

THORPE HISTORY GROUP

Newsletter - January 2018

Our next talk

The Boat Builders of Thorpe St Andrew
Malcolm Martins

Thursday 15th February 2018 8pm

The St Andrew's Centre, Thunder Lane

There will be a charge of £3 per person.

Forthcoming Events

We have a full programme of events this year including talks on differing aspects of the history of Thorpe, including one from Thorpe Hamlet on the history of Pull's Ferry. Details on the last page and on our website.

The events include a guided walk of the former County Asylum, a tour of the Rosary cemetery and a guided walk up Chapel Lane which has proved so popular in the past. The picture below (courtesy of Jan Warman) shows the Ward hire fleet at Thorpe Hall.



Our Last Talk 'A Time to Build'

This talk was about the building of thousands of homes in Thorpe St Andrew, between-1920-1960. Many factors would determine the amount of building work that took place. Some were positive like the availability of land and government intervention in the form of council housing. PM Lloyd George commented in 1919 that the returning men from the Great War needed "Homes Fit For Heroes". The first council houses built in Thorpe were on the Primrose Estate on Yarmouth Road. These were built from 1925, on land donated by Lord Roseberry, Lord of the Manor of Postwick. Boulton and Paul, based in Norwich, made six kit form bungalows on Boulton Road on Harvey Lane.

One of the biggest estates was that of the High House estate which ran from Yarmouth Road to South Avenue and includes Stanmore Road, Hillcrest Road, Gorse Road and parts of Thunder lane to the east. Harry Pointer was the main contractor for this area. Pointers got all the roads and land ready and builders such as Frances Clabon and George Dack built many of the individual, semi-detached houses and bungalows.

William Spalding built many of the semi-detached houses on Plumstead Road East, Aerodrome Crescent and some on Pilling Road. On Furze Road we discover that a firm based in central London bought up to ten acres of land between Plumstead Road East, Aerodrome Crescent and Thunder Lane from the Birkbeck family. These builders would go on to build much of this mentioned area including sixteen properties which they retained and rented out instead of selling.

The next builders were a firm of Stevenson and Evans who were formed in 1933 by Russell Evans and Claude Stevenson. Other family members joined in and this team built several houses on Hillside Road, Hillcrest Road and Hillside Avenue. They also built numbers 265 to 295 Thunder Lane.



As we move across to Thunder Lane we then come to the Spinney Estate. One of the first pieces of land that Robert Caston and Sons bought was the area of Plumstead Road East, Thunder Lane through to South Hill Road. This area again covered about ten acres. Caston and Son's would go on to build up to a thousand properties all over Thorpe as well as some in Sprowston.

The other builders in this area was a Sprowston firm made up of four brothers: the Fisher Brothers. They built semi-detached houses and bungalows of a similar size to the ones built by Caston's. the big difference was in the materials used by both firms. Both firms used doors, windows and woodwork supplied by Boulton and Paul, but Caston's preferred smaller windows, three panel front doors which differed to those of Fisher Bros who preferred more bulky wooden frames and doors. The last builders to feature were that of George Wimpey who built a large part of the Brick Kiln Farm Estate which runs from the Spinney Road/South Hill Road junction through to the Thorpe St Andrew High School.

In 1945 the City of Norwich Plan was printed which included suburbs such as Thorpe, Sprowston and Catton in their long term plans on a large scale for the very first time.

All of the above meant that a lot of building work was achieved in a forty year period in Thorpe, whether it was carried out by local builders or national builders such as George Wimpey. All of this activity leads us to the landscape that we have today and still an ever changing picture.

Appeal for help

I am doing research into the public houses of Thorpe St Andrew - including those that have now closed, such as the Red Lion below - and am looking for people's memories of them and any photographs you may have. If you can help please contact me at spinney72@aol.com or on 01603 438766.

Thanks
Nick Williams



Thorpe Memories: David Thompson

I very much enjoyed the excellent article by Alan Jones in the Thorpe History Group Spring 2016 Newsletter. It brought back so many memories Mr Rump, the milkman, with his churns and dip can measure is well remembered. As well as his bike he occasionally used a pony and trap and on those occasions I was instructed to collect any horse droppings for my Dad's roses! I moved to Thorpe, with my parents, in 1936. We lived at 2, Jubilee Estate, Spinney Road, where my sister, Jean, was born in 1937.

During the war we moved to The Willow Cottages, numbers 110 to 128 Yarmouth Road. This is the row of cottages (still there) next to the cemetery. At the cemetery end lived a Mr & Mrs Juby. They had an interest in the dog racing track at Cary's Meadow and always had two or three retired racing greyhounds at home. At the other end of the row was a small general grocers run by Mr and Mrs Gaul. They dispensed to my Mum her ration of 2ozs per week of cheese, butter etc. There was concern about German bombing, brick blast-walls were built to protect our windows and doors from damage and we had a Morrison air raid shelter in our front room. At some point our front garden metal railing fence was removed for material to help the war effort but we were allowed to keep the garden gate because there were two or more steps down from the pavement!

The cottages were two up and two down with a small kitchen and outside coal house and flushing toilet. There was a cold water tap in the kitchen. Lighting was by gas, there was no electricity! One of my jobs was to take very heavy acid filled glass accumulators from our wireless to a shop on River Green where they would be charged up.

Next door but one to the Gaul's was Whittakers Butchers. Well remembered for the smell of freshly laid sawdust on the floor and the deliciously cold water from their well in summer. Who remembers buying tasty penny bread rolls straight from the oven at Howards Bakers, on the way to school?

During my schooldays at Hillside Avenue I delivered newspapers for Mr & Mrs Roberts, from their newsagents' shop on River Green. I also worked for Dr Davidson whose house and surgery were demolished when Thorpe Narrows were widened.

My favourite part time job was looking after the day hire boats at Thorpe King's Head PH, (now River Garden.) I used to go to Oulton Broad by train and tow the boats up to Thorpe just before Easter, returning them after the summer season. Americans with their girlfriends were, I believe, the main hirers. A deposit was charged and they frequently drove up river to Norwich and the 'Blue Room' where they abandoned the boat thus losing their deposits. I used to go and collect the boats at dusk....The boats were owned by Mr Harmer Copeman, Oulton, Suffolk...He also owned an inboard hydroplane 'Barracuda' which he occasionally brought to Thorpe....In this boat he used to race against the likes of the legendary 'Whisso-Bang' at Oulton Broad.

Below: Hire boats mentioned by David in his article pictured at the King's Head.



The picture may hold memories for other reasons as well. The building on the island across the river housed The Yare Rowing Club. As a boy I was a cox there and to gain access all members used to scull across the river in a punt from the King's Head.

As far as I know the white hull moored on the island is the M.G.B owned by Commander Ashby before its conversion. It had windows and superstructure added, becoming the well-known houseboat 'Morning Flight' which was moored for many years opposite the River Green.

The name of the wherry, which had been converted to a houseboat, is moored at the Santa Lucia Hotel, escapes me. Perhaps she is long gone, or is she one of the eight remaining wherries on the Broads? Finally, I wonder who were the children in the rowing boat?

David Thompson
14.05.2017

Programme for 2018

Thursday 15th February 8pm

Talk 'The Boat Builders of Thorpe St Andrew' by Malcolm Martins
St Andrew's Centre, Thunder Lane

Thursday 12th April 8pm

Talk 'The history of Pulls Ferry' by Ann Shopland
St Andrew's Centre, Thunder Lane

Sunday 10th June 2pm

Chapel Lane - guided walk

Saturday 14th July 2pm

Thorpe Films - an opportunity to view historic films featuring aspects of life in Thorpe.
St Andrew's Centre, Thunder Lane

Sunday 22nd July 2pm

Tour of Rosary cemetery
Rosary Cemetery, Rosary Road - meet at Chapel

Thursday 13th September 2pm

Heritage Open Day. Talk and Tour Thorpe Lodge
(booking necessary when brochure published in August)

Sunday 23rd September 2pm

Guided walk around the former St Andrew's Mental Hospital
An opportunity to hear about the former asylum.

Thursday 11th October 8pm

Talk 'The development of Dussindale' by Rod Spokes.
St Andrew's Centre, Thunder Lane

Please note: There is a modest charge of £3 per head for the talks and the walk around St Andrew's Hospital but the other events are free. Booking may be necessary for the walks and the tour of the Rosary. Please contact Nick Williams on 01603 438766 or email spinney72@aol.com for further information.

Getting in contact

If want to know more about the Thorpe History Group or have something interesting on the history of Thorpe you would like to share please contact Nick Williams on 01603 438766 or email him at Spinney72@aol.com

The Thorpe History Group is also on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1613500998930684/> or Google Thorpe History Group on Facebook to find some interesting information and photographs.

We have a website at <http://www.thorpe-history-group.org/> so do take a look.