

# THORPE HISTORY GROUP

## Newsletter - May 2018

Our next events

### **Walk up Chapel Lane**

**2pm Sunday 10th June**

**Free**

**Places available but booking required**

### **Thorpe Films**

**2pm Saturday 14th July 2018**

**The St Andrew's Centre, Thunder Lane**

**Free**

## Forthcoming Events

We have a full programme of events this year including talks on very differing aspects of the history of Thorpe and walks during the summer and autumn. The walk around the former St Andrews hospital is fully booked but we will consider running it again next year. There are still places on the walks up Chapel Lane and around the Rosary but you need to book. Details can be found on the last page and on our website <http://www.thorpe-history-group.org/>

### **Change in the law on data protection**

You may be aware that a major change to UK data privacy law comes into effect on 25th May this year. The General Data Protection Regulation(GDPR) gives you more control over how your personal data is used and ensures that any organisation using it protects it securely. To reflect these changes and explain what we use your data for we have a privacy statement which tells you what we do with your personal data, how it's used and your rights as an individual under the GDPR. The privacy statement can be viewed on our website <http://www.thorpe-history-group.org/> from 25th May.

## St Williams Way school 65th Anniversary

Recently St Williams Way School celebrated its 65th anniversary and the Thorpe History Group provided some material for a display at the school. Below is an extract from the Norwich Evening News recording the event.

Norwich Evening News | Tuesday, November 7, 2017

### Celebration

**Students young and old reminisced at a 65th anniversary celebration of a Norwich school.**

St William's Primary School, on Williams Loke, opened its doors to former pupils from across the decades who spoke with children students aged four-11.

The event, which was the first of its kind for the school, included three generations of the same family.

Topics which former students spoke about included news headlines, popular culture and sport from the 1950s and changes in the uniform over the decades.

The school has 400 pupils and the anniversary event was supported by Norwich history enthusiasts.

The older students gave the former pupils a tour of the school.

Victoria Buxton, deputy headteacher of St William's Primary School, said: "It was a really nice community feel having visitors in."

"The older pupils who gave the tours felt very empowered. It was a way of encouraging confidence."



Adults, from left to right, Ian Murrell, Robert Brister, Colin Chilvers, Joanna George, Suzanne Quimton, Annette Brand, Chris Carter, Michael Bullwick, Michael Butler, Shelia Murrell, Nathan Chinman, Louise Carver, Sarah Carter and Erin Flock at the St William's Primary School 65th celebrations in Norwich.

Picture: ST WILLIAM'S PRIMARY SCHOOL

## St Andrews Hospital

Bearing in mind our guided walk around the south side of the former hospital in September the picture below may be of interest.



It was kindly provided by the Norfolk Industrial Archaeology Society and shows two of their members with the alarm hooter which was in use at the hospital. The Society is currently looking for somewhere to position it.

## Our Last Talk

Since the last Thorpe newsletter we have held two talks, both of which were well attended.

In February Malcolm Martins gave a well illustrated presentation on 'The Boat Builders of Thorpe St Andrew'. He explained how boat building began in Thorpe and how later it developed into the boat hire business, and that for a time, Thorpe was the most important centre on the Norfolk Broads for hire of pleasure boats. With the aid of many fascinating photographs he went on to cover the various boat builders which in their time were household names in Norfolk. These included the Jenner family, the Harts and of course the Ward family who not only built and hired boats but managed the Thorpe Gardens public house.

In April we departed from Thorpe St Andrew when Ann Shopland gave a talk on Pulls Ferry which is in Thorpe Hamlet. With the aid of some carefully chosen maps and photographs Ann explained the history of the ferry and the buildings surrounding it. She explained how the watergate had been built at the entrance to a canal used to bring stone and other material for the construction of Norwich Cathedral.

It is known as Pulls Ferry after John Pull who was the ferryman for 45 years until his death in 1841. Prior to that it had been known as Sandling's ferry after an earlier ferryman. She recounted how when Norwich City played at the Nest some supporters got there via the ferry although not always without getting wet as on occasion the ferry was overloaded and capsized.

She finished her talk by explaining how, after it had been derelict for many years (as shown below in 1936) Pulls Ferry was rebuilt in 1949 to provide accommodation for the Girl Guides.



## Thorpe People: Estelle Hunt

I had the pleasure recently of meeting Estelle Hunt to talk about her recollections of life in Thorpe and in particular her time at the King's Head where her father was landlord for almost twenty years.

Estelle was well known in Norwich when for many years she ran 'Estelle Charles' in Lower Goat Lane with her business partner and younger brother Charles. The premises at the corner with Pottergate had until 1966 been the Blue Bell public house

Estelle Charles was a quality fashion and bridal shop which sold fashionable ready-to-wear clothes from top designers catering for the smart woman and many beautiful brides, and which prided itself on personal service. It also put on fashion shows in prestigious local venues for charity, raising many £1000s' and was featured on TV. Estelle had managed several women's wear shops in Norwich included Richards Shops and Fifth Avenue and Charles was a fashion designer but they had ambitions to have their own business. The heyday of the business was the 1970s when, with Estelle's business acumen and Charles's creative flair for design, it flourished. The shop closed in the 1990s. Estelle also owned Renoir on St Giles for a time. Decorated by Charles it provided a chic new hairdressing salon for women with a pleasantly relaxing atmosphere.

Estelle's background was very different to the glamorous business she built up at Estelle Charles. She was born in 1920 at the Dial public house where her aunt was the wife of the landlord Charles Smithers. Estelle was one of three children and had one older and one younger brother

In 1938 when the then Estelle Carter was 18 her father Edward Carter took on the tenancy of the King's Head at Thorpe from brewers Steward and Patteson. He ran the pub with his wife Violet until his death in 1957. Violet (pictured below second right) was a formidable woman who effectively ran the King's Head, making it a popular 'local.' Estelle has fond memories of her time

4



The pub was the headquarters of the Yare Rowing Club whose boathouse was on the island opposite, from where it put on an annual regatta. The club's members included a number of prominent Norwich businessmen including Ken Wilmott who had a shop on Prince of Wales Road and Percy Meadows whose Fishergate shoe factory made top of the range women's shoes.

With the outbreak of war in 1939 the King's Head was used by the Air Raid Precautions(ARP) wardens who took over the 'back room' as their base. It was a good location to observe enemy planes and was 'sand bagged up' for protection. Estelle can recall seeing German bombers flying low as they passed the pub, following the river on their way to bomb Norwich. Her father worked as an engineer at Laurence, Scott and Electromotors (LSE) during the war and at times the King's Head was used for confidential meetings with Admiralty officials - no doubt to discuss the latest developments that LSE were working on for the Royal Navy.

At the time beer was rationed and at times the King's Head ran out - forcing it to close. Spirits were difficult to obtain but Estelle would be despatched to Great Yarmouth, then in the coastal zone where travel was restricted, to buy spirits from friendly suppliers. Estelle also organised dances for the War Charity Committee at the Roxley hall during the war and can remember soldiers being billeted at the White House on Yarmouth Road. She also recalls growing vegetables on the island and her family picking up much needed coal which dropped from the trains using the line which crossed the island. Her father Ted owned part of the island where he would shoot pheasants and rabbits to supplement the sparse war time diet. A further memory of her time at the King's Head was the ever present risk of the pub being damaged by passing vehicles. The pub stood on the Thorpe narrows where it was difficult for two vehicles to pass one another - they sometimes tried and ended up hitting the wall of the King's Head.

In 1945 Estelle married Lesley Hunt after his return from war service in Burma. Like so many other young couples at the time they found it impossible to find a house of their own so they began married life at the King's Head where they lived for two years . Her husband set up his own architect's practice in the back room now vacated by the ARP wardens, and later became an Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects.

During her time at the King's Head Estelle met many of the people prominent in Thorpe who frequented the pub - including the Jenners and the Wards who built hire cruisers, and the property developer Harry Pointer who lived at Thorpe Lodge prior to his premature death in 1944. Pointer was very active on the War Charities Committee which raised money to support the war effort. One of her favourite memories is when Ernest Barry the English Sculling Champion stayed at the King's Head while coaching at the Yare Rowing Club. Barry had been the sculling world champion on five occasions earlier in his career but by the time he stayed at the Kings Head was the Royal Barge Master to King George VI. He also held the post under the current Queen.

Her father Edward died in 1957. Violet was permitted by the brewery to stay at the pub for a year but not offered a full tenancy. Today Estelle, aged 97, lives quietly in Norwich.

## Wally Webb at Frostbite

Recently the Frostbite Sailing Club put on a film show by Wally Webb of his holidays on the Broads in 2008 and 2012

It was on a cold and wet evening in the middle of March that a hardy crowd which included several members of the Thorpe History Group, made their precarious way to the Frostbite sailing club. This was to meet Wally Webb and enjoy some of his films of his adventurous holidays on the Broads.

I was mesmerized right from the start. Having never been on a boating holiday, I hadn't realized what an uplifting experience it could be. It can also be quite daunting which the Breydon Water crossing showed!

The first film was a record of a holiday taken in 2008 on the northern rivers of the Broads, hence the precarious crossing of Breydon Water as their boat is moored at a boatyard on the River Yare. It is crucial that the crew catch the tides at the right time to safely navigate under numerous bridges and to avoid the sand banks which lurk under Breydon water.

Wally's aim was to reach Honing and explore the North Walsham and Dilham canal. It was very interesting and he talked about the history of the canal which was built in 1826 and ran from North Walsham to Wayford Bridge in Smallburgh. This included an infamous insurance scam! One of the 6 locks has been painstakingly restored at Ebridge and work has started at Briggate lock. The aim of the volunteers is to restore the top third of the canal and encourage wildlife to return.

He also recorded an interview with the late Tim Whelpton of Eastwood Whelpton Boats at Upton and recorded a chat with an eel catcher.

In the second film, Wally and his wife travelled on the southern rivers of the Broads, travelling to Geldeston lock just outside Beccles. They reached the river Waveney from Brundall by The Cut and spent their first night at Somerleyton. They spent some time at Worlingham before leaving at day break to travel to Geldeston Lock. This was a magical piece of footage. So quiet and peaceful early in the morning with the sun slowly rising through the low mists over the River Waveney. On the way back they stopped at Hardly Mill and then made their way back to Bramerton to meet friends who had spotted some unusual bracket fungi on a tree at their mooring.

This was the first time Wally had shown his private films to an audience other than his family and everyone was most grateful to him for sharing his magical holiday experiences.

Linda Pargeter, one of the trustees of the Wherry Maud was there and gave notice of the Wherry Maud being at Thorpe St Andrew River Green in August for 2 days hosted by the Frostbite sailing club. There is also going to be an art show on board when moored at Ranworth during May Bank holiday weekend to raise funds for the upkeep of the Wherry Maud. It was used at Hobrough's dockyard as a mud lighter in the 60's and John Fox was the skipper.

Pam Harwood

# Programme for 2018

**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](mailto:spinney72@aol.com) for further information.**

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 and Friday 14th September 2pm and Th  
**Talk and Tour of Thorpe Lodge** Heritage Open Day.  
(booking necessary when brochure published in August)

Sunday 23rd September 2pm  
Guided walk around the former St Andrew's Mental Hospital  
Now fully booked

Thursday 11th October 8pm  
Talk '**The development of Dussindale**' by Rod Spokes.  
St Andrew's Centre, Thunder Lane

## 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](mailto:Spinney72@aol.com)

You can also find the Thorpe History Group on Facebook - Google Thorpe History Group to find some interesting information and photographs.

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