

# THORPE HISTORY GROUP

## Newsletter - October 2019

Our next talk

### 'St Andrew's Hospital'

**Dale Wiseman**

**Thursday 10th October 2019 at 8pm**

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

There will be a charge of £3 per person.

### Forthcoming Events

Our last talk of the year will be on the history of St Andrews Hospital, based on extensive research carried out by our speaker Dale Wiseman on the hospital, its patients and those who worked there.

It will be preceded by our Annual General Meeting when the accounts for the previous 12 months will be presented and the committee will put themselves up for election.

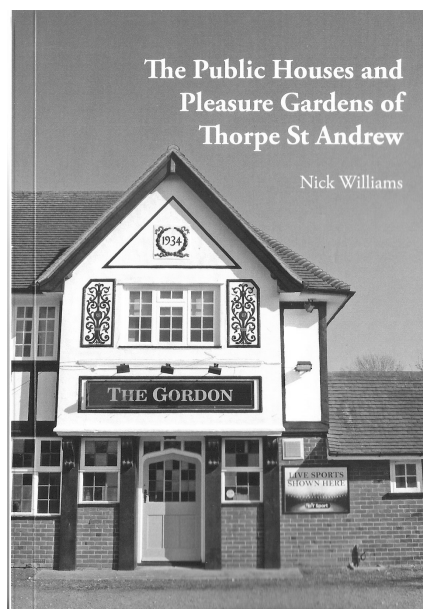
Our programme for next year is laid out on the last page.

### **The Public Houses and Pleasure Gardens of Thorpe St Andrew**

Copies are available from Nick Williams.

Priced £8.50 it is a history of the pubs of Thorpe, the landlords and the events that took place in them.

It includes not only those pubs which still exist but those which have closed and in some case been demolished - several within living memory.



## Building Hill Crest Road

Much of Thorpe has been developed during the last 90 years. Known as Thorpe-next-Norwich or Thorpe Episcopi until 1954, initially the village grew beside the river and alongside the Yarmouth Road but by the early 1900s new housing was being developed further east beside the Yarmouth Road and to the north of it. This included developments such as Hillside Avenue where houses began to be built about 1930. Recognising that Thorpe was an attractive place to live with easy access to Norwich and the river, developers began looking at the large estates and farms at the northern end of Thunder Lane. One of the most active was Harry Pointer, a road haulage contractor and farmer who lived at Thorpe Lodge. He began buying land in upper Thorpe

In 1931 Pointer bought what became known as the Hill Crest estate from the Gurney and Birkbeck families. They had acquired much of it during the nineteenth century and leased it out to be farmed. Thanks to the kindness of Hill Crest Road resident Gary Staff who permitted me to read his property deeds we have an insight into the nature of the development of Hill Crest Road (pictured below). Once he had bought the land Pointer laid out the roads and sewers before selling off plots and block of plots to individual builders.



One such plot was sold to Stevenson and Evans, builders and contractors, who did a lot of work in Thorpe. In July 1934 they paid £76 for a 38 foot wide plot on Hillside Road. With it came the right to use the sewers and half the width of the road until both were adopted by the local council.

Development of the plot, and presumably others in the area, was subject to a number of stipulations Pointer had agreed to when purchasing the land in 1931: it was only to be used for the erection of a private dwelling house; only one house with a minimum floor area of 1,000 square feet was to be erected on the plot; no trade or business was to be conducted from it; the design had to be approved by Pointer; no nuisance was to be committed and fences were to be put up at front, back and sides to specific heights. In addition, the purchasers were not permitted to dig for gravel, brick earth, clay or soil other

than in connection with the foundations of the building of the property or the laying out the garden.



Stevenson and Evans were one of many builders and contractors who bought plots on the Hillside estate to build on. Pointer's power of approval of the plans for each property ensured considerable uniformity which is visible today although closer scrutiny reveals some subtle differences in design which provide a degree of variety.

The photograph above, courtesy of Neil Evans, shows Russell Evans, (left) with some of his workers while working on number 295 Thunder Lane in the late summer of 1934. Russell was a bricklayer while his partner Claude Stevenson was a carpenter and joiner.

#### **Please Note**

**We send some newsletters by post but with postage costs rising this is expensive.**

**If you receive our newsletter by post and wish to continue doing so please contact Nick Williams on 01603 438766 to let him know.**

**If you don't contact him we will assume you no longer wish to receive the newsletter.**

## Coronation celebrations 1953

The photographs record celebrations held on the River Green as part of the coronation celebrations in June 1953.

The Coronation took place on Tuesday 2nd June at Westminster Abbey and was celebrated in Thorpe the same day by an event on the recently opened Recreation Ground on Laundry Lane. The main pavilion had been gaily decorated and a large photograph of the new Queen had been hung from the balcony. Organised by the Thorpe Coronation Celebration Committee, there was entertainment for all including a fancy dress parade, a procession of decorated vehicles, dancing displays by the Girl Guides and the Norman School of Dancing, novelty football matches, talent competitions, whist drives and community singing. For the children there was Punch and Judy.

Several thousand enjoyed the fun, despite the rain forcing them to seek shelter at times in the marquees and the pavilions. Sandwiches and drinks were handed out, 400 children under school age were given Coronation souvenirs and 500 tins of tea, decorated with pictures of the Queen and Prince Phillip, were given to the elderly. After the Queen's speech had been broadcast, the day finished with dancing, fireworks and a huge bonfire. It had been estimated beforehand that the celebrations would cost about £525. Parishioners subscribed £250, the Parish Council gave £200 with the balance to come from competitions and stalls.

The celebrations concluded the following Saturday when a "Merrie England Revel" was held on the River Green and in the grounds of the adjoining Thorpe Gardens public house. In addition to stalls and sideshows there was country dancing, children's fancy dress parades, archery and what was described in the local press as 'rustic revelry.'

But the main attraction was the arrival by barge of the "Queen", representing Elizabeth I, and the royal party - all in period costume. Her arrival was heralded by a royal salute, fireworks, a fanfare of trumpets and an announcement by the town crier. The "Queen" was then formally welcomed by the "Mayor" and "Sheriff" of Thorpe. The royal party then paraded along the waterfront so the crowd, estimated at 4,000, could view the splendour of the elaborate costumes. At dusk the Thorpe Auxiliary Fire Service put on an illuminated fountain and water display before the finale when floodlights illuminate in turn the Thorpe "Queen" and a huge portrait of Queen Elizabeth II. So ended a day of celebration - appropriately held where water frolics of the past had taken place.

We are grateful to Jan Warman for providing the photographs.



## Our last talk: The Three Churches of Thorpe St Andrew

Ian Hinton, the Chair of the Norfolk Historic Buildings Group gave a fascinating and challenging talk on the churches and their origins. The churches concerned are the one whose sparse remains are to be found at the top of the Hillside allotments, the ruined church on the Yarmouth Road and its successor that stands behind it.

The accepted belief is that the Hillside church was the first church in Thorpe, was subsequently demolished and then rebuilt on the Yarmouth Road during the 16th century before being replaced itself by the current church. Ian challenged this view. He suggested that the Hillside church was probably a Saxon style church, established in the 12th century, set in a burial ground with a small settlement around it and was demolished or fell into decay by the 16th century.

Based on his inspection of the remains of the riverside church Ian felt it was constructed earlier than the 16th century, and that Thorpe for a time had two churches - one at the Hillside site and the other by the river. It was not unusual for a parish to have more than one church, for example Shotesham had four and Gillingham had two. It seems likely it was the main parish church, being in the centre of the village, close to the Bishop's summer palace at Thorpe hall and adjacent to the river which would have been the easiest mode of transport. Ian went on to point out features of the old riverside church, drawing attention to the put log holes used to secure scaffolding as the tower was built in stages. He pointed out that the top part of the tower was of brick construction contrasting with the flint construction of the lower part, indicating it had been added later. Once the new church had been built the old church was 'ruinated' in 1881 and left much as it appears today.

He moved on to the current church - designed by Thomas Jekyll, it was one of four he was responsible including the Methodist chapel at Holt, the parish church at Hautbois and a church at Stapleford Abbots in Essex. Built in 1866 it included some unusual features including medieval style gargoyles. Inside, the rood screen, installed as a war memorial in 1921, features prominent soldiers and local clergy as the faces of the saints. The carved column decorations are made of coade stone - a synthetic stone used on public buildings which retains detail due to its strength and density. Jekyll suffered with mental health issues and was committed to an asylum where he died in 1881.

Ian then took questions and comments - one of which was from Neil Evans who provided details of the V2 blast in September 1944 at Whitlingham which damaged the church tower, leading to it being removed and capped in 1951.

## Can we record your story

Thorpe History Group is considering widening the reach of the audio archive with a view to encourage more residents to share their stories of living and working in Thorpe St Andrew and we would be happy to receive contact from any of you who wish to tell your story. Please contact Pam Harwood on 01603 434263.

# Programme for 2020

Below is our programme for the forthcoming year. There is a modest charge of £3 per head for the talks but the other events are free.

We can only accommodate a limited number on the tour of the Rosary, the Chapel Lane walk and the builders walk, so booking in advance is necessary. Book by contacting Nick Williams.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Time</b>
Thursday 20th February	Talk The Public houses of Thorpe St Andrew'	St Andrew's Centre, Thunder Lane	8pm
Thursday 16th April	Talk Thorpe Schools 1937- 1997	St Andrew's Centre, Thunder Lane	8pm
Sunday 14th June	Walk up Chapel Lane	Chapel Lane	2pm
Saturday 4th July	Archive day - an opportunity to view the material held in the Janet Smith Archive	Roxley Hall, Yarmouth Road	2-4pm
Saturday 25th July	Tour of Rosary cemetery	Rosary Cemetery, Rosary Road	2pm
Friday 11th September	Heritage Open Day Talk and tour of Thorpe Lodge	Thorpe Lodge	2pm
Sunday 27th September	Guided walk 'The Builders who built the Spinney, Hillcrest and Plumstead Estates'	Beechwood Drive by garage	2pm
Thursday 22nd October	Talk The Life and Times of Robert Caston (1887-1981)'	St Andrew's Centre, Thunder Lane	8pm

## Getting in contact

If you would like 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 find the Thorpe History Group on Facebook - Google Thorpe History Group to find information and photographs.

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