

THORPE HISTORY GROUP

Newsletter - June 2020

Update

Coronavirus pandemic

As there is still no indication of when groups like ours can meet we have put together a summer newsletter. We will keep you informed of when our programme of events will be re-starting.

This edition

Following on from the item in the previous newsletter on the Thorpe woodlands there is a piece on the horse racing that took place there.

There is also an update on the work that Dale, Roger and others have been doing at the Thorpe cemetery to make the monuments more accessible and an article on Thorpe Secondary School in the 1960s and 70s.

If you have anything of interest on the history of Thorpe, particularly photographs do get in touch.

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

You can also 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.

Clearance at Thorpe cemetery

When researching Sir George Morse (1857-1931), for a forthcoming book, I found out that Sir George was buried at Thorpe Cemetery on Yarmouth Road. On my second visit and having to go into the depths of the middle part of the old cemetery, I came across the fore mentioned headstone. It was looking in a sorry state, covered in moss, lettering very faded and difficult to get near too due to a mass of grass, thick tree roots and stinging nettles. On this same trip I also found the headstone of Major Cubitt of Thorpe Hall (1835-1929), another person I had been looking for. These discoveries led to a discussion with Roger Pointer, Father James Stewart, representing the church who own the cemetery, and Councillor Ian Mackie in February of this year.

We were in agreement that this area of the cemetery had been left for far too long, and any visitors would have found it impossible to navigate the site, let alone get any pleasure out of their visit. All parties agreed to put together a working party and a designated area 30 metres by 80 metres was measured out and seen as a starting/trial area. Two Saturday mornings were arranged in February and March of this year. The first Saturday was a major success with up to 18 people turning out at different times and putting in a shift of clearing and discovery. During the March meeting although numbers were down to 8, many new graves and headstones were uncovered, and the project was now on track.

Within a week of this second meet up, Covid 19 put a stop to all progress. The next step for this first area is to clean the stones and to make repairs to some of the fallen crosses. The cross of Elizabeth Von Stieglitz has already been stood back up after being found completely hid up under a mound of grass and nettles. The Sir George Morse plot now has a newly discovered edging and the lettering has been renewed. The lettering on the Cubitt memorial has been repainted and now both look back to their best.

During this first phase we have already come across many local names and people who have made an impact on the Norwich area. One of these is Samuel Base (1861-1945) who lived on Thunder Lane and spent over forty years of his working life at Steward And Patteson, the brewers, ten of these as Company Secretary. Another figure from the Victorian period is Henry Le Strange Herring (1833-1912) who lived at the Old Rectory in Thorpe. Herring led a full military career as Captain of 87 Royal Irish Fusiliers.

Now that the project has been started there are ambitions to completely log and grid the whole of the middle area of the cemetery. Tracey Wilson has agreed to carry out the planning and research into this and It is also hoped that we can make the site visitor friendly by identifying as many of the names and plots as possible. Over the past few weeks a lot of research is being undertaken in preparation for a return to carrying on the project in the very near future.

Dale Wiseman May 2020.

The Norfolk and Norwich Races



**NORFOLK AND NORWICH
RACES**

Will take place on **THURSDAY & FRIDAY, 28th and 29th June, 1838,**
ON MOUSEHOLD HEATH.

THE CORONATION STAKES
OF TWO SOVEREIGNS each, with THIRTY added, in honour of Her Majesty's Coronation. Three years old to carry nine stone; four years old, ten stone four lbs.; five years old, eleven stone four lbs.; six years old and aged, eleven stone ten lbs.; thorough bred horses to carry ten lbs. extra; Mares and Geldings allowed three lbs. Beats twice round and a distance. Entrance Ten Shillings, to go to the Clerk of the Course. Winner to be sold for £150, if demanded in the usual way.

THE TRADESMEN'S STAKES
OF ONE SOVEREIGN each, with TWENTY-FIVE added. Weights and Articles the same as for the Coronation Stakes, with the exception that the Winner of the Coronation Stakes should carry seven lbs. extra; the Winner of this Stakes to be sold for £100, if demanded in the usual way. Beats twice round and a distance.

THE HACK STAKES
OF TEN SHILLINGS each, with FIFTEEN SOVEREIGNS added. Weights, eleven stone each. The Winner to pay One Sovereign to the Clerk of the Course. Beats twice round and a distance. Winner to be sold for £40, if demanded in the usual way.

Having done some research into the Thorpe woodlands for the article in the previous newsletter I became interested in the history of Racecourse Plantation and how it got its name. You may be aware that many of the trees there are being felled in advance of an estate of 300 houses to be built there so the plantation will soon disappear.

My research, largely in the files of local newspapers, uncovered a considerable amount of material on the 'Norfolk and Norwich Races' that were held there during the nineteenth century, attracting large numbers of people. There had been racing in the locality prior to this. During the 1730s there was a course in Sprowston that ran from Mousehold Lane to Salhouse Road where the 'Racecourse Inn' now stands but the 'Norfolk and Norwich Races' were a new venture. |

They were the brainchild of Henry Stracey, a former cavalry officer, whose wealthy family owned Rackheath Hall and estates in the county. It was taken up with great enthusiasm by many of the local gentry and in particular by John Harvey of Thorpe Lodge who became the public face of the races as one of the Stewards who supervised them, ensuring they were run fairly and resolving any disputes. In early June 1838 Stracey proposed holding the races and within a fortnight arrangements had been put in place. They were held over two days, the first being Thursday 28th with the first race being named the 'Coronation Stakes' in honour of the new Queen, Victoria, whose coronation took place that very same day.

The course was laid out on 80 acres of heath land that stretched east from where Woodside Road is now, leased by John Harvey from the Dean and Chapter of Norwich Cathedral, that became known as the 'Old Race Course'. On that first day thousands attended, many walking the two miles from Norwich; the gentry travelling in comfort in their carriages and gigs. A

grandstand had been erected and there were booths providing food and drink for the assembled multitude. Racing commenced at noon and despite heavy rain which arrived at 2.30 the event was viewed as a great success. At a celebratory meal held by the Stewards that evening at the Royal Hotel in Norwich, Harvey, after toasting the new Queen, expressed his great pleasure at seeing so many people from different classes enjoying themselves at the races.

The following year the old course was unavailable and a new one, immediately adjoining it, known as the 'New Race Course' was laid out. It consisted of an oval track of a mile and a distance in length. The races had become a major event in the social calendar and again thousands flocked there to enjoy two afternoons of racing with music from a band and food and drink from the booths. Those entering horses had to confirm ownership, there had to be a minimum number in a heat or the prize would not be awarded, and no jockey was permitted to ride in plain clothes. In addition, no gambling was allowed, despite offers being received to pay £100 if a gambling tent be permitted. During these early years the races were followed by a ball at the Assembly Rooms in Norwich but it was not well patronised and by 1841 had fallen into abeyance.



The Races continued to be held for a further three years. A noticeable feature of them was the participation of officers from whichever regiment was stationed at the cavalry barracks in Pockthorpe. They were prominent in supporting the event, putting up a silver cup on occasion as a prize. The 'Norfolk and Norwich Races' were last held in July 1842 when, although popular with the general public who still attended en masse, support from the gentry had declined. It would appear that the drive and enthusiasm had gone - Harvey had died earlier that year and the land used for the races had been sold so perhaps the two things combined to kill the 'Norfolk and Norwich Races'. Today (site pictured above) , there is no physical evidence there was once a racecourse in Racecourse Plantation but with it about to disappear it's an appropriate time to remember a forgotten aspect of the history of Thorpe.

Thorpe Secondary School in the 1960s and 70s

Thanks to the generosity of Gerry Hawkins who was a teacher at Thorpe from 1964 to 1976 we have access to some striking photographs of school activities, the teaching staff and some of the pupils.

His memories will feature in a future edition, along with photographs but we begin with this picture of the teaching staff of the early 1970s. He can name some - if you can fill in the blanks please let Nick Williams know.



Short Back Row:

? / ? / Vince Wilding / David Buckingham / Sheila Moorby / Geoff Pinching.

2nd row from back:

Roy Glover / Ray Stokes / Bill License / Godfrey Arnison / Chris Race / Peter Stanniland / Ian Sinclair / ? / Ted Carr / Ted Cant.

3rd row from back:

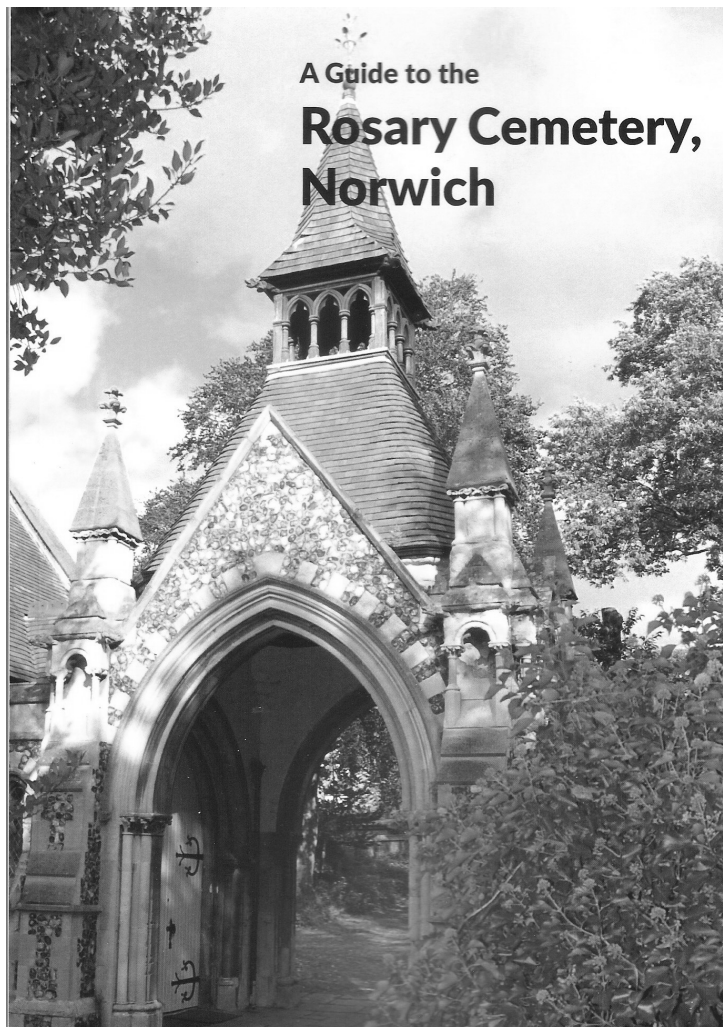
Dina Smithdale / Jean Darkins? / ? / ? / Bill Sutton / Mr Belchambers (Head) / ? / ? / ? / ? / ? .

Front row:

Geoff Long / ? / ? / ? / ? / Godfrey Batley / Gerry Hawkins.

A Guide to the Rosary Cemetery, Norwich

'A new book on the Rosary cemetery in Thorpe Hamlet has been published by the Friends of the Rosary - written to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the formal opening of the Rosary in June 1821.



Since their first book was published over a decade ago further research has enabled them to provide a more comprehensive history of the Rosary. Also included in the new book is a fuller picture of Thomas Drummond the founder, sections on the flora and fauna, a chapter explaining the symbology to be found on the monuments and chapters on the military and railway personnel who are buried there in large numbers. It concentrates largely on the lower cemetery where burials first took place but there is a brief chapter covering the upper cemetery where burials continue.

The book is a B5 format paperback of 111 pages and illustrated with black and white images(see picture of cover attached) and priced at £8.50.

The book is available from Nick Williams who will deliver in the Norwich area.

If it is to be posted the price is £10 which includes postage and packing. You can contact Nick at spinney72@aol.com or at 01603 438766.