

THORPE HISTORY GROUP

Newsletter - September 2020

This edition

Coronavirus update

Most of our events for this year have been cancelled due to the pandemic but we have decided to put on two walks in the Thorpe cemetery in September. Details on page 2.

Activity at the Thorpe cemetery

Dale Wiseman is organising sessions to clear further monuments and would welcome help. They are on Saturdays - 22nd August, 12th and 26th September, from 9 til 12. Meet at the cemetery - there is unrestricted parking on Yarmouth Road.

Please bring hand tools and wear appropriate clothing and shoes. The photograph below shows some of the work accomplished so far by Dale's team.



Thorpe in 1881

This edition carries an excellent analysis of occupations found in the 1881 Census of Thorpe next Norwich. Written by Lesley Barrett one of our members it provides a fascinating insight into the area 140 years ago.

Tours of Thorpe Cemetery

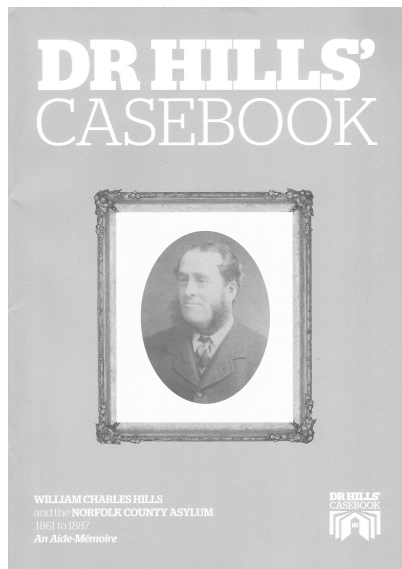
The recent clearance work has located memorials of several prominent Thorpe residents and triggered research to discover more about them.

We are putting on two guided tours of them on Sunday 27th September led by Dale Wiseman. The tours will be at 1pm and again at 2.15pm. We are restricting the numbers to six on each tour and places must be booked in advance on a first come, first served basis.

You can book by emailing Nick Williams at spinney72@aol.com.

Dr Hills' Casebook

Written by Richard Johnson it provides a detailed insight into what was then known as the Norfolk County Asylum here in Thorpe. Below, Richard has provided background to the project which he has been heavily involved in.



'Dr Hills' Casebook is a project about history, mental health, creative writing and theatre. It is centred on the Norfolk County Asylum at Thorpe during the superintendence of Dr William Charles Hills (1861-1887).

The project is a successor to Change Minds and, as with that programme, utilises primary sources including patient case histories held at the Norfolk Record Office. Both ventures provide an opportunity for people with lived experience of mental ill health to engage with cultural activities, improve well-being and to educate communities. Ultimately there will be a theatrical performance which will tour local venues.

My interest in the Asylum started in 2018 when I took part in the Change Minds project. I was fortunate indeed that my treating psychologist brought this amazing 'second-chance' to my attention; I haven't looked back since! The Asylum records are a fascinating insight not only into the lives of the patients but also the care and treatment of the mentally ill during the nineteenth century. Dr Hills' Casebook is inspired by my research and by, in no small part, the manifest compassion and humanity of Dr Hills as demonstrated in his journals.

Dr Hills' Casebook is a partnership between the Restoration Trust, the Norfolk Record Office, UpShoot Theatre Company and South Norfolk Council. It is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.'

Note: Copies are available, priced £6.50 which includes postage and packing from Laura Drysdale at laura@restorationtrust.org.uk.

Employment in Thorpe in 1881 - from the Census - Part 1



It is 1881, Queen Victoria has reigned for 62 years, a Liberal government is in power and William Ewart Gladstone has been Prime Minister since 1880. Further afield, the Treaty of Pretoria has brought a halt to the first Boer War and British troops have left Afghanistan after the ending of the Second Afghan War. If you could read and afford books, you could enjoy the newly-published *Portrait of a Lady* by Henry James, and your children could be thrilled by R L Stevenson's *Treasure Island*. Locally, the City Asylum was opened at Hellesdon and the Cathedral gave that part of Mousehold which was within the city boundary to Norwich City Council.

In Enumeration District Number 1, the census taken on 4th April that year in 'all that part of the Civil Parish of Thorpe next Norwich which is included in the Union of Blofield' recorded 1,189 people living in 311 households, compared with 892 people in 213 households in the 1851 census. To collect all the information necessary for the census, all households were given census forms (called schedules) to complete, and these forms were collected by officials called enumerators who then had to copy out the details into their enumeration book. Many working people would have struggled to complete the forms as education provision was haphazard and informal until 1870; the enumerators had to complete a substantial proportion of the schedules themselves. The enumerator for Thorpe, Charles Sabberton, was himself a Thorpe resident, who recorded himself as a 'smith and fitter' living with his family in Grove Hills, off Yarmouth Road.

People were supposed to enter their exact address on the schedule, including the house name or number, if any. However, in rural areas the only

information given might be the name of the village or parish. In Thorpe, only road names and house or building names were recorded, beginning in Yarmouth Road (much closer to Norwich than where it begins now) at what was the Cremorne Gardens public house and finishing in the Plumstead Road area of north Thorpe. Household numbers do not correspond to the number of houses, but to separate family units, several of which could inhabit the same building. A look through the 1881 census for Thorpe shows that the people from household numbers 1 to 264 lived either on Yarmouth Road or in areas around it; the rich in large houses and others in areas of housing varying in standards according to the means of the occupants. Houses named in the census records include Pinebanks, the home of John Taylor, solicitor and landowner; Holly Lodge, home of solicitor Peter Hansell; Sunny Hill, the home of banker Geoffrey Fowell Buxton, and Belle Vue House, home to banker Hugh Gurney Barclay. Buxton was a grandson of Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, the renowned anti-slavery campaigner. Sir Thomas had married Hannah Gurney in 1807 thus establishing his family's connection with the prominent Norfolk banking family which his grandson was continuing.

Home to people of more modest occupations, the Green Hills and Chapel Lane areas had 20 households living there in the 1851 census; by 1881 this number had risen to 32. Further developments just called 'buildings' had been built since 1851 eg Whittakers Buildings, Howards Buildings and Rowena Buildings, which accommodated 18 households between them. Tann Yard and Red Lion Square, again located off the Yarmouth Road and new since 1851 were lived in by another 25 households. The remaining households, numbers 264 to 311, were spread between Postwick Lane, Pound Lane, Boundary Lane, Whittaker Lane, Thunder Lane and Plumstead Road, indicating that north Thorpe was less populated than the south and more rural in character. The occupations of its inhabitants, with some exceptions, were more related to the land; this was where a shepherd lived and two gamekeepers.

Eleven men were recorded as farmers in 1851; in 1881 six men are recorded as farmers and two farms, Brook Farm and Old Hall Farm were being managed by farm bailiffs (ie farm managers). Two of the farmers combined farming with other activity, eg Samuel Starling of Yarmouth Road was a lime merchant as well as a farmer and employed eight men and two boys, and Samuel Whittaker of Brick Kiln, Plumstead Rd, combined farming and brickmaking. Samuel also featured in the 1851 census as a farmer. Robert Dale of Yarmouth Rd identified as a 'cowkeeper' but to this description on the census form 'dairyman' has been added. He also featured in the census of 1851, as young man of 19 helping his father James on the family farm. Robert Mickleburgh of Yarmouth Rd and James Hawton of Thunder Lane described themselves as milkmen; maybe delivering the milk from Dale's farm to local customers. Another of the farmers, Robert Desborough, was also named in the 1851 census; he was then a child of 7 whose father was a farm bailiff. Two more men recorded their occupations as market gardeners; perhaps they sold their produce to the inhabitants of nearby urban Norwich. They were Edmund Bell of Green Hills who had two acres and employed one labourer and John Green of Larkhall Place, who identified himself as a florist and market gardener employing two men and two boys. The number of agricultural labourers in 1881 had shrunk to 44 from the 95 recorded in 1851. It may not have been in Thorpe, but two men worked at a sawmill and four men worked as woodmen. Twenty seven men identified simply as gardeners

and a further 26 men identified just as labourers. There were approximately 44 men who were employed as domestic servants/gardeners, coachmen, grooms or differing combinations of all 4 roles.

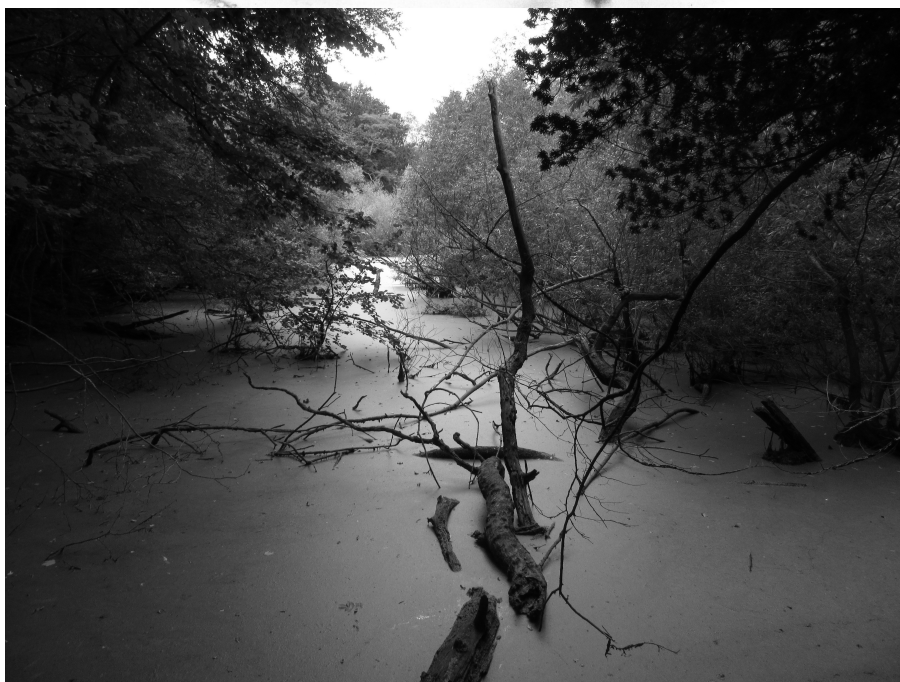
Compared to 1851, by 1881 the numbers of men employed in some trades or skills had increased whilst in others they had declined. Carpenters increased in numbers, ranging from 14 year old apprentice Alfred Hardy, the Burton brothers who were carpenters and wheelwrights to Robert Firman of Buck Yard, a carpenter who himself employed three men. Brickmakers, bricklayers and painters and decorators increased; perhaps benefitting from the growth of Norwich 'suburbs', which in the 19th century meant Heigham, and areas around the Earlham, Unthank and Dereham roads. Norwich had had gas lighting in some streets from around 1830, but it wasn't until the last quarter of the century that most working people could afford gas lighting in their homes. Thorpe had one young man who saw his future in this industry, teenage Charlie Cannell, listed as a gas fitter (unemployed at the time of the census).

The number of plumbers and blacksmiths remained similar to 1851. A few tradesmen followed their fathers into these businesses, eg Charles Sabberton's father Thomas was recorded in 1851 as a master blacksmith, and plumber Benjamin Shardelow's father, Benjamin senior, was recorded in 1851 as a master plumber employing two men. The boatbuilding trade grew slightly; living in Water Lane, Stephen Field was listed as a master boat builder employing two men. The number of home-based shoemakers declined, perhaps reflecting the increased mechanisation of shoe manufacture with shoes now being made predominantly in large factories, of which Norwich had several. The census of 1881 records William Oakley as a shoemaker living in Tann Yard, perhaps assisted by his daughter Maria, aged 12, as she was recorded as a 'boot closer's apprentice'. Jane Chettleburgh of Brew Yard, living near to cordwainer Thomas Francis (cordwainers made the finest shoes) was recorded as a boot machinist. The iron foundry owned by James Turner in the 1851 census was being run in 1881 by widow Elizabeth Sabberton; it employed eight men with William Moulton as clerk of works. Samuel Clarke, 24, of School Lane, was one of the eight men.

Only a few men recorded occupations connected with factories in Norwich. J J Colman's factory won awards for its mustard and starch, so perhaps this was where Thomas Bailey and Henry Ellis, describing themselves respectively as a starch labourer and a starch packer, both worked. Two men were factory owners themselves; William Houghton Clabburn of Walpole House was recorded as a textile manufacturer and magistrate. Louis Willet of Thunder Lane was recorded as a manufacturer of mixed dresses and employer of 200 hands. Both of their companies had manufactured the shawls which Norwich had become known for; Queen Victoria was thought to have bought a Clabburn shawl at the Great Exhibition of 1851, but by the 1870s the heyday of the Norwich shawl was ending as fashions changed.

Then and Now

The photograph below shows the lake in the grounds of Woodlands on Pound Lane when it was a private house (date unknown but believed to be during the early 1900s). The one below that shows the lake as it is today - overgrown, covered with weed and difficult to access.



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.