

THORPE HISTORY GROUP

Newsletter - Spring 2023

**Our next talk:
Thorpe Woods and the growth of the parish
Frank Meeres**

**Friday 14th April 2023
St Andrew's Centre, Thunder Lane**

Beginning at 7.30pm.

**Admission £4 per head – please bring exact money if
you can.**

Update

Welcome to the spring newsletter that contains details of our programme of talks and guided walks-including some we have not done before and how to book.

This edition contains a report of February's well attended talk and the second part of Ray Bloomfield's memories of Thorpe, prepared by Joanna Barker and Pam Harwood.

In June, as part of Armed Forces Day and in collaboration with Thorpe Town Council and the Royal British Legion, we are putting on a display of material featuring Thorpe after 1945 – 'The Home Front and those who returned'. If you have any material related to this we would love to see it and consider including it in our display. Please contact Dale Wiseman at dale.wiseman@ntlworld.com for details.

The History Group will be staging an Exhibition of photographs and documents showing how the Village celebrated the Queen's Coronation in 1953. It will be in the Parish Church from Friday, May 5th to Monday, May 8th.

You may be interested in the Golding Brothers website which features the Christobel, a vintage launch that was built in Thorpe by George Mollett in his yard at Girling's Lane. It has been restored by Tony Golding and forms part of his hire fleet at Windsor. You can find out about Christobel and how it came to be built at www.goldingbros.uk The site also contains a series of splendid photographs showing its restoration.

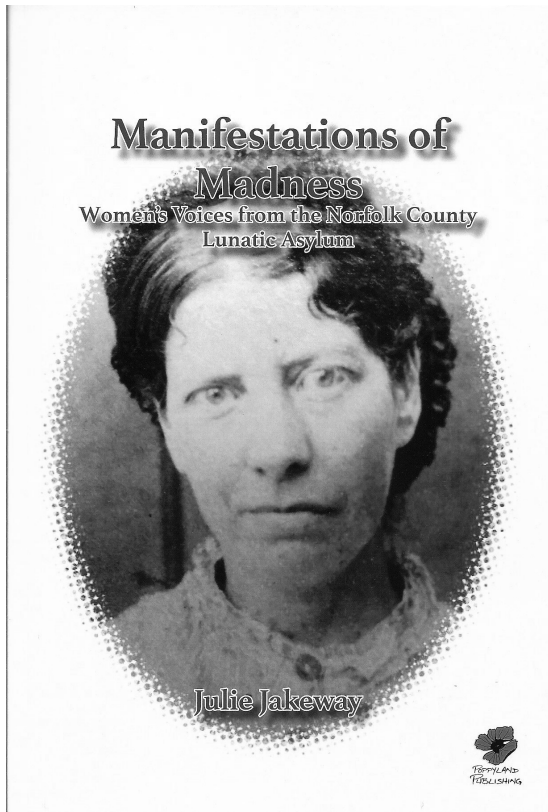
Our Last talk

Our speaker in February was Julie Jakeway who spoke on 'Manifestations of Madness: Women's Voices from the Norfolk County Lunatic Asylum' based upon her book of the same title. There was a good attendance – probably the largest since we restarted the talks following the end of the covid restrictions.

Julie's talk focused on the period 1851 to 1870. After sketching out the early years of the asylum from its foundation in 1814 when it had only 70 inmates, Julie highlighted the role played by Dr William Hills who was the first medically qualified superintendent. He saw his role as one of nursing the patients in his care back to health, rather than just incarcerating them; in part by providing enough food, adequate rest and a regime of work where feasible. If inmates were unable to undertake physical work outdoor exercise was provided.

Many of the inmates, male and female, were suffering the effects of poverty including a lack of nourishing food. This was addressed by providing a diet better than many would have experienced at home; an example was a statistic provided by Julie that the Asylum spent four shillings per patient per week on food as against an estimated two shillings per week by the average farm labourer.

Julie went on to provide details of four gender specific issues that led to women being admitted to the Asylum – three of which were linked to childbirth and associated complications, with the other being the 'change of life'. She provided several case studies that highlighted the benefits of short stays which included adequate rest and improved nutrition contributing to a improvement in mental health. There were of course women suffering with long term serious mental health issues who spent lengthy periods in the Asylum, and in some cases died there, but the majority of women Julie highlighted appear to have benefitted from what was in effect respite care at the asylum..



Julie's book, 'Manifestations of Madness: Women's Voices from the Norfolk County Lunatic Asylum', published by Poppyland Publishing at £9.95, is available from local bookshops.

Thorpe People – Ray Bloomfield - Part 2

This is the second and final part of Ray's memories of Thorpe – prepared and transcribed by Pam Hardwood and Joanna Barker.

During those years (the 1920s), I was at the village school – the C of E School in School Lane where the Adult Education Centre now is. The rector, the Reverend Canon Supple, came once a week to give the statutory scripture lessons, and I also remember him, invigilating when some of us sat for county scholarships. Canon Supple, who wore a grey spade beard, was an earnest and rather severe High Anglican, whose views were clearly disturbing to many of his parishioners. I remember large congregations attending matins on Sunday mornings and then tiptoeing out before the much less well attended Sung Eucharist. One day there was a great scandal; Canon Supple refused to read the burial service over an infant who had died without being christened, and the village was outraged when the district nurse walked the length of Thorpe carrying the little coffin to the cemetery. The conventional churchgoers of the day, who would never have dreamed of countenancing heretical deviations from the Book of Common Prayer, failed to grasp that the conscientious if rather unimaginative rector was complying with the precise instruction that the burial service is not to be used for any that die unbaptized.



Above: Yarmouth Road in the early twentieth century

In 1921, the village schoolmaster was Mr Potter, bald and easy-going, a genial man. His assistant was Mr Snooks, very fat, wheezing and snuffling, a rather pathetic figure who earned no respect. Surprisingly, both men were nearing retirement. Mr Snooks went first; I remember him being presented with a leaving gift, and remember him stepping behind the junior classroom for a quiet weep. I cannot recall his successor – a mistress, I think, though curiously enough, I have no recollection of where the village girls were taught. My sister, aged 12, was sent to Cedar House School, off the Thorpe Road just beyond where Carrow Road leaves it; his was a small fee-paying establishment, slightly genteel, and educationally, I would imagine, thoroughly inadequate. When Mr Potter retired, not long after Mr Snook, his successor was Mr Rudling, who looked severe in his gold-rimmed glasses but wasn't in the least.

He was an excellent teacher, who gave us sound instruction in all the requirements of the elementary schools of those days, but went far beyond them. He introduced us, for example, to English literature. At the age of 9 or thereabouts, I learned by heart a Wordsworth poem (The Reverie of Poor Susan), and I remember making my first acquaintance with Shakespeare – “Is this a dagger...? - and also for some reason the tennis balls episode from Henry Vth. Best of all, once a week, Mr Rudling wrote a few lines of descriptive poetry on the blackboard, and invited us to use our imagination and draw an accompanying picture. I remember one of my drawings of which I was rather proud – someone sitting by the roots of a great tree on a river bank; but what was the poem?

Our handwriting was uniformly excellent – not copperplate but bold, well-formed and well-rounded lettering (this of course was long before he revival of italic scripts). My writing went to pieces within weeks of starting in 1924 at King Edward V1 School in Norwich.

We also learned to sing with great vigour many traditional English songs – The Lass of Richmond Hill, John Peel, the Golden Vanity, Barbara Allan, and so on.

Many of the boys came from distant parts of Thorpe and beyond. There were, of course, no school meals, and these boys, who could not get home at the midday break, were supposed to bring their own dinners. One boy, who came all the way from the Plumstead area, and all too obviously from a very poor home, simply brought a large potato, which at the start of the school day, was thrust into the ashes of the coal fire which was all the heat we had. This unfortunate boy, when I first went to Thorpe School, sat apart from the rest of us because he had had ringworm; his shaven head was covered with what looked like a blue pudding cloth with a drawstring.

We played all the traditional games – marbles, hopscotch, hoop bowling, conkers. Conkers, of course, was autumnal; but for some reason, the other games seemed also to have their seasons. Another important autumn activity was making popguns out of elder sticks. The popgun barrels were formed by diving out the soft pith; the ammunition was an acorn, propelled with some force and accuracy by a hardwood rod, whittled and smoothed to fit precisely into the elder gun barrel.

The education of most boys finished at the age of 14. I remember, in particular, our awareness on one occasion that in the midst was a boy of outstanding intelligence – in my memory’s eye I can still see his bright face and the gleam in his eyes – and Mr Rudling could not conceal his sadness that family determination was to make him a farm boy at 14 instead of sitting for a county scholarship. There was, of course, in those days, no such thing as PTA, but my recollection of our teacher is one of conscientious and admirable relations with parents. The village schoolmaster in the 1920s was probably no longer the dominant figure in rural life that he was in Goldsmith’s days; but his influence during those all too short formative years was profound, and if he was a good man the benefit to his pupils was incalculable.
Ray Bloomfield 15.10.1987

Getting in contact

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

You can find the Thorpe History Group on Facebook - Google Thorpe History Group to find information and photographs and on our website at <http://www.thorpe-history-group/>

Programme for 2023

There is a modest charge of £4 per head for each event, except the walk on 15th September which is part of the Heritage Open Day and the display on Armed Forces Day.

Date	Title	Venue	Time
Friday 14 th April	Talk: 'Thorpe Wood and the growth of the parish.' Frank Meeres	St Andrew's Centre, Thunder Lane	7.30pm
Sunday 11 th June	Talk: 'The view from the River Green in the late 19 th century' Joanna Barker	River Green Booking needed	2.00pm
Saturday 24 th June	Armed Forces Day display.	Thorpe Town Hall, Fitzmaurice Park	2.00pm
Sunday 2 nd July	Guided Walk: 'Dr Hills, the Thorpe Asylum and Beyond, 1861-1915.' Dale Wiseman	Northside Booking needed	2.00pm
Sunday 23 rd July	Guided walk: 'Thorpe Woods and Plantations.' Nick Williams	Woodlands Crescent Booking needed	2.00pm
Sunday 13 th August	Guided walk: 'Sister Monica and the Red Cross in Thorpe 1914-1945.' Dale Wiseman	Thorpe Cemetery Booking needed	2.00pm
Friday 15 th September	Guided Walk: 'Dr Hills, the Thorpe Asylum and Beyond, 1861-1915.' Dale Wiseman	Northside Booking needed	10.00am
Thursday 26 th October	Talk: The Polish community in Norfolk and at St Andrew's Hospital'. Adrian O'Dell	St Andrew's Centre, Thunder Lane	7.30pm

Please note - the number we can accommodate on some events is limited, so booking is necessary. Book by contacting Nick Williams. Payment will be collected on the day.

Booking for the walk on 15th September should be done via the Heritage Open Day website when bookings open in August 2023.

Booking is not necessary for the talks at the St Andrew's Centre – just turn up.