

EDITORIAL

"An interest in natural things is the secret of a happy life".

Miriam Rothschild.

We are approaching the end of our third year, and perhaps it is a good time to take stock of how successful we have been in fulfilling the aims of the Society. They are: 'To promote interest in local history, the local environment and the conservation of the Thriplow region, and to promote the formation of a Thriplow collection'. The Thriplow Collection has been most successful with information, photographs and artifacts being given to us all the time. The local history talks and outings have been well supported but when it comes to caring for the environment and to protecting the rural nature of our village there is still room for vigilance. Thriplow not only has an acknowledged micro-climate but also has a varied and diverse habitat. The older villagers tell of gathering armfuls of wild flowers for Mothering Sunday or for Nature Study at school, but the last *Ladies Smock* has bloomed in the wetter areas in the centre of our Village and no longer do the *Dog Daisies* blow in the wind of the dry uplands of God's Acre. *White Violets* were once a feature of this village flowering along all the footpaths and in the hedge-bottoms, and now in the least wooded county in England, one little piece of ground shaded by trees and unchanged since the Red Lion burnt down in 1942, and which at this moment is thick with Purple Violets, Primroses, Cowslips and seeding Snowdrops, is to be covered with soil and sown with lawn grass and mowed to resemble a smooth suburban park, so the Parish Council has decided. Should it not be our aim to preserve Thriplow's identity as a village and conserve its unique character and not to order it as though it was an estate on the outskirts of London? It is instructive to note that in this age of high mobility there is now, more than ever before, an interest in the past. The County Record Office in Cambridge is full every day with people tracing their ancestors, and Family History Societies abound to help people find roots and a sense of stability. We hope that the Thriplow Society has been a unifying force in the village, appealing to all; its mixture of historical lectures, social events and field outings help us to feel we belong to Thriplow. It must remain the Societies' aim to continue to put the welfare of this ancient and attractive village and the community that lives in it first, to investigate its past, to record its continual changes and to be vigilant for the future.

Our next meeting is the A.G.M. on Monday April 24th. at 8.0pm when Bill Wittering will be talking on the History of Bottles. If you have any old bottles you have dug up in your garden do bring them along.

V.E.DAY EXHIBITION: The Thriplow Society is mounting an exhibition as part of the village celebrations for V.E.Day, from Thursday May 4th to Monday May 9th 1995. If you have any photographs, uniforms or other memorabilia that we could borrow we would be most grateful. Any member of the Committee would be pleased to receive them.

Our thanks also go to Jim Rowley for obtaining a set of display boards to use for this and subsequent exhibitions. They were put to good use at Daffodil Weekend, when they were used to display a series of maps of Thriplow, from the earliest draft survey made by the Ordnance Survey in 1799 to the Enclosure map made in 1840. The Thriplow Society's Exhibition in the Dove Cote at the Bury proved to be a great success, much interest being shown by visitors in the photographs of our activities and in the many records and articles displayed.

Peter Speak and Shirley Wittering, Joint Editors.

THE PRIMROSE *primula vulgaris*



Among the many delightful spring flowers, the Primrose holds a firm place in our affections. Many of us have happy memories of gathering bunches of the soft yellow flowers to give to our mothers on Mothering Sunday or of poking them into moss to make Easter Gardens on trays, complete with gravel paths and a piece of mirror for a lake!

The *prima rosa* or 'first rose' as the ancients called it has long been valued for its medicinal properties as an astringent, antispasmodic and emetic. Pliny prescribed it for muscular rheumatism and gout. Culpepper directed that the flowers should be dried and ground to a powder and "taken as a snuff to encourage violent sneezing". He adds that a decoction of the root taken in the autumn is a strong emetic. Gerard recommended "Primrose tea, drunk in the month of May, is famous for curing the phrensie".

Being aware that it is not so common as it once was, we are unlikely to use it for these reasons, being content to enjoy the beauty of it growing in our gardens or in the woods and hedgerows.

If there is a plentiful supply, then a few sprinkled on a salad looks very pretty and they can also be candied as decorations for cakes and drinks.

They grow happily on any ordinary soil but do like a certain amount of shade, which is why they prefer to grow in deciduous woods where they get the sun early in the year when they are in flower, but are shaded by the tree's canopy during the hottest part of the year.

S.A.W.

PROFILE

Cuth Wenham



I arrived in Thriplow from Castle Camps in 1933 on a visit to help out my brother-in-law Herbert Parker on Winter Egg Farm. I was fifteen at the time and it was meant to be a temporary job but I have been here ever since. Although I was christened Herbert Cyril, in order to avoid confusion with others on the farm, I was given the adopted name of Cuthbert. Hence every -one knows me as "Cuth".

I came as a lodger at that time to 2 Church Street, always known as "Sunny Peak", where the family lived and we kept poultry mainly in the fields behind the house and between Church Street and Middle Street. There were about 2000 hens then mainly White Leghorns and White Wyandottes. They were all incubated on the farm, the eggs being turned by hand twice a day, until they hatched. Eventually in the 1950s there were over 8,000 laying birds and we had

become the largest egg producer in East Anglia - over one million per year. In addition we were also producing chickens for sale, from "day-olds" to birds on the "point-of-lay". We had two incubators holding 27,000 eggs each in the incubator house and when they were about to hatch they went into 2 'hatcher' incubators each holding 9,000. These were principally pure bred Light Sussex and Rhode Island Red, and cross breeds. Our egg producers were kept for a year and then sold for eating as "boiling fowls". We bought in all our food from Shelford Corn and Coal Co. or from Isons of Cambridge.

In addition to the fowls I have also been involved in pig production and continued to breed pigs until I retired a few years ago. The pigsties were in the farmyard formerly known as "Jobbers" (where Arthur and Terry Humphreys live now) and down Crouchman's Lane. I started with Large Whites crossed with Large Blacks to produce a good growing pig for bacon, and after the war changed to a cross between a hybrid gilt and Large White. There were about 120 breeding sows and up to 1000 pigs at any one time. They were supplied mainly to Sainsbury's etc.

When war was declared I was in the first batch to be called to the Recruiting Office in King Street, Cambridge but as I am haemophiliac they would not take me nor allow me to do anything in the local services. Thriplow in those days was a village dependent entirely on

agriculture. Thriplow House was commandeered as a hospital for R.A.F. Duxford and Fowlmere and later for American troops; the Bury then known as 'The Place' was taken over for WRAF members from both Duxford and Fowlmere airfields, but direct effects of the war on the village were few. There was a searchlight unit along the Drift and a concrete pillbox with an anti-aircraft gun at the top of Gravel Pit Hill. Some of the farmworkers joined the Home Guard under the leadership of Mr Nash and Mr Jackson of Fowlmere and at first had nothing but pick-axe handles as weapons. The land was farmed by Pumphreys at College Farm, by the Smith Brothers of Foxton at Bacon's and Church Farm, by Thriplow Farms, and by ourselves: horses were everywhere and horsekeepers were very important members of the farming community. Cochrane's Farm in Lower Street was the principal stable and Mr. Plumb the blacksmith was kept busy at the Smithy. On Thriplow Farms prize Arab horses were stabled along with pedigree Jersey cattle. Elsewhere the crops were wheat, barley, sugar-beet, potatoes, horse beans and oats. Village folk were able to supplement their rations as they all had allotment gardens, hens for eggs, and maybe a pig. At the start of the war there were evacuees from a school in London complete with their teachers, but most of them stayed for only a short time. Some who arrived late were put up in the old Jubilee Rooms in Middle Street which the young men of the village used as a reading and social club.

We had few incidents during the war in Thriplow but I remember one plane that crashed in the front of College farm and the rescue team had to come to our farm for water. As they worked bullets were exploding all over the place and when I arrived one chap had a bullet in his hand. I watched with horror as he held his hand between his knees, took out his penknife, extracted the bullet, climbed into his truck and drove off!

When the war ended we had a celebratory tea in Deller's Barn in Middle Street and gradually the village embraced peacetime. I recall a friend who was a RAF officer saying to me "On Victory night I will come and celebrate with you all, I will require 12 poached eggs on toast and 2 very large cups of cocoa, I will bring you wine and Ice Cream". The grown-ups drank wine, he drank cocoa and my nephews and niece ate the ice-cream which he had brought in a very large biscuit tin, full and very rich. After the RAF officer had eaten his 13th egg he walked across the fields to his home which stood where the Citroen garage now is, but was very sick on the way, and when I went out to feed the chickens the ground was going up and down in front of me!

My brother-in-law bought Thriplow House in 1948 and we moved from "Sunny Peak" to concentrate our Winter Egg Farm at the top end of Middle Street. At the entrance to the House we erected two egg machines that dispensed eggs in half dozen cartons for many years.

Today Thriplow has ceased to be a village dependent on agriculture but it has retained, better than many others, a sense of community and I believe the annual Daffodil Weekend has helped in this preservation.

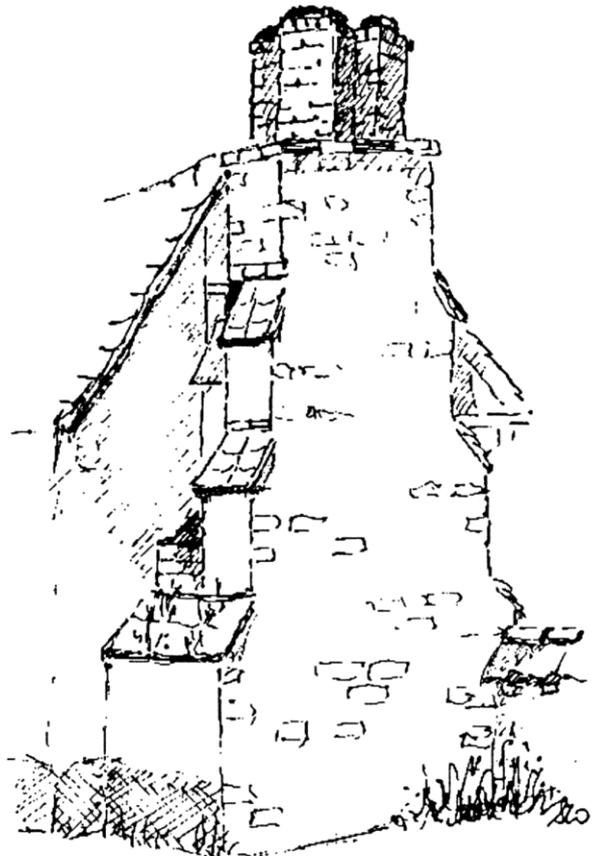
More of Cuth's memories about the war will be in the VE Day exhibition.

TAXING THRIPILOW'S HEARTHS.

It is a well known fact that the more things change the more they stay the same. and we may think that putting a tax on fuel is a new and unkind way of raising government funds but it has all been done before.

When King Charles II was restored to the throne in 1660 after Oliver Cromwell's joyless reign the country was delighted. After over 20 years of dull respectable correctness the contrast could not be greater. Charles reopened the theatres, the court resounded to the music of Purcell and Dowland, beautiful clothes and rich laces were once more the fashion and Charles's private life was nothing if not luxurious, accompanied by horse-racing, sumptuous food and beautiful women, and where Charles led, his courtiers followed. All this conspicuous consumption had to be paid for and by 1662 the government was casting round for new ways to raise money.

Since the days of Queen Elizabeth the country had been engaged in enlarging and rebuilding its houses - 'the Great Rebuilding' as the historian W.G.Hoskins called it. Greater wealth, much of which came from trade overseas, and a rise in the population led to people enlarging their houses often by raising the roof and putting in another storey to give more sleeping room and greater privacy. We only have to look at the number of jettied houses in Thriplow



Great chimney Bacon's Manor.

such as Anno Domini in Church Street, which was enlarged in 1687 to see the effect this urge to enlarge had on one small village, and in Foxton, Rowland Parker in his book 'The Common Stream' calculated that more than fifty houses were enlarged and rebuilt between the years 1550 and 1620. Once a second floor was built it was no longer possible to allow the smoke from the fire to find its way through a hole in the roof and so the great era of chimney building began. Chimneys became a great status symbol being built of the best bricks as are those of 'Bacons Manor', and greater houses had chimneys of carved and curved bricks. In addition to the fashionable reason for building more hearths there was another reason; Europe was going through 'the little ice-age', the Thames froze over eleven times in the 17th. century, and people needed to keep warm.

Governments have always been quick to tax new and fashionable ideas and in 1662 the first Hearth tax was introduced. All Hearths were taxed including Bread Ovens, Blacksmith's Forges, Brewer's Ovens and Industrial Forges. The poor, those worth less than 20 shillings a year, were exempt, but everyone else had to pay two shillings a year for each hearth. The information was collected by the village Constable going round the village noting down how many hearths each person had, and these were made into lists and sent to the exchequer. The tax was due twice a year, on Lady Day (25th. March) and Michaelmas (29th. September). It was a comparatively easy tax to administer, the Constables knew the village people very well and a hearth cannot be hidden. It was also extremely unpopular. Further returns were made in 1664, 1666 and 1674 and they can be seen on microfilm in the Cambridge Record Office at Shire Hall.

When looking at the Hearth Tax Returns for Thriplow the first observation is the number of people with only one hearth - 29 out of the 80 people mentioned (36%), and these are not the poorest people in the parish. The only conclusion to be drawn from this fact can be that these villagers probably had very small houses, not much more than four rooms and that they were a hardy lot! The greatest number of hearths mentioned is 13, only one person Anthony Benning at the Manor had that many. The next characteristic is the stability of the names, 50 (64%) people are mentioned more than once and 13 people are mentioned on all four lists. One problem is that there is often two people with the same name, sometimes with 'elder' or 'junior' after the name showing that the habit of giving each generation the same name was common. This habit was obviously taken to the New World by English colonists as it is still common in the U.S.A today. The average amount collected for the crown from Thriplow was £17-5s. For the year 1666 the amount from Thriplow was £21-14s and that from Fowlmere was £20-4s.

With the advent of cheap coal and plentiful servants the number of hearths was at its height during Victoria's reign and by the late 20th century the wheel has turned full circle; if we calculated a persons wealth by the number of hearths each house has now we would have a very distorted view, for it is probable that we are back to the majority of houses in Thriplow having only one hearth!

The Hearth Tax was collected until 1689 when, to great rejoicing, it was abolished by William and Mary only to be replaced by another infamous one, the Window Tax!

S.A.W.

A BRIEF LOOK AT COMMUTING TO LONDON, 1840 TO DATE

Living in Thriplow, we are fortunate to have a choice of rail routes to London; 44 minutes by fast train from Royston to Kings Cross and 62 minutes to Liverpool Street from Whittlesford. But what was it like 150 years ago? What was it like in its heyday before World War I?

Alfred Kingston, writing in 1893, describes how “in order to shorten the journey, London gentlemen and tradesmen rose early in the morning and drove from places in Cambridgeshire and North Herts to Broxbourne to join the new conveyance [to London] the engine of which frightened the passengers as it drew up in the station”! He does not say what time they would have left home but it must have been quite a bit later than going all the way to London by carriage or coach as they had had to do before. Broxbourne Station forecourt was said to be filled with horses, carriages and coachmen facing the long day of awaiting the return of their masters from the City.

The railway from London to Broxbourne was opened on 15th September 1840 with its London terminus in a very handsome building at Shoreditch (later renamed Bishopsgate) just south of the junction of Bethnal Green Road and Shoreditch High Street, to the North of the present Liverpool Street Station and some distance from the City. It was the property of the Eastern Counties Railway which amalgamated with others to become the Great Eastern in 1862. The 1840 commuter wishing to be in the City by 10.0 am, needed to reach Broxbourne (22 miles from Royston; 27 from Thriplow) to catch a train at about 08.45 and therefore had to leave home nearly three hours earlier. But in not much more than four hours he would have accomplished what would have taken up to six hours previously in most uncomfortable conditions particularly in the winter time with all the possibility of being stuck in a snow drift. (Kingston states that the average time it took for a *fast* coach to reach Bishopsgate from Royston was 4½ hours - in good weather!) Liverpool Street Station was not opened until 1st November 1875 for Cambridge line trains, more than 25 years after the service first started!

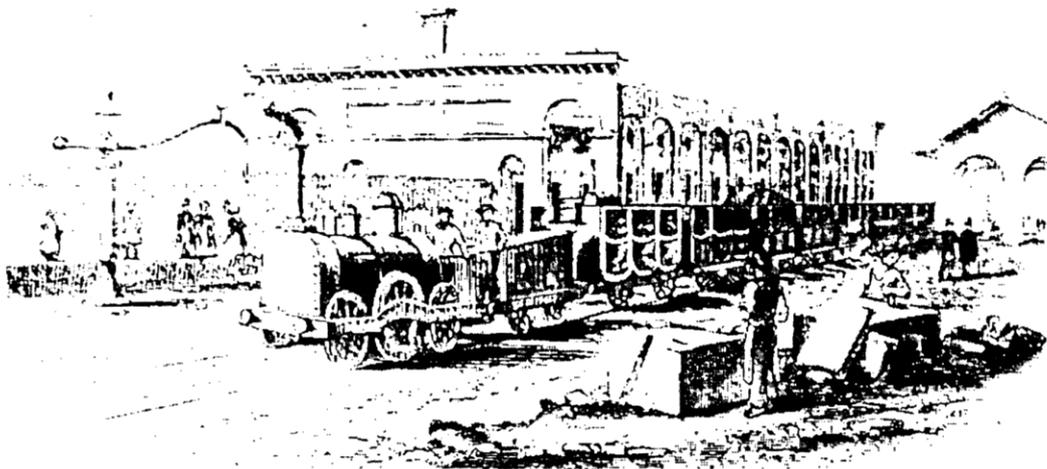
These commuters however only had to tolerate the journey in their horse-drawn carriages to Broxbourne Station, presumably by what we now call the A10, for a relatively short time for the railway reached Newport in February 1843. This far, the line had been built to a gauge of 5' which was changed in a four week period in 1844 to the standard 4'8½" gauge. Further construction then shot ahead with stations between Newport and Brandon via Cambridge being opened on 30th July 1845. Commuters therefore had a progressively shorter journey in their carriages to the nearest station as time passed with a train time to Bishopsgate of 50-70 minutes from Broxbourne, and around 2½ hours from Whittlesford. As time passed, this line now bears the name “West Anglia”.

There was no alternative route until the Great Northern Railway despatched its first train (a 'Parliamentary') to Hitchin at 06.00 on 7th August 1850. Initially trains on this line went to a temporary terminus in Maiden Lane - now called York Way - to the north of the present Kings Cross which was not ready for opening until 14th October 1852. Massive engineering feats had to be undertaken in the first twenty miles of this line such as the construction of nine tunnels and the major viaduct at Digswell.

Royston was connected with Hitchin on 21st October 1850 (by the Royston & Hitchin Railway Company) and stations to Shepreth on 1st August 1851. From that date, Cambridge was served from the Shepreth terminus by five daily horse-drawn omnibuses taking 40 minutes for the 9 miles. Beyond Shepreth was Eastern Counties Railway Company territory who, on 1st April 1852, provided a link between Shepreth and their line at Shelford running 3-4 trains a day each way between Cambridge and Hitchin, eventually leasing the entire line.

The GNR very soon provided a better service for the businessman than the Great Eastern route to Liverpool Street. From 1st June 1868, the City was served by GNR trains from Kings Cross to Moorgate and from January 1875 with trains from Finsbury Park to Broad Street.

With running powers over lines owned by the London Chatham & Dover Railway, from 1st January 1866 trains ran from Kings Cross via Blackfriars to Herne Hill and, from 1st March 1868, to Victoria with 14-15 trains daily in each direction and with opportunities to connect with many places in Kent and Sussex. However it took 1 hour for the journey from Kings Cross to Victoria compared with the 20 minutes or so on the Victoria Line today. When the Inner Circle line on the UnderGround was opened on 30 April 1907, quick travel to most



Cambridge Station on Opening Day - Still Under Construction!

other London termini was afforded and these longer duration services ceased. However, the introduction of new services to places south of the Thames did not stop completely; from 1st July 1905, through trains ran from Kings Cross to Weymouth, Bournemouth and Southampton via Ludgate Hill and Clapham Junction and later to East Kent towns such as Deal, Ramsgate and Margate via Blackfriars. It took the advent of World War I to bring these services to an end on 11th January 1915 never to return though there are long term plans to reconnect Kings Cross with the south by running through trains on the ThamesLink service. The necessary tunnels built so many years ago are still there under Kings Cross Station.

What colossal changes in such a short time for travellers from Thriplow and the surrounding areas to London. In 1850, the journey time from Royston was just over two hours. Sadly for Thriplovians, Harston Station, which was our nearest for 111 years, was closed on 17th June 1963 under the cuts propounded by Dr Beeching.

From May 1932 until the Sixties, luxury rail travel was afforded by the Garden Cities and Cambridge Express which, except for the war years, ran from Kings Cross five times each way daily stopping only at Welwyn Garden City, Hitchin, Letchworth, Royston and Cambridge. There was ample time in its 90 minute journey to take breakfast, lunch or afternoon tea at a comfortable table in the Buffet Car with waiter service or to drink a glass of bottled Bass or Worthington at the bar. A far cry from the refreshment trolley (if you are lucky) of modern trains!

The cost of travel was for a long time beyond the reach of all but the wealthy. In 1796, it cost 12/- (60p) single from the Old Crown Inn, Royston to the Four Swans at Bishopsgate by a coach called "*The Telegraph*". The railway companies started off with similar prices but to bring rail travel within reach of the 'masses', William Gladstone's 'Regulation of Railways' Act of 9th August 1844 obliged railway companies to provide at least one train each way on weekdays with covered-in carriages (roofed and glazed and with seats) for third-class passengers at a statutory fare of 1d per mile, travelling at a minimum speed of 12 miles per hour and stopping at all stations. There was however nothing in the Act to stop these trains being run at inconvenient times. In 1855, the single fare from Cambridge to London by one of these so-called 'Parliamentary' trains was 4s 9½d (24p) which suggested the very accurate measurement of the distance from Cambridge Station to Bishopsgate as 57½ miles! A day out in London for the family was therefore still largely out of the question for the working classes (assuming they had the desire to go) at a time when the average weekly wage hovered at 10/- (50p). Nowadays, a cheap day return to London (from Royston), priced at £7.25 using a Network Card, represents about 3% of the average weekly wage.

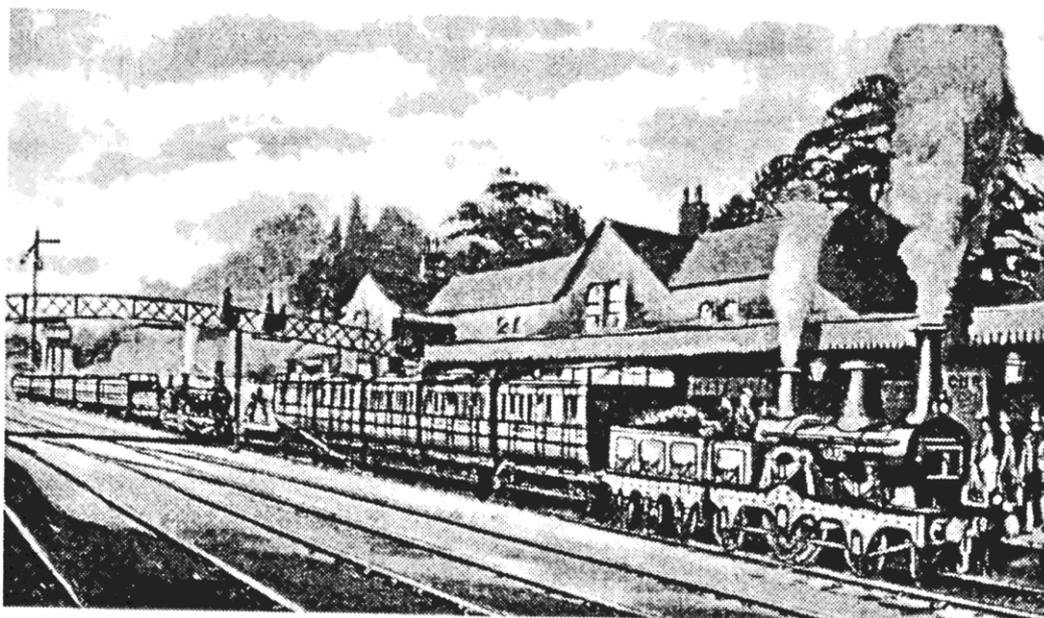
The two wars brought great administrative changes to the railways. 1st January 1923 saw the major railway companies (about 26 in all) compulsorily reorganised into four larger private companies. The GNR and GER lines became part of the London and North Eastern Railway Company. World War II ended with a Labour Government and nationalisation on 1st January 1948 of road and rail transport under the British Transport Commission. Steam gave way to diesel in the sixties. Electric trains to Cambridge via the West Anglia route came

on 19th January 1987 and via the Great Northern in May 1988. The wheel has now gone full cycle and complete re-privatisation of the entire network seems probable. The Channel Tunnel is open and running. Who knows how long it will be before Roystonians will be able to take a through train to their twin town of Großalmerode or Thriplow Society members pay a visit to the Folies Bergère in Paris!

References

To save space, the list of sources of information is not being reproduced but can be consulted on application to the editors.

Bill Wittering



Hitchin Station in 1854 with Trains of the type that may well have steamed into Royston in the day the service started 21 October 1850

WEATHER AT THRILOW DAFFODIL WEEKENDS

Peoples' memories of what Daffodil Weekend weather was like differ. What are the facts? I have been keeping records of the temperature and rainfall in the village since 1980. Members may be interested to see, from the table below, exactly what happened.

Year	Temperature(F)		Rainfall(mm)		Remarks
	Sat	Sun	Sat	Sun	
1980	64	71	Nil	Nil	A lovely weekend; 7 days of warm weather
1981	72	71	Nil	Nil	The warmest Daffodil Weekend
1982	62	62	Nil	Nil	
1983	59	58	Nil	4.7	
1984	48	52	1.2	-	The coldest Daffodil Weekend
1985	58	52	0.3	0.8	Followed by 5 days of warm weather
1986	54	55	6.8	0.4	The end of a week of snow, hail & gales
1987	55	50	Nil	Nil	A swallow was seen the next day
1988	63	63	1.1	Nil	
1989	59	47	Nil	Nil	Sunny but rained later on Sunday
1990	52	55	Nil	Nil	Frost Saturday morning; sunny
1991	50	54	0.9	2.1	
1992	66	57	Nil	Nil	Sunny on Sat.cold and cloudy Sun
1993	52	57	3.0	3.4	Windy & wet both days
1994	53	49	1.9	0.1	Hail with sunny intervals on Sat., snow overnight, very cold & windy The wettest Daffodil Weekend
1995	72	68	Nil	Nil	Sunny both days

BILL WITTERING

GLEANINGS

Searching through the records concerning Thriplow in the University Library the other day, I came across an intriguing story; A case in which a certain “Robert Amery late of Thriplowe in the Countie of Cambridge” who together with three other men all described as ‘yeomen’, (a man farming his own land and having some standing in his own community) was caught on the King’s Highway leading to the town of Hendley upon Thames in Oxfordshire about 9.0am. on 10th November 1549. He with the others were accused of robbing three men of their purses worth 8 pence, and the money within the purses being £4-7s, £3, and £6-13s-8d, together with four gold rings in the first man’s purse worth £5-8s. The report ended with the words, “Pardon to the said Amery for the said felonies.”

I was left feeling most perplexed: first what was a solid Cambridgeshire yeoman doing in Oxfordshire? Why had he joined a gang of highway robbers? and most puzzling of all, why was he pardoned? Watch this space!

S.A.W.

HOW WE LIVED THEN An Exhibition to Celebrate V.E. Day

SATURDAY May 6th	11.00am. - 5.00pm.
SUNDAY May 7th	11.00am. - 5.00pm.
MONDAY May 8th	11.00am. - 5.00pm.
TUESDAY May 9th	9.300am. - 12.00noon Thriplow School Visit

The committee would like to thank all those who have kindly lent items for the exhibition. We should also be most grateful for anyone willing to steward during the above times.





АИИОДОН 1687