

THRIPLow SOCIETY

EDITORIAL

In a most exceptional year with floods even in Thriplow, we now have to contend with the possibility of Foot and Mouth disease amongst the livestock of our fields. Consequently for the first time in 33 years the annual Daffodil Weekend has been cancelled. All will agree that this is a very sensible precaution, as even the specialists in animal diseases seem unable to foretell the coming of this dreadful affliction. Our hope is that we shall be spared and our sympathies go to the farmers at this worrying time. Please avoid walking across footpaths and across fields. Our sympathies too for those who have worked hard in the preparations for Daffodil Weekend and who now see their efforts unrewarded.

The Society organised a most enjoyable evening on Saturday 24 February when around 40 members and friends attended a Supper Dance with the Tony Budd Trio. Many thanks to those who provided the delicious dishes for the supper. On Friday 23 March we had a good attendance for the Thriplow Landscape History group outlining their research and for taking us back to the village before Domesday.

You should have received an appeal for contributions to the Society's Millennium Stained Glass Window Fund. This project, supported by the Parochial Church Council, is well on its way to completion and installation in June this year. The design is very attractive and we are confident of its highly professional completion by stained-glass artist, Anne Sutheran of York. Details of the design were given in an article in the last Journal. Should you wish to contribute to the cost of the project (c. £2000) please send your cheque (made out to *Thriplow Millennium Fund*) to the Society's Treasurer, Peter Yates, or to the Secretary, Betty Parker.

Please do remember the Annual General Meeting of the Society to be held on Friday 20 April in the Village Hall at 8.0pm. If you have nominations for the Committee please let the Secretary, or our Chairman, James Quinlan know before the meeting. Remember that the nomination must be proposed and seconded by members of the Society. There will also be a talk by Shirley Wittering on '*Before 1066 and all that, the Origins of the Village*'.

Thriplow changes only slowly as planning restrictions reduce new building mainly to infilling between existent plots. Recent new residences have included neo-Georgian houses to extend the variety of Thriplow's architecture; it is good to see also that the new house overlooking the village green is being roofed with the traditional thatch.

Peter Speak and Shirley Wittering, Joint Editors.

CLIMATE CHANGE

*All the Rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full.
Ecclesiastes.*

This quotation from the Book of Ecclesiastes represents what scientists call the *hydrological cycle*, i.e. evaporation takes place over the seas of the world, is transported as moist air towards neighbouring lands by the wind, it then condenses over the land either along weather fronts, or above high ground, falls to the earth as rain or snow, and eventually percolates into a drainage basin and flows back to the sea as rivers.

But the elements of the cycle are not constant and may vary greatly from one time to another. We have witnessed in 2000 an unusually wet year and the water-table in this country (which governs the level of ground water discharge) has been exceptionally high so that many parts have suffered severely from flooding. From the last issue of *Thriplow Journal* we see that we received a fall of 32 inches of rainfall compared to an average fall of 22 inches and even now the fields are unaccustomedly showing standing water in ponds and small lakes. It is understandable that there are many who have been predicting a significant change in our weather, and changes in this country seem to be matched by similar changes in other parts of the world.

We should be chary of drawing any conclusions from this kind of speculation; after all Britain is notorious for its variable weather and the British renowned for their unending interest in it. To the meteorologist *Weather* is the daily condition of the atmosphere, its temperature, moisture content, cloud cover, wind strength, visibility etc., and *Climate* is the average state of the weather.

In the British Isles the controls over its weather include: its latitude which is temperate; its insularity making it open to the influence of surrounding seas; its closeness to the European Continent which permits continental influences to be imported from time to time; the ocean currents called the Gulf Stream Drift which bathe our shores with waters unusually warm for this latitude; its topography which provides a welcome regional variation especially of rainfall; and for its relationship to the weather fronts which represent the meeting zones of contrasting air masses. Any change in any one of these factors can induce climate change. We know how difficult it is to forecast the weather just a few days ahead, but forecasting a change of climate is even more difficult if not impossible. We only know that there has been a significant shift in climatic factors after it has happened! Moreover there are other important global factors, such as the melting of ice in distant parts, the amounts of volcanic dust in the atmosphere, or the thickness of the ozone layer, or the changing position of ocean currents, which can affect the temperatures and humidity of the British Isles. So is the climate changing?

We can see from weather records that occasional extremes are not uncommon. In the last century the driest year was 1921 with parts of East Anglia recording no more than 10" of rain

(virtually desert conditions), and in 1947 there was an almost uninterrupted frost in Southern and Eastern England from the end of January into April with disastrous flooding in the Fens when the thaw came. In the mid-70s we enjoyed exceptional sunshine and dry conditions for two years with threats of drought conditions in many areas. In the early years of the nineteenth century winters were colder than today, many frosts were reported so that the river Thames froze over sufficient to hold frost fairs. So what is the norm as far as the British weather is concerned? In this country meteorological records have been kept systematically since the middle of the eighteenth century: before that date documentation is fragmentary or non-existent. In most of the rest of the world the keeping of weather data is a very recent discipline. Very exceptional conditions are often mentioned by diarists or reported officially, but these may not have been general throughout the country, just as the 14" of rain that fell in 48 hours at Plumpton, Sussex last October was not repeated elsewhere in southern England.

We do know, however, that the average temperature over Britain has been rising over the past twenty years or so—about two degrees centigrade in that time. Should this increase continue then it would have important consequences for all of us, not only in the warmer summers and for instance, the shorter ripening times for crops and the reduced fuel bills for winter, but also for the amount of rain that falls which is likely to be greater than now. As the temperature increase is world-wide then it could lead to the melting of Antarctic ice sheets and the global rising of sea level. Most observers attribute the increased temperature of the lower atmosphere to the increased emissions of industrial gases and the soot and other particulates thrown into the air by the burning of fossil fuels since the Industrial Revolution that began in Britain in the mid-eighteenth century and has now been copied in most of the world. The radiation of heat from the earth's surface, it is claimed, is increasingly trapped and hence the atmosphere's temperature rises. This phenomenon is known as *the greenhouse effect*.

We must not be complacent, but there is little that the individual can do, except keep his burning of fossil fuels to a minimum. In Thriplow we do not have to avoid building on the flood plains of rivers to avoid a possible inundation, and so far we have not suffered from drought conditions, and fortunately the chalk sub-soil is a good aquifer that permits springs to flow and wells seldom to run dry. But have a look at Thriplow's present landscape after the wet year of 2000. Ponds in the hollows of fields, ditches once with flowing water, the wash-pit by the side of School Lane living up to its name and reputation, all along the spring-line water is bubbling, and the dry moats around the Bury and Manor once again full of water.

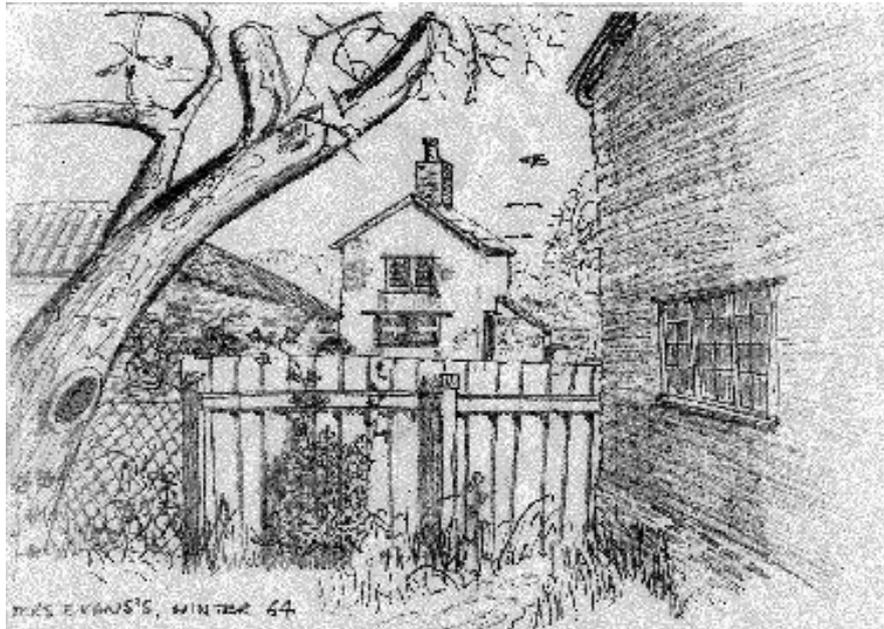
Weather will continue to be of unending interest and a continual topic of conversation.

Peter Speak.



Hope at the end of the Rainbow (the View footpath closed as a result of Foot and Mouth)

DING DONG BELL – FIRST MEETING WITH OUR NEIGHBOUR



View of Mrs Evan's Cottage, drawn by Lewis Stone

It was late summer when the sun was still hot and bright but better able to illuminate the bedroom through the small window by being at a lower angle. There were two bedrooms, two downstairs rooms and a kitchen. Having all this space as ours, and knowing we were going to be doing “major works” on the building put us in the position of a small dog with a big bone. Where to start? The bedroom seemed to be a good place to keep our few possessions while elsewhere was having things done. We were considering this when there was a sudden loud knock on the imposing front door in the room beneath our feet. The knocking had to be sudden, as the large iron door knocker did not work gradually. The sunny, empty rooms echoed in the yellow light and we rushed to slide open the window and see who was our first and unexpected visitor to our old house and new home.

The figure standing there was wearing the standard dress and cardigan of an elderly woman, with a business-like hat on her head. The exchange was brief and direct. “Hello! Are you the new person living here?” Her voice was strong yet reasonable, probably not from commanding people, but from being used to standing on her own feet, and making clear requests. “I’ve come to ask if you’ll take particular care to keep the cover on your well so my cat doesn’t fall in and drown. I lost the last one down there not so long ago and I don’t want it to happen again.” What could I say but “Yes, of course”, as well as telling her our names. In response to our asking she said she was Mrs Evans and that she lived in the house back up by the road. It ended with “So I’ll be going now. Thank you” and an unambiguous “Bye bye”.

By the November of that year, two important things had changed. We had come to realize that doing extensive work on the house demanded that we live on site, and my employers had come to realise they no longer wanted my services. So to reduce our expenses to a minimum while on the dole, we would move into an old caravan in the garden with our baby Amanda at ten months old. Life had suddenly become even more frightening, or exciting, depending on the mood. Our new lifestyle brought us into more contact with neighbours. Margaret and John Shaw, suspecting our difficulties in managing with well-water, chemical toilet and a young baby, generously gave us use of their bathroom during the afternoons. Mrs Evans, with plumbing as non-existent as our own, provided us with a hearth and home from home to visit on the dark winter afternoons, and soon became a third granny for Mandy.

At the end of the path beneath the walnut tree, her impressive green panelled door with a splendid latch led straight into the living room, past the mahogany chiffonier and towards the plain scrubbed table. Under this stood the bucket of water. Behind the door stood the walnut veneered piano, giving shelf space to various items on it. On the right, backing on to the road was the large inglenook and iron range. Ahead was a many-paned sliding window looking partly down the road towards Deller's farm and partly at Jobber's Yard where Cuth Wenham and Herbert Parker trundled in and out with their Fergie tractor with feed for the chicken farm. Across the centre of the ceiling ran the well shaped oak beam, painted green. When the door was open on a sunny afternoon, light would shine in and fill the room. On a cold day, the room was cosily dark, with only the light from the window facing north. Mrs Evans, as we mere 24 year olds called her, would greet us with her strong yet gentle and cultivated voice. She had a square jaw and direct but unthreatening gaze, and generally wore a hat of the practical, pork pie variety. Though she spoke in a considered way, she was quick with quips. To an offer of more tea, the request for just half a cup would always be met by "I haven't got any half cups". Mandy was always given the green mug and if she hadn't got her shoes on always drew the sympathetic "Oh. Poor little feet".

Illumination at night was by oil downstairs and Eastern Electricity upstairs. This happened because one of the few street lamps in Middle Street was fixed to the pole outside her bedroom window.

By about 1966, by way of social welfare, Mrs Evans was moved to a new bungalow in Sheralds Croft, where the large windows let in as much cold as light, where the fire was too small for a kettle and where she lived in fear of the electricity. In this well intended home, her furniture looked out of place and the kitchen clattered with clinical cleanliness. Cosiness became just a fond memory. The concrete drain-gully outside the back door later led to her end, as she tripped over it, broke her hip, was confined to bed and died of pneumonia.

Her last visit to us before her accident was on a light spring evening, by which time we were living in part of our rebuilt house. The background of sound included the Parkers' chickens, the Dellers' sheep and lambs, and The Archers. Gradually we became aware of another sound, an intermittent wail. After a while we went to investigate and found that Mrs Evans had been squeezing past our van, parked in the lane, and had slipped and rolled into the ditch

and become wedged. We helped her into the kitchen and sat her in the brown leather chair where for once she accepted something stronger than the usual tea.

The eventual demolition of her cottage was a loss and a bonus. Our house is now built and furnished with some of the items from it, including the kitchen table, so her contribution to our lives is still quite tangible. The well now has a steel grid over it and serves as a pumping point for the flooded garden.

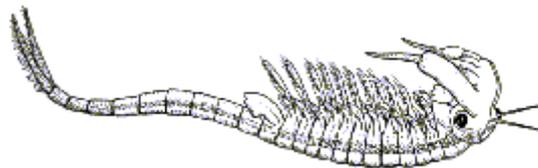
Lewis Stone 09.03.01

Nature Notes

THE FAIRY SHRIMP

Chirocephalus diaphanous

20mm



This very wet winter, (40% more rain than average) the temporary pools in some fields are well in evidence. Within some of these pools lives a rare and unusual crustacean, the Fairy Shrimp. During dry periods the eggs lie dormant within the mud but as these hollows fill with water, they hatch within sixteen days. A lot of work was done on these creatures during the 1960s and 1970s but since then we have had several dry years with no water in the shrimp pools. Have they survived? At the time of going to press, the only things I have found are Cyclops, water fleas and a hole in my boot! I now have a new pair of boots and shall keep looking and report my progress in the next Journal.

Shirley Wittering

Thriplow's Water Courses

*February fill dyke
be it either black or white.*

To those of us not born to the village the amount of water in the parish has come as an eye opener. To those born here it takes them back to their childhood, though even they cannot remember so much water as we have had this winter. The centre of Thriplow lies within a loop of harder chalk called Melbourn Rock, through which water percolates and acts as a spring line. Thus the amount of water (over 40% more than normal) we have had this winter has saturated the ground and is now overflowing onto the surface. We had 3.3 inches of water in February compared with a February average of 1.4 inches. How did former inhabitants of Thriplow cope with this amount of water in similar wet seasons in the days when less water was abstracted? One only has to walk around the village to see evidence of how well they knew the lie of the land and how well they understood how to direct and control the surplus water.

While much water stands in pools in fields and on the Green, their curved edges show that this is just water surfacing from waterlogged ground and finding its own level. But take a walk along the View footpath from Middle Street towards Church Street,* and the ditch that runs from Berenton's Manor soon takes a sharp right angled bend to the left along the valley bottom towards Pigeon's Close, showing that the stream which flows from the springs which rise there was channelled at some time in the past through pastures where the surplus water would enable good grass to grow for feeding stock. Thriplow like most villages within South Cambridgeshire is mainly arable and pasture has always been scarce and more valuable than arable land. The enclosure map of 1840 shows the water then dividing and flowing around the edge of Pittensaries (Pigeon's Close), probably to drain the land. Villagers recall that field always full of water in the winter.

This year for the first time for many years the moat around The Bury is full of water. This is a complicated series of ditches probably built sometime in the 14th century both as a status symbol and as a way of draining another low lying area of land. When a new sewer was put in along the drive of the Bury, the drain from the moat was blocked so the water from the moat ran into Lena Browne's garage, up to her house and flowed across the road to another ditch opposite Bassets. This has now been remedied but for several weeks she was marooned behind sandbags. The water has now been diverted but seems to be forming a pond outside Bassetts. On the 1840 map this is shown as a pond anyway.

Another complicated moated area is Barenton's Manor and the Rectory Farm complex. The 1840 map shows several arms forming part of this system and maybe the moat at one time ran from the manor across Middle Street down Balls Lane taking a sharp right hand bend just before Lewis and Ruth Stone's house and along the boundaries of the houses between there and the Rectory Farm and finally drained into the farm pond. This system has been breached at some time and the water running down Balls Lane from Middle Street has nowhere to go. Likewise the water from the Rectory Pond is now overflowing into the field behind. The map shows a ditch running along the front of the Rectory and taking a left hand bend into Narrow Lane where the ditch is some six feet deep. A man-hole cover in the lane just past the houses in Middle Street shows where the well for Cowlings used to be.

Water can reveal features much as aerial photographs can, and a fascinating sight greeted Lewis and Ruth Stone as the water gradually rose in their wood behind their house. A series of straight edged ditches with right angled bends showed up revealing the boundaries of the two areas of ground described in the Manor Court Rolls of 1677 as "Two Groves of wood called Burrells and Pantons". An earlier document of 1587 spells the two pieces of land "Beurells and Pontwaeas". Does Pontway suggest there was a bridge there? ⁱ



One of the man-made ditches in Lewis Stone's wood

Other documents reveal the extent of maintaining the watercourses of the village. The Overseers' accounts for Thriplow from 1765-1789 show a total of 771 days in which the

Overseers paid unemployed men to dig ditches, reaching a peak in 1780 when 234 days labour was paid for. Was this year exceptionally wet? A look at the rainfall records for England and Wales show the annual rainfall for the year was certainly wet at 900 mm. (The average December rainfall for England and Wales over the period 1961-90 was 796 mm). The ditching was carried out from May to the end of July 1780. ⁱⁱ

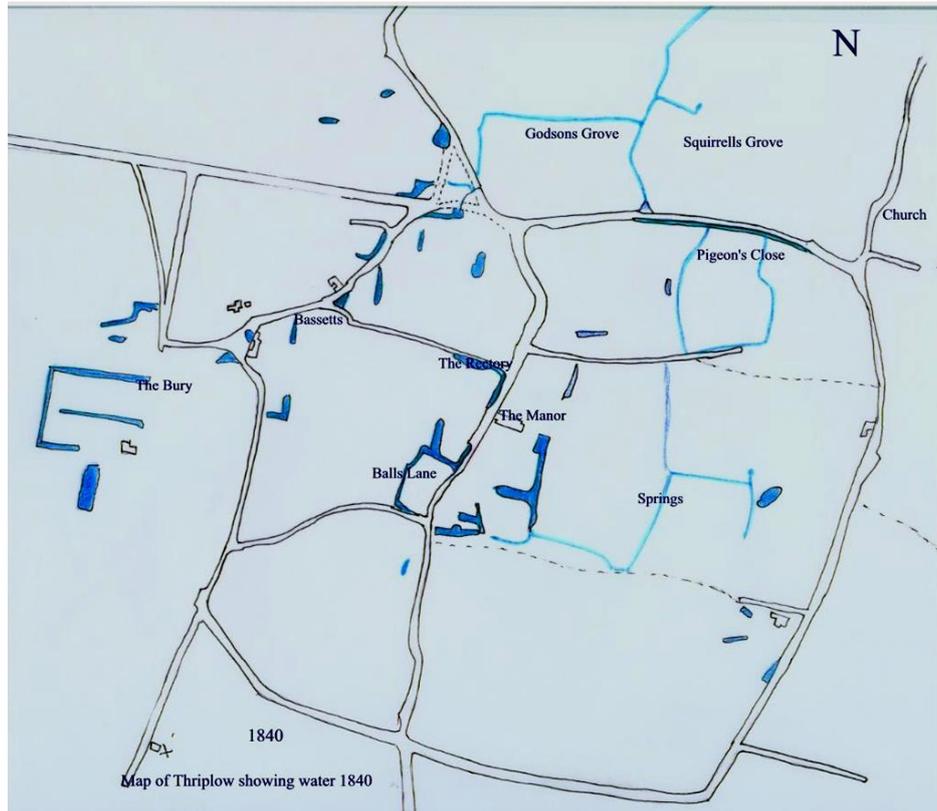
The ditches in Newditch Plantation at the Bury were dug during this time. The Overseers of the Poor paid ten able-bodied unemployed men to dig out the ditches spending £10-9s on ditching during 1780. A pauper could earn six shillings a week for this type of work, compared with eight shillings a week earned by an agricultural labourer. ⁱⁱⁱ

Part of the problem we have had this winter is certainly the amount of rainfall, but another cause has been the blocking, culverting and filling up of drains and ditches. We have had so many years without much rain that when new houses have been built existing ditches have been seen as unnecessary and filled in. A prime example is the ditch that runs down Balls Lane beside my house; it used to turn right at the bottom of the garden and run along the end of the neighbouring gardens into Rectory Farm pond. As the houses have been built along Middle Street these ditches have become filled in and now the water has nowhere to go.

The first map is taken from the 1840 Enclosure map showing how much water there was when the map was drafted. The rather interesting moat system around the Bury was probably made in the 14th century when it was fashionable to make moats as part of a garden, but it obviously performed a very valuable job of draining the low lying ground during wet years. The moat around Barenton's Manor in Middle Street was also made in the 14th century but as the map shows extended across the road and down Ball's Lane to Lewis Stone's house then turned right across to Rectory Farm.

The springs by The View footpath rise in Spring most years but in 2000 they rose in the Autumn also. It can be seen from the map how the water was directed through the fields to Pigeon's Close (then Pittensaries and belonging to the Bishop of Ely), and thence across School Lane into the Wash Pit, becoming The Brook and eventually flowing into the Cam. The water from The Bury flows down Lower Street, across the Green (where it has been culverted) and through Thriplow Meadows to join the Brook.

Before the drains were dug and the water diverted and controlled, the lower parts of the village probably formed a large shallow lagoon. During dryer times of the year, the water may have receded leaving lush meadows for cattle to graze on. This abundance of fresh water and good grass probably attracted men to settle here. They probably built their houses on the higher and dryer ground such as Church Street, and this is certainly where they buried their chieftains. It is interesting to speculate as to where the Saxons buried their dead; near the Tumulus? Beneath where the present church is? Perhaps one day we shall find out.



Map of Thriplow showing water system 1840



Map of water in Thriplow in February 2001



Imaginary view from Church Street over Bacon's meadow to Middle Street about 10,000 years ago.

*Nb. This article was written before Foot and Mouth disease closed the footpaths in the village.

Shirley Wittering

ⁱ Nicholas, F.J. & Glasspoole, J. *General Monthly Rainfall over England and Wales 1727-1931*, 1931, updated by Jones, P.D. UEA 1997

ⁱⁱ Cambridge Record Office P156/12/1 Thriplow Overseers' Accounts

ⁱⁱⁱ David Davies, *The Case of Labourers in Husbandry 1795*

GLEANINGS

Stained Glass Window. Anne Sutheran hopes to install the stained glass window in June. We hope to have the bulk of the money in by then so that we can pay her so please give generously. The date for the dedication service has yet to be fixed.

Thomas Whitehead of Shannon, Missouri, whose father was a medic during the war at Thriplow House, has compiled a book about Thriplow House when it was a hospital, if anyone is interested his e-mail is thomasw871@cs.com he has sent us a lot of pictures which are now in the Society archives.

IN Memorium: We are sorry to report the death on 14th February 2001 of Winnie Jones of Fowlmere at the age of 85. Winnie was the daughter of George Hitch, the Fowlmere and Thriplow carrier in the first half of the last century. She featured in a photograph on Page 10 of Vol. 7/2 of this Journal in 1999. She was the sister of the late Jack Hitch who was the president of the local Royal British Legion branch for many years.

Useful Web site: www.ukvillages.co.uk based in Harston it features village organisations and some very useful links including jobs in the region.

George Deller recalls rook shoots that took place when he was a child. Rook Shooting Day was always May 11th The meat was used for Rook Pie.

Thank you to Oliver Walston for the gift of some postcards to add to our collection.

Thank you also to Robin Smith for pictures of George Fuller at his home Anno Domini.

Next Meeting: FRIDAY April 20th. AGM and talk by Shirley Wittering on 'Before 1066 and all that, the Origins of the Village'. If you would like to nominate anyone, or if you would like to be on the Committee yourself, please let Betty Parker know at least a week before the meeting. Nominees need a nominator and a seconder.



First of the season