

EDITORIAL

On 31 August members of the Thriplow Society have been invited by Ashley Arbon of the Whittlesford Society to join its members and others from the Sawston Society to a Field Walk across the site of the Roman Villa on the boundary between the parishes of Thriplow and Whittlesford. Many residents of Thriplow may be somewhat surprised to learn that a former Roman Villa has been identified in this spot as there are no obvious physical means of identification, except for plentiful remains of roman pottery and an excellent aerial photograph showing the building.

A Field Walk consists of walking slowly across the land inspecting closely the ground for evidence of former occupation in the discovery of fragments of roman pottery, floor mosaic tiles, and other every day domestic objects which have survived and have been brought to the surface by ploughing. It is a technique much used by archaeologists and demonstrated on programmes like Time Team on television. To assess the fragmentary evidence there will be experts on hand including Dr.Christopher Taylor of Pampisford who was formerly Director of Conservation of Historic Buildings for East Anglia.

Any one who would like to join the walk should let the Secretary or Chairman know in advance and bring a picnic.



Of much later date but still of some antiquity are a few houses in Thriplow, the best known being Anno Domini in Church Street. The fabric has recently been repaired by George and Douglas Sheldrick, and revealed the structure easily seen in its lath and plaster infilling the crudely shaped timber beams. Overlaying this was a layer of wattle and daub and then the whole was given a thick lime plaster covering and a thin skim of a finishing coat of white. A picture of the end elevation is given in this journal. Like most old houses Anno Domini was probably started quite simply as a single cottage of one storey and only later 'improved' by adding the upper storey which then was jettied as was the fashion. This was probably the time that the date 1687 was added. The house for many years was divided into two cottages, but will soon be restored back to one dwelling.

We have seen in Thriplow in the last few years the problem of dating houses by their styles and construction, with new buildings in Georgian and Queen Anne designs, looking authentic to those times at a distance, and overlooking the village green a new fully thatched 'farmhouse' of timber construction as though it might have been built three hundred years ago.

Peter Speak and Shirley Wittering, Joint Editors.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2002/3

We celebrated our tenth AGM in April this year so I thought that as we had reached an important landmark, instead of giving you just the last year's report, I would recount some of the events of the last ten years. Peter Speak has also given us some of the highlights in the Spring Journal, Vol.10.3

It was on 16th June 1989 that a meeting was held at 24a Middle Street to consider the possibility of setting up a museum in the village. The roof of the barn at Bacon's Manor was damaged in the great gale of October 1987 and Bill Wittering and a few others had become concerned about the whereabouts of its contents. Mossy Arbon had opened the barn every Daffodil Weekend to show visitors the items that had been given by people in the village, but when the barn became unsafe the owner notified people to remove their items or they might be sold. Bill who was a member of the Parish Council then, suggested to the council that a committee be set up to do whatever they could to save the remaining items.

At that first meeting there were besides Bill, Dr Ken Joysey, Arthur Rowe, Geoffrey Axe, and David Easthope. By November 1991 Richard Webber had joined as secretary of the Thriplow Museum Committee as it was then known and it was decided to ask Peter Speak to be Chairman and Lady Lena Browne as President. Peter suggested that just setting up a museum in Thriplow was not practicable and that a wider remit would be better. By the next meeting in January 1992 the name was changed to *The Thriplow Society* with its aims '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.' Tony Carter was invited to attend and explain how the Whittlesford Society worked.

The inaugural meeting was held in the village hall on Monday April 27th 1992. The aims of the Society were agreed and it was also agreed to hold three meetings a year, to produce and circulate the Thriplow Journal to all members of the society, and to encourage the collection of any materials of interest to the Society. Membership would be by household and the fee £3 per year. This was followed by a talk by Peter Speak on 'The History of Thriplow over Two Million Years'.

After our first meeting we had 32 family members; by the end of our first year we had £8 in the kitty. By the end of 1993 we had 60 members and our three aims – talks, social events and collections of items of historical interest including documents were well under way, and we had erected the first of our annual Christmas trees by the Village Hall, this one donated by Cliff and Betty Parker with lights provided by a donation from the Parish Council.

Dr Arthur Wragg was our first Treasurer; in 1993 Cliff Parker was co-opted to the committee and in September of that year Arthur Wragg left the village and Cliff agreed to be our new Treasurer.

Our first social was a Barn Dance in the Spanish Garden of the Bury in July 1992 followed in December by a musical soiree in the Bury by kind permission of Sir Patrick and Lady Browne; Lena provided a lovely hot supper and the elegant surroundings and formal clothes of the guests were complemented by the beautiful music of the Cambridge Woodwind Ensemble in which our then chairman played the bassoon. Our first outing was a guided tour of Thriplow Meadows nature reserve by Ashley Arbon, its warden.

From then on talks, socials and visits were the pattern of each year. We had visits to the Folk Museum, the Zoological Museum under Dr Ken Joysey its Director, the Scott Polar Research Institute by Peter Speak, Denny Abbey, Castle Acre in Norfolk, Welney Wetland Trust to see the swans by floodlight, Wandlebury, Saffron Waldon Museum and the Museum of Mechanical Music Instruments at Landbeach. Our socials included more Soirees, Barn Dances, Victorian, Edwardian, Valentine and a 1920s Cocktail Party at the Bury. Some of our speakers were, Tom Doig, Betty Boothroyd, Oliver Walston, Oliver Rackham, John Sutton, John Whitmore and David Dymond.

The Smithy on the Green owned by the Parish Council was put into the care of the Society, and each Daffodil Weekend we have opened it and, up to Sir Patrick's death, we also opened our Museum in the Dovecote at the Bury.

Apart from the production of *About Thriplow* and *Steps Back in Time*, by Sheila Andrews which continue to sell well, the *Journal* has been issued three times a year since the first year; that is 30 editions, and we are still not short of material, although we love it when members write something, either memories or profiles of people of Thriplow. We try to keep a balance between the environment, flowers and trees etc, personalities and local history. Without advertisements the cost of the Journal is high and originally the socials were designed to pay for the printing, but now with over 80 members the costs are covered, which is why our subscription still stands at £5.

I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to all the people who have worked hard to help the Society over the past year. I should like to thank all the members of the committee, especially Peter Speak who took over as Secretary from Betty Parker a year ago. His advice and help have been invaluable to me and as he will tell you he has put together an interesting programme for the coming year. My thanks also go to Peter Yates our Treasurer; he beavers quietly away with no fuss making sure that we remain solvent.

This year special thanks must go to Geoffrey Axe, Peter Speak and Bill Wittering for tidying the Smithy and setting up the exhibition and together with Elizabeth Livingstone and Pat Davies, two members of the Thriplow Landscape Research Group, and Arthur Rowe for manning the Smithy over Daffodil Weekend.

Thanks must go to John Lord who recently resigned from the committee as he had moved away, for getting us the grant from *Local Heritage Initiative* to mend the roof of the stable half

of the Smithy. George and Douglas Sheldrick did a good job making the roof bird and rain proof and replacing and rehangng the tiles. I should like to thank Bill Wittering for varnishing the Village Sign and the old Village Hall Sign each year, and, in advance for re-issuing the Journal Index. It had become rather unwieldy and it was difficult to find articles. In the process of re-reading every issue we wondered whether you might like a special re-print of some of the more historical articles of the early issues?

All committee members, some of whom have been on the committee since its inception, are willing to stand again, but as we have vacancies we are delighted to welcome Wendy Seaton of Manor Farm as a new member of the committee.

Shirley Wittering



Thriplow Society Committee, from left: Dr Ken Joysey, Arthur Rowe, Peter Speak, David Easthope, Shirley Wittering, Geoffrey Axe, Peter Yates, Michael Moule.

Missing – Betty Parker and John Lord

UK VILLAGES 3RD BIRTHDAY.

On June 4th Bill and I were invited to help UK Villages.co.uk celebrate their 3rd birthday. UK Villages was the brain child of Rupert Dick who lives in Harston. He wanted a web site that would list local events so that dates did not clash. He wanted it to be community based with people themselves contributing information about their societies, and organizations. It is essentially grass roots based and operates from Rupert's house. From such small beginnings it has grown and now covers 31,000 organisations. As he says 'No community exists in isolation, the web site is National but Local.' Among its partners is the Post Office with over 1,400 sub-postmasters contributing, various Building Societies, Shell Direct, Interflora, Sadolin, The Country side Agency, DEFRA and other rural organisations such as Cambridgeshire Acre. It has links to 40,000 schools, has recently launched 'Pubs in the Area'. All with a staff of five.

The Thriplow Society has had its website hosted by UK Villages since its earliest days. Having read an article in the Telegraph, I contacted them. It is free to local organisations and the society has the freedom to change information and advertise its programme as much as it wants.

The party was held in Haslingfield Village Hall; speakers included Neil Etherington from the village of Stepps in North Lanarkshire, the greatest user of the site this year. A Speaker from the Cheshire Building Society, Nigel Frith from Alecto Historical Editions, publisher of the facsimile Domesday Book, Sefton Darby an official representative of the e-envoy, a government body committed to getting everybody on line and John Fisher from CEO Citizens online.

After a wonderful lunch made by local producers, we split into discussion groups to discuss what we could get from such an organization and what we could give to it. It was fascinating to hear what people had to say.

Tea and Birthday cake followed and the meeting wound up with goody bags for all and a conducted walk to Harston, the final destination being one of Harston's pubs.

So do log on to UK VILLAGES.CO.UK and put in Thriplow and see what we have contributed to this people-based and friendly web site.

Shirley Wittering

TREES OF THRIFLOW

This is the first of a new series of articles covering the things we see and pass every day but perhaps tend to take for granted – the village trees. The initial subjects will be the more unusual species. Like us, trees have a history. In most cases, their history is much longer than ours but they didn't write theirs down! How strange when you think that without them we would not have been able to write ours down either!



Dawn Redwood at Gowards Middle Street



And at 13 Lower Street

The Dawn Redwood

Of all the trees growing in Thriplow, the Dawn Redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) has the strangest story to tell. It had long been known only as a fossil dating back 80-100 million years; *Fossil Tree* is its other common name. It was first found as a living tree during the Japanese War with China (1937-45). Japanese foresters, who were surveying parts of Central China in the early 1940s, found a tree they had never seen before. Branches and cones were sent to the Japanese Forest Research Station in Nanking where the conclusion was drawn that here was a living tree unknown to science. Only 25 specimens were found.

In 1947, a U.S. financed expedition found a thousand more trees in a belt 16 miles long and a mile wide in the Hupeh province. Locals were using the foliage to feed their cattle! It is truly amazing that knowledge of this tree had not escaped to the West much sooner. The great seed collectors of the 18th and 19th Centuries must somehow have missed this valley.

Seed was sent to the U.S. from where, in 1948, it was distributed to other countries including the U.K. where it was planted at Wisley and Kew and elsewhere including gardens. Hence no tree growing in this country can be more than 55 years old. It is fortunate that the tree grows readily from cuttings.

The Dawn Redwood is an unusual conifer for, like the larch, it drops its needles in the winter. It has all the makings of a fast-growing big tree like its relation the true Sequoia, more about which in a later article. Specimens seen in China grew to 100 ft tall with a diameter of 7 ft. I have not found any record of the quality of the timber but one can only conclude that because of the use to which it was put in China and that it has never been planted as a forest tree in this country, it has been judged to be of limited value.

I know of two specimens in Thriplow, one in the garden of Graham and Janet Wynne at *Gowards* in Middle Street, and one in Lower Street owned by James and June Rowley. Perhaps readers know of others?

Further Reading

See: "*The Glory of The Tree*" by Dr B K Boom and H Kleijn. Published by G G Harrap & Co., 1966

Metasequoia glyptostroboides by C A Carpenter, Journal of the Forestry Commission, No 20, 1949, p.156.

Bill Wittering

HISTORY OF THE THRILOW SOCIETY PLOUGH

May 1993 A Ransomes Plough, a game safe and seed drill were offered to Thriplow Society by Mr and Mrs Terry Black of Fowlmere. The plough was moved by Peter Freedman, Nigel Smith and Pat Ginty to the Bury where it was kept in a meadow close to the large barn.

June 1993 Lady Browne suggested that after the plough had been cleaned and re-painted it might be housed in front of the Smithy on the Village Green for the benefit of the whole village.

June 1993 Peter Speak, Chairman of the Thriplow Society spoke to the Chairman of the Parish Council John Luckham, informing him of the acquisition of the plough and also of Lady Browne's suggestion; Chairman sympathetic.

Summer 1993 Editorial of Thriplow Journal Vol. 2/1 mentioned plough. Journal given to all Thriplow Society's members among whom are Parish Counselors John Luckham, David Easthope, Barbara Pointon, Betty Parker, Rita Bond and Bill Wittering.

September 1993 Bill Wittering offered to find name of someone who could sand blast the plough and the best time of year when this could be done.

March 1994 Secretary of the Thriplow Society, Shirley Wittering, requested Mr Stuart Walker of Sawston to look at the plough and give an estimate for sand blasting the rust and repainting with rust resistant paint in situ. £180. T.S. decided to increase the sum to £200 to include fixing of plough to a hard standing outside the Smithy. The top coat of paint in correct colours to be done by volunteers.

March 1994 Further conversation between Chairmen of T.S. and P.C. about siting and cost.

April 1994 Request to Daffodil Weekend Committee for half the money needed. The rest to be raised by T.S. and £50 to be requested from P.C. Copy of letter sent to Chairman of P.C.

April 1994 Letter from Daffodil Weekend Committee enclosing cheque for £100.

May 1994 After the election of a new chairman of the Parish Council, it was thought that having the plough outside the Smithy might be a hazard to children and the PC voted to refuse permission for it's siting there.

Summer 1995 – The Thriplow Journal reported that the plough had now been restored and thanks were given to Arthur Rowe for providing the paint and re-painting the plough in its traditional colours of red and blue with silver shares, out of his own pocket. Cambridge Plant

Breeders (now CPB Twyford) had agreed to its being placed outside their new building in Church Street. They had also provided a brass plaque recording the event.

Summer 2001 The plough was repainted by members of the Thriplow Society, Ken and Valerie Joysey, John Lord, Michael Moule, Shirley Wittering and Peter Speak. And once again the paint was kindly provided by Arthur Rowe.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank CPB Twyford for their giving a home to the plough, where it makes a handsome addition to the agricultural history of this village.



The Plough outside CPB Twyford

CPB TWYFORD

On Thursday 10 July, at the invitation of CPB Twyford Ltd., of Church Street Thriplow, a small number of the Committee visited the company to hear about its work in plant breeding. We were shown into a welcome air-conditioned lecture room (it was one of the warmest days this year), and addressed by the general manager, Dr. Nigel Moore.

Cambridge Plant breeders came to Thriplow in 1987 and amalgamated with Twyford's Seeds, (a company founded in 1936), in 1995. In 1996 the company was acquired by a European consortium of plant breeding specialists, Lochow-Petrus, a member of the German KWS group and the French organisation SIGMA in association also with NPZ-Lembke, also German. Together the group has a seeds turnover of over £1,000 million and employs some 1,300 people. At Thriplow there are 45 staff, 30 of whom are employed in the practical work of plant breeding. The Church Street premises house the general office headquarters and specialised laboratories. Across the fields on the way to Heathfield are further laboratories and glasshouses.

Why Thriplow? This site was chosen because of the favourable climate and soil conditions, and the good expertise of farmers in cereal growing. East Anglia generally is one of the driest and sunniest parts of the country, and it is estimated that 60-70% of the UK's wheat, winter barley, and oilseed rape is grown within 100 miles of Cambridge. Moreover there are many of CPB Twyford's rival breeders and growers nearby, e.g. at Whittlesford, Hauxton, Trumpington, and others in Norfolk and Suffolk.

The firm is committed to increasing yields of arable crops, particularly cereals, and so specialises in experimenting with producing new varieties of wheat (13% UK market share), barley (10%), oilseed rape (15%), and beans and peas (28%). Yields have risen by over 1% per annum for many years and CPB Twyford's is now one of the leading international plant breeders marketing its products in many parts of the world. Whilst in UK the average wheat yields per hectare are about 8 tonnes/hectare, CPB Twyford's now produces varieties which, under optimum conditions of weather, pest control, and fertilisers are regularly approaching 14 tonnes per hectare. The principal new varieties pioneered in Thriplow are: Malacca, Equinox, Aardvark, Genghis, Canterbury, and Biscay. On average it takes about 7 years of experimentation before a new hybrid is ready for a full field trial.

After two hours of stimulating talk and discussion we were shown round two of the laboratories where experimental new varieties were in their early stages; literally we were looking at plant embryos in test tubes, grown in a specialised medium before planting in

small pots before transfer to greenhouse. When next you walk around Thriplow and see the trial fields, marked into plots, and others surrounded by white fabric to contain pollination, you are witnessing highly skilled technical innovation that may be the beginning of a new agricultural transformation. Note that the experimentation is by selective breeding and hybridising, and does not involve GM, genetic modification, of the plants or seeds.

Oliver Walston has written recently that, ‘The fields around Thriplow have been growing cereals for two thousand years’. Even in the last century farmers were delighted with yields much less than those currently harvested, and would have perpetuated cereal varieties that had developed only very slowly over time. Now the agronomist through the science of plant breeding has demonstrated that the land can, with good management, yield abundantly. Thriplow is playing a major part in this quiet revolution.

Peter Speak.

We have been invited by the Whittlesford Society to a

FIELD WALK AND PICNIC

On Saturday August 31st. at 2.0pm.

To take place on the Roman Villa Site just over the border into Whittlesford. Walk along the Whittlesford Footpath, (The Drift) from Church Street. You will need good footwear and there are no loos.

The Field Walk will be directed by Ashley Arbon, Chairman of the Whittlesford Society.

Do come along and bring a picnic tea, we need plenty of people to find as many bits of roman pottery as possible. There will be experts there to look at finds, including Christopher Taylor, and members from the Sites and Monuments Department of the County Council.



GLEANINGS

IN MEMORIAM - We were sorry to hear of the death of Bert Moule on June 3rd. 2003 aged 85 years. Many in the village will remember Bert and his wife Phyllis with affection. We send our deepest condolences to his children Pat, June, Richard and Val and their families.

Many THANKS to Hilary Russell for her kind invitation to visit the gardens of the Bury and take tea on 29th May. The weather was superb and about 29 members had a wonderful time exploring the grounds ably assisted by Hilary's three sons.

THANKS to Bill Wittering for re-indexing the Thriplow Journal; should anyone wish for a copy please ask him. 208269.

THANKS also to CPB Twyford for a fascinating talk by Nigel Moore on the work of the company which is based in Church Street followed by a tour of their labs. A more detailed article can be found elsewhere in this Journal.

THANKS to Daffodil Weekend Trust for the promise of £550 to cover re binding the Ellis Bibles, Restoring the Graffiti Stone on the south wall of the nave of the church and repairing the village pump in Fowlmere Road.

We also have a grant from Local Heritage Initiative to buy a display cabinet to house small items in the Smithy. Preferably wood and glass. If anyone knows of such an item or where we can get one, please let us know, we would be very grateful.

Recommended web site - English Nature has a very good web site giving plants, both wild and cultivated, that attract wildlife and which can be printed out for future reference. – www.english-nature.org.uk

Some of the flowers that are particularly attractive to bumble bees which are apparently now under threat of extinction are – Borage, Buddleia, Cornflower, Foxglove, Heather, Lavender, Honeysuckle, Catmint, Celandine and Rosemary.

We have received a letter from Mr Derek Schofield who is tracing his family, some of whom came from Thriplow. The main name is Prime; other names are Cranwell, Creak, Turner and Doo. If anyone can help and would like to correspond with him let me know and I will give you his address.

NEXT MEETING – Peter Speak will give us illustrated talk entitled, 'Keeping the Water at Bay: History of Fen Drainage', on Monday 22nd September 2003 at 8.0pm in the Village Hall.

