

Editorial

On November 21 a goodly audience were regaled by three of us to tales of our endeavours to transcribe the wills and inventories left by the people of Thriplow from the 17th to 19th centuries. The audience found this talk extremely interesting as few people know that such a valuable source of information exists. So we thought those that didn't manage to get to the November meeting might like to read about it, and those that did get to the meeting might like to be reminded of it. A good place to start would be an article in the Journal from 1995, Vol. 4/2, page 8. This is on-line

<http://thriplow.org.uk/uploads/thriplowsociety/Journal%20Archive/1995%20vol%204.2.pdf>

Pat Easthope spoke on the experience of learning to read old handwriting and has written about her researches in this edition of the Journal. Robin Dring also spoke of the Manorial system and the farming practices of the past which from his agricultural background was especially useful

Thriplow School celebrated its 150th anniversary last October with exhibitions of school photos dating back to the early years of the 20th century, a service of thanksgiving, a supper and auction to raise funds for a Nature Garden in the school grounds. I was privileged to be asked to give a short talk on the origins of the school, more of which is in this Journal. Although the school was opened in 1863 there is a large gap of information until 1875 when the School Register and the School Log Book were started. I remember reading of a great storm that blew down the end wall of the school but couldn't find any record of it. In December Geoff Axe found four newspaper cuttings recording the storm, a most important piece of the jigsaw that is the history of Thriplow C of E School.

The Editors would like to wish all members of the Thriplow Society a Very Happy New Year and Good Health and Prosperity. And we send especial Good Wishes to Jean Tomlinson who is awaiting heart surgery at Papworth. We wish you a speedy recovery, Jean.

Shirley Wittering and Angela Rimmer, Joint Editors.

N.B. We are hoping to have a 'Show and Tell' evening on Thursday April 17th, our AGM. Bring anything you have of interest, something you have found or pictures of times past, preferable relating to Thriplow. There will be room to show them. Refreshment will be available free to anyone who brings something of interest. Let Shirley 208269, Angela 209160 or Pat 208401, know so that we can put out enough tables. Let's make it a really good evening.

Thriplow School's 150th Anniversary



Head, Mrs Penty, Sec. Linda Baron, Lizzie Duckworth and Pauline Walker

In October 2013 Thriplow Church of England School celebrated its 150th anniversary. The school put up pictures and showed a video of when BBC 'Playschool' came to Thriplow in 1975; there was also an assembly service to celebrate the occasion. The Thriplow Society put up an exhibition of school photos and memorabilia and I was invited to give a short talk at the Anniversary Dinner. I thought that those that missed this and my talk in January to the Society, would like to read about the origins of the school and the educational rivalry between the British (non-conformist) and National (Anglican) schools in Thriplow.

There was a Non-conformist (a British School) in Thriplow by 1844. There was also a small church school in Church Street, but by the 1860s this was far too small to accommodate the 45 scholars attending and several children were being turned away. In 1863 Henry Perkins, Lord of the principal manor in Thriplow, the Bury, gave a piece of land in Gutter Land to the Vicar and Churchwardens of Thriplow under an '*Act to afford further facilities for the conveyance and endowment of sites for school.*' This piece of land in what is now School Lane was called 'Savages'.

The previous year, 1862, the Vicar, the Rev Thomas Andrew, had applied to the *National Society for Promoting the Education of the poor in the Principals of the Established Church*, (the National Society for short) for a grant towards building the school and teacher's house. He enclosed a list of subscribers of people who had given over £5. 23 people in all, including Peterhouse, the Bishop of Ely, St John's College and Trinity Hall college, Cambridge, adding up to £730.1.9½d. The Diocesan Board of Education gave £50 and the National Society gave £28. A further £499 was promised by various people.



Probably the earliest photo of Thriplow school children

The same year tenders were invited for building the new school. Four were received ranging from £755 to £788; these were all rejected as being too high. But a year later the school was eventually built at a cost of £808 1 9½d.

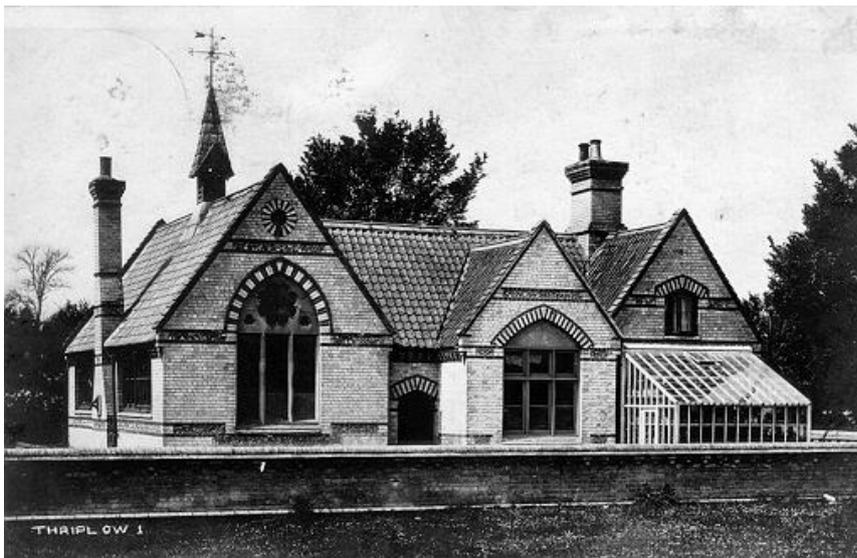
By 1865 the Vicar applied again to the National Society for £55 for repairs and to erect a separate entrance to the boys' offices.

The National Society has a record of the official opening of the School on 29th October 1863. There were 92 children and Kelly's Directory for 1864 states that Miss Elizabeth Smith was the first school mistress.

On September 27th 1868, the newspapers reported that a great storm had knocked out both ends of the classroom. Fortunately no-one was hurt but obviously the school was closed until the damage could be repaired. ¹ The Leeds Mercury Saturday, October 10, 1868; reported the occasion:

¹ I must thank Geoff Axe for finding this reference to the great storm of 1868.

A WHIRLWIND.—A correspondent writes to the *Times*:—"A circular storm or whirlwind visited the village of Thriplow, in Cambridgeshire, on Sunday, the 27th of September. In the course of three minutes it destroyed 400 trees, blew out both ends of a handsome new school, and shook the building so violently that it is thought to be permanently injured. On Sunday, for the first time this year, we had a thunderstorm, with vivid and incessant lightning, and terrific thunder, which seemed to come from all quarters. There was no wind to speak of, and the storm was getting over, we thought. We were waiting with the assembled morning school for the arrival of the superintendent, when suddenly there was a sharp rattle of hail against the windows. I looked up and saw a cloud of dust and leaves whirling in the air, and with an indescribable roar and crash which filled the whole air around us, the tall poplars on the opposite side of the road were dashed to the ground, and we all huddled together in the passage as the large and costly window with its stone mullions was dashed out, and every brick blown out up to the apex of the high-pitched roof. We had a most providential escape. . . . The storm swept through the lower part of the village, breaking off some trees and tearing up others by the roots, but not a twig was injured on either side of its path. . . . Some damage was done in the neighbouring villages, but at Foulmire, close to us, they knew nothing of it until they were told. . . . The roads were blocked up on Sunday with fallen trees; the high road was cleared directly, the whole male population turning out and working with a will. We had no morning service; in the afternoon special thanksgiving was offered up."



The school showing one of the splendid gable window that replaced the one blown out by the tornado.

Little else is known for the next 6 years until December 1874 when the school inspector wrote, *'I regret that the instruction given by this teacher does not reach the mark required for the recommendation of a certificate of merit under Act 59.'*

Six months later in August 1875, the new vicar the Rev John Watkins wrote in the *Parish Magazine*, *We are very glad to be able to announce at last, the school will be opened after Harvest under a new Mistress duly certificated according to the requirements of the Education Department.'* The new teacher was Miss Mary Haslop and her first entry in the school log book was dated 18 October 1875 – *'I took charge of this school today. May God Bless the Work.'* The monitor was Susannah Kenzie from Fowlmere. There were two class rooms.

The Rev J Watkins opened the school at 9.0 0'clock with prayers, number of children admitted – 58. The greatest problem in keeping the school numbers up was illness; often the school was closed owing to epidemics of whooping cough, influenza and the itch, and in the summer the older children being taken away to work in the fields.

The school log books and the attendance registers are kept by the Thriplow Society and have been transcribed. Children on school photos from 1910 to 1925 were identified by the late Rose Moule. The oldest photo is from 1874 but unfortunately nobody is alive to tell us who the children are. The Society is hoping to put all this on-line soon.

Shirley Wittering

WE SHALL REMEMBER THEM: Richard Unwin;



This photo of Dick Unwin was in a collection of photos belonging to Mr Michael Reeve, a descendant of Mr Charles Wright and Nephew of Miss Doris Wright who used to live in the house next to Anno Dom; some of you may remember her.

THRILOW WEATHER IN 2013

2012 will be remembered for its lack of sunshine and the amount of rain. In fact, it was a year the likes of which we not seen since 1933. 2013 took us back to the weather we have grown used to.

2013 – Temperature and Rainfall

	2013		Mean 1980-2013	
	°F	°C	°F	°C
Daytime temperature	58.8	14.9	53.1	11.7
Night time temperature	47.1	8.4	42.5	8.8
Average day/night	53.0	11.6	47.8	10.2
	2013		Record 1980-2013	
Hottest day	86 (22 July)	30.0	97 (3.8.90)	36.1
Coldest night	16 (22 Jan)	-8.9	10 (31.1.87 & 12.12.91)	-12.2
	2013		Annual Mean 1982-2013	
	Inches	Mm	Inches	Mm
Rainfall	22.6	574.2	23.6	599.4

Precipitation

Our average monthly rainfall is near enough 2.0” and, apart from January to April, this is virtually what we had in 2013. The first half of January 2014 however gave us rain on 13 of the first 17 days. By then the underlying aquifers were so full of water they could take no more and large “puddles” formed in the fields.

Frost

The last frost of winter (2012-2013) was on 20th April and the first of winter (2013-2014) on 20th November. Snow fell and lay on the ground between 14th and 26th of January and more fell on 10th 14th 23rd and 24th March.

Guy Fawkes Night

Guy Fawkes night was wet, some 13.8 mm of rain falling. Displays of fireworks were sparse.

Daffodil Weekend (16th and 17th March)

The Saturday was dull and showery with a daytime temperature of 50 degrees F. Sunday saw similar weather with the sun coming out at intervals during the day. The temperature reached 51 degrees F. and heavy rain began at 4.0 p.m.

Christmas Day

The daytime temperature on Christmas Day 2013 reached 46 degrees F compared with 49 degrees F in 2012. It was mainly sunny.

Gardening

From a gardener's point of view, it was a good year for most vegetables apart from potatoes which suffered from scab due mainly to the dry conditions in the growing months which made them very small. Our broad beans were good, runner beans late but tender, the mice ate our beetroot, no parsnips but the Swiss chard is still excellent and so are the leeks. The tomatoes in the poly tunnel did very well.

Bill Wittering

THOMAS TURNER BORN THRIPLow 23.5.1670, NO RECORD OF MARRIAGE OR BURIAL.

HANGED AT TYBURN 25 SEPTEMBER 1713

4. Thomas Turner, condemn'd for stealing a brown Gelding, out of the Ground of Mr. Ambrose Benning, on the 20th Day of August last. He said he was 30 Years of Age, born at Thriplow in Cambridgeshire: That his chief Employment was Husbandry ; but had made it part of his Trade for these six Years past to steal Sheep and Hogs, and was for such a Fact burnt in the Hand at Cambridge about nine Months ago; and tho' his Offences had often escap'd the Notice, and consequently the Punishment of the Law, yet he found now, by his woful Experience, that Sinners do not always go unpunish'd, even in this World. He confess'd, that he was justly condemn'd, and that if God were not most merciful to him, who had been a wicked Sinner in many Ways, he should utterly perish.

Found in the Church

When the great West door was opened for John Rimmer's talk on August 8th, the evening sun shone straight down the aisle, illuminating a small brass plate fixed to the base of the Font.

It reads:

**Restored by the Vicar of this Parish
In memory of his brother
F. W. Watkins Leut – Royal Engineers
Who died Sept. 17th 1874**



The Rev John Watkins was the vicar of Thriplow from 1874 to 1878 and was responsible for the restoration of the Church in 1875.

FEATHER BEDS & FRYING PANS:

A Talk given to the Thriplow Society by Pat Easthope on November 21st 2013.

When I joined the Palaeography group I'm not sure I knew what I was letting myself in for. You've seen the sheet illustrating the alphabet and the many ways each letter could be written. My first thoughts when I saw the sheet were that it wasn't so bad. However, when I was given a will to translate, and faced with "joined up writing" where all the letters flow into one another, the letters don't always match the examples, many of the words are spelt differently and a good number of them are words I had never heard of which have long since gone out of use, my views on palaeography changed somewhat. Still, I thought I'd stick with it and give it a go, which is why I find myself standing here today.

It is estimated that ½ million wills have survived from 16th century England. Historians have realised that wills and other probate material are a fruitful source of information of the details of everyday life at the time. In the Cambridgeshire Records office there are 249 wills and inventories for Thriplow dating from 1471 – 1854. The earliest ones are in Latin but from the late 15th century they begin to be in English

Originally two documents had to be drawn up – the will which dealt with land and real estate and the testament which dealt with goods & chattels, i.e. personal property and effects. In 1540 the Statute of Wills allowed land and personal property to be disposed of in the same document and it remains so to this day. Wills still start with the words "This is the last will and testament of....."

Furniture, furnishings and clothes formed an important part of the will – these could be seen as continuing ones person in the community, whereas money is interchangeable and livestock eventually dies.

It would appear that about 25% of wills were made while the testator was in good health but the vast majority of wills were made shortly before death. Many wills state that the testator is "sick in body but sound in mind".



Making the will was a memorable occasion for the family. A scribe had to be summoned and witnesses gathered. The will had to be dictated and then read out to the assembled company, signed by the testator and the witnesses and sealed.

In order to be valid the will needed at least 2 witnesses to the signing and sealing and the nomination of at least one executor. After the testator's death the will had to be proved in the appropriate church consistory court where the executors and witnesses swore on oath that this was the testator's will that they had seen signed and sealed. They were then given permission to administer the will and for this they had to pay fees to the church court. Until it was taken over by the civil authorities in 1857 this made probate a good source of income for the church. The executors and witnesses had to travel to the diocesan seat to get probate which meant that they probably had to stay overnight, or at least take refreshment, which made probate another significant event for the family.

Anyone could make a will in the 16th Century, but as the church could only charge a fee on wills worth over £5.00, any wills worth below this sum were discouraged. Most will-makers came from the better off section of society and usually only represented a small proportion of the population. A comparison has been made between the number of wills and the number of adult burials in an area of Norfolk for the period 1581 to 1610 and it was found that on average only 10% of the adults buried had made wills.

Inventories were made after death. These were a list of items owned by the deceased and their value. A law passed in 1529 directed that goods and chattels worth more than £5 be listed within 40 days of the deceased's death by 4 honest and skilful 'Appraisers'; often these appraisers were neighbours or church wardens.

Some of the words we find in the old wills are no longer used and some meanings have changed, for instance, a 'hutch' was then a small cupboard and a cupboard was just that – a board for standing cups on. A 'joyned' table was craftsman made with joints not just a plank on a trestle. Chairs were status symbols, most people sat on forms or benches; The best beds or mattresses were feather, second best was flock. Books were a rare possession.

After Matthews death the inventory of his Goods, Chattels and Cattles was made on 2nd April 1739, which is only a few days after his death and the will was made. Nowhere in the inventory is there any mention of saffron, nor of the saffron ground. The inventory also mentions various crops growing on 9 acres and 3 roods of the land – was there nothing growing on the other 19+ acres? Saffron was a valuable commodity – we have to assume that this was removed before the inventory could be made so that its value was excluded. Unfortunately we will never know who took it!

Looking at the items Matthew left and remembering that he was one of the better off people of the time, it does make me wonder what the less well off people had.

When I learned to add up it was in pounds, shillings and pence and when we have inventories to translate I can't resist adding up the figures in my head – just to prove to myself that I can still do it - and I have actually found some errors in the adding up.

One problem in transcribing these documents is that we have to copy exactly what has been written. Trying to tell a computer that you don't want the spelling corrected can get very frustrating!

One of the earlier transcriptions I was given was the will of William Wallis. The will was proved in March 1667 but I don't know what year it was written. It starts with the words "In the name of God amen, the seven and twenty day of May in the fifteenth year of the reign of our sovereign lord Charles the second" I never was any good at history dates and I keep meaning to look up what year this was – one day I might get around to it.ⁱ

I find that as we translate more documents, so more questions are thrown up. Unfortunately we will never know the answers to some of them but Palaeography has certainly given me a greater idea as to what life must have been like a few hundred years ago and made me grateful that I wasn't around then – I don't think I would have lasted very long.

Pat Easthope

ⁱThe date was 1663, - C.R.Cheney, *A Handbook of Dates*, Cambridge University Press, 2000.

“Ack Ack” in Thriplow



Duxford aerodrome and the U.S. medical centre in Thriplow House were not the only military activities in or near the village during the Second World War.

Thriplow had an “Ack Ack” gun. “Ack Ack” was the name given to anti-aircraft equipment, “Ack” being the word for the letter A in a defunct phonetic alphabet.

The gun was installed on the left hand side of Gravel Pit Hill, going down towards the Recycling Centre. It was put there to defend Duxford aerodrome. A second gun was sited near the premises which were used by Ciba-Geigy’s crop spraying activities, on the right hand side of Hill Farm Road, Whittlesford. Thus there was a gun at each end of the Duxford runway and just north of it.

The guns were ancient 3” 20cwt AA guns which dated from the First World War. This is all that Anti-Aircraft Command (the army organisation responsible for the gun defences) could spare as all the better equipment had been installed in and around London and other places in anticipation of heavy air attacks on centres of population. The RAF was slow to realise that

their airfields needed AA protection and when they asked for it all they got was wholly inadequate and ineffective.

Each of these guns would have had hutted accommodation. I am told that the huts down Gravel Pit Hill were promptly taken over by local people at the end of the war because there was a lack of housing in the village.

These guns were not the only Ack Ack equipment near the village. There was at least one searchlight. It would have been sited on or near the track to Whittlesford. In the first months of the war searchlights were manned by men of the Royal Engineers. One of them was Eric French who was deputed to walk down to Church Street to collect water. In doing so he “met his fate” in the shape of the daughter of the house he called at. He and his wife Dot lived in that house until a few years ago.

Eric French mentioned to me that “the only bit of fun they had” was when a German bomber came over low to bomb Duxford aerodrome and they fired at it with their Lewis machine gun, an equally venerable weapon also dating from the first war.

There could have been several other searchlights in the area but apparently no record was kept of where they were sited. There are remains of wartime Nissen huts up the hill to Chrishall Grange.

The only other gun site near to the village was situated at the top of Chapel Hill, Haslingfield. It would only have been occupied for a short time in the middle of 1942 when the *Luftwaffe* launched their “Baedeker” Raids. These were attacks confined mainly to our cities and towns and were named after the famous tourist guide. It is believed that these raids were made in revenge for the attacks by Bomber Command on the ancient Hanse cities of Rostock and Lübeck. Neither Oxford nor Cambridge was attacked. Someone suggested that there were too many Rhodes scholars in the *Luftwaffe*! It is noteworthy that Heidelberg was not bombed either.

Finally it is possible that the Thriplow gun was eventually replaced by a Bofors 40mm LAA gun, probably by the Americans when they took over Duxford aerodrome.

Anthony Cooper

References:-

Cooper, Anthony J “Anti-Aircraft Command, 1939-1955, the Other Forgotten Army” (Fleet Hargate, Arcturus Press, 2004)

Dobinson, Colin “AA Command, Britain’s Anti-Aircraft Defences of World War II” (London, Methuen, 2001)
NB This work contains a complete gazetteer of all the Heavy Anti-Aircraft gunsites with Grid References (The author had to convert all the World War II map references to the current National Grid)

GLEANINGS

Apologies to David Heinzelman for spelling his name wrongly in the last edition of the Journal.

Thank you to Susan Smith for the loan of some School pictures from the 1980s and especially for the gift of a School photo taken sometime before 1874, we have yet to work out the date. This may be one of the earliest school photos we have so far. Also for a copy of the 1885 Kelly's Directory.

Thank you too, to Pat Easthope, Barbara Pointon, Toni Charter, Douglas Sheldrick and Michael Reeve for School photos, and other items, copies of which will be a useful addition to the Society's Archives.

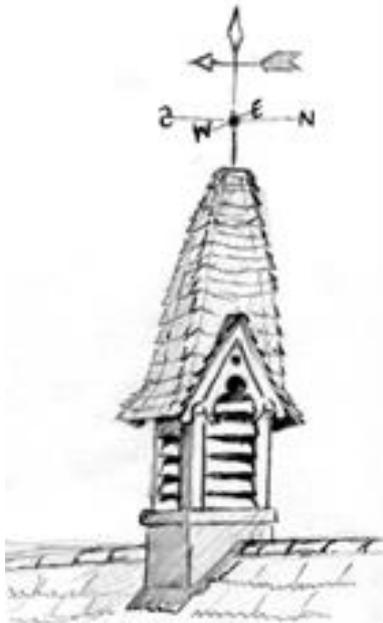
Once more the Thriplow Society has put up the Christmas Tree outside the Village Hall and I think you'll agree it looked very pretty. **Thanks** must go to Geoff Axe, David Easthope, Angela Rimmer and Shirley Wittering for putting the tree up; the Baubles were supplied by Jean Tomlinson. We hope you all enjoyed it. **Thanks** to Geof Axe, David Easthope, Jean Tomlinson and Angela Rimmer for taking it down on Twelfth Night, January 6th.

The 'History Group' will soon be re-starting, after a break, to continue learning to read old handwriting (Palaeography). There are a couple of spaces and if any member would like to join us, they would be very welcome.

In January 2014 work started at the Church on building a new loo and kitchen in memory of Mary Cooper. Nick and I went up to take pictures and the builders, who were very knowledgeable about the church, pointed out some graffiti high up on the south east pillar of the crossing which I don't remember seeing before. Nick took this photo of it.



Stop Press - Royston Crow - **Thriplow Solar Farm** plan withdrawn - *Planning officers from the district council have recommended that the scheme, which has attracted significant opposition in Thriplow and Heathfield should be withdrawn .*



The School Bell Turret