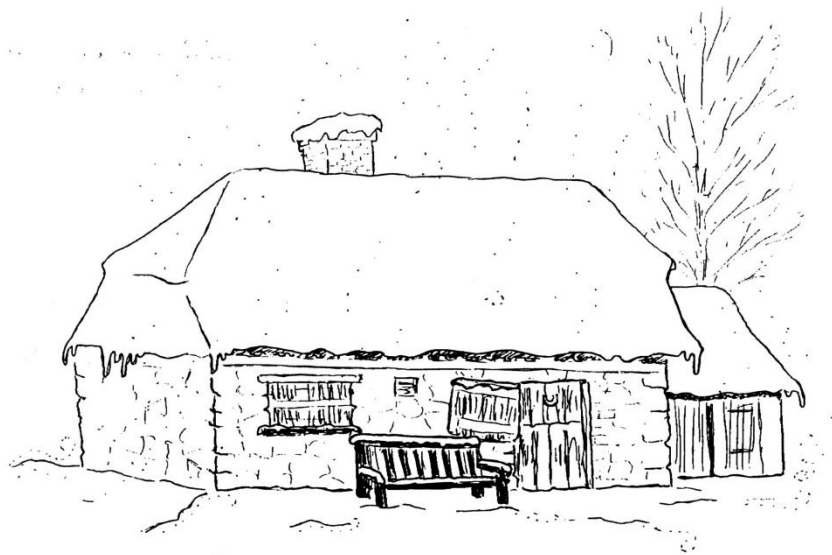


The Thriplow Journal



Published by *The Thriplow Society*

Vol. 34/3 Winter 2025

EDITORIAL

Christmas is fast approaching and I'm wondering where the year has gone. With the journal finished I can now hope to get my Christmas preparations completed – I still have gifts to buy and nothing is wrapped yet. I did get the Christmas cards done in good time and made the cake a few weeks ago. I've been feeding it weekly with alcohol so I'm hoping it will be good.

I hope you find something of interest in this journal, many thanks to Bernard Meggitt, Shirley Wittering and Geoff Axe for their input. I know I say this every time but I can assure you that contributions for the journal from members really are very much appreciated.

Looking at the parish map on page 5 left me wondering how many residents are unaware that part of our parish is on the southern side of the A505. When we moved to Thriplow in 1970 some parts of Fowlmere were also in Thriplow parish but we lost those when the parish boundaries were revised in the 1980's.

We have some interesting speakers booked for next year but our programme isn't quite complete so programme cards will be issued later. Our meetings up to and including the AGM in April are listed on page 15.

*Pat Easthope
Journal Editor*



ON THE PARISH

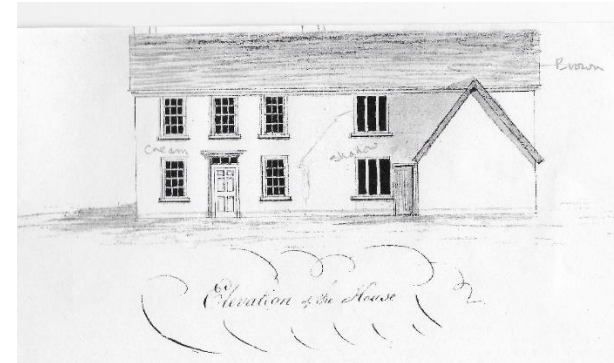
Today when we talk of the 'Parish' we probably think of an area looked after by a minister of religion, yet the Parish has had a long and chequered history. The word Parish comes from the latin *Parochia* = district. In the 8th century the Venerable Bede wrote his 'History of England' and in it he records that Pope Gregory the Great in the late 6th century gave instructions to his priests not to destroy pagan sites but to build Christian churches over them. Place names indicate where churches were built on these pagan sites, e.g. Harrow on the Hill, Thriplow - Trippa's Hill. In the 7th and 8th centuries Christianity was centred in monasteries lived in by monks. The Old English word for monastery is MYNSTER, this word covered all places of worship whether monastery (Ely, Crowland), private chapel of King or Thegn or regional church. By the 10th century the word Minster implied parish church, these differed from the monasteries in that the priests who lived there (up to 20) went out into the surrounding countryside to preach Christianity to the local population. Up till then Christianity had been the prerogative of the upper classes and had had little effect on the working population. They were funded by a tax paid by adult householders, the Church Scot; those that were exempt went 'Scot-free'.

In Saxon England the King held all the land and in return for military service he would give his Thengs property (Thriplow was held by Ealdorman Brythnoth of King Athelstan). These lords would each want to build a church and would vie with each other to do so, (this can account for two churches side by side as at Swaffham Prior). By the time of the Danish invasions of the 10th -11th centuries, most Parish Churches had been built, by the 12th century parish boundaries had been formalised and by the 13th century the parish system was fully developed with a total of 8,000 parishes.

The parish was an economic area large enough to support a priest and its surrounding village, therefore the size of a parish varied widely according to the type and fertility of the soil. Parishes on the fertile soils of South Cambridgeshire are small while those on the poor waterlogged fens and heavy clays are very large; some of the largest parishes in England are on the high inhospitable soils of Yorkshire. The parish of Halifax has 14,081 acres compared with Thriplow's 2,501 acres.

In AD 960 King Edgar decreed that a tenth (tithe) of a parishioner's income should go to support the parish church. This continued until 1936 when they were abolished, though judging by the number of Thriplow wills that mention 'Tithes forgotten' the priest didn't always get his due.

The Tithe Barn in Thriplow was probably the large barn at Rectory Farm in Middle Street, the home of George and Olive Deller. Dr Leigh Alston, an expert in timber-framed buildings, dates it from around 1320; the Rectory (not the present house) dates from a deed dated 1284 when the Bishop of Ely gave the income from the great tithes (grain, hides and timber) to found his college of Peterhouse.



Old Rectory 1770



Tithe Barn 1920s

As clerks in holy orders or parish priests were often the only people in a village who could write and probably one of only a few who could read, it fell to his lot to write wills, deeds, land agreements, Manor court minutes and any other piece of writing needed during the business of running a village. He was also likely to be the village teacher. So that eventually the church became not only responsible for keeping the ecclesiastical records but also for the civil records. Any business transaction or important ceremony such as handing over legacies or the civil part of a marriage would take place in the church porch, in public, to show that all was legal and proper. Later the annual meeting of the Vestry when the churchwardens and overseers of the poor presented their accounts would start in the church porch but then adjourn to an Inn for the rest of the meeting!

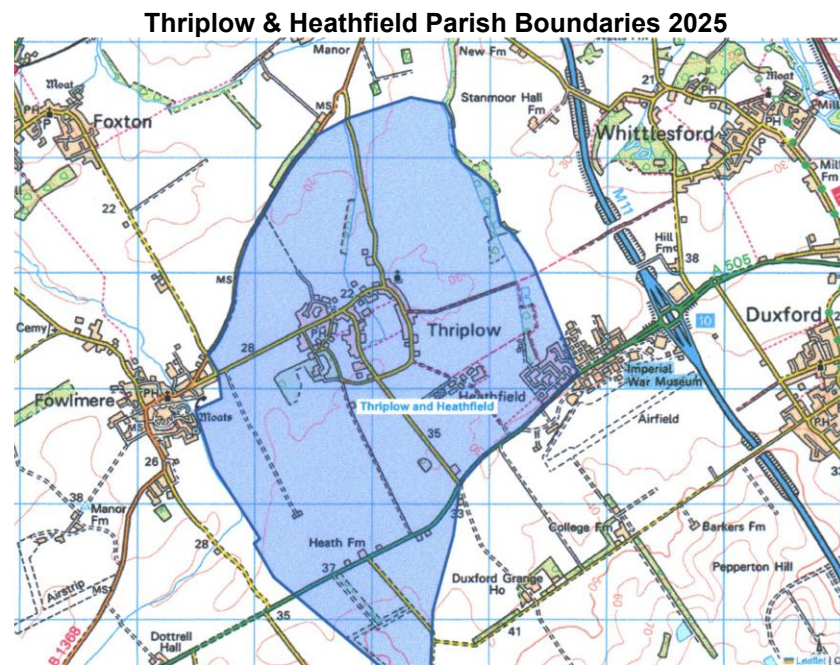
The existing churchwardens' accounts for Thriplow go back to 1782 with a few for the years 1637-1640. They cover the upkeep and repairs of the fabric and surroundings of the church, the purchasing of bread and wine, beer for the workmen, books and linen, journeys taken and payment to the poor from the charity money left in legacies. They record the moving-on of vagrants, the fostering of bastards, the feeding, clothing, caring and burial of paupers. From 1854 they show the renting of a room in the 'Green Man' at a 1/- a time for the Vestry meetings each Easter when the accounts were passed and the new churchwardens were sworn in. This is about the time that the south porch fell into such bad repair that it was taken down and the stones used to repair the roads! So, it can be seen that the parish church was the centre of civil administrative affairs as well as ecclesiastical ones



By the end of the 18th and the first half of the 19th centuries the Church of England with its monopoly of membership of Parliament and University had become lax and complacent. In Thriplow despite much patching-up the church was in an appalling state of decay: walls bulging; damp, mouldy floors; windows patched up with wood; the roof of the south transept covered with tarpaulin. The churchwardens, overseers of the poor, surveyors and constables had rotated their jobs annually from among a few select men, but from 1790-1832 a period of 42 years, just two men, Joseph Ellis and his son, also Joseph, filled the post of churchwarden and kept the churchwarden's accounts.

The weakness of the established church and the rise of non-conformity led to demands for reform in government and education. The 1832 Reform Act was the first of many such acts which enlarged the franchise and allowed a more representational parliament, although non-conformists were not to be admitted to university until 1858. The 1834 Poor Law Reform Act took the responsibility of caring for the poor away from the parish and put it into the hands of Poor Law Unions composed of several parishes combining to run a single central Workhouse. And in 1894 civil Parish Councils came into being, the smallest unit of government, elected from its inhabitants by its inhabitants and dealing with all secular matters within the parish; Parochial Church Councils replaced the Vestry to deal with purely church affairs. Thus, was broken the hold the church had on the parish for a thousand years.

Shirley Wittering



Copied under Ordnance Survey paper map copying.Licence N° AC0000846172

RECENT MEETINGS

A visit was arranged on Saturday 14th September to Landbeach Tithe Barn. We were fortunate with the weather which remained dry and a small group looked around the barn which looked splendid with its recently thatched roof with reed.



Robert Stripe, a trustee, gave a talk on the history of the barn and mentioned Archbishop Parker who had been the rector of Waterbeach and received the tithes which were a tax on the local produce to support the church. His nickname was nose Parker as he would spy on staff to check that they were working hard.



I then gave a talk about the structure of the barn and the major restoration project that was funded mainly by the National Lottery. This included repairs to the timber frame structure and works to the cladding, floors and walls.

Everyone seemed to enjoy the trip and some of us had lunch by the river in Waterbeach afterwards.

Richard Taylor

On October 16th Society member Martin Merry entertained us on the subject of "Artificial Intelligence and You" .

Those present at this well attended meeting were treated to an erudite description of how AI has evolved, followed by applications relevant to Thriplovians today.

Martin said we can be glad AI is improving the medical interpretation of our images, such as scans, in cancer detection.

On the other hand he said don't rely on banks that use your voice as your password anymore, and watch out for phone messages that sound like your son or daughter who has run out of money in some foreign land - because it's too easy for AI to copy voices. Martin also told us about the positive example where a very brief recording many years ago was enough for AI to work on to create an artificial voice for a woman who had lost her ability to speak due to motor neurone disease.

And Martin warned us that AI makes mistakes. He told us not to trust ChatGPT or Google's Gemini, or any other AI assistance, and made us laugh at AI generated poems about Thriplow which hilariously alluded to our Scarecrow Festival and how St George's Church looks out on the village square.

On 20th November we were entertained by Joan Gane, chairman of the Meldreth History Society, who gave an illustrated talk about the development of Whitecroft Road, Meldreth, over the hundred years from 1923 to 2023.

Joan has a fascinating collection of photographs which show how the road has developed from a narrow, bendy track to a straight wide road. Some of the old cottages still exist, albeit modernised, some have been replaced and other developments have filled in the gaps. We heard about some of the families who lived in the houses and the businesses carried out, most of which no longer exist but Elbourn Apples are still there.

Work in progress

Our programme for next year is not quite complete but on page 15 you will find the programme up to our AGM in April.



The Fowlmere Man Who Fought at the Battle of Trafalgar: Research Update

In 2011, naval historian Peter Guttridge gave a talk in Fowlmere Church, on Nelson and Trafalgar, briefly mentioning a Fowlmere man, John Barker, whom he thought fought in the Battle. With a keen interest in sailing and naval history, research was undertaken into John Barker's Trafalgar service and the findings presented in a 2016 Thriplow Society talk (Vol.25/2 2016). Early research was limited then by scarce online naval records, focusing on the lead-up to Trafalgar, Barker's ship's action, and the aftermath. Over the past decade, more historical data has become available online, allowing a fuller account of Barker's career over the Trafalgar period, 1805.

At the Trafalgar Bicentenary of the Battle 2005, the 10 years **Trafalgar Ancestry Project' (TAP)** was published, being a role of all who served in the Battle. Senior Naval Officers' career services had been recorded for many years, but none for ordinary seamen until 1857. Only the Ships Muster (ADM36), Pay Books (ADM37) and some correspondences were available. This further research was directed at 5 questions:

1. Evidence of John Barker at Trafalgar
2. His ship and rank
3. How he came to be there
4. His role in the Battle
5. What happened to him afterwards

1. Was John Barker at Trafalgar? Trafalgar Ancestor's Role gives HMS Defiance 577 crew having 10 Barkers, 2 Johns and only one a seaman from Cambridgeshire:

'John Barker aged 43 born in Folmoor, Cambridgeshire, England

Ship: HMS Defiance Rank/Rating: Yeoman of the Sheets'

'Service Details': 'Comments: From: HMS Uranic- HMS Defiance Ships pay book number: (SB628) 23 to 25 September, 1805 Rank/rating: Able Seaman Comments: Volunteer'

'Folmoor', was an unusual spelling for Fowlmere, as more often 'Fulmer, Foulmire, and Foul Mire' but no other derivations in Cambridgeshire were found. With no Civil Birth Registrations until 1837', ages were taken from Christening dates, usually within a few weeks of birth. His age '43' in 1805, gives birth year 1762 but the Fowlmere Parish records' showed no christenings for a John Barker for 1759-64 but one for 1765, making him 40; ages were often inaccurately stated. These, with his naval ship and rank, support a John Barker of Fowlmere in his early 40's serving at the Battle of Trafalgar.

2. His naval ship and ranking: The TAP showed he served on HMS Defiance, a fast Third-Rate Ship of the Line, 74 guns, 2-deck, 3-masted, 1750 tons with 577 men. His rank was 'Yeoman of the Sheets', being a Petty Officer with a team, usual 6, man-handling the sheets being the ropes controlling the main and fore sails, the engines of the ship. During battle, his work together with other Sheet Teams on deck, was to keep the ship sailing under Captain's orders. (Fig.1))

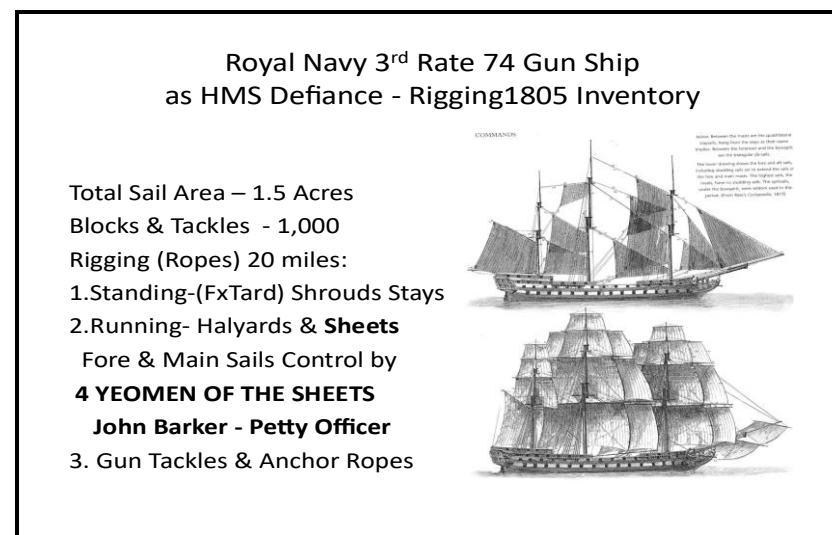


Fig.1

3. How John Barker came to be on HMS Defiance 21 October 1805, was helped by his further TAP'Service Details'as in 1. above. This signified a transfer from 'HMS Uranic' as Able Seaman to HMS Defiance as promoted Yeoman of the Sheets (TAP in 1. above) on the date shown and as a volunteer. No naval ship 'HMS Uranic' was found around the Trafalgar period, only 'HMS Uranie', being a 38 gun French-built 1788 Navy frigate, captured by the British in 1797. In the early 1800's she was active in the English Channel reporting French Naval movements. The TAP shows John Barker, before joining HMS Defiance, to be serving on HMS Urani(c)e but so far, not when he joined or for how long. While specific logs for September 1805 are not yet available, HMS Uranie had a history of operating out of Portsmouth and Plymouth and could well have been in Portsmouth when HMS Defiance was there.

In the summer 1805, Napoleon planned to invade England with a huge army in France, but first needed the Royal Navy neutralised. The French and Spanish aimed to unite their fleets to protect the Channel crossing. HMS Defiance, part of the Channel Fleet, joined Admiral Calder, intercepted part of the Combined Fleet (C/F) at Cape Finisterre Battle (22 July 1805) and helped to capture two Spanish ships but suffered damage. Returning to Portsmouth (ADM 51-Captain's log) for repairs, restocking and replacing crew, it is here that HMS Uranie was likely docked and John Barker volunteered to join HMS Defiance on 23 September 1805 (as TAP Comments 1. above.) The ship, now revitalised, sailed to join Admiral Nelson's fleet off South Spain.

4. John Barker's Battle Service on HMS Defiance took place during Nelson's two-column strategy at Trafalgar, with British ships utilising their superior morale, seamanship, and gunnery. Nelson led the windward line, Collingwood the leeward with Defiance 12th in line

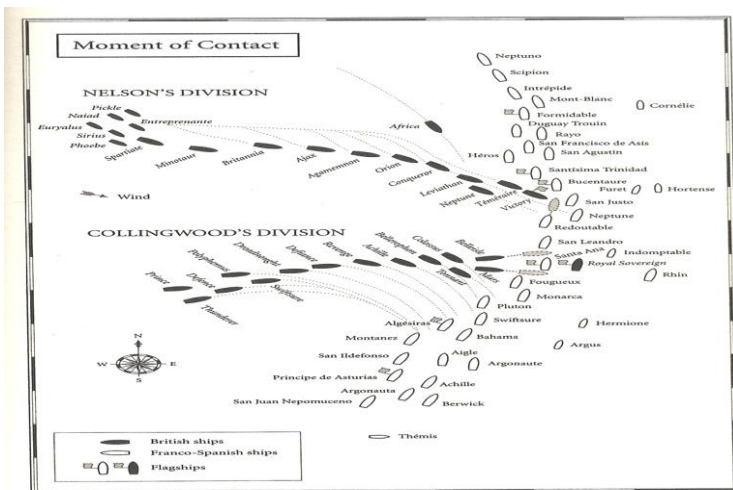


Fig.2

The Battle unfolded slowly in four phases:

- 12.30–1.30pm:** British van cut through, isolated and heavily engaged. (Fig.2)
- 1.30–3.30pm:** Rear columns, including Defiance, joined and balanced the fight.
- 3.00–4.30pm:** Intense combat as C/F ships began to surrender or flee; Nelson suffered a fatal wound but witnessed victory.
- 4.30–5.45pm:** British blocked the returning fleet. 18 enemy ships surrendered, the French Achille exploded and the rest sailed for Cadiz. (Fig.3)

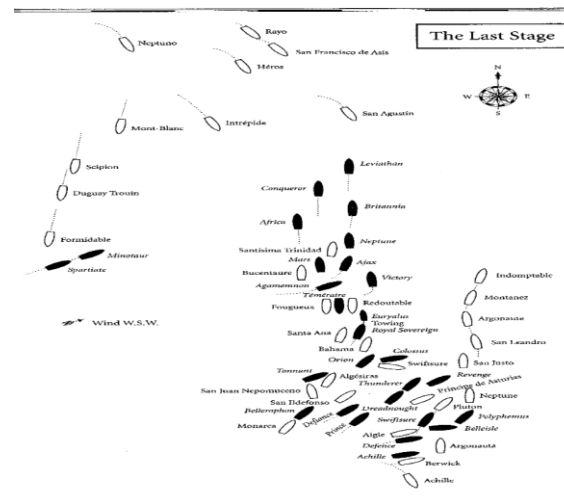


Fig.3

5. The Battle Aftermath and What Became of John Barker. On the evening of 21 October, as news of the victory and Nelson's death emerged, a severe southwest storm struck. Many ships, already damaged from battle, were further battered. On 22 October, the storm peaked, leading to the loss or abandonment of most captured French and Spanish vessels. Although exhausted, British crews managed to keep all their ships afloat, though scattered and damaged. Of 18 total prizes, only four remained by 23 October.

Defiance lost her prize Aigle in the storm when the tow-line broke and she ran aground; all aboard survived and the prize crew were exchanged later. Once the storm subsided, Defiance successfully towed the Argonauta with 300 prisoners to Gibraltar as one of the few surviving prizes.

Essential repairs were made and HMS Defiance sailed to Portsmouth, arriving 1st December 1805.

That John Barker survived Trafalgar, the storm and returned to Portsmouth, is confirmed in the Defiance's 1805 Muster Role (ADM 36/16244) and Pay Book (SB 628). His further listings show he continued serving as Yeoman of the Sheets on the ship. To trace his earlier or later career, it would be necessary to follow all Muster Roles and Pay Books for Uranie before or Defiance after, late 1805, beyond the remit of this article.

The Thriplow Christmas Tree



Our Christmas tree was erected outside the village hall on Saturday 3rd December. Geoff Axe did most of the work with Chairman David and Richard Taylor mainly “supervising” and giving “helpful” suggestions. The tree blew over last year so Geoff has also made a firmer anchoring system which will hopefully keep it upright.

Thanks to Shirley for adding the baubles to the tree.

The above photograph was taken during daylight hours and the one on the right in the evening, which also shows the lights put on the village hall by Geoff. He also put the lights on the Smithy again this year.

Very many thanks are due to Geoff for all he has done in making these central areas of the village look so attractive.

Photos: Pat Easthope



Smithy Repairs

Members may be aware that the Thriplow Society committee keeps an eye on the Smithy, which is owned by the parish council, and we let the parish council know when repairs are needed.



This year repairs were needed to the Smithy ‘annexe’. The work was carried out by Douglas Sheldrick. Rotten boards were removed and repairs were made to the base timber and parts of the timber uprights. All of the black boarding to the rear of the annexe was replaced.



Photos: Geoff Axe

