

# THORPE HAMLET HISTORY GROUP

## Article 1 : WELLESLEY AVENUE INFANTS SCHOOL

By Pauline Scales

*A version of this article was published in St. Matthew's Church Magazine for June/July 2015.*

It was when I was 3 that my family were among those who moved into the top part of Wellesley Avenue (there was no Wellesley Avenue South then). Numbers 1-31 were the first houses on the estate together with some on Morse Road. Opposite were a row of trees marking the drive to Mousehold House and a stretch of heathland where the school was built. Soon the building of the school began in 1934, and I remember watching the first children arrive at the new school. By that time more houses had been built.

I was JEALOUS, why couldn't I go to school too? There began a time of 'let's pretend'! I would get ready for school, join a group and walk as far as the gate, then go back and join another group and do the same again. Eventually my time came, new arrivals gathered at an open French door facing the playground. Apprehensive children yes but not me. My small brother was weeping and eventually my mother jumped the queue, introduced me to the teacher and fled! The room on the front corner was the reception class. There were 6 other rooms, 2 facing west. On the north side was a big loftier room known as the hall. A Miss Day taught in there if it was available but it was also used for P.T. classes and so on. My first teacher was I think Miss Swallow. The classrooms were very formal, we all faced front where there was a blackboard on an easel. On the back wall was the alphabet with small pictures for each letter – A for apple, B for ball, C for cat, D for dog, E for egg and so on.

Each class in fine weather would have time in the playground with exercises and games. Games? London's Burning, Oranges and Lemons, London Bridge is falling down, What's the time Mr Wolf – we knew them all! Work was serious, but by the end of the year there were very few of us who could not read. My brother and sister attended later, and my youngest brother started in September 1939 but had to wait a bit until the air raid trenches had been provided in the playground, each with an entrance at both ends. One leading event in peacetime was Empire Day, there would be a display of some sort – maypole dancing sometimes, a visit from the Lord Mayor or Sheriff with parents arriving to watch. To us it was very exciting, would today's children find it so? Are there others out there with more memories? If so please share them before it is too late to tell them. Today the school is no more, demolished for the building of the new medical centre, but the memories remain of pupils both young and old.

# THORPE HAMLET HISTORY GROUP

## Article 2 : THE BIG HOUSES OF THORPE HAMLET

By Debbie Russell

*A version of this article was published in St. Matthew's Church Magazine for August/September 2015*

### Introduction

Much of Thorpe Hamlet before 1900 was countryside and it had several large houses, with considerable land attached. Many were early Victorian, built for the wealthier people of the city, to enable them to escape the filth and slum surroundings in the centre of Norwich. It was also considered to be healthier to move where the air was fresher, plus the added bonus of the breathtaking views over the Yare valley. Most of the Thorpe Hamlet area was at one time owned by the Harvey family but was sold off over the years. Most of the large houses have now gone, being replaced with mainly terraced housing. Today we have only 4 large houses remaining: Mousehold House, Hill House on Hill House Road, Ferryside on Ferry Road and Holmwood on Harvey Lane.

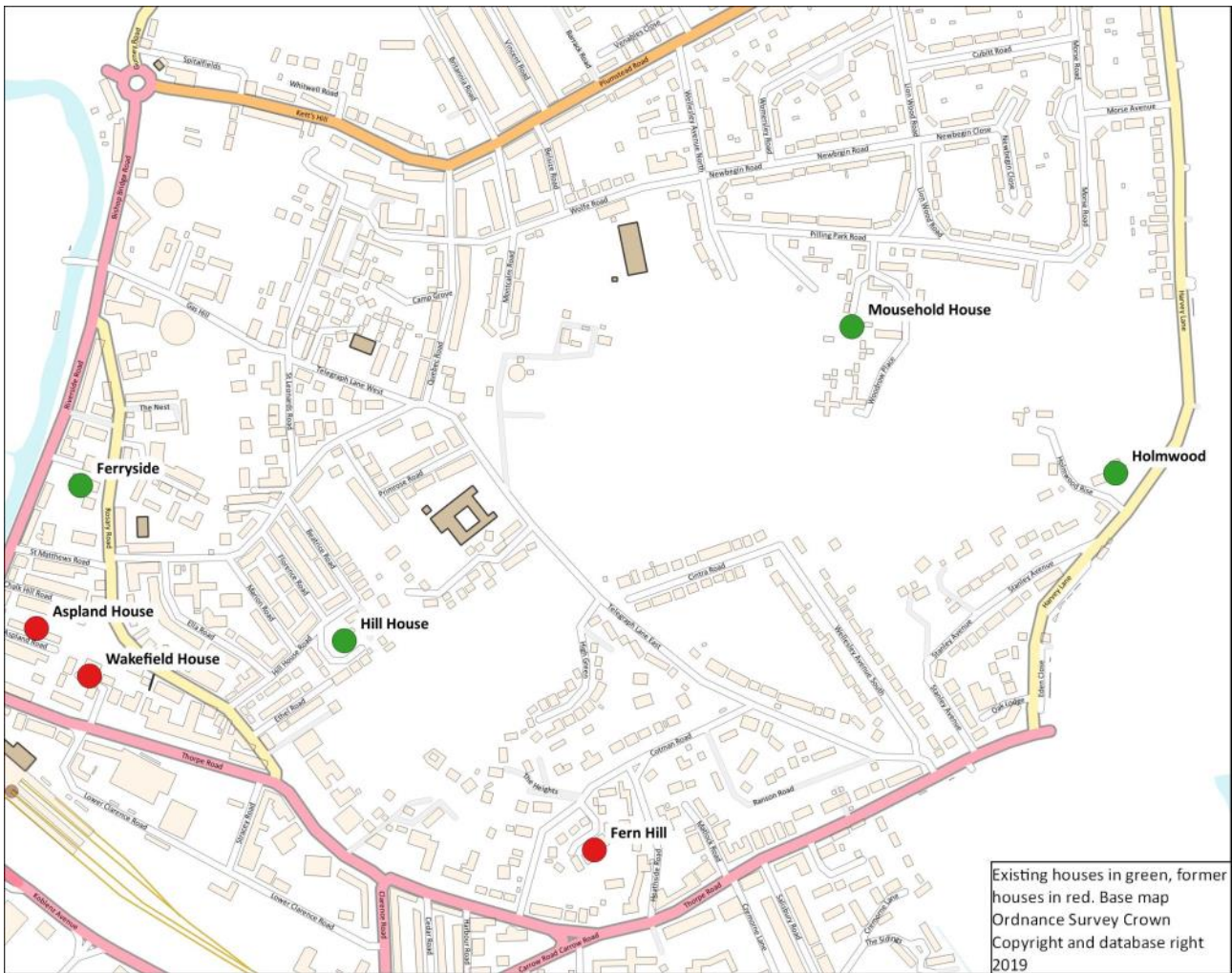
The houses can all be seen on the Ordnance Survey six-inch to the mile map of 1886, available online from the National Library of Scotland at <http://maps.nls.uk/view/101582876>.

### Lost houses

There were several other large houses which have long since disappeared, one such being Wakefield House on Thorpe Road. In 1901 this was a private girls school run by three sisters. The school later relocated to further along Thorpe Road and is now a care home situated on the junction of Rosary Road and Thorpe Road. The school was then owned by a Miss Dorcas, who was a teacher at the original school. The original house was demolished in the late 1940's after having suffered severe bomb damage. The site was purchased by the Council and on it they built a Registry Office and Library. These were subsequently demolished and the new development, Old Library Mews, now stands in its place.

Aspland House on Aspland Road was at one time a maternity home in the 1930's and 40's. It later became offices and was eventually demolished. New houses now stand on the site.

On Thorpe Road we had many large houses but Fern Hill, built by solicitor Isaac Bugg Coakes, who owned the land once belonging to the Harvey's, was one of the grandest. It had extensive grounds which were later sold off as building land. The house was left



empty after his death in 1909 but used as a T.B. hospital for soldiers during the First World War. After the war it was left empty again until used as a hotel in the 1930's. Fern Hill was later demolished and houses built on the site around the Cotman Road area.

### Mousehold House

Now to the large houses that remain. Mousehold House sits in the middle of the Plumstead Estate and was originally surrounded by eight and a half acres of land. This beautiful Georgian house was owned by the Harvey family. When they purchased the house in the mid 1800's they had it extended by the architect, William Mear. Mousehold House was bought from the Mousehold House Harvey's by Norwich City Council in 1930 for the sum of £13,700 for the purpose of building the Plumstead Estate. Most of the estate was built before the Second World War and the flats date from 1961. Local historian, Geoffrey Goreham, fought to save the house from being demolished as part of the development of flats in William Mear Gardens and in 1964 moved his family into the house to save it from being vandalised, whilst awaiting a decision to be reached by the council. What he thought would be only a few months, turned out to be a 4 year occupation. If it wasn't for his determination to save such a beautiful house, there would probably now be a 16 storey block of flats on the site. Mousehold House has the

distinction of being hailed as the poshest council house in the country since being converted into council flats in the early 1970's.

### **Hill House**

Hill House remains standing and is now used as offices but most of the surrounding land which was owned by Isaac Bugg Coakes was sold by him to build the terraced housing and roads of Thorpe Hamlet. This was on the condition that the roads would be named after his daughters, now known as the Lady Roads. Primrose, Florence, Ella, Beatrice, Marion and Ethel. Also built on the land were Thorpe Hamlet Infant and Junior Schools and the Crome and Stuart schools.

### **Ferryside**

Ferryside, tucked away at the back of Ferry Road, is today used as offices but was once a home to a member of the Bolingbroke family.

### **Holmwood**

Holmwood is now a residential home.

Today we have memories of the houses we have lost over the years but are lucky to still have a handful to pass by and wonder what went on within their walls in days gone by.

# THORPE HAMLET HISTORY GROUP

## Article 3 : ENTERTAINMENT AND LEISURE IN THORPE HAMLET

**By Debbie Russell**

*A version of this article was published in St. Matthew's Church Magazine for December 2015/ January 2016*

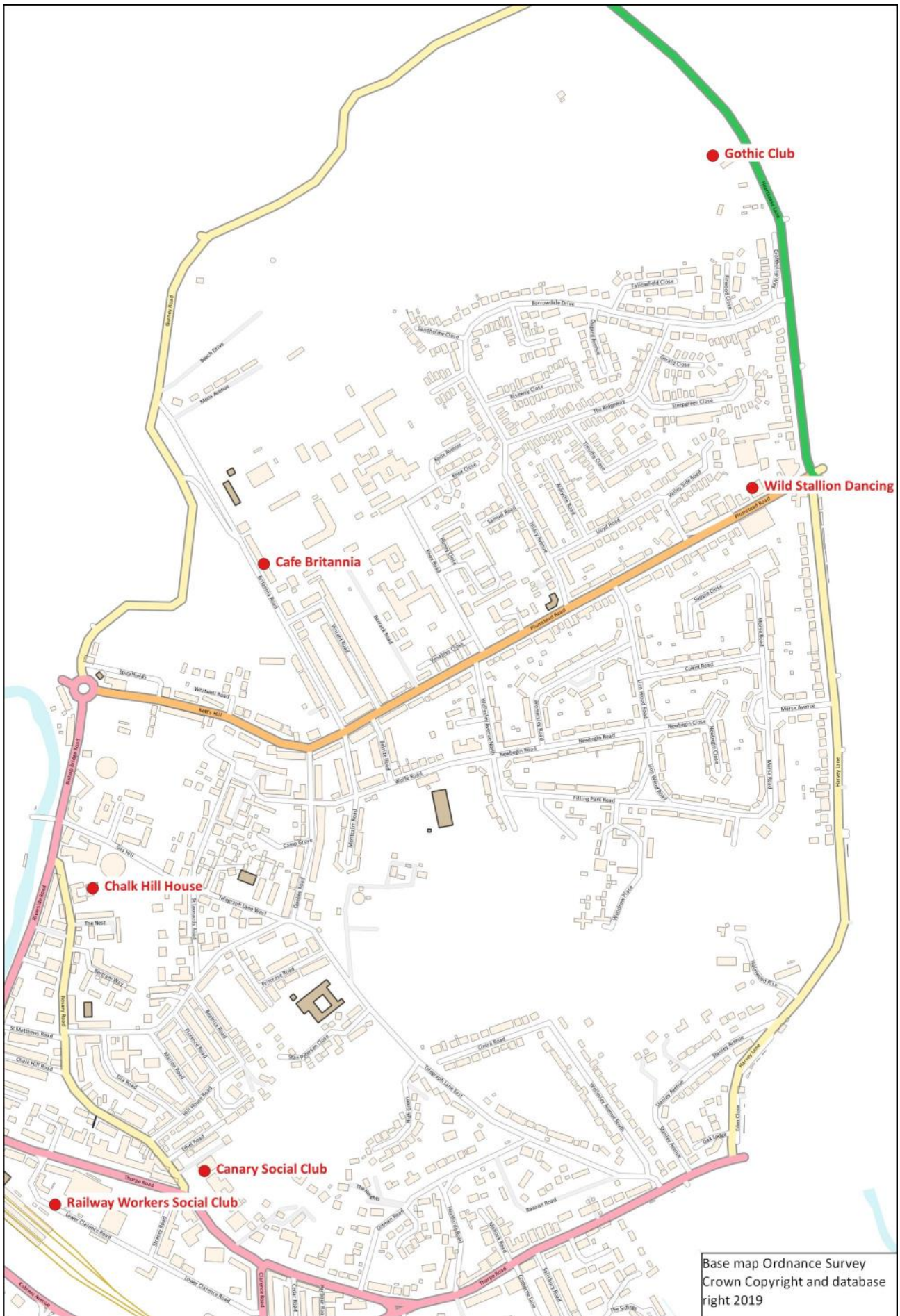
With the festive season and New Year just around the corner I thought about all the places we had to go to for a good night out in Thorpe Hamlet. We could boast about having 18 public houses once upon a time. They were thriving places where you could meet for a drink and chat on a night out or play in the darts team. Some pubs had crib teams and snooker teams. Cricket and football teams were popular and the yearly coach trip out to the seaside with the odd visit on the way back home to other hostelrys.

If you worked at one of the big companies in Thorpe Hamlet you would of course be a member of the company social club. At this time of the year hundreds of employees children would attend the annual Christmas parties. Lots of games like musical chairs and pass the parcel followed by a party tea of sandwiches, trifles and jellies all washed down with gallons of orange squash! And before the mums and dads turned up to take them home there would be a flying visit from Father Christmas and a huge sack of presents for them. For the parents, there were the Christmas and New Year's Eve dances.

The social clubs that survive are now no longer in Thorpe Hamlet, Laurence and Scott's social club was the Gothic Club on Heartsease Lane which was demolished and a nursery school and a church was built on the land (the church burned down a few years ago). The Gas Works Social Club was once housed in the beautiful Chalk Hill House but was later moved on to Rowntree Way. The Railway Workers Social Club was on Thorpe Road and was latterly shared with the Taxi Drivers Association. This closed and the building was converted into flats.

There were many other places to enjoy leisure activities in the area besides pubs and social clubs. In the 1930s there was a bowling club on Cotman Road. In the 1970s, when the Crome and Stuart school was closed down, half the school buildings were converted to a sports and leisure centre. It had a gym, bar, hi-tech ten-pin bowling alley which attracted several teams and leagues. It was also an adult education centre as well, there were tennis and badminton courts and a playgroup which was enjoyed by many of the Thorpe Hamlet three year olds. Sadly, the Crome Centre was closed down and demolished to make way for the houses in Stan Petersen Close.





We did still have a bowling alley on Plumstead Road tucked behind the shops. Although it was old fashioned and you had to do your own scoring unlike the computer system at the Crome which did it for you! This was housed in an old building left from the pig farm on the Valley Drive (before the houses were built). It was a rollerskating rink originally in the early 1960s and over the years this club became a venue for bingo as well. It is now the Wild Stallion Line Dancing Club and sometimes used for Zumba Dance classes for the more energetic members of the community!

Today we have the Canary Social Club on Thorpe Road, only 9 pubs and a new jewel in Thorpe Hamlet's crown which is the Café Britannia at Britannia Barracks. It is a thriving café during the day and now also does evening meals as well, with the stunning views of the city it can't be anything less than an amazing place to relax with a pot of tea and cakes. Well that's my trip down memory lane and with that I hope everybody has a peaceful Christmas and New Year however you celebrate it, with our best wishes from Thorpe Hamlet History Group.

# THORPE HAMLET HISTORY GROUP

## Article 4 : THORPE MATERNITY HOME

By Debbie Russell

*A version of this article was published in St. Matthew's Church Magazine for February/March 2016*

Thorpe Hamlet once had a select maternity home, it was situated on Aspland Road and was housed in a very grand looking 19th century mansion house with a garden on two sides of the house. Records show it was open in 1927 and closed around 1946. It was run by Miss B. Hawkins who was Matron and Miss Anderson who was a S.R.N (State Registered Nurse), S.C.M (State Certified Midwife) and C.S.M.M.G (Chartered Society of Masseuses and Medical Gymnasts). All the nursing staff held their C.M.B certificate (Central Midwives Board). The maternity home could accommodate 14 patients at a time, and boasted 13 wards or bedrooms, a nursery fully equipped and heated by coal fire and a sun balcony, 2 bathrooms, 2 labour wards and 4 toilets. There were also 2 nurses bedrooms plus a bedroom for the Matron and Sister, With a sitting room for them. The servants had bedrooms and a sitting room on the upper floor. Meals were cooked and prepared on the premises in a kitchen with vegetable preparation area, pantries and larders, a scullery. There was also the sluice room and laundry with a copper and boiler.

The brochure printed at the time states that the home is 'spaciously built with wide staircases and large airy rooms. The furniture and appointments ensure every comfort and at the same time provide all that is necessary in up to date equipment'. The nursery was fitted on one side with a vita glass balcony to ensure the maximum of sunlight. All rooms had gas fires and hot and cold running water. The home was constantly staffed with staff living in. To have a baby at Thorpe Maternity Home would cost you £4 4s (£4-20) a week if you shared a room with two other women or £6 6s (£6-30) if you had a room of your own. Included in the fees were full board, nursing and attendance. No charge was made for patient's laundry, use of the labour ward or accommodation for babies in the nursery. There was however a charge for drugs, medicines and visitor's teas. The home closed around 1946 and in 1947 it became a boarding house. It later became used for offices of the Area Health Authority until it was demolished and now a row of new houses stand where this lovely old house stood.



# THORPE HAMLET HISTORY GROUP

## Article 5 : A PASSAGE TO NORWICH

By Robin Bowling

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In about 1974 I was skipper of a little ship called the 'Peter Robin' and we worked in the coasting trade; our company was based in Bishopsgate, London. Most of our trade was in cargoes from deep sea ships who were discharging in London for onward shipment to small east coast ports and taking cargoes from the same ports to be loaded into large ships for shipment all over the world. When my ship was empty



I phoned the office for orders and

was told to proceed to the Co-op Cutting in the Victoria Dock to load 200 tons of Canadian wheat for Reed's flour mill Norwich. The 'Peter Robin' was laying on the buoys at Gravesend where we bought enough victuals for the upriver trip to the Royal Docks.

We collected our boat from the Isolation Hospital pier sculled to the ship hoisted the boat aboard and started the engine, let go from the buoy and turned up the River Thames to carry the flood tide up to the Royal Docks. On reaching the docks we tied up to the lock entrance of the King George V Dock. I jumped ashore and ran to the Dock Master's office to see when the next lock in would be, he told me that it was nearly high water and a deep sea ship was about to lock out and if we stayed well back we could lock in on the return water. After about 15 minutes the lock gates opened and two tugs arrived, picked up the deep sea ship (one at the bow the other at the stern of the ship). With the familiar cry of "let go" and whistle signals from the Dock Master the ship a Blue Star ship was manoeuvred into the river and the tugs let go for her to proceed down the river and thence to sea. The Dock Master then called us into the lock and signalled us to move to move up to the lock gates as an inbound deep sea ship was coming into the lock behind us. She had been stemming the tide just upstream of the lock gates. The ship came into the lock behind us with the assistance of tugs, she was another Blue Star ship which was good for us as she was going to the Victoria Dock to discharge her cargo of meat etc..

Why was it good for us? Because the two bridges we had to get through would have to open for her and we as the smaller ship could slip through first and not be in the way. Without this help we could be kept waiting a long time as small ships counted for very little in the London Docks. The lock gates slowly opened and we let go the mooring ropes and the P.L.A. (Port of London Authority) tugs stood by to tow the Blue Star ship to her berth. As we approached the bridge between The King George V dock and the Royal Albert dock opened and we motored through and motored up the Royal Albert dock to the Connaught Road bridge between the Royal Albert and the Victoria dock. We had to slow down and wait for the Blue star ship to catch up. When the ship was three quarters of the way up the dock the bridge swung open and we went through into the Victoria dock. The Co-op Cutting was a small wet dock just through the bridge on the port (left) hand side of the Victoria dock, well out of the way of the Blue Star ship's discharge berth. We tied up at the vacant berth just below the silo and stepped ashore to see the silo foreman about loading. He said they were busy loading lighters for the rest of the day but he could fit us in first thing in the morning. This gave us time to walk to Silvertown to buy victuals for our passage to Norwich and a bit besides in case of bad weather. With the grub cupboard topped up (no fridges or freezers aboard then) we turned in after a swift beer at the Connaught Tavern just outside the dock.

In the morning we uncovered the hold and moved under the loading spout of the silo. After a hold inspection, which we passed with flying colours we started to load the wheat. If we had a good stow we would be full right up, so we helped the dockers shovel wheat into the after cupboard as if this was not full the cargo could shift in bad weather. The dockers were a good lot and worked well after we made them a cup of tea each. The PLA tea wagon comes round but the dockers preferred our tea and biscuits. One of my jobs when we loaded was to pump out the water ballast from the after ballast tanks so the ship would float a little higher and load to her Plimsoll mark. Unfortunately the after ballast tank valve would not open, the shaft just spun round and round leaving the water ballast still in the tank, it would make us look overloaded. The valve could not be removed when the ship was deep loaded as the water in the tank would transfer itself into the engine room bilge.

I decided to risk it and sail for Norwich where a repair could be carried out. After loading, signing the bills of lading and clearing customs we let go and motored down the dock after waiting for the Connaught Road bridge to swing for us. This time we locked out of the Royal Albert dock basin which being downstream of the King George V dock gave us a 15 minute start on our passage. We were lucky and carried the ebb tide down the river. It was a good spring ebb and we carried it to the Black Tail Spit navigation buoy (below Southend). Here we met the young floodtide which slowed us down but gave us plenty of water over the Spitway.

The Spitway is a shallow area of sand between the Swin or Kings channel and the Wallet channel, if you are bound Maldon, Colchester or Ipswich you normally cross it judging your tides and feeling your way with a boathook or a lead line. If you are bound for Great Yarmouth or Norwich you can avoid it but the passage is longer, the average time for an 8 knot ship from London to Yarmouth is 16 hours but can be longer with bad weather. Luckily the weather was fine with light south west wind about force 3 or 4. It was a good job the weather was fine or we

would have been like a half tide rock. We cleared Orford Ness with the ebb tide under us and carried that ebb all the way to Great Yarmouth we entered Great Yarmouth in the dark and tied up at Dalgetties's quay for the night, making sure the fenders (car tyres) were over the plimsoll mark and hoping the Board of Trade inspector did not see we were over loaded.

In the morning the agent came to see us and asked when I would like a bridge lift as the tide at Norwich is about four and a half hours later than at Great Yarmouth. I ordered the bridge (Haven Bridge) for 10am which was about one and a half hours before high water at Great Yarmouth, this gave me most of the flood tide to Norwich. As I had never been to Norwich as master before the agent gave me an Ordnance Survey map of the Norfolk Broads to follow. We let go and motored through the bridge and entered Breydon Water the flood tide helping us up. When we got above Seven Mile House I noticed we seemed deeper in the water, I gave the wheel to the mate and went down into the engine room to investigate. I checked the engine room bilge and found it empty so I went out onto the after deck and soon got wet feet as the after deck was 4 to 5 inches under water but I soon realised what the problem was; we had come from the salt water sea into the fresh water river which is less buoyant also the good stow the London dockers had given us plus the engine's power had drawn the stern down. I eased the engine down and the stern floated a little higher and the further up the stream we went the speed limits slowed us down and the stern floated a little bit higher. Reedham Bridge swung as we approached; there was no v.h.s. or any sort of radio on our size ship at that time. At Hardley Cross we entered the Port of Norwich area.

The river at this point is part of Thorpe Hamlet, just the river not the banks. We went through Trowse Bridge and Carrow Bridge without incident and berthed at Reed's flour mill. They were waiting for the wheat so we removed the hatches and they started grabbing out the wheat. After about 4 or 5 grabs we were on our marks and safe from the Board of Trade inspectors. The fine for being overloaded was £300 per inch for my size ship. As soon as we were empty I took out the faulty valve and had it repaired and replaced it, we were legal again. I posted off the freight sheet from the post office on Carrow Hill and booked a bridge lift from John Dann the bridge master and we were away down river off to new ports and places.



*Coaster approaching Carrow Bridge, passing the Boom Towers*



*Reed's flour mill, now converted into residential accommodation, seen beyond Carrow Bridge in 2019.*



# THORPE HAMLET HISTORY GROUP

## Article 6 : SCHOOL HOLIDAYS REMEMBERED

By Debbie Russell

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The children have now returned to their classrooms after the long summer holidays (much to the relief of many parents!) and I realised how quiet the streets were during that time, they resembled something like the Marie Celeste or even something like a scene from Chitty Chitty Bang Bang with the child catcher searching empty streets looking for the children. Where were they all hiding? What were they doing?

I remember being a child of the 60s being out nearly all the time in the summer holidays having all day to do anything and everything as long as it was free! Our parents had very little spare money in those days so we didn't have holidays away. We didn't mind as everybody was in the same boat, we still had fun. Most pavements were covered in hopscotches and noughts and crosses – we were supposed to wash it away at the end of the day but never bothered as we needed them for the next day. 4 yards of knicker elastic provided us with the necessary equipment for Chinese skipping. The boys had their footballs to kick around, usually on the street and sometimes not for long as our neighbours had a rule that if the ball came into their gardens three times on the third the ball was confiscated until our dads got home from work and the said ball was handed back to them. Our garden shed was cleared out and swept clean once a year whether it needed it or not so we could have a den to go to on a wet day, us girls never managed to keep it for long as big brothers always over-ruled us. When we did have the chance to get in it we would make up strange codes which we usually forgot how to read but who cared, we enjoyed doing them.

One of my favourite things I enjoyed was sliding down St. James's Hill on cardboard! Sheer bliss until you hit a rabbit hole. We all would take some sandwiches and a drink and go out for much of the day over Mousehold Heath, making dens and sliding down the hills and getting rather mucky in the process. We never had a watch but we knew when it was teatime. Thorpe Hamlet used to have lots of haunted houses, well to us they were, any empty houses were fair game to us, daring each other to go inside them or in the gardens. Opposite Wickham's



yard on Wolfe Road was the ruins of an old house and the garden was really overgrown with trees and bushes and the older kids used to love jumping out at us just to scare us silly. The corner shop – now the One Stop -- used to be owned by a Mr Arthurton and he sold penny and tuppenny ice totties from a side window, you had to ring a bell at the side of the window and wait to be served – sometimes he would sell bags of gooseberries for sixpence, I can't ever remember buying a bag with any sweet ones in it!



When I think of some of the things we done it's hard to think how we fitted it all in six weeks but I do know how our parents felt when it came to going back to school as I felt the same when my children returned after their summer holidays although my children were not impressed when I had to show them the joys of cardboard skiing down St. James's Hill!



# THORPE HAMLET HISTORY GROUP

## Article 7 : A BRIDGE TOO NEAR

By Robin Bowling

*A version of this article was published in St. Matthew's Church Magazine for February/March 2017*



In about 1982 when I was master of the coasting vessel 'Subro Valour' we had just discharged soya bean meal (used for cattle feed) at Riverside in Norwich; we swung the ship round and called Carrow bridge on the VHS radio and proceeded down the river towards the bridge. The bridge lifted and we sailed through, as we approached Trowse railway bridge we called the signal box to ask when they could open the bridge. They called back and told us there would be a twenty minute wait to allow the London train to pass over the bridge before it could be swung.

It is difficult to tie the ship up between Carrow and Trowse bridges as there is no river bank and there was a lot of land water running down the river; this caused the ship to drop down onto the bridge. Dropping the anchor was not an option as there are electricity cables and gas pipes crossing the river or to turn round as the river is too narrow at this point but the bridge had wooden piling to protect and guide the vessel into the bridge hole as it is known. I called the mate to throw a rope over one of the wooden piles to hold the ship until the bridge was ready to swing open to get a rope out and gently stop the ship. We had a cup of tea while we waited for the bridge to open. We were only going through the bridge and then tying up on the Deal



Ground overnight before continuing on to Great Yarmouth in the morning.

When the railway bridge was about to swing, I called to the mate to let go of the rope from the pile but unfortunately for Joe the mate, it had become jammed on the pile so Joe stepped onto the cross timbers to release the rope but as he was about to step back aboard the ship, the cross timber which measured approximately 14" by 14" proved to be rotten 'as a pear'; it collapsed causing Joe to fall into the river. The ship's side was too steep and too high out of the water for him to get back aboard or for the rest of the crew to pull him back on board. He swam to the bank which sloped at this point and scrambled onto the north shore.

We carried on through the bridge and tied up at the Deal Ground. Joe waited for the railway bridge to close and walked back to the ship; he ran below and had a hot shower and was none the worse for his dip in the river. The next day we sailed down to Great Yarmouth and loaded our next cargo, not giving the railway bridge another thought. Roughly two weeks later the ship's owner spoke to me and asked about the railway bridge incident, so I gave him the story chapter and verse, he then told me Railtrack had put in an insurance claim for the repair of the timber cross beam that had collapsed when Joe stood on it. I pointed out that the wood was so rotten it had collapsed under Joe's weight, approximately eleven stones, and I thought Railtrack were 'trying it on'. I wrote a full report of the incident, posted it to the office with a first class stamp and that was the last we heard of the Trowse bridge incident.

# THORPE HAMLET HISTORY GROUP

## Article 8 : THORPE HAMLET PUBS

By Debbie Russell

*A version of this article was published in St. Matthew's Church Magazine. Numbers after the pub names refer to the map on the next page - pubs currently open shown in green, former pubs in red.*

Thorpe Hamlet over the years could boast of having 22 public houses at one time, and today we have only 9 (10 if you include the QUEEN OF ICENI [1] at the Riverside complex) and 2 of these are under threat of closure, so I thought I would look back at all these watering holes for the Thorpe Hamlet locals and decided we can all go on a paper pub crawl!

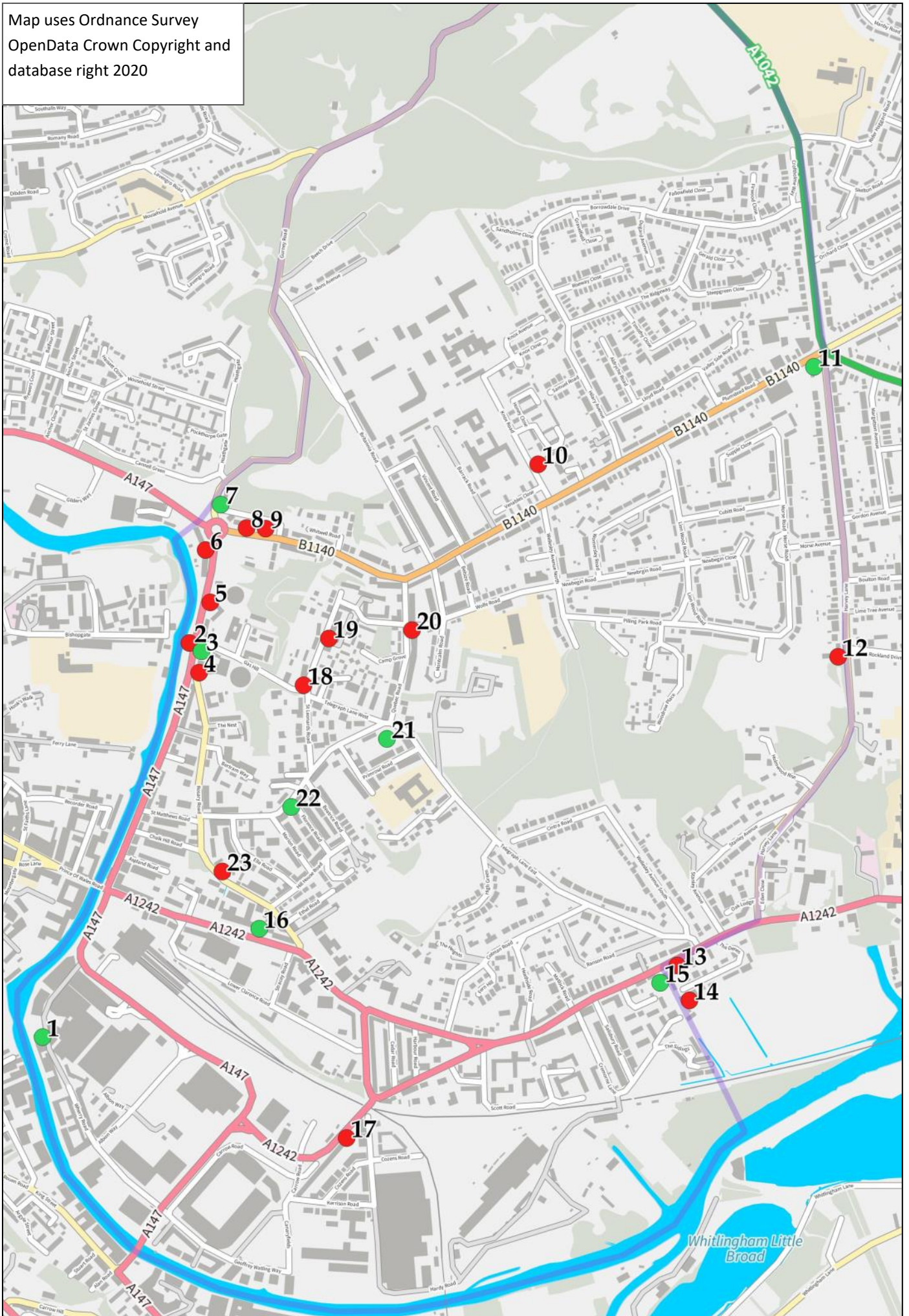
So if we start at the bottom of Gas Hill and look across the road a few years ago the BISHOP BRIDGE INN [2] stood from 1830 until 1959 when it was demolished. At the bottom of Gas Hill on the corner was the KING'S ARMS, this became THE BRIDGE HOUSE in 1975 to 2012 when it changed its name once more to the present name of THE LOLLARDS PIT [3]. The building dates from 1760. The present name of LOLLARDS is after the unfortunate people who were burnt at the stake close by because of their religious beliefs. A couple of doors down was the EVENING GUN [4], this dated from 1836 and was just a beer house until 1867 when it got the full licence to be called a public house. This was named because of the gun which was fired by the nearby Britannia Barracks every evening and the sound could be heard from the pub so it is said. The pub closed its doors for the last time in 1964 and was demolished, the Cotswolds Furniture shop now stands in its place.

If we walk back towards Ketts Hill we will come to the DUKE OF YORK [5] on Bishop Bridge Road, this was a beer house when it opened in 1810. It was badly damaged in the air raids in April 1942 and closed in 1967, this was demolished and the site re-developed. A bit further along the road we then come to the LORD RAGLAN [6], this dates from 1855 and closed in 2002, this was converted to a private house. Now we head across the roundabout to the CASTLE [7] which stands on Spitalfields, it's the only surviving building on the road. This opened in 1845 as a licenced property and today still retains its original name.

As we start the climb up Ketts Hill we come to the KETTS TAVERN [8] but it was also known as THE KETTS CASTLE (a bit confusing with the CASTLE behind it), this opened in 1827 and closed in 2015. The pub had a name change in the 1980's and became the OLD BILL and was done out in the style of old police cells however when it changed hands again it reverted back to the KETTS TAVERN until early 2015 for a short time it was called the VIRTUOSO. This is now closed and for sale as a private house. Next door to the KETTS separated once by a passage stood the OSTRICH INN [9], it dated from 1850 and was badly damaged by the Norwich flood of 1912 when the entire front of the building collapsed. It was badly damaged in the bombing in 1942 and had to be demolished. Pre-fabs were put up on the site later on, and when they were



Map uses Ordnance Survey  
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removed it became the car park for the KETTS TAVERN.

Up the hill we trundle to the WINDMILL [10] on Knox road, this has seen some changes to the building over the years. It was originally a two storey house, then in 1922 a new house was built next to it and the original building pulled down and then in the 1930's a flat roofed extension was added to the side of it. The future of this pub is unsure at the moment.

Now we wander down Plumstead Road to the HEARTSEASE [11], this was once an old coaching inn and was situated when it was built on part of Mousehold Heath, it was also near the old racetrack. It dates from 1839.

Next we go down Harvey Lane to find the MORRISON LODGE [12]. This was built in 1939 just after the new council estate was built in what was once the grounds of the nearby Mousehold House. It was built to service the tenants of the new estate. It closed in 2005 and new houses stand in its place. Now we walk down the rest of Harvey lane onto Thorpe Road, there we come to THE REDAN [13] also known in the distant past as the HERO OF THE REDAN, this was named in honour of Sir Charles Ashe Windham from Felbrigg. This opened in 1859 and closed in the 1990's, it is now a Cantonese Chinese restaurant. The CREMORNE GARDENS [14] was situated down Frogs Hall Lane and had a fairly short life, it opened in 1861 and closed in 1910. A bit further along we reach the EAST END RETREAT [15], opened in 1851 until 1965 when it became known to many locals of the hamlet as the MUSTARD POT until 2011 and is now THE FAT CAT AND CANARY a fine real ale establishment.

If we continue along Thorpe Road we will come to the COACH AND HORSES [16], another fine real ale pub with its own small brewery at the rear of the building, this was opened in 1830 and still retains its original name. If we carry along Thorpe Road along to Carrow Road we reach the CLARENCE HARBOUR [17], when it opened it was just a beer house but became a licenced pub in 1863 until its closure in 2004. It was demolished and a row of new houses stands on its site.

Now that's the pubs on the outskirts of the Hamlet, let's go to the others that are tucked away!

If we start back at the bottom of Gas Hill and slowly climb to the top we get to the SHIP [18], perched at the top it was a handy drop in for workers at the Gas Works, the Ship dated from 1851 to 1974 when it was demolished for new houses. Along to St Leonards Road heading for Ketts Hill now and we get to the BAKERS ARMS [19], this too was a beer house until being giving a full licence in 1861. The Bakers closed its doors in 2009 and was converted into a house. Now we follow St. Leonards Road along until we get to Quebec Road and we see the QUEBEC [20] on the corner, it opened in 1886 and now sadly under the threat of closure.

Walk down the hill from the Quebec and we get to the WILLIAM IV [21], this was once called the MOUSEHOLD TEAROOMS when it opened in 1842. Down the hill to the other end of St. Leonards road to the JUBILEE [22], opened in 1887 and in the 1980's for a short while named the HANOVER HOUSE- it was re-named back to the JUBILEE when new owners took it over.

Our final stop of our drinking establishment tour past and present takes us on to Rosary Road to the ROSARY TAVERN [23], opened as a beer house in 1836 and closed its doors in 2011 to be converted into a private home.

# THORPE HAMLET HISTORY GROUP

## Article 9 : THE INCIDENT IN THE FOG

By Robin Bowling

*A version of this article was published in St. Matthew's Church Magazine for August/September 2017.*

After we had discharged Soya bean meal at John Lee Barbers Bowling Green Wharf in Great Yarmouth which is situated in the North River just below Vauxhall Bridge, I telephoned our London office for orders. The office told me to proceed to Norwich to load scrap metal for Dunkirk. I went back aboard to tell the boys (crew) we could have a night in Great Yarmouth and we could sail up to Norwich in the morning as it was a winter and we would need daylight to negotiate the river Yare to Norwich and King's scrap yard, where the Novi Sad bridge is now. It was a bit frosty in the morning when we let go off the ropes and backed out of the river Bure and headed up the river Yare where Breydon Bridge lifted for us and we had a good uneventful trip to Norwich both Reedham and Trowse railway bridges opened for us promptly and after Calling Carrow Road Bridge on the V.H.S. radio that lifted for us as well. We went past the Scrap yard to the swinging basin (just above the Julian Bridge) to swing round to face down river and then proceeded to King's Wharf.

The trip from Yarmouth to Norwich takes about six hours and after such an uneventful trip we were alongside the Wharf at about 2 p.m. We uncovered the ship's hold and started to load the scrap. There was a big heap on the Quay, approximately 250 tons or more. The ship was called the Subro Venture could load 250 tons on a draught of 8 feet 6 inches. The scrap was lifted into the ship with a Scotch Derrick that was fixed on the quay permanently. The Derrick moved from side to side lifting the metal with a spider grab and releasing it above the ship to fall into the hold. The wharf foreman called Sammy told me the scrap had been weighed in on the weighbridge by the lorry load so it should be right but anyway I would load to fresh water marks. We finished loading the next day at about 10 a.m. and after getting the paperwork and bills of lading signed we shopped for vitals on Norwich Market and filled up with fresh water just across the river courtesy of John Dann the bridge master.

He lifted Carrow Bridge and we steamed up the river. Trowse Bridge opened for us as did Reedham Bridge and Haven Bridge to open on our arrival. As we approached the Berney Arms public house Great Yarmouth port called me on the V.H.S. and told me that visibility was less than a quarter of a mile at the lower end of Breydon Water and they could not see Breydon Bridge from Haven Bridge House. We put the ship alongside the Quay and there were no bollards so the mate put a rope round the phone box on the quay as it has a good concrete base and I don't think it would come adrift. The landlord of the Berney Arms came out of the pub to watch us tie up; the mate Cyril asked him "What time do you open?" and the landlord replied "March the 31st". At the time the Berney Arms pub closed at the end of October and reopened in



the spring. Just then Great Yarmouth Radio called us and said visibility had improved to 1½ miles so we let go and steamed to Great Yarmouth. The bridges opened and we went straight through and to sea and Dunkirk leaving the landlord standing there none the wiser.

# THORPE HAMLET HISTORY GROUP

## Article 10 : CARGOES TO AND FROM NORWICH

By Robin Bowling

*A version of this article was published in St. Matthew's Church Magazine for December 2017/January 2018*

Norwich has been a port for over a thousand years. The Angles settled in Norwich around the King street area followed by the Vikings who gave Norwich it's name. They came up Rivers Yare and Wensum and traded with Denmark and the Low Countries. Later came the Normans who built the castle and Cathedral with Caen stone from France in vessels very similar to the Keels that were used on the Broads before the wherries. The good Burghers of Norwich shipped wool for cloth to Flanders and the Low countries. Other cargoes came to Norwich and the ships paid harbour dues to the city at the Boom Towers; the chains would be lowered upon payment to allow the ship passage to the wharves that lined King Street.

With the industrial revolution of the 18th and 19th centuries the river was improved to allow bigger ships to reach Norwich. There were cargoes to Colman's, coal to the power station, timber for the timber yards, slate and tiles for the building trade, wheat for Reads Mill all shipped in steam coasters and Thames Sailing Barges. Cargoes being exported were Norfolk barley for the Dutch and Belgium breweries, scrap metal from King's scrap yard in King Street to Dunkirk, Rotterdam and Spain. Wherries shipped and transported all sorts of cargoes including household refuse from Norwich to Whitlingham where it was unloaded by steam crane onto the refuse dump. It is all finished now and the last ship to be unloaded in Norwich was the Dutch coaster 'Buccaneer' in 1987. We are now in the age of the Lorry; nowhere near the cargo capacity and eight times the cost, but that's progress!

# THORPE HAMLET HISTORY GROUP

## Article 11: THE GENERAL, THE BANKER AND THE SOLICITOR

By Jim Marriage

*A version of this article was published in St. Matthew's Church Magazines for June/July and August/September 2018*

### **The General : General Robert John Harvey**

If you ever have the opportunity to see the deeds of the property you are living in, there is a very good chance that at some time the land will have been owned by the Harvey family. The family owned most of Thorpe Hamlet in the 18th century. Sir Robert John Harvey inherited from his father John Harvey in 1816. The Harvey family was well established, and had made its fortune from weaving and also the manufacture of the famous Norwich Shawls. Over the years the family held most of the important civic posts in Norwich including 8 mayors and 7 sheriffs

General Robert John Harvey was born in 1785 in what is now the Broadland Council Offices at the bottom of Harvey Lane. He had three brothers and eleven sisters. Among many of their achievements they introduced Horse Racing on Mousehold Heath. Part of General Harvey's education was in Leipzig, Germany, and although many of his family went into banking he joined the Army in 1803 aged 18.

After the invasion of Portugal by the French in 1807, the Portuguese Army was in disarray. The Portuguese made a request to the British Government for a senior British Officer to command, reorganise and modernise their Army. In 1809 William Carr Beresford was appointed to do this and was made a Field Marshall in the Portuguese Army. He appointed 350 officers and 23 sergeants from the British Army to the Portuguese Army and promoted them above their British Army Ranks. Harvey was one of these officers. He had a very distinguished military career and in particular in the peninsular War in Portugal and Spain against Napoleon. In 1810 he was made assistant Quarter Master General of the Portuguese Army. He organised the Portuguese Guerrilla Corps and the Intelligence Service where his skill in languages was useful, and in 1811 he was appointed to the General Headquarters of the Duke of Wellington as Liaison officer to the Portuguese Army until the end of the war in 1814. He was at most of the battles in the Peninsular War, and on Wellington's recommendation he was given the same rank in the British Army as he had held in the Portuguese Army. After the war the King of Portugal made him a Knight of the Order of the Tower and the Sword. The British Prince Regent also knighted him and in 1831 he was made a Companion of the Order of the Bath. He was considered to be one of the bravest men in England.

He developed Mousehold House and the surrounding area. The following street names and places were named in memory of the Harvey family, the Duke of Wellington and the Peninsular Wars:

- Cintra Road – after the treaty of Sintra, Portugal in 1808
- Harvey Lane
- Wellesley Avenue South (Wellesley is Wellington's family name)
- Wellesley Avenue North.

### **The Banker : Sir Robert John Harvey – 1st Baronet of Crown Point, Whitlingham 1817 - 1871**

The son of General Robert Harvey. Trying to unravel the Harvey family tree can be very confusing because they tended to use the same Christian Names – Robert, John, and Robert John; Robert being the predominant one. He was the Senior Partner in the Harvey and Hudson Bank (The Norwich Crown Bank) at Bank Plain, founded by his Great Grandfather Robert Harvey (1730 – 1816) in 1792. At one time the bank had about 25 branches spread around Norfolk and Suffolk, and more than 3000 depositors. The Baronet was in full control in the 1860's and enjoyed a good life style while he rebuilt his house at Crown Point in Trowse which he had bought in 1861. This rebuilding was costing more than he had expected, and he speculated rather unsuccessfully on the Stock Exchange. The fall was partially due to the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war which against all expectations Prussia won. To cover his losses he invented fictitious bank customers. Sir Robert shot himself at Whitlingham in 1870.

### **The Solicitor : Isaac Bugg-Coaks**

The solicitor who was involved in winding up the Baronet's estate was Isaac Bugg-Coaks who is now buried in the Rosary Cemetery. During this time Bugg-Coaks became very wealthy and there were court cases about where this wealth had come from. These cases went on for over thirty years, but that's another story. Fourteen acres including the Hill House Estate were sold. Some of the land was sold for housing by Bugg-Coaks.

Street names and places associated with this sale are:

- Ella, Beatrice, Marion, Florence, Ethel and Primrose Roads named after Bugg-Coaks's six daughters.
- Hill House Road.
- Fernhill, where Bugg-Coaks lived.

Bugg-Coaks was later struck off from being a Solicitor, but for reasons not associated with winding up Harvey's affairs.

(This article borrows heavily from the book of June Marriage's articles '*A Thorpe Hamlet Miscellany*', published by the History Group)

# THORPE HAMLET HISTORY GROUP

## Article 12 : EULOGY FOR JUNE MARRIAGE

By Barbara Miller

*A version of this article was published in St. Matthew's Church Magazine for October/November 2018. The eulogy was delivered by Barbara at June's funeral at the Rosary Cemetery on 9th September 2018*

June had a happy childhood in an unusual household. As well as her parents the small house was shared with her grandfather and twin uncles. Jim told me: "I don't know how they all got in and I never asked!". Leaving school early, June was first a Nursery Nurse and nursing was to be her life-long calling. Later she qualified as a nurse and then a health visitor enjoying the work and the study to achieve better qualifications.

June had a questing mind. When she, Jim and the family settled in Norwich she threw herself wholeheartedly into the life of both Norwich and the village of Thorpe Hamlet, the area of the city to which she devoted so much of her time and expertise, writing regular articles for the parish magazine and supporting St. Matthews church with practical commitment. Thorpe Hamlet is interesting and retains something of a village atmosphere while being part of the city.

The regular articles she wrote have been drawn into a book, now part of the city's archive. They are varied, succinct and warm produced by a woman who loved her fellow men but abhorred triviality. This was sorely tested by Jim's devotion to the Canaries, for June thought sport a waste of time! June loved her family, Anne, Michael, Philip and the grandchildren and I know she was a loving, supportive mother and an interesting, inventive and fun grand-mother. It was June's love of history, in particular the history of Norwich, that led her to study for a history degree at UEA and to graduate with honours. Before embarking on her UEA studies, June and Jim had become Blue Badge guides for the city which they enjoyed together.

When June could no longer tramp the streets as a guide she became the Queen of the coach tours, using routes devised by Jim to circumvent road works and traffic restrictions in the city. June's kind and generous nature meant she accepted people as they were and with her ready sense of humour she forgave much.

Another intense interest June and Jim shared was their work for the War Memorial Trust, and for their research they travelled all over the county to find neglected memorials hidden in churches and parish halls. When an invitation to Clarence House came in recognition of their work and research June was quite at home chatting to Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, as if to an old friend. As Jim said: "she could talk to anyone". She was willing to go the extra mile for the causes she cared about and so willingly dressed up as Mrs. Toppes for open days at Dragon Hall. There they supported Chris Barringer as part of the King Street History Group. What a wonderful life June and Jim have had, secure in their love for one another, rejoicing in their family, able to pursue all their varied interests. When June's devastating stroke robbed her of her mobility, her work for

Muscular Dystrophy and her compassion for both the children and adults she met who grapple with that debilitating disease may have helped her cope. Jim cared for her wonderfully and said: "although she did not do much for some weeks before she died except sleep, I miss her terribly".

It is right that June will lie here in the Rosary, near her home and overlooking the city she loved, enfolded in the heart of Thorpe Hamlet. We miss June, her ready smile, her sparkling blue eyes and aura of white hair, her huge knowledge generously shared, her sense of humour and her humanity. I don't think June lost her faith, I think she lived it.

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# THORPE HAMLET HISTORY GROUP

## Article 13 : ALLOTMENTS TO THE RESCUE

By Robin Bowling

Allotments in Thorpe Hamlet helped in the war effort in the first and second world wars.

The railway provided some allotment gardens at the back of the Harbour Triangle in the Crown Point area. There were more allotments in Plumstead Road where the Wild Stallion dance ranch is now. Further allotments were at the the lower end so Mousehold allotments at the back of Sprowston Road.

The allotment gardens at Crown Point owned by the railway company and possibly Lawrence and Scott's. The Wild Stallion was possibly leased to the council for the duration of the great war.

Pigs were kept on Kett's Heights and more land was put down to cultivation in back gardens where lawns were dug up and planted with potatoes, and flower beds with cabbages and leeks.

Thorpe Hamlet did it's bit to grow food in the time of wartime shortages. In the first world war there was as little as two weeks food in country and things were not much better in the second world war.

All these allotments are gone now; many of them built on in the 1960s or returned to the companies that made the land available after the wars.

Today the folk of Thorpe Hamlet do their allotmenting in Plumstead Road East at Cottage Farm Allotments in the Heartsease area or at Mousehold Allotments at the back of Sprowston Road.

# THORPE HAMLET HISTORY GROUP

## Article 14 : CLARENCE HARBOUR

By Robin Bowling

The first canal in Norwich was the one built by the Normans from the River Wensum to the Cathedral where Pull's Ferry is now. It was built to get the stone from Caen in France close to the building site. The stone was shipped in vessels called 'knorres', the cargo boats of the time. They were very like Viking longships but shorter and fatter, shallow draught so were no problem in the Rivers Yare and Wensum at that time.

Eight hundred years later and things were very different. Ships were bigger, harbour dues had increased, the rivers had silted up. The Norwich merchants were paying through the nose for their cargoes. At Great Yarmouth ships' cargoes were transhipped into wherries for shipment to the Norwich quays or heavy towage fees. High Spring tides were the only tides when shipment was possible, A solution had to be found.

After long and protracted negotiations a Bill was put through Parliament to build a harbour and a river passage from Lowestoft to Norwich. It would also allow passage to Beccles. The Bill was passed in 1827 and the money was raised by selling shares. I believe the Duke of Clarence, later to become King William IV, was an investor. A steam dredger was built at Ipswich in 1828 to dredge the river and dig out the New Cut. A sea lock (Mutford Lock) was built and a cut or canal was built from St. Olave's to Reedham to allow passage from Lowestoft to Norwich.

As soon as the Lowestoft end was built ships started loading for Beccles, the first cargo going up in a Humber 'Billy Boy'. When the cut to Reedham was finished the first shipments could begin to Norwich. The first shipment to Norwich was the same 'Billy Boy' that went to Beccles. The tug that was to tow it to Norwich was delayed in Great Yarmouth as the port authorities would not raise the bridge to let the tug through to meet the ship at Reedham. The tugmaster was determined to honour the tow agreement so he sawed off the tug's funnel and steamed through the bridge to meet the tug at Reedham. Meanwhile a smaller tug had been hired to tow the ship to Reedham. When the vessels rendezvoused and the master of the smaller tug was reluctant to relinquish the tow an altercation took place. One man fell in the river and was drowned.

The navigation survived the building of the railway and a second new cut at Thorpe Green was build to avoid two swing bridges. The cut created Thorpe Island. Navigation continued to Beccles with grain shipments until the end of the 1950s. The navigation across Breydon Water was improved with another Bill through Parliament. Breydon Water was deepened to 10 feet with the addition of Turn Tide jetty at the Norwich end of Breydon plus a training wall known as the 'Dicky Works'. Norwich remained a port with timber, building materials, roof slates and tiles, grain, cattle feed, invert sugar and mustard seed coming in and barley, scrap metal and fortified wines exported. The swing and lift bridges and Mutford Lock were kept busy with vessels from Swannels Malting in Oulton Broad.

The first cargo ship to Norwich was the 'Luna' under Captain Moon and the last in 1986 was the Dutch coaster 'Buccaneer' under Captain Voss. The dredger was later owned by Great Eastern Railway and was named 'Excavator or Dredger No. 1', but was lovingly remembered by the crew as 'The Thing'. As she was constructed mainly of teak she remained in service until 1916 when she succumbed to a German shell.

# THORPE HAMLET HISTORY GROUP

## Article 15 : THE OPTICAL TELEGRAPH IN THORPE HAMLET

By Tony Smith

### Introduction

Some sixty years before the invention of the electric telegraph a method of communication existed that relied on visual signals passing along a chain of relay stations each visible to the next station in the chain. This was not an entirely new idea as communication over great distances had been possible for thousands of years by various simpler means.

Before formal telegraph systems evolved, urgent messages to distant destinations were usually sent by messenger on foot or on horseback but simple optical methods were also used to send pre-arranged messages. These included flashing reflections of the sun from polished shields to a distant point; smoke signals and chains of burning beacons.

Various attempts were made from the late 18th century to create a more formal optical or visual telegraph but a practical form did not evolve until the French government adopted the Chappe telegraph in 1793. This could convey a message faster than a messenger on a horse although it could only operate in daylight hours and was severely restricted by bad weather.

During the Napoleonic Wars, Yarmouth, Britain's most easterly naval base was vitally important for the defence of the nation against any French naval action or invasion from the North Sea. From 1808 to 1816 a line of optical telegraph stations, inspired by the French system, connected the Admiralty in London with the Port Admiral in Yarmouth to facilitate urgent communication in the event of such hostilities.

One station in this important line was located on high ground in Thorpe-next-Norwich, on what is now Telegraph Lane East, Thorpe Hamlet. The telegraph station was situated on the site of the present water tower in Telegraph Lane East. The water tower itself is now the site of a modern communication device, a mobile telephone mast.

The line to Yarmouth was one of several radiating from London. Although inspired by the French system the British telegraphs were of a different design. The differences are described in this paper.

The optical telegraph as a means of rapid communication was eventually replaced by the electric telegraph, one version of which controlled the first railway in Norfolk, the Yarmouth to Norwich Railway.

### The French Optical Telegraph

Charles Dibdin (1745-1814) a famous musician, songwriter, dramatist, et al, in his time described the French telegraph system thus:

*If you'll only just promise you'll none of you laugh,  
I'll be after explaining the French Telegraph!  
A machine that's endowed with such wonderful pow'r  
It writes, reads and sends news at 50 miles an hour.*

*Then there's watchwords, a spyglass, an index on hand,  
And many things more none of us understand.  
But which, like the nose on your face, will be clear,  
When we have, as usual, improv'd on them here.*

*Adieu, penny posts! Mails and coaches adieu!  
Your occupation's gone, 'tis all over with you.  
In your place telegraphs on your houses we'll see  
to tell time, conduct lightning, dry shirts and send news.*

*Thus while signals, and flags, stream on top of each street,  
The town to a bird will appear a grand fleet,  
And since England's grand fleet, to the French, convey fear,  
Sure shan't we improve on the Telegraph here?*

In 1793, in the midst of the French Revolution, France declared war on Britain. That year, the Revolutionary government approved the construction of a semaphore telegraph system from Paris to Lille, some 190 km north of Paris. When the line was completed, its inventor Abbé Claude Chappe, a cleric who lost his benefices in the Revolution, was hailed as a “benefactor of the motherland”.

Telegraph stations were sited at 10 km intervals, within sight of each other and it was claimed that messages could be transmitted over more than 65 km in under 46 minutes; and almost as rapidly over a much larger distance as the time required for the communication did not increase proportionally with the distance.

Each station had a large horizontal beam, called a regulator, with two smaller arms, called indicators, mounted at each end as shown in the illustration. The angles of the regulator and the indicators could be varied to provide 92 different signal patterns. Twenty-six of these indicated the letters of the alphabet while others represented words, syllables, or complete phrases.

By 1800 more lines were under construction. The system was developed under the control of the Army (by contrast, the later English system was under the control of the Navy). Napoleon, recognising its military value, used a portable version in his campaigns and, in anticipation of a proposed invasion of England, had a telegraph built at Boulogne which was capable of signalling across the English Channel.



*Contemporary illustration of the  
Chappe telegraph.*

Eventually a national system evolved with 556 telegraph stations connecting 29 cities to Paris. When the electric telegraph was introduced in France the first instruments used were miniature replicas of the old optical telegraphs, enabling the operators of the old system to convert easily to the new system.

With this background, it is not surprising that Britain took an interest in the French invention and decided to develop its own optical telegraph system.

## **The British Optical Telegraph**

When their new telegraph towers began to be erected across the country the French could not hide their new invention from their enemies although the codes and signals used for the system remained a military secret.

Refugees from the French Revolution brought news of the telegraph to England and in September 1794 the *Gentleman's Magazine* described it thus:

"...let persons be placed in several stations, at such distance from each other, that, by the help of a telescope, a man in one station may see a signal made by the next ...he immediately repeats this signal, which is again repeated through all the intermediate stations ....(it is called) a télégraphe; and (the magazine forecast)...we doubt not but it will be soon introduced in this country...."

The following month, the magazine published a drawing of Chappe's telegraph and its forecast soon proved to be correct.

### *Experiments*

The British government and Army already knew about the telegraph from a drawing found on a captured French soldier in August 1794. The Duke of York, Commander-in-Chief of the Army, instructed his chaplain, the Revd. John Gamble, a mathematics scholar, to investigate the possibilities of the system.

Gamble made a model of what he suggested was an improvement on the French design and submitted an essay on the subject to the Admiralty. He proposed a five-shutter system with 32 possible signal positions. It was to be manipulated by ropes to open or close the shutters to indicate the letters of the alphabet.

Unknown to Gamble, Lord George Murray, Bishop of St. David's, Pembrokeshire, was also experimenting with an alternative system. It seems an unusual subject for clergymen to be interested in but it will be recalled that Chappe, the inventor of the French telegraph system, was also an ordained minister.

In an age of scientific curiosity and invention involvement in such matters came mainly from the better-educated upper classes so perhaps the interest of these high-ranking clerics was not quite so surprising.

### *The Murray system*

Murray built an experimental apparatus in the grounds of his home, the Bishop's Palace in Abergwili, enrolling the help of his family to take it in turns to pull ropes operating six shutters

to signal messages to him in his study.

In 1795, he offered his invention to the Admiralty. His six-shutter system provided a combination of 64 signals and was adopted by the Admiralty in September of that year in preference to Gamble's 32-combination system. Murray was awarded £2000 for his invention.

The Murray shutter telegraph was first put to use in 1796 on a 15-station communication chain running from the Admiralty in London to Deal on the coast of Kent. The chain of stations took just four months to erect. To achieve this, as in France, a suitable route had to be surveyed. Land on high ground was identified and acquired to site the telegraph stations and obstructions cleared to ensure line of sight between the stations.

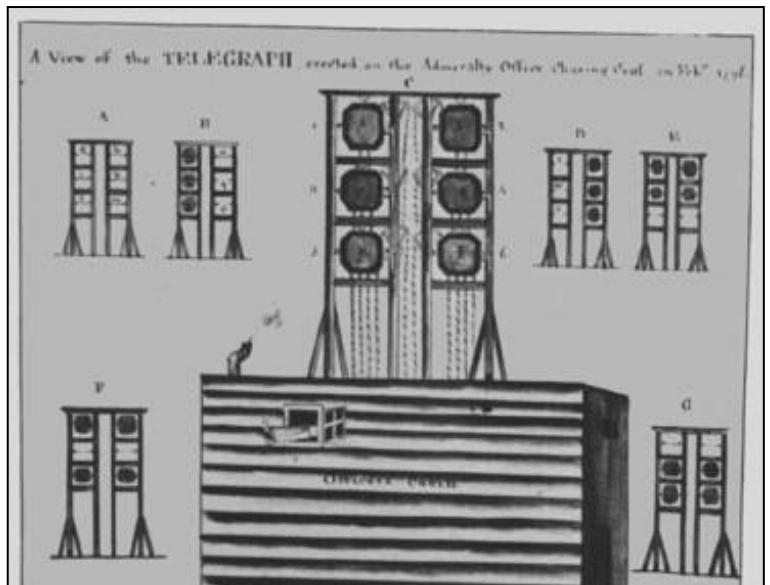
The work was undertaken by a surveyor, George Roebuck, who was later appointed Superintendent of Telegraphs. At the time, it was claimed that a message could begin to be read in Deal sixty seconds after transmission began in London. Roebuck was then instructed to construct further lines extending to Portsmouth and Plymouth.

***The Line to Yarmouth - a relay station at Norwich***

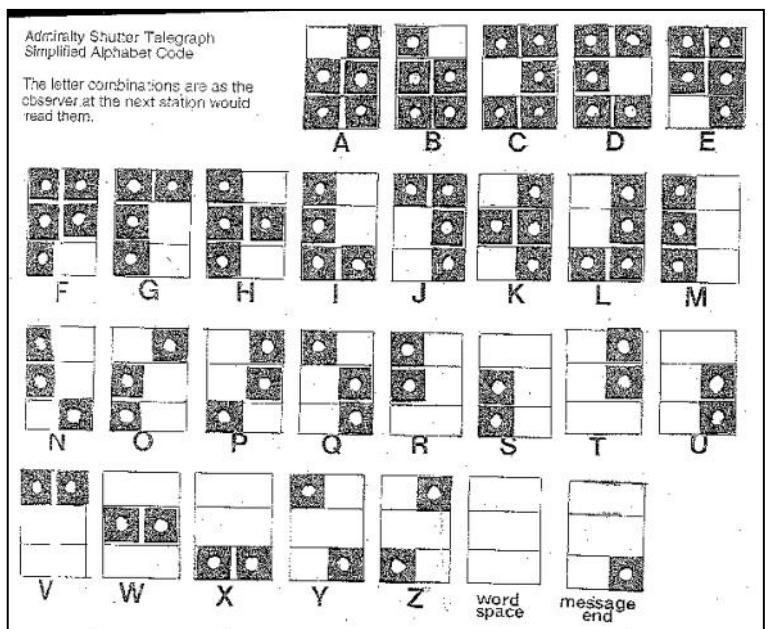
The Admiralty also considered constructing a telegraph line to the east coast but abandoned the idea after the Peace Treaty of Amiens was signed in 1802. War was resumed the following year and by 1807, with hostilities continuing, the defence of the North Sea became a matter of concern.

Roebuck was instructed to survey and build a new line to Yarmouth, a strategically important port controlling the entrances to the rivers Bure, Yare and Waveney. The purpose of the line was to maintain urgent communication between the Admiralty and the Admiral in command of the Naval base at Yarmouth.

In December 1807, the Norfolk Chronicle reported "A telegraph or signal station is on the point of being erected upon the hills leading from Norwich to Thorpe. It is to be commanded by a naval officer, and the object of it is to open and maintain a prompt communication with



*Murray's shutter system 1796. Admiralty Archives, London*



*Admiralty Shutter Telegraph - simplified Alphabet Code*

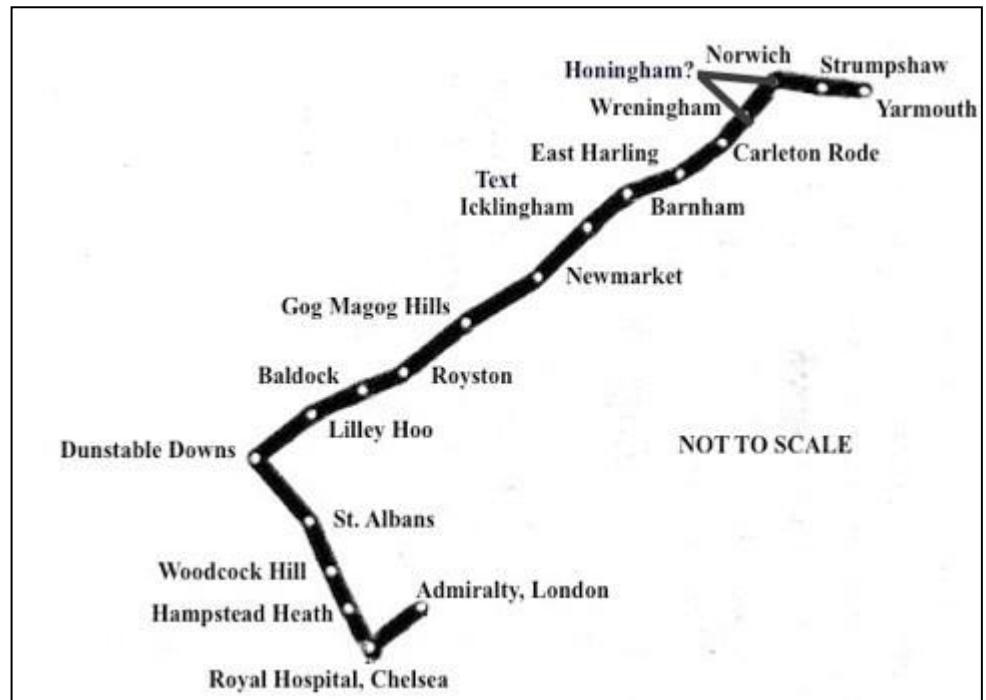
Yarmouth on the one side, and with the telegraphs between Norwich and London on the other.”

On 25th June 1808 Roebuck reported that the line to Yarmouth was ready and that practice messages had passed “perfectly correctly.” On 24th August 1808 the Port Admiral sent the first official message to the Admiralty, “Calypso ready for sea.” (HMS Calypso was an 18-gun sloop of the Cruizer class, presumably operating out of Yarmouth.)

### *The route via Norwich*

The London-Yarmouth line covered a length of 136.5 miles and its stations were located at:

- Admiralty (London)
- Royal Hospital, Chelsea
- Hampstead Heath
- Woodcock Hill
- St. Albans
- Dunstable Downs
- Lilley Hoo
- Baldock
- Royston
- Gog Magog Hills (near Cambridge)
- Newmarket
- Icklingham
- Barnham
- East Harling
- Carleton Rode
- Wreningham
- Honingham (see below)
- Norwich
- Strumpshaw
- Great Yarmouth



The distance from Admiralty to Chelsea was only two miles. Other stations were typically seven miles apart but from Royston to Gog Magog Hills to Newmarket they were 11.7 miles apart. They were all were located on hills, high ground or high buildings with a clear view in each direction towards those on either side of them. They were mainly in direct line with each other but there were three bends in the line, at Chelsea, Dunstable and Norwich, making reception and onward transmission of messages at these stations difficult.

The very sharp bend at Chelsea was necessitated by the need for a high location for the first relay station to overcome obstacles to the line of sight leaving London from the Admiralty caused by occasional fogs and high buildings in the metropolis.

In *The Shutter Telegraph* (see references below), Bernard R. Ambrose suggests that an additional reserve or bypass station was situated on Telegraph Hill, Honingham, to the west of Norwich.



This could have taken traffic from Wreningham when fog or mist from low-lying ground near Keswick or smoke from the city prevented the direct route to Norwich being used. If this station existed there would have been yet another sharp bend to be overcome.

Telegraph Hill, Honingham is marked on Bryant's map of Norfolk 1826. Honingham Village website claims that the station did exist but no contemporary documentation has been found to confirm the existence of a shutter telegraph station on this site.

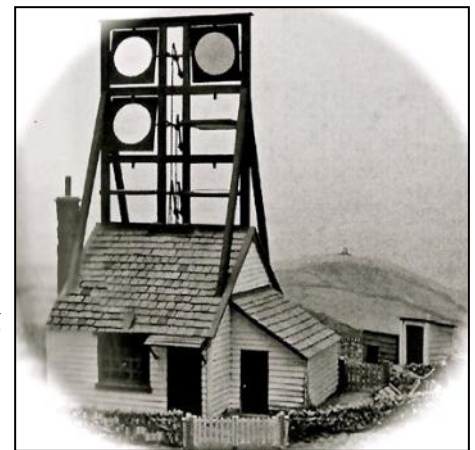
There is also no direct evidence on how the problem of the bends was overcome although The Times, on 25 March 1808, reported that the shutters at Chelsea were much bigger than usual and were set at 45°. It also reported that the horizontal dimension was increased and this would certainly have helped in reading and re-transmitting the signals at all points where the line diverted at an angle. Another possibility is that the angled stations would have had two sets of shutters, one towards each of the diverted directions but this suggestion is unsubstantiated.

### ***Construction***

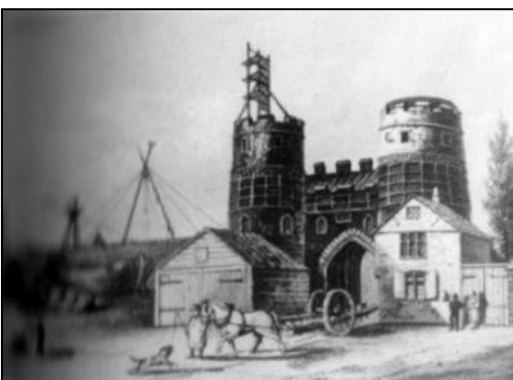
Constructed to a universal design, the intermediate stations were large wooden two-room huts some 30 ft. high with a six-shutter signalling structure in two columns erected above them. Each shutter was 5 ft. high within a wooden frame, adding a further 15 ft. to the height. Individual shutters could be operated independently of each other.

Each station cost £215 to build and was equipped with a stove, an eight-guinea clock and two 12-guinea Dollond telescopes. (A guinea was twenty-one shillings, or one pound and one shilling.)

The telescopes faced in opposite directions, one to read incoming messages and one to confirm that the messages had been correctly relayed to the next station. The instrument used was the achromatic lens telescope for which its inventor, John Dollond, received the Copley Medal of the Royal Society in 1758. With a much-improved image quality and resolution compared with previous telescopes, it became the "standard" for many years and enabled optical telegraphy to become a realistic proposition.



*Model of an intermediate Murray telegraph station. The station at Norwich would have been of this type. Note the next station on a hill in the distance.*



The station at Chelsea was on top of the Royal Hospital. The terminal stations, at the Admiralty in London and at Yarmouth were also erected on high buildings. At the latter, the signal shutters were located on Yarmouth Gate as can be seen in the contemporary illustration to the left.

### ***Staffing***

Each hut had an establishment of three or four men. Records are unclear but it is believed that

they were usually ex-Navy men one of whom was a Midshipman, or perhaps a retired or half-pay officer, in charge of the station. Terminal stations were in the charge of a Royal Navy Lieutenant.

“Glassmen” within the huts were continuously on watch, observing neighbouring stations with their telescopes. One source suggests that observations were made every five minutes. If the signal 123456 (i.e. all shutters closed) was seen, the “Ropemen” on duty were alerted, ready to relay a message onwards. The jobs of the glassmen and the ropemen were interchangeable.

The signal shutters were controlled by ropes hanging inside the hut. To indicate a signal a shutter was pivoted vertically on a horizontal axle, so that it could be seen by the next station or horizontally so that it could not be seen. Varying the positions of different shutters created combinations with specific meanings that could be understood by the final recipient of a message.

### *Security and coding*

For added security the messages were sometimes coded instead of being sent in plain language. Combinations of open or closed shutter positions were allocated to the letters of the alphabet and to numerals (0 to 9). There were procedural signals (eg, 123456 as mentioned above) and some pre-arranged sentences. Word compression was also used, omitting the vowels in common words. The staff in the intermediate stations did not have to read or decipher the messages. Their task was merely to copy and relay the signals onwards towards their destination.

Attempts were made to improve the efficiency of the system. In 1808, for example, Lt. Col. MacDonald devised a numbered codebook to improve the coding and the speed of the shutter signals. However, the Admiralty rejected his suggestion, believing there would be confusion or error if signals were sent as single numbers.

### *Gog Magog Journal*

A journal was kept at every station to record the passing of messages and various routine matters throughout the day. One of the few contemporary records surviving, the journal of the Gog Magog station on the Yarmouth line, provides some information about the working of the system. This station, on the Gog Magog Hills near Cambridge, had a staff of three men, two of whom were on ‘glass duty’ each day.

A clock was used to time all messages handled and, subject to weather conditions, time signals were received regularly enabling the clock to be re-set accurately on most days. The system was far from perfect. It worked well on clear days when visibility was good but bad weather or fog caused delays in transmission that could sometimes last for days.

The journal records that most weeks there were reports of fog along the line delaying signals for many hours. In December 1813 and January 1814 the system was closed by fog for seventeen days in each month.

The station at Norwich is referred to in the journal as “Mussell Hill,” an old name for Mousehold Heath, which suggests that the site of the station, where the present water tower is located in Telegraph Lane East, was at one time part of the Heath. (Grid reference of site: TG 2469 0871;

Map sheet TG20NW).

### *Perceived Limitations*

Despite Murray's claim that he had created an improved telegraph, it was a crude system with limited capability compared with the French version. Faced with the government's urgent need for a rapid communication system, however, it had the advantage that it could be constructed and put into use very quickly.

The Encyclopaedia Britannica of 1797 commented on its capability:

"...its form is too clumsy to admit of it being raised to any considerable height above the building on which it stands, and .... It cannot be made to change its direction, and consequently cannot be seen but from one particular point."

Perhaps because of these perceived limitations over 100 alternative proposals were made to the Admiralty and Parliament between 1796 and 1816.

### *Peace - and War again*

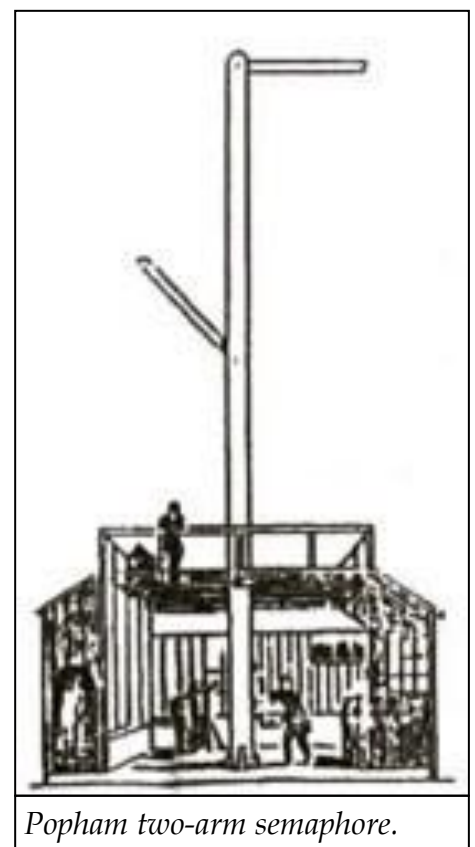
On 18 May 1814 peace was proclaimed and Napoleon was banished to the Isle of Elba. As a result, on 6 July 1814, the Portsmouth Shutter Line was closed down. On 1 May 1815 Napoleon escaped from Elba and returned to France. England was again at war and the Portsmouth line was re-opened.

On 18 June 1815 Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo. In March 1816, with the threat of invasion gone, the Murray shutter system, including the London to Yarmouth line, was finally closed down.

Before this, the Admiralty had already decided that it should have a permanent, improved, replacement of the Murray system for its communications and on 29 June 1815 an act of Parliament had authorised the acquisition of land for a new system. Various proposals were considered and that chosen was a semaphore designed by Rear-Admiral Sir Home Riggs Popham, inspired by an invention of Charles Depillon, a rival of Claude Chappe.

### *The Popham Semaphore*

Popham's telegraph used two signalling arms erected on a 30 foot high mast. By July 1816 an experimental line had been constructed between the Admiralty and Chatham and was in working order. A permanent Popham line to Portsmouth was opened at the end of June 1822. This remained in use until 1847 when it was replaced by the electric telegraph. The Yarmouth line was never re-instated and Norwich never saw the new system.



*Popham two-arm semaphore.*

## *Commercial optical telegraphs*

During this time a number of commercial optical telegraphs evolved in Britain and in other countries, particularly to notify the arrival of shipping off the coast. An indication of the increased use of these telegraphs is given in a report on the Liverpool to Holyhead semaphore telegraph in 1836:

“In the year 1828 there were about 847 vessels reported by name inward and outward bound; in 1831 there were 1,712; in the present year, up to 30th Nov., [1836] there were upwards of 2,440, besides several hundred without numbers, upwards of 500 reports respecting pilot-boats, about 200 communications respecting wrecks, accidents and casualties, and the state of the wind and weather reported upwards of 700 different times.”

## *End of the optical telegraph*

By 1838 a number of commercial companies had plans for electric telegraph systems. The Liverpool to Holyhead semaphore line survived until 1861 but others were closed much earlier once the electric telegraph became available.

The new invention provided instant communication with distant places by sending electrical impulses along wires strung on telegraph poles. Unlike the optical telegraph, it could operate day or night, irrespective of weather conditions and without the need for relay stations with a clear line of sight between them.

A pioneering version was installed on the Norwich & Yarmouth Railway, when it opened in April 1844, to ensure the safe running of the railway. Telegraphic communication between Norwich and Yarmouth, lost when the Murray optical telegraph was abandoned at the end of the Napoleonic war, was again a reality.

It was the beginning of a new and exciting era, with future communication capabilities far exceeding anything that Chappe, Murray or Popham could have ever visualised. However, their procedural techniques, use of codes, pre-arranged messages and word compression were all adapted for use in the new system; and some survive to this day in modern electronic messaging.

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# THORPE HAMLET HISTORY GROUP

## Article 16 : ST. LEONARD'S PRIORY

By Ann Shopland

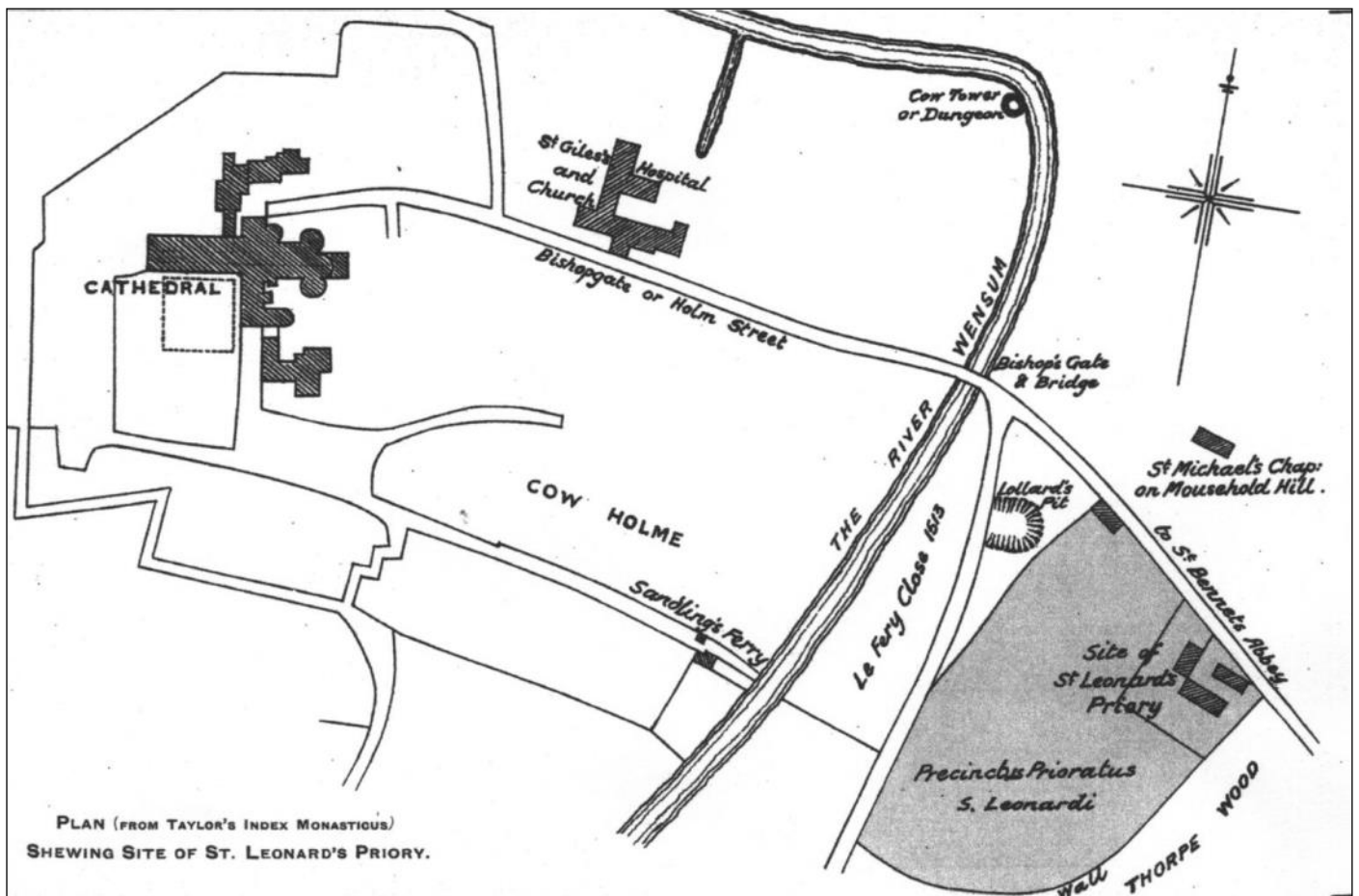
On the top of a hill in Thorpe Hamlet, and hidden from view on a private site, are the remains of a Norman priory. The cathedral records show that in 1101 Henry I granted Bishop Herbert de Losinga the Manor of Thorpe and Thorpe Woods. This domain covered about fourteen acres of extensive woodland and formed an area which encompassed what is now known as Gas Hill and Kett's Heights.

The Norman Bishop, Herbert de Losinga, who founded Norwich cathedral in c1096, built a Benedictine priory on the land at the top of Gas Hill, on the left-hand side facing the city. It was dedicated to St. Leonard, a French nobleman, who became the patron saint of all prisoners, captives and slaves, and was built initially as temporary accommodation for the monks until the cathedral buildings were completed. It seems that St. Leonard's priory was built five years or so after the work on the cathedral had started and that as the work on the building was going more slowly than anticipated extra accommodation was needed for the monks. Also, of course, it was highly visible, built high on a hill overlooking Norwich and provided a visual reminder of Norman authority in the area. Losinga later gifted St. Leonard's priory to the cathedral and seven or eight monks remained there permanently when it became a cell of the cathedral priory.

The monks performed daily services at the nearby chapel of St. Michael on the Mount, built part way down the hill, about two hundred yards away on the opposite side to the priory, on what is now known as Kett's Heights. An area of woodland was cleared to enable them to site the chapel on this spot. Losinga built this small chapel c1109 to replace the Anglo-Saxon St. Michael's church on Tombland which had been demolished in order to make room for the cathedral. It is thought that building the chapel close to St Leonard's Priory was a way of removing the church's Anglo-Saxon links from the area of the cathedral by placing it outside the city limits and under Norman control.

The monks would have kept in daily contact with the mother house by crossing the river at Bishop's Bridge and following the track up and down the hill to the cathedral priory. In 1514 the prior of St. Leonard's was accused by the bishop of not keeping the accounts in order and neglecting the upkeep of the buildings. The prior complained that having to climb up and down (Gas) hill twice a day was time consuming and tiring, and left him little time to carry out all his duties.

According to the Paston Letters new windows were bequeathed to the priory in the mid to late fifteenth century, when it is thought that the priory became a popular place of pilgrimage. The image of King Henry VI in St. Michael's Chapel and the bejewelled image of St. Leonard in the priory are thought to have 'brought in a good round annual sum' and also possibly attracted



This plan was made by Richard Taylor (1789 - 1851) and appeared in his *Index Monasticus*, published in 1821.

This copy was reproduced by W. T. Bensly in his article on 'St. Leonard's Priory, Norwich' in *Norfolk Archaeology Vol. XII*, (1895), p190.

other pilgrims who passed by on their way up the hill on their way to the shrine at St. Benet's Abbey.

After Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries in 1538 the king granted the priory site and domain to Thomas, Duke of Norfolk. In this way the former dependent cell of St. Leonard's and the cathedral's share of Thorpe Woods passed permanently out of the hands of the Dean and Chapter of Norwich cathedral. The Duke of Norfolk's son, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey built a 'sumptuous' mansion on the priory site, which he called Mount Surrey. (Not to be confused with the town house called Surrey Court he built in what is now known as Surrey Street.) However he did not live long enough to enjoy it, for after falling out of favour with Henry VIII, he was beheaded in 1547.

Two years later in 1549 Robert Kett and his rebels camped on the hillside overlooking the river and the city, and Kett set up his headquarters in St. Michael's chapel. The mansion built by the Earl of Surrey which had been empty since his execution, was used to hold Kett's more important prisoners and resulted in extensive damage to the Mount Surrey house, from which it never recovered. However St. Leonard's Priory, which had been demolished in 1538, was already a ruin before Kett and his troops occupied the site, and the remains of the building would have already been plundered for stone and other valuable building materials. Unused since the



dissolution St. Michael's chapel suffered a similar fate and fell into total ruin. Only a flint wall remained which was the subject of a painting by John Sell Cotman in 1810.

Unfortunately little is known about the layout of the priory buildings although it is said some remains were still visible above ground at the beginning of the 20th century. Very little interest seems to be shown in the remains of the priory, until 1899 when Walter Rye, a famous antiquarian, purchased the house called St. Leonard's Priory, which had been built on the site in about 1831. Rye was very interested in the history of the priory and carried out some excavations in 1904 which uncovered the west side of a gatehouse and the remains of an early fifteenth century library, chapel and dormitory.

A survey of the site was carried out by Bradford University in 1977 when the house built around 1831, on what was thought to be the priory graveyard, was being demolished. The clearance of the undergrowth on the site provided an opportunity to study the state and preservation of any remains of the priory. They found that the most of the site had been levelled and today all that remains are two mounds of masonry which consist of the east end of a building and the west wall of the gatehouse, as well as a possible boundary wall located near the southern edge of the site. Two modern houses now stand on the priory site, giving them one of the finest panoramic views of the city.

There is however a permanent reminder in Thorpe Hamlet that a Benedictine priory once stood at the top of Gas Hill. St. Leonard's Road runs from the junction of Quebec Road and Wolfe Road and curves down to the top of Gas Hill and then follows the boundary of what was the priory precinct on its way down to Rosary Road.





# THORPE HAMLET HISTORY GROUP

## Article 17 : THORPE HAMLET SCHOOL

By Debbie Russell

Thorpe Hamlet School was built in 1887 on St. Leonards Road on land purchased by the Norwich School Board from local solicitor Isaac Coakes. It was built to replace the old school on Riverside Road when it was just a tow path. School was compulsory for children aged between 5 and 14 yrs and it was expected that each child should attend for 320 hours a year although 280 were acceptable. Parents whose children did not attend would be fined and some fathers were put in prison for non payment of school fines. The new school could accommodate 1100 children split into three separate departments – boys, girls and infants. Each department had its own hall and playground. The school was local authority owned but run by appointed managers who looked after the daily running of the school, they also had to attend monthly meetings with the Education Committee. The teaching staff were usually single ladies who would be expected to leave when they married, the only exceptions were during the war when the male teachers were called up for military service, then the married teachers were called in for the duration only. With the new school year now starting and a new intake of infants starting school for the first time I have delved into the Thorpe Hamlet School Log Book for 1916 to give you an insight of school life 100 years ago.

August 29th 1916

School re-opened this morning , all assistants being present, no-one had received notice of transfer. 36 children applied for admission or re-admission to roll. 226 scholars all being present.

September 1st.

The number on the roll this week 268, the average attendance for the week 81% . A few children still away from the city on holiday and several are sick.

October 12th.

Received from Dr. Cooper notice that Dr. Fisher will commence examinations of entrants on the 24th.

October 13th.

School closes this afternoon for a week's holiday in lieu of the Whit week, we will re-open on Monday 23rd when the hours for the afternoon session will be 1.30 – 3.30. Lessons in the afternoon will be taken half an hour earlier than shown on the timetable in each case.

November 6th.

By permission of Mr. Holme, college students visited the school today for observation purposes, 4 in the morning and 5 in the afternoon. Mr. R.F. Betts visited during the morning and asked for

the loan of a teacher for the rest of the week owing to absence of the headteacher and an assistant at the St. Giles School. Miss Stevens will therefore be taking up duties there temporarily, her class will be divided. The older ones will be joining class IV and the younger ones with the babies class as neither of the three classes are large the numbers will not exceed 60.

November 13th.

Mr. D. O. Holme visited this morning to consult me as to the transfer of Miss Crisp to Wensum Boys School to take the place of a teacher called up for military service.

November 14th.

Received notice from Mr. Holme asking Miss Crisp to go to Wensum School informing me that Mrs Bullard from the special school would be placed here temporarily.

November 27th.

Received note from Mr. Holme this morning requesting me to ask Mrs Bullard to go at once to St. Marks school.

December 8th.

The low attendance this week has continued owing to bad colds and coughs. 17 marks have been lost since 30th November owing to closing the register at 1.35 in accordance with the request of the Board of Education notified through Mr Holme. The long distances which some of the children often come and the hilly nature of the district make it almost impossible for the little children to get back to school in the time allotted for dinner.

December 22nd

At 2.10 this afternoon children were assembled in the main room to participate in games and receive little Christmas gifts from the teachers. The timetable was adhered to for the last two lessons. 41 children have been absent for the whole week, average attendance 73%.

How things have changed in the 100 years since then, school lunches, central heating, electricity and indoor toilets, many children going to school in a car with plenty of clothes to wear and out of school activities. No having to stay at home because your clothes were so wet from coming home in the rain and your mum couldn't get them dry for the next day. I wonder how the children of today would cope if they had one school term living as a child 100 years ago?

# THORPE HAMLET HISTORY GROUP

## Article 18 : THORPE HAMLET'S INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS

By John Trevelyan

The first evidence we have of Thorpe Hamlet's international connections is that of the "Old East Road", the road past the church and down what we now call Gas Hill and across what was then a ford over the river. It is considered to have been a Roman Road, evidenced by various Roman remains that have been found in the area.

The Vikings began to raid and settle in England in 787AD. They came from Scandinavia, and spoke a language called Old Norse - the word 'viking' is old Norse for 'pirate raid'. They left many influences, including the use of 'thorpe' as a place name, often as part meaning 'village' or 'hamlet'. Today's Thorpe St. Andrew was once Thorpe-next-Norwich, so when the area in between there and the city came to be developed in the 19th century, it was given the name 'Thorpe Hamlet', even though that really means 'hamlet hamlet'.

When the Normans started development of the Cathedral site at the end of the 11th century, they demolished numerous existing houses and churches, including that of St. Michael in Tombland (a plaque today marks the site). By way of compensation they built a chapel on the high ground to the east, close to where they had also established a priory dedicated to St. Leonard, patron saint of prisoners. The remains of the chapel can still be seen on Kett's Heights, even if all that can be seen of the priory is the sloping wall opposite the end of Marion Road.

Kett's rebellion in 1549 also brought foreign mercenaries from Italy, Germany and Spain, recruited to help government forces defeat the rebels.

A later conflict gave us the name of the road in which the church is located. The threat of Napoleonic invasion in the early 19th century led to the development of a telegraph system intended to convey messages from Great Yarmouth to London. One of the stations was on the highest ground in Norwich, where the water tower and reservoirs are now located on what is now Telegraph Lane East. A further connection with wars involving Napoleon was that of Sir Robert Harvey, active in the conflicts in the Iberian peninsula serving with Wellington. He later developed Mousehold House and the surrounding estate, hence today's Wellesley Avenue (Wellesley being the Wellington family name) and Cintra Road.

Other street names relating to foreign conflicts are Quebec, Wolfe and Montcalm Roads.

The History Group's research into the men commemorated on the St. Matthew's war memorial shows that more than two-thirds of them died on the Western Front in France and Belgium. But others went further afield, with deaths occurring in locations such as Turkey (Gallipoli), Iraq and Israel/Gaza. Our research into those commemorated as a consequence of losing their lives in the

Second World War records lives lost in the USA (while training),, at sea, in the Far East and on the Normandy beaches.

Business and trade will have given Thorpe Hamlet many international connections, whether through shipping on the river, post through the sorting office or flights from the airfield at Heartsease, or much earlier, the balloon flights from the vicinity of the gas works, including those made by Mr Charles Green, who in 1836 had made a flight from London to Germany.

Many more international connections feature in the articles written by June Marriage for the parish magazine, and collected by the History Group in "A Thorpe Hamlet Miscellany", still available from the church or the History Group.

# THORPE HAMLET HISTORY GROUP

## Article 19: READ'S FLOUR MILL

By Robin Bowling

Albion Spinning Mill was built at 237 King Street in 1837 for making worsted, silk and mohair. It was then converted for making confectionery until 1934. For many years it served as the R. J. Read Woodrow Flour Mill. This was also the site of St. Olave's Chapel which was demolished in the 14th Century.

The flour mill closed in 1993. The building was empty for a decade until it was sold in 2005 and redeveloped into residential flats.



*The converted mill seen from the other side of Carrow Bridge in 2019.*

# THORPE HAMLET HISTORY GROUP

## Article 20 : Nautical sayings and terms that have entered common usage

By Robin Bowling

*A version of this article was published in St. Matthew's Church Magazine.*

**"All squared away"** means when everything is packed away and safe prior to going to sea. Originally it comes from the time of old square-rigged ships when you were clear of a harbour and were running before the wind.

**"I'm pooped."** We say this when we are tired through putting all our efforts into a task or work. It originally meant when a ship was running before the wind. With strong winds and a following sea a wave can break over the stern of the ship (where the poop deck is located) causing a lot of damage.

**"Keep on an even keel."** Today this means keep your life and emotions controlled and on track. Its original meaning was when loading a ship correctly kept it upright with no list as this could cause it to capsize.

**"That's taken the wind out of their sails."** We say this when something is said or done to stop someone short or slightly shock them, but it comes from when two ships were sailing close together and the sails of the ship to windward stopped and blocked the wind reaching the other ship's sails.

**"They are on the right tack."** We say this when something is doing something correctly. It comes from when a ship was on the right tack for passing another ship or sailing round a headland.

**"We are all in the same boat"** comes from when there was dissension on board a ship and the captain needed all the crew to work together.

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That's enough of my old squat if I "show a leg". "It's all plain sailing" from now on and if you give me a bit of "leeway" I will try not to leave you "all at sea", because "it's any port in a storm" when you are "a bit groggy" or even "free sheets to the wind". I don't want to be thought of as a "waster" as I want to leave you all "ship shape" and "Bristol fashion" as I wait "for my ship to come in" so don't "tar me with the same brush" or we will all end up in "Davy Jones locker".

These sayings are all from seafaring, there are far more. I wonder how many there are from other trades and industries. If you know any from the shoe industries please write them down and let Thorpe Hamlet History Group know.



# THORPE HAMLET HISTORY GROUP

## Article 21 : When I was on 'Flog It'

By Robin Bowling

I arrived at the Cathedral at about 8.30am and was ninth in the queue. The queue continued to get longer and loner and at 9.00am we were ushered into the cathedral and into the cloisters to form another queue. The valuers walked up and down looking at the items people had brought in. As mine were tied to the barrow I had to tell them what it was I had brought as unpacking them in the queue would have been difficult. The valuers put red stickers on the items to be valued first, we were then led into the cathedral and sat down in ordered ranks to obtain our valuations. My position in the queue had in the meantime slipped from ninth to thirty-seventh, but it was soon my turn.



*Robin's ship's log*

After having the marine pictures valued I decided not to send them to auction, so the valuer, David Fletcher, looked at the ship's log and thought it an unusual item that would be good at the auction. I, along with all the other people who had items for auction, had to wait in a side aisle

for filming to start. We were given tea, coffee, sandwiches and cake while we waited. We were called in order to valuation tables to discuss our items and their history and provenance. I was also asked about my life as a seafarer and the fisherman's gansey that I am normally seen wearing.

When the producers were happy with the filming we were free to go and were told by the BBC staff we would be advised of the auction date by letter. Approximately a month later the auction date arrived and myself and my wife drove to Gaze's Auction Rooms in Diss. We had plenty of time to wander round and view all the lots going to auction as my lot was mid-catalogue.

We checked in with the BBC staff in a side room and I waited for my lot to be auctioned. Just before my item was auctioned I was called into the auction room with Paul Martin and David Fletcher to be filmed as the auction took place. We returned to Norwich after a very pleasant day.



*Robin with Paul Martin and David Fletcher at the auction*

The programme was first shown on 11th November 2015, and is repeated from time to time and then made available at BBC iPlayer for a month. [[www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b06pnh39](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b06pnh39)]



# THORPE HAMLET HISTORY GROUP

## Article 22 : BISHOP'S BRIDGE, NORWICH

By Ann Shopland

Bishop's Bridge spans the River Wensum providing access from Norwich's Cathedral quarter to the eastern suburb of Thorpe Hamlet. It is one of the oldest medieval bridges in the country still in everyday use. Until the opening of the first road bridge across the river Wensum in 1811, Bishop's Bridge was the only footbridge over the Wensum between the city and Thorpe Hamlet. It is believed that a river crossing at this point was in use from Roman times and that possibly there was a Roman Road between the crossing and Bawburgh, forming part of what is now the Dereham Road.

Norwich Cathedral records show that the Prior was granted a license in 1275 by Edward 1 to build a bridge over the river at this crossing point. It is thought that it became known as Bishop's Bridge, or sometimes Bishop's Gate, because it gave access to the Bishop's Palace. It was a wooden bridge giving the monks from the Cathedral Priory access to their daughter house, St Leonard's Priory, which was situated at the top of what is now known as Gas Hill. The way up this hill is directly opposite the bridge and in the Middle Ages pilgrims used this route over the river, on their way to visit the shrines at St Leonard's Priory and at Walsingham. The bridge gave people on foot, horse back, or with horse drawn carts, access to not only the chalk and flint workings on the Thorpe side but once they crossed over the river there were numerous pathways they could follow. The area on the east bank of the river consisted mainly of wet, marshy ground,



*The Norwich City coat of arms, incorporating a lion and a castle, are carved in stone over the central arch of the bridge.*

leading to a rural hinterland which remained undeveloped until the early nineteenth century. Thorpe Hamlet did not become a separate parish, independent of Thorpe St. Andrew, and within the Norwich City Boundary, until 1852.

The current bridge was built in 1340 by Richard Spynk and is the only surviving medieval bridge in the city. It was constructed of stone, brick and flint and was the first bridge in Norwich to include stone in its construction. The bridge was twenty feet wide, with three supporting arches and a large fortified gatehouse on the city side of the bridge to control access to and from the city. The Cathedral Priory who owned and maintained the bridge charged travellers a toll to use it. In 1393 ownership of the bridge passed to the City of Norwich. Bishop's Bridge together with Cow Tower, which was built 60 or so years later, then formed part of the city defences along the eastern side of the river Wensum.

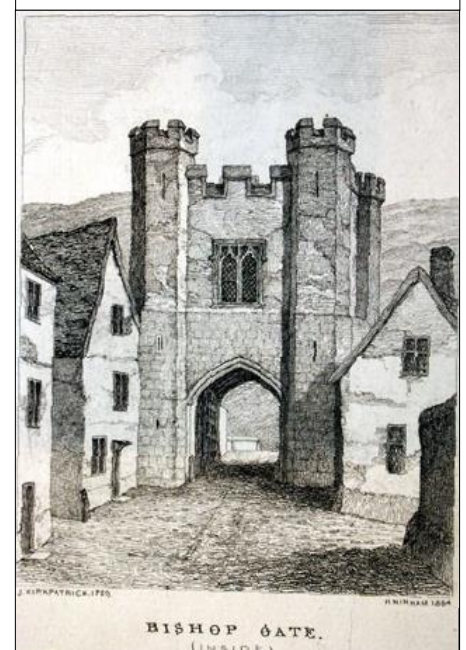
Fifteenth century records show that only one soldier controlled the gate, letting people in and out of the city. In 1486 two wooden posts were fixed at the Thorpe end of the bridge to mark the boundaries of the city's liberties. Many people left money in their wills for the repair and upkeep of the bridge and gate house. The executors of Alderman John Gilbert in 1467 agreed to pay 50 shillings to the city towards repairing and maintaining the bridge and river banks.

The bridge suffered serious damage during Kett's rebellion in 1549, when Robert Kett and his 20,000 followers marched on Norwich. They were unable to break through the stronger defences on the other side of the city so they set up camp on the less well defended eastern side of the city, at the top of Gas Hill, on what became known as Kett's Heights. The rebel gunners then bombarded the gate with cannon balls, demolishing a large part of the wall and towers of the gate house. They stormed the bridge, overpowering the guards, broke down the wooden gates and entered the city. After the rebellion the gates were repaired with wood from Whitefriars Bridge and the damaged stone work of the gate house was replaced or repaired. The bridge and gate house were obviously well repaired as in 1578 Elizabeth 1 crossed over the Bishop's Bridge on her way into Norwich.

These early 18th century sketches of the gate house and bridge show the towers complete with battlements and everything appears to be good repair. The view from the city side shows the gate house with its four turrets and a room over the archway with a decorative mullioned window. Both of the drawings show houses and buildings abutting the bridge on both sides. Unfortunately a survey carried out in 1790 showed that the



*View from Thorpe, the east side  
c1700*

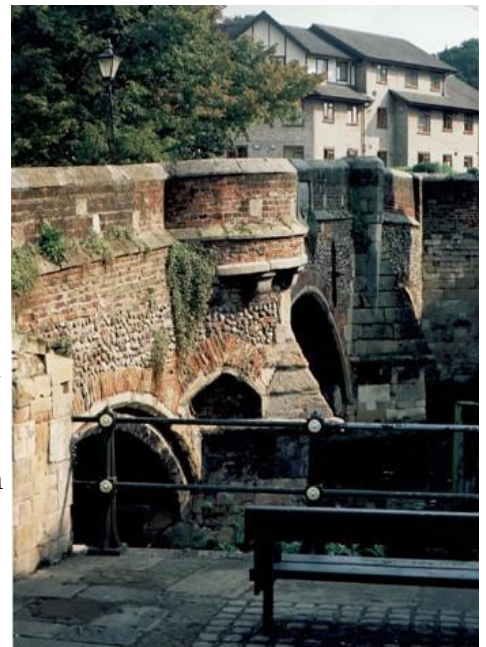


*View of the gate house from the  
city side c1720*



weight of the gate house had damaged both the first and central arches of the bridge. The first arch under the gate house had large cracks and the foundations needed strengthening and repairing. As the arch of the gateway was only 9 feet wide it obstructed the passage of loaded carts, so rather than carry out expensive repairs and building work a decision was made to demolish the gatehouse, and just carry out repairs to the bridge. The gate house was subsequently demolished between 1791 and 1808.

In the early twentieth century the city authorities embarked on a programme of modernisation and in 1923 it was proposed that Bishop's Bridge be replaced with a wider, more modern bridge. However the newly formed Norwich Society wanted to preserve the bridge as part of the city's heritage. Their campaign to save the medieval bridge was successful and they managed to protect it by having it designated Grade 2 listed by the Ministry of Works. Although the bridge is now closed to traffic many people, on foot or bicycles, still cross over it every day going to or from Thorpe Hamlet to the Cathedral and the city.



*This modern photograph shows that today the only remaining part of the gate house is a semi-circular projection on the side of the bridge.*

