

## DIARY DATES 2009/10

There was a mix-up last issue, so please check your dates!

May 30th (Sat)	Family History Day organized by Fenland FH Society, St Peter's Church Hall, Wisbech. Ann Lefort representing us, but do come along.
June 6th & 7th (Sat and Sunday)	Thorney Vintage Machinery Weekend at Park Farm from 10.am.
June 7th (Sunday)	Open Farm Sunday, Park Farm from 10am. National event giving people a closer look at agricultural life. Climb a tractor, ride a trailer, spot birds with RSPB, make butter, buy local produce, meet ducks, sheep and hens. Afternoon tea and beefburgers.
July 12th (Sun)	Summer Fayre at the Bedford Hall, for all ages. 10.30-5pm. Ploughmans Lunch (pre-book) and other refreshments. Lots of stalls and people in costume. Entertainment from lunchtime in the main Hall.
July 13th (Mon)	John Clare's Cottage opening at Helpston, special event.
Aug 3rd (Mon Bank Holiday)	John Clare's Cottage open to general public.
Sept. 13th (Sun)	National Heritage Day: Tour Thorney with Dorothy Halfhide, Blue Badge Guide. Meet at Abbey, 2pm
Dec. 6th (Sun)	Thorney Society Christmas Fayre at Pigeons' Farm
Feb 28th 2010 (Fri)	TS Dinner dance - plenty of time to organize your diary!!

### TOURS:

we have already started for the season, with several educational group visits (including 78 children from the Duke of Bedford school and a French Conversation Class) or simply as extra help in the Museum when a group comes?

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# THE THORNEY SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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## THORNEY HERITAGE MUSEUM

opened on Easter Sunday  
2009 season: Sundays, 2pm - 5pm or by appointment  
[www.thorney-museum.org.uk](http://www.thorney-museum.org.uk)

The new boards are looking good! Everything is not finished yet, so more improvements are in the pipeline. For example, we are discussing more professional main headings with Chris Lane, our local printer; the Thorney map the Museum was given by the Parish Council will not go for conservation until June, so has a temporary Perspex barrier to help protect it.

\* One of the new ventures this year is the dressing up clothes, the Fen costumes being funded by our education link with Ely Museum. Thanks to Sue Barnes and Margaret Dewing for their sewing, and to the person who left a suitable hat on my doorstep.

\* The Russell family were pioneers in social housing when not all landowners were as generous. Consequently the houses were in need of repair before some on other estates, just at the time when building regulations demanded general up-grading. Facing huge expenses, the Thorney Estate was sold in 1910. Please does anyone possess an AUCTION SALE notice that we can copy?

\* There has been some amusement at the Split Knickers in the farming display - "Divided Drawers" if you are trying to be polite! They would certainly have been of practical use in the fields around Thorney in the days when women wore long skirts and there were no loos, and a man could "inspect a hedge" but a woman had to be more discreet.

### GIFTS

Wing Commander Tom Bussey, now 95, has presented the Museum with his dress uniform and dress medals, brought recently by his daughter Maureen. Tom Bussey was the son of a labourer on farms in French Drove. His daughter thought he was one of nine. Although he left school at 14 and started work as a farm boy he always wanted to travel. In 1935 he joined the RAF and eventually became an engine fitter with the Cambridge University Air Squadron until the second World War.

His RAF career led him to help drop spies over France, to India, Iraq, Malta, and to service with the King's Flight. Later he served Queen Elizabeth 2nd.





## MEMORIAL LECTURE

### Goodbye England! Does anybody out there care?

Dr Simon Thurley, Chief Executive of English Heritage chose this as his title for our talk, while linking national developments clearly with Thorney's local circumstances and his understanding of the East of England.

He started from the position that from 1954 to 1979 there was great redevelopment in England in the built environment - but it was not always obvious why all of this was happening, due to vested interests. This was a period of huge change, but that period had ended. The pace of change had led to groups of local people who helped to arrest wholesale redevelopment by peaceful protest and demonstrations.

As part of the protection of the historic environment, he stated that 50% of Grade 1 listed buildings are parish churches. 87% of people in England have been into a church or some reason in the last year, but many parish churches are no longer in places where they are needed, due to population changes. Eight pubs a week are also closing in London. In the same way as with churches, much of their traditional use is disappearing.

Some of the significant buildings which need help are little-known. Dr Thurley mentioned that the first, third and fourth iron-framed buildings in the world, the predecessors of factories using industrial building methods, were built in Shrewsbury, from 1797. It is important that in order to conserve buildings, they are allowed to develop and have different uses. The Shrewsbury mills are part of a major redevelopment project which will lead to commercial and residential use and bring people back into them.

Dr Thurley also talked about the rescue of our local great house at Apethorpe, in passing making clear how individuals and their personal and commercial actions can influence the chances of our heritage surviving well or being challenged. He also said that the Fens were "about the only part of the countryside which are working properly".

Over 70 people from Thorney and further afield, enjoyed the talk and were then given the opportunity to ask a wide range of questions. In his Vote of Thanks, Michael Sly also bestowed Life Honorary Membership of the Thorney Society on Dr Thurley, who said he often visited Thorney Abbey and will return to visit Thorney Heritage Museum. The talk was followed by convivial refreshments (particular thanks to Carol Fuller, Michael and William Sly) and a brief Annual General Meeting for the Thorney Society.

*Dorothy Halfhide*

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

### OFFICERS

Chair: Michael Sly    Secretary: Dorothy Halfhide  
Vice Chair: Chris Coakley    Minutes Sec: Jayne Sheraton  
Treasurer: Howard Fuller    Membership Secretary: Sue Squires  
Curator: Dorothy Halfhide

### OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Carol Fuller: Museum Rota    Margaret Fletcher: Display, TSN  
and new members Irene Brookes and Gareth Salter.

## PLANNING

As an observer recently at a Parish Council meeting it was interesting to hear that the Parish Council is pushing to improve the appearance of the Causeway Bridge barriers. Parts of the bridge have to be improved first, then it is hoped to take down the ugly metal additions. The Thorney Society attempted this battle in the past but it was not possible until the by-pass went through. I am sure we all look forward to an elegant bridge once again.

## ROTARY MEDICAL GROUP EXCHANGE LINKS

John Bartlett recently nominated Thorney society member Michelle Anderson from Wisbech Road to represent the East of England in South Carolina in America, on a medical friendship and fact finding visit. Interviews followed, and eventually Michelle, a Theatre nurse, was chosen to be one of six. Each person took gifts from their local area for their several hosts in America: Michelle took copies of "Victorian Thorney" and postcards of the tiny Canary Cottage just outside the village, which the Thorney society donated. If you want to know more, try: [www.d1070-d7770.blogspot.com](http://www.d1070-d7770.blogspot.com)

## CHOLERA: Thorney, July 15th 1832

From 'Showing that medical scares were much the same a long time ago.'  
*by Irene Brookes*

"The principal inhabitants, having this day met, pursuant to a notice given, to take into consideration what Precautions may best be taken to check the Cholera, etc. Ordered that in consequence of the representations made by Mr Clapham (the Doctor) before this morning, that there being no immediate necessity to make further representations to meet the calamities likely to arise from the disease of Asiatic Cholera, this meeting be adjourned until Thursday morning at nine o'clock, when it is requested Tycho Wing, Esq (the Duke's Steward) will attend to give his recommendations of a suitable house as a hospital for the purpose of receiving persons who may be attacked with Cholera, and to assist the parishioners in making their arrangements as the exigencies of the disease may then require. Ordered, in the meantime, in case the disease should break out beyond the present contemplation of this meeting, that the parishioners request the Minister, Churchwarden and Overseers, by the advice of Mr Clapham, to make such arrangements as may be expedient and the parishioners will sanction such expences as they may seem necessary."

(Signed)    H.J. Ellman    Wm. Morris  
                 R.M.Layton    Wright Crane  
                 Edwd Maxwell    Wm Whitting  
                 James Watson    Jos. Boakley  
                 John Crane    John Bailey

(No further mention of Cholera at later meetings so presume it did not come to anything.)