



Charity number: 298235

# NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 116 – SEPTEMBER 2010

# Summer Fayre

Be a  
Film Maker  
See page 5 for details



Most of you saw the Thorney Post report, but for those who live further away: a wonderful sunny day, great traditional fun like horse-shoe throwing, face painting, candy floss and tombola, and up-to-the-minute mouth watering cup cakes! A barrel organ provided happy background music and Mark Teulon and his daughter entranced dancing children with their music. Those who needed a cuppa and some shade were well looked after inside by Margaret Dewing and her team. Thank you Irene Brookes, who was on duty despite a recent fractured hip and sold lots of books. John Clark was busy taking superb photos to be used later for publicity, records and displays, and new volunteers joined us. Despite the draw of barbecues and paddling pools at home on such a hot day, the profit was just over £700, which is much needed for general expenses and display improvement - thank you EVERYBODY!



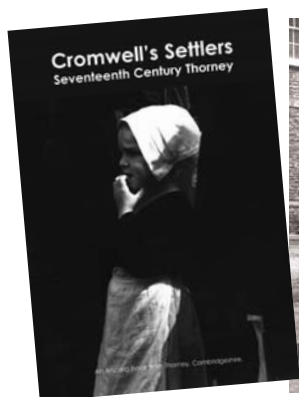
## Fenland Story Exhibition with the Whispering Willow

Those who saw these films very much enjoyed them. (One child said: "I came with my class yesterday and it was REALLY good so I've come back with my dad to have another look.") The Exhibition gave us definite benefits, such as helping raise our Museum profile and draw in more visitors, and link with other voluntary and professional Museums and local schools. We were able to show the general public the costumes we gained through last year's Education link and also some of our new costumes made by Margaret Dewing recently. The Greater Fens Museum Partnership funded an excellent mobile display board on Family History and contributed funding towards our new publication on 17th Settlers. All great boosts for a small voluntary Museum.



### New publication - Cromwell's Settlers

Were you part of the Thorney Community Pageants in 1990 and 1992? You may be in here! Attractive colour and black and white photographs to bring the memories flooding back.



This is the background story of the Settlers of the late 1600s in Thorney. A peep into the time when half the Thorney residents spoke French or Flemish, yet lived side by side with their counterparts on the Earl of Bedford's estate.

Order on 01733 270634 - £4.95 or £5.95 by post,  
Or use [enquire@thornesociety.co.uk](mailto:enquire@thornesociety.co.uk)

#### Readers' Comments:

"I am so excited to find this! I had no idea I would find so much here today. I am definitely coming again to do more research and see the places where my ancestors lived."

A Beharrelle descendant  
from 50 miles away.

"I didn't know anything about this and found it very interesting."  
New resident.

"I started to read your book last night and it is riveting!.....the illustrations and images are so complementary to the text. I met Cornelius Vermuyden outside the Museum - those in costume must have been toasting."

Dinah Smith, authority  
on Fen Roddens.

## Park Farm Open Day report:

We sold books, picked up two new members, answered queries about Thorney and hope we encouraged people from near and far to visit the Museum. Incidentally, if you are going somewhere where you feel our leaflets would be appropriate (a caravan site within reach?) please collect some from the Museum on a Sunday (say where they are going) or ring 270634 for some.

A beautifully restored horse-drawn Thorney Fire Engine made a special appearance, arranged by Michael Sly. Its current owners are Bedfordshire and Luton Fire and Rescue Service. The bodywork was re-painted again during the winter of 2008/9, taking approximately 2000 hours and 12 coats of paint. They will visit the Museum one day to share knowledge of the machine's ownership and history.



## Museums and Tourism stall: Heritage Festival

Cathedral Precincts, July.

It was the middle weekend of the Peterborough Festival. There was a lot of interest in the Land Army display, as at Park Farm Open Day.

Thousands of people and re-enactors everywhere! Even better than last year and well worth being there.



## National Heritage Open Day

**Thorney Tour, September 12th: meet at Abbey 2pm.**

Dorothy Halfhide (Blue Badge Guide) will lead an hour's walk around Thorney culminating at the Community Museum. Find out about other events at [www.heritageopendays.org.uk](http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk)



## Events publicity

We have a strong working base at the moment, but there is room for further volunteering because there always seems more to do! We specifically need someone to be in charge of putting out the A-frames with posters in two or three places in the village, and placing posters in nearby villages. We also need someone to be in charge of delivering our museum publicity leaflets each season. These extras are not onerous but would help spread the jobs and add focus; there are already people doing radio interviews, newspaper insertions, website, facebook. An overall publicity officer would be a brilliant find too, to feed in information and see that these jobs are done. Please ring Dorothy Halfhide on 270908.

# MUSEUM

## Museum Development Fund Grant

We have received £700 to be used for displaying the Village map in a more suitable way, and for associated access projects. We have to provide £250 match funding. Dorothy took advantage of the SHARE scheme again, in which experts come from a large Museum at no cost to ourselves. Ciara Canning and her colleague Liz came from Colchester and have put together a report looking at improvements in displaying the 1848 Town Plan itself, together with ideas for using the scanned versions of the map, and perhaps holding an event to build a modern community map. This map is important for us because it was drawn by Samuel Sanders Teulon who was an up and coming architect of the time, and whose works are keenly sought out by followers today for their idiosyncratic features.

## Skating

A recent museum visitor was a descendant of William "Turkey" Smart, the fastest skater in England for over 20 years, 1853-1874. He was followed by his nephew George "Fish" Smart, then his son James. Most people don't realise that the first **English National Skating Championship** took place in Thorney along the Hayling Bank (on the beginning of the Causeway) in 1879 (incidentally the reason the date of the event differs on the poster in the Museum and the newspaper report was that it was postponed due to bad weather). Around 10,000 people turned up so it could be called a success, but many could hardly get near enough to see and farmers brought wagons for them to clamber up for a better view. Sadly there were lots of complaints because of the crowds, because it was quite a trek from the train station, and because the programme was little more than a penciled list, so Thorney could not hold on to the event. BUT in 1884 **England's first Professional Ice-skating Championships** were held on Thorney River, with nearly 3,000 skating.

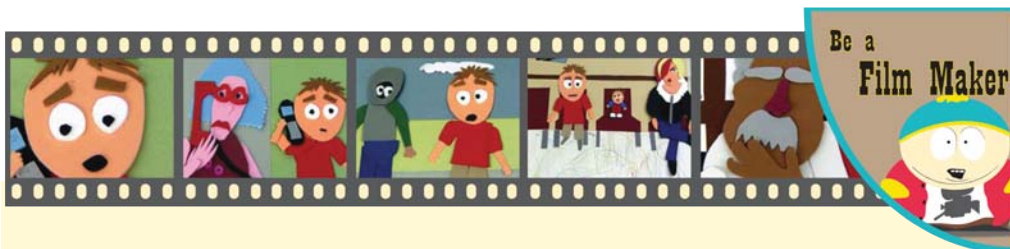


## Stewards

Stewards can be trapped upstairs for hours with enquirers looking at **family records!** This can prove interesting if you know where to look but the enquirer must always be accompanied by a member or insurance will not cover them. Our enquiry site works quickly and available research can be sent swiftly; if people need further help it is more efficient to tell people

to ask again on our site, or leave details with the steward on duty, as Dorothy Halfhide and Ann Lefort know exactly which sources might help. Similarly, please answer enquiries about **school photographs** by getting the relevant photo book from upstairs (work room immediately on left, blue books, top left of shelves to left). There is no need to open display bags in the storage drawers downstairs - their record numbers would have to be traced, so requests taken from here are a problem.

**Rota list:** when a steward rings the duty person for the following week to remind them, the duty may have been swapped. If you swap your duty, please go to the Museum or telephone on a Sunday afternoon to make sure the list is altered behind the stairs door.



## Animation Film Making Weekend

Be a film maker Sat 25th, Sun 26th September in Thorney.

Your creative energy can be used to make a special animated story for the museum and the village.

Join us in an animation film making weekend, where **YOU** make the film. No experience or talent needed.

We have 2 fun days planned where you have the opportunity to help make a 4 minute animation with us.

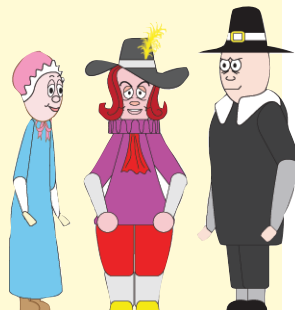
You make the characters, draw the scenes and create the film footage using animation techniques. We provide the story, the facilities, all materials and the guidance.

It's all free of charge.

The activity is for 10 year olds and upwards, including adults.

Places must be reserved, so please contact me as soon as possible.

Film Producer & Coordinator - Sean Riches.  
07810 714425. [enquiry@thorneysociety.co.uk](mailto:enquiry@thorneysociety.co.uk)  
More detail will be posted on our website  
[www.thorneysociety.co.uk](http://www.thorneysociety.co.uk)



# Cambridge University Archaeological Project

*Dorothy Halfhide*

In July Carenza Lewis and Paul Blinkhorn came to Thorney, with a team of archaeologists, for the third time to work on small (one metre square) archaeological digs with school students and their teachers. We hoped to be able to learn more about the areas where people have lived in Thorney in the past.

A number of new sites were kindly made available to us, including the Vicarage garden, which is excitingly close to the Abbey. Altogether, nine test pits were dug this year, and all evaluated. The pottery report is available online at <http://www.arch.cam.ac.uk/aca/thorney.html>, and the general information will add to the 22 pits already dug in 2006 and 2007.

In summary, it looks as though the evidence of early medieval settlement is exclusively from round the Abbey site. It seems that the vision we have of Thorney as a religious settlement without the distractions of a town is correct, almost until the time of the Dissolution.

The Higher Education Field Academies have been a "free" archaeology service over the last few years. There is one more year of funding, and if local pupils want to be involved, there are still some sites we could excavate in Thorney. The visiting students have enjoyed their time here, though this year they got rather wet some of the time, and for all this we are grateful to those who have offered their gardens for investigation.

## **Finds at Bridge House ..... July 2010**

Dorothy Halfhide asked Paul Blinkhorn to review items collected when a large fish pond was dug out at Bridge House, the site of The Duke's Head - Thorney's main Victorian Inn. This house is on the corner of Abbey place, just before the Bridge, now the home of Jayne and Ken Sheriton; they still have a big pile to finish, helped by Carol Fuller with her metal detector. The pottery was 1650-1720, some described as "quite swish" and an "unusually marked" red-ware pot. There were a lot of clay pipes from the same period, a reminder that they were often given free on purchase of tobacco.

For full item, look on You-Tube: [www.youtube.com/watch?=5QJqVtKZOP](http://www.youtube.com/watch?=5QJqVtKZOP)



## **A Memorable Character**

*Margaret Fletcher*

**The late Gertrude Tegerdine** was part of the first Museum founding group in the 1980s. Known as Trudy, she was a strong, determined and humorous person with an interesting personality. She returned to her roots here after keeping a pub in London for many years. It was on a corner with the Saloon Bar on one side and the Lounge Bar on the other and I am told she was more than capable of curtailing rowdy elements and persuading them it was time to go home.

One evening not long after we met, I offered her a lift home and was invited in for a drink. Her house was one of the small Duke of Bedford cottages but no sooner had she settled me in a comfortable chair than she pulled something and a corner opened up into a very well-stocked bar - and I had been expecting coffee! My face must have shown astonished enjoyment of the moment and when I was a bit slow deciding what to drink she suggested a Gin and Sherry; I had to teach the next day but while I was wondering whether it was wise to drink spirits ....oh well, the glass was in my hand and we were chattering away, like others after me!

The Tegerdine name has been traced back in England to Jean Tegredin, born around 1610. Roger Coombs from Australia tells me this line reaches his mother Elsie Tiggerdine, born in Eye, but his grandfather William Tiggerdine was born in the fen near Thorney at Powder Blue farm. The name appears to have come from overseas Settlers.

# My Short Life in Thorney

John Thompson

I was born at 23 Parkside, Thorney on 29th February 1932. My father was Clerk to the North Level Drainage Board. My Grandfather was the village bobby in the days when Thorney had a resident Policeman living "over the shop"; as far as I remember this was in Station Road, with the cells between the Police Station and the Rose and Crown. Grandfather was an extremely tall man, known as "Tiny" Thompson. Since my grandmother was a superb cook the prisoners were always well fed and in some cases looked forward to being arrested.

Shortly after I was born the family moved to a corner house on the Green beside Thorney Abbey. I do recollect attending the School in Church Street beside the Abbey, where there was one large classroom divided into three to accommodate different age groups. One Guy Fawkes Day somebody let off a "firecracker" in the playground, much to the consternation of the teachers.

We then moved house to Wisbech Road, opposite the land from which Les Green ran his Bus Company. He lived in the house next door. My father had the new house built. My first real memory was of my first "real" birthday when I was four years old; the local Doctor who had been responsible for my delivery gave me a clockwork train featuring Mickey Mouse, since I was the first "leap year baby" whom he had delivered.



I spent a good deal of time on the buses with Les Green and was allowed to clip tickets from time to time. He kept donkeys in the field opposite to our house and on one occasion I was taking one down a gravel lane to the water butt for a drink. Stupidly I had wrapped the halter rope around my wrist. The donkey smelled the water and set off at a gallop dragging me along the gravel - I have the scars on my leg and elbow to this day.

Regrettably my father died in 1937 at the age of thirty and is buried in the Cemetery on Whittlesey Road. The family moved away shortly after.



## Medical response to Ted Little's letter in the June Newsletter:

*from Morris Spridgeon*

I was the first baby Nurse (Miss) Lawford delivered in Thorney in September 1943 at 12 Parkside (now re-numbered 107 Wisbech Road). She suggested calling me Sydney but my mother was not impressed, so Morris Edward it was to be. She returned to her homeland, Wales, to retire. She sent us a wedding present of a linen tablecloth in August 1964 and we exchanged Christmas cards until her death. Janice Matthews (nee Wicker) was the last baby she delivered at 6 Sandpit Road in 1955, where she still lives. The Council then built the property in Sandpit Rd. purposely for the District Nurse, the other as the village shop for my father.

*from Eileen White*

The dentist was Mr French from Whittlesey (at least when I remember). The Midwife/District Nurse lived where Bernard Hargrave lives near mine (*the houses with the Dutch appearance*) with her sister Bronwen. She delivered me and my brother and sister. There was also a registrar who used to visit in Mrs Fletcher's front room (that's Jean Golding's mum) and we were all registered there; I can't remember when they stopped coming.



## DIARY DATES 2010

Autumn	<b>Time Team on TV</b> - the Norman Cross programme was postponed because of programme rescheduling owing to oil disaster. Look out for it in the Autumn.
Sept 12th (Sun)	<b>Heritage Open Day:</b> Our event will be a Historical Tour of the village with Dorothy Halfhide, about an hour. Meet at the Abbey at 2pm. National info. on <a href="http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk">www.heritageopendays.org.uk</a>
Sept 25th (Sat)	<b>Duke of Bedford School Reunion</b> , Golf Club, 7pm. £5 including light buffet. All welcome, staff and pupils. The Museum will be open from 3pm and we still need help stewarding: please ring 01773 270634 if you can help welcome people, some of whom may come from some distance away.
Sept 25th/26th (Sat/Sun)	<b>Film Animation Weekend</b> for adults and children. Fun, not hard work! Ring Sean Riches on 07810 714425 for bookings or enquiries.
Dec 5th	<b>Christmas Fayre</b> at Pigeons Farm: Craft Stalls from 12 - 4pm, then more delightful singing by the children from the Abbey Choir (you can join in if you want to!). Even more children's stalls than last year, home baking, excellent Christmas presents. Keep an eye out on the Farm website as well as ours for details.
March	<b>Annual Dinner:</b> details after Christmas.

### We are pleased to welcome new members

Jeb Hargrave of Thorney, Kathy O'Connor of King's Lynn, Tony Borgognoni, originally of Thorney but now living in Stanground and Myrna Hayter of London.

The Committee is gratified to find that putting up our subscription cost (first time since we started in 1982) has been accepted by most of our members and we have quite a few new members, so it appears we made the right decision. We can also afford to keep up the standard of the newsletter.

BUT people who enquire don't always go on to join - please encourage new members whenever you can.

**Library history:** doesn't anyone remember using the library before 1965? We are still looking for a start date.

**No news about Dick Turpin, despite a £25 Reward!**

### Fen Waterways project:

Anyone whose interest has been caught by recent comments may like to look on their website. There is a link from the Thorney Society website.