

# Thurgarton

2000

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# VILLAGE NOTES

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## **1 Introduction**

Thurgarton, the settlement or farm of *Thorgeirr* (an old Norse name), is one of the ancient villages of Nottinghamshire. Before the time of the Vikings, when the ancient British tribe of the Coritani occupied the Thurgarton side of the river Trent, a folk-moot or meeting-place certainly existed on Castle Hill; it is probable also that a simple form of church existed here long before the Norman Conquest but it was not on the same site as the present Priory Church.

## **2 Farming within the village**

All the farm land within the village is owned by Trinity College, Cambridge. It is divided up into several small farms and small holdings. Over the years some of the farmhouses have been sold and the buildings converted into dwellings. Some of the land has also been built upon. The farms were:

### ***The Old Farm***

Last farmed by the Thornton family until about the mid 1960s. The farmhouse and converted buildings are now privately owned.

### ***Priory Farm***

Last farmed by the Allwood family until about 1959. The farmhouse and buildings are now owned by the Hoggard family, whose clock, acquired from Nottingham Midland Station in 1966, is a familiar feature at the side of the main road through the village.

### ***Manor Farm***

This was farmed by the Bentley family and continued to be farmed by the sons. After one the sons, Ernest Bentley, died Manor Farm house was sold in 1986, but the land and farm buildings became part of Poplar Farm.

### ***Poplar Farm***

At the beginning of the century this was rented by Mr & Mrs Massey who were contract thrashers for all the farms. The tenancy then passed to the Plowrights, and then to Mr & Mrs Fletcher, formerly of Orchard

Farm. When Mr Fletcher died, Phil Bentley moved into Poplar Farm house and Mrs Fletcher into his cottage next to Manor Farm where she still lives. Since the death of Phil, his wife Jean has continued to farm the land which is solely arable and the only working farm in the village.

The small holdings were: The Hollows, last farmed by the Farrand family; Orchard Farm (Tinker's Cottage) last farmed by Mr & Mrs Fletcher; and Maley Cottage which has been lived in by the Bowley family for over a hundred years and is now owned by them.

### **3 Outlying farms in Thurgarton, 1900 - 2000**

#### ***Bankwood Farm***

Since World War 2 Bankwood farm has been predominantly a dairy farm although there are other enterprises of arable and pigs. It is now farmed by the Cressey family; three brothers farm together and live on the farm.

#### ***Checkers Farm, Hill Farm and Magadales Farm***

From the 1940's onwards these three farms were in the ownership of Boots of Nottingham who used them for their experimental station in Thurgarton. In 1968 the buildings of Magadales Farm were razed to the ground and the site has subsequently been reclaimed by Nature. The whole estate was sold to Thoresby Estates in 1996 as a large arable farm.

#### ***Coneyge Farm***

The land was sold just before the dissolution of Thurgarton Priory to an associate of the Abbot. It was purchased by Walter Buxton in 1921. He was a butcher by trade and continued with his shops as well as running the farm. He died in 1933. He was succeeded by his only son Walter S. Buxton, who continued to farm but was also a racehorse trainer. In 1952 the farmland was quarried for gravel and Buxton moved to Lowdham to continue farming. Subsequently the farm was gradually reclaimed by filling in the gravel pits with ash that was brought by pipeline from Staythorpe power station, and returning the topsoil. This was completed in 1969. The farm is now farmed by the Lee family who

have a dairy, sheep and arable enterprises.

### ***New Farm***

New Farm was last farmed by the Allwood family until it was taken for gravel extraction and then reclaimed with fly ash. The land was put to a neighbouring farm. It is now an industrial unit and was modernised in 1998.

### ***The Industrial Area***

This began in 1938/39 when gravel was discovered on Coneygre Farm by Arnold brothers who approached Trinity College Cambridge for a site nearer the road. The plant was erected near New Farm. Later it was sold to the Needler family who ran Hoveringham Gravels with the familiar lorry livery of orange and red with a mammoth in black. The company used small trains made on site to bring gravel to the plant. There was also a plant making drainage pipes.

Hoveringham Gravels had a metal sculpture made of a very large mammoth which was placed on a plinth outside their new office block. The sculpture was moved to the Clifton campus of Nottingham Trent University after the company was bought by Tarmac Quarries.

Westpile now have large engineering sheds and manufacture concrete piles.

Marshalls started out as a concrete product plant and became Trent Jetfloors before taking on its parent company name.

## **4 Village pubs**

### ***Coach and Horses***

In 1780 the first stagecoach on the Southwell Line pounded a route past this house and no doubt gave rise to its name; it was opened as a coaching inn in 1801. The inn has known many keepers in its history but the inn-keeper who remained the longest was Henry Fletcher who had first come to Thurgarton to work as a butler at the Priory and later returned to marry. His period of tenure lasted from 1888 until at least 1922. The family remained in Thurgarton as farmers and Mrs Freda Fletcher, Thurgarton's oldest resident, still resides in Beck Street.

As noted on a board outside, the inn together with its garden, orchard and paddock, was purchased from Cambridge University on 19<sup>th</sup> June 1937 for £1050 by Home Brewery. It remained in their ownership with several landlords for the coming 60 years. In 1976 the Brewery sold the paddock to a builder and subsequently four houses were built.

The three small cottages alongside the inn had remained empty for a considerable time, but in 1982, when George Holman was landlord, the cottages came into use as a skittle alley. 1997 brought great changes for the Coach and Horses when new ownership changed it from a small village inn into a larger inn and restaurant incorporating the cottages. Jeff and Elaine Sale now run this popular inn which still retains much of its old character.

### *The Red Lion*

The Red Lion is reputed to be a 16<sup>th</sup> century inn but records only show its history over the last two hundred years. It remained in the hands of the Thornton family for at least 72 years. John Thornton was born in Thurgarton in 1795 and three generations of his family were landlords until about 1912. The inn gained notoriety in September 1936 when landlady Mrs Sarah Ellen Clarke, aged 82, was found dead in her bedroom; her niece was found bleeding heavily from a throat wound.

Joyce and Hayden Brownson came to live in and run the inn in 1957 and stayed until 1983. They opened a restaurant within the inn in 1970 that was featured in the Egon Ronay Guide of the time, and from 1972 they lived in Cherry Trees next door.

The inn has now passed out of brewery hands and for the past 10 years has been run by Jim Renwick. Like the Coach and Horses, it has retained much of its character, and outwardly has changed little in appearance over the years. As in its coaching inn days, it remains popular with locals and travellers.

## **5 Shopping**

It has been difficult to be precise over some of the locations and dates of the various shops and trading outlets that have existed in Thurgarton, but until the advent of the car and buses the village would have been virtually self-sufficient in the provision of day-to-day goods and

services. However it has been possible to establish the existence of a variety of businesses dating back 150 years.

The earliest record of an actual shop was of a butcher at The Hollows in 1869, which was later replaced by a shoe repairer; just above on Priory Road, at Hollows Cottage, there was a small haberdashery business. However, research by Mr Dennis Humphreys shows the existence of a postal system recorded from 1847, and this has been an important and enduring feature of the village more or less ever since.

Many more small businesses have waxed and waned over the last hundred years. Ted Marsden's mother had a small tea-shop along Beck Street and Ted himself sold newspapers and sweets. Albert Holmes sold fruit and vegetables for many years and farm produce was sold by Tom Fletcher, both of whom lived in Beck Street. In fact there were many cottages, which had a field or fields belonging to them within the boundary of the village, selling a variety of farm produce. For example, opposite the Village Hall stands Orchard Farm with the land behind, now occupied by houses, supporting a small dairy business. Also along Bleasby Road was Percy Warrener's cottage which was a bakery, while at the rear of The Coach and Horses, Mr Paling had a wood-yard and joinery business. He was locally nicknamed "Mr Six-inch Nail" because when asked to advise on any difficult joinery problem would invariably reply "Stick a six-inch nail in it". One wonders how many of the older houses in Thurgarton are held together with a six-inch nail.

As well as the village shops, various traders would visit from outside. Shaws, the hardware shop from Lowdham, sent a van every week selling such items as soap, brushes, paraffin, candles etc., and Kirkby's from Southwell also came to deliver groceries which had been ordered the previous week. Mr Penson, despite having a wooden leg, used to cycle from Lowdham to collect boots and shoes for mending. Two bakers, Mr Thompson and Mr Ashton, also from Lowdham, delivered bread from their own bake-houses. Three butchers, from Lowdham, Hoveringham and Southwell made deliveries of meat. Once a year we even had a visit from a knife-sharpener. Today we have a van selling fish in the village every Monday morning and a mobile library service every other Tuesday morning.

However it is the Post Office, and associated shop, which has the most detailed record. Mrs Ann Warrener had the first Post Office in

the village in Beck Street from 1893 - 1904. In 1899 control of the Post Office passed from Southwell to Nottingham. Among the various locations of the Post Office later were: Orchard Cottage under firstly Mr William Richardson and then Mr Charles William Richardson until 1940, Cherry Tree Cottage from 1940-51 under Mrs Statham (and here Mr Statham had a small butcher's shop and freezer in a building at that time separate but now incorporated in the cottage; Mr. Statham rode round on his bicycle selling meat), and then at Holly Tree Cottage under Mrs Reeve, 1952-77. The site of the present village Post Office was the former blacksmith's forge which was, in 1967, made into the village shop run by Mrs Dulcie North. Subsequent incumbents have been:

**Mrs Dulcie North** 1967 - 1977

**Mr Ronald Doxey** 1977 - 1978

**Mr R. Goodwin** 1978 - 1980

**Mr Eric Williamson** 1980 - 1985

**Mr John Berridge** 1985 - 1989

**Mrs Jas Johal** 1990 - 1993

**Mr Brian Noble** 1993 - 1995

**Mr John Holland** 1995 -

## **6 Priory church of Saint Peter**

In the Domesday Book, Thurgarton appears as one of 34 Nottinghamshire manors granted to William D'Ayncourt who was connected by marriage to William the Conqueror. His second son, Ralph, founded Thurgarton Priory about 1140 AD. It was founded for the regular canons of the Augustinian order and was dedicated to God and St. Peter. A church was built next to the Priory in the 13<sup>th</sup> century and, as a Monastic Church, was apparently the size of Southwell Minster, and rivalled it in magnificence.

The Priory and the Monastic Church survived in this form for some three centuries. At times the monks grew slack, sometimes even corrupt but, by and large, the Priory served the neighbourhood well. The

monks instructed the young, cared for the sick and aged, provided hospitality for travellers and maintained the worship of God. From time to time men of great spirituality emerged; notable among these was Walter Hilton (died at Thurgarton 1395) who was one of the greatest of English saints and mystics. His great work *The Ladder of Perfection* has been published in various editions over the centuries and most recently in a paperback edition.

Henry VIII decided that the monasteries had outlived their usefulness and should be closed. Thurgarton's turn came in 1538 when the monks left and the vast church became the village parish church. The king gave the Priory buildings to William Cooper and his wife Cecily and the priory remained in the Cooper family until 1825. The lands went to Trinity College, Cambridge and much of it still remains in the college's possession. The college was given the responsibility of providing a parish priest.

The upkeep of the church itself was beyond the resources of the villagers, and of the Cooper family, and so general deterioration slowly resulted in almost complete ruin of its fabric. The soldiers of Oliver Cromwell may have helped this process on its way, for the Coopers were active royalists. The ancient stone can still be found in many a village garden rockery and some farmhouses are built almost entirely of it. Services were held in the north aisle and for the next 300 years the church must have been a sorry and depressing sight.

In 1854, the Millward family, who were living at the Priory, set about the work of restoration. Much of the ancient building was incorporated into what is now known as the Priory Church. The Tower and West Front are original 13<sup>th</sup> century, as are the pillars in the Nave. Other ancient features include the Monks triple seat known as a misericord, a fine 13<sup>th</sup> century Niche on the east wall, and the Stone Altar which was apparently found at the bottom of the well. The Altar is one of the few surviving pre-reformation stone altars.

Saint Peter's Church is the unique heritage of Thurgarton. It has been passed down to us through many generations of the village. Its beautiful pastoral setting can have changed little since medieval times.

## **7 Methodist Chapel**

Methodism came to the village in about 1833. The Chapel on Bleasby Road had its foundation stones laid in a ceremony on 18<sup>th</sup> May 1927 and was completed about a year later. Each year there is a service held to commemorate this event. Before the Chapel was built there was a wooden hut with an iron roof in the garden of Rosegarth which served as the chapel.

## **8 War Memorial**

The War Memorial stands inside the pinfold by the side of the village shop.

## **9 Thurgarton Village Hall**

The Village Hall has been part of village life ever since the arrival of 'The Hut' soon after the First World War. This old army hut was used for all the village activities until 1957 when it was sold to the Mansfield Shoe Company. It was replaced by the new hall which was built after nearly ten years of fund raising. Since then it has been extended twice, has had a refurbished kitchen, and has been double glazed. Plans are now in hand to provide amenities for the disabled in wheelchairs. It continues to be used for all village functions and clubs.

## **10 Thurgarton School**

A school for the education of 20 boys from Thurgarton and Hoveringham appears on an old map drawn for Trinity College in 1799. When the school started is not known but in 1783 the parish register records the death of George Huddlestone schoolmaster aged upwards of 73. In 1851 the school at the corner of Beck Street was created by Rev. Henry Lea Guillebaud. It was closed in 1974 when there were 34 pupils on the register. The register shows that a total of 416 children had been pupils at the school. It lists wartime evacuees, where they came from and who took them in. It also details pupils who gained admission to Southwell Grammar, Newark Technical College and Newark High School. Today children attend Bleasby Primary School for infants and juniors, with the senior pupils going to Southwell Minster School.

## **11 The Station House**

The house was built in 1847 by the Midland Railway Co. It has a very distinctive style that can also be seen in other stations and crossing houses along the Nottingham - Lincoln railway line. It would have employed about five full-time staff in its working life, and you would have been able to purchase a ticket at the ticket office, and wait in the waiting room by a roaring fire in the winter. There were two waiting rooms, one for general use and one for ladies. After 1969 the station was no longer manned though the house was let to the person who operated the gates at the level crossing. When it was sold to the Yates family in 1988 all links with the railway were severed.

The Station yard was a necessary focal point for the commercial trade in the village. The coal merchant was based there; farm produce, cattle, sugar beet etc. were all taken to the markets in Newark and Nottingham from the station. Hoveringham Gravel used the facilities extensively, sending sand and gravel by train over the country. It is now used as a general engineering works.

## **12 Birds and Animals in Thurgarton Parish**

There are many types of birds and animals that live in Thurgarton Parish; there are really too many to mention but there are some that are really special as they are quite rare to this part of the country, and people travel from large distances to see them. The 'twitchers' saw the Temmincks Stint in autumn 1998 and it was then posted on the internet for all ornithologists to see, so people flocked from far and wide to witness the arrival of this rare bird. The Temmincks Stint is only 13 cm from its bill to its tail, it has grey plumage and yellow legs and as it migrated from lapland it came a little further North than usual.

The other rare bird to visit this area recently was a small duck called a Smew; this again caused quite a stir. It is also known as the 'White Nun' because of its black and white plumage, but this description only applies to the drake as the duck is grey with chestnut patches on its head and chest. They measure approximately 43 cm from bill to tail. The Smew is one of the smallest saw-bill ducks.

*The following Nature Notes were written by Tom, Rob and Richard Yates.*

There are a pair of Barn Owls that live in the area and in warm summer evenings they can be seen hunting along the verges and edges of the fields for small mammals to eat and feed to their young. In our garden we have a bird table and we have regular visitors to it such as Blue Tits, Robins, Great Tits, Blackbirds and Wrens; we also have Tree Creepers and a pair of Mistle Thrushes. We have quite an established wildlife pond in our garden which is a haven to frogs, toads and newts; there is also a lot of frog spawn and toad spawn ready to hatch. We also have some Tench that have come into the pond on weed. Last year we had a litter of baby hedgehogs born under the shed in the yard; we were lucky enough to see them in the daytime as they were with their mum.

## **13 Village Organisations**

### ***Thurgarton Women's Institute***

Thurgarton Women's Institute was formed in November 1946 with 46 members. Mrs Molly Simey was the first President and other founder members included Mrs Madge Sneath who is still resident in the village, the Misses Lily and Kath Atkin and Mrs Margaret Reeves. Membership has fluctuated, but increased in the 1980's when table tennis, badminton and whist tournaments started. County trophies have been won on several occasions. Nine ladies have taken the chair since Mrs Simey in 1946, and present members led by President Mrs Helen Crowder, continue to enjoy monthly meetings, and social events when family and friends are invited. Many members are involved with the church, chapel and village hall.

Meetings were at first held in the hut on Bleasby Road and from 1957 in the new Village Hall. Members have made their voices heard on many occasions, objecting to the closure of the station waiting room and the closure of the school. The County Council provided two litter bins at Hilltop layby at the WI's request, and in 1978, members organised a litter clearance with the children which helped win the village the title of Best Kept Village. Choir and drama groups thrived in early years and a reformed Drama Group entertained members and villagers during the 1980's. In 1961 the Village Hall Committee included cook-

ery items in the Flower Show schedule at the WI's request and the ladies of Thurgarton were able to compete for the WI cup.

### ***Thurgarton Cricket Club***

The home of the Cricket Club is Thurgarton Priory paddock where massive chestnuts, ancient yews and cypress trees surround the paddock with the Church and the Priory itself in the background. In the centre lies the wicket square with a huge oak tree standing guard. The origin of the Club is unclear but cricket was played in the 1870's when Bishop Riddings, the first Bishop of Southwell, who was a very keen cricketer, came to live at the Priory and formed a team captained by his own Chaplain. Cricket was played close to Hill Farm until 1925, when the club was disbanded due to lack of support.

The club was revived in 1947 and cricket has been played on the Priory ground to this day. Mr Albert Palmer was elected as Hon. Secretary and Mr John Reeves as Vice Captain. Both served the club for many years, John becoming one of five original life members with Sid Crowder, Iain Kirkham, Peter Woodward and Michael Sadler. There were no facilities at the ground, visitors had to change in the cobbler's shop and teas were provided alternately at the two village inns. In 1953 a small hut was obtained and used as a tea room. In the early years extensive work was done on the square and suitable wickets prepared. An all weather wicket was laid in 1984. Friendly games were played on Saturdays and from 1965, some Sunday games were arranged. The increasing number of matches necessitated the purchase of a new pavilion which was erected by members and officially opened in August 1973. The new pavilion was sponsored by the late Gordon Gerring who was Area Manager at Nottingham British Rail. An extension to this building was completed in 1991 to include shower facilities and create a larger kitchen. At a special match in September this year commemorative plaques were unveiled to mark the generous contribution of The Farr Trust towards a newly laid wicket and The Boots Company for the donation of a new artificial wicket.

The Club has been a member of the South Notts. Village League since its formation in 1972. In 1987, due to increased membership, a 2nd XI was formed and there is now a thriving Junior Section. One of the club highlights of the year is the Six-a-side tournament when

the winning team receives the *Michael Sadler Plate*, which Michael presented to the club before he left the village in 1985. The club is probably unique in that until 1999 it had a Lady President, Mrs Jenny Farr, who succeeded her late husband Hordern as President in 1981.

## THE VILLAGE MAP

In the interest of a Millenium Project for the village three members attended a meeting on Parish Maps at Newark Community Arts Ltd. This was followed by a public meeting in the Village Hall after which a full committee was formed. This has proved to be a very enthusiastic group who have worked in a voluntary capacity to complete the project. We were particularly fortunate that Mrs Doreen Hyam volunteered her services to paint the village map *Thurgarton 2000* which is hung in the Village Hall. Doreen lives in the village and enjoys watercolour painting as a hobby and is an active memeber at Patchings Art Centre.