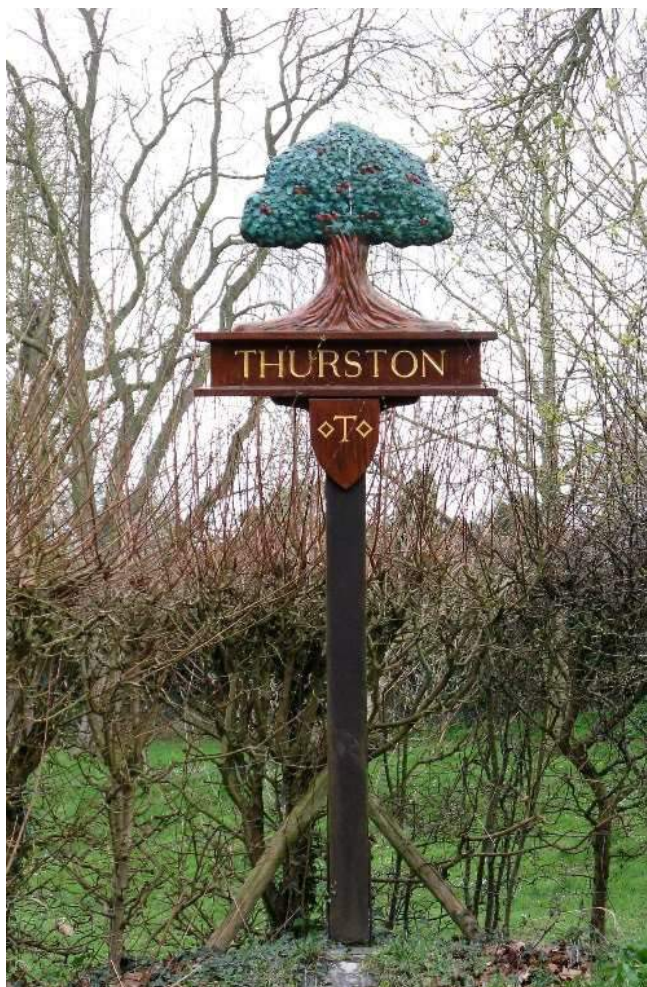


A History of Thurston

A HISTORY OF THURSTON



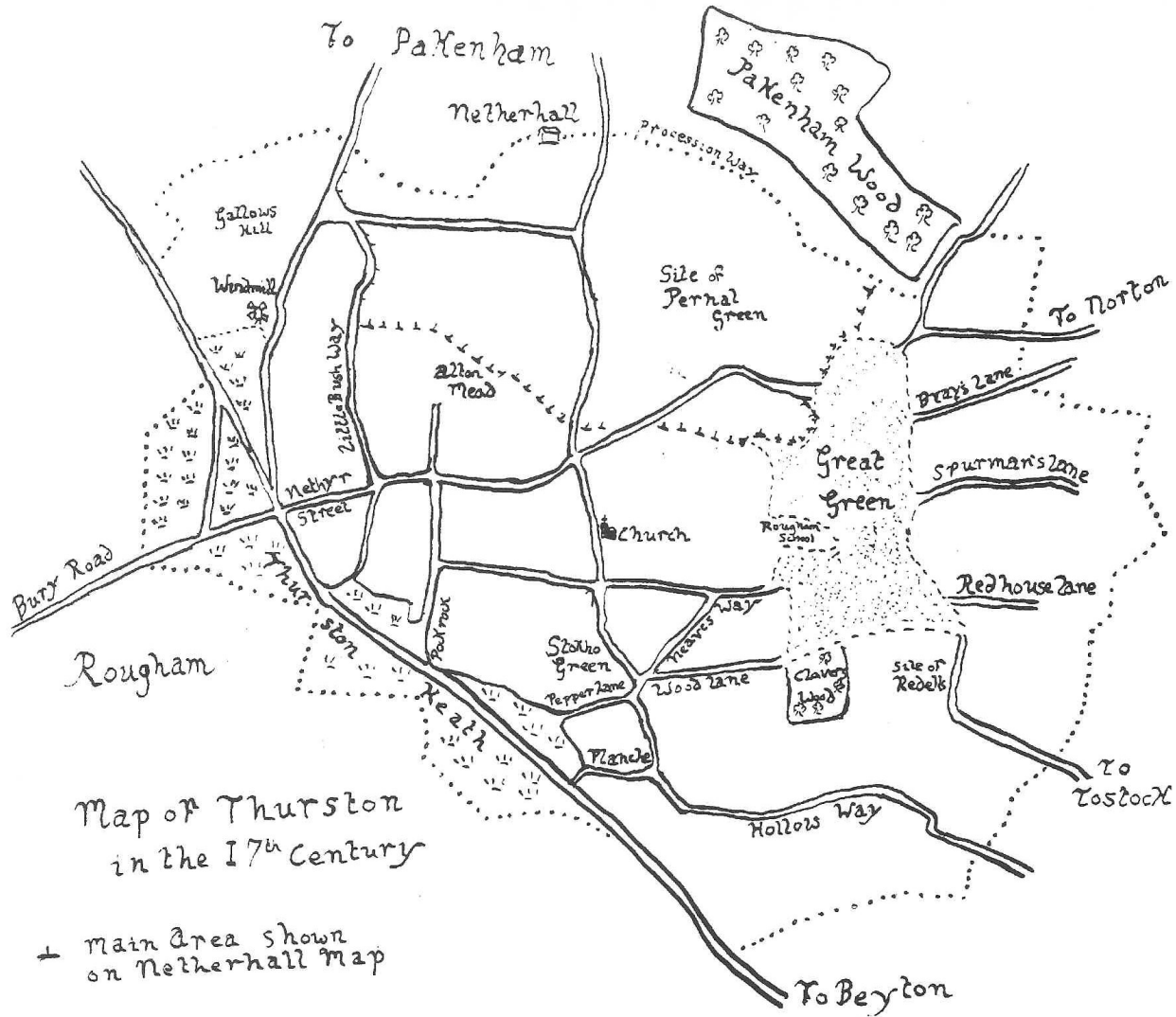
During the Plough Sunday service on the 14th January 2018, at St Peter's Church, the vicar asked the congregation if there were any farmers present. No hands were raised. Today very few people who live in Thurston have any connection with agriculture or horticulture.

Plough Sunday is a traditional English celebration of the beginning of the agricultural year. In Thurston, we are fortunate to have a horse-drawn plough that can be brought into the Church every Plough Sunday to be blessed. This plough was given to the Church by Percy Howes whose family farmed, both as tenant farmers and owners, at Manor Farm for many years.



Thurston's single-furrow horse-drawn plough

Thurston, like most settlements in England, has grown and changed greatly since its mention in the Domesday Book of 1086. It was part of the Thedwastre Hundred which consisted of 24 parishes in Suffolk. Thedwastre or Thedwestry was listed in the Domesday Book as Thevardestreu. The name derives from Theodwards's tree, presumably a notable tree situated on the area's boundary. It has been suggested that the Thedwastre Hundred Court may have met in Thurston on Thedwastre Hill. In 1660 the Thedwastre Hundred Court met once a year at Easter on Thurston Plains or on Thedwastre Hill.



17th Century Thurston
By permission of Anthony M Bream

A farming parish

For many centuries Thurston existed as a small scattered parish supporting a population of about 300, the majority of whom would have been involved in farming in some way or other. Most of the inhabitants lived in the eastern half of the parish, in the Great Green, Church Road and Stockhold Green areas. The western half was more sparsely populated and partly consisted of an expanse of heath land.



Cultivating by Myatt's wood 2017

The 1841 Tithe Map shows the landscape and presents us with a picture of the farming community in Thurston. Thurston was very much an arable farming area. Situated in East Anglia with its chalky soil and rich boulder clays, together with its low rainfall, it was an ideal area for the growing of cereals.

There were a number of pasture fields but these tended to be mainly around the farmhouses and other dwellings. Being an arable farming area, which required a large labour force to plough, cultivate and harvest the crop, the majority of male residents of Thurston were described as agricultural labourers in the 1851 census.

The majority of the population of Thurston depended upon agriculture for a living and even if they were not directly involved on the land they were occupied in jobs closely associated with farming. These included blacksmiths and wheelwrights who tended to have their workshops close to each other.



Cavendish Hall and The Laurels
Postcard c.1920

The type of farming is also reflected in the settlement of the village. The 1905 Ordnance Survey map of Thurston shows in the Great Green area the smaller, independent farms, where the owner is also the farmer. From the map we can see a cluster of farms around a central green which before the Enclosure Act was common land. There are a number of cottages near to the farmhouses such as those near Poplar Farm, Grove Farm and Green Farm. Thurston Heath in the western half of the parish was also common land prior to enclosure. Most of the land in the centre of the parish was owned by the large estates of Nether Hall and Thurston House. New terraced cottages were built by the larger estates for their farm workers and can be found in Meadow Lane and Church Road.



Terraced cottages in Church Road
Postcard c.1930

Some original village properties

Thurston has lost many of its old thatched cottages.

Stockhold Green Farm, Pepper Lane Cottage, Pepper Mead and Field House still remain as thatched cottages. Many date back to the 16th century; Stockhold Green Farm may well date back to the 15th century.

During the mid-1800s, when agricultural was enjoying a period of prosperity, small cottages for agricultural labourers were built on Meadow Lane and Church Road and in the Great Green area. All remain to this day except for the middle row of Post Office Row, Church Road.



The Old Cottage, Thurston, Suffolk.

The Old Cottage, Hollow Lane now demolished
Postcard undated



Pepper Mead 2018



Stockhold Green Farm 2017



Post Office Drive, Thurston.

**Terraced cottages in middle Post Office Row
now demolished** Postcard c.1940



Pepper Cottage c.1890

By permission Bury St Edmunds Past and Present Society



**Terraced cottages in Post Office Row,
Church Road 2017**

There are currently 23 listed buildings in Thurston. The more significant buildings in the parish include:

Thurston House: A Grade II listed, large Georgian red brick house built in 1763 with later alterations. This was the estate house that owned much of the southern part of the parish including Thedwastre Hill and Stockhold Green.



Thurston House c.1890

By permission Bury St Edmunds Past and Present Society



Thedwastre White House c.1890

By permission Bury St Edmunds Past and Present Society

Thedwastre White House: A listed building dating from 1530 and one of the oldest surviving buildings in the village. It is timber framed and was re-fronted in Georgian times.

Farm workers lived in cottages surrounding the estate with the estate providing work for blacksmiths and carpenters in Blacksmiths Road now Pokeridge corner.



Nether Hall c.1870 Artist unknown

Nether Hall: This was the estate house of a very large estate, part of which is in the Parish of Pakenham. In 1544, the Crown granted the manor of Nether Hall to Thomas Bacon and his son George. Originally it was the property of the Abbey of Bury St Edmunds. Nether Hall is a listed building described as a large 16th or 17th century house with remodelling in the early 18th century, 1875 and again by Philip Webb in 1901. Along with his friend William Morris, Philip Webb, is often called the father of the Arts and Crafts Movement. He is best known for his unconventional country houses. Together with his fellow Arts and Crafts colleagues he was one of the founding members of the Protection of Ancient Buildings Society. The garden walling and ha-ha is also listed as part of the landscaping of 1875.

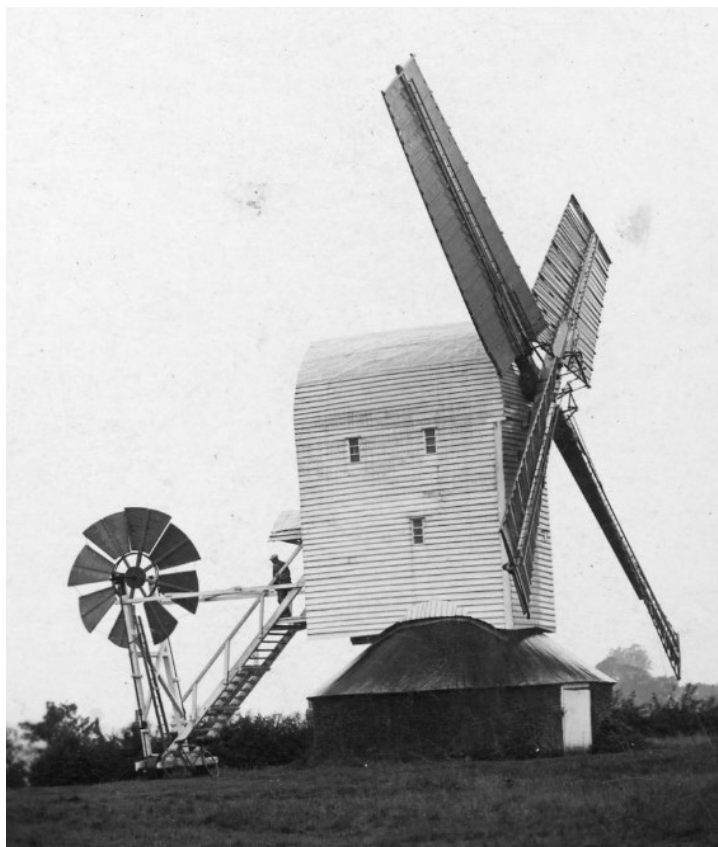


Manor Farm c.1900 Source unknown

Manor Farm: Was built as an estate farmhouse for Nether Hall in 1876 and is a Grade II* listed building. The architect for this building as well as the original farm buildings was also Philip Webb. At one time called Home Farm, Manor Farmhouse is made from red brick in Flemish bond.

Thurston Mill: The only reminder that there was a windmill, which original belonged to the Nether Hall estate, is Mill Lane. The entrance to the mill was beyond the road leading to Mill Farm and stood back from the road. A windmill is shown on a map of 1620 on Thurston Heath; Mill Farm being situated on the edge of the heath. Thurston windmill was a post

mill. Most villages would have had a windmill but by the 1900s the demise of the windmill had begun, due to the introduction of the powerful roller mills. Thurston windmill was demolished in 1950 with some of the timber being sent to Pakenham Mill.



Thurston Mill Postcard c.1930

Thurston Cottage: Only the Gate House for this property is listed. Thought to be originally a farmhouse, it was enlarged in the early part of the 19th century and is now known as Thurston Place. The first owner of the new house was a well-known botanist, Nathaniel Shirley Hodson, who moved to Bury St Edmunds following his retirement as a War Office official. He established the Abbey Gardens in Bury St Edmunds.



Thurston Cottage c.1890

By permission Bury St Edmunds Past and Present Society

Although there is no proof he lived at Thurston Cottage, the garden contains interesting plants he may have introduced. According to the 1841 Tithe Map, he was the owner but the occupiers were the Misses Gwilt.



Planche Hall 2017

The Planche: Old maps show a vicarage on the site. The earlier thatched dwelling may have been the vicarage in the late 18th and very early 19th century but had been occupied by other villagers for many years. The property was listed in the 1841 Tithe Map as house and gardens, brick stud and thatched dwelling used as two tenements. It was also included in the sale of Glebe Lands in 1905. The present house was built in 1906/7 and was used as a private residence until 1958 when it was sold and used as a residential nursing home. In 1977 it became a home for adults with special needs until 1995 when it closed and the house returned to being a private residence.



The Vicarage c.1930 Source unknown

The Vicarage: A new vicarage was built opposite the church next to the recreation field in 1861 by Rev. Paul Stedman. This Victorian vicarage was used as the vicar's residence until it was sold in 1938 and a new smaller vicarage had been built next to the church. This latter vicarage ceased to be used as a vicarage in 2010 and was sold.



The Methodist Chapel 2017

The Methodist Chapel: In Thurston there were Methodist meetings but little is known of them or where they were held. The Methodist Chapel was erected in 1872 and in White's Suffolk Directory of 1891 is described as a 'Primitive Methodist' Chapel. It was built on a very small plot of land on the roadside, next to The Planche. Due to the decline in numbers the last service took place at this Chapel on Sunday 6th December 2015.



The Victoria public house c.1980

The Victoria public house: It is the oldest known pub in Thurston. The census for 1841 lists William Ridgeon as a publican on Norton road, where the Victoria is located. According to census and directories the Victoria stayed in the Ridgeon family until the 1890s. In 1912-

1954 the pub was run by Harry Peachey and his wife Sarah. They had four children and the family also kept pigs, chickens and cows. The milk from the cows was sold from the pub. Descendants of the Peachey family live in Thurston today. The Victoria continues as a village family pub serving food. It is also used as a venue for the 68 club, a village men's club formed in 1968, which continues albeit with rather reduced numbers.



The Black Fox public house c.1990

Black Fox public house: William Barker, a farmer, built the building which was to become the Black Fox public house. He died in 1862 and left the property to his niece Mary Barker and her five sons. She obtained a licence to brew and sell beer. This was not an unusual choice to make as a number of farmers supplemented their income in this way. Mary ran the business for twenty years and the Black Fox continued in the same family for over 130 years.

From small beginnings the Black Fox became a pub that won the News of the Worlds dart championships in 1956 and a favourite CAMRA pub at the time it closed its doors in the early 1990s. The pub was only ever an ale house with no 'mod cons'. To quote Charlie Baker in 1977, when he was in his 80s, 'the beer had always kept well in the back room, no pipes to get dirty'. 'I get just enough trade to pay the bills'.



The Black Fox darts team c.1930

Photograph source unknown



Locals at the Black Fox c.1960
Photograph source unknown

The Black Fox had been in the Baker/Barker family for four generations when Joyce Ong and her husband George gave up the pub in 1991. She had taken over the Black Fox from her father George Baker in 1979 and at that time it was probably Suffolk's last 'Ale Only' licensed house. When Joyce applied for the licence in her name she added a spirit licence but never added draught lager. There were never any pumps on the bar. The Black Fox is fondly remembered as a pub where people could socialise without music or food. It attracted serious beer drinkers from all over Suffolk.



Grove Farm Grade II listed barn 2016

Grove Farm: Situated on the eastern side of the village is the Grade II listed Grove Farm – a mid-16th century timber framed farmhouse that underwent a major remodelling in 1919. The late 17th century stables/barn is also Grade II listed and inside the building there is evidence of early graffiti.

The village centre

The History, Gazette and Directory of Suffolk 1844 lists the Thedwastre Hundred parishes. This shows Thurston has not always been a large village. In 1801 the population of Thurston was 354 and in 1841, 599. For the neighbouring village of Pakenham, the village of two mills, the population in 1801 was 681 and in 1841, 1,105. Thus Pakenham was a considerably larger village.



*Aerial view of Thurston village centre c.1950,
St Peter's Church is towards the centre-*
Postcard undated



Thurston Post Office c.1900
Postcard undated

There is no main village street in Thurston. Up until the middle of the 1900s the 'centre' of the village was to be found in the Church Road area of the parish. The church, primary school, Cavendish Hall, post office, blacksmith and carpenter/undertaker were to be found there. The building of the council houses began in the early 1900s and continued with bungalows for the elderly built in 1970.

St Peter's Church: From as early as the 14th century St Peter's Church has been the main religious building in the village. The present chancel dates from the early 15th century replacing an earlier structure and was the only part to survive when the tower collapsed in March 1860.



St Peter's Church from the north churchyard 2015

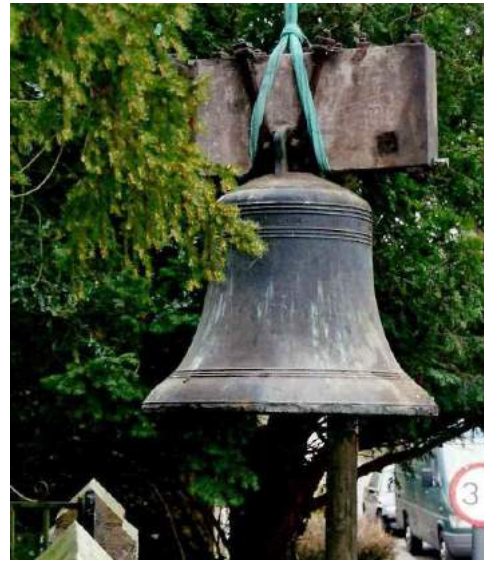
Through the generosity of the parishioners St Peter's Church was rebuilt to a very high standard. The Greene family of Nether Hall and the Blake family of Thurston House commissioned much of the fine 19th century stained glass which replaced the lost medieval stained glass. The rebuild took just over one year and on Thursday September 9th 1861 the Church opened its doors, once again, for worship. During the 1890s Sir Walter Greene of Nether Hall was extremely generous to St Peter's and made the restoration of the chancel possible. Included in this work was a new organ, erected by 'Father' Henry Willis. It was said to be the last organ that Willis built as he caught a chill whilst tuning it and died within three days.



St Peter's Church interior view c.1920

Source unknown

An interesting memorial stone to be found under the tower is that to George Wickes who was one of our greatest silversmiths and was goldsmith to George III. He founded Garrard in London. It has also been suggested that Gainsborough's first teacher in London was a silversmith and George Wickes is said to be a contender. Born in Bury St Edmunds, he retired to Thurston together with his wife Alder. Where he lived in Thurston is not known.



Removing and dispatching the church bells 2004

The five church bells survived the collapse of the tower and were re-hung. The wooden bell frame was found to have deteriorated at the end of the 20th century so funds were raised to replace it with a new metal frame. This work was done in 2004 with the assistance of village volunteers, removing the bells which were sent to be re-tuned, erecting the new frame and eventually reinstalling the bells. An additional sixth bell, to augment the ring, was added in June 2012 which was obtained, through the Keltek Trust, from St Albans Abbey. Public subscription helped with the purchase and volunteers helped hang the new bell.



Consecrating the new churchyard 2016

Numbers attending St Peter's Church services on the 30th March 1851 were 130 for the morning service and 250 for the afternoon service. Today St Peter's shares a vicar with Holy Innocents, Great Barton and numbers attending church are much reduced. On 8th October 2015 the first lady vicar, the Rev'd Manette Crosssman, was instituted. The Mothers Union meets once a month at the Rock, a Church room adjacent to the Church. The Flower Festival has been held in the church about every three years and more recently an annual Christmas Tree Festival both of which have involved local businesses and organisations and proved to be very successful and popular.

Thurston School: As early as 1818 records show that there was a Sunday school in Thurston which some children attended. Pakenham village had a purpose-built school built in 1840-42 and some Thurston children attended school there. On 15th January 1869 at a meeting at Thurston Church, ½ acre of Glebe land, situated opposite the Church, was offered by the vicar, Rev. P Stedman. On the 13th October, 1869 Thurston School opened with a Miss M. C. Dexteras mistress. The Victorian school through the years saw roll numbers rise and fall but in the early 1960s, the baby boom years had led to overcrowding and there was talk of a new school. In the middle of the 1960s the old school closed after a short service at 3.00pm. The Victorian school was demolished and a new 1960s style building was built. The Cavendish Hall was used as a school during this time.



Thurston Victorian School from School Road c.1960 Photograph source unknown



Thurston Primary School 2017

Today the Thurston Primary School is described as a friendly village school with a strong Christian ethos. Since school system changes in 2015, two extra years have been accommodated on site, taking it to capacity. With the increase in Thurston population, a new larger primary school is required and it will be necessary for this to be on a different site to the current school site which is constrained by its size.

Village Hall: On the southern edge of the recreation field which was Glebe land near the church, old maps and photographs show there was a building on this site called the Church Room. The history concerning the current building, Cavendish Hall is well documented. Mrs Tyrell Cavendish wished to present the village with a new village hall in memory of her late husband, Tyrell William Cavendish, who had lost his life on board the Titanic in 1912. They were both travelling to America to visit Mrs Cavendish's father, leaving their two young sons in England due to illness. Mrs Cavendish survived but never returned to live in Thurston House which they had purchased shortly before the journey to America. Cavendish Hall was built on the site in 1914/15.



The Cavendish Hall c.1960 Photograph G. Wood



The Thurston Players c.1960
Photograph by permission Bury Free Press

Today the Cavendish Hall, which has been updated over the years, is still a very popular venue and is used as the base for the local Scouting Movement. The first meeting of the Thurston Women's Institute was held in March 1919 at the Cavendish Hall and celebrates its Centenary in 2019. During the 1950s and 1960s, The Thurston Players, a successful amateur dramatic club, used the Cavendish Hall for the majority of their plays.

Recreation Field: This area was originally Glebe land which was used as farm land until 1921 when the deed of Thurston Recreation Ground was signed and the area given to the village as a public recreation ground 'in possession free from encumbrances'.



St Peter's Church from the Recreation field c.1861

By permission Bury St Edmunds Past and Present Society



Thurston Football Team 1929-30

Photograph source unknown

Football and cricket have been played on this area since the 1920s, and it continues to be used by clubs.



A Cricket match on the Recreation Field 2010

The clubs now have an attractive pavilion for their use. For many years the area was used for the annual flower show and village fete. The local rugby club have their own facilities on the Ixworth road.



The Pavilion, Recreation field 2017

The coming of the railway

The construction of the railway in the early 1800s led to a major change in the landscape of the village dividing it north and south of the rail line and resulting in the development of the western part of the parish.



Men working on the line at Thurston Station c.1920 Photograph source unknown

The estate belonging to Thurston House was divided by the rail line which resulted in the construction of a bridge to link the land to the north of the line. This bridge was demolished when the land was sold for the housing development of Birch Road.



The bridge across the rail line to Thurston House estate Postcard undated



Early view of Thurston Station showing original gables and the building on the south side
Postcard 1904

Thurston Railway Station Building: As part of the construction of the railway in the 1840s, it was decided that Thurston would have a station, now a Grade II listed building. The chosen architect was Frederick Barnes of Ipswich, who trained under Sidney Smirke, architect of the British Museum. Described as being in the Baroque manner, it was built in red brick with quoins and dressings of gault. The station building was mirrored by an equally grand building, no longer standing, on the opposite side. The two halves were joined by a pedestrian tunnel, now bricked up. Unfortunately, the Station Building has lain unoccupied for several years. The firm Drecroft ran their printing and photocopying business from here and the building has been empty since they left in 2013.

Fox and Hounds public house: This is also a Grade II listed building and to quote the web site, British Listed Buildings, 'this finely detailed public house was built at the same time as the station, 1846'. An advertisement in the Bury and Norwich Post, dated 22nd November, 1848, informed readers that a William Partridge Walliker 'had taken over an inn and fitted it up with every accommodation.' 'Superior home-brewed beer, draught and bottled porter, draught and bottled, spirits and fine old wines in addition to good stabling and a careful Ostler.'



Hunt meeting at the Fox and Hounds Public House c.1950 Source unknown

There have been numerous occupants over the years and for many years they would have brewed their own beer. Today the Fox and Hounds is a very busy and popular pub also serving meals.



View of Station Bridge, old cottages, village store opposite the Fox and Hounds c.1905 Postcard
undated

The Railway: The railway was built primarily to carry freight and particularly agricultural produce in Thurston. The first passenger train ran between Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds on the 7th December, 1846. In 1848, the fare from Thurston to Bury was 10d (4p) first class, 6d (2.5p) second class and 4d (2p) for third and parliamentary. The fare from Bury to London was 18s 0d (90p) first class, 13s 0d (65p) second class, 9s 0d (45p) third class and 7s 10d (39p) for parliamentary Parliamentary. passenger services were required by an Act of Parliament in 1844 to allow inexpensive and basic travel for the less affluent.

In 1952, the working timetable shows how railway traffic had developed over the years from 1892, with the following trains passing through Thurston.

Down (to Haughley)	Up (to Bury)
17 freight trains	15 freight trains
2 mail/parcels trains	2 mail/parcels trains
10 stopping passenger trains	12 stopping passenger trains
6 express trains	4 express trains
1 pickup goods train	1 pickup goods train
1 fish train	
1 empty coaching stock train.	



*The Signal Box originally on the south side
by the station c.1960*

Photograph source unknown



Thurston Station, the present unmanned halt 2017

This made travelling to and from the village much easier and brought new people to the village. Up until this time everyone would have had work connected with agriculture or traditional village occupations such as blacksmith, wheelwright, and shoemaker. The census, of 1851, shows that 48% of the population were agricultural labours, with 5% described as railway men and 19% domestic servants.

With the opening of the railway and a station sited in Thurston new trades began to arrive.



The Granary when it was processing grain and shipping to Burton on Trent by rail c.1950
Photograph source unknown

The Granary: It is believed to have been built in the late 1850s. Harold Clarke ran the business from the 1920s and he built up the malting trade to become one of the largest barley merchants in the county. His son Roy carried on the business. The Granary was a prominent and important feature of Thurston for more than a hundred years when it closed in the early 1980s. It was finally demolished earlier in 2017 to make way for a new building containing flats and commercial units. Also, on the site there are a number of businesses and a pharmacy occupies the original grain quality inspection office.



Conversion of the Granary buildings for use for small industrial units c.1980
Photograph source unknown

Coal merchants: There were possibly 5 coal merchants of which, C&W Peachey of Thurston was one, using or collecting supplies at Thurston Station. It has been noted that at one time 37 wagons of coal were lined up on the track. Peachey's were the last coal merchants to receive coal by rail in 1976. After the withdrawal of the scheduled goods services to Thurston in 1966, the firm of C & W Peachey still received deliveries of coal by rail, although these were now brought from Bury St Edmunds using a diesel shunter. In early 1976 all rail goods services to Thurston were withdrawn and after this all coal deliveries were made by road. The sidings in Thurston yard were lifted on the 1st June 1976.



*C & W Peachey coal merchant premises
opposite the Granary c.1950*
Photograph source unknown

Station yards: During the 1920s and the 1930s the Station and its yards were very busy. In addition to the 5 coal merchants collecting and loading their supplies as they arrived, there were animal pens for cows and horses. Polo ponies arrived from Cambridge University and were destined for Beyton. Beer arrived from Bullard's Brewery in Norwich and was delivered to the Fox and Hounds, Thurston and the White Horse, Beyton by R. Carter and Son's drays. Goods were also sent from Thurston: daily shipments of fruit and vegetables to Covent Garden, sugar beet for the factory in Bury St Edmunds and cereals to many destinations.

Although Thurston Station survived the 'Beeching Axe', it became an 'unmanned halt' in 1967. Today there are hourly trains to Ipswich and Cambridge with connections to London stations and Peterborough.

Ely and District Model Railway Club until recently had a wonderful award winning 4mm 00 layout based on Thurston Station and sidings. This has now been sold to a railway enthusiast from Suffolk.

Agricultural change

Families were large and an agricultural labourer living during the 19th century would have witnessed great changes in the farming world. Changes included the rise and fall in agricultural prosperity, the increasing use of machinery, the change in the fields in which they worked and the movement of village people to industrial towns.

During the agricultural depression, which began in the late 1870s and which was to last until the First World War, a number of fit young men from East Anglia including Thurston, travelled to Burton-on-Trent to work as maltsters. The reasons were that many young men were out of work, the connection the Burton Brewers had with East Anglia through the purchase of malting barley and lastly the farming season and the malting season complemented each other. During WWI the Government guaranteed farm prices and introduced subsidies. This protection stopped in 1921 and living off the land became a constant battle, especially for the small farms. British farmers were producing less than one third of the nation's food and many small farmers had to leave their farms.

Following the death in 1920 of Sir Walter Greene, the Nether Hall estate was sold. Farms that were part of the estate at the time of the sale were Thedwastre Hill Farm, Green Farm, Manor Farm and Home Farm (Pakenham). The horse was still the most important animal and Nether Hall Estate had approximately sixty horses at this time. During World War I heavy horses were commandeered by the military authorities and most did not return. Whether it was the power to pull a plough or harvest a crop the horse provided it. This continued until after World War II when gradually the tractor and other machinery took their place. The fields shown on the Tithe Map were small and during the middle part of the 1900s field hedges were removed to make the cultivation of the fields with the new machinery more efficient. A fair number of mature trees were also felled and sold. The 1920 sales particulars for Nether Hall Estate show the timber for the whole estate is valued at £2250.00 of which that at Green Farm was valued at £367.00.



Hedge and ditch clearing at Great Green 1979



Combine harvesting winter wheat c.1990

The 1890 Agricultural Returns for Grove Farm show 1000 sheep, 891, lambs, 32 cows in milk and over 100 cattle. Whereas in 1941, the records show that 1000 hens, 600 young birds and 50 geese were kept at Grove Farm.

Barley was the main cereal crop grown, much of it being malting barley which would have been sent to Greene King in Bury St Edmunds or further afield to the Bass Charrington Brewery in Burton-on-Trent. A large acreage of wheat was also grown and oats too were grown for horses as well as human consumption.

The introduction of the growing of sugar beet dates from 1868 but it was not until 1924 that their cultivation took off with the building of the sugar beet factory in Bury St Edmunds, followed by the Ipswich factory in 1925. In 1941, more than 435 acres of sugar beet were grown in Thurston. Also, there were over 55 acres of vegetables grown.

Expansion of the village

The building of the railway station did not result in a sudden change but it did provide a new focal point in the west of the village. The village has developed over the years on the area to the north of the railway, within easy reach of the station and possibly because the land was of poorer agricultural value than that to be found in the Great Green area.

Development on Thurston Heath began in a small way in the mid-1930s. A number of new businesses were also established in the village.



Bungalows in Barton Road c.1950
Postcard undated

Timber yard: The 1929 Kelly's Directory lists William Albert Alban, as a timber merchant and wood fencing contractor at Heath Mills which was situated on Heath Road. The directories for 1933 and 1937 list Suffolk Timbers Limited, Heath Mills. Steam engines were used and petrol sold there! The timber yard closed in the very early 1940s.

Thurston nursery: The 1937 Kelly's Directory lists Jacob Langeveld as a florist nurseryman, seedsman and bulb importer. His nursery, Idle Hour Nurseries was situated south of Barrell's Road near the Black Fox, very close to the railway lines. Locally he was known as the 'Dutchman' and it is said he had a small railway system on his land to help with the collecting of his crops. Mr Langeveld died in the 1960s and the business was closed.

Thurston orchards: Situated on the Thurston/Pakenham boundary of Orchard Lane, a large orchard area was designated to the growing of dessert apples by a Mr Zavalloni, an Italian prisoner of war, who remained in Thurston, marrying a local girl. After he died in the 1990s the land was sold and is now arable fields.



Station Garage, Thurston c.1950

Photograph source unknown

Thurston garage: Next to Thurston station on the Beyton Road, a garage was opened in 1936 by a Mr Hubbel, who serviced the vehicles of Rougham Estate. He also sold motor fuel and carried out general repairs. Mr Hubbel was called up for War Service and so the garage was sold to Mr Will Brazier, who carried out general repairs and taxi work. Mr Roy Cracknell purchased the garage in 1959. For a number of years Roy, together with his eldest son Brian, ran the original wooden garage and petrol pumps. In the early 1960s they decided to enlarge the premises. This they managed by purchasing the Station Master's garden which made it possible to build a new garage and showroom for car sales. Brian's younger brother, Derek, joined the firm at this time as a car salesman. During the 1980s and 1990s business grew with more staff and fitters employed. Classic cars were repaired and bodywork and painting were also carried out. Over the years many youngsters from schools and colleges have come to the garage for work experience and apprenticeships. More recently the business has changed with greater emphasis on the shop and forecourt. The Cracknell family still own and run the business.

Thurston in the World Wars

Thurston men and horses were involved in World War I and a number did not return.



The War Memorial in front of the church 2015

Thurston's War Memorial: The unveiling ceremony took place one Sunday during November 1920. The Celtic Cross of blue Forest of Dean stone stands nine feet high and is positioned on the Western side of the Churchyard. Many parishioners attended the ceremony which was conducted by the Rev. H.B. Bladon. A description from a local newspaper sets the picture, beautifully: 'On the Church tower the flag floated at half-mast in a keen Autumn breeze, whilst a typical November sun bathed the quiet little burial ground in sunshine except where the shadows still presented hoary mantles of frost'. On the memorial there are thirteen names displayed from World War I and nine names from World War II.

British Legion: There was an active group in Thurston after the First World War which continues as the annual Poppy Day appeal.



A British Legion dinner in the Cavendish Hall c.1950 Photograph source unknown

World War II: Thurston is remembered as being a very noisy place during the war years with ceaseless planes overhead and the revving of engines from Rougham airfield. Men from the Royal Army Service Corps, who were stationed in the grounds of Rougham Hall and the workshops at Beyton, would come to the Cavendish Hall in the evenings to be fed a welcome meal provided by local housewives. A Pioneer Corps collected bombs from Thurston Station and transported them to the bomb dumps at Rougham Park. There was only one explosion and no casualties.



Ground Crew of 388th BG with B17 Flying Fortress 'Little Boy Blue' at Knettishall c.1944 from Roger Freeman Collection FRE 1501

On 19th July 1944, a B17 'Flying Fortress' Bomber plane named 'Little Boy Blue' took off from the airfield at RAF Knettishall. It was on a mission to bomb a ball-bearing works at Schweinfurt, Germany. Unfortunately, it collided with another American 'plane, a B17 G, and Little Boy Blue was sliced in half. The front section exploded very close to the Black Fox pub causing damage to nearby properties. The tail end of the 'plane landed near the Planche. Two members of the crew were able to parachute out and were the only survivors. The crash caused damage to the East Window in St Peter's Church, which was three fields away from the crash site. The window was replaced with a window designed and made at Powell and Sons, Whitefriars Studio. There is a small stained glass panel in the window that depicts the badge of the 8th Air Force. During WWII there were many airfields to be found in East Anglia and many planes crashed locally. Some articles and artefacts relating to this can be viewed at the Rougham Control Tower Museum.

Home Guard: According to the Register there were thirty members of the Thurston Home Guard. Mr C Baker, who lived at the Black Fox public house, was the Sergeant in Charge.

Women's Land Army: During World War II grassland was ploughed up including the Parish Recreation field. Ladies of the Womens Land Army provided help on the farms during the war and some made their homes in Thurston after the war. Two of these ladies included Laura Cooper, who lived at Grove Farm and Mrs Winnie Last, who still lives in the village.

Post war development

Farming continued to change with new techniques and machinery being introduced which resulted in further reductions in the labour force and the enlargement of fields by the removal of hedges.

Development began in earnest in the 1950s-60s in the Barton Road and Heath Road area with the final phases, Maltings Garth and the Hambros, completed in the 1970s. Some infill has taken place in more recent years. The connection with the past is the names of the different estates, Furze Close, Heather Close, Genesta Drive and Heath Road. A new Post Office on Barton Road and Genesta Stores were also established in this area. Land was utilised for the new Upper School between the Barton Road and the Ixworth Road. Maltings Farm on Barton Road was demolished and the land used for a new housing development, Howes Avenue, increasing the population of the western side of the village.



Maltings Farm before demolition c.1970 Photograph H Wood



The first houses on Howes Avenue c.1980 Photograph source unknown

New businesses also became established and took over areas of the farmland.

Matthews Fruit Trees Ltd: After the Second World War Mr Jack Matthews established a tree propagation nursery. As a bomber pilot during the war Mr Matthews held the record for the fastest flight between London and Cairo for a time. He spent the last two years of the war in South East Asia as personal pilot to Lord Louis Mountbatten and remained with Mountbatten in India during partition. On his return home Mr Matthews set up Matthews Fruit Trees in Thurston. One hundred and thirty acres were grown, with the firm gaining both national and continental status. After much hard work Mr Matthews gained the sole right to propagate and sell what was, in the 1960s, the new apple variety Discovery, which he initially named Thurston Pippen. Many ornamental trees went to new town developments such as Peterborough. The firm continued to operate until the mid-1990s providing much needed local employment for up to about 40 employees.



Working in the tree nursery c.1970 Photograph courtesy of M.Cutting



Bare-root trees prepared for dispatch c.1970 Photograph courtesy of M.Cutting

Highmead Nurseries: After three years of renting on Meadow Lane, from the builder Jack Baker, Brian Pryke and his father purchased the nursery in 1965. Greenhouses were built in 1971 to assist in managing the growing of plants and the Pryke family, who lived in Norton, built two houses on the site.



Highmead greenhouses 2016

Various crops were grown over the years, including lettuces, tomatoes, celery, stocks and chrysanthemums. All the flowers were sent to Spitalfields and Covent Garden. Salad crops went to local wholesalers and the London Market. In the early 1990s the nursery opened to the public and strawberries and raspberries were grown in a plastic tunnel. Work was also undertaken for Thompson and Morgan and local staff were employed growing bedding plants. In 2013, the nursery closed and the land managed with a small flock of sheep.

Thurston Upper School: The school opened in 1973 and was designed to provide secondary education for a wide rural area. It now provides education for approximately 1600 pupils of 11 to 18 years old as Thurston Community College with the sixth form being relocated to the Beyton school site.



Thurston Community College 2018

The Thurston Community Library is located on the school site as is the Thurston Sports Education Centre.



Manor Farm Creamery 2018

Manor Farm Creamery: This enterprise started in 1986 when milk was still being produced at Manor Farm and has continued after the sale of the farm and dairy herd. The business now trades as Criterion Ices with continued involvement from the Myatt family.

Bayer Agrochemicals: The Company, which had moved to Eastern Way, Bury St Edmunds in 1966, closed its experimental farm in Kent and in 1972 rented land from the Little Haugh estate, at the Great Green area of Thurston for agrochemical field trial work. Bayer purchased the farm buildings at Elm Farm, Great Green and 25 acres of land in 1982. The farm buildings were renovated into offices and new laboratories and workshops built for storing and servicing agricultural vehicles.



Aerial view of Elm Farm Development Station 1998

Elm Farm Development Station grew many different types of agricultural crops and varieties of fruit and vegetables for testing new crop protection chemicals from research carried out in Germany. Up to 20 members of staff were employed as well as several sandwich course university students. The station had an international reputation with many visitors and contributed to generating data for the registration of new herbicides, fungicides and insecticides which enabled farmers to increase the quality and quantity of the crops they produced. In 2003, the formation of Bayer Crop Science resulted in both the experimental station and office in Bury St Edmunds closing and the company moving to Cambridge.

Elm Farm Park: The main site at Elm Farm was bought by Seamans Building in 2003. They moved their business to the site as well as providing units for occupation by a number of different firms. Harveys Garden Plants bought the field containing the orchard and together with the Tickety Boo café operates from here.

New Green development: In 1991, as part of a large housing development, 12 acres was given to the village on a 99-year lease for a peppercorn rent. Eight acres were set aside as permanent open space and two acres sold for sheltered housing, Field View. The money raised from the sale of this land was used to build the New Green Centre, together with car parks.

Today it is a busy facility offering a good mixture of accommodation for functions. Initially there was a club and bar which has now become a popular coffee shop. Various refurbishments have taken place over the years including changing of a store room to the Parish Council office. Many clubs use the New Green Centre as a venue including bridge, U3A, keep fit classes, gardening club, indoor bowls, the lunch club and the afternoon Women's Institute group. Fetes, local circuses, fun fairs, croquet and the annual fun run use the open space area



The newly completed New Green Centre 1991



New Green Centre and Open Space 2017 Photograph R Fawcett

Other local businesses: There are a number of small businesses including hairdressers, a butcher shop, a sandwich shop, a fish and chip shop, an estate agent and motor engineers which continue to operate within the village.



Thurston Pharmacy 2015 established in the Granary's grain quality inspection office



Local businesses 2015



The Granary businesses 2015 now relocated as the building was demolished to make way for a new building for business units and flats



The Fish and Chip shop 2015



Map of the Grove farm wildlife 2017

Suffolk Wildlife Trust: Laura Cooper came to work at Grove Farm as a Land Army Girl during the Second World War. She remained working on the farm after the war and bequeathed the farm to the Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT).

To recognise Laura Cooper's generosity, the SWT, with the help of many volunteers, planted Cooper's Wood in 2001. The farm land borders the river Black Bourn and this land together with land purchased recently on the Norton side of the river, now forms the Black Bourn Valley Reserve.

Thurston today

Today Thurston is a village with excellent facilities, services and schools as well as being ideally situated in the A14 corridor which has led to its growth as a key service centre for the area. In the late 1950s/1960s, the village expanded with the Barton Road and Heath Road developments and subsequently, in the 1980s, with the Howes Avenue development. In 1931, there were approximately 200 houses and a population of 584; the 1991 census shows a population of 2612 and 900 houses. During the 1980s/early 1990s the New Green area was developed along with the building of a new Community Centre, sheltered accommodation and Open Space area. This large building project joined the two halves of the village together and the 2011 census shows a population change to 3232 with 1327 houses.



New Complex on the Granary site 2018



Sustrans Cycle Route 51 sign - New Green Open Space 2018

The development of the Granary site heralded the start of considerable further development being planned for Thurston. In late-2017, a number of significant developments in Thurston were granted planning permission. These permissions would provide, amongst other things, 818 new dwellings. When added to earlier planning permissions yet to be completed, this brings the total to in excess of 1,000 dwellings.

Although within the main part of the village and at Great Green there has been an increase in the number and types of small businesses, these could not support the growth in population. There is also a wide range of social and recreational activities but the increase in home entertainment and easy access to neighbouring towns and facilities results in a lower proportion of the residents participating in village activities.

Most of the agricultural land in Thurston is now farmed by farmers who do not live in Thurston and very few village residents have any involvement in agriculture or horticulture. So, Thurston has moved on from being an almost self-sufficient village, where many people survived off the land. Work has to be found elsewhere and the car provides easy transport: thus it has 'ceased to become their working place but chiefly a place where they slept'. (The Farm and the Village, George Ewart Evans.)

Throughout the years, Thurston has grown incrementally and sporadically to reflect changes in agriculture, industry and transport, particularly with the building of the railway station in the village.

However a series of planning applications determined in 2017–2018, driven by central government's strategy to build more houses across the country, has seen over 1000 dwellings likely to be built in a compressed timescale. This scale and intensity of development will have a lasting and significant impact on the village.

To see how the Parish Council and Neighbourhood Plan Team are influencing and managing development, please see the Thurston Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2036.

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The Fate of 'Little Boy Blue' Remembered, No 215 Chris Pattle. The Invicta Military Vehicle Preservation Society

Local residents including: Brian Cracknell, David Morris, Vicky and Brian Pryke, Alan and Linda Noble

All photographs not credited were taken by Barbara and David Morris

