



Around the Village

An interview ...

Tuesday 18th February, 2016

This is the transcript of a recorded interview between
Michael Robin Duffield (in bold type)
and Liz Herring (in normal type)

This interview is a walk around the village of Tharston in South Norfolk with comments, information and discussions on places, people and events.

This transcription has been made so as to best represent the recorded conversation between Michael and Liz. Where any conversation is not strictly on a question and answer basis, and the recording is not selective, the method of transcription used is what best gives the information from the talk. Hence repetitions, murmurs, laughter, corrections and unnecessary comments have all been removed. However, no content has been changed or altered to reflect any thoughts or knowledge of the transcriber.

Your name? - **Michael Robin Duffield** - and would you be happy to tell me the year you were born - **I'm happy to tell you the date I was born, 29th of August, 1932** - and where were you born - **Mill House, Tharston, in the bedroom nearest the mill bridge.**

Your parents' names were - **Harry Thomas Shrewsbury Duffield, Dorothea, Dorothea, Annie A-n-n-i-e Jane, she was a Buxton** - and were either of them born in Tharston - **no, father was born in Tasburgh, Tasburgh Mill House** - and did you have any brothers and sisters - **yes, one sister, who is Ruth Eleanor, now Simms.**

Where did you go to school? - **Tharston, from 1937 to 1943 then** - at the Church Rooms which was the school - **yes** - which I see has completely gone now - **yes** - sad isn't-it - **it hasn't completely gone because I've got a brick in the garage** - good for you.

Can you remember who you went to school with and who your school teacher was? - **the first school teacher I had was a Miss Brown** - was she local - **I can't remember if that's her or the one after who married Sam Woods, she came from Hempnall or somewhere or other I think, didn't she, but I'm nor sure if that was Miss Brown I got, I can't think right now what her name was or even if I knew what her name was, but certainly there was a Miss Brown** - on that photograph which was before your time - **yes** - I mean there's a lot of children there - **yes** - who presumably all lived in the village - **yes** - at the time - **yes.**

Can you remember how many children were at school when you were there, was there just the one teacher? - **no, in the infants' room we would've had about 16 and I'd have said in the main room, there were probably getting on for twenty** - so a lot of children in the village, well I don't suppose there's that many children in the village today if you discount the Chequers Road Estates - **no there aren't, but you know they all go down to Stratton and whatnot, you don't really know how many children there are in the village** - no, I think they tend to keep themselves to themselves more than they used to - **afraid so.**

I mean Tharston is one of these villages because you're spread about a lot, I mean how did you get to school, did you walk to school? - **walk or bike or sometimes we got a lift with the headmistress because the headmistress was a Mrs Bond and she is from your part of the country, Newton Flotman** - there were a lot of Bonds in Newton - **she lived in the house next to Masters Bakery, Ma Bo we called her** - so that was the opposite side of the bakery to the Post Office - **no, she was just into the** - just into the back street - **yes** - they call that Front Street I think, that little street that runs between the two - **she was just round the corner** - the post office used to be on the corner - **I'm trying to think where it was, you know** - I think it's a fair step for you - **a mile and three quarters** - yea - **a mile and three quarters** - up that steep hill - **yes, that as well.**

And where you lived along the bottom there, which I suppose you call Lower Tharston - **Low Tharston** - there were still the buildings there are today, one farm, two farms - **three farms along there, there's Mill Farm first, then there was Hawthorn Farm next, the one where Gerald Barnes lives, Valley Farm he calls it now, and I'll tell you why they changed the name because there was a Hawthorn Farm in the Street and so there was a lot of confusion with post so the Barnes changed their one from Hawthorn Farm to Valley Farm** So where's Mill Farm? - **the one this side of the railway bridge because they were actually two farms not one as you come this way, the first one you come to was Mill Farm and just round the corner that side, Valley Farm, or the one that is Valley Farm now.**

Valley Farm was where the Barnes were? - **no, at the time the first people I can remember there were Palmers** - were there Brightons in one of those farms? - **no, Brightons were in the other side which was, you know, Chamusca, they were on the other side of the road, the Brightons have been there ever since I can remember, I mean there's been three generations through there** - might be related to me of course - **could be, I don't know whether he was a relation of "Potts" or not, I don't know whether there was any relationship, could be related somehow or other, yes.**

So there's Mill Farm then Hawthorne Farm which changed its name to Valley Farm? - **yes** - I can't think what that's called - **no, I can't, oh that's Chamusca, C. H. A. M. U. S. C. A., Chamusca Farm** - that's an unusual name - **well that's all to do with the war, the Peninsula War** - all to do with Mr. Harvey - **that's right.**

Was the pub along there when you were little? - **Oh, very much, I remember two pubs along there, well I remember, the original Queens Head was pulled down when I was a youngster, I should think I was probably about three when that was pulled down and I can remember my mother taking me along there to see this because this was an old thatched house and I remember that being sort of half pulled down** - and was that on the site of where the other Queens Head was built? - **yes, exactly** - and is that where the Cruickshanks are now - **yes, that's right** - which is a much bigger building now - **oh yes** - I remember when I was young that Gilly Sexton used to keep it - **that's right** - the Queens Head, when Sid was looking at the records he couldn't find any record of Gilly being the landlord, the publican there - **well he was there several years, I would have said he was the, you know** - unless someone else held the licence - **it was Mrs Someone, Mrs Someone held the licence after him, or before him** - but you would have thought he would have held the licence wouldn't you, I haven't spoken to Terry because I said to Sid perhaps he ought to speak to Terry - **does he still live out your way** - no, he lives at Wymondham, but there

we go, so there were two pubs along there so - **no, they pulled the other one down** - OK - **they were both called the Queens Head.**

Now as you come up the hill I remember when I was young there were some Brightons who used to live in the bungalow on Parkes Lane, along there - **that was Mrs. Brighton when she moved out of the farm** - they used to have a caravan at Lowestoft and we went and stayed there on a holiday once at Lowestoft and the caravan was called Forbes, don't ask me why I remember that but you remember silly things from when you were younger - **well why it was called Forbes was because the cottage where her bungalow is, the cottage on there that they pulled down was a double dweller cottage and that was called Forbes** - so where her bungalow was used to be two cottages - **correct, and in one of them in my younger days when I was walking to school was a chap by the name of Billy George and he was Brighton's cowman and he used to walk to work as well and he had a big old black hat which was all full of grease and whatnot off the cows, and it was pulled right down, he was a most forbidding character, and all you heard if he thought about speaking or you spoke to him, all you got was a mumble come from underneath the hat and that used to frighten us** - there aren't characters around are there today so what happened to Billy George, and did he have family - **no, oh, I say no he didn't, I think I remember, yes, there was a young boy and I think he was a bit sort of strange, I think probably because they had him late in life, and this boy was a bit peculiar and I didn't really know much about him.**

So there wouldn't have been very many buildings along that road because most of those houses along that bottom road there are fairly new, aren't they? Was the house there on the corner as you turn in? - **Vittoria, that's where my great grandfather lived there** - on the corner of Parkes Lane are we talking about? - **Yes, down the bottom, that was the house which went with the brick kiln**

So where were the brick kilns? - **well, they were on the other side of the road from Vittoria, they have done some research into that, I always thought it was on the field opposite Vittoria, in Parkes Lane just, that's where a lot of the pits where they dug the clay out were, I assumed the brick works were there but they said no it was on the other side of the corner towards the Queens Head, they said it's in there, you know, some of the people in your book did some research and I'm pretty certain they discovered it was** - right, because there were a lot of old brick kilns around in the local area, weren't there - **oh, yes, well it goes back to when every village had a blacksmith and everything else, and you had a brick kiln in every other** - yes, obviously there's clay around here

Let's come up to Tharston Street, because a lot of the properties in Tharston Street - **are gone** - are new aren't they, I mean there aren't many still there - **no, the first one along there, coming from Parkes Lane into The Street on the left, there's part of the building left was the shop, there was a shop in there** - really, I can't remember, it must be before my time - **that closed early in the war, I think that closed about '41, '42, time, anyway, might have gone a little bit longer, that closed during the war and towards the end that only sort of sold the main commodities and sweets and chocolate** - yes, and that's all gone now - **it's gone except you can see the end away from the road, because that was end on to the road, if you now go into Hunter's Lodge where Peter Beck lived, on the left hand side of his drive there is a part of a building which was on the end of the shop and that's all that is left** - and the only other thing I can think of on the left hand side is the farm buildings and that presumably was all there was along there was there, didn't Basil Tunmore live down there - **true but that was further down, no, that's Willow Farm and the buildings in my younger time, I don't ever really remember anyone living in there, I mean they had chickens and whatnot in there for a time until they did it up in relatively recent times, no that's all there was down there as far as I know, there was only those two houses**

So then you get to the turning - **straight down or Plump Road** - go straight down first - **well, there's nothing on the left hand side until you got to Filby House which was Tunmores, that was the only house down there** - where was that then - **that's still there, Filby House, that's a little sort of cottagy thing that stand end on to the road, that was the only one down there** - how far down is that then, I can't visualise where that is - **two hundred yards, that's sort of behind the highest hedge, do you know anyone lives down there?** - I know Helen and Chris - **well that's next door to them** - this side of them, top side of them - **that's right** - and then there was a new house built sort of face on to the road where a bloke who lived there was a book binder a few years ago - **well, they are all relatively new down there** - they're new, I know they're all new, so that was where Basil was - **that's right, Basil, and all the Tunmores** - now Gwen tells me, Gwen Riches that was, Gwen Harvey, there were ten of them and ten of the Tunmores - **I don't know how many of the Tunmores there were only, Olive might know, I mean at least there were about seven that I knew of, of course there were one or two of the younger girls who started school after I left so I sort of didn't keep up with it** - that's right, so that's all there was along there then, Filby House where the Tunmores were, what about on the other side of the road - **on the other side of the road it's quite similar, if you start at the post-box that's where Chillingworths are which was The Orchards, anyway the Chillingworths near Ivy Farm. Ivy Farm hadn't changed at all until relatively recent years when all the buildings were converted and that was Ivy Farm where my great grandfather lived, in Ivy Farm, not a Duffield, Fuller, so I had one great**

grandfather living down in Vittoria and the other great grandfather was living in Ivy Farm - the only other house I can think of along there that's old, what's the one with the pond - **well there's as you go down from Ivy Farm you then get to the T-junction and just beyond that is Hawthorn Farm, then there was Gowings which was Grange Farm, Grange Farm?** - I can't remember that, I'm too young - **well that's still there, that's been done up, the only other one down there was Brookes' house which was The Walnuts, and that's still there, modernised, and that was it**

Weren't there some Brookes lived opposite the church - **that's another brother** -right - **Anthony Brookes and their father, Harry Brookes, no not Harry Brookes, Cyril Brookes** - who was the one who used to make the cider? - **that was them at the Walnuts, that's George and, not Harry, there were three Brookes in the family living in the family, in the village then, all brothers, there was Cyril at Church Cottage, there was Harry on the corner cottage of the Street and Highfields and then there was these Brookes, George and Claude, they were the ones who made the cider** - I have heard about the cider, it was well known - **so there were four of them and they had a sister, Margaret, live in there as well and so there were actually five Brookes brothers and sisters living in the parish at that time, there was another one, Robert, so that made six, there was Cyril, George, Robert possibly, so in the Walnuts there was one, two, three, four, ah, that's right Bob, he lived in the end, at that time that was split into two cottages, Bob lived in one and the two brothers and the sister lived the other end** - and that's the one that's still there - **yes** - is that just one building now - **that's turned into two, beg your pardon, it was two now turned into one** - so that's more or less the Street.

Let's come back up Plump Road, the only building I can think of, there's some cottages just as you turn in from the Street - **yes, well that was the one Harry Brooks lived in at one end, and there was a lady lived in the other end who I didn't know, well that had several occupants over a relatively short period of time, but Harry Brooks was the main occupant of the one nearest the Street, then this lady or whoever lived the other end** - and the only other building along I can think of is Model Farm where the Riches were, I don't know who lived there before them - **when I was at school it was a family the name of Aldridge and the husband had one of the garages down there, do you remember Dick Cawfield having that garage down there next to Willis' there was a little garage of corrugated iron** - yes, and Chris bought that and made it into a bike shop and that's where Norman Phillippo started - **that's right, and before that it was Aldridge's** - and they were at Model Farm - **yes, he never settled to anything, that bloke didn't, he was into this and into that, never settled to anything, and in the end he got itchy feet and went to Australia.**

The houses there at Highfields now, were any of them there - **oh yes, they were all there then, I should think they were build at the end of the 1920s, they were always there** - and that's where Gwen lived - **correct** - where her sister - **still lives** - still lives in the same house do you know - **yes, I think it's the same house** - because, as properties go, they look relatively modern but I suppose 1920s they are when you think some properties are hundreds of years old - **I should think that was towards the end of the 1920s** - and Gwen tells me she is one of ten as well - **well she may be** - gosh, can you imagine that - **well they moved out of there because the council, when they were building some new council houses down in Church Road Tasburgh, they built a house specially for that family with one of the bedrooms out of the joining double dweller into theirs** - they did that a lot, I don't know if they still do- **that's the reason they moved out of Tharston**

Then if we come back, if go round and come back along the main road we've got Hill Farm - **yes, Hill Farm first** - and who was there then - **Hardesty** - they were there then - **yes, and Silvia's husband, I can always remember her husband took the school certificate, as it was then, the year before me and him and another boy Derek Bowman, also from Tharston, passed the scholarship, and I thought, 'cor, weren't they clever'** - and then we've got the Spanish farm, well there's a quite new house between the two - **Cuidad Rodrigues is the next original one where Clarence Potter is in**

I suppose we should go down Picton Road, were those council houses there on the end - **yes, they were all there and I think they were built slightly after the ones in Highfields, I should think, not long after** - and Picton Farm, Stanley and Joan Smith were there then in my young days - **well, some bloke from away was in there, I don't know** - was it Stanley's mother who lived in, was she a Read - **yes she was, Stanley Hubert, Stanley Smith was Wibbler Read's second wife's son, his mother was married twice, and Jack Read, you see, Jack Read was Stanley Smith's half brother** - and then there was, I don't know who lived in the cottage - **on the corner, George Barnes, and then after that his son, Jack, that was in the old smithy, old forge, whatever you like to call it** - oh, was that where the forge was then - **yes, a blacksmith, there's still one more left, the wall right nearest the road was covered in ivy is all that's left of the forge** - oh, right, I didn't realise that was there - **George Barnes, Old Forge Picton Road.**

And then we come down to El Boden on the end - **down the bottom here, that was owned by one Reginald Gowing, or not owned by, but lived in by one of the Gowings in my school days, he was brother to the Gowing in whatever the other farm was called** - I've got it written down here - **The Laurels, he was the brother of the one in The Laurels** - I can't remember the connection now but did you know Basil Fox - **yes, lived down there** -

yes, him and his wife Connie, now she had a connection somehow with the people at El Boden, I can't remember what that was, I ought to ask Renie really, Renie Tunmore is Basil Fox's niece - **he was a bus driver as well** - he was a bus driver as well, and Richard his son still lives in Flowerpot Lane - **oh, I see** - and that was the only building, apart from the Hall, that was all there was.

Who lived in the Hall when you were young, can you remember, I remember Mrs Holman living there, she's the only person I ever remember living there - **well in my school days that was a relation of the Holmans by name of Crisp, Horace Crisp, he was, of course they rented it off Holmans you see** - so that belonged to Holmans - **yes** - so the Holmans are a local family to Tharston - **no, I think they came from Attleborough way, then after the Crisps that went through several occupants, well it was unoccupied for a time, then Charlie Barnes from down at Mill Farm, he bought it and he over-stretched himself financially when he bought it and what he did was cut down all the brilliant oak trees that they had on the farm everywhere including down Parkes Lane, he cut them all down and sold them all and he sort of got everything out of the farm he could before he sold it** - I remember in my young day when, because my brother used to work on the farm in the holidays at Picton Farm with the Smiths and I used to go up there as well with Joan Smith, I used to come with her down to see her mother down at the Hall, and of course Dick was at the farm then and then he married Jill and had that bungalow built - **that's right** - but the farm was behind, is the farm still there up there behind the - **where's that** - up opposite the Church - **yes, that was the farm** - and is that still there - **well, no, well it is but it has all been converted, the barns, the big barns they've come down and the sort of lower buildings like cattle sheds and things have been converted into two houses.**

Then were cottages opposite the church - **there was Church Farm on the corner by the tip, that has not altered there, that's still Church Farm, and then the two cottages and the vicarage, that's it** - then we go Chequers Road I suppose - **you've missed one out, there is still a house on Bungay Road down towards Tasburgh Hall** - oh, yes - **Lime Kiln Cottage** - was that Barnes as well - **no, well they got Hall Farm, Tasburgh, the Barnes there, but there's a little cottage between Vittoria as you come over the bridge there's a little cottage on the** - in the trees there - **yes, that was Lime Tree Cottages and there was a Mrs Goose lived in there, I think there were originally three houses, three cottages and they were turned into two and then they turned into one, that was where my great grandfather lived and died because when he gave up the brick kiln he went into one of those cottages and I think he died there, wherever he died it was just eighteen months before I was born** - but the other side of them isn't there another farm - **no there's another**

building in there, new building in there - further down or nearly opposite the Hall - **yes, well that is Hall Farm Tasburgh** - oh, that's not Tharston and it's Barnes in there - **yes it is** - it's so close to Tasburgh.

Then we come down Chequers Road, there's only one house been pulled down along there and that's Bordeaux which was a double dweller house and been replaced by a new bungalow called Bordeaux, anyway, coming from this way on the right is John Hylton's first - did his parents live there - **yes, they did and that was Oak Tree Farm**, and his parents lived there then he lived there - that's still called Oak Tree Farm isn't it - **yes, Oak Tree Farm** - and then what's now The Chestnuts, I don't know what it was called then - **Chestnuts** - but then it was just a couple of little cottages - **which was Miss Knights, that was two sisters lived in there, one was a Mr and Mrs. Knights, Sid will know all about this anyway, and the other was a Miss Neave** - and there was someone living there called Hoy but Sid will know all about that, the history of his house, and then there's a field.

Then there's - **Buttons, where Buttons lived** - Buttons, undertakers - **that was just his house, that wasn't where he worked** - where he worked, did he not have a workshop there - **yes, that was on the other side and I'll come to that in a minute, I'm trying to think what the house was called, anyway, that doesn't make any difference, the house is just the same** - that's called something Ville - **yes, Roseville** - Roseville, I walked past there yesterday with my dog.

Then there was the pub, I should know what the blokes name was who was there at the time, anyway, it doesn't make any difference, **Wilson** - I don't know what Neville's surname is, what's his surname - **Woor, W-O-O-R**, his father was the last licensee - he told me that they moved there 1948 I think he said - **but I should know who was there before then but I can't recollect it, Wilson**, then after that the last one along that side was another old Harvey's pair of cottages by the name of Bordeaux - well where were they - where the bungalow is now, just past - not Basil's - **that's right, that plot was bought by John Button to build himself a house on** - whatshername lived there, Brenda King - **wasn't it someone by the name of Butcher, in my younger days I think there was someone by the name of Butcher there, Mrs Butcher** - I've got another name, I'll remember it in a minute, and that's all there was along that side. - **that's right**

I remember the other side where all the new housing is now was just all brush-land, gorse and brush - **well that was after that was left** - that was just a mess really, and I suppose the first property was where Alan and - **what coming from the other end way, yes, that was Alan Buckenhams** which again I think the dear Mrs Butcher who lived in Bordeaux, I think she moved across the road when the other house was more or less fallen down so she's

sort of the first one I remember up there, and then of course you come to Poplar Farm, and after Poplar Farm there is The Meadows - so Chequers Farm - **yes, was Cannell, Herbert Cannell was in there** - but Chequers Farm, doesn't Neville call his Chequers Farm now - **yes, there're both Chequers Farm, no, what was Cannell's called, of course Cannell didn't live there did he** - are you talking about the Cannells who lived up on the corner - **yes they lived there and had that farm, until he sold it to the developers, he had that up there and had a few cows and that sort of thing** - I can't remember that - **Herbert, but Aunty used to live up there, Aldridge, that's right their name was Aldridge, Poplars, that was called Poplars, I expect that what it was, that was called Poplars, and Neville's was Poplars Farm - Poplars - no** - is that where Peter lives now - **no, Neville's is Chequers Farm** - yes, that's what I said, that was Chequers Farm - **opposite Poplars Farm** - and is that where Peter lives now - **yes, the E.D.P. man** - because the barns are still there next to his house, I don't know who owns them - **the people who bought them got into financial trouble didn't they so nothing's happened to them** - and then the next house, the Catteries, my brother built that- **did he** - he did, I just thought I'd mention that in passing - **well that wasn't there but The Meadows was** - where Jack and Ivy lived - **that's right** - and so who lived in The Meadows - **Charlie** - was that Jack Savory's parents - **no, Ivy's parents** - Ivy's parents - **Legood** - of course, I knew that, because there are one or two Legoods around still - **and then on the site of what's now called Acorn Hollow, right down the bottom, that was where Tom Button had his workshop, that was a wheelwrights and you know they did any sort of carpentry, funeral, made coffins and all that sort of thing**

I suppose another thing along there was the council houses, when were they built, can you remember - **no, that's before my time as well, except the ones on the end, the last four were built about 1950 time, the last four but the previous ones were before my time** - yes, well I think we've been round - **yes, been round the village**

Well you haven't done the Mill Yard - oh, where you were, should have started there shouldn't we, so how many houses were there in the Mill Yard, I mean there was the mill, was that a house then - **well there were actually three dwellings, two houses and three dwellings, there was a brick cottage built on the end of the mill house and at the time that a chap by the name of Chatten lived in there, he was a railway man** - any relation to Pat's family - **yes, her mother and father-in-law and so there was father and mother and Gordon, Pat's husband, lived in there when I was a youngster, then on the other side of the river, was a place now The Riverside, a brick house was built in there by the name of Riverside, and that was occupied, or let, to an ex Police Inspector, his last position I think he was the inspector at Diss, and they came and rented that house in the Mill Yard** - so

there's three dwellings there now, aren't there - **no, still the same, oh well, yes, I know you've got the Mill and the other one converted into two now but I'm only talking about when I was a youngster** - when you were a youngster, yes, so we had Mill House, where the Chattens lived, then you had - **no that was Mill Cottage, I was living in Mill House** - right - **and Mill Cottage was Mr and Mrs Chatten, and Riverside was Mr and Mrs Smithson** - who lives there now, is that where the Thwaites live - **no, Thwaites live in our house, no that was a solicitor person lived in there but I think that's changed hands, I think she moved out, they had a sort of divorce and goodness knows what and that all went a bit peculiar, well you get solicitors and divorce, I mean things are sure to go peculiar** - so the actual Mill House was the big white building that was the mill - **that was the mill, the white building that was the mill, then you walked in front of the mill and just the other end and then you had the Mill House**

The river is the boundary between Tharston and Hapton? - **no, the river is not, there's a stream runs round the back which was the boundary, the reason is that the river in front of a mill like that is not a natural river, an artificial river because that's been dammed up and that was our problem our house was built on the bank and so you had five levels from the back door to the front you had a step up in every room, but the actual boundary is in a stream running at the back where the flow of the river was before the dammed part** - before it was diverted, because when we were kids we used come swimming down the river in the summer time, everyone did from miles around - **so you were ones who caused the problem** - absolutely, all these Stratton kids, that's right

When was it last a working mill - **'71** - oh, it was working still, was it a working mill when you, did you work at your - **yes, but that was expanded a lot during the war, you see, because they needed the home production, the flour, etc., and so the capacity of the mill was sort of, well I suppose at the end, that was possibly three times the capacity it was in 1939**

Well I think that's it, unless there's anything you want to add - **no.**

Thank you Michael



© Tharston History Society - 2019

Please note that this document, wholly or in part, may not be copied, published or altered without first seeking the permission of the Tharston History Society

<https://www.tharston-history-society.com/contact/>

A contribution of £2.50 is requested for this booklet so the costs of production can be recouped by the T.H.S.