

The Thurlows 2010



This is a volume about Great and Little Thurlow, two small rural villages in West Suffolk which share a long history reaching back to Roman times and were significant enough to be mentioned in the original Domesday book of 1086. Indeed, this is *our* modern Domesday book in a way – as full an account as we can manage of the people and the places as they have been and as they are today. We have involved the whole community of both villages - and it *is* in many ways still a real community - in compiling a record of life now and in the recent past, drawing on the experiences and memories of everyone living here in 2009.

The book divides into three main parts.

- general essays written by villagers past and present about different aspects of village life, including: the history, both human and natural (the villages are very rich in wildlife); some of the historic buildings like the Olde School, the Cock Inn, the Windmill and some notable private houses; important institutions such as the churches, the school, the estate, the village hall, the shop and the W.I.; major families who have left their mark on the village - both the famous ones like the Frinks, Ryders, Smiths (W.H.) and Vesteyes and the important local dynasties of the Day, Eley, Thomas, Talbot and Rowlinson families which are all still represented here today; and stories of life and work in the Thurlows from those with memories going back a generation or more to before the Second World War. The essays are enlivened by many anecdotes and personal stories and they are illustrated with historic photos lent from family collections and local archives. Taken together the anthology provides a unique snapshot of 'life then and now' in a small rural community in East Anglia.

- interviews conducted with each household to record people's experiences of the villages and explain something of their own life-histories. There is a separate entry on each family or household where it was possible to undertake such an interview and these are arranged in the sequence of the Parish registers, as in a continuous walk around the villages. Together they comprise an important record for future social historians (and a source for villagers curious about their neighbours!).
- a section of colour plates with pictures of all the dwellings in the village, in the same sequence as the interviews, including in the pictures as many as possible of the people that live in them; this therefore constitutes a complete archive of the contemporary domestic buildings, a snapshot in the villages' still evolving history.

The volume as a whole is not a theoretical study of some grand or sophisticated kind, but rather a chronicle of how things are now in two small, closely related villages in rural Suffolk, compiled by the inhabitants and participants whose place this is. But even small villages can be a window to a wider world and one can truly say, 'all human life is there'. The lives described here may often be ordinary in ways that make them typical of countless other rural communities in Britain today – that is part of the interest and importance of compiling a volume like this; but they are also unique in ways particular to the Thurlows, and this is what we have especially wanted to celebrate and record.

Iris Eley, Conrad Hawkins, Molly Hawkins, Mary Hilton, Jeremy Mynott, Rod Pass, Peter Thomas and Rachel Vestey.

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