THORPE HAMLET HISTORY GROUP

Article 18 : THORPE HAMLET'S INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS

The first evidence we have of Thorpe Hamlet's international connections is that of the "Old East Road", the road past the church and down what we now call Gas Hill and across what was then a ford over the river. It is considered to have been a Roman Road, evidenced by various Roman remains that have been found in the area.

The Vikings began to raid and settle in England in 787AD. They came from Scandinavia, and spoke a language called Old Norse - the word 'viking' is old Norse for 'pirate raid'. They left many influences, including the use of 'thorpe' as a place name, often as part meaning 'village' or 'hamlet'. Today's Thorpe St. Andrew was once Thorpe-next-Norwich, so when the area in between there and the city came to be developed in the 19th century, it was given the name 'Thorpe Hamlet', even though that really means 'hamlet hamlet'.

When the Normans started development of the Cathedral site at the end of the 11th century, they demolished numerous existing houses and churches, including that of St. Michael in Tombland (a plaque today marks the site). By way of compensation they built a chapel on the high ground to the east, close to where they had also established a priory dedicated to St. Leonard, patron saint of prisoners. The remains of the chapel can still be seen on Kett's Heights, even if all that can be seen of the priory is the sloping wall opposite the end of Marion Road.

Kett's rebellion in 1549 also brought foreign mercenaries from Italy, Germany and Spain, recruited to help government forces defeat the rebels.

A later conflict gave us the name of the road in which the church is located. The threat of Napoleonic invasion in the early 19th century led to the development of a telegraph system intended to convey messages from Great Yarmouth to London. One of the stations was on the highest ground in Norwich, where the water tower and reservoirs are now located on what is now Telegraph Lane East. A further connection with wars involving Napoleon was that of Sir Robert Harvey, active in the conflicts in the Iberian peninsula serving with Wellington. He later developed Mousehold House and the surrounding estate, hence today's Wellesley Avenue (Wellesley being the Wellington family name) and Cintra Road.

Other street names relating to foreign conflicts are Quebec, Wolfe and Montcalm Roads.

The History Group's research into the men commemorated on the St. Matthew's war memorial shows that more than two-thirds of them died on the Western Front in France and Belgium. But others went further afield, with deaths occurring in locations such as Turkey (Gallipoli), Iraq and Israel/Gaza. Our research into those commemorated as a

consequence of losing their lives in the Second World War records lives lost in the USA (while training),, at sea, in the Far East and on the Normandy beaches.

Business and trade will have given Thorpe Hamlet many international connections, whether through shipping on the river, post through the sorting office or flights from the airfield at Heartsease, or much earlier, the balloon flights from the vicinity of the gas works, including those made by Mr Charles Green, who in 1836 had made a flight from London to Germany.

Many more international connections feature in the articles written by June Marriage for the parish magazine, and collected by the History Group in "A Thorpe Hamlet Miscellany", still available from the church or the History Group.