

**St JAMES CHURCH THORLEY**

by

**Revd John Edward Ingleby Procter**

## A GENERAL DESCRIPTION.

The Parish of Thorley is situated in Hertfordshire, on the Essex border of the county. It is in the Hundred of Braughing, and in the Union, Petty Sessional Division and County Court District of Bishop's Stortford. Ecclesiastically it is in the Diocese and Archdeaconry of St. Albans and in the Rural Deanery of Bishop's Stortford ; while for Parliamentary purposes it forms a part of the Hertford or Eastern Division of the County.

The acreage of the original Parish was 1527 acres of land and 9 of water. But by an Order of the Local Government Board, dated September 30th 1909, the north-east corner of the Parish, consisting of 80 acres, 1 rood, and 24 perches, and containing 59 houses and an estimated population of 241, was transferred to the Civil Parish of Bishop's Stortford. This transference took effect on April 1st 1910. For Ecclesiastical purposes, however, this district still remains a part of the Parish of Thorley and is under the spiritual care of the Rector.

The following interesting description of Thorley appeared in *The Gentleman's Magazine* of August 1811:-  
" Thorley is 29 miles from London and divided in three parts ; Thorley Street, through which is the road from London to Newmarket ; the Rectory House and at a small distance the Church and Manor House (called Thorley Hall) ; and a mile distant Thorley Houses or Housen, so named by the inhabitants ; added to this there is belonging to the Parish the pretty hamlet of

Twyford through which passes the Navigation from Stortford. The Parish contained in 1801 55 inhabited houses and 269 persons ; this year the population was found to be 313 and 60 houses. It is remarkable that this Parish, which is now in a high state of cultivation, was formerly reckoned the most uncultivated in the County. Though at so short a distance from the Metropolis you might imagine yourself several hundred miles from it, so retired and indeed so sequestered is this spot ; and the verdure of the fields and the houses thinly scattered among the trees make it: highly interesting and beautiful."

In County Histories and other records the name of Thorley appears occasionally in the following forms :- Thornley, Torley, Torlei, Thorle, Thorleye.

The meaning of the name Thorley is uncertain. John Norden, the earliest Historian of Hertfordshire, says that this Parish was originally called " Thornley, terra spinosa," on account of the quantity of briars or thorns which grew in it. But Cussans in his History, referring to this statement of Norden's, remarks "judging from the large proportion of the soil under cultivation at the time of the compilation of Domesday Book, I am not inclined to put much faith in his assertion."

Possibly the name may be derived from Thor, the god of thunder of the Anglo-Saxons. If this is the origin of the name, then Thorley would mean " the pasture of Thor," since " Ley " means pasture.

The Parish is traversed by two important roads, namely, the road from London to Cambridge and Newmarket and that from Hertford and Ware to Bishop's Stortford. To the east of the London and Cambridge Road, and parallel with it, runs the Cambridge section of the L. & N.E. Railway, formerly known as the Great Eastern Railway. This line was completed to Bishop's Stortford about 1845.

To the east of the railway flows the river Stort. This was originally a mill stream, but on October 24th 1769, it was opened for navigation as far as Bishop's Stortford.

The following is a record of the population of Thorley at the different decades since the beginning of the last century: -

Year.	Population.	Inhabited Houses.	
1801	269	55	
1811	313	60	
1821	386	71	Males 197. Females 189.
1831	414	82	Males 214. Females 200.
1841	396		
1851	402		
1861	388		
1871	423		
1881	415		
1891	546		
1901	538		
1911	347	Civil Parish.	
	590	Ecclesiastical Parish	
1921	350	Civil Parish.	
	622	Ecclesiastical Parish.	

The increase in the population has taken place in that part of the Parish which, in 1910, was transferred to Bishop's Stortford for civil purposes. In October 1892, a small Mission Room, known as St. James' Mission Room, was built in this corner of the Parish and licensed for Divine Service.

The principal landowners in the Parish are Mr. G. S. Streeter, of Thorley Place, who is Lord of the Manor, Mr. L. Frere, of Twyford House, and Mr. J. Tinney, of Thorley Hall.

The Parish is mostly agricultural, but the works of Millar's Machinery Company, Ltd., are situated in the Parish and give employment to over 200 men and boys. There is also a flour mill, both steam and water, known as Twyford Mill.

There is a Hamlet on the London and Cambridge road, which is called " Thorley Street." Since the Romans called their roads " strata, " i.e. " streets," it may be that the name " Thorley Street " indicates that the road was Roman in its origin.

On the west side of " Thorley Street " there used to stand a row of 8 cottages, known as " Malting Row." They were so called because they were formed out of an old malting. These cottages were destroyed by fire on July 13th 1923.

Almost opposite to where " Malting Row " used to

stand is an old Inn, called " The Coach and Horses." On a small green between the Inn and the road a Fair used to be held on May 13th. It has not been held for many years.

The last inhabitant to wear the picturesque smock frock was James Reed, who died on September 14th 1907, at the age of 89.

It is an interesting fact that the Incumbency of the last 3 Rectors covered a period of 111 years : -

Rev. Thomas Pennington 1798-1853,  
Rev. Frederick Vander-Meulen 1853-1882,  
Rev. Canon John Mathias Procter 1882-1909,

while Stephen King 1837-1872 and George Seabon 1872-1923 held the office of Church Clerk for 86 years.

Some of the older inhabitants can remember when " the gleaning bell " used to be rung during Harvest at 8 a.m. and 6 p.m. No one was to begin gleaning before the bell had rung at 8 a.m. and no one might continue gleaning after the ringing of the bell at 6 p.m.

The Pound for confining straying cattle was situated on the left hand side of the gateway leading into the yard of Thorley Hall. About 40 years ago the present cowshed was built where the Pound used to be.

## THE PARISH CHURCH.

The Church, which stands on rising ground in the middle of the Parish, is the oldest building in the place. It is dedicated to St. James and consists of Chancel, Nave, South Porch, Vestry and Embattled Western Tower, surmounted by a Spire covered with oak shingles. It is built of flint rubble with clunch dressings and is covered with cement. The total length of the Church is 100 feet.

The Chancel and Nave were built in the early part of the 13th century in the early English style of architecture, but the Norman South Doorway and Font indicate that a Church existed here at least as early as the 12th century. The South Doorway has a semicircular arch with double dog-tooth moulding, and twisted pillars with scalloped capitals on either side.

The Chancel is 31 feet long by 20½ feet wide. On the north side there are two 13th century lancet windows and a doorway of the same date. On the south side there is a 13th century lancet window in the centre, and on either side there is a window with modern tracery, though probably occupying the place of early English lancet windows. The east window with 3 lights is quite modern, having been inserted about 1863 in place of a 5-light window. On the south wall of the Chancel is a Piscina and close by is a Sedilia of the 14th century.

The Nave is 43 feet long by 23½ feet wide. In the middle of both the north and south walls of the Nave is a 13th century lancet window and on either side of

these lancet windows are windows with 2 lights, which are modern, though they take the place of windows of an earlier date. At the east end of the north wall is the rood loft staircase. At the east end of the south wall is a Piscina. This was probably at one time enclosed within a chapel.

The Tower, which measures 12½ feet by 11 feet is in the perpendicular style of architecture and was probably built in the 15th century. Inside the Tower at the south-east corner is a small doorway leading to the Tower Staircase. The tracery of the west window is modern, and so is the ornamentation above the west doorway. On the south side of the west doorway is a Holy Water Stoup.

There are 3 bells in the Tower, bearing the following inscriptions : -

" God Save the King, 1628."

" William Wightman made me 1682."

" James White, William Cramphorn, Church-wardens, 1682."

The Church was thoroughly restored in 1855, chiefly at the expense of the late Mr. Bartle John Laurie Frere, of Twyford House. Mr. Lewis Vulliamy was employed as architect.

The restoration consisted chiefly in rebuilding a great part of the walls, in putting new stone work round the windows and in placing a new roof on the Chancel and Nave. At the same time the Vestry and South Porch



were built, the Floor of the Church paved and the whole of the Church reseated.

It was at the same time that the old Norman Font, of Bethesden Marble, which had been used as a horse trough at Thorley Hall, was restored to the Church and placed on a base designed by Sir Gilbert Scott. The Font is 2 feet 5½, inches square, with 5 round headed panels on each side. The diameter of the basin is 1 foot 11½: inches. The Font Cover was also designed by Sir Gilbert Scott and was purchased out of the collection made in the Church on its re-opening on January 17th 1856, after its restoration. The Sermon on this occasion was preached by Christopher Wordsworth, D.D., at that time Canon of Westminster and afterwards Bishop of Lincoln, who chose as his text " Behold, I make all things new." -Revelations xxi, pt. 5.

The Church is seated to accommodate 200.

There is only one ancient brass in the Church, now affixed to the south wall of the Nave and bearing the following inscription : -

" Here lyeth the body of John Duke, who was, while he lived, Fermor of Thorley Hall, and died the 5th day of December Anno Dni. 1606, who by his first wife Gertrude, being buried in the Parish Churchyard of Sheringe, had eight children, viz., Robert, Margret, Thomas, William, John, Henry, Ellen and Peter, but by his last wife Jane no issue."

There are also 10 marble mural tablets to the

memory of various members of the Billers, Raper, Horsley and Pennington families.

All the windows in the Church except two are filled with stained glass, but none of it is old.

The stone Reredos was erected to the memory of the Rev. Frederick Vander-Meulen, and bears the following inscription :-

" To the glory of God and in memory of the Rev. Frederick Vander-Meulen, M.A., Rector of this Parish from 1853-1882, this Reredos is erected by the Parishioners and other friends as a token of their esteem and regard."

At the south-east corner of the Nave is a list of the Rectors of Thorley since 1327. The names are painted on oak panels in an oak frame. This was the gift of Mr. G. S. Streeter.

The War Memorial on the north wall of the Nave was erected by public subscription in memory of those who fell and served in " the Great War. " It was dedicated on July 24th 1920.

The following is a list of the Plate belonging to the Church :-

- I. Silver Chalice, 1562. " The gift of Moses Raper, who died 1748. "
- II. Silver Cover, 1562.
- III. Silver Paten, 1839.
- IV. Silver Paten, 1793. " The gift of Mrs. Penn-

- ington to the Parish of Thorley, Herts, 1809 "
- V. Silver Flagon, 1839. " The gift of Elizabeth Frere and Anne Frere, 1839. "
- VI. Pewter Flagon. " Thorley Church. "

The Registers of Baptisms, Banns, Marriages and Burials date from 1539, and are contained in 11 books.

### **THE CHURCHYARD.**

The south part of the Churchyard was added to the original Churchyard in 1888 and was consecrated by Alfred Blomfield, D.D., Suffragan Bishop of Colchester. The land, which was formerly used as a stackyard, was given by the 3rd Lord Ellenborough, who at that time was the principal landowner and Lord of the Manor, while the enclosing wall and the legal and other expenses were defrayed by the Parishioners at a cost of about £100, to commemorate the jubilee of Queen Victoria in 1887.

The Lych Gate was erected by Mrs. Procter and her children in memory of the Rev. Canon J. M. Procter, and was dedicated on April 3rd 1921. On the front beam is the following inscription :-

" To the glory of God and in memory of John Mathias Procter, Rector of Thorley 1883-1909."

Towards the north-west corner of the Churchyard used to stand 3 cottages, which were built during the Incumbency of the Rev. William Browne, 1784 -1798.

About the year 1860, the cottages having become dilapidated, the Rev. F. Vander-Meulen obtained the permission of the Patron of the Living to pull them down, and in their place he built the present Church Room.

Adjoining the south wall of the Churchyard stand the Stocks and Whipping Post. These formerly stood near the junction of Clay Lane with the London and Cambridge road. They were removed to the Churchyard apparently for greater safety.

The trees in the Churchyard are especially beautiful. There are some fine beeches and elms, and there is a very venerable yew, which measures nearly 17 feet in circumference 3 feet from the ground.

## THE RECTORS.

The following list of the Rectors of Thorley since 1327 is taken from Newcourt's Repertorium and Cussan's History of Hertfordshire. The names of the Rectors before 1327 are not known.

<i>Name of Rector.</i>	<i>Date of Institution.</i>	<i>Patron.</i>
William Vigerons	13th April 1327	Bishop of London.
Stephen de Scatldeford	6th May 1329	„
William-at-Water	6th May 1333	„
Thomas Thorpe	24th Sept. 1393	„
John Berton	18th April 1401	„
John Gray	-	„
William Seton	2nd Sept. 1431	„
John Chicheley	17th April 1433	„
William Northwold	31st July 1434	„
Robert Coventry	7th June 1443	„
John Gayteliffe	11th Sept. 1470	„

Henry Thomas	-	Bishop of London.
Robert Wylly	8th Oct. 1474	„
Thomas, Bishop of Pavia	22nd Oct. 1493	„
Robert Glowceter	-	„
Ralph Wakefield	14th Feb. 1502	„
Thomas Chamber	10th April 1528	„
Edmund Brygate	22nd Oct. 1545	„
John Atherton	28th Sept. 1562	„
Christopher Taten	20th April 1573	„
Francis Burley <sup>1</sup>	5th July 1594	Queen Elizabeth, the See of London being vacant.
John Mountford	3rd May 1619	Bishop of London.
Robert Pory	Nov. 1640	„
Benjamin Some	-	„
Thomas Turner <sup>2</sup>	4th Nov. 1680	„
Thomas Beaumont	20th Jan. 1689	„
John Reynolds	27th Jan. 1710	„
Thomas Ely	27th May 1728	„
William Gibson	27th Nov. 1742	„
John Horsley	18th March 1745	„
Thomas Henry Louth	5th Jan. 1778	„
Stephen Eaton	6th July 1778	„
Samuel Horsley <sup>3</sup>	11th Dec. 1779	„
Joseph Warton <sup>4</sup>	20th April 1782	„
William Browne	14th Jan. 1784	„
Thomas Pennington	7th Feb. 1798	„
Frederick Vander-Meulen	13th Jan. 1853	„
John Mathias Procter <sup>5</sup>	22nd Jan. 1883	Bishop of St. Albans
John Edward Ingleby Procter	28th Sept. 1909	„

1. One of the Revisers of the Authorised Version of the Bible issued in 1611.

2. Founder of the Apprenticing Charity, which bears his name.

3. Successively Bishop of St. Davids, Rochester, and St. Asaph.

4. Head Master of Winchester College, 1766-1793.

5. Hon. Canon of St. Albans, 1881-1917.

The Benefice of Thorley is in the gift of the Bishop of St. Albans.

The Rectory, which stands in well wooded grounds, was built in 1854.

## **THE SCHOOL.**

Until the Education Acts of 1870 and 1873 the only provision made in the Parish for education were Dames' Schools. One of these Dames' Schools was held in the cottages which used to stand in the Churchyard on the site of the present Church Room. Another was held in a room, altered by Mr. George Frere for the purpose, in one of the cottages which stood originally on the site of the present Parkside Cottages. Mrs. Jackson kept this School for many years. While a third was held in an old cottage, now pulled down, near Rumbold's Farm.

At a meeting of the Ratepayers held on January 19th 1874, a School Board was formed, and on November 29th 1875, the present School was opened. Four years later the Class Room was built to give additional accommodation.

The School continued under the management of the School Board until the Education Act of 1902, when it passed under the control of the Herts County Council.

## **CHARITIES.**

### **HOY'S BREAD CHARITY.**

In 1686 Thomas Hoy bequeathed a rent charge of 6s. a year, payable at Christmas, on Rumbold's Farm, which was to be spent on bread for the poor. The Rector is Trustee.

## TURNER'S APPRENTICING CHARITY.

The Rev. Thomas Turner, D.D. (Rector of Thorley 1680-1689), died in 1714, and by his will left £50 to the Parish of Thorley. By the terms of his will the income derived from the legacy was to be used "to bind out some poor child and apprentice to some honest trade ; the children to be always such as come constantly to Church and have learnt their Catechism there." The money is now invested in £99 11s. 6d. 3½ per cent. Conversion Stock 1961, and produces an annual income of £3 9s. 8d. By the terms of the will the Rector is sole Trustee.

## VANDER-MEULEN CHURCHYARD TRUST FUND.

The family of the Rev. F. Vander-Meulen (Rector of Thorley 1853-1882), paid over £215 to the " Official Trustees of Charitable Funds." This sum was invested in £244 17s. 11 d. 2½ per cent. annuities. By the terms of the Trust the interest, which amounts to £6 2s. 8d. per annum, is to be paid to the Rector for the time being and by him is to be expended in cutting the grass in the Churchyard (especially the grass on the graves of the Vander-Meulen family), and in weeding the paths.

## KING'S COTTAGES, BISHOP'S STORTFORD.

The 4 cottages in South Road, Bishop's Stortford,

nearest to the Thorley boundary, bearing the name of Colonel J. H. Vander-Meulen, were erected by Admiral F. S. Vander-Meulen 15th October 1910 and presented by him to the Trustees for the benefit of poor aged persons resident in Thorley. Applicants must be at least 60 years of age and have resided in the Parish for 20 years. There is a provision in the Trust Deed giving a prior claim to these 4 cottages to the Parishioners of Thorley. Failing suitable applicants from Thorley, the Trustees can nominate inhabitants of Bishop's Stortford to occupy them.

### **SOME OF THE PRINCIPAL HOUSES.**

THORLEY HALL is the property and residence of Mr. J. Tinney. It was the old Manor House and is situated close by the Church. It dates from the 15th century and is built of plastered timber. From time to time the house has been much altered. The dining room is lined with 17th century panelling and has some remains of a plain fluted frieze. Only a part of the moat, which once surrounded the house, remains. There are some curious subterraneous passages built of red brick. It is not known for certain what the object of these passages was, but most probably they were aqueducts or culverts for water. Among the farm buildings are 2 exceptionally fine barns. The larger one has 9 bays and is 146 feet long by 33 feet wide.

TWYFORD HOUSE is a handsome building of red brick. It is a very good specimen of the Queen Anne style



of domestic architecture and was built probably at the end of the 17th or early part of the 18th century. It is surmounted by a handsome clock tower. The bell in the clock tower has the following inscription " W.E. made mee for the use of Sir E.T. by order of T.B. 1663." Twyford House is the property and residence of Mr. Laurie Frere.

THORLEY PLACE is a comfortable and spacious modern house of red brick, situated about  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile north of the Church. It belongs to and is the residence of Mr. G. S. Streeter, who is Lord of the Manor.

MOOR HALL is situated about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile west of the Church. It was probably built in the 17th century and is of lath and plaster. The east and north sides have been faced with red brick. It is the residence of Captain A. G. Elliott and belongs to Mr. J. Tinney, of Thorley Hall.

THE HOUSE standing in the Park of Twyford House, which is now divided into 4 cottages, known as Park Cottages, was probably built late in the 16th or early in the 17th century. It is a picturesque gabled building of 2 storeys with tiled roof and original chimney stack.

### **THE MANOR.**

It appears that in the reign of Edward the Confessor the Manor of Thorley was held by Godid. After the

Conquest it was bought by William, Bishop of London, from the King. However, by 1086 it had been acquired by Geoffery de Magnaville, who held it at the time of the Domesday Survey.

In a sketch like this it is impossible to give more than a brief account of the Manor of Thorley.

It is not known how long the Magnavilles retained this Manor, but in the reign of Henry III it was held by Richard de Thorley, who probably took his surname from the place. In the reign of Edward I Arnold de Thorley granted this Manor to William, the son of Gerberdge de Gernemuth. In the reign of Henry IV, 1399-1413, Sir Richard Whittington, who was thrice Lord Mayor of London, held land in Thorley. In the same reign the Manor of Thorley passed into the possession of John Leventhorpe, of Marthams or Shingey Hall. It remained in the Leventhorpe family till the reign of Charles II, when by indenture dated 12th October 1672, Sir Thomas Leventhorpe, Dame Mary his wife, their only child and heiress Mary, her husband John Cook, and others conveyed it to William Kiffin, of London, who in the reign of James II, was elected Sheriff and afterwards Alderman of the City of London.

William Kiffin and his son and heir Henry Kiffin conveyed the Manor in 1691 to John Billers, Citizen and Haberdasher of London, whose son William, in 1714, sold it to Moses Raper, of London, Silkman. The Manor was held by several members of the Raper family until by the marriage of Elizabeth, the daughter and heiress of

John Raper, with Dr. William Grant, of Rothiemurchas, in the County of Inverness, the Manor passed to the family of Grant.

In 1808 the Trustees of John Peter Grant, who was afterwards knighted, sold the Manor to Edward Law, 1st Lord Ellenborough, whose son was created an Earl in 1844 on account of his eminent services as Governor General of India.

The manorial rights remained in the Ellenborough family till 1895, when they were purchased by Mr. Charles Gayton, of Much Hadham, who in 1906 sold them to Mr. G. S. Streeter, of Thorley Place, who is the Lord of the Manor at the present time.