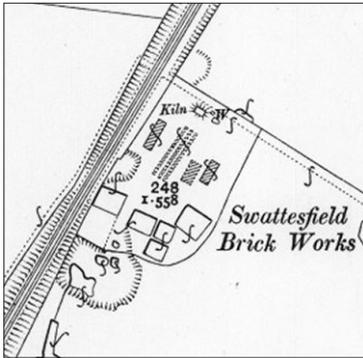


NOTES FROM THORNHAM

BRICKS, part one

Many of the dark red handmade bricks to be seen in and around Thornham were made by the Estate for its own use. From the mid-19th century the brickworks was at Swattesfield and is shown on this map of 1885. Next to the railway, near



the Thornham Arch and the Campsite, it was actually in Gislingham. As well as bricks, it produced roof and floor tiles, pipes for field drains and flower pots.

By the First World War, factory-made bricks from Peterborough or Bedford were very cheap, and country brickworks could not compete. Ours continued work into the 1930s, still making field drains and bricks. The buildings show on aerial photos of 1947 and in the 1950s children rode their bikes round the horse track of the pug mill. Today, claypits in the woods are all that remains.

Russell Mayes remembers coal for the kiln being collected from Mellis station by his Uncle Jack and Fred Blake. They took a tumbril with a horse in the shafts and two trace horses alongside. Russell also remembers finished bricks being thrown two at a time between men when they loaded lorries.

The five small rectangles on the map were washing or settling tanks where as many stones as possible were removed from the clay. Many small stones remained, and they are a distinctive feature of local bricks.

The photo shows a horse-powered pugmill similar to ours but at an unidentified brickworks. Blades in the barrel mixed clay and water to the desired consistency. Everything else, including digging out the clay, was done by hand. It was hard and unpleasant work, and also seasonal, as clay was dug in the autumn, left in piles to break up through the winter, and then moulded, air-dried and fired during the warmer months.

I am always pleased to hear from anyone with information or photographs concerning the history of Thornham. My phone number is 01379 788207.

JULY EVENTS

Thursday 21st to Sunday 24th: Summer concerts, musicatthornham.org.uk

Saturday 30th: Summer Dance, Village Hall