

NOTES FROM THORNHAM

The names and boundaries of most Suffolk parishes are very ancient, and ours are no exception. Domesday Book records the twin parishes of Thornham Magna and Parva separately, although they seem to have shared a church which was in the Parva and owned two-thirds by Parva and one third by Magna.

The story of the boundary of one 'Thornham' and its division into two perhaps dates back to Roman estates or earlier. We know the name of one estate, Villa Faustina, which was along the Pye Road (today's A140) somewhere near here.



What might have been: the recently replaced signpost on the triangle opposite the school house.

A little further north the angled field pattern cuts across and pre-dates the Pye Road. Perhaps our parish boundaries – if not their names – are as ancient as these fields, which if they really are pre-Roman, can be classed as 'prehistoric'.

Dictionaries of place-names show that Magna was variously recorded as 'Marthorham' (1086), 'Thorham' (1203), 'Thornham Pilcock' (1306), 'Thornham Magna' (1327) and 'Great Thornham' (1520).

Parva appears as 'Parvo Thornham' (1254) and 'Thornham Parva' (1327).

The same sources consider that 'Thornham' means thorn-tree homestead and that Pilcock is perhaps derived 'pill' meaning willow and 'cocc' meaning copse, hill or mound.

The examples show that the Latin 'Magna' and 'Parva' forms were interchangeable with the English 'Great' and 'Little', which were much used in the 18th and 19th centuries, and in the first quarter of the 20th.

There are a number of similarly twinned parishes nearby including Rickinghall Inferior and Superior, the Stohams and the Creeting, while near Bungay the many confusing Saints are a challenge to lost visitors.

MARCH EVENT IN THE THORNHAMS ● Fri 1st: Talk in aid of Friends of Magna church: *The bells of St George's, Ypres*, £9, must book 01379 788207

● **Fri 22nd:** Parish Hall film, 7.30pm, *Widows*, £5, no need to book

● **Sun 24th:** Magna litter pick, meet Parish Hall 10.30am