

## NOTES FROM THORNHAM

As I write this, vaccination is near the top of the news agenda, and will doubtless remain there for some time. In the 18th century Suffolk led the way in the field of vaccination with world-beating technology.

As the press cutting here from the *Ipswich Journal* in 1771 reveals, the epidemic was the dreaded Smallpox which was a major cause of death, killing a third of sufferers, disfiguring half the survivors and attacking everyone from paupers to emperors.

Inoculation had been practised in a small way, deliberately infecting people hoping to give them a mild case of Smallpox which it was known would make them immune for life. But it was an unpleasant and expensive ordeal.

It took a surgeon from Kenton named Robert Sutton to improve the treatment. With his many sons he developed the 'Suttonian Method' for which they rented isolated country houses. Patients were put on a diet before being inoculated with live matter from a Smallpox sufferer rubbed into a slight cut on the arm or leg. They became unwell, spending a few days in bed before being ordered to spend time outside. They remained at the house for up to four weeks, until they were no longer infectious. Understandably the neighbours were none too keen on having this activity nearby!

Robert and his sons, licencees and imitators gained great wealth and prestige as their method dominated in Britain, mainland Europe and America.

Their fame and success was usurped by Edward Jenner, a doctor and naturalist in Gloucestershire who understood the importance of the local tradition that milk maids did not get Smallpox. He realised that they were made immune by a mild infection they got from cows and that cows got from voles. He called this Smallpox of the Cow and the process of inoculation with it he called Vaccination, after the Latin for cow.

From 1800 Jenner's Vaccination took over and by 1840 inoculation with live Smallpox was illegal and the Suttons were forgotten. A major drive by the WHO in the 1970s and 1980s completely eliminated Smallpox worldwide.

*You can read more, especially about Daniel, the most successful Sutton son, in 'The Great Inoculator', by Gavin Weightman just published by Yale and possibly the ideal Christmas present for yourself and your medical friends.*

**I N O C U L A T I O N.**

**T**HE Public are most respectfully informed, That Mr. T. SUTTON has engaged two houses in the occupation of THOMAS MARSH and JOHN LEGGET, at Braiworth near Eye, for the reception of patients in the inoculated small-pox. The terms are for kitchen patients Two Guineas, and parlour patients according to their circumstances. Families may be inoculated at their own houses on reasonable terms in any part of the country, except in or near Bury. Housekeepers living within 30 miles of Eye, who are desirous of accommodating patients will be allowed half-a-guinea per week each, during their residence with them. Application to be made at Tho. Marsh's, Braiworth, where they will receive their medicines and printed directions.