

NOTES FROM THORNHAM

Last month I printed the fine photo of Lamb's forge in The Street, Thornham Magna. The importance of a village smithy cannot be overstated, 'no foot, no horse' as the old saying goes. In addition it was one of the few heated buildings in which to gather for a chat through long winters. Although this establishment was clearly larger than the average village smithy, there are few surviving records. I am grateful to Chloe Stoneman for finding a reference in the 1871 census listing Daniel Lamb, age 60, a blacksmith employing 6 men and one boy. The much earlier reference I have is a 12 year lease from 1806 for 'a messuage, the blacksmith shop and house in Great Thornham'. It was granted by the Duchess of Chandos to a Mr Henry Lamb.

The photo showed a draft horse, possibly a Suffolk Punch, being shod. The gentleman sitting on the horse-drawn hay rake on the left may be Mr Lamb himself. As well as being farriers the firm can be seen to have had ambitions as agricultural engineers with rollers and animal



feeders on display. By 1978 the forge was used as farm buildings and cowsheds with no surviving evidence of its previous life as a smithy.

Times change. After 1978 Jude and Mick Farrell used the updated forge for a youth training scheme. Again it evolved and now houses Street Forge Workshop.

Thornham also had a second forge, now the Forge Café at the Walks. In a previous life this forge served the then self-sufficient Estate as one of the many buildings clustered around the Red House. They included a wood mill for processing all the timber required by the Estate carpenters and builders. While this forge became a café and shop, the other workshops around the yard were converted as spaces for craftspeople and offices.

My photo shows Lord (John) Henniker and Malcolm Archer outside the café on Malcolm's 60th birthday in July 2001. Malcolm is fondly remembered as factotum and friend to the Walks, Field Centre and Yards.