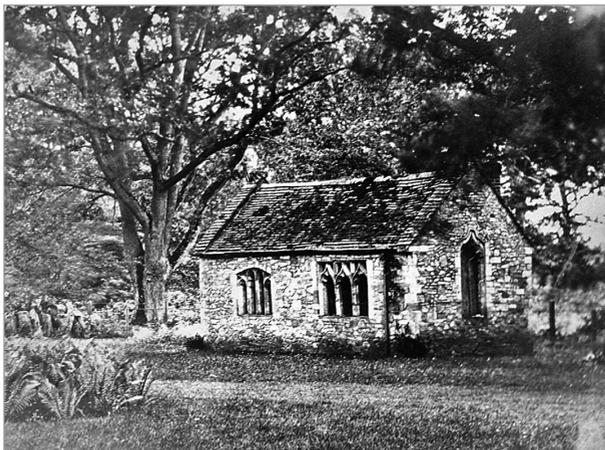


NOTES FROM THORNHAM

Thornham Magna is blessed with many ancient oak trees forming dense groves in places, most notably at a location in the north west corner of the Hall's grounds. This is one of the finest groups of veteran oaks in the county, with many more historic oaks close at hand in the gardens, Park and woods. They reached maturity centuries ago in the hedges of often long-forgotten fields. Old Thornham field names, The Queach (thicket) and Fryars Wood Field suggest there were even more trees before being cleared.



This photo shows the Folly in about 1875. The photographer was probably Cleer Alger of Diss.

In the second half of the 19th century many changes and improvements were made in the parish, including restoration of the church and the building of formal walks around the Hall. Someone with imagination realised that the oak grove was a wonderful setting for a romantic gothic chapel and what we know as the Folly was created. At hand was the weathered stonework and medieval font that had been removed from the church, an army of estate craftsmen to do the hard work and an unknown person to design and supervise.

The building was sometimes called the Hermitage, a romantic reference to a structure said to have stood elsewhere in the Thornhams for a few years in the 13th century. Under yet another name, the Summer House, it was used as a resting or picnic spot by groups out for a stroll from the Hall, a gardener being sent ahead to light the fire.

By the turn of the 20th century the Folly was a ruin. It was rebuilt in the nineties by Lord John and Lady Julia Henniker in memory of the Sixth Baron who died in 1956 having never fully recovered from the horrors of Ypres.

● **Events in the Thornhams** Here's hoping this section can soon resume. Meanwhile the good news is that the Village Hall is being insulated to make it a cosier winter venue than has sometimes been the case.