

The Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society

140th Annual Report 1994-95

In addition to the Annual General Meeting, which took place on 24 November 1994 at the Guildhall, ten General Meetings of the Society were held at which the following papers were read:

1994

Thursday
13th October

Survival under persecution: religious dissent in Leicestershire in the 1660s
David L. Wykes, B.Sc., Ph.D.,
Department of History, University of Leicester
Hon. Editor (History), *Transactions*

Thursday
27th October

Lost capitals, tombs, and giants birds: the archaeology of southern Madagascar
Michael Parker Pearson, B.A., Ph.D., M.I.F.A.
Department of Archaeology, University of Sheffield

Thursday
10th November

Building Jerusalem: art-work in St Mark's, Belgrave Gate, Leicester
Miriam Gill, B.A.,
Research Graduate, Courtauld Institute, University of London

Thursday
8th December

A Roman city and its territory: making sense of Lepecis Magna
David Mattingly, B.A., Ph.D., F.S.A.,
School of Archaeological Studies, University of Leicester

1995

Thursday
26th January

The Councils of Clofesho and the Anglo-Saxon diocese of Leicester
Simon Keynes, M.A., Ph.D., F.S.A.,
Trinity College, Cambridge

Saturday
4th February

Leicestershire Archaeology in 1994
The Archaeological Staff of the Leicestershire Museums and others

Thursday
9th February

From treewrights to timber framing: the development to medieval carpentry
Richard Darrah, B.Sc.
Archaeological Consultant specialising in timber

Thursday
23rd February

Leicester politics and society between the First and Second World Wars: a sense of betrayal
D. T. Williams, B.A., Ph.D., F.R.Hist.S.
Department of History, University of Leicester,
Vice-President of the Society

Thursday
10th March

THE W. ALAN NORTH MEMORIAL LECTURE
The uses and abuses of Trajan's Column
Jon Coulston, B.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.,
Department of Archaeology, University of Newcastle upon Tyne,

Thursday
23rd March

The writing and publication of local history in the 1990s
Margaret Bonney, M.A., Dip. Arch., D.Phil.,
Editor of *The Local Historian*

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Annual General Meeting

This was held at The Guildhall by courtesy of Leicester City Council. Mr T. G. M. Brooks, Lord Lieutenant of the County, was elected President and took the Chair of the Meeting.

Officers and Committee

Seven meetings of the Committee were held during the year, with an average attendance of eleven. There have been no changes in the officers or membership of the Committee.

Transactions

Volume 68 was published and available for members at the meeting. We gratefully acknowledge the grant which the County Council has made towards the cost of this volume. The work of indexing past volumes has made progress and the indexer, Mrs Auriol Griffiths Jones, has submitted a substantial draft on which the Committee has commented.

The Guildhall

At the last AGM we welcomed the completion of the extensive restoration of The Guildhall. At the same time it was noted that this would open the way to new proposals for its development as a Visitor Interpretative Centre; proposals which were potentially contentious. This has proved to be the case. Readers of the Newsletter will be aware that this development required the provision of additional space for Visitors' Reception and Refreshments. It is proposed to provide this by building on the south side of The Guildhall, making use of the land known as the western burial ground. Plans of the scheme were published in the Spring Newsletter. They have however met a set-back as a result of opposition from English Heritage and the Royal Fine Arts Commission. No doubt the plans will be resubmitted after modification, but for the present the City cannot fully realise its objectives for this building.

Local Government Reorganisation

The main decisions have been made. Rutland and the City of Leicester are to have unitary status while the rest of the County will remain under the authority of a truncated Leicestershire County Council. The practical consequences of this decision remain unclear, in particular the future of the Leicestershire Museum, Arts and Records Service.

The Leicestershire Archaeological Unit

Archaeology in the County has already suffered a severe blow, though as a result of economies enforced by the County Council's budget rather than local government reorganisation. This led to the decision to disband the Leicestershire Archaeological Unit in the course of the summer. This was a blow indeed. The Unit has been the leading force in the promotion and practice of archaeology and excavation. The closure has involved the loss of not only an important organisation, but of skilled and experienced personnel. It has, for example, required the premature retirement, most regrettably, of a member of the Committee, Miss Jean Mellor, and a former member, Mr Terry Pearce.

Something has been done to contain the loss. On the one hand the Archaeology section of the Museums Service has received a small increase in staff and this will help it to keep contact with county-wide activities, especially with groups such as field-walkers. On the other hand the University of Leicester has established within its School of Archaeological Studies a new unit, the Leicester University Archaeological Research Centre, where Mr Richard Buckley will be based. It is hoped that this will take over the excavation work of the old unit; but it faces a difficult future as it will have to pay its way in competitive tendering for developer-sourced funding.

Membership

On the initiative of the ever-resourceful Honorary Secretary, and with the encouragement and support of our President, a new membership drive had been launched. Its purpose is partly to

restore to membership those whose subscription payment has slipped, partly to recruit new members. The first results are encouraging with 59 new members and a considerable amount of subscription arrears collected.

Activities

The Lecture Secretaries are to be congratulated on a well-balanced and interesting programme of lectures. Yet again the W. Alan North Memorial Lecture was a particularly distinguished occasion. We must also thank the Lecture Secretaries for their efforts in making refreshments available. In this respect the hall at The Rowans is perhaps more suited. We also hope that the efforts to improve the acoustics of the lecture hall are having some success; and we should acknowledge the great help of the Museum Director and his staff in this matter.

The Society's excursion to Chester in June was fully reported in the Newsletter. It was highly successful and Dr A. K. B. Evans should be congratulated on her organisation and Mrs P. Baker-Clare for her assistance with the bookings. It should also be noted that, thanks to careful budgeting the excursion met its costs. The Committee is hoping that an excursion will be mounted annually.

The Society was represented at the History Fair at The Guildhall on 29 and 30 April.

Historic Buildings Panel

The Panel has continued to meet fortnightly to consider planning applications. In spite of the recession the number of applications has remained considerable. During the year the Panel considered nearly 500 applications, of which over 100 concerned listed buildings: the remainder related to conservation areas. The Panel is most grateful to Mr Richard Wood for continuing Mr Roger Keene's valued help of offering secretarial services to the Panel.

Donation

Members will be glad to learn that the Society has made a donation to the Sir Andrew Martin Trust for Young People. This is a trust established to commemorate the life and work of our late President.

Deaths

We note with regret the deaths of the following members:

Mr Peter Blakesley, who died in June 1993, was a specialist in architectural history and did great service to the Society in establishing the Historic Buildings Panel and running it practically single-handed.

Mr Frank Cheney, who died this year, was a veteran member with a strong commitment to archaeology. He was a staunch supporter of our meetings.

Mr Bernard Elliot, though a member, did not play an active part in our proceedings, but he will have been known to many as an indefatigable writer on subjects of local history and those relating to the Catholic community. Readers of Transactions will remember his article on the Exiled French Priests in England at the time of the French Revolution.

Mr Derek Tomkins, who died last year, was a valued member of this Society and its Committee. He led excursions, gave lectures and generously stepped into the breach when the sudden death of Mr James Crompton left us without a secretary.

Mr J. A. (Jack) Willett was distinguished citizen of Loughborough who had supported this Society for many years and served on its Committee. He was a Vice-President of the Society.

Mr Jonathan Wilshire was very well-known for his research in local and family history covering a very wide range of topics, most notably perhaps the subject of plagues and epidemics, which involved real pioneering work. Mr Wilshire took a large part in the Local History Council and was responsible during the early years for the publication of the *Leicestershire Historian*.