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Local History Diary (separate enclosure)

All material for "The Leicestershire Historian" should be sent to the Editors, Miss A J Wait and Mr D Hopkinson, c/o County Record Office, 57 New Walk, Leicester.

This essay is the winning entry of "Reminiscences" Essay competition held by the Leicestershire Local History Council. For more news of the competition see page 245.

Shilton at the turn of this century was just a country village where everyone knew everybody else. Nicknames were very common and indeed many of them are inherited today. I have compiled quite a few myself over past years, approximately 300 known ones and some in my own family. In my younger years, as my contemporaries would also remember, came the advent of drinking water piped from Snarestone about 1912. Formerly the water was supplied from the parish pumps in the streets, as well as some private pumps in back yards, there was one near to the Premier Works, another in Keats Lane, at the Westfield end, and also one in Thurlaston Lane near to Poplar Farm. Piped water was not at first connected to the inside of the houses, but put on stands outside and consequently got frozen in winter. Flush toilets were unknown and open cesspits were the general rule and very smelly indeed. We did not get a decent sewerage system until about 1927, a veritable boon to the village which indeed did away with the epidemics that we suffered. Shilton had the unenviable record of having the highest rate of tuberculosis in the country. But village life was not too bad, they worked hard, 50-60 hours per week, but they played hard too. People did not have time to be bored, they made their own amusement. We remember the Whitsun parades by the Friendly Societies, both men and women on different days followed by a splendid feast. They
paraded with banners and flags accompanied by the old village band. Old style dancing in the open air followed and they were not afraid to dance either. The band played for them with the beer cask and mugs in the centre. I am sure they did enjoy themselves.

Perhaps the biggest innovation was the "Royal Rink" in Station Road sponsored by the late Mr. Harry Cooper senior, a former "mine host" of the King William IV inn. This vast building was erected in 1910, the village band played in a kind of crow's nest in the middle for roller skating, the skaters going around in great jollity. Afterwards the rink was made into what they called a "Living Picture Show". I attended the very first show and we all sat around on chairs, the show was free to all children. This was quite a memory for me, the building still stands but only half is used as a cinema now.

The field at the front where now stands a bungalow was the venue of the village wakes or fairs and often the circus and other travelling shows. On a field at the opposite side of the road a nomadic tribe called the "German gypsies" had their caravans and tents. They were real "Romanies" unlike the modern hawkers who very often pass off for these people, they were very colourful and ornamental in their dress. How many of my contemporaries remember "Holloway's blood Hut"? They were of course strolling players and stayed for quite a few months when they came, putting on such plays as the "Dumb man of Manchester", "East Lynne", "Uncle Tom's Cabin" and the "Face at the Window", a different play each night. On Friday nights there were competitions for budding singers to try their luck, at the interval one could go outside and buy fish and chips served by the lovely heroine with all her make up on and still in her theatrical clothes, happy days indeed!
Another memory is of the old flower show and sports held in a field near "Prospect House" up the King's Walk, marquees were put up and local gardeners used to take along their barrows full of splendid produce, nearly everyone had an allotment in those days which helped out very much. There was a road walking race every year from Leicester to the sports field, and cycle racing was very popular at this event. A very high standard was attained by the competitors. Betting took place and it made it very lively to hear the bookies shouting the odds. I remember a rubber stamp being used to mark everyone's wrist as they entered the field.

The Sunday School Treat was always held in July, and it was always a red letter day, the parade was twice as large as today and Shilton was a much smaller place. Flags and bunting were hung all down the main street, something one never sees today, I don't know why. There would be several bands and the scholars walked around the village, all carried their own cups and saucers in handkerchiefs. Sports would take place in the evening also open air dancing. The Church of England did not take part in those days, they usually went out in farm wagons to Croft Hill for a picnic.

The Coronation of King George V in 1911 was very memorable, I remember we had to learn patriotic songs and sing them all around Shilton on the long parade. We had erected a huge bonfire on the site of the present new infant school on the old recreation ground, but a vandal set fire to it prior to the day and it had to be made up again. There were fireworks and a parade through the streets, comic dresses, decorated carts, a tea for everybody, slow bike races with sports afterwards, some people painted their doors red, white and blue, truly a wonderful event in the
life of the village. An event I also remember was the funeral of a Crimean veteran by the name of Mannasah Porter, we all saw the cortege from Almey's Lane schoolyard. The coffin was draped with the Union Jack and his helmet and medals rested on top, soldiers were the pall bearers and indeed it was a great memory for us. Shilton had at that time many old soldiers returned from battles, there were quite a few South African veterans about, these men must have had splendid training, they walked about the village with that military step and ramrod backs which they never lost. They carried their stature to the last, fine men who had served England well.

On the outbreak of the 1914-18 war I saw the Hinckley Company of the old 5th Leicesters march through Shilton and remember them having their rest on Shilton Hill en route for Loughborough. During this war while they were asking for volunteers in one week over 80 men went, they received £2 and a fortnight's holiday before reporting to depot. At this period we used to go to work at 6.30 a.m. but on this occasion we all left off work and marched down to Elmesthorpe station to wish them "Bon-voyage". Many of these men took part in those terrible battles of the Somme and Ypres, many did not return. Shilton lost 100 men out of 1,000 who served their country. We had a "Big Gun Week"; there was a big procession in the village for War Bonds, a large howitzer was pulled along the main street and later a German field gun was presented to Shilton and stood for a time near the present Cenotaph. It was removed and eventually buried in a sand-pit which is now the Wood St. recreation ground. A big Naval shell was also presented to the High St. school but has now been cast away; I located it a few years ago on a scrap heap in the council yard.
The "Hill Top" area is very interesting - recently we lost Shilton's last thatched cottage. It bore on its front the date of 1714 and the initials R W. The date suggests Queen Anne's reign, but it was much older than that, probably early 17th century. This region has always been referred to as the Barn End.

How many can recall the lion's escape and recapture in 1931? It was caught in the yard of Bradbury's hosiery factory, here surrounded by bones provided by generous butchers and covered in pig-nets it was eventually enticed to enter the cage, when its mate arrived. Nearly all the inhabitants turned out to see it. Cake Lane or Keats' Lane adjoins Hill Top and was once the site of an old bakehouse where people brought their bread and cakes to be baked in a communal oven, a bell was always rung when the oven was hot, hence the name of Cake Lane which still survives.

Mr. Rudkin a carrier was the pioneer of the first char-a-banc in the village, he gave free rides to children all around the village, putting on chairs and surrounded by ropes to prevent the children falling off. Close by was the house of Dr Garrett who possessed Shilton's first motor-car a De Dion, his house is now occupied by Dr Cook and is a 17th century house and has a Georgian fan-light over the front door. The "Bowling Green Inn" has not altered much over the years and shares the honours with the Plough Inn in Church St. having the Old Petty Sessions held here about 1840, in addition to the former Vestry meetings.

Racing from Hill Top was once very popular, one of which I witnessed. On this occasion the village sweep was to cycle on his three-wheeler, he challenged a well known runner Mr Dick Pickering to race from Shilton Hill to Kirkby. Mr Macartney was the cyclist who rode with his brushes on his shoulder, the runner
was easily passed down Kirkby Lane and retired. The old Post Office Row was situated close by and is now the site of the Church Hall. Here lived once, the last of Shilton's Toll-gate keepers Mr Mannasah Green. There also lived here an old sexton of the church, a Mr William Worthy, who died in 1927 and was parish clerk and sexton for 30 years, his father and grandfather held office for many years before him. Will Swinney was for 18 years parish clerk, 1850-1868, James Worthy was for 47 years sexton and 18 years parish clerk.

Near Hill Top was a row of timbered and thatched houses of Elizabethan origin. They were known as "Rackett Court" and there is a sketch of them in "Highways and byways of Leicestershire". I remember an old recluse named Johnny Freestone living there, quite a character of his day. Adjoining was an old grocery shop known then as "Stale Freddies" who sold churchwarden clay pipes and locusts. This was the calling place for hundreds of tramps for rations and bread and cheese as they journeyed from one workhouse to another, the tickets were supplied by the workhouse. The Glove-yard, now the site of the Veldetta shoe factory, is another memory it was one of the venues of the framework knitters, a cottage industry in which Shilton had over 300 frames. In 1927 Mr Bradbury a hosiery manufacturer gave a party at his home "Holly-dene" for 19 Golden wedding couples, who were married 50 years previously by the late Rev F E Tower, this I think was a record for all England at that time, both national and local papers reported the event. Near to the old Post Office row and quite near to the monkey puzzle tree that is still standing dwelt Shilton's first schoolmaster Mr Samuel Reynolds. The footpath running to the Hall Yard is still called "Gaffers Alley".

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Mr Steer R A the famous painter also lived here close by. I will conclude now with poetical grace.

Oh there are voices of the past  
Links of a broken chain  
Wings that can take us back to time  
That cannot come again.  
Yet, God forbid that we should lose  
The echoes that remain.

LEICESTERSHIRE LONG-CASE CLOCKS

Jonathan E O Wilshere

Leicestershire, with more than 150 known makers, was an important Provincial clock-making centre, particularly during the period 1720-1850. Other notable centres outside London included Bristol, Derby, Durham, Edinburgh, Leeds, Manchester and Newcastle.

Before Leicestershire Long-Case clock-making is discussed, brief mention of other earlier types of clock may assist in providing historical background. Excluding astronomical clocks, Salisbury Cathedral has what is generally regarded as the oldest clock (c.1386) still working in England, whereas the earliest surviving Leicestershire clock, c.1620, is that of All Saints Church, Leicester. Leicester churches are known to have had clocks before this (e.g. Thomas Skipton was paid 8s 4d quarterly in 1553 "For keeping the clock and chimes at St. Martin's." There are also earlier references in 1544.) All Saints' clock has suffered later restorations, is not in its original position and its two striking jacks no longer operate.
Staunton Harold church clock, dated 1653, has a dial of later date. Another church clock, that of Kirby Muxloe is no longer working and, in common with many early tower clocks, never possessing hands or dial, was made, according to the Churchwardens' Accounts, by William Davis of Croft in 1720 for £8 ls "and the old clok". The clock, now in the Newarke Houses Museum and still on its original oak stand, is an early Leicestershire example of the anchor escapement, which had been invented by Robert Hooke, first experimenter to the Royal Society in 1669. (This invention enabled greater accuracy than had hitherto been possible with the verge escapement and foliot balance). These early turret or tower clocks were usually made of wrought iron and were essentially public clocks - often the only one in the neighbourhood. Originally many blacksmiths made wall-clocks for their own forges, thus inviting comment and, in time, orders. (In London, clockmakers by virtue of a Royal Charter from Charles I separated from the Blacksmiths' Company in 1631).

Among domestic types, bracket and lantern clocks first became popular during the Commonwealth, the domed-top variety in particular often being referred to as "Cromwell" clocks; they were few in number in Leicestershire, although those examples that survive from the later period of c. 1695 - c. 1705 are generally of fine craftsmanship, entirely brassmade. Among the earliest names are those of Chris. Carter of Galby, Roger Lee of Leicester, and Thos. Gambel of Walton. Roger Lee was apprenticed to John Wilkins, Supplementary Mayor of Leicester in 1692, who himself had been apprenticed to Henry Woodland, slater. No examples of Wilkins' work are known, but he was something of a mechanical genius, whose interests extended to waterworks. Wilkins is the only Mayor of Leicester
to be described as "Clockmaker". Roger Lee, made a Freeman of Leicester in March 1692, later (c. 1715-20) produced a twelve-inch square dial for early long-case clocks. His son, William Lee, known to have been working c. 1710-1740, made over a hundred long-case clocks, a number of which are known to be still in existence: evidence of sturdy craftsmanship. A long-case clock is simply a clock encased in a "long-case", the initial purpose of which was to hide the pendulum but which, in a very short time, acquired importance as a piece of furniture in its own right. Colloquially, long-case clocks have, since the Victorian age, been referred to as "grandfather" clocks, and it is believed this apt description derived originally from a Music-hall joke. William Lee's earliest clocks (up to about 1720) possessed only the single hand. This was quite usual even until the end of the 18th century in some instances. In an age of illiteracy, many had been accustomed to telling the time to the nearest quarter-hour by the sundial and an hour hand therefore satisfied their requirements. Indeed, many were not concerned with an attempt at learning to read both hands. Many of these clocks were 30-hour ones, which had the advantage of requiring a simpler "movement" than 8-day ones, thereby keeping costs low. A Victorian Cautionary Tale, quoted in "Truth" in 1936, suggests there were certain dangers inherent in clock-winding:

"There was a man who had a clock:
His name was Matthew Mears
He wound it reg'lar every night
For more than forty years.
At length the precious timepiece proved
An eight-day clock to be
And a madder man than Matthew Mears
You could not wish to see."
As far as London dealers are concerned, the clocks of Thomas Stripling attract particular attention. The very rare surviving examples of this Barwell maker flourishing c. 1730-1750, are of elaborate dials with no two dark oak cases alike.

The only known example (1732) of a local long-case clock with a Swithland Slate dial is that by Thomas Kelham, blacksmith, of Walton-by-Kimcote. Several examples exist of gilt slate dials on tower clocks and it can only be presumed that Swithland Slate headstones provided such lucrative and full-time employment that slate clock-dials were rarely made: possibly Swithland Slate was too reminiscent of the graveyard to be welcome inside the slate roofed house of superstitious families.

Of several Market Harborough makers in the mid-18th century, probably Everard Billington and John Spence produced the best work but at this time it was Thomas Noon of Ashby who may have been producing the finest craftsmanship, comparable, particularly as regards the movements themselves, with his London contemporaries. A fine example of an eight day clock with repeater attachment, a rare provincial innovation, suggests he received his training in London. This repeater, found in the earlier bracket and lantern clocks, causes the last hour to be struck when a cord is pulled. Those families fortunate enough to have a clock in the days before the long-case variety became established often carried it from room to room and at night placed it at the bedside. With no luminous dials, the only way to ascertain the time during the hours of darkness was by lighting the candle, or oil lamp. The repeater cord provided a useful and speedier, though not very accurate, time check, but its utilitarian value on a non-portable clock is questionable.
Identification of clock-makers became easier after 1777 when an Act of Parliament required both the maker's name and place of work to be engraved on the dial.

The only known local example of a dead-beat escapement (a refinement to prevent the "recoil" of the anchor escapement: observe the seconds-hand of almost any long-case clock possessing one for a practical demonstration), invented in 1715, occurs in a clock c. 1790 by John Warren of Syston.

Nine clock-makers are listed in a Leicester Directory for 1794: nearly all have examples of long-case clocks to their credit. The trade was then centred on High Street. Meeting-places included the "Admiral Rodney" in Highcross Street and the "Black Bull" in Applegate Street. By 1815 things had changed and watches were in vogue. Out of sixteen names, perhaps only six were making long-case clocks. Though there were five clock and watch makers in High Street, Market Place, Gallowtree Gate and Belgrave Gate were now becoming of importance in the trade.

The most famous families of Leicestershire long-case clockmakers include:

(1) the DEACONS of Barton-in-the-Beans. Samuel Deacon, born at Ratby in 1746, moved to Barton in 1771 as Baptist Minister and set up a clock workshop (including his own forge) which survived in situ until 1951. It can now be seen, preserved by Leicester Museum, just off the Newarke near Rupert's Gateway. Deacon, who was also the village dentist, was a prolific worker and also made many turret clocks for neighbouring churches (e.g. Hinckley, 1791; Quorn 1795). His son, John Deacon, was the first Secretary and Treasurer of the "Society of Watch and Clockmakers in the Town and 224
County of Leicester”, formed in 1795 to control prices and to prevent price-cutting with provision to set up a central warehouse to meet such competition, if necessary. The following items are quoted from a long, but interesting, list of prices:

"New clocks, with common hands, without cases, 30 hour movement, square or rounded, 12" dial £3 0s 0d.
As above but 8 day movement, with or without seconds £4 12s 0d.
As above, with landscape painting in dial arch £5 0s 0d.
Extra painting 25% on Birmingham prices.
Gilt hands extra.
Cleaning: 30 hour movement 1s 6d. 8-day movement 2s 6d.
Church clock 10s 6d.
Cases: Plain, oak, Deal 10%; Plain mahogany 20% on Joiner's Wholesale Prices.
Parts: Hands 1s 6d, Pendulum 3s 6d, Pulley at the weight if brass 1s 6d, Large Wheels 3s 6d; Small wheels 2s 6d. Tooth in any wheel 6d."

(2) The BOYFIELDS of Great Dalby. The father, from about 1740, was succeeded by son Richard about 1780, and Thomas Boyfield may be a younger son.

(3) The CORRALLS of Lutterworth, c. 1740-1800. Francis was followed by Thomas and William. Quite a few examples are known to survive in farm-houses in the area and interesting correspondence took place in the "Rugby Advertiser" some years ago.

(4) The DONISTHORPES throughout Leicestershire - c. 1750 to 1820. In the Museum collection is a clock dated 1757 by Joseph Donisthorpe of Normanton-le-Heath, with whom Samuel Deacon was apprenticed. Other members of the family include William in Loughborough, Groves in Hinckley, and another Joseph, in Leicester.
Leicestershire Clock-makers were cautious to make changes in their basic designs and the usual London-Provinces time-lag of about thirty years applied before a new design-change became universally adopted in the area. Thus it was c. 1785-90 when the brass-dial plate with its silvered chapter-ring and rococo spandrels gave way to a white painted (usually enamelled) dial, generally square or later arched, though a few round dials do exist (e.g. by Joseph Glover of Leicester). Even some older dials were replaced by the "new fashionable" painted ones, and spare brass dials found new uses for such things as small table tops.

Clock-cases were steadily becoming taller as time went on and by 1810 were almost Regency in Style, often 8 feet or more in height, to go with the spacious rooms of the period and often with decorated door panels and ornaments on top of the hood. The advent of the arched dial allowed for landscape painting to fill in the spandrels. This was a hunting county, and a dial by W Bull of Loughborough has a large scene of the hunting field on it. Sometimes a movable moon-dial was incorporated showing the age of the moon: an important factor if a night journey was to be undertaken since highwaymen were still active. Local superstitions (e.g. the sowing of seed or the transplantation of trees) were also related to the state of the moon. (In coastal areas, seascapes were common and some effort was made in those areas to provide "tide-dials"). Date dials were common in long-case clocks from fairly early on, in many cases, this would represent the only calendar in the house.

At the end of the eighteenth century the trade was at its height of prosperity, but thereafter the final phase of the grandfather clock had begun and they were made in decreasing numbers. Within a generation the
industry was so mechanised that the village clockmaker found his work superseded by the cheaper factory made German, French and American products, boosted by the demands of the Free Trade Movement. Against such a flood of cheap clocks, the village clockmaker could not compete: the repair of existing clocks continued, and grandfather clocks remained largely prized possessions handed down from generation to generation, or when a line was coming to an end, they were sold for a few pounds, sufficient to pay for funeral expenses. Often they became "death-bed" gifts to a person who vowed to keep the clock for life.

During the first quarter of the 19th century (in 1803 Sheraton said "long-case clocks are almost obsolete in fashionable London") there was an increase in the use of ready-made clock parts, painted dials, and even cases from the big manufacturing centres, such as Birmingham, Clerkenwell and Derby. Even in the early days of brass dials, some makers were using common-design dials from a common source. In many places, the clock-case would have been made, more often than not, by the village carpenter; in some instances, particularly if demand was running at a high level, he had to make use of what wood he had (possibly an old elm coffin-board) but even in the last phase of local clockmaking it was still oak that was commonly used. Mahogany, so popular in London for a century, may have been scarce and consequently expensive; it was only in regular use as veneer or for ornamentation. Often, cases of an earlier period were "re-modelled" by adding hooded canopies to suit the changing taste. Local cases, on the whole, could not compare with the often elaborate marquetry or japanned work of the London School, but quite a number were inlaid and decorated. Nevertheless, period by period, the Leicestershire clockmakers compared favourably with their London
counterparts; their resources may not have been so great and economies had to be effected if supplies were short or financial difficulties encountered. Yet by dint of hard work and a degree of ingenuity they managed to survive fairly securely until they were swamped in the 1850's by the Continental flood. Second-hand dials were re-used in time of emergency or the seconds-hand was omitted and the seconds-dial covered over by ornamentation. If a clock-case cost more than the norm, refinements on the dial had to be made to equate the cost. There is only one recorded case of a local clockmaker becoming bankrupt - this was Thomas Lee, possibly a son of William Lee referred to earlier in this article, who failed in 1773.

Leicestershire, at the end of her clockmaking era, was, notwithstanding the genesis of the Industrial Revolution, still primarily an agricultural county. This meant that, particularly in rural areas, she remained dependent for her prosperity on good harvests, a bad year would mean fewer clocks would be ordered. Food and shelter were more essential than the luxury of a clock, whose use was not considered part of everyday life until the coming of the railways brought about Greenwich Mean Time and a new awareness of the importance of time. In the ultimate, though, it was, as emphasised above, external influences such as the unabated import of foreign clocks, that sounded the death-knell of the local clockmaker.

Several late examples in the Museum collection include Leicester clocks by W Brewin c. 1850 and Edward Loseby c. 1855.

Readers wishing to extend their knowledge of Leicestershire clocks further should visit the Newarke Houses Museum, Leicester, where nearly one hundred items from a notable collection are exhibited, and
where the makers mentioned in this article are among those represented, with a particularly fine series of Deacon clocks. This collection of local long-case clocks is one of the finest provincial "gatherings" of its type in existence.

(Acknowledgement is made to Mr J A Daniell, Assistant Keeper of Antiquities, Leicester Museums, who kindly read the notes of an earlier draft of this article. Mr. Daniell's detailed study of Leicestershire clocks, "The Making of Clocks and Watches in Leicestershire and Rutland", was published in the "Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society, Vol. XXVII 1951 and remains a valuable paper, though some of its information is now out of date in a few respects.)

IN SEARCH OF PRESTGRAVE - a sample exercise in indoor work for field archaeologists in bad weather.

Miss E Linford

This project was undertaken as part of a course of evening classes on Leicestershire Local History Documents conducted by Mr G A Chinnery for the University of Leicester Adult Education Department. Acknowledgement is made to Mr Chinnery for all his help, and to Mrs Henstock and Miss Wait of the County Record Office for technical assistance.

In the summer of 1969, Miss Hull of Medbourne casually mentioned "the lost village of Presgrove" which lay, she said, at the side of a field where she had been
sent to feed livestock during the 1939-45 war. Reference to the list of Leicestershire Deserted Villages included in Volume 39 of the "Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society", disclosed the existence, at some period, of Prestgrave, a hamlet reputedly in the Nevill Holt area but included in the category "Neither documents nor tradition indicate location of village - period of desertion not known".

A visit to the field indicated by Miss Hull disclosed little of interest but an adjacent field showed considerable disturbance at one end. A brief examination of a grassless bank in the disturbed area produced nothing which could be associated with habitation but the ground was sunbaked and trowelling of the surface impracticable.

Aerial photographs, examined in the Archives Department of Leicester Museum confirmed marked disturbance in a field lying in Holt parish, immediately adjacent to the Holt-Drayton parish boundary.

Nichols, writing in the late 18th century, placed the hamlet site one mile from Holt and Great Easton and ¾ mile from Drayton - approximately the area under investigation. He further alluded to "the East and North sides of the fosse or moat", a description which tied in well with some of the contours observed, and claimed that nearly 200 acres of former Prestgrave land had been absorbed by "Holt lordship". He assumed that a similar acreage had gone to Drayton and Great Easton.

An attempt was made to determine the boundaries of the medieval fields belonging to the hamlet by plotting, from aerial photographs on to a 6" Ordnance Survey map, such ridge and furrow as was still visible in the
fields of Drayton, Holt and the western side of Great Easton. This was not successful - possibly because of depopulation so early that Prestgrave field boundaries have now been completely overlaid by those of the adjoining villages.

A Glebe Terrier of Bringhurst and Drayton, dated about 1680, from the Museum Archives, referred to strips in Drayton's "Prestgrave Field" two of which were described respectively as "1 acre towards Prestgrave" and "3 half acres shooting into Prestgrave gate". The scent seemed to be warming up!

The 1805 Bringhurst and Drayton enclosure map, in the County Record Office, showed Drayton's "Prestgrave Field", (one of the three medieval fields of the village - all still clearly delineated), as occupying the area adjacent to the Drayton boundaries with Holt and Great Easton.

On the 1850 tithe map of Holt, also held by County Records, the field to which attention had been originally directed (i.e. the one beyond the disturbed field) appeared to be in two sections, labelled respectively "Prestgrave" and "Prestgrave Close". The disturbed field itself was termed "Second Great Park", while adjacent fields were "First Great Park" and "Little Park". A footpath from Great Easton to Holt, traces of which appear on the aerial photograph to traverse the disturbed field diagonally, is shown as diverted in the 1850 map to run through Presgrave Close and Presgrave, avoiding the Second Great Park.

A return visit to the area, made after three months' winter rains, produced a dozen sherds of medieval
BRINGHURST + DRAYTON
Enclosure Award Map 1805

Presgrave Field

BRINGHURST
DRAYTON
GREAT EASTON
NEVILL HOLT
Tithe Map 1850

parish boundaries

Little Park
First Great Park
Second Great Park
Presgrove
Presgrove Close
Holt Close

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pottery, mainly from the same bank which had been examined fruitlessly on the earlier occasion. This bank seemed likely to be part of Nichols' "North side of the fosse or moat" but though the adjacent depression is very marked, it is more probably the end of the hamlet's main street. The hollow is traceable on the ground for some 250 paces further into the field and, judging from the photographs, probably continued for most of its length.

It seemed reasonable to assume that the hamlet site was now established, with an approximate Grid Reference SP 829932.

The next step was to determine, as closely as might prove possible, the date of and reason for depopulation - to this end the scanty records of the hamlet still available were collected and assembled until a sketchy outline of its history slowly emerged.

Snippets of information were gleaned from:- Nichols' "History of Leicestershire"; Farnham's "Leicestershire Village Notes"; Domesday Record; Victoria County History; Curtis's "History of Leicestershire"; L.A.H.S. Transactions; Fine Rolls and Calendars of Inquisitions up to the end of the 15th century; and, in some respects most precious of all, 13 deeds included among the Bradley Priory documents, part of the Peake collection in the custody of the County Record Office.

Prestgrave was badly positioned for prolonged survival, lying as it did at the centre of a closely knit group of steadily expanding "vills", with Drayton to the south, Brinhurst S E, Easton E, and Holt N W. Medbourne, a couple of miles S W, was the major lordship of the area.
Of the 5 "vills" only Easton and Prestgrave are mentioned in the Domesday Survey. Easton, with 27 male adults and 10 ploughs, was held by the Abbey of Peterborough; Prestgrave, where 2 ploughs were operated by 6 husbandmen, was "Kings land", temporarily rented by "Humphrey the Chamberlain".

The hamlet did not appear again in the records consulted until the mid 13th century. By this time, the other four villages had a church or chapelries but Prestgrave seems to have been too small for this amenity, though, from three of the Bradley deeds, it is clear that a priest ("clericus") was resident there.

For taxation purposes, Prestgrave was linked with Easton. Ownership is more difficult to establish; by early 14th century it would seem to have been divided principally between the lords of the two separate Holt manors. The position during the second half of the 13th century is less clear. At this period Walter de Prestgrave is described in four Bradley deeds as "Lord of Prestgrave" or "Lord of the Fee", and in 1290 he was receiving a quarterly rent of 10d from John de Kirkby, Lord of Medbourne. By the turn of the century, however, he had disappeared from the picture and after this time nobody of higher social status than "free tenant" has been encountered.

Between 1237 and 1427, eighteen transactions concerning Prestgrave land are recorded, among the lords of Medbourne and the two Holt manors. They are generally linked with holdings in one or more of the remaining four "vills", Holt and Drayton predominating. A messuage in Prestgrave is occasionally mentioned.
Local land transactions during the 13th century include 6 deeds of gift and one of exchange, of land to Bradley Priory. Each is witnessed by Walter of Prestgrave in company with the lord of one of the two Holt manors. The Gettehors family (William and Stephen) are early with their offering and Geoffrey, son of Hugh, and Stephen the Priest make two donations apiece. Walter (or his father, Peter) sponsors them all but apparently feels no urge to increase further the Prestgrave contributions. The remaining 6 Bradley Priory deeds concern minor land transactions between residents of Prestgrave, Drayton, Easton and Brinhurst.

The 1381 Lay Subsidy Roll separated, for the first time, Brinhurst's 26 taxpayers and Drayton's 43, from Easton with its total of 143 of which 7 (4 free tenants, a shepherd and 2 servants) were residents of Prestgrave. (Holt had been assessed independently as early as 1327).

The extent of Prestgrave in 1414 may be partially estimated from a fraudulent claim in that year on Holt Manor. Prestgrave property included in the demand covers \( \frac{1}{2} \) part of a messuage, 100 acres of land, 5 acres of meadow and 20s Od rent. Since this claim was made on Holt Manor proper, it would not concern itself with that part of the hamlet included among the holdings of the second Holt Manor (known since the mid 13th century as "Trussel Manor"); the total size and value of Prestgrave must therefore have been in considerable excess of the holding listed.

In 1417, Trussel Manor together with "lands, rents, reversions and services" in Prestgrave, was sold to William Palmer Esq. by Sir John Trussel and the deed was dated at Prestgrave. Two years later his sister
Anne also parted with her holding in the estate to the same William Palmer.

In 1427 Thomas Palmer, William's son, obtained "The Manors of Holt and Prestgrave", together with all the land in the area amassed by John of Holt and his successors, and proceeded to consolidate a sizeable estate. The document recording this transaction contains the only reference yet discovered to a "Manor of Prestgrave".

In 1448, Henry VI granted to Thomas Palmer leave to empark 300 acres in Holt (or in Keythorpe) and this grant may well have sealed the death warrant of Prestgrave. The name appeared only once more, in a Fine Roll settlement of 1457 in combination with Drayton and Bringhamurst. This last appearance could be an anachronism; or possibly emparking may have proceeded by stages and in 1457 may still have been incomplete. The combined area of the parks on the Tithe Map is only some 86 acres out of the permitted 300 but the remainder may have been utilised elsewhere - possibly at Keythorpe - or a curtailment made in the original plan. The intervening four centuries may have witnessed a partial reversion of the 15th century emparked area to arable.

Conclusive proof is lacking and probably now unobtainable, but the presumption is strong that the small and apparently shrinking hamlet, with outlets for expansion blocked on all sides by larger and more vigorous villages, was depopulated about the middle of the 15th century and disappeared into Thomas Palmer's deer park.
THURNBY'S BATTLE OF THE BELLS

Mrs E Ruddock

Grateful acknowledgements to those who made the documents of the case available for reference, and to the "Leicester Mercury" for the "Leicester Journal" report.

In 1862 Lord Stamford with the Quorn hounds paid a two-day visit to Thurnby in East Leicestershire, being entertained by Mr Thomas Miles at The Grange. This set in train an unforeseen chain of events.

At that time it was the custom in Thurnby, and possibly elsewhere, to ring the church bells to herald the start of a new hunting season. But the vicar, the Rev J R Redhead, gave note to churchwarden David Wait that he objected to ringing for such an occasion. He went further; he barred the door of St. Luke's Church by putting a piece of wood across it.

Old customs die hard, however, and Leicestershire folk can be independently minded. The bellringers - churchwarden David Wait, parish clerk Edward Draper (the man who had borne the vicar's letter of warning to Mr Wait), and parishioners Edward Seal, Robert Jarvis and William Seal-- overcame the difficulty of entry by asking the local constable to remove the wood. In all innocence and acknowledging the supposed authority of the churchwardens, the officer prized off the fastening.

Soon afterwards the Rev R J Redhead arrived, to find that he in his turn was prevented from entering the Church, because the door was locked from within.
"Let me in or take the consequences", he shouted. The answer came: "We are willing to take the consequences". The vicar hurried off to find the district superintendent of police, a search which took him two hours. In the meantime the bells rang merrily and the hunt gathered.

The Rev Redhead was not a man to brook opposition. He resorted to the law, and the case was tried at the County Court in the Castle. A delightful account of the proceedings appeared in the "Leicester Journal" of the day. The Court was said to be crowded with intent listeners, including many of the principal gentry of the neighbourhood in which the incident took place.

While defence and prosecution counsels were having an eloquent set-to, the vicar suddenly stood up and told the Court that he had come not to seek punishment but to know for certain whether he had the right to ring the bells, whether the wardens had the right to ring the bells, or whether they both had the right to ring the bells. The defending counsel was delighted, and emphasized that the matter was one of ascertaining a right and not of passing judgement on a wrong. Eventually the case was dismissed as beyond the competence of the Court, and the affair ended temporarily as Mr Miles of The Grange stood up and shouted his objection to being arrested as an accessory when all he had done was to organise the meeting of the hounds.

The vicar then took the matter to the Court of Arches, which is the highest ecclesiastical court for the Archbishopric of Canterbury. It dates from mediaeval times and is still in existence. The hearing was held in the Rolls Court in the City of Westminster, under Mr Justice Lushington, Doctor of Laws and Principal of the Arches Court.
The five accused were summoned "to answer to certain Articles, heads or positions touching and concerning their Soul's health and the reformation of their manners and excesses at the promotion of the said John Roberts Redhead and more especially for having in the month of February ... etc., etc." The bellringers admitted the facts, but claimed the right to ring the bells. The learned judge did not agree and admonished them to refrain from like behaviour in the future. They were instructed to pay the costs of the suit, £44 3s 10d. In the 1860's this represented a large sum of money, probably beyond what the five defendants were able or prepared to pay. They elected instead to go to prison for a month in the second division. During this time the members of the Quorn hunt sent them game and so many other delicacies that, according to local report, never had they lived so well.

A pencilled note among the records states that at the Vestry (parish) meeting held on the 10th February 1863 in Thurnby, a weekly allowance was proposed for the families of the men concerned. Whether this was actually paid has not been ascertained, but it is easy to see where people's sympathies lay. Indeed the vicar himself, although by repute a man who did not like to be gainsaid, may well have had some regrets. He had said in the County Court that "It was during a slight misunderstanding that I began to interfere with them (the churchwardens) as to bellringing".

A law journal of the time clarified the case by stating that the vicar could not sue for trespass, because the legal ownership of the bells and bell-ropes was vested in the churchwardens. On the other hand, the incumbent of a parish had absolute control over the ringing of the bells, and no one had the right to ring them against his wishes. Hence the judge's findings.
Because of manner in which the matter was resolved, details of the incident are still remembered by older families in Thurnby and district. These include three great-granddaughters of two of the bellringers concerned. Two of the descendants have carefully preserved the documents connected with this Battle of the Bells, which in its way is a vignette of village life just over a century ago.
THE PAROCHIAL VISITATIONS OF COSBY

The Parochial Visitations constitute some of the most interesting of the extensive and varied records of the Leicester Archdeaconry. These Visitations are entirely concerned with the church fabric and not only offer a vivid insight into the problems associated with the upkeep of the churches, but also are an invaluable record of the state of the buildings at that time. The Visitations made by Archdeacons Bickham and Barnaby in the late 18th century and the Archdeacon Bonney in the early 19th century offer a continuous series of records of the state of the churches in the County over a period of about 70 years.

In 1797, Archdeacon Bickham reported on Cosby church as follows:

"Weather boards to be put up to guard the belfry windows - the cracks and crevices which are many, to be filled with Mortar and fresh painted - The lead to be examined and repaired where the rain comes in - The Chancel ceiling where the plaster is broken to be repaired - The Windows to be cleaned and casements to be put into them also one in the east windows of the Chancel, in order to air and ventilate the Church - The Church and Chancel, where dirty, to be fresh whitewashed and coloured - The Creed, Lord's Prayer and Ten Commandments to be retouched ..... The old register beginning at 1557 to be taken great care of ..... The parsonage house, which is a most wretched one, and is lett in two tenements at 18s per annum, wants a great deal of
repair which must be immediately done".

This statement is testimony indeed to the very poor condition of both Church and Vicarage at Cosby, which had not been improved since Archdeacon Bickham commented in a similar if not such a severe vein in 1779. This time Bickham's apparent wrath seems to have encouraged both the Vicar and his Wardens to treat more seriously and responsibly the task of keeping the condition of the Church and Vicarage in good and satisfactory order. Two years later, at the Easter Visitation of 1779, it was certified by the Minister and Churchwardens that "the above orders have been faithfully executed". It appears that the more responsible attitude was maintained, for when Archdeacon Bonney made a Visitation in 1838 it was indicated that the condition of the Church fabric was most satisfactory. After a further Visitation in 1842 Bonney wrote:

1. The Tower and Spire of this Church are strong and substantial - the Spire was repaired last year and a new Weather cock put up.
2. The Body of the Church is in a good state, except a little place at the West end of the Nave, which wants painting.
3. The Chancel is in good State except the Slates.
4. The Porch is good.
5. The outside Roofs of the Church and Porch are of Lead, and good, of Chancel, Slate - the Slates on the North side are loose.
6. The Windows are good.
7. The doors are good.
8. The inside roof of the Nave is very good, new in 1822 - of the South Aisle old and wants attending to.
9. The inside walls are decent, but want a little cleaning.
10. The floors are of brick, level and clean.
11. The interior of the Chancel is not very neat.
12. The drains and spouts want cleaning and attending to.

The Churchyard, furnishings and equipment were also in a reasonably satisfactory condition.

Finally it is worthy of note that the arrangements to put in hand the "recommendations of the Archdeacon" were the responsibility of the Incumbent and his Wardens. The submission of a certificate to the Archdeaconry that the necessary repairs had been carried out was usually required within a period of nine months. Where difficulties were experienced in raising the necessary funds this period was often extended. There is no doubt, however, that the responsibility lay ultimately with the parish.

LOCAL HISTORY EXHIBITIONS AT ASHBY PARVA AND ANSTEY

The Leicestershire Local History Council's most recent exhibitions of local history have been those at Ashby Parva last April and at Anstey last May. Apart from the attractive presentation of material from many sources, these two villages made innovations that distinguished their events from previous occasions elsewhere in the county. A feature of the Ashby Parva exhibition was the display of the results of the children's competition for paintings and sketches of houses in the village; perhaps this competition may have awakened an appreciation of local architectural variety and style. At Anstey the organisers were inspired to mark the occasion with the production of a commemorative illustrated brochure, "From a Narrow Track", which is reviewed on page 250. It seems that these exhibitions continue to prove interesting and important events in the life of a community. At the time of writing we look forward to two similar exhibitions; at Kirby Muxloe on 9th-10th October and at Cosby on 23rd-24th October.

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REMINISCENCES - ESSAY COMPETITION

As we reported in our Spring edition, the response to this competition was wonderful. Eighty entries were sent in, and these will all be preserved at the County Record Office, so that local historians of the future will be able to read first-hand accounts of what life was like at the beginning of this century. The writers describe so many things which were common in their childhood but are rarely or never seen now: the carriers' carts, the horse-drawn buses, the gravelled, muddy roads; the pumps in the yard, the "dolly-tubs" for washing (occasionally used as playpens), the baths in front of the fire, the oil-lamps; the strict discipline in the schools, their "standards", and children leaving at thirteen or earlier; the part-time jobs delivering meat or groceries, or taking dinner to the men working at the quarries; work in hosiery factories or "in service"; the Whitsun parades; the First World War, with troops marching away and a Zeppelin raid on Loughborough.

Some of these essays, or extracts from them, will be published in future issues of the Leicestershire Historian. (The winning entry, by Mr G H Foster, is of course the first article in this edition). We are very grateful to all who sent us these interesting essays, and more particularly to our sponsor, Mr Fred Thorpe of the Ulverscroft Press, who was so impressed with the standard of the essays that he has generously given a large-print book to every entrant. Our thanks are also due to the County Library and to Mr Burton of the Old People's Welfare Association for all their help.
REVIEWS

Mrs G K Long

LEICESTERSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL and HISTORICAL SOCIETY TRANSACTIONS Vol. XLIV for 1968-9, published 1970

EXCAVATIONS in LEICESTER 1965-1968 by J E Mellor

A summary account of excavations on Roman Leicester, which have increased our knowledge of the Forum and of the defences, and suggest that the town's western limits may have extended further westwards than was considered before; also a report on other excavations of Roman buildings.

LEICESTERSHIRE LOLLARDS by J Crompton

A continuation of an earlier paper on John Wycliffe, describing other Lollards - William Swinderby who preached in Leicestershire, and greatly influenced the variety of respectable citizens, respectable tradesmen, in Leicester itself, at Mountsorrel, Castle Donington, Twyford, Wigston, Kibworth, Illston, Stoughton and Smeeton Westerby. Throughout the 15th century, Leicestershire radical opinions like those of John Belgrave of St. Martins, were fore-runners of the local Puritan movement of the 16th and 17th centuries.

PLAGUE in LEICESTER, 1558-1665 by J E O Wilshere

This survey of the incidence of plague in Leicester is based on the Parish Registers of the six parishes
and the Borough Records. The worst plague years in Leicester were 1564, when the assizes were held in Loughborough, 1593-4, when contributions were asked for from the Hundreds, and 1610-1611, when the assizes were held in Hinckley, and when the total death roll exceeded 700. 1636-1639 were years of fear, when burials increased, and Leicester's anxieties for its own safety overshadowed the other epidemics in the county. Melton Mowbray in 1637 lost a third of its population. In 1665, the Great Plague year in London, Leicester (perhaps through its stringent precautions) escaped, and was able to send £10 to Melton Mowbray, once more badly stricken.

NEW WALK in the NINETEENTH CENTURY by G Potts

A detailed account of the builders and buildings in New Walk and their social status, described by a Polish refugee in 1847 as "the only solely respectable street in Leicester". Of its residents between 1841 and 1861 the largest single group identified consisted of "Ladies of Independent Means", who maintained their ascendancy until the completion of building at the end of the century, when an appreciable number of professional people were conveniently working from their own homes. This article is very fully illustrated, and includes maps of the area in 1828 and 1844.

LEICESTERSHIRE: a Shell Guide by W G Hoskins
Faber and Faber 1970 30s (£1.50)

This latest and long awaited addition to this series, provides an up-to-date and very personal guide to the towns, villages and countryside of the County of
Leicester. It includes an introduction, and a gazetteer including every Leicestershire village and hamlet, describing their notable buildings and personalities, and a varied selection of photographs in the text. The descriptions included in the gazetteer are more personal and sometimes less comprehensive than the details included in the Leicestershire volume in the Buildings of England series, by N Pevsner. The two books used in conjunction provide an excellent guide to the face of Leicestershire today.

A BRIEF GUIDE TO THE CITY OF LEICESTER
by Jack Simmons. City of Leicester 1969 2s (10p)

This new edition of the official introduction to the ancient and modern city of Leicester and its neighbourhood, includes some new illustrations of modern Leicester, and forms an excellent guide to the City.

SAINT BARTHOLOMEW'S KIRBY MUXLOE, Church Guide by J E O Wilshere, 7 Gullet Lane, Kirby Muxloe, Leicester, LE9 8BL 2s (10p)

This guide gives a brief account of the history of the former hamlet, and a further description of the interior and exterior of the church, a chapel in the Parish of Glenfield until 1930, when Kirby Muxloe became a separate parish. The church was restored in 1848-50 by the Leicester architect Henry Goddard, and one of the remaining pieces of church plate, a pewter cup dating from 1634, was sold to defray the cost of restoration. The illustrations to this guide show the exterior before restoration, the
interior and exterior today, and the 18th century church clock now in the Newarke Houses Museum, Leicester.

The STORY of BRAUNSTONE PARISH CHURCH
ST. PETER'S, BRAUNSTONE by G M England 1970 3s (15p)

This new illustrated guide to the church, its interior and exterior features, briefly describes the history of the parish and the growth of its daughter churches. An interesting custom is still associated with this church, the strewing of hay in the church at the time of the patronal festival - a custom once practised in some other Leicestershire churches - Glenfield, Ashby Folville and Medbourne.

DRAWING ARCHAEOLOGICAL FINDS for PUBLICATION, by
Conant Brodribb John Baker 1970 15s (75p)

This is a most useful book describing types of pen, ink, and drawing techniques - how to draw to scale, to shade and draw from the original material a complete picture of the "find" when reproduced in the text. It does not include maps, but the techniques shown are applicable to most other material usually found by the amateur archaeologist.
SURVEY OF BUILDINGS UNDER THREAT OF DEMOLITION
edited by David Smith. University of Leicester
Department of Adult Education 1969 3s (15p)

The surveys described in this account of buildings in
Cosby, Earl Shilton, Thorpe Satchville and Anstey have
been undertaken by groups of students from the
Department of Adult Education under the leadership
of Mr D H Smith. These surveys uncover the stages in
the evolution of the buildings examined, and form a
notable contribution to our knowledge of the
development of local domestic building.

FROM A NARROW TRACK - a short history of the village
of Anstey. Anstey Village Society 1970 5s (25p)

A series of short chapters describing the development
of the village, its roads, parish government, churches,
schools, industries, motor transport, Anstey in wartime,
cricket and football, written by local people and
illustrated with local photographs, some of them showing
buildings like the group of cottages on the Upper Green,
which have now been demolished. This pamphlet was
originally produced for the Local History Exhibition
last May.

LOUGHBOROUGH in 1770 by Thomas Pochin, edited with an
introduction and notes by J D Bennett. The Book House,
Loughborough 1970 6s (30p)

This nicely reproduced article was first published
in Nichols' Topographica Britannica and has never
before been reproduced in an individual format. It
describes Loughborough - then a town of a mere 4,000 inhabitants - and reflects the strong prejudices of its author, his dislike of rising prices and his regret at the enclosure of the open fields belonging to the town. The author was a connection of the Pochins of Barkby and Edmundthorpe.

A CENTURY OF CRICKET: a history of Shepshed Town Cricket Club from 1869 to 1969
Freeman Press, Shepshed. 1969 5s (25p)

Cricket was played in "Sheepshead" long before the formation of the Cricket Club in 1869 and the first records are of a match with Whitwick in August 1801 on Crophurst Plain. The early club played with similar bats, balls and stumps to those used today, but players changed behind bushes and refreshed themselves with ale at 1 ld a gallon! This book outlines the Club's history from those days to 1969, and includes eight photographs of teams.

THE SIEGE OF LEICESTER 1645: a 325th Anniversary History by J E O Wilshere and S Green
Leicester Research Services 1970 4s 6d (22½p)

A brief account of the siege of Leicester in May 1645, the last minor victory won by the king's forces before the disastrous defeat at the Battle of Naseby a few weeks later, and the aftermath when Cromwell's forces briefly besieged the town which quickly capitulated on fair and honourable terms. This description quotes from contemporary sources, is well illustrated, including a map of the City, and is a most attractive pamphlet.
BYGONE SILEBY: a series of booklets containing historical facts about the village by the Rev J S Hunting each 2s 6d (12½p)

1) Words and Sayings
2) Sayings and Predictions about the Weather
3) Hard times in the Village
4) Tales of Old Sileby Cricket
5) How Sileby began
   Special Christmas Issue (un-numbered)
6) More Old Words and Sayings
7) Sileby in the Doomesday Book
8) Home Life
9) Norman Times
10) Wakes

This interesting series of pamphlets (which is to be continued) describes many facets of life in Sileby in the last century and earlier. The pamphlets on dialect, hard times, home life and cricket give a vivid picture of life at a time when a man of Barrow recognised a man of Sileby by his speech, when children left school at 13 to work a full day, 6 a.m. - 6 p.m., and when glove seaming at home, gleaning, "the pig", crow scaring and belonging to clothing clubs were all ways of making ends meet. Cricket matches and cricketers are fully described, and the pamphlets on Christmas and the Sileby Wakes tell of traditional customs at these festivals. Later numbers tell the story of Sileby from its first settlement to the twelfth century.
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