### CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Editorial</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leicester Cafés</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J D Bennett</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountsorrel Childhood Recollections</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss E J Harrington</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Humberstone Gate Pleasure Fairs in the Late Nineteenth Century</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss S L Boase</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New Rail Roads, Or, the delight and pleasure of Travelling by</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot Water</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Charnwood Forest: some Histories, References and Guides published</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>since 1900</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian Keil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs E M Dickson, B Elliott</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book Reviews</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs G K Long, J Goodacre, Mrs E M Dickson, B Elliott, D Fleming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Leicestershire Historian, which is published annually, is the magazine of the Leicester Local History Council and is distributed free to members. The Council exists to bring local history to the doorstep of all interested people in Leicester and Leicestershire, to provide for them opportunities of meeting together, to act as a co-ordinating body between the various Societies in the County and to promote the advancement of local history studies.

A series of local history meetings is arranged throughout the year and the programme is varied to include talks, film meetings, outdoor excursions and an annual Members’ Evening held near Christmas. The Council also encourages and supports local history exhibitions; a leaflet giving advice on the promotion of such an exhibition is available from the Secretary.

The different categories of membership and the subscriptions are set out below. If you wish to become a member, please contact the Secretary, who will also be pleased to supply further information about membership and the Annual Programme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subscription</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GROUP, Organization</td>
<td>£2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOUBLE, Husband and Wife</td>
<td>£2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INDIVIDUAL, Person under 65</td>
<td>£1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOUBLE, Senior Citizens</td>
<td>£1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SINGLE, Senior Citizen, Student</td>
<td>£1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EDITORIAL

Shop fronts change with bewildering frequency, but the buildings above often retain their more distinctive architecture. Our cover picture of Leicester's Turkey Café before it was defaced shews that it was originally conceived as a complete façade and illustrates Mr Bennett's retrospective glance at Leicester Cafés. We are grateful to Mr Allan Wright of Coventry for preparing the drawing specially for this issue.

There are several ways in which this issue follows on from the last. Dr Keil's article on publications concerning Charnwood Forest concludes our two part bibliographical appreciation of the local history of the area. In the last issue Mr Coleman's memories of Humberstone Gate took us back to the beginning of the century. This was the time when the fairs for which this street was so famous were finally banished from the city centre. Sarah Boase's account of the fairs is another article based on research undertaken in the English Local History Department of Leicester University.

The essay chosen this time from the Leicestershire Historian reminiscences competition includes a vivid account of what it was like to go to school in Mountsorrel early this century.

It is a new departure to include a local ballad, but we hope to publish others in the future.

It is sad to have to omit from the list of our Vice Presidents the name of Colonel Pen Lloyd, who died last September. Among his many roles and achievements in the county we may choose to remember him for the support he gave to the Leicestershire Local History Council from the beginning. His amusing talk at our annual general meeting in May 1975, under the title 'Anecdotes and Past Personalities of Leicestershire and the surrounding counties', provided the material for two booklets, which were generously published for the benefit of our society.
Letter to the Editor:

Mrs N Frampton, a member who lives in Leicester Forest East, writes, referring to the last issue:-

I am enjoying reading my Leicestershire Historian as usual. As one gets older I’m sure recalling the past is more and more enjoyable. However, may I comment that in Mr Sidney Coleman’s list of buildings in Humberstone Gate seventy years ago it was the Wyggeston Girls’ School just beyond Charles Street, not the City Boys’. They did not take over until 1928.
When Birch's in Loseby Lane closed in 1977, it looked as if Leicester had lost the last of its older-type cafés. Since the early 1950's they had suffered the same fate as many of the old, locally owned shops in the city centre, forced out by rising overheads, changing tastes and the advent of new competitors.

Most of the local cafés and restaurants which became household names like Winn's, the Mikado, Moreton's and Kunzle's - dated from the periods just before or just after the First World War. Before then the main places offering refreshments had been hotels and public houses, dining rooms or eating houses, the chain of establishments owned by the Leicester Coffee & Cocoa House Company, founded in 1877 (1), and one or two confectioners.

For much of the nineteenth century eating out was mainly a male pursuit; it was not respectable for women to dine publicly in mixed company, and they were not welcome in hotel restaurants (2). Eating houses and dining rooms also tended to be male preserves. The coffee-houses, it is true, did not discriminate, but they were really meant for the working-classes. In towns like Leicester the only establishments middle-class women could patronise with impunity were the few confectioners or pastry cooks who also served refreshments.

Two very well known ones who did this were Crane's at 61 Market Place and Bills' at 1 1/2 Hotel Street. John Crane first appears in directories as a confectioner in 1846, when he was in High Street, but by 1863 he was established in the Market Place. After his death his daughter, Miss Louisa Crane, carried on the business in the Georgian bow-fronted premises where ladies were served with a glass of madeira and a biscuit, discreetly consumed in little curtained alcoves. Crane's disappeared in the nineties to make way for an extension to Adderly's premises (3).

James Bills, in Hotel Street, who was well established by the 1870's as one of the town's leading confectioners, was recalled with much affection in later years. His specialities included beefsteak-and-oyster pies, 'yellow tarts' (i.e. lemon cheese cakes), green gooseberry tarts and big, warm Chelsea penny buns (4).

Times, however, were changing, and by 1890 it had become acceptable
for women to eat out in mixed company. In addition the reduction of duty on both tea and coffee had stimulated demand. The moment was right for the introduction of the English version of the continental café.

It was John Shepard Winn, a tea merchant, who in 1892 opened what appears to have been Leicester’s first example, the Oriental Café, in existing premises at 18 Market Place. The new undertaking aimed at a more middle-class clientele than the coffee-houses, was a success, and by 1911 had expanded into three of the adjacent shops. Rebuilt between the wars to include the Oriental Hall, scene of ‘select’ dinner dances, the Oriental was renowned for its three piece orchestra, consisting of piano, cello and violin, playing traditional café music like ‘The Indian Love Lyrics’ and ‘Salut d’Amour’ (5). It closed in 1955; the building became a Woolworth’s store, and was demolished about five years ago.

The Turkey Café, at 24 Granby Street, was Mr Winn’s next venture. It was built in 1900 to the design of Arthur Wakerley, with coloured Doulton tiles and art nouveau lettering. It was really an architectural pun, illustrating the theme ‘Turkey’ both in style and in the actual birds, of which there were originally three (6). In the middle 1960’s it was bought by Bruciani Limited, and is now a coffee shop and soda fountain.

The Café Royal at 44 London Road was opened about 1911 in part of the block, also designed by Arthur Wakerley, which included the Wyvern Hotel of 1895. Like the Turkey Café this too was purchased by Bruciani Ltd, but was demolished in 1974. In the mid-thirties the Kenya Café was opened at 21 Market Street, followed shortly afterwards by the Sunset Café at 7 Haymarket. The Kenya had a fairly short life, and had closed by 1947 (7), but the Sunset survived until it was demolished in 1964 for the Haymarket redevelopment. Winn’s cafés once had a high reputation for their cakes, made in their bakery in Bath Lane. Unfortunately standards declined during the Second World War and never really recovered.

Moreton’s Café in Hotel Street was a successor to Bills’. George Moreton, a pastrycook who took over the business in the mid nineties, kept the premises much as they had been. His successor, William Moreton, had a more spacious establishment on two floors, with a band (8). Moreton’s, famous for its pork pies and sausages, closed in the early 1950’s when the premises were demolished for the building of a bank.

Less well known, but of remarkable longevity, was Mrs Sarah Ann Hooper of 20 King Street. She is listed as a confectioner (and also a servants’ registry) in the 1888 directory. Sixty-three years later, in 1951, Mrs
CRANE,
Cook * and * Confectioner,
61 MARKET PLACE, LEICESTER.
Wedding Breakfasts, Luncheons, Dinners,
Suppers, &c.,
WITH OR WITHOUT HIRE.

GAME, PERIGORD AND OTHER PIES.
OR ANY SEPARATE DISH SUPPLIED.

BRIDE CAKES ALWAYS READY.

Tea and Coffee in Perfection.

High-Class Refreshments
AT POPULAR PRICES.

WINN'S
ORIENTAL CAFE,
18 MARKET PLACE, LEICESTER.
Hooper was still there, by which time her shop was known as Jean’s Café. A long, narrow building at the junction of King Street and New Walk, with entrances in both streets, it finally closed in the middle fifties (5).

Pole’s Café at 15 Haymarket had also started as a confectioner’s, run by Clara Pole at least as early as 1912. The Café occupied part of a large Georgian house, which still retained much of its original decoration on the upper floors. Pole’s Café was demolished in 1970.

Another of the new-style cafés was the Mikado at 67 Market Place. It was owned by a London firm, Nelson & Co, and dated from the turn of the century. In spite of its name, the decor, with its murals of coloured tiles, was definitely Turkish. A common sight was a man in a chef’s hat roasting coffee beans in the window, the aroma drifting across the Market Place. In its later years an attempt was made to modernize the downstairs part, which was in three sections, with the intrusion of plastic and formica, but the upstairs dining room, with its wicker furniture, remained unchanged. The Mikado Café was closed and the premises sold in 1966 (9). It is described by William Cooper in his novel _Scenes from Provincial Life_, published in 1950.

In spite of the proliferation of the café, the older type of eating house lingered on. Wright’s in Granby Street, a survival from the Edwardian era, lasted until the mid 1920’s. James Hartopp’s Albion Restaurant in Gallowtree Gate, which did not close until about 1955, occupied premises which had been used as dining rooms at least as far back as the 1870’s. Olorenshaw’s ‘dining, grill, oyster and supper rooms’ in Humberstone Gate, though they had a twenties look about them, were really in the 19th century tradition. They survived until about 1952.

The Eastern theme, seen already in the Oriental, Turkey and Mikado Cafés, was again repeated in the Egyptian Café at 15 and 16 Silver Arcade. This dated from the early 1920’s, had several owners, and closed shortly after 1960. It had a slightly dubious reputation.

Another café which opened in the twenties was Kunzle’s. Christian Kunzle was a confectioner who had had a shop in Market Street before the First World War. About 1927 he opened a café at 52 Granby Street in premises formerly occupied by Wright’s eating house. Kunzle’s, noted for their chocolate-covered Kunzle cakes, survived until the mid-1950’s.
Advertisement from Burrow's Guide to Leicester, c 1925
Some time in the middle forties, what had previously been Riley's Café at 17 Loseby Lane was taken over by Allen Birch. For thirty years or so it was a popular rendezvous, with its small tables crowded close together on two floors, its steep and narrow stairs, and a market town cosiness increasingly hard to find in post-war Leicester. Its closure in 1977 seemed sad but somehow inevitable, and it was all the more remarkable when early in 1978 it reopened, under a different ownership, but otherwise apparently unchanged.

References:

2. The newer, larger hotels solved this problem by having segregated coffee rooms for guests who did not wish to dine in their own rooms.
3. I C Ellis, Records of Nineteenth Century Leicester, p 121
4. Ibid. p 172
5. Information from Eric Swift
6. P Atterbury and L Irvine, The Doulton Story, pp 98-9: Leicester City Planning Department, Leicester's Architectural Heritage, p 56; this shews the original façade.
7. It is now a jeweller's shop.
8. I C Ellis, op cit, p 172
9. It is now a chemist’s shop.

VISIT
MORETON'S CAFÉ
HOTEL STREET
EST. OVER 100 YEARS
EVERYTHING MADE ON THE PREMISES
TRY OUR CELEBRATED
PORK PIES & SAUSAGES
BATH & DIAMOND BUNS
FANCY CAKES & PASTRIES
NONE TO BEAT

Advertisement from Leicester: a guide to places of interest in the city, c 1945
MOUNTSORREL CHILDHOOD RECOLLECTIONS
Miss E J Harrington

One of the things which interested me as a child was listening to my parents' recollections of their childhood. Sometimes they would add tales which they themselves had been told of their parents' early days, and so, before recounting my own personal memories, I will go back for two generations.

My maternal grandfather was born in the year of the accession of King William IV, 1830, and lived for much of his life in Mountsorrel. When I was a child he was blind and his memory had almost gone, but sometimes recollections of earlier years came to him. I enjoyed hearing him describe how the stage coach came rumbling along the turnpike with the coachman sounding his horn. My mother used to point out to us the inscription on the gable of the school which grandfather had attended. The building is now a house; in my childhood it was a Cottage Hospital, to which men injured in the nearby quarry were taken. The inscription is still in position and is as follows:

This English School for poor boys out of Mountsorrel and Swithland, given by John Danvers 1742

But my grandfather's formal education was meagre, for my mother used to tell us that he left school at seven years of age to start work. His first day's work was to drive the cows out to graze for the day, and he was instructed to return at milking time. It must have seemed a long day to the seven year old, for when he drove the cows home for the evening milking, it was barely mid-day!

My grandmother died long before I was born. I remember being told that in her childhood tea was a luxury which her parents could not afford. At the Big House in the village where she lived, the lady saved the tea-leaves when the teapot was emptied. It was my grandmother's duty, as a child, to call for the used tea-leaves and take them home so that they could be used a second time by her family.

It was about eighty years after my grandfather left school that my own school days began – in the same village, though in a later building. There were three rooms, the baby-room for the five year olds, the little room for the second and third years, and the big room for standards two to seven. This building with moderizations and additions is now the
Infants' School.

Preparations for my first school Christmas were made when 'the babies' were asked to bring ingredients to put into a Christmas pudding, which we all helped to stir. Then we all took a spoon and plate to school. We must have spent a very steamy morning while the pudding bubbled and boiled on the baby-room fire, and at last the great moment came, and the wonderful pudding was shared out!

The six year old class was divided from the seven year olds for lessons by a curtain which could be drawn back for prayers and singing. I remember getting into trouble, as I sat on the back row of the six year olds, for not attending. It was difficult to explain that I found the lesson which was going on on the other side of the curtain more interesting; for the seven year olds were learning about something I had never heard of, called Tens and Eunuchs, and I so wanted to know what they were.

In due course we moved up to the big room which seemed enormous, and full of so many classes, all on view — certainly the Open Plan! The only heating was from two coke stoves. Children sitting near them must have been scorched and those far away, frozen.

Sometimes, when we returned after dinner, the headmaster would start the whole room saying tables in a kind of rhythmic chant, and the younger ones were soon able to join in. The pence table had its own particular tune. Line a was higher; line b was lower, as follows:-

- \( b \) 12 pence, one shilling
- \( a \) 20 pence, one and eight pence
- \( b \) 24 pence, two shillings
- \( a \) 30 pence, two and sixpence
- \( b \) 36 pence, three shillings, etc.

Our class teacher taught standards two and three together when I first went into the big room; then she changed, and took standards three and four together, and so for my three years in these classes I had the same teacher. I much enjoyed my first introduction to Dickens, when one Christmas she read to us the story of Scrooge.

When we came out of school at twelve o'clock, some of the children who were 'taking dinner' had to race home and collect their fathers' dinner and take it to them at the quarry, then back home for their own, and back
to school by 1:30. When we went home on summer afternoons, mothers would often be sitting on their doorsteps, busily ‘seaming’ the undyed stockings which were issued in bundles by the hosiery factory to those who would undertake the work, and so add a little to the family income.

The second Monday in January we children knew as Plough Monday, and celebrated it by dressing up in whatever outlandish garb we could muster, and visiting neighbours singing:

A hole in my stocking, a hole in my shoe,
Please will you give me a penny or two, etc.

Another custom we kept was celebrating May 29th as Royal Oak Day, though I doubt if our study of history had reached as far as Charles II and the Boscobel Oak. It was essential to go to school that day wearing a sprig of oak. Equally important was it to carry a stinging nettle with which to sting the luckless child who had forgotten to wear his oak.

A favourite play place in Mountsorrel was The Hills. They were grassy, and abounded in buttercups, daisies, bird’s foot trefoil and other flowers. There were slopes to run down, hollows to hide in, rocks to scramble on. Now much of our favourite haunt is overgrown with hawthorn and other bushes, and long grass. Fewer children evidently play there now. Quarrymen no longer tramp that way to work, and cows no longer graze there. Indeed ‘The Froggy’, which was once their drinking trough, has long been filled up and is part of the church car park.

When we were taken for a walk, the favourite route was by the quarry. Along the higher road came the sound of tap, tap, tapping from far down below, where the set-makers and curb-dressers were hard at work. Little engines pulling strings of trucks could be seen puffing along. If we took the lower road, which was crossed in places by railway lines, we would wait for one of the engines to come along the lines, wondering if it would be ‘Lady Winifred’ or ‘Violet’, and if the engine-driver would wave.

Our lives were lived mainly in the village and surrounding countryside. To get further afield would mean walking either to Sileby station on the Midland line, or to Rothley on the Great Central, except on Wednesdays and Saturdays, when there was a bus to Leicester from Mountsorrel. This had wicker seats, and if it was very full boards could be put across the gangway forming an extra seat, so that passengers were sitting five in a row—and no emergency exit either! On the rare occasions when we went for a holiday we had ‘a conveyance’ to take us and the portmanteau and dress
basket, made of wicker, to the station. The conveyance was a horse-drawn cab, and we felt very grand riding along in it.

Reading was a favourite pastime. How very much we, and our parents, would have appreciated the County Library that is now such an asset to the village. But we read and re-read our own books and borrowed from friends. We had eight volumes of the *Children's Encyclopaedia*, some bound volumes of the *Strand Magazine* containing among other things Sherlock Holmes in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, *Lorna Doone*, *Westward Ho* and *The Dove in the Eagle's Nest* were firm favourites too.

Of music I knew nothing; apart from the The Band which before and after the war came round playing carols so beautifully at Christmas, the only instruments I had heard until well into my teens were a piano, an organ and a violin. I had heard of an orchestra but had no idea what it would sound like. How different from today when there is not only radio and television bringing music into every home, but when schools have their own orchestras.

Soon after the end of my third year at school, the Great War began. I remember going to watch the Territorials march away from the Drill Hall, and watching searchlights sweeping across the sky, and seeing sheets of thick brown paper hung by loops at the corners over the windows before the gas was lit, but I do not remember the sequence of things. One night, soon after I had gone to bed, there were terrific bangs not far away. My sister slept on but I was frightened and was taken downstairs to sit with my parents by the fire. Next day we heard that Loughborough had had a Zeppelin raid. During the war there were severe winters and my feet were so swollen with chilblains that I could not get my boots on, and I felt very grown-up going to school in my mother's cloth-topped boots—substitute material due to the shortage of leather. Near the present Rolls Royce factory was a disused brick-yard pit. The water in it froze so hard that 'winter sports' took place there. A small charge was made in aid of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Comforts Fund to those who joined in the fun on the ice. What fun we had sliding, and how much I enjoyed watching the skaters! Perhaps it was in the same year, 1916 I think, that there was a very severe blizzard in March. The wind and the weight of the snow brought down many trees and telegraph poles along the main road—a memorable sight.

In 1917 I left the village school and started my secondary education in
Leicester. This meant the two mile walk to and from Rothley station each day, a long and lonely walk for an eleven year old, for there were few houses along the roadside until one neared the station. At first the school uniform included straw boaters in winter as well as summer, and through the rest of my school life we wore black woollen stockings in summer as well as winter. Our school fees were £1.8.0 a term, a considerable sum for my parents to find, together with my season ticket on the train and other expenses.

Just before Christmas 1917 we heard that Folwell's, the pork butchers in Leicester Market Place, would sell lard on the Saturday morning—a rare luxury in wartime. I with my season ticket on the train, and my newly acquired knowledge of the way about Leicester, set off for the station and in due course joined the long queue outside Folwell's on that cold, grey December morning, cheered by the prospect of mince pies which would result if I was successful. How triumphantly I came home with my half pound of lard!

When the war came to an end, I was at home from school recovering from an illness. My mother heard someone shouting in the road 'The war is over! The war is over', but we had no telephone and I suppose there could have been no confirmation until the newspaper came the next morning. I have no very clear impression of any special rejoicing, only a great feeling of relief and thankfulness among the grown-ups.
On the 17th of May 1889 *The Leicester Journal* reported:-

... the rapt delight with which the closely packed crowds (in the
fairground in Humberstone Gate) gaze upon the gorgeous fronts of the
shows and revel in the smell of flaring oil lamps and in the earsplitting
din and racket of blaring steam organs and hoarse voiced showmen ... 
The long and spacious roadway is lined on each side from the Clock
Tower to Rutland Street with closely packed stalls and shows. On the
stalls the usual "fairing" toys and oddments are arranged; and at the
Clock Tower end savoury sausages and potato chips are frying and
abundance of oysters are on sale. There are the usual skittle alleys,
cocoa nut "gardens", swinging boats and shooting galleries ... The
old style steam roundabout horses may be looked on as rank outsiders in
these enlightened days. They were knocked out by the galloping horses
which are finding formidable opponents in the steam yachts ... and
now to crown all previous enterprises in this direction we have the
roundabout switchback railway ... (Amongst the shows) the most
attractive appear to be the boxing saloons, especially that in which
the famous lady boxers give illustrations of the noble art of self de-
defence ... At the Rutland Street end of the great array 'Parker's A1
Ghost Illusion' may be enjoyed for a moderate admission fee which
a lady in picturesque short frock and tights condescends to take at the
door.

By the late 1880s the Leicester pleasure fairs were more popular than they
had ever been before. In 1888 no fewer than thirty thousand people were
estimated to have attended the October fair and the following October
twenty six special excursion trains ran to Leicester on the Saturday of the
fair week from virtually every town within a hundred mile radius, bringing
some twelve or thirteen thousand visitors to the fair. On that day
Humberstone Gate was "so densely packed that it was almost impossible
to move except with the crowd and nothing short of a struggle could
enable anyone to get near some of the shows" (1).

Perhaps paradoxically, it was also in the late 1880s that the fairs came
under organized and forceful attack for the first time. In Leicester as
elsewhere the attack was based on two main arguments: that the fairs
were in many ways morally pernicious; and that they caused intolerable
nuisance and obstruction in the commercial centre of the town. In August 1888 the Town Council appointed a Fairs Committee to report on the desirability of abolishing the fairs or of removing them to the outskirts of the town. Five months later the Council requested the consent of the Home Secretary to the abolition of the fairs. The grounds given covered the full range of objections:-

These fairs are not now from any point of view necessary, but are in fact useless relics of a bygone age. The attractions provided at these fairs are not instructive or in any sense calculated to enhance health, morality or good order, but on the contrary there is imported into the town a number of itinerant persons and showmen, some of whom are of doubtful character and insanitary habits, and whose entertainments and exhibitions are of a demoralising, unnatural and disgraceful tendency. The whole thoroughfare resounds with discordant noises, shouting and ribaldry, while large crowds literally pack the thoroughfare to the great danger, annoyance and inconvenience of the public at large, so much so that all ordinary traffic during the several days these pleasure fairs are held is greatly disturbed and for several hours each day is entirely suspended (2).

The Council's attack on the fairs in 1889 failed because of legal disputes over the ownership of rights in the fairground. The merits of the fairs continued to be debated for another fifteen years until the Council agreed to buy out, for the sum of twenty thousand pounds, those who claimed fairground rights. The last fair in Humberstone Gate was held in May 1904 (3). Throughout that period the protracted controversies were amply reported in the Town Council Records and the local newspapers. The views expressed were of course predominately those of the articulate middle classes and unrepresentative of the fairgoing public generally; but they do shew the wide range of considerations which determined people's attitudes to the fairs.

The moral arguments were set in the general context of a paternalistic desire to further the ideal of 'rational recreation' for the working classes. The Leicester Chronicle attacked the fairs because their 'whole tendency is demoralising, pernicious and out of joint with the efforts which are so general for the elevation of the public in their amusements as well as in their social habits and customs'. Fairs had perhaps been necessary, according to one of the Borough Aldermen, when there were few holidays for the people, but 'since that time the Council had done much for the people in providing parks and places of amusement and they would still be glad to
contribute any reasonable and rational amusements which were not demoralising'. And The Leicester Guardian saw no merit in the fairs when it asked 'How can people even tolerate (them) when they have seen lovely pictures, heard exquisite sounds and read good books?' (4)

For those who thought in terms of the ideal of rational recreation there were certainly grounds for criticising the fairs. Amongst the worst aspects were the 'freak' shows like the cow with five legs, the living skeleton and the Champion Prize Female, six years old and weighing eleven stone and three pounds. Such shows were criticised for appealing to man's lowest or most 'beastly' instincts, to a 'morbid curiosity' and perverse fascination with the grotesque. The human freaks were specially objectionable because they could degrade the beholder's image of mankind (5). Other shows were attacked on grounds of indecency in the form of unsavoury canvas paintings exhibited outside, or lewd behaviour by the female attendants at sideshows, or even obscenity in the shows themselves. The simple peep shows, consisting of a square box on a pole with viewing glasses at the front, were always particularly suspect. Gambling was also very much frowned upon (6). Though the problem of street betting in Humberstone Gate was not confined to fairtime, it was frequently referred to in connexion with the fairs. As for the stalls in the fairs which involved an element of chance, the main complaint was that the odds were weighed heavily in favour of the showmen. The Wyvern reported in 1896 that several of the stalls possessed only one prize 'which seemed to prove that the chances of winning were not very great' (7).

The fairs did, however, comprise many different elements and even some of the sternest critics recognized that within the fairground there was a marked hierarchy of respectability. Undisputed at the top and always 'lion of the fair' were the menageries, which combined the merits of educational value, the demonstration of skill and the ability to boast an impressive scale and splendour. Throughout the controversies even those who were in favour of abolishing the fairs regarded the menageries as their 'one redeeming feature' (8).

The menagerie owners emphasized the educational value of their exhibitions by stressing in their advertisements the rarity of their specimens and the distant lands from which they had come. Mr Manders went so far as to claim that through a visit to his menagerie 'the natural history of the world may be read in a single lesson'. Significantly it was only towards the end of the century, when permanent zoos easily accessible by rail
The Last Fair in Humberstone Gate, May 1904, from the Clock Tower end, looking East.
from original in Leicester Museums Collection
were able to display larger collections in more natural surroundings, that criticisms of the menageries began to be voiced. In 1903 one reporter found the show 'very smelly and by no means edifying' (9).

Other 'educational' exhibitions which appeared in Humberstone Gate on a less regular basis and won the admiration of the press reporters included, in 1878, a working model of a colliery and in 1870 'mechanical models, illustrating the science of hydraulics and the application of steam' (10). Shows appealing to popular interest in current affairs, such as the exhibition in 1889 of photographs of the victims of the Whitechapel murders and a facsimile of Jack the Ripper's letter, tended to be less respectable because of their sensationalism and because they often allowed considerable liberty to be taken with the truth (11).

Shows which involved the demonstration of skill and talent were also regarded as respectable. The brass band attached to Wombwell's menagerie was continually praised for this reason. The marionette shows ranked high because they were 'exceedingly clever and entertaining'. And the 'skilful and talented works' which comprised Bellamy's models were unhesitatingly recommended, stress being laid on the fact that the model of Windsor Castle had taken seven years to construct, the 2,128 windows all being separately shewn. Perhaps most striking of all was the skill of the lion tamers of the menageries in demonstrating 'the command man may have over the most fierce and powerful of animals' and 'the wonderful subjection (into which they brought) the Kings and Queens of the Forest' (12).

The reporters of the fairs generally admired those entertainments which were on a grand and splendid scale. The newspapers often mentioned the colossal value of some of the exhibits in the menageries. In 1867 Mr Manders had paid £2,300 for three giraffes imported from Abyssinia. And from the 1880s, when firms like Orton, Sons and Spooner Ltd were specializing in the carving and decorating of elaborate gilded prosceniums, references were increasingly often made to the 'gorgeous' showfronts, especially of the menageries and the Ghost Shows (13). In this respect popularity and respectability clearly went hand in hand. Whereas until the 1870s the swings and roundabouts were dismissed as among the minor amusements, by the 1880s the magnificent steam rides brought to Leicester by showmen like Pat Collins and George and Arthur Twigdon had become some of the principal attractions (14). It seems likely too that the splendour of the Ghost shows, Dioramas and Bioscopes contributed
largely to the decline of the traditional fairground theatres, where a four-act tragedy (Richard III being particularly popular in Leicester), preceded by an overture and followed by a pantomime, could be seen in the space of ten minutes (15).

Within the fairground, therefore, there were attractions which, even judged in terms of the ideal of rational recreation, were unobjectionable or even edifying. Thus it was that ‘respectable’ middle class people not only went to the fairs themselves but also took their children, choosing carefully which of the amusements to visit. Isabel Ellis, the daughter of a successful miller, recalled in the 1930s her youthful visits to Humberstone Gate Fair escorted by her father. For her the fair was ‘a glimpse of paradise’. She visited the menagerie and the marionette show, and rides on the roundabouts were ‘a never forgotten joy’, but as for the ‘booths with dancers in tights disporting themselves outside on a platform – these our father or other conductor avoided’ (16).

The moral arguments against the fairs went beyond criticism of the entertainments they provided. Despite the attendance of some respectable townspeople, it was argued that the fairs ‘bring into the town many objectionable persons and are an incentive to intemperance and sensuality and do much to lower the moral tone of the community’ (17).

The fairs posed problems in the maintenance of law and order. Each fair-time the Borough Police Reports generally described a handful of cases of pickpocketing in Humberstone Gate. Several constables and one or two sergeants, usually six men in May and twelve in October, were given gratuities for extra duty in plain clothes. As early as 1846 police constables from Nottingham and Birmingham also were attending the fair expressly to identify local criminals, such as suspects coming on from the Nottingham Goose Fair the previous week in 1850. It is notable, however, that the showmen themselves were rarely involved in court cases, though some of their casual employees were (18).

By the late nineteenth century the greatest number of court cases arising from the fair concerned drunkenness. This was despite the efforts of the Leicester Temperance Society, which in the 1890s held mass meetings in Humberstone Gate on the Sunday of fair week, when the exhibitions were closed. Although the fair in Leicester, unlike many held elsewhere, did not offer drinking booths among its attractions, Humberstone Gate contained no fewer than fifteen public houses in 1888. No doubt this explains
why, of all the occupational groups represented on the Town Council, it was the councillors involved in the drink trade who most favoured the fairs (19).

As for the accusation of licentious behaviour, one Leicester resident, writing in 1904 about his youthful visits to the fair, recalled ‘all the joyous rollicking larrikins of both sexes’. The youngsters used ‘to parade the sidewalks in crowds, the lads pinching the arms of the lasses and the lasses paying the lads back in their own coin till the flesh of both was black and blue . . . And when the ‘“bobby” appeared, didn’t we try to pinch him and rush him and dodge him too? Oh! It was “great”’. He described too the popularity of the ‘squirt’, from which a jet of dirty water could be shot at bystanders, and the feather ticklers which by 1904 were the most popular ‘weapons’ in the fairground, together with confetti, which was used ‘for bombardment at short range’ (20). In 1903 Alderman Wood referred darkly to the effect the fair had on young people, saying ‘the Council knew what took place in the neighbourhood’ — clearly too terrible to be mentioned; but there is little real evidence of immoral behaviour. The more tolerant Councillor Loseby ‘could not recollect anything worse than a little larking and a little hooliganism’ (21).

An analysis of the way the Watch Committee voted on the Town Council motions about the future of the fairs suggests that these considerations of law and order were not in fact decisive (22). Moral arguments about the fairs centred on the seriousness of misbehaviour rather than its nature and here arguments depended upon the attitudes of individual councillors. It is indeed unlikely that moral arguments alone would have been sufficient to bring the fairs to an end. On the other hand there was no disputing the objections based on the practical problems of coping with the obstruction of traffic in fair week.

By the 1860s Humberstone Gate, which had originally lain outside the town walls, had become one of the major thoroughfares in the new commercial heart of the town. It formed part of the turnpike to Uppingham and contained the depots of many of the country carriers. From the mid 1860s handbills advising traffic to use alternative routes were published at fairtime by the Highways and Sewerage Committee and the horse-drawn trams, which were introduced in Humberstone Gate in 1874, sometimes had to stop running. Not only was there some danger — accidents in the fair were reported resulting from horses taking fright at the noise and crowds — but also commerce was hindered. The showmen, it was argued,
took the townspeople’s money out of Leicester without serving them any useful purpose and actually hindered them from earning their own living (23).

There was a considerable increase in traffic by the 1880s and the fair itself was growing. Wombwell’s menagerie, which in 1828 had comprised 12 waggons, in 1885 “boasted 20 enormous carriages drawn by 55 splendid horses”. The size of the steam rides also increased in the 1880s. Firms like Savages of King’s Lynn began producing steam roundabouts that were over forty feet in diameter. By the 1890s the fair was blocking Humberstone Gate for as much as four hundred yards and a number of shows had been forced to take positions outside the main fairground (24).

There were objections to the noise made by the fair, especially after the introduction of steam organs in the 1880s. "The hideous combination of discords produced by a score of steam organs all out of tune and playing in different keys, embellished by the clamour of gongs lustily belaboured and the roar of foghorns worked by bellows" led one commentator to observe that there was "not the slightest wonder that Leicester ears are incapable of appreciating the delicacy of the highest forms of music" (25).

The Council’s final campaign against the fairs, started in 1902, was again based on the practical consideration of physical obstruction. The Council proposed to introduce electric trams to Leicester and to build a stand for cars in Humberstone Gate. They therefore had to come to terms with the owners of property there who claimed fairground rights. The removal of the fairs to an alternative site was indeed considered by the Council in 1903; but the majority of the councillors were not prepared to expend so much money and effort merely to move an ‘intolerable nuisance’ to a less congested site where the moral dangers to which visitors to the fairs were exposed would in no way be diminished (26).

Although the fair was held in Humberstone Gate for the last time in May 1904, showmen like the Twigdon family did manage to acquire new fairgrounds on private property in the town. It is true that they were on a smaller scale than their predecessors in Humberstone Gate and were further from the railway station, the central shops and the pubs. But despite the whole battery of arguments brought against the fairs between 1888 and 1904 the Council was in the end unable to suppress them completely.
References:

1. *The Leicester Chronicle* (*LC*) 1 Dec 1888; *The Leicester Journal* (*LJ*) 18 Oct 1889
2. *LC* 1 Dec 1888, *LJ* 4 Jan 1889
3. *LC* 22 Mar 1902, 23 Apr 1904
4. *LC* 1 Dec 1888, 4 Aug 1888; *LJ* 4 Jan 1889; *The Leicester Guardian* (*LG*) 9 May 1900
5. *LJ* 16 Oct 1868; *LC* 15 May 1863, 1 Sep 1888, 17 May 1889
8. *LC* 12 Oct 1889
9. *LJ* 7 Oct 1870, 13 Oct 1871; *LG* 17 Oct 1903
10. *LJ* 17 May 1878, 14 Oct 1870
11. *LJ* 17 May 1889
17. Resolution sent to the Home Secretary by the majority of the non-conformist churches in Leicester; *LC* 16 May 1903
18. Watch Committee Minutes, C M 42, Leicestershire Record Office (LRO), 20 Oct 1846 and passim; *LJ* 11 Oct 1850
20. *LC* 12 May 1904
21. *LC* 28 Nov 1903; 29 Mar 1902
22. See my Dissertation, as in note 19.
23. J Simmons, *Life in Victorian Leicester*, 1971, pp 49-53; Highways and Sewerage Committee Minutes, C M 22, LRO; *LJ* 20 May 1881; *LC* 14 May 1898, 1 Dec 1888, 29 Oct 1902. The fairs certainly benefited the publicans and probably also many of the retail traders in the town centre. It is perhaps significant that the analysis of voting patterns shows manufacturers were more often opposed to the fairs than whole-salers or retailers.

24. *LC* 18 Oct 1828; *LJ* 9 Oct 1885; D Braithwaite, *op cit*, pp 34-65; *MFP* 14 May 1892; *LJ* 14 Oct 1870; *LC* 20 Oct 1889


26. *LC* 29 Mar 1902, 28 Nov 1903, 23 Apr 1904

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**IN MEMORY OF**

**LEICESTER FAIR**

**WHO BREATHED HER LAST ON MAY 16TH, AFTER A GALLANT STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE.**

At one time she had a very robust constitution, but old age and worry did its work, and although respected by many, and beloved by the young, (especially the feather ticklers) she was interred on Monday, May 16th, at the ratepayers' expense, the funeral costing them over £20,000, which many thought exhorbitant—no one, excepting some of her Humberstone Gate relations, being satisfied.

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Post-card memorial to Humberstone Gate Fair. The front is a photograph 'Last Leicester Fair, held in Humberstone Gate *Taken May 13th, 1904.*' from copy in Leicestershire Record Office, Misc 810
A Most Curious and Interesting Dialogue on the

**NEW RAILROADS,**

Or, the delight and pleasure of Travelling by Hot Water.

Bill—Good morning Jack, I am glad I have met with you to bid you a
good bye, for I am going away for awhile, for you know there is a great
deal of employment going forward in making these new Rail Roads.

Jack—Yes Bill, the Rail Roads are something like the new Workhouses,
make work at present for a few, and in the end be the ruin of a great many.

Bill—Why Jack, steam is all the rage, steam boats, steam sawyers,
steam bakers and millers, and I expect very soon we shall have to live
upon steam.

Jack—No! No! Bill, you're mistaken, instead of living by steam, it will
prove a great help in taking away life, and numbers will be thrown out of
employment, for I cannot see what benefit we shall derive from it.

Bill—Why Jack, it may be a benefit to the town of Leicester the
London markets will be plentifully supplied with all kinds of corn, butter,
cheese, eggs and stockings, and from the seaports fish alive on the dish.

Jack—Why we now see the Railroads a moving panorama of live lumber,
like a string of Noah's Arks, filled with men and women, pigs, sheep
and oxen carried by steam to the markets, where they will be sold by
steam, killed by steam, cooked by steam and then devoured by steam.

And Jack it will be a fine chance for the Leicester bricklayers, they
may now undertake to send ready built Workhouses by steam for the poor
paupers of the different parishes from the North to the south of England;
well secured with iron bars and cast iron roofs to keep them from escaping.

Jack—Why they tell me Bill that as there are no more coach horses
wanted, they will be taken to the fellmonger's yard, there to be converted
into hog's lard.

Bill—But what will become of the Innkeepers, Ostlers and Coach
Proprietors?

Jack—Become of them! why as they have always been fond of the
horse line, they may now enlist in the line of Horses of her Majesty the
Great Queen of Spain or ride upon English donkeys for the good of their
health.

Bill—Well Jack, I must bid you good bye at present for this job won't
last always, for Shareholders; Engine scheme and all may yet be blown
up by this boiler of hot water.
THE PUBLIC ARE INFORMED, THAT THIS RAILWAY,

FROM

Nottingham and Derby,
LOUGHBOROUGH, LEICESTER,

AND THE INTERMEDIATE STATIONS,

Will be opened for the conveyance of Passengers, Parcels, Gentlemen’s Carriages, Horses, and
Van Goods, on TUESDAY the 5th of May.
The Wonderful effects of the Leicester RAIL ROAD

Of all the great wonders that ever were known,
And some wonderful things have occurr’d in this town,
The Leicester Rail road will beat them all hollow,
And whoever first thought of it was a wonderful fellow:

No drunken stage-coachmen to break peoples necks,
Turn’d o’er into ditches, sprawl’d out on your backs,
No blustering guard that through some mistake,
Fires off his blunderbuss if a mouse should but squeak.

No, no my good friends, now this rail road is finish’d,
All coachmen and cattle will for ever be banished,
You may ride up to London in three hours and a quarter
With nothing to drive you but a kettle of water.

You may breakfast in Leicester on tea toast and butter.
And need not put yourself into a flutter;
You can ride up to London and there dine at noon,
And take tea in Leicester the same afternoon.

What a beautiful sight it is for to see,
A long string of carriages on the railway,
All loaded with passengers inside and out,
And moved by what comes from a tea-kettle spout.

As for packages, parcels and such like of gear,
There’s more goes in one day than used to go in a year,
It is only to load half a score of waggons,
Send a boiler along with them and off they’ll be jogging:

And then what a lot of employment ’twill make,
The Leicester bricklayers may now undertake,
To send ready built houses to London by steam,
And no doubt it will turn out a very good scheme.
What a chance for the gentry who are fond of fish,
They may have trout and salmon alive on the dish,
In the morning from the river to the railroad they're taken,
Dress'd at Leicester at noon what a great undertaking.

And any old woman that has just enough sense
By raking and scraping to save eighteen pence
If in service in London she has got a daughter
She may ride up and see her by this boiler of water.

As for Innkeepers and Ostlers and all such riff raff
This railroad will disperse them before it like chaff
They may list for her Majesty the great Queen of Spain
And curse the inventors of railroads and steam.

And coach horses that devour more corn in the year
Than would maintain three parts of the labouring poor
Are all to be taken to the fell monger's yard
And converted if possible into hog's lard.

All coach proprietors that have rolled in wealth
Must ride upon donkeys for the good of their health
And to keep up their spirits must strike up a theme.
To curse all the railroads and the boiling hot steam.

E. SMITH, PRINTER, CHURCH-GATE, LEICESTER

Notes:

This Leicester broadsheet dialogue and ballad commemorates the opening of the Midland Counties Railway line, which brought Leicester into the
national railway network. This had an immediate effect on the long dis-
tance coaching lines. The railway fares were cheaper and although the
journey from Leicester to London in fact took at least 5¼ hours and not
3¼, this was still only slightly more than half the 10 hours taken by the
fastest mail coach. The railway also offered opportunities for cheap trans-
port of heavy freight, such as coal.

A copy of the original broadsheet, printed by E Smith of Church Gate, is
preserved in Cambridge in the Madden Collection, volume 21, number 141.
We are grateful to the Syndics of the Cambridge University Library for
permission to publish it here. The text is transcribed in its entirety and
the heading is reproduced in facsimile. An abridged and edited version
was published by Roy Palmer in A Touch on the Times: Songs of Social
Change 1770-1914, Penguin, 1974, pp 52-3. We are grateful to Mr Palmer
for drawing attention to it and for his kind help.

The illustration is from a photocopy, in the Leicestershire Record Office,
46'32, of a handbill announcing the opening of the section of the line
from Nottingham and Derby to Leicester on the 5th of May 1840. The re-
main ing section, from Leicester to Rugby, linking Leicester with London,
was opened on the 30th of June. (All historical details taken from
‘Railways’ by Professor J Simmons in Victoria History of the County of
Leicestershire, III, p 116)
CHARNWOOD FOREST
Some Histories, References and Guides published since 1900
Ian Keil

Charnwood Forest lies between Shepshed and Loughborough to the north and Leicester and Groby to the south. Its eastern boundary runs along the western side of the Soar valley. The western limits approach Coalville and Coleorton. This imprecisely delineated area corresponded to the Tuesday country of the Quorn Hunt. At present the Forest comprises open hilly country of farms with rough grazing about rock outcrops, and some woodlands. The district includes varied geological formations and much of it lies several hundred feet above sea level. It provides habitats for a wide diversity of natural flora and fauna.

During the twentieth century Charnwood Forest has undergone a variety of changes in its appearance and this reflects economic, political and social developments whose origins are local or national or, more recently, the EEC. The reorganization of local government in 1888 with the establishment of the County Council and in 1894 with the creation of district and parish councils led to greater public control of many facets of life. Although Charnwood Forest lay wholly within Leicestershire for district administration it was divided among several authorities. Even the reforms of local government which took effect in 1974 did not result in Charnwood becoming the sole responsibility of one district authority; the Borough of Charnwood controls the greater part, but a large area forms part of the North West Leicestershire district. These political divisions have been reinforced by the drawing of boundaries of Parliamentary constituencies which ensure that some of the Forest is in Loughborough and the remainder in Melton. The consequences of the lack of political unity of the Forest area have not been assessed. The effects might be discovered through a consideration of the debate about and the implementation of policies over land use.

Land use has become a matter for public policies in the twentieth century beginning with the Town and Country planning legislation of 1909. The county and the district authorities have seen Charnwood serving competing demands from agriculture, quarrying, manufacturing industries, residence and leisure. Major changes in agriculture affecting the appearance of the Forest have occurred mostly since the outbreak of the second world war in 1939. National priorities in wartime and since have extended the acreage of arable at the expense of pasture. To cultivate efficient-
ly farmers adopted mechanization and industrially produced chemicals. Larger crops resulted, but at the cost of removing many old boundary hedges and fences so as to allow effective use of modern techniques. One example of the changes is visible in early summer time when some fields are bright yellow with the flowers of rape. The Common Agricultural Policy of the EEC has made its mark. Pastoral farming for dairying has encouraged the keeping of Friesians, although a few farmers have chosen other breeds such as Galloways.

Quarrying for stone, an ancient industry, has become more important in the twentieth century. Currently about one third of the national requirements for roadstone are met from the Charnwood area. This has led to controversy as, for example, the decision to allow the removal of Buddon Hill. Other industries have had less dramatic effects in the appearance of the countryside. Traditional occupations in hosiery and knitwear have been augmented by other manufactures including engineering. Among the latter Rolls Royce have made components at Mountsorrel since the second world war.

The changes in transport required for expanding economic activities have had important implications for the Forest. The construction of the M1 motorway divided the area physically in the early 1960s. Less evident in the landscape, but of major consequences for the people, has been the use of internal combustion engines. Buses and lorries have made the area socially and economically part of more general changes since the first world war. Increasing car ownership especially since the 1950s has altered social life as well as the economy of Charnwood Forest. Blacksmithies became garages, shopping habits altered, but the district attracted people whose work was in the surrounding towns to live in its villages.

Housing has increased both within and about the periphery of the Forest as a result of the growth of population in the twentieth century. The influx of new industries to Leicester and the county has made an urban crescent extending from Shepshed through Loughborough, along the Soar valley to Leicester and thence via Groby to Coalville. Some parts of the countryside which once formed the edge of the Forest have become built up as, for example, on parts of the Garendon estate between Shepshed and Loughborough.

The social life of villages has altered during the twentieth century. Some communities have lost schools, some shops, and also locally provided
services such as shoe-repairing. Commuters have brought incomes into villages, together with some changes in life styles. Thus the standard of housing has reflected prosperity, although a full evaluation of the changes remains to be made.

One feature of Charnwood Forest that has distinguished it from many other rural areas has been the development of tourism. The countryside as a leisure amenity has developed during the twentieth century, much more than as a venue for hunting. Walking, rambling, cycling, motor drives, bird-watching and many other ways of enjoying the beauties of the area have made Charnwood attractive to tourists. A milestone in the creation of tourism was the gift in 1928 from the Bennion family to the city of Leicester of Bradgate Park. Other donations subsequently have included Swithland Wood and the Outwoods. The County purchased the Beacon, Iveshead and Broombriggs Farm as important sites for encouraging an appreciation of the countryside. Associated with rights of public access has been the growth in the number of shops selling antiques and crafts as well as of garden centres. Restaurants and public houses have sought to meet the needs of tourists as well as of local inhabitants.

The history of Charnwood Forest before 1900 attracted some researchers, but in the twentieth century most of the writers whose works are surveyed in this article have not sought to make much use of the archives of private and public bodies now open to the public. Until Dare's *Charnwood Forest and its Environs* of 1925 the principal question about the history of the Forest was whether it had been subject to Forest Law. Dare acknowledged that Farnham had shown convincingly that the area was never Royal Forest. Farnham's own published collections of sources provide invaluable information and references for researchers, but relatively little interpretation. His *Charnwood Forest and its Historians and the Charnwood Manors* is a monument to painstaking scholarship among muniments but the range of archives in time makes the book of little value for those wishing to study the history of the Forest after the sixteenth century.

The use of archaeological and documentary materials to write the history of Charnwood before 1066 has begun. R A Rutland's chapter in *Charnwood's Heritage* gives an all too brief glimpse of what might be said. It replaces the now archaic chapters in the first volume of the *Victoria County History*. The brief account of the Forest in R A McKinley's chapter in the second volume of the *Victoria County History* highlighted the artificial constraints imposed by the format of that historical series: three pages of large format.
print could not do justice to the theme since the author had no scope to
draw on archaeological or archival evidence. The debt of most writers to
Throsby and Nichols has been much greater than we have a right to expect.
The volume by Everard published in 1907 had nothing original. Hadfield’s
"Charnwood Forest. A survey," of 1952 was essentially an account from
secondary sources of the history of the Forest as basis for discussing
planning issues.

Expectations from the title Charnwood’s Heritage edited by I M Evans of a
history of the Forest and its people would be false. The volume was com-
piled to accompany the Charnwood Heritage exhibition of 1976 in Lough-
borough. This exhibition had the purpose of informing the people of the
Borough of Charnwood about themselves. The Borough extends from
Shepshed to Beeby and from Anstey to Wymeswold, and only part of the
Forest area lies within the local authority boundaries. Thus the volume
had a much wider brief than telling the history of the Forest. Constraints
of time and costs severely limited the length of each author’s contribution,
and in trying to meet a variety of likely users’ needs the interests of the
historians were less well served than they would have liked.

References to Charnwood Forest in more general works dealing with various
aspects of the history of the County are numerous. The insights of the
doyen of local historians, W G Hoskins, often encourage reappraisals. He
contributed to the Victoria County History, and various other of his pub-
lications mention the Forest. Perhaps the most enlightening for newcomers
to the area as well as old hands is Leicestershire, An Illustrated Essay on
the History of Landscape. Other references have been made to the Forest
area in the volumes produced to coincide with the meetings in Leicester of
the British Association for the Advancement of Science. The collection of
studies edited by Professor Pye in 1972 contains useful data for historians
df Charnwood as well as essays touching on the history of the Forest area
as part of Leicester and its Region. P W Bryan edited the earlier volume
which has value mainly as a source of data.

The historical geography of Charnwood Forest has been made partly access-
ible in Colin Read’s Atlas. This has brought together much information,
but he utilises the political boundary of the Borough of Charnwood, so that
the treatment of the Forest is incomplete.

Tourism has stimulated a number of publications concerning Charnwood
Forest. A reprint of Gray’s guide of 1858 has made a Victorian perspec-
tive readily available but the publications about Bradgate indicate a concern by the County Council to provide information for the public as well as to generate some income to pay for the upkeep of the Park and its amenities. The *Charnwood Colouring Book* of 1976 was first on sale at the Charnwood Heritage exhibition, but the main focus was the Forest. Its appeal to the young has been matched by the more broadly conceived *Family Guide* by Joan Stevenson. Her short book *The Greys of Bradgate* and Marie Forsyth’s *A History of Bradgate* provide brief sound general accounts. Nutt’s often reprinted *Pictorial Record of Bradgate Park and Newtown Linford* gives a brief and uncritical account of the Forest with particular reference to the subjects in the title. More elaborate accounts of Lady Jane Grey have little about the Forest area, but the heroine has apologists in H W Chapman and D Matthew.

Several themes of importance for the historian of Charnwood Forest deserve fuller treatment than was possible in the *Victoria County History*. These include history of population; agriculture in the Forest (the findings of R H Hilton’s *The Economic Development of some Leicestershire Estates in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, and the evidence discussed in *Studies in Leicestershire Agrarian History* need incorporating into the history of the Forest). The history of Forest industries; religious life (the developments of both Protestant dissent, Roman Catholicism and Anglican parishes from the Reformation onwards await systematic investigation in the Forest area); and social welfare.

Transport and communications have helped to shape the economy and the lives of the people but no coherent history of the topic has appeared. Brian Williams wrote in association with some adult students *The Forest Line*, a most valuable account of the Charnwood Forest Canal, whose vicissitudes shewed the risks in business life at the end of the eighteenth century. Railways have attracted more attention. D L Franks’s *The Ashby and Nuneaton Joint Railway* describes the building and operation of the Charnwood Forest Railway which ran from its Loughborough terminus along part of the line of the erstwhile canal to Ashby. The commercial difficulties of the enterprise and the attitudes of Charnwood people might have been afforded a fuller place in the history. Again the emphasis on the technical appears in C R Clinker’s *The Leicester and Swannington Railway*. This oldest railway in Leicestershire was begun in 1832, but its wider implications were hardly touched upon in the book. Russell’s *A Leicestershire Road* describes the Harborough to Loughborough turnpike, now the A6.
Hunting has attracted attention and Blew’s book was superseded by Colin Ellis’s *Leicestershire and the Quorn Hunt*. Other leisure pursuits have, as yet, no historian.

Histories of particular communities have varied from the compilations of documents such as the ones Farnham made about Quorn to the individual memoir and perspective such as Ruth Packe’s of Rothley or S R Meadows’s of Swithland. Kibble’s *From a Narrow Track, A Short History of Anstey* has the virtues of gathering much information, but regrettably its significance has not been fully explained. The co-operative history of Shepshed by Jowett *et al* selected materials to hand, often secondary, and many questions remain untouched. Levine’s *Family Formation in an Age of Nascent Capitalism* has demonstrated what light can be thrown on population history using parish registers and other documentary sources. He examined in detail the histories of Bottesford and Shepshed from the early seventeenth century until the middle of the nineteenth century. A co-operative venture such as that of the Social Studies Group of the Townswomen’s Guild of Mountsorrel indicates the need for a firm editorial purpose. The booklet contains most evocative memories of the past, now recorded for posterity and of great value, as well as some eclectic lists of prices of commodities whose significance is not explained. Church guides such as S F Keeping’s of St Bartholomew’s, Quorn, and R P Rankin’s Woodhouse and Woodhouse Eaves make available information conveniently and crisply concerning the Anglican churches in the villages.

It will be evident from the discussion of the readily accessible literature that many questions relating to the history of Charnwood can be answered only by further research. This effort requires time and money to gain access to sources in archive repositories and libraries. Some information lies in theses or in journal articles, or even in printed form. The work of local historians could be eased if all authors or publishers registered their titles with the British National Library. Even so, the role of Charnwood Forest provides some challenging problems for historians to examine in the future.
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(Mention and illustration as Forest affected the town.)

Articles about Charnwood Forest can be found in the following local journals:-

The Bulletin of the Loughborough and District Archaeological Society
The Leicestershire Historian
The Transactions of the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society
The Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society
LEICESTERSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY COUNCIL ONE DAY CONFERENCE

A one day conference on the study of local history, organized by the Leicestershire Local History Council, was held on Saturday May the 5th 1979 at Birstall Community College. In his opening address Mr Anthony Stuart, the chairman, welcomed delegates from several local history societies in Nottinghamshire as well as Leicestershire. He pointed out that the Leicestershire Local History Council had now existed for twelve years to further the study of local history and for the first time it had organized a conference with this aim in view. The purpose of the conference was to explore the various ways in which small village groups could be formed. A comprehensive answer to this problem was voiced in the address given by Miss E Garnett, who spoke of the part she had played in the formation of local history societies in Frisby-on-the-Wreake, Thrussington, Gaddesby and Syston. Mr Pinfold of the Frisby Historical Society then spoke of the various topics which his society had studied and of the pamphlets it had produced. Dr Parker of the Leicestershire Record Office drew attention to the primary and secondary sources available in the Record Office to students of local history. The need to study more than one local area was stressed by Mr C V Phythian-Adams, who in a most informative illustrated talk explained how different kinds of terrain led to the establishment of different kinds of communities, reinforcing his argument by contrasting settlements in Cumbria with those in the Midlands. Mr I Lindsay of the County Planning Department spoke of the need to preserve both ancient monuments and listed buildings and explained how the latter came to be classified into various grades. Mr P Boylan, Director of the Leicestershire Museum Service, gave the final speech of the conference in which he pointed out that local history studies are an essential part of community involvement, in which the amateur can work hand in hand with the specialist to the mutual advantage of both.
STANDING CONFERENCE FOR LOCAL HISTORY

Our society was represented at the Annual Meeting of the Standing Council for Local History by Mr Stuart and Mrs Mason, together with Mrs Dickson as co-opted member of the Conference Executive Committee.

This year the Annual Meeting was especially important. The whole day was given up to the discussion and final acceptance of the Blake Report on Local History.

At the suggestion of the Standing Conference the Committee under Lord Blake was asked in 1977 to take a broad and long look at the position of local history at all levels all over the country. Apart from Lord Blake, the Provost of Queen's College Oxford &c, the committee was made up of people from various walks of life capable of taking an impartial and objective view of the subject.

The Blake Committee produced a long and detailed report of their findings. We have a copy which can be borrowed on request.

It is not possible to go into the details of the various suggestions made, but only to consider what effect it may have on the Leicestershire Local History Council in its role as the County Committee forming part of the Standing Conference. It is suggested that County Committees may play a greater part as intermediaries between the local groups and whatever national overall body for local history is formed. Leicestershire is fortunate in having an active County Committee. This is not the case everywhere and it was apparent at the Conference that many people were in favour of cutting out the intermediaries. If this should happen then the Leicestershire Local History Council will survive as a local history society in its own right.

The Standing Conference has set up a Steering Committee to implement the suggestions made in the Blake Report and we shall look forward to the outcome in the future with much interest.

EM D
On completing its review of local history in England and Wales, the Blake Committee sent to local societies a Summary of Report, on which this note is based. The definition of local history adopted is 'the study of man's past in relation to his locality; locality being determined by an individual's interests and experience.' Of the 240 local societies that submitted evidence 195 have been established since 1946. The reasons for this growth are rooted in the need for a sense of identity in a period of dramatic changes.

Local history has social and recreational roles and also possibly an environmental one; but its main role is educational, in that it offers an opportunity to collect, analyse and interpret material. The facilities for acquiring this discipline through formal education vary. Leicester University has the only local history department, but no university offers a first degree in the subject. Some universities offer certificates and diplomas for part time or extra-mural students. Academic historians tend to scorn local studies, which are often included in other courses, as diverting students from 'real' history. The opportunities local history provides for developing research skills should be emphasized and the possibility of making a real contribution to scholarship.

In schools local history falls short in that few of those teaching it have academic history qualifications or training in local history skills. Local history studies in teacher training schemes should be expanded. Any course in local history, whether aimed at formal qualification or not, should include training in documentary and field research techniques.

A range of qualifications in local history should be created and the subject should be accepted by universities and polytechnics for study in courses leading to first and higher degrees. More certificates and diplomas should be offered, possibly through the Open University. Local history should also be promoted as a subject in schools with syllabuses leading to examinations.

Information and guidance is needed by individuals and groups on a variety of questions including publication. It seems that such needs can only be met by a national organization — possibly the Standing Conference for Local History, if it is prepared to extend the range of its services.
ENGLISH COUNTY HISTORIANS: first series edited by
J Simmons EP Publishing Ltd 1978 £10

This collection of eight essays on English county historians and their work brings together in one volume the introductions specially written for the reprints of the individual histories. The collection is prefaced by Professor Jack Simmons's own essay on the 'Writing of English County History'. For those counties lucky enough to have one, these histories form one of the oldest printed sources for the local historian. The original publication dates of the first editions of the works referred to in this collection range in time from 1677 to the completion of the final volume of Edward Hasted's Kent in 1799. Two of these histories are of special local interest, Wright's Rutland and Thoroton's Nottinghamshire. James Wright, a London lawyer interested in drama, succeeded in completing the main part of his concise history of Rutland in 1684, and in making his own brief additions in 1687 and 1714. Robert Thoroton, a busy practising physician and antiquarian, completed his history in 1677; but by the end of the following century it was both in short supply and in need of revision. This task was undertaken by the Leicester artist and antiquarian John Throsby, who made most of the drawings for the new edition, which was completed in 1790-1796. The similar attempt made by William Harrod the younger to revise and expand Wright's Rutland in 1788, failed to obtain enough financial support, and only two parts of the proposed work were published. All these projects, as well as the two revisions of Hutchins's Dorset in 1796-1815 and 1861-1870, reflect the value attached to these classic histories.

This collection is illustrated by contemporary portraits of each historian, apart from that very private person, James Wright. There are extensive bibliographies, further notes and a useful index.

G K L
ACADEMIA TERTIA ANGLICANA; Or, The ANTIQUARIAN ANNALS OF STANFORD
Francis Peck
EP Publishing Ltd 1979 £35

The author's researches for this very detailed account of mediaeval Stamford started with the Survey of Stamford, written by the Town Clerk Richard Butcher and first published in 1646. Taken together, these two books still form an interesting and useful source of information for the local historian. Copies of Peck's work, a stout folio published in 1727 and including his annotated edition of Butcher's book, are rare and often lack some of the interesting plates. This complete reprint has a new introduction by Dr Alan Rogers and Jack Hartley, giving details of the author's life and the general background to his history. A complete list of plates and a very detailed index, compiled by the Stamford Survey Group, make the volume easier to use than the original.

The work contains numerous references to places in Leicestershire and Rutland and their mediaeval landowners, and the author, the Rev Francis Peck, was Rector of Goadby Marwood from 1723 until his death in 1743. He was a scholarly man with literary and antiquarian interests and among his unfinished writings and working papers was his material for a history of Leicestershire. Some of this was later used by John Nichols in his own History of the County of Leicester.

VICTORIAN LEICESTER
M Elliott
Phillimore 1979 £5.95

Until recently much urban history was written from a constitutional point of view, so that although the development of borough or corporation was analysed in detail, the economic and social characteristics of towns were usually treated only superficially. Mr Elliott's book is primarily another constitutional history in the old style. In so far, therefore, as it does not come to grips with the main economic and social conflicts within Leicester, it cannot come to any profound conclusions. Indeed the last chapter, after touching on party politics, asserts the impartial probity of Leicester's Victorian public servants. It comes to a surprising, even credulous end, on a note of Leicester self-congratulation, with the words of a retiring Liberal councillor; 'Old England cannot go far wrong while its Town and County Councils follow the lead of Leicester'.
Victorian Leicester, however, is no fleshless skeleton of a constitutional history. The author fills it out by making it 'a study of the environmental problems which commanded the attention of the Victorians and which thereby determined the growing points in the machinery of local administration.' (p xiii) The reader should not be put off by such unpromising chapter headings as 'Watering the Town' and 'Sewers and Centralisation'; the accounts given of the way such pressing problems were dealt with as the population increased are fascinating.

Of prime importance, however, was the problem of housing and the chapter 'Somewhere to Live' is a substantial contribution to an understanding of the overall character of the town. The author takes issue with Professor Simmons for belittling the achievement of the reformed Corporation by asserting that all the town's back-to-back housing appeared after 1850 and in spite of its new Local Board of Health. He illustrates, however, the limitations of the Board's powers in dealing with the increasing demand for cheap housing by citing the Freehold Land Society. Its object was to buy housing land and to distribute house plots to share holders chosen by lot. It soon became clear that there was nothing to prevent a lucky allottee selling off his plot to an unscrupulous builder, such as one Thomas Bland, who was ready to build several houses instead of one. In some cases objections were raised, albeit fruitlessly; but 'what was considered deplorable in the newer outskirts of the town could pass unnoticed in its crowded interior, where standards were already much lower.' (p 113)

This book should be read by anyone interested in the overall character of Leicester and the Victorian origins of some of that character. It is based on detailed reading among the local press and Corporation Minutes and Reports. Mention must be made of the publishers' presentation of this neatly printed volume. Firstly, all the references are relegated to the end in such a way that it is difficult to refer to them and almost impossible to refer back from them. Within them the use of 'op cit' is inconsistent and even inaccurate and of 'Ibid loc cit' is tautologous. Secondly, it is a disgrace that the sources for so few of the illustrations are acknowledged in such a scholarly work.

J G
THE STORY OF MELTON MOWBRAY
P E Hunt  Leicestershire Libraries and Information Service
2nd ed  1979  £1.50

This is the second edition of an interesting little booklet which was first published in 1957 and which has been out of print for some years. Various aspects of Melton’s history are studied including, alas, the inevitable chapters on the town’s vicars and Dissenters as well as the Mowbray family which in fact had very little connexion with Melton, and whose history is not particularly interesting anyway. Much of the material looks as though it has been lifted from the publications of Thomas North and John Ward, but these nineteenth century writings are not generally available and so The Story of Melton Mowbray fulfills a useful function for the casual reader in this respect. Melton’s fascinating Town Estate receives good coverage, and it makes a pleasant change to see the emphasis on the pre-Pork Pie period. Something of a patchwork, and rather pricey, but one of the better non-academic works on Leicestershire — there are not many of them about after all.  D F

RUGBY AS IT WAS
Rugby Local History Research Group
Hendon Publishing Co Ltd  1979  £1.95

The front cover, a photograph taken around 1930, shews the market being held next to the Jubilee Clock Tower, with stallholders selling produce to women shoppers. Much could be said about the other five dozen fascinating illustrations, nearly all of them photographs, which make up this booklet. It is worth drawing attention here, however, to the admirable quality of the presentation. The choice of a large format, approximately A4, has allowed the printer to do justice to the detail in the originals and the pages are not overloaded with text or with reproductions of printed matter. The notes give a shape to the whole and have been written so as to help explain the illustrations and are laid out neatly in relation to them.

It is a pity that neither the pages nor the illustrations are numbered and that there is no list of contents or detailed list of sources. Leicestershire readers will no doubt spot that the photographs of the building of the Great Central Railway must be by the Leicester photographer, S W A Newton, whose collection is in Leicester Museum. But then anyone wishing to check such details can presumably join the Rugby Local History Research Group, which has produced two substantial collections of articles as well as this booklet.  J G
SELECT COMMITTEE ON FRAMEWORK KNITTERS PETITION:
REPORT AND EVIDENCE, 1819
Facsimile reprint by Knitting International £5.75

In 1819 a House of Commons committee was appointed to inquire into the Grievances complained of in the Petition of the Hosiers and Framework Knitters in the Woollen Manufactory of the town and county of Leicester. The petition had been signed by upwards of ten thousand persons and the recent fall in earnings from fourteen to six shillings a week was blamed on the fact 'That their Trade has been, and still is, greatly injured by the introduction into it of a fraudulent species of Worsted Hose, which is call Cut-up Work, an article in appearance so nearly resembling the properly wrought Stocking, that Consumers cannot easily distinguish it, and which, though differing very little in Price from the fair Article, is greatly inferior in Value.'

Two years earlier the manufacturers had attempted to solve the difficulties by keeping to a table of agreed rate of pay. When this failed and cut-up work, which was quicker and more economical to make, increased, glutting the market, they sought to have it prohibited. This they could only contemplate because they were confident of a monopoly of the trade throughout the world, no other country having a source of the fine long wool used.

The evidence, full of fascinating details of working conditions in the trade, was submitted by men from Leicester, Loughborough, Hinckley and Wigston Magna. It also includes tables shewing poor relief provisions made for framework knitting families in the Leicester parish of Saint Margaret's.

1894 saw the first publication, in Leicester, of an organ for the hosiery trade, The Knitters' Circular and Monthly Record. The direct successor to this ten page paper is a glossy journal, Knitting International, still based on Leicester. The publishers, Ferry Pickering Ltd, keep a small reference library and have undertaken the reissue of this rare item of local interest. It is excellently printed on good quality paper and is altogether a very handsome production.

J G
George Smith of Coalville was an active campaigner for better conditions for small groups of workers in scattered and little known occupations. Unlike other prominent Victorian social reformers he was born in poverty and remained for the most part of his life a poor man and actually experienced some of the conditions he sought to remedy. The son of a brick and tile maker, he started work at seven years of age. At nine he was carrying lumps of clay weighing up to forty pounds in company with other children, some of them girls. In the 1860's he was managing a brickyard at Coalville and practised his own theories, refusing to employ female labour or boys under thirteen. In Coalville he became well known, published his first book and began the first of his active campaigns of lobbying MPs, writing to the press and distributing literature at his own expense. He was successful in obtaining legislation in 1871, but his very success cost him his job and his popularity in Coalville, where his effigy was burnt in the street.

In the 1870's he turned his attention to the conditions under which some one hundred thousand boatmen lived with their families on the canals. Again he was successful in obtaining some legislation for the control of sanitary conditions on the boats and in the first tentative registration of boats where children could obtain a semblance of schooling. He continued to work for the boatmen for the rest of his life and his last cause before his death at Crick in 1895 was the plight of gipsy children. All his very active working life seems to have been infused by his evangelism and he knew and was loved by many of the people he worked for and with.

This is a most interesting and well illustrated account of a remarkable man, whose life and work merit a much more detailed modern study.

G KL
period, Dr John H Pruett, an assistant professor of history at the University of Illinois, gives an admirable account of their social origins, their careers, their domestic lives, their attitude to their religious duties and their political involvement. He shews by reference to numerous examples that the parish clergy of Leicestershire had such diverse social and economic origins that only with great reservation can they be considered one coherent class. Like Professor Norman Sykes, author of *Church and State in England in the Eighteenth Century*, published in 1935, Dr Pruett has a better opinion of the clergy of the Church of England at this time than did the historians of the nineteenth century, who accused them of lack of zeal in their work. As the author shews, however, most parish clergy served their congregations conscientiously and zealously, urging them to lead good lives, to attend to their religious duties and trying to bring peace to a countryside that had been only recently torn with religious strife. The spelling of the names of some of the Leicestershire villages is somewhat strange; but this is a small criticism of a book that should be read by all those interested in the revaluation of the work of the Church of England in the second half of the seventeenth century. Clearly the influence of Professor Sykes and other church historians has reached the other side of the Atlantic, to the great benefit of local historians in this country.

B E

**THE BROOKSBY FAMILY**
Frisby-on-the-Wreake Historical Society
Wreake Valley Community College 1979

This well presented and produced book is the result of two and a half years of research in her spare time by Miss Emmeline Garnett. In her introduction she tells that it all started as the material for a half hour talk to the Frisby Historical Society and 'grew and grew'. She calls her research 'amateur', but the result is a most professional production. It is well illustrated by clear simple family trees and maps and the text is enlivened by charming pen and ink sketches by Mr R F Pinfold, the moving spirit in the Frisby Historical Society.

Non family historians may marvel that it is possible to establish a link between the various Brooksby families, but the fact that there are now
over thirty one name societies in the Federation of Family History Societies shews the popularity and value of this aspect of research. No one can doubt that some amazing connexions have been made in this way. The formation of a Brooksby Society must surely follow and one wishes them every success in the future.

One might imagine that it would be difficult to keep one's head above water in a sea of Brooksbys, but the excellent plan of using the dates in brackets after the name makes it easy to follow each member of the family, despite the fact that, as usual in the early days, almost every man is called William, Thomas or John.

Particularly worthy of note are the introductions in which each family is set in its historical and social background. Family historians should note many useful background ideas, not least the careful noting of gaps that need to be filled, the repetition of dates after each name and the way in which the family trees are simplified.

Especially interesting is the fact that this is research from both ends, i.e. the past coming forward and the present going back. This was accomplished by contacting all known Brooksbys and culminated in a weekend meeting at Brooksby.

E M D

WATERSIDE WALKS IN LEICESTERSHIRE

J Anderson the author
29 The Fairway Blaby 1977 80p

These fourteen walks along the towing paths of Leicestershire canals, footpaths and by-roads provide a new view of the countryside. They include the Ashby Canal, with an additional visit to Bosworth battlefield, and such a little known walk as the quiet stretch of the Welford Arms, whose lock gives the canal the highest summit in the county. Of very considerable interest are the urban walks, in Market Harborough, Glen Parva to Leicester, and in the city itself, walks from Upperton Road to the North Lock, and from Belgrave to Birstall. The directions are clearly given, each walk has its own sketch map, and points of interest on the canal and in the surrounding countryside are clearly noted.

G K L
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52
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