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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.

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Wycliffe 600 issue

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THE PRIESTS' DOORWAY, LUTTERWORTH CHURCH, THROUGH WHICH WYCLIF'S BODY WAS TAKEN.

from L Sergeant, John Wyclif: Last of the Schoolmen and First of the English Reformers, 1893
EDITORIAL

The burning of Wyclif’s bones and a view of Lutterworth shewing the spot by the River Swift where this is supposed to have happened in 1428 announce this as our special Lutterworth issue, to contribute to the ‘Wycliffe 600’ commemoration there this year. The detail is from an engraving entitled ‘Wickliffe’s Bones taken out of the Grave and Burnt 41 Years after their interment by the Papists’ published by Thomas Kelly as an illustration to his 1822 edition of Foxe’s Book of Martyrs. The view is from F W Bottrill’s Hand Book of Lutterworth, 1900 edition.

To write authoritatively about the life of John Wyclif as a historical figure is a hazardous task, as so many myths have grown up since his death, especially from the sixteenth century onwards. Elizabeth Long, who is an undergraduate reading History at Oxford University and lives at Lutterworth, shews that the basic facts about his career at least are clear enough to form some theories about his attitudes and those of some of his contemporaries to his teaching. Precious little is known of his connexion with Lutterworth; all that can be done is to examine yet again the local myths and ‘relics’ that have been associated with him in more recent times.

The series of Lutterworth parish records that has been deposited at the Leicestershire Record Office forms an important source for its history as a market town. Jerome Farrell, who is a member of the Record Office staff, has examined one aspect of parish administration there in his detailed article on pauper apprentices.

The other article can be claimed as quite a ‘scoop’ for The Leicestershire Historian. We are lucky to be able to include a hitherto unknown group of letters written in Lutterworth by the Royalist Rector there at the beginning of the Civil War. Thanks to Miss Norah Fuidge at the Public Record Office, who contacted us and made them available before they are fully listed and catalogued, we are able to reveal some fascinating details of Nathaniel Tovey’s personal life in his own words.
JOHN WYCLIFFE
Elizabeth J Long

To introduce one of his articles on John Wycliffe J H Dahmus quoted a statement of Professor David Knowles: 'Probably no character in English history has suffered such distortion at the hands of friend and foe as that of John Wyclif.' The name Wycliffe instantly spells controversy. We lack the essential ingredients for an accurate biography and yet accounts of his life have appeared in as great a variety as the spellings of his name.

We first catch a glimpse of Wycliffe in 1356 as a junior fellow of Merton College, Oxford. It was in Oxford that he was to master the art of debate, a suitable training for the future political agitator. By 1360 he had been elected as third master of Balliol College, a reflection of his growing academic importance in Oxford. In 1361 he secured Fillingham in Lincolnshire, the fattest living of the college. Yet this did not lead to his exit from Oxford life; he remained in residence at Queen's College. Debate has arisen as to whether this active critic of pluralism and absenteeism was himself an offender. In 1915 H J Wilkins apologetically announced that the register of the bishop of Worcester, William Whittlesey, proved Wycliffe to be 'a negligent pluralist'. At the same time he tried to excuse Wycliffe by protesting that there was a shortage of clergy due to the Black Death. Dahmus has furthered Wilkins's arguments with his assessment of Wycliffe's residence in Fillingham. After obtaining the living in May 1361 Wycliffe did try to obtain a licence of non-residence for one year in August 1363, due to necessary study in Oxford. Yet not until April 1368 did he apply for a second licence for two years. Entries in the Long Roll of Oxford make it clear that during the years 1363 to 1368 Wycliffe was a resident in Oxford. The evidence falls heavily against Wycliffe. In November 1368, however, he exchanged Fillingham with Ludgershall, sixteen miles from Oxford. This made it possible for him to administer in person and he may have had a sudden change of heart and renounced his blatant pluralism. This inconsistency between theory and practice was a common feature among most reformers of the next two centuries.

Although Wycliffe had achieved academic success in Oxford, he was to feel the bitterness of disappointment. In 1367 he was deprived of the headship of a newly formed secular order, established under Simon Islip, archbishop of Canterbury, as a result of monastic interference. He now stood as the chief academic enemy of monasticism. His moves towards non-conformity, however, were not marked by any urgency. In 1371 he was still in papal favour, being made a canon of Lincoln. Yet the accompanying promise of a prebend, should a vacancy arise, was to become an area of disappointment for Wycliffe. When a vacancy did arise in 1375 at Caistor it was presented to the illegitimate son of Sir John Thornbury. Wycliffe's resentment has been seen as
a cause of his attacks on the church; yet other clergy received similar rejections and did not turn to Wycliffe’s path.

While following the well-trodden route of ecclesiastical advancement Wycliffe also strayed into the field of politics. Shortly before obtaining his doctorate he entered the service of the crown as *pecularis clericus*, an occasional duty usually sought for extra finance. For Wycliffe such employment provided an opportunity to spectate in Parliament and hence provided him with a wider audience. Unlike other heretical mediaeval scholars Wycliffe went beyond the walls of the University. He possessed the extra-mural character which moved his radicalism to realism.

In 1374 the king presented Wycliffe with the rectory of Lutterworth, later to be his exile. Again there are signs of absenteeism from Lutterworth, although initially this was due to his visit to Bruges in July 1374 on diplomatic duties. The procurement of Lutterworth has been seen as a gift to Wycliffe from the government for his services. The growing feeling of anti-clericalism in Parliament coincided with his own thoughts. He wrote firmly in favour of the active interference of the lay ruler to deprive sinful clerics of their endowments. Wycliffe’s theories on lordship would have had the greatest appeal for the crown. He contended that all human lordship depended on grace. A sinful man could not have property or authority; hence a secular lord could remove a worldly ecclesiastic’s property. Yet Dahmus asserts that up to 1376 Wycliffe’s recognition was not due to anti-clerical views; otherwise he would never have been sent to Bruges. Wycliffe may, however, have had his uses for purposes of propaganda. He was summoned to stir public opinion against the bishop of Winchester, William Wickham, John of Gaunt’s arch-foe, who had been behind the Good Parliament’s attack on the corrupt and incompetent advisers of the crown – an attack upon Gaunt.

K B McFarlane and others have held up the traditional view that Wycliffe was continually under the protection of the English government, at least until 1381 when he left the University. Wycliffe’s political stature was such that even the archbishop of Canterbury dared not attack him directly. Dahmus has questioned this conclusion, contending that it was John of Gaunt that insisted on protecting him while the English government aimed to silence and censure him.

In February 1377 Wycliffe was called to face ecclesiastical superiors at St Paul’s for contumacy. John of Gaunt’s energetic attack upon William Courtenay, bishop of London, is evidence of his role as Wycliffe’s protector. Three months after this abortive attempt to silence Wycliffe, pope Gregory XI issued five bills directing that another attempt be made; yet this time, at Lambeth Palace, Wycliffe escaped with a mere reproof.
Dahmus looks to the Lambeth hearing to prove that interference on Wycliffe's behalf was from John of Gaunt rather than the English government. The emissary sent to relieve Wycliffe was Sir Lewis Clifford. Did the crown authorize his interference? It seems unlikely. Richard the monarch was only twelve years old and the governance of the country was in the hands of a council which included Courtenay, who was John of Gaunt's arch-enemy, and two other bishops. Such a council would hardly wish to protect Wycliffe. Clifford was in fact in the service of the Princess of Wales. Although she devoutly adhered to her traditional faith and was certainly not a Wycliffite, her favour rested upon John of Gaunt. It would seem that the link lies here and that John of Gaunt used a servant of hers to divert attention from himself and his notorious association with Wycliffe.

As for evidence of censorship from the English government, Dahmus refers to documents of Wycliffe's replies to the question of withdrawing of money from the pope. A copy of his answer is discreetly followed by the remark 'And here silence was imposed upon him concerning the above by the Lord King and the royal council'.

Evidence does seem to point to John of Gaunt's active protection and to some possible censorship from the English government. For what reason did John of Gaunt protect Wycliffe? Scholars have abandoned earlier views that he approved of Wycliffe's theories on dominion and hoped to use them to drive his enemies out of the government and to take over the church's wealth. McFarlane's view that pride lay behind his reasoning may be correct in that, as he remarks, 'Those who served Gaunt could look with confidence to his protection; it was a point of honour no less than policy with him to maintain their quarrels as his own'. For Courtenay to have disciplined Wycliffe would have degraded John of Gaunt, who had first introduced Wycliffe to Westminster.

Wycliffe's gradual movement to a clarification of his beliefs, however, was to alienate such allies. In 1378 he is seen arguing for predestination and in 1379 he rejected the 'real presence' in the Eucharist. It is known that John of Gaunt reproached him for his book *On the Eucharist*. At the synod of Blackfriars in May 1382 twenty four propositions from Wycliffe's writings were examined. As a suspected heretic he was forbidden to preach or teach in Oxford. He withdrew to Lutterworth, after being debilitated by a paralytic stroke, and here remained in exile.

We know little of his last years in Lutterworth, although his literary output suggests that he rarely turned from his desk. It is known that he was aided by a curate, John Horn, in 1384, although his chief companion in his retirement was John Purvey, whose origins are unknown. It was probably Purvey who was
most responsible for the popular English expositions of Wycliffe’s teachings, part translation and part adaptation of the Latin originals. According to P A Knapp ‘In The Lollard Bible Margaret Deanesly clears away the myth surrounding the two complete English translations of the Bible connected with John Wycliff’s name. She refutes the earlier view that Wyclif himself had translated both versions, and most modern scholars accept her view that he, in fact, produced neither’. McFarlane remarks ‘He inspired it and he may have supervised it, but there is no reason to believe that he himself was responsible for a single sentence’. The first translation, which was a literal reading, has been connected with Nicholas of Hereford. The second, finished about 1396, has been accredited to John Purvey. It was Wycliffe’s belief that the Bible, the statement of God’s law, should be intelligible to simple men. It has been held that the Lollards were the first to tackle the whole Bible, rather than excerpts as seen in earlier fourteenth century translations of the Psalter and part of the New Testament. As Knapp points out, there was no known tradition of bible reading previously. It was the Lollards who made it common and hence fulfilled Wycliffe’s aim.

Overall the extent of Wycliffe’s influence from Lutterworth would appear to have been minimal. In documentary evidence ‘poor preachers’ are frequently mentioned, so as to suggest some organization of missionary priests. On occasion it has been assumed that these were organized by Wycliffe. However, if he had been actively concerned with such a movement it would have been focused on Lutterworth and there is certainly no evidence for this. The closest centre of Lollard activity was Leicester. It seems likely that it was Philip Repton’s evangelism rather than Wycliffe’s influence which led to the creation of this Lollard base. The local chronicler Henry Knighton would have been the first to make the ‘arch-heretic’ responsible. In 1382, when episcopal correction was given to the Lollards in Leicester, there is no reference to Wycliffe or Lutterworth. Knapp has drawn attention to Wycliffe’s numerous sermons, which are arranged in several series. Many manuscripts of these have survived and at least one was evidently used by a parish priest as a basis for his sermons. However, this evidence cannot lead to conclusions about the organizing of ‘poor preachers’.

Wycliffe’s exile in Lutterworth was abruptly brought to a close. Years later his curate, John Horn, recalled that ‘On Holy Innocents Day (28 December 1384), as Wycliffe was hearing mass in his church at Lutterworth, just as the Host was elevated, he fell smitten by an acute paralysis, especially in the tongue so that neither then nor afterwards could he speak’. He finally died on the 31st of December and his remains were laid to rest in the chancel of the church. In 1415 the Council of Constance demanded his bones to be cast from Christian burial. Eventually in 1428, as the story goes, the bishop of Lincoln’s officers came at night and took the bones out through the south door, which is remembered
today as 'Wycliffe's door'. The bones were then burned and cast into the Swift.

Wycliffe had died in the knowledge that his cause was not to die, but to be furthered under the banner of the Lollard movement. Despite his inconsistencies and ambiguities he undoubtedly inspired the movement, even if he did not lead it.

Sources:

H J Wilkins, *Was John Wycliffe A Negligent Pluralist?*, 1915
A H Dyson, H Goodacre ed, *Lutterworth: John Wycliffe's Town*, 1913
M Deanesly, *The Lollard Bible*, 1920 repr 1966

Lutterworth from the River Swift.

from A E Treen, *Historical Memorials of Lutterworth*, 1911
LETTERS FROM A SEVENTEENTH CENTURY RECTOR OF LUTTERWORTH: NATHANIEL TOVEY AS MARRIAGE AGENT

to my very Loving Brother Mr George Warner
   at Mr Westfield’s house in Laurence Poultnay Lane
Loving brother,
I have here sent you a couple of cheeses for a token, as good as I had at this time, praying you that you would send back the cloths and basket (?) in which they are lain (?); for I shall stand (in need) of them. I pray let us hear from you as soon as your (?) occasions will permit you and withall certify (?) us of my brother William. No more at this time, but my prayers for your health and happiness. Hoping you will let us hear from you shortly I rest
your affectionate sister, Elizabeth Tovey
I pray forget not to send my cheese fat again next week; for I have present use of the same. And remember my child’s cap. I pray let it not be a green one.

This letter, written at Lutterworth by the wife of Nathaniel Tovey the Rector there, to her brother, a merchant in London, could have been from any period in history. It is one of the series of Warner family private papers preserved by some lucky chance at the Public Record Office that has recently been brought to our notice during sorting and listing. A further dozen and a half are letters written to George Warner by Nathaniel himself in the years 1638 to 1642. His wife’s letter accompanies tokens of affection and is mainly a request for personal news; but his own letters remind us that in the seventeenth century the network of compliments and obligations that stretched across the family and beyond was an important part of business, even very personal business, especially for the educated and wealthy classes. If Elizabeth had given a couple of cheeses she might also ask for a cap for her little daughter or for a few thousand pins. The relations between her husband and her brother were more formal, in that Nathaniel was one of the chain of parties involved in the lengthy negotiations leading towards George securing a bride. The principal party on the Warner side was not George’s father Silvester but his uncle George. It appears that the younger George was working as a factor for this difficult uncle and that the latter was an important figure in Warwickshire, being High Sheriff in 1642. He and Silvester both lived on his manor at Wolston, which is half way between Rugby and Coventry. He was visited by one Dr Samuel Hinton, who wrote to the younger George a letter from there beginning: ‘Mr Warner! I have been acquainted with your liking of my niece Mistress Elizabeth Chester! I have by your uncle’s consent acquainted my brother her father with it . . .’ Perhaps George did in the end marry Elizabeth, thereby cementing his obligation to his uncle for life. A fragment of a poem survives among the papers entitled ‘Epithalamium for a Wedding Night’.
The letters are of interest not only for the details they give of the family and connexions of a Lutterworth rector. Amidst the negotiations Nathaniel's writing becomes quite literary when adding his friendly advice for planning the campaign of courtship. And finally his martial metaphors for courting lead him naturally to the latest news of the preliminary skirmishes at Leicester which ended within a month in the declaration of the Civil War. He reveals his hostility to the Roundheads that was to lead to his being ejected from his rectory at Lutterworth. He later became Rector at Aylestone, where both he and his wife died in September 1658.

As far as possible the letters have been arranged in order of date and the spelling has been modernized for the following extracts. They are all written by Nathaniel Tovey to his brother in law, the younger George Warner, and, unless stated, are addressed from Lutterworth to the house of Mr Edward Westfield in St Laurence Pulteney Lane in London. Details are given at the start of the extracts from each letter, in brackets where conjectural. The letters with folio numbers are in State Papers Domestic 46 Supplementary Volume 83. Elizabeth's of 10 May (1640) is fo 62, Dr Hinton's of 9 Oct 1641 is fo 41 and the poem is fo 100. The rest are in the same class but are at present being listed for the first time. We are grateful to Miss Norah Fuidge, who is engaged in this task, for bringing the Tovey letters to our attention and for generously making them available for study at this stage.

12 Nov 1638 fo 9
You see how careful your uncle is for the managing of this trivial blow-point business. However it will be wisdom in you to be punctual in your observance of his instructions and to give him a just account of your performing of all particulars.
This day we have received a first token of your loving remembrance; namely a barrel of oysters. I think I scarce ever had the honesty to return you thanks for the wine you sent us. But I hope you believe (as) well of me, as that I keep all your courteous expressions in a faithful Registry. You are a kind man. God increase your gifts. I hope you will find leisure to come down at Xmas. In the interim and for ever I am
(your) most affectionate (brother) Nat: Tovey
Your Master was at my house last Friday and your uncle (met?) him here.

to Mr George Clarke's house in Milk Street (London)
Good Brother,
27 July (1641)
I heartily congratulate your safe return into your native soil. And I hope God will give you the wisdom (unless your occasions be extremely urgent) to keep your four quarters from henceforward upon the ground, your natural and proper element, and not trust yourself any more to the fury of the billows, or the
uncertainty of a few rotten boards.

Your uncle George desired me to advertize you, that he shall be very glad to see you so soon as your fair leisure will give you leave. But his lust is not such as that he desires to cut you off from your occasions. First accommodate and settle your concernments, and then he will expect you and bid you welcome to Wolstan.

Your sister will needs have me spar (?) you a question. What’s become of her watch? That’s all. In good earnest she longs to see you. So do I.

Your most affectionate brother Nat. Tovey

Good Brother, 6 Aug (1641)

Since my last I have had a full parley with Dr Hinton and his wife. And after that moved the matter the second time to our old Master. He like the business better and better. What Mr Chester he father will do towards the augmentation of her portion the Dr nor Mistress Hinton will not undertake to know. But they think for a good match he will come off. Well upon these grounds at all adventures I would advise you, if you have a desire to her, to make yourself acquainted with her, and you may be bold at least to intimate your affections either to herself or some of her friends or both. For hitherto there was never any motion relished so well with your old man as this. And I think he will be content you should lay your knife a-board there, though upon cheaper terms than anywhere else, that he ever heard of yet.

The Dr and Mistress Hinton have offered assistance either by writing, riding or speaking. And this week your old man will to Coventry on purpose to speak to them about it.

She has a weak sister not likely to live, to whom Mr Stone gave an equal portion, namely £2,000. There is some expectation in that. Mr Chester has but one only son and if he should drop away there’s a further expectation in that. All this I laid open before our uncle. And I perceive him not only willing but desirous to promote it. You will hear from him shortly. Only I write so soon as I can...

your loving brother N.T.

from Wolston (Oct 1641) fo 46

I hope my letter written to you about a fortnight since miscarried not, though I have not received from you any advertisement since.

I am now able to afford you some little account more of your business. Dr Hinton has received an answer not from the father’s own hand but from his brother Dr Robert Chester of Stevenage by his direction, which for your better satisfaction and to save myself a labour in writing I have here inclosed so far as concerns you.

Now you have a good ground to walk upon. Lay all the traps and strategems you can honestly devise to win the gentlewoman’s affection, and she being so tender in her father’s eyes will be able to bring off his consent. I make no doubt of it. I would advise you to venture so far however. There can (if the
gentlewoman and the father be content (?) no rub be feared but matter of portion. And I hope to win your old man off to reasonable terms if the matter be well set afoot. I can tell you no more at present. Expect my further currents as occasion serves. . .

I am now at Wolston where all remember their several affections to you. So does Dr Hinton with promises of all assistance. This letter will be with you on Saturday night. I send it by Thomas Waples, Mr Hawford’s man.

Adieu from your ever loving brother Nat Tovey

1 Nov (1641)

I received your letter or rather your sheet of paper with almost just nothing in it. Did you not receive mine by Thomas Waples? If you did I wonder you say nevr’a syllable of it. In truth now I think you are in love indeed, and your thoughts being so much employed in that passion I must pardon you if you can think of nothing else.

How do you know that I am to be at London so very shortly as you seem to intimate in your letter? It is true, fain I would come but I must stay God’s leisure and your sister’s who makes me believe every day she is falling in pieces. But still she holds out and I know not how long she will. I thank you for your kind invitation to your house . . .

Tomorrow I am for Wolston, there to meet Dr Parsons and Mr Hawford and Dr Hinton. Our uncle is tampering again with physic. The last Thursday he was let blood. God send him good luck after it. Your sister remembers her kindest respects to you. Remember mine to Mr Wastfeild. Write us at the return of the carrier some news. So God be with you,

your ever loving brother N.T. . . .

Good Brother, 4 Nov (1641) fo 39

My resolution was peremptory and fix to have set my face this day towards London. But two things have happened to cross my designs. First the sickness of my little wench, who at this time is very ill, and I am very loath to leave your sister alone not knowing how it may please God to deal with her little one. The second is an homely impediment to acquaint you withall but yet such it is that renders me for the present altogether unable to ride. It is (saving your presence) a little boil or angry what (quatte) grown upon my sitting place which makes me impatient of the motion of an horse, unless I could ride altogether upon one side. Yet for all this I have a very good mind to be with you and if these inconveniences cease may perhaps come upon you unawares.

My heart is with you, and shall as seriously rejoice at the good speed of your business as though it concerned mine own person.

I have examined the ways of carrying to you an hogshead of Worcestershire liquor, but the way by sea to Bristol (Bristowe) and so to London is so full of uncertainty that they tell me it is an hundred to one it will be abused or drunk up before it come to you, unless you could acquaint me with some Bristol friend
that will take charge of it there.
I desire you to recommend my loving and hearty respects to mine uncle George
and acquaint him with this my just excusation. God send him a day to his full
content, so heartily wisheth
your most affectionate brother Nat: Tovey
I pray you let us hear a word or two from you the next week how things go.
Remember me to brother Will and the (rest?) of our friends.

Good Brother, from Wolston 19 Jan (1642) fo 49
You will receive a very round letter from our Master. If I had set down all that he
bade me, you would have thought him very angry. But it was but a fit of choler
and it is past. Let me receive satisfaction from you this week and all is well. High
Sheriffs must swagger. They have the privilege so to do and it becomes them.
My sister Isabell thinks long till she receive the things she spake to you for.
Remember my two cloaks ready made and directed to Lutterworth. All here
remain in the state you left them. And command their hearty affections to you.
You have taken upon you a factorship for a Master which is somewhat hard to
please, but will pay you well for your pains at long run. Adieu from
your most affectionate brother N.T.
Be sure fail not to send down the things for (Isabell?) and likewise the cloth for
clothes (at least some of it) this week; for if you fail another return of the carrier
it will be horribly out of time.

Good Brother, 28 Jan (1642) fo 51
I thank you for your news. And if you have any spare time from your more
serious occasions I shall take it as a copy of your favour to acquaint me with
such passages of the time as come to your knowledge. In term time I have
letters of intelligence from my friends: but out of term when they are gone, I live
in darkness and ignorance and know not which end of the world stands
upwards, unless it be by pedling rumours in the country, whereof a man can
believe scarce one of an hundred . . .
I will look out as well as I can for a convenient horse for you. I am about my
under George Benyon’s colt. He will break him very shortly and if I like him upon
his breaking I will venture upon him. But I must tell you he will not be for any
service this twelvemonth yet, for he is but three years old now. You may play
with him for a journey of half a score miles or just a trifle but he will not be for
any substantial use yet. But if I can light upon one that is for your turn and fit for
present service I will have him for you if I can upon any reasonable terms.
I came yesterday from Wolston. Our uncle is not very (lame?). His legs are
worse than they were and put him in great pain towards night. But he is not sick,
God be thanked. I pray you have a care of your health. I would not have you
tamper more with physic than necessity requireth . . .
God be with you from your ever loving brother Nat Tovey
3 Mar (1642) to 25

... At Wolston all friends are well, and remember their kind love to you. My sister Isabell is well recovered from a dangerous fever.
Your uncle would be well content to hear of your likelihood of matching, and I believe upon parley would be easily brought off to reason. Let me know whether Mr Shute ever sent to you, or how probable your other projects (?) are to fare (?). I shall be your faithful agent in the country: you yourself must look you start good game, and when she is started to hunt eagerly ... I thank you not only for your loving but your liberal expressions ... I am behind hand with you in the account of courtesies; a debt that shall ever be acknowledged by
Your most affectional brother Nat: Tovey
Your uncle is willing that Will should have the money for his chamber to his own use (?). It behoves him to manage it well. I have written so much (to him?) My love and respects to Captain Wolston and Mr Wastfeild and his Mistress.

Good Brother,
(to Wolston) (1642)
My occasions are such that in truth I cannot spare either today or tomorrow to come to you, unless I should wrong myself. And therefore I pray you let us see you here in your return, if it must be so short as you pretend. You may come here the night before you set forward without any loss of time. Besides I must deliver you a sour salute from your sister and tell you in a pouting phrase that she takes it not kindly at your hands, that you will not see her at her own house. And says you have not been at Lutterworth these two years. ‘Tis an heavy charge. Come and make your apology ... So hoping to see you. In haste.
Adieu from
your ever loving brother Nat: Tovey

Good Brother,
(to Wolston) (1642)
What humour our uncle was in to shew no more sensibility of your business when it was represented to him so fairly as now it is by Mr Shute’s letter I wonder much of it. But you know he will be sometimes in his dumps, no man knows why or wherefore. Well. Get you gone to London and spur and switch on your business as far as possibly you can. Lose no time nor opportunity. My advice is likewise that you procure a letter from Sir George Clerke to your uncle in commendation of your match. I know he will (...) in his report. I cannot tarry any longer. I am very weary having had a communion of above four hundred communicants. Let me alone for tampering here in the country with your old man. Assure yourself of the utmost of the endeavour of
Your most affectionate brother N.T.
Your sister would desire you to send her four thousand of pins, three of the small ones, one of the great ...
Good Brother, (1642)
Your sister and I join our forces together to thank you for your kind and most loving (?) token. We will eat it for your sake, and remember you in the best wine our town will afford. I hope I shall be strong enough one of these days to venture upon it. (Venison?) is too high and mighty meat for me yet ... I begin now to pick up my crumbs, but am yet weak ... 

Good Brother, from Wolston 29 June (1642) fo 31
It was almost seven of the clock at night before I received your letter and being the eve of the fast I was in great straits, not knowing how to go to Wolston and provide a sermon for my parish the next day. Yet rather than I would be wanting to you in a matter of this consequence I presently mounted toward Wolston. Our uncle had dispatched both his letters before my coming, not being full to the point and written with his own hand I thought good not to alter them, though he would have had me so done. I hope they will give all parties full content. You are likely all of a sudden to step into a plentiful fortune. Much joy and contentment I wish you with all my heart.
And our uncle commands me to write thus much more to you by way of addition, that he expects you should be a liberal and kind brother to your younger brother and sister which are yet undisposed of. And he is confident of the goodness of your disposition that, though he is loath to interpose any knots or scruples which may retard the proceedings of your match, yet that hereafter you will be content to conform yourself to such motions which he shall make to you. They shall be neither many nor burdensome. What part of your portion your uncle will have reserved for him he hath referred to Sir George Clarke, so that it be not less than £2,000, which he conceives cannot be any stop in the treaty; it being so little a share in the whole sum. But rather than that motion shall break (?) any squares, it is likely he will be persuaded to take assurance of your private promise. He is very right and trusty in the entertainment of any thoughts which may conduce to the advancement of your business. And if you can think of anything else wherein I may serve you I shall do it with all possible faithfulness and hearty affection, i being your most affectionate brother N. Tovey
And truly I conceive he means not to take near so much of the portion from you. Only he will have it in his power.

Good Brother, (from Wolston) 6 July (1642) fo 33
I told our uncle at first that his manner of proposing the jointure would be excepted against. But he swore more oaths than a good many he would never condescend farther. Has he laboured and wiled for an estate all his life time, and should he live to see it go to he knew not whom whilst he lived? No, he would be hanged first. And in no other resolution was he this morning when I woke him at his bedside. He vowed and swore he would never do it, no, not for the greatest portion in London. But at last he was content in cool blood to hear
reason. And this fair resolution is he now come to: which I hope will give ( . . . ) contentment . . .
My head is muddy, being called out of my bed this morning by two of the clock to come hither and here I was presently after four. God in heaven speed you in your proceedings, so trustily intrust (?) your very loving brother Nat Tovey

(Tuesday 26 July 1642)
What, Brother, is the day of our fair hopes so pitifully overclouded? What, is the castle of her affection impregnable? How is she fortified more than all other women? If she were a tower or a town methinks you have forces enough to take her. Tell her you have sworn to marry her and it may be religion and conscience will work her off to preserve you from the sin of perjury. Learn who be her playfellows, her she companions which consort most with her. Plough with these heifers if possibly you can . . .
And now I think on't I'll tell you some news. The King has been at Leicester ever since Friday. And is as much troubled about the magazine as you are about your Mistress. Sir Arthur and my Lord Ruthin were training the ordinance soldiers till the morning the King came. And Dr Bastwick (God blest us) was brought down by them out of the city to muster the soldiers. They gave out how glad they were of his majesty's coming and they would stand to what they had done, that they would. But when they heard for certain the King was upon the way between Leicester and Nottingham, all the whole rout of them ran away as though quicksilver had been in their heels. There was messengers sent after them to attach them. Bastwick and one Captain Ludlow they recovered and brought them back, and they are now both in Leicester gaol. Sir Arthur Haselrig was too nimble and outrid them. Only some thirty or forty possessed themselves of the magazine, which lies in a strong gatehouse, and notwithstanding it has been demanded by the Grand Jury (the representative body of the Shire), all the Gentlemen of the County, many of the Lords, yet they will not yield it but upon some conditions left with them by my Lord of (Ruthin) and Sir Arthur. (The King has not been?) to demand it yet (?) in his own (name?). I cannot tell whether he will or no, for I hear say he goes away this day about eleven of the clock. But two or three pieces of ordinance are come to Leicester as I hear. The King was bravely welcome by all the Gentlemen and freeholders of the County. There were not so few as twenty thousand people met him upon the way some miles of Leicester, and shouted as though their throats would burst asunder. The Roundheads are most horribly battered. But I suppose they look for within these few days some Aqua vitae e from the Parliament to revive them. No more now.
But I pray you remember me heartily to Mr Westfield and his Lady . . . ( . . . ) difficulty about your mistress. Your sister thanks you infinitely for your ( . . . ) Your most affectionate brother Nat. Tovey
The large collection of Lutterworth parish records recently deposited at the Leicestershire Record Office includes a considerable number of documents relating to the administration of poor relief in the parish from the late seventeenth century onwards, amongst which is a fine series of 385 apprenticeship indentures spanning the period 1673-1856. A contemporary index of the indentures shows that only six of the originals are missing. Although their format and wording are largely standardized and repetitive, a careful analysis of the information they contain reveals more about the nature of Lutterworth parish apprenticeship than might at first be expected.

Most, if not all, of the 385 apprentices were pauper children. In 348 cases either the child is described as 'poor' or it is clear that the premium, normally five pounds, was paid by the overseers of the poor. 150 of these indentures record that the money was derived from Poole's Charity, which had been founded as a result of Robert Poole's will of 1699 with the apprenticeship of poor Lutterworth children as its main objective.

Sometimes the wording of the indentures provides clues to the child's family background or makes it clear that the parish had been supporting the child. Sarah Buckerfield is described in 1691 as 'a poor motherless Child, and a Charge to the parish of Lutterworth', while the same year the overseers paid for the apprenticeship of David Dixon, 'a poor child who hath been a great charge to the parish'. The indenture of 1837 which binds Thomas Tibbetts apprentice to a Lutterworth brickmaker describes him as the son of Edward Tibbetts, labourer, but 'disowned by Edward Tibbetts as his son and left on the parish for support, and about 13 years of age'. Where the father's occupation is given, that of labourer is by far the most commonly encountered; but at least 86 of the children were without a father to support them, due either to their illegitimate birth or to the father having already died. Two brothers, Thomas and William Burbidge, who were apprenticed in 1819 and 1822 respectively to the same cordwainer of Belgrave Gate, Leicester - which suggests some humanity on behalf of the overseers - had a father described as 'now being beyond the Seas', while at least 22 of the apprentices were orphans.

One of the chief duties of the overseers was said by the Rev Dr Burn in 1764 to be 'to bind out poor children apprentice, no matter to whom or to what trade, but to take special care that the master live in another parish'. Parish officers habitually bound pauper children apprentice to masters living elsewhere in order to rid their parish of all future financial liability for them, since a statute of 1692 had declared that serving at least forty days of an apprenticeship sufficed to give legal settlement in the parish. An analysis of the indentures shows
that prior to 1692 the majority of the children apprenticed by the Lutterworth overseers went to Lutterworth masters and only about a fifth were sent to live elsewhere. After that date the trend was reversed and over four fifths were bound to masters residing outside the parish – a high proportion when compared with a parish like Doveridge, Derbyshire where W E Tate tells us only about a third of the pauper apprentices were sent outside the parish during the period 1699-1818. In the case of Lutterworth no doubt improvements in transport and communication together with the growth of industries in nearby towns contributed to this change; but it seems likely that a deliberate policy was pursued by the parish officers with the aim of reducing the pressure on the poor rates.

Although we know that between 1673 and 1856 at least 281 Lutterworth children were sent to serve apprenticeships elsewhere, while a further 77 were apprenticed in their own parish, we do not know how far this was counter-balanced by the arrival of children from other parishes to serve apprenticeships in Lutterworth. Some certainly came, as a few indentures which found their way into the Lutterworth parish chest show. Ten of the 385 indentures fall into this category. One concerns a poor boy from the adjoining parish of Gilmorton, thirteen year old Joseph Wood, whose mother Ann Wood was ‘unable to maintain him’ and who was apprenticed in 1822 to a Lutterworth framework knitter. It specifies that the nine pound premium was only to be paid after Wood had served six weeks, when he would gain legal settlement in Lutterworth. This suggests that the principal concern was for Gilmorton parish to be relieved of future responsibility for the boy. The Lutterworth overseers might ensure that as many as possible of their own pauper children were sent to serve elsewhere but evidently they could not prevent their own parishioners taking on apprentices from other parishes, enticed by the premium which accompanied them.

A further 17 indentures are for children who came from, and were sent to, parishes other than Lutterworth. Most if not all of these form part of the Lutterworth collection because they concern children attending Lutterworth school who were thus eligible to benefit from Poole’s Charity even though their legal settlement may have been elsewhere. Robert Poole bequeathed money from the rent of his land to the overseers of the poor ‘for setting out to apprentice One of those poor boys that are taught in the school in Lutterworth . . . one poor boy to be put out with the said rents yearly for ever’. All of the 27 children who came from outside Lutterworth were from Leicestershire or Warwickshire parishes except three who came from East Haddon in Northamptonshire, Turvey in Bedfordshire and Nottingham.

As for the 281 Lutterworth children sent to serve masters living outside the parish, their main destinations were the nearby urban centres of Coventry (50
apprentices, of whom 34 were to work as ribbon weavers), Hinckley (47 apprentices, 40 of these as framework knitters) and Leicester (40 apprentices to a number of trades, the 14 apprentice shoemakers being the largest group). Hinckley tended to predominate in the eighteenth century; only nine of the 47 children apprentices there were sent after 1800 and all but one of these were apprentices in the period 1800-1811. On the other hand the majority of the children sent to Leicester and Coventry left Lutterworth during the period 1800-1856 (34 of the 50 Coventry apprentices and 33 of the 40 Leicester ones). In fact only two Lutterworth boys were apprenticed to Leicester masters before 1775. As might be expected, the early nineteenth century eclipse of the Hinckley framework knitting industry by the increasingly important industrial growth of Coventry and Leicester is reflected in the Lutterworth apprenticeship indentures.

Coventry, Hinckley and Leicester between them account for almost half of the children apprenticed away from Lutterworth. Far fewer children were sent to the next most popular places, Nuneaton and Claybrook Magna (10 apprentices each), followed by Rugby (8), Birmingham, Bedworth and Bitteswell (7 each), Bulkington (5) and Burbage and Dunton Bassett (4 each). The remaining 82 went to 57 different villages and towns, mainly within Leicestershire and Warwickshire. Only 22 were sent outside these two counties, ten of these being bound to masters in nearby Northamptonshire. Of the twelve who were sent further afield three went to the city of Nottingham and four to Staffordshire. Only two went to London, the most distant destination to which Lutterworth parish apprentices were sent. There is no evidence that Lutterworth pauper children were apprentices *en masse*, as happened elsewhere, to mill owners and other masters in the industrial cities of the north.

The age of the child being bound apprentice is sometimes given in the indenture. 64 of the 385 Lutterworth indentures include this information, but as these all concern children apprenticed between 1754 and 1852 no general conclusions regarding the whole of the period covered by the indentures can be drawn. Within this later period, however, it is clear that most pauper children, 36 out of the 64, were apprenticed when 13 or 14 years old. A few were slightly older; three were aged 15 and one was 17. 28 of the 64 were under 13 when apprenticed, 23 of these falling within the ten to twelve age group. Following a statute of 1816 nine was the youngest age at which a child could legally be apprenticed. The Lutterworth collection includes two indentures for local boys of that age who were both apprenticed to framework knitters, James French to Richard Bassett of Claybrook in 1810 and Edward Newcomb to Richard Billings of Blaby in 1803. The indenture of a nine year old girl from Claybrook, Elizabeth Palmer, who was apprenticed to a Lutterworth framework knitter in 1802, also survives with this collection. There is no evidence that children under nine years of age were bound apprentice by the Lutterworth
parish officers, although two indentures in the collection prove that the practice was not unknown elsewhere. One concerns Thomas Bannister, a poor child of Bitteswell, bound apprentice in 1798 to John Taylor of Lutterworth, framework knitter, the other a poor child of Willoughby in Warwickshire, John Shaw, bound in 1809 to another Lutterworth framework knitter, John Jennings. Both were seven years old and were to serve until they were 21.

Most of the Lutterworth apprentices were bound for seven years or until the age of 24 or 21. Shorter terms were sometimes agreed on and there is one indenture of 1716 for a boy, John Jee, who was apprenticed to serve a Coventry skinner until he reached the age of 26.

The conditions of apprenticeship follow the usual pattern whereby the apprentice promises to serve his master faithfully, protect his property, avoid gambling, fornication, frequenting taverns etc, while in return the master promises to teach the apprentice his trade and provide him with sufficient food, lodging, apparel and other necessaries. Exceptional conditions are mentioned in some of the Lutterworth indentures. That of 1704 for James Cox is endorsed with a note that he might be released after eight years instead of serving his master until the age of 24, provided he paid Lutterworth parish two pounds towards the apprenticeship of another poor boy. The 1799 indenture for William Childs includes a clause in which his master, William Mills, a cordwainer of the adjoining Warwickshire parish of Monks Kirby, guarantees to 'permit and suffer the said apprentice to visit his friends three times a year'. That of 1784 for Thomas Simms stipulates that his master Thomas Malin, a Bitteswell weaver, allow him 'six days Holydays... each year'.

References to the provision of clothing for the apprentice are sometimes included in the indentures, usually a case of the master agreeing to provide two new suits of clothes, one for working days and one for Sundays, on the expiry of the term of apprenticeship. Occasionally a detailed list of the clothes the new apprentice is to receive is given, such as in the 1691 indenture for Elizabeth Booton, ‘a poor fatherless and motherless Childe’, who is promised ‘2 shifts, 2 pair of Stocking, 2 pair of Shoes, 2 Blew aprons, a Mantu (manteau) & petticoate, 1 straw Hatt, a few head Cloths & a whiske (neckerchief)’.

‘Some children were taught trades, but most were apprenticed to learn ‘housewifery’ or ‘husbandry’, which meant that they became domestic servants or farm labourers’. Such was the case for pauper children at Gnosall in Staffordshire and at Doveridge in Derbyshire and it is often assumed to have been commonplace elsewhere; but the pattern of apprenticeship at Lutterworth appears to have been quite different. Leaving aside the 27 indentures concerning children from other parishes we have indentures for 358 Lutterworth children, only six of whom were apprenticed to learn ‘husbandry’
and five to learn ‘housewifery’, although some other indentures imply as much
without using these terms. That of 1693 for John Gough bound him to William
Cole, esquire, to be kept ‘in the manner and nature of a servant’ and that of 1787
for John Clifton bound him to learn ‘the art or occupation of a labourer’. Among
the girls we find Ann Neale apprenticed in 1711 to Mary Blakesley of Ashby
Magna, widow, to be taught the ‘art of spinning and other matters belonging to
a Service’ and Mary Smith bound in 1759 to learn ‘the art of spinning jersey on
the two-handed wheel, and other household business’. No trade is specified in
a further 17 cases, the relevant space on the indenture either having been left
blank or the master simply promising that he will ‘virtuously employ and
educate’ the child. In all only 32, under one tenth of the indentures, concern
children who probably ended up as servants or labourers, a far lower
proportion than at Gnosall or Doveridge. Even if we confine ourselves to those
children apprenticed within Lutterworth parish we find that 60 of the 77 were to
be taught specific trades.

Of the 326 Lutterworth pauper apprentices who avoided domestic service or
labouring work, the framework knitting industry claimed the greatest number,
74. This would seem to confirm Geoffrey Oxley’s statement that ‘parish
apprentices with limited funds behind them tended to find themselves in the
least attractive occupations’.9 There is evidence that apprentice framework
knitters were set to the worst kinds of hosiery work, such as making small
worsted stockings. A report of 1778 said that ‘some, boys who are paupers, are
put to this work at the age of 10 or 11… the work affects the nerves very much’.10
Many of the eighteenth century apprentice framework knitters, ‘ill-managed,
ill-taught and little cared for, were reduced almost to starvation’.11

Cordwainers or boot-and-shoemakers took the next largest group, 55, of
Lutterworth apprentices, followed by 53 who became ribbon weavers (23 of
whom were girls). Between them these three occupations account for just over
one half of the children apprenticed to specific trades. Next come tailors (28
apprentices), followed by general weavers (14), worsted weavers and wool-
combers (10), blacksmiths (10), silk weavers (7) and hairdressers (6, including a
‘barber and peruke maker’). The glovers, turners and carpenters or joiners took
five apprentices each, gardeners and stockframe needlemakers four, and the
butchers, feltmakers, plumbers-and-glaziers, and diesinker makers three. Two
children were apprenticed to bakers, cooper, clothiers, breeches makers,
brickmakers and carpenters/wheelwrights. The remaining 22 children went to
a wide variety of trades. Amongst these were Edward Lee, apprenticed to a
Lutterworth tobacconist in 1694, George Thompson sent to a Birmingham
knifesheath maker in 1730, Thomas Moore apprenticed to a chimney sweep of
Castle Donington in 1828, Isaac Scrimshire sent in 1833 to a printer, bookbinder
and stationer in Longton, Staffordshire, and Joseph Bosworth who was
apprenticed in 1850 to a Leicester cabinet maker, paper hanger and upholsterer.
The 385 apprentices comprised 330 boys and 55 girls. As might be expected the girls tended to be apprenticed to particular occupations. The ribbon weaving took 23 of them, as we have seen, while another 18 probably went in domestic service since no specific occupation, or that of 'housewifery', is entered on their indentures. Another six girls became framework knitters and three learnt to weave silk. The remaining five were bound to a variety of craftsmen, a glover, a tailor, a clothier and even a turner and a cooper. In the last case Mary Morris was apprenticed in 1710 to John Onion of Tamworth, cooper, who agreed to teach her 'his calling so far as she is capable of understanding'. Only two of the 385 children were apprenticed to women. Ann Neale, as we noted was apprenticed to a widow of Ashby Magna and William Carvell in 1855 was apprenticed to Elizabeth Cherry of Lutterworth, painter.

A writer in 1758 remarked that 'many of those who take parish apprentices are so inhuman as to regard only the pecuniary consideration; and having once received that, they, by ill-usage and undue severity, often drive the poor creature from them, and so leave them in a more destitute condition at a riper age for mischief than they were in when first they became the care of the parish officers'. Obviously we cannot tell from the indentures, which mark the beginning of the apprenticeship, how these children were subsequently looked after or neglected. However, there is definite evidence that at least three of the apprenticeships were not completed due to the unsuitability of the master chosen. Two brothers who had been bound in 1809 and 1810 respectively to James Jennings, a Hinckley framework knitter, were discharged from their apprenticeships in 1812 by the Justices of the Peace after it was proved that Jennings had 'mis-used and evil treated James Shortland and Samuel Shortland his Apprentices by not providing sufficient Clothing as a Master ought to do his Apprentices'. Attached to the indenture of 1819 for Daniel Clowes, a ten year old orphan who was apprenticed to William Holland, a harness plater of Chirons Buildings, Birmingham, there is a letter dated 1823 from Birmingham Workhouse, stating that about a year after Clowes had been bound apprentice, his master 'ran away & hath not since been heard of – the Boy has ever since been maintained at this house'. We cannot assume that such cases were as rare as the few such documents in the Lutterworth collection suggest, since as Dr Marshall has pointed out, 'our actual knowledge of the pauper apprentices is scanty because an ignorant child of twelve, separated from its friends, and absolutely at the mercy of its master, had no real chance of making its wrongs known'.

Doubtless problems were sometimes caused by the pauper apprentices themselves, since they were 'perhaps the least attractive of apprentices . . . among them were bastards, orphans and the products of broken homes, and it is reasonable to assume that they suffered in full measure from the emotional and psychological disturbances which we now know that these conditions
produce’. 14 Ten of the Lutterworth indentures have documents attached recording that the apprentice was later assigned or ‘turned over’ to a new master. One of these, that for Peter Manger, who was apprenticed in 1820 to Thomas Garratt of Coventry, ribbon weaver, mentions that his subsequent assignment to another Coventry ribbon weaver, Thomas Goode, was due to ‘some differences (which) have arose between the said Thomas Garratt and Peter Manger’. The fact that another document records that Peter Manger was soon afterwards turned over from Goode to another Coventry master, Richard Tilt, suggests that the boy may have been difficult to control or disturbed in some way.

Although, as we have seen, just under one tenth of the Lutterworth apprentices became servants and labourers, three fifths went into hosiery, shoemaking or weaving industries, where they may have been allotted the worst jobs, under unsatisfactory conditions and with poor prospects of regular employment after the apprenticeship had ended. However, it has been pointed out that since ‘pauper children came from the lower strata of society . . . it would be quite unrealistic to expect the overseers to put them in a position to rise any higher. Equality of opportunity was unheard of either as a slogan or as a concept’. 15 Nevertheless, many of the remaining 31½% of the children who were apprenticed to tailors, carpenters, smiths, plumbers, bakers and other more specialized craftsmen, must subsequently have been able to support themselves and their families by practising their trade and have had reason to thank Robert Poole and the Lutterworth overseers for the benefits derived from their apprenticeship.

References:

1. Leicestershire Record Office accession number DE 2559: /88 Index 1673-1831, /89 Indentures 1673/1831, /90 Indentures 1807-1856
2. Rev Dr Burn, History of the Poor Laws, 1764, p 121
3. 3 William III, cap 2 sec 8
5. A bill dated 1st December 1843 (DE 2559/134/7) records the expenditure of 5/- on ‘advertising in the Leicester Journal for a Master’. The advertisement, addressed ‘To Master Shoemakers, Blacksmiths, etc.’, offers ‘two or three healthy Boys of 14 years of age. Premiums will be given and recommendations required. Apply (post paid) to the Churchwardens of Lutterworth’.
6. Leicestershire Record Office, Will of Robert Poole of Lutterworth, 1699
8. W E Tate, op cit, pp 221-2
14. G W Oxley, *op cit*, p 76
15. *Ibid*, p 75

Lutterworth: the River Swift.

from Prof G Lechler, *John Wycliffe and his English Precursors*, 1878
The principal myths about John Wyclif, that he translated the Bible into English and that he sent out Lollards or ‘poor preachers’ to spread the word amongst ordinary people, became fully established during the sixteenth century, at a time when it was important to be able to cite an English precedent for the break with Rome at the Reformation.

Although Wyclif’s association with Lutterworth was brief, local myths have sprung up over the centuries associating him with the town. He was presented with the living in 1374 but was only forced to retreat from Oxford to Lutterworth during the last two years of his life. Two events here are certain, his death on the last day of 1384 and the disinterment of his bones in 1428. Despite his short stay here his Protestant admirers have built up a list of local relics to be hallowed through their reputed association with him, almost as though he were a Roman Catholic saint.

When Daniel Defoe visited the town in the early eighteenth century he wrote, with characteristic disregard for either fact or tact, that ‘we saw nothing worth notice, nor did the people, as I could find, so much as know in general, that the great man was born amongst them.’ By the mid century, however, there first appeared an account of the complete renewal of the interior of the church that was to be repeated in various publications right into the nineteenth century:

The Church is lately beautified with costly pavement of chequer’d stone, new Pews, and every thing else new, both in Church and Chancel, except the Pulpit made of thick Oak-Planks six-square, with a seam of carved work in the joints; which is preserv’d and continu’d in memory of Wickliff, whose Pulpit it was, if constant Tradition may be credited.

John Throsby, in his Memoirs of 1777, treated his visit to the church as a reverent pilgrimage:

I entered his sacred temple with a mind awed by a venerable idea of that sage counsellor . . . my intelligent conductor led me to the remains of his shamefully neglected Vestment and Sound-Board. Clothed with the former and under the latter he promulgated the will of God . . . Oxford! – he was thine. Protect the annihilating relics of your famed father! – Bare them hence to your repository; and suffer not the rude hands of ignorance to diminish them more hastily than time. The neighbouring peasants . . . copying each visitor, become sacrilegious robbers of his antiquated robe.

By the early nineteenth century, according to John Nichols and others, Wyclif’s vestment and Wyclif’s pulpit with its sounding board had been joined by the chair ‘on which he was carried when he died’, his dining table ‘on which he fed the poor’ (later ‘and translated the Bible’) and his pair of wooden altar
candlesticks. Also a small stone mortar or corn measure has been called Wyclif's font. Various pictures have also been supposed to have been copied from actual likenesses painted as portraits of him. The most conspicuous one is the oil painting by Mr Shirley Feilding based on the one belonging to the Earl of Denbigh and presented to the church by the artist in 1786.

Not everyone accepted these stories uncritically. When he visited the town on his *Rural Rides* in 1830 William Cobbett wrote, with typical scorn, 'At this place they have, in the church (they say), the identical pulpit from which Wickliffe preached!' The most authoritative and startling dismissal of the Wyclif relics was undertaken in 1861 during a two day meeting of the Leicestershire Architectural and Archaeological Society in the town. A temporary museum of antiquities was assembled in the Town Hall for the occasion from loans by local gentry and other inhabitants. These included the 'Alleged portrait of Wycliffe; artist unknown' contributed by the Earl of Denbigh and 'Fox's Book of Martyrs, 1631' and 'Altar cloth and candlesticks stated to be of Wycliffe's time from Lutterworth Church' by the Churchwardens. My own great-grandfather, then a curate, contributed several exhibits, some of them models of famous treasures, presumably of his own making. I know that he was interested in the Wyclif relics: an entry in his diary five years earlier reads 'Made a few medallions and a pair of Wicliff candlesticks'.

At the evening session Matthew Holbeche Bloxam, the noted antiquarian and historian of Rugby, its school and its neighbourhood, read a paper. He gave his opinion as to which parts of the church might date back to Wyclif's time, such as the 'priest's doorway' through which he is supposed to have been carried. Turning to the relics, Bloxam mortified his audience by carefully ascribing them to their centuries, the pulpit to the fifteenth and its sounding board, the chair, the communion table and the candelsticks to the seventeenth. The 'vestment' might be part of a fifteenth century altar frontal and the Denbigh 'portrait' dated from the sixteenth century. 'At the conclusion of Mr. Bloxam's paper,' the Society's report reads, 'the chairman invited discussion upon its contents. There was an apparent reluctance on the part of some of the audience to give up their long-cherished faith in the "Relics" of Wickliffe, yet no champion appeared to take up the glove thrown down by the learned lecturer'. 'One gentleman, however,' the report continues, 'created much amusement ...' *The Leicester Chronicle* revealed more antagonism: 'One gentleman in the body of the room (in a fit of despair and anger combined, forcibly repressed by self-control) asked Mr. Bloxam whether he really believed Wickliffe was ever in Lutterworth at all, or ever existed.'

Following the alarming report by Gilbert Scott the architect on its structure in 1866, the church was extensively rebuilt and restored under his direction. The removal of the panelling from the chancel wall revealed, as Bloxam had
predicted, several early mediaeval features and the removal of the wooden
galleries and plaster brought to light, as Scott had anticipated, mediaeval wall
paintings. The 'Doom' over the chancel arch was easily recognized; but the
three crowned figures on the north wall lent themselves to speculative
identifications. If they were portraits of English royalty, Mrs Thursby argued,
they must be of Richard II and his Queen and John of Gaunt, Wyclif's protector,
and were probably placed there by Wyclif himself while Rector. The publication
of a drawing from this painting, with the doubly erroneous title 'John of Gaunt
Fresco' in my grandfather's book in 1913 aroused the curiosity of a parson in
Bovey Tracey. In a similar painting in the church there three such kings were
matched by three crowned skeletons and evidently illustrated the allegorical
story of the three living kings meeting the three dead kings who remind them of
mortality. In fact, as S H Skillington pointed out in his book in 1916, this
identification had already been conjectured. And it has now been vindicated by
the restoration work undertaken during the last year. The three expected
skeletons have been brought to light to the right of the living kings.

Although more serious books, like the ones published by my grandfather and
by S H Skillington, both under the name of A H Dyson, took note of Bloxam's
exposure of the relics, 'constant Tradition' was not to be ousted by any
demonstration of facts and guide books continued to list the relics associated
with Wyclif in the church. A E Treen of Rugby wrote hopefully of the 'portrait' of
Wyclif that 'although he appears with a beard and a gown (uncanonical for a
cleric of that age), it is not improbable that he was thus arrayed, seeing that, as
he was daring enough to propagate the most advanced theological and social
views in his time.' The same desperate argument was attempted by 'H S S' in
1927 about the 'Refectory Table . . . which tradition says was used by Wyclif to
write on': 'It's workmanship is that which is ordinarily associated with a rather
later period than Wyclif's. But is it not conceivable that Wyclif's taste, like his
other ideas, may have been well in advance of his times?'

The 'relics' are all Lutterworth antiquities of interest in their own right and
should not be despised just because they fail to match up to their fabled
association with a late fourteenth century Rector. The handsome pair of
seventeenth or eighteenth century candlesticks deserve a better fate than their
coat of gold paint which has made them match perfectly the altar cross made in
the same style and presented by the Mothers Union in 1925.

The attempts to appropriate antique objects to hand for the memory of a
revered figure are in some respects laughable; but they do betray the same
deep-felt desire to commemorate the man that was expressed by Throsby,
even if he despaired of the local inhabitants and considered an Oxford museum
more appropriate for the relics. It is more constructive to enquire what positive
efforts were made in the town to set up new memorials to him, such as the
presentation of the copy of the Denbigh ‘portrait’ already mentioned.

In 1828 a Wyclif scholar from Oxford, Thomas Pindar Pantin, edited a reprint of one of the few works attributed to Wyclif that had been printed in the first half of the sixteenth century, Wycklyffes Wycket (since agreed not to have been written by Wyclif). At the time Pantin was a curate at Lutterworth. Here he took up the cause of dissatisfaction ‘that not even a stone has been erected to the Memory of John Wyclif – a man whose rare talents, distinguished learning, and persevering industry, have done more for this Country, than those of almost any other individual.’ These words are from the introductory sentence in a short leaflet proposing a Monument to the Memory of John Wiclif, at Lutterworth. Pantin evidently took a leading part in the campaign and probably wrote the pamphlet. It continues with the well-established myths:

He was the first in the race of Reformers: . . . he laid the ground-work for . . . the Reformation. If it be remembered that he was the First Protestant against the Errors of Popery, and that he produced the first translation of the Holy Scriptures into the vernacular English, – the reprehension of a celebrated living author will not be thought unjustly severe: “It is a reproach to this country, that no statue has been erected to his honour.”

The inhabitants of Lutterworth, where this great Man lived and died, and where he carried on the important work of his translation, have long been alive to the duty and propriety of raising some Memorial to their former illustrious Rector; and a few Gentlemen of that place have now formed themselves into a Committee for the purpose of leaving no step untried of carrying the design into effect.

‘The Sum already raised among the Committee and their fellow-townsmen’ already amounted to nearly a hundred pounds. Pantin was one of the Secretaries and I assume that my great-great-grandfather was interested. Subscriptions were invited in London, Oxford and Cambridge or in Lutterworth, where they would be received by ‘Messrs. Goodacre & Buszard, Bankers’.

The proposal is to erect a bronze statue of the Reformer in his robes, with the Bible in one hand and his staff in the other: the statue to be elevated on a pedestal of white Derbyshire stone, and to be placed in the Church-Yard of Lutterworth, in a situation where it may be seen by every one who passes through the town.

As a final inducement ‘It is proposed to present each Contributor of One Guinea and upwards, with an Engraving of the Monument, accompanied by a List of Subscribers.’ As a model for the statue reference was was made to the recent edition of ‘Lewis’s Life of Wiclif, for the portrait. Oxford Ed. 1820’. This is the frontispiece, which is in fact an engraving after the Denbigh ‘portrait’; so the image Pantin sought to perpetuate was the one already well known in Lutterworth and its church.
The Wycliffe Memorial and proposed Museum for the Wycliffe Relics from F W Bottrill, *Hand Book of Lutterworth*, 1900 ed
Evidently the campaign did not go as planned and took some time. Possibly a change was missed in 1836 when the Town Hall was built to designs by Joseph Hansom; the later editions of FW Bottrill’s handbook assert that ‘It was intended in the original design, to have had a statue of Wycliffe between the two middle Ionic Pillars in front of the building’. The next year, however, the present white marble mural monument *in alto relievo* by Richard Westmacott junior, paid for by subscriptions amounting to £500, was erected in its original position where it dominated the chancel. In 1882 the south porch was reconstructed with ‘a carved head in representation of Wycliffe outside the doorway’.

The greatest determination to commemorate the man in Lutterworth centred on the fifth centenary of his death, 1884. Subscriptions were raised for a new organ in the church, which cost £850 and was eventually opened with a recital in 1886. The year before that is the date of the new east window, containing a representation of Wyclif. A much more ambitious scheme was a nation-wide campaign to erect a memorial to him in the town. This was to be an obelisk of Aberdeen granite, ‘upwards of thirty feet high’, with palisading around it and, behind it, ‘should funds permit, a Caretaker’s House and Museum for the reception of Wycliffe Relics ... Unfortunately the subscriptions already received failed to cover the cost of the Memorial and the palisading, and the latter had to be left’. By the time enough had been raised for the obelisk alone, it was able also to commemorate Queen Victoria’s sixtieth Jubilee in 1897. The cutting of the first sod for its erection in the previous year was occasion for a large gathering and procession through the town, including ‘The Clergy and Ministers of all Denominations’ and ‘General public. (Six-a-Breast.)’ It is perhaps better that the Wycliffe Memorial, which has given its name to the Garage opposite it, should be backed not by a Museum of discredited relics but by the Wycliffe Memorial Methodist Church built in 1905.

Bloxam lamented the loss of an opportunity in 1861 of acquiring a genuine Wyclif exhibit for the church. This was a manuscript supposed to be of the fourteenth century and containing portions of the Old Testament translated by Wyclif, but ‘whether in his monograph, which I think not unlikely, or simply a transcript made in his time, I cannot say.’ As there is now held to be nothing to connect such translations with Wyclif and as the sale price even then was as much as £150, the parish did better to wait until 1877 when a copy of a modern edition of ‘Wycliffe’s Translation of the Bible’ in two volumes was presented to the church by the secretary of the British and Foreign Bible Society. A more fitting and authentic memorial of this sort, but one that is probably less well known as it is in Latin, the language Wyclif of course usually wrote in, was bought for the church by eight subscribers in 1916. This is a copy of his *Trialogus*, the only genuine work of his to be printed in the sixteenth century, the first edition of 1525, published in Germany at Worms. The price paid, nine pounds, seems very reasonable now for such a rare book.
The Pulpit in Lutterworth Church, partly fifteenth century work from A E Treen, *Historical Memorials of Lutterworth, 1911*

Title page of Wyclif’s *Trialogus*, published in 1525 from the copy presented to Lutterworth Church in 1916
‘Wycliffe’ has become a regular Lutterworth proper name. My grandfather felt it necessary to publish his book about the town under the title *Lutterworth: the Story of John Wycliffe’s Town*. Apart from the Garage, a nineteenth century Terrace, a County Primary School, a Foundry and a local Finance Company have all been named after him.

Before leaving the memorials and relics, it is worth returning to the one antiquity that has been so evocative and was first singled out as Wyclif’s, the pulpit with its Gothic panels of carved woodwork and its hexagonal sound board. There is a possibility that a fifteenth century pulpit of this type originally faced into the chancel and could never have been used for preaching to the congregation before the time after the Reformation when the choir screen was dismantled. Be that as it may, even since then this one has evidently suffered several changes and it is possible to trace its history back further than the eighteenth century. At some time around 1824, according to Bloxam, and probably when the galleries round the church were installed, ‘The pulpit was removed from its ancient and appropriate position in the north aisle ... and set up in the centre of the nave, with clerk’s desk and reading pew massed together like a huge graduated excrescence.’ Even before it became such a ‘triple decker’ despised by this Gothic revivalist and had been made to fit in with the ‘tasteless arrangement of boxes and pews’ it had been altered. In 1653 the Church Wardens paid four pounds to a Lutterworth joiner for ‘work and timber for the Pulpit and the Canopy and new stairs’. In contrast to its present austere bare oak it was probably gaudily painted and adorned. In the same year twelve shillings were paid to a Lutterworth mason ‘for Colouring the Canopy and Pulpit’ and in 1671 eightpence was paid ‘for lop lace and silk to make the pulpit cloth’.

The sounding board was treated by Throsby with the same respect as the vestment and he made drawings of both for an engraving. The board was illustrated by Nichols as if still in place above the pulpit. Yet he recorded that it had suffered when the steeple fell through the roof in the great gale of 1703; it ‘was beat to pieces; but as many of its fragments were collected as could be upon the removal of the rubbish, and are now fixed against the wall in the vestry’, where for a time it was apparently used as a mount for the copy of the Denbigh ‘portrait’. If it had survived intact it might well have been included in the restoration of the 1860s. As it was, perhaps because Bloxam judged it to be only two hundred years old, it fell from favour. According to my grandfather’s book, ‘As doubts were cast upon the authenticity of this relic it was sold ... and is said to have been purchased by a member of the Fry family (of chocolate fame) and converted into a dining-table.’ Bloxam was evidently correct in assigning it to the mid seventeenth century. In 1657 the Church Wardens received six shillings ‘for the old canopy’; so that the work in 1653 may have included renewing the canopy as well as making new stairs.
Perhaps of more interest for a connexion with Wyclif are the two local myths concerning the disinterment of his remains, both first recorded by Nichols. The sixteenth century woodcut in John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* provided a memorable image of the Bishop's officers burning the bones and casting the ashes into the Swift – an image often referred to or repeated throughout the centuries. It was probably known in Lutterworth from the 1632 edition in the church, although the chain keeping it there failed to prevent the removal of the relevant pages. Nichols related that 'Those ashes were thrown under the arch of the bridge next the town; and the vulgar insist that the stream, in ever so great a flood, will not run under that arch.' Bottrill provided a let-out for superstition; 'The old bridge has of course been replaced by a modern one which was built by subscription in 1778, and probably to superstitious people this is the reason the above legend has now ceased to have any effect, as we never remember any difference in the flow of the water through the arches of the present bridge.'

The other story concerns the well or spring below 'Wellegriffe', the sixteenth century name for Stony Hollow, presumably the same spring which used to be piped to a drinking trough at the side of the road and which still flows in the garden of the house called 'The Springs'. One version has it that as Wyclif's bones were carried from the church to the waterside for burning one fell to the ground and was trampled into the earth. Some years later a man working there removed it, whereupon an unfailing spring issued from the hole. Nichols's version is more dramatic:

*Tradition also says, that, at the time of this ceremony, one person who staid, after the rest had left his grave, in order to search as strictly after the least bit of bone that might remain of him, as he (Wyclif) had done into the erroneous tenets of his adversaries, having found one, ran hastily to his companions with it in a triumphant manner; but, before he reached them, fell down, and dashed his brains out; and from the very place where he fell immediately gushed out a spring of water, which to this day is called St. John's Well. How far the Protestant is even with the Papist in this invention, let the reader judge.*

The suggestion here is that ignorant locals had somehow managed to elevate Wyclif to being a saint and certainly later writers have followed this view. This road, however, known in the sixteenth century as 'Spittle Lane', led over the bridge, known as the 'Spittle Bridge', to the Hospital of Saint John, founded a century and a half before Wyclif's time just across the river, and it is very likely that the well had long been dedicated to that saint. The name was certainly current in the early eighteenth century; an entry dated 1716 in the Town Masters' account book records that four shillings were 'paid for a spout of elm 7 foot long to lay at St. Johns well'. The association between the well and Wyclif, however, can also be traced back to the formative period of Wyclif mythology, the early
sixteenth century. The accusations of heresy made in 1531 against a draper from Much Hadham in Essex are recorded in Foxe’s Book of Martyrs. They included ‘for saying that Luther was a good man’ and ‘that he reported, through the credence and report of Master Patmore, parson of Hadham, that where Wicklif’s bones were burnt sprang up a well or well-spring’

There is an anomaly about the grim ceremony on the bank of the Swift. The orders were apparently that Wyclif’s bones should ‘be taken out of the ground, and thrown far off from any Christian burial.’ Why then were they burnt as well? It has been suggested to me by Charles Phythian-Adams that this may betray another association with Saint John. There is a tradition that the word ‘bonfire’ (bone fire) derives from the fires of bones burnt on the Eve of Midsummer’s Day, the Feast of the Nativity of Saint John, to drive away evil spirits. Possibly the original event in Lutterworth, or its re-enactment, was part of this festivity. As far as I have been able to ascertain, however, Wyclif’s bones were burnt in 1428 in the spring and not at Midsummer.

The presence of a representation of Saint John in stained glass in a lancet window in the chancel of the church need not be quoted as proof of another association between the saint and Wyclif. It was erected after the church restoration by my family in memory of their ancestor the Rev Richard Wilson, who was a curate here in the late eighteenth century and also the headmaster at the Sherrier’s School. Saint John was chosen ‘in allusion to the name by which he was affectionately known by his friends’.

Doubtless the commemoration of the sixth centenary of Wyclif’s death will help to perpetuate the principal myths about him, as proudly proclaimed last time by the Wycliffe Memorial that he was ‘The Morning Star of the Reformation, The First Translator of the Bible into the English Language’ or by the foundation stone of the Wycliffe Memorial Methodist Church ‘to the Glory of God and to the memory of John Wycliffe who died in this town 31st December 1384. This great Reformer not only translated the Bible into the English tongue, but sent out itinerant preachers throughout the length and breadth of the land.’ Whether of not the local stories will be remembered, we should be grateful that most of the Lutterworth Wyclif ‘relics’, whether because of their alleged association with the man or in spite of it, have been preserved together with the various memorials. No doubt they all continue to contribute to the satisfaction of those who visit the town because this revered historical character spent his last years and died here.
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H Webb, Wycliffe Memorial Methodist Church: 75 Years of Witness, 1905-1980, (Lutterworth, n d)
LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETIES
Additions and corrections to list published in vol 3 No 1

a. Periodicals  
b. Occasional Publications  
c. Affiliated to Leicestershire Local History Council

Ashby-de-la-Zouch Local History Society  
Mrs J Hampson, 21 South Street, Ashby-de-la-Zouch

c. Coalville and District Local History Society  
Miss C Reekie, Coalville Library, High Street, Coalville

Earl Shilton Local History Group  
Mr M S Johnston, Earl Shilton Community College, Heath Lane, Earl Shilton

b. Evington Local History Society  
Miss A Sharpe, Evington Library, The Common, Evington Lane

Fleckney Local History Group  
Mr M Burdett, 4 Main Street, Fleckney

Ibstock Historical Society  
Mrs S Cattell, 11 Laud Close, Ibstock

c. Harborough Museum Society  
Mr S P Mullins, Council Office, Adam and Eve Street, Market Harborough

abc Shepshed Local History Group  
Mrs L McDermott, 86 Conway Drive, Shepshed

Somerby Local History Group  
Mr R Mellows, The Carriers, Chapel Lane, Somerby

ac Greater Wigston Historical Society  
Mrs D Chandler, 3 Eastway Road, Wigston magna
LEICESTER: A Pictorial History
M Elliott  Phillimore  1983  £7.95

A brief chapter on the history of Leicester based on modern texts introduces the illustrations of objects, people and places, ranging from items in the Bronze Age hoard found at Welby to the new buildings of Charles Street in the 1930’s—the forerunners of the post World War II alterations of the road patterns and new buildings which have so transformed the face of the modern city.

Many of the views of Roman remains and surviving mediaeval buildings are very familiar to students of Leicester’s history. John Flower’s views of Southgate Street, Highcross Street and the old West Bridge shew the great variety of the buildings demolished in the nineteenth century improvement and expansion of the old town. The nineteenth century itself brought a variety of architectural styles, from the plain proportions of the Charles Street Baptist Chapel, the mock Gothic of the Collegiate and Saint Mary de Castro schools and the mock baronial of the Welford Road prison to the exuberant mixture of styles and decoration shown in the shops, offices and warehouses built in the 1880’s and 1890’s.

The illustrations have been carefully selected. Illustrators seldom have their due, so that some notes on the artists whose drawings are reproduced could have added to the interest of the book. It is for the reader to judge whether it succeeds in encouraging the ordinary citizen to look more closely at the buildings he sees on a walk or bus journey round the city.

G K L

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT FOR LEICESTER, 1832-1983: with an appendix of M.P.s 1294-1832
J D Bennett  Leicester Research Department of Chamberlain Music and Books (n d)  £1.80

Mr Bennett continues his county biographical work with this neatly produced sixteen page booklet. Members from 1832 onwards are listed, giving their parties. Brief notes are included on ten who had local connexions.

J G
The history of Leicester’s suburban parishes has been a popular research topic in recent years. Unlike its rural, unchanging counterpart the suburban parish has absorbed the overflow from adjacent urban development and has had to assimilate this rapid expansion within the framework of the village. The first two of these booklets illustrate such changes well, but with quite different approaches and styles.

*Old Aylestone* is an attractive glossy production with an appealing sepia cover photograph of halcyon days spent by Aylestone Boat House. The contents are arranged in a rather haphazard fashion, ‘The Parish Church’ being the third section after ‘Farming’ and ‘Schools’ following ‘The Holt’ (the Old Rectory) and ‘Shops’. A later section headed ‘The Village’ actually relates to the roads in the village and changes in housing. Although mention is made of earlier history, particularly of the church, most of the book is devoted to the nineteenth century and the rapid development of the village since the sale of the manor in 1869. This is a very readable, chatty work, based on local reminiscences and records and highlighted with carefully chosen photographs amply provided throughout.

*Old Evington*, by contrast, boasts a modern cover showing an aerial photograph of the village taken in 1966. The arrangement of the text is chronological, spanning pre-Domesday to twentieth century Evington and appendices detail and transcribe relevant manuscript sources. This is a less attractive production but more informative and balanced. A wealth of original records held locally and nationally were studied in detail by the author and are coordinated in the text side by side with local reminiscences and knowledge. Evington was developed far later than Aylestone, the Evington Hall estate being sold in 1930. A lengthy chapter charts the expansion from a population of 248 in 1901 to
18,196 in 1971. This is a very informative work and provides much interest for the local inhabitant and for the historian working further afield.

In his earlier account of *Old Braunstone* (reviewed here in Vol 2 No 4, 1973, pp 34-5), Jonathan Wilshere did not deal with its expansion after the compulsory purchase of the area by Leicester Corporation in 1925. In preparing this second edition he has taken the opportunity of adding some notes and of expanding the details given in the appendices but has otherwise kept the text largely unaltered.

In 1981 Simon Pawley, an MA student at the University Department of English Local History, completed his dissertation *Land, Labour and the Locality: Braunstone and the Typology of the Closed Village, 1780-1860*, and presented a copy to the Leicestershire Record Office. Even if this author is not interested in such a study with its more serious aims beyond using it as a quarry for occasional pieces of information to correct or add to his own text, it is a pity that he made no acknowledgement or reference to it.

The last of these, a sixteen page pamphlet, deals with one area where suburban housing has been kept at bay, partly by the Leicester Golf Course. The author ranges wide in reminiscences and in speculation based on his personal knowledge of the ground, from the dams of the mediaeval mills to the future of the Leicester Corporation Arboretum. An interesting project for the Evington Local History Society would be to follow up his theories with documentary research into the history of their village and of Stoughton Grange Farm.

This brief but vivid picture of the people of Oadby in 1881, who they were and what they did, is based on a careful study of the Census returns. The most startling feature of this growing village was the youth of the population and sometimes too the size of individual families. The men followed all the usual trades and crafts of most communities at this time, as well as the local trades of out-work in hosiery and the boot and shoe trade. Building was now increasing and for locals and incomers this helped offset the decline in agricultural
occupations. At this time, and no wonder when you consider the weight of domestic chores, nine out of ten married women stayed at home. Some of these no doubt helped with out-work as well as caring for their families; but, with coal fires and stoves to cook on and primitive equipment for cleaning, their work was surely never done.

This booklet is most valuable to local historians for the way in which it so clearly demonstrates the value of the Census returns in recreating a picture of life in a restricted area such as a village community. The lively line drawings from a charming decoration in the text.

G K L

BRAUNSTONE PROBATE INVENTORIES 1532-1778 (1983) £2.75
GLENFIELD PROBATE INVENTORIES 1542-1831 (1983) £1.95
KIRBY MUXLOE PROBATE INVENTORIES 1547-1783 (1983) £2.50
RATBY PROBATE INVENTORIES 1621-1844 (1984) £2.75

transcribed by J Wilshere
Leicester Research Department
of Chamberlain Music and Books

Following his booklet Evington Probate Inventories 1557-1819, reviewed here in the last issue, Jonathan Wilshere has now issued similar transcriptions for these four parishes. This completes his series, a collection comprising 327 inventories for central Leicestershire. He has adapted the glossary in each case.

J G

ASHBY DE LA ZOUCH: The Spa Town
K Hillier
Ashby-de-la-Zouch Museum 1983 £2

Ashby’s Ivanhoe Baths, opened in 1822, were one of many springing up throughout Georgian England to remedy and soothe the maladies of a high-living aristocracy. In its first year it attracted 3,624 bathers and in 1824 numbers at Ashby had exceeded those at nearby Moira. Development of the town into a fashionable watering place was swift. Several terraces of housing were erected, boarding houses and a theatre opened and the Hastings (Royal) Hotel
was built. The spa town's popularity and prosperity were already declining by the end of the century, however, and a gradual deterioration and misuse of the Baths led in 1962 to the demolition of the Spa buildings.

Kenneth Hillier's book not only recounts all facets of Ashby as a successful spa town but also provides a general description of the development of spa towns and the nature of their waters. He describes the earlier baths at Moira and the involvement of the Hastings family in these local commercial enterprises. This is an interesting history which has been thoroughly researched. The booklet has a pleasing appearance, illustrated with photographs and drawings which, although poorly reproduced in parts, are well chosen and plentiful.

THE HISTORY OF MARKET BOSWORTH
P J Foss

Market Bosworth, a town by virtue of its market but only of village size, just over 2,000 inhabitants at its peak, is probably most famous for the battle that took place just outside its bounds and for little else. But intensive research by the author has unearthed many notable and interesting figures connected with the town: Robert Burton, producer of a seventeenth century best-seller, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, and his brother William, Leicestershire's first historian; Samuel Johnson, who taught at the school but was so bullied by Sir Wolstan Dixie, the eccentric squire, that he left in 1731; and several members of the Dixie family, who bought the manor in 1589 and remained until the sale of the estate in 1885. Most fascinating of these is Lady Florence Dixie, who married the eleventh Dixie baronet in 1875. She travelled through Patagonia and South Africa, acting briefly as a war correspondent in the First Boer War, and whiled away her time at home writing verse and dramas and poems, including the poem engraved on the memorial to her dog Smut in The Wilderness at Market Bosworth.

The chronological arrangement of the book, beginning with a description of the Roman villa site, does not preclude considerable detail about people and places throughout. A large number of photographs and drawings illustrate the text and notes to the chapters, sensibly added at the end, clarify and relate particular points without breaking up the text. In all this is a handsomely produced book which will be appreciated by many.
This account of Hinckley provides a series of historical sketches of different aspects of the town's growth from pre-historic times to the present day. The town's hosiery trade, beginning in 1640, provided at first seasonal work for farmworkers, then a cushion against the effects of the 1759 enclosure and finally became an uncertain and often meagre livelihood for the bulk of the town's workers. After the hard times of the 1840's, factory based and steam powered knitting frames brought a new prosperity to the industry. There is an interesting account of the transport revolution of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries: first the turnpiking of Leicestershire main roads which increased Hinckley’s role as a market town and staging post for south west Leicestershire and beyond; then the coming of the Ashby canal in 1802 and the completion of its full length in 1805, forming a cheap bulk transport link with Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Coventry and the Oxford canal. By the early 1840's there was a weekly service to London and Manchester, Pickfords ran a passenger service and local emigrants to Australia in 1839 began their journey on the Ashby canal. Though the Midland Railway acquired the canal in 1846 its commercial use continued. The second half of the nineteenth century was a period of expansion and progress. The changes and improvements of the inter-war years, especially better housing conditions, have continued. In the past thirty years the old face of the town has been transformed and the formation of the new Borough, with greatly increased boundaries, in 1974 has given the town an interesting mix of urban and rural communities.

The outstanding feature of this book is the number and variety of its illustrations, though it is somewhat disconcerting to find comparatively modern views of the town in sections dealing with earlier periods. On balance this is a small price to pay for the preservation in book form of so many Victorian and early twentieth century photographs.

G K L
London. He has now printed privately his biography of the son, his own great 
grandfather, who was ‘manufacturer, inventor, engineer, railway promoter 
and surveyor, political writer and Baptist deacon, the nickname then meaning a 
scientist rather than a metaphysicist.’

Later stages in his life, his involvement with London cabs, with early 
aerodynamics and with Indian railways, might at first seem to have little 
interest for the Leicestershire historian. However the cab, which he completely 
re-designed in the 1830’s and which remained the standard London cab 
throughout the Victorian era, remained named after the architect who had 
obtained a patent in 1831, Joseph Hansom. Hansom was based on Hinckley 
and was backed by the Hinckley banking partnership of Heming and Needham. 
In the early 1840’s Chapman contributed work on the projected aerial steam 
carriage of William Samuel Henson, who was the son of a Leicester lacemaker.

Perhaps of most interest is the earlier period in the 1820’s when John was 
involved in the family business of making bobbin lace machinery that followed 
on from the clockmaking. The failure of this business was the reason for his 
leaving Loughborough for London. We learn something of his local involve­
ment in radical politics and a handbill printed after a riot in Loughborough in 
October 1831 is stated to have been written by him. Throughout his later life 
away from the town he kept in touch with his Loughborough relations and with 
the Baptist Church there.

This work is obviously a labour of love. Although it is based on family papers it 
rises above the level of the usual genealogical account of a family. The author is 
fortunate in that hundreds of his subject’s personal papers have survived, 
some of them in his own possession. Although it might have been inappropriate 
to try to list them here, it is not always clear whether he is quoting from original 
documents, from other contemporary sources, from family tradition or indeed 
from his own conjectures. He is to be congratulated for his courage in 
producing this account in such a readable form. The price, from the author’s 
address, includes postage.

J G

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE HARBOROUGH BUS: The History of the Market 
Harborough (and District) Motor Traction Company
P J Blakeman

P J Blakeman Bedford 1982 £6.95

This is a fascinating and very complete account of a pioneer attempt, initiated 
and maintained by a railwayman Mr Edward Sharpe, to provide a public motor 
omnibus service to Market Harborough and the surrounding villages.
Mr Sharpe, with much local support, set up the company in 1913. Two buses were purchased, single deckers with the then universal solid tyres, and the service became a reality in April 1914. Timetables were well planned, services to Leicester on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday, to Kettering on Friday and Sunday and a village service on Tuesday, Harborough market day. From the very beginning the buses were available for private hire and popular theatre excursions were run to Leicester. The Kettering service made Wicksteed Park easily accessible. Interesting details are given of the complicated licensing procedures, of the difficulties of drivers and conductors and of the ‘dirtying’ of standing places by oil droppings. Unhappily war conditions, call-ups, rising prices and, above all, the cuts in 1916 of petrol allocations forced the company into liquidation at the end of that year. It is thought that Mr Sharpe himself bought many of the assets and in 1917, whilst still working as a signalman, he set up his own company, working from his own home. In June that year the new company set out to run very similar services. His daughter Miss Ivy Sharpe acted as the conductor. This new service was maintained with difficulty but the vehicles were old and the venture seems to have collapsed in 1921.

The end of the war brought increasing competition in road transport. In 1919 the ABC bus services (William Arch and William Beesley) moved their vehicles from Bedford to Market Harborough and attempted to operate them on similar routes. They faced the same problems as the early company and were in 1922 being effectively ‘run off’ the road by Midland Red and other services, all of which made life difficult for small operators.

Well produced, well illustrated with photographs of the villages served, maps and diagrams, this is a fitting tribute to local enterprise and to a venture which might well have succeeded had it not been for the problems of wartime restrictions.

G K L

THE MELTON TO OAKHAM CANAL
D Tew  Sycamore Press  Wymondham  1984  £15

This complete rewriting of the author’s The Oakham Canal of 1968 includes the fruit of much documentary research and exploration on the ground. The final chapter, written with Trevor Hickman, describes the present traces of the canal, which are well illustrated in numerous photographs throughout the text. A list of all the illustrations and acknowledgements, especially for the two early photographs, would have helped; but most can be related to the details reproduced from a map made after 1849 for the Midland Railway Company, to
which the whole enterprise was sold. Both text and illustrations are beautifully printed.

The origins and development of the canal company are unusually well treated in that it is set in the context of Oakham as a market town. Analysis of the original shareholders, their occupations and places of residence shews that it was built almost entirely on local capital. Local landowners, including the troublesome Earl of Harborough, company officers and engineers involved in the construction and running of the business emerge not as heroes as in old-fashioned accounts but as real local figures recorded in the details of minute books, diaries, letters and newspapers.

J G

Archdeacon Johnson's Foundation: The Quartercentenary of Oakham and Uppingham Schools, 1584-1984

THE STORY OF OAKHAM SCHOOL
J Barber Sycamore Press Wymondham 1983 £18.00

BY GOD'S GRACE: A HISTORY OF UPPINGHAM SCHOOL
B Matthews Whitehall Press 1984 £19.50

Robert Johnson, Rector of North Luffenham and later Archdeacon of Leicester, founded simultaneously in 1584 two schools, Oakham and Uppingham. Because of their 'free' status, providing education for poor local boys, the foundation greatly benefited the county of Rutland. As recognition of both schools has extended far beyond the county boundaries it is fitting that the history of both should be written on the eve of their quartercentenary. Considering that the authors wrote independently, with no sight of each other's texts, there is little of the expected duplication. The Oakham history recites the full text of Johnson's will, the grant founding the schools and the Statutes and Ordinances for their upkeep. The Uppingham work includes an appendix on the school seal and a table of descent of the founder. Both texts have a similar, chronological arrangement, with chapters or sub-headings allocated to each headmaster recording the changes of attitude, expansion and vicissitudes of each school during his term. Each author, as an old boy, teacher and local historian of his school, has an unparalleled knowledge of its history; coupling this with intensive research of the foundation's records, each has produced a very comprehensive and informative work. The Oakham book is a glossier and more attractive production than its counterpart, which, with its closely-printed text and compact arrangement, has a more scholarly appeal. Both books are highly recommended and, despite their local themes, are of great interest not only to the student but also to the general reader.

HEB
The name Griffin is an important one for the history of coal mining and miners. Dr Alan Griffin has written on the subject and has established the National Mining Museum at Lound Hall, near Retford in Nottinghamshire. Much of his son Dr Colin Griffin's academic research has gone into this volume, a study of the struggle for the foundation of the local miners' unions to gain some measure of control over their working conditions. All this is set clearly in the context of the technical and economic history of the mines. Although as late of the 1880s one mine at Staunton Harold was still a one man affair, with the expansion of the market that followed the railways and the subsequent technical innovations in the mines, the local industry was employing a work force of over ten thousand men by the end of this period.

Working conditions are examined in this, 'the hardest work under heaven', particularly the risk of fatalities. Wages fluctuated not only seasonally but also from working to working and from week to week for a variety of reasons. Against this background an account is given of the various strikes and efforts to establish lasting unions. This is authoritative and readable history in that it is based on the working experiences of imnumerable miners. It is a carefully presented text, with maps, tables and appendices and illustrated with a dozen photographs, all in all very good value. The author is planning a second volume to cover up to the miners' strike of 1972.

J G

COALVILLE: THE FIRST 75 YEARS, 1333-1908
D W Baker
Leicestershire Libraries and Information Service
1983 £3.50

The success of last year's 'Coalville 150' celebrations as a local history event was founded on Denis Baker's long term researches into the history of the town. These he gathered into this book, which was published in time for the celebrations.

The wealth of detail soon dispels any assumption that the subject might be of little interest. The origins of this town in a coalfield, its dependence on transport and its diversification as it grew are all examined in turn. There is a chapter on the Whitwick Colliery Disaster of 1898, in which thirty five men lost their lives. The last two chapters, 'Religion and Education' and 'Life in the new town' assemble much diverse material for the social history of the town. Good use has been made of the files of the Coalville Times, of trade directories and Census figures and of research already undertaken by others.
Not only are there fifty odd illustrations, mainly from old photographs and postcards but the text is also supported by numerous maps and diagrams prepared specially for the book. This is the most attractive work of this sort published by the County Libraries and, for such an authoritative source-book and a readable account of the town which deserves long to remain the standard book on the subject, it is very reasonably priced.

HEATHER OVER THE YEARS: A Leicestershire village early in the century
R S Walker Leicestershire Museums, Art Galleries and Records Service 1983 £1.50

This very vivid picture of the daily life of ordinary people in a Leicestershire village is based on the memories of Ethel Gilliat, 1892-1983.

As a rural community Heather was still very feudal in its attitude to the Squire and Parson. Situated on the edge of the coal field, however, it was not a purely agricultural village and could offer jobs in the nearby pits and brickworks. Though it was almost a self-contained community, the local railway linked it with Coalville, the carrier’s cart with Ashby-de-la-Zouch and a mile away, within easy walking distance, the large village of Ibstock offered more services. Even so, only once in their childhood did Ethel and her brother go far away, on a visit by train to their grandmother in Horncastle.

The book describes their daily life in detail. Though life was hard, with a good garden, cheap food and their father’s steady job as porter and general factotum at Heather Station, the family was well fed, with meat every day, well clad and most carefully brought up. No toys, and no Comic Cuts on Sundays. At the beginning of the century they still had to fetch water from the well, coal was the only fuel and rush light and candles the main source of artificial light. Education was plain, simple and very short. Ethel was not quite twelve when she left school to help in a village shop, her brother Ernest twelve when he first worked in the brickworks before going down the pits. The many people who could not afford bicycles still walked to work. Leisure activities were very simple, church, chapel, and for the men the pub was their club; for children the Sunday School Treat and Christmas festivities. Ibstock had a small library and the Working Men’s Club had a brass band and lectures.

The illustrations are well chosen and this is a well written and neatly arranged piece of social history.
'I invite you to take a stroll with me around the village' Mr Eggington starts and lists all the premises and their occupants as he remembers them when a kid. He fills in with his later memories and details of village occupations, activities and organizations, like Lizzie Ison and her sister fetching coal and selling it by the hundredweight well into their 60's, the church sewing class which helped the poor obtain clothes and the various friendly societies making payments during sickness. He mentions himself, doing the Saturday shopping at the Co-op and returning with a barrow full of goods and some change from a gold sovereign, and his own family for their long association with Wesleyan Methodism in the village. His own sister was one of the eighty victims of the 'flu epidemic during November 1918. Outsiders would need a street map to follow the route and full title page details; but this sixteen page leaflet will be an excellent starting point for the new Ibstock Historical Society, for whom it was written. It is obtainable from the author at 172 Melbourne Road, Ibstock and proceeds from it are being devoted to the Church Tower Restoration Fund.

J G

FRISBY OBSERVED: A review of Frisby Historical Society’s first ten years (Frisby-on-the Wreake Historical Society) (1983)

Frisby-on-the Wreake has every reason to congratulate itself on the success of its village history society. This report shews the wide range of activities of the different members and of the Society as a body, especially the launching exhibition in 1974. Acknowledgement is made to the contributions of help and advice from local organizations, including our own Council. It fills a dozen pages of photocopied typescript in card covers and was made for circulation among members. Presumably copies were sent to the organizations, as to ours. It is a pity it was not made more widely available, with full title page details, as a model and encouragement to other local history groups.

J G
A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF LEICESTERSHIRE CHURCHES
Part 3: Documentary Sources
Fascicule 1: Parochial Records, Parishes A-H
D Parsons ed Department of Adult Education,
University of Leicester 1984 £4

THE ANGLICAN CHURCHES OF LEICESTER
G K Brandwood Leicestershire Museums, Art Galleries
and Records Service 1984 £2.95

While county parish churches are being re-grouped and city ones made redundant, the task of documenting their history is steadily pursued by the group directed by David Parsons. The first two parts of the Bibliography, reviewed here in Volume 2 Nos 9 and 11, listed references in periodicals and newspapers. The third, dealing with locally kept records such as churchwardens’ accounts, faculties, estimates, bills and the odd notes on fly leaves of parish registers, is being published in three sections. Most of the details are from the nineteenth century, with some from the eighteenth. In the meantime the project has engaged a research assistant whose work on church records not kept locally will be published separately in the series.

Geoffrey Brandwood, who was responsible for the second part of the Bibliography, has written an immediately useful coverage of all fifty two Anglican churches, mediaeval to modern, within the present City boundaries. St Margaret the grandest, St Nicholas the most ancient, St Martin the most altered and St Mary de Castro the most difficult to interpret – here re-assessed – of the mediaeval borough churches and All Saints, now redundant, occupy a third of the text. The discussions of their treatment in the last century overlaps with the account of the movement for building new churches, represented locally by the Church Building Society of the County and Town of Leicester, founded in 1838. The successes in the designs of St John the Divine, St John the Baptist in Clarendon Park Road and St James the Greater are noted alongside some of the Victorian failures. This is a most authoritative coverage, from late Saxon to 1980. Although the text, in the Museum A4 publications format, is not attractively presented, there is room for discussion, references and plenty of illustrations at a reasonable price.

J G
RUTLAND CHURCHES BEFORE RESTORATION: An Early Victorian Album of Watercolours and Drawings
commentaries and photographs by G Dickinson
contributions from R J Adams, G K Brandwood and R P Brereton
Barrowden Books 1983 £22.50

The reproduction of these unpublished drawings of the exteriors of many Rutland churches side by side with excellent photographs of the churches today, taken from the same angle as the originals, gives us an opportunity to assess what has been gained and lost in the Victorian restoration and often partial rebuilding of these parish churches. The original drawings are now in the possession of Uppingham School. Though seven of them are signed ‘AW’ and dated 1838 or 1839, the artist is so far not precisely identified. It is thought most probably to have been either the wife or the daughter of the Rev George Wilkins, Rector of Wing, who came from a distinguished family of architects.

The foreword, the introductory articles on the early nineteenth century Anglican Church and the role of the Cambridge Camden Society in church restoration, as well as the excellent brief notes on the individual churches, make this a useful supplement to other guides.

G K L

BEFORE MY TIME: THE STORY OF THE LEICESTER DRAMA SOCIETY
J Graham
(no imprint) (1983?) £3.50

This is the story of the Little Theatre and the society whose home it is. The first productions were at the Royal Opera House in 1922. After a cramped period in the hall of the YMCA building, the society’s own theatre was opened in the former Baptist chapel in Dover Street in 1930, when a full house would have brought in the sum of £44 6s. In spite of difficulties during the War and a disastrous fire in 1955, the enterprise continues to thrive and the author includes much interesting criticism and discussion about the aims of the society and its contribution to the cultural life of the City.

J G
Hardly had the University started to function in 1920 when Mr Thomas H Hatton of Anstey Pastures made an offer of the magnificent gift of his topographical collection to the Library. The Hatton Collection laid the foundation of one of the very best local history libraries and, eventually, of the Department of English Local History. Hatton had his own boot factory in Leicester and, apart from books, his interests included greyhound racing, boxing and crossword puzzles.

Besides details of the local history collections, this sixty page booklet contains much of interest about the growth of the University and its facilities and administration. It is sold at half price to past and present members of the University.

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George Davenport was born in 1758 to a well established and wealthy family who had settled in Wigston in the early sixteenth century. Despite a good start in life he soon succumbed to petty thefts, desertion from various armies and robbery, until he was finally apprehended in 1797 for robbery at Kegworth, found guilty and hanged. Barry Lount states that he reputedly operated as a local Dick Turpin for nearly twenty years, robbing the middle and upper classes to give to the needy. However, because of the nature of his life there is only a patchy record of his activities. The introduction states that the booklet tries to separate fact from fiction but it is not easy to differentiate between the facts gleaned from Assize papers, newspapers and contemporary accounts and the romantic stories of his life. Although the question ‘what was he really like?’ remains largely unanswered, this is an entertaining piece of work, clearly written, with ample black and white drawings throughout.
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**Also**
Leicestershire Museums  
Mrs J M Mason, ‘Ramses’, Walton, Lutterworth
The River Swift—showing the supposed spot where Wycliffe’s Bones were burnt.