the
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The Leicestershire Historian, which is published annually, is the magazine of the Leicestershire Local History Council and is distributed free to members. The Council exists to bring local history to the doorstep of all interested people in Leicester and Leicestershire, to provide opportunities for them to meet from time to time, to act as a coordinating body between the various county history societies, to encourage and support local history exhibitions and generally to promote the advancement of local history studies.

In particular the Council aims to provide a service to all the local history societies and groups throughout the county, by keeping in touch with them and offering advice. All members receive a Newsletter, which includes a diary of events, reports on activities and publicity for groups.

One-day Conferences or seminars on a particular topic are held in the spring and autumn, to which members (both individuals and groups) are invited, to meet and compare notes about their activities. An up-dated list of groups, many of them affiliated as members of the Council, is published in the magazine. There are summer outings and the AGM is held in May, kindly hosted by one of the affiliated groups.

The different categories of membership and the subscriptions are set out below. If you or your group wish to become a member, please contact the Membership Secretary, whose address is given at the back.

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EDITORIAL

The conjectural plan of the siege of Leicester in 1645 on our cover is taken from *The History of Leicester during the Great Civil War* by J F Hollings, published in Leicester in 1840. As promised last year, this year’s issue commemorates the 350th anniversary of the siege. Our opening article is by Paul Courtney, whose original researches into the archaeology of the siege have encouraged him to reconsider the factions among the defenders of the town.

Last June my fiancée and I went on a WEA narrow-boat cruise of the city of Leicester. The guide was Bob Payne, who mentioned that he had come across references to a humane society started when the danger of drowning in canals was a new threat. He has now written for us an account, absorbing in its details, of this local example of nineteenth-century philanthropy.

The parish pump is often taken as a symbol of all that is petty in local government. David Knight shews, however, that the life-and-death task of providing a clean water supply in a crowded town such as Hinckley in the nineteenth century was a crucial factor in the replacement of *ad hoc* regulation under the manorial court by a new Local Government Board.

Thanks are again due to Christine Taggart, the Leicestershire Libraries and Information Service representative on the Leicestershire Local History Council, for securing book reviews by her colleagues.
PARLIAMENTARIANS DIVIDED OR, FEAR AND LOATHING AT THE SIEGE OF LEICESTER, 1645
Paul Courtney

1995 marks the 350th anniversary of the siege of Leicester during the English Civil War. The late seventeenth-century French military engineer Vauban outlined the typical textbook siege with sophisticated Continental defences in mind. It would last 48 days before culminating in the storming of the fortified town.¹ There were in fact two sieges of Leicester, though neither lasted long enough to merit the formal title of 'siege'.² The first, on the 30th of May 1645, lasted only a few hours before the Royalist field army stormed the overstretched and undermanned defences. Classic aspects of siege warfare such as mining (tunnelling) the defences and the use of incendiary mortars to fire the town were therefore absent. The Royalists were probably unable to use their mortars due to their high trajectory and relatively limited horizontal range. In sieges it was often necessary to move mortars close up to the defences under cover of prepared earthworks. The Royalists, clearly unimpressed by Leicester's defences, dispensed with such elaborate preparations.

The wall around the Newarke, a former ecclesiastical precinct, was quickly breached by the Royalist heavy guns fired from a battery, probably sited somewhere near the modern Leicester Infirmary. The Royalists used a ‘great Spanish piece’ firing canister shot (a cannon firing small shot or shrapnel enclosed in a container) to devastating effect. Parliamentarian troops under Major James Innes successfully defended the breach in the wall, located in Mill Lane, but the Royalist troops stormed the eastern defences of the town by using bundles of rushes to fill the ditch and ladders to climb the defensive bank. Incendiary grenades filled with ‘wildfire’ (a form of Greek fire) were used to create panic among the defenders. Once over the defences the Royalists opened the gates for the cavalry to enter the town. Resistance continued within the town and some women even threw tiles from the roofs upon the heads of the enemy. Some slaughter of unarmed defenders by Royalist troops followed, but contemporary accounts of atrocities were probably exaggerated for propaganda purposes.
The storming of Leicester was not a notable affair in the military sense. The defenders, including untried local militia, numbered around 1,000 to 1,500 men. They had little chance against the full Royalist field army of over 10,000 men with its battle-hardened troopers and skilled engineers. The siege was, however, of considerable stratetic importance. It succeeded in drawing the Parliamentarian field army into an engagement. Unfortunately for the King the vital clash at Naseby on the 14th of June was disastrous for the Royalist cause.

A second siege of Leicester followed, only two weeks after the first. The victorious Parliamentarians brought back from Naseby the very same guns which had been used in the first siege. These were once more brought to bear on the Newarke wall, which had been hastily repaired in the interim by the Royalists. It was again quickly breached and the Royalist governor surrendered on the 16th of June.

The divisions which existed between the Parliamentarian and the Royalist aristocracy and gentry in Leicestershire are well known, as is the enmity between the Greys of Groby and Hastings of Loughborough, which can be traced back to the fifteenth century. An aspect that has received relatively little attention, however, is the divisions evident within the Parliamentarians who defended Leicester. Most of the contemporary literature on the sieges was in the form of vitriolic polemic between the defeated Parliamentarian defenders.

Like many other towns, Leicester shewed signs of wishing to stay neutral in the early part of the Civil War. It was impossible to maintain neutrality and Leicester soon fell within the Parliamentarian orbit. Control of the town was in the hands of a county committee, composed of local notables, and a military governor. The Parliamentarian governor at the time of the siege was Colonel Theophilus Grey of Burbage, third son of the earl of Kent (not to be confused with Colonel Henry Grey, his predecessor as governor of Leicester).

Preparations for the defence of the town were undoubtedly negligent. A pamphlet written in 1645 indicates that work had begun about spring 1643, within nine months of the beginning of the war. In the accounting year beginning Michaelmas (the 29th of September) 1643 houses outside the southern defence were demolished and the town as a whole went out to repair the defences. Earthwork bulwarks or projecting defences were erected at the gates and other strategic points. An earthen bank or ditch, perhaps with palisading, stretched round at least part of the town.
The Magazine. This mediaeval gateway to the Newarke served as the town armoury during the Civil War. Lithograph by John Flower, published in Leicester in 1826
Sir Henry Hastings, commander of the Royalist garrison in Ashby-de-la-Zouch, reported in 1643 that the Leicester works stretched for two miles and that the side along the River Soar was otherwise unprotected. He noted the ease with which both Leicester and Derby could be stormed. Such long defences were not untypical of the early stages of the Civil War, for instance at Chester. Royalist field commanders, Princes Rupert and Maurice, twice shortened the Chester defences, levelling considerable parts of the city to do so. Understandably, commanders with their roots in the locality found such decisions more difficult. The defences of Leicester were certainly untenable in 1645. The southern defence was apparently shortened shortly before the siege. This necessitated the levelling of all the houses that still remained outside the south gate. It may be significant that this southern suburb was the poorest part of Leicester and its citizens presumably powerless compared with their wealthier brethren outside the north and eastern gates of the town.

More surprising was the inadequate defence of the Newarke, potentially a strong point of the town. It was still surrounded by a stone wall, provided with gun loops along Mill Lane. These survived long enough to be photographed before their demolition in the mid-nineteenth century. Stone walls on their own, however, offered little defence against artillery. They needed to be protected either by an earthen bank in front or by throwing up an earthen lining or rampart behind in order to absorb the impact of cannon fire. No such bank was constructed at Leicester and the wall was quickly breached.

It seems that the inadequate defence of the Newarke had its roots, at least partly, in an extraordinary dispute in the spring of 1645. According to a post-siege pamphlet the county committee ordered the Newarke to be fortified in March 1645. One Colonel George Booth, however, visiting the town on his way north, was alarmed at the fears of the townsfolk that the town’s elite, safe in the Newarke, would abandon the rest of the town to its own devices. He therefore persuaded the committee against fortifying the Newarke. An anxious enquiry from the Committee for both Kingdoms brought a reply from the town that they were continuing to strengthen the defences of the whole town and ‘never have had further thoughts in fortifying the Newark, than for a reserve in time of absolute necessity, and a more safety for our Magazeen, it being a place easily made a very strong pееce’. Another pamphlet accused Booth of having stayed at a malignant inn and having been deceived by tales of unrest in the town.
The south wall of the Newarke, scene of some of the fiercest fighting of the siege. Unfortunately this wall in Mill Lane was destroyed by late nineteenth-century development. Lithograph by B F Scott, published in the 1840 history by J F Hollings.
Leicester could hardly have been successfully defended, given the disparity between the sizes of the forces involved. In addition the defences were too long and the Newarke had not been prepared to resist artillery attack. Theophilus Grey, the governor, was a local man and was probably reluctant to destroy large segments of the town. The members of the county committee were probably also of a similar mind. According to Major Innes’s account, Mr Wadland, a member of the committee, prevented proper defence of the Newarke by refusing to allow his ground to be cut up. In the event the ease with which Leicester was taken probably kept down casualties and certainly reduced the damage of property to a minimum, although the town was said to have been thoroughly looted by the victorious troops. The captured officers, who included Grey, who had been wounded, and Major Innes, were soon ransomed. It was after the return of these officers to London that a vitriolic battle of words, waged by means of privately published pamphlets, broke out.

Major Innes accused Grey of being personally responsible for the fall of Leicester. He condemned the inadequacies of the defences and accused Grey of having been shot in the back while running away. Colonel Grey and the committee replied that this was a pack of lies and that Innes had exaggerated his own role in the defence of the town.

It is difficult to assess the reliability of Major Innes’s account or his motives for publicizing it. Was he a jealous and bilious upstart involved in a personality clash or was he a professional officer outraged by the incompetence of his social superiors?

Relations between the county committee and Lord Grey of Groby, Commander of the Midland Association, were far from good. Lord Grey was fighting in Derbyshire in the summer of 1644 but was subsequently absent from the area, probably in London in his role as Member of Parliament. Unsuccessful calls were made for him to return and impose discipline over his officers, who were at loggerheads with the county committee. Innes’s contempt for the committee may have originated in these quarrels and the committee probably felt abandoned by Lord Grey and the Midland Association.

Little is known of Major Innes’s background. Immediately before the siege he was in charge of a garrison based outside Leicester at Humberstone. In March 1644 he had played a decisive role in the skirmish at Mountsorrel. In this engagement he saved the day by countermanding orders of his superior officer, Sir Edward Hartopp, and leading an attack on the Royalists.
This initial victory was surrendered by the indecisiveness of Hartopp, who arrived later at the scene and took command. This incident tends to support the view of Innes as a hot-headed but brave and decisive captain frustrated by the military incompetence of gentleman amateurs like Edward Hartopp and Theophilus Grey. Nevertheless in the aftermath of the siege of Leicester it was Innes who quickly disappears into obscurity after publishing his grievances in two pamphlets. Colonel Theophilus Grey reappears as one of the commanders at the famous siege of Royalist Newark in the following summer, in charge of a troop drawn from Leicester and Beccles. He went on to live a long life as a country gentleman at Burbage, until his death in 1679.

This account stresses the importance of social and political context when analysing military history or archaeology. The pattern of urban destruction in Leicester suggests that self-interest and contempt for the poor characterized the urban and gentry elite who led the Parliamentarian side in the county. The Parliamentarian struggle was clearly not a revolution by, or on behalf of, the dispossessed, though some found a voice for the first time during these years. More especially the defence of Leicester shows the military incompetence which characterized so much of the English Civil War. It was a war fought largely by amateurs in a country long used to peace within its own shores. Expertise was generally limited to foreigners or Englishmen with experience in the wars of religion waged on the Continent, wars marked by both a professionalism and a viciousness rarely seen in England.

The poor defences of Leicester were nevertheless probably a boon to many of its inhabitants. The quickness of the siege and inevitable storming by a superior force probably lessened both damage to property and loss of life. In the short term the siege brought much suffering to inhabitants. The long-term impact on the town is difficult to judge. The Newarke at least appears to have been strongly fortified with earthen bastions by the Parliamentarians under General Fairfax, perhaps completing work begun by the Royalists. A military ditch recently excavated at the corner of Bonners Lane and Oxford Street probably belongs to this phase of re-fortification.

By 1648, however, the Civil War defences of Leicester were being demolished and in 1688, the year of the Glorious Revolution, the militia commander found it necessary to order the digging of a new ditch to protect the Newarke.
References:


2. For a more detailed account of the siege, giving references to the primary and secondary sources, see Paul and Yolanda Courtney, ‘A siege examined: the Civil War archaeology of Leicester’, *Post-medieval Archaeology*, XXVI, 1992, pp 47-90


Gun embrasure in the south wall of the Newarke. Engraving by J Burton, published in the 1840 history by J F Hollings
THE WREAKE AND EYE HUMANE SOCIETY
Bob Payne

The Melton Navigation was an inland waterway constructed along the River Wreake and Eye between Syston and Melton Mowbray in the early 1790s and probably opened in the late summer of 1795. The establishment of the Rivers Wreake and Eye Humane Society in June that year was no coincidence. Making the river navigable inevitably made it a more dangerous, yet more attractive place. In order to provide sufficient water for boats some harmless sections of shallow stream were transformed into permanent lengths of deeper water. Twelve locks and accompanying works were also constructed, dangerous at the best of times, and potential playgrounds for children. Furthermore the arrival of boats and cargoes meant the arrival of people, not only boatmen, many of whom could not swim, but also ordinary persons who came to the local wharf to collect their goods or simply to watch.

The motives of its initiators may not have been entirely philanthropic. Amongst the prime movers was the Reverend Henry Browne of Hoby, a riparian owner and a leading opponent of the Navigation Company in fighting for damages attributable to the construction of the navigation. His attitude may have reflected some local resentment against the intrusion of this new means of communication and transport.

The Society was established at a meeting held in the White Swan Inn, Melton Mowbray, on Tuesday the 30th of June 1795. Two public notices in the Leicester Journal provide information about this event. The Leicester Journal of the 19th of June 1795 set the scene:

HUMANE SOCIETY

It being the intention of the Gentlemen residing on the Banks of the River Wreake to form an Association on the Plan of the Royal Humane Society, for the recovery of persons apparently drowned. The attendance of those Gentlemen who are disposed to countenance such an Undertaking, is requested at the Swan Inn, at Melton, at 12 o’clock on Tuesday the 30th. June to consider of the best method of putting the said plan into execution, and for forming the same into a regular permanent Society.

The outcome of this initial meeting was set out three days later in a long and fascinating Public Notice in the Leicester Journal of the 3rd of July 1795.
This provides crucial information about the Society. It was to ‘be formed upon the Plan of the Royal Humane Society of London’. The Society’s purpose had been extended from ‘the recovery of persons apparently drowned’ to that ‘of giving immediate Assistance . . . in all Cases of suspended Animation, either from Drowning, the Stroke of Lightning, Frost, Hanging, or from noxious Vapours’. It was to ‘be called the Rivers Wreak and Eye Humane Society’ and it was to be active ‘from Melton-Mowbray inclusive, to the Junction of the Wreak with the River Soar’. It was agreed ‘that a Reward of Four Guineas be offered to such Persons as shall be principally active in recovering any Persons from the Water’ and the method of distribution of this reward was carefully prescribed. It was agreed that an annual subscription should be raised to provide such rewards and defray expenses. An annual meeting of the subscribers was to be held on July the 1st each year and local clergy were to ‘be requested to preach an Annual Sermon for the Benefit of the Society’. Earl Ferrers became President of the Society and four local surgeons offered their services free of charge. Annual subscriptions were acknowledged.

The notice also refers to the assistance to be made available to would-be rescuers:

That . . . a Drag . . . be hung up in every Church or Chapel, within the Limits of the said Society, and that the Instructions for the Recovery of the apparently Dead, presented by the Royal Humane Society, be printed upon large Paper, and Framed, and hung up with each Drag.

The ‘drag’ was presumably a rope with hooks, to be used in the search for and rescue of bodies. A manuscript notice about the Society, preserved in the Leicestershire Record Office among papers from the parish church of Hoby, recites the nine ‘Instructions for the Recovery of Persons apparently Dead’, which include ‘cautions’ about handling bodies and a range of suggestions for restoring life, such as a form of artificial respiration and the employment of electricity.

The leading influence at the meeting was Joseph Boulbee of Rotherby, the Leicester banker, whose village gave an initial donation of two guineas. He was a businessman and self-proclaimed philanthropist, who had taken pains to obtain information from the Royal Humane Society in London. Boulbee, who became the first Treasurer and Secretary of the Society, could well afford his philanthropy; he and his father before him had made a substantial fortune from their stewardship of coal mines at Coleorton and Newbold in the Leicestershire coalfield. He was currently being pursued for £20,000 damages which the mine owner Sir George Beaumont claimed was due to him as a result of Boulbee’s dishonest management.
The *Leicester Journal* of the 10th of July applauded the establishment of the Society:

Amongst the many benevolent exertions which characterise the present era, none has a greater claim on the feelings of the philanthropist than that of the Humane Society, on the important subject of resuscitation — the inhabitants on the borders of the River Wreak and Eye are indebted to the attention of Mr. Boulbee of Rotherby for a similar institution in that neighbourhood which we hope will be followed by every other district in the country; for on what can the attention of the rich be better bestowed than on an institution which stretches forth its preserving hand alike to the humble and illustrious; to the favoured child of affluence, and to the unhappy vassal of poverty and misfortune.

Despite the publicity given to the Society, it is clear that initially the motives and intentions of its founders were misinterpreted or misrepresented. A year later, following the Annual General Meeting of the Society on the 1st of July 1796, the *Leicester Journal* felt it necessary to say:

It is with much concern we find that the philanthropic intentions of this society are not generally understood and that the erroneous idea that the subscribers only are to receive benefit from the Institution has taken hold of the minds of the inferior class or people in particular. We are desired from the best authority to contradict so injurious a report, and declare that the efforts of this society will be directed to every unfortunate individual, whether rich or poor, and that so far from any expenses being incurred by the parents or their families, very considerable rewards are offered to such persons who give assistance. Nor can too much honour be given to the gentlemen of the faculty who have so handsomely offered on all occasions of suspended animation to give their time and assistance gratis.

Whatever people’s feelings and beliefs, the good work of the Society was demonstrated in August 1797, when the decisions of its Annual Meeting were reported in the *Leicester Journal*:

Resolved
That the thanks of the Society be given to Mr. Williamson of Gaddesby for his exertion in removing William Hudson from the water at Brooksby Lock whereby he was saved from drowning.
That the thanks of the Society be also given to Mr. Robert Kitchen for his exertion in recovering . . . Allsop from the water in Scalford Brook whereby he was saved from drowning.
Also that the reward of one guinea be given to Thomas Goddard for recovering a child of five years old from the brook in Rearsby Village, thereby preventing his being drowned.
It was Robert Boultbee who sent this notice to the *Leicester Journal*. Presumably he had been elected to the post of Secretary at the Annual Meeting in place of Joseph Boultbee, his father, who at this time was being forced to vacate the mines which he had on lease from Sir George Beaumont.

Further changes took place during that year. The notice for the 1798 Annual Meeting went out under the name of the Reverend Henry Browne of Hoby, describing him as both Treasurer and Secretary. Henry Browne was now to hold these posts until his death in 1838 and one suspects that without his interest the Society would have floundered long before it did. He had been one of the original proponents of the Society, attending the first meeting in 1795 and being one of the first subscribers. He was undoubtedly a man of strong humanitarian instincts. He was also a riparian owner and seems to have been a thorn in the flesh of the Navigation Company. As will be seen later, the Navigation Company received some bad publicity as a result of the Society’s activities.

Henry Browne’s influence immediately became apparent. It was probably partly his efforts which resulted in so many of the local clergy subscribing to the Society. One of the resolutions emerging from the Annual Meeting involved a request to ten local clergymen ‘to preach an annual sermon in support of the Society’. This was, of course, in pursuit of one of the original 1795 declarations. Some rewards were also announced:

that half a guinea be given to Thomas Kerr and Thomas Parsons, two persons who recovered Mary Carradine, late of Syston, in the County of Leicester out of a pond of water and thereby prevented her from drowning;
that the sum of one guinea be given amongst the persons who carried the body from the water, to be distributed in such manner and such proportions as Mr. Dalby, who administered the medical assistance upon the occasion, shall think proper.

Some discussion appears to have taken place at the meeting about extending eligibility for reward. It was agreed:

that the reward of this society to be extended in cases of suspended animation, happening within any Parish in which there shall be a resident annual subscriber of one guinea.

For a period of six years no further notices of awards were published, though annual meetings were regularly advertised. The date of these was now later in the year, either late August or early September. One of these notices reveals that an annual dinner was one of the attractions of membership, the notice for 1803 advising members to attend at one-o-clock ‘that the business relative to that institution may be settled before dinner’.
In 1804 the Society returned into the public eye, this time publishing the tale of William Moseley, boatman, who ‘drowned by falling into the Melton Navigation in attempting to raise one of the clews of the lock owing to the unsafe position of the machinery over the water’. Presumably the paddles on the lock gates were opened by a mechanism on the gate itself, which involved the operator standing out on the gate.

Commendably the Navigation Company did give orders for the machinery to be removed to the bank; but the Humane Society was rightly concerned that the danger of the system should be widely publicised and therefore resolved ‘that it be recommended to the Proprietors of all other Navigations to attend to the above facts and make the necessary alterations’ and ‘that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to Dr Hawes, the Treasurer of the Royal Humane Society, that the above recommendations, if approved, may have the sanction of that Society.’

In the following year, 1805, the Leicester Journal used the occasion of the Annual Meeting to press for a similar Society in Leicester:

The Rivers Wreak and Eye have to boast of one of the ornaments of the age, a HUMANE SOCIETY, for the recovery of drowned persons; at present Old Father SOAR is deprived of this honour, even though it is devoutly to be wished; had so valuable intention been established there is reason to believe that at least two deserving objects (who have fallen victims during the present summer) might have been dispensing comfort in the bosom of their families!

The leading citizens of Leicester responded immediately and quickly and within a period of a month had established a Leicester Humane Society, complete with membership, subscription, receiving rooms for victims, directions to be observed in ‘cases of apparent death’ and an interesting commentary on cases which would benefit from the formation of the Society:

And here I would suggest to those who are not of the medical profession that the resuscitative processes, although generally applied to cases of drowning, is equally applicable to cases of suspension by rope, smothering, suffocation, intense cold, immoderate doses by opium, intoxication, and accidents by lightning.

Members of the Wreake and Eye Humane Society could justly be proud that their Society had not only set the example for their larger neighbour, but that it had done so by ten clear years. The Wreake and Eye must be one of the earliest examples of such an institution in the provinces. As if to confirm the importance of such a society to the people of Leicester, the
Wreake and Eye Society took this opportunity to publish a long list of resolutions:

That Thomas Dolby be allowed one guinea for saving Samuel Stamford from being drowned in the Ratcliffe Lock on 21st June 1804.
That the thanks of this meeting be given to the Reverend Mr. Noble for his exertions in endeavouring to recover William Mayes from drowning.
That William Sheldon be allowed 10s.6d. for going over to Melton for medical assistance.
That Samuel Pepper be allowed 5s.-0d. for endeavouring to recover William Mayes.
That Thomas Madden, John Sheldon, John Knapp and Richard Plumtree be allowed 2s. 6d. each for their services on that occasion.
That James Knapp and William Knapp be allowed 5s.-0d. each for their exertions in getting Joseph Ferriman out of the Frisby Lock in April last.
That the thanks of this meeting be given Mr Fowler, who has this day become a member of this Society, for his offer of attending as a medical assistant which this Society gratefully accept.

and that the above resolutions be published in the Leicester paper.

H Browne Treasurer and Secretary

Such a catalogue of effort immediately following on the Leicester Society’s inaugural meetings surely provided the impetus for that city to make its own contribution. Indeed in the following May (1806) the Leicester Humane Society responded with a list of resources and awards.

In September of 1806 the Wreake and Eye Society returned to the Journal with its own set of resolutions. It had been twelve months of high public consciousness and a gratifying amount of public activity in terms of saving lives in the neighbouring navigations:

At the Anniversary of the Rivers Wreak and Eye Humane Society held at the Swan Inn Melton Mowbray on Monday, 1st August 1806, the following resolutions were adopted:
That a reward of one guinea be given to Mary Robinson for her praiseworthy exertions in extricating from the water Sarah Lindsey on the 10th July last near the Holm Bridge in the Lordship of Hoby and that Hannah Robinson be rewarded with 7s. 0d. for her assistance.
That a reward of half a guinea be given to Ann Bilson for her exertions in extricating William Gilson, the son of Edward Gilson, from the Oakham Canal.
That the thanks of the Society be given to the Reverend Doctor Ford for his exertion in recovering Miss Caroline Ford from the water.
That a Committee be called by the Treasurer to consist of himself and
the four members resident nearest the spot where any accident shall happen in which suspended animation shall not occur but praiseworthy exertions to prevent it, to determine on a proper reward to be given for such exertion to be immediately paid by the Treasurer.
That John Bitlingal be paid half a guinea for his assistance in furthering the ends of the Society.
That every person expecting any reward from the Society must apply to the Rev. H. Browne of Hoby, the Treasurer, or of the General Meeting of the Society on the 30th August at the Swan Inn in Melton Mowbray.

H. Browne, Treasurer.

Such sets of resolutions were not regular features in the local press. Four years were to pass before another batch was given prominence, though each year the Annual Meeting took place in the White Swan in Melton. This may be because of the effect of the fourth of the above resolutions where at least some of the Society’s business was delegated to committee level.

At some point during 1807 Charlotte Durrance was drowned in the Canal in Melton. In his manuscript ‘Melton Mowbray in the year 1807 or thereabouts’ Thomas Ward described her graphically as the person who ‘made buns every Tuesday and brought them to Peggy Pears’ school; the whole of the children took their penny for a bun’. She had moved house in Melton to Birmingham Row, the cottages which lay alongside the Oakham Canal, and it was presumably here that she drowned. Her drowning, however, receives no mention by the Humane Society.

For two years the Society did not publish any account of its deeds and it was not until 1810 that the next public notice appeared, setting out the resolutions passed at its Annual Meeting:

That a reward of half a guinea be given to Ann Bilson for rescuing a child from a perilous situation in the Melton Canal in October last.
That the sum of one guinea be given to William Underwood of Asfordby for his exertion on finding the body of a child accidently drowned in the River Wreak in July last.
That two guineas be given to the Rev. T. B. Burnaby to be distributed at his discretion to persons not exceeding six, active in their exertions at Mr. Marriot’s house in the process of resuscitation.
That the thanks of the Society be given to Mr. Fowler and to Mr. Whitchurch of Melton Mowbray for their ready attendance and active exertions in the case of the child aforesaid.
That the thanks of the Society be given to Mr. Marriot for his ready reception of the child into his house and providing such things as were
That a galvanic apparatus be provided for the use of the Society under the direction of Mr. Fowler.

In 1811 it was an employee of the Navigation Company, John Rastall the toll collector at the Junction, who benefited from the existence of the Society:

One guinea reward to Anthony Repton for rescuing the infant son of John Rastall of the Junction House, in the Parish of Cossington, from being drowned in the Navigation on January 4th last.

Two years later, in 1813, four rescues were publicly announced, together with one tragedy, an accident which took place some distance from the Wreake in Leicester itself:

That Amy Adcock of Aylestone receive the reward of one guinea which should have been given to her son Samuel Hubbard for his meritorious exertion in endeavouring to rescue William Kind from the River Soar in the Parish of Aylestone in which attempt he lost his life.

Nine years elapsed before any further public recognition was given, though the Society regularly held its Annual Meeting in the Swan. In September 1822 the Society published a notice recording three rescues, including one by George Mount of Frisby Mill.

Some people, of course, were not rescued. The *Leicester Journal* of October the 17th 1823 gives an account of an inquest in Asfordby on Thomas Shepherd, aged 9, ‘companion of a boatman and was on his passage from Melton to Loughborough’. The boy disappeared while the boatman was taking his horse into Asfordby, perhaps to the blacksmith. The body was later discovered ‘floating on the canal’. There is no mention of a particularly gruesome story of 1820 which appeared as a news item in the local papers. Four men working for the Navigation Company discovered the decomposing corpse of a baby child near Hoby.

September 1825 saw five rescues rewarded, including the only recorded occasion when water was apparently not involved:

- N. Hopkins from the water in the Parish of Queniborough.
- George Bass out of the Navigation basin on 9th May last.
- William Bilson, aged 2 years, from fire.
- John Denny from the water at the Bridge near Eye Kettleby (saved by a passing soldier).
- a child from the water near Ratcliffe Mill.
Two years later in 1827 six rescues were commemorated; on this occasion the Oakham Canal seemed to be the attraction since it was involved in the case of ‘Luke Kinnerley from the Oakham canal, near Stapleford Bridge’, George Fitzpatrick and Sarah Gilson. In two other rescues it was probably children involved: ‘George Davie and Redmile Christian from the Old River, adjoining the Play Close in Melton Mowbray’ and ‘John Dixon and Frances Dixon from the River below Asfordby’. At Rearsby it was the daughter of William Hives, the miller, who was rescued by William Lockton.

The next notice in the *Leicester Journal*, in 1831, was of substantial length and content. The Society had been in existence for 36 years and doubtless some of the earlier subscribers who had been committed to an annual payment had now died. Henry Browne took the opportunity to remind everyone of the aims of the Society:

1. To bestow rewards on all who promptly risk their own to rescue the lives of fellow creatures.
2. To provide assistance as far as it is in the power of the Society in all cases of apparent death within its limits.
3. To restore the apparently drowned or dead and to distinguish by proportionate rewards all who by skill or perseverance are under Providence successful.
4. To collect and circulate the most approved methods and the best apparatus to be used for this purpose.

Readers were reminded that ‘Methods of treatment, accompanied with proper drags, are deposited in the Churches in the vicinity of the River’ and were given details of five rescues, two of which bear recounting here:

That a reward £1-0-0d be given to John Lowe for his laudable exertion in endeavouring to save his brother William Lowe from drowning in the Reservoir at Braunston near Belvoir Castle in December last where they had been skating with many others, but in this attempt the ice gave way and he was likewise precipitated into the water. However, he held his brother who had sank twice by the hair and supported himself by resting his elbow on the ice till John Poyser, one of their companions secured a pole, which he extended to John Lowe, who by this means extricated himself from his perilous situation and rescued his brother also.

The other account is a similarly courageous story:

That a reward £1-0-0d be given to William Hand of Asfordby, for his meritorious exertions in rescuing John Pettinger from the water near the Junction of the Wreak with Soar in June last. John Pettinger had slipped from the side of a boat and disappeared, when William Hand plunged fearlessly into the river and brought him to the shore.
This long notice in the *Leicester Journal* was the last of its kind. At the time of writing it, the Reverend Henry Browne, still Treasurer and Secretary, was 71 years of age; perhaps it represents a conscious attempt on his part to attract support to an ailing body. For six more years annual meetings were regularly and meticulously advertised and on one occasion, in 1833, the objects of the Society were briefly restated, but there are no more accounts of rescues and rewards; though we know of at least one death in the Canal, that of an Irish soldier on his way with his unit from Nottingham to Norwich.

On March the 23rd 1838 the *Leicester Journal* reported the death of the Reverend Henry Browne of Hoby. He had been Secretary and Treasurer for forty years, a solid record of public service and achievement. The Society barely outlasted his death; there were annual meetings in 1838, 1839 and 1840 and then no more.

Over the next ten years the water continued to claim its victims. In 1841 an eight year old boy was drowned in a lock in the Oakham Canal. In 1845 a ‘sweep boy’ died in the river at Melton. In 1846 there was a drowning at Kirby Bellars and ‘Mr. Whalley, a basket maker of Melton’ drowned in the canal near Syston. In 1848 there was a drowning in the Wreake near Thrussington and Martin Bradleyson, a six year old boy, drowned at Melton ‘while playing on the banks and over some locks’.

But there was no longer a society to draw attention to this, to reward the brave or to organise life-saving arrangements. The Wreake and Eye Humane Society remains a novel, perhaps unique, example, a worthy forerunner of so many of the great public and charitable institutions which mark the Victorian era.

**Sources:**

*The Leicester Journal* at Leicestershire Record Office
Colin Owen, *The Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfield 1200-1900*, 1984, which does not make the connexion with Rotherby
‘Melton Mowbray in the year 1807 or thereabouts. Written by Thos. Ward in 1871’, Leicestershire Record Office, Misc 908
Melton-Mowbray, June 30th, 1795.

At a Meeting of the Gentlemen inhabiting the Banks of the Rivers Wreak and Eye, The Right Honorable the Earl Ferrers, in the Chair,

The following Resolutions were unanimously agreed upon:

That a SOCIETY be formed upon the Plan of the ROYAL HUMANE SOCIETY of London, for the Purpose of giving immediate Assistance within the Limits of the said Society, in all Cases of Suspended Animation, either from Drowning, the Stroke of Lightning, Frost, Hanging, or from noxious Vapours.

That the said Society be called the Rivers WREAK AND EYE HUMANE SOCIETY, for the Purpose of extending Relief in every Accident happening within the Parishes situate upon the Banks of the said Rivers, from Melton-Mowbray inclusive, to the Junction of the Wreak with the River Soar.

That for the better Completion of the Intentions of this Society, a Drag, the same as the one produced at this Meeting, be hung up in every Church or Chapel, within the Limits of the said Society, and that the Instructions for the Recovery of the apparently Dead, presented by the Royal Humane Society, be printed upon larger Paper, and framed, and hung up with each Drag.

That a Reward of Four Guineas be offered to such Persons as shall be principally active in recovering any Person from the Water; to be distributed in the following Manner, viz.—Five Shillings to the Person who shall procure the first Drag; Half a Guinea to the Person who shall procure the first Medical Assistant; One Guinea to the Person who shall receive the unfortunate Object into his House, and provide such Things as may be necessary in the Process of Resuscitation; and the Remainder to be divided amongst such other Persons, not exceeding the Number Six, as may be otherwise active in carrying the Patient from the Waterside, and giving other necessary Assistance; to be distributed in such Manner and Proportions as the Minister of the Parish where the Accident happened shall think proper.

That an Annual Subscription be immediately entered into to defray the necessary Expenses of putting the above Plan into Execution, and for raising a Fund to pay such Rewards and other Expenses as may be incurred by the said Institution.
That a Meeting of the Subscribers be held annually, on the first Day of July, in Melton-Mowbray, and that the same be advertised twice in the Leicester Papers.

That the Earl Ferrers be requested to accept the Presidency of this Society.

That the Clergy in the respective Parishes be requested to preach an Annual Sermon for the Benefit of the Society.

That Joseph Boulbbee, Esq., be appointed Treasurer and Secretary to the said Society.

That the Thanks of this Meeting be given to Mr. Huse, Mr. Whtchurch, Mr. Christian, and Mr. Dalley, who have generously offered to become Medical Assistants to the said Society, and to give their Attendance, when called upon, free of all Expenese.

That the Thanks of this Meeting be given to Earl Ferrers, for his obliging Acceptance of the Presidency of the Society.

That the Thanks of this Meeting be given to Joseph Boulbbee, Esq., for the Trouble he has taken in calling this Meeting and procuring the necessary Instruments and Information from the London Society.

That the above Resolutions be advertised in the Leicester Papers.

That Subscriptions and Donations be received by the Treasurer, and the Bankers in Leicester and Melton.

### ANNUAL SUBSCRIBERS

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### DONATIONS

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HINCKLEY PARISH PUMP POLITICS
David J Knight

'Parish pump politics' is a euphemism frequently applied to the narrowness of vision exhibited by local government in the past. In nineteenth-century Hinckley, however, it was no euphemism; for the problem of obtaining an adequate supply of fresh water dominated local issues and ultimately led to a major change in the local government of the town.

Hinckley was typical of many towns that experienced rapid population growth. In 1782 there were 4,500 inhabitants in 750 houses and by 1871 this had increased to 6,779 in 1,500 houses. Taken at face value there is nothing remarkable about these figures. The population had increased by a third while the housing stock had doubled to compensate, but this was achieved by adding dwellings to the yards of existing houses either by building new ones or by converting outbuildings for habitation. By 1867 there were numerous yards or courts containing anything from five to twenty dwellings behind the principal thoroughfares of the town. Not infrequently more than one family shared a dwelling. Consequently the population increase was accomplished by a massive increase in the density of housing, which placed additional pressure on an already inadequate water supply and created sanitary problems that severely undermined the health of the town.

The town's water came from pumps and wells that were sunk to a relatively shallow level of 50 to 60 feet or less. A survey conducted in 1867 revealed that there were 200 wells or pumps. About 120 of these were in private hands and supplied one house each, which left only 40 per cent of the remaining pumps to supply 92 per cent of the houses. Over half of these houses, however, relied on the town's eighteen public pumps, three of which were out of order. Of the remaining pumps, 29 were 'decayed and useless' and 30 were provided by landlords to supply dwellings in yards, though about twenty yards had no pumps at all.
The report added that the demand for water from the public pumps exceeded the supply. Inhabitants would queue from three or four o’clock in the morning at times of shortage for the pumps to be unlocked only to see them run dry. This was inevitable in times of drought, because the shallow wells relied on rainwater for their supply, according to a report by J Plant. The only other sources of water were the water cart, which sold water at one farthing per bucket, or local springs, which were some distance from the town.

The quality as well as the quantity of water was a problem. By 1879 it was appreciated that the density of population and lack of sanitation had caused the sub-soil to become saturated with human and animal excreta, which found its way into the wells by solution in rainwater. Earlier in the century, however, this was not properly understood. In the words of the Sanitary Report of 1842, the risk to health was caused by ‘atmospheric impurities produced by decomposing animal and vegetable substances, by damp and filth and close and overcrowded dwellings’. This view was reflected in local attitudes to the high death rate and prevalence of fever in the town. In the 1840s Dr T S Cotterell, the Medical Officer of the Hinckley Union, was attending 400 to 500 cases of typhoid per year and in 1867 the Rev Colbourne complained that Hinckley had 48 more deaths per annum than a town of comparable size. In fact between 1841 and 1851 the Censuses shew that the population actually declined from 6,448 to 6,177, though this was partly due to emigration from the town. Cotterell complained that dwellings were not properly ventilated. Windows overlooked cesspools and they could not be opened to obtain fresh air without the effluvia from decomposing animal and vegetable matter entering. These views were echoed by Thomas Vann, the Relieving Officer of the Union, who described how there was only one privy to three to five houses and open cisterns for receiving sewage near houses. The stench was said to have been particularly bad in hot weather, but no connection was made between sanitation and water pollution.

The condition of the yards was graphically described to government commissioners in 1843. A Hinckley knitter gave evidence that nine members of his family lived in a thatched house of three rooms and no water supply. Instead of a privy they used a tub which was emptied in the morning on a dung heap in the middle of the yard. A neighbour had a privy, but he had converted it into a pigsty by removing the door. All of the waste and filth from the yard had to be removed through a narrow archway, which provided access from the main street and was not wide enough to allow a cart to enter. Liquid filth ran out of the yard into an open drain at the front, which smelt very bad in summer.
Our knowledge of the town’s drainage system is derived mainly from the manorial court rolls and oral traditions collected in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. An open drain ran down Bond Street and across the Borough to the Jolly Bacchus public house, where it entered a culvert which ran across the Market Place to the George Hotel (now The Bounty). From there the sewage was carried by open drain to the Sketchley Brook. Open drains flowed into this sewer from Hog Lane (now Mansion Street), the Backside of Castle Street (Stockwell Head) and probably Castle Street itself. A reference in the notes of the nineteenth-century antiquary Thomas Harrold to the ‘flood gates in Church Walk’ implies the existence of another open drain behind the other side of Castle Street. Flood gates would have been necessary to halt the flow of storm water from the upper part of the town, which was reported to have washed material down the hill slopes and silted up drains in the lower parts of the town. The water and sewage from all of these drains had to pass through Duck Paddle Street (now Regent Street), which was appropriately named because of its tendency to flood. Elsewhere in the town the drains became blocked with rubbish, causing ponds to form in the streets, some of which were sunken ways that were some five feet below their present level in the early nineteenth century. Indeed one inhabitant could remember being able to look over the top of a hay cart while standing on the pavement in Bond Street.

The idea that disease was caused by bad air prevented residents from linking the poor sanitation of the town with water pollution. In his evidence before a government commission of 1845 Dr Cotterell said that the drains were ‘considerably improved’ and that ‘Hinckley was well calculated for drainage in every direction’. The problem was essentially seen as one of an inadequate supply.

Nevertheless it would be wrong to imagine that the town’s problems were ignored. The Court Leet, which was the main instrument of local government in Hinckley until 1868, tried to regulate the situation. Inhabitants were prohibited from shovelling refuse into the streets and blocking the drains with it or face a fine of 6/8d. The same fine was imposed for failure to scour out the drains. Twelve public pumps were provided and Pump Reeves were appointed to ensure that pump users paid their proportions towards the upkeep of them. Scavengers were also provided to sweep the Market Place and carry off the dung once a week. Some attempt was also made to improve the water supply. By comparing the manorial court rolls with a report of 1867 it is evident that six additional public pumps were provided sometime before 1867. The Castle End horse-pool was levelled in 1803 and an underground reservoir constructed under the site. This would have prevented
the contamination of the water by filth from horses and ensured an adequate supply to the horse-pool pump.

During the nineteenth century, however, the Court Leet became largely ineffective. Its main raison d'être, the regulation of agriculture, had disappeared in 1760 when the manor was enclosed and its jurisdiction over criminal offences had been superseded by the magistrate system. Its control over the town pumps eventually passed to the Nuisance Committee, which was elected in vestry, and the regulation of the drains seems to have been taken over by the Surveyors of the Highways. With its powers whittled away, it became little more than a dining club, which met annually to elect a mayor with no authority and celebrate his election by feasting into the early hours.

John Baxter, the publisher of the Parish Magazine, complained that the officers of the Court Leet were irresponsible. The lack of public accountability enabled the Pump Reeves to neglect their duty and the town pumps were allowed to fall into a state of disrepair. The Surveyors and the members of the Nuisance Committee were, according to Baxter, honourable and respectable men, but they lacked public support and were inefficient because of the lack of coordination between the various bodies that ran the town.

At first *ad hoc* measures were taken to improve matters. For instance, unemployed hosiery workers were set to work on the roads and drains in the ‘hungry forties’. It was probably at this time that the open drains were culverted, to judge from a note left by Thomas Harrold to the effect that the open ditch in Duck Paddle Street was culverted and then called Regent Street. The change of name occurred during the 1840s. The outbreak of cholera in 1852, however, may have prompted the ratepayers to take more decisive action. The Surveyors of the Highways were appointed, apparently with a mandate to improve the water supply to the public pumps. How this was achieved is unknown, but it was costly and placed an added burden on the rates. Surprisingly it received the support of the majority of ratepayers at a public meeting held in the Town Hall. They approved of the improvement in the health of the town that would result and were prepared to accept the additional expenditure; for it would avoid the massive rate increase that would have occurred if the Central Board of Health had imposed a Local Board, which it was empowered to do if a town’s death rate was too high. The minority of objectors included some of the highest ratepayers in the town, who had most to lose, and also the traditional figures of authority in the town, such as the Lord of the Manor and the Feoffees of the Feoffment Charities, who may have felt that the Surveyors were intruding on their domain.
A typical Victorian mistrust of government intervention may have motivated many of the Surveyors’ supporters, but there was also a genuine concern for the health of the town and the condition of the poor. In this respect, it is significant that those who supported the additional expenditure were the same people that had access to a private water supply and would not benefit directly from the improvements. Among them were individuals who, whether motivated by Christian conviction or a sense of public duty, played a more active role in the movement to improve the town.

George Dare was such a person. His family had been associated with the working class improvement for many years. George was a plumber and glazier, who taught the poor to read at the Great Meeting. He was an active member of the Unitarian church, sometimes preaching there, and secretary of The Hinckley Loans Society, which aimed at improving the social conditions of the area. He was secretary and manager of the Hinckley Co-operative Society and was largely responsible for its survival during the ‘Cotton Famine’. When he left the post in 1867, he was also serving as Overseer of the Poor.

A less well known contemporary of George Dare was a leather merchant named William Gray Farmer. He was an Anglican and a member of the Teetotal Society who became director of the Coffee and Cocoa House. While serving as churchwarden and as a member of the Board of Guardians in 1867, he became the chairman of a committee set up to look into the workings of the Local Government Act of 1858, which would allow the town to take charge of its own affairs.

Matters had been brought to a head by a combination of circumstances. There had been an outbreak of cholera in 1866 and fever was prevalent in the town, causing respected members of the community to complain about the high death rate. There was also general dissatisfaction with the “do nothing” policy of the town’s masters and the old fear that if they failed to act the Board of Health would intervene and bring ‘a more heavy and serious, if not unnecessary expense’ to the town. The new District Highways Board at Market Bosworth was singled out for particular criticism, because it had allowed the drains in Bond Street to remain blocked with rubbish for twenty one weeks, causing ponds to form in the street. The main concern, however, was the town’s water supply which was ‘deficient in quality and quantity’.

Under Farmer’s chairmanship the committee resolved to do two things. It decided to establish how the Local Government Act worked in other towns.
by sending out fifty circular letters and it charged George Dare with the responsibility of conducting an enquiry into the state of the town’s water supply. After this information had been gathered a meeting of ratepayers was called at the Town Hall. The committee had done its homework well. It was able to shew the ratepayers that a local board could be introduced without a significant increase in the rates and George Dare was able to present a long and detailed report which left no one in any doubt about the "deplorable state for want of water and sanitary improvement" that the town was in. The resolution to adopt the Local Government Act was passed unanimously by the meeting, though the Feoffees and manufacturers, no doubt realizing that their opposition was futile, were absent from the meeting.

In 1868 the first election occurred and the fifteen members of the first Local Government Board were duly elected. They included William Farmer, George Dare and a number of others, such as Thomas Cotterell, the old Medical Officer, and John Atkins, secretary to the Mechanics’ Institute, who had been actively working for local improvement. For the first time the various organs of local government were integrated under the control of one body. It was faced with an enormous task and it earned the censure of the ratepayers for embarking on costly schemes when the reason for its formation was to obtain a better water supply. Nevertheless its achievements were remarkable. In 1875 a sewage farm was opened at Sketchley and the 1:500 Ordnance Survey of 1887 shews that every street in the town had been provided with an underground sewer, though to judge from early photographs of the town this had been accomplished over ten years earlier. All this opened the way for the introduction of water closets connected to the main sewers. In the meantime council workers with carts were employed to empty raw sewage from cesspits and transport it to the sewage farm for treatment. The £85 entered for sewage in the Board’s accounts for 1868-9 probably refers to the cost of this operation.

The problem of water supply proved to be more intractable. There was a feeling that ratepayers should not be expected to provide water from public pumps for landlords who were not prepared to lay on water for their tenants. Some landlords even had wells filled in to compel their tenants to rely on the street pumps. It proved impractical, however, to oblige landlords to sink wells. No sooner was a new well sunk than an old one dried up and it was recognized that even if deeper wells were sunk in the town the purity of the water would remain suspect. As a short term measure a new water cart was purchased, but it was not until 1891, after thousands had been spent on experimental bore-holes, that an adequate supply of water was piped to the town from a disused mineshaft at Snarestone.
It had taken over twenty years for the Local Board to fulfil its main objective, but its success was reflected in the typhoid figures of the town. During the 1840s there were four to five hundred cases per year, but in 1895 there were only seventeen, only four of which were fatal.

**Primary sources:**

Details of the manorial court and copies of the court rolls are available in the Francis Collection (Hinckley Public Library). The Pickering Collection (John Cleveland College) contains various notes taken by Thomas Harrold during the nineteenth century and some of A J Pickering’s unpublished research. John Baxter was an eye-witness to the events recorded in this article and described many of them in his ‘History of Hinckley’, published in the Parish Magazine, 1866-1878. The *Leicester Advertiser* covers the work of the Local Board and the 21st of September 1867 edition is especially valuable, because it reports the public meeting that led to the introduction of the Local Board and Dare’s report on the town’s water supply. The problem of supplying water to Hinckley is described by J Plant in his *Report on the Water Supply from Underground Sandstone of the Triassic Formation*, 1879. Government reports on *The Condition of the Frame-Work Knitters*, 1845 and on *The State of Large Towns and Populous Districts*, 1843, contain extensive details on the water supply and sanitation of the town. The Rev Colbourne’s letter of 1867 was unfortunately destroyed in a recent fire at John Cleveland College.

**Secondary sources:**

H Beavin, ‘George Dare (The Man Behind the Memorial)’, *Hinckley Historian (HH)*, 21, 1988, pp 6-8
H J Francis, *A History of Hinckley*, 1930
D F Allinson, ‘Hinckley Hosiery Knitters in 1843’, *HH*, 31, 1993, pp 12-14
D J Knight, *The Hinckley Chronicles*, 1990
J Nichols, *History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester*, Vol 4, 1811
A J Pickering, *The Cradle and Home of the Hosiery Trade*, 1940
LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETIES
Additions and corrections to list published in Vol 4 No 2

a. Periodicals
b. Occasional publications
c. Member of Leicestershire Local History Council

bc BILLESDON Local History Group
   Mr G W Bromley, ‘Peddars Way’, Coplow Lane, Billesdon
botTESFORD Local History Group
   Mr M Honeybone, 11 Easthorpe Road, Bottesford, Loughborough

b HATHERN Local History Society
   Mr A M Swift, 18 Shepshed Road, Hathern, Loughborough
LEICESTER and LEICESTERSHIRE Historic Churches Preservation Trust
   Mr T Y Cocks, 24 Beresford Drive, Leicester
LUTTERWORTH Museum and Historical Society
   Mrs J Mason, Lutterworth Museum, Churchgate, Lutterworth
MEDBOURNE Local History Group
   Mr E F Hall, The Nevill Arms, Medbourne, Market Harborough
QUENIBOROUGH Local History Group
   Miss R Smith, 8 Syston Road, Queniborough, Leicester
RATCLIFFE CULEY Local History Group
   Mrs S Wilkins, 5 Main Road, Ratcliffe Culey, Atherstone

bc SHEPSHED Local History Society
   Mrs E A Start, 145 Charnwood Road, Shepshed, Loughborough
BOOK REVIEWS
John D Anderson, John Goodacre, Stephanie F Goodacre
— Leicestershire Local History Council
Keith D M Snell — Department of English Local History, Leicester University
Steph Mastoris — Harborough Museum
Helen Edwards, John Hinks, Joyce Lee, Matthew Richardson,
Christine Taggart — Leicestershire Libraries

THE VALE OF BELVOIR IN OLD PHOTOGRAPHS
Trevor Hickman Alan Sutton 1994 £7.99
AROUND ASHBY-DE-LA-ZOUCH IN OLD PHOTOGRAPHS
Kenneth Hillier Alan Sutton 1994 £7.99
THE HARBOROUGH AREA IN OLD PICTURE POSTCARDS
Pam Aucott and Steph Mastoris European Library 1994 £8.95

Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd continues its steady progress in covering the whole of the country with its ‘in old photographs’ series. There could have been no better choice of compiler for the two latest volumes. Trevor Hickman has long been involved with printing, publishing and the local history of the north-east of the county. He boldly defines the extent of the Vale of Belvoir, to include parts of Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire as well as Leicestershire, and sees this agricultural area as held together by an amazing comradeship. After the opening section on Belvoir Castle each county is covered. Apart from the usual village scenes and views of road, canal and railway, there are some excellent farming scenes. A dozen views include a windmill, either because they were more common in the region or else reflecting the author’s interest in windmills.

Kenneth Hillier, who modestly claims to be a newcomer to Ashby-de-la-Zouch, has been the moving spirit behind local history research and the museum in his town. His collection of pictures ends with a coverage of the villages of Blackfordby, Packington, Smisby and Coleorton. The main part concerns the market town itself and its streets. One of the most agricultural scenes is not from a village but shews the Ashby postmaster with his herd of beasts. The Trevor family of photographers worked in Ashby from 1880 to 1914 and were responsible for some of the fine pictures of Jubilee celebrations in the town.
Market Harborough and the area around it has been well served by the publishing of old views, not least in books by Pam Aucott and Steph Mastoris. Their admirable study *Harborough in Camera*, reviewed last year, gave an account of the different types of photographer active in the area and is complemented by their present book, which is confined to one aspect of commercial photography, the picture postcard from the 1890s to the 1930s. In their introduction they sketch the origins of the postcard and distinguish four categories of producers, pointing out that a local photographer was in a better position to issue short runs of scenes of particular events, as opposed to a national company interested in tourist attractions. A cheerful summer scene shews that one enterprising Harborough photographer set up a temporary photographic booth in a tea garden alongside the canal.

There will be more books of local views to come; Harborough Museum alone has a collection of over five thousand images. The present book reproduces 74 views, with the photographer or publisher identified where possible, and two portraits of local photographers. It is bound in boards and the printing is consistently good. Valuable caption space is taken up with derivations of place names, hardly relevant to the subjects in view. Does the European Library, based on Zaltbommel in the Netherlands, have ambitions like Alan Sutton and plan to cover the whole of Europe?

J G

**BRADGATE PARK: Childhood Home of Lady Jane Grey**  
Joan Stephenson and Anthony Squires  
Kairos Press 1994 £3.50

The Kairos Press has published a very attractive booklet as a guide for the tourist. On the front of the card cover is a coloured photograph of the famous ruins of Bradgate House, ‘one of the earliest Stately Homes of England’. The text and illustrations are well integrated to give a readable account of the landscape, the former village of Bradgate, the House, the Grey family and the present Park and its deer, supported by a list of further reading and a detailed index.

J G
LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND WITHIN LIVING MEMORY
Leicestershire and Rutland Federation of Women’s Institutes
Countryside books and the Federation,
135, Loughborough Road, Leicester 1994 £8.95

This fascinating book has been compiled from very personal recollections, many of them reading more like oral history, sent by Women’s Institutes in the counties. Nothing on this scale has been attempted for the two counties before and the book, co-ordinated by Dorothy Pennington, is highly successful in presenting a wide variety of reminiscences in a most readable way. It retains the personalities of contributors and gives a convincing and evocative sense of what is was like to live here earlier in this century.

The book is divided into chapters on ‘Town and country life’, ‘House and home’, ‘Childhood and schooldays’, ‘The world of work’, ‘War and peace’ and ‘High days and holidays’. In all of these there is considerable detail and variety of content, with cycles of life very well treated and working experiences receiving vivid recollection. I found an enormous amount of interest in the book, for example on agricultural life, domestic service, tramps and gypsies, ideas of localism, prisoners of war, relations between church and chapel, friendly societies and parish seasonal rituals. I am sure other readers will benefit from it in a similar way.

The whole is well brought together into a readable entity and, so as not to interrupt the flow, the anonymity of contributors has been preserved. As an ‘academic’ reviewer I do wonder whether there might have been more information on each person providing the memories, for example their gender and age. This is a most attractive publication, which goes well beyond some of the smaller works of this genre. With its irresistible price and its excellent illustrations, it should attract readers for many years to come and the people concerned deserve our warmest congratulations for their enterprise. It is a book that they should feel very proud of and I hope that it will be widely read in Leicestershire and Rutland.

K D M S

LEICESTER: A second selection in old photographs
David R Burton Alan Sutton 1994 £7.99

For his second collection of old photographs David Burton has chosen material mainly from the Leicester Mercury collection. He has sorted a wide range of images into broad categories, covering such topics as shops and businesses, transport, streets, and leisure and sport.
The pictures themselves vary from the very general — views of Leicester city centre between the late nineteenth century and the 1960s — to the very personal — family snaps taken in the back garden and a retirement ‘do’ for the author’s ex-workmates.

THE DIARY OF ADA JACKSON 1883
Living History Unit, Leicester City Council 1993 £5.99

Ada Jackson was nineteen years old in 1883, a time when Leicester was rapidly growing into a thriving industrial town. Her diary for that year is an illuminating and often moving first-hand account of life in a ‘respectable’ working-class family, who lived in a long-vanished street between St Margaret’s Church and the Leicester Canal.

This publication is a model of how to make a unique source document accessible to a wide audience. It is attractively produced, illustrated with charming family photographs and enhanced by the inclusion of a helpful introduction and explanatory notes. As an insight into late nineteenth-century Leicester, Ada Jackson’s diary offers an entertaining and informative read for the local historian and general reader alike.

SCAVENGERS AND NIGHTSOIL MEN: the history of Friday Street Depot
Malcolm Elliott Leicester Victorian Society 1994 £1

The Leicester Victorian Society was founded to protect and preserve Victorian buildings and to promote knowledge of the art and culture of the period. As is shewn by this eight-page pamphlet written by Malcolm Elliott, the Chairman of the Society, the range of interests within the group is all-encompassing.

Following public health legislation enacted in the 1840s Leicester Council took on responsibility for the cleanliness of streets and collection of refuse, engaging twenty men as scavengers for the purpose. A Highways and Sewerage Committee was appointed within the town council to administer the work and a depot at Friday Street was constructed to house horses, carts, steamrollers and the associated maintenance workshops, blacksmith’s shops and general offices. This article is a lively account of the operations and personalities involved in the delivery of the essential services of road-maintenance and refuse-collection from Victorian times.
The stimulus for the publication was the danger of demolition of late Victorian buildings within the Friday Street complex. The great cart shed has now been pulled down to create a car park but surrounding buildings still survive. Mr Elliott makes a plea for a sympathetic future use of the site, perhaps combining an interpretive centre focussing on the social history of this necessary feature of civic life, with craft workshops and café.

OUT AND ABOUT IN LEICESTER: A series of armchair tours
John Banner Leicester Living History Unit 1995 £5.99
WALKS THROUGH VICTORIAN LEICESTER
Richard Gill Leicester Victorian Society 1994 £2.50

Writing very much in the informative, chatty style of a tour guide John Banner takes the reader wandering through the streets of Leicester on five different routes around the city centre. If you know Leicester well enough you can visualise the whole journey, even ‘seeing’ things you have missed before. There are masses of detail, of building construction, historical facts, snippets of all sorts gleaned from the Leicesteshire Record Office, as well as good old-fashioned gossip, to entertain and inform. If you are a stranger or newcomer to the city the clear descriptions and good use of photographs allow the buildings and streets of Leicester to become familiar.

The range of the work is impressive, covering structures as diverse as the Jewry Wall, the Shires shopping centre and the Jain Temple on Oxford Street. The natural juxtaposition of buildings of different age and purpose, together with the information provided on their history and associated personalities, makes a lively mixture for the armchair historian and tourist, and you can always put your coat on and go and see for yourself.

Richard Gill’s book, in contrast, is not for the armchair traveller. The descriptions of the buildings pick out detail rather than describe the whole structure. There is a wealth of architectural information and lists of architects and builders.

Three walks are included. The first covers the major Victorian civic buildings in the city centre and the further two naturally follow on as he looks at the work of the same architects and builders in a suburban setting. Thus the three walks, taken together, provide an indication of the scope and quality of Victorian design in civic, domestic and ecclesiastical building in Leicester.
SAFFRON’S HEALTH DEPENDED ON WEALTH: A look at health care for residents of Saffron Lane Estate before the National Health Service
Anne Rogerson Coalville Publishing Company Ltd 1992 £2.50

Don’t ask us we’re just the patients was the title of an earlier booklet produced by the Saffron Lane Estate Women’s Group in Leicester. After sharing experiences of modern-day health care the group decided to explore what it must have been like on the Estate before the National Health Service. The result is a collection of memories about health care from around the time ‘the Saff’ came into being in 1925. The reminiscences are set within a historical framework by the author and organized into chapters such as ‘Home Remedies’, ‘Infectious Diseases and Hospitalisation’, ‘Birth’ and ‘Scourges of the Day’. The presentation is clear and uncluttered with a few photographs and documents as illustrations. The text is enjoyable to dip into, as much of it is transcribed from taped interviews.

The book will be of double benefit to the community. As well as bringing back memories for local people, profits from its sale will go towards their Linwood Centre. The ‘Afterword’ contains an important reference to the National Health Service at the time of publication and the clear message that, despite improvements in health, health care is still related to economic circumstances.

S F G

TALKING SHOP: An Oral History of Retailing in the Harborough Area during the 20th Century
Sam Mullins and David Stockdale Alan Sutton 1994 £8.99

It is difficult to realize just how profound has been the change in the pattern of retail shopping during this century. Apprehension about supermarket uniformity is not new; yet only a couple of generations ago the principal shopkeepers in a town were usually owners of their own businesses, often living on their premises and also fulfilling a role as principal townsmen. The professional manager as an employee who may be moved on to another branch of a multiple is a comparative newcomer.
The staff of Harborough Museum undertook in 1986 a very ambitious research project to give an account of these changes in the area by drawing on living memories. The result is an important study in the development of trade in the twentieth century, presented as 'the first grass-roots account of the retail revolution to be published'. It is also very entertaining to read, as the long quotations from reminiscences are well placed in the unfolding of the themes treated in the different chapters. References to the recorded interviews are given, with a list of them at the end. An index of names might have helped local readers; but it would have added to the labours of the authors and perhaps delayed publication still further.

The photographs of shop interiors and staff are also fitted carefully into the text with their captions. Countless sharp details in the pictures and in the quotations help us to understand what it must have felt like to work in one of these shops and there is excellent coverage of the changing fortunes of the town’s Co-op, with its village branches. A constant theme is the hard work involved in keeping up the standards of a shop and how it interfered with family life.

A PROSPECT OF OADBY
Helen E Boynton Oadby Local History Group 1993 £3.50

For several years I lived in one of the Leicester University halls of residence and benefited from the handsome architecture and generous grounds of the suburban houses in this part of Oadby, although I had little idea of their history. Helen Boynton has written a remarkable piece of original research into the area, bounded by Gartree Road, Stoughton Drive South and Stoughton Road, through which runs Manor Road 'once one of the richest roads in Europe'. The framework of her booklet is its stage-by-stage conversion this century from farming land to a suburbia of named architect-designed houses, many of them illustrated in old or recent photographs. This frame she has filled out from her own and her family’s knowledge and by enquiring from eye-witnesses of the changes. 'There were haystacks in the fields and they all played hopscotch in the road because there was very little traffic, . . . except a few bicycles and Mr Cooper’s tractor'. The owners she mentions include many of Leicester’s leading industrialists, such as John Bolton of Fields House, who invented and developed 'Chilprufe'. In his large grounds he had a model farm and a wooden observatory, only a hundred yards from the site of the University’s present observatory; 'Perhaps the vision of the heavens is particularly good from this point!'
After her previous books *Wiggy’s Child* and *Wiggy’s War*, Doreen Boulter’s latest book claims on the title page to cover the period from 1930 to 1950. In fact the story roams freely over time without any apparent care or hindrance and few references to precise dates. It is nevertheless part of the charm of the book that this story of one woman’s Wigston through the years is told in a homely anecdotal style.

The tale is a bittersweet and uniquely personal one. Stories such as the trip to Dudley Zoo, where a chimpanzee appropriated a young schoolmate’s cap, will have readers in fits of laughter. There are also poignant memories, such as the tragic death of the author’s mother’s sister at the age of five after falling into an open fire.

With accounts of the now sadly demolished Magna Cinema and the Lancaster bomber crash still remembered by many older citizens, this will make fascinating reading for anyone who lives in Wigston and is eager to find out more about the history and dramatically changed character of this Leicestershire village.

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Bernard Elliott’s booklet *Victorian Wigston*, published in 1989 and reviewed in our Vol 3 No 8, was based on the 1881 census enumerators’ returns. He has followed this up with a similar analysis based on the 1891 returns, which shew that the population had again increased by over 60 per cent in ten years, to just over seven thousand. Factories were making an impression on industrial employment; fifty of the 712 hosiery workers were described as hosiery hands, sixty people worked at William Dunmore’s biscuit factory and an iron foundry, specializing in fireplaces, employed about forty workers, many of them originating from Yorkshire. The number employed on the railways had increased from 260 to 340.

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M R

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J G
Arthur Shepherd rose from humble origins as a poor tailor’s son to be one of the establishment figures in his town. As a struggling young decorator and family man he experienced the hardships of the lack of work during the two hard winters in the mid 1890s. In 1911 he became a councillor and in 1916 witnessed the Zeppelin bombing of Loughborough. For twenty five years he undertook the catering for the poor children’s breakfast on Christmas morning. After the War he became active as a property-developer and, with his partner Walter Mountney, made many decisions that defined the expansion of the town. He was also closely involved in the Council’s purchase of premises in the town centre to make way for street-widening. All this was in an age before the post-Second-World-War bureaucratic regulations, which he found irksome.

The memoirs have been compiled from his reminiscences and notes made ten years before his death. Two of his granddaughters have made an excellent job of assembling them into a very readable book, which has been professionally designed and printed.

J G
It is impossible to produce a complete history of any village and this group of ten publications shews a wide range of coverage. In general their contribution is greatest where they reproduce original material, whether in the form of illustrations, documents or personal knowledge of the author or of other residents. Changes in printing techniques mean that it is no longer out of the question to present text and illustrations respectably printed. Nearly every one of these is a substantial booklet with card cover and including reproductions of photographs on the cover and in the typeset text.

The Whitwick Historical Group has built up an impressive archive of information about the history of the village. Jeffrey Knight’s booklet, in typewriter print, includes copious quotations, in italics, from these records. It is based on an imagined tour through the centre of the village, property by property. The background is the opening up of the coal mines in the nineteenth century and the increase in population and commercial activity. The long-abandoned mediaeval market grant was mentioned when a new weekly market was started up in 1836 ‘before Coalville had one’.

A project by Mountsorrel Townswomen's Guild group has benefited from the editing by Mrs L A Tyman so as to form a readable guide to the history of the village in short sections. Situated where the A6 route to the north is confined between the Soar plain and the granite Castle Hill, the mediaeval village once had a market and fair. The fair was finally suppressed in 1872 but has since been commemorated by a ‘Mock Fair’. Fair Cakes used to be taken by villagers for baking at the village bakery on the Thursday before the Fair. The main industry in the village, the quarrying of the granite, was expanded in the nineteenth century by bringing in Scottish stonemasons.
In the depression towards the end of the century some villagers emigrated to America or went to find work in Scottish quarries. Although the lavishlly produced Somerby booklet covers a wide timespan, its strength is in the recent history, based on reminiscences collected by the Society since 1976 and illustrated by over 130 old photographs. The personal and informal snapshots are a delight. Following the closure of the gas works in 1912 the Somerby Electric Light Company Ltd supplied the village from an oil engine in a shed at the bottom of the garden of Mr Adcock the blacksmith.

Mr Patrick has concentrated on the parishes of Moira, Donisthorpe, Oakthorpe and Measham, covering his villages street by street. The glossy pages of his spring-bound booklet have helped in the reproduction of over two hundred photographs. These include interesting views of streets with shops, the collieries and the Moira pottery works, producing pipes and stoneware jars. His writing is strongest when it is based on his personal knowledge of his area; elsewhere he relies on uncritical and unreferenced quotations from ‘ancient writings’ or ‘old records’.

Shepshed Local History Society have followed up their 1986 publication, reviewed in our Vol 3 No 5, with a second volume comparing old views of the village with modern photographs. It is a very professionally produced booklet, with pleasant layout of the 56 photographs and uncluttered captions making the comparisons and pointing out relevant details. It starts from the centre of the village, the Bull Ring, dominated by the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Bank building of 1904, which was rumoured to have been intended not for Shepshed but for Derby or Ashby. The Packington booklet is also in the format of captioned photographs, with a sketch plan of the village at the beginning. The heavy black lines round each of the 53 illustrations and under the titles are a little sombre. The detailed captions go some way to making this the kind of history which the title gives one to expect. They were written by various members of the Group and have been revised by J L Salter. In 1915 a local tornado did damage recorded in two photographs. In 1986 the Gilwiskaw flooded so that the headmaster had to wade out along the street to buy lunch for his pupils.

Mr Weston has transcribed, analysed and published the Census Enumerators’ Schedules for the two Kibworths in the form of large ‘landscape’ booklets. It is worth pointing out to those who might not be attracted to this detailed information that the format has also given him the opportunity of reproducing local photographs to a generous size. Alec Moretti has written a guide to Wymeswold in the form of a walk round the village. He has included a sketch map shewing the street names and he draws attention to the buildings of
interest. The chief attraction is the ten full-page line drawings of street scenes.

For those seeking historical significance in old street names it is well to consider how capricious the act of deliberate naming may be. During the rapid growth of the village of Stoney Stanton since 1961 the parish council has had a policy of giving new streets names relevant to the village, as recounted in a little leaflet. Thus Lee Close is named after an old village character; ‘Well done Tom, we salute you with this road name. We still miss him walking the streets with his dog.’ Richardson Close commemorates the women who provided refreshments at all Gala and Carnival Days. ‘All their names were put in a hat and Richardson came out.’

The Earl Shilton and District Local History Group continue their series of modestly produced reminiscence publications with an account by an Earl Shilton resident of her early life in Sapcote. She describes a dozen shops and many of the activities in the village, mentions buildings and fields and the quarry and ends with some comments about the place of women in society. Stoney Stanton was Sapcote’s rival village. ‘On occasion a gang from each village would gather somewhere on the boundary and taunt each other . . . Sometimes this would graduate to clod and stone throwing, but I never heard of there being a winner.’

J G

MEMORIES OF NEWTOWN LINFORD AND BRADGATE HOUSE
Joan Stevenson ed  Kairos Press  1994  £3.50

The product of a group project which lasted over a year, with older villagers of Newtown Linford gathering regularly to record their memories, is this attractively produced booklet. Here is a fascinating, if somewhat confusing, consort of voices. It certainly helps to have a family tree of one of the more extensive clans, the Harrisons, and readers from outside would have been helped even more by a sketch plan shewing the location of the families mentioned.

Some of the forty photographs illustrating the text are a little small, but many shew fascinating details, such as the Foresters’ Parade outside the church in the early 1900s and some rare cottage interiors from the 1920s. Those shewing individuals or small groups are well captioned, which helps to put faces to many of the names mentioned.
Apart from the usual theme of primitive domestic life before the Second World War, two themes deserve further comment. The first is the impact of tourism on the village. Being close to Bradgate Park and the rest of Charnwood Forest, Newtown was a convenient ‘watering hole’ for thousands of people from Leicester and the surrounding towns, mainly as day-trippers. The cottagers catered for all classes, with ‘plain tea’ costing 1/-, a ‘full tea’ (which included a boiled egg and tinned fruit salad) costing 1/6d, or just hot water sold to those who brought their own tea, milk and sugar. The second is the effect of the ‘great house’ on this estate village, where all were tenants of the Grey family until 1925. Bradgate House had a major impact on most aspects of life in the village, although the Grey family seems to have got its servants from further afield. Edward Haslegrave, the agent to the estate from 1913, figures prominently. He continued to work as agent for those who bought parcels of the estate in 1925 up until 1961. The story of the estate is handled well and it would be good to see similar studies in other ‘close’ villages in the county.

S M

DRAYTON ROMAN VILLA 1994 30p
THE INDUSTRIES OF HOLT YARD, DRAYTON 1994 £1.25
HISTORY OF ST JAMES’ CHURCH, DRAYTON 1994 50p
DRAYTON ‘SCHOOL FOR YOUNG LADIES’ 1994 35p

K Y Heselton Brinhurst Press,
24 Barnsdale Close, Great Easton, Market Harborough

Four new pamphlets from Mr Heselton’s Brinhurst Press are clear photocopies of computer-generated typesetting, where some earlier products were marred by being duplicated typescripts. He does not hesitate to undertake original research and indulge in personal speculation. He gives some account of a second Roman villa in the parish discovered in 1977. He traces the fortunes of a nineteenth-century ironstone quarry, served by an inclined plane to link it to the railway, and a brickworks.

Drayton’s church started as a tiny chapel of ease within the parish of Brinhurst. It became disused and by Nichols’s time had been used as a bakehouse. In 1878 the owner of Rockingham Castle replaced it with a mission hall, now the present church. Mr Heselton raises the intriguing possibility that parts of the original structure survive incorporated in the new building. Finally he follows clues as to the existence of a small private school in the village and uses census returns to name some of the boarding pupils.

J G
THE TICKNALL ROUNDHOUSE AND OTHER LOCK UPS
Yvonne Crowden, Howard Usher
Ticknall Preservation & Historical Society 1994 £1.80

Situated on the Leicestershire-Derbyshire border are a number of strange, well preserved structures known as roundhouses. They date from the end of the eighteenth century and were erected to serve the purpose of village lock-ups, prior to the establishment the following century of the police force and proper police stations.

The fascinating publication on the subject is based on research on the Ticknall roundhouse, using sources such as sessions records, court orders and constables accounts. Additional information is included on other roundhouses in the area and there is a useful gazetteer of roundhouses both extant and demolished. Those listed for Leicestershire include Breedon-on-the-Hill, Castle Donington, Packington and Worthington. A selection of interesting photographs illustrate the text on a little written about subject.

J L

TURRETT CLOCKS IN LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND
P A Hewitt Leicestershire Museums, Arts & Records Service 1994 £4.50

Mr Hewitt points out that until the wireless became common in the 1930s the striking of the church clock was the time signal, as in his home village of Rothley. The study of English church clocks received great impetus from the work of C F C Beeson, published in 1971, which established their systematic classification. Mr Hewitt has done a great service to our county by investigating 435 churches and other buildings so as to publish this list of over two hundred turret clocks. He starts with a historical account of the clocks and their makers and ends with a concordance of the makers of the clocks listed. The admirable task he has accomplished in undertaking and publishing his practical research could benefit from further documentary searches; his distribution map of the earliest turret clocks certainly underestimates the position for the seventeenth century. Work of this sort is just what our county museums should be encouraging and it is gratifying to see this book published in their ‘Leicestershire Researched’ series.

J G
In the early 1980s the Midland main line passing through Leicester was still controlled by traditional signal-boxes and semaphore signals. As modern, centralized electronic control had been installed northwards from Loughborough and southwards from Irchester, the old-fashioned portion in between became known as ‘the Leicester gap’. British Rail decided that this section too should be modernized by 1987 and electrically controlled from a new signalling centre at Leicester.

Mike Spence’s black-and-white photographic collection records the signal-boxes and signalling displaced by this modernization programme. The two dozen boxes involved are shown in some detail, both inside and out, sometimes with several illustrations of a single box. Following decommissioning the fate of boxes was usually demolition and burning but the odd one was removed for use elsewhere. Another section of photographs relates to various branch lines which appear to be outside the scope of the title.

Pictures of signalmen inside their boxes add a human touch to what is mainly a specialized book for railway buffs and model-makers. At Croft Doug Burge sits by his glowing stove in early January with shirt sleeves rolled up, obviously quite cosy despite the weather outside. At Oakham the infrequent trains on a Sunday afternoon allow the signalman to relax on a home-made couch with his feet up in between spells of work. Such signalmen and their boxes added a life to a railway which, upon modernization, is removed and replaced by unseen beings at some remote location and miles of uninteresting cables alongside the tracks.

The reproduction quality of the otherwise excellent pictures could, with advantage, be improved, as could the binding. Some lack of attention to detail is present, as on the map, where Leicestershire is printed across the whole of northern Northamptonshire.

J D A
Zouch by way of Swadlincote and Woodville, with branches from the latter two places to Church Gresley. In all these places it shared stations with conventional railways. In addition, as it ran along the streets of these and intermediate places, adequate roadside stops were provided. Outside built-up areas the route was sometimes across open country. The details of the route are given by way of a ‘run on the line’ from Burton to Ashby.

Construction began in February 1905, with services commencing — in what today seems a remarkably short period — between Burton and Swadlincote in June 1906, and throughout the following month. After several profitable years there was a gradual decline in receipts, resulting in partial closure from 1912 and total shut-down in 1927.

The vehicles were locally built at the Brush Works in Loughborough and were of normal two-deck tram pattern with open top deck. Seating was provided for twenty passengers inside and thirty one outside. Electrical power to propel the vehicles was obtained from overhead cables supported from columns.

The text is supplemented with black-and-white photographs, railway maps and track diagrams, time tables as well as by miscellaneous lists, including the industrial premises linked by the line. This compact but full history of the tramway and general information on interconnecting railways should be of interest to local historians as well as tram and railway enthusiasts.

J D A

THE LEICESTER AND MELTON MOWBRAY NAVIGATIONS
AN EXPLORATION OF THE LEICESTER NAVIGATION (celebrating 1794-1994)
Brian C J Williams Leicester Navigation 200 Group,
The Old Mill, Sileby 1994 £3

Philip Stevens worked for Leicestershire Museums and his book The Leicester Line was published in 1972. He wrote the volume reviewed here in 1974 but died before publication was possible. Mrs Stevens, who also worked for the Museums, has finally succeeded in getting the work into print.

The book was meticulously researched, based on contemporary writings and newspapers, official records of the canal and railway companies and of Leicester City Council and extracts are given from Acts of Parliament.
Tabulations are included for income, dividends, tonnages carried and some accounts. Promotion, financing, construction, traffic and decline in use are discussed at length. When reading the chapter entitled 'The Leicester Navigation To-day' one needs to bear in mind that it was written in 1974.

There are two maps, one for each of the navigations covered, and various illustrations have been added. Reproduction quality of photographs is disappointing, whilst the normal credits for sources of illustrations are not given. The caption to the photograph of Mountsorrel mineral line bridge incorrectly dates it to 1960, exactly one hundred years too late. The Melton Mowbray Navigation accounts given in an appendix appear to have figures missing, or to be incorrectly stated.

The unavoidable deficiencies of the book are largely made up for by Mr William’s attractive guide, unusually printed in sepia. As a professional artist he has drawn the commendable sketches and up-to-date large-scale maps, which complement the text and photographs. Produced at the time of the Navigation’s bi-centenary, the booklet also covers both the Charnwood Forest Canal and its associated tramway to Loughborough and the river line from there to Leicester. The text is written in an easily read style and reflects the author’s love of his native county together with his extensive knowledge of local history and archaeology.

VESTIGES OF PAGANISM IN LEICESTERSHIRE
Charles Billson Heart of Albion Press 1994 £1.95

Here are anecdotes of old Leicestershire with origins in prehistoric religions, or so legend has it. Some may be well known to the reader, such as the hare pie ceremony at Hallaton, but others less so. Is there really a lost temple of Janus under the River Soar, said to be a King Lear connexion, or a subterranean passage between Leicester Castle and the Dane Hills frequented by the witch Black Annis? The imagination is quickly captured.

This twenty-page booklet is an oddity but an intriguing one nevertheless. It comprises the unedited text of an essay by Charles Billson first published in 1911 in Memorials of Old Leicestershire edited by Alice Dryden. The present editors have added new photographs and drawings, some helpful notes that supplement the original references and an interesting biographical sketch of Billson, who is perhaps best known for his work on the folklore of Leicestershire and Rutland, published in 1895.
The production has been kept simple in a style appropriate to the age of the text. There is an unfortunate misspelling of Billson’s name on the cover and some of the modern photographs have not reproduced well. The booklet is, however, to be welcomed as a timely reminder of historical sites which can so easily disappear under modern developments and be forgotten. Local historians could usefully check the text. Others may enjoy a little escape into the past.

CT

THE MONUMENTS OF SAINT NICHOLAS CHURCH AND ALL SAINTS CHURCH LEICESTER
THE MONUMENTS OF SAINT MARTIN’S CHURCH LEICESTER
Max Wade-Matthews  Heart of Albion Press  1994  £2.50 and £3.95

Within these two slender volumes is to be found a wealth of information on the monuments of three of Leicester’s mediaeval churches — St Nicholas, still thriving, All Saints, sadly redundant for the last twelve years, and the cathedral, St Martin’s. The same author has already produced a similar guide to the monuments of St Mary de Castro and is working on those of St Margaret’s.

A brief history of each church is followed by full and clear transcriptions of the monuments, often with fascinating explanatory notes. Windows, floor slabs and gravestones are included, along with notes on monuments listed by Nichols in 1809 but since lost. Marred only by somewhat uneven print quality, these inexpensive booklets are a uniquely valuable source of reference for anyone interested in Leicester’s ancient churches.

JH

BY THE FOOLISHNESS OF PREACHING: Leicestershire and the 18th century Evangelical Revival, with particular reference to the ‘Barton Preachers’
John R Todd  Barton-in-the-Beans Baptist Church,
D W Meller, The Hawthorns,
Odstone Road, Barton-in-the-Beans  1993  £2

Mr Todd’s historical interest arises from his preaching at Leicestershire Baptist churches. Drawing on published material, he has assembled a concise
account of the local experience of the Evangelical Awakening, starting from the Countess of Huntingdon at Donington Hall, and of the careers of Samuel Deacon of Barton-in-the-Beans and of Thomas Cook. Missionaries from the Barton group of churches went out to Orissa in India, where one believer ‘having seen so many missionaries from Barton and having heard so much about it, is said to have enquired on one occasion whether London was as large as Barton’.

J G

HISTORY OF ST GEORGE’S CHURCH SWANNINGTON
Bernard Daws
40 Main Street, Swannington 1993 £1.95

In 1841 my great-grandfather was sent from Lutterworth for schooling under the Rev Mr Babington at Thringstone Parsonage near Ashby-de-la-Zouch. Until reading its history by Mr Daws it never occurred to me that Mr Babington’s church was a new building. In his booklet of 32 pages, which draws on a variety of sources, he recounts how it was erected in 1825 to serve the growing population of the hamlets of Swannington and Thringstone in the parish of Whitwick, many of them poor framework-knitters, and acquired its own parish in 1875.

J G

END OF AN ERA: further education in Leicestershire, 1870-1993
Frank Foden
Leicestershire County Council 1993 £7.50

Dr Foden covers the history of further education in the city and county college by college. Early developments in Hinckley were recounted by Steve Drodge in our Vol 4 No 1. Perhaps most remarkable is the way that Loughborough College sprang to importance during the First World War by providing short training courses for women needed in munitions factories.

The message of the book is that the technical and ‘non-vocational’ elements of further education have always been inter-dependent and that their recent separation under the 1992 Act, removing vocational training from the local authority to a national Further Education Funding Council, must fail.

J G
PACKINGTON SCHOOL: a History
Kenneth Hillier Ashby Museum Ltd 1993 £3.50
EARLY EDUCATION IN GREAT EASTON

In 1833 Sir Charles Abney-Hastings, owner of nearly all of Packington, established an infant school in the village. In 1893 his successor, Lord Loudoun, paid for its replacement by a new school building, which remains the core of the present school. The private ownership of the property by the Earl and his successors eventually constituted a hindrance to the school being taken over by the county, even as late as 1960. Mr Hillier has searched through the log books, those chronicles of the endless day-to-day details of running a school, and relies also on first-hand memories. He includes a wealth of detail and several photographs of the school and village, all in a 72 page booklet with an aerial photograph in colour on the cover.

The main part of Mr Heselton’s 86 page duplicated typescript also relies much on the log books for his account of Easton Magna Board School, which opened in 1876, up to the beginning of this century. A lengthy dispute led to the dismissal in 1894 of the couple who were the schoolteachers. He has in addition collected from various sources traces of the schooling that went on in his parish prior to 1870.

J G

MELTON OPERATIC SOCIETY 75TH ANNIVERSARY BOOKLET
John Dolling Melton Operatic Society 1994 £5

Amateur operatics in Melton were started as a result of the enthusiasm for Gilbert and Sullivan of the young music master at the Grammar School, who was also the church organist and choirmaster in charge of the Choral Society, none other than Malcolm Sargent. After a brief introduction Mr Dolling lays out the cast lists of the hundred productions so far mounted and an analysis of which shows each of the members appeared in. The early diet of G & S has been widened to include various light operas and musicals and the glossy paper shews the photographs to advantage.

J G
The lore of foxhunting is full of tales of daring and single-minded heroism. Michael Clayton, who is editor of *Horse & Hound*, has written a substantial book that recounts plenty of thrills and spills and cutting remarks; but in his treatment of the sport in both past and present he also confronts wider issues. His account of the Quorn must needs start from Nimrod’s appreciation of Hugo Meynell and his concluding chapter is ‘The Fun of it’; but his opening chapters are ‘The Hunting Landscape’ and ‘Enduring Changes’. There is evidence even in the nineteenth century of opposition, sometimes violent, to the hunts. Recently the principal change has been the shift in public opinion, although he sees the outcry against hunting that followed the infamous video film of the Quorn in 1991 partly in terms of a political abolition campaign that failed.

The core of his book is the coverage of the history of the four shire hunts that are mainly confined to Leicestershire, the Quorn, the Fernie, the Belvoir and the Cottesmore. Much of the more recent account is based on his personal knowledge and the illustrations are all photographs of ‘names’. A chapter is devoted to the hounds and their breeding, ‘an immensely successful science’.

J G

Organized athletics in the county has its origins back in the 1860s. In 1866 the newly-formed Leicester Athletic Society staged an ambitious Olympic Festival of fifteen events. This was several months before the first meeting of the National Olympian Society at Crystal Palace. The activity was initially confined to gentlemen but opened out for all men and also women under the AAA. Jim Sharlott, athletics correspondent of the *Leicester Mercury*, gives an account of the local involvement in the sport up to the present and ends with biographical details of Olympic athletes with County connexions. Among the illustrations, mainly action shots, there is an intriguing portrait of ‘Leicestershire’s first All England champion’, Alfred Adcock, who made an eighteen-foot long jump when aged thirteen. His trophies appear to include a dinner service.
The story of Highfields Rangers football club is a success story. Started in 1970 by a group of young West Indian immigrants, they soon graduated from Humberstone Park to Victoria Park and eventually their own ground at Rushey Mead. The book that commemorates their first twenty years is a novel production, a singularly direct and breathless read. Most of the text is a mosaic of extracts from recorded interviews with the members. The decision not to ascribe names to them, frustrating for the pedantic historian perhaps, pays off; the voices betray a shared attitude to the game, which parallels the players’ distinctive style of soccer, and deal casually and honestly with the questions of the racial prejudice they came up against and, later, with the prejudices of some members against starting a women’s team as well.

J G

THE TIGERS TALE: The Official History of Leicester Football Club 1880-1993
Stuart Farmer and David Hands
ACL & Polar Publishing (UK) Ltd 1993 £25

The official history of Leicester Football Club is essential reading for any local historian interested in sport and recreation and would make an ideal gift for any serious Tigers’ supporter. Probably one of the most thorough histories of a Rugby club ever published, The Tigers Tale is a comprehensive information source, offering a well-judged balance of narrative text, illustrations, tables and statistics.

Meticulous research on the club’s official archives has resulted in an incomparable reference book, which includes match records and biographical information on key players from the club’s modest beginnings in 1880 to the present day. The book is a credit to its authors and a worthy history of a top-class Rugby club.

J H
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