The Leicestershire Historian is alive!

In December 1995 the Leicestershire Local History Council (LLHC) decided to wind up its activities. The Council was, however, anxious to see its annual publication, the Leicestershire Historian, continue to be published if at all possible. The Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society (LAHS) at about the same time was considering making one of its Newsletters more substantial. These two events have led the Society to agree to publish the Leicestershire Historian. It will be available free to all members of the Society. The LAHS has agreed to provide a free copy of the 1996 volume to all who were members of the LLHC when it ceased to exist and have indicated their wish to receive a copy.

We hope that former members of the LLHC will in due course decide to join the LAHS. For a subscription of £12 a year members receive two respected local publications, The Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological Society (TLAHS) and the Leicestershire Historian. The TLAHS has been published by the Society since the 1860s and is an invaluable source of information about the county’s past. The Society is currently having produced a cumulative index of Transactions and when this is done it will be easier to use Transactions for research. In what form the index will be published has not been decided, but members of the Society will be given preferential rates when the index is sold.

In addition to the publications mentioned above the Society puts on a lecture programme between October and May each year. Currently these lectures are held at the Rowans in College Street, Leicester, where there is ample parking on the premises. Once a year a Saturday day school is held dealing with archaeological fieldwork which has taken place in the previous year. The Society is also looking into the possibility of arranging a day school on local history topics.

The Society also has an extensive library which is housed at the Guildhall in Leicester. It is open to members on the first and third Sunday of each month between 2.00 and 4.00 pm, and on the second Tuesday between 12.00 and 2.00 pm. The Library is closed on public holidays. Books can be borrowed by members and a complete run of Transactions consulted at the Guildhall.

Alan McWhirr, Honorary Secretary, LAHS
37 Dovedale Road, Leicester, LE2 2DN

The Society is now on the internet http://indigo.stile.le.ac.uk/~lah-soc/
Leicestershire Historian
Vol 4 No 4 1996

Contents

Editorial 2

Farewell to the Leicestershire Local History Council
Mary Mason 3

The Origins of Leicester’s Market-Place: an archaeological perspective
Paul Courtney 5

Local History on the internet 16

Letters from America
Janette Shepherd 17

The oldest firm of hosiery manufacturers in Leicester: the early history of Wolsey
David L. Wykes 20

The early years of steam power in Leicestershire
Marilyn Palmer and Peter Neaverson 30

Recent books edited by
Helen Edwards 45

Contributors 63

Editorial

Although the *Leicestershire Historian* is now published by the *Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* it has been decided for this issue to retain the format established over the years by the former editor Dr J Goodacre. Changes are likely in the future, but the Society is committed to maintaining the high standard previously set by Dr Goodacre.

We have, therefore, retained the two sections which have been a current feature of previous issues. The first contains a variety of articles relating to the county’s local history and the second is devoted to recent local history publications. I am greatly indebted to Helen Edwards for managing to persuade people to review a large number of books in a relatively short period of time and to Aubrey Stevenson for providing us with the original list of publications. We have decided to list all publications known to us which have appeared since the last edition of the *Leicestershire Historian*. Some have detailed reviews, others a statement of the contents, whilst some are just listed. It is intended to produce each year as complete a list as possible of all works published which are relevant to the study of Leicestershire’s past. Publications for review should be sent to the Honorary Secretary of the Society at the Guildhall and clearly marked for the *Leicestershire Historian*.

The first section is longer than usual and therefore the whole volume contains more pages than previous editions. I am delighted to have persuaded Dr Paul Courtney to write about urban market places as this is a topic which has received little attention in the past and which has archaeological potential, as Dr Courtney illustrates with examples from Europe. Janette Shepherd, from Leicestershire County Record Office, contributes a piece on a series of letters written in America and sent to Theddington. We hope to have a regular feature from the County Record Office and I am indebted to the staff for their help and forbearance. Dr David Wykes has written about one of Leicester’s best known hosiery manufacturers, Wolsey, and traces the development of the firm from the eighteenth century. Industrial archaeology has not featured to any great extent in the pages of this journal and I am particularly pleased that Dr Marilyn Palmer and Peter Neaverson have written a paper on the early years of steam power in the county.

Considerable changes are likely to take place over the next couple of decades in the way in which scholarly information is distributed. Already the Council for British Archaeology has set up an electronic journal on the World Wide Web and the British Association for Local History has pages on the internet which I have referred to on page 16. We may well decide, with authors’ permission, to put some of the *Leicestershire Historian* on the internet. Likewise the index to the Society’s *Transactions*, when completed, might appear in different forms including CD ROM or the WWW.

We intend to increase the number of pages in future editions and are therefore looking for articles. In particular we would like to receive snippets which could serve as page fillers! Do please contact the acting editor if you have an idea for an article or page-filler.

Alan McWhirr, Acting Editor
Farewell to the Leicestershire Local History Council

Mary Mason (Former chairman and Vice-President)

It is with a certain amount of sadness that one learns of the demise of the Leicestershire Local History Council, especially when I have been involved since its inception in 1966. The Council was formed under the auspices of the Leicestershire Rural Community Council with Professor W.G. Hoskins, its first President, and an impressive list of Vice-Presidents, many of whom were local dignitaries. Representatives from the University, the City Museums, the County Record Office, the Leicestershire Libraries, the Rural Community Council and their neighbour, the Federation of Women's Institutes served on the Executive Committee together with several erudite local historians and those amateurs whose expertise proved useful. It got off to a flying start with a lot of enthusiasm, professionalism and media publicity.

Membership was open to both individuals and societies and over the years much was achieved in providing a local history interest for all and the formation of new societies. The Council existed 'to bring local history to the doorstep of all interested people in Leicester and Leicestershire' and this was manifest in lectures, exhibitions, conferences, sponsored competitions as well as Summer outings conducted by well-informed leaders. Christmas celebrations at the Guildhall in the early days were perhaps memorable for their refreshments as well as the event. The Council's Silver Jubilee in 1991 was another time for celebration and many well-known members gave their support.

Weaving a shining thread through all its events was the annual publication of the Leicestershire Historian which had a wide circulation (including libraries in the USA and Australia) with its meticulously researched articles, book reviews and an updated list of all Leicestershire and Rutland local history societies. Its high standard of editorship has been maintained for many years by Dr John Goodacre; and it has been printed by Duplitype (offset) Limited under the care of Mr Frank Pocklington, the Council's last Chairman.

Many well-known and eminent Leicester and Leicestershire people have been associated with the Council and to mention but a few is in no way to detract from those who gave their time and expertise, as well as opening their homes for fund-raising events. Two publications by the late Colonel Pen Lloyd, 'An Anecdote of Bygone Leicestershire and other stories', and 'The History of the Mysterious Papillon Hall' and the launch of Professor Hoskins’s 'Shell Guide to Leicestershire' did much to promote the Council to the public. It was involved with the British Association for Local History and even fielded
representatives to their Executive. The late Tony Stuart set everything in motion when organising Secretary of the Rural Community Council; Betty Dickson’s indomitable encouragement was second to none: the late Colonel Martin gave much of his time in a very busy lifestyle, as did Dr Patrick Boylan.

There are many others, and the endeavours of recent officers are to be commended.

For almost 30 years the Council played a role in Leicester and Leicestershire local history. Its story can be found in earlier copies of the *Leicestershire Historian* and its archival information at the County Record Office.

Many will remember their involvement with pleasure and now it has completed its life span. Its testimonial continues, we trust, in the many local history societies with which it was associated.

Exmouth.
April 1996

---

The origins of Leicester’s Market-Place: an archaeological perspective

Paul Courtney

The urban market-place as a topographic feature has attracted little interest in Britain. In its classic form it was a compact (often rectilinear) open space enclosed by merchants’ houses within which markets and fairs were held. Recent work suggests that market-places first appeared in Britain sometime in the twelfth century, though of course the holding of regular urban markets was a much older practice. Certainly market-places were not a primary feature in the first wave of Norman town plantations in Wales before 1100 where the broad ‘high’ street was intended to house the borough market (Courtney 1994, 123-6). However, by the second half of the twelfth century rectilinear market-places were a common feature in the growing number of planted new-towns in England and Wales, for example, Newport (I.O.W.) (Beresford 1967, 444-5 and fig. 25).

This chronology seems to agree with recent archaeological evidence of twelfth- or thirteenth-century origins for market-places in a number of northern European towns such as Lille, Gent (Ghent), Gdansk (Danzig) and Hannover (Verhaeghe 1994, 166-9; Blieck and Guiffray 1994, 207). One explanation for their origin is that they originated as loosely defined trading-areas alongside rivers which were later incorporated by the expansion of their adjacent towns (Emmens 1991). Archaeology has indicated just such a transition at the Baltic port of Lübeck in Germany which first acquired a grid plan in the mid twelfth century. Around 1220 this regular plan was extended over a former extra-mural market area, with evidence of timber stalls, along the River Trave (Fehring 1989 and 1994). Enclosed market-places certainly reflect an increased regularity and orderliness in town plans from the twelfth century onward. Indeed the origin of the market-place may have occurred in the planned new towns which lords were actively founding to increase their revenues as trade expanded. Meanwhile, in the older towns, patrician merchant-elites were taking an increased role in the government of their own boroughs as they gained charters from absentee lords.

It thus seems likely that Leicester’s market-place was created in the twelfth or thirteenth centuries. Widespread archaeological evidence for twelfth-century occupation in Leicester, in contrast with the dearth of earlier remains, suggests that Leicester was approaching its full medieval extent around this period. The curved northern boundary of the market-place implies that Cank Street, which curves northward towards the East Gate, was already in existence (Plate 3).
The market-place is first specifically referred to as 'the Saturday Market' in 1298 (RBL, 1, 350). However, markets undoubtedly existed prior to this date in the borough's streets, notably the broad, original High Street (now Highcross Street and Oxford Street). The Wednesday and Friday markets continued to be held at the High Cross until the nineteenth century (Everitt 1970).

The market-place was created within the SE corner of the town walls, probably in an empty space previously utilised for agriculture. The creation of Leicester's market undoubtedly had a profound effect on the later development of the town. It became a prime commercial focus, perhaps an important factor in the movement of the commercial heart of Leicester eastwards. By the sixteenth century the name 'High Street' had switched from the original north-south street to the present street of that name, the former 'Swinesmarket'. Even that area has been overshadowed by the commercial success of the Granby Street area outside the walls of the medieval town.

Leicester's market-place may have been initially defined by the town walls on its eastern and southern sides. At some date, possibly early, the walls were engulfed by timber dwellings. The distribution of three-storey timber buildings of fifteenth to seventeenth century date, known to have existed in Leicester is revealing (see Courtney 1995, 9-42). One was on the modern High Street, two fronted onto the market-place while the fourth, the Angel Inn stood between Cheapside and Gallowtree Gate. Of these four timber-framed buildings, only Pearce's (jeweller's shop) on the NW side of the market-place, and a fragment of the Angel Inn at 10
Plate 2. The north-west side of the market-place in 1745. Engraving published by T. Bateman (Leicestershire Museums, Arts and Records Service).
Cheapside now survive behind later brick frontages (Plate 3). A survey of 10 Cheapside (Victoria Wine stores) by David Smith in 1982 suggests an early-mid sixteenth century date (see NHM). The remnant of the Angel Inn’s former yard, and a few timbers in the gable above, can still be seen by walking through Morley’s Arcade.

Timber-framing at Pearce’s shop survives behind a later brick frontage and roof timbers have been dated by tree-ring analysis to c.1500 (LCC 1993, 36-7). A short distance away stood two inns, the White Swan and the Green Dragon (Plate 3). Timber-framing was noted behind the brick frontage of the White Swan during demolition in 1973 (for the new Market Centre) by David Smith who suggests a date of c.1580 ± 20 years. He had also noted (pre-1954) timberwork, including a moulded beam in the range at the rear of the White Swan in Market Place South (TLAHS 68 (1972-3), 62 and pers. comm: see NHM). Unfortunately the timber-framing of the Green Dragon Inn was obscured by white-wash when the building was illustrated by John Flower in 1850 shortly before it was demolished (Pyrah 1984, 6-7 and 20-1). Its overall shape, though, with jettied cross-wings at either end of its frontage suggests a fifteenth- or sixteenth-century date.

The street-blocks in which Pearce’s, the White Swan and Green Dragon were situated were thus in existence by the sixteenth century though they may be much older. They probably represent infilling of an originally much larger market-place. The offset nature of the street-block upon which the present Corn Exchange lies suggests it was the latest addition (Plate 3). A further inn, the White Lion, which formerly stood between Cank Street and the Market, is described by Billson (1920, 210) as probably dating from the reign of Elizabeth, but ‘much altered’. This may imply that it had surviving timberwork when Billson saw it. The Bull’s Head in the market was one of several Leicester inns said to have been of medieval construction within living memory in 1889 (LRNQ,1, 126). The survival of these buildings is even more remarkable given the major rebuilding in brick which occurred in this area of Leicester in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Furthermore, the survival of three- as opposed to two-storey buildings reflects the high commercial values of their sites and willingness to invest in their construction.

By the sixteenth century the market-place appears to have been loosely divided into distinct areas where different groups of traders sold their goods: the ‘Shambles and Drapery’, which housed such tradesmen as butchers, drapers, mercers and shoemakers, the pavemented ‘Corn Wall’ for grain and malt sales, the ‘Sheep Market’ (moved to the market-place in 1506) and the ‘Housewives’ or ‘Women’s Market’. All of these are located on the 1741 town map except for the Women’s Market which may have ceased to function by this date. Unofficial trading also undoubtedly took place in the many inns which were situated around the market-place.
Plate 3 The market-place in 1886 (OS 1st ed. XXX1.14)

Timber Buildings (surviving or recorded in pictorial sources: location of nos. 3 and 5 is approximate)
1. Pearce's, c.1500 (three-storey): survives.
2. Angel Inn, early-mid C16 (three-storey): fragment survives (see NHM).
4. Green Dragon Inn, C15/C16 (two-storey with gabled cross-wings). Demolished 1850.
5. Timber building(s) with ornamental gables, (two-storey). Demolished by 1847: fig 2.
8. ?White Lion (see Billson 1920, 120). Probably demolished 1922-5 (Kelly's Directories).
9. ?Bull's Head (see LRNQ, 1, 126).
The market-place appears to have been only partially paved in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for instance, the Corn Wall and around the Gainsborough and Drapery. A payment in the mayor's account of 1346 for breaking stones in the Saturday market near to Henry Dexter’s probably refers to piecemeal surfacing. In 1565-6 the area around the elm tree was repaired with mortar and stone and benching was placed around the same tree in 1606-7. The elm can probably be identified with the former Pigeon Tree under which country women had sold pigeons according to Gardiner (1853, 11). The 1741 map indicates a tree, presumably the elm, at the NW end of the market (Plate 1).

Street furniture recorded in the market during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries included stocks, a pillory near the Cornwall, and a pinfold for penning stray stock. The feature in the SE corner of the market on the 1741 map (Plate 1) may have been the town pillory. Mrs Fielding Johnson (1891, 169) states that the pinfold had formerly been on the site of the Victorian Fishmarket, re-erected in iron in 1877 (Spencer 1878, 172-3) (Plate 3). During the midlands enclosure riots of 1607, a gibbet was constructed on the Cornwall at the earl of Huntingdon’s instruction, but had to be re-erected after it was nefariously pulled down. A well was recorded in the market-place in 1592, possibly the well by the Gainsborough which was given a pump in 1706. A piped water supply to the Conduit in the NE corner of the market-place was probably constructed as early as the 1570s (RBL, 3, 140 241), despite the date of 1612 cited by Throsby (1791, 376) and later sources. The lead piping was replaced in 1692 and the Conduit was rebuilt in 1709 as a domed, hexagonal structure (Plate 1c).

More permanent structures were making an appearance within market-places from an early date and a few of the surviving stone market-halls in the arcaded squares of Gascony date back to the thirteenth century (Beresford 1967, 167). The earliest reference at Leicester may be to the toll-booth first documented in 1376 when the chamber over it was rented. No source states where this was located, but it is most likely to have been in the market-place. About 1440 a prison is documented underneath the toll-booth. The toll-booth is last mentioned in 1582-3 in connection with drink bought for the ceremonial walkers who pronounced the beginning of the fairs. Despite overlapping references it is possible, given the similarity of functions, that this was the same building (perhaps rebuilt) as the ‘Gainsborough chamber’ which is first documented in 1533.

The Gainsborough had a chamber on its first floor used for judicial and mayoral business, especially on market days, as well as for civic feasts and housing guests. There were shops which were rented out on the ground floor and a prison in the cellar. A gutter or drain running from the Gainsborough towards the Eastgate is recorded in 1567. The Gainsborough was presumably a
timbered structure raised on posts like many other free-standing market-houses of this period (Tittler 1991). A balcony was added in 1705 on the side towards the Corn Wall, noticeably avoiding the panorama of the drapery and stalls. The balcony appears to be represented on the 1741 plan (Plate 1b). The junction of the market-place with Cheapside, the main thoroughfare to the High Street and East Gate, appears to have developed as a focus for high-status buildings. The Gainsborough, the Angel (Leicester’s premier inn) and the Conduit were all situated there.

A covered market-hall, known as the ‘Drapery’ or ‘Shambles and Drapery’, was built around 1440, presumably in timber. It can be seen, having been clearly rebuilt not long before, on the map of 1741 and print of 1745 (Plates 1-2). The Drapery was described as ruinous in 1601. References to newly-built shops in 1609 and again in 1714-5 could refer to the rebuilding of the Drapery as well as to the adjacent semi-permanent rows of stalls. The absence of the stalls in front of the Drapery on the print of 1745 was probably artistic licence. The artist was no doubt intent upon showing a modernised urban landscape and noticeably avoided depicting the ‘medieval’ Gainsborough in either of his two perspectives of the market (Plate 2 and cover). The Drapery (Shambles) and the adjacent stalls were demolished in 1748 at the same time as the
Gainsborough. However, the stalls were rebuilt and reference to the thatching of a ‘market house’, leased from the borough, in 1771 suggests fixed structures.

In 1748 the Drapery and Gainsborough were replaced by the Exchange or New Gainsborough (Plate 4). This was built with an arcaded ground floor and a cellar, echoing medieval forms, on a new site. This required the demolition of several buildings. The Exchange continued to combine civic, judicial and trading functions, though its ground-floor market quickly proved to be a failure (Throsby 1791, 377). However, unlike the old Gainsborough, its central position and classical facade now dominated the open space of the market-place both physically and symbolically. The Exchange can be seen as reflecting the self confidence of eighteenth-century merchant-capitalism. It also mirrors Enlightenment concern for the architectural control of space and thus of nature and man (see Markus 1993 and Isaac 1982, 18-87). The Exchange was, in turn, replaced by a new single-storey market hall in 1850-1 (fig. 3). A Corn Exchange was added, with a external flying staircase as a second storey in 1856 (LC and LA). The new storey also doubled as a civic function-room (Spencer 1878, 171). Many such corn exchanges were raised in mid-nineteenth century market-places, invariably in the classical style, to meet the growing demand for food created by the rapidly expanding urban population (Girouard 1990, 16).

The borough regained direct control of the market in 1821, after a period of leasing, and undertook a programme of improvements. New stalls were built, by now clearly temporary structures erected on market day, and the market was also repaved and provided with drains. A guardhouse existed prior to 1738 when it was rebuilt on a new site only to be demolished for the Exchange in 1748. It was subsequently rebuilt in 1762 and again in c.1811-4. A complaint in 1810 from a nearby householder suggests that it can be identified with a building seen to the SW of the Exchange on prints of 1847 (Courmey 1995, 74) and earlier (Plate 4). As well as serving as a prison it was used as a store for the sheep pens and for soldiers’ baggage, as well as housing the borough’s fire engines. It was probably demolished along with the Exchange towards the end of 1850.

The removal of the Conduit in 1841 was part of the general process of tidying up and modernising the town’s premier open space in an age which had no time for quaintness. It was replaced by two successive structures with water-taps. The first was capped by that symbol of modernity an iron lamp-post (the market had its first gas-lights in 1821-2). The lamp was replaced in 1852 by a statue of the Duke of Rutland, erected to mark his 50th year as Lord Lieutenant. It was moved in 1872 to the front of the Corn Exchange when it was given a new base and gilded (Spencer 1878, 171).

Aesthetics were no longer high on the agenda of civic authorities in the inter-War depression years. The civic importance of the market-place had also
diminished with the opening of the new Town Hall in 1876. In 1930 the temporary stalls were replaced by fixed stalling under a canvas (later a corrugated iron) roof. This was superseded in turn by the current “egg-box” roof, made of glass fibre, in 1970-1 (LRO DE4702/3/4 and NHM). The effect of open-space and unobstructed vistas, considered so desirable in the nineteenth century, contrasts starkly with the crowded intimacy of today’s covered market. The present fragmentation of space (i.e. as used and perceived by people) in the market-place reflects its still vibrant role as a centre for competitive low-capital retailing. In contrast the commercial desirability of the market-place’s surrounding frontages has declined since their Victorian and Edwardian heyday.

Finally some attention is drawn to the archaeological potential of market-places. One notable British market-place excavation is that of the fish market (created c. 1710) in South Castle Street, Liverpool, which produced the foundations of structures interpreted as timber stalls, a sunken lock-up, stocks and a whipping post (Davey and McNeil 1980-1). Obviously archaeology could help clarify the date of the first buildings around Leicester’s market square and thus shed more light on its date of origin. An intriguing chance find was the discovery of about sixty leather shoes in black mud by workmen digging a sewer trench near the NE. corner of the Corn Exchange in 1960. The only surviving shoe, perhaps from a rubbish pit or drainage culvert, is fifteenth century in date (Allin 1981, 6 and 9).

In contrast to the dearth of information from Britain, excavations on the Continent have shed light on the development of the market-places themselves. Remains of timber market stalls have been found as early as the twelfth century at Duisburg, Magdeburg and Lübeck in Germany (Verhaeghe 1994, 168). In the Markt of ‘s-Hertogenbosch in Holland, excavation has uncovered the foundations of a fifteenth-century octagonal well-house, later replaced by a free-standing pump (Jannsen 1983, 53-63). Excavation in the Place Charles de Gaulle (the former Grand Place) of Lille in France revealed that in the twelfth century it was an open space where numbers of horse-shoes were discarded. In the thirteenth century the market-place came into being when the area was enclosed with buildings. Subsequently the level of the Grand Place was repeatedly raised in response to flooding during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Archaeologists found the remains of a sequence of timber market-stalls before the square was paved over in the fifteenth century (Blieck and Guiffray 1994).

Despite regional peculiarities, the topographic development of medieval British towns shows many close parallels to their counterparts immediately across the Channel. This is hardly surprising given the ties of dynasty, commerce and religion. British urban archaeologists need to be more aware of
the work of their Continental colleagues and, in particular, of the untapped archaeological potential of the British market-place.

Acknowledgements.
I am grateful to David Smith, Yolanda Courtney and Richard Buckley for assistance or information.

Bibliography
Note: All historical references prior to 1835 are from the printed borough records, RBL, 1-7, unless otherwise stated. See also Spencer 1878, 171-3; Billson 1920, 46-9 and 112-22; VCH Leics, 4, 363-4; Green and Wilshere 1973; Simmons 1974, 110-1 and pls. 17-9; and Courtney 1995, 70-7. Schofield and Vince 1994, 46-52, Girouard 1990, 9-20 and Markus 1993, 300-16 offer useful general background on market-places and their buildings.

Fehring, G. P., 1989. 'Archaeological evidence from Lübeck for changing material culture and socio-economic conditions from the 13th to the 16th century', Medieval Archaeology 33, 60-81.
Fehring, G. P., 1993. 'Topography, plot layout and building structures in towns belonging to the Hanseatic trading area (12th-13th c.)', 191-200 in Demolon et al.
LC and LA. Leicester Chronicle 14/12/1850 and 28/9/1851; and Leicester Advertiser 10/5/1856, 19/7/1856, 30/8/1856 and 27/9/1856.
LRNQ Leicestershire and Rutland Notes and Queries, vol. 1. 1889.
NHM. Cuttings from the Leicester Mercury newspaper and correspondence in Newarke Houses museum (Leicestershire Museums): Market-place and Cheapside history files.
Nichols. J., 1815. The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester. vol. 1 ii. Leicester.
Throsby, J., 1791. The History and Antiquities of the Ancient Town of Leicester. Leicester.
TLAHS Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society.
Local history on the internet

Local history is beginning to make its appearance on the internet. Our own Society has had a number of pages on the net since January. These will be updated in the near future and kept up-to-date on a regular basis. They contain information on the officers of the society, the lecture programme, publications and links with other historical/archaeological pages on the World Wide Web.

The location or address for the Society is:

http://indigo.stile.le.ac.uk/~lah-soc/

Another local society, a member of the LAHS, has also ventured into the field of electronic publishing. The Diseworth Local History Society can be found at:

http://www.gmtnet.co.uk/diseworth

Bob Trubshaw’s Heart of Albion Press is at

http://www.gmtnet.co.uk/indigo/albion/hoaphome.htm

Nationally, the British Association for Local History appears under Resources in British Local History and can be contacted at:

http://indigo.stile.le.ac.uk/~bon/LOCAL_HIST/frontpage.html

From these pages you will be able to find out the contents and abstracts of the British Association’s publication, The Local Historian, a valuable journal for local historians around the county.

Once you make contact with the above you will find that links can be established. For example, with the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, the Council for British Archaeology, English Heritage and many others. You can even order books!

The editor would be pleased to hear of other facilities on the internet which might be of interest to local historians.
Letters from America

Janette Shepherd

In June 1849, the Ellson family, John and Ann, and their children William (16), Elizabeth (14), Mary (10), Robert and Tom, left their home and butcher's business in Lubenham and set sail from Liverpool to start a new life in Avon, Ohio in the mid-west of the United States. The story of their journey and their life there for the next 20 years is chronicled in letters written by John to his brother William Ellson back in Theddingworth. This collection of letters was given to Leicestershire Record Office last year by a relative of the Ellsons and has now been catalogued and made available.¹

It is not clear from the letters why the Ellsons chose to pack up and leave Lubenham where, according to White's 1846 Directory of Leicestershire, John Ellson was a butcher, but it may well have been because Ann Ellson's family, the Blackwells including her mother, were already settled in Cleveland and Avon, Ohio.

The first letter, dated 10th June 1849, is written from Liverpool. The family, complete with a provision chest for their journey (so large that it would not go in at their cabin door but had to be taken aloft), were due to sail the following day. Their sea voyage took over a month as the next letter, dated July 18, says 'We arrived in New York yesterday about 12 o'clock, landed about 4 o'clock'. The dangers of sea travel at this date can be seen from the fact that John Ellson related that, whilst there had been no deaths on board their ship, he had heard that on another, the Guy Mannering, there had been 50 deaths on board from cholera and smallpox. Two days after landing they set out on the next stage of their journey:

'Started about 6 o'clock [in the evening] in a steam boat, got to Troy about 5 o'clock next morning, 196 miles. Staid there for breakfast then started for Sconnectady [Schenectady] 20 miles by first class carriages, waited there till 3 o'clock for the emigrant carriages which is a great deal less expence. Travelled all night, got to Buffalo about 1 o'clock next day ... about 300 miles. Did not like the railway travelling, they are very dangerous ... We started from Buffalo on the Saturday night about 7 o'clock, got to Cleveland on Sunday about 1 o'clock about 180 miles. Thos. & John Blackwell [relatives of Ann Ellsons] was waiting at the landing with 2 carriages for us but they never expected to see us all alive'.

Over the next nine years the letters regularly crossed the Atlantic at the rate of
two or three a year. The family soon settled in to their new life and new
surroundings, greatly helped by the fact that a very large number of families
they already knew from the Leicestershire/Northamptonshire border area were
already settled in the same community. Within the first six months John Ellson
had bought a house with a large garden and orchard full of peach trees and
other fruit, a barn, cowshed, stable and 16 acres of land for less than $1,000.

Two more daughters were born to Ann and John: Ann in May 1850, and Clara
Jane in December 1853. Meanwhile the other children were growing up.
William the eldest had 'grown like a giant - 6 ft. 3 1/2ins. tall' by March 1851,
and had become a butcher and slaughterman like his father. In 1853 he married
one of his Blackwell relations, five years older than himself, and moved into his
own farm rented from old Mrs Blackwell. The younger son Robert is described
in May 1851 chopping wood.

‘He can swing the axe over his head. We should have thought he would have
chopt. himself in England. He will make a Yankee complete’.

The letters between 1849 and 1857 are full of descriptions of life in the
American middle-west: parties to build log houses for new arrivals, the
abundance of fruit at harvest time, prices paid for food and other goods, details
of the American meat-trade with, to modern eyes, an almost excessive emphasis
on the slaughter of beasts of various kinds undertaken by William in the course
of his business. The emphasis is understandable, John Ellson was a butcher
writing to his brother who was also a butcher. There are also references to
national and international news, such as the 1851 Great Exhibition at the
Crystal Palace, which John Ellson urges his brother William to visit, as he will
see there some things from America, including a 47 cwt bullock. There are also
references to the Crimean War: ‘The Americans ... don’t seem to care which
way the war ends. We as Englishmen do’. At the time of State elections in Ohio
in 1855 slavery was the big issue. They were presumably the first American
elections that John Ellson could take part in as 'Foreigners can’t vote until they
have been five years in America'.

Then in May 1857 disaster struck: ‘William has gone off and left us owing all
of us his relations a great deal of money’. He had apparently borrowed heavily
to enable him to carry on his trading, lost heavily buying cattle and taking them
east to sell, and panicked when the time came to have to repay about £1,400.
He had fled to Canada leaving his wife and two small children. After a month
of uncertainty, he was located in Canada and brought home to face bankruptcy,
and by the following March John writes,

‘[I] think William has seen his folly and bought experience dear. He is
working hard now and paying off his debts. ... America is a strange place for speculation. Wm. speculated too much, stopt at nothing’.

Whether the shock and shame of William’s bankruptcy were too much for John Ellson, or whether the disruption caused by the American Civil War was to blame, there is only one more complete letter from John Ellson after 1859. It was written in October 1864 at the height of the Civil War which was about to swing decisively in favour of the north with General Sherman’s destruction of Atlanta and his march through Georgia. Each town was required to supply a quota of soldiers for the Federal Army and young Robert Ellson had gone to Canada to avoid the draft, but had come back as $500 had been raised for volunteers and the town had filled its quota. Matthew Blackwell, one of the Blackwell relations, had enlisted, but William had been suffering from rheumatism, ‘couldn’t use his hands or feet’ and so presumably he was spared the draft.

After this letter there is silence, until an undated fragment of a letter in John Ellson’s handwriting, presumably written in the 1880s, as family news tells of not only grandchildren (children of William and Elizabeth), but great grandchildren. This throws light on the development of post-Civil War America:

‘There is a great many familys going west where land is cheap, government will give you 160 acres if you will go and live on it’.

The final letter, dated 27 March 1894, brings the story of the first generation of Ellson’s in America to a close. It is from John’s younger son Robert, now a man in his 50s, to a cousin in Birmingham, and records the death of his father, at the age of 87, in September 1891, of typhoid and dysentery. Robert and Clara are both unmarried and still living in ‘the old homestead’, but William, Elizabeth and Ann, between them, have had eighteen children and the American Ellson dynasty looks set to continue into the twentieth century.

For those interested in the background to American history in the turbulent years of the mid-nineteenth century or just wanting to know more of the lives of an emigrant family in their new country I can recommend a visit to Leicestershire Record Office to read these letters. I don’t think you’ll be disappointed.

1. Leicestershire County Record Office - DE 4784/1-31.
The oldest firm of hosiery manufacturers in Leicester: the early history of Wolsey

David L. Wykes

There are few studies of individual business firms for the period before the twentieth century. The reasons are easy to understand. Economic change, the cyclic nature of business, bankruptcy, contraction and the reorganisation of industry, have meant that only a handful of businesses or their records have survived from earlier periods. Remarkably, one modern Leicester hosiery and knitwear firm, Wolsey, can trace its origins back to the first half of the eighteenth century, though there are no business records available before the modern period. Because the survival of any firm for such a long period is so exceptional, the early history of Wolsey deserves to be investigated. Any study is also likely to provide evidence on the hosiery industry and on the structure of business in this period.

The Leicestershire hosiery and knitwear industry developed from hand-knitting during the late sixteenth century, and by the 1590s there existed a regular trade in stockings with London. The expansion of the Leicestershire industry dates, however, from the mid-seventeenth century, when hosiers began increasingly to undertake not only the marketing of the finished stockings, but to organise the manufacture to satisfy the demand they had created by putting out wool to be combed and spun and yarn to be knitted up for stockings. Until the end of the seventeenth century the Leicestershire trade was based on pauper hand-knitting. A machine for knitting silk stockings, the stocking-frame, was probably invented by William Lee of Nottinghamshire in about 1589. Although the stocking-frame was adopted in London and Nottinghamshire by the mid-seventeenth century, for technical and economic reasons it was slow to gain acceptance in Leicestershire. It is clear that there were very few stocking-frames in the county before the 1690s, but thereafter, with the considerable expansion in the domestic and overseas markets, and with the technical problems of knitting worsted stockings having been overcome, the growth in framework-knitting in the county was rapid. By the mid-eighteenth century three-quarters of the stocking-frames in the country were located in the East Midlands (Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and, to a lesser extent, Derbyshire); by the beginning of the nineteenth century four-fifths; and by the 1840s over 90 per cent. The structure and organisation of the hosiery industry which had developed by the mid-eighteenth century remained largely unchanged until the stocking-frame was replaced by the power-driven knitting-machine during the second half of the nineteenth century.
The early hosiery industry was dominated by the hosier, who by the late seventeenth century organised and financed the manufacture and marketing of the stockings. Before the modern period the individual was the basis of all business capital and credit, and businesses therefore tended to die with their owner, particularly if capital had to be found to make provision for a widow and other dependants. Other factors also helped to make hosiery businesses in general short-lived. By the late eighteenth century most of the larger firms were managed by a succession of relatively short-term partnerships involving different junior partners, many of which failed to last even the set seven-year period. Such partnerships were not permanent trading organisations in the modern sense. In addition to the structural factors which acted against the establishment of the long-term firm before the modern period, the cyclic nature of the industry with its unpredictable slumps in trade, has meant that few firms today date from before the Second World War. The firm of Wolsey is almost certainly the oldest firm still active in the industry.

**Henry Wood (1707-1768), founder of the firm**

The modern firm of Wolsey can trace its origins back to Henry Wood, who took out his freedom of the Borough of Leicester as a ‘stranger’ in 1748.\(^4\) He had, however, been trading in the town since at least 1744, when he insured the contents of his house near the Southgate and the two tenements he owned in Friar Lane for £200. The contents of his house included ‘his three stocking-frames therein in the several occupations of John Hastings, Edward Young, and Sarah Jarvis, Framework-knitters’.\(^5\) The stocking-frames were presumably worked in a workshop in part of Wood’s house. Although described as a hosier, the evidence suggests that at this date he was perhaps a master framework-knitter, involved in the manufacture of stockings rather than trading in the finished article. Wood was the son of a framework-knitter, also called Henry, but little else is known about his origins. At the time he insured his property he was already in his late 30s and a man of some property, but the earlier history of his business career is unknown. It is clear using evidence from insurance policies that like the majority of the hosiery concerns in Leicester at this time, Wood’s business was only of modest size. The leading firms were insuring their buildings and stock for £1000 and more.\(^6\)

In 1748 Wood formed a partnership with Job Middleton, who was certainly older than Wood, since he had obtained his freedom in 1722. Middleton appears also to have been a self-made man. He was from a similarly modest background, the fourth son of a Leicester saddler. It was apparently in connection with this partnership that Wood took out his freedom. The partners had taken on an apprentice some three months before Wood himself became a freeman.\(^7\) Wood by this date was living in Friar Lane, and the partners traded
from a warehouse adjoining his house. Their stock in trade and utensils in the ‘Warehouse and Chamber’ were insured for £300, and the stock in another warehouse with a ‘wash-house, work room and stove room’ on the other side of Wood’s house was insured for a further £100. The practical advantages of a partnership, in the greater amount of capital available to the business, are clear.

Two years later John Wightman joined the partnership. Wightman appears to have brought additional working capital with him. The utensils and stock in trade in the ‘two warehouses and rooms over it’ adjoining Wood’s dwelling-house in Friar Lane were insured for £365, and stock and equipment in ‘the dwelling-house, three store rooms and work-room adjoining belonging to the said Henry Wood’ were insured by the partners for a further £35. Wood insured his own dwelling house and household goods, together with the ‘three store rooms and work rooms adjoining’, ‘his warehouse and rooms over it’, and two tenements, one of which was in the tenure of William Manley, a framework-knitter, (the other empty), for £250. The occupants of the two tenements were presumably part of the workforce. Manley was still a tenant in 1760 when Wood made his will, and was perhaps a foreman, or trusted workman. It is likely that most of the stockings were made in the town and surrounding villages by framework-knitters working in their own homes, and that the work and washrooms were used by the partners to sort, dye and finish the stockings. Most framework-knitters hired frames, for which they paid a
regular weekly rent. A characteristic feature of the framework-knitting industry in this period was the number of frames which individuals outside the industry owned as an investment. Frame-rents were particularly attractive to small investors such as widows as they provided a regular weekly income.

The partnership does not appear to have lasted long, by June 1753 Wood had registered Edward Blower as his own apprentice. Blower's family paid a premium of £21, further indication of Wood's growing importance as a hosiery manufacturer. There is, unfortunately, no further evidence concerning Wood's business except the details which are available from his will. It is clear that Wood's business must have prospered. In 1744 he had only insured a couple of tenements in Friar Lane and was living in the Southgate. In 1748, when he entered his partnership with Middleton, he was living in Friar Lane, which after the mid-eighteenth century became an increasingly fashionable area of the town. The tenements adjoining his house appear to have been used as warehouses, though two tenements, insured separately in 1750, were certainly tenanted. In 1757 he purchased a tenement and garden on the south of Friar Lane for £140, which he appears to have rebuilt. When he made his will in December 1760, he was living in a 'new erected' house. On the north side of the street were his three cottages or tenements occupied by his tenants, including William Manley. The notice in the *Leicester Journal* recording Wood's death, though using conventional expressions, considered Wood to have been responsible for establishing his hosiery business: 'He had acquired a very considerable Fortune with great Industry and equal Reputation'. Judging from his modest origins, his father was a framework-knitter, this was no small achievement. Nevertheless, his second marriage to Ann Blower in August 1751 was clearly a good one, and almost certainly brought him additional capital for his business. Edward Blower, bound to Wood as an apprentice in 1753, was his brother in law. Christiana Blower, his mother-in-law, left £400 to each of her two sons and two daughters when she died in 1766. Her will also reveals a further family connection in Wood's business activities, for she mentions the will of her aunt Mrs Christiana Wightman. John Wightman, Wood's former partner was presumably a relation.

It is, however, remarkable that the business survived Henry Wood's death. Although Wood was aged 61 when he died in June 1768, he left a young family. His first wife had died in March 1750/1, apparently without any surviving issue. Five months later he married Anne Blower, twenty years his junior. When Wood died in June 1768, his seven children were between the ages of three and twelve years old. His will was therefore concerned with making provisions for his widow's jointure and for the maintenance and education of their children. He made his wife his sole executor and gave her a life interest in half his residual property, the other half to be equally divided amongst his children. He directed
specifically that ‘All my Stock in Trade Debts and all other Goods Chattels and Personal Estate’ were to be placed in trust by his wife, and that she was ‘to convert my personal estate (save my household goods) into money’ and place the proceeds out at interest ‘upon good Public or Private Securities’. Half the sum was to be for her own benefit, the other half for the children.

**Ann Wood & Co.**

Ann Wood clearly did not sell up the business and invest the proceeds as her husband had directed. Instead she was to conduct the business herself, later with the assistance of her sons, for another 40 years. This was highly unusual for the period, though not completely unknown in the Leicester hosiery trade. The most important hosiery firm in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century was established by Elizabeth Pougher and continued by her son, grandson and great-grandson, until the death of the latter in 1780. Few widows, however, had either the knowledge or skill to continue their husband’s business. Thomas Leach (an important figure in the late eighteenth-century hosiery trade) was apprenticed to Henry Wood in 1765 for £10, but was afterwards turned over to his widow, Ann Wood, to complete his term of apprenticeship. In September 1768, Thomas Smith was bound to Ann Wood, in her own right, though the entry states from 14 June, the day before Henry Wood died. This was almost certainly a legal fiction to allow her to take an apprentice which in Leicester, unlike a number of towns, widows of freemen were unable to do. Ann Wood conducted the business herself until her eldest son, Henry Wood, joined the business in 1778.

In November 1778, Ann Wood signed a partnership agreement with her son Henry, then 24 years old. The partnership was to run from the previous 18 March for a period of seven years. The agreement noted that Ann Wood had ‘continued in the Trade of Manufactoring of Hose, Caps, Mitts and so forth since the Death of her Husband’ ten years earlier. An agreement was necessary because Ann Wood under the terms of her husband’s will had only been left a life interest in half the capital. The other half was to be held in trust (together with the capital of her own life interest) for the benefit of their children. The agreement was therefore to apportion the capital in the business and to make provisions for the assignment of the capital in the event of the death of Ann Wood before the end of the term of seven years in order to protect the inheritance of the younger children. Henry Wood jun. appears to have been taken on as an equal partner, for the profits and losses were to be shared, but he had to pay interest at 4 1/2 per cent. on ‘so much of her Stock in Trade as will make his Stock in Trade equal with her Stock’. The agreement also stated that ‘a considerable part of the Business in carrying on the Partnership Trade will be done by Henry Wood’, which suggest that now that her son was old
enough to have gained the necessary experience Ann Wood was to have a less direct part in the day-to-day conduct of the business. Nevertheless, the firm traded as Ann Wood & Sons until her death in 1813. The agreement was concerned almost exclusively with the financial arrangements between the partners, and therefore it gives few other details concerning the business. Four servants were, however, mentioned by name because Henry Wood jun. was to be allowed their wages and board out of the partnership profits. Two of the servants, John and Joseph Heard, had been apprenticed to Henry Wood sen., and had presumably assisted Ann Wood in conducting the business during her son’s minority. 

The trade directories of the period record the firm trading as hosiery manufacturers in Friar Lane, first as Ann Wood & Son, and later, after the admission to the partnership sometime in the late 1780s of her second son, Thomas Wood, as Ann Wood & Sons. Thomas Wood had been apprenticed in 1777 to John Dalby for the very substantial premium of £190. Only the leading manufacturers were able to charge such sums, and so the payment of such a premium is also evidence of the wealth and standing of the Wood family, and the prosperity of the business under Ann Wood’s direction. Thomas Wood made a very successful first marriage to the heiress to a wealthy Herefordshire physician, and Ann Wood’s youngest daughter received a marriage portion of £1200 when she married John Richards, a Birmingham factor, in 1785. There is unfortunately little evidence concerning the activities of the business during this period, but the firm appears to have manufactured a wider range of goods than just stockings. The partnership agreement between Ann Wood and her eldest son in 1778 spoke of the manufacturing of ‘Hose, Caps, Mitts and so forth’. Caps always seems to have been a regular line for the firm, but by the early nineteenth century the business was also engaged in the manufacture of fancy hosiery. Holden’s Triennial Directory for 1805 states that Ann Wood & Sons were ‘manufacturers of caps, spots and hosiery’. There is some evidence of the prosperity of the business in the 1790s from the moneys Ann Wood had available to lend. For example, in 1795, and again in 1796, she advanced the sum of £600 on mortgage. Ann Wood died in October 1813, in her 87th year, the widow of ‘Henry Wood, whom she succeeded in trade and survived upwards of 45 years’. Her personal estate was sworn under £5000. The residue in fact came to just over £3800: a remarkable sum considering she had only had a life interest in half her husband’s estate. This total excluded any landed property, which at this date did not fall within the jurisdiction of the probate courts. By the time of her death, her grandsons had already entered the family firm. 

Henry Wood (1754-1821) junior’s sons, Henry and Richard Warner Wood, were admitted as partners to the firm during the early years of the nineteenth century. Thomas Wood’s second son, Thomas jun., was apprenticed to the four
partners in 1809. Five years earlier, in 1804, Henry and Thomas Wood sen. had entered a separate partnership with John Gill, Samuel Towndrow, David Harris and their mother’s former apprentice, Thomas Leach, to spin worsted. The partnership was finally dissolved in 1817 when Richard Warner Wood and Thomas Wood jun. joined their fathers to continue the business in a new partnership. By the second half of the eighteenth century Leicester had become the centre of the worsted hosiery trade, but the only source of yarn remained the domestic hand-spinner. The introduction of the stocking-frame at the end of the seventeenth century had greatly improved productivity by increasing the number of stockings that a single operative could knit, but the failure to mechanise the other processes led to shortages of yarn. Woolcombing and spinning, unlike knitting, could not be mechanised at this time, and these processes, in particular spinning, remained very labour intensive, often causing interruptions in the supply of yarn to the knitters. An attempt in 1787 to introduce into the Leicester trade a new machine for spinning worsted by adapting Arkwright’s principle of cotton spinning failed following ten days of serious rioting in the town by the hand-spinners fearful that the invention was a threat to their livelihoods. As a consequence of the riots, the new spinning machine was driven from the town, and worsted spinning continued in Leicester unmechanised for another two decades, while spinning mills were set up in Nottinghamshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Yorkshire. It was to these places that the Leicester hosiers were forced to send for yarn to make up the deficiencies in the supply from the local hand-spinners. One of the main sources of worsted yarn for the Leicester trade during the first two decades of the nineteenth century was Messrs Parkes & Sons’ factory in Warwick, whose Leicester agent was Thomas Fielding, subsequently the founder of Fielding Johnson & Co., worsted spinners. By the early nineteenth century a number of the larger Leicester hosiery firms appear to have tried to secure their yarn supply and to reduce costs by undertaking worsted spinning themselves. The partnership formed by Gill, Towndrow, Leach, Wood and Harris, was unusual since, with the exception of Gill (who was a worsted-maker), all the partners traded separately as hosiers. The partnership was probably established to spread the costs involved in setting up a new spinning mill. The initial capital provided by the partners in January 1804 was only £426, for the land (about a quarter of an acre) and ‘all those newly erected Warehouses, Workshops & Buildings then lately erected’, but by June, when Gill withdrew from the partnership during the first year, the total sum invested had already risen to £1254. By 1814, when Towndrow’s heirs were bought out, the investment of the partners totalled £1800. Henry Wood (1754-1821) and Thomas Wood (1758-1826), like their mother, undoubtedly prospered in the hosiery trade. Henry Wood, when he made his will in 1820, in addition to the property he had inherited in Friar
Lane, had purchased an estate at Ullesthorpe in Claybrooke parish near Lutterworth. His will also mentioned an estate in Warwickshire which was his wife’s marriage portion. There is unfortunately little other evidence on the firm before the mid-nineteenth century beyond the references in the trade directories of the period. Thomas Wood jun. was examined by the Commissioners enquiring into the state of the framework-knitters in 1844. He answered that the business conducted by the firm of Ann Wood & Sons was ‘a county trade altogether; principally a Scotch trade’. Question: ‘That is the goods are made for the Scotch Market? Yes, chiefly so’. In answer to the questions concerning the framework-knitters themselves, he reported that the firm’s frames were located in workshops and houses both in Leicester and the surrounding villages. The villages presumably included Fleckney where the firm later had a factory.

In 1849 the Wood family sold their business to Robert Walker. Robert Walker (1809-1883) had come to Leicester in 1825 at about the age of 15 or 16. He was the youngest son of a large family and had received his education at the Glasgow High School. His father had been engaged in the wholesale and retail woollen trade in a substantial way. He was first taken on by John Moore & Co., one of the leading firms in the town, though there is no record of a formal apprenticeship. Walker subsequently became a junior partner in the firm of Ann Wood & Sons with Richard Wood. When the latter retired in 1849 Walker took over the Wood family business in Friar Lane and the firm changed its name to Robert Walker & Co. At the time of his death, it was reported that Walker was responsible for introducing the Scotch hosiery trade to Leicester. ‘Having witnessed the manufacture of this class of goods at Hawick, Mr Walker resolved to combine this with the other departments of his business’. His decision to imitate the manufacture of Scottish hosiery was made possible by changes in the type of yarn that the spinners were able to produce. Leicester was also the main centre of the woollen hosiery industry, and not surprisingly hosiers sought to develop new branches of the trade. By the 1880s the Scotch branch of the hosiery trade had assumed a considerable importance and was employing hundreds of men and women in Leicester. Walker’s own business prospered greatly. As his business increased, he acquired a succession of warehouses in the town, until in 1864 he built his own warehouse in Rutland Street. The manufacturing side of the business appears to have been conducted in Fleckney, where cheaper labour was available. He had bought John Garner’s business in the village in 1859, and built a steam-power factory. In 1876 an additional wing was erected to the Rutland Street warehouse which faced Charles Street. In 1882 two upper storeys were added to the Charles Street warehouse. By the time of Robert Walker’s death in 1883, the business had become one of the largest hosiery firms in Leicester. In 1897 the firm
registered the name Wolsey as one of the earliest trademarks. In 1920, on the merger of Robert Walker & Son with W. Tyler & Sons, the new company adopted the name of Wolsey Ltd.

The survival of any firm for more than 250 years is very exceptional. Such firms not only had to weather the cyclic nature of business and a number of severe economic depressions over the centuries, before the modern period as family firms they also had to overcome the problem of succession. Although the firm of Wolsey can claim a continuous history from the business originally established by Henry Wood in the first half of the eighteenth century, the link is not direct. In strict terms it could be argued that the link was broken in 1849 when Walker acquired the Wood family business in Friar Lane and changed its name to Robert Walker & Co. In addition, the survival of the firm’s name, despite a series of company reorganisations, is largely the result of a decision taken by Courtaulds, its present owners, to preserve the firm’s identity for corporate purposes. The earlier history of the firm, particularly in the eighteenth century, is not without interest. The account of Henry Wood’s business provides evidence of the importance of partnerships in this period in making greater sums of capital available for business. It also provides an example of a rare phenomenon before the modern period, the successful businesswoman. The circumstances in which Ann Wood continued the business, contrary to the directions of her husband in his will to convert all his stock in trade, trade debts and other goods into money, make the survival of the firm after the death of Henry Wood all the more remarkable.

References
1. This study was originally undertaken at the request of Mr Peter O’Neill, Overseas Sales Director of Wolsey, and formed part of a project to produce a history of the Company to be used for marketing purposes.
4. Register of Freemen of Leicester, 1196-1770. Including the Apprentices Sworn before Successive Mayors for Certain Periods, 1646-1770. Abstracted from the Borough Records and Edited by Henry Hartopp (Leicester, 1927), I, p.283; Leicestershire Record Office, DG6/E/37, ‘Pedigree of Wood of Leicester’, privately printed by H. J. Roby, Pendleton, April 1888. Under the Statute of Apprentices (1563) no one could work a trade to which they had not been apprenticed. Between 1710 and 1811 stamp duty was payable on the premium received by the master, and the registers now form the Apprenticeship Books (IR 1) in the Public Record Office. Unfortunately, there is no record for Wood’s own apprenticeship in the stamp duty registers. No duty was owed if the apprentice was apprenticed to his father, another relative, or where the premium was paid by a charity or below the minimum upon which duty was payable.


12. Leicestershire Record Office, 14 D 57/92/34a, b, Lease and release of tenement and garden south side of Friar Lane, Oct. 1757; PR/T/1766/24, Will of Christina Blower of Braunstone Gate, Leicester, widow; dated 4 Jan 1764; proved at Leicester, 14 Apr. 1766.


16. Bailey’s British Directory ... for ... 1784 (London, 1784); The Universal British Directory of Trade & Commerce (London, 1791); Richard Weston, The Leicester Directory (Loughborough, 1794); Holden’s Triennial Directory for 1805, 1806, 1807 (London, 1805); The Leicester Directory: Printed & Sold by J. Fowler (Leicester, 1815). Spots were small cravats.

17. Leicestershire Record Office, 12 D 69/42a, fo.2, Mortgage, £600 (1795-1814), 7 D 65/XV/1/35-44, Mortgage, £600 (1796-1814); Leicester Journal, 5 Nov. 1813.


19. Registers of Freemen, ed., Hartopp, II, pp.111, 115, 542, 133. Thomas Wood senior’s eldest son by his first marriage, Peter Cranke Wood, was admitted a freeman by birth in October 1806, but it is clear he never entered the family firm. He had the good fortune to be the heir of his wealthy uncle, Peter Cranke, wine merchant of Cannon Street, London. He received £9000 as his share of his uncle’s estate, see 9 D 43/2-5.

20. Leicestershire Record Office, 3 D 42/2/396, fol.4, 2/399, fol.20, 2/400, fols.1-10, Abstract of title to a warehouse or factory in Millstone Lane, 1803-17.


The early years of steam power in Leicestershire

*Marilyn Palmer and Peter Neaverson*

Steam power first became a practical possibility following the perfection of the atmospheric engine by Thomas Newcomen in 1712, in which year a steam-powered pumping engine was erected on a coal-mine at Dudley Castle in Staffordshire. The increased power of these engines compared with earlier methods of pumping enabled deeper coal seams to be exploited. Winding coal, however, was still carried out by hand windlass, horse gins or water-power. Not until the 1780s was steam power successfully utilised directly to produce rotative motion after James Watt’s development of the sun and planet geared engine, which could then be used both for winding coal and driving machinery, particularly textile machinery. He also improved the efficiency of the atmospheric engine by the addition of the separate condenser, but the capital and running costs of the Watt engines were high compared to water- and horse-power and to the old atmospheric or ‘common’ engine. These could be used to supplement water-power by pumping water back from the tail race of a water-wheel to the header pond, so indirectly producing rotative motion. The atmospheric engine itself was also adapted for rotative motion and continued to be used wherever its higher fuel costs were unimportant, particularly for winding coal. A new invention did not necessarily result in the disappearance of accepted ways of doing things. This was certainly the case in Leicestershire.

Coal-mining had been carried on in the county since the 13th century, as recent archaeological discoveries at Lounge open-cast site have shown. The use of steam power would be beneficial in a county with an established textile industry but lacking good water-power resources. Leicestershire, however, lacked navigable rivers on which to transport the necessary fuel. The canalisation of the River Soar in 1778 enabled Derbyshire coal to reach Loughborough, but not until 1794 was this extended to Leicester. The Charnwood Forest Canal of the same date was intended to bring coal from the north-west Leicestershire coalfield to Loughborough and hence onto the main waterway system, but was unsuccessful. Only the dead-end Ashby Canal, opened in 1804, with its linking horse-drawn tramroad system, and finally the Leicester and Swannington Railway of 1832 enabled the Leicestershire coalfield to expand. The county therefore had the coal reserves for the successful use of steam power in industry, but the slow development of the transport infra-structure hindered its widespread adoption at an early date.

Another major industry in the county was framework knitting, the production
of knitted hose on a hand-operated machine invented in the late sixteenth century and still being used in a domestic environment well into the nineteenth century. Although originally developed for silk, the frame had been adapted to make worsted hose which had long been a staple product of the county's hand knitters. The hosiery industry created a considerable demand for thread, which was produced by hand wool combers and spinners. Increases in production to satisfy a rising population in the late eighteenth century put considerable pressure on these hand processes and a cycle of inventions, such as the spinning jenny and Arkwright's water frame, helped to alleviate the shortage. These inventions were first used in the cotton industry in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire, whereas Leicestershire remained largely true to its worsted tradition. Some attempts at powered cotton spinning, however, did take place in the county but made use of steam power rather than water. The efforts to mechanise worsted spinning were hindered by labour as well as technical problems, and it was not until the third decade of the nineteenth century that a powered spinning industry began to grow in Leicester. By this time water-borne coal supplies from Derbyshire were well established and a rail link to the Leicestershire coalfield was to follow shortly afterwards. The application of steam power to the hosiery industry was beset by similar problems to worsted spinning but had to wait another forty years for a successful outcome.

Early Coal Mining
Nevertheless, the Leicestershire coalfield had some of the earliest Newcomen engines used in the industry. This was due to the enterprise of the colliery proprietors, who also had interests in the Warwickshire coalfield where Newcomen engines were introduced as early as 1712. Remarkably, one of these engines survives as a memorial to its inventor Thomas Newcomen in his birthplace of Dartmouth in Devon. The engine had originally been erected at Griff colliery near Nuneaton for Sir Richard Newdigate of Arbury Hall and was then moved to Hawkesbury Junction on the Coventry and Oxford Canals where it pumped water into the canal. Two of the Leicestershire proprietors, George Sparrow and John Wilkins, had business connections with Newdigate and before 1720 introduced atmospheric engines into collieries in Measham and Swannington. The engine cylinders, which were made of brass, were purchased from the Coalbrookdale Company while other iron parts were made locally. The engines may well have been leased from the Beaumont family of Coleorton, who had many business contacts with the Coalbrookdale Company. The Beaumonts, along with other landed gentry such as the Ferrers and Huntingdon families, chose not to exploit their mineral wealth themselves but to make their fortunes by leasing to entrepreneurs in return for rental and royalty payments on the tonnage raised. The entrepreneurs in turn could profit
considerably from the collieries they leased. John Wilkins died a wealthy man in 1726, the owner of Ravenstone Hall and whose estate founded the Ravenstone Hospital. Other early colliery proprietors included Stonier Parrott and James Burslem, who had introduced atmospheric engines into collieries at Coleorton and Oakthorpe at a similar date. There are other scattered references to engines on the coalfield in the archives of the landed proprietors over the next 50 years. These may have been moved from one mine to another as the fortunes of the coalfield waxed and waned. John Prior’s map of Leicestershire, surveyed in the 1770s (Plate 1), marks ‘Fire Engines’ (as steam engines were depicted) at Lount, Newbold, near Alton Grange and between Measham and Oakthorpe. This, however, is a serious under-estimate, since engines were clearly in existence at other mines. For example, in 1767, Joseph Wilkes, Nathaniel Curzon and William Burslem had leased coal-mines in Measham and Oakthorpe, where there were clearly several fire engines. It is to be hoped that on-going research will enable a more precise figure of the number of atmospheric engines on the Leicestershire coalfield to be determined.

As with the Newcomen engine, the rotative Watt engine was also an early introduction into the coalfield, again due to the initiative of a local entrepreneur. James Watt had patented his ‘sun and planet’ engine in 1781 and it was five years later that Joseph Wilkes and his brothers John and Thomas first enquired of Boulton and Watt for a winding engine at their Oakthorpe pit. They had considered a water-powered system, but decided on a single-acting Watt engine with a 16 inch diameter cylinder with a stroke of 4 feet. This was installed in 1787 and was the first of its type on the midland coalfield, but was by no means satisfactory in operation and the evidence suggests that other proprietors did not follow the Wilkes’ example. The Newcomen atmospheric engine was preferred for its reliability and cheapness in situations where its higher fuel consumption was irrelevant. John Farey, who undertook the survey of Derbyshire for the new Board of Agriculture in 1807, said: ‘I met with no Pumping Engine on Bolton [sic] and Watt’s principle, at a Coal-Pit; the old Atmospheric Engines, well contrived and executed, being thought to answer better in such situations’. As the new coalfield on Ashby Wolds was developed in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, atmospheric engines certainly seem to have been preferred. Regrettably, although there is an excellent archive collection for the supply of early Boulton and Watt engines, there is no comparable source for what continued to be known as the ‘common’ engine. Since all the engine parts were now made of iron rather than brass, they could be produced in local foundries and erected by the various mine engineers themselves. One such local supplier was the Burton Forge, operated by the Lloyds ironmasters of Birmingham until 1810, and then Thornewill and Company, also of Burton, whose general ironworks diversified into steam
Plate 1 Extract from John Prior’s map of Leicestershire in 1777, showing ‘Fire Engines’ at Newbold and Lount.
engine manufacture to meet the needs of both the colliery proprietors and the brewing industry.\(^9\)

The Ashby Wolds and Dimminsdale

The enclosure of the Ashby Wolds, as well as the projected Ashby Canal linking the area to the national canal system via Coventry, prompted exploration for minerals in the area. Joseph Wilkes, one of the most enthusiastic promoters of the canal, encouraged the Earl of Moira to develop the potential of his estate, but it was not until 1804 that the first mine was sunk on Ashby Wolds. This was known as Warren Hill Colliery and Nichols refers to the fact that ‘the Earl of Moira has erected a fire engine on Ashby Woulds to raise coals’, thereby implying that this was a winding engine.\(^{10}\) This colliery was followed in 1806 by Furnace Pit, close to the newly erected iron furnace alongside the canal. The pumping engine house for one of the shafts still survives in residential use, but was clearly designed for a Newcomen-type engine (Plate 2). It is tall and narrow, since these engines originally had their boilers directly underneath the cylinder. The two wooden beams which would have supported the cylinder bear the date ‘1805’, while the spring beams for the iron rocking beam are still present on the upper floor. Now a listed building, this is one of the few survivals of a Newcomen engine house anywhere and practically the sole remnant of the early 19th century coalfield. Documentary evidence indicates the existence of two steam whimseys (winders) by 1807 when William Robinson, who worked for Lord Dudley, was carrying out a survey of the Earl of Moira’s mines on the Wolds.\(^{11}\) These may well also have been Newcomen-type engines, since the only engine to survive is of this type.

In 1929, the agents of Henry Ford, the motor manufacturer, combed England for surviving old steam engines for his new Museum at Dearborn, Michigan, U.S.A. One of these was purchased from Reservoir Colliery, which had been sunk circa

![Plate 2 Converted Newcomen pumping engine house on Ashby Wolds.](image-url)
1851. It was an engine of Newcomen type with a 33 inch diameter cylinder and considerably older than the date of the colliery, probably built around the turn of the eighteenth century. On examination of the engine in the Henry Ford Museum (Plate 3), it would appear that a new cast-iron rocking beam had been fitted which bears the inscription ‘Moira 1821’. It is likely that the original wooden beam was replaced with a new one made at the foundry at Moira Furnace. The engine, in its final form, served for both pumping and winding, having a secondary wooden beam operating a pump. The original location of the engine is not known, but most probably was on another of the Earl of Moira’s mines on Ashby Wolds which had been closed by 1851. The agent entrusted by Ford to buy the engines in Britain, H. Morton, had great difficulty in persuading Sir John Turner, the managing director of the colliery company, to release the engine, which had been kept running due to his ‘sentimental interests’ - an early industrial archaeologist! Not only did Henry Ford pay £2,000 for the engine but had to replace it by an electrically driven turbo-pump. Morton says that the price ‘although stiff, was not more than we expected under the circumstances, and we cabled you for instructions because, if you wish to truly represent the progress of steam, then an atmospheric engine
is decidedly essential'. Thus part of Leicestershire's industrial heritage now resides in the U.S.A.!

Further evidence of the late use of the Newcomen engine in north-west Leicestershire is provided by a painting now in Leicestershire Museums' New Walk Gallery. This is of unknown date or artist, but appears to be the lime quarries and lead mines at Dimminsdale on the estate of Lord Ferrers. The painting came into the hands of Sotheby's in 1990 and was purchased for the collection because of its local interest (Plate 4). This graphically illustrates the extraction of limestone by means of underground galleries, together with two steam engine houses, one located on the floor of the quarry and the other on the top rim. The style of the engine houses, together with their external haystack boilers, indicates that they are indeed of the Newcomen type, one for pumping and the other for winding. In 1788, Joseph Boultee had taken a twenty-one year lease on the 'lime pits, lime works and lime kilns and building for smelthouse' at Dimminsdale, which granted him the right to 'erect and build a fire engine or fire engines' and similar rights were accorded to William Matthews when he leased the limeyards in 1833. By 1855 the Earl was suing

*Plate 4 Painting of the lime quarries and lead mines at Dimminsdale, probably painted in the 1830s-40s, artist unknown.*
Matthews in respect of damage to the workings caused by the collapse of the overburden due to the removal of the supporting pillars of limestone. It is therefore possible that the Newcomen engines are still at Dimminsdale, along with the lime-burning kilns, submerged in the Laundry Pool, as the former workings are now known. The engines at the limeworks had obviously been regarded as detrimental to the parkland setting at Staunton Harold, since when a new lease was being negotiated by the estate in 1864, the use of steam engines at the limeworks was specifically excluded.

Returning to Ashby Wolds, there are two further early steam engines of interest. The first is the blowing engine for the coke-fired blast furnace at Moira, built to process the iron ore found in the coal measures on the Wolds. This engine was probably purchased second-hand from Thomas Cox at the Dale Abbey furnace in Derbyshire which had closed around 1802. The engine was described as 'a steam 50 horse double power engine, embracing one boiler, cast-iron beam, with two sets of parallel gear, condensing system and cast-iron support columns'. This implies it was a double-acting beam engine with two blowing cylinders. The blast furnace had been blown-in during 1806 and continued to work intermittently until some time between 1812 and 1816, by which date it was abandoned for iron production. However, the blast engine seems to have been retained to power an air furnace in the casting house attached to the furnace. This served as a foundry for the Moira Colliery company until it was moved to Bath Yard nearby. The furnace, its adjoining charging bridge and the blowing engine house were in use for domestic housing by 1851 and remained so until the 1960s. The blowing engine house was demolished, but the furnace and its adjacent houses beneath the charging bridge were saved through the efforts of Leicestershire Industrial History Society and remain as an Ancient Monument and an icon for tourism in North West Leicestershire. When the furnace was restored, the blowing engine house foundations were excavated and may now be seen along with a haystack boiler base beside the furnace itself.

Still on the Ashby Wolds at Bath Pit, sunk in 1813 beside the Ashby Canal, the water removed from the mine was found to be saline. The Earl of Moira first attempted to extract salt from the water, but the excise duties made this an uneconomic proposition. Since spas were in fashion at the time, he and his agent Edward Mammatt took the bold step of building a bath house beside the colliery engine house. The drawing (Plate 5) was found on the back of an envelope in the Hastings papers in the Huntington Library in California! Although these baths proved popular with local people, it proved difficult to persuade a developer to erect suitable accommodation to attract any more prestigious visitors from outside the region. Mammatt consequently decided to build new baths at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, the Ivanhoe Baths and Hotel, which,
along with the later Midland Railway station nearby, were of such a style to emulate those at Bath and Cheltenham. The Ivanhoe Baths, opened in 1822, with their Grecian pillars were regrettably demolished in 1961. Little is known about the steam engines which pumped water for the Moira Baths, but a report on the Ivanhoe Baths describes the engine there. It was a four horse power engine built by Jonathan Woodhouse from old materials from the Moira Colliery company. It pumped salt water to storage tanks and condenser water was also used for supplying the baths. The engine had also been used to drive a lathe for turning the stone pillars which adorned the building and terraces. Later, it also drove a washing machine to launder napkins for the baths and the engine house also served as a mangling and drying room. The fate of this engine is not known, but it was probably scrapped when new plant was installed at the Ashby Baths in 1887. The site of the Moira Baths and Bath Pit became Bath Yard, a maintenance depot for various colliery companies until the demise of the coalfield. It is now to be a visitor centre for the Midland Forest and some of the original buildings have been retained. The site was recorded by a Leicester University group in 1993 prior to demolition. Subsequent excavations by the developers have exposed the foundations of some of the Bath buildings and storage tanks, but regrettably no provision was made for their recording.

The Leicestershire coalfield therefore saw the use of many early steam engines employed on a wide range of duties. One of these engines, which was still working in the late 1920s, fortunately survives in a museum setting in the U.S.A. This engine, of the Newcomen atmospheric type, indicates the long service on the coalfield of this type of engine, and illustrates its versatility for both pumping and winding purposes. The availability of waste coal, and, before

Plate 5 Sketch of the Baths at Moira from the Huntingdon Library in California.
1800, the avoidance of the annual premiums demanded for engines using the Watt patents, made the Newcomen engine particularly attractive to the Leicestershire coal owners. Unfortunately the continued use of one pit shaft for long periods has meant that many early surface installations have been demolished and replaced by new steam or electrically driven pumping and winding engines. In Leicestershire itself, the only large steam engine from a mine to survive is the twin cylinder horizontal steam winding engine from Donisthorpe Colliery which awaits rebuilding at Snibston Discovery Park. Formerly Snibston No.2 colliery, steam winding engine houses survive here but contain later electric winding engines.

**Cotton spinning**

Powered cotton spinning was an East Midlands development, since Richard Arkwright first spun cotton using his roller mechanism driven by horse-power in Nottingham in 1769 and water-power in Cromford in 1771. Many entrepreneurs licensed the Arkwright water frame, as his machine was known, and built water-powered spinning mills. However, they were beset by the perennial problems of water power, drought and frost, and often supplemented it with a steam engine to return water to the mill head race. The first successful application of a Boulton and Watt rotative steam engine to drive spinning machinery was also in the East Midlands, at Papplewick in 1786. The cost of these engines, in both fuel consumption and patent premiums, limited their use and manufacturers continued to use water power wherever possible. However, Joseph Wilkes and his brothers of Overseal, when planning a new cotton mill in Measham in 1783, enquired from Boulton and Watt about the possibility of a rotative steam engine, two years before the Robinsons of Papplewick. Wilkes wrote as follows:

> We want one [an engine] to work a cotton mill for 3,000 spindles. We beg to be informed if you are certain it will work as steady as water as I find Mr Arkwright was obliged to alter one he erected at Manchester to a water wheel and our friend Mr Peal [sic] of Burton is in some doubts about an engine being smooth enough.  

They received a reply from Boulton and Watt, but clearly decided not to pursue their enquiry:

> We have your fact before us and have considered and informed ourselves respecting the engine, as no cotton mill hath yet been worked by your engines, we are fearfull of your events. Should have been glad to have seen one first to have done its duty. We in the first place shall bring a stream and
what will do for some of our works by a little time and experience shall be more determined in what engine to proceed on.\textsuperscript{21}

The cotton spinning mill was therefore built at Measham for water power, with a 21ft diameter water-wheel, originally 5ft 2in wide which was later extended by 23in to increase its power, possibly at the same time as a Newcomen pumping engine was erected to return water to the header pond. Some indication of the extent of Wilkes' industrial enterprise can be gained from a report by Arthur Young, who visited Measham in 1791, and referred to 'two cotton and a corn mill, two steam engines, many weaving shops and a number of cottages built.' He added that:

The great wheel of one of the cotton mills is turned by water, which is not in sufficient quantity to keep the wheel going; to remedy this, the engine is erected below to throw back the water into the mill dam, by which means a little water is made to do a great deal.\textsuperscript{22}

It is quite possible that Arthur Young never saw Wilkes' third engine at his corn mill elsewhere in Measham which had been erected 1786/7. Alternatively, the second cotton mill to which he referred had not at that time had a direct drive steam engine installed. There is evidence in the Boulton and Watt archive that work on the engine installation at this mill was taking place in March 1791, and that the engine had been repaired and up-rated for power in 1798.\textsuperscript{23}

This second cotton mill also appears to have incorporated some corn milling machinery as well as carding machinery, a fact noted by John Farey when visiting the mills \textit{circa} 1809.\textsuperscript{24} Wilkes was an early pioneer of steam-powered corn milling, equipping his new mill in Measham with an eight horse power double-acting sun and planet engine supplied by Boulton and Watt in the same year, 1786, that the firm installed the engine for the first steam-powered corn mill, Albion Mill by Blackfriars Bridge in London, which burnt down shortly afterwards.\textsuperscript{25} He may well have added the corn milling machinery in his cotton mill when corn rather than cotton was at a premium during the last years of the Napoleonic campaign. In 1802 he completed his tally of Boulton and Watt engines with a 36 horse power engine in his original water-powered cotton mill,\textsuperscript{26} finally overcoming his early objections to the use of steam power for cotton spinning. By 1807 the original Newcomen pumping engine was offered for sale.

There were at least two other early attempts at steam-powered cotton spinning in Leicestershire, both by hosiers who decided to produce their own yarn. In 1791, Miller Howe and Company of Leicester purchased from Boulton and Watt a double-acting sun and planet engine for a new cotton mill in Northgate
Street, becoming the first in the county to drive spinning machinery by steam power. In 1792, the Churchill brothers of Shepshed were also building a new cotton mill and wished to install a 14 horse power engine, probably anticipating that their coal supply could be brought along the new Charnwood Forest Canal. Rather than wait for a new engine, since Boulton and Watt's order books were full, they were offered two second-hand ones. One of these seems to have been the original engine installed in 1786 by Robinsons at Papplewick which the Churchills eventually rejected as being of too low power and too expensive. The other was originally supplied to Peel and Ainsworth in Warrington for a mill in 1787 which subsequently burnt down. The Churchills finally purchased the latter engine which was working by June 1793. Generally, however, powered cotton spinning did not become as important in Leicestershire as in neighbouring Nottinghamshire. Leicestershire had always specialised in the production of worsted thread, largely for its hosiery industry from the late seventeenth century, but the mechanisation of this branch of the textile industry proved to be fraught with problems.

Worsted spinning
The growth of the hosiery industry in Leicestershire in the late eighteenth century created a considerable demand for worsted thread and consequently encouraged experiments to adapt the machines used for cotton spinning to worsted production. The first real success in utilising the Arkwright roller spinning mechanism for worsted thread was achieved in Leicester by John Coltman, a leading hosier, although it was one of his employees, Joseph Brookhouse, who perfected a machine for power spinning in 1785. Brookhouse, together with Coltman and a master comber, Joseph Whetstone, attempted to set up a powered worsted factory in Market Harborough, possibly anticipating opposition from the well-established hand combers and spinners of Leicester. Their pessimism was justified, since Leicester became engulfed in a fortnight of riots in December 1787. The Corporation then banned the operation of powered worsted machines within a 50 mile radius of the town and Brookhouse transferred his activities to Bromsgrove and then Warwick. The firm of Parkes, Brookhouse and Crompton was one of several who supplied thread to the Leicester industry through agents.

Leicester therefore lost its early lead in powered worsted spinning because of this industrial action. However, various powered cotton spinners in the area seem to have added a few worsted frames and so circumvented the ban on them. J. W. Rawson reputedly experimented with water-powered frames at St Mary's Mills in the brief period between 1799 and 1811 when the mill reverted to corn-grinding. It is also possible that Miller Howe, mentioned above, applied their Boulton and Watt engine to worsted spinning before 1808 when the mill
was offered for sale. It was, however, one of the agents of Parkes, Brookhouse and Crompton, Thomas Fielding, who was the main instrument in the return of the worsted spinning industry to Leicester. By 1818, he seems to have established a worsted manufactory in Leicester which was powered by steam from 1822 and met with no opposition. His mill was in West Bond Street and became a very large enterprise. New Watt beam engines were installed in the 1850s: the mill was demolished in the 1960s and the site is now part of The Shires shopping precinct. Others quickly followed Fielding’s example, and by 1828 Sir Richard Phillips could view Leicester ‘with all its steeples and steam engine chimneys’. Powered worsted spinning was now being carried on in relatively large factories in Leicester, alongside hand spinning in small workshops. The larger enterprises included Brewin and Whetstone, Raby, Fielding and Son, Oldacres and Gamble. Several of these were built alongside the river in the Bath Lane - Northgate Street - Frog Island area, and the others in Bond Street and King Street. Probably the only surviving worsted spinning mill from this period is the attractive Friars Mill in Bath Lane, a four storey building with a pediment and a roof-top cupola with its Ibex weather vane. The mill and its engine houses have been sympathetically restored as part of the riverside environmental improvements. G. M. Henton’s painting of 1893 (Plate 6) is an evocative reminder of the River Soar as an industrial corridor, showing both Friars Mill and the slightly later West Bridge Mill beyond.

Plate 6 G. M. Henton’s painting of the River Soar at Friar’s Mill in 1893.
Conclusion
Leicestershire, then, witnessed some early experiments with steam power applied to industrial processes ranging from coal mining to corn milling and textile production. These were largely due to initiative of local entrepreneurs, beginning with the introduction of the Newcomen engine onto the coalfield by Wilkins and Sparrow in the 1720s and sixty years later with the industrial empire built up in the Measham area by Joseph Wilkes and his brothers. Despite their pioneering use of Boulton and Watt engines, most of the colliery owners continued to use the less economical but simpler atmospheric engine for both pumping and winding. The survival of one of these engines in the Henry Ford Museum in the U.S.A is a testament to their longevity. Steam continued to be used as a power source on the coalfield until its demise in the 1980s.

These entrepreneurs were able to use locally available coal, but the adoption of steam power elsewhere in the County was dependent on the improvement of the transport infrastructure in the last years of the eighteenth century. One or two hosiers then followed Wilkes’ example in cotton spinning, but competition from outside the County prevented the expansion of this branch of the textile industry. The Leicestershire hosiery industry was based on worsted yarn, but pioneering development of powered spinning in Leicester was discouraged by an antagonistic labour force. The town lost its early lead and powered spinning did not return until the third decade of the nineteenth century. With the opening of the Leicester and Swannington Railway in 1832, plentiful cheap coal ensured the future of steam-powered manufacture in Leicester and the successful growth of its important textile industries.

References
3 LRO DG32/91-4, Ravenstone Hospital MSS.
5 LRO Ferrers 26D53, Hastings-Donington DE41, Wyggeston Hospital 3D67.
6 LRO DE41/1/73 dated 1st May 1767, lease from the Earl of Huntingdon.
7 Birmingham Reference Library, Boulton and Watt Collection portfolio PF 20.
8 John Farey, General View of the Agriculture and Minerals of Derbyshire, Volume I (first published 1811, reprinted by the Peak District Mines Historical Society in 1989) 338-9. Note that Measham and Oakthorpe were in Derbyshire at this date.
9 Colin Owen, The Development of Industry in Burton upon Trent, (Chichester, 1978) Chapter VI.
10 Nichols, John, History of Leicestershire, Vol. iii part ii, West Goscote Hundred, (1804), 638.
11 Dumfries House, Hastings MSS, Box 35 bundle 15.
12 Edison Institute Archive No.2412, letters from H. Morton to Henry Ford and Mr. Mayo, dated 31.5.1925 and 25.11.1927.
13 LRO 26D53 Ferrers Collection 523, lease to Joseph Boultbee 1.5.1788.
14 Ibid. 524 and 525, lease to William Matthews 18.12.1833.
15 LRO 25D60 Ferrers Collection 112, draft of deed of submission to arbitration 1855.
16 Ibid. 374, 1864.
20 Boulton and Watt Collection incoming letter Box 2 ‘W’, 19.10.1783.
21 Ibid., incoming letter Box 2 ‘W’, 7.11.1783.
22 Arthur Young, Tours in England and Wales (1791), selected from The Annals of Agriculture, reprinted London 1932, 274 and 278.
23 Boulton and Watt Collection, Portfolio PF20, 28.3.1791 and incoming letter Box 3 ‘W’ 8.8.1798 and 19.12.1798.
24 John Farey, note 8, Volume II (1813), 494.
26 Ibid., PF 234.
27 Ibid., PF 68.
28 Ibid., PF 82 and incoming letters Box 6 ‘C’, 2.1.1791 et seq.
33 Phillips, R., Personal Tour Through the United Kingdom. The Leicester section is reproduced in The Leicester Chronicle, 15 November 1828.
34 Temple Patterson, A., Radical Leicester, (1975), 165/6.

Editor
The illustrations on pages 36 and 42 have been provided by Leicestershire Museums, Arts and Records Service and I am most grateful to Tim Schadla-Hall and Richard Marvin for their help.
BOOK REVIEWS

Some seventy titles have been published over the last twelve months covering many aspects of history within Leicester and Leicestershire. Many, especially local village histories, have been instigated following the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the end of the Second World War and the subsequent reminiscences provoked by those memorials. It is impossible to review all publications in detail and so I have tried to include a representative sample of the work being produced. Other titles not reviewed have been listed with full bibliographical information. I would like to thank the following people for their help in writing reviews at very short notice.

Helen Edwards

Steph Mastoris - Leicestershire Museums Arts and Records Service.
Dr Alan McWhirr, Dr A.K.B. Evans - Leicester University.
Carolyn Oldfield - National Youth Agency

LEICESTER CITY

THE CHANGING FACE OF LEICESTER
Paul and Yolanda Courtney (Britain in old photographs S.) Alan Sutton 1995 £7.95 0750910186 126p.

LEICESTER THROUGH THE AGES

Both of these well-presented titles provide plenty of material to fascinate not only the local historian but also the general reader with some interest in the history of Leicester. At first sight rather similar, a closer inspection reveals some differences in approach.

The Courtneys, basing their book on two exhibitions held at the Newarke Houses Museum, rely mainly on well-chosen illustrations to outline the history of the city from the Middle Ages to the early years of the present century. Captions are brief but informative, and the emphasis is on architecture, with some excellent pictures of lost buildings. The Newarke is a particularly interesting area of old Leicester and has a section to itself, with illustrations not to be found elsewhere.

Joan Stevenson relies more on text and less on illustrations, although there are
photographs on most pages and they complement the text well. Covering the history of Leicester from the Romans to the middle of this century in a hundred pages, the treatment is inevitably “broad -brush”, although very readable. This is an ideal introduction to the history of Leicester for the newcomer but even the seasoned local historian will pick up some new information here. The timeline diagrams set the history of Leicester into a wider context and make the book a good source for school project work, although it deserves a much wider audience.

J H

LEICESTER CALENDAR 365 DATES IN THE HISTORY OF LEICESTER
J. D. Bennett  Leicester City Council 1995 £2.50  0952109034  32p.

A booklet of 32 pages which ‘brings together a selection of events from Leicester’s history over the past two hundred years or so, arranged under the month in which they occurred.’ This is necessarily only a selection and therefore of limited value. It is the type of book beloved by radio presenters who like to remind us what happened ‘on this day in......’.

A D M

IMAGES OF LEICESTER

This collection of photographs from Leicester Mercury’s archive spans from before 1900 up to and including the 1970s. There are now many collections of photographs on different aspects of Leicester and this one is of particular interest in seeing how the city changed following the massive re-development of the 1960s and 70s. The book is well produced and the quality of photographs on the whole excellent. The caption on page 66 suggests that the bottom picture is of the 1911 fire at St George’s Church, which clearly it is not.

A D M

TALK OF THE TOWN: LEICESTER IN THE 1950s AND 60s
A video by Paul Morley     Living History Unit, Leicester City Council

The potential of video as a local history medium is as yet underdeveloped. The source material of film footage is inevitably patchy in content and uneven in quality of both image and sound. The production of a useful and entertaining video is a considerable challenge, both editorially and technically. The Living History Unit and the Fosse Arts Centre have succeeded in presenting a
fascinating 45 minutes of visual images, linked by a well-written commentary in the familiar voice of John Florance.

A mixture of archive film footage and recent interviews, this video proves that oral and documentary history can be combined successfully. The unique history of Leicester in the 1950s and 1960s and its sometimes faltering response to rapid social change are well-documented in this wide-ranging video. Its coverage of sensitive social and multicultural issues adds a dimension of realism and honesty sometimes lacking in local history. Marred only by rather woolly sound quality, this worthwhile video will inform and entertain Leicester residents and local historians; it is also a first-rate source for school work or for reminiscence activity. “Talk of the Town” is a credit to its producers and also to the amateur cine enthusiasts who had the presence of mind to commit to film at least some aspects of a rapidly changing world.

J H

WHARF STREET REVISITED
Cynthia Brown   Living History Unit, Leicester City Council
£6.50 [n.d.]  0952109026  120p.

WALNUT STREET, PAST PRESENT AND FUTURE
Colin Hyde   Living History Unit, Leicester City Council
£6.50 [n.d.]  0952109085

Leicester City Council’s Living History Unit maintains a very high standard of publication of attractive local area histories. Well worth the modest price, especially given the wealth of clear and fascinating illustrations, these two titles will be of great interest not only to those who know the Walnut Street and Wharf Street areas but also to anyone interested in the social history of working class urban life. The balance of text and illustration is excellent; there is a lot of information but it is attractively packaged, providing hours of happy browsing. Based largely on oral sources, these two books really bring their areas to life and are a credit to their authors and publishers. “Living History” is exactly what these exemplary titles convey. Highly recommended.

J H

LEICESTER AT WORK
David R. Burton (Britain in old photographs S.) Alan Sutton 1995
£7.99 0750910313  126p.

This is the third title about the history of Leicester to be compiled by the author for this popular series of illustrated local history books. Using a wide ranging
selection of mainly unpublished material from the Leicester Mercury archives, he creates a successful blend of general information and personal memories. Especially interesting are the sections covering education, catering and the services (ambulance, fire and the Post Office!) which make a welcome addition to the already well-documented hosiery, engineering and footwear industries.

H E

THE PANTRY UNDER THE STAIRS: CHILDHOOD MEMORIES OF WORLD WAR II
Valerie Tedder Living History Unit, Leicester City Council [1994]
£4.99 0952109018 96p.

The author was five years old when war was declared in 1939. Her book recounts her experience of living with war - spending long hours in the pantry under the stairs, generally believed to be the safest place in the house during air raids. Her memories are those of fear and privation rather than high drama, a story of daily “making do” - coping with shortages of food, clothing and coal while maintaining standards. At times however the war came closer. She gives a vivid account of seeing wounded soldiers evacuated from Dunkirk returning to Wigston, and her shock at this first-hand encounter with the brutalities of war.

At the heart of the book is Valerie’s relationship with her mother. It is an ambiguous relationship. It is clear that her mother loved her, cared for her and defended her; it is also clear that Valerie was frightened of her and the frequent slaps and punishments that she administered. Valerie admits to being no angel, but her memories carry with them a sense of resentment at unjust punishments and her mother’s constant assumption of her guilt. In one poignant story, she describes the death of her pet rabbit and its reappearance as the mainstay of the Christmas meal the following week. Looking back, she accepts that Sooty was “sacrificed as part of the war effort”, but it is her bitter resentment at her mother’s deception that remains with the reader.

C O

RAMSAY MACDONALD: THE LEICESTER YEARS (1906-1918)
John Hinks Published privately, J Hinks, 52 Fairefield Crescent, Glenfield, Leicester, LE3 8EH 1966 £4.95 (including post) 80p.

This is a revised version of the author’s MA dissertation which is here produced as a spiral bound volume of 80 pages. MacDonald was one of Leicester’s MPs from 1906 until he was decisively defeated in 1918. Hinks not only reviews the career of MacDonald whilst representing Leicester, but also examines the
Labour movement in Leicester at that time. There are fascinating insights into the friendship which developed between MacDonald and the Christian Socialist vicar of St Marks, Revd F.L. Donaldson. When MacDonald’s wife, Margaret, died in 1911 it was Donaldson who took the funeral service in London, and later organised a memorial service at St Marks.

Hinks uses a wide range of sources including the Labour Party archive, the MacDonald papers in the Public Record Office and in the John Rylands Library at the University of Manchester, local newspapers including Leicester Pioneer, Leiceser Daily Post and Leicester Daily Mercury. Any reader wishing to delve deeper into MacDonald’s association with Leicester is well served by the careful referencing of this work. The arrangement of the bibliography is clumsy and difficult to use, but is the format often insisted upon by degree supervisors. For publication purposes it could have been simplified - I could not find Deian Hopkin (ref 6 page 26) in the bibliography.

This publication serves a very useful purpose in extracting from a large archive material which is relevant to Leicester. It is well put together and readable.

ADM

END OF AN ERA AND LOUGHBOROUGH TALES
Mike Green The author £3.50 1995 1856207439
FAMILIES AT WAR
Mike Green Stylus P. £7.95 1995
CARING FAMILIES AND LEICESTER MEMORIES
Mike Green Stylus P. £7.95 1995
DECADES: DERBY, LEICESTER AND NOTTINGHAM 1920s-1950s
Mike Green Stylus P. £9.50 1995
AFTER THE BUNTING CAME DOWN: POSTWAR LEICESTER
Mike Green Stylus P. £9.50 1995
CORONATION DAY 1953 AND LEICESTER MEMORIES
Mike Green Stylus P. £7.95 1995 1856207137
V.E. DAY & LEICESTER MEMORIES
Mike Green Stylus P. £ 1995 1856208060
BLACKOUTS & RATIONING AND LEICESTER NOSTALGIA
Mike Green Stylus P. £7.95 1995

Photocopied advertisements, articles and illustrations taken mainly from the Leicester Mercury are linked by personal anecdotes and reported reminiscences to form wide-ranging but unstructured coverage of some significant periods of recent local history. They are aimed at the general reader and fulfil a “do you remember this?” function and consequently would be of value in reminiscence work with, for example, the elderly. Although poorly produced with no
references, these publications do collect together a large amount of primary source material which may form a starting point for further research.

THE GHOSTS OF BRAUNSTONE HALL
A. J. Wright The author 1995
HAUNTED LEICESTER
A. J. Wright Wright On 1995

Two slim booklets, containing the author’s own line drawings, record his investigation into suspected supernatural occurrences at Braunstone Hall and a summary of ghostly phenomena in the city.

OTHER RECENT PUBLICATIONS

A KEEPER OF THE MAGAZINE IDENTIFY’D: WILLIAM RAYNOR AND ALLEGATIONS OF ATROCITIES AT SIEGE OF LEICESTER (1645)
(Severinus Genealogical monographs: 1)

LEICESTERSHIRE: TOWNS AND VILLAGES

THE TRANSFORMATION OF A PEASANT ECONOMY: TOWNSPEOPLE AND VILLAGERS OF THE LUTTERWORTH AREA 1500-1700
John Goodacre Scolar P. 1994 £49.50 1859280730

Like many people concerned with the history of Leicestershire, I have been awaiting the publication of this detailed study of the Lutterworth area with great eagerness for a number of years. The result certainly lives up my expectations and in many respects exceeds them.

Here is a masterwork by a seasoned practitioner and editor of local historical research. Its impressive qualities spring from the fact that Goodacre studiously avoids the great pitfall of much local historical writing, namely parochialism through the concentration on one town or village and through too little concern with longer term regional and national trends. In no way can this book be so criticised. Goodacre states that his study is intended as a detailed contribution to the academic debate about the decline of the midland peasant economy, so placing the text, and himself well in the context of the W G Hoskins school of
local history studies. In the same vein Goodacre recognises that such a mission cannot be achieved by studying an individual township. So wisely, but most dauntingly, he has focused his research upon a sizeable area of southwest Leicestershire which contains Lutterworth and the 35 surrounding parishes within the 75 square miles bounded by the Fosse Way, Watling Street, the Welford Road and the river Avon. Overall this work justly claims to be the first detailed study of an English market town and its economic hinterland during the period 1500 to 1700.

By an analysis of what seems to be most of the useful written sources available in this period, Goodacre systematically develops his study of this area during two crucial centuries which witnessed a fundamental transformation of its landscape, agriculture, demography and especially economic life. As a result of a complex interaction of local, regional and national forces and trends, the lifestyle of people in the Lutterworth area changed radically between 1500 and 1700. Whereas most lived a predominantly subsistence, subfeudal existence in 1500 two centuries later they were experiencing a commercial, protocapitalist economy. Of course, this was happening throughout the rest of lowland Britain, but Goodacre rightly feels that this part of southwest Leicestershire provides a large enough sample area to undertake an indepth analysis of the process of transition at work.

He begins by outlining Lutterworth’s role within the marketing network of Leicestershire and adjoining counties, defining the extent of the town’s economic and social hinterland and sketching the course of enclosure in the area from the late fifteenth century. In the second and subsequent chapters enclosure is seen to be the most potent force of change throughout the period, not only bringing about major agricultural innovations and demographic shifts but also having a major impact on the emergence of commercial and retail activity.

The core of the book comprises two chapters, one on the farming economy and another on the town economy. The former gives a thorough analysis of south Leicestershire agriculture, which should be essential reading for anyone undertaking a village history project or wanting to understand the evolution of this area’s landscape since mediaeval times. The latter chapter systematically analyses the economy of Lutterworth town, very rightly beginning with its role as a farming community, then moving on to the distributors of agricultural produce, the craftsmen and then the retailers. Goodacre does not forget to discuss Lutterworth’s important position close to regional and national transport routes and the impact of the Welsh droving traffic. The end result is a fascinating view of the combination of factors which created that very special economic community which we recognise today as the English market town.

The fifth and final chapter of the book is a short but brilliant synthesis of the
many detailed arguments put forward in the rest of the text. It reiterates the important point of the complete interdependence of the market town and the surrounding villages and farms. This in turn focuses the whole thesis of the book back on to the progress of enclosure in the area and the justice of the mid seventeenth century debate amongst local clergy about its harmful or beneficial effects on agriculture, village depopulation, urbanisation and the growth of pauperism.

Here is the very stuff of the making of modern Leicestershire (as well as an antidote to the romantic excesses of "postmodern" Leicestershire!). Throughout the book Goodacre shows himself to have not been afraid to take considerable time to analyse every conceivable source for this period and area, and then think long upon the meaning of his research. What is equally impressive is the lightness with which he wears his learning and the elegance of his prose style. The result is a text which never loses sight of the overall thesis, but can also be dipped into to answer specific matters of detail. My only regret is that the price of this volume will prohibit all but the most enthusiastic local reader to purchase a copy. With this in mind it this book must at least be on the shelves of every public library in Leicestershire.

S M

HINCKLEY: AS I REMEMBER IT
Edited by Phillip Lindley and Angela Hall Leicestershire Libraries & Information Service 1995 £2.99 085022389x

The latest (eleventh) in the popular series of booklets prepared and published by the staff of Leicestershire Libraries and Information Service. Competitions are organised to encourage local residents to recall their experiences and write down or tape-record their memories. The result is half a dozen individual memoirs followed by themed collections of contributions on such topics as shopping, leisure, work and the war years.

The volume on Hinckley provides a rich source of local information including memories of life in Hinckley workhouse in the 1930s, a “poor kids” visit to the seaside (only those who could prove that they had never seen the sea were allowed to go!) and the excitement of the calling out of the horse-drawn fire engine. Bearing in mind the stated limitations of the book - the period covered is c.1920 to 1960, it contains only personal memories and experiences and thus is not concerned primarily with historical accuracy - it is extremely successful in giving a lively impression of life, and especially of growing up, in a small Midlands town.

H E
As the author states in the introduction to both books it is “a record of the information I have accrued over the last 20 years” which includes “all its inaccuracies and omissions”. Having said this, both books do include some interesting reminiscences of local people and descriptions taken from the diaries of local people. The books do contain some useful information on the villages and the park, but the style of the book can make this difficult to find at times. Both books do contain some good pictures and “The History of Gopsall” has some pictures of the interior of the Hall with a useful commentary. It would be an interesting read for someone with an interest in the area.

LE

RATBY: PHOTOGRAPHIC MEMORIES
John Watson, Rod Atkins and John Stone The authors [1995] £3.00 72p.

The authors state in the preface that “this is not a history book, merely a collection of prints to keep as a souvenir of Ratby” and, as such, it is a fascinating collection of photographs documenting the last 90 years of this large and lively village to the north west of Leicester.

But, how frustrating - there are so many questions raised by these photographs which range from formally posed groups (Why did Field Marshall Earl Haig unveil the war memorial in a Leicestershire village?), to scenes of village streets (How did the population change over the years? What work was available? What were the tenancy structures?) and include wonderfully intimate portraits of families and friends (How did the villagers manage during the General Strike of 1926? How many desperate people did they have to feed with that tin bath full of vegetables they are preparing in the school yard?).

An evocative if incomplete booklet, mainly of interest to those who know the village. I lived there in the 1970s and I remember the band roaming the streets on Christmas Eve playing carols all night long it seemed - it was quite magical on a frosty night. I would urge the authors to go and ask those questions before it's too late and write a follow-up!

HE
This book would be of interest to anyone who has an interest in the area of North West Leicestershire or in the Second World War. It is full of the reminiscences of the people of the area who were affected by the war. At the end of the book there is a short section on the "Billet", which was a paper produced in the war years to keep those serving in the Armed Forces in touch with news of the area. The memories recalled include those from people at home as well as those who served overseas.

OTHER RECENT PUBLICATIONS

BRIEF HISTORY OF DESFORD
Desford Village History Society The society 1995 £0.50.

VICTORIAN ROTHLEY: A GLIMPSE OF VILLAGE LIFE
Pamela Britt The author 1995 84p.

CHANGING BIRSTALL: BIRSTALL 1891
Birstall & District Local History Society The society 1995 £2.00

LOUGHBOROUGH’S STAGE AND SCREEN
Mervyn Gould Mercia Cinema Society 1994 £14.25
0946406324 112p.

TUGBY FROM OLD PHOTOGRAPHS

111 YEARS OF SOUTH WIGSTON 1883-1994
P. Mastin The author 1995 £1.50

BIRSTALL’S HERITAGE
A. Naylor & J. Burns The authors [1995] £7.25 0952492105

BARDON HILL
L. Noble The author 1995 £12.50 0952597802
LEICESTERSHIRE: GENERAL

KNIGHTON'S CHRONICLE 1337 - 1396
Edited and translated by G. H Martin  Clarendon Press, Oxford
1995 £75.00 0198205031 670p.

For the first time, Henry Knighton’s Chronicle is available in English, in a new critical edition, the latest addition to the series Oxford Medieval Texts, where the Latin text and an English translation appear on facing pages. Unlike the Latin text published in the Rolls Series (ed. J.R. Lumby, 2 vols, 1889 and 1895), this edition omits the first half of Knighton’s work, which is derived from other chronicles, to concentrate on the second half (1337-1396), for which Knighton is a source of prime importance. For this period his account is his own, carefully compiled from official and semi-official documents, correspondence, and oral communication. To it we owe such items of local interest as the numbers who died of the Black Death in Leicester in 1349, and the story of a murder in 1344
when the corpse was dumped in the grounds of Leicester Abbey. But it is for
the later part of the period, from 1377 to Knighton’s death in 1396, when he
was writing contemporaneously with the events he records, that the Chronicle
is most valuable.

Henry Knighton was a canon of Leicester Abbey, probably as early as 1363
and certainly from 1370: his name seems to have been taken from the abbey’s
manor of Knighton. Consequently, his chronicle has a particular interest for
Leicestershire readers, in addition to its wider importance for its vivid reporting
of the Peasants’ Revolt of 1381; the rise of Lollardy; and the Merciless
Parliament of 1388. The terror inspired by the Peasants’ Revolt is dramatically
illustrated by Knighton’s story of how John of Gaunt’s officials carted the
furniture of Leicester Castle to Leicester Abbey for safety, only to be turned
away by the frightened abbot: the carts had to be abandoned in the churchyard
of St Mary de Castro. Owing to Knighton, we know more about popular
Lollardy in Leicestershire than any where else: Knighton even breaks into verse
to describe how William Smith and a companion chopped up a wooden statue
of St Catherine for fuel to cook their supper. Smith subsequently had to do
penance both for this insult to the saint and for translating the scriptures into
English (which Knighton disapproved of since it made them too easily available:
even women might read them).

Knighton’s verses about Smith’s iconoclasm are brilliantly translated into
English rhyme by the editor and translator, Geoffrey Martin, formerly Professor
of History of the University of Leicester and at one time Honorary Librarian of
the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society. His characteristic wit
and elegance of expression make both the translated Chronicle and the
scholarly introduction as eminently readable as they are widely informative.

It is to be regretted that the price of this impeccably-produced volume will be
a deterrent for many individual purchasers; but library copies will be well used.

AKBE

THE CIVIL WAR IN LEICESTERSHIRE
Douglas Clinton Leicestershire Libraries & Information Service
1995 £4.95 0850223849

This book brings together both interesting and relevant information about the
struggle in Leicestershire. The style of the book, that of a newspaper, makes it
very difficult to access the information however and nothing is covered in
depth. Even allowing for the fact that the book is aimed at the young teenage
market the style is a major fault. The book includes a glossary that simply
explains historical terms, a suggested book list for further reading and a list of
sites associated with the Civil War in Leicestershire. It is a book that would have
been a useful introduction to the period if the style of writing had been clearer and less cluttered.

LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND WOODLANDS PAST AND PRESENT
Anthony Squires and Michael Jeeves  Kairos P. 1994  1871344034

An important and detailed survey of local woodlands from ancient forests and deer parks to the new National Forest of today. The book consists of an historical survey of woodlands from prehistory to modern times. Using techniques from archeology - field-walking and earthwork surveys, place-name studies, documentary evidence, botanical and zoological data, the authors have described and mapped the structure of local woods, their associated flora and fauna and evaluated their past, present and future management and conservation. Six woodland areas in the county are covered in detail.

Derek Seaton  The society  1994 £7.99  0952426706

The Society has a proud record of service to visually impaired people and it was a good decision to commission former Assistant Secretary, Derek Seaton, to write a history of the Society’s distinguished work. This is a well-written history, attractively presented and (importantly for partially-sighted readers) clearly set out with large print and many good illustrations. It is interesting to read how the activities of the Society have developed over the years, responding to changing needs and reflecting new attitudes to care and support for those with visual problems. This is an informative and entertaining record of a particular group of people in the community, how they have helped themselves and been helped by others - a unique contribution to documenting the social history of Leicestershire.

MY BIT OF ENGLAND
David Weston  The author  1995 £27.50  095261944x  112p.

A quite beautiful book - it contains a selection of pencil sketches ranging from tiny detailed drawings of a chimney pot or a gate hinge to sweeping landscapes
of the rivers, houses and churches of Leicestershire. Handsomely printed on pale cream paper the drawings and text are embellished with architectural flourishes and a few well-chosen photographs.

The text wanders through the history of the locality as the artist wanders through his “bit of England” pausing, digressing, gossiping and reminiscing. But it is the illustrations which make the book so desirable - I have found my Christmas present to me!

HE

CURIOSITIES OF LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND
Joyce Lee and Jon Dean S.B. Pubs. 1995 £5.99 18577008800
LITTLE KNOWN LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND
Bob Trubshaw Heart of Albion P. 1995 £6.95 1872883400

Two books which, in different ways, cover unusual and little known aspects of Leicestershire. “Curiosities”, arranged alphabetically by village and town, describes unusual architecture, objects, epitaphs and street furniture to be found around the county. Rather dull, but nevertheless illustrative, black and white photographs mark each feature. Some pictures are clearer than others, but the text is full of interesting information.

Bob Trubshaw’s approach is more practical, as little-known Leicestershire is introduced through suggested bicycle or car tours. The glossary of architectural terms and the introductions to holy wells, crosses, standing stones and medieval carvings are very useful to those with little knowledge of these areas. Although many of the descriptions of places and objects are brief, they encourage the traveller and explorer to be observant and to appreciate the history on view around the county.

“Curiosities of Leicestershire” and “Little-known Leicestershire” are complementary, and when following the suggested tours in the latter, it would be an advantage to have “Curiosities” alongside.

GW

OTHER RECENT PUBLICATIONS

WATERWAY WALKS IN LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND
Paul Biggs Sigma Leisure 1995 £6.95 1850584427

FAMILY WALKS IN LEICESTERSHIRE
Meg Williams Scarthin P. 1995 £4.95 0907758827
OCCUPATIONS

THE HISTORY OF STILTON CHEESE
(The Best of British in old photographs S.)

Stilton, “the king of English cheese”, is unique to the three East Midland counties of Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire and cannot, by law, be manufactured anywhere else. This book charts the rise in popularity of the cheese, made first in the small town of Stilton in Cambridgeshire on the Great North Road, and the subsequent move of the centre of manufacture to Melton Mowbray and the Vale of Belvoir following the collapse of the coaching trade and the advent of railways.

An interesting book detailing the origins and continuing production of this local delicacy. There is a good amount of well-written and well-researched text and contemporary illustrations to supplement the usual Alan Sutton “Britain in old photographs series” format of fascinating photographs with tantalisingly minimal captions.

HE

ROBERT BAKEWELL AND THE LONGHORN BREED OF CATTLE

An exhaustively researched book covering all aspects of Robert Bakewell’s work with cattle and sheep breeding and his far-reaching influence on the livestock farming methods of the mid-eighteenth century. The book also documents the continuing story of the development of the Longhorn breed of cattle before and after Robert Bakewell.

The book is written by a farming expert rather than an historian and for an agriculturally-minded readership. Hence some of the terminology is rather esoteric and the historical referencing rather sketchy. Nevertheless, the information contained in the book is very wide-ranging and the detailed history of a single breed of livestock animal is a fascinating and unusual topic.

HE
A FOUNDRY IN A GARDEN: A LEICESTERSHIRE STORY

This book tells the story of a village business which grew to be one of the leading foundries of its type in the British Isles. R. C. Harrison & Sons manufactured parts for the Air Force and the Navy during the Second World War and were involved in producing Sir Frank Whittle's revolutionary jet engine.

The book tells of village life and growing up in the 1920s and 1930s. In contrast, it also describes the business and industrial community of Leicester during a period of major growth in the engineering sector. Written by the son of the founder, who took over the management of the company with his brother during the Second World War, the book is an engaging description of the development of a successful family business. There is no attempt to set the book into any historical context and it is extremely parochial, but it does provide an insight into the lives of an emergent section of the community, an increasingly wealthy industrial management class.

OTHER RECENT PUBLICATIONS

CHANGING TRACKS: THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF A MIDLAND RAILWAYMAN 1946-1975
R. Shenton  £25.00  1857800044

SUNDEW IN RUTLAND: THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST WALKING EXCAVATOR
Alan Winterton  Speigl P.  1995  £5.00

RECREATION

LORDS OF THE CHASE: TALES FROM THE SHIRES AND BEYOND
Levenston Psmith  Woodpecker  1995  £24.00  0952500108

If the words fox, hounds, covert and run send a shiver of excitement down your spine, this book will be of interest to you.

A collection of hunting verse and anecdotes, this book has many references to Leicestershire and its hunting heritage. For example, the poem “Summoned by bells” recalls the time, in 1862, when a meet of the Quorn in Thurnby was greeted...
by the ringing of the church bells. The vicar objected and, on the Sunday before
the meet, locked the door to the belfry and nailed down the latch. The
churchwarden got the village constable to lift the door off its hinges with a
crowbar!! The ringers then rang the bells for two hours in firm defiance of the vicar.

There has always been a strain between the church and hunting and this is
emphasised by a quote in the book by the hunting parson, the Reverend Baring
Gould (1834-1924) who said, “the unfortunate thing is that the English clergy
of the new epoch do seem to have been ordained because they are effeminate
youths .... it would be a wholesome corrective if they could go after the hounds
occasionally”.

OTHER RECENT PUBLICATIONS

ALL THE FUN OF THE FAIR: LOUGHBOROUGH FAIR
Leicestershire County Council Education Dept. Traveller Education
Service 1995 £5.00 0850223784

HISTORY OF THE COALVILLE AND DISTRICT CHARITY
FOOTBALL CUP

RELIGION

LEICESTERSHIRE AND THE PILGRIMAGE TO SANTIAGO DE
COMPOSTELA
Edward and Marguerite Harper Confraternity of St. James 1995
£2.25 1870585259 32p.

The Research Working Party of the Confraternity of St James are in the process
of producing a series of County Guides. The Leicestershire edition appeared in
1995 and is the work of Edward and Marguerite Harper who live in Thurnby.
All churches dedicated to St James in the county are explored in this small
booklet of thirty-two pages which has an introduction devoted to an historical
survey and routes which may have been taken by pilgrims to Santiago de
Compostela. It is this introduction which is probably the weakest part of this
booklet as it includes a number of errors. The Jewry Wall is not part of the
town’s basilica, but part of the public baths, and the Coritani is no longer
acceptable as the name of the local people.

The survey of Leicestershire churches dedicated to St James, fifteen in all, is
useful. There are one or two minor mistakes, but on the whole the booklet is an interesting read.

A D M

MONUMENTS OF ST. MARGARET’S CHURCH, LEICESTER
Max Wade-Matthews Heart of Albion P. 1994 £3.50 1872883370
GRAVE MATTERS
Max Wade-Matthews Heart of Albion P. 2nd. ed. 1995 1872883427

These two extremely useful and informative publications form part of the growing literature published about Leicester’s graveyards and cemeteries, and the people buried there.

“Grave matters”, originally published in 1992 was revised in 1995 with minor updates, and concentrates on nearly fifty of the more notable worthies of Victorian Leicester who are buried in Leicester’s Welford Road Cemetery. The biographical sketches make fascinating reading. Contemporary portraits and photographs of surviving monuments help to illustrate many of the entries. A concise history of the cemetery is also included, as is a map, an essential aid for those planning a visit to the cemetery.

“The monuments of Saint Margaret’s Church, Leicester” is the fourth book by Max Wade-Matthews on the monuments of Leicester’s five extant medieval churches, a series which will be welcome to local historians and genealogists as well as visitors to churches. Helpfully arranged by location within St. Margaret’s, the entries include transcripts of inscriptions for sepulchral effigies, inscribed floor slabs, mural tablets and window dedications. A good selection of the more interesting headstones in the churchyard is also covered. Also useful is the additional biographical information the author has included on people of note and of particular interest.

J L

OTHER RECENT PUBLICATIONS

UNCLE WILLIE: 70 YEARS OF UNBROKEN CONGREGATIONAL MINISTRY
D. Borland Caron Pubs. 1995 £15.00 0947848118
Contributors

Paul Courtney is a freelance historical archaeologist with particular interests in the medieval and post-medieval periods.

Helen Edwards works for Leicestershire Libraries and Information Service and has an interest in local social and economic history.

Mary Mason is a founder member of the Leicestershire Local History Council and a former chairman and vice-president.

Peter Neaverson is an honorary research fellow in the Department of History in the University of Leicester, author and editor.

Marilyn Palmer lectures in both the School of Archaeological Studies and Department of History at the University of Leicester. She is a Commissioner of the Royal Commission of Historic Monuments England and author of a number of books on industrial archaeology.

Janette Shepherd is an assistant keeper of archives at Leicestershire County Record Office.

David L Wykes is a research lecturer in the Department of History at University of Leicester and joint editor of the Society’s Transactions.
UNCOVER THE PAST

Finding out about your locality and how people lived in the past is both fascinating and rewarding. Every day, staff of Leicestershire Libraries and Information Service help people who want to discover more about Leicestershire. Our customers include students of all ages, researchers, family historians and anyone who simply enjoys uncovering the past.

You will find books and information about every aspect of Leicestershire at all libraries in the county. The amount and range of materials varies at each library, so do check what’s available before making a special journey. There are books to borrow and some for reference only. Most of the larger libraries have substantial collections which have built up over many years, and many of these contain specialist and unique items relating to the area.

Smaller libraries offer a more basic selection, but can be a useful starting point for general histories of Leicestershire, and especially for information about the local community or village.

Major local studies collections are held at:

- Leicestershire Record Office Tel: 0116 257 1080
- Coalville Library Tel: 01530 835951/2
- Hinckley Library Tel: 01455 635106
- Loughborough Library Tel: 01509 212985/266436
- Market Harborough Library Tel: 01858 462699/462649
- Melton Mowbray Library Tel: 01664 60161
- Oakham Library Tel: 01572 722918
- Reference and Information Library Tel: 0116 255 6699

Leicestershire Libraries and Information Service is active in the recording and promotion of local history and knowledge through the publication of a wide number of titles on local themes. These include the ever popular Walks in Leicestershire, and the As I Remember It collection which vividly brings to life the bygone days of local areas.

Forthcoming titles include:
Ashby As I Remember It, Highfields As I Remember It and Glenfield: More Lives and Times Remembered

For more information, contact:
LLIS Publications, 99 Burleys Way, Leicester, LE1 3TZ.
Tel: (0116) 262 1459
This issue of the Leicestershire Historian is sponsored by Leicestershire Libraries and Information Service