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Editor: Helen Edwards

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Editorial

Once again, I hope that this issue of the Leicestershire Historian will provide an interesting variety of articles, reviews and illustrations to whet the appetite of those local historians who have a long-established interest as well as some who might have recently relocated to the county, or newcomers to the study of local archaeology, biography, landscape, industry etc all of which belong within the scope of the Historian.

Angela Cutting reminds us of the Diary of Ada Jackson, some 120 years after it was first written. The book, published by the Living History Unit of the City Council is still available and very readable. Roy Palmer has recently found four broadside ballads which represent the best (happy royal visits) and the worst (vicious murder) of Leicester in Victorian times. Michael Freeman follows his grandfather’s footsteps as he was employed to teach basket weaving to the inhabitants of Skye in 1908. This proved to be quite a culture shock for a young man born and brought up in the industrial east midlands and gives an insight into how isolated those Scottish island communities were.

Alan McWhirr gives us part one of what will develop into a fascinating tour of the county’s graveyards. This first part concentrates on the larger monuments – crosses, mausoleums, grand tombs, lych gates and other churchyard buildings. The enclosure of Humberstone has been researched thoroughly by John Rowley. He has described this time in the history of the parish illustrated by two excellently detailed maps. John Bennett continues to write about a wide range of topics: this year we have a survey of American visitors (including General Ulysses S. Grant and Buffalo Bill) who came to entertain and inform the inhabitants of Leicester.

Hilda Stoddart of the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Record Office, has written a piece following up an intriguing newspaper reference to a will deposited at the Record Office. She raises many questions concerning inheritance, family honour and very sour grapes!

The Society recently sent a questionnaire to its members asking, amongst other things, about the content and scope of the Historian. The results were very encouraging as well as interesting and many of the suggestions will be taken up by the future editorship. 97% of respondents read the Historian and 94% of those found it “very good” (49%) or “good” (45%). However, we do not intend to rest on our laurels and aim to publish more material on recent social history, biography, Leicestershire regiments, reminiscences, industrial history and archæology as requested by our members. The reviews page will especially appreciated and we intend to continue to publish regular updates and contact details for the many and varied local history societies around the county. The editor would be pleased to receive other suggestions as well as actual contributions for print.

Once again, I am deeply grateful for the work of John Hinks and his dedicated team of reviewers for the comprehensive survey of recent local publications. I would like to remind would-be authors that any review copies sent to John are placed in the library of the Society in the Guildhall. My thanks also go to Alan McWhirr who has fulfilled his indispensable role of production editor and has ensured that this issue of the Leicestershire Historian has reached the publication stage.

Helen Edwards
“I did not think there was half the pleasure in keeping a diary as there is. I have kept my temper all day, what a battle fought. Started to work today. G. came in for a box of his. How nice it is to write all my secrets down here…”

So wrote Ada Jackson in her diary on 2 January, 120 years ago. The diary was kept for the year 1883 when Ada was 19 years old. It was handwritten by her in a foolscap “scribbling diary” supplied by Rowe and Sons, printers and stationers of Granby Street, Leicester.

Ada was born on 19 March 1863, the only child of John Thomas Jackson of Leicester, and his wife Mary Ann. The family lived at 9 Pares Street, one of a cluster of streets laid out in the 1830s and 1840s in the northern part of the town, between St. Margaret’s Church and the Leicester Canal.

Hard-working, sober and thrifty, this was a “respectable” and relatively affluent working class household. John Jackson enjoyed a drink – Ada was occasionally sent to “fetch the ale” – but never to excess. “I am so sorry”, writes Ada of one acquaintance, “we found her in so much trouble about her husband, he drinks so sometimes and then comes home and ill uses her”. The piano and washing machine, the outings to the theatre, the day trips to the coast, were still well beyond the means of many working class families at this time.

**Tuesday May 15th**
Miss E. Cooper came down this morning but she did not stay long as I was to see Lily, we made up our minds to go to Belvoir Castle with the Miss Palmers and Ellen, Lily and I by the half day trip. I think we all thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, we managed to get into the Castle, that is just what I like. We saw the family portraits, Ballroom, Drawing room etc. and we got in with strange company on the train both going and coming back. We had to wait for the train about an hour and half before we could get in one to come home. The Station Master was civil, he is an exception to the general rule, he shook hands with some of our party and bid us goodnight.

**Saturday July 14th**
We started for Skegness after eight o’clock this morning, we had such a lark in the train. I think it is a nice little place, we did not care to mix up with the girls because of them coming in the afternoon. Eliza and I got a good wetting, through sitting on the sands too near the water. I had to wring her dress out at the bottom… In the afternoon we went on the pier.

John Jackson’s occupation was given as “foreman” in 1884, but as the diary suggests, he also owned two houses in Chestnut Street, off the Aylestone Road. On one occasion Ada had to “go of an errand for Father to fetch the rents”, while on another, George Beecroft, the young man around whom much of Ada’s diary revolves, “told Father he would mend the window sashes down Chestnut Street”.

George was a carpenter and joiner by trade. Originally from South Witham in Lincolnshire, in 1874 he was apprenticed for four years to the firm of George and John Thomas Thorp, elastic web manufacturers of Friday Street in Leicester. This was close to Pares Street, as was the anonymous “Factory” to which Ada refers, and it seems likely that both George and Ada’s father were employed at Thorp’s during the period covered by the diary.

Unlike many of those employed in Leicester at this time, both he and George appear to have enjoyed regular work with a regular income – arguably a more important factor in maintaining a comfortable lifestyle than the level of wages themselves. Ada herself worked at the firm of Thomas Webster and Co., hat and cap manufacturers, in East Bond Street. The company – motto “Labor Omnia Vincit” or “Work Conquers All” – produced not only silk, felt and Tweed hats, but police helmets, and embroidered caps for schools, colleges and sporting activities, many of them exported to Europe or the Colonies. However, Ada rarely enjoyed the same regularity of work as her father.

**Wednesday June 20th**
I am altogether disgusted with the work, I was there till four o’clock and earned scarcely anything, it is a humbug of a place.

**Thursday June 21st**
I left off about five again today, I tell them at home if it lasts much longer I shall go wrong… I met Lily tonight and as soon as we got on the Race Course I felt my drawers coming down so we had to go into Waterloo Street to fasten them up.

**Tuesday July 31st**
I am going to have the stitch of my Wilcocks and Gibbs machine made larger, that will be a great help to me. Mr Jackson says it is to go by steam. I shall like that, it will not be such hard work.

Although Leicester suffered little of the overcrowding seen in many urban areas, mortality rates in the 1840s were notoriously high by comparison with other industrial towns. They began to fall from the 1870s, and by the end of the century were below the national average, but epidemic diseases remained prevalent, and Ada herself suffered a bout of the “English cholera”, a regular feature of the summer and winter months.
Saturday August 25th
I felt a little better when I got up this morning, I was going to try to go to work this morning but I soon felt bad again so I had to give it up. In the afternoon Mother went to Mr Butler’s, he gave her some medicine. George called in at two o’clock, he is working this afternoon. The medicine did not relieve me, I was in such pain so Mother went again to Mr Butler’s, he changed it. About seven Aunt Kilby brought George’s sister to our house, Mrs Beecroft wanted to see George and did not know where to find him. She stayed to tea and George came in too, I could not speak to her I felt so ill, she would think me unsociable.

Otherwise, with the exception of Mary Ann’s headaches, and the occasional toothache, the family appeared to enjoy remarkably good health. This may be due, in part, to the sanitary reforms introduced from mid-century by the Borough Corporation; but declining mortality rates also owed a great deal to the rising standard of living enjoyed by at least some sections of the population in Leicester, and the access it gave them to decent housing and an adequate diet.

Much of the town’s social life was still centred in its public houses and street corners, but there was no lack of other entertainment. The annual fairs in May and October were a long-established feature of the calendar, though in Ada’s view, “there don’t seem to be half the fun there used to be”. There were two theatres in Leicester at this time, in addition to the Floral Hall in Belgrave Gate, which opened in 1876 and staged concerts and theatrical performances as well as exhibitions and other events. The Theatre Royal, in Horsefair Street, was built in 1836, but Ada normally attended the Royal Opera House in Silver Street, which had opened in 1877.

Wednesday April 25th
Father wants me to go to the Opera House with him tonight, I don’t know what to do, if I don’t go I expect I shall offend him and that will not do. Well, I have made up my mind to go, they are playing “Rip Van Winkle”, it is an Opera. There is some lovmaking in it, I felt so silly a great many times.

A seat in the Gallery cost 6d (2.5 pence), but the lectures which Ada and her friends attended at the Town Museum and the Temperance Hall were normally free of charge. “An Hour with the Modern Microscope”, “King John and the Magna Carta”, Shakespeare’s “As You Like It” – the range of subjects was wonderfully wide, and much in keeping with the Victorian ideal of self-improvement through education.

Monday February 5th
At night I went to the Temperance Hall with Elly, saw George, he had not a seat for himself, so he could not save us one, but we got on the back seat behind a post (E. and I) in the body of the hall. The lecture was by Mr Carpenter on the “Dynamo Machine and Electric Light”, it was a very good lecture and lecturer. I thought G. was not coming to us tonight, but he caught us and brought me as far as home, we left Elly at the Clock Tower.

The lectures themselves attracted large audiences. Ada’s own enthusiasm for them may have owed something to the fact that George Beecroft was usually in the audience. However, her obvious interest and enjoyment also suggests a degree of intellectual curiosity, and a sufficiently high standard of education to grasp the subject matter. The diary itself reinforces this impression. Her grammar is occasionally eccentric, her punctuation non-existent in parts, but this gives the text an immediacy which a more “correct” style might lack, and her standard of literacy is still higher than the average that might be expected of a working class woman at this time.

Monday February 19th
… I went to the Temperance Hall with Elly to hear a lecture by Doctor Carpenter on “The Voyage of the Challenger”. I could not hear well and I felt so dull because I didn’t see anybody and I had to come home alone. I wonder whether he did this on purpose to slip me. Elly would not hear anything of the sort, I am a nasty tempered girl tonight Mother says.

Finally, what of Ada’s relationship with George, which occupies so much of the diary? Ada knew her own feelings well enough. “How happy I am, I am in love”, she declared in January, but did George feel the same way, and when – if ever – would he declare his “intentions”? She wrote more than once: “I wish he would say something. It seems to me as though he is trifling with me” – but if she openly showed her affection for him, would he think her “fast, like my little longer, I think that is a nice order for me, but what am I to do? it is not my place to propose. I wish something would happen soon so that I could know one way or the other. It is too bad tampering with me like this, I think I make too much of an idol of him, all my writing is about him and I seem to relieve me, I was in such pain so Mother went again to Mr Butler’s, he gave her some medicine. George called in at two o’clock, he is working this afternoon. The medicine did not relieve me, I was in such pain so Mother went again to Mr Butler’s, he changed it. About seven Aunt Kilby brought George’s sister to our house, Mrs Beecroft wanted to see George and did not know where to find him. She stayed to tea and George came in too, I could not speak to her I felt so ill, she would think me unsociable.

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Dear Editor, Leicestershire Historian 2002

I was interested to notice a hidden connection between two of the articles in the current issue. The article on Celebrating the Jubilee mentions a memorial window at St. Catharine, Houghton-on-the-Hill (1897) on page 6. The dedication of this window is “To the Glory of God and to commemorate the sixtieth year of Queen Victoria’s reign, this window is dedicated by William Jesse Freer, Clerk of the Peace for the County, and Helen his wife, AD 1897”. Interestingly, this couple also feature in the article on a Former officer of this Society on page 25.

There is also a mural tablet in green marble and Hopton Wood marble in the church with the following inscription:

“In honoured memory of Major William Jesse Freer V.D. D.L. F.S.A. eldest son of Rev. Wm. T Freer Rector. For many years a valued servant as Clerk of the Peace and County Council and to the Lieutenancy of Leicestershire – President British Numismatic Society – Lay Canon of Leicester and a generous benefactor to the Diocese. Died 12th July 1932 in the 80th year of his age. Also of his wife Helen, daughter of William Goode Johnson Esq. of Nottingham & Vancouver. She died 23rd December 1948 in the 91st year of her age”.

It carries:
Arms: Sable, a chevron between three dolphins naiant embowed argent.
Crest: Out of a ducal coronet guules, an antelope’s head argent, attired or.
Motto: Aime ton Frere.

These were carved by Leicester Technical School students.

I hope that this is of interest.

Yours sincerely,
Dr K Oldham
Churchwarden
St. Catharine’s Church

The Diary of Ada Jackson 1883 was published by the former Living History Unit in 1993, and is still available, price £5.99. ISBN 0901 675 059

Acknowledgments
With thanks to Mrs M. Blow, the granddaughter of Ada Jackson, for permission to use extracts from the diary and family photographs, and to Cynthia Brown who wrote the introduction to the book.
The word serendipity does not have an opposite, but perhaps one should be invented: any writer knows the pangs induced by turning up relevant material as soon as a book has gone to press. In my case after revising *The Folklore of Leicestershire and Rutland* last summer for re-printing I came across four broadsides which I should happily have quoted, or even reproduced in full. This was all the more frustrating because for some years I had been chasing a scrapbook of such items which the John Rylands Library of the University of Manchester admitted to possessing but could not find. Suddenly, it came to light, but too late. It yielded three items of Leicester interest.

The title of “The Trial Confession and Execution of Sarah Smith” is misleading in one respect since Smith, from Mountsorrel, far from confessing, tried to blame her husband for the murder (by arsenic in tea) of Elizabeth Wood. She was hanged – or rather, in the time-honoured phrase, “launched into eternity” in March 1832. At the foot of the sheet (cut off and moved to the side in the scrapbook) came the no less ritual “Copy of Verses” with its sternly moralising message.

Another sheet, this time preserved in the St Bride Printing Institute, London, dates from only two months later. “Leicester Tragedy”, issued by Smith of Belgrave Gate, again in both prose and verse, describes, in lurid detail, very much in the manner of today’s tabloid press, the murder of James Paas by James Cook, a bookbinder from Wellington Street, Leicester. A good murder, trial and execution could provide an alert printer with subjects for a succession of sheets: perhaps one on Cook’s execution will one day come to light.

“Proclamation Extraordinary!”, printed by J.F. Winks of Charles Street, is a heavily ironic appeal to voters in the general election which followed the death of William IV in 1837. The piece is intriguingly dated from the “Sweating Room, Hydraulic Pressure Establishment, in the gate to the Gallows Tree, not far from the Bishop with Three Crowns”. The framework knitters and others to whom it is addressed are summarized as “ye men, of dunghole and twitchill”, the last word being a synonym for what Leicestershire people of my generation called an entry.

It was on the death of William that Victoria came to the throne, and one of the lines of the “Proclamation” runs “What arrogance it is in you to talk of HER who reigns”, yet six years later a sheet without imprint described how all ranks in society would flock to see the queen’s progress through Leicester. “A New Song Composed on Her Majesty’s Royal Visit” (1843) is good-natured knockabout, though the writer in conclusion expresses the hope that Victoria will “help the poor in their distress”.

In their various ways, these ephemeral sheets, sold at a penny a time, provide vivid insight into a decade of Leicester life.

continued on following pages

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**New Resources at the University of Leicester**

**Digital Library of Historical Directories**

Leicester University has created a library of 18th, 19th and early 20th century local and trade directories from England and Wales, which can be searched online. The site has a search engine so that names, occupations, addresses and other key words can be located.

The site includes some directories covering Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland.

- History, Gazetteer and Directory of the Counties of Leicester and Rutland, 1877
- Pigot & Co’s National Commercial Directory for 1828-9
- Slater’s Directory of Important English Towns, 1847
- Directory of Leicester, 1815
- Pigot’s National Commercial Directory, 1835

Website address: www.historicaldirectories.org
YOU Females all of each degree,
Attend unto these lines I pray,
I hope you will take warning by,
A wretched female doom’d to die,

SARAH SMITH it is her name,
And from Mountsorrel town she came,
For cruel murder she’s condem’d
On Monday morning to be hang’d,

She took the life of Eliza Wood,
By putting poison in her food,
And thinking to avoid her shame,
She on her husband laid her blame,

But God from whose all seeing eye,
T’is needless to attempt to fly
This wretched woman’s guilt did see
And to Justice brought her instantly.

Of all the crimes it is confess’d,
That murder it is the very worst,
And by the scripture it is prov’d,
That blood for blood is required by God.

On Monday March the twenty-sixth,
Upon the Gallows she was fix’d,
We pray the Lord’s forgiveness,
To rest her in Eternal Bliss.
Leicester Tragedy.

A most horrid and infamous Murder committed on the body of Mr. Phis, a travelling Gentleman in the town of Leicester, here by James Cook, a Bookbinder, Wellington Street, Leicester, on Wednesday the 30th of May 1832, and who escaped from the hands of justice, but has since been captured and now confined in the Borough Gaol.

Of all the horrors here described,
The one I now unfold,
Surely's the worst that 'ere washe
'Twill make your blood run cold:
A crime more dark sure ne'er did stain,
The page of history,
For never was a murder done,
With more barbarity
At the Town of Leicester,
The place where he did dwell,
And by the name COOK,
This villain was known full well.
And he has killed a Gentleman,
So barbarous and severe,
As never man in all his life,
The like did never hear.

And when the door was open'd
Lo there human flesh lay,
By which it plainly did appear,
A murder done must be,
Lament in tears of grief to hear,
This dreadful tragedy.

It was on the 30th. Day of May,
This gentleman to Cook did go,
Little thinking he'd be overcome,
By a Murderous blow.
[___] to save or help was nigh,
He fell'd him to the ground,
And the blood of this Gentleman,
Was slain all by a deadly wound.

All of Leicester in amazement,
Heard of the horrid tale,
The fate of this poor Gentleman,
Both high and low bewail.
The deeds of blood are brought to light,
As all mankind may see,
And soon exposed to public scorn,
This inhuman monster will be.

O may the afflicted friends, amid their grief,
Experience sweet solace from on high;
Cast all their [___] on HIM, who ne'er will leave
Them in distress - but will be ever nigh.
Leicestershire Historian 2003

Proclamation Extraordinary!

With

Pains and Penalties

For the

Non-Observance Thereof:

Addressed to All

Frame-Work Knitters, Workmen, Tradesmen,

And

All Whom It May Concern.

Good people all, both great and small, just listen to our order,
And mind that ye obey the same without the least disorder:
It is our sovereign wish and will, that at the next Election,
Ye vote as we shall tell you how, without the least defection.

Ye FRAME-WORK KNITTERS now attend, this notice here we give you,
That if we cannot lead you still, we are resolv’d to drive you;
And if you do not vote as we direct at this election,
We will withdraw from each of you our dignified protection,
‘Twould be a pretty thing indeed for men like you to think,
Men who were only born to work, and sleep, and eat, and drink:
Then mind your knitting boys, and let all politics alone,
And never dare to mention once, the Church, or State, or Throne:
What arrogance it is in you to talk of HER who reigns,
Or puzzle with affairs of state your poor half-addled brains;
Indeed you do not know what is the best for your own selves:
So let us hear no more about Reform Bills and such stuff,
More Bills indeed! Why have we not got Bills enough in store,
And work enough to get them paid, without desiring more?
However, to cut short our work, we do declare it treason
If Frame-Work Knitters dare to think, or Workmen dare to reason;
Nay, more, in opposition to our will if you should act,
We swear a solemn oath which we will never retract,
That if you give one vote this time for Duckworth or for Easthope,
We’ll turn off every man of you, and not leave you the least hope
Of ever coming back to gain our mighty approbation,
An this we do declare before the face of the whole nation.

Ye Tradesmen and Shopkeepers too, of every grade and station,
We call on you also to hear our sovereign declaration;
But as such men as you have got some little share of reason,
A word or two, for your own sakes, mat not be out of season;
So think, ye Tradesmen, ere we leave you all to your deserts,
What would become of you if we should buy our shifts and shirts,
Our coats and breeches, threads and tapes, our cotton, wool, and silk,
Our ale and beer, our bread and cheese, our butter, eggs, and milk,
Our garden stuff and poultry, our mutton, beef, and veal,
Our game, our geese, and gooseberries, our mushrooms, malt and meal
Some ten miles off? What could you do? You in-dependant sinners
Who are on us dependant for means to get your dinners:
We therefore, do hereby command that you to us shall bow,
And think, and speak, and act, and vote, as we shall tell you how;
If you refuse, we tell you plain, our intercourse all stops,
And never will we spend again one shilling in your shops:
Obey then, now, without delay, our sovereign will and pleasure,
Or you shall have an extra squeeze of our hydraulic pressure.

‘Tis done: and now we say no more, but leave you to your choices,
To vote for Goulburn and Gladstone, or silent keep your voices;
One of these things we will have done, and this you may depend on’t,
For when such men as we once speak there ought to be an end on’t.

Hear this and tremble then, ye men, of dunghole and of twitchill,
I’m JOSEPH the great FILLIPER, and I DICKEY M—
Dated, Sweating Room, Hydraulic Pressure Establishment, in the Gate to the Gallows Tree, not far from the Bishop with Three Crowns, July 12, 1837.

J.F. Winks, Printer, Charles-Street, Leicester.
COME listen awhile I do relate,  
The visit of our Queen so great,  
Who comes in royal robes of state;  
Her subjects for to honour,  
From Belvoir Castle is coming down,  
And passes through old Leicester town,  
With hearty cheers we her surround,  
And welcome Queen Victoria,  
To Drayton Manor they went all,  
To take a peep at Bobby's hall,  
And now on as she'll give a call,  
As she passes on from Belvoir.

CHORUS.
Such running thro' Les'ter in double quick pace,  
You'd think they all was running a race,  
To take a peep at her pretty face,  
The charming Queen of England.

Thursday next will be the day,  
Bands of music they will play,  
People all will bend their way,  
To meet the Royal party,  
And to accommodate the thro[n]g  
Triumphant arches made all along,  
And platforms built so very strong,  
To view the grand procession,  
Deck'd out in royal robes she rides,  
With Prince Albert at her side,  
And all her suit behind will glide  
To attend her royal pleasures.

The Mayor and Corporation to,  
The pleasing sight will go to view,  
And on his head a cock'd hat new,  
The Loyal Mayor of Leicester.  
The town's council will be there,  
And with shouts will rend the air  
For they all aloud declare'  
They'll greet the Queen of England,  
The soldiers grand salute will have,  
To show their loyalty so brave,  
Policemen all their hats will wave,  
To the blooming Queen of England.  
The temperance men they all do say

The publicans are in dismay,  
Their customers are run away,  
To see the Queen of England,  
Poole with his patentee also,  
To see Prince Albert he must go,  
Because his boots he made you know  
To please his Royal fancy,  
Butchers and Bakers will be there,  
And at the Queen to have a stare,  
So to Morrow of short weight pray beware,  
For they'll make you pay for your peeping,

The Loyal Clergy and the sweep  
With sutty face and mourning deep,  
Hand in hand go to peep,  
At the blooming Queen of England,  
Barbers, Tinkers and Tailors, too  
With chip women in True Blue,  
They will go to have a view  
At the blooming Queen Victoria,  
Snobs and Ragmen on that day,  
Their noble figures will display,  
The rags and bags they'll throw away,  
To see the Queen of England.

So to conclude and make an end,  
Of these few lines that I have pen'd,  
I dont wish any one to offend,  
I've wrote to please my fancy,  
But since we are so much oppress'd  
If she by her subjects will be blest,  
To help the poor in their distress,  
And we'll pray for the Queen of England  
And as we lose their noble sight,  
The Royal train will take its flight,  
We wish them safe repose this night,  
At Buckingham Palace in London.
The parish churchyards of Leicestershire are a wonderful resource for historians and ecologists, with sometimes the interests of one group conflicting with those of the other. The memorials which characterise our churchyards almost always carried inscriptions which were meant to be read by successive generations. Some of these are now obscured by lichen and mosses and difficult to read. Even so there is still much to interest the local historian. The church has been the centre of village life for centuries and what we discover in the church, and its associated graveyard, reflects life in the parish and its village. This article is the beginning of an exploration around some of the county’s churchyards and will be continued in a subsequent edition of the *Leicestershire Historian*. It is to be hoped that what follows will act as a catalyst and encourage the reader to seek out some of the three hundred or so parish churchyards and discover more about the ways in which parishioners were commemorated after death and, perhaps, find unrecorded snippets of local history.

The siting of the Leicestershire church and its associated ‘God’s acre’ is not fully understood, but it is clear that many of our present day churches were erected on sites which had been associated with religious activity before they were built. We can see this at Sproxton and Rothley where Saxon cross shafts survive from the ninth or tenth centuries. In Sproxton churchyard in the north east of the county a cross stands to the south east of the church. It is made of a shelly oolite which may have come from Colsterworth in Lincolnshire, 5 miles due east of Sproxton. It stands 6′ 6˝ high on a square plinth and is topped by a wheel-head cross. Although badly eroded in parts it is still possible to see decoration consisting of a vine scroll, interlace pattern and a beast which has been described as being of Jellinge-type, that is, similar to art forms found at Jellinge in South Jutland. It has been described in the pages of this Society’s own *Transactions* from where these illustrations have been taken (volume 20 for 1938-9). The shaft at Rothley is much taller standing some 12′ high, but may have been higher originally. The stone appears to be a highly quartzose millstone grit, probably from east of the Derwent. Each side of the shaft comprises four panels in which there are interlaced designs, foliage scrolls and a Jellinge-type beast which some argue to be similar in execution to that on the Sproxton cross. Other examples of Saxon sculpture which may have once come from the churchyard can be found in a number of places, but they are no longer in context. There is a tomb slab in St Michael’s, Hallaton, and what was once thought to be part of a cross in St Andrew’s, Foxton, but as it only has decoration on one side it may not have come from a cross.

There are also other possibly pre-conquest artefacts which may have come from churchyards such as the hog-back tombstone from Narborough, or the carved stone dug up in Aylestone churchyard, although its original provenance is unclear. A particularly interesting group of headstones – if that is what they are, and what else can they be? – was found at Thurnby during extensive renovation work in the nineteenth century. They are around 2 ft high and are inscribed on both sides with decoration that is difficult to attribute and date. They have always been considered to be pre-conquest and carried a label when on display in the Jewry Wall museum describing them as Danish. This was based on the fact that they were thought to be stylistically similar to a group of slightly bigger stones found in Adel in Yorkshire, but the similarity is difficulty to see. At Adel they were found in the footings of a church of about 1160 date and since they did not look Norman it was concluded that they...
must be pre-Norman and therefore date to the Viking kingdom of York. So as the Thurnby stones were considered to be similar, they must be pre-Norman and, therefore, Danish. They could probably date from anywhere between AD1000 and AD1120.

Churchyard crosses appear again in the medieval period. According to one author these later crosses were “intended both to sanctify the churchyard and to provide a corporate memorial to the anonymous dead of the parish” at a time when individual gravestones were not the norm. The most common form/shape for the top of these crosses was a tabernacle, but there were also cross heads and wheel heads and, needless to say, many surviving examples are now without their uppermost parts. There are good examples in Scraptoft and Stoughton churchyards. There are also remnants of cross shafts at Barrow and Anstey, and no doubt several more from around Leicestershire.

It had been the custom for the nobility and gentry of society to be buried inside their parish church and to have monuments erected in their memory in the church itself. By the mid to late seventeenth century a new breed of yeoman farmers, tradesmen and master-craftsmen began to emulate this fashion by having memorials in the form of headstones erected over their churchyard graves. The trend spread to all levels of society and headstones began to be erected regularly in our parish churchyards from this time. The earliest dated church-yard headstone so far recorded from the county seems to be the Swithland slate one now inside Thurcaston church. It commemorates a former rector of Thurcaston, Elias Travers who died in 1641. One assumes that the stone once stood in the churchyard, but it may not have done. Somerby has some early dated headstones including one dated to 1665, but carrying little detail. A survey of such headstones must await another article.

Let us first examine the monuments which were erected to the upper levels of society in the post-Reformation period. Beginning at the top of the social ladder there are several churchyards in the county containing mausolea erected for the burial of members of some notable family of the parish. They can be found at Buckminster, Church Langton, Welham, Dishley and Staunton Harold. A mausoleum is a building or chamber, usually on a grand scale, which was intended for the burial of members of one family. Welham is included in this list, but there are doubts as to whether...
it can really be classified as a mausoleum. The largest in the county in a churchyard is that at Buckminster. It was erected by the trustees of the Seventh Earl of Dysart who died in 1878 and probably dates to around 1880. W.G. Hoskins described it in his *Shell Guide to Leicestershire*, as ‘ugly’. Built in the Gothic style in stone with a stone slab roof, it is of single storey of three bays with prominent buttresses. It still dominates the eastern part of the churchyard and one has some sympathy with Hoskins’ views. In contrast, the mausoleum built by the Revd William Hanbury in the 1760s at Church Langton only lasted a hundred years and little of it survives. However, it was recorded in Nichols and here we can see something of its design. It was an octagonal structure with three or four circular openings below the eaves. It was built as a burial place for Hanbury’s family, but was taken down in 1865/6 and the coffins moved to a brick vault under a new vestry and organ chamber which was being constructed on the north side of the chancel. The remains of the original mausoleum are still visible in the present churchyard south east of the church.

The story at Welham is rather different. A monument was built to Francis Edwards, who died in 1729, over a burial vault in the churchyard as illustrated in Nichols, but it became so damaged by exposure to the elements that it was moved and enclosed in an extension to the church – a transeptal chapel built on the north side of the nave in 1809/1810. The monument was an elaborate construction and of some quality, although the sculptor is unknown. However in view of its quality, it may have been the work of somebody of national standing. It consisted of a marble tomb placed on four wide steps surmounted by a tall obelisk carrying a marble urn. It stood within a small enclosure, paved with marble slabs and fenced with an iron palisado, with four large urns on pedestals in the corners.

To the north of the derelict church at Dishley stands a mausoleum. It was built of brick in about 1818 and there is a blocked entrance on the north side. The mausoleum was built to accommodate the coffin of the Revd William March Phillipps (1790-1818). There is a central passage with, either side, a two-tiered row of 3 coffin spaces giving a maximum accommodation for 12 coffins. It only received two, the Revd Phillipps and Mrs Catherine Hamilton (1788-1830). The door was bricked up around 1960 and it was re-roofed in 1967/8.

At Staunton Harold a stone built mausoleum stands south of the church. It has two windows either side through which one can clearly see two wooden coffins with coats of arms displayed on the top. This mausoleum was built in 1906 by Sewallis Edward Shirley, 10th Earl Ferriers, for his wife Frances Eugenie Matilda who died that year. The family vault under the chancel had become flooded and so the mausoleum was built to accommodate the coffin of the 10th Earl’s wife. When he died in 1912 his coffin was placed beside that of his wife and they would appear to be the only occupants.

Slightly less conspicuous and ostentatious is a group of obelisks, such as those at Carlton Curlieu, Hallaton and Kings Norton. These are monuments which either mark a burial plot, or are simply memorials. Outside the north wall of the vestry at St Mary’s, Carlton Curlieu, is an altar tomb on top of which is an obelisk. The Monument to Revd Fenwicke at Hallaton.
inscription records a Revd Fenwicke who died in 1733. The Fenwicke name we come across again at Hallaton where another obelisk can be found at St Michael’s north of the chancel wall. This was erected in memory of Revd George Fenwicke (d 1760), rector of the parish for 37 years.

Both of the obelisks just described were on the north side of their respective churches, but at Kings Norton William Fortrey wanted all who worshipped in the church to be regularly reminded of the monument he erected in memory of his parents so the obelisk was placed centrally outside the east window, which consisted of clear glass, and so was very visible from inside the church. However, when viewed from inside the church it looks slightly off centre!

Rather more elaborate than the obelisks are the pedestal tombs at Burton Lazars, Barrow-on-Soar and Melton Mowbray. Pedestal-tombs emphasise height as opposed to chest tombs in which their length is the dominant feature. The striking monument at Burton Lazars commemorates a weaver named William Squire who died in 1781, and it is said that his fortune of £600 was to be used for the monument and to provide education for the poor of the parish. However, by the time the monument was completed there was none left for any other purpose! It is quite a remarkable monument as it contains nearly every device one could build into such a monument at the time and is about 20ft high. It is basically a sarcophagus with an obelisk on top containing an urn, and supported on four cannon balls – said to be real. You can also find eagles, serpents, a globe, angels, crosses and skull and cross-bones and originally it was gilded and painted to resemble marble.

The tomb in Barrow-on-Soar churchyard, not far from the south porch, is similar in style to that at Burton with a raised sarcophagus and a possible urn on top, but lacking the pyramid or obelisk which supported an urn. The monument contains various dedications to members of the Beaumont family the earliest of which is dated 1796. We do not know the exact date when the Burton Lazars tomb was designed and erected – it may have been some time after William Squire died in 1781 and so the dates of these two monuments may not be too far apart. One wonders whether they are by the same sculptor.

Monument erected by William Fortrey at Kings Norton.

The pedestal tomb at Melton Mowbray, said to date from 1747, is in the area to the west of the church and similar in design to those we have already seen at Burton and Barrow. Here a sarcophagus is flanked by urns with a further one on top thus extenuating the height of the monument. The inscription records Edward, son of Richard and Ann Hughes on the north face, and on the south, Francis Gregory. Burgess, in his book on *English Churchyard Memorials*, says that this is the work of the local Staveley family who were practising their craft throughout the eighteenth century and into the nineteenth.

The tombs at Burton Lazars, Barrow and Melton were expensive and created by experienced monumental masons and sculptors. If we journey across the county to Newton Harcourt, and to a later century, we come upon a rather different monument, one created by the father of the child commemorated – no monumental mason or sculptor involved – just the work of a craftsman. In St Luke’s churchyard we find a miniature church. The plaque on the back of the tower reads

To the Fragrant Memory of Christopher V. Gardner
Born 26 Aug 1916
Died 20 Sept 1924
Aged 8 years

The story of the monument was told to the *Leicester
building activities whilst another shows a ship at sea with a church and other buildings in the background. Swithland is well worth a visit to see other tombs, especially those of the Hind family who were involved with Swithland slate.

Finally, for this first part of my exploration of Leicestershire’s churchyards I want to look at some structures which can be found in, or close by, churchyards. A familiar sight is the lych gate through which many churchyards are entered. The term lich/lych was coined by Victorian ecclesiologists and is derived from the Old English lich meaning a corpse, and up until quite recently the term corpse gate was often in use. The reason behind this covered structure can be traced back to the 1549 Prayer Book which required that the priest ‘meet the corpse at the style gate’ and should there begin the Order for the Burial of the Dead. This encouraged the provision of some form of shelter to protect the priest and the funeral party. Later in the 1662 Prayer Book the church style was defined as the entrance to the churchyard. To quote from Frair’s Companion to the English Parish Church:

“Sometimes the cortège had to wait for the arrival of the parson and this brief respite must have been welcomed by the bearers who often had to carry a corpse for many miles along rutted roads from outlying hamlets and farmsteads.”

The shrouded corpse or coffin, during this respite, was set down on a corpse table, often in the centre of the lych gate or sometimes on an adjacent wall. No such corpse tables have yet been noted in the county. There are many examples of lych gates two of which are illustrated here. The first is at Bitteswell and was paid for by Richard Twining a member of the Twining tea family who retired to live in Bitteswell where his sister Mary was married to the Revd James Powell vicar of the parish. The second is from Thurlaston.

Another unusual monument can be found in Swithland churchyard, unusual at least in its positioning. This tomb to the memory of Sir Joseph Danvers (an MP for many years and a Deputy Lieutenant), straddles the churchyard boundary so that part of the tomb is in consecrated ground and part is not. This, we are told, is so that he could be buried with his favourite dog who could not be interred in consecrated ground (did he die at the same time or was he shot especially for the occasion!!!). So Danvers could lie in consecrated ground and the dog in the field next to the churchyard, i.e. in unconsecrated ground. Around this tomb are some exquisitely executed reliefs carved onto Swithland slate panels. One slate panel shows ploughing and Swithland slate carved panel from Sir Joseph Danver’s monument, Swithland.
the writer would like to know of further examples. These buildings serve a variety of functions. Some may have been connected with death and burial and been where the church bier was stored. At Thurlaston there is, by the gate at the south-east corner of the churchyard, a building which may have been a bier house. It is built of brick and probably nineteenth century in date with a door facing on to the street. There is a small square opening on one side and the remains of a stone which appears to have an inscription. A building of similar size can be found at Belgrave and likewise may have served as a mortuary house. Close by Melton parish church is a building known by some as the hearse house. It has proved remarkably difficult to find out exactly what these buildings were used for, and even oral evidence is lacking.

In Cossington churchyard by the south porch is a impressive stone building. It is listed in its own right and described as ‘detached vestry dated 1835 – granite rubble stone and brick – stone tablet over a central doorway with the Babington coat of arms and inscribed erected April 1835. Mrs Skillington refers to this building in her paper in Transactions on Post-Medieval Cossington in which she says that ‘the Rev John [Babington], fearing for the souls of his parishioners, provided greater facilities for teaching them sound doctrine and, possibly, general elementary subjects. This was in response to the building of Ratcliffe Roman Catholic College on land in the parish. There is also a local story which links Thomas Cook with this building. Cook used to organise horse-drawn coach trips out of Leicester on race days and in 1839, two years before the railway was built in that area, he was invited by the Rector to bring a group to Cossington where they were provided with tea in the vestry. (Whilst at Cossington it is worth mentioning that outside the east window of the church is the grave of Lord Kitchener’s father).

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Part 2 of Exploring Leicestershire’s Churchyards will examine the more familiar tombstones which frequent our churchyards and in particular the information they provide about life in the parishes.

Further Reading
Skillington, F.E. ‘Post-Medieval Cossington’ TLAHS XX (1938-9), page 211 for reference to the Building at Cossington.

Can you help the author of this article by?

• Providing examples of dated headstones before 1650
• Finding more examples of medieval crosses in churchyards
• Giving more examples of buildings in or associated with churchyards
• Finding more examples of pedestal tombs
• Sending him examples of unusual deaths as recorded on tombstones.

If so please send details to 37 Dovedale Road, Leicester, LE2 2DN

or email: alan@dovedale2.demon.co.uk
In 1908, my Grandfather John (Jack) William Freeman, at the age of 24, was engaged by the Congested Districts Board in Edinburgh to teach basket making to the crofters at Kilmuir on the Isle of Skye for a minimum three-month period. The Congested Districts Board had been established in 1897 to oversee many areas of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland holding a population that they could not support (1)

During his stay he kept a diary, which he transcribed fully on his return to Leicester. When this came to light in 2001, a copy was presented to the ‘Skye Museum of Island Life’. The curator Jonathon MacDonald, whose father had in fact been the last basket-maker on Skye, was delighted, as it provided a missing link in their information on the topic. The Museum’s only knowledge was of ‘an Englishman engaged in 1908 to teach basket making locally’.

Jack, Thurmaston born and bred, had been apprenticed as a basket weaver on leaving school and remained in the trade throughout his working life. Jack was a keen ornithologist but, for the sake of brevity, I have edited out most of the reference to this subject for this article.

A Trip to the Isle of Skye 1908

20th, January 1908

Started from Midland Station (Leicester) for the North in very cold foggy weather, our engine killing a man before we reached Humberstone Road.

[In fact there were two railway deaths that day, due to the ‘extremely heavy fog experienced in Leicester this morning’. (2) In the early morning a goods guard had been killed at Sileby. The victim at Humberstone Road Station was ‘Job Leam (58) an engine driver from Derby who received injuries of a fatal character about 9.30 on Monday night on the Midland Railway. He had been driving a goods train from Derby to Leicester and had pulled in at Humberstone Road to be relieved and catch another train back to Derby’. The night however was ‘very foggy’ and the witness (the also injured fireman) lost sight of the deceased. He was hit probably by the footplate of the 7.15 express London to Glasgow which was picking up speed after pulling out of Leicester. The driver, David Shaw, knew nothing of the fatal accident until he pulled into Leeds station where he was informed. ‘The coroner at Leicester Town Hall recorded a verdict of accidental death’ (3)]

Arrived Edinburgh 4-15 a.m., caught another train for Glasgow arriving 6.00 a.m. Changed again on to the West Highland Railway, over Tay Bridge passing Loch Lomond 8-30 a.m. just day break and terribly cold. Splendid scenery through Scotland.

Nothing more to record until aboard the steamer “GLENCOE”. It was nearly dark at three o’clock and I was feeling cold and weary. Being the only passenger on a cargo boat, got in conversation with one of the sailors, he took me down the engine room and fixed me up near the boilers covering me with a coat.

Arrived at Portree about 6.00 p.m. pitch dark except for lanterns. What a feeling, everyone talking in Gaelic unless they were addressed in English. I got a young man to take my luggage while I pushed my bike to the hotel, a very comfortable place, but only one other guest for the night. They supplied us with a good meal and I was in bed by 8-30 p.m.

1-30 p.m. directly after dinner (six courses, would have preferred two) started to cycle to Kilmuir, my destination, 24 miles to the north, gale blowing in my favour. After travelling about five miles my tyre went flat, not a house or building in sight, luckily there was plenty of water about so took my tube out and found puncture directly and mended it smartly. Next I got to parting roads, DUNVEGAN left, other blank. Two women were in the distance, I asked the way to Uig, was several minutes making them understand but eventually got my directions. Arrived at the Inn at Uig

‘Should he ne’er come back again’: a diary revisited

Michael Freeman
hoping to get some tea, no tea, so a glass of beer with bread and cheese, then off again as it was getting dark.

Uig is situated in a lovely bay protected from all winds, except the West by hills 300 feet high. My way was up a zigzag path over these to the North and then along gradual slope for another two miles. A horse shaw was approaching opposite way with three men in, when one shouted “Mr. Freeman”, as I was passing, so I pulled up as soon as possible and went back to them and found it was Mr. Reid whom I had met in Edinburgh earlier in the month, accompanied by Mr. Macintosh and Mr. Coles, three officials of the ‘Congested Districts Board’. I was getting anxious now as it was practically dark with three miles to go. I rode on for 25 minutes and had not seen what I thought was a house and knew I must have covered 7 or 8 miles, so got off as the road turned down to the sea, and that was all I could see. There I stood, peering in the dusk and spotted two figures leaving the road, I shouted, they stopped, so I laid the bike down and went up to them, fortunately they were the Misses McLaing two school teachers who could understand English, and what a shock when they told me that I had come 4 miles past the Post Office. That meant a walk back, pushing the bike most of the way.

I had learnt by now what I thought were huts or barns, were the houses. At the first I reached, a dog greeted me with lots of growls and barks, which brought a young man out. I explained who I was and would he guide me to the P.O., which he kindly did; he later became one of my pupils. Arrived at the P.O. 6-30 p.m. nearly done in. The lady missionary (as she was known) lived there and was expecting me. Miss Russell soon arranged a meal for me, which revived me as it does most young men of 24. We had a talk for an hour or more, planning the next four months and then I was provided with an escort for the last mile, down to the mill on the shore, which was to be my future home.

8-15 p.m. The moon was now shining between clouds and my guide was like a native runner, making me keep close behind him over rough ground, the nearest way. I had a struggle to keep up with him. In one place he went straight through a shallow burn, fortunately, I was wearing waterproof shooting boots so didn’t take any harm.

Arrived at Mill, reception very cold, they had expected me about midday and had given me up at this late hour. I was taken to a room at least 14ft. square, oil lamp, no fire, but soon had one made of peat and oh! the smell. It was the only uncomfortable night I spent there. The cool reception, as it appeared to me, was their manner, if they thought they had not done their utmost for your comfort. We lived so happily together that I had my son named after their son Donald in remembrance.

January 24th. I was introduced to the men in the shed, which was to be our workshop. It had been a fishermen hut, which had been so badly neglected as to be useless. The friends from Edinburgh had it repaired and made good for the men to use as a workshop or meeting place.

January 25th. Went to concert at Uig and enjoyed it very much. Had a terrible ride back, too many clouds for the moon to get through, had to follow the trap.

January 26th. Went to Church, service in Gaelic, but Rev. McDonald preached 15 minutes in English for me.

January 28th. Prefab tank arrived, cane and willow followed. Commenced work February 1st.

February 1st. 1908. Kilmuir Skye.

Men came to workshop, we had no tools except my own kit, so had to get the men interested by talking to them about their future prospects. We planned working hours, 10-1 mornings, sometimes only one or two would come, as the others went fishing or had to work on their crofts in the daytime. The evening shift was 6-30 to 9-30, when we mustered from six to ten maximum. Fortunately, Donald McRaid, with whom I lived, was the district carpenter and funeral undertaker, so with his assistance, which had been procured before, we got work boards and boxes made for the men to sit on, which soon put them at ease. For lights, we had paraffin lamps with tin reflectors, the same type that were used by the old Leicestershire stockingers. The men were drawn from different occupations, three lobster fishermen, one shepherd, one carter, two crofters, one carpenter and two others. The carter was a sergeant in Lord Lovat’s Scouts.

I had ordered six sets of tools, which should have arrived in time for the opening of the shop, but as they did not turn up I phoned to the Pier master at Uig. (Yes we had a phone, the only thing modern that I saw in the island), he said there was no parcel in my name, I repeated this for three days with the same result. Six weeks had passed since the date of order, so I decided to cycle the seven miles to the pier. On arriving there, I was told to look round myself. I moved everything in the receiving shed and found the parcel behind some boxes. He made the usual apologies and sent them along.

While in Uig I called on Mr. McKintosh, Secretary of the Congested Districts Board. Stayed with him for lunch and tea, not reaching home again until nearly 7p.m. where I found them worried over my long absence. But I had had a grand day, listening to his exploits with dog and gun. He had a lovely specimen of a peregrine falcon, stuffed, and six more in the hands of the taxidermist. His favourite sport was deer and Greylag Goose stalking. Six otters had also fallen to his gun, besides herons, curlews and pintail ducks. He also gave me an account of the gamekeeper being lowered by
a rope over the cliffs to collect some ravens eggs. We went to try and find the said keeper, but he had gone up the hills, so we were disappointed.

I must say here, that Wednesday was my holiday and as most of the men only came in the evening and Wednesday was the weekly men’s meeting at the church it would have been useless to open. The attendance at the meeting was from 45-60. Opened by a prayer, followed by a hymn sung without any instrumental accompaniment, very slow, breves, semibreves and minims. Most weird. Musical instruments were looked upon by most of the older people as works of the Devil and it was practically a crime to play one on a Sunday. We had a jolly meeting, don’t know how it passed the censor, but John McNab, the schoolmaster’s son, brought his violin and gave us a good show of Scotch music, he kept his time by a kind of step dance.

One Sunday evening, after getting home from church, Donald was in my room and during conversation said, “I have a melodian but cannot play”, I asked him to fetch it at once, which he did. I started to play a hymn tune, but the elder sister came in before the end of the first verse and begged me to stop, or we should be the talk of the place tomorrow. I argued with her and continued. The reaction was quite in favour. The people were deeply religious. There were three sects, Presbyterian which I classed as our Church of E., Free Church, Wesleyan, United Free as our P. Methodist. At this period there was a rift between the United Free and the Free. The United broke away and by their action severed themselves entirely from all the churches and property. A whirlwind campaign was started in Scotland by the United Free and £60,000 was collected towards building new churches. On April 30th 1908 our new church was opened, a very nice place of the Mission Hall type, built of wood, and poor as the people were the collection averaged 2/- each for all who attended. That widow’s mite in most cases would be the last shilling they had.

The Day school, what a problem, 9-12a.m. then 1.30-3.30 p.m. some of the children having to walk three miles each way. I saw some going to school up till 11a.m. The biggest grumble I ever heard about education was the absence of Gaelic being taught.

There was no pastime, what the average person here would call recreation or pleasure, but the people seemed fairly happy. Clothing: most of the men had very shoddy clothing, hob nailed boots and sou’westers. The women, hob nailed boots or none, very poor dresses and wore a scarf round their heads and generally knitted as they walked. The fuel used was all peat, which had to be carried from the peat beds or pits, which I should estimate at least 500 ft. above sea level and anything up to 3 miles away, in wicker creels on the women’s backs, the women still knitting.

At Easter they had a picnic up at these peat beds, the men all working together, digging, cutting and stacking the peat, all for the common good. The men had an egg feast on the Easter Monday after the work was done and the honour went to the man who had eaten the greatest number of hard-boiled eggs. One of my pupils, the shepherd, won it, with 13 to his credit. It was daylight until nearly 10p.m.

**Easter Tuesday.** George Barbour, nephew of Dr. Alexander Whyte, and his companion came to see me for a few days, on the recommendation of the Rev. D. A. McDonald whose manse was Duntulm Castle. They were very keen on bird watching and stalking and wanted some tuition, which it was a pleasure to give.

**April 25th.** 10 hours continual snowing, over 2 ft. deep on the level, worst day in any living persons memory of Kilmuir (pop. 2000). There were drifts 15-20 ft. deep and many lambs were born under the snow, but some sheep died. Some of the drifts were not thawed by May 16th.

Most of the people were crofters, just a house and a bit of land, varying from about 1/2 to 6 acres. They grow a few oats and potatoes, kept a few fowls or duck, odd ones managed to keep a cow, but I didn’t see or hear of a pig. All billeted under the same roof the Byre being situated at one end of the house. The digging tool they used was made of wood, bent to an angle of about 120 degrees the bottom section about 2ft.x 4″x 3″ plated underneath with thin iron or steel and the handle section about 5ft. This was pushed into the ground 5″ or 6″ deep, by the foot pressing on a side piece to force it along and then partly turning over similar to ploughing backwards. I found it very hard work, but they went quicker than we could with a spade. We had a plough (without wheels) as it would have been impossible to have used one of our type as the rocks

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*In its bleak and remote setting, the factory where Jack held his basket making classes is now the village Hall for Kilmuir. Photograph 2002.*
came just under the surface and had to be jumped. I had a few sore ribs from the handles, with the bumping at the rocks, until I rumbled the trick. They expected me to try everything and I did. I sent home to Thurmanston for the garden seeds, cabbage, Brussels, carrots etc. but of course I never saw the results, but from reports later, they were mostly failures.

One afternoon on my rambles up the great drain I came across a large patch of watercress, gathered some and took it home for tea but it was difficult to convince them that it was good to eat, but eventually I persuaded a few to try it. The only green salad they seemed used to was a kind of seaweed called dulse, used to hang from the rocks.

The soil was very dark and looked good, but I soon found that it was very poor and the only manure they used was seaweed, which was communally gathered and brought home in boats. The most interesting thing to me was the way the men jumped into the water right up to the waists, fully dressed, to lighten the boats to enable them to land their cargoes. I never saw one with a cold.

Quite a number of the crofters supplemented their living by fishing. Lobsters were the only fish they had any sale for, a dealer came along with a horse and cart every two or three weeks to collect them. He appeared to me to be very mean, well almost a robber. If a lobster had only one large claw, he only paid them half price for it, as though that was the only part used. To store these lobsters the fishermen severed the guide or sinew in each claw and then replaced them in creels and lowered them in the bay again, attached to a rope and float. During a gale in February 21st 22nd and 23rd the whole of 3 weeks catch was lost owing to the creels being washed up and banged on the rocks. No compensation for that.

There was one wedding during my stay and it took place in the evening, everyone who possessed a window in the side of their house en route, placed a lighted candle in it. Don’t know anything about christenings, in the side of their house en route, placed a lighted candle in it. In the evening, everyone who possessed a window placed a lighted candle in it. In the evening, everyone who possessed a window placed a lighted candle in it. Don’t know anything about christenings.

References
1. Scotland History of a Nation David Ross 1998
2. Leicester Daily Mercury 20 January 1908
3. Leicester Daily Mercury 22 January 1908

May 1st seemed to be the day when the bird migration was in was in full swing. I walked along the top of the cliffs to Monkstadt, a very old house with farm buildings belonging to the ‘Congested Districts Board’ (Monkstadt was the residence of MacDonald of the Isles. Flora MacDonald hid here on her flight with Bonnie Prince Charlie in 1746. Possibly the first slated house on Skye, it is today a ruin). (4)

By May 11th the time of my departure was nearing, it was my last week to say goodbye to the island and the friends I had made there. On the last Wednesday I had the opportunity of saying goodbye at the farewell party in the schoolroom. The usual speeches were made and I was promised a good reception if I decided to return. On May 11th I went to Duntulm (the manse) for farewell tea with Miss Russell. A pudding basin full of hardboiled eggs was placed on the table to help ourselves from.

May 12th. Mr. Nicolson and his two sons took me to Fladda Chuan, 14 miles away, it consisted of a group of islands.

May 13th. We started with a favourable breeze but landed in a dead calm when about half way, so had to row the remainder. What a feast for the eyes, the ground was covered with nests, on an average about 4ft apart, mostly gulls. We had a good look round the different islands and I shot a couple of rabbits which they took home. We got back in the evening, tired but satisfied.

May 17th. I was preparing for my journey home. I spent the night at the inn at Uig, left at 2-45a.m. to cycle 24 miles in a facing breeze and drizzle to Portree. I got on the boat with only 10 minutes to spare.

May 18th. I attended a meeting of the Edinburgh friends to report progress and discuss prospects for the future. I enjoyed that meeting, I suggested paying the men trade union rates, which they refused, saying that the men were perfectly happy, working was a pleasure, in such conditions. I gave my views, showing that the men needed money to raise the living standard of the wives and children, not merely to get away from them to enjoy themselves only. On these grounds I refused to return. However I was very pleased that I had taken the opportunity to visit Skye and to meet her hard working people, for it was an experience I have always valued.

Jack Freeman 1908

‘Should he ne’er come back again?’ Well, Bonnie Prince Charlie of the song never did and neither did my Grandfather. A staunch trade unionist, he could not bring himself to return. He died in Leicester on October 24th 1968 aged 85. Years later his son and daughter would holiday there and nearly one hundred years on after the diary came to light again I too would retrace his sojourn ‘over the sea to Skye’ and return it to its place of origin. Having retraced his footsteps I can only marvel anew at his stamina and self-confidence in undertaking such a journey, when Leicester to Skye must indeed have felt like travelling to the other side of the world.
A Narborough Will
Hilda Stoddart

“DIED After a short illness, on Monday last, in his 61st year, Mr. Wheewhall, of Narbro’ – At the moment of departure he was in the act of making his Will but had not time to complete it – a large property will in course devolve to a very near relative, who has hitherto classed as below mediocrity.”

This rather rude comment appeared in the Leicester Journal for 19 October 1798. Two hundred years on, we cannot be certain of the writer’s meaning though it would appear to be less than complimentary. Does it imply that a relative of the unfortunate gentleman was to receive a great deal more than he – or she – should have done, because Mr. Wheewhall had been prevented from willing it otherwise? Did the Journal in fact assume that he was to be declared intestate? Or did the newspaper know that the will had been completed after Mr. Wheewhall’s death and that his wishes, perhaps to be deplored were to be carried out? And what does “mediocrity” suggest? Was the beneficiary of a social class much, much lower than the deceased or someone whose morals were in question – or merely someone who did not choose to mix in the political or social circles approved by the Journal?

William Wheewhall, gentleman and, as is known from apprenticeship records, a master hosier, was buried on 21 October 1798 at Narborough. His will, which the grim reaper had prevented him from signing, was presented to the Prerogative Court of Canterbury and was duly considered. Two witnesses appeared personally to testify that the paper represented the true wishes of the deceased. The first was Samuel Miles of Leicester, assistant to attorney Thomas Pares the Younger. He explained that his employer had sent for him at two o’clock in the morning of 16th October and he was told to go to the home of Mr. Wheewhall where he was to draw up that gentleman’s will. (Presumably Mr. Pares himself dealt with emergencies that arose at more civilised hours). Miles departed on the horse that had carried the messenger from Narborough to Leicester – but it is not stated how the messenger returned home, whether he walked or had to await the return of the horse. Miles arrived at William Wheewhall’s home in Narborough at about half past three. He was shown immediately into the sick man’s bedroom, John Pratt of Narborough accompanying him. John Pratt read “audibly and distinctly” a paper on which he had previously noted down Mr. Wheewhall’s last wishes and the dying man said “aye” to each point. Some words, said Samuel Miles, were added later to express more clearly what was required. He added that Mr. Wheewhall was “of sound mind” and had insisted that the bequests to his great nephews and nieces were added later to express more clearly what the dying man said “aye” to each point. Some words, said Mr. Wheewhall’s last wishes and the dying man said “aye” to each point. Some words, said Samuel Miles, were added later to express more clearly what was required. He added that Mr. Wheewhall was “of sound mind” and had insisted that the bequests to his great nephews and nieces were not to be given until each was twenty-one “for it did young people no good to have money to play with. It only made them Fools”. Miles then went downstairs to write up the will but was recalled to the bedroom before he had completed the task. William Wheewhall died a few seconds later.

The second witness was Thomas Parkinson of Leicester, surgeon and apothecary, who had been attending the deceased for several days. He stated that he too was called at about two o’clock and that he arrived shortly after Samuel Miles. He too was confirmed that William Wheewhall was capable of making rational decisions.

And so, in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury on 12 November 1798, the unsigned list of beneficiaries was proved, the deceased’s sister, as next of kin, first consenting. This sister, Elizabeth Jarvis, widow, was to receive £500 by her brother’s will; her son John £1000, and her daughters and grandchildren £500 apiece. Other bequests were to Thomas Cheatell (£1000) and Henry Peake (£500) (one of whom, though the list does not make it clear which, was a former apprentice of Mr. Wheewhall); John Smith, farmer of Narborough (£100); Alexander Smith of “Huntoote” (£100) and Ann Pawley, wife of Thomas of Littlethorpe (£20). John Pratt of Narborough (who had noted down the dead man’s wishes before the attorney arrived) appeared in the will three times. He was bequeathed £1500, and also £100 as one of the trustees and, after some discussion (reported in his evidence by Samuel Miles), it had been decided to include in the will the fact that Pratt was receiving an annuity of £100 from 28 December 1788 “the time of commencing his partnership”. But the largest bequest went to Miss Amey Pratt of Enderby, who was to have £4000 and was moreover to be the residual legatee, and, should the estate prove to be too small to pay all the legacies, her £4000 was to be paid at the expense of the others.

As the will was not written out in attorney’s language, which leaves no doubt as to its meaning, it is not easy to discover exactly who some of the legatees were. John Pratt was in partnership with William Wheewhall; was Miss Amey his daughter or his sister? Was she young or old? Was she Wheewhall’s illegitimate daughter or the patient lady he had been too busy to get round to marrying? The records of death duties do not expand the information about the legatees. Miss Amey had to pay £240 death duty and the executors, John Pratt, Joseph Brown of Leicester, hosier, and William Turney of Laid Lane, London, £46 each.

So who was below mediocrity? If the Journal thought that the incomplete will would not be accepted, then it meant the next of kin, Elizabeth Jarvis, would have received everything if her brother had been declared intestate. If the Journal presumed that the unfinished will would be proved, then it is Miss Amey Pratt who was “below mediocrity” – and what does that mean? Shall we ever know?

Sources:
Leicester Journal
Parish registers (ROLLR)
Will of William Wheewhall, PROB11/1315
Death duty records IR26/25
Indexes to tax paid on apprenticeship indentures IR17 (PRO/Family Records Centre, London)

Enclosure, when it occurred, had a profound effect on local communities considerably transforming their physical environment. The large open fields, which often covered hundreds of acres, were partitioned into smaller units and ring-fenced with quickthorn hedges and, because the land was now 'private', access was restricted to given rights of way. This aspect of enclosure is often overlooked when considering its social and economic effects. There were three main periods of enclosure in Leicestershire: the latter part of the fifteenth century, the beginning of the seventeenth, and enclosure by Parliamentary Acts during the eighteen and nineteenth centuries. The first two resulted in the enclosure of almost 50% of the county, but as these did not always involve complete parishes its impact on the communities was not always so dramatic. The vast majority of what remained was enclosed between the years 1750 to 1800 and it was during this phase that a Bill was set before the Commons ‘... for dividing, allotting, and inclosing, the said Open Fields, Meadows, and Commonable Grounds [of Humberstone]’.

The earliest surviving map of the parish is dated 1789, a year after the Bill was passed by Parliament, before that date it is only possible to provide a sketch of the earlier landscape.

The village of Humberstone is situated on a sand and gravel cap, a feature common of early settlements, in fact there are two such areas in Humberstone separated by a narrow band of clay; predictably these reflect the locations of the two separate manors of the old township. To the north of the village the soil consists predominantly of boulder clay rising to its highest point in the east at just over 100m. As the land slopes gently south-westerly towards the Soar basin shallow valleys are formed which, although hardly noticeable today, were once important reference points in the early landscape – Greenhill Slade, Fullwell Slade, Mannfield Slade and Dallislade (O.E. Slæd ‘valley’). The northern boundary of the township was formed by the brook,

![Fig. 1 The Open Field Landscape](image-url)
which flows past the deserted hamlet of Hamilton and on through Thurmaston to the Soar. Other streams in this part of the parish were small and tended to be seasonal in their flow, but over the passage of time the water carried away substantial amounts of soil to form small valleys or sykes through which the *gutters* flowed. These often proved difficult terrain to plough and were left as semi-rough grazing e.g. *Quakesick* and *Mannfield Sick*. Occasionally they were utilised in other ways as with *Hall Sick*, which had been dammed in medieval times to form a series of manorial fishponds. An important topographical feature of this part of the parish is the *Hoarestone* or *Humberstone*, a large lump of Mountsorrel granite, from which the village got its name.

In contrast to the soils to the north of the village those on the southern side are formed mainly of alluvium deposits and river gravels. This gently sloping landscape is punctuated by the slight rise of *Rowboro* or *Rowborough Hill* hardly noticeable in today’s urban landscape (between Coleman Road and The Martival), but it would have been a prominent mound in the open-field landscape looking towards Leicester. An ancient roadway, turnpiked in the eighteenth century and now the A47, formed the parish boundary with Evington form the adjacent parish of Thurnby as far as *Salter’s bridge* (Humberstone Park) where it crossed *Counsell Brook* and from that point onwards the brook takes over this role.

By the end of the sixteenth century a small amount of enclosure had already occurred in the parish but in the main this was confined to closes adjacent to the village (only eight existing closes are mentioned in the Enclosure Award). The remainder of the land was open and partitioned into three large fields – *North, Middle* and *South Fields*. However, during the seventeenth century the rigidity of such division had eased and these three fields were gradually subdivided to form six separate entities. Any hedges tended to be on the peripheries marking boundaries rather than purely for stock restraint, but this was not a bare arable landscape, wood was still an important commodity and small copses were scattered throughout; often those long gone lingered on in the memory as topographical markers – *Bowman’s Bush* and *Raven’s Bush*. Along the streams where the soil was more productive lay the communal...
The large fields were divided into furlongs and wongs, often taking their name from a nearby topographical feature, such as Rowborow, Greenhill, Hoorestone and Thorneymere, others are less informative as to their actual location; even so it has been possible to trace some of these using documents from the nineteenth century. These parcels of land, varying in size, were in turn subdivided into individual plots of acres, roods and gores. The meadows however, being contiguous with the fields, were often partitioned into portions carrying the name of the adjacent furlong before being subdivided into ploughlands and finally individual plots of wands or roods. This rich variety of terms, still in use prior to enclosure, is indicative of the previous occupants of the land often dating back the Anglo-Saxon and Danish settlers; it also suggest that some of the blocks of land remained intact from the earliest of times perhaps before parish formation.

All this land was held in common with an individual's property scattered amongst the various fields and meadows throughout the parish. Much time was consumed transporting equipment and stock between the different plots and this proved to be one of the main disadvantages of this form of agriculture. The glebe land, for example, consisted of 246 individual plots of varying size. When the parish was finally enclosed the land allotted to the vicar was grouped into five compact blocks not all adjacent to each other but far more manageable.

The population of the village virtually doubled during the first half of the eighteenth century and by 1759 forty-three inhabitants owed suit to the manorial court. However, only nineteen of these were actually freeholders owning land in the fields, the other freeholders being the vicar, the lord of the manor and the impropriator of the tithes (John Dudley, William Pochin and Edward Wigley-Hartopp respectively). Fourteen farms or 'homesteads' within the town-ring are mentioned in the Award most of which had ancient enclosures attached. Together with these more substantial holdings were twenty-nine houses and cottages, twelve of which had their own garden or orchard. Finally, and of a more uncertain legal status, five cottages had been built on the 'waste' on the edge of the village. These last two groups had the most to lose by enclosure because it was only the owners not the users of common rights who were compensated. These rights may include common pasture for a cow or two or the gathering wild fruit, herbs or fuel and in many cases were of vital importance to the independent survival of the poorer inhabitants.

Before a Bill to enclose could be presented to Parliament it was necessary to have at least three-quarters, preferably four-fifths, of the owners of land by value in favour. This was unlikely to have proved to be much of a difficulty because the three proposers of the Bill (Dudley, Pochin and Hartopp Wigley) between them alone owned almost half of the property and if we add to these the other two larger landowners the threshold of 75% is reached. Whatever the feelings of the majority there seems to have been little effective opposition given that the Bill was ordered on the 5th February 1788, attained Royal assent on the 20th March and by the 31st of the same month the commissioners had completed their tasks and the Award was ready to put into effect. Many compromises must have been made in the process because within a year just over a quarter of this land had changed hands either by sale or exchange.

Besides authorizing the enclosure of the land the act also included provision for the commutation of tithes, the improvement of parish roads and drainage, and the fencing of roads and the tithe-holder's allotment. With the exception of the roads, for which a separate rate was set, the process cost the proponents £1148 8s. 9d, equating to around £81,000 today. Each individual had to pay his or her share (proportional to size of allotment) within 14 days or forfeit goods and chattels of an equivalent amount, however this was not the total outlay to be incurred there were private costs too.

The new owners had only a few months in which to ring-fence their allotments with, 'ditches and a quick thorn sett properly planted on the banks at a distance of 4ft from the outer edge of the land . . . and guarded on each side by posts and double rails ', as well as stiles and gates which had to be installed where public rights of way crossed their land. This all added to the initial outlay and further subdivision into smaller more manageable closes was often left to a later date and invariably not carried out to such stringent requirements. These fences formed the skeletal framework of the future patchwork of fields typical of the English midland countryside. It was not until later in the nineteenth century that farmhouses moved away from the village to be positioned more conveniently within their fields, initially barns and hovels were placed in outlying plots for the storage of machinery and to provide shelter for stock.
The parish had been divided into forty-six separate parcels of land all of which varied greatly in size. Francis Foulham’s plot amounted to little more than half an acre whilst that of Marmaduke Tomline covered over two hundred. Land was also set aside for the parish sheep-wash near to Salter’s bridge (Humberstone Park area) and three separate plots of land were designated for the extraction of sand and gravel needed for the new roads.

The roads to be set out included carriage roads, foot roads and private roads and often followed the course of earlier drift roads or footpaths; now they were legal status. The five principle carriage roads, pegged out at a width of 40ft, were: Scraptoft Road (Scraptoft Lane), Thurnby Road (Vicarage Lane), Leicester Road (Humberstone Drive), Belgrave Road (Gypsy Lane) and Thurmaston Road (Thurmaston Lane). In addition to these were three lesser roads Evington Road (Ocean Road), Barkby Thorpe Road (Bridle path) and Keyham Road (Keyham Lane) these were only to be 20ft wide. The ancient footpaths that radiated out of the parish to adjacent villages remained legal rights of way across the newly privatized land. The Turnpike (Uppingham Road), which carved a 50ft wide corridor through the southern portion of the parish, was the responsibility of the Leicester to Uppingham Turnpike Trust that had been set up in 1754.

The farms that developed generally consisted of an individual’s whole allotment which meant that some concerns were considerably large, especially those to the north and east of the village. With few exceptions they were rented out to tenant farmers and most remained intact well into the twentieth century with the exception of those on the southern side towards Leicester which slowly disintegrated during the fifty years following enclosure; by 1860 the majority of this land had been broken up into blocks of less than 20 acres in size and this demise was further exasperated during the following years by the onslaught of urban growth from Leicester.

This all must have had a deep emotional affect upon the villagers, especially the older inhabitants. No longer could they roam endlessly along the baulks, headlands and commons on warm summer evenings; now they were restricted to the narrow footways and by-roads. The rigid lines of hedgerows, which closed in the once open landscape, now obstructed views. Loss of the common land meant that those who used it, without true rights, to graze a cow for milk were now deprived of the opportunity to supplement their income. In spite of this the village did not decline or stagnate, as often happened following enclosure in earlier centuries, Humberstone grew providing employment for various cottage industries.

References from the Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Record Office
2D60 –12 Enclosure Award;
2D60 –15 Poor Rate 1861;
1D41/2/329-335 & MF 259 Glebe Terriers;
8D1046 & 1062 Land Terriers;
12D43/165 in 11 – 28 Tailby Estate;
13D28/5/13 Humberstone Hall Yardlands;
DE3860/3 Marston Closes;
3D42/44/5 –21 Allen Family Deeds

Maps: O.S. 1st Ed Leicestershire sheets XXXI SE & XXXI NE (1884)
Geological Survey Sheet 156 (Leicester)

The Society’s web page can be found at www.le.ac.uk/ar/lahs/lahs.html

The Society stocks back numbers of some volumes of the Leicestershire Historian and also back numbers of Transactions. If you would like to know what is available write to the Honorary Librarian, Mr A W Stevenson, Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society, The Guildhall, Guildhall Lane, Leicester LE1 5 FQ.

Members of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society receive a copy of the Leicestershire Historian each year in addition to a copy of Transactions and two Newsletters. If you are not a member, then why not join now. Contact the Honorary Membership Secretary, Mr G Clark Monks, 15 Stanhope Road, Wigston, Leicester LE18 3SJ
Bosworth 2001
Bosworth 2001 is a small, formally constituted non-profit making group of local people created to stimulate interest in both historical and current information about the life and times of Market Bosworth and the surrounding area. The aim is to use local events and locally prepared and published books, that where possible link the past to the present, but that focus at a more general "local knowledge" level than that found in more scholarly publications.

Several books have been produced and events have included a photographic competition, entitled Bosworth at Work, Rest and Play; a craft weekend entitled Old Crafts in an New Era and, involvement in the Hinckley and Bosworth Heritage Open Days. The most recent book From an Open Wooded Hilltop follows on from a very successful book The Bosworth and Gopsall Estates which used old photographs and personal recollections to present a nostalgic look at village life early in the last century.

The new book, which has already won a national literary award, covers the same geographic area but uses atmospheric new photographs and artwork of people, buildings and landscapes, along with history, memoirs and modern day reflections to present a picture of the astonishing variety and richness that is country life today, at the start of a new century. All proceeds of this book are to be donated to local organisations.

Contact: Bosworth 2001, The Forge, Park Street, Market Bosworth, CV13 0LL
Tel: 01455 290348 or 290631
www.bosworthbook.com

Burbage Heritage Group
Established in December 2000 with help from the Heritage Lottery Fund and support from Leicestershire County and Burbage Parish Councils, the group is now actively working in the community. Activities include a monthly meeting with a range of talks as diverse as the Hinckley and Bosworth countryside sites to a history of the Archer Family.

Projects planned for this year include a survey of the ancient hedgerows of the parish and the building of a parish archive.

Visitors to the website (www.burbageheritage.org.uk) can take a virtual tour of the village 100 years ago, read the school-day memories of older residents, access family trees, and read the current newsheet with listings of forthcoming events.

Desford and District Local History Society
The Society aims to collect information on all aspects of the past life of the village and to record the present for posterity. It holds a large collection of local photographs, maps, books and documents. There is a regular programme of lectures and outings. Membership of the Society is £5.00 individual and £8.00 family. Visitors are welcome to attend the lectures at a cost of £2 per visit.

Publications are as follows:
St. Martin’s Church, Desford, price £1.50; Recollections of Desford, price £2.00; A Brief History of Desford, price 50p

Contact: Mrs. Jane Crowson, Secretary,
Tel:01455 824688

Enderby Heritage Group
Formed in December 2000 the group holds monthly meetings throughout the year which cover a full range of topics. The current project is to develop the website www.enderbyheritage.org.uk

Since its foundation the group has recorded and published the Monuments in the Parish Churchyard and is preparing for publication the Monuments in the Original Burial Ground, and the booklet The Early Churches of Enderby before 1558.

Other projects include The Men from Enderby in WWI and WW2, and an attempt to preserve the rapidly decaying ruins of the Anglo Saxon church at Aldeby, subject to approval by English Heritage.

Contact: Amanda Gordon (Hon Secretary)
Tel: 0116 286 1776

Hinckley Local History Group
Founded in 1975, the group meets monthly, during term time, in the Humanities Block of the John Cleveland College. Autumn and Winter meetings take the form of talks, whilst the May and June meetings take the form of visits to places of historical interest, with a full day trip in July.

The group also produces the Hinckley Historian twice a year.

Contact: Mr and Mrs H Beavin
Tel: 01455 615634

Loughborough Archaeological and Historical Society
Founded in 1955 to encourage the study of archaeology of the Loughborough area, the Society has expanded its interests to include aspects of the areas’ history. The society is a registered charity with a membership of around 100 individuals.

We are currently working on a project recording the history of the Loughborough Hospital which will be published later this year. We are also producing an index.
to the illustrations in the eight volumes which comprise John Nichol’s *History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester*. The society also runs a small museum in the Old Rectory, a medieval building adjacent to the All Saints Church.

Our core activity is our winter lecture programme. Lectures take place monthly from October to April and cover a wide range of topics. The society is affiliated to Group 14 of the Council for British Archaeology, who organise Reports Meetings and other events of interest across the East Midlands. We have also established a field walking group. The society runs one or two bus excursions in the summer to places of historical interest.

**Contact:** Barry Gidley (Hon Secretary)
Tel: 01509 237433

**Melbourne Civic Society**
Melbourne Civic Society was set up in 1974 in response to a redevelopment threat in the town’s historic centre. Current activities include visits and talks on environmental and historical topics, consultation on planning applications, an annual award for the best new building or restoration scheme, conservation work including tree and bulb planting, and the monitoring of local airport development.

The Society holds a large local photographic archive to which it adds donations quite regularly. In 2000, with the aid of the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Society published *A Celebration of the Places and People of Melbourne, Derbyshire*, a portfolio of photos old and new with historical notes by Philip Heath, Heritage Officer for South Derbyshire. The Society also takes part in the Heritage Open Days scheme each year.

Melbourne Civic Society is always eager to exchange ideas and programmes with other local groups.

**Contact:** Secretary, Mrs C. Sturges, Quarry Hill Barn, Ingleby Road, Stanton-by-Bridge, Derby DE73 1HT.

**Mowsley Heritage Society**
Our society was formed in 2000 specifically to publish *Mowsley a Leicestershire Village*, a history of the village which had been worked on during the preceding years. Little else was done during the first year or so, priority being given to the book.

We have now started on our second year of programmed meetings, having completed a programme of talks, visits, walks etc. that proved to be very successful. Membership has grown to about thirty (most rewarding considering the size of the village).

During this time work has been done on a detailed history and guide to the church and churchyard, which is now ready for publication. Work is on-going with the intent of eventually publishing further essays on the fields and farms, the roads and paths and possibly a study of the manors and their lords (particularly the Brabazon family). Surveys of ridge and furrow and of the older buildings in the parish are being conducted. It is also intended to collate an album of old photographs relevant to the area.

The full schedule of work will demand attention for several years to come. Any information or help re any of the above stated projects would be much appreciated.

**Contact:** John Lacey (Chair) Tel: 0116 240 2386

**Packington Village History Group**
Ten members meet approximately once a month in the house of a member. Meetings are informal with topics of local interest presented by members. Activities have included the production of oral histories; display and sale of publications at the Carnival and Open Garden days and participation in a village exhibition. A millennium drama presentation was given in the church featuring episodes in its history.

**Rothley History Society**
Rothley History Society was born out of plans for celebrating the new millennium so is still quite a young group. We are however delighted with the steady growth in membership, enthusiasm, encouragement, and support.

Meetings held 7.30 pm third Wednesday each month in the Village Hall, Fowke Street Rothley. We enjoy a variety of guest speakers on a number of subjects. But during the months of July and August we plan outdoor meetings, Museums or similar.

During 2001 we held an exhibition of photographs, documents and artefacts relating to the village. We were so delighted with the response five of us are now involved in the clubs first publication, *Rothley, Then and Now. ...a hundred years through the camera lens*. This will be available autumn 2003.

In the meantime some of the members are researching the history of our cemetery as it celebrates its centenary, along with a national event this year. Others are busy reading and documenting monumental inscriptions and there are some documenting names on war memorials. We do have further articles planned for the not too distant future.

**Sapcote Heritage Group**
The Group was founded in the summer of 2001 as part of the Leicestershire Museums ‘Heritage Watch’ project. Monthly meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month at 7.30 pm, in the upper room of The Red Lion, Church Street, Sapcote.

Our aims are to promote the history and archaeology of Sapcote over a wide area by giving talks to other groups, organising village walks, and through our new web site on: beehive.thisisleicestershire.co.uk/sapcoteheritagegroup.

An important aspect is to make local schoolchildren, as the future generation, aware of their heritage.
A large number of projects are in progress. A detailed history of the fields and field names is almost complete and we are hoping to publish the story of the men whose names are inscribed on Sapcote War Memorial. The history of the castle and manorial site and its connection with the Bassets of Sapcote is well under way and we have been looking into the genealogy of some village families. We hope soon to begin recording the memories of villagers who remember the village before it was developed in the 1960s.

The Group is planning an exhibition in September. Village documents and artifacts will be on show during the day, and there will be a slide show of old Sapcote and the 1960s excavations of Sapcote Castle and Manorial site on the village playing fields, now a scheduled Ancient Monument in the evening. There will also be a short cine film of a carnival in 1967.

**Contact:** Keith Hextall (Chair) 01455 274662, or Diana Dunne (Sec) 01455272198.

**Stoney Stanton Heritage Group**
The group is now in its third year and has a full and varied programme of talks. The major ongoing project is to collect photographs and information about all the people listed on the War Memorial. Other projects include recording of the churchyard memorials, village businesses, oral history, and a future village trail.

**Contact:** Sue Astill (Sec)01455 273468 or Alison Jackson (Chair) 01455 271176

**Wigston (Greater Wigston Historical Society)**
The Society was founded in 1980 and there are currently 80 paid up members with subscriptions at £7 per annum and £5 concessionary.

We meet on the third Wednesday of each month, except in July. From September to April these are held at the Boys’ Brigade Rooms, United Reformed Church, Long Street, Wigston at 7.30p.m. Consisting usually of a talk illustrated with slides except in December which is a social evening. In May, June and August we go out on conducted tours often travelling by coach.

A news Bulletin, with articles submitted by members, is produced 3 times a year and Transactions on more specialised topics as and when material is discovered. Both of these types of publications are nearly all, though not exclusively, about Wigston. In addition members have been responsible for nineteen commercially produced books on Wigston of which only the following are still available. These can be purchased from the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.

- *South Wigston, the early years 1883/1913*, 1997, Peter Mastin
- *South Wigston, between the Wars 1914/1945*, 1997, Peter Mastin
- *Wigston Magna & South*, 1997, Peter Mastin, Duncan Lucas and Tricia Berry

The Society supports the Wigston Framework Knitters Museum by annual donation and active help as Trustees, ‘Friends’ etc

**Contact:**
- President, Duncan Lucas 01162885546,
- Chairman, Edna Taylor 01162812891
- Secretary, Tricia Berry 01162880156.

**Woodhouse and Woodhouse Eaves Local History Group**
The group has an interest in various aspects of history, particularly the history of our two villages. At each meeting we have a speaker (well-versed in his/her subject) and have heard talks on windmills, railways, family names, heraldry and many, many more topics.

People attending the Group meetings will develop a wide knowledge of local history in a friendly and informal way, with a break for refreshments and chat. The Group has carried out various projects, including publishing two books (*The Winds of Change* and *A Breath of Fresh Air*), an illustrated village walk leaflet and oral history tapes collecting reminiscences from local villagers.

Meetings are held monthly at St Paul’s School. During the summer months outings may be arranged.

**Contact:** Maureen Axon (Chair) 01162880156

**East Midlands Oral History Archive**
The East Midlands Oral History Archive is a three year Heritage Lottery funded project to establish an archive of oral history recordings for Leicestershire and Rutland. The recordings are deposited in the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, and are being entered onto an electronic catalogue available on the EMOHA website. Some audio extracts are included on the website in a ‘virtual exhibition’ on the Leicestershire hosiery industry, and as part of the educational materials provided by the Archive.

We offer a programme of talks for local community groups, as well as free training in oral history. Recent publications from the archive include a CD of extracts from interviews on the theme of *Toys and Games* (£7), and *Leicester Voices*, a book in the Tempus Publishing Ltd. Oral History series (£11.99). EMOHA also publishes a series of Information Sheets, a quarterly Newsletter, and Education Bulletins for teachers, which are all free and available by post or online.

For more details of our services, see the EMOHA website at www.le.ac.uk/emoha, or contact us at East Midlands Oral History Archive, Centre for Urban History, University of Leicester, University Road, Leicester, LE1 7RH. Tel: 0116 252 5063; fax: 0116 252 5769; email: emoha@le.ac.uk.

Local archaeology/history/heritage groups are encouraged to send in regular updates of their activities to the editor at the Guildhall.
Our American Visitors

In February 1944, thousands of American troops arrived in Leicestershire, as part of the build-up for the invasion of N.W. Europe (‘Operation Overlord’). They were the U.S. 82nd Airborne Division, which had been formed in 1942, and after training in North Africa, had taken part in the fighting in Sicily and Italy. The 82nd Airborne was commanded by Major General Matthew B. Ridgway, who with his second-in-command, Brigadier General James M. Gavin, and some of his staff officers, lived at a house called Glebe Mount, in Glebe Road, Oadby, opposite the entrance to what is now the University of Leicester’s Harold Martin Botanic Garden. The divisional headquarters was on Braunstone Park, where some of the troops were billeted, while others were at Shady Lane, Evington, in and around Oadby, and at various other locations in the county. After the Normandy landings in June 1944, the 82nd Airborne came back to Leicestershire to re-equip and retrain, before taking part in the invasion of Holland in September 1944 (‘Operation Market Garden’). 1

General Ridgway returned to Leicester in May 1976 to inaugurate a memorial on Victoria Park to the men of the 82nd Airborne Division; and in 1997, veterans of the Division, who had been billeted on Leicester Racecourse, unveiled a plaque marking their stay there in 1944. 2 In August 2000 another plaque commemorating the 82nd Airborne was unveiled by the Lord Mayor, Councillor Barbara Chambers, in the Memorial Garden on Braunstone Park. General Gavin, who himself later commanded the Division, is commemorated by James Gavin Way on the Grange estate at Oadby.

The Americans who came here in 1944 were by no means our first visitors from across the Atlantic. One of them was the famous animal tamer Isaac Van Amburgh, who had arrived in London in 1838. He made several tours of Britain, visiting Leicester on three occasions. The first visit was in August 1840, when he appeared at the Cricket Ground in Wharf Street, where ‘a handsome and commodious Pavilion’ was erected. The second, in May 1843, was in the same location, and the third, in January 1845, was at the Amphitheatre in Humberstone Gate. 4 On each occasion his animals were paraded through the streets, to provide a grand introduction. A remarkable portrait of him by Sir Edwin Landseer, painted in 1839 and showing him surrounded by his lions, tigers and leopards, is in the Royal Collection.

Charles S. Stratton, better known as ‘General Tom Thumb’, was brought to England in 1844 by the showman Phineas T. Barnum. Then aged 6 – though Barnum claimed he was 11 – he was only 25 inches tall and never exceeded 40 inches. He caused a sensation, and with his talent for entertaining, became a respected comic performer. In October 1844 Leicester people had an opportunity to see him at the New Hall, Wellington Street (now the Central Lending Library). During a second English tour in 1863 he again visited Leicester, appearing this time at the Temperance Hall, Granby Street, with his wife, Lavinia Warren, and two other midgets, ‘Commodore Nutt’ and Minnie Warren, Lavinia’s sister. Visitors to Arlington Court, a National Trust property in Devon, can see one of Tom Thumb’s suits and the miniature carriage built for him by a London coachbuilder.

A rather less sensational visit to the New Hall was that of essayist and poet Ralph Waldo Emerson, who came here in December 1847 to give two evening lectures to the Mechanics’ Institute, the first on ‘Shakespeare the Poet’ and the second on ‘Domestic Life’. 5 Emerson was in England on a lecture tour, and getting him to come and speak to them was a real coup for the Institute; would a present-day equivalent, one wonders, be able to persuade an American literary figure of equivalent stature to come and lecture to them?

While in Leicester, Emerson had been hoping to meet William Gardiner, the local author and composer, but he was disappointed. ‘ At Leicester I just missed seeing Gardiner ...I was promised an introduction to him. He is an old man past 70, and his townsmen think very humbly of him and his books’, he wrote a few days later to a correspondent in America. 6 He stayed at Knighton with Joseph Biggs, brother of John Biggs; the house has not been identified, though many years later he recalled it affectionately in a letter to Joseph Biggs’ wife, describing it as ‘your beautiful house at Leicester’.

Ira F. Aldridge, a black tragedian known as the African Roscius, appeared at the Theatre Royal, Horsefair Street in January 1851. He was well-received, the Leicester Journal reporting that ‘The African Roscius has been attracting large audiences this week’. There was a return visit in January 1852, and he came back for a farewell week in March 1857 which, the Journal thought, ‘may well be considered something of an event in the history of the Leicester stage’. His repertoire usually included productions of Othello. 7 Another American actor to perform there was Liverpool-born Edward A. Sothern, famous for his role as Lord Dundreary in Tom Taylor’s comedy, Our American
American artistes could also sometimes be seen at the Temperance Hall. By means of ‘glees, songs, overtures, dances, lectures, refrains, sayings and doings’, Pell’s American Opera Troupe aimed to show something of the characteristics of ‘the slaves and free blacks of America’, when they appeared there in March 1858. The Christy Minstrels, ‘a talented troupe of ten American sable vocalists and instrumentalists’, gave three concerts there in August 1858; they were not the original Christy Minstrels, who had been disbanded, but had been licensed by their founder, Edwin P. Christy, to use his name.

The Jubilee Singers had been formed in 1871 from student choirs made up of former slaves, to make fund-raising tours for the newly established Fisk University at Nashville, Tennessee. Consisting of four men and seven women and directed by music teacher George L. White, the Jubilee Singers, under the patronage of the Earl of Shaftesbury, toured Britain to great acclaim in 1873/4, appearing at the Temperance Hall in April 1874. Their programme consisted of spirituals, anthems, operatic selections and popular ballads; they were the first group to bring spirituals to white audiences. Their British tour was financially successful and paid for the university’s first permanent building.

Readers of the Leicester Daily Mercury were invited to the Temperance Hall at the beginning of October 1881 to hear Mr R.T. Booth, ‘the celebrated American Temperance Advocate, give the story of his life’. He was a former slave who had escaped to Canada in 1830, became involved with the famous Underground Railroad, helping other slaves to escape, and founded a colony for escapees in Ontario. Mrs Harriet Beecher Stowe drew on his 1849 autobiography when writing *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), which gave rise to the belief that he was the model for Uncle Tom. Henson appears to have encouraged this idea, and signed photographs given away to members of the audience had printed on the back: ‘Rev Josiah Henson, better known as Mrs H. Beecher Stowe’s “Uncle Tom”’. During their visit to Leicester, he and his wife, Nancy, stayed with Mr & Mrs Robert Peach at 75 Regent Road, though it is not known how long they were here.

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The Temperance Hall may also have been the venue for the Rev Josiah Henson’s lecture, during his third visit to England in 1876. He was a former slave who had escaped to Canada in 1830, became involved with the famous Underground Railroad, helping other slaves to escape, and founded a colony for escapees in Ontario. Mrs Harriet Beecher Stowe drew on his 1849 autobiography when writing *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), which gave rise to the belief that he was the model for Uncle Tom. Henson appears to have encouraged this idea, and signed photographs given away to members of the audience had printed on the back: ‘Rev Josiah Henson, better known as Mrs H. Beecher Stowe’s “Uncle Tom”’. During their visit to Leicester, he and his wife, Nancy, stayed with Mr & Mrs Robert Peach at 75 Regent Road, though it is not known how long they were here.

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successful that 2,000 people had to be turned away, and resulted in 10,000 people signing the pledge.

At the end of May 1877, at the start of his world tour, General Ulysses S. Grant, hero of the Civil War and former President of the United States, made what might be described as a fleeting visit to Leicester, while en route from Manchester to London. The train carrying him and his party, which included his wife and son, Brigadier General Badeau, who had served with him during the war, and John R. Young, a journalist from the New York Herald, made a brief stop at Campbell Street station. Here he was presented with an address by the Mayor, Alderman William Winterton, and the General made a short speech in reply. Also on the platform to greet him was Thomas Cook, ‘the well-known excursionist’, who had himself completed a world tour only five years previously.

Americans appeared in force in Leicester at the end of August 1891, when Buffalo Bill’s Wild West show arrived for a one-week engagement on the Belgrave Road Cricket & Bicycle Ground (the site of the BUSMC factory). The famous show, founded in 1883 by Colonel William F. Cody (‘Buffalo Bill’), had already made a highly successful visit to Britain in Jubilee year (1887) and was now on its second British tour. Audiences were enthralled by the Indians, the wild horses and buffaloes, the sharpshooting and riding displays, and the ‘attacks’ on a wagon train and the Deadwood coach. Anyone who had missed it, or wanted to see it again, had a chance to do so when the show, now larger and more international in scope, returned to Leicester in September 1903, during its third and final British tour, appearing for two days on the Freeman’s Meadow, Aylestone Road, where the power station was later built.

The Palace Theatre in Belgrave Gate also featured American artistes from time to time, as did the Opera House in Silver Street. Eugene Stratton, famous for songs like ‘Lily of Laguna’, delighted audiences during the Palace’s first season in 1901/2; W.C. Fields, who had not yet embarked on his film career, appeared as a juggler in 1911 and again in 1913. Much later, Buster Keaton, the director and star of many silent film comedies, could be seen ‘in person’ in June 1951, and the following month the veteran Hungarian-American actor Bela Lugosi starred in Bram Stoker’s Dracula, both the stage and film versions of which had made him world-famous. The Opera House, which presented both variety and plays in the 1930s and ’40s, saw such stars as the Houston Sisters, Roy Fox and his Band, and Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne, regarded as the greatest husband-and-wife team in American theatrical history, who appeared in Robert Sherwood’s There Shall be No Night, a war play set in Finland.

In a sense, the American who has left perhaps the most lasting impression on Leicester is Andrew Carnegie, the Scottish-born steel magnate and philanthropist, whose offer of £12,000 towards the cost of a new Municipal Library was accepted by a grateful Borough Council in June 1902. The architect Edward Burgess was commissioned to design the new building in Bishop Street, which was opened by Carnegie himself in May 1905 and now houses the Reference & Information Library.

Notes
1 Deryk Wills (ed.), Oadby 2000 (1999), 59; and information from Deryk Wills, who has told the story of the 82nd Airborne Division in Put on Your Boots and Parachutes! (1992).
2 H. E. Boynton, The History of Victoria Park; Leicester (2000), 19; Wills, ibid.
3 A Short History of Braunstone Park (2001), 12.
5 Leicester Journal, 17 Dec 1847.
7 Leacroft, 54, 56.
8 Ibid, 59. Our American Cousin was the play President Lincoln was watching at Ford’s Theatre, Washington when he was shot by John Wilkes Booth in April 1865.
10 Ibid, 139.
11 Leicester Daily Mercury, 1 & 3 Oct 1881.
12 Leacroft, 107.
13 Ibid, 121.
Recent publications
Edited by John Hinks

LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND: GENERAL

BIRDS-EYE WARTIME LEICESTERSHIRE 1939-1945
Terence C Cartwright
TCC Publications, 9 The Woodlands, Wigston 54pp
ISBN 0953449718

I came to Leicester late in 1956, at the height of the Suez crisis, and so was not here during any part of 1939 to 1945. Somewhere, I had heard or read of the major damage to Freeman, Hardy and Willis during the air raid of 19 November 1940 but otherwise had the impression – quite ignorantly – that World War 2 had left Leicester and Leicestershire almost completely untouched and unaffected. Terence Cartwright might have produced his book just for ill-informed folk like me: it both amplifies and supplements his earlier booklet, Birds-Eye Wartime Leicester, (1998). It has a laminated cover and fifty-four pages, most of which contain aerial photographs of decoy sites, ammunition dumps and airfields (there were eleven in the county): Luftwaffe target maps are reproduced, also a two-page, three-colour map which identifies the sites of all known mines, bombs, plane crashes, camps, searchlights and airfields.

Perhaps the clearest impression of the impact of the war is given by some tabulations listing the sites of major fires, reported damage and unexploded bombs, as well as the locations of, amazingly, about 200 aircraft crashes (about fifty of them Wellington bombers) – they were ‘falling like autumn leaves’ is Cartwright’s pictorial description. Although modest in size, this book contains a great wealth of detail which makes it ideal for those as ill-informed as myself as well as for those who lived in Leicestershire during the war, who will have their own memories. The wealth of information is in some ways a bit of a problem: there is no linked or consecutive narrative (only brief and disconnected paragraphs on separate subjects) and the point of the post-war photographs is not always obvious. If there is to be a new edition, a rethinking of the contents, and their order and presentation, might well add significantly to its clarity and value.

Colin Jones

BOSWORTH 1485: PSYCHOLOGY OF A BATTLE
Michael K Jones
Tempus 2002 224pp ISBN 0752423347

Shakespeare’s view of Richard III has bedevilled historians. It is a pity that Michael Jones, though clearly no adherent to the Richard-as-monster school, hasn’t managed to break free of the play either. The author tries to use the dramatic force and psychological depth of Shakespeare as his starting point but by harnessing the power of fiction, which he then disparages, Jones’ book rather goes off at half-cock. The book deals at length with the events of several decades before Bosworth. Indeed Jones takes us back to the 1440s and the success of Richard III’s father, the Duke of York, in the Hundred Years’ War. Whilst York was relieving the garrison of Pontoise and bringing rare glory to English arms, his wife, Cecily Neville, was in the arms of an archer named Blaybourne. We are introduced here to Richard III’s two preoccupations; to honour his father, whom he resembled and to dishonour his half brother, Edward IV, who resembled his father, Blaybourne. The horrific death of the Duke of York, dishonoured, at Wakefield and the secret marriage of Edward to a lowly Woodville, rather than to foreign royalty, merely added impetus to Richard’s desire for restitution and justice. It is an interesting tale well enough told but Jones struggles to convince, simply because he lacks proof.

To many local readers one of the key elements in the story of Bosworth Field is simply its location. Here, Jones produces another interesting argument. Using records of Henry VII’s payments for damage done by troops ‘coming toward our late field’ and ‘at our late victorious field’ Jones suggests that the fighting was around Atherstone, rather than Ambion Hill or even Dadlington. The argument is intriguing but Jones weakens his case by inconsistency. On page 154, for example, in support of the Atherstone case, battlefield burials ‘were normally found in the immediate vicinity of a battlefield’, but on page 146 we had already been told that ‘a burial site could be many miles distant’. In discussing the battle itself Jones remains interesting but is less convincing. It is hard to believe that Richard III would decide on his tactics before seeing the battlefield or allow his martial good sense to be swayed by anything as impractical as ‘chivalric valour’ (p.138). We may sympathise with Jones’s wish to avoid neat battle-plans and to emphasise the horror of medieval warfare but he fails to produce an alternative model.

The ‘astonishing archival discoveries’ mentioned on the dust-jacket (the hyperbole may owe more to Tempus than to Jones) turn out to be the account of the battle penned the next day by a French mercenary. This
would indeed be astonishing if Jones had more than a tantalising snippet published in 1897 from an original that has subsequently been lost. Jones nevertheless makes much – too much probably – of the five lines that survive of his new source; though in fairness we should be grateful to Jones for bringing them to light, as even five lines are of value in the study of a battle so ill-served by contemporary chroniclers. This book is well produced and illustrated, though the format is familiar from Michael Bennett’s The Battle of Bosworth. Some of the illustrations lack sharpness but most are well chosen. Many of the colour plates are very striking. Michael Jones has an intriguing tale to tell. The book is not the ‘last word’ on Bosworth and skirts a field well trampled by the likes of Peter Foss and the late D. T. Williams, but it is well written for a general readership and puts forward important new arguments.

Robin P Jenkins

FOLKLORE OF LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND
Roy Palmer

This revised and extended version of the first edition of Roy Palmer’s book, originally published in 1985, draws on a wide range of oral, manuscript and printed sources, including verse, song and drama, to illuminate the folklore of the two counties, defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as ‘the traditional beliefs, legends and customs current among the common people’. These are often passed on through the oral tradition, but also preserved in artefacts and photographs as well as documentary sources. Just one example from the many discussed in the book is the Caldecott “Mummiers’ Play”, which was still performed there and in neighbouring villages in the early years of the twentieth century. This usually concluded with a song featuring various items of clothing, as in the following extract:

You see this old ‘at, this old ‘at that I’ve got on?
This old ‘at it ‘as seen better weather.
For I wore the old ‘at out, yes, I wore the old ‘at out,
Till I wore the blooming crown out altogether.

A section on sports and pastimes features children’s games, alongside boxing, water sports, and, of course, the Hallaton bottle kicking. Other aspects of folklore covered in the book include customs associated with particular dates in the calendar, crime and punishment, haunting and witchcraft, and folk remedies for everyday ills: fried mouse for whooping cough (said to taste like chicken); innumerable cures for warts; and the application of cobwebs to an open wound, proven in more recent times – like other folk remedies – to have sound chemical properties. An adder’s skin hung over the chimney-piece was said to ward off disease, while killing a spider could have the opposite effect – as well as causing the ghost of Cardinal Wolsey to rise from his tomb at Leicester Abbey:

If you wish to live and thrive,
Let a spider run alive.

While focusing on Leicestershire and Rutland, the book places local customs firmly in the context of national and international folklore. The Tempus series itself includes other volumes on Wales, the Scottish Highlands, Gloucestershire and Sussex, no doubt with more to be added in future. As the author points out, there have been deliberate attempts in the past to suppress the folklore and the traditions of the ‘common people’ on the grounds of religion, morality, education or public order – but ‘folklore is far from being a dead language or an archaeological study. On the contrary, it clings doggedly, obstinately, tenaciously to life’. This fascinating and well illustrated book demonstrates the truth of this statement in a highly readable fashion.

Cynthia Brown

LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND TALES OF MYSTERY AND MURDER
David Bell

This is a good, 123-page read, nicely printed and illustrated but it could have been improved by the inclusion of some colour photographs, such as the shoes from Butterfly Hall as they are quite rare. Perhaps Laurence Olivier would have made a better image of Richard III, though I was pleased to see my own feelings about Richard echoed in Leicester and beyond. [On this point, see also the review of Bosworth 1485, above. Ed.]

One or two of the photographs are of rather poor quality, such as the one of Jeffrey Hudson with the Queen. However, it is wonderful to have all these stories brought up to date with some fascinating details; it is interesting to learn that Ronald Light of the ‘Green Bike Murder’ died aged 89 on the Isle of Sheppey. I also enjoyed the modern tales of mayhem at Oadby and Oakham and felt sorry for the elderly ladies considered to be witches, whose only offence seemed to have been their age. All in all, this is a fascinating collection of local tales including murders, ‘big cats’, ghosts and other mysteries.

Rex Woodford
Bob Trubshaw's Heart of Albion Press has made a significant contribution to local history publishing in the East Midlands and this latest offering maintains the publisher's reputation for informative books, attractively produced and, importantly, at an affordable price. This A to Z account of the villages of Rutland – a county unsurpassed, in the words of W. G. Hoskins, for its 'unspoiled, quiet charm' – is both readable and very easy to use. Introductory material includes a short outline of Rutland's history and a brief glossary: very useful if you need to check the meaning of architectural terms or if you want to know what 'gurning' is ('pulling a face by putting one or both hands in the mouth')! The photographs are all in monochrome (except the very nice cover picture of Thistleton church) but this is quite acceptable at such a reasonable price. Congratulations to the author/publisher on another value-for-money contribution to local history.

John Hinks

The Rutland Local History and Record Society is to be congratulated on producing such a fine book, and likewise the authors for researching and writing an authoritative account of devices used for measuring time in the county of Rutland. This hard-backed book runs to 400 pages and is wonderfully illustrated. It begins with an introductory section covering church bells, Saxon sundials, scratch dials, scientific sundials, clock and watches and the electric telegraph and standard time. Then there are two chapters dealing with bellfounders and clockmakers before a detailed gazetteer of bells, scratch dials, sundials and clocks arranged by parish. It is this gazetteer, consisting of some 254 pages, which is the heart of this book. Is it clearly laid out and the plans, diagrams and other illustrations are very professionally produced. For each parish the gazetteer entry begins with a summary of the records available and where they are kept. It then lists the bells, often with diagrams of the hanging arrangements, and details of any inscriptions. The entry then deals with scratch dials and clocks where they exist. One of the most valuable features for 'church crawlers' is the inclusion of plans for every church. The authors have also included information about any local customs relating to bell ringing.

Another very useful aspect of this book is the appendices including one on 'Bellfounders' Marks, Devices, Decoration and Lettering on Rutland Bells' which includes clear and informative illustrations. There is another on 'Rutland Ringing Customs'. Of particular interest to members of this Society is the appendix on Thomas North who was associated with the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society for many years and its Honorary Secretary (Editorial) from 1861 to 1884 when he died. For the researcher there are also several very useful indices. This is an excellent book, very 'user friendly', well produced and a credit to the authors. It will be the standard reference book for many years to come and stand alongside the works of Thomas North. I look forward to their volume on Leicestershire!

Alan McWhirr

This publication is a combination of a booklet and CD which together look at people's reminiscences of toys and games that have been played with over the years. A good cross-section of people, in terms of both ages and backgrounds, have given their stories and this variety adds to the usefulness of this publication. The sound recordings are easy to listen to and have all been produced well. The toys mentioned range from 'conkers' and 'whipping toms' to Action Man. For those games that are perhaps not so familiar to the modern child, there are clear explanations of the games and how they were played. The booklet is clearly laid out with a good index to the different recordings, giving the subject's date of birth and gender while still retaining their anonymity. The booklet also relates the recordings to how they might be used in the context of the curriculum and there are ideas about how children could get involved with producing their own oral histories.

Although this is primarily aimed at schools, it could also be used by anyone with an interest in toys and their history. Another use could be in reminiscence work in hospitals or rehabilitation work, as the recordings could be used to trigger the memories of the listener. This is a well-produced publication that is likely to be well used in the future.

Lois Edwards
Reviewing CD-ROMs is fraught with difficulties as those buying them will have a wide range of computer technology and different computer skills. This reviewer used an AppleMac and the comments in this review are based on that equipment. It has not been tested on a conventional PC. The CD on *Sepulchral Effigies* is based on material collected by Max Wade Matthews who wrote the text. He also provided many photographs which were supplemented by those from the publisher Bob Trubshaw. It covers Leicestershire and Rutland. The details on the CD box mention that ‘177 effigies in 85 different churches and private chapels are described and illustrated with 518 photographs’.

The main home page gives an index which is clear and simple to use. Some links did not work in my case, but this did not present a problem and other ways could be found to find the relevant material. One could list other links which did not work in my case, but it would not be sensible to dwell on these as it may be the technology and operating system that is failing. The main index links the user to an Introduction, Places A-Z, People A-Z, Artists, A-Z, About (this CD-ROM), Help and Copyright.

With so many churches and chapels now locked during the day, a good CD can be the answer for those who want to see the details of the many effigies in Leicestershire and Rutland. The indices make it easy to find a particular place or artist, although my overall search facility did not allow me to search the entire CD, but only the pages being browsed. Perhaps the publishers should consider including a built-in search engine in future CDs. The other unknown with CDs relates to future research on the same subject which the compilers are likely to undertake. Will they produce another CD when they collect more material or will there be some way of updating the existing CD which people have already bought? Most early prints which have been used on the CD are identified, but it is not clear where the print of Edmonthorpe was scanned from, although it looks like Nichols. In such a work as this there are bound to be omissions as it does not claim to be an exhaustive survey of all effigies in the two counties. Despite one or two slight limitations this is a CD worth having.

The second CD, *Interactive Little-known Leicestershire and Rutland*, comes from the same publisher, but is solely the work of Bob Trubshaw. As a result, the contents reflect his interests and hence the title ‘Little-known’. It is not a comprehensive survey, but covers the following topics: deserted villages, carvings, ‘Belvoir angels’, green men and foliate faces, gurning faces, tongue pokers, dragons, scratch dials, crosses, standing stones, wells and springs, moats, Anglo-Saxon minsters, dissolution of the monasteries, stocks, whipping posts, gallows and gibbets, toot hills. The home page gives a good index, although deserted villages appears twice! There is an extensive bibliography, although I could not find a reference to the very important and definitive list of deserted villages contained in volume 39 of our own *Transactions*. There is a ‘clickable’ map which did not work on my machine.

The details on the CD box mention that the CD contains ‘information about 230 villages and towns in Leicestershire and Rutland ... with over 550 photographs plus introductory essays...’ Whilst that is true one should bear in mind that the topics covered from those places are restricted to those listed above, and do not claim to be an exhaustive account of the history of those places. As with the CD above the real plus of this CD is the number of photographs it contains, so that one can have a ‘virtual tour’ of these little-known aspects of the two counties.

One would hope that all libraries will stock each of these CDs, including school libraries where the younger generation are so computer literate. The publisher and author are to be congratulated on this bold venture.

Alan McWhirr

*Other recent publications*

FRANCIS FRITH’S LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND LIVING MEMORIES
Ken Wheatley

NOTABLE CITIZENS OF RUTLAND
A R Traylen
Spiegl 2002 105pp

PLACE-NAMES OF LEICESTERSHIRE: PART TWO: FRAMLAND HUNDRED
Barrie Cox
English Place-Name Society 2002 430pp ISBN
This booklet was produced to mark the 150th anniversary of the opening of New Walk Museum and in her introduction, the author describes it as a ‘brief history’. It is brief, only 28 pages, but it gives a flavour of the development of museums in the City of Leicester. The museums of Leicester have a long and important history in the development of museums in the country as a whole, but this small publication cannot do justice to that story and one hopes that in the future somebody will pen a more detailed history of museums in city and county. There have been many characters who have worked for the museums service and it is a pity that their contribution has not been highlighted, although it would be difficult to include them all. One thinks of the enormous contribution that John Daniell made to the collections of various city museums during his 35 years with the service between 1946-1981.

It is ironic that in a city council booklet published in 2002 there should be a section and picture acclaiming the opening of the Wygston’s House Museum of Costume when in the same year that building was closed as a museum and public access restricted. We can also read about the opening of the purpose-built Jewry Wall museum and let us hope that that does not follow the way of the Costume Museum! The booklet includes a range of interesting illustrations, and many remind us of how the layout and display techniques of museums have changed over the years. All in all, it is a useful introduction into the history of museums in Leicester.

Jennifer Sandys

LEICESTER VOICES
Cynthia Brown

There cannot be much doubt that the East Midlands Oral History Archive is one of the most important and valuable developments in the collection and recording of oral history in Leicestershire and Rutland in recent years. Cynthia Brown is manager of the three-year Heritage Lottery-funded project which combines existing collections with new recordings to a total of around 4000 items, now deposited in the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland. This very substantial book enables us to see the fascination of the material that has been collected. There are black and
white photographs from all periods (the latest being of Leicester's Caribbean Carnival in 1994) and around a hundred contributors of their memories, the earliest having been born in 1893.

The separate contributions – some quite long – are grouped in sections: Growing Up, Play and Pastimes, Working, First World War, Shopping, Coming to Leicester… and it is good that so many of the contributors remember a number of different scenes and activities, so that as we meet them successively we feel we are getting to know them: it does not surprise us at all that it should be Blanche Harrison who gets into trouble as a child, falling under the baker’s cart and then being taken home, with a messed-up coat, in a funeral cab. This book gives a fascinating picture of the society from which the various contributions are drawn – it is simply a very enjoyable read. Whether or not the society described could only be Leicester or whether recollections from other cities and counties would have different characteristics is an interesting speculation. It has to be hoped that ways will be found to extend the duration of the project beyond the three years for which it has been funded, and that Leicester Voices will not be the only publication to come from it.

Colin Jones

**Other recent publications**

**LEGENDS OF LEICESTER**
Paul Tuff 2002 56pp ISBN 0953685713

**VAUGHAN COLLEGE: 140 YEARS OF ADULT AND HIGHER EDUCATION**
University of Leicester [2002] 8pp

**TOWNS, VILLAGES AND HOUSES**

**KNOW YOUR BARLESTONE: THE HISTORY OF A LEICESTERSHIRE VILLAGE**
Keith B Hextall 2002 199pp

This book is a very pleasant read, having been developed from the articles Mr Hextall wrote over a number of years for the magazine *The Village Pump*. It has good, well-ordered chapters beginning with the origins of the village. It is filled with people’s memories of the village, what it was like to live and work there. The chapters provide a good representation of various aspects of village life including education and religious life. Mr Hextall has transcribed some of the documents that have been associated with the village and these include early wills and inventories which all help to build the picture of what life would have been like in a certain period in the village's history. There is an excellent small section giving short histories of many of the prominent buildings in the village. The images are clear and complement the text. *Know Your Barlestone* is written in a chatty style which makes it an enjoyable read. It is a book that would be useful to anyone with an interest in the village of Barlestone or the people living there past or present.

Lois Edwards

**LOUGHBOROUGH: LIVING MEMORIES OF YOUR TOWN**
David Jones
Black Horse 2002 64pp ISBN 1904033881

The book features a collection of photographs of Loughborough taken by Francis Frith & Co. over a period of 150 years, and begins with a brief introduction to the Frith archive itself. The photographs are arranged under the general headings of the Market Place and surrounding streets; High Street and the Gates of Loughborough; Queens Park and the Carillon; and Education in Loughborough. As the author notes, they reflect the commercial purposes for which they were taken – mainly to be turned into picture postcards – so they do not provide comprehensive coverage of the town. Nevertheless, they cover a wide range of buildings including shops, pubs, cinemas and industrial premises, and – unlike many books of photographs – are accompanied by a written commentary which adds greatly to their interest and value to the reader.

Cynthia Brown

**THE OLD SCHOOL HOUSE, STAUNTON HAROLD 1850-1995: A HISTORY**
Mick Sheath 2002 98pp

The old School House, Staunton Harold, stands on the former estate of the Earls Ferrers. It is an example of a foundation by an aristocratic family to provide schooling for local children; the neighbouring Hastings family founded similar schools at Breedon on the Hill and Moira. The pattern was repeated throughout the country until the State took an interest. The small school was closed in 1964 and Mick and Mavis Sheath later bought the property. Mr Sheath has produced a detailed account of the building as a home and as an educational institution. Although he has encountered a problem facing most historians – the unevenness of evidence – he has diligently tracked down an impressive array of material: a surviving log-book, estate accounts, local directories and Ordnance Survey maps, as well as the memories of surviving pupils. The result is a pleasing survey, an exercise in how extant evidence can be used effectively. The book has primarily a local appeal but it is a model for local historians following similar projects.

Robert Ward
Anyone seeking to engage in family or local history connected with Osgathorpe would be remarkably lucky to have such a splendid source of information readily available, whilst the introductory chapters on the history of parish registers make clear and helpful reading for all. The author began to take an interest in local and family history as a boy and in 1991 discovered his family's connection with Osgathorpe where couples came to marry quickly from all over North-West Leicestershire. During his research he started to transcribe the Osgathorpe registers, including other information such as marriage witnesses, indications of wills or monumental inscriptions from the marriage licence. Considerable effort has gone into the verification of names and places cross checking against other primary source material, including censuses, taxation records, wills and administrations etc. Arranged under Baptisms, Burials, and Marriages with an Index. This is a well-produced and remarkably cheap publication.

Jennifer Sandys.

The Slang and the Jitty: A Midland Childhood in the 1940s
Pat Jenkins

Pat Jenkins was born in Henley-on-Thames, but moved with her family to Leicestershire in 1937, and lived in Thrussington for a number of years. There is a brief history of the village at the end of the book, along with descriptions of local events such as potato picking, ‘thrashing’ and the cinematograph shows for the village children, using hand-turned films hired from Young’s Chemists in Belvoir Street, Leicester. The village school also features in some detail. However, as the title and table of contents suggest, with sections on the kitchen, wash day, house furnishings, the garden and the lavatory, this is less a history of Thrussington itself than of home and family life in the 1940s. In some ways this is not so much a village history as a compendium of information about the village. The history is in Part 1: a chronological account placing information, where relevant, in the context of Leicestershire and British history. Included are extracts from transcripts of parish registers, an analysis of occupations from the 1851 census, geological technical reports etc. There is information on the Burtons and an obituary of Archbishop Fisher is included as an appendix. Part 2 is topographical and includes information on the history of MIRA, the disused railway line and the Ashby Canal, plus current information about the village. The arrangement is somewhat haphazard and I found both the vignette map at the start of each section and the extensive references on each page somewhat intrusive. There is a glossary and a full bibliography. The subject is painstakingly researched, one can imagine the author taking great pleasure in amassing the information, though perhaps the scope is rather too wide and the author may have lost sight of his audience. Perhaps this is why, disappointingly, I found by the end of the book that, for me, Higham on the Hill had still not really come to life.

Jennifer Sandys

Other recent publications

HISTORY OF NORTH LUFFENHAM
G W R Berridge 2002 52pp

OWSTON AND ITS ABBEY
Roland W Morant 2002 20pp

CHURCHES

A PUGIN MONASTERY: MOUNT ST BERNARD’S ABBEY: THE EARLY YEARS
John Tucker and Maureen Havers
The Abbey 2002 40pp ISBN 0954202805

The compilers have produced a collection of photographs and drawing covering the early years of the Cistercian monastery founded in 1835. The booklet is provided with a short introduction and each illustration is accompanied by explanatory notes, either from the architect, A. W. Pugin, or from historians of the abbey and the Cistercians. This is a pictorial evocation rather
than a mere chronology. The simple grandeur of the monastery and its setting comes across convincingly and a sympathetic feeling for the place is created. In a sense, the abbey is part of the revival of interest in Catholicism in nineteenth-century Britain. Readers of this booklet are urged to visit Mount St Bernard’s Abbey to see and feel for themselves. Perhaps a modern history of the institution, using the abbey archives, will follow, putting it into its historical context.

Robert Ward

**HEALTH, WELFARE AND EDUCATION**

**EXTON REMEMBERED: THE RECOLLECTIONS OF A RUTLAND SCHOOLMASTER**
Herbert R W Hall with annotation by Ven. Bernard Fennyhough
Spiegl 2002 117pp ISBN 0902544519

Bernard Fennyhough unfortunately did not live to see this delightful book to publication. He died shortly after taking the original manuscript to the publisher together with his annotation. Herbert Robert Wilton Hall was the schoolmaster at Exton Mixed National School from January 1876 until he resigned in August 1877 after a difference of opinion with the vicar who ruled the village with a rod of iron, not an unusual situation at that time. In 1913, living in St Albans, Hall wrote his recollections of his time in Exton. These give an unusually vivid picture of life in a small country village at the end of the nineteenth century. The claustrophobic nature of village life at that time comes through very clearly as well as the community togetherness. Hall’s writing is engagingly frank:

‘...every little mortal in those days represented so much possible source of income to the school funds if he could be impounded within the four walls of the schoolroom for a fixed no of hours on 250 occasions within a twelvemonth and on a certain day in the presence of a weird called Her Majesty’s Inspector of schools, perform certain gymnastics in Reading writing and arithmetic in a given time successfully’.

No wonder he and the parson were at war!

Jennifer Sandys

**Recent publications**

**ST PAUL’S CATHOLIC SCHOOL; 25th SILVER JUBILEE**
Bernard Eccles (ed)
The School 2002 48pp

**INDUSTRY, TRADE AND TRANSPORT**

**AUSTERS: ‘NEARLY ALL YOU WANTED TO KNOW’: A DESIGN AND ANECDOTAL HISTORY OF THE REARSBY PLANE MAKERS**
Mike Preston and Mick Ames (editors)

This is a book for lovers of small aircraft and Austers in particular. Published by the International Auster Club Heritage Group, it begins with a foreword describing the way in which it came about as a Millennium project. It is very thoroughly illustrated with almost every one of its 116 pages containing at least one photograph. The book is divided into three chapters, the first of which is a history of the company, by Norman Ellison, that was published as a paper in 1964. The remaining two chapters are by the compilers and editors, Mike Preston and Mick Ames. Chapter two contains ten pages of pictures, almost a company catalogue, with each photograph labelled with the model name and year. Chapter three is given over to material from an oral history project. This contains the memories of former employees of the company from Thurmanston, Syston, Mountsorrel and Rearsby. The employees are not named and each item is identified by the year in which it took place. Quite possibly this is because each item is a composite of several individual memories. Again there are plenty of illustrations.

The print is clear and easy to read and the illustrations are both clear and many. It is an informative book and although there is some aircraft jargon, there is not enough to make it unreadable to the casual reader. Essentially a book for the Auster lover, it is interesting enough to appeal to others. For instance local historians with an interest in the village of Rearsby would find it interesting to read about a company that played such a big part in village life in the twentieth century. As the title says, here is ‘nearly all you wanted to know’ about Austers.

Pat Grundy

**Other recent publications**

**LIFE ON THE LEICESTER LINE: THE PROGRESS OF A TRAIN DRIVER**

Leicestershire Historian 2003
ENTERTAINMENT AND SPORT

COALVILLE RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB: A CENTENARY HISTORY 1903-2003
Jeffrey Knight Whitwick Historical Group 2002
162pp
ISBN 095319731X £15.00

Who would have thought that the history of a rugby club could fill the pages of a 162-page book? That is what Jeff Knight has done in bringing together the material about the history of Coalville Rugby Football Club, and what a magnificent job he has done. Not only has he written the text but from the credits it looks as though he ‘desk-top’ published the book. The club was formed in 1903 and this history was published to mark its centenary. There are many group photographs as you would expect in a publication of this sort, some where the players are identified, and others where they are not. Authors find it particularly frustrating not to be able to name people on photographs at the time of compiling books, and even more frustrating when their names are discovered after publication, which is bound to happen in this case. A particularly pleasing aspect of the book is a section devoted to mini, junior and women’s rugby, now a feature of modern-day clubs. Needless to say, such a book will have a restricted circle of interest, but the history of an important side of Coalville’s sporting past is now in the public domain thanks to the tireless efforts of Jeff Knight.

Alan McWhirr

Other recent publications

FAREWELL TO FILBERT STREET: 1891-2002
Neville Foulgar
LCFC 2002 192pp
ISBN 0954270401

LEICESTER ‘TIL WE DIE: THE FINAL SEASON AT FILBERT STREET
Jeremy Clay
Leicester Mercury and LCFC 2002 144pp ISBN 095235361X

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Bringing them to their knees: church-building and restoration in Leicestershire and Rutland 1800-1914
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