2004
Thursday 7th October
Coal Mining in Leicestershire
Robert F. Hartley, B.A., A.M.A.
Community Services,
Leicestershire County Council

Thursday 21st October
A Setting for Good Citizens: the early years and people of
Clarendon Park Congregational Church
Clyde Binfield, O.B.E., M.A., Ph.D., F.S.A.
Professor Associate, Department of History, University of Sheffield

Thursday 4th November
A ‘lost’ Roman villa relocated: excavations at
Wymondham in 2003
Roger J. A. Wilson, M.A., D. Phil., F.S.A.
Professor of Archaeology,
University of Nottingham

Thursday 25th November
Annual General Meeting
At the Guildhall, Leicester

Thursday 9th December
The Brian Allison Memorial Lecture
The Gothic Revival: a corrective view
James Stevens Curl, Ph.D., A.R.I.B.A., F.S.A.
Emeritus Professor, University of Belfast

2005
Thursday 6th January
Community Archaeology in Leicestershire
Peter Liddle, B.A., A.M.A.
Community Services,
Leicestershire County Council
Thursday 20th January

Jane Austen and the Picturesque
Irene Collins, M.A., B.Litt., F.R.Hist.S.
Honorary Senior Lecturer, Department of History,
University of Liverpool
Honorary Fellow, University College Winchester

Thursday 3rd February

Christianeity and Kingship: a discussion of some finds from a 7th-century royal burial in Essex
David Lakin, B.A.
Project Manager, Museum of London Archaeological Services

Thursday 17th February

The Slate Industry in Leicestershire
David Ramsey, B.A.
Local Historian

Thursday 3rd March

The Writing is on the Wall: Housing in Leicester 1860–1914
Richard Rodger, M.A., Ph.D.
Professor of Urban History and Director of the Centre for Urban History, University of Leicester

Thursday 17th March

The W. Alan North Memorial Lecture
Egyptian, Greek or Roman: who were the subjects of mummy portraits from Roman Egypt?
Susan Walker, B.A., Ph.D., F.S.A.
Keeper of Antiquities,
Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

Thursday 7 April 2005

The Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society, 1855–2005: a personal view
Robert A Rutland, M.A., F.M.A.
Former Curator of the Jewry Wall Museum, Leicester

The year 2004–2005 has been a memorable one in the life of this Society as we have been celebrating the 150th anniversary of the founding of what was originally the Leicestershire Architectural and Archaeological Society. On 13th October 2004 we were honoured with a visit from His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester, who met with the President and Vice-Presidents and members of the Committee and their spouses at the Guildhall. The other formal occasion was the reception, open to all members, held at the Guildhall on 10th January 2005 in the same room as the inaugural meeting exactly 150 years before. The toast to the Society was moved by Mr Lars Tharp, known for his appearances on BBC television ‘Antiques Roadshow’. He later described the occasion, in Leicestershire
...and Rutland Life, as ‘a spirited evening of conversation and surprise treats. Being asked to propose a toast to the society gave me an excuse to read the various accounts of the activities and achievements which included visions of carriages setting off into the Leicestershire countryside, a bugler hired to help with the time-keeping, the excavations of the Jewry Wall site, and discussions among friends of their own treasures – a bit like the Antiques Roadshow, really’. Other speakers were the President, Sir Timothy Brooks, the Secretary, Dr Alan McWhirr, and the Committee Chairman, Dr Gerald Rimmington. Especially delightful was the ‘conversation’ between ‘Thomas Cook’ and ‘Dr Mary Royce’, two well-known nineteenth century Leicester personalities, played by Robert and Sue Ingle to very good effect.

Other celebrations of the sesquicentenary will be continued in two forthcoming publications, a special volume on Leicester Abbey, and a publication by Robert Rutland’s on the history of the Society. Already published is the article in the Leicestershire Historian and the long-awaited Index to Transactions.

Another aspect of our celebrations was to hold one of our meetings jointly with the Society of Antiquaries at the University of Leicester on 10th November. We were delighted to have this recognition of our sesquicentenary by a national society.

The Society’s regular publications have maintained the high standard for which we are noted. Kay Gowland prepared two copies of the very informative Newsletter. Joyce Lee edited an excellent issue of the Leicestershire Historian for 2005 which contained several memorable articles, so that we now know about ‘The Rabbit in Leicestershire’ and have been able to ponder ‘The Location Puzzle of the Old Groby Mill’. The Transactions issue for 2004 included, amongst others, fascinating papers on Iron Age settlements, problems of Tithing in Leicestershire during the sixteen and early seventeenth centuries, and the historian, William Camden. The editors, Jill Bourne and Dr Joanna Story, are to be congratulated on their excellent work. We look with anticipation to the 2005 edition of the Transactions and the special sesquicentennial volume on Leicester Abbey.

The lecture programme has been as successful as in previous years. It was the first time that, in accordance with the wishes of members as indicated by a recent survey, the programme was extended into April. Despite some conflict with Easter holidays, which is inevitable when April dates are chosen, the lecture on April 7, 2005, was well-attended. This may relate to the fact that Robert Rutland was speaking on ‘The Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society, 1855–2005: a personal view’. Members who attended hoping for a preview of the forthcoming publication were not disappointed.

The membership of the Committee suffered a serious blow this year. Hard on the heels of the death of Rupert Evans, my immediate predecessor as chairman, came news of the death on 3rd May 2005, of his wife, Dr Babette Evans. Babette was one of our longest serving members; she was elected in November 1946, her sponsors being Mr F. Cotterill and Dr W. G. Hoskins. For many years she was one of our Lecture Secretaries, responsible for lectures in history. She and Rupert will be difficult to replace.
Last year our President, Sir Timothy Brooks, indicated that he felt the time had come for him to retire from his position although, with some persuasion, he agreed to remain until the annual meeting of 2005. We have appreciated his quiet leadership and words of encouragement. We are mollified in our loss by the agreement of Professor Rosemary Cramp, who recently retired from the Chair of Archaeology at the University of Durham, to be the Committee’s recommendation for the Presidency.

I intend to close this report of the Committee with a cri-de-coeur. Many of the Committee members who carry the main work-load are now retired from their profession. Our honorary secretary has held the position for three decades and his work has increased rather than diminished as there is now no minute secretary to take this aspect of the work away from him, which frankly is not fair. Our lecture secretary, who decided some time ago that it was time for her to give up, and was until recently one of two such secretaries, has found her work-load doubled. That is not fair either. I am one of the shortest serving members of the Committee having only been a member for a decade, three of which I have been chairman. I am, however, well beyond three score years and ten, and I perhaps should be thinking about stepping out of the chairmanship. We need younger members to join the Committee with a view to taking office, if the Society is to remain as healthy and active as it has been in recent years.
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