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Editor: Joyce Lee

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Editorial

Campaigners, scholars and influential works, along with new light on Leicestershire’s industrial past, and fascinating insights into places, events, buildings, institutions and medieval art, are amongst the themes and subjects which emerge from the rich and varied contributions to this year’s Leicestershire Historian.

Fifty years after the Leicestershire volume of W. G. Hoskins’ pioneering work The Making of the English Landscape was published, Anthony Squires, himself well-known to readers as a leading writer on the history of the Leicestershire landscape, gives us a personal appreciation of the profound influence which Hoskins’ writing has had on his own work, as well as a revealing insight into Hoskins’ attitude to Leicester and Leicestershire. Also in this edition, Stefan Cabaniuk teams up with Anthony Squires on the history of Beaumont Leys and its Parks, presenting an informative examination of this large area, where a significant number of often unexpected landscape features are still to be seen. Readers will also be interested to hear from Alan McWhirr on a newly-accessible collection of stereoscopic pictures of Leicestershire landscapes and other local scenes.

On the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the British slave trade, Terry Sheppard writes on the friendship between Thomas Babington of Rothley Court, Thomas Gisborne and William Wilberforce that contributed to the parliamentary battle to end slavery. Meanwhile, Jess Jenkins highlights the lesser-known role of women in the anti-slavery movement through the work of Elizabeth Heyrick of Leicester, a remarkable campaigner whose influence was felt both here and in America. Another notable local campaigner who carried weight at a national level was George Smith of Coalville, who, as Lois Edwards shows, effectively championed the rights of children employed in the brickyards, and on the canals of nineteenth-century England. Writing on contemporary events in Leicester, Gerald Rimmington portrays the life and work of William Fry, a remarkable Anglican priest, whose achievements significantly influenced the development of educational and spiritual facilities in Leicester.

Maureen Havers gives us an instructive insight into how she researched the Boys Reformatory at Mount St Bernard Abbey, and how the story unfolded as the elusive, hard-won evidence came to light. Erica Statham continues her investigations into the oldest Baptist church in Leicestershire. David Ramsey’s keen observations on the remains of Roman building materials at the Vine Street excavations give weight to the theory that the Leicestershire slate industry began in Groby, not Swithland, whilst Caroline Wessel seeks to address the lack of familiarity with the builders of many of Leicester’s more prominent buildings through her examination of the prodigious output of Leicester builders Henry Herbert & Sons. The art of the medieval masons is highlighted by Bob Trubshaw as he shares his enthusiasm for the wealth of wonderful and fascinating artistic carvings which decorate many Leicestershire and Rutland churches, aiming to encourage interest from readers to record and share information about these, whilst Robin Jenkins brings the 1932 Pageant of Leicester to life, through its centre-piece, the grand theatrical performance of Leicester through the ages.

Although barely five years old, the Tilton and District History Society has made significant progress, the group’s work being described here by Jim Auterson and Paul Herrington, accompanied by useful advice for similar groups. Meanwhile Mark Carne puts the work of the Enderby Heritage Group at Aldeby into context.

My grateful thanks to John Hinks and his reviewers for the Recent Publications section which continues to play a vital role in keeping readers up to date. Also to Carl Harrison and the staff at the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland for their kind help; and to Alan McWhirr for his much-welcomed support.

The Leicestershire Historian aims to promote the study of the county’s history by providing a platform for established and new authors, and through encouraging the pursuit of research and project work. It also aims to publicise the work of local groups and organisations, and seeks to raise the awareness of research sources.

Contributions for future editions are welcome from individuals, local groups, museums and other organisations and should be sent to the Editor for consideration. Articles can be short half-page items or longer in-depth pieces, and can be submitted at any time. If you would like to discuss an idea in advance, please contact the Editor.

Joyce Lee, Editor
Leicester boasts a number of fine late-Victorian buildings. As we walk or drive through the city we may observe, admire and appreciate them, but do we ever stop to wonder who designed and built them? Guide books sometimes give us the names of architects; but what about their builders? Very seldom are these men mentioned, important though they were in the creation of a significant building. Who, for example, was the builder of the Leicestershire Bank (Midland Bank/HSBC) on Granby Street; the Leicestershire Club in Welford Place; the Leicester School of Art (De Montfort University); and St. James the Greater church? Answer – the firm of Henry Herbert & Sons, which at its peak was one of the largest building firms in the county, and served the people of Leicestershire for an unbroken 168 years. The firm worked with all the top architects of its day, including William Parsons, the Goddards, Stockdale Harrison, J.B. Everard, Ewan Christian and Sir Edwin Lutyens.

It seems that the business was started in 1801 by one Cornelius William Hill Herbert, whose name appears in an 1846 trade directory as a builder of Welford Road, Leicester. In the ‘Trades and Professions’ section he is also listed as a bricklayer, along with Thomas Herbert, bricklayer, of Southgate Street, and William Herbert, brickmaker, of Welford Road. In 1863 the firm was recorded as ‘Cornls. Wm. Hill Herbert and Son (Thos.), brickmakers and builders’ of 86 Welford Road. By 1875 Thomas’s son, Henry (b.1842), had also joined the business, and the company name changed to T. & H. Herbert. Thomas and Henry are shown as builders and contractors of 77 Welford Road, and Thomas’s home is the former works at 86 Welford Road.

The firm’s name of T. & H. Herbert continued, and in 1892 the business offices moved to 100 Welford Road. Is it mere coincidence that the Bricklayers’Arms lay just a stone’s throw from the premises of the largest building firm in town? In 1892 it was a public house run by Edward Weston, immediately opposite the old headquarters of T. & H. Herbert and a few paces from their new site at no.100. Many a thirsty Herbert employee must have enjoyed a pint or two there!

Henry’s home was a modest...
middle-class residence at 24 Upper King Street, Leicester whilst William lived not far away at 88 Regent Road. Thomas resided at the offices at 100 Welford Road, but had also become a farmer at Whetstone Gorse. By now the whole family had moved up the social scale, as Henry, Thomas and William’s home addresses were all listed in trade directories under ‘Gentry’.

In the late 1890s it appears that Thomas had left the firm and Henry had taken his sons into the business, the company’s name having changed to Henry Herbert & Sons, ‘joiners, builders, contractors, brick makers and sand & gravel merchants’. The company offices had moved to 31-33 Millstone Lane, and the unmarried sisters, the Misses Florence Mary and Eveline Kate Herbert, were using the former office, 100 Welford Road, as their Leicester address, although they were also farming with Thomas at Whetstone. Contemporary sources reveal that Henry had six sons – Edmund Henry (b.1871), Sydney Frank (b.1873), Albert (b.1875), Cornelius Henry (b.?), Walter (b.1878) and Leonard (b.1880). Trade directories show that Edmund and Walter were living with Henry at his large home, Park Hill House, in the leafy suburbs of Aylestone, and Leonard was at a house named Overstrand in the same road. Albert was a Leicester architect who resided in fashionable Highfields, and Walter, an engineer, had founded the engineering firm of Hill and Herbert.

In 1932 the Henry Herbert business had expanded still further, with store yards in Tower Street and The Newarke, and a company called New Star Brickworks. Henry had purchased Portland House (now Leicester High School for Girls) and, though he never lived there, he built a house, Overstrand (now Leicester High School for Girls Junior School), in its grounds for his son, Leonard. Did Overstrand in Norfolk perhaps hold some significant or romantic association for Leonard, who twice named a house thus? Sydney Herbert had a fine residence at 111 Princess Road, as well as a country retreat, Taylor’s Rock, built for him by the firm at Woodhouse Eaves. Architect Albert’s offices were at 18 Friar Lane, and, although living at 98 Regent Road, he was soon also to move out to the country to The Gables, Swithiland Lane, Rothley.

Thomas Herbert and his descendants stayed on as farmers at Whetstone, where in 1892 Thomas was resident at Whetstone Gorse, and William Henry at nearby Whetstone Pastures is recorded as a principal landowner. In 1912 the spinster sisters, the Misses Florence Mary and Eveline Kate, are listed as ‘farmers and graziers’ at Whetstone, where in 2007 the Herbert family continues to farm.

The firm of Henry Herbert & Sons finally closed its doors for business in 1969, with a phenomenal record of Leicestershire public, commercial, 100 Welford Road, Leicester, which became the business offices for T.& H. Herbert in 1892.
domestic and religious buildings to its credit. To date, the
earliest known building identified as Herbert’s is Leicester’s
Theatre Royal (demolished 1958). Situated in Horsefair
Street, it was designed by William Parsons and erected in
1836 at a cost of £10,000. With its Classical architecture and
‘very rich and costly’ internal decorations, it was considered
‘unquestionably one of the most elegant little theatres in the
provinces’. In A Plain Man’s History of Leicester,
Skillington recounts that the building of the Theatre Royal
took place ‘in the hot summer of 1836. The work was
finished in the remarkably short period of six weeks, a feat
made possible by unlimited beer, which was carried to the
[Herbert] work-men in buckets’. (1)

By the 1870s Henry Herbert had earned a high reputation
amongst the élite of the town, confirmed by two significant
commissions. The first was the building of large premises for
the newly formed Leicestershire Banking Company (1874)
(later Midland/HSBC) on Granby Street, considered one of
the most important sites in the town. Designed by Goddard
and Paget, ‘the material’ according to Spencer’s Guide
(1887), ‘is chiefly red brick, enriched in a striking and
tasteful manner by dressings of Portland stone and terra-
cotta.’ In addition to the fine banking room there was a
‘board room, directors’ private rooms, waiting room, clerks’
room and retiring rooms’, and Spencer refers to such modern
inventions as extensive fire-proofing, a hydraulic lift, and a
hot-water heating system. By this time, Henry’s prestige was
such that, according to his descendants, he was honoured
with The Leicestershire Bank’s ‘Account Number One’.

A second important contract at this time was the erection of
the Leicestershire Club (1876/7) in Welford Place. Formed
as a venue for those not eligible for the landowners' County
Club, and again designed by Goddard and Paget, ‘The
Leicestershire’ appears to have been modelled on the
aristocratic gentlemen's clubs of London, with its
characteristic bow-window frontage reminiscent of the
famous bow-window of White's Club in St. James's. ‘The
Leicestershire’, reported Spencer’s Guide, was ‘of red
pressed bricks, with Ancaster stone facings, of modern
design, inclining to the Flemish style’, and boasted a grand
reading room, dining room, library and smoking rooms, and
upstairs eight bedrooms. An American heating apparatus
was placed in a separate part of the basement, along with
kitchen and wine cellars.
At the Club's opening on 19th October 1877 a splendid dinner was given, at which 'the present Mayor, the newly elected Mayor, the Hon. Secretary of the County Club and Mr Henry Herbert', were honoured guests. Shortly afterwards, both Thomas and Henry Herbert were elected club members. They had now aspired to high society. As indicated by the Club's Minute Books, pretensions to 'Pall Mall' grandeur included the employment of a French chef, a copy of Debrett's Peerage for the Smoking Room, livery for the staff, a framed portrait of the venerable Chairman, the acquisition of fish knives, fish forks and nutcrackers, whiskey from Dublin and choice wines from Bordeaux.

Further important commissions for public buildings were to follow. In a Leicester Mercury article (2), Mr. Davis Herbert, Henry's grandson and a former director of the firm, stated that 'much of Leicester Royal Infirmary testifies to the worth of their [Henry Herbert & Sons] work'. This may well have included the erection of various hospital wings the south wing in 1888; the north in 1901; the east in 1907 and the west in 1927. Herbert's also built the Leicester Art College (1896/7) (De Montfort University), designed by Everard and Pick, that Pevsner describes as 'in pared-down Jacobean style'.

But as the century drew to a close, an extraordinarily complex and demanding piece of work was undertaken; the building of all the stations and railway bridges between Leicester and Loughborough on the new Great Central Railway (1899). The cost of its construction was high – £11.5 million compared to the estimated £6 million, and the company never paid a normal dividend afterwards. But it certainly lived up to its slogan 'Rapid Travel in Luxury', and the competitive stimulus it engendered must have found parallels with the Herbert philosophy of assertive capitalist enterprise.

In the twentieth century, Henry Herbert's building portfolio included Stockdale Harrison's medieval-style Saracen's Head public house (1904) (now Molly O'Grady's) in the Market Place; the First World War memorial (1917) in Town Hall Square; the new Oliver Temple (1923) at Freemasons' Hall, London Road, at a time when the house next door was added; the Town Hall's enlarged Council Chamber and new Mayor's Tea Room (1931); and the Lutyens-designed Victoria Park gatehouse lodges (1935).

Of these, perhaps two deserve further mention – the war memorial and the interior additions to the Town Hall. In June 1917 a war memorial was unveiled by the Duke of Rutland on the east side of Town Hall Square, for which Herbert's were the overall contractors. On the screen with side panels was a sculptural relief of a pelican bleeding itself to feed its young - emblematic of Kipling's line 'Who dies if England lives?' The names of 95 men from the Navy and 2,034 from the Army were inscribed upon it, with space left for further names. The memorial was demolished in 1926/7, when the permanent commemorative arch was erected in Victoria Park.

In June 1931 the Corporation Minute Books recorded that the lowest tender received for significant alterations to the Town Hall 'was from Messrs. Henry Herbert and Sons, amounting to the sum of £23,314'. The following year in October 1932 the Mayor formally opened the new accommodation that included a larger Council Chamber to
Entries from the Time Books (by job) for Henry Herbert & Sons which record the costs of materials purchased and the costed work of bricklayers, foremen, labourers etc, for example for work on the Red Bus Garage in 1927 (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, location mark 22D71/V/55).

The other highly productive area of T. & H. Herbert’s building empire was ecclesiastical. There had been a great burst of church restorations in Leicestershire in the 1850s and 1860s. By the 1880s and 1890s there were still respectively 85 and 79 mainly smaller projects being carried out in the county, in which Herbert’s played a significant part. For example, they built the new upper tower with bells and clock at Woodhouse Eaves, and the organ chamber and vestry at Kirkby Mallory; they carried out modernisation at Braunstone, with new seats and underfloor heating system, and at Evington, where new open seating and a pulpit were installed; at Knighton they restored the chancel and at Hugglescote added to ‘the most imposing modern village church in the county’ a tower, chancel, south transept, north porch, vestry with organ loft, and heating.

However Herbert’s were responsible for two brand new church builds – at Aylestone (1891) (chancel excepted), that seated 600, and phase one of St. James the Greater (1899-1901). Described by Brandwood as ‘one of the finest modern churches in Leicester’, St James’s was designed by Henry Goddard, who had responded to Bishop Creighton’s inspiration for a Basilican type of church by undertaking an extensive tour of Italy and producing a ‘new Renaissance’ plan. Its interior is particularly stunning, with its long nave, raised chancel, arcades and bays, and ‘impressive apse in which the altar is viewed through a round-headed arch.’ What must Henry and his workmen have thought of this innovative design? A marking across the present-day wooden flooring (about a third of the way from the entrance) continues to define where the Herbert work ended.

On considering the above list, one observes that the changing face of Leicester, throughout a most prosperous period of its history, is strongly reflected in the work of a group of men who are rarely talked or written about. The prodigious output of the firm of Henry Herbert & Sons is a worthy testament to the Victorian and early twentieth-century architecture of Leicestershire, and deserves to be recorded in the annals of our history.

The author’s son-in-law’s great-great-grandfather was Henry Herbert and the author’s daughter’s great-great-grandfather was H. Simpson Gee, founder of the Leicestershire Banking Co.

References:
2. Leicester Mercury 18th June 1981.
3. ROLLR: 22D71.
Uncovering the Facts about St Mary's Agricultural Colony, Whitwick

Maureen Havers

The gaunt grey buildings, almost derelict, on the estate of Mount St Bernard Abbey had long held a fascination for me. There was a stillness about the place that seemed different to the peace of the abbey gardens and church, but the story of the St Mary’s Agricultural Colony was shrouded in mystery and myth, and it was not until I came to live in the locality that I attempted to discover the story behind this extraordinary combination of monastery and reformatory.

Basic facts were known: the Colony, also known as the Reformatory, was instituted in 1856 by the then Abbot, George Burder, for the purpose of housing and reforming the young Catholic delinquents whose demeanours were punished by incarceration in the state gaols. This was the accepted method of punishment and deterrent for all young offenders, but public opinion was in the process of demanding that separate provision should be made for young people, to avoid their further contamination by hardened offenders. Reformatories as methods not only of punishment for juveniles, but also for rehabilitation and reformation, were advocated by various individuals and philanthropic groups, and there was growing Catholic concern that religious faith and practice could not be addressed in these institutions. In response to this need, Abbot Burder decided to make use of redundant buildings on the monastery estate to provide a Catholic reformatory. Consequently, St Mary’s Agricultural Reformatory was duly established amid much publicity in Catholic circles and with the approval of the Government Inspectors who would have the duty of ensuring that standards were maintained.

The proposal was not at all popular with the monastic community, but the plans were well advanced before the monks were aware of them. Almost immediately difficulties arose which caused great friction between the Abbot and the Community, and within two years of the opening of the Reformatory, Abbot Burder was required to resign and the management passed to other hands. Later, there were the infamous riots among the boys which provoked questions in Parliament, and ultimately, in 1881, the Government revoked its licence and the Reformatory was closed down.

Such were the bare bones of the story with tantalising brief additions such as a photograph of a notice board which asked for prayers for the forty plus boys and servants who had died at the Reformatory. Also the local tale that the deaths had been caused by an outbreak of typhus (or variably, measles), and the knowledge that one boy had committed suicide and been buried outside the cemetery. There were the remains of buildings whose interiors gave no indication of their use in the time of the Colony. The lack of a story was perplexing especially as the great number of boys who had passed through this place had apparently left no mark, no evidence of their communal life or of their individuality.

Research for a Local History course at the University of Nottingham brought a more academic interest about the Colony and led to the Local History sections of Loughborough and Coalville Libraries, the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, and finally to the National Archives at Kew. The
information found in these places was scant, but a single line in a report hinted at a link with the Reformatory at Castle Howard which provided the comparison of both reformatories necessary for a dissertation. A Whitwick man, Arthur Robinson, offered his own collection of archives relevant to the Colony whose source he was reluctant to reveal but there were photocopies of Government Returns, handwritten details of admissions giving the names, ages and offences of some of the boys, but, again, these were scraps of information with little source value but extremely important as evidence that primary sources had, or still, existed into the twentieth century. Some of the monastery archives were made accessible but these shed only a small amount of light on what was already known.

Books fleshed out the national background to reformatories: Radzinowicz A History of English Criminal Law Vol 1; The Movement for Reform (1) gave chapter and verse of the evolution of juvenile punishment. This moved from incarceration in adult gaols, to transportation, towards a system entirely focussed on the child as a malleable young person capable of being retrained and reformed by kind, firm discipline into a worthy member of society. Similarly, there were books detailing the growth in Catholic confidence after the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy in 1850, which enabled the Catholic population to take upon themselves the social and educational needs of the poor in general, and of children in particular. But the particular story of St Mary’s Agricultural Colony remained elusive until a new archivist at the Abbey released all the documents relating to that period and it soon became apparent why that period was regarded as a bleak time in the Abbey’s history, acknowledged but best forgotten.

The first sources to be scrutinised were the letters of Abbot George Burder to Cardinal Wiseman over a period of about two years, and while these contained little specific information about the boys, they revealed the growing rift between the Abbot and his monks and much about the character of the Abbot himself. The correspondence from Wiseman is not in the Abbey archives but the gist is discernable from Burder’s replies. The one hundred and thirty-two letters, each one lengthy, begin in July 1855, and the first reveals the most dominant thought in Burder’s mind, that the Cistercian life was not suited to England or the English temperament. This radical view was the more challenging because George Burder was a convert from the Anglican priesthood, and had been a monk at Mount St Bernard for only seven years, and also, the Abbey itself had been in existence for a mere twenty years. That argument was to persist throughout Burder’s time as Abbot, and the letters indicate the manoeuvrings he undertook to persuade and at times, bully, the community to agree to change its allegiance from the Cistercian order to the Benedictines. The majority of the community was fiercely against the idea, but some were swayed by Burder’s rhetoric, later retracting their support. It seems that this idea of transferring allegiance pre-dated the initiation of the Reformatory, and it may have been that Burder was experiencing personal difficulties with the strict, silent, contemplative regime of the Cistercians, and hoped that an Order which combined both contemplative and active life would prove less difficult to live. In his letters he argued that the change would attract more candidates to the monastery, and be a means of personal sanctification of the monks and also of their immediate neighbours, and especially help in the ‘conversion of our beloved but Protestant country’. Throughout the letters there is a sense of manipulation, of appearing to be reasonable, but always a return to his own agenda and providing more justification for his stance.

In the initial, difficult years of establishing the Reformatory, Burder presented conflicting statements about its progress. At first all is well and it is evident that he visited frequently, but within months of its opening the letters revealed problems with staffing and the monks’ opposition to the Reformatory. All this, Burder again argued, could be resolved if the Abbey were to follow the Benedictine rather than Cistercian Rule, and then the Lay Brothers could justifiably be employed for the welfare of the boys. His plan

### Daily timetable for the Colony boys.

**SUMMER SEASON.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 a.m.</td>
<td>Boys rise, wash, &amp;c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.30 a.m.</td>
<td>Morning prayers in common.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.45 a.m.</td>
<td>Moral and intellectual training.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.50 a.m.</td>
<td>Breakfast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.15 a.m.</td>
<td>Distribution of work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.30 a.m.</td>
<td>End of work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.45 a.m.</td>
<td>Midday prayers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 p.m.</td>
<td>Angelus. Dinner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.30 p.m.</td>
<td>Recreation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.30 p.m.</td>
<td>Supper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 p.m.</td>
<td>Recreation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 p.m.</td>
<td>Recreation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.30 p.m.</td>
<td>End of work. Recreation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 p.m.</td>
<td>Supper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.30 p.m.</td>
<td>Recreation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.30 p.m.</td>
<td>Night prayers. Singing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 p.m.</td>
<td>Boys retire to rest.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SUNDAYS AND HOLIDAYS.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 a.m.</td>
<td>Boys rise, wash, &amp;c.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.30 a.m.</td>
<td>Morning prayers in common.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 a.m.</td>
<td>They assist at Mass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 a.m.</td>
<td>Breakfast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.30 a.m.</td>
<td>Recreation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 a.m.</td>
<td>Sunday report.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 a.m.</td>
<td>Recreation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.45 a.m.</td>
<td>Midday prayers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 p.m.</td>
<td>Angelus. Dinner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.30 p.m.</td>
<td>Recreation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 p.m.</td>
<td>Recreation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 p.m.</td>
<td>Recreation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 p.m.</td>
<td>Vespers. Recreation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 p.m.</td>
<td>Supper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 p.m.</td>
<td>Recreation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.30 p.m.</td>
<td>Night prayers. Singing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 p.m.</td>
<td>Boys retire to rest.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
to form a Third Order of Cistercians had not resulted in sufficient recruitment to meet the needs of staffing the Reformatory, and the existence of these men 'neither secular nor religious, without training, without novitiate, without vows', was another cause of dissent in the community. Of even greater concern to the community was the state of the finances at the Reformatory. There were government grants, but in a very short time the Reformatory was in debt, and it would seem that there was little or no separation of the Colony and monastery accounts. The extent of the financial problem was never specified in the letters, but after Burder's resignation the amount of money owed was calculated to be in the region of £12,700. For a community living frugally and intent on being self-sufficient and dependent only on the goodwill of visitors for an income, the prospect of repaying this amount of money was horrendous.

Taken individually, Burder's letters have a rationality and could come from the pen of a man wanting to do what was right and best for his community, spelling out the reasons for his arguments and what great damage and scandal could result if his suggestions were not implemented, but in their entirety - and the letters were written almost daily - a pattern unfolds. Burder acknowledges what Wiseman has revealed the less than goodwill of visitors for an income, the prospect of repaying the cost involved in keeping children in them, opinions about better alternatives such as emigration to Canada and several were comments on the perceived inadequacies of Roman Catholic Reformatories compared with those run by other organisations. These were valuable as an indication of the wider public opinion about the topic, but personal circumstances did not permit that this source could be followed up by a general search of national newspaper archives. The cuttings gave the first indications about the activities of the boys and also some unexpected glimpses into life and death at the Reformatory. Local Leicestershire newspapers were full of graphic accounts of the riots at the Colony and these are the events which are well known and have been retold over the years.

The Burder letters revealed the less than tranquil lives led by the community during the years 1855-58 but told little about the boys, whose juvenile escapades, rarely criminal acts, had caused their banishment to the wilds of Charnwood Forest. During the relevant years in the nineteenth century, someone had been sufficiently interested in the Reformatory to collect cuttings of newspaper correspondence and articles and stick them into a scrapbook, which is in the Abbey archives though its origin is not known. These were mostly undated and rarely gave the title of the newspaper, but many could be dated to the time of Abbot Burder and several of the letters were written by him. Some of these cuttings contained national information about the controversies surrounding reformatories and their value, the cost involved in keeping children in them, opinions about better alternatives such as emigration to Canada and several were comments on the perceived inadequacies of Roman Catholic Reformatories compared with those run by other organisations. These were valuable as an indication of the wider public opinion about the topic, but personal circumstances did not permit that this source could be followed up by a general search of national newspaper archives. The cuttings gave the first indications about the activities of the boys and also some unexpected glimpses into life and death at the Reformatory. Local Leicestershire newspapers were full of graphic accounts of the riots at the Colony and these are the events which are well known and have been retold over the years.

In the early years Abbot Burder wrote about the boys' excursions, marching along the country lanes to the accompaniment of fife and drum and, on one
occasion the writer invokes a picture of three hundred boys being marched from the Reformatory to fields in Wards End, Loughborough for a feast provided by local businessmen with sing-songs and sweetmeats to follow. This account provoked a terse reply from a local Vicar who thought the whole episode distasteful. But even Burder had to admit on occasion that not all was joy and delight with the boys; his recounting of the last days of John Hannon was printed in one newspaper omitting no detail of the lad’s demise and his associates’ reaction to it:

I came suddenly into the room the day after his death, and a beautiful sight indeed I saw, which must have rejoiced, I think, the Holy Angels. There was John, dressed in white, in the centre of the room, lying on his humble bier, the hands crossed meekly on his breast, a sweet smile on his face, and all his little Holy property arranged about his person... By the side of the white body was a group of three little boys kneeling; one of them was reading some prayers as well as he could, and the other two, with hands lifted up and their palms closed were listening and responding... It was a scene for a holy painter...

By now the work of several years had resulted in the names of about one hundred boys being amassed from various sources, but for the most part they were names only. What names were known were collated along with any minute detail that could be found of their history. These names were the keys which unlocked the next area of research when the National Census returns were published on the internet. Within a very short space of time, the inmates and staff of St Mary’s Agricultural Colony had been located for 1861, 1871 and 1881. It was as though the Colony was suddenly peopled again. There were now nearly 1000 names in our record and the boys who had been committed to the Colony in the years between the Census would probably have doubled that number. Not only had individuals been convicted and sentenced, but so had brothers and even twins. The National Census provided their birth place and date of birth thus giving the opportunity for further research at a later date. Through the internet it was also possible to find what records were held by museums in towns and cities where the boys had been convicted, and from these, photocopies of committal orders, escort orders and admission procedures of the Reformatory were obtained, and it was at this stage that it was felt that there was sufficient material to warrant the telling of the Reformatory story.

It was the issue of the deaths at the Colony which was perhaps the most intriguing, but even with the increasing volume of records which were being discovered, it had been possible to find the names of only twelve of the forty-two for whom prayers were asked on the notice board. When individual names had come to light, it had been possible to obtain copies of the death certificates from the Leicestershire Registrars’ Department, but initially where there was no name a death certificate could not be located. In the summer of 2006 however, as the requests for certificates relating to the Reformatory trickled through, permission for the registers to be searched using the place of death rather than by name was given, and within three weeks an additional thirty-three entries certifying deaths which had occurred at the Reformatory were found. It was then back to the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland to find the newspaper stories behind the manslaughter of one boy, of the accidental death of a female member of staff, and the report of the inquest into Henry Kelly’s suicide. The detailed and graphic reporting of the Victorian journalists not only gave the facts, but showed the power of words to recreate an event in the mind of the reader. The death certificates themselves contained surprises; there were deaths of infant children of staff members; there were several deaths in one year as a result of typhoid fever thus proving that the local story did have a basis in fact; and many deaths from tuberculosis, the disease of the impoverished. The magazine *Household Words* had included an account of a visit to the monastery and Reformatory written by one of Charles Dickens’ reporters in which he tells of the Christmas Eve death of Brother Lawrence, the monastery Guest Master, as he was accompanying him to a service in the Reformatory. Again, the scene is recreated and made real for the reader, even after one hundred and fifty years.

*Carved graffiti found on wooden plank in the monastery paint store in 2004.*
The Victorian words are powerful and evocative, and it did not seem to lessen their impact that no material evidence of the boys’ existence had remained, but the story came to life when an exciting artefact was found on top of an old cupboard in the monastery. A wooden plank covered in carved graffiti, names, numbers and self-commiserating phrases ‘poor old basket’ had lain undetected for over one hundred years. There was a very clear carving of the implements of physical punishment which most of the boys had had to endure as part of their sentence before being sent to a reformatory, and possibly for misdemeanours conducted within. This was the voice of the boys themselves, and, so far, the only personal record of their experiences.

I had thought that uncovering so much information would quench my thirst for knowledge of how the boys had spent their years of punishment in the area I know so well, but that has not been so. There are now more questions. What happened to them after they returned home? Did they tell their children and grandchildren of their exile from home? Did any of them write about their experiences? The day that a family historian arrives at Mount St Bernard with a tentative query about an ancestor is eagerly awaited, but meanwhile there is a certain satisfaction in knowing that for the majority of the boys there were good times, kind mentors, and much more wholesome surroundings than their inner city homes.

Notes and References:

More about this interesting story can be found in Maureen Havers book, *The Reformatory at Mount St Bernard Abbey 1856-1881* (Mount St Bernard Abbey, 2006).


Acknowledgements:

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Beaumont Leys and its Parks

Stefan Cabaniuk and Anthony Squires

Beaumont Leys, lying to the south of Thurcaston and to the east of Anstey, today forms the northern suburb of Leicester. It comprises mostly industrial and retail estates together with extensive areas of housing and some open spaces. The whole has been laid out since the 1970s and further developments are planned. Beaumont Leys has a history of parkland and woodland through much of the middle ages and in places to the present. Today, a significant part of the northern section is municipal parkland in the form of Beaumont Park and Castle Hill Country Park, both of which areas are administered by the City Council. The purpose of this article is to offer a brief description of the two ancient parks and a comment on the modern approach to the term 'park'.

History

At the time of Domesday Book (1086), the area which was later to become known as Beaumont Leys was part of the manor of Thurcaston and extended southwards from the village. The manor descended through the Beaumont earls of Leicester from 1107 until the death of Robert Fitzparnel, the fourth and final earl in 1206. At some point during the years of the second and third earls (1118-65), the manor of Thurcaston was granted to William Faulkener. Successive generations of the same family held it until at least 1384 when one John Faulconer was the tenant. Elsewhere it has been proposed that the huge Domesday woodland of Thurcaston (approximately 1200 acres) lay south of the village and its fields. As will be seen later, the original grant to the Faulkeners does not appear to have included this huge wooded area and it is clear that the tenure of the village and its fields effectively became divorced from that of the woodland at an early date.

In 1207 the earldom of Leicester passed to Simon de Montfort the elder who had married Amicia the sister and co-heir of Robert Fitzparnel. Their grandson Simon, the second earl, (c1209-65) is probably best remembered for his revolt against the king in pursuit of political reform and for his death at the battle of Evesham. De Montfort and the Beaumont earls before him were keen hunters and it is probable that the first park at Beaumont Leys, considered below, was established at some point between the years c1118 and c1220.

Sometime between 1239 and 1240, possibly in 1239-40, this second earl Simon sold a portion of his Thurcaston woodland to the Abbey of Leicester. (4) This was about 320 acres in extent and lay furthest from the village of Thurcaston. Although the monks were permitted to enclose the land with a ditch and make a profit 'as they will', the earl retained the right to hunt over the land he had sold. It was not until 1352 that they were given permission to create a pale, ie erect a deer-proof barrier along their new boundary and, as will be seen, create the Abbot's own park.

At about the same time as this sale to the Abbey, de Montfort also granted land at Beaumont Leys to the Knights Hospitallers, and not the Knights Templars as some other...
Beaumont Leys was held by Henry of Bolingbroke, Earl of Leicester and Duke of Lancaster. It passed to the crown when Henry ascended the throne as Henry IV in 1399. Thereafter, Beaumont Leys was administered as part of the Duchy of Lancaster estates. Some of the Duchy lands lying to the north of Leicester, which had been run as a private chase by successive earls, now became royal forest and were administered under forest law. However, there is no evidence that Beaumont Leys was included in this arrangement. When, in 1482, King Edward IV exchanged the rectory of Boston, (Lincs.), with the Hospitallers, he came into unencumbered possession of Beaumont Leys and enclosed at least part of it with a pale as a deer park. He died in the following year.

Beaumont Leys was included in this arrangement. This fifteenth century record is not the first mention of a deer park at Beaumont Leys. In the novum Rental, the register of Leicester Abbey, it is stated that the community was entitled to one tenth or half the wood of the ‘park of Bellemonte’. (7) This reference to a secure enclosure which has been dated by Professor Cox to 1341 (8) will be examined below.

A commission from Henry VIII in 1524 found the park well stocked with deer and the following year the king granted it to Thomas Grey, the second Marquess of Dorset. (9) At that time enclosing land for sheep grazing was a highly profitable form of agriculture and the 900 or so acres at Beaumont Leys offered the marquess a very considerable business opportunity. However, it is doubtful if the exchange for the Marquess’s manors near London ever took effect since the following year the park was declared to be Duchy property. Shortly afterwards, Beaumont Leys was disbarked and much of the grazing granted to the people of Leicester for their domestic stock.

Queen Elizabeth granted Beaumont Leys to Sir Henry Skipwith and it subsequently passed through the Moseley and Maynard families. In 1686 Sir William Rawlinson owned the property, by which time it had been divided into a number of farm holdings of arable, pasture and remnant woodland. The next owners, the Aislabies, made improvements to Beaumont Leys House and its grounds and planted avenues of elms. Miss Lawrence, the next owner, passed it on to the Ricketts family who sold it to the Tempests.

Over the period 1885-1901 Sir Robert Tempest transferred the entire Beaumont Leys estate to Leicester Corporation for use as a sewage disposal works linked to an agricultural scheme known as the City Farms. The pumping of sewage from the town’s Abbey Sewage Works spanned the years 1890-1964, after which the sewage farm was dismantled, leaving a considerable landscape legacy of banks, ditches and drains.

Beaumont Leys, conceived as a new satellite town to house Leicester’s growing population, was developed over the period 1972 to 1989. The population in 2001 was 13,838. There are further plans for a development called Ashton Green which will be sited to the east of Castle Hill. It will be a sustainable residential community of 3,500 dwellings which will extend over 400 acres (160 hectares).

**Topography**

Beaumont Leys takes the form of a low plateau mostly above the 250 feet contour and rises to a maximum of 311 feet in the centre. Beneath Castle Hill the land drops sharply towards the Anstey Brook and to the south more gently to
the river Soar. The soil is heavy clay and difficult to work. These conditions, together with its exposed nature, go some way to explain its lack of settlement at the time of Domesday Book and its subsequent history as wood, wood pasture and parkland.

Unfortunately, the documentary evidence relevant for reconstructing the history of the parks of Beaumont Leys is poor. So too is that from the archaeology on account of the fact that the landscape has undergone such radical change. Air photographs have proved of limited use and the earliest field names, those on the Rawlinson map of 1686 (see opposite), appear to be modern. The following account summarises the available information including that of surviving ancient features as recognised by the writers from field survey.

The most important archaeological feature is Castle Hill which commands fine views in all directions. It is composed of a system of banks and ditches which describe a large but irregular rectangular enclosure. Its origins remain uncertain but the limited investigation to date suggests it is a site of multi-period occupation from possibly the Neolithic to the middle ages. (10) It may have been occupied by the Hospitallers as a centre for the day-to-day running of their estate here. Confirmation of this awaits a time when a thorough investigation becomes possible. (The site will not be considered further in this account).

The earliest known map of Beaumont Leys is that of 1686 when the property was owned by Sir William Rawlinson. (11) This remains the base map for the purposes of this account. It describes an area of 1122 acres which is probably much the same as that of the Duchy of Lancaster estate surveyed in 1526. There is no evidence to suggest that the various owners or lessees during the period 1526-1686 added to, or parted with any part of the estate.

The Domesday Wood of Thurcaston extended southwards from the open fields of the village almost as far as the northern bank of the river Soar. Here was a wooded landscape with expanses of grassland together with areas thickly covered with trees. The land in the south-west where (the later) Beaumont Leys adjoined the manors of Birstall

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**Figure 1: Beaumont Leys in its landscape context in the seventeenth century.**
and Belgrave supported the best stands of woodland. These were carefully guarded and managed against the herds and flocks of the local communities and in favour of the wild deer. By the time of the Domesday Book, the grazers may have already gained the upper hand which saw the inexorable decline of the tree cover. Certainly by the twelfth century, woodland conservation here, as on Charnwood Forest, was a matter of much concern to manorial lords.

The Early Boundaries of Beaumont Leys

We are now in a position to attempt a brief outline of the probable origins of the boundaries of the estate in 1686 as shown on the Rawlinson map, fig 1 and fig 2. The southern border, from Roydene Crescent Point (A) to Calverhay (B) and the south western border from Calverhay north to Bow Wood Field (C) separated Beaumont Leys from the Lands of Leicester Abbey after 1240. The development of the Abbey’s demesne estate has been described elsewhere. (12) The south-west border, from Roydene Crescent (A) north to Gorse Hill (D) follows the present Anstey Lane. The ancient nature of this route, from Leicester towards Anstey and on to Ashby-de-la-Zouch, has been well established. (13) Field survey reveals that the entire length is marked intermittently by the remnants of an ancient bank. The ditch which would have accompanied it is discernible in places and it is best to regard the feature as a wood bank. Anstey Lane was formerly a wide drove road for moving sheep and cattle to and from Leicester. The bank prevented the animals from entering the woodland and/or grazing the pastures of Beaumont Leys.

North from Gorse Hill (D) and as far as point (I), much of the boundary is marked only by a shallow field boundary ditch. The irregular nature of this line can be accounted for by two main factors. The first is the flood plain of the Anstey Brook which in medieval times gave rise to a wide meadow. The second was the creation of assarts (reclamations for agriculture of land in a wild state) by the tenants of Leicester Abbey in the area. (14) These were created on land rising from the flood plain and which had been granted to the Abbey by de Montfort.

The first section of the line between (I) and (J) has been determined by the boundary of Park Field, one of the great open fields of Thorcaston, which was enclosed by act of Parliament in 1798. This line, along the northern section of the Rawlinson map, was the parish boundary in the late nineteenth century had possibly become established as such by the end of the twelfth century, ie about the time when the first de Montfort received his lands at Beaumont Leys. In a similar manner, the line from (J) to (K) can be explained by reference to the open fields of Birstall which were similarly subject to the eighteenth century parliamentary enclosure.

We now return to the south-east boundary, beginning at point (A). The origins of the course of this line as it moves in a north-easterly direction as far as Calverhay (B) thence to Stoney Lane and finally northwards to Bow Wood Field has been described elsewhere. (15) A brief summary will suffice here. The line was established by de Montfort’s sale to the Abbey in 1240. This land was referred to in the Chronicle of St Albans Abbey as his ‘noble wood’ (16) and details are given in a charter of Leicester Abbey. (17) The area of land lying to the south of the southernmost border of the Rawlinson estate, (A) to (B), was subsequently enclosed as a deer park by the Abbot in 1352. The land to the east of the line (B) to (G), in the area of the present Stocking Farm estate, was retained by the Abbey as woodland and wood pasture. After the Dissolution in 1538, both areas passed into private hands. At the same time, Beaumont Leys was retained by the crown as part of the Duchy of Lancaster.

The remaining section of the boundary on the Rawlinson map, (G) to (L) concerns Bow Wood Field. It was shown as the parish boundary on the map of the Belgrave Enclosure Award of 1657 (fig 1). (18) Here is a remarkably clear example of a community, in this case the people of Belgrave, successfully establishing a share of woodland in an area where the tree cover was fast declining. It is suggested that this boundary was in existence by 1240, and possibly earlier.
From the above brief considerations it would appear that the boundaries shown on the Rawlinson map had probably been established by the middle of the thirteenth century. Records of the following century indicate that Beaumont Leys was mostly pasture with some woodland. (19) The best areas of surviving woodland were permanently fenced and carefully managed, primarily for wood and timber but also for limited grazing.

The First Park of Beaumont Leys

The deer park became a common feature of the medieval landscape. Monarch and nobles alike set aside land as one way of ensuring a reliable supply of deer for hunting, of conserving blocks of woodland and providing for additional grazing for more valuable stock such as horses. The perimeter of the chosen area was marked by a deep ditch and a bank on which was erected a stout fence. The deer were retained within the enclosure and their roaming there checked by internal fences. Parks typically occupied between 100 and 150 acres and tended to be noticeably oval in outline. Many of the medieval parks known for Leicestershire were established on the sites where woodland was recorded by Domesday Book. (20)

Chiefly from the Rawlinson map of 1686 and the Lawrence map of 1851 (21) we identify one such park. The date and circumstances of its establishment are undocumented but we believe it to be the ‘park of Bellemonte’ mentioned in 1341 in the novum Rental. This park must be added to the list of the known parks for Leicestershire. (22) The proposed boundaries are shown on fig. 2. Since the area enclosed is now almost entirely built over or otherwise archaeologically ‘dead’, we have used a pattern of field boundaries shown on the Rawlinson and Lawrence maps.

The supposed enclosure may, of course, have been established simply and exclusively as a reserve of woodland, but in terms of size, shape and topography there is no known
parallel for an enclosure of this nature in Leicestershire before the mid-fourteenth century, except perhaps at Buddon Wood on Charnwood Forest. (23) As Rackham has pointed out, whatever else the term ‘park’ at this time meant, it certainly indicated the presence of deer. All the earls of Leicester were keen hunters and the area under consideration appears to have had all the attributes of a hunting park. (24)

The first clue to the origin of the boundary is the area of High Park, an enclosure made for deer by the abbot of Leicester following the Abbey’s purchase in 1240 (fig 1). It occupied 56 acres and is first shown on the William Senior map of 1613. (25) Alone it lacks all the characteristics of a medieval deer park. Rather it is a small southern remnant of what was once a much larger entity.

Having proposed what we believe to be the southern line, it is possible to extend the western boundary along a distinctly curving line (fig. 2) which was respected by the boundaries of closes established in later years and certainly at the time of the Rawlinson map. The proposed eastern boundary of the park follows or is followed by the ancient route from Cropston to Belgrave via Stoney Lane. This route is mentioned in 1240. The park thus described encloses some 420 acres including the 56 acres of the Abbot’s section called High Park. A possible but less likely alternative line for the northern boundary of the park is shown on fig. 2 and this would give an area of 340 acres, including the Abbot’s portion.

As noted above, the existence of a park is recorded in 1341. This was a century after its division into two parts. De Montfort’s section on the northern side probably still contained deer; the area certainly contained woodland to at least 1526. The Abbot’s section contained woodland (and probably deer) since de Montfort retained the right to cross into High Park in pursuit of his quarry.

The Second Park of Beaumont Leys

As proposed above, the boundaries of the estate in 1686 were much the same as those of the year 1240. The remnant park together with much if not all of the land of Beaumont Leys passed from the de Montforts to the Hospitallers. In 1338 the Knights had 220 acres of land worth 4d an acre; meadow and pasture worth £41-6s-4d; and orchards worth 6s-4d a year. (26) In 1502 there were ‘meadows and pastures’. (27) In line with the nation-wide movement of enclosing for sheep, the landscape was divided into large enclosures.

Having completed his exchange with the Hospitallers in 1482, Edward IV erected a pale along the boundary between points B and C (fig 2) to create his ‘new park’ at Beaumont. It seems likely that the area emparked extended over the entire Rawlinson estate. Late large medieval parks were seldom entirely enclosed by the traditional ditch, bank and fence. The cost of erection and maintenance was usually too great. Only those areas reserved for hunting and containing stands of prime woodland were stoutly secured. Other acres not so enclosed were also referred to as ‘park’.

Beaumont Leys after 1530

Beaumont Park in about the year 1500 contained approximately 1048 acres. The exchange with the Marquess of Dorset, noted above, was in effect a fiction, for such an area would hardly have supported the 3000 deer he was allowed to keep along with the sheep and other grazers which would also have been present.

In the fifteenth year of his reign, Henry VIII had the park surveyed. His commissioners reported that it contained at least 800 deer and that there were ‘two fair lodges’ the roofs of which needed new slates. These were presumably on the sites of the present Beaumont Leys House/Home Farm and Beaumont Lodge. In addition, there was a great number of timber oaks about 80 years old. (28) Unfortunately, the data which the commissioners supplied cannot be used for determining boundary lines on the landscape, as it has not been found possible to reconcile linear measurements with stated acreages. The area of the park was given as 424 acres; that of the first wood – ‘the little wood of Beaumont Leys’ – as 43 acres and that of the wood ‘adjoining the Abbot of Leicester’s park pale’ as 170 acres. The total value was £453-6s-8d. (29)

The commissioners also reported that the lopping and cropping of the trees produced an income but added that the land would be of more value if the trees were removed in favour of sheep and cattle. However, they were mindful that some of the people of Leicester drew wood from the area and warned that ‘if the king’s wood in the Frith and the forest of Beaumont (ie Beaumont Leys) should be sold the king’s town of Leicester, his tenements and inhabitants within the same should be greatly hurt and in a short time likely to decay’. (30)

By 1530 the days of Beaumont Leys as a park were at an end. The Tudor traveller John Leland noted; ‘Bellemontelease sumtyme a great park by Leicester but now converted to pasture’. (31) In Elizabeth’s reign Beaumont Leys was described as being divided into two parts. The northern section of about 420 acres was called Bonneys Walk and the southern one of about 502 acres was known as Temple Walk. The open nature of the landscape is clearly indicated by the term ‘walk’ meaning ‘a range of pasture’. (32)

Ancient Routeways

Four of what we discern as ancient pathways over Beaumont
Leicestershire Historian 2007

Leys, as derived from the Rawlinson map, are shown on fig. 2. All are but sections of much longer routeways which linked local settlements to more distant ones. That which linked Cropston to Belgrave is mentioned in 1240 as ‘the footpath from Cropston’. (33) Its course was one of the factors which determined the eastern edge of the first and second parks. The routes of the other three also appear to be related to the proposed line of the pale, including entry and exit points. The importance of Stoney Lane as the main route to and from Belgrave through formerly wooded countryside is quite clear.

The Third Park of Beaumont Leys

Now, almost five centuries after the abandonment of the second park, a new style of park for the area, the ‘Country Park’, has been established. The contrasts with its forerunners could hardly be greater. It has been created by Leicester City Council, rather than by one individual, and the finance concerned has come from the taxes of many thousands of individual citizens. It has been created to serve the widest possible community of both residents and visitors alike.

Strictly speaking, this latest park is composed of several separate discrete parts, including Castle Hill and the appropriately named Beaumont Park, which are open areas not covered by urban development. Linked to the public rights of way network, these modern parkland areas provide opportunities for many forms of recreation, other than hunting, with pitches for outdoor sports, playgrounds for children, attractive country walks and habitats for wildlife. Such provision certainly challenges the traditional views of the term ‘park’ by introducing the modern term ‘green spaces’. Once again, as we see at Beaumont Leys, the local landscape changes to reflect the social and economic structure of the society it serves.

Notes and References

1. An extended version of this article can be seen at The Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland at Wigston (ROLLR). A copy can be obtained from the Parks Service, Park House, Abbey Park, Leicester LE4 5AQ.
4. Calendar of Charter Rolls (1226 – 57), 408 gives a date of 1252 David Crouch in Storey et al (2006), 267 – 68 suggests a date of 1399x1246, and probably 1239x1240. The date of 1240 has been adopted throughout this account.
6. Rotuli Hundredorum (Record Commission) 1, 238.
7. ROLLR: MFV/2 folio 159.
9. ROLLR: 28 D64/1.
11. ROLLR: 3D42/M12/6.
19. John Nichols 1/2/Appendix 84.
21. ROLLR: 3D42 M51/5.
27. TLAS xii, 70.
28. The National Archive (formerly The Public Record Office) TNA DL 43/14/6.
30. TNA DL 3/ 16/ 3.
32. Barrie Cox 1998, 249.
Rothley and the Abolition of the Slave Trade
Terry Sheppard

On the 8th February 1788 the 29 year old Thomas Babington wrote to his wife of just over three months about his involvement in an abolition rally in Leicester. ‘You are, I dare say, very anxious to hear how matters proceeded at Leicester. We had not so large a meeting of County Gentlemen as at Stafford, but the town afforded us a large supply’. ‘I opened the business to about 150 people’, Babington wrote. Continuing, he added, ‘judging there would be no opposition, I spoke for about 5 or 6 minutes. I was seconded by Dean Nichols, who to my surprise happened to be in Leicestershire. He gave a particular account of the treatment of the Negroes, and in a part of his speech where he argued against determining the point from matters of policy, he was extremely animated, introducing quotations from scripture with a force which I believe affected the whole meeting’. ‘The petition was agreed unanimously, and Gisborne and I are to take it up to London’.

On 22nd February 1788 Babington wrote to his wife again, this time from London where he and his brother-in-law Thomas Gisborne were staying with the Roos family. ‘Yesterday evening we were in the House of Commons [the Public Gallery] and were extremely entertained. You will see the subject of the Debate in the Paper, so I will not send it to you. Mr Pitt was uncommonly forcible and convincing. I have never heard him more clear and strong in his argument or more happy in his language. Gisborne was highly pleased with the Debate: to him it had more of novelty than to me. As soon as we returned we found a note from Wilberforce inviting us to Supper. We went, and spent a very agreeable evening with him’.

So just eight months after the formation of the London Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade these two county gentlemen are organising in their local patches. Babington, the squire at Rothley Temple, and Thomas Gisborne, the squarson at Yoxall Lodge, deep in the Needwood Forest in Staffordshire, had assembled opinion in the two counties and taken the resultant petitions up to Parliament. This February 1788 trip looks like a first for Gisborne, as his presence in the gallery of the Commons ‘had more of a novelty than to me’. Babington was clearly an old hand at this.

The Supper with Wilberforce was significant. Gisborne and Babington had been at St John’s College Cambridge together in the late 1770s, and Gisborne had later married Babington’s sister Mary in 1784. Wilberforce had been at St John’s too, quartered in the study next to Gisborne. The trio had forged deep bonds with each other.

The occasion gave the three the chance to catch up on how life had moved on since those days at Cambridge, and to observe the great change that had come about in Wilberforce. His hectic socialising of the Cambridge days had given way to an earnest lifestyle motivated by his newly-found Evangelical Christian faith. On the one hand Babington wrote in awe-filled praise at the huge workload Wilberforce has taken on. As well as his large constituency post bag, Wilberforce had just launched his crusade to upgrade the nation’s virtue, the popularly called Proclamation Society, as well as having pledged himself to bringing the slave trade issue to Parliament. In his 22nd February letter to his wife, Babington articulated the motives
he sees in Wilberforce: 'He is continually active in some good cause which he espouses with the zeal of a man impelled, not by the fluctuating motives of vanity or ambition, but by a strong sense of duty'. Then on the other hand Babington saw his friend with his already 'delicate constitution', 'sinking under the extent of business'. Babington lays out to his wife his admiration for Wilberforce, and picked out the qualities that no doubt Babington would like to emulate:

I look up to this little man with a degree of love as well as veneration. What character can be contemplated with more pleasure than that of a man surrounded by venal and ambitious politicians, but himself pure and disinterested -- with abilities which expose him to flattery, and place high official situation within his reach, but yet remaining both independent and free from vanity, pursuing a steady and active course of duty.

The next day Wilberforce collapsed with a stress-related intestinal condition, and entered a long dark period when he had to be away to recover. The rest of the year was spent in spells at St John’s Cambridge, at Rayrigg in the Lake District, at Hull, and at Bath.

By the end of 1788 Wilberforce resumed his place alongside Pitt to assist him with the Regency Bill, the measure to deal with the King’s illness. In the Spring of 1789 Wilberforce made his first astonishing speech calling for abolition of the slave trade, and the question became a matter of hearing evidence in Parliament.

By the end of the 1790 sitting of Parliament, the Select Committee had accumulated a mountain of evidence from witnesses brought before it. Pitt called an election that year, and after being returned unopposed for Yorkshire, Wilberforce made for a summer rendezvous at Gisborne’s home at Yoxall Lodge. Babington and his wife were already there by arrangement. Wilberforce arrived via the Sykes’ Buxton retreat, bringing Marianne Sykes with him to Yoxall, and a trunkload of the evidence heard by the Select Committee. The Cambridge trio spent the whole of that summer and early autumn boiling down that evidence into a useful and concise report that could go to the Members of Parliament, as Marianne Sykes describes in a letter to her mother in Buxton:

...they have never appeared downstairs lately except to take a hasty dinner, and for an hour after we have supped. The Slave Trade has occupied them for nine hours daily. Mr Babington told me last night that he has 14 hundred folio pages to read to detect the contradictions and to collect the answers which corroborate Mr Wilberforce’s assertions in his speeches.....the two friends begin to look very ill, but they are in excellent spirits and at this moment I can hear
them laughing at some absurd questions in the examinations proposed by a friend of Mr Wilberforce's. Every corner of this house is crammed with books, and people are free to read or go out or come in and do exactly as they like. I have left Mr Babington reading to Mr Wilberforce in the corner of the room. Mr Gisborne correcting the proof sheets of his book in another, and Mrs Babington, Mrs Gisborne and I have been ‘discussing’ in the middle of it. We all have supper at eight o’clock and a little after nine wonder that we should sit up so late, and retire to our rooms.

Here are two trusted colleagues, Babington and Gisborne, who after spending weeks in this activity would know Wilberforce’s mind and the nature of the case for and against the Trade better than many people. This close relationship would see itself further worked out in Wilberforce’s London home, Old Palace Yard, where Babington and Gisborne, variously quartered themselves as Wilberforce’s ‘staff team’ in the weeks leading up to the major Spring debates of 1791 and 1792. Babington’s many letters home from Old Palace Yard detail their role in helping their champion become ready for the crucial debates in the Commons. In August 1791 Wilberforce adjourned to Rothley Temple for another long summer working with Babington on the evidence and the resolutions to lay before Parliament in the Spring 1792 session.

The Abolition Bill laid before the Commons in April 1792 won the first decisive vote for Abolition, 230-85. However, that was to be on an amendment by the Home Secretary, Dundas, who slipped in the crucial word Gradual instead of Immediate Abolition. Parliament was admitting its guilt, but was too scared to face the powerful West Indian lobby at this stage. In any case, the Lords were against the measure, and started up their own series of hearings to gather evidence. With the declaration of war with France the next year, the whole abolition movement went quiet. Babington was able to offer a rather special assistance to Wilberforce during this otherwise dark period. After Henry Thornton happily married Marianne Sykes in 1796, Wilberforce came round to the idea of ‘not ending his days alone’. In 1797 with them all at Bath, Babington urged the young Barbara Spooner, who was an admirer of Wilberforce, to write Wilberforce a letter asking for some ‘help on a spiritual question’. Wilberforce met Barbara two days later and the whirlwind romance began.

Babington went on to join Wilberforce in Parliament as one of Leicester’s MPs in 1800, from where he was able to work more continuously as Wilberforce’s unofficial parliamentary private secretary in London. Parliament eventually ended the British Trade in its Bill passed in February 1807, given the Royal Assent on 25th March 1807. The Bicentenary of that event in 2007 has led to a new plaque being installed on the monument at Babington’s former Leicestershire home, the Rothley Court Hotel.

Notes and References:

Terry Sheppard is joint author with lain Whyte of ‘Rothley and the Abolition of the Slave Trade: the mutual endeavours of Babington, Gisborne, Wilberforce and Macaulay’, launched on 25th March 2007 to mark the 200th anniversary of the signing of the Bill that brought the slave trade to an end.

The Babington letters quoted are among the fifty-three to be found in Box 13 of the Babington MSS at Trinity College Library, Cambridge.

The Marianne Sykes’ letter is in the Thornton MSS 7674 at Cambridge University Library.

The Wilberforce material is taken from John Pollock’s Wilberforce, (Lion, London, 1986), p79 et al.

The plaque unveiled at Rothley Court Hotel on 25th March 2007.
Before the 1840s elementary education for the children of the poor in Leicester was provided by charity schools. The first of these appeared in 1780 in St Mary’s parish, where the vicar, Thomas Robinson, appointed a schoolmaster, who set to work teaching fifty children in a rented room. (1) This was followed by the St Martin’s Blue Coat School in 1790, St Margaret’s Charity School in 1807, the County Schools in Holy Bones (St Nicholas’ parish) in 1814 and the British School (funded by the British and Foreign Schools’ Society) in Hill Street in 1831. (2)

Laudable as their development was, these schools were not able to cope with the increasing demands for education from a growing population. Between 1801 and 1841 the population of the town increased from 16,953 to 48,167 (184 per cent). By 1821 St Margaret’s parish housed more than 15,000 people. (3) The new parishes of St George (1829) and Christ Church (1838) were soon to be carved out of it, so that, even though the new St Margaret’s School was opened in 1834 there was no possibility that it could meet with the demand.

It was obvious that educational provision in the town as a whole was hampered by the failure of voluntary agencies to respond adequately to the challenge. By 1851 there were only nineteen denominational schools, twelve of which were parish schools, four being supplied by the Dissenters and three by the Roman Catholics. Joseph Dare, who acted as an enumerator for the 1851 Census, noted that in ‘a population of fifty-six thousand there are not more than six thousand at the Daily Schools’. (4) The fact was that, despite the development of some new parish churches, the Church of England in Leicester was not itself expanding rapidly enough. More people attended the chapels than the parish churches. Even more did not worship anywhere.

Ever a practical man as well as an idealist, Fry saw clearly that evangelism and the provision of school facilities were essentially linked. Both would be served by the judicious purchase of sites that in the future would be needed for schools and churches. He was convinced that the way to build up a worshipping community that would form the nucleus of a new church was to build a school and use it for the evangelising of the surrounding area. As the Reverend Joseph Wood, chairman of the Leicester School Board from 1874 to 1884, noted: ‘He felt strongly that religion and education being joined together of God were

St John the Divine, Leicester (1854). Canon Fry and his friends purchased the sites for the school and church, and had them built. Fry worshipped there regularly. His funeral service in January, 1877, took place there. (With acknowledgement to Geoffrey K. Brandwood, Bringing them to their knees, LAHS, Ecclesiological Society, and Victorian Society, 2002).
matters which no man could put asunder and he ever made the school the forerunner of the Church’. (9)

It is likely that Fry’s inspiration was sparked by George Davys, the Bishop of Peterborough, who in 1839 took over the Leicester Archdeaconry, which had previously been in the Diocese of Lincoln. Davys was not an ideal bishop. He had little idea of system or organisation. C. K. F. Brown said that he ‘ignored political controversy in order to concentrate on the production of pedagogic works of an elementary nature’, that he ‘remained in spirit an usher all his life’, and that he owed his position to the fact that he had been private tutor to the future Queen Victoria. (10) Yet he was generally liked, was noted for ‘his liberality and kindly disposition’, and was especially encouraging to Fry in his endeavours.

(11) Davys erected two churches in Peterborough at his own expense and encouraged a quickening of the church extension movement in Leicester, which took the form of a Church Extension Fund established in 1851. (12)

By 1856 Fry had been responsible for purchasing the site of St John’s School in Ashwell Street, for evangelising the area, and for seeing that the Parish Church of St John the Divine had come into existence. The whole enterprise rested on shaky financial foundations, the church itself being for many years dependent upon pew rents for the vicar’s stipend, but it was functioning. Fry was rewarded with an honorary canonry of Peterborough Cathedral on 27th October, 1856. Bishop Davys’s letter to him stated that ‘I shall be happy to show my sense of your long and effective exertions for the education of the humbler classes of society by placing your name on our list of Canons. I am sorry to say that there is no emolument attached to the office’. (13)

Fry, however, had not finished. There was much more to come. He was further encouraged when Davys’s successor as bishop in 1864, Francis Jeune, the former Master of Pembroke College, Oxford, had caused the formation of the Leicester Archdeaconry Church Extension Association. He had called for ‘an immediate and united effort to supply the deficiency which had been shown to exist especially in the town of Leicester’. (14) For the first couple of years Fry shared the secretership of the Association with Alfred Ellis, but was not re-elected in 1867, perhaps having offended some members by his tendency to purchase sites for schools and churches without reference to the committee. However, coincident with attaining his canonry, came his appointment as honorary secretary of the newly formed Leicester Archdeaconry Board of Education, a position that he continued to fill until his death in 1877.

Probably Fry’s greatest achievement, as far as buildings were concerned, in the 1860s, was the Church of St Andrew in Jarrom Street. The way for this development had been prepared by Fry’s purchase of land in Laxton Street, where a school was built and a congregation gathered. The church was highly praised in a lecture on ‘Modern Leicester’ delivered by Dr John Barclay to the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society on 22nd February, 1864. Barclay described it as ‘a missionary church, set down in a new and populous district’. Designed by Gilbert Scott, it was described thus:

There is not a brick nor a stone that could be spared from the structure; and most admirably does it meet the want for which it was erected....everybody can see, and everybody can hear, and a glance round its well-filled open seats shows how much it was wanted, and with what success Mr. Scott has designed a preaching church.... The marvellously small cost of the building, between £4,000 and £5,000, shows what may be done with small means, and does honour to those who, with the indefatigable Canon Fry at their head, undertook its construction. (15)

More than two decades later it was noted, at a Church Extension Association meeting, that to Fry ‘the churches of St John, St Andrew, St Matthew and St Paul....owe their existence; and it was by his foresight that the very land on which the Church of St Mark now stands was secured some years before it was required’. (16)

It was the development of St Peter’s, Highfields, however, which best exemplifies that way in which Fry worked. He had worked hard to win the support of Bishop William Connor Magee, appointed in 1868 after Jeune’s sudden death. In this he had been so successful that Magee’s stated policy was to place:

St Andrew’s, Leicester. Canon Fry as the Secretary of the Leicester Archdeaconry Church Extension Association was responsible for the construction and opening of the church. (With acknowledgement to Geoffrey K. Brandwood, Bringing them to their knees, LAHS, Ecclesiological Society, and Victorian Society, 2002).
An earnest and spiritually minded man in a ....district....and if he were the right man he would show it by gathering around him the people of the place, and when he had filled some small room....and gathered a congregation....then when the church was built it would be filled with a congregation already trained, instead of remaining empty till a new man could get a congregation into it. (17)

The 1875 street map of Leicester indicates that there was a network of streets around the Union Workhouse and Joseph Wood's Congregational Church. The population in 1872 was about 4,000; two years later it had increased to about 10,000. (18) Though lying within St George's parish, it was relatively inaccessible from there because of the Midland Railway to the south. Although a church had been planned, the land which had been purchased for it was in an area not yet populated. Fry's response to the situation was to purchase land for a school in the already populated area. The Upper Conduit Street (known originally as the Kent Street) School was built rapidly and was soon host to a congregation attracted by Fry's son, William Targett Fry, who was appointed as an assistant curate at St George's with special responsibility for the Highfields area. By the time that Francis Robinson was appointed vicar in 1874 and the new church, St Peter's, was ready for consecration there was already an enthusiastic and energetic congregation. There was also another new school near the church, where services were also held; Fry had persuaded the recently widowed Elizabeth Brook, the lady of the manor at Enderby, to pay for the land and the erection of the school. (19)

Fry's contribution to education, however, was more than the building of schools. He took an active interest in what went on in the classroom, in particular concerning himself with the training of pupil teachers. By 1842 the St Margaret's Schools were reputed to have eight masters in process of training, all supervised by Fry himself. Andrew Irvine, the vicar of St Margaret's, stated that 'after they had attended.....Day after day I found him in St Margaret's New Schools, sedulously and successfully occupied in their improvement'. (20)

During 1842 Fry attempted to develop a training college for teachers. Plans were made for the development of a college in association with the Collegiate School, an Anglican proprietary school that at the time was suffering severe competition from the non-sectarian Proprietary School in New Walk. This, however, was a failure; the upper middle-class boys at the school had no interest in teaching in elementary schools. (21) As if to underline Fry's disappointment, the Leicester Journal published a report from the principal of the National Society's Training College for Schoolmasters in Chelsea, which stated that student teachers 'should not take from the upper ranks of society. Boys bred in refinement....would with difficulty be made to accommodate themselves to the discipline of the Institution and still less to its objects'. (22) Thereafter Fry restricted himself to the training of pupil teachers, young people from working class backgrounds who were the most proficient in the 3Rs.

By 1870 there were 33 public elementary schools in Leicester, 23 of which were Church schools, with 6,500 places out of 10,355. In that year the Forster Elementary Education Act made non-denominational school boards a possibility. Fry, along with other Leicester clergymen, had hoped to stave off the threat of board schools competing with church schools. His friend, David Vaughan, the vicar of St Martin's, stated in a sermon that 'the time must come....when, in education....each denomination of Christians must stand on its own efforts and its own sacrifices, if it would secure any place at all in the education of the children of the poor'. (23)

The Education Act aimed to provide a school place for every child up to the age of thirteen years. Where voluntary agencies, like Churches, were unable to provide sufficient school places, a school board could be elected to provide schools to fill the gap. Towns like Peterborough, which were church-dominated, never needed a school board, but in Leicester, where Liberal Nonconformists were in a majority, it was a foregone conclusion that there would be a school board. This was elected for a three-year term in January 1871. (24)

What Fry quickly realized was that, if Church candidates could gain a majority on the new Leicester School Board, the Church of England could continue to dominate the educational scene in the town. Since the voting system allowed 'plumping' or cumulative voting (i.e. the placing of all of an elector's votes (thirteen in Leicester) on one candidate), it not only ensured that no one party could win every seat, but it also ensured that a party which fielded only seven or eight candidates rather than thirteen stood a good chance of gaining a majority. Fry put himself forward, and also persuaded David Vaughan, A. A. Isaacs, J. N. Bennie (all clergy), J. Hollingworth (a wine merchant) and John Barrs (a tea dealer) to stand. He also persuaded R. W. Worwick, a Roman Catholic, to stand. The result was that all the Church Party candidates and the Roman Catholic were elected. With Worwick's assistance, the Church party, therefore, had a majority. (25)

Fry managed to delay the introduction of board schools until 1874. Even then, when the first five schools (Syston Street, Slater Street, King Richard's Road, Elbow Lane and Oxford Street) appeared they were clearly designed not to compete too obviously with Church schools, either in their style of
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Slater Street Board School (1874). Canon Fry bought most of the land that formed the site, and was a member of the Leicester School Board when the school was opened. (With acknowledgement to Barry Haynes, Working-class life in Victorian Leicester, Leicestershire Libraries and Information Service, 1991).

building or in their location. The location of schools in fact was sometimes determined by Fry's habit of buying up land for school building. Slater Street School was built on land that had already been partly purchased by Fry and partly by G. A. Robinson, a keen member of the Reverend Augustus Isaacs' Evangelical Christ Church. (26) Even after Fry's death in 1877 it was noted that he had purchased the land for a school in Deacon Street, had built the school, and had been in process of transferring it to the Board's jurisdiction. (27)

After the first triennium of the Leicester School Board's existence the next election saw the Church party's dominance give way to a Liberal-Nonconformist majority. The clergy were reduced to three – Isaacs, Edmund Davys (of Holy Trinity) and Fry himself – and Barrs and Hollingworth were retained. (28) By this time Fry had realized that church dominance was no longer possible. His interest in schools remained, however, as strong as ever. He remained as a member of the Board until he retired at the next election in 1877, shortly before his death at the age of 87 years, when much praise was expressed. Perhaps the most apt eulogy was that of A. Ellis at a meeting of the Church Extension Society:

A large portion of the late Canon Fry's work was unostentatious. His life was one of continual labour, and the way in which he promoted the interests of pupil teachers was beyond what people now living would be willing to believe. No day was too long for Canon Fry, and the amount of correspondence he carried was very great. (29)

References:
2. S. H. Skillington, A History of Leicester (Leicester, 1923), 137.
4. Ibid., 46-47.
7. One wonders if John Moore was a son of the John Moore who was reputed to have taught poor children on Sundays in Leicester in 1778. See A. T. Patterson Radical Leicester: A History of Leicester, 1780-1850 (Leicester, 1954), 20.
9. Ibid.
16. Leicester Journal, 22 June, 1877.
17. Ibid., 22 June 1874.
19. Leicester Journal, 22 June 1877. Charles Brook, Esq., J.P., who had been lord of the manor and patron of the Living of Enderby, before his death, had had the school there enlarged at the cost of £200. He left £500 to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and £500 to the Marine Society. His widow, Elizabeth, continued to reside at Enderby Hall, ‘a large and handsome mansion with extensive park-like grounds’ See Harrod’s Directory of Leicestershire and Rutland (1870) and White’s Directory of Leicestershire and Rutland (1877).
20. Leicester Journal, 29 April, 1842 and 29 April, 1842.
21. Ibid., 29 April, 1842.
22. Ibid., 2 December 1842.
23. Ibid., 7 & 14 October, 1870.
26. Leicester School Board Minutes (Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland, 19D59/VI/3), 18 September, 1871.
27. Leicester Journal, 22 June 1877.
29. Leicester Journal, 29 June 1877.
The Making of the English Landscape: Leicestershire
by W. G. Hoskins: a personal appreciation
Anthony Squires

This year sees the 50th anniversary of the publication of a book in the Preface of which its author wrote that it was 'an attempt to interpret to others the significance of what people see in streets and fields, the history that lies behind the scene of everyday existence'. (1)

The present writer wishes to record his appreciation of the contribution Hoskins's book has made to an understanding of this county's history and to record the personal pleasure and interest it has given to him over many years.

William George Hoskins (1908-1992) was a Devon man whose ancestors were yeomen farmers through almost four centuries. These rural connections were to influence his approach to much of his writing. He came to Leicester in 1931, aged 23, as assistant lecturer in economics at University College, which was then an outpost of London University. He spent the years of the Second World War 'imprisoned', as he describes the experience, in Ministry Offices in London. Later he moved to a post at Oxford University as a lecturer in economics. In 1965 he returned to Leicester as professor of a new research department of his own creation. This was called English Local History and was unique to British Universities. Although he exercised a strong influence on the development of the subject, unacceptable administrative burdens caused him to take early retirement and he returned to Devon in 1968.

During his career he wrote over twenty books on historical topics and contributed numerous papers to learned journals, including the Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society. But the book which first brought him to public attention and established him as the leader in his new field was The Making of the English Landscape (1955). In this, his style and approach to landscape contrasted sharply with what had gone before. For him geological studies, central though they were to a proper understanding of his subject, presented only the dead, underlying skeleton and framework. The traditional approach to landscape history was seen in the antiquarian collections of facts which resulted in so many of the great eighteenth and nineteenth century county histories, written most often by clergymen too interested in church matters. Fine achievements though they were, these works in Hoskins's view failed to connect the people they contained to the landscape they described. Hoskins regarded them as valuable mines of information to be used in pursuit of his new approach. They were period pieces, separated from their times by the changes brought about by a second and devastating World War.

In the post-war years there were fundamental stirrings and rapid advances in politics, economics, service, the arts and other aspects of a society seeking change. In education, Hoskins's own realm, it was indeed a time for looking forward, with the beginnings of what, during the remainder of his active life, was to become an immense flood of historical knowledge.

Hoskins's major achievement was that he so successfully joined people to landscape. These were usually quite ordinary people, whose daily lives spent securing a living left marks on the landscape. He also found them travelling, worshipping, dying and doing all manner of other things that people have always done. As Charles Phythian-Adams has so aptly remarked, 'Humanity not landscape was Hoskins's prime concern. The highways of his England are not empty and echoing. They are thronged with people; with husbandmen and butchers, with merchants, craftsmen and labourers, with squires and parsons, and even local geniuses'. (2)

In this approach we find the germ of Hoskins's second great contribution. In his English Landscapes (1973) (3) he explains that in his early days 'I felt that everything I was looking at was saying something to me if only I could recognise the language. It was a language written in a kind of code'. Here he also recognised the English landscape as a kind of palimpsest, written and drawn upon by generation after generation. Often the contributions of the early generations are partly (or wholly) obliterated by the contributions of those of more recent times. The totality may be confused and difficult to read, but can be deciphered with careful study. Here, then, was the fourth dimension of the landscape, that of time.

The signs of these 'layers' of history were all around and visible to those who took the trouble to find them. The detailed study of landscape, Hoskins always maintained, inevitably involved long walks and muddy boots. He himself did most fieldwork either on foot or on a bicycle. Research from behind the wheel of a car missed essential clues; small changes in contours would be noticed by the cyclist but hardly detectable in a car and, in any case, hedges blocked vital views. It was essential to get away from perspectives provided only by modern, especially eighteenth century, lines of communication. In Fieldwork in Local History (1967) (4) he recalls with great pleasure his discovery, 'by accident', of the deserted village of Knaptoft, with the remains of the former houses lying beneath the bumpy
pasture field in which he was standing, simply awaiting
recognition. Landscapes, Hoskins said, reveal features that
maps, documents or even the best air photographs fail to
show.

But not all his fieldwork was carried out in the countryside. Hoskins had an eye for, and love of all manner of old buildings. A county's stock of ancient buildings was usually a faithful reflection of changing local and national economic factors. He recognised the decades 1570-1640, years of great prosperity, as giving rise to what he termed 'the Great Rebuilding of Rural England'. This touched every social class except the poorest in town and country alike. It resulted in the construction of many buildings, which survive today as treasured contributions to our stock of ancient artefacts. Churches too, were another of his interests, which is hardly surprising since, as a feature, they probably represent the single greatest repository of the social, economic and cultural history of England.

Fieldwork, Hoskins said, must be pursued wherever the trail may lead and this extended to towns, if not quite to cities. Every town is a special case; one should put aside the guide book and explore on foot. Exeter, which he knew intimately, was one of his 'towns'. Leicester was another, 'despite the wholesale destruction of the antiquity in the enormous goitrous growth of the 19th century'. His third town was Stamford where he was puzzled by the fact that the line of the old Great North Road made a number of abrupt right angle bends through the centre of the town. One morning, while walking in a street called Scotgate, he realised the road had been bending round a feature which Domesday Book indicated had been a new market place, set up in the heart of the Saxon town. In Fieldwork in Local History, Hoskins records with much satisfaction 'all the clues on the ground and in the documents fitted my theory about Stamford perfectly'.

The Making of the English Landscape appeared in local bookshops in 1955 at a time when I was preparing for the 'O' level GCE exams. This was unfortunate since the time spent reading and re-reading the book proved to be a considerable distraction from the effort to study the revolutionary wars of Napoleon, simultaneous equations and reproduction in lower plants. Two years later the Leicestershire Landscape volume appeared; and once again my enjoyment of landscape was in conflict with the needs to meet the demands of the 'A' level syllabuses. I wondered at the time who could fail to be fascinated by the origins and forms of Leicestershire villages and their fields, the building of great country houses and their parks, and the revolution on our local landscape brought about by the parliamentary enclosures.

In one respect at least the book was a disappointment. I was approaching landscape from my early boyhood love of birds and natural history in general; but Hoskins made almost no mention of flora and fauna. It was simply not one of his many interests. To his credit, he put me in touch with the eminent Devon naturalist H.G. Hurrell who introduced me to others with a similar approach. After reading Hoskins I wanted to understand why, for example, in the mid-1940s there were still very ancient oaks - later replaced by conifers - of immense size growing in the Outwoods at Loughborough. These I remembered from visits with my father when I was still a very young boy. And again, why could we hear the nightingale singing in Owston Wood and from so few other sites in the county? Hoskins's books provided no direct information, but the clues it did contain helped me towards a new and deeper appreciation of landscape.

During the 1960s I was fortunate to live in Africa and to travel widely, mostly in pursuit of my wildlife interest. In remote areas, where electricity was largely unknown and where the sound of the internal combustion engine seldom intruded, it was not difficult to draw parallels with some aspects of life in medieval England. Post Independence politicians in East Africa promised voters virgin acres, and landscapes began to change. The forest reserves of western Uganda retreated before the axe, mattock and hoe and from this assarting appeared a landscape of small, irregularly-shaped fields. These were strikingly similar to those created under comparable circumstances by the monks of Ulverscroft Abbey in the silent waste of Charnwood Forest in the middle ages. Again, the wood pastures of Domesday Book, I thought, could be recognised in isolated patches of savannah, the continued existence of which as a resource was governed by the control of wild grazers and the herding of the domestic stock of the people of the surrounding settlements.

The Making of the English Landscape was a major work of historic writing and one which also brought Hoskins to the attention of a wide public. He drew on a broad range of manuscript sources some of which, such as probate inventories, had been notably under-worked by his contemporaries. Others including Hearth Tax Returns, which had already been transcribed and printed, he made a thorough use of. Then, of course, there were the results of his fieldwork which, as he was so often at pains to point out, offered insights and even solutions to problems which no amount of desk bound study could provide. His themes were developed at a local level - history from bottom up - and would be related to the wider picture in a scholarly manner. He was happiest writing on agricultural topics and took particular interest in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century parliamentary enclosures which swept away what he lovingly described as 'a peasant civilization'.

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In his Leicestershire essays, as in most of his writing, Hoskins adopted a relaxed and measured pace and marshalled his facts into a readily digestible form. His presentation made no sacrifice to accuracy and did not prevent him from displaying a considerable literary style, a quality so lacking in other academic historians of his time. In his view of much of the Leicestershire countryside before parliamentary enclosure he writes:

The open field landscape must have been one of great beauty, with its long sweeping lines disappearing miles away over the low Midland horizons, its little clumps of groves of trees, unfenced willow-shaded streams, patches of wild common, winding green balks, neat compact villages gathered round the church spire.... how beautiful it can be at any season of the year....

His vision of landscape was paralleled by that of the eighteenth century naturalist Gilbert White who was the Vicar of Selborne in Hampshire. This curious clergyman also became a scholarly pioneer in another field, that of natural history. White’s woods and fields, streams and commons were wildlife habitats, populated by the plants and animals of the Almighty’s Creation, there to be recognised, described and put into order so that others may share, understand and enjoy. The results of his keen powers of observation and extensive fieldwork were recorded in his acclaimed *The Natural History of Selborne* (1789) which has earned him the accolade of ‘father of English natural history’.

On the importance to early settlement in Leicestershire of a reliable water supply, Hoskins wrote:

So ..... we should salute and venerate the parish pump as the oldest site in the place. It has become a term of abuse, a symbol of a narrow mind, of a limited outlook, in the curious wild desert of modern life; but it was the source from which the living waters flowed unceasingly..... as we contemplate the parish pump we are in the presence of the Origin, the Venerable Source. This prosaic object takes us back to the first human beings who burst through the woods into that unmemorable scene.

Of Wistow he remarks, with deep satisfaction:

Wistow, bordered by the slow stream of the Sence, with its gently sloping grassland dotted with fine trees, is one of those places of which one says instantly it is typical Leicestershire, or even completely English: the little church with its squires’ monuments, the scarcely moving stream, the big house, the park, green, quiet and cuckoo-haunted.

One very much doubts that the modern academic writer on landscape would be allowed such a singular approach to the presentation of his material.

I have already remarked upon the absence in Hoskins’s works of living aspects of the county. In particular, there are few mentions of woodlands although there were and are very many of them, large and ancient and standing prominently in the landscape. In later years, Hoskins was to see develop a particular branch of landscape studies which filled the gap and which became known as historical ecology. We can also point to his light treatment of prehistory and of the Roman occupation in spite of his knowledge of Roman roads. For him, the development of the modern landscape began with a taming of the English forests from the fifth century AD. He made little use of archaeological evidence although, to be fair, the great bulk of discoveries have been made as a result of four decades of amateurs field walking. There is, too, very little consideration of mining in spite of the fact that the extraction of coal, granite and ironstone had become major industries and were contributing much to a changing scene. Charnwood Forest receives very little coverage which is surprising when one considers its marked differences with the landscape of the rest of the county. No, east Leicestershire was where his heart and interest lay and where, as he put it, ‘we can still find deeply satisfying oases of peace’.
The avoidance of a consideration of physical destruction on a large scale and of the ugliness to which it usually gave rise is apparent in Hoskins's other works. His dislike of modern industry is nowhere better demonstrated than by his remarks beneath a photograph of the truly grim landscape around Burslem in the Potteries. 'Imagine being born amid this ugliness' he wrote 'worse still being buried among it'.

In point of fact Hoskins hated the twentieth century and particularly those forces which brought about so much change. In the opening lines of chapter 10 of *The Making of the English Landscape* he reveals his feelings on the subject in much the same way that Richard Jefferies recorded his grave misgivings of change in the nineteenth century and John Clare wrote from the heart a generation or so earlier. For Hoskins 'since the year 1914 every single change in the English landscape has either uglified or destroyed its meaning or both'. 'The term 'overspill' is as beastly as the thing it describes'; and the war plane in the sky over Aldermaston, 'the obscene atom-bomber laying a trail like a filthy slug upon Constable's and Gainsborough's sky', filled him with despair.

There are criticisms of Leicester too. Of South Wigston, which had developed rapidly in the late industrial revolution, he was moved to remark:

The sight of South Wigston on a wet and foggy Sunday afternoon in November is an experience one is glad to have had. It reaches the rock-bottom of English provincial life;


and there is something profoundly moving about it.

He found the Clock Tower 'rich in associations for generations of Leicestershire men and women', surrounded by distasteful attributes of the twentieth century which could and should be corrected. One wonders what he would have had to say of the present Haymarket Centre and the plans for its future redevelopment. But writing of Great Stretton he is away from it all and in a mellow mood. The solitude he found along the Gartree Road moves him to put in a plea for the County Council to declare 'this unhoused and lonely road, rising and falling for miles along gentle slopes in the morning sun' a sanctuary for walkers, cyclists and Horsemen, a nature reserve for human beings.

Hoskins, the product of generations of men close to the land and a lover of pre-Industrial England, was pleased to settle for a leisured view of Victorian life. Of the Stoneygate area of Leicester he remarks with much satisfaction:

It is still delightful to wander in it at certain times of the year.... its real development for solid middle-class families, businessmen and professional men came with the horse-trams in the 'seventies and 'eighties. The wide roads lined with handsome hard wood trees.....the tall gabled houses timbered and Jacobean.....large flowery gardens, the vistas of trees overhanging quiet pavements, the utter absence of wires and gadgets....takes one back seventy years into the very heart and mind of Victorian Leicester.

One has the distinct feeling here that perhaps Hoskins was born a couple of generations too late.

The brief text of the 'Leicestershire Landscape', little more than 30,000 words was greatly enhanced by a collection of well chosen illustrations. Some of the photographs were the work of Frederick Attenborough, the father of two distinguished sons, who was then the principal of University College. Many of the book's views are now historical documents in their own right and others evoke with great skill scenes of a much changed city and county.

I must emphasise that I have been commenting here on the first edition of *The Making of the English Landscape*. There was a subsequent edition in 1976 and one in 1988 in which the 1976 text was reprinted.
unchanged but was accompanied by a masterly overview by Christopher Taylor, who summarised the advances in knowledge over three decades. The ‘Leicestershire Landscape’ did not run to a second edition, so should one be attempted now? Surely the answer must be no. Such has been the increase of the knowledge of the development of this county’s landscape that it would be beyond the power of one person to attempt a detailed synthesis which would prove a worthy follow-up. A team of specialists might usefully produce a meaningful corpus of knowledge; but any new work must adopt an approach and style written in the manner and language demanded by the early 21st century. It must, too, embrace those aspects which Hoskins neglected. No, Hoskins’s ‘Leicestershire’ should be left alone and read and enjoyed for what it is: a great pioneering work in its field of scholarship and a delightful period piece.

With the passage of time I have come to identify with many of the interests and sentiments expressed in the writings of William Hoskins. It is now clear that the Domesday Book of Loughborough occupied much of the present site of the Outwoods and that my ancient oaks were very likely the direct descendants of the trees growing there nearly nine centuries before. Also, I understand it has been the nature of the management over the years of the ancient woods of Owston which gave rise to the conditions the nightingale sought for breeding. The last five decades have been ones full of enquiry, discovery and much enjoyment.

References:

A medieval lane near Launde, contrasting with what was in 1957 ‘A modern main road’: the A6 near Great Glen. (With acknowledgement to W.G. Hoskins, Leicestershire: an illustrated essay on the history of the landscape, (The Making of the English Landscape), Hodder and Stoughton 1957, p110).
We may not know the names of medieval stonemasons, but their vast output of work, in all its variety, does more than simply decorate churches. Their stylised and grotesque foliage and figures offer clues to the attitudes of whole generations of people whose thinking has otherwise been lost from the written records.

Fabulous, hideous and even incongruously bawdy figurative carvings sit alongside characterful human and animal heads, not to mention forests of decorative foliage. Indeed sometimes the foliage and the faces become one and the same, as with the so-called ‘Green Men’.

The craftsmanship varies from quaint, clearly local efforts, to sophisticated displays of stonemasons’ skills, with faces and creatures in wonderfully animated postures. The best examples – and there are many of them – are clever caricatures or imaginatively hideous.

What were these masons thinking about when they were carving? One of the most frequent motifs is a face – usually human but sometimes animal – with one or both hands pulling the mouth. About twenty years ago these were dubbed ‘gurning’ faces, a name which derives from Cumbrian ‘gurning’ (or ‘girning’) competitions for pulling faces. Similar face-pulling contests are still current in Lancashire. However, about three years ago I belatedly encountered Leicestershire Words, Phrases and Proverbs by Arthur Benoni Evans and Sebastian Evans, published in 1881. In this there is an entry which reads:

to make mawns; to 'make faces' in derision. (1)

So perhaps Leicestershire’s face-pulling grotesques should be referred to as mawming gargoyles rather than gurning ones.

Among the mawmers, tongue pokers also abound; indeed some may be both tongue poking and mawming. Also very common are foliate faces and so-called ‘Green Men’, with
A tongue poking Green Man roof boss in Sclaford church porch.

foliage sprouting from their mouth, nose, ears or even eyes. (2) More unusual motifs include naked male contortionists (medieval precursors to modern day ‘mooners’), female exhibitionists (referred to coyly as ‘sheela-na-gigs’) and women wearing a scold’s bridle.

Later in the medieval period, carvings tend to borrow more from heraldic devices so dragons and wyverns (two-legged winged beasts) become more popular. Angels and Biblical subject matter also begin to appear more frequently, although these still do not predominate.

As most rural churches were restored in the mid-nineteenth century, when the Gothic Revival was in full flower, original medieval carvings were retained and, if necessary, restored. Noticeably, the churches which had been restored earlier in the eighteenth century were often radically transformed by Classically-inspired architects who found the ‘Gothic’ medieval decoration abhorrent (indeed, the term ‘Gothic’ was originally derogatory, meaning ‘barbarous and uncouth’); presumably the rubble walls of their rebuilt churches incorporate fragments of the despised and broken-up medieval embellishments.

The Victorian craze for the Gothic may have saved the large majority of the medieval masons’ decorative work, but they were not perfect conservators. The vogue for bare stone meant that all traces of paint were almost invariably removed from interior carvings. So, although the carvings are now bare stone or wood, we should try to image them in garish colours, perhaps with gilding. This is not as speculative as it seems – medieval records survive revealing that the craftsmen painting sculptures were paid as much as the carvers.

One of the roof bosses in Ashby Folville church which have retained their original paint.
There is a vast wealth of decorative medieval carvings in churches, vastly exceeding all other surviving medieval art. Often dozens of examples can be found in a single church and in all there are several thousand in Leicestershire and Rutland.

Frustratingly, even though such carvings are often among the best features of churches, most guidebooks ignore them. It seems that they fall between the cracks of professional interests. They ‘merely’ decorate the functional parts of the structure, so are of secondary interest to most architects. Historians have nothing to offer because there are rarely any documentary references, whilst the subject matter and designs are too far removed from the ‘high art’ of medieval times to fall within the interests of art historians. There is a small number of specialists in medieval folklore, but their interests have so far been restricted to other aspects – the closest has been a study of ‘bawdy’ pilgrims’ badges.

The medieval stonemasons who produced decorative carvings for churches were among the elite of fellow craftsmen, but they were not part of a ‘high art’ tradition. Indeed, even painters and sculptors who are now undeniably regarded as ‘artists’, such as Michaelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci, were merely ‘artisans’ within their own societies. To understand the motifs and imagery, we need to be knowledgeable about the popular culture of the middle ages. The clues are in drinking songs, bawdy ballads and such literature as Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*.

Popular folklore says that grotesque gargoyles are to frighten away the Devil. But this does not explain why similar grotesques and a whole range of images with no Biblical references are found inside the churches. Some have speculated that Green Men and female exhibitionists are evidence for pre-Christian beliefs surviving during the Middle Ages. This suggestion simply does not fit the facts: these grotesques are the product of a deeply Christian culture, albeit part of the ‘popular’ culture that was clearly different from that of the clerical hierarchy, and which existed alongside more pious statues of saints (mostly destroyed in the Reformation) and wall paintings (mostly destroyed during restorations).

However, to be able to draw together the clues as to the meaning of these medieval carvings, we need to know what the clues are. So far, this great wealth of carving is largely unknown and unrecorded. To begin to understand these carvings we need to know more about the distribution of
A very attractive Green Man on the outside of Ryhall church.

motifs (both their locations and estimates of date). Most importantly, specific motifs – such as Green Men or exhibitionists – need to be recorded not on their own but in the context of associated decorative motifs. For example, if a Green Man decorates a nave roof corbel, then the other images in the set of corbels in a nave also need to be known. Information and illustrations about some of the Leicestershire and Rutland examples have been published both in book and in CD-ROM format. (3) However, these cover only a small proportion of the counties’ medieval carvings. Now that digital cameras enable large quantities of photographs to be taken without incurring the cost of film (although cameras capable of taking telephoto lenses are essential) and publication on Web sites or CD-ROM is relatively straightforward, there is little excuse for these treasures of medieval art to remain unknown. If only a small number of people record and publish the carvings in their area then a better understanding of what is out there will quickly be available.

Next time you see a curious carving or especially gruesome gargoyle, think about the mason who made it. Wouldn’t it be wonderful if we could begin to understand his decidedly curious thinking! If everyone who was curious about medieval masons took photographs and built up a collection of local examples then we would be taking long-overdue first steps towards understanding and appreciating the vast wealth of medieval art in Leicestershire.

Bob Trubshaw will be pleased to hear from anyone who shares his enthusiasm for this overlooked aspect of the county’s heritage, and can be contacted by email at: bobtrubs@indigogroup.co.uk

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References and Recommended reading:


One of several interesting roof bosses in Queniborough church.
The name of Elizabeth Heyrick is little known today. Even thirty years or so after Elizabeth’s death, an anonymous biographer recorded the need to ‘raise the veil that time and circumstances have interposed between

John Coltman, father of Elizabeth Heyrick. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, location mark 15D57/458).

her life-long deeds of benevolence and ourselves’. As the unknown author of A Brief Life of Elizabeth Heyrick explained, the world did not know Elizabeth, and ‘she’ felt compelled to set down Elizabeth’s ‘rare talents, her noble qualifications of heart and mind, her unflinching devotion to the cause of Truth, and her generous self sacrifice’. (1) There seems no doubt that the biographer was a woman for the author writes with feeling about the boundaries rigorously marked out for women in Elizabeth’s time: ‘An amount of courage which we can scarcely estimate was required by any woman who chose, or felt impelled by the obligation of duty, to overstep these boundary lines’. That Elizabeth did succeed in surmounting these barriers is not in doubt. Whether one looks upon her as philanthropist, social reformer, animal rights activist or anti-slavery campaigner, she was a remarkable woman whose influence was to make itself felt both here and in America. The humanity and compassion expressed in her literary outpourings are often

Elizabeth was born on 4th December 1769 in an ancient house in St Nicholas Street, Leicester (formerly Shambles’ Lane or Jewry Wall Street) ‘within a stone’s throw of Jewry Wall’. Her father John Coltman (1727-1808) was at this time one of the wealthiest hosiery manufacturers in Leicester but was also known as a man of great learning. William Gardiner (1770-1853), whose father was in partnership with Coltman, described Coltman in his memoirs Music and Friends with great affection as ‘a first rate classical scholar...an insatiable reader and noted antiquarian’. (2) Coltman had been educated at an academy in Kibworth by the Reverend John Aikin (1713-1780), during what his son later recalled to have been ‘the happiest period of his life’. His education completed, Coltman senior moved to London to escape conflict with his stepmother and earn a living as a distiller working for his uncle ‘Page’. It was whilst he was travelling on behalf of his uncle’s business in Matlock, that he first met his future wife. A long courtship ensued, for Coltman, exhibiting a characteristic indecision, hesitated to

Elizabeth Coltman, mother of Elizabeth, known as The Lily of Duffield. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, location mark 15D57/458).
offend an uncle who had his own plans for his nephew. After nearly nine years, the couple were eventually married at Duffield Parish Church, Derbyshire, on 10th October 1766.

Coltman's wife and Elizabeth's mother, Elizabeth Cartwright (1737-1811) was herself a remarkable woman. The only child of a modest yeoman farmer in Duffield, and his wife 'Miss Grace', his former housekeeper, she seems not only to have excelled in beauty but also in intellect. Mrs Cartwright trained her daughter assiduously in household work but as Elizabeth's brother Samuel Coltman was later to recall: 'my mother's mind was of that elevated sort, that the mere drudgery of life could not suffice for its scope, and employment at a time when literary pursuits were little known for women, she cultivated a taste for reading, and fortunately for herself she wanted not friend's capable of leading her to the study of the best authors' She also showed some talent in drawing and 'a most remarkable facility in cutting out on paper, landscapes, figures or flowers'. Her daughter, Elizabeth, would inherit many of her artistic talents, but would perhaps be most profoundly influenced by her religious piety.

The best source for the early family life of Elizabeth Heyrick are the memoirs of Samuel (b.1772), her younger brother, which he dictated to his wife at the age of eighty. Entitled *Time's Stepping Stones - or some memorial of four generations of a family by an octogenarian of the same* (3), the three volumes afford a fascinating insight into the complexities of the Coltman household and eighteenth century Leicester. It is these which form the main primary source for the account of Elizabeth which appears in *Catherine Hutton and Her Friends* by Catherine Hutton Beale. (4)

In all there were five Coltman children: John (b.1768); Elizabeth (b.1769); Samuel (b.1772); Rowland (b.1774) who was destined to die tragically young from consumption and Anne (b.1778) also known as Nancy. With not a little resentment, Samuel recalled in his memoirs the closeness of John and Elizabeth: 'These two were of characters in some respects strikingly similar – and from their childhood preserved that close Attachment to each other, which we their juniors used to think... was too exclusive' Like her elder brother, Elizabeth exhibited a natural sympathy for the neglected and oppressed from an early age. As an example of his sister's nature, Samuel cited an incident of their childhood, when a litter of kittens was about to be drowned and the children disputed which one should be saved. All felt that the prettiest deserved rescue except for Elizabeth: 'my sister Bessy insisted upon the ugliest being preserved to the utter dismay of her tears and remonstrance, a doubtless harried parent agreed that both the prettiest and the ugliest should gain a reprieve.

Samuel's memoir describes a basically happy existence with only little hints at discord, for example when his father resented his wife's preoccupation with the children. In 1772 Samuel and the young Elizabeth's grandfather, Samuel Cartwright, left his native Derbyshire to live with the family in Leicester after the death of his wife. The conflict between John Coltman, a Tory and his puritan father-in-law also made an impression upon the young Samuel who was a great favourite of his grandfather's. Overall, however, the strength of character of Elizabeth's mother predominated and apparently maintained an uneasy peace.

The young Elizabeth was sent with her two brothers to a local Dame School but when the boys were removed to a school kept by a Quaker at Harthill near Atherstone, she remained in Leicester. It was only when an accident with a scalding coffee pot led to Samuel being too ill to attend, that Elizabeth was sent in his place. She was taught separately from the boys with the daughters of the master, to whom she acted as companion outside school hours. Although Samuel recalled that he learnt chiefly habits of punctuality and neatness from the Quakers, Elizabeth would seem to have been influenced on a far deeper level.

Although the children's father was clearly suspicious of their mother's tendency towards 'puritanism', the family worshipped regularly at the Unitarian Chapel until Robert Hall's arrival drew them back to Harvey Lane Baptist Chapel, which had been built on land provided by Coltman's father. Amongst many distinguished guests entertained by the Coltmans, were Dr Priestley and John Wesley, who after preaching at Markfield, stayed with the family and preached in their parlour, where John Bunyan was said to have preached a hundred years earlier.

Elizabeth Coltman senior's concern for the religious welfare of her children is well illustrated by a letter which she wrote to her husband, transcribed with many like it, in Samuel's memoirs: 'That their welfare and happiness in both World's is the highest object of my ambition (next to your own) I know your own feelings will readily grant: and I cannot but think that the likeliest way to secure this is not only by a moral but a pious and religious education'.

Mrs Coltman evidently kept a very close control over her children and she seemed particularly concerned about Elizabeth who: 'grew in stature, as in beauty -was a high spirited child; and evinced early symptoms of pride and self-will, that my mother's anxious eye did not overlook- and which it was her aim to mortify, in hopes of checking them'. So concerned was she in fact, that 'pride and vanity the usual attendants of personal beauty, had insidiously crept into the character of her talented and lofty spirited daughter' that she insisted on Elizabeth travelling in a covered wagon when she went sea bathing at Freestone, 'to the utter dismay...
of the young lady, who had some how imbibed notions of fashion and style, that my mother greatly disapproved'.

Despite such measures, the family could not prevent Elizabeth from falling in love and as her brother Samuel recalled: ‘forming an attachment the very reverse of prudent, to which she was doubtless led in part by her admiration of those external advantages in another on which she had with some justice begun to pride herself’. At the age of seventeen, Elizabeth first made the acquaintance of John Heyrick, the eldest son of the Town Clerk of Leicester. At the time he was just establishing himself in practice as a solicitor in Leicester. The Heyrick family were very well known in the town and related to the Herrick family of Beaumanor. (John’s sister would later marry in to the Macaulay family of Rothley Temple much to the chagrin of Elizabeth’s elder brother). Two years after their meeting at a music meeting, Elizabeth and John were married on 10th March 1789. If her younger brother’s account is to be credited, Elizabeth was greatly admired ‘in the superior circle of the society of Leicester’ into which her marriage introduced her and, freed from her mother’s censure, happily threw herself into an expensive round of entertainments and high fashion. Whether it was financial problems or a general disenchantment with the legal profession prompting him is unrecorded, but Heyrick soon afterwards abandoned his chosen career and entered the army as a Cornet in the 15th Light Dragoons.

In what all sources consent to have been a passionate but stormy marriage, Elizabeth now followed her husband with the army, staying in barracks in England and Ireland. Her brother Samuel often escorted her to and from Leicester and was able to see at first hand the effects of his sister’s husband’s jealous restrictions upon herself: ‘The utmost discretion in my sister’s behaviour, did not overcome in her husband’s ill-regulated mind, the tendency to those jealous fears and suspicions that allowed neither himself nor his wife any respite’. On the same theme, Samuel records that his brother John felt particular ‘animosity’ against Heyrick and even issued a challenge on first hearing of the ‘ill treatment of his wife’. Samuel recalls too, Heyrick’s bad treatment of a horse which he loaned him on joining the army. The strongest evidence of his sister’s melancholy and depression, a trait shared with her father, is provided by excerpts from Elizabeth’s own diaries for this period. In the first of many soul searching entries, written at Croydon Barracks in 1796, she declares: ‘I am now admonished by experience of years, that happiness or peace of mind, are not attainable in the indulgence of the senses, the imagination, or the feelings, whilst they are confined to temporal gratifications; but result only from an unwearied discharge of duty, and anticipation of the glories of futurity’.

Despite their difficulties, the couple did clearly love each other. First Flights, an anthology of poetry by Heyrick which he was preparing for the press at the time of his death in 1797, contains several love elegies to his ‘Eliza’. The first poem in the book, recounting the author’s delight in shooting at fieldfares and larks and even a blackbird, despite the protestations of his wife, suggests at least one conflict of interests within their marriage.

Sometime around 1794, Heyrick retired from the army as a Lieutenant and returned to Leicester to take up an appointment as Captain of the Loyal Leicestershire Volunteer Cavalry. Intriguingly, the historian John Throsby served under Heyrick in the cavalry but is surprisingly reticent about him, remarking only upon his ‘pretty’ poetry.

Elizabeth and her husband moved into Bowbridge House which had been built for them, then a pleasant rural retreat on the banks of the Soar. The sudden death of Heyrick after a heart attack was to throw Elizabeth into new depths of despair. Samuel concluded: ‘Thus ended the short, restless, career of my unhappy brother-in-law – who gifted by nature with no mean talents, and a fine person, debased himself by reckless self-indulgence while he destroyed the peace of mind of an adoring wife by his capricious violence and suspicion. She never recovered the stroke but with a melancholy infatuation persisted in believing herself the principal cause of her late husband’s errors’. For the rest of her life, Elizabeth was to spend the anniversary of her husband’s death in seclusion.

There the sad tale may have ended. Elizabeth, once more under her father’s roof became a recluse, imposing upon herself a rigid discipline of self-denial. Extracts from her diaries for this period afford an insight into a tortured soul striving for self-improvement: ‘I am living at random - days, weeks, and months are passing over me unimproved - I will wait no longer in indolent expectation of these lively and strong impressions, but try to improve such as I have, least the feeble and almost smothered voice of conscience should become quite extinct’. Remarkably, supported by strong friends and family, Elizabeth was gradually to turn away from such egotistical preoccupations ‘till her object became the improvement and welfare of all her fellow creatures - but especially of the neglected and oppressed’.

Although, under her husband’s influence, Elizabeth had attended the Reverend Robinson’s services at St Mary’s, she now found herself increasingly drawn once more to the ideals of her Quaker friends and their duty of self-sacrifice which concurred so closely with her own instincts. It was to be a long spiritual journey and it was not until June 1807 that Elizabeth, then in her late thirties, was accepted into membership of the Society of Friends in Leicester. (5) Thereafter she soon begins to appear in the minutes of the women’s meetings, assisting in superintending the poor but
also more significantly, frequently elected as a representative to attend Quaker meetings in Leicester, Coventry, Birmingham and later even London. This opportunity to travel once more and meet with like-minded people around the country must have been very significant in the development of her social awareness.

By this time, Elizabeth had already overcome severe disapproval from her parents and family in order to set up a boarding school in her former home at Bowbridge. A letter in the Record Office amongst the Coltman papers (6) reveals much about her strength of character. Writing in October 1802, from York, where she was obviously making an effort to improve her educational skills, she responded to her mother’s criticisms with submission to her parents, but also clear determination: ‘the rest of my family and friends disagreeing with me in opinion, is no reason why my own judgement is to be discarded as an useless thing – We are not all endowed with equal degrees of reason and discernment; but, when arrived at years of maturity, every individual must govern his actions according to the measure he has received, and not by that of another- and by this rule, he will be either acquitted, or condemned’. The letter is revealing too about her own motives for seeking employment: ‘I shall find no difficulty in composing my mind to returning home and to a true value and enjoyment of my domestic blessings, but I shall not so easily loose the employment: ‘I shall find no difficulty in composing my mind to returning home and to a true value and enjoyment of my domestic blessings, but I shall not so easily loose the.

She was right, and her parents must have eventually realised this, for Elizabeth was to run a successful school from Bowbridge for several years until an outbreak of typhus led to the school’s relocation to Welford Road. She was still listed as the proprietor in Fowler’s directory for 1815. Letters amongst the Coltman papers suggest that she enjoyed a very close relationship with her pupils. One letter written from Emsworth in 1819 by an ‘I Perry’ addresses Elizabeth as ‘My dearest Mother’ and a later letter reporting the death of an Isabella Perry, bears the annotation ‘an adopted daughter of Mrs Heyrick’s’. (7)

Despite such calls on her time, Elizabeth found time for other charitable works. Long before Elizabeth Fry visited Leicester, she began visiting the local prisons and was moved by the many cases of hardship which she encountered, particularly amongst those convicted for petty crimes like poaching but unable to obtain release because of their inability to pay their ‘gaol fees’. Aided by her brother-in-law, William Heyrick, Elizabeth made representations to the magistrates and eventually paid many such fees in order to liberate the sufferers, much to the annoyance of the authorities concerned. The first of the eighteen pamphlets which she was to publish anonymously in Leicester and London, was a warning against war and appeared in 1805: ‘multitudes, equally unacquainted with the origins and the object, are always eager to rush to the standard of blood’.

Elizabeth first rose to public prominence however, when, by chance, she and her sister chose to visit the Derbyshire village of Bonsall, near Matlock, on the occasion of their annual wake, where she was horrified to learn that the inhabitants still indulged in bull-baiting. Having failed to persuade anyone to intervene, she eventually halted proceedings by buying the bull and leading it off to safety despite ‘the rage and disappointment of the assembled spectators’. Pamphlets on the subject soon followed and with the help of the local curate the practice of bull-baiting in Bonsall and at Uppingham was eventually brought to an end. Elizabeth’s concern for animal welfare was to be again exhibited in a further pamphlet which highlighted the cruelties suffered by animals sold at Smithfield Market, a sight which she had encountered whilst attending a Friends’ meeting in London.

Pamphlets were to follow on subjects as diverse as The Offensive and Injurious Effect of Corporal Punishment (1827), An Appeal to the Electors of the United Kingdom on the Choice of a New Parliament (1826) and A Letter of Remonstrance ...to the Hosiers of Leicester (1825). The latter appeal on behalf of the beleaguered framework knitters is all the more remarkable since Elizabeth could well remember the riots of 1787 when the mob had attacked her father’s house after he had attempted to introduce new machinery into his works.

However, it was to be Elizabeth’s writings concerning the evils of the slave trade which were to earn her renown not only in Britain but also America. Her anti-slavery work had first commenced in 1824, when with her friend Susannah Watts (1768-1842), who had taught French at her school, she went from door to door within the town urging the populace to abstain from buying slave-produced sugar in what must have been one of the earliest appeals for ‘fair trade’. In the same year she published four pamphlets advocating the boycott of West Indian produce as a certain means of effecting the immediate abolition of slavery.

In December of 1824, Elizabeth, Susanna and probably her sister Ann, launched their own periodical entitled The Humming Bird or Morsels of Information on the Subject of Slavery. The title was chosen by the ‘ancient sisterhood’ as they termed themselves, to highlight the great ‘contrast between a gang of slaves driven to their labour by the harsh crack of the whip...and the little Humming Bird buzzing like a feathered bee, free and happy to her voluntary labour’. Using their own writings and those of other abolitionists, the three continued to produce the periodical for eleven months.
In calling for the immediate abolition of slavery rather than the 'gradualist' approach as favoured by most of the male abolitionists of the time, Elizabeth was breaking new ground. Even amongst her own family, her brother Samuel urged upon 'Sister Heyrick' the policies favoured by the Spanish government whereby slaves could purchase a day's freedom at a time 'which will be a stimulus to industry & prevent any violent change either to their proprietors or slaves'. (8) Elizabeth would not countenance such an idea condemning it as 'the very master piece of Satanic policy'.

Between 1824 and 1828, Elizabeth was to publish seven pamphlets concerning the iniquities of slavery. Of these, the most influential and significant was to be *Immediate not Gradual Abolition or an inquiry into the shortest, safest and most effectual means of getting rid of West Indian slavery* (1824), which was eagerly distributed by female anti-slavery societies in this country as well as America. A sample of her style will perhaps explain its success in arousing public interest:

...the detaining of out West Indian slaves in bondage, is a continued acting of the same atrocious injustice which first kidnapped and tore them from their kindred and native soil, and robbed them of that sacred inalienable right which no considerations, how plausible soever, can justify the withholding. We have no right, on any pretext of expediency or pretended humanity, to say 'because you have been made a slave, and thereby degraded and debased—therefore I will continue to hold you in bondage until you have acquired a capacity to make a right use of your liberty.'

The pamphlet was even quoted in the House of Commons as 'the work of some gentleman'.

Despite her differences with some of the leading male abolitionists, many of whom, like Wilberforce, disapproved of the involvement of women, she corresponded regularly with many prominent figures and clearly enjoyed some influence. In April 1825, Elizabeth was appointed treasurer at the inaugural meeting of the Birmingham Ladies Society for the Relief of Negro Slaves. When an appeal went out for the establishment of local branches elsewhere in the country, Leicester was quick to form its own society in June 1825. By 1831, there were at least forty-seven such female anti-slavery associations in Britain, many of them exhibiting far more radical ideas than their male counterparts. Subsequent histories of the anti-slavery movement in this country are largely silent about the role of women like Elizabeth and the work of their societies.
In June 1830, The Birmingham Society submitted a resolution to the National Conference of the Anti-Slavery Society calling for a campaign for an immediate end to slavery in the British colonies. At Elizabeth’s suggestion, the Society added fresh weight to their resolution by threatening to withdraw its funding to the Society if it was rejected. This was no idle threat for the female societies were some of the largest donors to central funds. In the event, the conference was persuaded and agreed to drop the words ‘gradual abolition’ from its title. Although historians have since attributed this change in policy to the influence of male abolitionists, they have overlooked the fact that women had already advocated ‘immediatism’ for several years.

Amongst female societies, Elizabeth’s ideas were certainly remembered with more warmth. As late as 1853, an address presented by the women of Surrey to Harriet Beecher Stowe, author of Uncle Tom’s Cabin, recalled Elizabeth as the first to propose immediate abolition of slavery. Certainly her influence in America, where her pamphlets were eagerly reprinted, is undeniable. It is interesting in particular, that Elizabeth was cited as an inspiration by the abolitionist and feminist Lucretia Mott and this in particular fuelled Mott’s resentment at women being excluded as delegates from the World’s Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840. Already, there were ominous rumblings of a new struggle for women to take up. Years later Christabel Pankhurst would record that American feminists like Mott had been a great inspiration to herself and her mother, Emmeline.

Sadly, Elizabeth Heyrick did not live to see the success of her efforts. She died suddenly in Leicester on 18th October 1831 at the age of sixty-two from a ruptured blood vessel. By the terms of her will, her money and furniture at her house in London Road was to left to her sister and brothers. Her death received little attention outside her close circle of friends and family. The Leicester Journal recorded simply that Elizabeth, the relict of the late John Heyrick died at her house in Friar’s Causeway (10) and announced a sale of her household furniture by auction in the next issue. The Leicester Chronicle was kinder adding to the notice of her death: ‘By her death, the poor have lost a kind and most benevolent friend, and the negro a zealous advocate, as the variously forcibly written pamphlets, published at her own expense most amply testify.’ (11) In a letter published in its next issue the Reverend Charles Berry (1783-1877), minister of the Great Meeting extolled the virtues of his friend of thirty years: ‘I have seen her occasionally in trying circumstances and it was impossible to manifest a nicer sense of honour, a greater indignation against anything selfish and mean, more consideration for the feelings of others or a stronger desire to do that which was right and kind’. Elizabeth, he recalled, had devoted all her husband’s military pension to charity. Her brother Samuel was also moved by the obvious affection in which his sister was held, quoting the comment of one admirer to his wife: ‘She was the highest pattern to the rich, the kindest friend to the poor and one of the greatest ornaments of the town.’ (12)

Only two years later, in 1833, the Act for the Abolition of Slavery in the British Empire was finally passed with effect from 1st August 1834. Amidst the scenes of public rejoicing in Leicester and elsewhere, some of the women at least were to remember Elizabeth’s name. Maybe the claim of her biographer of 1862 was not so extravagant as it first would seem: ‘We regard her as one of the noblest pioneers of social liberty, not only for her own sex but for mankind at large, whom the world has ever known’. It is sad indeed that there is no memorial in Leicester to such a ‘noble pioneer’.

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3. Samuel Coltman, Time’s Stepping Stones — or some memorial of four generations of a family by an octogenarian of the same, 3 vols. ROLLR: 15D57/448-450.
5. ROLLR: 12D39/126.
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7. ROLLR: 15D57/147&166.
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11. Leicester Chronicle. 22nd October 1831.

Acknowledgements: This article expands Jess Jenkins’ article ‘A Woman before her time — Elizabeth Heyrick (1769-1831)’ which appeared in The Dustsheet, Winter 2006, produced by the Friends of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.
This article is a follow-up to that which appeared in the *Leicestershire Historian* (2006) and which examined the evidence for Sutton in the Elms church being the oldest Baptist church in Leicestershire, concluding that whilst Sutton could claim to have the oldest Baptist meeting house in Leicestershire still in use, it did not necessarily have the ‘oldest’ congregation.

Leicestershire Baptists can trace their origins back to the Civil War and particularly to events that brought Cromwell’s Army to Leicestershire during the 1640s. In its wake came Baptist preachers, resulting in a new-found religious freedom that lasted throughout the Protectorate and beyond. To say that these new groups of Christian believers flourished during this period is probably an overstatement. However, they were able to meet openly in their own homes and villages, get together on a regional basis, and publish pamphlets outlining their beliefs which were often contrary to established Christian belief, all apparently without fear of punishment or persecution.

One such group of people were those Baptists who met together at Earl Shilton (geographically not far from Sutton in the Elms) and they first come to light in 1651 when they sent a delegation to a meeting of likeminded believers, possibly held in Leicester, but drawn from the whole of the East Midlands. This committee drew up a statement of belief (1), published as a small booklet or pamphlet and widely available at the time. The Earl Shilton signatories were Thomas Webster and Nathan Jones. Interestingly, the only original copy of this pamphlet was found in a book belonging to Captain Robert Everard, a local commander in Cromwell’s army who is believed to have been born in either Heather or Earl Shilton. He was a prolific pamphleteer in his day and could well have been the architect of this first Baptist statement of belief in Leicestershire.(2)

Ten years later, at the time of Venner’s revolt in London, Earl Shilton was once again in the limelight when it was recorded as being ‘a particularly revolutionary centre at which armed Baptists, including former Parliamentary soldiers congregated … only to be arrested’. (3) Whether for being ‘armed’ or ‘Baptist’ is unclear, but Earl Shilton Baptists were still a highly visible group in 1669 when Archbishop Sheldon commissioned his report. This report revealed there were around fifty of the ‘meaner sort’ of Anabaptists meeting in ‘Earle Shilton’ – the term ‘meaner’ indicating their social status rather than the way they spent their money.(4)

The Compton census of 1676 then reports that there were thirty-three ‘schematical dissenters’ in Earl Shilton, out of a total population of 266 (5), and it is likely that all of these dissenters would have been Baptists because ‘the record on p222 of the State Papers of Charles II (note a) “Lie for Edward Choney (or Cheney) at Earl Shilton (or Earle Shalton) in Leic Aug 9, 1672. Bap License to Wm Biges to teach in the said Choney’s or (Chenery’s) house there, Bapt and no other dissenters were licensed for this village.”’ (6) Dissenting Baptist believers had now been given a legal right to meet and the derogatory term ‘Anabaptist’ had been dropped. Bishop Compton’s unpleasant term ‘schematical dissenter’, as used throughout his nationwide non-conformist count, would seem to indicate his personal view rather than a widely held belief that those who held differing Christian views were necessarily subversive members of their community.

There is yet another glimpse of these early Earl Shilton Baptists in the will of John Goadby, dated the 28th July 1714, ‘I give and bequeath to the use of the minister and the poor of the Bapt church in Earl Shilton aforesaid forever, all that (is in) my little close lying in Crewhurst (or Crowhurst)’. (7)

Earl Shilton Baptists continued to meet in each others homes but as the membership grew and prospered it became not only desirable but also possible in the changing religious climate to build a permanent meeting house. In 1740, a piece of land to the west of the parish church became available, but it was not until 1758 that the meeting house was ‘legally conveyed to the trustees’. (8) This happened around the same time that renewed Baptist interest was sweeping the Leicestershire countryside under the direction of the Barton-in-the-Beans preachers headed up by Samuel Deacon, father and son.

Although the chapel buildings have been substantially renovated and refurbished, it is still possible to see much of the original. Christopher Stell states ‘the first meeting house on this site, built in 1758/59 was replaced by the present building in 1844 and this was widened to the S, reroofed and refitted in 1890’. (9) Unfortunately this description neither coincides with Fursdon (writing in the 1930’s) or what an
Earl Shilton Baptist Church in 2007, south view, showing the graveyard and building dated c.1758.

Another interesting feature of Earl Shilton Baptist Church is its burial ground. Nicholls on a visit prior to 1811 states ‘a Bapt. Meeting in this village has a small burying ground in which (there is) a stone to the memory of Hannah wife of Samuel Cheney, who died Aug. 13th 1795 aged 58’. This could be a descendent of Edward Cheney whose home was used as a Baptist meeting place in 1672. Also, like many other Baptist churches at the same it had an outdoor baptistry, which was ‘situated in what is now the path leading to the Burial Ground, outside the eastern end of the church by the old vestry. After it was filled in, its location was marked by pools of water in wet weather’. (10)

In conclusion, Earl Shilton Baptist church probably does not have the oldest building in the county still in use as a Baptist church – Sutton in the Elms or the well documented Arnesby Baptist church are more likely contenders as noted previously – but it probably does have the ‘oldest’ congregation still meeting in a village setting.

References:
1. The Faith and Practise of 30 congregations gathered according to the primitive pattern, (Northants, 1651, 1901 ed).
3. Ibid.
5. ROLLR: ID 41/43 Compton Census for Leicestershire.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
The Vine Street excavations of late summer 2006 provide hard evidence for the beginnings of the Leicestershire slate industry being in Groby and not Swithland.

Many members of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society who visited Vine Street, Leicester, on 22nd August 2006, probably still carry a mental picture of the sterile and pitted landscape which met our eyes that evening.

Picked almost clean by well over thirty-two archaeologists during the preceding months, at first glance there was just bare earth and deep trenches to be aware of. On closer inspection however, there were noticeably large amounts of pink, flesh-coloured Groby granite in significant clusters, lying both on the raw earth and in numerous pits and trenches in the south-west sector of the site. The eye then became aware of perfectly usable green and dark grey Roman roofing slates scattered across a major portion of the excavated area.

The green slates and the flesh-coloured granite were known to outcrop together close to Field Head at Groby. The dark grey Roman slates fashioned in the same way as the green were from an unidentified location at this time, but their texture and colour did not suggest any of the Swithland slate outcrops. Nicholas Cooper of U.L.A.S. (University of Leicester Archaeological Services) was contacted and a second, this time solo visit, was arranged three days after the first visit with permission to acquire Roman slate samples for my own research.

My short list of targets were: (a) clues leading to the location of the blue/black slate outcrop (b) an interface green slate with pink granite on the face or underside and (c) with curses written on strips of lead having been found by archaeologist Martin Shore some days previously at the site, it was important to check the flat undersides of the Roman slates for signs of graffiti.

Groby granite and Roman roofing slates lay together in the centre of the site.
Vine Street on Friday 28th August was once again bathed in warm sunshine, and within an hour the interface slate \( A \) was the first item on the short list to be found. A similar green slate with tool marks on the upper surface and a square-shaped side notch followed, then a complete slate with iron nail intact (more on this later) and lastly a large slate slab 57.5 cm x 53 cm with pairs of iron nails on the side points of balance. The large slate slab was left on site but it was noted that a strap, or belt of leather, if fixed over the nail positions (the points of balance), would have produced a substantial well cover.

The smaller items mentioned above were taken back to Groby and washed. The interface slate once released from its covering of soil was found to be unique in that both its upper and lower surface had been worked flat, and furthermore its weight was only half the normal 1.5 kilograms of a normal 27 x 22 cm slate. As no other slate of this size and weight was found, one wonders if this was a demonstration piece by a skilled mason showing what could be achieved. As the interface is now some distance (54 metres) from the point where the working face stops, this particular slate would have been from a recently opened quarry at the time it was fashioned.

When washed, the darker slate with the Roman nail intact revealed carefully incised straight lines on the underside. Was this the equivalent of a modern builders design hastily drawn on the back of any nearby wall, card or paper? Could these be Hadrian’s thoughts of home and a garden make-over back home at Tivoli? Or a villa project at Vindolanda incorporating his own wall perhaps! Neil Finn of U.L.A.S. immediately dismissed these fanciful thoughts by pointing out the obvious - that the mason was squaring the lower part of the slate twice over - hence the double scouring.

So the slate below was returned to U.L.A.S. for their archive, and a substitute was sought and found surprisingly quickly \( B \) during the next visit to Vine Street. Back-filling was already behind schedule due to the large number of graves still being revealed and recorded at that time. These were connected with the medieval church of All Saints - the building long since erased and the chance of finding a single clue to the origin of the dark coloured slates was receding.

Two weeks later on 16th September 2006, a final sweep of the Vine Street excavations unearthed a curious dark coloured slate, half covered in what appeared to be hardened pitch. This, although not realised at the time, would prove to be the key to fixing the second Groby slate quarry used by the Romans.

Field walking a few days later, parallel to the A50 west of Bradgate Hill near Carter’s Rough (SK 5009) revealed the same dark coloured slate mixed with the flesh-coloured granite in the remains of post enclosure walls separating plantations from fields, so the target quarry had to be very close. The fishing lakes (SK502092), though likely candidates, were carefully surveyed and dismissed, as possibly old granite workings but not slate. The A50 at this
point climbs steeply from the Slate Brook flowing into Groby Pool at 105 metres Above Sea Level, to 160 metres A.S.L., dividing, with few exceptions, granite outcrops to the right and slate to the left as the road reaches Field Head. At the bottom of the hill lies Bradgate Home Farm and a visit here proved to be the turning point in my quest. The A50 was diverted around Groby village in the 1970s and a substantial amount of unwanted spoil was tipped into the slate quarry at Home Farm, so much so that only a small corner now remains.

Fortunately an old working face still exposes areas of 'pitch' subsequently confirmed as mica by Dr Graham Lott at the British Geological Survey, Keyworth. Graham added that I would be very fortunate to find mica traces in the Swithland slate beds.

So a summer evening visit by members of the Leicestershire Archaeology and Historical Society actually led to the solving of a long-standing and unanswered question: where was the slate for Roman Leicester taken from – Groby or Swithland?
The source of the green slates at Upper Parks Farm Groby, part of a former deer park, and without footpaths or rights of way for centuries. The now grassed over quarry (centre) measures 54 x 55 metres. The flesh-coloured granite also found at Vine Street lies alongside. Carting away from the sites would appear to be via Thornton Lane, as a deep valley lies between the A50 and this site. Within the old park the ground shelves steeply south towards Grey Lodge. (Photo A. Squires 1976).

Acknowledgements:
As one of the Groby Archaeological Wardens I have been privileged to wander the fields of Groby Parish where no rights of way exist in the course of this research, my thanks in particular go to Mr and Mrs A. Milner of Upper Parks Farm, and Joyce and Tony Chapman at Bradgate Home Farm, Groby.

To members of the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (U.L.A.S.): Nicholas Cooper, Tim Higgins, Neil Finn, Richard Buckley and Martin Shore for information and access.


A much larger manuscript about to be published by the writer will trace the history of the Leicestershire Slate Industry from Roman times into the early twentieth century, and will be published as Bulletin 19 of the Leicestershire Industrial History Society later in 2007.
“A distinct tonic” - The Pageant of Leicester (City and County) on its seventy-fifth anniversary
Robin P. Jenkins

Quite who first thought of a pageant for Leicester is not recorded. The idea seems to have cropped up in discussions of a suitable commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the opening of Abbey Park. It soon became the ‘baby’ of Councillor C. E. Gillot, who must have been aware of Stoke-on-Trent’s celebration of the Wedgewood bi-centenary in 1930 and of pageants at Bradford and Newcastle. Gillot however, knew Leicester could do better. He had little doubt that ‘The Pageant of Leicester (City and County)’ would be longer, more spectacular, and broader in scope.

At its centre would be a grand theatrical performance, reciting every conceivable episode of Leicester’s dramatic past. With a cast of thousands, this would occupy the whole of Abbey Park for half of June 1932 (including rehearsals and the erection of scenery and stands). However, this was not all. The De Montfort Hall would have a display of locally made goods and industries, to boost flagging trade, and on 21st June the Lord Mayor of London would pay a state visit to see the Pageant.

To ensure the smooth running of preparations, a dozen or more committees were formed. Gillot himself chaired the controlling Executive Committee, which was ably supported by a Finance Committee, under the direction of Leicester’s City Treasurer, Mr A. Riley. The Historical Committee came next, to oversee the Pageant itself and to ensure the accuracy of every re-enacted scene from Leicestershire’s past. Other committees undertook the arrangement of lectures, music, publicity and publications, as well as seeing to the arenas and amphitheatres, costumes and properties, and the performers themselves. There was also a committee to distribute any profits amongst local charities.

Of course, there were doubters and upsets. The proposed holiday worried both employers and workers, the latter fearful that they might lose a day’s pay. A Mr. F. W. Southorn wrote to his local ‘paper with the thought that ‘our London and Home exhibitions would encourage trade sufficiently without unsettling labour with pageants’. There was also a flurry of
letters to the press from animal-lovers, concerned at news that oxen were to be roasted alive. This worry was dispelled, in part at least, by several correspondents who pointed out that the beasts would be dead and that "is not a portion of an ox roasted in almost every oven in Leicester at least once a week?"

Attempts to gather support in the county also ran up against an iceberg of unenthusiasm in Melton Mowbray, where the Meltonian Guy Dixon, already a member of the Lecture Committee, finally won the council round with the dubious rallying cry: 'nobody minds where their boots and stockings come from, but there are not many eaters of pork pies who do not relish the genuine Melton brand'.

Generally, the idea of a Pageant went from strength to strength. The Bishop, Dr. Bardsley, was firmly behind the scheme and expressed pleasure that a recreated Pentecostal procession was to be the responsibility of local church people. A promotional film was made for screening in local cinemas, and W. E. H. Allen, the Pageant's secretary, wrote a rather imaginative play on the subject for the B.B.C..

Recruiting for the performance was, apparently, slow - especially amongst Leicester's men. Partly this would appear to have been a natural reluctance on the part of many to don unconventional garb. There was even talk of banning a film made to publicise the Pageant on the grounds that the Romans' 'skirts' were a trifle skimpy! Others clearly felt that to play a 'serf' was rather beneath them; a friend of Miss Preece (secretary of the 15th century episode) rejected her offer of a part with disdain - 'A serf...why I've been that six days a week for the last twenty-five years. You can guess again - something like an Archbishop!'

Eventually the Pageant took shape. Major Guy Paget and the Historical Committee painstakingly put together an historical account of Leicester, told through scenes in the city's past. Episode One began with the arrival of the Romans and ended with the flight of the Danes by boat, driven out by Ethelfleda. Episode Two saw the Barons assembling at Leicester Castle to draw up the Magna Carta, and then the dramatic departure of Simon de Montfort and some Templars (from Rothley) for the Holy Land.

On and on went the Pageant, through the Wars of the Roses and the Civil War to the arrival of the railway and the departure of Thomas Cook and his excursionists. Snaking through those stirring times went strings of pack-horses with coal from Charnwood Forest, Bakewell's 'New Leicester' sheep, and choristers from Alderman Newton's School. Nothing could stop the appearance of those traditional giants from the city's past: Cardinal Wolsey (played by Canon Winckley atop a white mule), Daniel Lambert (whose 52 stone were somehow 'suggested' by the City Police PT "Merrie England" - fiddlers on the town green in the time of Richard II. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland).
instructor, Sergeant Hankinson) and Prince Rupert (done in style by Edgar Armitage).

Perhaps some of the reluctance amongst the ‘serfs’ was the realisation that most of the best parts had gone already – and in many cases to the organisers and their friends. Guy Paget himself donned wig and beard as Charles I, while Guy Dixon, who had promoted the pageant in Melton, appeared as a dapper King John. Shortages in the ranks were made up with the help of the local Territorial Army – most of the Romans seeming to have marched up from the Glen Parva depot, and Cromwell’s Ironsides to have been recruited from the Yeomanry.

Early on, the Pageant Committee had been fortunate to secure the help of some ‘professionals’. Frank Lascelles was appointed ‘Pageant Master’ or producer of the show. Fresh from a triumphant Pageant of South Africa, Lascelles seemed a rare catch – an ‘encyclopaedia of pageant details and the art of producing’, as the Evening Mail put it. The

The weather was not always kind. Ironsides from the Civil war scenes take shelter from the flood. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland).

music was in the hands of Dr Benjamin Burrows. It included a number of settings (the principal one by Walter Groocock) of the Pageant Song, specially written by Hugh Goodacre. Like the Pageant itself, the song was a gallop through local history, or national history where it impinged on Leicestershire, with a rollicking chorus:

Come along, Come along, over the ages,
Ridges and furrows that carry us back,

Leicestershire legends and Leicestershire stories,
Follow us, Follow us, Follow the pack.

The pageant ran from 16th to 25th June 1932. Although it is clear from later reports that the performance seemed over long (it was subsequently cut) or perhaps a little too slow, the first night was clearly a triumph. The Pageant was opened by Lady Snowden, who was so overcome by ‘Pageant fever’ that she missed her last train home and had to have a special coach added to the 10.45 p.m. parcels train for London.

The 5,000 actors and actresses did their best, the crowds being stirred or moved as events unfolded. The death of Wolsey went down particularly well, thanks to Canon Winckley’s affecting performance, and Guy Paget’s horsemanship justified his choice as King Charles. The show was well attended and the weather kind.

Each day of the pageant was allotted a special designation. The first day had been ‘Statesman’s day’, followed by ‘Sportsman’s’. Monday 20th June was ‘Empire Day’ and the high point of all, on Tuesday, 21 June, ‘Civic Day’, when the Lord Mayor of London (and fourteen other mayoral parties) joined Leicester’s Lord Mayor at the De Montfort Hall exhibition, and then, after lunch, in a procession from Hastings Street, via the newly opened Charles Street, to Abbey Park.

It was certainly a memorable occasion. The police reported (good humoured) crowds of 160,000, while the City Tramways declared receipts up £350 on the same day the year before. The railway companies all reported full trains and the ‘buses – both service and specials – carried 14,000 passengers. Not a child was lost and the most valuable item handed in at the lost property offices was a coat. Ambulance men dealt with 165 cases of collapse, mostly from excitement!

The next day saw the pageant’s first bad weather. Wednesday, 22nd June was ‘County Day’, attended by the Duke and Duchess of Rutland. Despite a torrential downpour the evening went well.

Alas however, it could not last. Despite a succession of full houses and unprecedented popular involvement, on 23rd June (‘Shops Display Day’) it was announced that the City’s Parks Committee had voted not to extend the run of the
Many of the performers, who had already declared their willingness to go on, were astonished and disappointed. Ironically, it seems to have been the effect of the pageant on trade that brought about the premature end. Market-stall holders had begun to bemoan the crowds who came to see but not to buy, and shop-keepers were reporting an unusually slack week despite (or perhaps because of) the unprecedented crowds. One retailer (and Pageant worker) was reported as declaring: ‘People are spending their money on the Pageant instead of on shirts, socks and such things’, while Leicester Opera House’s manager, Walter Clarke, not surprisingly, felt it better to end on a ‘high artistic note... rather than drag it out for another few days’.

Frank Lascelles was outspoken in his attitude to such ‘near-sightedness’, telling the man from the Mercury that he found the committee’s decision ‘rather foolish’. The performers were hurt and puzzled at their apparent ‘rejection’, while many who had not yet seen the Pageant had been looking forward to an extension and cheaper entrance tickets.

Then, on the appropriately named ‘Drama Day’, 24th June, it was announced that the Pageant would, after all, be extended by three days. It was a decision that seemed to please no-one. The tradesmen still bemoaned their empty cash registers, and the performers grumbled at having so little time to make their arrangements. Many harsh words had been uttered and too many feathers ruffled for the last few days to pass smoothly.

Nonetheless, there was a rush for the cheaper tickets. Audiences had gradually been increasing throughout the period of the Pageant, from 2,131 on the evening of 16th June to 10,489 a week later. Now, with the end in sight, price reductions and assurances that no scene would be cut, tickets were being sold at the rate (on 27th June) of 1,200 in one hour. There certainly seemed to be no diminution in the spirit of the Pageant amongst Leicester’s ordinary citizens; they continued to buy tickets and there were 90 or more street parties laid on for the city’s children.

The Pageant came to an end on the last day of June 1932. There was a degree of frivolity amongst the performers, and, after the show, much impromptu celebration. Presentations were made and (until they were finally driven out of the Park by police shortly after midnight) there was dancing and singing by revellers. The local press was full of pious hopes that the ‘spirit of the Pageant’ might be retained and speculation as to the amount raised for charity.

The final account was not submitted until February 1934. Having paid all the bills (including £2,000 to Mr Lascelles and £2,164 in Entertainment Tax) the Pageant raised no less than £2,180 – plus four shillings and twopence for charity. There was an unseemly spat when the Pageant Master (fairly) claimed an additional £500 for the extra three days’ performance, but as the City Treasurer recorded in his financial report: ‘Was this all worth while? What has been achieved as a result of this marvellous display of enthusiasm? First and foremost it can be said that the Pageant acted as a distinct tonic at a time of severe industrial depression: it attracted publicity to Leicester and County, its people and industries and did something towards bringing the City and County into closer touch... it provided relief to unemployment; it most certainly had an educational value... The Pageant of the City and County of Leicester will stand out not only as a great historic event but also as a monument of unselfish and devoted service gladly and efficiently given’.

A Note on sources:
The Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland has a wealth of material on the Pageant. This includes several copies of the programme and published texts of the episodes. There is an extensive collection of professional photographs recording scenes and performers (DE3736) as well as several other deposits of private snapshots (DE6054, DE6182, DE6703, etc). Most significant perhaps are the records kept by Councillor Gillot and George Cable’s exhaustive scrapbook (DE6764) and the papers (and badge) of W F Curtis, who chaired the Pageant’s musical committee (DE6078).
George Smith of Coalville (1831-1895):
children’s rights protector
Lois Edwards

Now largely forgotten amongst the names of the Victorian philanthropists, George Smith was a remarkable person. A man with principles and the courage to fight for the rights of others, he spent much of his life tirelessly working for those less fortunate than himself. Influenced by his own experiences as a child labourer and his deeply-held religious beliefs, he championed the rights of children, campaigning for their protection in employment, their well-being and education. His activities are inextricably linked with the brickyards and canals of nineteenth century north-west Leicestershire, and the hardships and poverty of the children whom these industries used as labourers.

The eldest child of William and Hannah Smith, George Smith was born in Clayhills, Tunstall, Staffordshire on 16th February 1831. (1) William, a deeply religious man, whose influence on George was to be immense, worked in the local brickyards, a job that entailed hard, heavy labour, as well as being extremely poorly paid. At the age of four, George attended a local Dame School run by a Betty Wedgewood, where he learnt to read and write. A quick learner, he developed a thirst for knowledge that never left him. However, at the age of seven he left school and went to work in the brickyards, where, as time progressed, he supplemented his wages by tending the kilns throughout the night, spending the extra he earned on tuition fees for evening classes and books.

The 1841 census records the family which included George, his parents and five brothers and sisters as living in Paradise Street in Tunstall. Ten years later the family had moved to Watergate Street where George is himself listed as a brickmaker. (2) George’s ability to learn quickly, helped him to gain better positions in the brickyards.

Following his marriage on 1st November 1852 to Mary Mayfield at Tunstall parish church (3), the newly married couple moved to Ladderidge, with George taking up work in the brickyard owned by Harry West, and it was there that he began to make the blue bricks and sanitary-ware that were the first to be produced in the area. But George was ambitious, and was soon drawn further afield to the potential of a clayfield on the Derbyshire moors at Reapsmoor, and it was on these moors that George and Mary had some of the happiest times of their short married life. Their first child, George Mayfield was born there on 3rd April 1856, his birth being recorded in the chapel registers. It was in the brickyard at Reapsmoor that George Smith began his reforms by refusing to employ women or boys under the age of twelve.

The remoteness of the yard however, meant that it was not in an ideal place from which to transport bricks and sanitary-ware. With this in mind, he applied for the post of manager of a brickyard at Humberstone near Leicester, and following his success, the family moved again. By this time another son, Charles Henry had been born, and on 24th February 1860, Mary gave birth to a daughter, Hannah Mary, at Humberstone. George and his family are still recorded as living in Humberstone in 1861, their address being Victoria Cottages. (4)

It was not long though before George, whilst travelling to visit his parents, saw a small brickyard with potential for
sale at Coalville, in north-west Leicestershire. His intention was to buy the yard, but he made the mistake of showing the clay to the owners, the Whitwick Colliery Company, who, themselves then realising the yard's potential, declined to sell, and instead offered him the post of manager. By the time that he realised his mistake, he had resigned from his post at Humberstone and had no choice but to take the lower paid position at Coalville.

The burgeoning town of Coalville was to became his home for over twenty years. His parents also moved to Coalville in 1862, with his father joining him as an employee of the Whitwick Colliery Brickyard as did his younger brother Charles. William was instrumental in helping George and Mary establish a Sunday school there, and supported his work with the children of the growing town. As George and Mary settled into their life at Coalville, another son, Hollins Capper, was born on 17th July 1863.

Whilst managing the brickyard, George Smith never forgot the hardships that he had endured as a child. In addition to refusing to employ women or boys under the age of twelve, he also refused Sunday overtime to young boys in his employ, in order to allow them time to attend Sunday school. He aimed to change the lives of those who worked for him, and was dismayed when the other brickyard owners and managers in the area did not follow his lead. However, his methods came to the notice of Robert Baker, an Inspector of Factories, whose report of 1864, following a visit to Coalville, was clearly influenced by George Smith. Encouraged by this, Smith became an active campaigner, lobbying national newspapers and parliament about the plight of the children.

Tragedy hit the family as Mary's health began to fail and on 19th January 1866 she died of consumption at the age of 37, and was buried in Coalville's new London Road Cemetery. Within two months, George re-married to Mary Ann Leheman from the Moravian community at Ockbrook in Derbyshire, the ceremony taking place at Ockbrook parish church on 19th March 1866. His new wife shared his beliefs, both religious and moral, and she became an active supporter of his work with disadvantaged children. The family prospered, aided by pay increases from the Whitwick Colliery Company, and by 1871 the family had moved to Springfield Cottage where they were able to employ a servant and send their two eldest children to boarding school. The eldest son, George went to

Children at work in the brickyards, from The Cry of the Children from the Brickyards of England. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland).
the school run by the Moravian community in Ockbrook, whilst Charles was sent to school in Atherstone. The eldest daughter, Hannah, went to live with his wife’s family at Ockbrook within the Moravian community.

In 1870 George Smith presented a paper to the Social Science Congress in Newcastle Upon Tyne. Telling the story of his own early life in the brickyards, he then produced a large lump of clay which a nine year old child had recently been made to carry on their head. The lump weighed 43 lbs, and the child had had to walk over six miles ‘whilst carrying this burden’. The paper was followed the next year by his book The Cry of the Children from the Brickyards of England.

A girl carrying clay, from The Cry of the Children from the Brickyards of England. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland).

On 13th June 1871, Mundella introduced a bill into the House of Commons entitled The Factories Act (Brick and Tile Yards) Extension Bill 1871 and on 16th August the same year, the Bill was passed, which prevented any females under the age of sixteen and any child under the age of ten from being employed in the brickyards after 1st January 1872. This was a major triumph for Smith and his beliefs. Soon after this successful campaign he began to style himself George Smith of Coalville, a title which he kept until he died.

After this, he turned his efforts to the children of the canals. He believed the families who lived on the canals lived in sin and ignorance without any knowledge of God, and he made it his mission to protect these children.

However, his campaigning was beginning to have consequences at home. He was still employed by the Whitwick Colliery Company and was given an ultimatum to either stop campaigning and concentrate on the brickyard or face dismissal. He chose the latter which not only resulted in the move from his comfortable home to a “wretched house” that no one else would rent, but by 1876 had led to him being declared bankrupt. Meanwhile his continuing campaigning was making him enemies in Coalville to such an extent that his effigy was burnt in the streets.

In 1877 a bill was passed to protect the canal children, and when the Act came into force in 1878, it aimed to improve sanitary conditions on the boats, whilst ensuring that the
children had an elementary education as a minimum. However this was only a recommendation rather than a requirement, and Smith continued his fight for what he saw as continuing injustice against the children. As part of this he spent many months walking along the canal towpaths gathering evidence for his case to improve the bill, and in 1881 he wrote up his findings in a book called Canal Adventures by Moonlight (9) which describes his travels and the people that he met as he walked from Leicester to London along the Grand Union Canal. The walk was deliberately undertaken in the depth of winter while the canal was frozen and the boats could not move as he thought that this would allow a fuller assessment of the conditions that the boatmen and their families lived in. The bill was finally amended in 1884.

In 1880 Smith moved to Northamptonshire, first to Welton, and then on to Crick. The house at Crick was bought for him by his supporters who wanted to relieve the state of poverty that he now found himself in. In Canal Adventures by Moonlight he writes that one night ‘I was left with two shillings and a halfpenny in the house to face Sunday’s dinner and the week’s food. Six of us had dined off two or three herrings, bread and cabbage, and were being driven to the last extremity. Presently a knock came against the door. Our vicar had sent an invitation for me to take tea with him, which I gladly accepted. After tea, and in a most unexpected manner, he put one pound into my hand.’ Smith lived by the belief that God would provide for him and his family, believing that he was doing God’s work. For the 1881 census he gave his occupation as ‘Author and Philanthropist’. (10) In the 1891 census which shows him living at Crick with his wife Mary Ann, his youngest son Edgar and his two youngest daughters, he lists his occupation as ‘Living on his own means and working with poor children’. (11) He continued to campaign for England’s children, turning his full attention to the gypsies and their children of travellers.

George Smith’s last campaign was never finished. He died of cancer of the liver on 20th June 1895, surrounded by those who loved him and had supported his life’s work. In his will he left all his letters and books, and any money that was left over after paying his debts, to his wife whilst she remained a widow. There is no mention of his eldest son George in the will, but he did make allowances for his daughters, whilst still unmarried, or in the case of Hannah, should she become widowed. A portrait of himself was left to his son Arthur, who by this time was a medical student. Arthur was also left a family bible, as was his youngest son Edgar. Charles was left his grandfather’s harmonica and a bronze portrait.

This was a man whose life was dedicated to the protection of those who could not speak for themselves, the children of the poor. His enthusiasm was driven by his own experiences as a child and his religious beliefs. He believed that all children should have knowledge of God and have the right to a basic education. Throughout his life he made many enemies, including some from the very ranks of those whom he was trying to help. He was a serious man, whom by his own admission had little sense of humour. He was supported by his wives through both good and hard times, his second wife Mary Ann having gone from relative wealth to poverty as a result of her husband’s beliefs. She died in 1917 and was buried next to her husband. The epitaph on her headstone reads: ‘Faithful Helpmate’, an apt if not a little understated description.

George Smith’s grave is in the churchyard at Crick, near to the school’s playground, where the laughter of the children can still be heard. A fitting epitaph for a man of humble beginnings, who spent his life fighting for their rights.

References and Notes:
1. Tunstall Methodist Circuit Records for 6th November 1831, record the date as 17th February 1831. Staffordshire Record Office: D5491/2/18/1.
3. Mary signed the register ‘with her mark’.
5. George’s nephew Lewis, the son of Charles, was killed in the Whitwick Pit Disaster in 1898.
6. No headstone survives to mark her resting place.

Additional sources:
The provisional list of Deserted Medieval Villages for Leicestershire (1) compiled at the end of 1961 consists of a total of 65 villages and describes the visible quality and the historical evidence with a possible suggestion for reason for desertion. This list is based upon earlier work by Professor W. G. Hoskins. The first name on the alphabetical list is Aldeby whose visible quality is described as 'poor' (church / church ruins without visible earthworks). Its historical classification is given as desertion (monastic depopulation c1125 – 1350), but documentary evidence is inferior in quality. This is in fact non-existent in any of the accepted sources from the Domesday Book forwards (population 1086, lay subsidies, quota 1334, poll tax, subsidy, hearth taxes, parish returns).

All references to Aldeby that have been found, have always been in an ecclesiastical context, and refer only to the church that stood on the same site from pre-Norman times, and which was still standing in the sixteenth century. Between c.1143 and the Reformation, the church was under the control of Leicester Abbey to whom it had been given as part of its foundation charter by the Earl of Leicester. There is no doubt about the presence of a church but the existence of a village is questionable with the lack of any historical record. The earliest mention of a possible village occurs in the Enderby Parish Magazine in September 1925 which states:

Whether there ever was a hamlet at Aldeby or not is a question which cannot be settled. It does not occur as a place in Domesday. But the Danish termination of ‘by’ seems to suggest a settlement of some kind. (2)

The same writer in 1928 attempts to show that the entry numbered 13–31 in Domesday Book for lands held by Hugh de Grandmesnil suggests Oldebi as a possible identification for Aldeby as follows:

There is no documentary evidence for the existence of Aldeby in the middle ages. There is only presumptive evidence, that one does not build a church a mile and a half...
from the nearest village without some settlement being there
to warrant its existence. (3)

This presumption evolved over a period of time, and in 1949
the following appeared in the Enderby Parish Magazine
under the heading 'Did you know that'

The old site of St John's is really the site of the deserted
village of Aldeby – and that this village has no connection
with Enderby?

It disappeared about the same time that the village of
Lubbesthorpe ceased to exist?

That the Church was closed by order of the Abbot of
Leicester or the Bishop of Lincoln, because the inhabitants
could not attend, the very necessary services each week
owing to floods?

The village may be older than Enderby? (4)

If as stated the village had no connection with Enderby, the
church certainly did have, since when Enderby became a
manor in 1204 and the Lord of the Manor built a chapel in
1225, the villagers were successful in petitioning the Bishop
of Lincoln to have this chapel made the parish church in
1270 instead of the church at Aldeby. If the church at
Aldeby itself is older than the village of Enderby then by
whom, when and why was it built?

It is easy to see how the idea of a deserted medieval village
was then taken up by the Deserted Medieval Village
Research Group and how 'Oldebi' is used as the
Leicestershire reference for Aldeby in the dictionary of
English Place Names (5). Making further reference to the
gazetteers and dictionaries of place names for England, there
is only one other Aldeby mentioned and that is in Norfolk.
This was called Alderbury in 1086 and became Aldeby by
1180, the old or disused stronghold, from the Old English
(e)ald + burh (bury) being replaced by the Old Scandinavian
'by' (farmstead).

In the Hastings Charter No. 311 A, before 1238 we find
under Aylestone a reference to 'Oldebi' that reads as
follows:

Ralph Marechal of Aileston giving by charter to Adam son
of Ivo de Braunceston, 2 Vigates of meadow land in
the meadows of Ailstone which consists of 6 roods at Lechpittes
in the meadows of Oldebi, 1 rood at Spelthom and 1 rood
towards the church of Aldeby which Walter son of Miles
held of me. (6)

This shows that the Oldebi referred to is meadow land only.
Much of the land associated with meadows of Aylestone is
subject to flooding and was cultivated as water meadows for
a very valuable hay crop. It appears that the meadows were
allocated to various neighbouring settlements because of this
crop. We get references to Wigston, Ratby and Oadby, all
holding land in Aylestone Meadows. Aldeby is a church
only and there is no village.

It is this context that had not been explored by the earlier
researchers into the area. The addition of 'bury' to a place
name in the vast majority of cases indicates a fortified place
of some kind (Iron Age hill fort, Roman fortified town,
defensible Anglo Saxon town) or a monastery and later
times a borough. The 'Alde' part would suggest that
something of importance would have been associated with
this area. A monastic connection has been suggested in this
case: if so, then there would have been a church and no
village other than monastic buildings, such as we find with
Celtic monastic sites. This idea has been previously
suggested by others and is included in Pevsner (7) under
the entry for Enderby. We know from the archaeology of
the area that there was a church on the site from pre-Conquest
times, and it was Anglo Saxon in building and dates before
950. The Danes who occupied the area about 877 were
pagan in their beliefs, and would have destroyed any
previous church that had been built by the Middle Angles
when they converted in 653. To complete the removal of any
Christian influence they changed the name of the area, in
this case it was simply done by changing the 'bury' to 'by'.
Thus the area would become the old farmstead. One other
piece of archaeological evidence for pre-Danish occupation
is the Middle Angle foil die found close by. This type of
object is normally only associated with high status sites.

This latest research suggests that Aldeby never was a village
– it is more likely to be the site of a very early Christian
church in a monastic setting.

Research into the Church at Aldeby is continuing by the
Enderby Heritage Group, assisted by a research grant from
the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society.

References:
1. 'Deserted Medieval Villages in Leicestershire'.
Transactions Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical
2. M. Paul Dare, 'Researches upon the Church of St John,
Aldeby and some notes on the “Abbey” of Lubbesthorpe'.
Enderby Parish Church Magazine, September 1925.
3. M. Paul Dare, ' Aldeby a suggested Identification in the
Leicestershire Domesday, with a Note on the Site and
Church'. Transactions Leicestershire Archaeological and
Names (Parragon, 1991).
6. George F. Farnham, Leicestershire Medieval Village
Notes, 6 vols. 1929-1933.
7. Nikolaus Pevsner, Leicestershire and Rutland, (The
The impetus for the formation of the group came from several directions: from work undertaken to prepare a Village Trail which was sponsored by Harborough District Council; from a Village Appraisal, also conducted under the Council’s auspices; and from the activities of an already well-established field walking group operating with the encouragement of the archaeology section of Leicestershire County Council. The inaugural meeting of the Tilton & District History Group was held in January 2003, and the officers including a Chair, Secretary and Treasurer, were elected a month later. There was also a shared knowledge in the village that a number of people were engaged in personal research on a variety of local topics, for example Lords of the Manor, the W.I., and the origins of the old village school, with the potential benefits of pooling sources, methods and other knowledge being obvious to all.

It was agreed that the objectives of the Group should be:
- to investigate all aspects of the history of Tilton, Halstead and the surrounding district.
- to encourage and support the historical interests of the individual members.
- to publish and make available information of local historical interest to a wider audience.

Early group discussions focussed on establishing a local oral history project and recording details of old photographs and documents held by members.

Significant grants were obtained from the village appraisal fund, and from the surplus of a residents’ campaign fund which had successfully challenged the layout and style of a proposed housing development in the village’s conservation area.

To build on the investigation objective of the Group, an open morning was held in the village hall in April 2003, with a successful appeal for additional material. Items were photographed or scanned on the day for adding to the archive. Five of these social mornings have now been held on a Saturday in April or May, and the purpose widened to include attracting new members and giving poster and audio reports of research in progress by group members. Typically these sessions are well attended and a continuing source of interest locally.

In pursuit of our publication objective, the Group’s Journal has been published each autumn since 2004. Normally 28 illustrated pages, it sells for £3.50, and records the results of the personal and oral history research referred to earlier, the results of the latter often being grouped under individual themes. Initial funding allowed a print run of 300 copies for the first issue which is now almost sold out. We have been able to break even at this level with this and subsequent issues. The majority of sales are made through the Tilton village shop and personal contacts. Each year between 35 and 45 copies are sold through bookshops in Market Harborough, Melton, Oakham, Uppingham and Leicester (Browsers and Clarendon Books). The timing of publication is believed to be crucial, with the pre-Christmas marketing aimed at those with friends or relatives who know or knew Tilton, and now live away from the district.

In support of the launch of each Journal we have held an open meeting in November at which a talk with slides is presented.

Pupils of Tilton School in 1910, with the churchyard wall providing a seat, and with the school building to the right.
Tilton and District History Group Journal

given by one of our members on a topic featured in the current issue. Subjects have included the Ironstone Mining in Halstead, Railways in the District, and Local Windmills. These have also attracted considerable interest and are well attended by local people.

We are in contact with other local history groups in the area and have exchanged visits with Belton History Group. We are also in contact with groups at Billesdon and Caldecott and hope to expand this network further, with a view to inviting outside speakers to combined meetings. We have been able to offer encouragement and advice to other villages in the area contemplating setting up their own history groups.

We have an active Oral History sub-group comprising three members who have chosen to focus on recording first-hand accounts of life in the district during the last century. We have been able to provide suitable good quality recording equipment from our own resources, and so far a dozen interviews with older residents, lasting one to two hours, have been conducted. Emerging themes such as ‘Healthcare in Tilton’ and ‘Migration’ have been discussed in Journal articles. We have been encouraged in this and other activities by the Leicestershire Villages initiative of Leicestershire County Council and by the East Midlands Oral History Archive based at Leicester University.

Regular monthly meetings, nine a year as we exclude July, August and December, take place on the second Thursday in the month. These are devoted to planning our activities, and to members’ reports on their own research.

The Tilton and District History Group is now well established and in the last four years has achieved some success in the publication of its Journal and in recording oral history. Membership, loosely defined, currently stands at seventeen. In the immediate future, expansion is foreseen in a number of directions. In the next few years we hope to play an active role in the Eyebrook Project funded by the National Heritage Lottery which will investigate, amongst other things, the history of farming in the catchment area of the Eye Brook in east Leicestershire and Rutland. To date our emphasis has been on Tilton and Halstead, but historical links to surrounding parishes, such as Whatborough, Marefield, Launde, Lowesby and Loddington are yet to be investigated and we hope to develop this further. A lot of work on the Parish registers, census records, and churchyard memorials which will be of interest to the family historian has yet to be brought to a wider audience, and we hope to be able to exploit links to the website at www.tiltononthchill.org.uk, (built by the son of one of our members), to further this. Lastly, in the longer term, we intend to move towards the original intention of establishing a comprehensive history of the village.

Tilton railway station, 1948, with the Nottingham to Market Harborough train.
The technique of viewing a pair of pictures so as to give an illusion of depth in a photograph was said to have been invented by Sir Charles Wheatstone in 1838. During the Victorian period interest grew, and many pairs of pictures were taken in order to create stereoscopic or 3D effects. They provide a valuable record of the past as pictures, even without the 3D effect.

In 2006 the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society was approached by a dealer in stereoscopic pictures saying that he had ‘a rare collection of stereoscopic views of Leicestershire dating from the late 1850s/early 1860s. There were 46 in the collection. It was possible to view these pictures on the web and although a number were repetitive scenes of the Leicestershire countryside, in all the collection contained sufficient views of people and buildings to consider purchasing them all for local use. After consultation with the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland it was agreed to purchase the prints, the cost being split between the Society and the Friends of the Record Office. The collection has been accessioned as DE7149 at ROLLR and although they are as yet uncatalogued, the photographs may be viewed, using a viewer purchased with the collection.


Handwritten: ‘Bishop Latimer’s House in Thurcaston (Mrs Lygo)’. Latimer (reformer, Bishop of Worcester) was born in this house around 1470.

Untitled group but the man on the left is ‘Old Perry’. ‘Old Perry’ is almost certainly Mr William Perry Herrick of Beaumanor Park, Leicester, who was reputed to be the richest commoner in England, and was known to have this nickname.
Handwritten: 'The 1st waterfall, Dell, Bradgate'. Four gentlemen, two boys. Condition: looks dark, but views really well.

The dealer thought that the stereoscopic prints bore the hallmarks of George Bankart who was President of the Leicestershire Photographic Society in the 1850s and who collaborated with Emerson to provide illustrations for the centenary edition of *Walton’s Compleat Angler*. However, most of the prints bear the initials F.B.. Quite a number were published by Thomas Parsons, 30 Gallowtree Gate, Leicester and some have inscribed on them 'photographed by F. Parsons'.

'Gates of the Monastery, Leicestershire. Father Lawrence in the centre of picture. Vide "Out of the World" in Household Words'.

The collection contains a number of pictures of slate pits, buildings such as Ulverscroft Priory, Kirby Muxloe Castle, Aylestone church and parsonage, Bishop Latimer’s house in Thurcaston and views in and around Bradgate Park. [Three other pictures were illustrated in the Society’s Spring 2007 Newsletter]. A few are reproduced here.

Readers are encouraged to inform the editor if they can provide any details of Bankart, Thomas or F. Parsons, or if they know of other pictures by any of these people.

George Bankart, May 1858. 'Victor, the property of Matthew Bridge Esq. Ingarsby'. George Bankart (1829-1916) was President of the Leicester Photographic Society and, in association with P. H. Emerson, did the photography for the centenary edition of Walton’s Compleat Angler.
The Society is pleased to announce a link with Browsers Bookshop, Allandale Road, Leicester. They already stock a number of the local history titles reviewed below and will be happy to order any other book on the list. To contact Browsers phone 0116 270 1684, or email browsersbook1@btconnect.com mentioning the name of this society.

LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND: GENERAL

COMMON RIGHT AND PRIVATE INTEREST – RUTLAND’S COMMON FIELDS AND THEIR ENCLOSURE
Ian E. Ryder
Rutland Local History and Record Society Occasional Paper No 8, 2006 84pp
ISBN 978090746436X

This excellently produced 84-page book contains twelve chapters, a bibliography and four appendices as well as four indexes (personal names, place names, topographical names and subjects). Ian Ryder explores the reasons for enclosure and examines the processes which took place at different periods of time between 1500 and 1882. There are three detailed case studies: Greetham 1764; Lyddington, Caldecott and Uppingham 1799 and Thorpe by Water (parish of Seaton) 1854. In addition to being of considerable interest to local historians the book will also be a quarry for family historians and provide landscape archaeologists with data relating to ridge and furrow in the ‘Dimensional Survey of Rutland Ridge and Furrow’ (Appendix 4). There are 26 well-chosen illustrations and a number of tables. The whole appearance is excellent and the Society has been well served by Central Print Services of Leicestershire County Council.

DISCOVERING RUTLAND EPITAPHS
Bryan Waites

This pocket-sized book is an invaluable resource for those exploring Rutland’s churches and churchyards. Bryan Waites visited all parish churches in the county but did not include chapels or council cemeteries. He found ‘surprises such as the man with five wives, someone killed in a bayonet charge at Gallipoli and a clergyman who won the VC in the Afghan War’. There is a brief introduction followed with examples from all parishes in Rutland giving around 200 epitaphs. The earliest dates from 1513 (Tickencote) and the latest is 2005 (Little Casterton). Some of the examples included are slabs or memorials from inside churches but the majority are in churchyards and therefore readily accessible. Copies of the book can be obtained from the Press at 6 Chater Road, Oakham, LE15 6RY.

ELIZABETH HEYRICK 1769 TO 1831: the Leicester Quaker who demanded the immediate emancipation of slaves in the British colonies
Shirley Aucott
ROTHLEY AND THE ABOLITION OF THE SLAVE TRADE
Terry Sheppard & lain Whyte

The abolition of the slave trade in 1807 has been commemorated in a number of books and other publications this year. The efforts of the leading abolitionists, not least William Wilberforce, have on the whole been well documented. Much less thoroughly recorded are the local and regional roots of much abolitionist activity and these two books on aspects of the movement in Leicestershire both merit a warm welcome. In a previous book (reviewed in this journal in 2005), Shirley Aucott gave us an excellent account of the life of Susannah Watts, a prominent local abolitionist. Now we have another book from the same author which tells, equally skilfully, the story of another staunch female supporter of the cause, Elizabeth Heyrick. Unfortunately, although (according to her contemporary, Catherine Hutton of Birmingham) Elizabeth ‘left behind her a mass of unpublished manuscripts, chiefly consisting of essays, sermons, prayers, etc.’, only a few letters have survived. This loss of key primary source material has not prevented Shirley Aucott from conducting some thorough research into Elizabeth’s fascinating life, using the many pamphlets that she published (which are listed in an appendix) and letters of hers that survive in various archives. Elizabeth Heyrick’s importance is her firm advocacy of the immediate emancipation of slaves in the British colonies, rather than the gradual process suggested by many others.

In common with Leicester and other towns and villages in the county, many of the people of Rothley expressed strong anti-slavery views, which are well recorded in Rothley and the Abolition of the Slave Trade. An additional factor which makes Rothley of interest is the presence of the Babington family, described in the introduction by Professor James Walvin as ‘a dynasty of abolitionists... who left their mark on the campaign against the trade and, later, in the renewed attack on slavery itself...’. Although slavery was not finally abolished until the 1830s, the ending of the British slave trade in 1807 was a remarkable step forward on many levels. This book does a very good job of documenting the abolitionist activity of the people of Rothley – an excellent example of a thorough study of a local community in a national movement – while Elizabeth Heyrick 1769 to 1831 focuses on a prominent and memorable individual. Both books are highly recommended.

John Hinks

THE JOURNAL OF THE TILTON AND DISTRICT HISTORY GROUP
Issue 2 (Autumn 2005) and Issue 3 (Autumn 2006) £3.50 each

Because of the interest aroused by the first edition of the Journal published in 2004, the Tilton Group decided to produce one every year. Each edition contains articles by members of the group on recent research in the district. Issue 2 concentrates on ‘relatively recent history’ and includes articles on a WI trip to London in 1931, Tilton school 1844-1891, healthcare, Tilton windmill and two articles on the railway. In Issue 3 we find more on the school (1877-1913), details of the will of Everard Digby (1508), an article on Halstead Farm wind engine and one on Tilton church. The Tilton group are to be congratulated on producing a good series and one hopes it will be successful. The overall appearance of the Journal is very good and the illustrations have come out well.

Alan McWhirr

LEICESTER AND ITS SUBURBS IN THE 1920s AND 1930s WITH COUNTY HIGHLIGHTS
Helen Boynton & Keith Dickens

Although the contents page does not specifically itemise the chapters as such, this book is divided into four chapters. It begins with ‘An Introduction to the 1920s and ‘30s’ and then moves on in chapter 2 to a survey of ‘Leicester in the 1920s and ‘30s’. This chapter forms the bulk of the book, about two-thirds. Chapter 2 is further subdivided into sixteen sections which cover, for example, cinemas, public houses, hospitals and more. Chapter 3 explores beyond the city boundary, ‘Leicestershire and its near environs’ and the final chapter is on ‘Leicestershire architects of the 1920s and ‘30s’. The book has many illustrations including 57 in colour grouped together in the centre, the rest are black and white. It is well produced and is a useful resource for the study of the 1920s and 1930s.

Alan McWhirr

RUTLAND IN PRINT – A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ENGLAND’S SMALLEST COUNTY
J. D. Bennett
Rutland Record 25 Rutland Local History and Record Society, 2006 40pp
ISSN 0260-3322; ISBN 9780907464372
This bibliography is a list of 'books, pamphlets, directories, almanacs, periodicals and newspapers relating to Rutland which were published before the end of 2005'. The first part is an alphabetical list which is also numbered consecutively totalling 529 entries. There then follows a list of directories and almanacs (ranging in date from 1822 to 1960), and then periodicals and newspapers. Finally there is a subject index which cross references with the numbered alphabetical list, and a list of publishers of books and pamphlets. As one would expect from J. D. Bennett this is a thorough and meticulous piece of research. I guess there will be some trying to catch him out and find omissions, but there will be very few (if any). Perhaps in due course the author might be persuaded to itemise and list articles and papers relating to Rutland which appear in the periodical literature. There are a number of illustrations which help to break up the text and the book has been extremely well produced.

Alan McWhirr

**Other recent publications**

**THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE EAST MIDLANDS:** an archaeological resource assessment and research agenda
Nicholas J Cooper (ed)

**GHOSTS AND HAUNTINGS IN AND AROUND LEICESTERSHIRE**
A J Wright
Wymeswold: Heart of Albion, 2006 viii, 104pp ISBN 1872883990

**THE LEICESTERSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY 1855-2005**
Robert A Rutland

**THE LOST VILLAGES OF ENGLAND** [includes Cold Newton, Ingarsby, Martinsthorpe]
Leigh Driver

**LOUGHBOROUGH AND CHARNWOOD: A QUIZBOOK TO DISCOVER OUR LOCAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE**
J Harrison & D Dover
Loughborough: Reprint, 2006 iii, 24pp

**TO THE LAST ROUND: THE LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND HOME GUARD 1940-1945**
Austin J Ruddy

**CITY OF LEICESTER**

**THE ANTHOLOGY OF LEICESTER CHARTIST SONG, POETRY AND VERSE**
Ned Newitt (ed)

Leicester's importance as a centre of the Chartist movement - the first truly national network of British working-class radicalism - is well recognised but surprisingly sparsely documented. This well-chosen and nicely produced anthology helps to bridge the gap by providing texts of local Chartist songs, poems and posters. The key figures are well represented, including John Henry Bramwich, Thomas Cooper and William Jones, along with several lesser-known writers, some of whom are anonymous or known only by initials. There is a useful bibliography and very readable introductory material by Ned Newitt but the bulk of the book allows a broad selection of Chartist texts to speak for themselves. The launch of this book was a memorable and entertaining November evening gathering, where the words of Leicester Chartists were read out and celebrated. The Red Leicester Choir sang some Chartist hymns which have probably not been heard for 150 years! If only someone could find a copy of the long-lost Leicester Shakespearean Chartist Hymnbook, so named because Thomas Cooper's group of Chartists met in the Shakespeare Rooms in Humberstone Gate, very close to the Secular Hall where the launch of this excellent book was held.

John Hinks

**LEICESTER'S UNEMPLOYED MARCH TO LONDON 1905**
(Occasional Papers no. 2)
Leicester: Friends of ROLLR, 2005 60pp ISBN 0850224578

The second volume of this series continues the high standard of the first. One could not wish for a more thorough and well presented account of the 1905 march of around 450 unemployed men and their supporters from Leicester to London. It is fortunate that the march was quite thoroughly recorded in photographs and contemporary reports, a selection of which are reproduced here alongside a clear and accessible text by Jess Jenkins. A number of the key figures
are discussed and pictured, often sporting a hat suitable to his station! The Reverend F. L. Donaldson, the outspoken Christian Socialist vicar of St Mark’s, was a key figure along with other middle-class supporters, but the working-class men of Leicester provided their own heroes, including some entertaining characters, who took part in the march, alongside very many whose names are not known. One cannot help wondering what kind of lives they lived after the march was over. This book is a wonderful tribute to Leicester’s ‘Ragged Army’ to whom it is dedicated. Original texts, commentary and contemporary illustrations are judiciously balanced and this book should be widely read and appreciated far beyond the membership of the Friends of the Record Office.

John Minks

POSTWAR LEICESTER
Ben Beazley

This book follows on from Ben Beazley’s previous book Leicester at War. A book on this period of Leicester’s history was overdue and this is a well-written appraisal of the era. The period has seen many changes in Leicester, both in the diversity of the population and actual buildings and layout of the city. The book tackles the period in chronological order and looks at the history of the city from 1945 until the early 1970s. It charts the progress of the city through periods of boom and decline, and how each affected the appearance of the city and the lives of the people who lived in it. Also included are plans of what Leicester may have looked like if the planners had got their way, including a photo of Leicester with a monorail. Each chapter is as well-written and researched as we have come to expect from Ben Beazley’s books. It is full of clear and relevant illustrations, which help to bring the book to life. For those who do not remember Leicester during this period there is a timeline at the back that helps the reader place the events in Leicester with those happening nationally. For those who do remember Leicester at this time, it should bring back many memories. It is easy to read and the text brings to life the city of Leicester, through this period. It is a book that I would recommend to anyone with an interest in the city of Leicester.

Lois Edwards

OTHER RECENT PUBLICATIONS

DID YOU KNOW? LEICESTER: A MISCELLANY
Julia Skinner (ed)

History of Ratby: Volume 2
Ratby Local History Group, 2006 161pp ISBN 0954799410

This publication contains five diverse articles on the village of Ratby and its history, the first of which is a look at Ratby in the 1930s and ‘40s, based on Dennis Green’s recollections of the village of his childhood. The final article looks at the enclosure of Ratby in 1770 and its effects on the area and people. The other articles include the story of Ratby bakers, the Geary family, which tells the story of 100 years of baking in the village, the story of a local schoolmaster in the 1870s and a description of Annie Astill and how she ran the post office. The articles are an interesting mix of the chatty and more academic, but together they give an interesting glimpse into the past of Ratby and some of the people who lived there. The book is well produced and the illustrations where used are clear and well reproduced. The articles are referenced, should anyone wish to follow up on any of the work. This book would appeal to anyone who has in interest in the village of Ratby and its history, and is a good example of what can be produced by a local history group.

Lois Edwards

LORDING IT OVER MEDIAEVAL ROTHLEY: income for kings and the warrior Templar and Hospitaller Knights (Rothley Chronicles 4)
Vanessa McLoughlin
Rothley History Society, 2006 20pp ISBN 0954542649

The lordship of Rothley is interesting to scholars of the Middle Ages because it combined possession of a manor which had been ‘ancient royal demesne’ with jurisdiction.
over a soke (a survival from the pre-Conquest period in which a lord exercised certain juridical rights over groups of vills, often extending over a large area), and ownership of a mother church with chapelries dispersed around the soke. Rothley was not unique in this, even in Leicestershire, but its soke and parish were somewhat unusual in being largely scattered in detached portions across the north and east of the county. This booklet is adapted from a chapter of the author’s doctoral thesis, which examines medieval documents to find out more about the operation of this entity, particularly the income and outgoings between the time of Rothley’s granting to the Knights Templar (and later the Hospitaller Knights of St John of Jerusalem) to its passing to the Babington family after the dissolution of religious establishments in the sixteenth century.

Graham Jones

**Melton Mowbray: A Traditional Market Town**
Trevor Hickman

**The Bell Inn Stilton, The Birthplace of Stilton Cheese**
Trevor Hickman

**The Melton Mowbray Pork Pie and Stilton Cheese**
Trevor Hickman

Food is the theme linking these attractive booklets in which image and text impressively combine (though the latter becomes disjointed in The Bell Inn, which doubles as a publicity brochure). Visitors quickly learn that you can’t know the East Midlands until you have tasted pork pie and blue-veined cheese – though the latter was named after its eighteenth-century distribution centre on the Great North Road rather than the villages where it was made. One fascinating thread is the story of how whey residue from cream cheeses, whose character was determined by grazing on particular soils, became recognised as excellent food for pigs – hence the link between stilton and pork pie. Another is the role of rural entrepreneurship and marriage alliances which linked villages like Wymondham and distribution centres like Stilton in a trading system which responded to demand from growing towns (particularly London) by harnessing improvement in farming and transport. Behind such changes lay centuries of development. In his vignette of Melton Mowbray (a model of how to condense a community’s history into a thousand words!), the author points out that its Tuesday market, selling cereals and livestock and anciently complemented by a thrice-yearly cheese fair, has probably been held for more than a thousand years.

Graham Jones

**Other recent publications**

**Ancestral Houses of Rutland**
A R Traylen
Stamford: Spiegl, 2005 viii, 307pp

**Back to the 1940s in Melton Mowbray**
Carole Naylor
Loughborough: Reprint, 2006 60pp

**Dunton Bassett: A Village History**
Dunton Bassett Local History Group, 2006 vii, 168pp ISBN 0955273501

**A Nostalgic Look at Bygone Shepshed**
Marjorie Schulz

**The Records of Stoke Golding**
W T Hall
Stoke Golding Heritage Group, 2005 [first published 1940] iv, 632pp

**Walking Close to Melton Mowbray**
Clive Brown
Walkingcloseto.com, 2006 28pp

**Religion and Places of Worship**

**Grace Dieu Priory**
Kenneth Hillier & Peter F Ryder
Ashby Museum & Grace Dieu Priory Trust, 2006 24pp ISBN 0954779908

This is a well-produced booklet that has a dual function of guidebook and a short history of the Priory of Grace Dieu, in North West Leicestershire. The booklet is divided into two halves, the first being a history of the priory, the second giving a description of the site that you can use as you walk around the surviving buildings. The history is concise and clear and gives a brief description of the daily lives of the nuns who lived there. There is a clear plan of the whole site and its associated earthworks, and a clearer plan of the remaining buildings. The whole booklet is well-illustrated
with relevant, clear images. The booklet can be used by those who have an interest in the site for basic information and as background reading before visiting the Priory. When on the site, the second half of the booklet, with the descriptions of the buildings, will help to explain the site to the layperson. Although not a book for the specialist, it is a beautifully illustrated guide book, which gives a basic introduction to the priory and its history, and is well-priced at £5.

Lois Edwards

**Other recent publications**

**ALL SAINTS’ CHURCH, HIGHCROSS STREET, LEICESTER**

G Brandwood

London: Churches Conservation Trust, 2006 8pp

**BAGWORTH CHURCHES**

B Austin & F Gregory

Bagworth Historical Society, 2006 195pp

**CELEBRATE 80! Souvenir brochure 1926-2006**

Diocese of Leicester, 2006 56pp

**CELEBRATING 80! Commemorating 80 years of the Diocese of Leicester**

Leicester Mercury, 2006 28pp

**GUIDE BOOK TO MOUNT ST BERNARD’S ABBEY**

Coalville, the Abbey, 2006 24pp

**A HISTORY OF OUR LADY OF VICTORIES CHURCH**

J T McEvoy

The church, 2006 48pp

**LEICESTER ABBEY: MEDIEVAL HISTORY, ARCHAEOLOGY AND MANUSCRIPT STUDIES**

Joanna Story, Jill Bourne & Richard Buckley (eds)


**LEICESTER COUNCIL OF FAITHS: 20th anniversary brochure, 1986-2006**

Leicester Council of Faiths, 2006 24pp

**MONUMENTAL TRANSCRIPTIONS: ST CUTHBERT’S CHURCH, GREAT GLEN**

J M Hughes & T Smith (eds)

Great Glen U3A Family History Group, 2006 106pp

**ST PAUL’S CHURCH, WOODHOUSE EAVES: a guide to the church**

Mary Hodge

The church, 2006 31pp

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**HEALTH, WELFARE AND EDUCATION**

**THE STORY OF LOUGHBOROUGH DISPENSARY AND HOSPITAL 1819-2003**

Edited by Ian Keil and Don Wix


This glossy volume was written by several members of the Historical Society on behalf of the Charnwood and North West Leicestershire Primary Care Trust as a memorial to the former Loughborough Hospital in Baxter Gate which closed in 2003. A great deal of meticulous research has been undertaken – particularly in local newspapers – in order to chronicle the early history of the hospital for which no archival evidence has survived. The resulting publication, which treads a path between academic treatise and popular history, tells the story from 1819 when the first public dispensary was opened in the Market Place and charts the subsequent evolution of the hospital after the dispensary moved to Baxter Gate in 1824.

The gradual expansion of the Loughborough General Hospital, the constant struggle to achieve financial security, and the lives of the staff and patients through the turmoil of the twentieth century are all described in depth. As a result, the work will be of great interest both to the local historian and to the student of medical history. The family historian too, may find something of interest, for an effort has been made to record the names of doctors, nurses and patients through census returns and later hospital records. The personal reminiscences of former members of staff have also been used to fill out the later history of the hospital. The work contains a wealth of information: the addition of an index would have been even more useful. The volume is very well produced and contains coloured as well as black-and-white photographs. The images of the early buildings are particularly interesting. In all, the book is certainly the ‘fitting memorial’ which the authors intended. It may also be worth recording that the surviving hospital records for Loughborough have since been deposited at the Record Office where they are available for consultation.

Jess Jenkins

**Other recent publications**

**GARTREE: THE STORY OF A PRISON**

Dick Callan

BEEC, 2006 xvi, 176pp ISBN 0955300908

**LOUGHBOROUGH UNIVERSITY, THE FIRST 40 YEARS**

Leonard Cantor

Loughborough University, 2006 109pp ISBN 0947974466
INDUSTRY, TRADE AND TRANSPORT

ANATOMY OF A RAILWAY ACCIDENT: the 1933 fatal train crash at Loughborough LNER
A Goodger
Quorn: the author, 2006 38pp

This little booklet is a rail buff’s delight. As a former schoolboy volunteer with the Main Line Preservation Group and latterly a signalman for the steam railway at Loughborough, the author is clearly an expert who knows all there is to know about the former Great Central and its subsequent life as part of the LNER. He has drawn upon the Ministry of Transport Accident Report of May 1933 and contemporary newspaper reports to provide a detailed and quite technical account of the sad events of 31 January 1933 when a restaurant-car express bound for Bradford collided with a goods train backing into Loughborough Station just beyond the Empress Road Bridge. The author’s experience of the technicalities of the signal box contribute to a very clear description of the events leading up to the accident, and a fair and balanced analysis of the findings of the Ministry of Transport Inquiry. Black-and-white photographs of the wreckage and salvage of the engines, although they have not reproduced very well, are quite fascinating. The human dimension is not ignored either, and one can feel only sympathy for the personalities involved in the inquest and subsequent inquiry. Did the hapless driver of the express, Tom Webster, whose quick action averted a far more serious disaster, really deserve blame? Why not purchase a copy of the booklet from the Great Central Station Shop and decide for yourself? At only £2.99 (£3.40 by post) it is a bargain and, as all proceeds go to the David Clarke Railway Trust for the future preservation of the wonderful Great Central Steam Railway, you cannot go wrong!

Jess Jenkins

Other recent publications

INDUSTRIAL RAILWAYS AND LOCOMOTIVES OF LEICESTERSHIRE AND SOUTH DERBYSHIRE
A R Etherington & I R Bendall (eds)

LEICESTER AND ITS TRAMS, TRAMSCAPE AND TOWNSCAPE 1903-1949
Geoff Creese
Claphill: Irwell Press, 2006 64pp ISBN 1903266688

LOST RAILWAYS OF LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND
Geoffrey Kingscott

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Publications for sale

**Leicester Abbey: medieval history, archaeology and manuscript studies**
*Ed by Joanna Story, Jill Bourne and Richard Buckley*

Leicester Abbey was founded in 1138 and became one of the most important Augustinian monasteries in medieval England. But it is one of the least known of the Midland monasteries because of the almost total destruction of its buildings and archives after its Dissolution in 1538. This is the first volume on Leicester Abbey for more than 50 years, produced to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society.

The book presents eleven papers by leading scholars and local historians on the social, political and landscape history of the abbey as well as its archaeology, manuscripts, charters, urban rentals and library. Newly discovered charters are published here for the first time, as well as accounts of recent excavations in the abbey and gatehouse that formed the core of the post-Dissolution mansion known as Cavendish House.

2006 Hardback with dust jacket 314 pages Illustrations: many, some colour ISBN 0954238818 Price: £25 (plus £5 post and packing in the UK)

**Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society Cumulative Index to Transactions Volumes 21-74 (1940-2000)**
*Compiled by Auriol Griffith-Jones*

This volume also includes a reprint of the index produced in 1951 for volumes 1-20.

2005 Hardback 388 pages ISSN 0140-3990 Price: Members £10, Non-members £22 (plus £5 post and packing in the UK)

**Incised Slabs of Leicestershire and Rutland (prefaced by a Brief Manual of Incised Slabs)**
*F. A. Greenhill*

Incised slabs is the name given to flat memorials, exactly like brasses save that the design is engraved in the stone instead of on brass plates inlaid in it. The main text comprises a full description of the slabs in Leicestershire and Rutland, including a considerable amount of genealogical and heraldic information about the persons commemorated.

1958 Hardback 256 pages 42 plates Price: Members £10, Non-members £15 (plus postage and packing in the UK)

**The Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society 1855-2005**
*Robert A. Rutland*

Produced to mark the 150th anniversary of the Society, this volume chronicles the Society since its foundation. It also tells a great deal about the movements in the intellectual and social history of Leicestershire.

2006 Paperback 227 pages 77 Illustrations ISBN 0954238826, 9780954238827 Price: Members £12, Non-members £18 (plus £3 post and packing in the UK)

**Bringing them to their knees: church-building and restoration in Leicestershire and Rutland 1800-1914**
*Geoffrey K. Brandwood*

Contains an extensive gazetteer of all churches in the region which had work carried out to them in the period 1800-1914.


Back numbers of the Leicestershire Historian and Transactions are available.

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Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society