Contents

Editorial 2

How Leicester and Leicestershire celebrated the Coronation of King George V Robin Jenkins 3

‘An eminent surveyor’ – John Sulitzer of Burton Overy (1737 – 1782) France Rouse 9

Rescue and Redemption: Saving Leicester’s Fallen Women 1846 to 1900 Shirley Aucott 14

Richard Phillips, Pioneer of Radical Print John Hinks 22

The Seventeenth Century Sherley Brothers and Persia Irene Brightner 27

The First Headmaster – Wilmot Pilsbury and the Leicester School of Art Christopher Halliday 30

The Tower upon John Hill in Bradgate Park – dispelling the myths David Ramsey 37

Miss Lawton’s Almshouses Caroline Wessel 41

Support for the South? J. D. Bennett 45

Hero or Villain? Robert de Herle of Donington le Heath Vanessa McLoughlin 48

Gateways to the Past

No. 1 The Newarke and Colonel George Clarke Bellairs (1826-1922) Eileen Gumley 51

The Other Newarke Houses Eileen Gumley 53

The Newarke Bus Station Eileen Gumley 55

‘Plucking Brands from the Burning’ Beryl Hawkes 56

Ministers of St Mary de Castro Andrew Moore 57

Recent Publications Ed Cynthia Brown 63


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Editorial

The current idea of the Big Society is not new - there is a long history of philanthropy and social action for the good of the local community in Britain's towns and cities such as Leicester. A part of this during the nineteenth century, was the growing concern for the well-being of what were termed 'fallen women', and Shirley Aucott's article 'Rescue and Redemption' breaks new ground by charting the response in Leicester by individuals and organisations to what was called this 'Social Evil'. Philanthropic action also led to charities being set up in the town to assist and support impoverished women. One such charity was Miss Lawton's Almshouses, its history and purpose from foundation in 1864 to its transfer to Leicester Charity Link in 2011, being researched and related by Caroline Wessel using the original Indenture document and Minute book of the charity. Six hundred years earlier, a murder case involving Margery Paynel, a woman from a more affluent section of society, is investigated in Vanessa McLoughlin's article about Robert de Herle of Donington le Heath.

Frances Rouse's article on John Sultzer of Burton Overy was researched from Australia, and demonstrates the growing wealth of online resources which are helping to break down some of the physical barriers to research by facilitating remote access to sources in record offices and other archives. This also brings little-known Leicestershire-based John Sultzer to notice, who as research reveals, was an eminent eighteenth century surveyor. Two further figures with Leicestershire connections who merit wider recognition in their home country, are the brothers Anthony and Robert Sherley, who, as Irene Brightmer shows, made a significant contribution in the seventeenth century to the development of Persia (modern day Iran).

The remarkable, flamboyant and larger-than-life Leicester pioneer of radical print Richard Phillips, is the subject of John Hinks' continuation of articles in the Leicestershire Historian on the development of the provincial book trade and the growth of the Leicester's printers, booksellers and newspaper proprietors. Meanwhile, as the town's population and industries grew during the nineteenth century, so too did the need for facilities to educate students in design, especially to support the new manufacturing industries, and it was artist and teacher Wilmot Pilsbury who played a key role in establishing the town's School of Art between 1870 and 1881. Pilsbury's influence and success as its first headmaster, along with his development of the School, has been researched by Christopher Halliday, and is presented here, along with an insight into Pilsbury's own work as a landscape artist, which includes a number of attractive landscapes of the Leicestershire countryside and elsewhere.

David Ramsey takes a fresh look at one of the Leicestershire countryside's best-known landmarks, aiming to dispel a number of commonly held beliefs about a miller called 'Old John' and Bradgate Park's Old John Tower, against a background of horse racing.

On the 150th anniversary of the start of the American Civil War, and using accounts which appeared in the local newspapers in the 1860s, J. D. Bennett examines what the situation was in Leicester against the town's tradition of radicalism and non-conformity, as rival supporters of the South and the North clashed with each other. Fifty years later, in a different mood, Leicester and Leicestershire's determination to suitably celebrate the Coronation of King George V in 1911 makes fascinating reading in Robin Jenkins' account of the event, well-illustrated by a number of interesting contemporary photographs.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the medieval street pattern of The Newarke in Leicester was being dramatically altered, and the story of the houses in The Newarke and their occupants, forms part of the interesting group of articles which were researched and written by students of the WEA course 'Gateways to the Past', led by course tutor Cynthia Brown. Contributors include Eileen Gunley writing on Colonel George Bellairs and The Newarke Bus Station, Beryl Hawkes on the Home for Penitent Females, and Andrew Moore on the Deans, Chaplains and Vicars of the Church of St Mary De Castro.

Cynthia Brown has done an excellent job in taking over as Editor of the Recent Publications section, and I am very grateful to Cynthia and her team of reviewers for a very interesting, varied and extensive collection of informative reviews, which continues to form an invaluable part of the Leicestershire Historian.

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 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
How Leicester and Leicestershire celebrated the Coronation of King George V
Robin Jenkins

This year is the centenary of the coronation of King George V. Although he acceded to the throne on 6th May 1910, the coronation was not celebrated until 22nd June 1911.

From the moment of the proclamation of the new reign, it seems that there was a growing determination locally to celebrate the coronation in a style and on a scale hitherto unsurpassed. Royal visits and Queen Victoria’s jubilees had seen crowds thronging Leicester’s streets on several occasions from the 1880s. Leicester had also turned out in force for the coronation of Edward VII in 1902 to see parades of troops, firemen and floats depicting scenes from the nation’s history, as surviving images attest. There remained, however, a lingering feeling – perhaps occasioned by the delays following the uncrowned king’s serious illness – that Leicestershire could have done better.

In 1911 however, Leicester was in the mood to push the boat out further than ever. As befitted the county town, Leicester provided its citizens with a bewildering variety of celebrations and entertainments.

A committee chaired by the mayor, Alderman William Wilkins Vincent, had raised £3,400 by subscription and proceeded to spend its way to what the Leicester Daily Post termed: ‘a programme of festivities…that, for interest and general effectiveness, will compare most favourably with anything arranged in sister towns in the Midlands. It was a programme thoroughly in accord with the democratic spirit of the age, in that it left out absolutely no section of the populace...’

Coronation Day began in Leicester with church services. There was an official service at St Martin’s, involving representatives of the town’s council, magistracy, and Board of Guardians. A Free Church service was also held at the Belvoir Street Baptist Church, while the town’s Roman Catholics gathered at Holy Cross Priory.

By 10.15 am however, the civic dignitaries were in place on Western Boulevard, ready to join a remarkable procession through Leicester to Victoria Park. The parade represented Leicester both new and old; its civic status and pride as well as its colourful royal history.

The religious service in Leicester’s Market Place; remembered for ‘its simplicity and its reverence’. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland).
Over 400 Church Lads and 150 of the Boys' Brigade paraded through Leicester. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland).

The procession began with the town’s military might: two guns of the Leicestershire Royal Horse Artillery, the Yeomanry, the 4th Battalion of the Leicestershire Regiment (with their Band and Drums) and other Territorial units including the Army Service Corps and 5th Northern General Hospital. (1) Following them were representatives of the town’s Friendly Societies, Leicester’s and various other volunteer fire brigades, and what would now be termed ‘youth groups’. Surviving postcards show the Church Lads Brigade, in pill-box caps and white sashes, marching with carbines at the slope past crowds packed five or six deep on the pavements. (2) They were accompanied by the Boys’ Brigade, Boy Scouts, and messengers of the Post Office.

There then followed the highlight of the procession – its historical section. As the Leicester Daily Post explained: ‘that the average Britisher still loves a procession is a fact that even the most pronounced of cynics will scarcely deny. In these go-ahead times he is not, of course, content with the kind of procession that did duty a generation or two ago – nothing but a picturesque historic pageant now satisfies him...’ (3)

In 1902 Leicester had been treated to a variety of regal scenes from Edward the Confessor, through Queen Eleanor, to the Wars of the Roses and beyond. Surviving photographs at the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland (ROLLR) show an array of bristling moustaches and Quixotic ‘harness’. Now, for the 1911 coronation celebrations, the emphasis was upon historical accuracy and vivid colour.

The 1911 pageant was on the theme of royal visits to Leicester. It had been managed by two stalwarts of the Leicester School of Art, B. J. Fletcher and H. R. Steer. To the critic of the Leicester Daily Post it was ‘nothing short of a triumph...Unlike many pageantries of the kind the dressing was no mere medley of garments more or less picturesque but of quite negligible [sic] value as a real reproduction of the past. In this case great care had been taken to ensure that the costumes should be as near the real thing as it was reasonably possible to get.’ (4)

The first group represented the Emperor Hadrian, impersonated by Mr A. L. Hames. A lantern slide (5) survives of the emperor, flanked by two attendants, with ten legionaries in support. The dignity of Rome was maintained until the group reached the Victoria Park, when as the Daily Press observed: ‘He looked very imperious until someone quite unnecessarily hailed him by his Christian name. Then he wrinkled his face into a smile, and replied...’How Do’.

Rome was succeeded by the court of Duke Ethelred, whose wife, Ethelfleda, is credited with driving out the Danish invaders and re-establishing Christianity in Leicester. The Duke was played by Mr R. Roberts, whose daughter,
Miss G. Roberts, acted the part of Ethelfleda. Once again the scene is captured on a lantern slide (6), though it also shows a kneeling lady in picture hat and Edwardian (or should we say Georgian?) dress undertaking running repairs rather in the manner of Rolf Harris’s ‘fascinating witches who put the scintillating stiches in the britches of the boys ... of the court of King Caractacus’.

Henry III and Richard II then followed in a fine display of heraldry and horses. Intriguingly, the youthful Prince Edward was played by Edgar Armitage, who was to go on to represent Prince Rupert in the Pageant of 1932.

Richard III (Mr H. H. Peach) followed, accompanied by the Duke of Norfolk and Earl of Northumberland. That unfortunate monarch was depicted twice, each incarnation captured on the glass of a lantern slide. (7) The first slide shows the last Plantagenet riding with his knights, while the second reveals his fate – a corpse slung across a horse’s back. The first of the Ricardian slides also shows clearly one of the banners which preceded every group, announcing to the crowds what they were about to see.

The next two royal visitors have also been immortalised on lantern slides. Miss V. Burgoine appeared as the inevitable Lady Jane Grey (Leicester’s only truly local monarch) deep in conversation with H. W. Benson’s Roger Ascham; while Charles I arrived with his queen, closely followed by Prince Rupert and a company of halberdiers. The visit of Charles and Henrietta Maria in 1634 had been peaceful; the later intrusion of Rupert rather less so. The Leicester Daily Post noting that ‘Charles was welcomed loyally...and attended St Martin’s church on the Sunday. Rupert, who gave the town such a battering...in 1645, was seen with the trumpeter whom he sent to demand the surrender of the town. Which summons the doughty Parliamentarians of the garrison declined to entertain.’

The final group recalled the fleeting visit of Anne of Denmark, who stayed one night in Leicester whilst fleeing the court of James II her father, in 1688. It appears that the princess arrived by hackney coach but left for Nottingham the next morning riding pillion behind a corpulent mercer named Mason. Alas, a photographic record of the double act of Miss Wesson, as the princess, and Mr A. H. Butler, as the tradesman, seems not to have survived.

The pageant procession was followed by the carriages of the civic party. It was a dignified end to as impressive a procession as Leicester had ever seen. With the Historical Section’s performers, the Leicester Daily Post could not have been more delighted: ‘All were excellent, and played their parts admirably. It was Leicester’s first bit of pageantry. Let us hope it won’t be the last.’
Their destination was the Victoria Park, where (at noon) the Leicestershire Royal Horse Artillery’s four new 15 pounders began a deafening twenty-one gun salute. Echoing across the town, the gunfire drew the crowds away from a religious service in the Market Place to see the Mayor plant a commemorative oak tree.

The afternoon was given over to bands and sports, one of the most popular events being a clowns’ cricket match. Schoolchildren danced and gymnasts performed. It was a programme broadly repeated at Western Park, where huge crowds also enjoyed trick cyclists and comic acrobats before gazing upwards at twenty tons of fireworks propelled upwards by the Borough Fire Brigade. The Abbey and Spinney Hill Parks also benefited from bands and entertainment.

For the more peacefully inclined of Leicester, the ideal resort must have been the Granby Street Picture House, where a film of the real coronation procession was advertised for the 4.30 pm (or thereabouts) showing. The pioneer aviator, Monsieur Charles Hubert [Latham] had been engaged to fly the films to Rugby, from where a motor car was ready for the dash to Leicester. Sadly the rain, which became heavier as the day wore on, put paid to the plan; having thwarted Hubert (a rival of Bleriot) who known also as the ‘Storm King’, and should have been able to deliver the film on time if anyone could.

Instead, the film was shown the following day, having travelled up by train. The Palace Theatre was also advertising the Bioscope film of the Royal Progress, though without specifying delivery by air. Even without the adverse weather, the railway can hardly have been much slower than the air and road route and was always, presumably, far more reliable.
Mugs were a frequent souvenir of the occasion. Many villages, including Stanton under Bardon, Stoke Golding and Battleflat, presented their children with mugs by way of celebration. It was a cup and saucer each however at Higham on the Hill, where the Hon E. H. Pierpoint, of the hall, also presented canisters to the parishioners; tea for the ladies and tobacco to the men.

An epidemic of measles led to the postponement of festivities at Bardon Hill, while the harsh economic times threatened to blight Coalville’s day. As the Leicester Daily Post rather unkindly reported ‘Coalville does not lend itself to artistic display, nevertheless the residents made a brave show, and the main streets were a blaze of red, white, and blue, the only tinge of regret was the scarcity of employment in the collieries, for, as one of the workers said: We can’t Coronate on two days a week.’ (9)

Scalford is unusual, not for what it did, but because the records of the celebrations survive – even down to the individual receipts for mutton, cakes and other supplies purchased. At Scalford, it would appear, nothing was left to chance. Funds were raised and spent (a balance sheet records that the Coronation Fund broke even at £27 16s. 3d.). Committees were formed for every aspect of the day and lists produced of tea makers, carvers (each bringing their own tools), water carriers, bread butters and cutters and so on. Finally, a record of the celebrations was made, detailing the time-table of teas and presentations (each child receiving a mug from the parish and a medal and flag from a Mr William Wright). The day concluded at 6.30 p.m. with sports - after which the children all received a bag of nuts and sweets. (10)
Market Bosworth raised fifty guineas for the celebrations and after a church service, treated the residents of both Bosworth and Coton to lunch in the Park. At Melton too there were free lunches, followed by sports and illuminations (to the sound of the Town Band) on the town’s new park. Barwell’s organising committee made the village’s children happy by hiring four traction engines, each hauling a truck, to take them on a tour of the neighbourhood.

A rare survival of a programme (11) enables Wigston Magna’s day to be constructed hour by hour. At 8.30 am, an hour’s peal rang out from the parish church. Then, an hour later at 9.30, a procession departed from The Orchard (where the Wigston United Brass Band played), consisting of Territorials, Scouts, Ambulance Men, Firemen, Friendly Societies, School Children, Vehicles, Cyclists, Mounted Men in Fancy Dress and others’. There was another peal at midday, followed by a service at 1 o’clock. Tea was at four, with sports before (for the children) and after (for the adults). The day’s programme closed with fireworks at 9.30 and the National Anthem at 10 pm.

The festivities continued throughout Friday 23rd June, although heavy rain seems to have driven most indoors. Bonfires and fireworks were planned at Hinckley and Grace Dieu, though rain dampened most of the squibs and the events were cancelled. A performance of *As You Like It* came to an abrupt halt at Mountsorrel. However, the Desford Industrial School Boys’ Band proved both their mettle and superiority over the thespians, by playing on from the cover of a spreading chestnut tree.

Yet more celebrations were held on the Saturday despite heavy rain. Disabled children were entertained by Punch and Judy at Leicester’s Abbey Park, and there was a garden party for the blind at the Wycliffe Hall in Gwendolen Road. Over on the East Coast, the poor boys and girls from Leicester enjoying a spell at Mablethorpe, were invited to join in the local village celebrations.

One way or another, there can have been few children in Leicestershire who did not finish that coronation week, richer by a mug, or a medal, or a memory of sweets and sports.

At Oadby the glow of success lingered longer than in most communities. The surviving minutes record general satisfaction with the occasion and the decision to purchase a barometer for the secretary, as a token of the committee’s thanks for a job well done. Fund-raising had resulted in a surplus of over £65 which when augmented with another £10 from Mr J. A. Corah, was enough to establish a parish nurse scheme. The coronation minute book thereby became the nursing minute book, just as a day’s celebration gave rise to a valued community asset. (12)

As the bonfires died down and the sparks of the last rocket vanished in the night sky, there was a feeling that Leicestershire had done well by their new King and Queen. The *Leicester Daily Post*’s editorial summed up the jollity of the occasion: ‘Not only did *all sorts and conditions of men and women* join in the entertainments, but all ages as well, the children as well as the *children of a larger growth* alike revelling in the amusements of the day.’ (13)

**References and Notes:**

1) *Green Tiger*, June 1911, p.108.
2) Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland (ROLLR): DE3736/104 & 105.
4) Ibid.
5) ROLLR: LS2610.
6) ROLLR: LS868.
7) ROLLR: LS2609 & 1391. LS 1078 shows both Richard II and Richard III.
8) ROLLR: DE1050/1. Measham’s celebrations were finally rescued by ‘a lady’ who offered to pay the cost.
10) ROLLR: DE3091/92-98. The parish balance sheet is somewhat misleading. A surplus of 8s. 1d. was made and transferred to the Parish Bier [sic] Fund.
11) ROLLR: DE4619.
12) ROLLR: DE1383/65. The minute book survives amongst the records of the parish council.
This article demonstrates how family history research is increasingly linking in with local history research and can lead to discoveries which are of interest not only to the family concerned but also to a wider audience. It also demonstrates the increasing availability and value of online sources for remote research, especially where the researcher does not have access to the original documents, as in this case where living in Australia. (Illustrations of the documents below, are however copies from the originals.)

Research into the history of Sultzer family connections, primarily using online sources, brought to light not only interesting information about one of Leicestershire’s eighteenth century surveyors, inclosure commissioners and land valuers, but also information about the role itself, about economic mobility, and of the professional networks which existed between Leicestershire, Staffordshire, Norfolk and Rutland and the neighbouring counties, plus an interesting link to the printer and publisher John Nichols.

The Parliamentary Inclosures of 1760-1825 were the cause of major upheaval in the English countryside. (1) As a consequence, whole villages were abandoned, labourers and farmers who had small acreages were forced off their land, and the majority ended up feeding the cities’ thirst for industrial labour.

Inclosure did however bring benefits in that the resulting larger areas used for crops increased the amount of food available for the industrial workers. Also, in addition to the large land-holders who benefitted from the inclosures, there were gains to be had by the smaller landowners and farmers, who, if they could afford it, built a house on their land, whilst others could buy land and enclose it themselves. The open field system of farming did however have its disadvantages, including the rapid spread of infections and diseases amongst the livestock, whilst common pasturing made breeding difficult, and selective breeding impossible. (2)

In the Burton Overy area in the south-east part of Leicestershire, oats, barley, beans and peas had been grown there historically, but by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries raising sheep was becoming more financially viable. As inclosure subsequently took place across the villages of the Midlands, for some communities it proved disastrous, for example where the land was divided amongst only a few landowners. However, at Burton Overy where the land was already divided amongst a larger number of people, inclosure plainly brought advantages allowing them to improve their stock (3), and by 1790, a contemporary description of the village mentions the ‘opulent graziers’ living there. (4)

It was against this background in Leicestershire and beyond that John Sultzer worked.

There seems to be no record of Sultzer’s birth nor origins, though the name is German/Austrian. Surviving records do however give us a good idea of his work as a professional surveyor, commissioner, and land valuer in Leicestershire and the nearby counties of Northamptonshire, Rutland and Bedfordshire, as well further afield in Norfolk and Suffolk.

Sultzer appears to have learned his profession under William Wyatt in Staffordshire, and by the mid-1760s he had moved to Leicestershire to work as a commissioner for inclosure. His name appears on the awards for Burton Overy and nearby Houghton-on-the-Hill.

‘An eminent surveyor’ - John Sultzer of Burton Overy (1737 – 1782)

Frances Rouse

John Sultzer’s name can be seen on the Attested copy of Houghton on the Hill Award, 1766 (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, location mark DE 2555/27).
The onlinetranscript of the Inclosure for Seagrave is also interesting in that it reveals further details of the role of Inclosure commissioner and is worth looking at in some detail. (10) In addition to William Wyatt, the commissioners who were appointed for Seagrave included: Hugh Platt of Osgathorpe, John Davys of Loughborough, John Kirkland also of Loughborough, and Thomas Drake of Shardlow, Derbyshire. The fields and commons surveyed included the open fields and meadows known as the Brink Field, the Ansley Field, the Over Field, and the Nether Field. There were also several Commons called the Hills, the Playne, the Woulds, the Gorse, the Slobbs, and the Wattering-Leys. The Lord of the manor at this time was Leonard Fosbrooke Esq, and the Rector was the Rev Richard Benskin.

A description of the existing owners of intermixed land included:

Fosbrooke as the principal proprietor of the land in Seagrave; Thomas Fisher, John Woodroffe, and others, are owners of other lands and meadows ... and of the right of common at open spaces ... Leonard Fosbrooke ... is entitled to the soil of the said several commons, and (he), Thomas Fisher, John Woodroffe, and several others, are entitled to the rights of common... The whole of the proprietors lands lay intermixed and scattered over the common fields and meadows, chiefly in very small parcels, and are therefore incapable of improvement. The residue of the land intended to be enclosed to be divided between Leonard Fosbrooke, Thomas Fisher, John Woodroffe, and the rest of the owners and proprietors ... (11)

In addition to surveying and measuring the land, and producing a plan, the work of the commissioners also included writing the award document and re-distributing the lands ‘in whole parcels under the Act’.

As far as the public and private roads were concerned, the commissioners were:

- to appoint such public roads, bridges, fords, causeways, sluices, drains, banks, and likewise such private ways, hedges, fences, fords, sluices, cuts, drains, banks, ditches, gates, and stiles in, through, or upon the said fields, meadows, and commons ...
- Cottages on the waste ... belonging to Leonard Fosbrooke, and several small parcels of ground ... used by the tenants... [were to be continued to be held by Fosbrooke and his heirs.] New hedges, fences, and ditches for enclosing and dividing the said Open and Common fields were to be made within 18 months and maintained by the new owners.
All the expenses for acquiring the Act, making the survey and implementing the award were to be borne by all the proprietors and owners except Richard Benskin. As a result the survey and measurement of the open fields, meadows and commons of Seagrave and of all the lands and grounds within the lordship of Seagrave... show the whole of the fields and land to be enclosed appearing to contain 2237 acres. (12)

In the later eighteenth century, surveying and mapping work (and the old associated prestige) were gradually becoming subordinate to the commissioners' task of quantifying relative land values. The early panels, similar to a local jury, gradually decreased in size, with expertise becoming more important. The very term “quality man” by which they were often now known, sums up this change. It is further revealed in the working relationship between John Sultzer and Samuel Davenport, and whilst Sultzer was involved in mapping in the early 1770s, he increasingly turned to specialise in land valuation, whilst Davenport continued to do the measuring.

The need for professional land valuers came from those interested in Inclosures and from the landowners themselves, one of the reasons for this being the importance being placed on the need for regular rent revision:

The specialist valuer thus shaded into the agriculturalist whose function was not only to indicate what increased rent might be charged but also to suggest changes which could be encouraged or imposed by landlords with a view to the increases in productivity out of which higher rents could be paid. (13)

Some further information concerning John Sultzer's mapping work in Leicestershire can be found in the National Archives online records which include a Map of an estate called King's Wood in the disafforested Forest or Chase of Leicester, surveyed by Sultzer in 1772. The estate belonged to the Duchy of Lancaster, and was in the tenure of Henry Hitchcock. The map shows field names, acreage and names of adjacent owners. (14) Interestingly, it also contains a mention of Sultzervoting in the election of 1775.

Although the distances he travelled seem relatively short to us today, or at least to this Australian, the area was quite a large one, given the transport system of the time. Certainly there were regular coaches between cities and the larger provincial towns and villages, but the estates where Sultzer was regularly required were not so easily accessed, and it could be conjectured that in some circumstances, the owners of the estates where Sultzer was working provided transport from the nearest coaching stop.

By 1779 Sultzer was working with Walter Watson of Shuckburgh, Warwickshire, and the two are recorded as wanting to partition 'Trystis Manor or Truss's Manor, the advowson of the rectory of Maidford and several messuages and ancient inclosures in MAIDFORD and of tithes of corn and hay out of a close of 50 acres in BLAKELEY, co. Northampton.' (15) It would seem from the wording that Sultzer and Watson were working for themselves rather than employed by someone else, the kind of work Sultzer was doing ideally placing him for his own development in a kind of early version of a real estate agent.

The last professional mention found to date of John Sultzer is 22nd July 1782 when by an Act of Parliament, he and Henry Walkery of Thurcaston were empowered to enclose some 300 acres of open fields and common grounds in Mountsorrel. (16)
The genealogical side of this research, whilst obviously of more interest to Sulzter’s descendants, does also contain some interesting general evidence of mobility, morbidity, marriage patterns and employment in the latter part of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with particular reference to Leicestershire, as well as pointers to online sources which the author found useful during the course of this research.

Sulzter’s travels would have given him the opportunity to meet a great many people, and it seems likely that he met his future wife Christian Woodward while surveying in the Burton Overy area in the 1760s. Christian was born on 27th March 1749 and her family had lived in the village of Burton Overy at least as far back as her grandfather William Woodward’s birth in 1672. Christian and John were married in St Andrew’s Church at Burton Overy on 19th March 1771.

Three of their children died in infancy – William who was born in 1772 and died just over a year later, and twin girls Peggy and Patty who died shortly after their birth in 1779. William, Peggy and Patty are poignantly commemorated on gravestones in St Andrew’s church alongside those of their mother’s Woodward relatives, and the memorial to their father.

The five children who survived were Katherine (1774 - 1852), Mary (b1775), Ann (b1776), another William (b1777), and John (b1782). Katherine was to marry Samuel Alston, a solicitor from Suffolk, at St Martin’s, Leicester on 31st December 1798. They had a son Samuel who was born in 1800 but died aged 25 in 1825; and a daughter Maria, born in 1803. She was to marry the Rev Rowland Ingram and went to live at Giggleswick in Yorkshire, where she was to be joined by her mother Katherine, who lived to the age of 77 and was buried in nearby Settle.

Mary Sulzter married William Wheldale, a draper of Leicester, in 1796 at St Martin’s. Her brother William, also a draper, married Elizabeth Geary, and they had at least one son, also called John (1802 – 1861), who became a successful cotton and silk manufacturer, and an Alderman in Norwich, Norfolk. William later re-married and had a daughter Anne. Tragedy followed when father and daughter were buried on the same day at St Martin’s. She was only twenty-four.

How John Sulzter (the subject of this article), died on 26th December 1782 is currently unknown. He was only 44, not old, even for the time. His youngest son John who had been born only seven months earlier was baptized on the same day as his father’s funeral on 29th December at St Andrew’s Church.

Similarly, whether Christian Sulzter and her five remaining children stayed on in Burton Overy to continue to be near her family after her husband’s death is also unknown.

For the long distance researcher, there are various online sources which can help with identifying memorials and inscriptions, their location and current condition and illustrations.

Burton Overy Village website helpfully provides a floor plan of the memorials in St Andrew’s Church along with a transcription of the inscriptions. (Reproduced by permission of Leicestershire County Council).

The online sources which have been used to locate and identify the family memorials and inscriptions for the Sulzter family of Burton Overy include John Nichols’ History and Antiquities of the Town and County of Leicester of which the original volume containing Burton Overy was published in 1798. (17) Nichols recorded the following transcript for John Sulzter senior’s gravestone located in the floor of the north aisle in St Andrew’s, referring to Sulzter in a footnote as ‘An eminent surveyor’: 
Here lie, in the hopes of a joyful resurrection,
The earthly remains of John Sultzer, gent
He resigned this transitory life
The 26th day of December, 1782, aged 44 years.

Nichols also recorded the memorial to the three Sultzer children who died young:

Here lie the bodies of
William, Patty, and Peggy Sultzer,
Of this parish.
William died the 9th June 1773; aged 14 months
Patty died the 6th July 1779, aged 11 weeks
Peggy died the 3rd August 1779, aged 15 weeks.

A recent illustration showing the situation and part of the children’s memorial as it is today was found on the history pages of the village website for Burton Overy. (18)

Online records are also proving increasingly useful for tracing wills, and the ‘Will of John Sultzer of Burton Overy Leicestershire’ dated 31st January 1783, and which is part of the records of the department of the Prerogative Court of Canterbury has been successfully traced this way. (19)

Lastly, the British Book Trade Index website provided an interesting printing connection for John and Christian’s son John who was found to have been apprenticed to the Leicester printers Price and Gregory in 1796. (20) John subsequently went into partnership with John George Barnard, a London printer, and coincidentally, Barnard and Sultzer’s printing office in Water Lane, London, was virtually opposite Red Lion Court, across Fleet Street, where the office of John Nichols, the well-known publisher and printer referred to above, was situated.

References and Notes:
1. ‘Inclosure’ is the older spelling of the term and is used especially in legal documents; ‘enclosure’ is the more modern spelling.
3. The British History Online website is an extremely useful source of village information. Website: http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=22043
5. The foldcourse agrarian system extended over the East Anglian region, in particular Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire. It had depended on the open field system and by the end of the eighteenth century was regarded as an impediment to improving land profitability. There are a number of references on the internet to this system.

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By the end of the eighteenth century, prostitution was perceived as a major problem in society, due, in part, to the Industrial Revolution which created the mass migration of people from the countryside into the towns and cities, where prostitutes became far more visible. The Victorians sought to control all forms of deviance, and prostitution which was known as the great ‘Social Evil’, became their number one target. To have become a prostitute was to have fallen, but other women also came into this category, including any woman who had sexual intercourse with a man outside of marriage, whether it be consensual or not. Mistresses, single pregnant women, those cohabiting with men, and sometimes victims of rape and incest were all labelled as fallen. Indeed any one sexual mistake was enough to condemn a woman as fallen.

Throughout much of the nineteenth century, the fallen woman aroused much fascination amongst artists, poets and novelists. Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell and Thomas Hardy felt compelled to write about her, and artists such as Dante Gabriel Rossetti, George Frederick Watts and Augustus Egg felt compelled to paint her. Thomas Hood’s poem *The Bridge of Sighs*, published not long before his death in 1845, called for the reader to have some understanding of her position and to treat her ‘tenderly’. How then did the people of Leicester respond to this perceived ‘Social Evil’?

The protection of young girls, who were orphaned, destitute, or living in very poor home conditions with no one to provide them with moral and financial support, were seen to be particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Such girls became a matter of real concern in Leicester in 1799, as the *Leicester Journal* notes ‘Care of poor females – trained up in ignorance and idleness – become prey to seduction and prostitution.’ (1) According to the Rev Edward T. Vaughan, ‘a lady of much active benevolence’ expressed a wish that an asylum could be opened in Leicester as ‘a place of refuge, education and instruction’ for these girls. (2)

The benevolent woman’s idea was then ‘adopted and modified [by the Rev Thomas Robinson, vicar of St Mary’s Church] and obtained its accomplishment through his influence, activity and zeal.’ (3) The Female Asylum was opened in the Newarke, opposite to Trinity Hospital, on 3rd November 1800, largely due to a donation received from William Wilberforce, Member of Parliament for Yorkshire, who, like the Rev Thomas Robinson, was an Evangelical Christian. He donated £2,000 from a charitable fund and £100 of his own money. (4) Once established, the Asylum aimed to protect girls and prevent them from falling into prostitution and remained open until 1927 when it was closed due to demolition in the Newarke.
It was not until 1846 that any real effort to rescue and reform fallen women in Leicester got under way. In May that year, not long after the publication of Thomas Hood’s poem, *The Bridge of Sighs*, the first of several letters, written by William Biggs, a Leicester hosier and political reformer, appeared in the *Leicestershire Mercury* and the *Leicester Journal*. His intention was to encourage the people of Leicester to form an associate society of the national Associate Institution for Improving and Enforcing the Laws for the Protection of Women, which had been founded in 1843 to protect women and children from violence, immorality and vice. Before this could take place, Biggs believed society had to change its attitude to prostitution:

> A conventional and mistaken delicacy has done all that it could to keep virtuous women clear of knowing, or wishing to know, or being supposed to know, the revolting instances of woman’s weakness and misery and man’s selfishness’ and brutality ... these things must be known, or nothing can be done. (5)

A further letter by Biggs estimated that there were sixty brothels in Leicester, each containing, on average, five prostitutes. This, of course, did not take into account prostitutes who did not work from brothels. All of these women, he claimed, were ‘shut out from sympathy or chances of reformation.’ (6) He again urged the town’s people to form a society to reclaim these abandoned women, emphasizing that the people of Nottingham had already done so to good effect, and that he did not want to see Leicester falling behind. A lengthy letter in reply to Biggs was anonymously published in the *Leicestershire Mercury* on 13th June 1846, in which the writer outlined what he believed were the causes of prostitution, and who was most likely to become one. Girls from poverty-stricken families, and those in domestic service, he believed to be most at risk. It was increasingly acknowledged throughout the nineteenth century, by such figures as Henry Mayhew, that young girls entering domestic service at its lower levels were particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation. Domestic servants dismissed from their posts without a character reference often found themselves on the streets. Despite this growing awareness, most of the girls and women who entered asylums and penitentiaries, were trained to enter domestic service when they left. The anonymous letter-writer also categorically stated that ‘you must raise the working classes in the scale of society, or you must tacitly consent to see a great portion of the female sex doomed to a life of prostitution.’ (7)

Writing in the *Leicester Journal* in early September 1846 Biggs said:

> From the comparative slowness of the public in Leicester, in taking up any new scheme of Benevolence, from the difficulty of raising adequate subscriptions, and from the delicate nature of the subject itself, I despaired of establishing a “Home of Refuge” or an Associate Society at present and had quietly resolved that if the matter was not taken up by others, I would defer its attempted accomplishment until another session of parliament. (8)

His despair turned to delight when ‘a few energetic and benevolent minds ... determined upon the immediate establishment for a house of refuge in Leicester.’ (9) The initial benefactors had subscribed upwards of two hundred pounds and persuaded several people of influence to become patrons of what was to become the Home for Penitent Females. The patrons named were: the Earl and Countess Howe, the Bishop of Peterborough, Rev Edward T. Vaughan, Rev W. Hill, Rev Octavius Owen, Rev Jemson Davies and the Rev Robert Burnaby. The honorary physician was to be Dr Shaw, the honorary secretaries Mrs Wilson and Miss E. Marshall and the treasurer Thomas C. Turner, who was agent to the Bank of England in Leicester.

This was quite an early venture as there were very few such institutions in Britain at that time. It also opened before Charles Dickens famous experiment began in November 1847 when he opened a Home for Homeless Women, in Shepherds Bush, London, called Urania Cottage. He particularly emphasised that it should be called a home rather than a penitentiary. It would seem that Leicester achieved this before Dickens and one wonders if Leicester influenced him?

It has been difficult to pinpoint the exact date when the Home opened, but it was certainly late 1846 or early 1847. Most of the trade directories for Leicester state that it was first located in Blue Boar Lane, but this is incorrect as its annual reports clearly show that it was in the Newarke and the 1851 census confirms this. Just before the first annual general meeting, in January 1848, it was proposed that a permanent ladies committee be formed to oversee the internal running of the Home. It was also decided that the all-male management committee should draw up rules for the Home, but that they should be put before the ladies committee for approval. The Countess of Lanesborough, the Hon Mrs Wilson, Lady Hazlerigg and Mrs Frewen Turner were also added to the list of women patrons.

The annual report for 1849 gives some detail of what happened to the inmates who had entered the Home since its inception. Three were restored to friends, four had left at their own request, four had been sent as immigrants to Australia and nine had gone into ‘respectable service’. In
1858 thirty of the inmates were said to have married respectably. Researching the background of the inmates is not always possible, for example, the 1861 census does not give the surnames of the girls and women in the Home. Enquiries relating to two of the women, Matilda Goodman and Hannah Cross, who were both in the Home in 1851, have proved a little more fruitful. Matilda, born in Stonton Wyville, Leicestershire, in 1828, and Hannah, born in Breedon-on-the-Hill, Leicestershire, in 1832, both had fathers who were agricultural labourers, and mothers who died when they were very young. Both of their fathers re-married which meant they had step-mothers. Thus, they fitted into the national pattern of the many motherless girls who ended up in homes for fallen women. Although there is no certainty, in these girls’ lives, step-parents were often to blame for a girl having to leave the family home when very young. A large proportion of girls and women entering refuges across the country were the daughters of agricultural labourers, who had come from impoverished families, causing them to be sent out into service at a very young age.

The accommodation in the Newark was thought to be unsuitable for the inmates as early as 1849. Insufficient space for exercise, and poor ventilation were blamed for the poor health of inmates, and Dr Shaw, honorary physician to the Home, suggested that they should move to a location out of town, but this was not to happen for another 32 years. In order to bolster the finances of the Home and to help it relocate to a more suitable accommodation, the management committee decided to invite the neighbouring counties of Derbyshire and Northamptonshire, who did not have a similar institution, to form auxiliary committees who would be responsible for sending fallen girls and women from their county to the Home, for which they would pay a fee. This did not entirely resolve the financial problems, and one remaining India Bond, purchased with initial donations when forming the charity, had to be cashed. However, despite a deficit, they were able to relocate to 18 Highcross Street, which had an airy backyard suitable for exercise and recreation, sometime between 1851 and 1852.

Most of the annual reports for the Home regularly showed financial problems. In 1856, the withdrawal of Derby from the scheme, due to establishing a home of their own, and Northampton about to establish one, forced the management committee to look at new tactics to raise funds. William Biggs suggested that they petition the government for a grant, arguing that ‘They had reformatories for men and boys in every county, why not have institutions for a class of females who stand equally in need of them? (10) It was decided to present a petition on the matter to parliament. There is no indication that this actually happened, but the finances were improved due to Biggs campaigning for additional donations and subscriptions.

Insufficient donations and subscribers to the Home were, perhaps, the main cause of concern to the management committee throughout its existence. The main reason being that the charity did not obtain the public recognition accorded to other forms of philanthropic effort. Consequently, in 1871 and 1872, in an attempt to encourage people to donate and subscribe, the management committee decided to publish extracts from letters, written by two past inmates, and a Nottingham employer of a reformed inmate to demonstrate that the Home was having some success in its work:

I desire to thank you all for what you have done for me, bearing with my temper, and so many times when I wanted to go out, many kind hands and hearts were stretched out towards me. I know that you all pitied me in my temper, and I don’t know where I should have been now if I had then gone out of the Home. I fear in some den of vice. Through grace I look upon the Home as a friend in need and think of it as my birthplace. (11)

I am quite sure you must feel very grateful to the Home for what they have done for you. It has been a blessing to you and to me and many more. May God send his blessing upon it, and those who uphold it. (12)

I feel that I can hardly speak too warmly of her conscientiousness, and of her earnest endeavours to do her best. Ever since she came to us I have felt great comfort in her. (13)

The extract from the employer was also used to encourage other people to engage the girls and women when they left the Home. Finding suitable placements was one of the greatest problems encountered by the committee.

Another periodic problem facing the committees of the Home was persuading fallen girls and women to enter the Home. In 1858 it was said that they had a fear of entering the walls of the Home. Earl Howe, chairperson of the management committee, thought an ideal solution to the problem was to take properly examined inmates from London homes, but that the decision to do so rested with the ladies house committee. The situation does not appear to have improved much by the time of the 1861 census which shows that there were only twelve inmates in the Home.

Despite continuing low numbers the management committee decided to purchase a permanent establishment for the Home in Blue Boar Lane, at a cost of £800. A mortgage was taken out and the purchase took place in December 1862. The move to 16 Blue Boar Lane probably took place in early 1863, as the annual meeting took place there in March that
year. It was now hoped that having permanent premises would mean that the Home would become better known to girls and women wishing to enter it. This may have been one of the reasons why in 1869 the annual report shows that there were 28 inmates, which was the largest number to date. The increase made it necessary to enlarge the dormitories, the laundry, the lavatories and the kitchen.

Consequently, prostitution became an attractive alternative, sometimes only in a transient manner between seasonal work, whilst unemployed, or to supplement their wages on a weekly basis. Casual prostitution was not just the prerogative of the single woman, married and widowed women were also often involved in the trade when times were particularly hard and children needed to be fed and the rent paid.

Prostitution carried with it the risk of contracting venereal infections, and a letter from a ‘Mother’ which appeared in the *Midland Free Press*, in March 1870 throws some light on how prostitutes in Leicester received treatment for them. She said that prostitutes knew where to go for treatment, and that the Bible Women and the ladies of the house committee advised them on this:

Many availed themselves of these offers and had been sent to the Infirmary where there is a ward set apart for this class, others have found their way to the Union house, where there is also a room set apart for this disease. From both these places many have been received into the Home. (14)

The report for 1876 also stated that ‘these poor sheltered penitents received tender sympathy and good advice of the ladies of the house committee and the matron.’ (15)

Despite alterations to improve and extend the accommodation at 16 Blue Boar Lane, the management committee decided, in 1875, that either further extensions to the property were needed, or a move to new premises. The latter was decided upon and a piece of land was purchased in Stoneygate Road, Knighton the following year. Local architect, William Beaumont Smith, was commissioned to design a red brick Gothic style building, and in October 1881 the management committee eventually achieved its ambition to move to premises away ‘from the associations of the town’ and the ‘narrow, dark situation in Blue Boar Lane.’ (16) This
position, near to green fields, they thought would be of great benefit to the inmates, as they were now beginning to understand that 'a healthy moral life depended upon a healthy physical one.' (17) The accommodation was much more spacious as it contained a work room (used as a chapel on Sundays), a kitchen, a dining hall and dormitories. All of this came at great expense causing the management committee to go deeply into debt for several years, despite generous donations from such people as Mrs Perry Herrick who had donated £1,000 towards the overall cost which was somewhat in excess of £7,000.

A rather romantic image of life in the Home was given in April 1882:

On entering the building and stating my wish to see over it, I was at once taken into the workroom. As we drew near we heard sounds of melody and on opening the door about fifteen or twenty girls and young women were seen sitting around the room, knitting and sewing and singing pleasantly and tunefully to their work. On seeing us they ceased their hymns, and rose up respectfully. (18)

When they first moved in, the workroom was bare of ornamentation, apart from illuminated text hung round the walls, but it was shortly decorated by Edith Gittins, co-founder of the Leicester branch of the Kyre Society. She equipped it with William Morris and Co furnishings, and a mural of the Light of the World, by William Holman Hunt.

In 1882 there were 38 inmates in the Home who, as had been the case since the Home’s inception, spent the weekdays mainly employed in laundry and needlework, which contributed to the income of the institution, and scrubbing the floors of the Home’s corridors. This sort of work usually occupied the daytime hours in most such institutions. Outside the building there was a large playground and a covered gymnasium and it was hoped that sometime in the future a small plot of land would be given for the inmates to cultivate.

Potential inmates could enter a home for penitent females in various ways. Some entered of their own volition, or under pressure from their families or employers, others were recommended by the clergy, the police, the magistrates and some could be brought in by subscribers to a home. The report shows that girls and women entering the Home in 1882 came 'just as they are rescued out of the streets by Bible Women and charitable ladies, and are at once admitted into the company of the other inmates.' (19) They were described as having 'been living a wild Bohemian kind of life' (20) and that some 'were probably not yet willing to enter a Home and submit themselves to training.' (21) This was not thought to be an ideal situation and the management committee wanted to open a separate refuge for newcomers, but this had to be delayed until the debt on the new building was paid off. This had still not taken place by 1885 when there was mounting concern about increasing numbers of prostitutes on the streets. The Leicester Bible and Domestic Women’s Mission proposed that a refuge be opened in the town to provide temporary additional shelter.

The Bible Women’s proposal elicited an anonymous letter sent to the Midland Free Press, in March 1885, calling on them to open such a refuge, but strongly emphasizing that it should be a complete departure from the type of refuge that already existed in the town 'it must not be a mere wholesale wash-house, a place for clear starching and ironing...a place where from morn to night it will be:

Wash, wash, wash
In the dull December light,
And wash, wash, wash
When the weather is warm and bright.
Iron, iron, iron,
From weary chime to chime,
Iron, iron, iron
As prisoners work for crime. (22)

Neither should it be a place for the ‘dissemination of religious dogmas and sectarianism’ or a place of penance, but that the work done should help to give the inmates a sense of self-respect and the opportunity to improve their chances in the workplace when they left:

Treat them not scornfully,
Think of them mournfully,
Gently and humanly.
Not of the shame of them,
Make what remains of them
Good and pure womanly. (23)
Both of these verses are adaptations of Thomas Hood’s two poems, *The Song of the Shirt* and *The Bridge of Sighs*, which brought people’s attention to the plight of the seamstress and the fallen woman respectively. Four months after the publication of this anonymous letter, the Domestic Mission opened the Temporary Refuge for Homeless and Destitute Women and Girls, at 1 Chancery Street, Pocklington’s Walk. The matron was Miss Jessie Overend and the two Bible Women specifically responsible for running it, were Mrs Voss and Mrs Dexter. The honorary secretary was Mrs Julia Windley, née Noble, the wife of Alderman Thomas Windley. The aim of the Refuge was to provide temporary refuge as they believed that:

All cases that need a helping hand do not necessarily require immuring in a home for, say, two years and indeed the existing institutions would be unable to contain them. Many have excellent relatives, sorrowing over their estrangement, and are quite willing at the first sign of desire for reform, to receive them back. But there remains a still larger number whose very livelihood, (alas! that it should be true) have come to depend upon questionable courses. “We must live,” say they. “We would work if we could get it to do.” (24)

Poverty, misfortune or sudden calamities were also given as reasons for girls and women needing refuge. The intention of the Bible Women was to provide the girls and women with a place to stay until work was found for them. Whilst staying in the Refuge they made articles for sale to the public, sometimes at specifically held fund-raising bazaars. A leaflet for one of these events informed the public how dependent the girls and women were on people buying the articles they had made:

There is so much preventable wretchedness among our poor sisters. Help them to help themselves, by making their temporary employment possible. (25)

During the year 1889 to 1890 seventy girls and women, whose ages ranged from a girl of ten to a sixty year old tramp, were given refuge at 1 Chancery Street, some after coming out of prison. Thirty-four were said to be of good character, 12 of doubtful character and 24 to have lost their good reputation one way or another. The girls and women had either been taken to the Refuge by policemen, Bible Women, visitors at the prison gate, the Infirmary and the Charity Organization Society, or they were directed there by the YWCA, lodging-house keepers and registry office keepers. Twenty unnamed examples of the inmates are given, many of whom were domestic servants who had lost their positions.

The Bible Women were clearly very visible on the streets of Leicester, both during the daytime and at night:

The night Bible Women have been most useful in alarming young girls about the streets and a great change is observable, bad as our streets and highways are, in the age of girls parading them. (26)

The Chancery Street Refuge was only intended to be a temporary arrangement because it was hoped that the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act, which raised the age of consent for girls from 13 to 16 and introduced laws to suppress brothels, would vastly reduce the numbers needing refuge. This was not to be the case, as illustrated by Mr A Lamb, a member of the management committee of the Home, who believed that the Act tended to drive the girls from houses onto the streets. With insufficient room to accommodate the number of girls and women requiring refuge many were transferred to homes outside the county.
that this was ‘pre-eminently and distinctly women’s work for Christ.’ (27) It was generally believed that laundry work symbolically helped to wash away the sins of the penitents whilst they washed away dirt from the clothes. Clearly, the St Mary Magdalene Refuge and it’s offshoot at Narborough did not heed the comments made by the anonymous letter-writer of 1885, who had condemned the setting up of a refuge that used laundry and domestic work as its main source of employment for its inmates.

The Narborough laundry project had been made possible by financial support from Mrs Perry Herrick, who had promised to pay the rent and rates for the duration of the experiment. The running costs of the Laundry had to be self-funded and it seems to have succeeded in achieving this, as it remained operational in 1898. St Mary’s Refuge and Night Shelter remained open in the Newark until demolition work in 1927 when it was forced to move to 1 Ashleigh Road, Leicester, where it became known as St Mary’s Home.

The Home’s reports for the 1890s tend to indicate a slight shift in attitudes towards the inmates needing some form of enjoyment and relaxation. The 1894 report said that Lady Perry Herrick had allowed the inmates to spend a day in Charnwood Forest and that the ladies house committee had arranged several evening entertainments, including a lantern exhibition of views of Switzerland, given by the Rev D.W. Lord. The 1898 report again mentions that Lady Herrick had allowed a holiday to be spent at Hanging Rocks, Woodhouse Eaves.

The 1891 annual report for the Home also indicates a more outward-looking attitude of the committee who attempted to forge greater unity between the Home, St Mary Magdalene Refuge and the Chancery Street Temporary Refuge. Each institution was sent five guineas, from a legacy of £100 recently received by the Home. Julia Windley, honorary secretary of the Temporary Refuge, present at the Home’s 1891 annual meeting, said that she was very grateful for the donation and that the Temporary Refuge was really ‘a child of the Home’ (28), because the inspiration for it had come about at an earlier annual meeting of the Home.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Leicester saw large numbers of upper and middle class men and women, whose names are too numerous to mention in this article, totally dedicated to rescuing girls and women who had fallen, and transforming them into penitents and finally respectable women. This was the general pattern throughout the country, but in Leicester there was perhaps more emphasis on the Home being a home rather than a penitentiary. The fact that the Home was established in 1846 also makes Leicester one of the earliest provincial towns to open such an institution.
Some of the men and women, who gave many years of service to the work of the Home, were: Thomas C. Turner, the treasurer from 1846 until his death in 1865, Mary, his wife, who was a visitor and member of the house committee for twenty years, Earl Howe, patron and the chairperson from 1846 to 1863, Edward Thomas Vaughan, secretary from 1846 to 1859, and the many matrons who oversaw the day-to-day running of the institution. Others, if not directly involved with the various institutions gave their financial support, the Herrick family, for example, gave both financial and practical support to several of the institutions throughout the nineteenth century.

The management structure of Leicester’s two main refuges, the Home and St Mary Magdalene Refuge, also fall into the national pattern of such institutions with named philanthropic professional men, comprised of clergymen, doctors, solicitors and businessmen, being in overall charge of their management structures. The women, who acted as visitors and sat on house committees, are largely unnamed and were not on the management committees, although they were sometimes consulted before decisions were made.

It is impossible to know what impact the reforming institutions and their committees had on reducing prostitution in Leicester, but as the 1884 annual report for the Home stated. ‘If they could rescue only one girl from a life of shame it was worth doing.’ (29) It is only possible to speculate about the number of prostitutes in the town, but the figures given in the letter from William Biggs in 1846, which did not include casual prostitution, far outweigh the number of girls and women entering the Home in 1847 and 1848. With women being subject to seasonal work and low wages throughout the nineteenth century, poverty often gave them little choice other than to resort to prostitution. The situation was little different in November 1904, judging by a letter written to Margaret MacDonald, by a working class Leicester woman, called Catherine Smith. Margaret MacDonald had placed a letter in the Leicester Pioneer, as part of an enquiry into unemployment of women in Leicester. Catherine’s extensive letter of reply expressed grave concerns about the extent of seasonal work and the low wages paid to women, working in the hosiery and boot and shoe trades in the town:

In reading your letter to the Pioneer I feel I must write a few lines in answer. You may well say women in danger. I think they are in terrible danger. It is quite certain they won’t let respectable girls get a living .... If things go on as they have been going on for the last few years they will have to open homes for respectable women between 20 and 30 for we shall not be able to earn a living. (30)

This letter shows that the financial situation for large numbers of working class women in Leicester was no different to what it had been in 1846 when the anonymous letter writer, who wrote in reply to William Biggs initial letter to the Leicestershire Mercury, said:

... you must raise the working classes in the scale of society, or you must tacitly consent to see a great portion of the female sex doomed to a life of prostitution. (31)

In other words the rescuers had done little or nothing to change the economic situation or lives of working class girls and women so often forced into prostitution, but what they were able to do, on a small scale, was to save some from such a life.

References:
1. Leicester Journal, 8th February 1799.
3. Ibid.
4. Leicester Journal, 29th November 1799.
5. Leicestershire Mercury, 23rd May 1846.
7. Ibid., 13th June 1846.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., 30th January 1857.
11. Leicester Journal, 8th March 1872.
13. Ibid.
15. Leicester Journal, 30th March 1877.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid., 5th April 1884.
21. Ibid., 12th March 1887.
23. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. Ibid.
27. Midland Free Press, 29th March 1890.
28. Ibid., 21st March 1891.
29. Ibid., 5th April 1884.
30. Catherine Smith, Letter to Margaret MacDonald (London School of Economics, MACDONALD/2/27).
31. Leicestershire Mercury, 13th June 1846.
The book trade in Leicester, between about 1790 and 1850, was remarkable for its high level of radical political activity. (1) Many of the town’s printers, booksellers and newspapermen held radical views and made good use of their book-trade skills to further the cause of radical politics in this turbulent era. One of the earliest, and unquestionably the most flamboyant, of Leicester’s book-trade radicals was the larger-than-life Richard Phillips.

The son of a Leicestershire farmer, Phillips was born in London in 1767 and grew up there. He arrived in Leicester in 1788, aged 21. Education was to be a lifelong concern of Phillips; he had briefly been a teacher in Chester, and followed the same occupation when he first came to Leicester. Later, he was to become a prominent author and publisher of school textbooks.

However, dissatisfied with running his small commercial academy in Leicester, he briefly turned to selling hosiery, then in 1790 took the important decision to enter the book trade. He opened a shop on the corner of Humberton Gate and Gallowtree Gate, then known as Coal Hill, where he sold books, stationery, printed music, musical instruments and prints, including the caricatures which were very popular at the time. He soon added a printing press and a circulating library, and began to sell wholesale and retail, a range of patent medicines, many of which were otherwise unobtainable locally. It was said of Phillips that he had an ‘absorbing desire to act as “guide, philosopher and friend” to the public at large, if they would but buy from him all they required for the equipment of their minds and the doctoring of their bodies’. (2) In 1791, he opened a ‘Navigation Office’ to sell shares in the new canals which were much sought after, and doubtless highly lucrative. (3) With characteristic bravado, Phillips also advertised his ‘Pamphlet Room’ as offering ‘the most extensive assortment of new publications in Europe’. (4)

Richard Phillips was always very open about his radical, republican opinions and his shop was known as ‘a depot for the advanced democratic literature of the revolutionary epoch’. (5) In 1792 he established one of the town’s first radical newspapers, the Leicester Herald. In the Memoirs of the Public and Private Life of Sir Richard Phillips which was later published in 1808, it was observed:

Politics... appeared to Mr Phillips as profitable an article as he could deal in; and with that alacrity which has ever distinguished the acts of able men, he established the newspaper called The Leicester Herald. (6)

The first issue of the Herald was available without charge, demonstrating Phillips’s creative approach to marketing. At the same time, another radical paper was started in Leicester, this being the Leicester Chronicle, its proprietor being Thomas Combe. Although Phillips accused Combe of stealing his idea, Combe was already a well-established bookseller in Leicester and had been secretly planning to start a radical paper regardless of Phillips’s activities. (7) Phillips sensibly proposed that the two papers should merge but Combe would not agree. (8) Thus for a time, Leicester had two rival radical newspapers, although the Chronicle closed down in February 1793 after having been threatened with prosecution.

At about the same time as launching the Herald, Phillips started an attractive small journal called The Museum and he also founded the ‘Adelphi’ Society, which both shared the aim of promoting philosophical and scientific study. Phillips’s great friend, the well-known Leicester figure, William Gardiner, recalled how Phillips gathered around him:
With the charismatic Phillips as its president, the Adelphi Society had, not surprisingly, embraced discussion of radical politics, as well as science and philosophy, thereby attracting the unwelcome attention of the authorities. The Corporation had ‘allowed itself to become alarmed at the thought of a few intellectuals reading “left” literature, and welcomed the proclamation of 1792 against seditious publications’. (10) The electrical experiments were as good an excuse as any to put an end to the Adelphi Society:

... so distrustful were the town authorities that an intimation was conveyed to the Society that their meetings had better cease, as they were deemed to have a dangerous tendency – the members might foment talk politics and thus become a seditious association; so, out of regard for their personal safety, they put an end to their proceedings. It was that lightning conductor that did the mischief. (11)

Although outspoken, Phillips was never a dangerous or violent radical, but as news of the French Revolution crossed the Channel, the Government became increasingly alarmed at the expression of even quite moderate radical views, and a series of measures was put in hand to stem the tide of ‘sedition’, the most serious being the suspension of ‘Habeas Corpus’.

Print culture was a vital part of this early wave of radicalism. Printed books, pamphlets, handbills and newspapers, even song-sheets, all helped to spread radical thought among working people, and played a key role in sustaining and holding together a fragmented radical community encompassing a wide range of opinions. Whilst ordinary people were more literate than their predecessors, even those unable to read could participate in the culture of print. Low-cost activities such as reading aloud were a common practice, enabling one copy of a radical newspaper or pamphlet, to reach a comparatively large audience of working people, thus cheaply spreading the word of radical ideas. Meanwhile, radical bodies, like the Adelphi Society, were instrumental in furthering the cause ‘face-to-face’ in their meetings.

Historians also now recognise the role of many considerably larger ‘communities of print’ – for example, those who read, discussed and reflected on the Leicester Herald – imparting a sense of belonging to an otherwise rather disorganized radical movement. Proselytising by means of relatively cheap and accessible print originated in seventeenth-century England, when political and religious pamphlets, along with rudimentary newspapers, poured from the presses on both sides of the great divide, before and during the Civil Wars. At that time, printing presses were few and far between, and attempts to control their output were rather hit and miss. By the end of the eighteenth century though, booksellers, printers and newspapermen were established in most provincial towns, including Leicester.

If the authorities were going to stand any chance of controlling the widespread production of printed material on a local basis, they would be forced to take drastic measures. The panic over the impact of events in France led to a nationwide wave of prosecutions of booksellers, publishers and printers.

Like many booksellers in Leicester and elsewhere, Phillips openly stocked the radical works of Tom Paine, and in 1793 a paid informer named Jackson bought from him a copy of The Rights of Man and several other radical publications. As a consequence, Phillips was put on trial, and after twelve hours was convicted of selling seditious literature. (12) The lead prosecutor was Spencer Perceval (later to become Prime Minister), a barrister who specialised in prosecuting radicals, including Tom Paine and Horne Tooke. Phillips was sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment in Leicester.
Gaol under the governorship of the celebrated Daniel Lambert. Interestingly though, Phillips was permitted to conduct correspondence, and even to edit the _Herald_ from his prison cell. (13) Whilst in prison, Phillips also acquired a reputation for providing assistance to needy prisoners and their families, whilst Lambert’s own ‘good nature and humanity’ towards Phillips is commented on in the _Memoirs_

Mr Phillips experienced the beneficial effects of his gaoler’s excellent disposition: his friends were permitted constant access to him, and through their medium, he contrived to carry on his business during the whole period of his imprisonment. (14)

![The old gaol in Highcross Street, Leicester, where Phillips was imprisoned in 1793-4. Detail from a lithographic print by John Flower. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland).](image)

Despite Phillips’s liberal treatment in gaol, it is quite possible that this experience led to his later support for penal reform. After serving about a year of his sentence, Phillips obtained a royal pardon, and was released in August 1794. (15)

Around this time, Phillips began to add another layer to his radical network. On top of the face-to-face community of the Adelphi Society, and the virtual print community of the readers of the _Herald_, Phillips now began to establish contact with some of the leading radicals of the day, such as Joseph Priestley of Birmingham who is described in the _Memoirs_ as the ‘main prop’ of the _Herald_. (16)

In November 1795, just over a year after Phillips’s release, disaster struck when a serious fire broke out in the premises next to his shop. The fire quickly spread and destroyed not only his house, shop, printing office and circulating library, but also almost all of his stock-in-trade. Some of Phillips’s enemies alleged that he had started the fire as an insurance scam, but there is no evidence to support this. His insurance claim was settled quickly and in full, which suggests that the fire was a genuine mishap. The _Memoirs_ characteristically state:

> Fortunately for the subject of these memoirs, not many months had elapsed since he had insured his property; and thus, when every body supposed him to be totally undone, he rose like a phoenix from the ashes, and proved that Providence is ever careful of those who really obey its dictates. (17)

However, it certainly appears that Phillips was planning a new venture before the fire, as he advertised his house and shop for sale in the _Leicester Journal_ some two and a half months before the fire. The detailed advertisement indicates that Phillips occupied spacious premises, with a 42-foot frontage to Gallowtree Gate, which ‘may be converted into two Houses at a small expense’. (18)

Immediately after the fire, Phillips advertised that ‘notwithstanding every Exertion on his part, he shall not be able to recommence his Business, in all its Departments, before the last week of December, or the first week of January’. (19) This was over-optimistic; and in January he advertised his intention of shortly resuming business in different premises, opposite the ‘Star’ in Belgrave Gate, where he planned to open ‘a modern and respectable circulating library’ in addition to bookselling, printing, stationery and bookbinding as before. (20)

There was no mention of the _Herald_. What happened next is not entirely clear. Some sources suggest that the _Herald_ had already been sold; but this is incorrect, although it may well have been in financial difficulties. During Phillips’s time in prison, the _Herald_ had carried repeated requests for subscribers and advertisers to pay their debts to the paper, while an advertisement in June 1794, for ‘an independent county newspaper’ and a bookselling and printing business, suggests that Phillips was already planning to sell up. (21)

However, Phillips produced the _Herald_ for a further year or so; the last extant issue is dated 12th June 1795. This issue ‘contains no hint of a cessation’ but it seems likely that the _Herald_ ‘was already defunct before the disastrous fire… the following November’. (22) Also unclear is whether Phillips did actually trade, albeit briefly, at the Belgrave Gate premises. In any event, he had moved to London by the summer of 1796 and was trading in St Paul’s Churchyard, the noted focal-point of book-trade activity.

Before leaving Leicester, Phillips had sold his business to John Nixon, who advertised that he taken over Phillips’s wide-ranging business comprising a circulating library, bookshop, printing shop and bindery; Nixon also sold stationery, patent medicines, coffee, tea and cocoa, as well as music and musical instruments. (23) Then in 1799, Phillips’s old radical rival Thomas Combe took over from...

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Nixon, thus acquiring the business with which he had once been in competition. (24)

Surprisingly, the Memoirs clearly state that the fire occurred in Phillips’s hosiery shop (which is definitely incorrect) and that, when he first arrived in London, he was again in the hosiery business but soon ‘transformed his hosiery warehouse, in St. Paul’s Church-Yard into a literary repository’. (25) At the same time Phillips established the Monthly Magazine, and made the momentous decision to become a publisher:

From the success with which the publication of The Leicester Herald had been crowned, he was led to turn his thoughts towards the publication of literary works; for which purpose, we understand, he held a consultation with his old friend, Dr. Priestley, and other literary characters, who promised to assist him in his proposed undertaking. (26)

The later career of the remarkable Richard Phillips can be briefly summarised as follows: he achieved his aim of becoming a publisher, becoming a rather prolific one as it turned out. He specialised in the lucrative market for school text-books and popular instructive books for children and adults, many of these being written under a variety of pseudonyms by Phillips himself, or by authors such as Eliza Fenwick and the Rev Jeremiah Joyce. (27) For a time, the business thrived:

...his business soon grew too large for the shop in St. Paul’s Church-yard; and accordingly he removed to his present residence, situated in Bridge-Street, Blackfriars.

Phillips’s circle of radical friends and acquaintances expanded to include William Godwin, Samuel Bamford (author of radical poetry and books including Passages in the Life of a Radical), Henry ‘Orator’ Hunt and Mary Wollstonecraft (author of The Rights of Woman) who would later write for Phillips’s Monthly Magazine. (28)

Phillips also became prominent in public life, serving as one of the two Sheriffs of London in 1807. He took his role very seriously and wrote a book on the duties of the Sheriffs. Not surprisingly, his shrievalty was quite a radical one: he often visited prisoners in Newgate, the Fleet and other prisons, campaigned for better treatment of prisoners, and reformed the notorious ‘sponging-houses’ for debtors. He also founded the Sheriffs’ Fund to assist prisoners; a Fund which still exists, providing support for ex-offenders.

Phillips had not given up his radical opinions but he had learned to express them with moderation. Had he still been an outspoken republican he would have been an unlikely candidate for the office of Sheriff of London and would certainly not have been knighted by King George III on the occasion of his bearing a loyal address to the king from the Corporation of London in 1808.

However, within a year of his term as Sheriff, Phillips’s business affairs, for reasons now unclear, had declined considerably and he was forced to close his premises in Blackfriars and sell some of his most valuable copyrights. He withdrew for a time from public life and quietly continued with his writing. Through the generosity of a former apprentice, Phillips was able to avoid total financial disaster, and he returned to his publishing activities, albeit on a reduced scale, reacquiring the Monthly Magazine and some of his copyrights. (29) He retired to Brighton in 1823.

Richard Phillips was an impressive character. John Timbs, one of his former apprentices (it is not known which of them assisted him) wrote some rather rambling, but informative, anecdotal recollections of his former master’s life. (30) Phillips was a strict vegetarian – regarded as a very eccentric habit in those days – and was strongly opposed to hunting and shooting. He was described as ‘earnest-minded, energetic, and warm-hearted - his friends, and even his servants, loved him with an affection as intense as the hatred of his enemies, and he had many of both’. (31) Timbs recalled his last visit to his old master in the autumn of 1839:

We found the old bookmaker ... full of years and memories, but infirm in health. We talked over various matters; and he summed up his long life, saying he was ‘past crying for the cake’. There was the old study, well filled with books and papers; but the master seemed to have done his work. (32)

Phillips died on 2nd April 1840, leaving a widow and several children. One of his sons, Horatio, became a bookseller in Paris.
Leicestershire Historian 2011

The importance of Sir Richard Phillips in the history of radicalism derives from his strongly-held opinions, which were argued in print consistently, reasonably and intelligently. His leadership of a number of overlapping 'radical communities of print', which together with his indefatigable publishing and writing activities, secure for him an important place in the history of the creation of a radical reading audience in England. Phillips co-published the Monthly Magazine with Joseph Johnson, another eminent radical bookseller-publisher. The extent to which their magazine was radically innovative has not always been recognised, but Jon Klancher observes:

As Richard Phillips and Joseph Johnson published the first Monthly Magazine in February 1796, they did not classify its readers as gentlemen, merchants, tradesmen, or any other familiar eighteenth-century social group. Rather, their journal held out for readers 'the propagation of those liberal principles...which have been either deserted or virulently opposed by other Periodical Miscellanies'. Its ideal reader did not belong to a rigidly defined social category but rather responded to that loose collection of ideas called philosophical radicalism. For young English intellectuals who were fascinated and disturbed by revolutionary politics, utopian rationalism, psychological materialism, Unitarianism and Dissent, the Monthly Magazine represented a new kind of ideologically cohesive discursive community. (33)

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3. Leicester Journal, 18th November 1791.
11. Herne, Old Leicester Bookseller, p.4.
17. Memoirs, p.49.
18. Leicester Journal, 18th September 1795.
20. Leicester Journal, 8th January 1796.
21. Leicester Herald, 14th June 1794.
22. Patterson, Radical Leicester, pp.77-78.
24. Leicester Journal, 14th June 1799.
25. Memoirs, p.68.
29. Some of the copyrights had been bought by Longmans but were sold back to Phillips; see John Issitt, ‘The Natural History of a Textbook’, Publishing History, 47 (2000), pp.5-30.
32. Timbs, Walks and Talks, p.120.

Masthead of the Leicester Herald (first issue, 5th May 1792), edited and published by Phillips. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.)
Those who are familiar with John Nichols History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester, may recognise the engraving below of a man in Persian dress and have wondered at the connection with Leicestershire. Having once been told that the Sherley brothers of Wiston, Sussex are known to present-day Iranians through their school curriculum, the purpose of this research has been to examine the brothers’ contribution to seventeenth century Persia (modern-day Iran), and how they were connected to the Shirley family of Staunton Harold in Leicestershire. (1)

In order to find the answer to the family relationship, it is necessary to go back to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. The Sherleys of Wiston, Sussex and the Shirleys of Ettington and Staunton Harold were all descended from Sir Ralph Shirley who was born in 1392. His son, another Ralph Shirley, married the heiress Margaret Staunton in 1423 and it was she who brought Staunton Harold into the Shirley family. It was their son, John Shirley, who chose to settle at Staunton Harold and designated himself ‘of Staunton Harold’. After the death of Margaret, Ralph re-married to Elizabeth Blount, and their second son (2), Ralph Sherley (d.1510) started the line of Sherleys of Wiston, Sussex whose descendants included Sir Thomas Sherley the Elder (d.1612).

Sir Thomas the Elder was an active politician and courtier of Queen Elizabeth I. He was knighted in 1573 and decided to rebuild his house, but hugely overspent. Due to his position as Treasurer at War, he had access to state funds which he misappropriated, and became bankrupt. He was imprisoned in 1597, but was released and some of his debts were waived. Sir Thomas however, continued with his various dubious business deals and false accounting, his lands taken by the Crown in 1602 due to unpaid debts, and he spent his last years in poverty until his death in 1612.

Sir Thomas the Elder had three sons: Sir Thomas the Younger (b.1564), Sir Anthony (1565-1635) and Sir Robert (c.1580-1628), who, like their father, gained fame on the international stage as adventurers and diplomats. It is the younger two brothers, Anthony and Robert, who are remembered in Iran today. All four Sussex Sherleys travelled widely at the time when many Elizabethans turned to adventure at sea, and their exploits have been much written about. Sir Thomas the Elder and the two older brothers (Thomas and Anthony) fell in and out of favour with their own monarch and with the heads of other states for a multiplicity of reasons. They took financial and political risks, and made miscalculations. As young men, Thomas the Younger and Anthony gained their early military experience in The Netherlands, and like their father, were always drawing up schemes to make money, usually having to borrow to make them happen. They spent and borrowed and were bankrupted, and spent time in prisons in different places for a variety of reasons, not only unpaid debts.

Thomas the Younger appears to have led a life which alternated between politics and privateering, with mixed fortunes. In 1585 he accompanied his father and brother Anthony to the Low Countries to quell the Spanish rebellion. Whilst there, it seems reasonable to suppose that their paths crossed with their Staunton Harold cousin, George Shirley (1559-1622), later the First Baronet, who was also...
accompanying the expedition with the Earl of Leicester. Robert, the youngest brother, also travelled extensively, although he did not get himself into as much financial trouble as his father and older brothers. After his marriage in Persia in 1608 to a princess from the Caucasus region, they usually travelled together.

Returning to the question about the Persian connection, Anthony and Robert were sent to Persia in 1598 by Robert Devereux, 2nd Earl of Essex, together with 25 Englishmen, their objectives being to promote British maritime trade, and also to stir up the Persians against the Ottoman Turks. The party was well-received by the King of Persia, Shah Abbas, known in Elizabethan England as the Grand Sophy, with whom they exchanged costly gifts. It was to be an alliance which would make the name of the Sherley brothers.

Shah Abbas was one of the most influential rulers in the history of Persia. He had come to the throne in 1587 when he was only 16 years old and became a stabilising force after a long period of civil war and foreign invasion. During his 42 year reign he transformed the country politically, economically and culturally through a combination of diplomacy and trade. He wanted to open up new markets in Europe and new routes for the products of the silk industry which he was expanding in his new capital, Isfahan. He also needed help in forming alliances with European rulers to help him fight against the Turks.

A year after the brothers’ arrival, Shah Abbas sent Anthony Sherley as Persian ambassador to Europe’s Christian princes. His mission was to promote the silk trade, and to engage support for war against the Turks. However, Anthony Sherley’s mission was unsuccessful and was disbanded when he was in Rome. Unable to return safely to England because of his close connections with the executed Earl of Essex, he went to settle in Spain in 1602. He subsequently ventured far and wide, and his travels to the Americas and Asia in those years are well-documented. He never returned to Persia, and died in Spain sometime after 1636 in relative obscurity.

Following the departure of his elder brother from Persia, Sir Robert was held in high esteem, and became a member of the Persian court. He was made a general of the artillery, was actively involved in the wars against the Turks, and with other Englishmen from his original party, he helped to reorganise the Persian army. In 1608 he married Samsonia, the nineteen-year-old daughter of a Christian Prince of the Caucasian city of Circassia. Samsonia was baptised by the Carmelites and given the name Teresia. Notwithstanding the failure of his brother’s diplomatic mission, Sir Robert now became the ambassador of the Persian monarch, and was sent to Europe in 1608 with the same remit as his brother. One can only speculate what the motives were behind this, or how his brother’s lack of success affected his own relationship with Shah Abbas. The whole party travelled in colourful and costly Persian attire, surely attracting great interest. They visited Poland, Spain and Italy and enjoyed a magnificent reception from Pope Paul V in Rome.

Sir Robert and his wife arrived in England together in 1611. Two key events during their stay were the death of his father and the birth of their son at Wiston. Sir Robert and his wife were well-received by King James, for whom they wore English dress. They named their son Henry after his sponsor, the Prince of Wales. The court of King James may well have provided the opportunity for a further meeting of the Sussex and Leicestershire Shirleys, especially as the young Henry Shirley (1588-1633) of Staunton Harold, who became the Second Baronet in 1611, was close to Henry Prince of Wales, and had travelled with him in Europe.

Early in 1613 Sir Robert and his wife sailed from England leaving their young son in the care of King James’ Queen, Anne of Denmark, but sadly he died in infancy, sometime after 1614. Meanwhile, after a long and dangerous journey, Sir Robert and his wife arrived back in Isfahan in 1615. Not long afterwards, he was sent on his second major diplomatic mission for the Shah, and travelled on his behalf for a number of years between Persia, India and Europe. During this time Sir Robert was showered with honours by many heads of state, including the Pope. While in Rome in 1622, Sir Robert and Teresia had their full-length portraits painted wearing full Persian dress. The young Dutch painter was fascinated by the detail of the sumptuous fabrics, and made notes on his preparatory drawings, which are now in the British Museum collection. He was the future eminent artist Van Dyck. The following year, the couple arrived in England with Sir Robert still serving as the Persian ambassador, but he had to suffer grave disputes regarding his authority. His resourcefulness carried him through until 1627 when they set sail for Persia for the last time. For all his loyalty, hard work and many achievements, Sir Robert received only a modest pension. Perhaps his increasing age made him less useful, but his health was in decline and he also had Persian rivals. He died of fever in 1628 aged 48 at Cazbyn in his adopted country, and was buried there at his own house without ceremony. It is said that on hearing of his death the Shah acknowledged Sir Robert’s services and ‘that he had done more for him than any of his native subjects’.

Shah Abbas’ successor in 1629 was his religiously conservative grandson, Sir Robert’s widow, Teresia, an extraordinary woman, subsequently met with opposition being a prominent Christian and took refuge with the Carmelites in Isfahan. She eventually retired to Rome, and later removed her husband’s body there to be re-interred in the Church of Santa Maria della Scala. When Teresia died in 1668 aged 79 she was buried with her husband, and the memorial plaque to both of them can still be seen in the pavement.
In an unexplained turn of events, it seems that the younger two brothers had become estranged from their mother, perhaps on account of having seen little of her in later years due to their constant travels, with neither being mentioned in her will when she died in 1623. Their older brother Sir Thomas inherited the Sussex estate but subsequently had to sell Wiston due to the family’s financial misfortunes, so the Wiston Sherleys lost all their land in the seventeenth century. The property never returned into the family’s possession. (3)

Conclusions: The family links between the Shirley of Staunton Harold and the Sherleys of Sussex go back over 500 years and are easily traced. The possession by both the Staunton Harold and Ettington Shirleys of portraits of Sir Robert Sherley in his Persian dress, further demonstrate the family connections. Thomas the Elder and his sons were intrepid, desperate, sometimes even dishonest, and certainly less prudent than their Leicestershire cousins. However, of the four Sussex Sherleys considered here, Sir Robert was courageous and loyal to the end, and given the role which he and his brother Anthony played in the transformation of Persia, it is not surprising, that the brothers receive mention in most histories of seventeenth century Persia. Meanwhile, the surviving exotic portraits of Sir Robert in Persian dress may well have helped maintain interest in him, and may even have promoted his reputation!

References and Notes:
1. Terminology: During the time of the Sherley brothers and at the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, modern-day Iran was known as Persia and the Ottomans as Turks. Hence the terms ‘Persia’ and ‘Turks’ are used here. More recent sources, including the publications associated with the 2009 exhibition at The British Museum, refer to ‘Iran’ rather than Persia and ‘Ottoman’ rather than Turk.
2. The Wiston Sherleys spelt their name differently, although this is not consistent in the literature. The manor of Wiston had been inherited by Ralph (b. 1392) through his mother.
3. Wiston house is still standing in 2011.

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A public meeting was held in Leicester town hall 14th October 1869 to consider the desirability of establishing a school of Art and Design in the town and with the aim of forming a ‘Society which, being in connection with a Government department, would be able to afford authoritative instruction in Art to the people of Leicester.’ This meeting followed several unsuccessful previous attempts over two decades to establish a school of Art, an institution seen as befitting the town’s burgeoning population, and increasing material prosperity. (1)

A limited number of independent schools of Art had been established in Great Britain in the previous century for the ‘encouragement of manufactures’. In England, the Society of Arts was founded in 1754; its full title - the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufacture and Commerce - indicates awareness of the necessity of improving design in support of manufacture. The Society established a drawing school in that year, this being the first school of design in England to this end.

However, it was not until the first half of the nineteenth century that government concern over the growing lack of competitiveness of British manufactures due to outmoded design, led to the establishment of a Commons select committee in July 1835. The committee concluded that there was ‘a most lamentable deficiency of taste and artistic knowledge in the designs used in our manufactures, and that in this respect we were very greatly dependent on foreign skill owing to the dearth of English designers’.

The government response to the findings of the committee was prompt. Funds were provided for a new school of Design, and the school opened at Somerset House in January 1837. Funding was extended to the major manufacturing towns in 1840, with schools founded in Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow and York.

A further select committee was established in 1849 to review the work of the schools. Its report noted mixed progress, but that demand for instruction in design was very much greater than had been anticipated, although it found that many of the schools were in debt due to the falling away of support by manufacturers.

The Great Exhibition of 1851, which allowed direct comparison between British and Continental wares, showed how much remained to be done to overcome ‘our modern inferiority in the industrial arts’. Increased government support for an expansion of design education soon followed, most notably the establishment of a Department of Practical Art (later to become the Department of Science and Art) at the Board of Trade in 1852. (2)

The great and the good of Leicester had debated the need for such a school in the town since the late 1840s.

In 1862, when a ‘highly respectable audience’ had been addressed by J. A. Hammersley, retiring headmaster of the Manchester School of Art, he reminded his audience that he had delivered two lectures to a similar audience back in 1847 on the benefit of a Leicester school. Although his remarks and the offer of his own services to set up the school had been well-received at the time, and a committee to establish a school set up with promises of subscription funding, these early signs of promise had come to nothing. (3)

Two years after Hammersley’s 1847 lectures, a further meeting had been held in the town in January 1849 to discuss the establishment of a school of Design in association with the Board of Trade. Notes from this meeting provide some understanding of why progress was so slow. The meeting discussed the moral and intellectual benefits of a school of Design for Leicester as well as its practical relevance. There was concern however that the ‘peculiar nature’ of the town’s manufactures - chiefly hosiery, gloves and footwear - might not benefit significantly from a school of Design. Nonetheless, it was concluded that such a school would be of great benefit, ‘even to our trade’. Once again, a number of individuals and companies pledged annual subscriptions, but as before, nothing materialised from these commitments. (4)

Hammersley’s subsequent 1862 address, highlighted the continuing concerns over the practical benefits of a school of Art but stressed the other advantages for the town, hoping ‘to show you that even admitting that no great skill in decorative art is needed in the manufacture of hose, yet, that the establishment of a school of Art in Leicester would be directly beneficial to the inhabitants’. The moral and intellectual benefits noted would be the education of popular taste and a widening of the appreciation of the Arts, and also the removal of ‘the stigma that rests upon Leicestershire of being the only county in England which contains in it no school of this character’. As in 1847 and 1849, the meeting expressed its enthusiasm and it was confidently predicted

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that ‘we shall hereafter date from the meeting of this evening the establishment of a school of Art’. However another seven years were to pass before the decision to proceed with a school of Art was taken on 14th October 1869.

This very abridged history of the protracted debate on the merits of a school of Art for Leicester clearly underlines the continuing issue of its relevance to the town’s trade. It seems that the leaders of the town viewed the establishment of such a school chiefly as a matter of civic pride, especially since other major towns had set up schools of Art years before, but that the manufacturers of the district shared concerns about the inability to justify it on commercial grounds.

A contributing factor to the delay in commitment to a government school of Art in Leicester may well have been the existence of apparently successful Drawing Schools organised by Canon William Fry in the county schools. An examination by the government’s Committee of Council on Education in 1858-59 of the work produced by these schools, concluded that the results were ‘fully up to the proportion of the success usually obtained when Schools of Art are in existence’ and recommended the extension of such education to bring ‘greater numbers under sound instruction in Drawing’ to give students an opportunity to carry forward their art studies beyond the Elementary level. The local press thought that ‘improvement must tell ultimately on the progress of such of our manufactures as are more immediately under the influence of popular taste’. It certainly seems possible that local manufacturers may have preferred to rely on the emergence of design skills as a result of Canon Fry’s dedication - at no additional cost to themselves - rather than subscribe to a separate government school offering what was seen to be of debateable value to their businesses. (5)

The main speaker at the 14th October 1869 meeting, J. C. Buckmaster of the Department of Science and Art in South Kensington, alluded to the local reluctance to support a school in his address, recalling that he had visited Leicester five years before. During this earlier visit he had ‘called upon several persons...with a view to the establishment of a school of Art. They all had plenty of excuses with which to evade him, and after going through the town he thought it best to go home and wait until the proper time had arrived’. (6)

However, at the 1869 meeting, sufficient commitment from all sides was at last able to make the vision of a school of Art for the town a reality, although opinion still remained divided on its relevance to Leicester’s industry. A committee was established and with the financial support of subscribers (who were reassured that their support would only be needed for the first three or four years until the school became financially self-sufficient) and the guidance of the Department of Science and Art, premises were secured in a former warehouse in Pocklington’s Walk.

Following a lengthy selection process, the Committee recruited Wilmot Pilsbury as the first headmaster from a list of fourteen candidates. Pilsbury, deputy headmaster at the West London School of Art, was born in Cannock in 1840 and had been educated at the Birmingham School of Ornamental Art and the National Art Training School in South Kensington. He came highly qualified for his new role, holding five teaching certificates from South Kensington. During his time at the South Kensington training school between 1859 and 1864, Pilsbury had developed a strong interest in ornamental design and was commissioned in 1862 by the South Kensington Museum to produce a manuscript copy of his notes from the lectures on Ornament. This work grew into *The Elements and Principles of Ornament*, a 224-page treatise on Ornamental Design, with some 800 illustrations, now in the National Art Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Pilsbury also wrote four scholarly articles on Symbolism and on Ornament between 1863 and 1865. (7)

In addition to his interest in Ornament (a subject at the heart of the Department of Science and Art’s curriculum for the schools of Art), Pilsbury was also a gifted watercolourist who had begun exhibiting his work in 1866 at the shows of the Society of British Artists and the Birmingham (later Royal) Society of Arts.

Pilsbury began the work of the school on 1st March 1870. To judge by the 1871 Committee report his efforts were quickly successful. The Committee stated that:
...there is no doubt that the high position which the School already occupies amongst the Art Schools of the United Kingdom is mainly due to the energy and ability of the Head Master, Mr Pilsbury; and the Committee are glad to avail themselves of his great talents and of the unremitting care and assiduity which he has devoted to the furtherance of the School’s interests.

The Committee’s report was given at the first annual general meeting of the school’s ‘subscribers and friends’ in December 1871. Lavish praise was heaped on the school by one speaker:

I shall not easily forget my evening visit to this school with its refined stillness, its subdued light, its absorbed students, its ever watchful bright-eyed, almost omnipresent master, whose spirit flowed silently through every moving pencil. I felt as if matter were annihilated, and that the spirit of beauty alone reigned there. There might be roughness, squalor, bare walls and cheerless hearths outside, but here was a little room in the heart of the town whence influences of the most refining and elevating character were quietly stealing forth to soften, to adorn and to cheer...I left it full of joy and hope for the future.

For the Rev Dr Dickson at least, therefore, here were the first signs of the ‘moral and intellectual’ benefits of such a school that many supporters had been hoping for. The new headmaster however, whose salary and performance bonuses were paid by the Department, knew that the school had to produce more than refinement and elevation. (8)

His first Headmaster’s report, presented at the same meeting, describes a solid performance by the students in the Department’s examinations, his only criticism of his charges being one of irregular attendance amongst the more advanced students. His report also quotes the favourable comments by the Department Examiners: ‘The works from Leicester were numerous, and evinced promise as the product of a first year of instruction.’ However, the Examiners pointed out that ‘The amount of Landscape Sketches seemed somewhat numerous relatively to the more legitimate efforts of the Students.’ Pilsbury attributed this to the higher number of students attending the day classes versus evening classes. This could most probably be interpreted to mean that those attending evening classes would be more likely to be those workers or artisans at whom the South Kensington ‘system’ was aimed; day students may have been more likely to be amateurs, the majority of whom were probably female, seeking ‘Art’ training and therefore more disposed to copy landscapes rather than the objects of still life, pottery and drapery thought more appropriate by the Examiners. Pilsbury stated his intention

...gradually to induce the Pupils to study light and shade, and colour, from the objects themselves, together with figure-drawing, which I consider to be a far more thorough and improving course to follow, and which the Examiners mean by the ‘more legitimate efforts of the Students.’ (9)

By 1873 Pilsbury was able to report to the Committee that the numbers attending the classes for artisans had risen while attendance at the Ladies’ Morning Class had declined. While regretting the fall-off in the Ladies’ Morning Class numbers, Pilsbury notes that ‘it is gratifying to know that the number is steadily increasing of those who make a practical use of the knowledge they derive, in their various occupations.’ The issue of ‘legitimate’ training aimed at design support for manufacturing industry versus ‘Fine Art’ education was clearly problematic for those charged with running the schools, as discussed by John Sparkes in 1884. (10)
Under Pilsbury’s guidance, the Leicester School of Art made steady progress, with an increasing number of students, a growing success in the Department’s annual examinations (held in Leicester), and in the quantity and standard of works submitted each year to South Kensington for examination in national competition. His annual reports detail meticulously the course of this progress between 1871 and 1881. However, in his 1872 report Pilsbury is already expressing his concerns about the inadequacy of the Pocklington’s Walk building as a school of Art. While the building had been ‘ingeniously adapted for the general purposes of Art study it was impossible to avoid at least the one inconvenience of a diffused light in most of the rooms.’

By 1873 he was somewhat less diplomatically writing that ‘the requisite space and proper lighting cannot be obtained in the present building, and I trust that one specially designed for the purposes of a school of Art will speedily be provided’. Pilsbury continued to highlight the difficulties of working at Pocklington’s Walk (citing health risks posed by poor ventilation amongst his other concerns), until 1876 when improved accommodation was made available in an extension to the Museum on the New Walk in Leicester.

A Museum Extension Committee had been set up by 1874 with the objectives of providing additional accommodation for the Museum, a Lecture Hall for the Literary and Philosophical Society (whose efforts had led to the founding of the Museum in 1849), and new premises for the School of Art. Echoing Pilsbury’s criticisms, the School Committee was anxious to ‘provide the rooms necessary for the accommodation of its various students and classes, who are now deprived of the space and light they need in prosecuting their artistic practice’. However, it soon became clear that this broad scope could not be accomplished with the funds likely to be raised by public subscription, and plans were therefore limited to the latter two objectives. (12)

The new building was opened in September 1876, the occasion being marked by a Fine Art exhibition attended by the ‘elite of the town’. The building featured the Lecture Hall which was used to display oil paintings for the exhibition, and which was ‘lighted from the roof in the style of the Royal Academy’, together with class rooms for the School of Art (which were used to exhibit watercolours for the exhibition). It is apparent from the very beginning that scheduling conflicts might arise between the requirements of the School of Art, and the Literary and Philosophical Society. In his address at the opening ceremony, the Society’s president was at pains to point out that the room in which they were meeting was also intended as a Lecture Hall for the Society, despite that evening’s use of it as an art gallery. The art exhibition did in fact remain in the Society’s Lecture Hall for several months. These issues were to surface within a few years. At the 1881 annual meeting of the School Committee, concerns were raised about the inadequacy of space for the school; a recently established life-class, held by kind permission of the Museum Committee, was housed in the Lecture Hall when not otherwise engaged. This class was frequently subject to interruption and it was now ‘desirable that a properly arranged room for this branch of study should now be provided for the exclusive use of the school’. It was also wished to begin a modelling class, for which there was not available space. In addition, ‘more space in the classrooms would also be sometimes desirable’. It seems that the shortage of space was mainly due to an expansion in the variety of classes being taught rather than student numbers which actually fell from 304 when the new school opened in 1876 to 292 in 1881-82, although, exceptionally, numbers did reach 317 in 1878-79. (13)

Despite these problems, the school would have to wait until the opening of the new Municipal Technical and Art School at The Newarke in October 1897 before adequate accommodation became available, by which time art student numbers had reached over 600. This handsome edifice, now known as the Hawthorn Building, is today home to the Applied Sciences at De Montfort University. (14)

It is interesting to note that none of the main speakers at the opening ceremony in September 1876 made reference to the school’s main purpose, at least as far as the Department of...
From 1871, Pilsbury began to bring his work to a wider audience, building his reputation as a watercolour artist. During the 11 years until his resignation in 1881 he exhibited thirty-nine pictures at the Dudley Gallery, twenty-six at the Royal Academy and fifteen at the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists. He also exhibited at the Manchester Institution (six pictures), the Walker Art gallery in Liverpool (seven), the Royal Society of British Artists (one) and the Hanover Gallery in London (one). The Walker Collection at Norwich Museum holds six watercolours painted by Pilsbury during his tenure as headmaster.

In addition to his duties as headmaster and his growing career as a landscape artist, Pilsbury found the time to return to the subject that had taken up so much of his time at South Kensington – the study of Ornament. In addition to completing the Ornament Manuscript for the South Kensington Museum in 1866, Pilsbury had also written articles on Symbolism and on Ornamental Design for the *Art Student* magazine between 1863 and 1865. In August 1873 he contributed an article to a new publication, the *Furniture Gazette*, entitled *Principles of Decorative Design*, based on an abridged version of his 1st May 1865 piece for the *Art Student*. Pilsbury obviously felt that standards of ornamental design had not improved greatly in the eight years between the articles as the later piece is as highly critical of the standards of the day, as was the earlier work. His incisive comments on wallpaper patterns, where he sets out illustrated examples of ‘true’ and ‘false’ design are discussed in Catherine Lynn’s study of the history of wallpaper in the United States and are considered by her to typify contemporary terms and standards for the evaluation of design. (16)

Pilsbury was not the only member of the family who would benefit from having a proper studio in which to work. His wife Elizabeth attended the school and is listed in his 1874 Headmaster’s Report as a Third Grade Prize winner. Elizabeth went on to exhibit four works at the Royal Academy between 1879 and 1881. Elizabeth’s sister, Annie Clifford, was also a student at the school and was awarded a Third Grade Prize in 1878.
During his period as Headmaster, Pilsbury also gave several public lectures in Leicester on art and design. As part of the season of free lectures held annually at the Museum he spoke on The Adaptation of Art to Decorative Purposes in December 1874 and on Styles of Painting in October 1876, the latter lecture addressing the works of art exhibited for the opening of the Museum extension. He also spoke on Sketching from Nature at the Leicester Society of Artists’ exhibition opening in February 1884. (17)

In September 1881, the Committee of the School of Art reported that Pilsbury had notified them in June of that year of his intention to resign at the end of the school year ‘as he wished to devote the whole of his time to his profession’. The Committee report does not give the reason for this decision - his election as an Associate of the Royal Society of Painters in Watercolours (RWS) - but states that ‘they are gratified, as all interested in the School of Art must be, by his success as an artist; and they sincerely hope that the step he has taken may prove to be to his permanent advantage.’ While the Committee’s valedictory words appear warm it is perhaps surprising that they do not specifically mention the Society that had, after all, gained much prestige by being granted Royal status that year. One wonders if they felt unwilling to give too much public recognition to Pilsbury’s achievement because the career of professional landscape painter, which he had now chosen for himself, was largely at odds with the objectives of a school of Art intended to train individuals in the applied arts in the service of industry. (18)

Pilsbury’s election to the RWS as an Associate (he was elected a full member in 1898) was a significant watershed in his career and reflects his success in winning national recognition as a watercolour artist since he started exhibiting some fifteen years earlier. Between 1881 and his death in 1908 he exhibited 497 pictures at RWS shows, in addition to many other works exhibited at the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists. Although he left Leicester in 1890, eventually settling in Dorking, Surrey, in 1898, he contributed regularly to the Leicester Society of Artists’ exhibitions until 1906. He died in Dorking in March 1908.

In coming to an assessment of Pilsbury’s tenure as the first headmaster of the Leicester School of Art, one must recognise the constraints under which the school operated. In his remarks to the annual meeting in December 1881, at which his resignation was announced, Pilsbury emphasises that although the school had prospered both in the number of students, and in the examination results obtained since its establishment in 1870, ‘the demand for instruction in design on the part of the artisans in the town was not great. The lithographic establishments and carvers had supplied them with students, and also a few others, but the demand was not so great as might be expected’. The Chairman of the meeting underlined this, stressing that ‘the demand for art instruction on the part of artisans must depend upon the character of the industry in the town in which they lived, and into one or two of the important trades in Leicester it would be very difficult to impart the advantages of design. For instance in the manufacture of stockings, elastic web, and boots and shoes, there were difficulties in the way of introducing designs’. As we know, this situation should have come as no surprise, as these issues were apparent from accounts of the very earliest attempts to establish a school. (19) Pilsbury’s remarks here indicate, I believe, that he felt that the school had not fully met the objectives of the Department of Science and Art by providing design support for the staple industries. His Headmaster’s reports contain only one breakdown of the composition of the student body: although relatively early (1874), it shows that out of 274 students that year only 2 hosiers and 1 boot maker were enrolled. In contrast, some 64 students were listed as training as art teachers. The same report also shows that some 35 students from what we might loosely call the building trades - architects’ assistants, draughtsmen, carpenters and joiners, painters and decorators and stonemasons - were studying under Pilsbury. However, whilst not staple industries, these trades were significant in terms of the elite’s aspiration for the architectural beautification of the town, as so clearly expressed in 1876.

Joseph Harrison, Pilsbury’s successor as Headmaster, reported to the Committee in 1882 that Leicester students had won two of the six national prizes for designs of tapestry hangings and wallpaper in the Owen Jones competition for ‘Designs for Household Furniture, Carpets, Wallpapers and Hangings, Damasks, Chintzes etc’. These national successes clearly show that Pilsbury had set the school on a path that did not depend on Leicester’s traditional industries. A future headmaster’s description of the Municipal School of Art in 1916, confirms that these trends begun under Pilsbury - the training of teachers and support for the building trades - had become a significant part of the programme offered to students. The school’s influence was ‘noticeable in the general appearance of the town...its industries, being relatively clean, have made possible a higher standard of design than is usual in the building of factories, cottages and houses and this has had its effect on the decorating trades’. Pilsbury, nursing the school under the handicaps of inadequate accommodation, budgetary restraints and a lack of manufacturers’ support, had laid the foundations of a flourishing institution that was eventually to grow into the School of Art and Design at De Montfort University. (20)

His contribution to the artistic life of the town was not limited to his teaching efforts. He was also heavily involved in the establishment of a permanent art collection for the town and in ensuring the success of the Leicester Society of Artists during its ‘first struggling years’, serving as President in 1888. At the December 1881 meeting, the Chairman of the School Committee had expressed his belief that, despite
the difficulties posed by Leicester’s unique manufacturing environment, he believed that Leicester was capable of producing a school of good artists in much the same way that Norwich had become renowned. In Pilsbury, who was to remain in Leicester until 1890, he felt that the town had the beginnings of such a school. Marcus Huish, writing in 1904, refers to the Leicester School of artists citing ‘John Fullylove, George Elgood, James Orrock and Wilmot Pilsbury. To the last named, doubtless many others whose names are less well-known owe a debt of gratitude for having discovered to them the paths that lead to an appreciation of the beautiful’. George Elgood studied under Pilsbury as did George Henton, another accomplished local artist. (21)

It is fitting to close this account of Pilsbury’s association with Leicester and its School of Art with the obituary published by the Leicester Daily Post in March 1908:

...no fewer than thirty-eight years have passed since he became headmaster of that now half-forgotten nursery of drawing and painting. At the outset his congenial task was necessarily exceptionally difficult. But he threw himself into it with characteristic ability and zeal, and at length created the nucleus of that larger school which has now its habitation and home in the Newarke. Mr Pilsbury devoted eleven years to this pioneer work, and found his most gratifying and appropriate reward in the success with which his efforts were crowned.

References and Notes:
1. Leicester Chronicle, 16th October 1869. Between the 1851 and 1871 censuses the town’s population increased from 60,642 to 95,220.
2. John Sparkes, Schools of Art: their origin, history, work and influence. Section II of International Health Exhibition, London, 1884.
3. Leicester Chronicle, 15th March 1862.
4. Leicester Chronicle, 13th January 1849.
5. Leicester Chronicle, 31st December 1859, 3rd July 1858, 30th June 1860.
6. Leicester Chronicle, 16th October 1869.
7. An extract of Pilsbury’s Elements and Principles of Ornament is contained in The Drawing Master, the life and work of Wilmot Pilsbury RWS, 1840 - 1908, by Christopher Halliday, (2009).
8. Leicester Chronicle, 9th December 1871.
9. Head Master’s Report to the Committee of the Leicester School of Art, 1871 to 1881. I am indebted to Linda Butt, archivist, De Montfort University, for her kind assistance in providing copies of these and the School Committee reports.
10. John Sparkes, (1884), op. cit.
12. Leicester Chronicle, 16th January 1875.
13. Leicester Chronicle, 30th September 1876.
14. Leicester Chronicle, 31st July 1897, 10th September 1897. By this time the School had leased a house in the Newarke to accommodate the increase in student numbers.
15. The Building News article clearly shows Pilsbury’s involvement in the design and execution of the house:
Mr Pilsbury, being chiefly a landscape painter in water colours, does not require an extensive studio and special contrivances such as are necessary to figure painters who require models, or artists who paint pictures of large proportions in oils. Hence, although the studio has been carefully designed for convenience and picturesqueness, and forms an important part of the house, the latter is of modest proportions and forms a contrast to most of the artists’ homes which we have hitherto described. The house is half-timbered ... No stonework is introduced ... The overhanging upper stories add to the picturesqueness of the elevation, and the spaces between the timbers are filled with rough plaster, on which designs representing night and morning, and arrangements of vases, flowers, fruit, butterflies etc. are both incised and in relief. This ornamental work was executed by the artist himself. The principal window in the studio has nearly a northerly aspect, but there are windows on three sides, the one facing the west being a bay window with a seat on it, from which a good view of sunset effects may be seen. There is also a skylight so arranged as to obtain an exhibition lighting of pictures, and a curtain is suspended from the truss of the open-timber roof, so that this portion of the studio may be shut off from the rest for this purpose.

Building News and Engineering Journal, 18 (1884), p.600. See also the Stoneygate Conservation Area Society’s Newsletter, (Spring, 2008) on the Hawthorns today.
17. Leicester Chronicle, 12th December 1875, 18th October 1876, 2nd February 1884.
19. Leicester Chronicle, 17th December 1881. Pilsbury’s successor was named as Joseph Harrison, second master of the Nottingham School of Art.
21. I am indebted to David Easton of the LSA for his invaluable information on the works exhibited at LSA shows by Pilsbury (and by his sons Wilmot Clifford and Harry Clifford) and for a copy of the Society’s Committee statement following Pilsbury’s death in 1908. See also Marcus Huish, British Water-Colour Art 1804 - 1904, (London, 1904), pp.164–5.

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The summer storms of 1782 and 1783 proved to be the undoing of the windmill which once stood perched high on John Hill in the northwest corner of Bradgate Park, Leicestershire. A programme of continuous repair for the structure by millers William Platts and David Warner before him, had failed to withstand the severe storms in the summer of 1783. The mill being unusable but possibly repairable, was taken down and moved by Platts not far away to Lint Hill, a lower summit which offered a plateau at the western end of Newtown Linford. This was an area recently cleared of woodland, and Platts’ intention was to attempt to rebuild the mill with some of the sturdy timbers which remained on the recently cleared high land. A nominal rent of 6 pence per half year was arranged for use of the area, but from the estate rent books it can be seen that the task was never completed. (1)

Within the Park, Bradgate House had also become ruinous by this time (2). The walls in the Park were however maintained, mainly to keep livestock in the park (3), and also for sporting purposes. The list of park workmen included a local builder, Thomas Sketchley of Anstey. (4) When Torrington visited the estate in 1790, he wrote how:

Beneath the ruins and within old walls, Ld Stamford’s foxhounds, a noble and celebrated pack, are kept; these I saw, and honour’d with my approbation. Ld Stamford has a hunting seat at two miles distance. (Stewards Hay) (5)

The 5th Earl of Stamford (1737 - 1819), had for some time previously, wanted to build an eye-catching folly on John Hill, and the clearing of the mill site gave him the opportunity he sought. The Earl had properties near to Rode Hall, Alsager, where his neighbour Randle Wilbraham had built a folly on Mow Cop Hill in 1754, which when viewed from a distance, took the shape of a decayed castle.

Inspired by Mow Cop, the 5th Earl proceeded to draft his ideas for a similar-looking folly for John Hill. He made modifications to certain features such as replacing the roundels from Mow Cop with lancet windows, and employed Cheshire architect John Hope who had designed Mow Cop for Wilbraham, for his folly at Bradgate. Drawings with the amendments are referred to in documents for the Earl’s Enville Hall estate in Staffordshire, and we know these were forwarded to the Earl’s stationers in 1784. Whilst unfortunately neither the drawings nor a copy have survived, records show that the folly on John Hill was built in 1784, its builder being the previously mentioned Thomas Sketchley of Anstey.

Constructed to Hope’s designs, the early structure, unlike that which we see today, resembled Mow Cop, being a similar open mock ruinous structure, with similar walling stretching beyond an open archway, as shown in a sketch from c1840 by the well-known Leicester artist John Flower.
It seems likely that the early Bradgate course would have been marked out by stones gathered from within the Park to guide the riders. We definitely know this happened at the Earl’s property at Enville Hall where a record of payments still exists for picking up stones for before the racing started.

With the Derby catching the imagination of the early Bradgate racers, and the riches which would follow, the search was on in Leicestershire for the right horse to win the prize, and in the same year which the John Hill folly was built - four years after the first Derby had been run - steps were being taken to find a horse with an excellent turn of speed over a short distance.

The location and topology of Bradgate Park was an ideal training and proving ground for potential Derby winners. It also had the advantage of comparative privacy, being well away from the general public. (7) Training took place within the Park and there are references to owners, Mr Paget of Groby, Mrs Ward of Belgrave, Colonel Wollaston of Shenton, all having horses in training for 10 to 13 weeks. (8) Those watching the racing were able to enjoy an uninterrupted view from the hilltop and its new folly, with the ‘Old John Plantation’ shown on the map below, not being walled or planted until 1832.

The Earls of Stamford took a keen interest in the sport, with the 7th Earl (1827 - 1883) in particular, being determined to succeed in the top races, as had his peers such as Viscount Lowther, the Duke of Rutland, the Earl of Egremont and others.

The John Hill tower was later modified around the middle of the nineteenth century by the 7th Earl to provide a sheltered viewing point to watch progress around the circuit on the ground below. Additionally, part of the ruined walling of the tower went, leaving the familiar ‘beer mug’ shape, known as ‘Old John’ today.

Interestingly, similarities between the topography of the Epsom course and the lay of the land around John Hill can clearly be seen today, especially when John Hill is viewed from vantage points on the Leicester side of Bradgate. Is it possible that this similarity was realised at the end of the eighteenth century and the idea of racing around John Hill in emulation of the Epsom track came to mind?
The 7th Earl was also Master of the Quorn Hunt from 1856-1863, and when he gave this up, upwards of 7,000 people attended the Tattersall's auction to see seventy-nine hunters sell for 14,350 guineas. The Earl immediately used the proceeds to purchase new bloodstock at Newmarket, and to hire John Dawson, regarded as one of the top trainers at the time. Derby disappointments still dogged the Earl though, with his horse *Ensign*, a reported 'certainty' according to his training staff, and with the odds 'disguising' this at 25-1, being left at the start in 1862.

The stable of at least 20 to 30 horses continued to be a constant drain on the Earl’s resources. Thirteen of the horses are easily traceable through the racing calendar in 1863, rising to 18 running under the Earl’s colours of light blue, black and gold belt, and black cap in 1865. However, the income from his estates in Cheshire, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Shropshire, Staffordshire, Worcestershire and Warwickshire were able to cushion his sporting excesses to such an extent that Bateman’s survey of the great landowners of Great Britain and Ireland in 1879 placed the Earl in the wealthiest 750 landowners in the country. The Earl’s successes were infrequent but in 1882 he did achieve a victory winning the Oaks with *Geheimnis* (‘Secret’). By this time his health was failing and he died the following year, having spent, by his own reckoning, a quarter of a million pounds in pursuit of winning the Derby.
So what of the much quoted legend of Old John the miller for whom it was said that the 5th Earl built a beer mug-shaped folly in Bradgate Park, to commemorate his miller who had a love of beer, and who died following being hit by a burning pole from a bonfire at the celebrations for the Earl’s eldest son’s coming of age?

As seen, the original folly was a larger and less mug-shaped design, inspired by that of a Cheshire landowner. Strange as it may seem, the estate records show no millers called John c1784, and no grave for such a miller has yet been found. The tower was also built two years before the bonfire to celebrate the coming of age of the Earl’s son which according to legend caused the fire which led to the death of the miller and the subsequent building of the Old John Folly in his memory. True the Earl of Stamford’s eldest son reached the age of twenty-one in 1786 and there was a bonfire on John Hill to mark the occasion. However the event did not cause damage or injury, and ‘John Hill’ and ‘Old John’ appear on early maps well before this date. (9) John Flower’s sketch of c1840 of the tower clearly shows the attached wall and three lancet windows, so the ‘beer mug handle’ is of recent origin just like the legend!

References and Notes:
1. In 1800 William Platts is again involved with milling, this time at Ulverscroft water mill.
2. Whilst estate owner, the 3rd Earl of Stamford, had made improvements to, and occupied Bradgate House, following his death in 1739, the 4th Earl and his wife left to live at the family estates at Enville Hall with little evidence of Bradgate House being subsequently maintained.
3. Many animals shared the ground within the Park walls. Cattle were kept in the ‘Copy’, an area close to Hallgates, rabbits were regularly netted in the Conery east of Bradgate House, and at Hunts Hill in the north west corner of the Park. Pheasants were reared in the pheasantry close to the ruins. The deer numbered around 300.
5. Ibid, p 53.
6. In May 1780, the prize for the Oaks was £1,065 15s. 0d.
7. Secrecy could bring high dividends and it was still possible half a century after the first Derby to enter a three-year-old horse with no known form in the race. The horse would be entered as having, ‘done enough at home to suggest it might win in a moderate year’.

Racing horses was an expensive interest and one perhaps forgotten cost two hundred years later is that of moving horses to the racetrack. Until 1816 horses were walked to racetracks and this would require accommodation for grooms and other attendants over a number of days before the race. Bullock carts were used in a limited way in 1816, and then during the course of the nineteenth century the coming of the railways significantly speeded up the conveyance of both bloodstock and their attendants to the course.
8. Ten weeks was thought to be the length of time necessary to get a gross horse fit to race - usually by sweating.
9. According to Stevenson and Squires, ibid. p.52, ‘the highest point of the park is the hill which was already shown as Old John on a map of 1754. There had been a windmill on this site in the 1740s. It may have been a post mill, the oldest windmill design, in which the whole of the mill and its machinery rest on a single post, so that it can turn, along with the sails, to face the wind. No trace of it remains.’

Additional sources include:
Enville Hall Archive, Staffordshire. Disbursements and building records 1780-1845.
David Ramsey, Time Line ...Old John, Book One, Bradgate and its Villages, rev.2nd ed.(2002).
Miss Lawton’s Almshouses
Caroline Wessel

In 1864, a Leicester spinster, Miss Martha Ann Lawton, set up a charity for impoverished women in the form of four almshouses in Evington Street, Highfields, Leicester, that still stand today. Little is known about Miss Lawton, who she was, how she derived her wealth, or what her family’s business or profession might have been. But in a Leicester Trade Directory for 1863, her home address is given as 46 Regent Road, at that time a fashionable residential area; so clearly she was an unmarried lady with private means, who desired to give charity to women less fortunate than herself.

Miss Martha’s benevolent provision of accommodation for women in Leicester was not the first. Since early times two large charitable institutions in Leicester had endowed almshouses for the town’s poor: Trinity Hospital (1330) and Wyggeston’s Hospital (1513). These two hospitals provided housing for both men and women, but later John Bent’s Hospital (1697) gave accommodation to six poor women and Matthew Simons’ Hospital (1712) catered for ten poor widows. At that time ‘hospital’ meant living quarters, not medical care.

However, the nineteenth century saw the development of an evangelical Christian movement of philanthropy that sought to assist and reform lone destitute women, and in particular to improve and supervise their morals. In 1800 the Female Asylum, also known as the St Mary Magdalene Refuge (with its overt reference to female sexual sin), was established in the Newarke, where, according to a Trade Directory, sixteen poor girls aged between twelve and sixteen were trained for domestic service, and were taught reading, writing and arithmetic. Their needlework and laundry-work contributed to their keep, and ‘great attention is paid to their moral and religious instruction.’ In 1846 the Home for Penitent Females was also set up in Leicester to ‘reclaim penitent women who have departed from the paths of virtue and are desirous of being restored to respectable society. In this good work of plucking brands from the burning, it has been eminently successful.’ Here also girls were trained for domestic employment, and it was obligatory for them to receive Anglican religious teaching.

By the end of the nineteenth century a number of other charities had been founded in Leicester to assist young women and girls, to protect them from sin, and – as in the case of the Girls’ Friendly Society – to ‘encourage purity of life, dutifulness to parents, faithfulness to employers, temperance and thrift.’ As might be expected in an era of fervent Anglican evangelising, all these organisations specified compulsory spiritual instruction and regular Church of England attendance, as conditions for assistance.

There is no written evidence that Miss Lawton was attempting through her gift to rescue ‘fallen’ women in particular; but nonetheless the requirements of respectability and church-going that she demanded fell in line with the religious and social ethos of her time. Did she have any personal motives for choosing ‘good works’ of this nature? One could speculate that her spinsterhood gave her a natural empathy for lone women, or, alternatively, that from personal experience she was aware of female vulnerability to men’s sexual advances.
The original leather-bound document for Miss Lawton’s almshouses is written in beautiful copper-plate script.

Are there any hints lying within the pages of the original leather-bound document? The first pages give us all the details of the Trust agreement:

This Indenture made the twenty sixth day of August in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty four between Martha Ann Lawton of Leicester spinster of the one part and Samuel Stephen Bankart of Leicester aforesaid Gentleman John Edward Dalton of the same place Gentleman Thomas Warburton Benfield of Leicester aforesaid Gentleman and Thomas Baxter of Lutterworth in the same county Gentleman of the other part…

In the parcel of Ground hereinafter described with four Messuages or Tenements which she is now erecting and building thereon… That parcel of Ground situate in the parish of Saint Margaret in Leicester aforesaid containing by estimation six hundred square yards or thereabouts being the parcel of a certain Close called Elverstone’s Close and bounded on the south east (on which side it measures one hundred feet) by a new street called Evington Street and on the North West (on which side it also measures one hundred feet…”

The document continues by stating that the female tenants may be of any age, but must be spinsters or widows possessing small means, though having an independent income of not less than £30 a year. And they must be members of the Church of England – a clear reminder of the prevalent anti-Papist sentiments of the day. The women must keep their houses in a neat and decent condition and observe and perform the Rules and Regulations made, or to be made, by Miss Martha Lawton or her trustees. Widows may be admitted if they have only one child, but any woman who marries or ceases to be a member of the Church of England must give up her almshouse within a month. Inmates (as they are always rather demeaningly called) could be removed if they did not keep the property in a decent manner, nor conduct themselves properly to the satisfaction of the trustees – a reflection of the pious Victorian belief that ‘Cleanliness is next to Godliness’. Inmates would also be obliged to quit if their income exceeded £100 a year. The tenancy agreement had to include a certificate from a Clergyman of the Established Church of England stating that the prospective tenant had been ‘a regular and constant member of his congregation for three years or upwards’.

Apart from the terms of the Trust agreement, the only other matters recorded in the leather-bound Minute Book are the prospective tenants’ Memoranda – the official signed agreements between Trust and inmate. However, there is an accompanying exercise-book Minute Book which covers the Trust’s general business from 1932 to 2002.

G. Cecil Gorham Gee was appointed a trustee in 1925 and served until at least 1961. He was brother to Percy Gee, long-time supporter of Leicester Charity Organisation Society, its Financial Secretary (1904 – 1961) and President (1932 – 39).

In the early years of the Miss Lawton’s Trust minutes there are records of regular decoration to the properties, and in 1949 some electric lighting is installed. There are reports almost every year of the death of one or more of the inmates, suggesting that the almshouses were let to the elderly.

So what of the almhouse building itself? Does this give any clue as to the personality of the enigmatic Miss Lawton? Its architecture is in the ‘Cottage Style’ derived from the ‘Picturesque’ tradition favoured by some altruistic landed estate owners who in the 1860s and 1870s were building ‘rustic’ cottages for their agricultural labourers. Miss
Martha’s two red brick cottages, each housing two tenants, are joined by a central archway. Half of each cottage forms a rustic projecting gable whose eaves are trimmed with decorative wooden carving. In the roof of the cottage’s other half are tiny dormer windows, and ‘cottage’ chimneys complete the pastoral effect. The red brickwork is adorned with polychromatic patterning, reminiscent of the work of architect William Butterfield (1814-1900), who during the 1850s-1870s exploited the newly-developed multi-coloured qualities of Victorian brick and stone, a device known as ‘constructional polychromy’. Butterfield used horizontal bands and chequer and diamond patterns, as exemplified in his masterpiece, Keble College, Oxford, and this style is evident in the more modest but nonetheless charming Lawton almshouses. The pointed-arch windows with Gothic stone decoration in the ecclesiastical Early English style were a reminder to the Lawton tenants of their obligatory religious devotion and of their benefactor’s strong Christian ideals.

Miss Martha’s selection of architectural design shows that she was familiar with the latest trends in modern architecture, and was drawn to bright colour and pattern. So was she equally as fashionable in her style of dress? If so, for the Opening Ceremony of her almshouses in 1864, she might have been attired in the new à la mode half-crinoline with its fullness now drawn to the back, announced in Paris and London that same year. Miss Lawton’s choice of the ‘rustic’ building style sees her identifying with the late nineteenth-century yearning of newly-industrialised England for its fast-disappearing ‘rural idyll’. It also suggests she might be aspiring to imitate the landed classes.

It is fortunate that the polychromatic almshouse building survives today. In World War II it suffered damage from enemy action when Leicester received its worst bombing attack. On the night of November 19th-20th 1941, during a terrible six hour raid, eleven factories were totally destroyed, seventy-two were seriously damaged, 550 houses were severely damaged, 4,200 damaged to a lesser degree, and thousands of buildings suffered broken glass. 203 people were hurt and 108 killed. The raid reached its greatest intensity from 9.30pm-10.45pm, when Highfields was the worst affected district. The exact details of the bomb damage to the Lawton property are not stated in the Minute Book, but the necessary structural repairs cost £70.7s.3d. and a War Damage Claim for £108 (to include architects’ fees) was lodged. However, the Claim was not settled until February 1943, by which time the two inmates had already carried out the re-decoration themselves.

After the War, the charity hit hard times. Its Minute Book records that in 1949, in order to raise money for repairs, the usual Christmas allowance to inmates was not paid. In 1950 some of the Trust’s investment stock was sold and the tenants were required to pay half their rates – hitherto funded in total by the Trust. In 1955 fire insurance on the four properties cost £1.10s. for the year, but by 1960 it was decided to take out a general insurance to the value of £4,000. The following year the income qualification for inmates was raised from £250 to £400.

It is curious that the minutes for 1961-77 are missing, and when they resume there is a new Clerk to the Trust. At the first meeting in 1977 the minutes of the previous sixteen years were approved! The Trust appeared to be in poor shape, with very little income and only one small capital investment. Two of the four houses were vacant and a third was awaiting a new tenant. One almshouse still had no bathroom, and the properties overall were in very poor repair. Present at the 1977 meeting were two representatives from Leicester City Council, who reported that in the following year the area in which the almshouses were situated was to be declared a Housing Action Area, and a 75% grant for repairs would be available. The City Council recommended that the almshouses be taken over by a Housing Association.

For the next four years many anxious meetings took place regarding the future of the almshouses. Discussions included plans to raise money for repairs by subscription; to sell to a Housing Association; to alter the qualifications for tenants; alter the income level requirement; widen the religious qualification (poor Anglican-minded Miss Lawton!); gain permission for industrial use; or let the properties to university students (turned down). The crisis was further widened due to a shortage of suitable trustees and decreasing demand for accommodation for ‘four unmarried ladies of the Church of England’.
under this extended Scheme. The charity’s minutes of 2004 record that the Charity Commissioners had now agreed to the new clause. Leicester Charity Link (LCL, formerly Leicester Charity Organisation Society) would assist in seeking out suitable beneficiaries, and the Board of Social Responsibility would send appropriate information to the Anglican clergy working in the most impoverished city housing estates.

By 2010 the Miss Lawton trustees finally agreed that there were too many obstacles in running the Trust, and so its funds were handed over to LCL. Martha Ann Lawton’s charity was wound up and its assets legally transferred to an appropriate fund already administered by LCL, the Edward Wood Poor Widows’ House Rent Assistance Fund (EWPWHRAF). The Lawton funds are now governed by the objectives of the EWPWHRAF, rather than those set by Miss Lawton 145 years earlier. Accordingly, the top limit on grants and the requirement of Church of England membership no longer apply, but the recipient must still be female. Under these new directives, and in the experienced hands of LCL, there is now no difficulty in finding suitable beneficiaries.

So the vision and generosity of Miss Lawton will live on in perpetuity, and her wish to help those women less fortunate than herself will continue to be honoured. Her steadfast desire to instil moral and practical virtues in single women, and the insistence that they should be practising Anglican worshippers, are now somewhat outmoded aspirations. But happily, Martha’s spirit lingers on as her endowment continues to assist women in need. After almost a century and a half, it is unlikely that more evidence will surface to give a clearer picture of the personality or physical appearance of Miss Lawton. But she was a woman typical of her era, and as such, her life and good works deserve to be esteemed and recorded.

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As a Trustee of Leicester Charity Link, Caroline Wessel has had the privilege of studying the Miss Lawton Minute Books. Permission has been given by the LCL Board of Trustees for this article to be published.

LCL (formerly Leicester Charity Organisation Society) was founded in 1877, one of around 75 Charity Organisation Societies at that time. Today only the Leicester one remains and, as LCL, continues to assist those suffering poverty, hardship and crisis in Leicestershire and Rutland. Caroline Wessel’s family has been involved in the charity’s management for 110 of its 134 years. Copies of the publication 125 Years of Charity Organisation: LCOS to Leicester Charity Link (2002) by Caroline Wessel may be obtained from LCL, 20a Millstone Lane, Leicester, LE1 5JN at £4 a copy including postage.

Miss Lawton’s Almshouses can still be seen today in Evington Street, Leicester.

The Charity Commissioners advised that if renovation did not proceed, the properties could be sold, but only if the whole project was no longer financially viable. At this point, we learn details of the exact accommodation: following renovation each house would comprise two sitting rooms and a kitchen downstairs, and two bedrooms and a bathroom upstairs. In 1979 a representative from the Housing Association spoke out bluntly at a meeting, causing the Chairman of the Trustees to resign; but the Housing Association Representative’s apologies for upsetting the Chairman are also recorded.

Finally, in 1980, the trustees received an offer of £12,000 from the Leicester Housing Association which they decided to accept. But the Charity Commissioners still insisted that the proceeds must be for the relief and benefit of poor Church of England widows and spinsters. The sale proceeds were lodged with the Official Custodian for Charity and an official Scheme approved by the Charity Commissioners.

However, the trustees’ problems were still not at an end, as from the outset it proved difficult to find suitable beneficiaries. Adverts were placed in the Diocesan calendar and newsletters, and Age Concern, Leicester Charity Organisation Society and the Bishop’s Officer for Clergy Widows were all consulted. The first cash grants included payments for gas or electricity bills, medical treatment fees, a new bed and coal – and the replacement of baking tins for a lady who did all her own home baking!

In 2002 the minutes reported that it was now almost impossible to find beneficiaries eligible under the present Scheme. Consequently permission was sought from the Charity Commissioners to widen the brief to include single mothers and divorced women, though still of the Church of England, explaining that many more women could be helped under this extended Scheme. The charity’s minutes of 2004 record that the Charity Commissioners had now agreed to the new clause. Leicester Charity Link (LCL, formerly Leicester Charity Organisation Society) would assist in seeking out suitable beneficiaries, and the Board of Social Responsibility would send appropriate information to the Anglican clergy working in the most impoverished city housing estates.

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2011 is the 150th anniversary of the start of the American Civil War, a conflict which was followed with great interest in this country, and could be said to have divided the nation. This divide was once thought to have been along class lines, with the aristocracy and upper middle classes identifying with the South and the lower middle and working classes supporting the North, although both at the time and since, the extent of that support has been a matter of debate. The humorous weekly magazine Punch was certainly very sceptical about support for the South:

A word or two of sympathy, that costs us not a penny. We give the gallant Southerners, the few against the many. We say their noble fortitude of final triumph presages And praise in Blackwood’s Magazine Jeff Davis and his messages. (1)

Many, though not all, of the upper classes, including members of both Houses of Parliament, did indeed support the South. So too did a number of Church of England clergymen, and writers and intellectuals such as Thomas Carlyle and Matthew Arnold. Most of the leading daily newspapers, including the hugely influential Times, were pro-Southern; while businessmen saw it as a golden opportunity to make money, supplying the Confederacy with arms, ammunition, medicine and clothing, with fortunes to he made running them through the blockade of Southern ports. There is also some evidence of working class support for the struggle for Southern independence, at least in the earlier part of the war. (2)

Support for the slave-holding South did not imply support for slavery. Great Britain had abolished the slave trade within its empire in 1807, and slavery itself in the 1830s. Many believed that once the Confederacy was independent and subject to European influences, then slavery would be seen as an archaic system that would soon disappear. This may seem rather naive, but towards the end of the war, in its last desperate days, the Confederate government actually offered to abolish slavery in a final, unsuccessful bid for diplomatic recognition from Britain and France. Lord Palmerston’s Liberal government remained neutral throughout the war, though in September 1862 - before General Lee was defeated at Antietam and President Lincoln’s preliminary Emancipation Proclamation was issued - it had considered the possibility of recognising the Confederate States.

As the war progressed, various pro-Southern and pro-Northern organisations came into being in London and the industrial towns and cities of the provinces. What was the situation in Leicester? With its tradition of radicalism and nonconformity, one might not expect to find much sympathy for the South here. However, on 27th November 1863, the following notice appeared in the Leicester Journal:

**“HEAR BOTH SIDES”**

**SOUTHERN INDEPENDENCE ASSOCIATION**

---

**President:** RIGHT HON. LORD WHARNCLIFFE.

A LECTURE

WILL be delivered on behalf of the above Association by

J. H. SMITH, ESQ,

(one of its Agents)

in the NEW HALL, Wellington Street, on WEDNESDAY

Evening next, at Eight o’clock.

Mr Smith, having resided 25 years in the Southern States, is practically qualified to set forth the claims of the Confederates to their Independence, and to refute all misrepresentations concerning them.

Mr Smith will contravene the mis-statements made by Mr Cobden, M.P., at Rochdale.

Admission to the Reserved Seats, 1s; to the platform, 6d each; and to the body of the Hall, 1d. (3)

J. H. Smith was an Englishman who was living in Mississippi in January 1861 when that state seceded, and had inherited a small plantation and four slaves from his nephew. Though he stated he was not a slave-holder, he was somewhat ambivalent when asked if he intended to free them. While trying to leave America and come to England, he had apparently been arrested ‘on account of his being a supposed spy’ and imprisoned for a while, in Louisville, Kentucky, and then at Camp Chase, Ohio. He had letters from Lord Lyons, the British minister to the United States, showing that he was a British subject, and intended to sue for wrongful imprisonment. He had been well-received by the ‘intelligent community’ in Leicester and had recruited about fifty members for the Southern Independence Association, and there were plans to form a local branch in the town.
His lecture, on Wednesday 2nd December 1863, was described in detail in the Leicester Journal, and in even greater detail in the Leicester Chronicle, where more than an entire page was taken up with an account of the proceedings. (4) 'The meeting,' reported the Journal, 'was packed by a number of admirers of the North, who interrupted the lecturer and behaved in a very uproarious and un-English manner, the violence of their opposition being apparently in exact proportion to the weakness of their cause.' The chairman was Edwin Kellett, a surgeon, and among those present were Samuel Baines, William Borham, William F. Bramley, William Charlesworth, Thomas Cook, Thomas Emery, who were all members of the local business community, and Thomas H. Carryer, a schoolmaster.

It went on: 'The room was nearly full. The proceedings were of a noisy and disorderly character. A determined opposition was raised throughout the lecturer's observations.' There were frequent interruptions and at one stage 'a scene ensued which had well nigh ended in a fight,' and the chairman had to intervene. In spite of this, Mr Smith 'managed, though not without great difficulty, and after a lapse of considerable time, to get through his address... The meeting then became very boisterous... [and] one or two seats were broken... Hooting, hissing, yelling, laughter, cheering and quarrelling characterised the ulterior proceedings, and the lecturer, in one or two instances, came into such close contact with some of his rivals, that it was feared he would be ill treated.' At the end of the meeting there was a resolution approving England's policy of refusing to grant diplomatic recognition to the Confederacy. (5)

The Chronicle, in its report, noted that the audience 'was composed principally of the working classes, while a sprinkling of the other classes occupied the reserved seats.' In his first lecture, Mr Smith began by expressing his disapproval of slavery, and spoke about the background to the war and its progress, and the right of the Southern States to secede. Samuel Baines felt the speaker had skirted round the issue of slavery, while William Bramley asked Mr Smith why he did not free his own slaves, referring to his opening remarks. Mr Smith, incensed at this, threatened to knock him down. While this altercation was in progress, the audience erupted and was only calmed down through the vocal efforts of the Rev J. W. Howell, an Independent minister.

Some of the disruption came from members of the Leicester Emancipation Society which had been founded earlier that year, probably as a result of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation issued in January 1863. (6) The Northern faction in Leicester were followers of Peter Alfred Taylor, who had become Liberal Member of Parliament for the borough in 1862, following the resignation of John Biggs. The faction included William Biggs, John Latchmore and John Pegg, the Rev Joseph F. Winks, a Baptist minister, and 'a few noted men from All Saints' ward.'

The meeting went on until 11.30 pm, and Mr Smith, after announcing another meeting the following week, was given a police escort for his own safety as he left the Hall. Prior to the meeting he had received an anonymous letter, saying it would be advisable to have policemen on duty to help keep order, advice he should perhaps have heeded. A distorted account of this meeting subsequently appeared in the Morning Star, one of the few daily papers to support the North.
William Biggs gave his views to the meeting about slavery and the causes of the war, and proposed a resolution opposing the speaker; John Latchmore agreed. The Rev William Woods, another Independent minister, said he was opposed to a war to end slavery and thought that its extinction would be by the separation of the South from the North. This was an unusual sentiment from a nonconformist minister, one in favour of Southern independence. James Thompson, the editor of the Leicester Chronicle, was himself present, and he agreed with this view, being of the opinion that slavery was ‘virtually extinct.’ Indeed, the Leicester Chronicle seems to have had little time for the Leicester Emancipation Society because of its blinkered views regarding the inferior treatment of free blacks in the North. This time, at the conclusion of the meeting, a resolution in favour of Southern independence was adopted by a majority of two to one. The townsmen of Leicester were congratulated on this in the report which appeared in the Leicester Journal. Headed ‘Southern Independence. Triumph of the Cause in Leicester’, the paper left its readers in no real doubt where its sympathies lay. (8)

These two meetings were followed by a third, on Tuesday, 15th December, also in the New Hall, when ‘several Leicester gentlemen’ and the ‘son of a Southern planter’ came together to reply to Mr Smith. (9) By this time Smith had moved on to Northampton and sent the Chronicle a letter, pointing out that consequently he was unable to attend this meeting.

Those present on 15th December included William Borham, Thomas Cook, Edwin Kellett and the Rev Joseph F. Winks; the Rev J. W. Howell was in the chair. One of the speakers was Samuel Baines, the president of the Leicester Emancipation Society. He suggested that Mr Smith had been rather two-faced regarding the question of owning slaves, and emphasised that ‘Leicester was not in favour of, or inclined to give support to, American slavery.’

The ‘son of a Southern planter’ was the Rev Moncure D. Conway, a Virginian who had declined to inherit his father’s slaves, and had come to England in 1863 to lecture on behalf of Northern abolitionists. Referring to Mr Smith’s lectures and the likelihood of the South achieving her independence, he pointed out that a number of important Southern cities, including Nashville, New Orleans, Memphis and Vicksburg had already fallen to Northern troops. This time the meeting concluded with the motion proposed by William Biggs, that ‘this meeting [supports] Her Majesty’s government in its neutral policy.’

These meetings in Leicester and the divided opinions and heated arguments they produced can be seen as a reflection of what was happening elsewhere in Britain at this time. Less than eighteen months after they took place, the armies of the Confederacy had been forced to surrender, and the Civil War in America was over.

References and Notes:
1. Punch, 5th September 1863. Blackwood's Magazine, a literary monthly, made no secret of its sympathy with the Confederacy. Jefferson Davis was the president of the Confederate States of America.
3. The Southern Independence Association had been formed in London that December. Richard Cobden, the radical M.P. for Rochdale, was decidedly pro-Northern but deplored the war.
5. The last Parliamentary debates about Confederate recognition were in June and July 1863 but they never came to a vote.
6. The Emancipation Proclamation, which was not universally popular in the North, changed the nature of the war, adding the freeing of the slaves to the original aim of saving the Union.
7. Leicester Journal, 11th December 1863; Leicester Chronicle, 12th December 1863.
8. Though the Leicester Journal was a Tory paper and the Leicester Chronicle was Liberal, support for either side in the American Civil War was not a party political issue; some members of both parties in Parliament, for instance, were sympathetic to the Southern cause.
9. Leicester Journal, 18th December 1863.
Robert de Herle held the manor at Donington le Heath in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, and from what is known of his life and wealth, he is believed to have been the person responsible for building the current stone manor house at Donington. (1) At the time, Robert, a lawyer by profession, was carrying out his legal and administrative duties in the neighbouring counties of Leicestershire, Staffordshire and Warwickshire, for which the property would have been conveniently located.

This paper investigates Robert de Herle’s involvement in a high profile legal case in the area between 1298-9. Not only do the records examined call Robert’s integrity into question, but they also suggest that he was prepared to use his position and skills to manipulate the court process for substantial personal gain.

The case in question was a murder case. (2) The unfortunate victim was John Paynel who was slain at his wife’s manor of Walsall in Staffordshire on 22nd June 1298. Paynel’s wife Margery appears to have quickly fled the scene to Warwickshire, taking refuge at Caldecote, another of her properties, just off the Watling Street, not far from the Leicestershire border.

By this point, Margery had already led a complicated life. (3) She was one of the two daughters of William le Rous. William had held the manor of Walsall which on his death in 1247 had been divided between Margery and her sister Enycina. Around 1255, Margery was married by the Bishop of Chester to Richard son of Richard de Alanson, but they subsequently separated. As part of the separation settlement Margery received the Warwickshire manor of Caldecote from de Alanson and William de Morteyn (the latter who was married to her sister). The ownership of Caldecote was disputed by various family members, and rumbled on through the courts from one generation to the next.

Meanwhile in Walsall, we hear of Margery being abducted by a John de Lay, and then despite the lack of a formal divorce, of her subsequently appearing as the wife of John Paynel in the early 1280s. Later in 1289, as part of the family dispute, Richard de Alanson and two of his sons arrived at Caldecote and took away goods from the house claiming their right to do so, leading to a further lawsuit and an enquiry.

It was in the midst of these family arguments a decade later, that John Paynel was found murdered at Walsall. Although others stood to gain from Paynel’s death, Margery seemed the most likely person to be accused of the crime. Her flight would have done little to help, and with many potential family enemies, the situation looked intractable.

Into this desperate situation for Margery came Robert de Herle, by now a man of rising power and local influence. De Herle’s fee-paying clients included the great and the wealthy of the Midland counties, and he had a reputation for readily pursuing debtors. (4) Despite his youth, Robert was powerful and a man to be reckoned with. What was his motivation for getting involved in this case, and was there anything unscrupulous in his actions?
The answer appears to lie in the *Coram Rege* Rolls which show that Robert de Herle’s connection with Margery preceded John Paynel’s murder. According to the Rolls, Robert had previously attempted to purchase the manor of Caldecote from Margery but she had refused to sell it to him. (5)

Now, here was Margery, a murder suspect, in hiding in the very manor which he had sought to possess. In a seemingly calculated cold-blooded action, rather than offering to help Margery and act as her legal defence, Robert’s first course of action appears to have been to apply to the courts to have her arrested and detained in Warwick gaol. Once there however, he visited her in Warwick prison, where he seems to have made a pact with her to the effect that if she would grant him the manor of Caldecote, he would promise to gain her acqittal, whilst ensuring that she remained in charge of all her other property.

Given the circumstances and situation facing Margery, this appears to have been a remarkable and extremely confident offer from the young de Herle. However, when taking account of de Herle’s upbringing and background, his confidence seems to have been well-founded.

![The de Herle Coat of Arms.](image)

Robert de Herle had been brought up in Northumberland, his father was John de Whalton, and his mother Agnes belonged to the important baronial family of Bolbec. His family’s principal holding was at Styford, near Corbridge. This was one of two baronies in the North whose function was to protect the border country for the king of England. (6) Robert’s older brother William was a lawyer of note, and a circuit judge who went on to achieve fame as Chief Justice of the King’s bench. (7) Robert followed his brother into the legal profession and is likely to have acquired the skills of his profession through a type of apprenticeship which involved observing the procedures of local courts. (8) Records show Robert was in Northumberland in 1292 where he appeared in the King’s court at Berwick on Tweed in pursuit of a debt (9), whilst by 1293 he was in Leicestershire negotiating the lease on a house in Donington le Heath. (10)

Thus in 1298 Robert embroiled himself in the defence of a woman suspected of murder. He appears to have persuaded the sheriff of Warwick to release Margery into his custody. He then took her to Nottingham, where he made her pledge to pay him £200 if she did not grant him the manor of Caldecote as soon as she was free. Robert then returned Margery to Warwick gaol. He subsequently went about obtaining a writ for the appointment of the justices of gaol delivery, procuring an inquisition, and finally bringing about her release.

Having obtained the promised result for Margery, she was then obliged to hand over the coveted manor of Caldecote to him.

Robert’s activities to seemingly pervert the course of justice did not go unchallenged and as a result he was subsequently pursued by the crown for conspiracy and trespass. In a curious turn of events in the following year, Robert was offered a reprieve. Instead of pursuing the case, the king decided instead to furnish Robert with a letter of protection which referred to him as an ‘alleged conspirator’, and the case was dropped.

In 1300, Robert was sent on the King’s service to Scotland, in a role which was more likely administrative rather than military. This move placed him outside of the reach of the English legal system, and within a short space of time he was able to effect a complete recovery from disgrace. Two years later in 1302, he received a commission to act as attorney in the forthcoming absence of William de Brom who was going to Gascony. (11) Further evidence of Robert’s continuing good favour came in 1305, and again in 1308, when he acted as attorney for John Comyn, the Earl of Buchan. However, this latter commission was to be Robert de Herle’s last recorded professional action and he appears to have disappeared from public life at this point. Unfortunately the records have given no clues so far on why this was, and we can only speculate - perhaps he was struck down by a debilitating disease or injured on one of his many journeys?

Whatever happened, by 1320 Robert de Herle was dead, and his body interred near the altar of St Benedict at the Cistercian abbey of Garendon in Charnwood Forest, not far from his home at Donington le Heath. (12) His name can also be found in a list of indulgences in an episcopal register of Bishop Dalderby. (13)
In the years that followed, his brother William created a family chantry chapel at Garendon, paying for a priest to sing the customary dirges for the dead to remember various family members including Robert and their parents.

Was there any lasting legacy of the questionable event of Robert de Herle’s early career?

Much to the dismay of Margery Paynel’s family, the manor of Caldecote remained with the de Herle family and was inherited by Robert’s brother William in 1320. (14) After William’s death, the manor passed to his son, Sir Robert de Herle, and thence to William’s grandson, Sir Ralph Hastings. (15) By 1369 Sir Ralph had sold the manor to the warden of the Chapel of St Mary at Naseley in Leicestershire for £400, in whose ownership it remained until the Dissolution. (16)

So was Robert de Herle a hero or a villain?

As an attorney Robert de Herle was tenacious in his pursuit of debtors, and ruthless in his ability to bend others to his will. The evidence suggests that in the Margery Paynel case, he manipulated the court process and used his skills for personal gain. His administrative skills however seem to have enabled him to avoid prosecution, and he found favour with the King who used his abilities for his Scottish campaign. Robert was indeed talented - he managed to achieve the acquittal of a woman accused of murder, and had he used his talents more for the benefit of others he could, perhaps have been truly great.

References and Notes:
1. The history of the principal families connected with Donington le Heath Manor House was the subject of an article by the author in the Leicestershire Historian, 38 (2002), pp26-30.
2. This case was commented upon by the Selden Society in their cases held in the court of the King’s bench. See Select cases in the court of the King’s bench under Edward I (Selden Society, 1939), Vol. III, pp. 84-89, and pp. bixf.
3. The name ‘Margery’ is cited by the Selden Society in their transcription of the cases referred to here. Ibid. Select cases in the court of the King’s bench under Edward I (1939). She is named as ‘Margaret’ in the Warwickshire V.C.H. Cf. L.F. Salzman, ed., The Victoria County History of Warwickshire (London, 1947), Vol. 4, pp. 40-42.
5. Coram Regre Roll, no 157 (Hilary, 1299), m. 32d.
7. He became Sir William de Herle, Chief Justice of the King’s Bench, in the reign of Edward III.
14. L. F. Salzman, ed., The Victoria County History of Warwickshire. Op cit. pp. 40-42. William de Herle entered the monastery at Garendon towards the end of his life, followed by his son Sir Robert de Herle, and following their deaths, they too were buried in the chapel of St Benedict.
15. He was the son of Ralph Hastings and Margaret de Herle, William’s daughter.
One of the houses scheduled for demolition was the house at No. 1 The Newarke. This house was of particular significance to the Leicestershire Architectural and Archaeological Society since its occupant at the time was George Clarke Bellairs, ‘one of the leading archaeologists of the district’ who was to play a significant part in the first half century of the Society. (2) He also played a distinguished role in public service in Leicester and Leicestershire.

No. 1 had been occupied by the Bellairs family for about thirty years by this time, George and his father having taken over the occupancy from William Biggs (brother of the well-known Leicester figure John Biggs whose statue is in...
Welford Place), when Biggs moved to Liverpool in 1868 following the death of his wife. From 1871, the house at No. 3 The Newarke was also in the Bellairs’ possession. (3)

George Clarke Bellairs had been born on 12th December 1826 at Narborough. He was educated at the Collegiate School in Leicester, being one of its early pupils (4). The school had been established in 1836, its purpose being to educate boys from Church of England families. Fees were £10 – £12 per annum for tuition, and £30 – £35 for boarders. (5)

After leaving school, George pursued a career in the law and by the time of the 1861 Census, aged 34, he was a solicitor, his address being recorded as 30 Granby Street, Leicester. At the same address was his father aged 74, described as a landed proprietor, and their two servants. It seems likely that George was practising from premises in Friar Lane, Leicester, this being the address given when he was enrolled as one of the original 60 members of No. 1 Company of the Leicestershire Rifle Volunteers.

He was sworn in at the Cricket Ground on Wharf Street, Leicester on 3rd March 1859 (6), and was soon to rise to become Captain and Commanding Officer. We can gain some insight into the commitment required from the men of the Rifle Volunteer Corps through Robert Read’s 1862 ‘Certificate of Efficiency’, reproduced in his book Modern Leicester in 1881. Read notes that during the eighteen months ending 30th November 1863 he had attended 102 drills, possessed ‘a competent knowledge of Squad and Company Drill… [and] of the preliminary Musket Drill’, and had been present at the last Annual Inspection of the Corps. Read also refers in the book to George Bellairs (now a Major) as ‘an officer and a gentleman than whom none has done more for the stability and efficiency of the Volunteer Institution’. (7)

George Clarke Bellairs was also a prominent member of the Leicestershire Architectural and Archaeological Society right from the start of its formation in January 1855. He became a Committee member in the same year, and one of its Secretaries in 1856 – a post which he held for over 50 years. He also contributed many drawings to the Society’s Transactions on topics including Roman roads of Leicestershire, and Trinity Hospital, Leicester. (8)

At the beginning of 1875, his father died aged 87, and later that year at the age of 49, George married Eleanor Catherine Bruxner, twenty years his junior, the daughter of the Rev G. E. Bruxner, Rector of Thurlaston. (9) George continued to live at Nos. 1-3 The Newarke with his new wife. In 1886 George retired from the 1st Volunteer Battalion as Honorary Colonel after 26 years’ service, but continued his commitment to public service as a Magistrate for the County of Leicester. (10)

As a member of the Church of England, he worshipped at the church of St Mary de Castro close by, where he also served as a Churchwarden.

When the new road through The Newarke required the demolition of the Bellairs family home, George and Eleanor moved to the south coast and in 1901 were staying at a hotel, ‘South Cliffe’, in Southbourne, near Bournemouth. (11) By 1905 they had moved to a house, ‘Highfield’, also in Southbourne, from where George continued his interest in the Leicestershire Archaeological Society as Secretary.

George Bellairs died on 12th January 1922 at the age of 95. His funeral took place at St Catherine’s Church, Southbourne and he was buried in Christ Church Cemetery. (12)

Meanwhile back in Leicester his memory was honoured close to The Newarke by his friends through the erection of a memorial tablet in St Mary de Castro. This can be seen in the chancel of the church. It reads:
Prior to 1870, No. 3 The Newarke had been occupied for around 20 years by Stephen Dudgeon Stretton and his family. He was a hosiery warehouse manager, and went on to found the hosiery manufacturing company of S. D. Stretton in Southgate Street, Leicester. The company continued to trade well into the twentieth century.

No. 5 The Newarke was the home for at least twenty years between 1851 and 1871 of Charles Ludlam, a carriage builder. William Hillson, a coachman/servant, is recorded as living there in the 1881 Census. Number 5 is listed in the 1901 Census as the home of George Mann, a labourer aged 80, while William Hillson now appears in 1901 at No. 1 The Newarke when he is described as a coachman/caretaker.

The house at No. 7 The Newarke must have been quite spacious, as in 1851 it was a Ladies’ Boarding School. The proprietor Ann Roughton, aged 65, is listed there, along with her three nieces, four staff, 16 pupils and three servants. This school was the forerunner of that at Belmont House on the corner of De Montfort Street and New Walk. (1)

By 1871, and also in 1881, Peter Alfred Jackson, a surgeon for the Leicester Militia, was living at No. 7. He was followed in 1891 by Henry A. Oldershaw, a boot and shoe machinist. From Wright’s Directory of 1902 we learn that by this time Oldershaw had three shops as a sewing machine agent and repairer of boot and shoe machines: there being around 300 boot and shoe makers in Leicester at that time.

No. 7 continued in use for a while after Nos. 1-5 had been demolished, and is recorded in Wright’s Directory of 1911 as The Newarke Guest House.

A watercolour by George M. Henton of these houses in The Newarke in 1900 gives a picture of tranquillity that is almost rural, but the people who lived there were clearly active, hardworking and contributed much to the wealth of Leicester.

It is also interesting to speculate who socialised with whom, and what conversations they might have had!

Eileen Gumley

The Other Newarke Houses

In addition to No. 1, two further houses in The Newarke, numbers 3 and 5, were also demolished to make way for the new road through The Newarke soon after the opening of the Newarke Bridge in 1898. The demolition of a fourth, No. 7, followed a few years later.

The houses had been built in the early nineteenth century, and an examination of the Census returns from 1841 onwards reveals some interesting inhabitants.

An 80 year old clergyman, Edward Hoare, lived at No. 1 in 1841, followed by Elizabeth Bosworth in 1851, a widow aged 73 living on an annuity. After her came the well-known hosiery manufacturer William Biggs, who served as Mayor of Leicester in 1842, 1848 and 1859. As recorded above, the house was then occupied by George Clarke Bellairs and his father, and later by George and his wife.
Map of The Newarke, from The Newarke, its Origin and Associations by S.H. Skillington (1912). The shaded area shows The Newarke Houses (now Newarke Houses Museum) - the gap to the right on the map is the location of the demolished houses Nos. 1 - 5 The Newarke. (By 1912, No 7 had gone as well). The location of St Mary's Vicarage can be seen opposite Trinity Hospital. Edward Shipley Ellis's house which had been the Home for Penitent Females in the mid-nineteenth century was one of several houses between the Female Asylum (a separate institution which operated from 1800-1927) and Fairfax Street on the map. The church of St Mary de Castro can be seen north of the Castle Mount, whilst The Newarke Bus Station which post-dates this map, was adjacent to the Magazine Gateway.
In later years, an island platform was built to provide more stops, and bus shelters were erected, although most people’s memories of waiting for buses seem to recall wind and rain! Additional waiting places were used along Western Boulevard, beyond the Newarke Bridge.

Other bus companies also came to use The Newarke as a terminus – these included Bass of Fleckney, Browns of Sapcote, Gibson Bros. of Barlestone (Comfort), Provincial of Leicester and Robinsons of Burbage. Eventually extra bus stations were required, and the facilities established at Southgate Street, St. Margaret’s and York Road subsequently took much of the Midland Red traffic.

Major redevelopment of the inner city took place in the 1960s, when an underpass was created and Oxford Street became a one-way. The Newarke was no longer a terminus, and by 1974 only a single shelter/stop stood near the Magazine as some routes passed through The Newarke and out across the bridge into Braunstone Gate. Further alterations in the early 1990s closed off this end of The Newarke to all traffic, and today buses no longer use its roads.

Acknowledgements:
Thanks to John Breen for providing additional information for The Newarke Bus Station section.

Eileen Gumley
The ethos and regime of the Home were described in the following remarkably frank description which appeared in local Leicester directories in the 1860s and 1870s:

When the new premises for the Home were opened in Stoneygate on 21st November 1881, the Revd. E.T. Vaughan said that:

At the same event, Sir Arthur Hazlerigg stated that the 'Home began 35 years ago', that is, in 1846. (6)

... reclaiming penitent women who have departed from paths of virtue and are desirous of being restored to respectable society. In this good work of plucking brands from the burning, it has been eminently successful'. (5)

When the new premises for the Home were opened in Stoneygate on 21st November 1881, the Revd. E.T. Vaughan said that:

its usefulness had grown from the time when it started in St Mary's Vicarage and afterwards in the house of the late E.S. Ellis, and subsequently at a place in St. Martin's parish and then Blue Boar Lane. At the same event, Sir Arthur Hazlerigg stated that the 'Home began 35 years ago', that is, in 1846. (6)
From 1851-1901 the Census gives information about staff and residents. The women were mainly born in Leicester or other areas of the Midlands, but some were from further afield, including Ireland, Scotland, India and Paris. Researching the lives of these women would be another fascinating project in itself!

References:
1. Leicester Journal, 29th May 1846.
2. Leicester Chronicle, 6th June 1846.
3. Hansard, 15th July 1856.
6. Leicester Chronicle, 26th November 1881. E.S. Ellis was Edward Shipley Ellis. The new Art School was built in the grounds of his house in The Newarke in 1889.
7. Ibid.

Beryl Hawkes

Ministers of St Mary de Castro

The parish church and former collegiate church which has served The Newarke over the centuries is St Mary de Castro, its elegant spire a notable landmark of the area, and unusual architecturally in that the building is two churches in one.

The church has a long history during which time its main incumbents have been well documented, and so, with the exception of the very early years, almost a continuous roll of the church’s ministers – its Deans, Chaplains and Vicars - can be found. This article seeks to document those who held these posts, along with some brief biographical information. It also examines the living which being a minister at St Mary’s provided, along with the network of parallel appointments held in Leicester, including St Sepulchre, Trinity Hospital and Leicester Prison, and in the county.

The principal sources for this research included: John Nichols, The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester, vol.1 pt.2; Col. Bellairs and J. R. Abney, Vestry Book and Accounts of the Churchwardens of St Mary Leicester, (1888, 1912); A. Hamilton Thompson The Abbey of St Mary of the Meadows Leicester, the web database The Clergy of the Church of England 1540-1835 (www.theclergydatabase.org.uk), and information held within the church. This last list is the most complete although on occasions the spelling of names, dates and office differ from other sources, and it is from here that the basic information has been taken to compile the chart below. Further information of appointments from 1858 onwards can be found in the back issues of Crockford’s Clerical Directory.

St Mary de Castro was founded by Robert de Beaumont as a collegiate church c1107, and he appointed one of the secular canons as the church’s first minister, who also acted as chaplain to the adjacent Leicester castle. Shortly afterwards when the church was put under the control of Leicester Abbey in 1143, it then became the Abbot who appointed a Dean of St Mary’s, the incumbent’s duties also including conducting parochial services.

St Mary’s was subsequently sacked by followers of Henry II in 1173, although it was soon rebuilt and on a larger scale. The church records of its Ministers start around 60 years later in 1237, near to which date a separate church was built attached to the south wall for sole use by the parish and which was administered by a separate chaplain or vicar.

Services were held in both churches until c1400 when a physical connection was made with arched openings in the wall which divided the two churches. From then on only one minister was required, although still to conduct separate services, until St Mary’s was made a purely parochial church. This was in 1548 soon after the Reformation when the collegiate church was dissolved.

The Vicars of St Mary’s were thereafter appointed and paid for by the Crown, the annual stipend attributed to St Mary’s being £13 6s 8d although the actual payment was only £8, a figure determined before the dissolution according to the 1535 national listings in the King’s Book. By comparison, the livings for the other Leicester churches - reflecting their state and size of parish were - St Margaret’s £17 18s 6d, All Saints £8 3s 8d, St Nicholas £3 11s 3d and St Martins £6 13s 4d.

Nearly 300 years later, in 1831, comparisons between the livings for these ancient churches were St Mary’s £221, St Margaret’s £440, All Saints £148, St Nicholas £85 and St Martin’s £140.

During the rest of the nineteenth century the size of some of these parishes declined with the creation of many more parishes outside the centre of the borough. The livings were varied accordingly – especially at St Margaret’s where in 1881 it was reduced to £300. At that time St Mary’s was the highest in Leicester at £450 although this was to decline as the parish shrank in the following decades.

Patronage of St Mary’s remained with the Crown until 1867 when it passed to the Bishop of Peterborough. Later, on creation of the See of Leicester, it passed to the Bishop of Leicester in 1926.
Throughout the centuries the vicars at St Mary’s had their income supplemented from other appointments and grants. The earliest appointments were at the very small church of St Sepulchre which was situated near to the site of the infirmary and which depended on St Mary’s clergy from c1200 until the middle of the sixteenth century. Similarly served from c1344 to c1530 was ‘Our Lady of the Bridge’, a small church on West Bridge.

By decree of James I in 1614, the vicars of St Mary’s have, almost continuously, also held the chaplaincy of the Trinity Hospital in The Newarke. Included in the decree was the bestowal on all current vicars the grand title of ‘Sovereign’s Preacher at the Newarke’. Despite the title, the fee for the chaplaincy, was not high - in 1877, for example, it was only £15 per annum.

On occasions the chaplaincy of Leicester Prison has also been held, as by George Mitchell in the 1820s, whilst in 1874 the first chaplain of the infirmary was Thomas Robinson who received a salary of £20. This gradually rose to £40 for succeeding chaplains, many of whom were from St Mary’s, and in 1844, because the chaplain was required to visit daily, the annual fee was suddenly increased to £120, although as it happened there were insufficient funds collected to pay the full amount. Independent, full time chaplains were employed at the infirmary from 1882.

The confratreship of the Wyggeston hospital was held around 1860 by Vicar John Wing and there may have been others who received the small salary. There were probably other vicars from St Mary’s who were also chaplain to the Leicester Technical College (later Polytechnic) as was Clifford Carver in the 1970s and 1980s.

Parallel appointments at other churches also increased the income of the vicars of St Mary’s. For example, Thomas Pocklington was Rector at Rotherby during his 31 years as vicar of St Mary’s, John Simmonds was vicar at Enderby 1756-78 and George Mitchell and William Fancourt were both paid a second living at All Saints, Leicester during their term of office.

In the seventeenth century Leicester Corporation made small grants to the church’s clergy, although we know that Josiah Bond, around 1660, had to supplement his income of £12 by teaching while his wife earned a small salary from the washing of church linens. However, after 1704, if income was still insufficient, grants were available from the Queen Anne’s Bounty. This was a fund which the sovereign had started for the poorer parishes from income received from land taken by Henry VIII at the dissolution. The living of St Mary’s had been classified as a ‘discharged vicarage’ which meant its vicar was excused the customary payment of the first year’s stipend. Amounts from the fund were received at St Mary’s in 1756, 1767 and 1792 of £600 and two large Parliamentary grants were also received in 1814 and 1817. Often these payments were used to maintain the vicarage.

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Freeman and Mayor (1780) of Leicester. A pathway through his land gave the name to Pocklington’s Walk.


Thomas Robinson [3]. St Mary’s most influential minister and a preacher of great renown with an evangelical approach. Congregations increased such that a capacious gallery seating 1,000 was installed in the church. Very active in the support of missions abroad and anti-slavery, he preached as far away as London to raise funds for these causes. He was a friend of influential Baptists William Carey and Robert Hall, and with Hall he developed the non-denominational Leicester Auxiliary Bible Society to supply Bibles abroad. He also formed a benevolent society to distribute alms to the poor within the parish and founded a female asylum near the vicarage for training orphan girls in domestic service. He was the first chaplain at Leicester’s infirmary and in 1780 rented a room for a day school for poor children. Under his influence this was followed by a new building in 1785 (rebuilt 1869) for Leicester’s first parochial school that was open to all denominations. Over several years he wrote a series of discourses on sacred biography, the series being printed as Scripture Characters in 1793 and which went through a number of editions. He also wrote The Christian System Unfolded in 3 volumes in 1805. A collective edition of his works was published in 1814 a year after his death.


George Berkeley Mitchell [4], worked hard throughout his life to improve education for the poor, prison life and the abolition of slavery. As an evangelist he took over the mantle of his predecessor, Thomas Robinson, who he greatly admired. He even called one of his 6 sons Thomas Robinson. Before moving to Leicester he married the daughter of the Revd. William Fancourt whose son was the succeeding vicar at St Mary’s. A good orator, he regularly preached charity sermons in London where he associated with those fighting for reforms of the time, including Wilberforce and Macauley who he met at Thomas Babington’s home at Rothley. Mitchell was chaplain at both Wyggeston’s hospital who died at St. Mary’s after a long illness.

James Noble Bennie [8], a descendant of the Noble family of Westcotes Hall, Leicester. He was also noted for a very unusual outlook on the established church at that time as shown when at a Diocesan Conference he seconded a motion that Archbishops and others should invite delegates from orthodox dissenting bodies to consider terms of a reunion. The motion was firmly rejected.

Reference: The Times, 23rd October 1879.

James Mountain [9].

Reference: Margaret Baker, The Priests and Curates who have served All Saints Parish Church Loughborough 1472-1996, op. cit. above.

James Trengove Nance [10]. He and his wife were very popular, setting up many organisations at the church and he was particularly connected with the encouragement of Temperance. He was made a canon in 1911. He set up a church mission in a former public house, the Golden Ball in Bakehouse Lane. Tragedy struck in 1915 when his wife, a popular speaker, died following a fall from the second floor window of the vicarage.


John Rumley Collin [11]. He wrote a very good account of the history of the church, A glimpse into the past; the Royal Foundation of St Mary de Castro, to raise funds for the 1935 church restoration. He married at the age of 51, his wife being 30 years his junior.
Deans, Chaplains and Vicars of St Mary de Castro, Leicester

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<td>John (Ralph?) Cowley</td>
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<td>William Burrows</td>
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<td>John Bennett, MA</td>
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<td>William Croft, LLID</td>
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<td>1648</td>
<td>? Holden, Minister</td>
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<td>Thomas Pesell, MA</td>
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<td>1659-62</td>
<td>Josiah (Josias) Bond, MA</td>
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<td>1678</td>
<td>S OD/P Lincoln 1661, C/P Lei St Mary 1662</td>
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<td>W. Simms</td>
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<td>James Noble Bennie, LLC</td>
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<td>John Rumley Collins, MA</td>
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<td>1956-74</td>
<td>Robert Pinder Symonds, MA, OGS</td>
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<td>1974-90</td>
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<td>Clifford Henry George Carver, DIC</td>
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<td>1990-93</td>
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<td>Michael Peter Walls, BA</td>
<td>V</td>
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<td>1995-2009</td>
<td>David Lewis Cawley, FSA, AKC</td>
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**Church Monument:** M Mural, S Slab, W Window. For details and inscription of monuments see The Monuments of the Church Of St Mary de Castro Leicester, recorded by Max Wade-Matthews. ** Inscription at rear of pews, north chancel wall.

**CODE:** C Curate, Ch Chaplain, D Deacon, H Headmaster, O Ordained, OCh Ordained Chaplain, OD Ordained Deacon, OP Ordained Priest, P Preacher, R Rector, U University, V Vicar

Deans, Chaplains and Vicars of St Mary de Castro, Leicester, with notes to some of the important events which have taken place during the early centuries of the church at which the vicar would have attended. Brief details of the Clergy's careers in the latter four centuries are also shown, but these are not complete.
The articles in this year’s *Leicestershire Historian* on the Newarke area of Leicester are based on research carried out as part of the Leicester Workers’ Educational Association course ‘Gateways to the Past’, held at Newarke Houses Museum in 2009-10. The Newarke is a small area of Leicester in terms of its physical extent, but with a rich history including the religious and charitable foundations of the medieval period to the Civil War, the Newarke Houses themselves, local legends and customs such as Black Annis and the Whipping Toms, homes for orphaned and ‘fallen’ girls, local businesses, schools, and De Montfort University and its antecedents.

Using a similar approach to previous research-based courses such as ‘Working Lives’ (1), students were able to explore and record the history of an aspect of The Newarke area of their own choice. Working individually or with others to develop their skills of historical research and analysis, they were able to share the results both within the class, and more widely if they wished, through short articles or other means.

As the course tutor, it was once again very rewarding to see the enthusiasm and creative thinking that the students brought to the research, the extent to which they helped each other with particular topics or questions by contributing their own knowledge, ideas and resources, and the skills of historical analysis and expression that are evident in the articles published here. Other students produced an educational resource for schools, used their research to inform a guided tour of the area offered by the Museum, or simply enjoyed extending their knowledge of a topic of particular interest. This approach to local historical research lends itself readily to other topics, and in the autumn term 2011 we will be offering a course exploring the even longer and equally diverse history of Leicester’s High Street.

Cynthia Brown (Course tutor)

**Editor’s note:**

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**Leicester’s High Street, WEA Course, Autumn 2011, Tutor Cynthia Brown**

From the Roman city and the medieval swinemarket to the Highcross Centre today, Leicester’s High Street spans around 2,000 years of the city’s history. With support from the tutor, students will be able to develop their historical skills by researching an aspect of the High Street of their own choice using original sources including street directories, business records and oral histories as well as the work of archaeologists and historians. Students can work individually or with other students to research their chosen topic(s). No previous experience is necessary. The course will be held at the Great Meeting Unitarian Chapel in East Bond Street, Leicester on Thursday mornings from 10.30 am – 12.00 midday, starting in September 2011 and will run for 10 weeks. For further information, contact Amanda Miles, WEA Leicester Branch, Vaughan College, 0116 251 9740, email amiles@wea.org.uk
**LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND: GENERAL**

**EXCHANGING IDEAS DISPASSIONATELY AND WITHOUT ANIMOSITY: THE LEICESTER LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY 1835 - 2010**

Patrick J. Boylan

This publication marks the 175th anniversary of the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society, one of the few surviving such societies founded in the late eighteenth and earlier nineteenth centuries, and unusual in its aim of bridging religious and political divisions in Leicester in the 1830s by offering neutral ground for debate. The Society thrived despite the ‘divers unlooked for obstacles’ encountered by its initiators Alfred Paget and Dr George Shaw, it being ‘considered by some a Radical affair’ and by others as ‘a Tory scheme’. The Society offered a wide range of activities from lectures on such topics as phrenology, poetry, public health and medicine, to theatrical performances and soirées.

Many of these lectures and other events were described in detail in the last major publication on the Society’s history, which marked its centenary in 1935. No attempt is made to do this here, partly because back issues of its Transactions are gradually being made available on its website (1982-2009 were available at the time of writing), but also because this enables the book to focus more closely on specific themes and topics. It begins with an overview of Leicester in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, placing the formation of the Society firmly in its historical context before considering its early years and subsequent development. It also considers its pivotal role in the foundation of the Town Museum in 1849, preceded by the opening of its own museum in 1841 in the New Hall in Belvoir Street (also housing the Mechanics’ Institute at that time), and supported by a donation of around 10,000 objects from its collections.

Additional chapters have been contributed by Anthony Fletcher and Caroline Wessel on the Society’s important Geology and Natural History Section, and ‘The Club’ formed by members who met for dinner in each other’s homes for some 25 years from 1860. They included well-known local figures typical in many ways of its wider membership: William Billson, for instance, solicitor and historian of Leicester; Rev C. C. Coe of the Unitarian Great Meeting; the schoolmaster J. F. Hollings; and Charles Camille Caillard, a teacher of languages who came to Britain as a refugee from France in 1830. The book also includes images of every President of the Society between 1835-2010, all but the most recent images displayed in its Council Room at New Walk Museum until being digitised and archived in 2006. These sections complete a very readable and well-illustrated account that does full justice to the founding principles and subsequent development of the Society.

Cynthia Brown

**FASCINATING GLIMPSES FROM 1888**

Roy Townsend and Brian Papworth
The Authors, 2009, iv, 67pp, illus.

This brief study of England in the year 1888 comprises short extracts from newspapers and magazines. Although the cover picture of the Clock Tower suggests that the booklet is about Leicester, its focus is actually national, even international here and there, though there are a lot of references to Leicestershire. The extracts are arranged chronologically and cover a wide range of everyday and unusual events, with some emphasis on crime and accidents, some of the latter being particularly gruesome. Various advertisements are also included, such as one for the Leicester Grotto Tea Garden in Woodhouse Eaves: ‘re-opened on Easter Monday for the season…. Come here from the smoke, din, toil and care of Leicester life and renew your health by drinking in the pure bracing and invigorating forest air’. This is obviously not intended to be serious or academic local history, but it is meant to entertain and this it does well enough.

John Hinks

**A GRANDSON’S INHERITANCE: ADMIRALS, FARMERS, MERCHANTS AND A GUN-RUNNER**

Max Peberdy, Felicity Evers and Alyson Peberdy

This book is written by three grandparents for their two grandsons, and divided into two parts. The first outlines in great depth the family trees and history of the four main families from which the grandparents are descended. There is a wealth of detail in this section and it is well researched, but much of it will naturally be of more interest to those
families concerned rather than the general reading public. However, the third chapter, on the Peberdy family, could be of wider interest to Leicestershire historians, as it charts the declining fortunes of a Saddington yeoman family and their migration towards Leicester throughout the nineteenth century. There are also sections here on the Leicester fire service and police force, the occupations of two Peberdys in the first half of the twentieth century. The fourth chapter contains histories of some Wigston-based ancestors.

The second part of the book consists of accounts of the lives of the four grandparents. Although these are personal stories, they would also appeal to those interested in autobiographical reminiscences of the second half of the twentieth century, and the Peberdy grandparents’ stories are particularly fascinating. These two chapters include sections on school and family life in Leicester in the 1960s and 1970s, though the focus is on the people rather than Leicester as a place. The introduction should also be of interest to the general historian, and has an analysis of the life expectancy of the families over seven generations. There is an appendix which very usefully outlines, step-by-step, the methodology followed to carry out the research. This will provide some useful tips for other local and family historians wanting to do similar research. The book is very well-presented and written and has many good quality photographs for illustrations.

Lucy Faire

A HISTORY OF THE MASONIC PROVINCE OF LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND
Aubrey Newman, David Hughes and Donald Peacock
Anchorprint Group, 2010, 156pp, illus., ISBN 9781907540028, £15

A HISTORY OF FREEMASONS’ HALL, LEICESTER
Aubrey Newman, David Hughes and Donald Peacock
Anchorprint Group, 2010, 34pp

This first comprehensive history of the Masonic Province of Leicestershire and Rutland was written primarily for an audience of Freemasons themselves, to offer ‘an even better understanding of how masonry came to this Province’, and as a contribution to the wider history of Freemasonry, but it will also be of more general interest. It is organised around four main ‘threads’, the first focusing on the leadership of the movement, the Provincial Grand Masters and Deputy Provincial Grand Masters, and accompanied by images of many of them. The first Provincial Grand Master in Leicestershire was Sir Thomas Fowke who held the office from 1774 - 1786. Others included Sir Frederick Gustavus Fowke (1850 - 56), Richard Penn, 1st Earl Howe (1856 - 69), Sir John Corah (1939 - 59), and William Kelly (1870 - 73). The latter is described here as a ‘strong personality’, warranting a detailed examination of his pivotal role in the local movement.

The book also examines the roles of the Provincial Grand Lodge and the individual lodges in the Province. The earliest known Lodge in Leicester was established in 1739 and met at the Wheat Sheaf Inn in Humberstone Gate. However, the greatest expansion of Freemasonry came in the second half of the nineteenth century, and Rutland also became part of the Province in 1869. There is a comprehensive list of Craft Lodges in the Leicestershire and Rutland Province, giving their dates of formation and brief histories of each lodge, and this is very useful for reference. A section on the meeting places of the Lodges is well illustrated and includes a detailed account of the Masonic Hall opened on London Road in Leicester in 1910. The fourth and final thread focuses on other Orders and Degrees in Freemasonry open only to existing members. A separate booklet published by the same authors provides a fuller history of the Freemasons’ Hall in Leicester.

Cynthia Brown

INNOCENT OR GUILTY?
Roy Townsend

Here we have a very brief account of the shooting of James Fenton in 1778. He was allegedly killed over a gambling debt by a Frenchman, Francis Soules, who taught French and dancing in Leicester. The author found the various published accounts of the case and subsequent trial somewhat contradictory and decided to investigate newspaper reports and other contemporary sources. Soules was found guilty of manslaughter but was pardoned when the case was referred to the King’s Bench - a baffling case indeed, and likely to remain so at this distance in time from the events.

John Hinks

LEICESTERSHIRE PEOPLE AND PLACES ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO: A SELECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHS BY GEORGE MOORE HENTON 1861-1924
Anthony Wibberley
Heart of Albion, [x], 81pp, illus., ISBN 9781905646197, £9.99

Published to mark the 150th anniversary of the birth of the local artist and photographer, George Moore Henton, this is a nicely produced selection of his many photographs of Leicestershire, which are now housed in the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland (ROLLR). The
photographs are all reproduced to a decent standard, given the constraints of publishing a book to sell at just under ten pounds. They are grouped by broad themes: village pump, monuments, markets and shops, places of work, schools, churches, places of recreation, and hostelries. The final category, ‘boundaries’, is a particularly interesting one, and highlights one of the most noticeable differences between Henton’s day and ours: groups of children standing around in quiet village streets, especially at boundary-points such as gates and bridges. Even if, as one suspects, the children were aesthetically posed by the photographer, they probably spent many more hours just hanging around in the village than their successors do.

The commentary, by Anthony Wibberley, gives just enough information and is clearly thoroughly researched. The selection is well-chosen and gives a good flavour of life in the county - in Leicester, market towns and villages - in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Henton was a competent if unremarkable photographer and was sufficiently well organized to date most of his work, which is very helpful in a selection of this kind. Some of the minority of photographs that are not dated are assigned approximate dates based on other factors. It is interesting that the photographs span this particular period, a welcome change from the more common focus on ‘Victorian’. This is recommended to local historians and to general readers who wish to have an informative and entertaining visual record of this important transitional period in our history.

John Hinks

LIFE STORY OF MRS ELVY MORTON: FIRST CHAIR OF THE LEICESTER CARIBBEAN CARNIVAL
Kiyotaka Sato
Memory and Narrative Series 1, Research Centre for the History of Religious and Cultural Diversity, Meiji University, Japan, 2010, 96pp, illus.

The first celebrates the life of Elvy Morton and the contribution she has made to Leicester through the Leicester Caribbean Carnival. It has three important strands: Mrs Morton’s personal history; general information about the experiences of the Leicester Caribbean community; and, finally, a specific explanation of how and why the Caribbean Carnival was born in 1984. Mrs Morton paints a vivid picture of her early life on the beautiful island of Nevis and describes her schooldays, her family and her Methodist upbringing. During these colonial times everyone was brought up to do things in a British way, and one highlight of the year was the celebrations for Prince Charles’s birthday. She then describes her voyage to Britain in 1958 and her first experiences in this country. We learn of her culture shock and the difficulties that she and all the new arrivals from the Caribbean encountered with racism.

Mrs Morton however is always positive and emphasises the changes for the better that have happened over the decades since she arrived. In the wake of the 1981 riots she felt increasingly that it was all important to teach young people in the African Caribbean community about their own history. It was from this motivation that the idea of the Leicester Caribbean Carnival emerged, the first being held in 1984 to mark the 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery. In addition to the written account of her experiences, the booklet includes very informative appendices including maps, Caribbean recipes, personal photographs taken in Leicester and Nevis, and pictures of past carnivals and carnival brochures.

Claire Wintram’s story is an enlightening description of what it was like to grow up in Britain shortly after the Second World War in the shadow of the Holocaust. It is a personal story of identity and belief as well as an account of the varying beliefs within the Jewish community in Leicester. Although Mrs Wintram was born in London and brought up in Leicestershire, her father had come to Britain from Europe where his family had had direct experience of the horrors of the Holocaust. She memorably describes how many Jews, including her father, felt it was safer to strongly underplay their Jewish identity, and how she was brought up to feel that she was only a guest in Britain.

Today Mrs Wintram describes her Jewish identity as cultural rather than religious, although she has many friends at the Leicester Progressive Synagogue. She is active in the Leicester Just Peace group which, among other activities, has raised funds for a peace village in Israel where Jews and Arabs can live in harmony. The appendices to the booklet include maps and personal photographs and Professor Sato’s introduction gives a useful summary of the history of the Jewish community in Leicester from the mid-nineteenth century to the present.

LIFE STORY OF MRS CLAIRE WINTRAM: A JEWISH WOMAN AND HER IDENTITY
Kiyotaka Sato
Memory and Narrative Series 2, Research Centre for the History of Religious and Cultural Diversity Meiji University, Japan, 2010, 78pp, illus.

Professor Sato has written these two fascinating booklets based on his personal interviews with Elvy Morton and Claire Wintram in Leicester. Both booklets are attractively produced, extremely readable and will be particularly welcomed by any student, local historian or general reader interested in Leicester’s different communities.
At the time of writing the books could not be bought in the UK, but they may be available here at some point in the future. However, there are copies in the University of Leicester, De Montfort University Library, the Central Library in Leicester, and other libraries in the city. The author can be contacted at the Research Centre for the History of Religious and Cultural Diversity Meiji University, 1-1 Kandasrugadai, chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 101-8301, Japan, email satokiyo@kisc.meiji.ac.jp

Siobhan Begley

LITTLE-KNOW LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND
Bob Trubshaw
Heart of Albion, 2010, 154pp, illus., ISBN 9781905646173, £7.95

This is the second edition of a book originally published in 1995. It is intended to provide ‘inspiration for outings to some of the unjustly overlooked treasures of Leicestershire and Rutland... a different sort of day out’, based on twelve tours by bicycle or car. Part I on holy wells, medieval crosses, standing stones and mark stones, and medieval churches has been substantially revised, but the tours themselves remain the same except for updated directions. As an example, the first tour takes the reader from Melton Mowbray to Thorpe Arnold, where the font in the church depicts five dragons attacking St. Michael, to the now redundant church at Breningby. It then passes through Wyfordby to Stapleford along the route of an ancient salt traders’ track, and on to Burton Lazars where several of the headstones in the graveyard feature the distinctive ‘Belvoir angels’ carvings.

An East Rutland tour begins in Tickencote, ‘in the lee of the fearsomely busy A1’, and continues through Great and Little Casterton, Ryhall, Belmesthorpe and Essendine to Pickworth, taking in unusual wooden effigies, Roman remains and a dovecote along the way. Detailed directions, map references and descriptions of the little-known features of the title are all provided, along with illustrations and practical advice such as taking binoculars to view the carvings inside the churches. As the author himself notes, publishing a book on little-known places is likely to attract more attention to them than previously, and readers are rightly urged to seek permission to visit privately-owned sites and not to ‘prejudice the reception for future visitors’.

Cynthia Brown

PORTRAIT OF LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND
Graham Oliver

Graham Oliver is a Leicestershire-based photographer whose work has been featured in newspapers, magazines and calendars. This book consists of a selection of high quality colour photographs from both counties, ranging from images of the Clock Tower, Diwali and Christmas celebrations in Leicester and Kirby Muxloe Castle, to scenes of villages, parks and woods that may be much less familiar. The latter include the duckpond and Exeter Arms at Barrowden, the Ashby Canal at Shackerstone, the Sence Valley Forest Park near Ibstock (part of the National Forest), and the almshouses at Appleby Magna. They represent all seasons of the year, and some of the winter scenes are particularly attractive. They are not arranged under themes or in any particular order, allowing each image to be viewed and enjoyed in its own right. The book does not claim to represent the history of the two counties, but there is a brief introduction describing some of their main physical characteristics, visitor attractions and industrial heritage; and by capturing contemporary scenes, the photographs themselves will undoubtedly become a valuable historical resource in the future.

Cynthia Brown

RUTLAND THROUGH TIME
Stephen Butt

This collection of photographs features an old sepia or black and white image on each page alongside a modern colour photograph, both of good quality. This allows for easy comparison of the same scene or building over time, or in some cases shows what replaced those that were demolished. The detailed captions give a sense of the history of each place and place the photographs themselves in context. The caption to the images of the war memorial at Belton in Rutland, for instance, notes that the King’s Stone that forms its base derives its name from the legend that Charles I rested there following the Battle of Naseby in 1645.
The introduction to the book provides a summary of Rutland’s changing status as a county over time, and of the rural life collection in the County Museum. The images are arranged alphabetically by place, starting with a charming photograph of Barleythorpe Manor with two children and a dog in the foreground, taken in 1915. Many of the older photographs also feature people, adding to their interest and historical value. Some were clearly posed for the purpose, while others were taken on occasions like the annual Hospital Sunday fundraising event, the declaration of an election poll in Oakham, or local troops leaving for service in the First World War. They have been drawn from two major sources, the Jack Hart Collection at Rutland County Museum and the Oakham School archives, with others provided by individuals.

Cynthia Brown

SILVER LININGS: LOROS - CELEBRATING TWENTY FIVE YEARS OF CARE
Wendy Taylor
LOROS, 2010, illus.

This beautifully produced book tells the story of the LOROS hospice in Leicester through the eyes of the people who have both worked for and supported the movement over the last 25 years. It consists of individual essays, each written by people directly involved in the hospice, from the initial idea of building it to the present day. It is well illustrated with some very personal snapshots. All the memories are well written and very easy to read. The stories are often emotional, and can bring a tear to your eye followed by a smile to your face almost within the same sentence. The relevance of this book to an historian will probably not be immediate, as many of the memories are still very recent. Nevertheless, it is a book that is well worth reading, both as a lasting testament to the building of the hospice and the people who made it happen, and because the story of LOROS mirrors that of the hospice movement in Britain more generally.

Lois Edwards

THROUGH THICK AND THIN: GOK WAN
Gok Wan

This is not an obvious choice of book to review for the Leicestershire Historian, but it is relevant to the formation of today’s city of Leicester. Gok Wan’s early life was centred on food. His grandfather owned the first Chinese restaurant in Leicester, and his father also ran Chinese restaurants in the city. He describes his childhood, growing up in a loving and secure family, and the lifestyle that they lived at that time. He also tells of his teenage years growing up on the Beaumont Leys estate, how he dealt with his increasing weight, and the experience of being mixed race and gay. He holds nothing back in his description of his excessive dieting and lack of confidence, how he has overcome his problems, and how he now uses what he learnt in his past to help others. This book is harrowing and inspirational at the same time, but is well written and easy to read. It gives a personal account of living in Leicester during a period of change, and this makes it relevant to anyone looking at the recent history of the city. From a historical point of view it will certainly offer people in the future an individual account of what it was like to live in Leicester in the late twentieth century.

Lois Edwards

YOU’LL NEVER LAST: ONE POLICEWOMAN’S STORY FROM 1958 – 1984
Valerie A. Tedder
United Press, 2010, 236pp, illus., £8.95

Valerie Tedder will be well known to many local readers as the author of The Pantry Under the Stairs and Post-War Blues, which cover her life as a child during the Second World War to the late 1950s. This book picks up the story in 1958 when, ‘twenty three, single and bored with a dead end job’, she joined Leicester City Police. Despite a colleague’s prediction that she would ‘never last’, she served with the force for over 26 years, many of them in the rank of Sergeant.

Her basic training was followed by a two year period of probation in the central ‘A’ division in Leicester, with duties ranging from street patrols, court and cell duty, domestic incidents, missing persons and traffic control. Many male officers are recalled as helpful and supportive, but some were openly hostile to female officers, and institutional structures and regulations also put them at a disadvantage in less obvious ways. While male officers on patrol carried a truncheon and handcuffs, female officers were armed with only ‘charm and the ability to converse quietly’ to protect
themselves; and although their shifts officially ended at 10 pm, their rest and social life were frequently disrupted by call-outs to incidents involving women and children until a Special Enquiry Unit was formed to ensure the necessary cover.

Many aspects of police work throughout Valerie Tedder’s career are described in detail in the book - including some of the ingenious excuses offered by motorists for parking offences. Policing football matches, the annual Abbey Park Show and the overnight queues for tickets for the Beatles’ concert at De Montfort Hall in the early 1960s were some of the more pleasant aspects of her work, while suicides, sexual offences and child abuse, and acting as decoy for a rapist, were foremost among those bringing high levels of stress and sleepless nights. Admittedly ‘timid and naive’ at the start of her career, she recalls that the ‘corrupt side of life I was going to deal with was as far away from my family circle as the North Pole’, but in the absence of the counselling that is now routinely offered, ‘we had to recover as best we could’. In this and other respects, although primarily a personal memoir, this account of her experiences also demonstrates more general changes in policing over the years, particularly in attitudes to female police officers and the broadening out of their role from a focus on women and children to something more akin to equality in work, pay and status.

Cynthia Brown

Other recent publications

ARCHITECTURE OF THE UNIVERSITIES OF LEICESTER
Arthur Lyons
Anchor Print Group, 2010

COLIN WILSON BIBLIOGRAPHY 1956-2010
Colin Stanley
Colin Wilson Studies, 3rd edn. 2010

A DIP IN THE OCEAN: ROWING SOLO ACROSS THE INDIAN
Sarah Outen
Summersdale, 2011

EXPLORING A PRODUCTIVE LANDSCAPE FROM A LONG HISTORY TO A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE IN THE EYE BROOK CATCHMENT
Chris Stoate
Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, 2010

GHOST WALKS IN LEICESTERSHIRE
Barbara Wadd
DB Publishing, 2010

TOWNS, VILLAGES AND HOUSES

ASHBY-DE-LA-ZOUCH AND THE GREAT CIVIL WAR
Kenneth Hillier
Ashby-de-la-Zouch Museum, 2010, 40pp, illus., ISBN 0954779940, £5

This publication explores the effects of the Civil War on Ashby and the surrounding area, and the role of Henry Hastings, second son of the 5th Earl of Huntingdon, who defended Ashby Castle for nearly four years for the King, and was created Baron Loughborough in recognition of his service. Drawing on contemporary sources such as diaries and newspapers, it follows events in and around Ashby year-by-year from 1643 to the surrender of the castle in 1646. However, Ashby was not yet to be left in peace, and the castle was partly demolished by Parliament in 1648 on the grounds of the Great Tower still being ‘a place of considerable strength ... not at present held by any soldiers of the Parliament, and that Mr. Hastings who formerly held that place so long is now in these parts ... may endeavour to
surprise it’. This is a very comprehensive and readable account of this important period in the history of Ashby-de-la-Zouch. It is well-illustrated with maps, images of objects and displays in the Museum itself, along with scenes from the re-enactments which were staged by the Sealed Knot at the castle in the 1990s. The work also relates the return of the Hastings family to Ashby in the eighteenth century, and their continuing association with the town. It includes an Appendix listing the Officers and Gentlemen of the garrison at the time of its surrender, along with an extensive bibliography.

Cynthia Brown

BILLESDON: SNAPSHOTS OF THE PAST
Billesdon Local History Group
The Authors, 2011, 120pp, illus., ISBN 9780953964529, £10

This book is one of the results of an extended project by Billesdon Local History Group to ‘safeguard the visual record’ of the village. Some of the photographs it features are now very fragile, while others can only be approximately dated, but they provide a vivid and informative record of Billesdon from the late nineteenth century to the 1960s.

An introduction places the village in its historical context, covering the decline of traditional trades, its educational and social life, charitable activities, and the continuing importance of agriculture and farming. The images are arranged by location or theme. The section on the Market Place, for instance, enables comparisons to be made from across several decades, while others feature houses, shops, other local businesses, and the Billesdon Workhouse, demolished in 1935. Many of the photographs are of local families, school groups or village occasions such as the annual ‘feast’, the Festival of Britain celebrations in 1951, and the meeting of the local hunt. Readers with family history links to Billesdon may find these particularly interesting.

The book is very well-designed, with high quality images, and the detailed captions also give a flavour of village life over the ages. The Widows’ Cottages’ for example, provided under a bequest in 1773 for ‘four poor widows during their respective widowhoods or until they shall be displaced for misbehaviour’, had become uninhabitable by the mid-1920s but were replaced by two new dwellings in 1929. When the Workhouse became a convalescent hospital during World War I, the ‘rowdy behaviour of the recovering soldiers was sometimes a cause for complaint’. The book also highlights the connection between Billesdon and two eminent citizens of Leicester, the naturalist and explorer Henry Walter Bates, and the newspaper editor James Thompson, both of them educated at The Academy in Back Street. In all respects, this book is a valuable and timely addition to the record of Billesdon’s past.

Cynthia Brown

GREAT BOWDEN HISTORIC VILLAGE TRAIL
Paul Bennett

On a fine April bank holiday it was a pleasure to visit Great Bowden and follow its Historical Society’s trail. It was this reviewer’s first visit to that village, yet in a little over an hour the trail afforded a good sense of its history. Starting at the village hall, the walk takes in St Peter and St Paul’s church, the 1839 school, and private houses of note, alongside some commercial establishments, encompassing church, state, and civil society, commerce and domestic buildings across seven centuries.

The history uncovered in a relatively unassuming village was of real economic, social and political relevance. One or two important figures, namely the Stokes family are introduced, and some remnants of previous ages such as bakehouses are noted. The trail is not bogged down in architectural detail, with almost no technical terms being used, perhaps confined by space in this pamphlet and the necessity of avoiding ‘jargon’ for a general audience. Those with a particular interest in the built environment itself will find as always that Pevsner remains an invaluable travelling companion; but the most astonishing fact I learned was that Great Bowden was actually ‘parent’ to Market Harborough and Little Bowden. After a pub lunch, it was quite clear that such trails are a great way to introduce new history to visitors, and new visitors to villages.

Malcolm Noble
MEMORIES FORGED IN MARKET BOSWORTH
Glynis Oakley, Joan Tomlinson et al., ed.
Market Bosworth Society, 2010, 112 pp., illus., ISBN 0952963949, £10

This book was part of a project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and is based on edited extracts from oral history recordings and written memories of Market Bosworth and the surrounding district. Most of the interviews cover the period from the 1920s to the 1980s, and the topics include childhood memories, home life, markets and shopping, farming, trade, industry and transport, wartime, and education. There is also a section on Bosworth Hall, originally the home of the Dixie family, later a hospital and now a hotel. One interviewee recalled that, under the ownership of Mr Rudolph Delius from 1918-1931, one of the duties of the gardeners was to ‘provide the house each morning with fourteen perfect new carnations… they had to be put on the breakfast table by 8 am’. There are many other interesting and unexpected insights into local life, and the book also features recollections of the Bosworth Cattle Market and Show, and the May fair. Its final section consists of interviews with Year 4 children from Congerstone Primary School talking about school life in 2010, offering a nice contemporary perspective. A DVD with extracts from the interviews and written memoirs is also available.

Cynthia Brown

PLUNDERED AND IMPOVERISHED: BIRSTALL, WANLIP AND BELGRAVE AND THE CIVIL WAR 1642 – 1646
Michael Smith
Birstall and District Local History Society, 2010, illus., £3.50

Michael Smith has previously written several volumes on the history of Birstall, and here he looks for the first time at the momentous period of the English Civil War. The work considers the national and local context of the conflict before looking in turn at the three neighbouring manors of Birstall, Wanlip and Belgrave. The war affected the manors in different ways, partly due to the different allegiances of the Lords of the Manor, and partly to the strategic significance of the area. As is explained in the foreword, it is
The character of the three principal landowners illustrates the broader issues at stake. In Wanlip we have Archdale Palmer who supports Parliament, but in the other two manors are Catholic recusants (the Byerleys in Belgrave and the Giffords and Brooksbys in Birstall) who are supporters of the King. As the author explains, Parliament views Catholics as both a major political threat and a source of money to fund the war. Their estates are sequestered, and in the case of Birstall especially this is the cause of widespread economic distress.

Although the author states in his foreword that it is not his intention to produce an academic study, this is a well researched and well written book which will be of interest both to local historians and students of the Civil War.

Philip R. French

THE STORY OF ENGLAND (KIBWORTH)
Michael Wood

This is, of course, the book that accompanied the popular BBC TV series of the same name by Michael Wood. Focusing on the parishes of Kibworth Beauchamp, Kibworth Harcourt and Smeeton Westerby, the series presented ‘a people’s history of England told through the history of one small community’, which the book is able to explore in more depth. Like the TV programmes, the book takes a chronological approach from the first century AD through to the twentieth century, exploring every historical period along the way, and devoting separate chapters to events of particular significance, such as the Great Famine and the Black Death, the Reformation, and the agricultural and industrial ‘revolutions’ of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The industrial history of Kibworth – framework knitting, canals and railways – was one reason for the location’s choice. Another was the richness of the available historical sources, foremost among these being the manorial documents relating to Kibworth in the archives of Merton College, Oxford, but which also encompassed the Domesday survey of 1086, medieval poll tax records, sixteenth century wills, and a wealth of more recent sources such as diaries, photographs, letters from a local suffragette from Holloway Prison, and archaeological discoveries. This book is invaluable in identifying and explaining these documentary sources which span so many centuries, including their original purpose, and also the wider context – economic, social, political and religious - in which these documents were produced, along with their significance in terms of the relationship between rich and poor, the powerful and those over whom they exercised their power.

The ‘people, not the rulers’, as the introduction to the book clearly states, are the real subject of both the TV series and the book: ‘the important action takes place not in the palaces of the rich and powerful, but in the houses and fields – and in the minds – of the ordinary people. And ordinary lives are often no less dramatic’. There is certainly plenty of drama here, from the devastation of the Black Death, to the upheavals of the Civil War, and the meetings in Kibworth organised by the suffragette Mrs Mary (Nellie) Taylor herself. However, if – or because - Kibworth was in many ways ‘remarkable for its ordinariness’, it is the insights that the historical sources give into ‘ordinary’ lives that make this book so engrossing and informative, and justify its claim to tell ‘the story of England: the burdens imposed by William de Harcourt in the 12th century that ‘afflict them to the depths of misery’; the note in the Kibworth parish register explaining that ‘the reason why little or nothing is registered from this year, 1641, until the year 1649, was the civil wars… which put all into a confusion until then; and neither minister nor people could quietly stay at home for one party or the other’; and the description which concludes the book of the ‘grumbling, friendly, warm-hearted, gossip-loving village…’ of 1944, ‘with ten thousand others of her kind… for ever England’.

Cynthia Brown

THE ‘TOWN’ CHARITIES OF MARKET HARBOROUGH, GREAT BOWDEN AND LITTLE BOWDEN
Pam Aucott

Some charitable benefactions invariably become outdated over the centuries, and coupled with poor administration or corruption, or changes in settlement patterns, require revision. With the growth of the state, and the decline of the Church, many aims such as maintaining roads became irrelevant; and the vagaries of population history and the rise and fall of the fortunes of any town can leave burgeoning towns with very small charities. On the other hand, now tiny villages may have resources disproportionate to their needs. These examples demonstrate the main difficulty in designing charities to bring benefits in perpetuity. If the requisite adjustments were not pursued at often ruinous expense in Chancery, then in the nineteenth century they might be
sought under the aegis of the Charity Commission. The Market Harborough and The Bowdens Charity was created by this route in 1994 to address the fact that Great Bowden had more resources than its substantially larger neighbour. The Charity Commission, unable to redirect the monies to different places, could only amalgamate the charities with the consent of all the parties.

Those concerned with the history of Market Harborough, Great Bowden or Little Bowden will naturally be interested in Pam Aucott’s work on these ‘Town’ charities, which is a solid and thoughtful consideration of imperfect source material. However, concerned as they were with the relief of the poor, apprentices and highways, and improving the built environment, it is also of relevance to the history of charity administration more generally. The sections considering the development of the various town lands themselves are concerned too with the control over land and what this means for local history. Through administrative reorganisation and efficiencies, it is hoped that public benefit will continue from old generosity for the next several hundred years.

Malcolm Noble

Joan Revill

This book documents the last 25 years of Old Dalby village, drawing on the parish magazine. It is written in the form of a diary, enlivened by pen and ink drawings by Duncan Rodgers and John Farmer from the original magazines. The minutiae of village life are carefully recorded, giving a picture of the residents and their concerns, the traditions, customs and events, the church restoration, ‘Old Dalby Day’ and a great deal more. Although much remains constant, there are also important changes, including the closure of the chapel, village post office and shop. The deaths of residents and the contribution they have made to village life are reported, giving glimpses further back into the past. The book is nicely produced and easy to read. It will be of most interest to residents and others who have links with the village, but it demonstrates the importance not only of researching the past, but of ensuring that records are kept for the future.

Gillian Lighton

**Other recent publications**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author/Group</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BURBAGE HERITAGE TRAIL</td>
<td>Burbage Heritage Group</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>The Authors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMPILATION OF EVENTS IN MARKET HARBOUR: MARKET HARBOUR ADVERTISER, LEICESTERSHIRE PETTY SESSIONS, AND OTHERS</td>
<td>Leigh Taylor</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>The Author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FROM FLECKNEY TO FLYING BOATS: REMEMBERING MY MOTHER’S LIFE</td>
<td>Trevor McHugh</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>The Author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRAVE MATTERS - IN MEMORY OF A FEW OF THE OCCUPANTS OF ALL SAINTS’ CHURCHYARD, THURCASTON: VILLAGE HISTORY SERIES No. 3</td>
<td>Brenda E. Hooper</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Falconer Press</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HABBY: VILLAGE LIFE IN THE VALE OF BELVOIR</td>
<td>Leslie Cram</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Harby History Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HINCKLEY’S MEDIEVAL PRIORY: PART ONE</td>
<td>Anthony G. Wallis</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Hinckley Archaeological Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MY VIEW OF LIFE IN HINCKLEY 1950S-2010</td>
<td>Dave Abbott</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Reprint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO. 18 HIGH STREET WEST, UPPINGHAM</td>
<td>Uppingham Local History Group</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>The Authors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SARSON SECONDARY SCHOOL FOR GIRLS (Melton Mowbray)</td>
<td>Carol Hall</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>The Author</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST JOHN THE BAPTIST CHURCH GOADBY: INVENTORY OF MEMORIALS IN THE CHURCHYARD</td>
<td>C.R. Stewart et al</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>The Authors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STATHAM FAMILY &amp; STANTON HOUSE, STONEY STANTON</td>
<td>Diane L. Harman</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>The Author</td>
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This book covers the 100 year history of the Belgrave Allotment Society which oversaw six sites. Some information is given about human activity on the Redhill site from the Neolithic and Bronze Age period up until the present day. In 2009 the same site became an archaeological dig when a third century Roman burial site was found. To illustrate these findings there is an appendix extracted from a University of Leicester Archaeological Services Report.

A wealth of information, extracted from committee minutes of Leicester City Council and the Belgrave Allotment Society, illustrates how the Society had to fight to hold onto the land when the Council wanted to sell it off for housing and industrial purposes, the extension of the Great Central Railway, and even the building of an Alpine style village on the Redhill site. Other problems faced by the Society over the years included continuing vandalism, stolen produce, broken fences, spiralling water costs, rats, rabbits and badgers.

Interspersed between the committee minutes are newspaper cuttings about some of the battles fought between the Council and the Allotment Society. There is also a 1908 ‘growers’ guide which lists vegetable varieties such as Giant Zittau onions, Dickinson’s First and Best peas and Marvel of the Four lettuce. An illustration from a First World War edition of The Allotment and Leisure Gardener makes use of lyrics from a popular song of that era, There’s a long, long trail a winding to the land of greens and spuds. Some of the plot holders’ memories are included and they help to give a human face to the book: those of Mrs Margaret King, for example, who took on a plot in 1948 to help feed her widowed mother, sister and daughters in a time when the family were short of money. Mrs Elizabeth Göbel, on the other hand, claimed to have ‘rescued a man from getting a hiding because he had it off with his friend’s wife in a shed which nearly collapsed on them’.

The decline and rise in demand for allotments is explored, with the early 1970s being a period of high demand due in part to the availability of deep freezes, the oil crisis and an interest in self-sufficiency inspired by the television programme The Good Life. In more recent times the author shows there has again been an increased demand for allotments, with waiting lists doubled and even schools in the area taking on plots in 2004. Evidence shows that women are now nearly equal to the number of men holding a plot, which is different from when Mrs Elizabeth Göbel, ex-president and trustee of the Belgrave Allotment Society, requested a plot in 1964. She was asked ‘Where is your husband?’ When she replied ‘Haven’t got one’ she received the response ‘Ooh!’, and although she was given a plot, she learnt ten years later that it was the worst one on the site.

There is a wealth of information in this book. It would have greatly benefitted by a contents page, headings to the dates and topics discussed, and a different style of script to distinguish comment from quotation. It is an unusual book which will appeal to the social historian as well as the
present day allotment holder, who will no doubt draw many parallels with his or her own experience and agree with the words of Mrs Göbel: ‘Going home with food you grow - an experience you can’t explain to anyone’.

Shirley Aucott

**BREAKING NEW GROUND: NINETEENTH CENTURY ALLOTMENTS FROM LOCAL SOURCES**
Jeremy Burchardt and Jacqueline Cooper, ed.

This is a very authoritative book which reveals the extent to which allotments were deeply embedded in rural society in the period 1793 to 1873. In its fifteen chapters, written by fourteen authors, it offers a wealth of fascinating new evidence, obtained from a nationwide research project carried out by the Family and Community Historical Research Society. It clearly demonstrates that allotments were not just a means of alleviating poverty, but a major part of family and community life in Victorian village life. They were cherished and enjoyed by agricultural labourers, tradesmen, artisans and various other individuals. The research also debunks the myth that allotment gardening was solely the work of men. Married, widowed and single women were also found to be allotment tenants.

The book is divided into three parts, the first giving an overview and summary of the project. The second part concentrates on a series of county studies which have been selected subject to the availability of evidence. Unfortunately, Leicestershire and Rutland do not feature very much, although it is made very clear that there is still plenty of scope for further research. The final section explores themes that have previously been neglected, such as allotments in unusual places: for example, beaches, race courses, roadside verges, marshland, London parkland and railway embankments.

The real sense of community that allotments brought to village life is revealed when Charles Dickens visited Rothamsted Allotment Club in 1859. The club house, situated in the centre of the allotments, had a verandah for members to sit on, and inside, where beer was served, there were chairs and tables and a roaring fire. There was also a separate reading room for religious study. The rules and regulations of the Allotment Societies varied widely over the country, although using a plough was largely outlawed by most, with some implementing a fine of 2d for every rod ploughed.

The book contains a number of black and white photographs, lists of tables and maps, some of which name the tenants and which plot they occupied. A CD-ROM which accompanies the book contains a database of over 3,000 allotment sites and nearly 1,000 named allotment tenants. It also has a surname index in addition to a subject index, thus making it a valuable resource for the family historian as well as the local and social historian, and indeed the allotment tenant of today. In such a short review it is impossible to really do this book justice. It is not only very readable, but it also helps to transform our understanding of the nineteenth century allotment and what it meant to a broad cross-section of society.

Shirley Aucott

**HISTORIC ORGANS OF LEICESTERSHIRE: A PERSONAL SELECTION**
David E.G. Shuker
At the Sign of the Pipe, 2010, 83pp, illus., ISBN 978095671020, £12

The title of this book and its front cover containing dozens of little photographs of pipe organs immediately makes one want to delve inside. Within, even before reading the text, we see excellent photographs of 30 pipe organs, mostly enlarged to A5 size. For the reader whose curiosity is aroused but has little knowledge of pipe organs, a useful potted history from Roman times to the present is provided in the Preface. Technical details relating to each organ are given in an Appendix.

The author explains that his research into organs grew fortuitously over 17 years, and that the material gathered is therefore a personal selection. This is arranged in the form of a guide book divided geographically into five sections, each corresponding to a district of Leicestershire. The organs are presented in chronological order in each of these sections. The discussion associated with each organ is necessarily compact in a relatively short work designed as a guidebook; but, presented here tantalisingly, it makes one want to know more - on the historical background that led to the use of organs, particularly in churches and chapels, the
associated changes in liturgical practice, and the introduction of professional organists and choirmasters - as well as pursuing to greater depth a knowledge of the organs themselves and hearing them played.

For those who are inveterate visitors to buildings of historical interest in Leicestershire, having travelled with an Arthur Mee, a Nicolas Pevsner, a W. G. Hoskins, or a Leonard Cantor in hand, Dr Shuker’s book may add to the interest to be found in the interiors of buildings by focusing attention on the organ, something rarely if at all mentioned by those authorities. He reveals some hidden treasures, like the organ in St Luke’s chapel at the Royal Infirmary; and he also enhances the joy that a visit to Staunton Harold church unfailingly provides by telling us about its remarkable organ which dates from 1630 and is still used for services in the church.

Ralph Leek

Other recent publications

HISTORY OF LEICESTER BACH CHOIR
M. Whittaker
Leicester Bach Choir, 2010

HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL HUNT CHASE 1860-2010
Peter Stevens
The Author, 2010

IVANHOE RAMBLERS: TWENTY YEARS ANNIVERSARY WALKS
S. Beaumont and G. Hampson, 2010

LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTRY PARK WALKS
Heather MacDermid
Leicestershire Footpath Association, 2010

SAVAGE!
Robbie Savage
Mainstream Publishing, 2010

MILITARY AND WARTIME

THIS GALLANT STEELBACK: WILLIAM EWART BOULTER VC
Derek Seaton

One of four brothers who served in the First World War and all of whom survived the conflict, William Ewart Boulter was awarded the Victoria Cross in 1916 while serving in the 6th (Service Battalion) of the Northamptonshire Regiment, one of the ‘Pals’ battalions, on the Western Front. This account of his life is the product of several years of detailed research, and draws on family photographs and memorabilia, as well as a wide range of military and civil records. It was prompted by the knowledge that Billy Boulter was born and raised in the author’s home village of Wigston Magna, and educated at Bell Street Infants’ School and the Great Wigston Board School in Long Street.

It begins with an account of the Boulter family, including his father’s involvement in the Co-operative movement, which clearly had a formative influence on Billy’s own working life. After working first as a grocer’s assistant, and then in the drapery department of the Leicester Co-operative Society in High Street, Leicester, he moved to Kettering in 1912 to take up a similar position with the Kettering Industrial Co-operative Society. It was here that he enlisted in September 1914 and was posted to the Northamptonshire Regiment. His subsequent military career is described in detail in the book, including the attack on Trones Wood in July 1916 in which the now Sergeant Boulter earned his Victoria Cross for ‘conspicuous bravery’ by single-handedly charging a machine-gun post ‘in the face of withering fire … with his bag of bombs, across an area of open ground pitted with shell craters’. He was severely wounded in the process and spent some considerable time in military hospitals before recovering sufficiently to gain a commission and return to France in August 1917. The remainder of the book follows his post-war career in the hosiery and drapery businesses, his marriage in 1927 to Alice Toone, and his World War II service in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. This is a meticulously researched, well-illustrated and engrossing record of a remarkable individual, placed firmly within the wider historical context of his times.

Cynthia Brown

TIGERS AT DUNKIRK
Matthew Richardson

The focus of this book is the 2nd/5th Battalion of the Leicestershire Regiment during the campaign in France in 1940, which lasted less than one month and ended in the evacuation from Dunkirk. Only two other accounts of the Regiment’s part in this campaign have previously been published: the official regimental history by Brigadier W.E. Underhill, and the author’s Fighting Tigers. In his own words, the latter left ‘a lot of unanswered questions’ and ‘many individual stories of bravery and of personal sacrifice which I felt needed to be told, both on the part of the men who made it back and of those who did not’.

Leicestershire Historian 2011
Beginning with an account of how the battalion was raised, much of the book is based on these individual stories and personal memories, along with published and unpublished documentary sources, maps and photographs. Taken together, they give a real sense of how individuals experienced the campaign, as well as providing a detailed account of the action in its wider context. There is also a chapter on the Prisoners of War incarcerated in Poland for the five years following the fall of France, including extracts from the diary of Leonard Bingley recording the Russian advance in January 1945 and the German attempts to evade it through a forced march. Alongside The Tigers and Fighting Tigers, Tigers at Dunkirk completes the trilogy of works on the Leicestershire Regiment that the author began in 1998.

Cynthia Brown

**WORLD WAR ANCESTRY: RECORD OFFICE GUIDE NO. 1**

Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland
Leicestershire County Council, 2010, illus., ISBN 9780850224832, £4.50

This is the first of a new series of publications from the Record Office designed to inform readers about the variety of resources available to help them with their family history research. There are separate sections on each of the two World Wars and a wide range of possible lines of research is suggested. How to interpret the type of information which may be available at home - medals and photographs, for example - is discussed, and clear advice is provided on internet resources, including sites giving background information. There is comprehensive coverage of the documents available at the Record Office, including newspapers and other publications, photographic collections, regimental archives and hospital records. Guidance is given on service records, and civilian records, such as those relating to the Home Guard, evacuees and conscientious objectors, are also considered.

This booklet is clearly laid out and concise, with plenty of interesting and attractive illustrations. It should provide a valuable aid in planning research and preparing for a visit to the Record Office. It will be useful to beginners and more experienced researchers alike, and is likely to introduce readers to a wider variety of research material than they have hitherto considered. It will clearly be of most use to those with Leicestershire ancestry but should also give other researchers plenty of ideas. The commentary on resources, their context and the discussion of their possible usefulness and limitations is particularly valuable, and I shall look forward to seeing further publications in this series.

Gillian Lighton

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