Congratulations...
... to our editors for producing two splendid publications towards the end of 2008. Members were delighted to receive their copies of Transactions and the Leicestershire Historian at the AGM held at the Guildhall on 20th November 2008. We owe a great deal to Jill Bourne and Graham Jones for maintaining such high standards with their editorship of our annual volume of Transactions and to Joyce Lee who has produced yet another stunning edition of the Historian.

Future of the Society’s library
unsure - see back page

New Lecture Secretary

Neil Finn has worked as an archaeologist for around 20 years, first with the Milton Keynes Archaeology Unit and more recently in Leicestershire. He is currently a project officer working for the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS) and has spoken to the Society as well as writing for our publications.

His specialist field is the recording, analysis and interpretation of historic buildings, with a particular emphasis on vernacular architecture. Current research projects include studies of the ‘Mud and Frame’ building tradition of south Leicestershire and the topographical pictures of John Flower. He also directed the important excavations at Eye Kettleby which he is currently writing up for publication.

We welcome Neil on to the committee.

President Retires

The Society’s new policy of electing a President every three years means that Professor Rosemary Cramp’s term comes to an end in April 2009. She has served us well and has not missed presiding over our AGM in her three year term despite having to travel from Durham – thank you Rosemary.

Another innovation was to ask the President to give a lecture during their three year reign. Professor Cramp gave her Presidential Address, despite a snow storm trying to stop her, on 12th February entitled New directions in the study of Anglo-Saxon sculpture with special reference to the East Midlands and this will be published in a future edition of Transactions.

President Elected

At the AGM Squire Gerard de Lisle was elected President from 2009 to 2012 and we are most grateful that he should agree to take on the role having served as a vice-president for a number of years.

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Alan Everitt was a former head of department at the Centre for English Local History at the University of Leicester. He was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1989 and was made Hatton Professor Emeritus of English Local History. He was a long-standing member of this society.

Emeritus Professor Alan Everitt was born in 1926, and took his first degree in history at St Andrew’s University. He returned south for his doctorate, and was based at the Institute for Historical Research, Senate House, University of London. His study of the County Committee of Kent during the Civil Wars of the seventeenth century was awarded the John Nichols Prize by the Department of English Local History.

In June 1957 he was appointed to a research assistantship at Leicester to work specifically on the agrarian history of England. His referees for this short-term temporary appointment spoke of him in glowing terms, and expressed the hope that the university would be able to find a more permanent position for him. In 1960 he was given a fellowship in the department in the field of urban history, and in 1968 Professor Hoskins urged the university to give him an established lectureship, describing him as undoubtedly a first-class scholar. Two years later, on Hoskins’ retirement, he was appointed to the Hatton Chair of English Local History, and he held it until the university, forced to make a series of economies, implemented a policy of ‘early retirement’. Professor Everitt accepted his new status as an ‘Associate Teacher’ until 1984 when his ill-health forced him to withdraw from even this limited commitment, writing at the time that ‘It will be a great wrench to sever my links after nearly 30 years’ association with the department.’

Alan Everitt was known world-wide as a first-class scholar. Having been originally appointed to the School of English Local History it became his academic home. He followed such renowned scholars as Finberg and Hoskins and in doing so he upheld, maintained and developed the school’s reputation, attracting students from all over the world ranging from such diverse cultures as the United States and Japan. In 1980 he was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, and his standing was further recognised in 1989 by his becoming a Fellow of the British Academy. One of his early referees had described him as ‘unassuming and cooperative’, and he certainly retained the reputation for the rest of his life as being a very gentle scholar. He was very fond of Leicestershire and remained a resident of the county until his death.

An obituary appeared in The Times on 2nd February 2009.

I

In May or June 1944, at the age of 6, I was evacuated to Barkby from Bromley in Kent. With a group of other children, complete with our gas masks, goody bags and labels, we were marched to the station and onto a train and finally finished up in a hall, in or near to, Barkby. There potential foster parents came to look us over and to take us to their homes. It was a bit like a jumble sale with the best looking items going early, the soiled ones being raked over and some left for the bin.

With a couple of others, who were left for the bin, I was taken in a hearse around the village with the driver and WVS helper knocking on doors and asking whether the owners would take in an evacuee. Eventually, late at night, I was accepted to be looked after by an elderly couple who I can only recall as “Mr and Mrs B”. As far as I can remember their home was a country cottage style house close to a small bridge and with a pond or lake in the garden.

Very shortly, having no doubt disgraced myself (something to do with ducks, duck eggs and scraps with local youngsters comes to mind) I was re-housed with a family on a farm who had a couple of children older than me. Again I can remember little about the farm or the family except that it was quite a walk across the fields to the village school and that several Italian Prisoners of War were housed and worked on the farm. Whilst again I can recall very little detail about the farm or family I do recall that I enjoyed myself, made good friends with the Italians and was well looked after.

I returned to Bromley in about August or September of 1944 in time to catch up again with the V1s and V2s. I am now 71 and all of my family, who would be able to recall those days, are now dead but I am keen to learn more about that period of my life and Barkby as I would have known it at that time.

I wonder whether there is still anyone who might be able to give me information about Barkby in the Summer of 1944. I would obviously like to find the location of where I was housed, the village hall, school etc and if any pictures exist of the village at that time. If anyone does have any information and knows where I might track this down and can spare the time I would be delighted to hear from them.

John R Manley
33, Spring Cross
New Ash Green
Longfield, Kent
DA3 8QQ
01474873599 home
johnmanleylag@netscape.net
A t the AGM we were presented with two publications of exceptional quality. The cost of producing such prestigious works is greater than the sum of money we receive from members’ subscriptions, but thanks to the generosity of a former member we are able to subsidise the cost of producing Transactions, something which Jack Willett, the benefactor, would have been thrilled about.

The committee is aiming to spread the appearance of publications through the year and hoping that to publish the *Leicestershire Historian* in June/August period. This not only gives members an even distribution of Newsletters, LH and TLAHS throughout the year, but also relieves Geoff Clark-Monks of an enormous task of distributing two publications at the same time. It was made even more difficult by having to carry boxes from one’s car to the Guildhall – especially now that access to Guildhall Lane is not possible. Taking 50 or so copies of a 314-page volume of Transactions to the Guildhall alone is quite a challenge and your committee will be experimenting by moving the AGM to our usual meeting room in New Walk Museum for 2009.

Dear Editor,

**Putting Nailstone back on the map!**

I was puzzled and astonished to find that Nailstone is not included on the map of Domesday Leicestershire. Is there a conspiracy to keep us all in the dark?

Nichols (History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester, Volume 4, Part 2, pg 973) firmly identifies the village with Domesday Neulebi, surely not an observation that is in any way controversial. However, the Phillimore version of the Leicestershire Domesday (Volume 22, Leicestershire: edited by Philip Morgan, Phillimore, 1979) fails to make this identification and simply lists it as Neulebi without placing it on the map of the Guthlaxton Wapentake. Worse still, the Alecto edition published by Penguin Books in 1992 translates it as “NEULEBI” but fails to even include it in their Index of Places thus ensuring that it is consigned to terminal obscurity.

The failure to make the connection between the Domesday place-name and the real geographical location is further compounded by Ekwall in his fourth edition of *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Place-names*. The earliest reading he gives for Nailstone is Neylliston AD1209-35.

So is Nichols correct? Is Nailstone really a Domesday village? Certainly the Matriculus of AD1220 lists a rector and this suggests that there were incumbents prior to this date although no priest is actually listed for Neulebi. Is this supported by evidence in the church fabric? Well, if we are to believe Pevsner the earliest clue is the lancet windows in the north and south walls of the chancel which he attributes to AD1300. However, this attribution is not safe as the so-called lancet in the north wall of the chancel is earlier than suggested. It is a round-headed window of Norman date (certainly) and pre-Conquest date (perhaps) which has been crudely remodelled. All of these factors, a place-name record of 1209, an incumbent of 1220 and the clues in the church fabric tend to push towards the magic date of AD1086.

Has there been a conspiracy of silence? If there has then we must see that it ends right now and restore Nailstone to its rightful place on the Domesday map of Leicestershire.

Yours sincerely,

Steve Mitchell

Responses please to the Editor
Neil Finn spoke to the society in December about the work of John Flower (1793-1861) and in particular about some 200 examples of his work which are currently housed on the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland. He also drew our attention to other examples in New Walk Museum and in the county museums service. He also wrote an article for the recent edition of the Leicestershire Historian (LH 44 (2008), 40-46).

Several members made valuable contributions at the lecture which have helped Neil in his attempt to compile a comprehensive list of all of Flower’s works including the unfinished or preliminary sketches. If members are aware of any John Flower pictures on display or in private collections Neil would be delighted to hear from you.

During his searches he has also come across several examples of churches which Flower drew, but which are unprovenanced. They may not all be from Leicestershire as we know that Flower produced topographical sketches outside the county. We are including some of these in this Newsletter hoping that members might be able to help with identification. If you recognise any please contact Neil.

If you would like to contact Neil he works in the University of Leicester Archaeological Services and can be contacted by phone 0116 252 5038 or by email at: nf17@le.ac.uk [and he is our new Lecture Secretary].

Steve Mitchell wonders whether No. 4 is St Peter’s, Knossington, prior to restoration in 1882.
Following the success of the LAHS Networks History & Heritage Fair in October 2007, it was decided that we would not repeat the Fair on an annual basis, but would aim to run a ‘lesser’ event in between times to keep the many interested groups in touch, whilst maintaining a high profile for our popular Networks Project.

On Saturday 31 October 2009, the Society is planning to hold this event at the Sir John Moore Heritage Centre, Appleby Magna, and to present themes on the history of education in the county.

The Sir John Moore Heritage Centre, Appleby Magna, near Ashby-de-la-Zouch, was designed by Wren and built in 1697. It is a stunning building which now combines a museum, housing the original rural Victorian school, with a hall that can accommodate 150 people, full catering facilities, and a community gallery. There is parking available on site, and the journey there is through pleasant countryside.

The web site for more information is:  
www.sirjohnmoore.org.uk

The Sir John Moore Heritage Centre won two prizes in the recent 2008 Leicestershire & Rutland Heritage Awards – Best Special Project, and overall winner of Museum of the Year.

We are planning a keynote speaker and members of groups will be invited to give 10-minute presentations on research in their area which might include such ‘education’ topics as apprenticeships, Sunday Schools, Victorian ‘self-help’ and Mechanics Institutes, the WEA – as well, of course, as any aspect of the history of their own village school. The broad theme of the ‘history of education’ would lend itself ideally to a venue that includes an authentic Victorian school. We will also have the opportunity of looking around the Victorian School Museum and one could also explore the village for which there is a trail.

It is expected that those attending the day would pay around £15 per head to include morning coffee and biscuits, finger buffet lunch with non-alcoholic drinks, and afternoon tea and cake. The other costs for the day will be sponsored by the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society.

All local societies in the Networks Project will be invited to send members and this includes the LAHS. So you are welcome, please book the date.
News from around the country ...

Heritage Bill, dead or delayed?
Joint Ministerial Statement

As widely expected, the Heritage Bill did not make it into the Queen’s Speech on 3 December. A joint Ministerial Statement from Andy Burnham, Secretary of State for Culture and Sport, Barbara Follett, Minister for Culture and Baroness Kay Andrews, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government confirmed that the Queen’s Speech reflected the Government’s ‘immediate priorities in these difficult times’. The Heritage Protection Bill was dropped with five other Bills.

‘Many people, of course’, the Ministers continued ‘will be disappointed that the Heritage Protection Bill has had to be put on hold… but have no doubt the Government is 100 per cent committed to preserving and protecting our precious historic environment’. The Ministers promised to take work forward on a range of fronts, specifically the development of a new Planning Policy Statement – a draft will be out for consultation by Easter; a clear statement of the Government’s vision and priorities for the historic environment; consultation on the English Heritage Strategic Designation Programme; and the continuation of the EH programme of training and capacity building for local historic environment staff. The statement can be found on the DCMS website at http://www.culture.gov.uk/what_we_do/historic_environment/5644.aspx

From the Society of Antiquaries on-line newsletter:

Professor Peter Wiseman who gave the W. Alan North Memorial in 2007 has published an ambitious and intriguing book called Unwritten Rome (University of Exeter Press) that starts from the proposition that what we think we know about early Rome comes largely from anachronistic accounts written centuries later – albeit containing traditions and stories that contain some essence of the past. The author seeks to retrieve the true story of early Roman society, from the Bronze Age to the conquest of Italy around 300 BC, as much from the artefactual record as from the later literature of Livy and Ovid, and seeks the origins of later Roman literature and customs in the sixth century when the Romans first encountered the Greeks in southern Italy. ‘Wiseman rethinks the history of Rome and Roman literature’ says one reviewer.

The Winchester Excavations Committee has just launched its ‘Winchester Studies’ website, to help promote existing volumes and to bring news of progress on the project, which intends to bring out eleven volumes in seventeen parts, of which six volumes in eight parts have already been published to universal acclaim. The half-way mark will be crossed when the next volume appears. This will be The Anglo-Saxon Minsters of Winchester by Birthe Kjølbye-Biddle and Martin Biddle.

Also online and accessible through the Archaeology Data Service is the archive of the London Archaeologist, consisting of all the articles that have appeared in the periodical between 1968 and 2005 (volumes 1 to 10). Published by the London Archaeologist Association since 1968, the periodical covers every significant archaeological discovery in England’s capital, including excavation reports, finds studies, environmental reports, exhibition and book reviews, news and commentary. More recent volumes can be obtained from the London Archaeologist website.

Members are reminded that they can access past volumes of Transactions via our web site

The Council for British Archaeology (CBA) is looking for responses to their new website: what do you think of the design, content and new features? What further new facilities or pages would you like to see? Are there any links to other resources we should include? You can provide feedback by filling in a short online questionnaire or by sending an email to Dan Hull, the CBA’s Head of Information & Communications: http://www.britarch.ac.uk/

The British Museum celebrates 250 years

The British Museum has just celebrated the 250th anniversary of the day — 15 January 1759 — that the museum first opened its doors to the public. To mark the occasion, director Neil MacGregor gave a lecture setting out the role of the museum in today’s world. Its job, he said, was ‘to slow down conclusions, to complicate the questions, to make the hasty judgment harder’. The BM can only play a very limited role in formulating ways of dealing with current politics, he said, but ‘it does allow people to look at issues with the understanding that they are part of long historical processes’.

Please let the Secretary know your email address if you are not already on his circulation list
With reference to the current situation in Gaza, he pointed to objects in the museum that help explain to non-Jews what the world looks like from a Jewish perspective, suffering from centuries of hostility from their neighbours: ‘In the current Babylon exhibition we are showing the cuneiform tablet that documents the Assyrian assault on Jerusalem [in 597 BC], the destruction of the first temple and the carrying away of the population … And in the recent Hadrian exhibition, we exhibited the oldest known inscription, dating from AD 139, in which the Romans wiped Judaea off the map, literally [renaming the province Syria-Palestina]. Both those seem to me to be historical events that need to be borne in mind in relation to what’s happening now.’

But he also pointed to evidence that the situation was not beyond resolution: ‘we are also showing the Cyrus cylinder [of c 539 BC], which provides evidence of a successful attempt to put right that Assyrian violation of Jerusalem, leading to the rebuilding of the temple and what appears to have been a stable solution and a very happy co-existence [between Jews and non-Jews]. So there is also evidence that problems of this magnitude can be solved.’

The museum itself began as a collection of 71,000 objects that Sir Hans Sloane acquired with the fortune he made as the inventor of drinking chocolate. His library and cabinet of curiosities were left to the nation on condition that his daughters were provided with dowries.

Stop flattening gravestones, Heritage Ministers says

So belatedly as almost to be too late, the Ministry of Justice has issued guidance to owners or operator of burial grounds calling a halt to the pernicious health and safety practice of ‘topple testing’ headstones and flattening those that are deemed to be at risk of collapse. The practice has caused great damage to historic tombstones in numerous graveyards, churchyards and cemeteries, and the new guidance says that moving or flattening headstones should now be seen as a last resort where there is a demonstrable, rather than theoretical, risk to the public. Not that the motive in issuing the guidance is concern for the historic environment: in announcing the new guidance, Justice Minister Bridget Prentice said that the intention was to protect ‘bereaved families [who] can feel distressed if a memorial stone for a loved one is laid down, propped up, or otherwise marked for repair, without them being made aware … this guidance should help them strike the right balance and crucially give peace of mind to those wanting to visit their loved ones’ gravestones’.

The new guidance can be downloaded from the Ministry of Justice’s website.

Chemical warfare in ancient Persia

Dr Simon James, Reader in the University of Leicester’s School of Archaeology and Ancient History, has uncovered evidence of ancient chemical warfare in Syria. At the recent meeting of the Archaeological Institute of America, Simon presented evidence that some twenty Roman soldiers, found in a siege-mine at the city of Dura-Europos, met their deaths as a result of inhaling clouds of choking gas.

During the siege of AD 256, the Roman city of Dura-Europos was besieged by Sasanian Persians, who excavated tunnels in order to undermine the city walls. Excavations during the 1920s and 1930s, renewed in recent years, found evidence that the Roman defenders responded with ‘counter-mines’ to thwart the attackers. The remains of some twenty Roman soldiers were found in the 1930s piled up in one of the galleries, disposed in such a way as to lead Simon to conclude that, when mine and countermine met, the Romans lost the ensuing struggle and the corpses of the victims were piled up to create a wall of bodies and shields, keeping Roman counterattack at bay.

‘But for the Persians to kill twenty men in a space less than 2m high or wide and about 11m long, required superhuman combat powers — or something more insidious’, Simon told the conference. He then revealed that bitumen and sulphur crystals had been found in the tunnels, and that their combined use to generate choking smoke in siege-mines is mentioned in Classical texts. ‘I think the Sasanians placed braziers and bellows in their gallery, and when the Romans broke through, added the chemicals and pumped choking clouds into the Roman tunnel’, Simon said, adding that: ‘The archaeological evidence at Dura shows that the Sasanian Persians were as knowledgeable in siege warfare as the Romans; they surely knew of this grim tactic.’
Excursion to Whitehall Roman Villa
on Sunday 12th July 2009

Whitehall Farm lies on the A5 trunk road and the nearest village is Nether Heyford to the East. The villa site itself stands on a hillside with a beautiful panoramic view eastwards over the upper valley of the River Nene.

The site was found in 1996 by metal detectorists - fieldwalking, geophysical surveys and preliminary excavations followed soon afterwards. The site has been the subject of a major annual excavation each year since 2000. The first three of these digs were training excavations providing archaeology students with structured field work experience to help them to qualify. Students from many UK universities attended; others travelled from the USA, Canada, Japan and Australia to take part.

The main archaeological site includes (in roughly historical order) two roundhouses, a proto-villa, a late Romano-British villa, a bath house (and probably a second bath house), all, except the proto-villa, within a ditch and bank enclosure of about 2 hectares. This site was continuously occupied for at least 500 years. Elsewhere on the farm a 7th century Saxon cemetery was excavated.

The villa and bath house were built and re-built during the early 3rd to late 4th centuries AD. The villa was a typical, medium sized, two-storey corridor villa with a large wing at the western end – there was almost certainly an east wing too. Most of the foundations of the main villa range have been robbed out. Two roundhouses stood at each end of the villa – that is, the villa was built between them. The northern round house has been completely robbed out, and some of its stones were probably re-used in the bath house.

The bath house still has standing walls up to eight courses high, and is a very impressive sight with its stoke house and hypocaust still clearly visible. It was re-modelled several times (possibly becoming a dwelling at a late stage) and poses many puzzles. Why is it so large? Why are the stones at the bottom end so massive? How was the water supply managed? We do know quite a lot about the way it was drained and cleansed by water from a spring.

One room of the bath house had a “sealed context” – an area of continuously wet soil containing a huge number of environmental finds preserved by the water including seeds, pollen and over 5,000 wild animal bones. Also found were brooches, rings, many pot sherds and fragments of 20 to 30 glass vessels (mainly from the Rhineland), including pieces of a 4th century conical beaker engraved with the figure of a gladiator - a very rare find! There were also hundreds of pieces of late 3rd to early 4th century wood – Whitehall is one of only a handful of sites in the UK to have a collection of Roman wood.

During the 2004 excavation another Romano-British building to the east of the villa, further down the hill. It had a hypocaust and a range of rooms, but it is still not clear what function it served.

Up to and including 2006, the site was run as an “open area excavation”: it was been covered over with straw bales and plastic sheeting each winter, and the whole of it's area was been completely weeded and cleaned each year to allow new developments to be seen in the context of the site as a whole. (The exception is the proto-villa area in a field adjacent to the main site -

Directions

Look for our directional signs to Whitehall Farm from the A5 or the A45 which is to the east of Nether Heyford, the nearest village. If you approach from the A5 take the Narrow Boat Pub turning. Those coming from Junction 16 of the M1 should take the A45 and follow the signs through the village.
Meet at 2.30pm at Whitehall Farm within 2 miles of junction 16 of the M1 – NGR SP 649587

this was closed at the end of the 2002). In 2006, the villa range was not weeded and cleaned; but the bath house was, so that a “virtual walkthrough” could be photographed.

In 2007 there was only a small-scale dig at Whitehall, and this was not concerned with the villa or bath house. After the 2007 season, the villa range area was returned to pasture, but the floor plan of the villa itself has been picked out using grass seed of a different colour and texture.

The Whitehall Farm Roman Villa and Landscape Project is run by Nick Adams, the farmer who owns the site, and the Director of Archaeology is Stephen Young, a Senior Lecturer at the University of Northampton.

Please note that the site at Whitehall Farm is not visible from the road and can be reached only by crossing private farmland: it is not open to the public. But site visits can be made by special arrangement during the digging season.

Visit the excavation web site at: http://www.whitehallvilla.co.uk/

Members who wish to visit this site are asked to assemble at 2.30pm at Whitehall Farm which is grid reference SP 649587

The site is within 2 miles of junction 16 on the M1

We would like to make a donation to the work and so will be asking for a donation of £2 per person.
A ULAS project in Hinckley

Atkins Hosiery Factory, Hinckley

A survey of the Grade II listed Atkins hosiery factory on Lower Bond Street, Hinckley, designed by Goddard and Paget, in advance of conversion to offices and recreational spaces was undertaken by Andy Hyam and Neil Finn. Until recently this building formed part of an extensive hosiery manufacturing complex owned by Atkins Brothers, although later demolition has now left the original core building isolated within an open area. Three principle phases were identified in the development of the building starting in the 1870s with a two storey structure with basement. A later addition added an extra storey by dismantling and reassembling the roof after adding another floor. In 1910, the main frontage range was extended along Lower Bond Street with new lift shafts and stair wells added. A range of later additions, including a whole new block, added in 1972, have all altered the appearance of the building to a greater or lesser extent. Internally there is little evidence of its former use although a number of bearing boxes and some woodwork survives to show where the overhead drive-shafts were fitted. Small details such as plaster beading, original office fittings and distinctive lift call buttons will hopefully be incorporated into the redeveloped building.
Following the general closure of the Guildhall during December and January the Library reopened on 1 February just in time for the snow showers that did not help the temperature in the Jury Room. Details of the Library, and Society publications, are on the Programme Card.

Books and pamphlets added to stock
BROOKES, L. comp. Holy Trinity church, Barrow upon Soar: a brief history and guide. 1999
EVANS, A. & GOUGH, J. eds. The impact of the railway on society in Britain: essays in honour of Jack Simmons. 2003
JONES, E. The Oakham parish field walking survey — archaeology on the ploughland of Rutland. 2007
Lubenham heritage trail. 2008
S.H.S. George Farnham, historian of Leicestershire. 1928
STRACHAN, A. comp Atlas of Leicestershire. 2 ed. 1986
WHEELER, R. ed. Maps of the Witham fens from the 13th to the 19th century. (Lincoln Record Society vol. 96) 2008
ZIENTEK, J. The restoration of God’s church in Humberstone: an address given in June 2008 to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the restoration of the parish church of St. Mary, Humberstone. 2008. We are grateful to the author, local historian and member of the Society, for the kind donation of this pamphlet.

Periodicals:
The regular range of titles has been received, so on this occasion I shall highlight a few items rather than list all the names.
Antiquaries Journal vol. 88 2008 includes ‘The Lichfield angel: a spectacular Anglo-Saxon painted sculpture’ (of interest to those who know the Breedon angel), ‘The secret history of the Mildenhall treasure’ (in the British Museum), ‘The date and politics of ‘The Song of the Welsh” (surprisingly has Leicester references), ‘Thomas Telford the archaeologist’ (yes, it is THE Thomas Telford).

Publishing news:
Information on new books of local interest:
BECKETT, N.H. ed. The register of Richard Fleming, Bishop of Lincoln, 1420-1431, ii Canterbury & York Society, £25, Jan. 2009 9780907239710 224p. This comprises a calendar of the institutions of clergy to benefices in the archdeaconries of Leicester(etc.) Vol.i was published in 1984 Vol. ii has been offered to LAHS members at a special discount of 25% by Boydell & Brewer, PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk, IP12 3DF 01394-610600 Contact Amanda Davidson, Publicity & Marketing adavidson@boydell.co.uk
BRANDWOOD, G. and JEPHCOTE, J. London Heritage Pubs CAMRA, 2008. Available at a discounted offer to Ancient Monuments Society members (LAHS is a member) £12.99 plus £1.50 postage and packing (£14.49). Send a cheque for that amount made out to ‘G.K.Brandwood’ to 2 Rothesay Avenue, Richmond on Thames, TW10 5EA. £2.50 will be donated to AMS funds for every copy sold under this offer. Please mark your covering note ‘AMS offer’. Each copy will be signed by the authors unless you say otherwise. Geoff Brandwood is, of course, a published author of LAHS.

Back editions of our Transactions are available online on our web site at www.le.ac.uk/lahs/
If you find any pages missing our web manager, Richard Buckley, should be informed (rjb16@le.ac.uk)
Visit to the Piddington Excavation site on Sunday 17 August 2008, following the W Alan North Memorial Lecture on 13 March by Roy Friendship Taylor

After overnight rain, Sunday dawned clear, warm and sunny. Nigel again checked the route and, with the aid of his 2008 Good Beer Guide, located a recommended hostelry, which was ‘Pub of the Year’ for Buckinghamshire, being just over the border.

I was rather apprehensive about the turnout, as the lecture had been five months ago, it was holiday time and a Sunday, but the drive along a medieval ridge road, passing uplands and downlands, sheep, grazing cattle and farmlands, mostly harvested, made a pleasant journey to Stoke Goldington village. The Lamb served tender beef to Nigel and lamb for me, with two succulent Yorkshire puddings each, with vegetables and all the trimmings. Nigel enjoyed Nethergate IPA and I drank half a pint of Old Growler.

We assembled outside the church at Piddington, where a row of cars and smiling faces showed that the good members of the LAHS had not forgotten the date in their diaries! Indeed, most were booted and ready for mud at the site. But, where was Roy? Dear Alan went on a walk-about and on his return we moved to the museum in the village. Built of Victorian brick, it carried a proud inscription incised over the door, ‘The Piddington Roman Villa Museum, Upper Nene Archaeological Society’.

Inside, a ‘Roman’ guide welcomed us with a verbal description of the museum, the finds and site. The artefacts are varied and interesting, well labelled and arranged. They include pottery from the Iron Age, locally imported. The site had been inhabited from approximately the third century BC until the seventh century AD, proven by the finds discovered.

The reason for this extensive habitation would be for industrial uses, excellent water supplies, safety reasons and accessibility. Many finds had been found in a massive well – still being excavated. Roy is of the opinion that the water was needed not only for baths and cleanliness, but to water an excavated courtyard, with fountains providing running water to maintain flower beds, nuts, cherries and the usual Roman produce, including herbs.

One side of the museum was lined with tiles to show underfloor space for heating, whilst opposite, roof tiles showed how the villa and its occupants were kept dry. From about AD 100, until after AD 410, this villa would have been a hub of domesticity. The owners had organised staff to service the baths, cook, clean, work the land and manufacture. Then, the visitors would come in through the discovered outer gate to the courtyard by horse – soldiers and merchants – to exchange news from Rome and from outposts, such as Hadrian’s Wall.

Gazing at us in the museum was a golden haired young lady, aged about 20 (not Angle, but Angel, ‘as not of dark Mediterranean peoples’) Roy told us that the excavated skull was reconstructed and a TV feature.

Then, there was a profusion of metal clasps and pins, including a unique find of a Roman clasp penknife, about 1½ inches, showing a metal gladiator with a previously unknown frill around the collar. Another find showed a long hand of friendship, which has been adapted as the mascot of the Nene Valley Dig.

After questions and answers, it was time to go, so we walked through the sleeping hilltop village, down the rugged track, across harvested grain fields to the nearside part of the villa. The entrance corridor is found here, where thousands of pieces of wall plaster are known to have been looted, only a few remaining to show unusual Roman decoration in ochre, red, blue and cream. There is a huge well, originally lined with wood, then stone cut from the earth. Right down by the ditch, there are places – now precipitous to negotiate – to cross to the main part of the villa, where teams of busy people, both mature and young, were on their knees with trowels and brushes, carefully scraping and seeking the unknown story of our history.

Roy and his team had a well organised base camp, with tents loaned by the Army, proper toilet facilities. To keep the workers fit, the cooks provided daily hot dinners with puddings and lashings of tea and biscuits. We much appreciated the tea and biscuits kindly given to us.

Thank you, Roy and your team.

Joan F M North
Vice President
How much do you know about the history of Leicester’s French twin city of Strasbourg?

Caroline Wessel visited it last summer and unearthed some fascinating facts about this historic and beautiful location. Situated in Alsace, 502 kms from Paris, and with a population of around 451,240 inhabitants, it is the seventh largest city in France, has around 80 churches and 200 bridges. Until the nineteenth century, Strasbourg’s cathedral, at 142 metres high, was the tallest Christian monument.

It is home to the European Council (created 1949), the European court of Human Rights (created 1959), and last year it celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its European Parliament.

So what of Strasbourg’s long and turbulent history? A Roman military camp in 12BC, it was returned to Francia in 496AD, and has since then changed hands between nations numerous times. In 1648 the province of Alsace became part of the Crown of France, though not the towns of Strasbourg and Mulhouse. But in 1681, as an indirect consequence of the Holy Roman Empire’s defeat in the Thirty Years War, Strasbourg itself became French under the rule of Louis XIV.

Following the Prussian siege of 1870, Alsace was annexed by the German Empire and Strasbourg became the capital of ‘Reichsland’. In 1918 the city, liberated by French troops, changed hands once more to again become part of France. However 1940 saw German soldiers entering an evacuated Strasbourg, which was subsequently annexed by the German Reich for a second time.

And finally on November 23rd 1944 General Leclerc liberated the war-torn city which rejoiced in its return to France. And – after nearly two thousand years of nationality changes – it has remained French ever since. And through many centuries of political turmoil, the Strasbourgeois people have remained justly proud of their enduring Alsacian identity, and the city continues to promote the cuisine, customs and culture of Alsace.

Amongst its famous sons the city can boast the writer and poet Goethe, who studied law at its University in 1770/1; Kleber, a prominent general in the French Revolution, born and buried in Strasbourg; and Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965), humanist, theologian, missionary, doctor and musician, who was a medical student and Pastor at Strasbourg.

Leicester is justly proud of its twinned status with Strasbourg, but do you know with which other towns it must share this honour? For Strasbourg is also twinned with Stuttgart, Dresden, Boston (USA) and Ramatgan. There are rich rewards awaiting all those who decide to visit this remarkable city, where they will surely enjoy its fine architecture, its picturesque canal district, an organ recital perhaps in its lofty Cathedral, and – of course its wine and cooking par excellence.
Due to the continued success of the ever-expanding and popular National Archaeology Week, from 2009 the event will be extended to a fortnight-long festival of archaeologically inspired events. It will retain the general format of National Archaeology Week but with even more opportunity to participate in a wide range of archaeology related activities and events across the UK. The Festival is a celebration of both British Archaeology and of the presentation of archaeology from around the world in Britain.

In previous years there has been a Leicestershire Archaeology Week organised to coincide with National Archaeology Week and this year events are being planned to cover the two weeks. Members who are on our email list will be kept in touch with developments when they happen. If any member wishes to organise an event or activity which could be included in the Festival do please write to Alan McWhirr.

So far we have two contributions for our Members’ evening. Steve Mitchell will speak on the Lost Roman Canal. This is the result of several years field work which Steve has previously entered for the Miss Linford Award. This was in two parts, one in 1992 and again in 1997. Both were voted highly commended. The illustrated talk is a rapid tour along the line of the canal sized aqueduct stretching from the Holiday Inn to the granite outcrops at Stoney Stanton. A popular reaction to the title of this talk is ‘How can you lose a canal...?’ The answer it seems is quite easily.

Alan Betteridge has been studing Meeting-House licences in Leics and Rutland between 1689-1852. He writes, ‘Under the Toleration Act of 1689 over 1,500 licenses were applied for for Protestant Dissenting places of worship up to the change in the September 1852. Almost every village, including small hamlets are represented. From 1749 many of the original applications survive, giving more details of buildings and people involved; several houses so licensed can still be seen today. The peak years were 1818 and 1819, for which there are good reasons.’

As part of the Alice Hawkins Heritage Project, The LeicestHERday Trust is looking for 150 women who would like to share their personal stories. Every woman has a story to tell, and we would love to hear about YOUR experiences, achievements, challenges and triumphs as a woman living in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland over the last 100 years. We also want to hear about your ancestors - do you have an interesting family heritage that has shaped the person you are today? If so, our young people would love to hear about it!

The stories you share with us will all be recorded by young volunteers and made into a lasting record that will celebrate Leicester's history and provide young people with a unique and fascinating insight into the lives of women living their local communities.

Stories will be interpreted through a variety of media including oral history (voice recordings), video, photography, drama, dance and radio/press. The majority of interviews will be oral history based. The aim is to give the volunteers the opportunity to experiment with and learn through a variety of different mediums and learn new techniques and skills.

We would love for you to share YOUR story with the project and our volunteers. If you would like further details or wish to register an interest please contact lara@leicestherday.org.uk, or via post to: The LeicestHERday Trust, Charnwood Court, 5b New Walk, Leicester, LE1 6TE. Plara can be contacted on 0116 2575615.
Some recent publications

100 years of the Workers’ Educational Association in Leicester
A group of WEA students spent the past year in a class called Hands on History researching the development of the WEA in Leicester since it was founded in 1908. The class was tutored by Cynthia Brown a member of our Society and the Chairman of the WEA Leicester Branch is John Swinfield-Wells also a member of our Society. The Society made a grant from its Research Fund towards the costs incurred in researching the work. The result of this work is Still Learning: 100 Years of the Workers’ Educational Association in Leicester. Copies are available for £3.00 + 70p postage from WEA, Vaughan College, St Nicholas Circle, Leicester LE1 4LB, tel 0116 251 9740, email amiles@wea.org.uk.

Tilton & District History Society publishes its Journal
The latest Journal from the Tilton group is no. 4 for 2008 and includes several interesting articles. The article on the pottery which was produced for a short time at Lowesby will be of particular interest as it includes colour pictures of some of the products from Lowesby. Other articles include Lowesby Village and Hall, Trading Livestock in the 1930s, Population of the Tilton area 1086-2008 and a brief note on Sauvey Castle. It is on sale from a limited number of bookshops including Clarendon Books for £4.75.

Disappearing Leicestershire – people, dialect and customs
Our Vice-President, Duncan Lucas, has been busy again putting pen to paper and produced a short 40-page booklet on sayings and songs and other reminiscences. This follows on from Duncan’s Leicestershire Ditties and both are a valuable reminder of some local customs. One is certainly reminded of Duncan as one reads through the booklet!!

A History of Sacred Heart Parish, Leicester, 1883-2008
Titled Faith Built on Love this 44-page booklet traces the history of the parish of the Sacred Heart and its church built in the Victorian suburbs of a rapidly expanding Leicester. Much of ecclesiastical history of the nineteenth century revolves around the Church of England so it good to see an account of a Catholic church built at a time when several Anglican churches were being erected in this part of Leicester. A permanent church was not built until 1924.
The future of the Society’s library

At its meeting in the Guildhall on 21st January 2009, the Committee gave further consideration to the future of the Society’s library. This is a matter that has been discussed at various times over the last few years. Its situation has now become really critical and the Committee felt that members should be made aware again of the position.

The Hon. Librarian made the following points to the meeting:

The major problem is lack of space for the Library’s stock. (NOTE: this does not refer to the lack of storage space for the Society’s publications which is another problem that we have been dealing with for some years now). Every bookcase in the Jury Room is full and some are overfull with stock ‘double-banked’ and items laid on top of others. This is bad for the books and also makes browsing and retrieval of items difficult. Use is therefore discouraged. Also much recent material, particularly Leicestershire items, cannot be added to the cases and is still stored in boxes in the attic. Retrieval is not just difficult, but impossible.

Use of the Library is minimal and has been for many years. A subsequent check of the Library Register reveals that 79 volumes have been borrowed by 8 different members over the last 6 years. There are a number of contributory factors:

- Access to the city centre is now much more difficult and expensive
- The Guildhall is generally closed in December and January
- Stairs to the Jury Room are worn and can be slippery
- Lighting in the Jury Room is poor generally and replacement of bulbs is very spasmodic
- Heating is poor and is not conducive to any sort of lengthy stay (as the Librarian knows only too well as numbness creeps over him).
- Dust everywhere (only to be expected in a building of the Guildhall’s age)

The Society’s Library was started at a time when local access to the sort of material it has collected did not exist. Now there is a great range of other libraries and resources available to researchers, e.g. Record Office, public, academic and educational libraries and other specialist collections.

Another problem is that the Jury Room is no longer the sole preserve, as it once was, of the Society. The Room and the Society’s furniture(!) is frequently used for meetings under the auspices of the City Council. Access can be further restricted and it is not possible to leave any library material of any worth on open access in there.

The Hon. Secretary and the Hon. Librarian, or, indeed, any member of the Committee, would be pleased to hear the views, preferably in writing, of any member of the Society.

Can any member suggest a possible location for our library which would be more accessible and which could be opened for more hours?

Do you have your copy of these two publications?

Members are entitled to a free copy of Leicester Abbey and they can also purchase a copy of the history of the society for only £12.

See our web site for an order form or contact the Honorary Secretary.

www.le.ac.uk/lahs

Please pay your subscription by standing order and gift aid it

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