The ‘Leicestershire Historian’, which is published each spring and autumn, is the magazine of the Leicestershire Local History Council, and is distributed free to members. The Council exists to bring local history to the doorstep of all interested people in Leicester and Leicestershire, to act as a co-ordinating body between the various existing Societies and to promote the advancement of local history studies. It arranges talks and discussions, encourages the pursuit of active research and project work, supports local history exhibitions and has a programme of events for its members. If you would like to become a member please contact the Secretary, whose name and address appears on the inside back cover.
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With this issue opens the second volume of the 'Leicestershire Historian'. Some changes in presentation have been made to distinguish it from Vol. 1 but the magazine will continue to record the results of individual or group research into the Leicestershire of earlier centuries with personal reminiscences of the last 70 or 80 years. As our essay competition has shown, the memories of older people are a reservoir of fascinating stories and insights. Contributions of any length up to 2500 words are welcomed, with line-drawings and maps where appropriate — the more received, the greater the chance of representing fairly the different parts of the county and the many possible topics. Articles for consideration for Vol. 2 No. 2 should reach the Editors not later than 30th June 1971.

We are sorry that it has been necessary to raise the price of the magazine but as readers of other papers and journals will appreciate, labour and materials costs have climbed steeply in the last year or so. The price of recent issues has been held down only with difficulty and we are now forced to increase it to maintain the present size and quality. The new type-face allows us to compress the text into fewer pages and we hope readers will find the result convenient and pleasing.

THE RAILWAY STATIONS OF LEICESTERSHIRE

Philip A Stevens

The closure and demolition of country railway stations in the last few years has robbed our landscape of a number of attractive buildings — as well as many cheap and nasty ones. Yet many still survive, often with a question mark over their future, and it is the purpose of this essay to comment briefly on some of those in Leicestershire which will repay study.

No station built by our earliest public railway, the Leicester & Swannington (opened 1832) survives; indeed, only one building erected by that company stands today — the house for the contractor in charge of Bagworth Incline, though the former Stag and Castle Inn at Thornton and the Railway Hotel at Coalville are inns which were used by the L. & S. R. as stations.

The Incline House is worthy of inclusion here, for it closely resembles the station house built by the company at Glenfield, and demolished only recently. Railways offering a public transport service were still in their infancy, and had not yet developed their own distinctive operational and structural forms, tending to borrow and adapt from existing systems, i.e. canals and turnpike roads. Thus, Glenfield
station was modelled on the typical turnpike gate-house, with windows looking both up and down the line, and this feature can still be seen in the Bagworth building.

The earliest surviving stations in Leicestershire are those on the Syston and Peterborough branch of the Midland Railway, a line which was authorised by Act of Parliament in 1845, the first section, to Melton Mowbray, being opened in 1846 and the second thence to the county boundary in 1848. The stations along this line have always been well known among students of railway architecture for their charm and, above all, variety. Of the stations in Leicestershire, no two are alike, although Rearsby and the now demolished Asfordby were mirror images. Two architects worked on the branch: William Parsons, the Leicestershire county surveyor, and Sancton Wood, well known for his railway buildings in East Anglia. Due to somewhat violent railway politics, the central part of the line, between Melton Mowbray and Stamford, opened two years later than the rest, and it is probable that Parsons withdrew about 1847, leaving the rest of the work to Wood. Rearsby and Asfordby were a pleasant pair of buildings, with the steeply pitched gables, decorated barge boards, and tall chimneys derived from the Victoriabethan manner. The Contractors, Messrs Norman and Gimson, undertook to build them for £744 8s 6d each. Between them comes the astonishing station at Brooksby. There were two surprising features about it: its style and its size. The former was a version of revived Queen Anne, to become popular from the 1870s, but rare at this early date. In size, the station seems far too big for such a tiny hamlet as Brooksby — though, of course, it also served Hoby to the north. No reason is apparent for this: it does not seem likely that the owners of Brooksby Hall insisted on a station of dimensions suitable to their dignity, as they were minors at the time. Particularly odd was the exceptional size of the stationmaster's house — in fact, the Committee supervising construction became concerned by this, and ordered that the house should be divided to accommodate a porter as well as the stationmaster, and that some of the windows should be blocked up to reduce tax (nevertheless, the station contract was let to Messrs T W & H Herbert for no less than £1,921 — more than Rearsby and Asfordby put together). Even with the economies, the house was one of great dignity, whose destruction in recent times is regrettable. The comparative opulence of Brooksby is inexplicable; no less so is the seedy poverty of Frisby-on-the-Wreake and — of all places — Melton Mowbray. Frisby station was not even put out to tender; it must have been regarded as a 'gate-house' only, and let with the other level-crossing houses. Melton Mowbray was undertaken by Herbert's, for £3,021. This high figure was not commensurate with its aesthetic qualities, for it has none. Later in the century, the Midland tried to tone it up by adding a porte-cochère. Perhaps the increase in the station's importance following the development of the Kettering-Nottingham relief main line, which put Melton on a through route between London and the north, coupled with jealousy of the
far superior Melton North station opened in 1879 by two of the Midland’s rivals, led the latter company to take this step; but it was a failure, for the addition was of no merit, and the station remains mean and depressing — a pity, since it is the only Leicestershire station on this branch still open. At Saxby, the first station was replaced by another in the 1890s, when a deviation line was built to take out the famous ‘Lord Harborough’s curve’, but it is still to be seen, fronting what became a siding after the deviation opened.

The Syston & Peterborough was built during a period of rapid expansion of the Midland Railway. In the west of the county, this movement led to the incorporation into the Midland’s system of the Swannington, which, at its western end, was extended to Burton-on-Trent. Opened in 1849, this line passed through Ashby-de-la Zouch, where one of our county’s most impressive stations was built. The line passed through what was then a most beautiful part of Ashby, centred on the lovely Ivanhoe Baths of 1822. In order to ‘Keep in keeping’, the railway company were induced or compelled to give their station a classical Greek appearance. The result was tremendous: though small, the station has superb ‘presence’, dominating the Tamworth road with well-bred ease. Although the famous Francis Thompson, who built a series of beautiful stations in the North Midlands, has been mentioned in connection with it, the building is usually accepted as the work of Robert Chaplin, a highly gifted architect of Ashby who was responsible for the design of the Ivanhoe Baths, and the creator of such an outstanding building as the latter (now demolished) may well be credited with this gem of a station.

So far, the Midland Railway has dominated our survey. Henceforth, however, though the Midland continued to lord it over much of Leicestershire, other companies infiltrated, and several of our most interesting stations were produced by these aliens, often working together as joint concerns. In west Leicestershire, the Midland and the London & North Western Railways together built the Ashby and Nuneaton Joint Railway, and erected a series of stations which combined elegance and charm in a way not common in the 1870s (the line opened in 1873). These are based on English domestic architecture of about 1700, with overhanging hipped roofs supported by heavy cornice mouldings. The quality of their materials — mellow red brick, ashlar surrounds to windows and doors, delicate cast-iron pillars and awnings — is noteworthy, as is the workmanship. Although designed to a standard, in three grades (estimated to cost £1,300, £780 and £350 respectively), there were detail differences. Snarestone, for instance, was given round-headed windows picked out in coloured bricks, a feature beloved of the Midland Railways, and the station had, indeed, twins among purely Midland buildings.

At about the same time, the L.N.W.R. was entering into partnership with the Great Northern for a joint line on the other side of the county to give it still further access
Ashby-de-la-Zouch Station

Market Harborough Station
to the Midlands coalfields. From an architectural point of view, the line was not nearly so interesting as the A. & N.J., and the stations were a dull lot, with one notable exception. This was Melton Mowbray North, where a not particularly outstanding design was lifted out of the common rut by a wealth of Renaissance decoration in terra cotta, and by the superb quality of the materials which went to the making of it. Its finest feature was a moulded brick plaque of the arms of the Joint Committee which controlled the line, being the arms of the Great Northern (shields of the royal arms of England and of Scotland side by side) surmounted by those of the L.N.W.R. (Britannia); this was happily preserved when the station was demolished in 1970. The architect is unfortunately unknown, as is the cost of the building, which was one of a number of stations on the line let as one contract to Messrs J. Wood of Leeds, who undertook their building for £40,172. It opened, with the northern section of the line, for goods on 30 June, and for passengers on 1 September 1879, at which time its staff seems to have been 5 men and a horse, although the former were soon increased to 11.

In the south of Leicestershire, modifications to the north of Market Harborough, where the Midland’s route to London ran for a short distance over L.N.W.R. metals, led to the ending of this unsatisfactory situation and the rebuilding of the joint station, in 1885, in that town. The new station was an extremely attractive building in the revived Queen Anne manner associated with Norman Shaw. It is perhaps the most pleasing of all Leicestershire stations, blending happily with its country town surroundings; and it is to be hoped that this and Ashby stations at least will be preserved.

New stations were built, the old ones rebuilt, after this; but they lack the attraction of many of the earlier ones. The passing of the former Great Central main line in recent years has not robbed us of any architectural treasures. Just as the M.R., in its extension to Hitchin in the 1850s, had evolved a standard pattern of wayside station, so did the G.C.R. in the 1890s; but the Midland’s had a charm wholly lacking in those of the Central – compare Kibworth (M.R.) with Ashby Magna (G.C.R.). With a few exceptions, railway building at this time tended to be either mechanical or tawdry – a noteworthy example of the latter being the replacement in 1892 of the Midland’s gracious classical station in Campbell Street, Leicester, by the sprawling structure on London Road, whose encrustation of thin decorative motifs stands in marked contrast to the bold relief of the Midland’s coat of arms on the bridge opposite.

I am indebted to the Curator of Historical Records, British Railways Board, for access to documents in his care; and to the City Librarian, Leicester City Libraries, for permission to work on files of the ‘Leicester Journal’ and ‘Leicester Chronicle.’
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY NEWSPAPERS AS A SOURCE OF LOCAL HISTORY
D Hopkinson

'Though Leicester has in some obscurity lay,
Behold a dawn appears of brighter day;
The wish'd event at last has taken place
And now a smile is seen on ev'ry face;
A Boat has smoothly sailed up the Soar
Its freight is Coals and cold is felt no more.'

This verse from the old 'Leicester Herald' may make us smile too, but it captures perfectly the swell of optimism with which the land-locked town greeted the first barges on the new canal from Loughborough (Nov. 1 1794). A contemporary view of the social order is likewise neatly illustrated in an advertisement inviting all to come and marvel at the 'Derbyshire Gigantic Youth' on show in Leicester marketplace: 'Admittance — Ladies & Gentlemen 1s — Trades People 6d — Working People 3d.' Old newspapers are not an easy source to use — the small print may tire the researcher's eyes and the lack of an index tax his patience — but they contain many valuable insights into the local past. The four-page weeklies of the late eighteenth century have two main advantages: first, the pages are fewer and smaller than in the nineteenth century, so that a topic which tends to recur in the same part of each issue can be rapidly pursued, and second, although they offer less strictly local news than became customary later, they are probably of relatively greater importance among the scantier body of sources for their period.

It is great fun simply to dart about among the columns picking out the curious and quaint. The puffs for patent medicines, for example, have a greater bravado than is possible in these days of consumer protection.

'GUN-SHOTS STABS & WOUNDS
Persons who have the Misfortune to meet with any of the above Accidents may obtain an expeditious and certain Cure by the immediate application of DR. SIBLY'S SOLAR TINCTURE.'

Anyone who could accept this would have little difficulty in believing the claims made for Grant's Incomparable & Never Failing Chimical Drops or for Dr. James' Analaptic Pills. And who could fail to benefit from Dr. Walker's Patent Genuine Jesuits' Drops? But it soon becomes apparent that a systematic approach will uncover a good deal more than the merely bizarre. Many subjects are waiting to have new light cast upon them, or indeed to be written up for the first time, from researches in the newspaper archives.

The great events of the day and their local repercussions form one theme, and the space given to syndicated news from London and abroad helps to provide a
perspective. The wars against the American colonies and against France are reported in detail and are reflected in the many appeals for volunteers, notices of deserters and subscription lists for war charities. These are not only part of military history but also cast interesting sidelights on other aspects of life at the time. The 90th Regiment of Foot, under Colonel Graham of Brooksby Hall, offered to each recruit a bounty of ten guineas, a sum which would buy 'a Stocking Frame for the Stocking Maker, a Pack of Wool for the Woolcomber, Five Looms for the Tammy Weaver, Ten Looms for the Ribbon Weaver or a good Milch Cow for the Plough-Boy.' The 1790s are of particular interest because England was no longer fighting rebels across the ocean but revolutionaries across the Channel, revolutionaries who might be expected to have many sympathisers among the 'lower orders' in this country. Only against this background can the tension and feeling of crisis in the newspaper articles be understood. Events and advertisements otherwise inexplicable become plain. A fund 'for the purchase of shoes for the Non-commissioned Officers and Privates of the Leicestershire Militia' in 1794 was only able to raise £150, but in the same period the Duke of Beaufort collected over £7200 in the county 'for the Internal Protection & Security of the Country.' On Jan 18 1793 the Loyalist Club of Market Harborough took two whole columns in the 'Leicester Journal' in which the names and occupations of several hundred of its members usefully appear. The innkeepers and victuallers of Leicester subscribed their names to a covenant against the holding of political meetings in their hostelries, 'conceiving that our situation in Life affords Opportunity of either checking or encouraging Proceedings which tend to subvert the Government.'

It was in this time of national emergency that there appeared the only rivals in our period to the long-established 'Leicester Journal': the short-lived Radical 'Leicester Herald' and 'Leicester Chronicle'. The 'Journal', begun in 1753 and 'printed by J. Gregory in the Market Place', took a fairly traditional stand and supported Pitt the Younger. Its reaction to the execution of Louis XVI was predictable: 'an awful lesson to mankind how far the dreadful depravity of human nature will carry blind and misguided mortals when once escaped from the sacred ties of Religion and Society.' Compare with this the opinion of the 'Herald' that 'the melancholy catastrophe of Louis may be viewed in different lights and afford many salutary lessons to Despots and Aristocrats.' It is not surprising that for more than twelve months Phillips, the 'Herald's' editor had to conduct his business from Leicester Gaol, where he had been sent for selling seditious books. His trial and conviction naturally figure large in his own paper. Ironically, it was not anti-Jacobinism but a fire which spread from a neighbour's premises that forced him from his Gallowtree Gate office in November 1795. A comparison of Leicester newspapers is thus possible for only three years but it would be interesting to examine the editorial policies in detail and to assess how far the papers were aimed at different readerships and whether their differences reflected a real division of opinion in town and county.
Genuinely local politics are also well covered and periodically the advertisement columns are crowded with election addresses, blasts and counterblasts from the various factions and notices of the state of the poll. The electoral practices of pre-Reform days seem odd, and even incredible, to us and the newspaper reports provide a route to understanding them. Since the modern party system was also unknown, differences between the candidates are even harder to spot than today, and the more cynical investigator may rightly begin to wonder whether it was not powerful oratory but a long purse that had the best chance of winning the day. Occasionally, as in Market Harborough on Dec. 19 1774, party supporters developed and used the ultimate knock-down argument to convince their opponents, the bludgeon. Perhaps this aspect of politics is not so unfamiliar in 1971, nor is that champion of the letter columns, the fireside doctrinaire. 'Plain Truth of Loughborough', a regular contributor to the 'Herald', would feel quite at home on Page Four.

The narratives of politics and of the extraordinary events of the time are more easily recovered from the newspapers, but the continuum of daily life is also there to be glimpsed. Tasteful articles on contemporary literature and advertisements for private schools and for books appealed to the literate minority who were the paper's readers. Sporting events familiar and unfamiliar were forecast and discussed: at a cricket match between Leicester and Nottingham held on Monday July 9 1792 the home side scored 51 and 119 for six against Nottingham's 61 and 107. (About the same time a team of 9 men from the MCC played a Nottingham team of 22 and beat them by 111 runs!) On February 15th and 16th 1775 was held the annual Cocking at the Bull Head, Syston, fighting birds to be weighed in like boxers at between 3lb 12oz and 4lb 2oz or between 4lb 2oz and 4lb 12oz. The prize per contest at this time ranged from a few shillings to a guinea.

Alongside the advertisements for leisure pursuits appear those giving clues to the workaday world of the late eighteenth century. Week by week the prices fetched by crops and beasts at Leicester Market are listed, and if plotted on a graph over a long period would show at what points there were likely to be significant rises in the prices of basic foodstuffs; this could be correlated with the occasional reports of food riots as on May 19, 1792 in Leicester Market Place. There are notes by the 'improving agriculturalists', the farmers who were experimenting with the new ways of getting more from their land like Mr. John Fukses of Newton Harcourt, who reported in 1792 that he had noticed a great advance in his early grass since dressing the land with Syston gypsum. The details of properties for sale or lease may be important to the genealogist or to the topographer, although the former may have to search many issues around the date he has in mind to discover how the family estate was disposed of.
‘TO BE SOLD TO THE BEST BIDDER
One Messuage, pleasantly situate in Worthington, the property of the late John Belcher deceased, with a Barn, Cowhouse etc. and an Orchard and Garden containing about a Rood of Land, with an extensive right of Commons called Grand Griffydam, Gelsmoore and Newbold Hurst. Also one other Cottage in Worthington consisting of two tenements.’ (1775)

Ten years later the following useful property was on offer:
‘A very good HORSE GRIT MILL at Whitwick in the County of Leicester containing two Pair of Stones, one Pair for shelling, the other Pair for grinding of Meal: the Wheel seventeen Feet Diameter.’

The same columns are a rich vein for the industrial historian to mine. Almost every week there was a sale of knitting frames, with the names and addresses of the former owners listed. And the ancillary branches of the hosiery trade are well represented. In 1785 George Dawson, ‘Wad-Dyer and Stocking Trimmer at the Bottom of the North-gate near the Bridge’ was appealing for work in commission dyeing. At the same time there was a potash works on sale in Market Harborough with its vats, ovens, boiling pans, coppers, buckets and the other equipment needed to make soap. Its peculiar advantage, said the vendor, was that it stood ‘in the centre of a large District in which the Woollen Manufacture is carried on to a very extensive Degree’. (He did not explain why he found it necessary to sell). Other industries too appear in the record:

‘EDWARD ARNOLD, BELL-FOUNDER
Begs leave to inform the Public that in addition to his present business he has erected an IRON-FOUNDRERY
Near the West Bridge
Where he intend prosecuting the Branch of Casting Iron to its utmost extent.’

Taken together the many evidences of factories and workshops would make a respectable foundation for a much-needed account, and even a map, of early industrial Leicester.

Finally, it is worth noting that the darker side of Georgian England is by no means forgotten in the pages of its newspapers. The readers, presumed to be
fairly well-off, are frequently entreated to bear in mind their duty of charity to the poor, and the point is reinforced by accounts of such unfortunates as Michael Robinson, shoemaker of St. Margaret's parish. While the overseers of the poor and the workhouse master debated whether or not he was drunk and whether he really belonged to another parish, Robinson died of starvation (Jan. 15 1785). The deserving poor were to be encouraged in their efforts to achieve independence and in December 1792 the Leicestershire Agricultural Society made awards of money to the parents of large families who brought their children up 'without assistance from the Parish'. Richard Palmer of Turlangton, father of fourteen, won the top prize of four guineas. The poor who could not help themselves, such as those with sicknesses of the mind, were made the object of conspicuous charity in the establishment of a lunatic ward at Leicester Royal Infirmary. But for the undeserving poor, and especially lawbreakers, there was no sympathy. As today, the more daring highwaymen and thieves earned so much space in print as to suggest that they were the objects of reluctant admiration, but the local Societies for the Prosecutions of Felons offered scales of rewards for bringing them to justice. The pay offered to informers by the Ashby-de-la-Zouch and Billesdon societies, for instance, ranged from half a guinea when cabbages and turnips had been stolen to five guineas for robbery or the maiming of animals. Of course, the fact that these societies had to exist in the absence of a regular police force was an admission that the law was unevenly administered and the harsh penalties of the period were later abandoned in favour of a professional enforcement body as the better deterrent. Meanwhile urban and rural crime flourished. It is not surprising that poaching was particularly widespread when the hardship of many ordinary people is considered in the light of information published in the papers in September 1793. The population of the whole county at that time must have been over 100,000 but only about 200 individuals, plus their game-keepers, were listed as being legally qualified to take game of any kind, whether deer, fish, birds or rabbits. Among these were at least thirty sporting parsons. The countryman with an empty pot could hardly avoid breaking the Game Laws if he wanted to fill it.

This article has tried to indicate a few of the many topics which the local historian can pursue through the pages of newspapers published before about 1800. Not all the information they contain can be taken at face value, and the techniques of higher criticism have their place, particularly in distinguishing fact from rumour or value-judgement in the main articles. But people's false ideas about what happened may be as important in explaining a chain of events as what actually did happen, and in any case the broad field of interest of the newspapers enables one to step through the textbook generalisations and stand close to the events themselves in their context.
Thanks are due to the staff of the Leicester City Reference Library in Bishop Street, who have the newspapers referred to in their charge. The 'Leicester Journal', which was the 'Leicester & Nottingham Journal' from 1755 to 1786, is held on microfilm from Jan. 6 1759 to the end of 1773, with odd copies missing. Readers who want to use the microfilm might be well advised to make arrange arrangements a little in advance so that the equipment can be set up for them. From January 1774 the 'Journal' is continuous in bound volumes. The 'Leicester Herald' for the period May 5 1792 to June 12 1795 is in one volume.

ASPECTS OF THE 19th CENTURY HOSIERY TRADE IN RATBY
Michael T. Ball

The history of the East Midlands hosiery industry has often been written on a regional or county basis but it may be helpful to focus on its place in individual villages or groups of villages to understand more of its workings and of its importance to those engaged in or dependent on it. The village of Ratby, which lies six miles north-west of Leicester, is typical of a group of villages in that area which expanded both in size and population as a direct result of the growth of the framework-knitting industry during the early 19th century. Today the village architecture reflects little of the cottage industry, since many of the homes and workshops of the knitters have gone, but a fine frameshop built shortly after 1860 still stands on the corner of Stamford Street as a reminder of the trade which once employed 40% of Ratby's population.

It is hard to say exactly when framework-knitting first became an integral part of the village economy. It is known to have had a foothold in many Leicestershire villages before 1720 but the earliest definite evidence for Ratby appears in the baptismal register for 1791, which records the birth of a daughter to William Grudgings (FWK). Several authors have mentioned that the early hosiery masters were often people in commerce. It is also common to find that farmers took up framework-knitting as a sideline and, finding the trade profitable, engaged people to work for them. At Bagworth, for example, the farmer William Corah died leaving eight frames in 1817. Each was valued at £8. (It is interesting to note that by 1843 the Bagworth stockingers were working for the greatly enlarged business of his son Nathaniel). Similarly at Ratby several of the landowners mentioned in the Enclosure Act of 1773 or their sons were later to be involved in the industry to some degree during the early 19th century.
A deed of 1832 between William Johnson of Newtown Linford and William Bunney Eliss of Ratby gives a descriptive account of the knitters' cottages in Dirty Lane (now Chapel Lane). Eliss' grandfather, William Bunney, had been a prominent landowner in the post-Enclosure period and it is therefore possible that Eliss owed to this heritage his ability to establish a small stockinger's business on the premises. This group of buildings was to develop considerably during the 19th century, eight knitter's cottages and later a large frameshop being erected there. (See plan).

The industry in the village expanded considerably from about 1830 onwards. In 1833 a Framework-knitters' Society was founded and it is worth noting that two of the men involved in setting it up, John Eliss and William Foulds, were bag hosiers — that is, they were not simply knitters but local entrepreneurs. In 1844 Felkin records 120 narrow frames working in Ratby, chiefly manufacturing ribbed hose in worsted. (The 1841 Census returns are incomplete and show only 44 knitters in the village and unfortunately the report of the 1844 government enquiry into the trade does not quote any detailed evidence from Ratby.) The 1851 return tells us that 210 persons, that is about 40% of the total, were migrants from other villages and that more than half of these were framework-knitters. Further analysis reveals that these men and women had been coming to the village in large numbers from 1830 onwards. This is shown by the ages and birthplaces of their children. Many of them had come from other hosiery villages in the north-west of the county, including the Soar Valley and coalfield areas, and had perhaps worked in several other places since leaving home. Other villages studied in this manner, Anstey and Desford for example, show a similar pattern of
movement to that revealed at Ratby. Further research is needed but it does seem likely that many villages in this area witnessed numerous comings and goings of stockingers searching for stable employment during a time when the state of the trade was bad. Other workers too were on the move — brickmakers from Mountsorrel and Woodhouse for example. By 1851 there were at least eight bag-hosiers working in the village, but unfortunately it has been possible to locate the shop of only one of them. These are the premises in Dirty Lane mentioned above which were at that time in the ownership of one Francis Hill. He had been a grocer and had bought the premises from Eliss in 1837. He continued to expand the business and by 1871 the knitters’ cottages were superseded by a larger frameshop employing fifteen stockingers. The shop was also used for Methodist prayer-meetings by several of his men. One of these, Henry Harrison, had by 1880 left Hill’s employ and set up his own business as a hosier/draper. He purchased premises in Station Road and started work on an order basis, making and delivering stockings and shirts as required. In Ratby itself he kept four women in fulltime work and also had several stockingers and two women making socks on Griswolds at nearby Groby. (Griswolds were small circular knitting machines worked by hand).

A firm from which Harrison often bought fancy hose and worsted skirts was Richardson Brothers, who had the frameshop at Stamford Street mentioned above. They had moved from Anstey shortly after 1860 to set up their fancy hose business and grew rapidly. In 1890 they were employing six worsted-loom weavers along with their stocking knitters. They had several houses built in Stamford Street, presumably for their employees. Another firm which came to Ratby in the 1860s was that of W. Tyler and Co. of Leicester and Fleckney. They remained in business until 1920 when they amalgamated with another Fleckney firm R. Walker and Sons, to form the new company of Wolsey Ltd. who still own the premises today.

It was also in 1920 that the last of the old stockingers of the village died. Had he written his memoirs we should have a fine record of the old hosiery industry from the inside, for he had come to Ratby in 1840 as a young man of 20. He had worked in Dirty Lane as a knitter for some years and then in 1861 had set up on his own account as a bag-hosier. He later built a frameshop adjoining his house in Station Road and continued working at his trade until he died at the grand old age of 100.

The author would like to emphasize that this has been only an interim report following a first survey of the available material. He hopes that further work will bring out more detail and will cover a group of villages, showing the social and geographical mobility of individual framework-knitters and their families.
References:
1841 & 1851 Census Returns for Ratby — Leicester Museum Archives Dept.
1773 Enclosure Award for Ratby — Leicestershire County Record Office.
1845 Royal Commission’s Report on the conditions of the framework-knitters
Leicestershire Collection, Bishop St. Library.
(Papers in private hands relating to Ivy Cottage, Chapel Lane, Ratby between 1832
and 1900).

WINDMILLS IN LEICESTERSHIRE: AN INTRODUCTION
J. D. Bennett

Windmills have almost disappeared from the Leicestershire landscape in the last
hundred years, the victims of technological and economic changes. The coming of
steam power, introduction of steel roller mills, and improvements in communications
dealt the wind-operated local mills blows from which they never recovered. In
addition, the depression which overtook English agriculture in the 1870s, following
the removal of duties on imported grain, was felt a few years later in the milling
industry, as cheap American flour poured into the country. Many mills were forced
to close down, and those damaged by fires and gales (not uncommon occurences)
were often not rebuilt or started again.

The figures speak for themselves. There are 88 windmills shown on Greenwood’s
Map of Leicestershire published in 1826. (There were rather more than this,
several mills known to have existed at this date not being shown). In 1860 there
were perhaps 70 mills still operating, but by 1895 this number had dropped to
around 24, and the downward trend continued into the present century. By 1912
the total had shrunk to 16: ten years later there were only 7. Little flour was now
being ground; most of the mills still operating kept going by grinding animal
foodstuffs. In 1931 the number still at work had dwindled to 4, and there were only
2 left by 1938. The last windmill in the county to be worked by wind power — the
tower mill at Waltham on the Wolds — lost its sails two years later.

Today there is one windmill in the county which still has two of its sails — the post
mill at Kibworth Harcourt; it also has most of its machinery intact, but has not
been worked since before the First World War. One tower mill, at Waltham on the
Wolds, is still worked by an oil engine, and ten others survive in various stages of
decay. The best preserved is at Wymondham; though this is minus its sails, it still has
its machinery more or less intact, and could probably be fairly easily restored. It was
worked by a tractor engine up to about ten years ago. The tower mill at Shepshed
has been incorporated into a modern house. Leicestershire has never had any smock
mills, though there was a composite mill at Croxton Kerrial, of which the short tower
survives.

The rest have vanished almost without trace; just here and there a pub sign, the
Windmill or Jolly Miller, a name like Mill Lane or Windmill Hill, or a slightly more
tangible piece of evidence in the form of a millstone used as a door step, remain to
remind us of this once familiar sight.

(a) Leicestershire windmills of which remains can still be seen:

Arnesby
Brick tower mill, built 1815 on the site of a post mill apparently first built 1653.
Still functioning in the 1890s, but had stopped work by 1904. Threatened with
demolition 1926, but still had its sails eleven years later. The machinery, cone-shaped
cap and sails have now gone. The Hurst family were the millers here for most of the
mill's working life; there was a stone over the door with the inscription 'J HURST
1815' but this has now been removed.

Ashby Folville
Though this four-storey brick tower mill is minus its sails, cap and machinery, flour
is still ground here in a small grinding machine used in conjunction with a tractor
engine. Built in the first quarter of the 19th century, it had stopped work by 1895,
though only five years previously it had been offered for sale by auction.

Barkestone
A brick tower mill, described as 'newly erected' in 1839. Still working in 1895, it had
apparently stopped by 1900. It still had two of its sails in 1927. Originally six
storeys high, now only a brick shell, about four and a half storeys high, survives.

Croxton Kerrial
The only composite mill in the county, it consisted of a short, three-storey brick
tower with a two-storey, weather-boarded octagonal superstructure and a boat-shaped
cap. There was a mill here in 1779, and its was still working in 1912, but had ceased
by 1922. The yellow brick base, at one time covered with limewash, remains; the
windows have been bricked up. The last miller was Newman Shires.

Gilmorton
A 'Wyndmill' here is mentioned in the will of William Burdett in 1601. In 1814 it
belonged to Edward Vines, and was later worked by the Hobill family. Its working
life ended on 28 December 1915 when it was wrecked by a gale. In 1935 it still had
its pepperpot-shaped, iron-covered cap, but now only the derelict brick tower
remains; most of the machinery has been removed.
Harby
Originally seven storeys high, this brick tower mill was built in 1828, and was still working in 1937, though no flour had been ground for twenty years, only pig and poultry food. Damaged in a gale the following year, it was apparently repaired, as it is described as working in 1940. The top was later removed because of the nearby aerodrome, and it is now only four storeys high. It was a large mill, measuring 73 feet to the top of the cap.

Kibworth Harcourt
The only surviving post mill in the county, and the last windmill to have sails. Built 1711, according to a date on the main post, where the miller's name is given as Daniel Hutchinson. Once owned by Merton College, Oxford. From the 1840s onwards it was worked by the Smith family. Still working in 1912, but stopped shortly afterwards. It became ruined, until restored by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings in 1936. Only two sails are now left, and the tailpole has largely gone, but most of the machinery is intact; there are two pairs of millstones. The roundhouse is of brick.

Long Clawson
Six-storey brick tower mill built by Cooke & Sons of Newark. Still working in 1912, but had stopped by 1922; already derelict by 1938. No sails or cap and most of the machinery has gone. The brickwork is painted black. Worked by the Shilcock family from at least 1846 onwards.

Shepshed
Known as Blackbrook or Fenney Spring Mill. The only example of a two sail windmill in Leicestershire. Still in use in 1931, it had ceased working by 1935, and was derelict by 1938. It lost one of its sails in 1947. The brick tower was incorporated in a modern dwelling house in 1957-8.

Swannington
The ruined tower mill on Swannington common is sometimes referred to as Peggs Green Mill. It had stopped work by 1895, although remains of two of its sails could still be seen in 1931. Now only a brick shell, with the centre post, some beams, a few pieces of rusting machinery and one pair of millstones, remains. There are two doorways at ground level. The last miller was Joseph Chester.

Ulllesthorpe
Lightning striking the sails and setting them on fire apparently stopped this mill in the 1890s. Further damage was done when the windows were blown out by bomb blast in the last war. This sixty foot high brick tower mill still has its pepperpot-shaped, iron cap, and a good deal of machinery remains. It is now entirely surrounded by houses.
Post Mills. In a post mill the whole body of the mill, built of wood, rests on a massive central post, and has to be revolved, so that the sails face into the wind. The main post (A), supported by quarter bars (B) rests on cross trees (C), which usually stand on brick piers (D), and this lower portion of the mill is protected by a brick or stone roundhouse (E). The brakewheel is marked (F), the wallower (G), the great spur wheel (H) and the millstones (I).
Tower Mills. Are normally round, and in Leicestershire built of brick. The fantail (A) causes the cap to revolve, so that the sails face into the wind. The turning of the sails (B) drives in turn the brakewheel (C), the wallower (D), the main shaft (E) and the great spur wheel (F), which operates the pairs of millstones (G).

Smock Mills. Work on the same principles as tower mills. The differences lie in the shape — they are usually octagonal — and the material out of which they are built, which is wood. They were thought to resemble a man in a smock. Not usually as high as tower mills.
Waltham on the Wolds
The last mill in Leicestershire to be worked by sails. It was built in 1868 by Cook of Melton, apparently on the site of a post mill. In 1940 its sails were taken off, and it was worked by a steam engine, later replaced by an oil engine. The brick tower is painted black, and it still has its cap. The Robinson family were the millers here for many years.

Woodhouse Eaves
The famous post mill on Windmill Hill was destroyed by fire on 15 April 1945, but the stone roundhouse can still be seen. It was originally built in Derbyshire, but moved here in the late 18th century; it was certainly here by 1806. In use till 1895, it was damaged in the March gales of that year and became a ruin, but was restored in 1929 and again in 1944. The last miller was John Hives.

Wymondham
Built in 1814, this five-storey tower mill is unusual in Leicestershire in that it is constructed of local stone, though when another floor was added later, brick was used; it has also been stuccoed at one time. It had six sails which were in use till 1918, after which an oil engine was installed, and in later years a tractor engine was used. The mill functioned up to about 1960, and the machinery appears to be intact; it still has its cap.

(b) Windmills which are known to have existed:

(P) = post mill
(T) = tower mill

Ab Kettleby (P)
Ashby de la Zouch
1. On Windmill Hill (P)
2. On Breedon Road (P)
3. In Smisby Field (P) Worked by the Jervis family.
4. On Leicester Road.

Aylestone On Leicester Road

Bagworth
Barlestone The Archer family were the millers here for many years.
Barsby (P)
Barwell (P) Still working 1904
Belgrave Approximately on the site of the present Windsor Avenue
Billesdon
1. In Mill Field (P). First mentioned 1558.
2. In the village centre.

Bilstone
Birstall On Wanlip Lane

20
Bitteswell
Blaston Disappeared in the 18th century
Bottesford 1. North of the village (P)
Bradgate On the site of Old John. (P)
Broughton Astley 1. In the village centre, near the water mill; one of the brick piers can still be seen.

Burton on the Wolds
Burton Overy

Castle Donington (T). Built 1773 by Thomas Twells; destroyed during the last war. On Hill Top.
Claybrooke Magna Title deeds to a windmill 1675-1757 in the County Record Office.
Countesthorpe Croft On Croft Hill

Dalby on the Wolds Some parts re-used at Wymeswold Mill
Desford Eaton
Diseworth (T)

East Langton Worked by the Smith family.
Enderby (P). Blown down 1846; the miller, John Darnell, inside it at the time, escaped injury.

Foxton

Garthorpe
Glenfield
Great Easton Worked by the Brown family

Hallaton Two mills, both gone by 1806.
Higham on the Hill

Hinckley 1. Two at Mill View, on the site of the Waterworks.
2. On Mill Hill. Site could still be seen in 1929.
3. South of Victoria Street. 'Newly erected' 1813.
4. In Brick-kiln Street. At one time worked by steam.

21
Hose (P). Blown down 1808.
Hoton (P). Still working 1904; later struck by lightning and burned.
Houghton on the Hill
1. South of Leicester-Uppingham Road (P).
2. In Ingarsby Lane (T). Demolished during the First World War; site sold by auction 10 April 1919. House built on it 1921.
   Millstones incorporated in the base of the village war memorial.
Humberstone South of Gypsy Lane. Joseph Bent, miller in 1846, was also landlord of the Windmill Inn.
Ibstock
Kegworth
1. Slater’s Mill, Ashby Road (T). Built (?). 1790; demolished 1930.
2. Dame Moss’s Mill, Derby Road. Moved from Nottingham Forest. At one time worked by steam.
3. On Loughborough Road.
Kirby Mallory
Knipton (P)
Leicester
2. Holmes’s Mill. Between Evington Lane (now Evington Road) and Mill Hill Lane.
6. Nurse’s Mill. On Knighton Hill. Moved further back from the main road 1810. Disappeared when the Cemetery was laid out in 1849.
7. Swan’s Mill. By the Soar, at the end of Mill Lane.
8. Tower Mill. In Upper Conduit Street. Probably disappeared to make way for extensions for the Union Workhouse, some time after 1851.
Long Whatton
Loughborough
1. On Sparrow Hill
2. Between Forest Road and Ashby Road.
Lubenham
Lutterworth (T). Subscription mill on Leicester Road.

Market Harborough
2. On Round Hill.
3. On the site of the town reservoir. Burnt down and gave its name to Burnmill Road.

Markfield
1. On Markfield Hill (P).
2. In Shaw Lane (P).
Both blown down 24 March 1895.

Medbourne
(T). Demolished 1902. Nichols gives exact dimensions
(History of Leicester, vol. II, p.717)

Melton Mowbray
2. On Scalford Road (P).
3. On Burton Road (P).

Mountsorrel
(P).

Mowsley
Materials incorporated in Mill Stone House, Main Street.

Narborough
Nether Broughton
Newbold Verdon
1. On Desford Road.

Oadby
South of London Road.

Osbaston

Peckleton

Potters Marston (T). Demolished because of nearby quarrying.

Quorn

Rearsby

Redmile (P). Moved here from Nottingham Forest 1855, and replaced a post mill formerly on the site. Worked by the Carlisle family. Still in use 1912.

Sapcote (T). Built 1806 of granite from a nearby quarry, at a cost of £1300.

Scalford (P).

Sewstern (T).

Sharnford (P). Struck by lightning 1783. Still working 1912.

Shearsby

Shenton
Sileby
Slawston
(S). Remains of a stone pier in a field near the railway line.
(S). Rebuilt as a landmark by the Fernie Hunt. Destroyed by lightning 29 July 1930.

Smeeton Westerby
Somerby
South Croxton
South Kilworth
Sproxton
(S). Blew down and killed the miller; rebuilt 1889 by Wakes & Lamb of Newark, using materials from the old mill and one from Castle Bytham. Wrecked by the gales of March 1916, but repaired. Out of use by 1920. Demolished 1949.

Stathern
Stonton Wyville
Sutton Cheney.
Sweepstone
Swinford
Syston
(P). Near the railway station. Worked up to 1908; blown down 14 February 1910.

Thringstone
Thurmaston
Tilton
(P). Still working 1910; the last miller was William Large.
Tugby
Tur Langton
Twyford

Walton by Kimcote
Walton on the Wolds
Wigston Magna
1. On Welford Road. Apparently blown down.
2. At Crow Mills.

Witherley
(P). Worked by the Watters family.

Wymeswold
(P). On Burton Road. Some parts were brought from Dalby on the Wolds. William Ford, miller in 1863, was also landlord of the Windmill Inn. Still working 1912. Demolished c.1950.

A Note on sources
Not a great deal has so far appeared in print about Leicestershire windmills, and much research still remains to be done on the subject. The two articles on ‘The Windmills of Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire’ by P.H.J. Baker and Rex Wailes (Newcomen Society Transactions, vols. 33 and 34), and ‘Leicestershire Windmills’ by P.J. Ball (Leicestershire & Rutland Magazine, vol. 1, no. 3) make a good starting point. The Victoria County History of Leicester, vols. IV & V, and
the Cable Collection of Newspaper Cuttings in the City Reference Library contain a number of references to local windmills. 19th and early 20th century directories of Leicestershire are invaluable for names of millers and dates when their mills were working. A careful search of 18th and 19th century local newspapers (a job for a team rather than an individual) would undoubtedly reveal a good deal of information about changes of ownership and tenancies, rebuilding, accidents and so forth. Maps of Leicestershire by Prior (1779), King (1806) and Greenwood (1826) and the early editions of the Ordnance Survey show many mills; earlier estate maps and surveys might reveal others.
MISCELLANY

FURTHER MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTIONS IN LEICESTERSHIRE
Mrs. P. Moll

The first article on this subject appeared in Vol. 1 No. 1.

The memorials in Leicestershire churchyards often give an amazing amount of information. Accident, illness and murder are finely detailed, and sometimes unexpected light is thrown on characters and talents.

William Bass died in 1781 at Hinckley aged 26 years, and 'Though born in humble life held for four years a commission in the Leicestershire Militia... his genius was to be discovered too late by the friend who inscribes this tomb... the last efforts of his pencil were views of Hinckley church'.

At Hinckley also, Mr. John Robinson, died in 1792, 'conversant with Philosophy, Botany and Medicine'.

John Sutton of Woodhouse Eaves, died 1877, 'enlisted in H.M.S. in 1825 and served 37 years in the Mediterranean Islands, Jamaica and Canada... had Good Conduct stripes seven times during his army career'.

At Bitteswell is buried Samuel Tilt, 'Surgeon in the Army, who served his country in all climates in every quarter of the globe'. He died in 1828 aged 46 years.

There are great cries for vengeance on some of the stones which mention murder. At Hinckley Richard Smith died in 1727, aged 20 years.

'A fatal halbert his mortal body slew,

The murdering hand God's vengeance will punish...

Here, too, William Aldridge 'died of manslaughter' in 1798. At Frisby on the Wreake lies buried James Garner who 'died by the hand of an assassin in the Lordship of Gaddesby' in 1843 aged 20 years, while at Asfordby William Glover was 'murdered in his own house at night' in 1825.

John Fenton, buried at St. Martin, Leicester in 1778, 'fell by violence and remains a sad example of the incompetency of Judicial Institutions to punish a murderer'. It appears that John Fenton became involved in a quarrel with a Frenchman who was a better swordsman, and who thereafter vanished across the Channel.
There were many drownings and accidents to farmworkers. At Ratcliffe on the Wreake there is a memorial to Samuel Matthews, labourer, 'who had both his legs broke and one of his ankles dislocated by falling off a load of beans at Mr. King's farm at Ratcliffe and died at The Leicester Infirmary' in 1839. His stone was erected by 'Mr. Thomas Freeman, his master, to whom he was for nine years a faithful and affectionate servant'.

John Walker died at Great Dalby in 1825, 'his death occasioned by the wheel of his own waggon passing over his body'.

'He suddenly did feel Death's Stroke.
His Glass of Life was quickly broke'.

Esther Houghton died at Saxelby in 1797 aged 34 years. 'A dropsy terminated her life after being tapp'd 21 times from 21 August 1789 to 28 April 1797. The quantity of water taken from her was 222 gallons weighing 19 cwt, 2 quarts, 9lb.'

Simon Pears of Wymondham, who must have been an extraordinary character, died in 1809 aged 91 years. His epitaph is delivered by way of a parting shot.

'I in my time did gather rags
and many a time I filled my bags.
Although it was a ragged trade
my rags are sold, my debts are paid.
Therefore — go on — don't waste your time
on bad biography and bitter rhyme
For what I am this cumbrous clay assures
and what I was is no affair of yours'.

The memorials in some churchyards are rather dull but in most the curious or the merely idle will find a wealth of information.

Leicester and Rutland Constabulary History Society

At an Inaugural Meeting held at Force Headquarters in Leicester on the 2nd September 1970, it was decided to form such a Society within the Force. Its objects are 'to promote an interest in Police and Social History' and it will meet on the first Wednesday in each month. Members of the force, the Special Constabulary, Police Cadets and civilian employees are eligible to join on payment of an annual subscription of 25p and the Committee will consider applications from any other person.
For the moment, members of the Society will entertain each other at monthly meetings by presenting short addresses for discussion. It is hoped to extend the range of activities to include visiting speakers, visits to places of interest and joint meetings with similar bodies. Local History Societies are particularly asked to consider ways in which they might assist and derive mutual benefit by association with the Force Society.

Exhibits and photographs of police origin will be particularly welcome for inclusion in the Force Museum and an index of such items is kept at the Force Training Department. Such items can be collected or sent through local Police Stations.

Any enquiries can be made to the Secretary of the Society, Mr. C.R. Stanley at the Training Department, Blackbird Road, Leicester, Telephone Leicester 28655, Extension 30.

**Folklore and Legends Project**

It has been suggested to the Planning Committee of the Leicestershire Local History Council that members might like to join in a group project and that the project should be the systematic collection of folklore and legends from their various parts of the county. Partial surveys have been made before but there must be many other tales from our villages that should be recorded before they are quite forgotten. Such stories may not be strictly factual accounts of what once happened at the manor house, or of how a field or lane came by its odd name, but they often hold clues to real events or states of mind of long ago.

A circular giving further details is to be issued to all members but meanwhile anyone who would like to know more or who has information to offer is invited to contact Mr. Andrew Strang of 97 Narborough Road, Cosby. (Narborough 4641)
BOOK REVIEWS
Mrs. G. K. Long

THE GROWTH OF LEICESTER
Edited by A. E. Brown
Leicester University Press 50p
This book contains the scripts of a series of talks given on Radio Leicester early in 1970. Given mostly by members of the staff of the University of Leicester, the talks select aspects of interest in the main stages of the city’s history: the Roman city, the Castle and church in the middle ages, the growth of markets in the seventeenth century, the autocratic closed corporation of the eighteenth century illustrated by the gracious town planning of New Walk, and the interest in the provision of the very necessary social amenities by the reformed Corporation of Leicester. The present century saw a demand for more living space, and the search for better housing is illustrated by the pre-1914 account of Humberstone Garden Suburb and the post-war growth of City Council housing. The final talk by Professor Simmons summarises the series and discusses the reasons for the continued growth and expansion of Leicester. The talks are illustrated with maps and plans, and short lists for further reading are given at the end of each section.

COSBY: a short history
Edited by D. Hopkinson, Littlethorpe, Leicester 1970 15p
This booklet was written and produced for a Local History exhibition from material collected by a local history study group and other helpers. It gives a vivid account of the hosiery trade in the village, the place of the parish church and chapels in village life, the plight of the poor, the history of parish government, the story of the school, and the slow introduction of modern amenities and the growth of new houses which have made the village we know today.

BELGRAVE, St Peter’s Church: a general guide
The Rev. Canon E. K. L. Quine 1970 18p
A concise, well illustrated and produced guide to one of the ancient village churches now absorbed by the City of Leicester. The earliest church was probably built in the 12th century and the fine late Norman arch over the South doorway is a handsome remainder of the Church which Roger de Belgrave enlarged in the thirteenth century. The guide includes a list of rectors and vicars and a note on the monuments seen by Nichols which have now disappeared.
A GUIDE to LEICESTERSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY from the earliest times to the end of the Middle Ages
Elizabeth Blank  Leicester Museums 1970  25p
Intended primarily for visitors to the Jewry Wall Museum, this book provides an outline guide to the archaeology of Leicestershire, illustrated with material from Leicester Museums collections. The supreme interest perhaps of this booklet, is the full description of the great variety of the Roman section, with its wealth of material from Roman Leicester. For the student of Anglo-Saxon England, there are the finds for the early period from the cemeteries on the approaches to Leicester, pottery from later periods, and the great interest of the carvings in Breendon church. Mediaeval Leicester is represented by a variety of pottery finds, from Leicester and Leicestershire, and this section has an interesting survey on the sources of pottery used locally, some from Stamford as in Roman times. Clearly written, well illustrated and most attractively produced this excellent outline should encourage visits to the Jewry Wall Museum, and interest in particular aspects of archaeology in Leicestershire.

LEICESTERSHIRE LANDSCAPES; case studies in local geography
Prepared by the Leicestershire Association for Local Geographical Studies  Blond Educational 1970  80p
Written as a work book for local field studies for school children, the maps, plans and photographs are all of interest to the local historian, showing the physical and human patterns of the changing local scene.

LEICESTER and EDUCATION BEFORE 1870
By David Williams in collaboration with Fred Walthoe
Leicester and Leicestershire Schoolmasters’ Association 1970  17½p
This very interesting booklet describes the development of primary education for the poor from 1833 to 1870 in Leicester as seen through the eyes of local opinion expressed in the local press. Informed public opinion was agreed on the need to educate the poor of the back alleys, a growing concern in a town whose population grew from 40,000 to 68,000 between the 1830s and 1869. What could not be agreed was who should provide the schools, what should be taught, and how could the children most in need be encouraged to attend. This book, showing the progress towards the 1870 Act, includes some illustrations of Leicester schools of the period. It is a shortened version of a dissertation submitted for the Diploma in Education of Leicester University in 1960.
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