The Leicestershire Historian, which is published annually, 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 provide for them opportunities of meeting together, to act as a co-ordinating body between the various Societies in the County and to promote the advancement of local history studies.

A series of local history meetings is arranged throughout the year and the programme is varied to include talks, film meetings, outdoor excursions and an annual Members' Evening held near Christmas. The Council also encourages and supports local history exhibitions.

The different categories of membership and the subscriptions are set out below. If you wish to become a member, please contact the Secretary, who will also be pleased to supply further information about membership and the Annual Programme.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Membership Category</th>
<th>Subscription (£)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GROUP, Organization</td>
<td>£3.50</td>
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<tr>
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<td>£3.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>DOUBLE, Senior Citizens</td>
<td>£3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SINGLE, Senior Citizen, Student</td>
<td>£2.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE LEICESTERSHIRE HISTORIAN

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CONTENTS

Editorial 2

The Depredations of the Civil War in South-West Leicestershire
Alan Roberts 3

William Stenson of Coleorton, Coleford and Coalville
Jeffrey A G Knight 14

The Whitwick Colliery Disaster: New Evidence from the Diary of the Coalville and District Miners’ Association
C P Griffin 21

Reports
J Goodacre 33

Leicestershire and Rutland Local History Societies 36

Book Reviews
Mrs H E Broughton, J Goodacre, Mrs G K Long 40
EDITORIAL

The articles in this issue follow up themes previously touched on in this volume. The cover of our ‘Coalville 150’ issue included a portrait of William Stenson, ‘the founder of Coalville’. Jeffrey Knight has now researched Stenson’s career in detail and a copy of the original lithograph portrait has been used here to illustrate his biographical article.

Dr Colin Griffin, the authority on the history of coal mining and miners, is engaged in writing *The Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Miners*, the first volume of which, covering 1840 to 1914, was reviewed in Volume 3 Number 2. We are privileged to be able to publish the results of a recent documentary discovery of his throwing new light on the negotiations following the Whitwick Colliery Fire of 1898.

Our ‘Bosworth Field’ issue dealt also with one of the local Civil War skirmishes. Dr Alan Roberts, in his Adelaide University Thesis, *Farming Inhabitants of Appleby and Austrey, 1550-1700*, concentrated on two parishes straddling the county boundary with Warwickshire. In Volume 2 Number 11 he contributed an article on an Appleby subject. He now widens his scope to cover an aspect of the Civil War less heroic than the local campaigns, its effect on the ordinary inhabitants of the countryside. To illustrate this region of the Midlands we reproduce on our cover a portion of the ‘Anonymous’ map of Leicestershire, engraved originally in 1602 but remaining in print throughout the seventeenth century.

Letter to the Editor:

Dr Jeremy Black of the Department of History at Durham University has noticed a 1756 recipe for Stilton cheese in *Letters and Journals of Mrs Calderwood of Polton*, Edinburgh, 1884, p 7, and writes:

On 8 June 1756, whilst travelling from Scotland to London, Mrs Margaret Calderwood stayed the night at the inn at Stilton. She was given by the landlady the recipe for making Stilton cheese and noted it in her journal, ‘two thirds cream and one milk; the whey prest off, and the curd broke, and salted in the curd; great care in dressing them well, and keeping them clean from moulding.’
THE DEPREDATIONS OF THE CIVIL WAR IN SOUTH-WEST LEICESTERSHIRE
Alan Roberts

The deprivations inflicted upon the inhabitants of south-west Leicestershire is an unexplored avenue of the English Civil War, partly because of the region’s remoteness and partly because of an apparent dearth of evidence. From the outbreak of hostilities in 1642 both the king and Parliament struggled to secure control of the Midlands by garrisoning strategic towns and strongholds and their more enthusiastic supporters raised troops at their own expense to assist in this. The formidable Henry Hastings, later appointed Colonel General of the East Midlands commanding Royalist forces in four midland shires, established two vital strongholds in Leicestershire, at Ashby-de-la-Zouch, his family seat, and at Belvoir Castle. The Royalists also seized Lichfield and Tamworth in Staffordshire. The Ashby garrison of around six hundred men was a particular thorn in the side of Parliament. It was strongly fortified with ‘vaults under the ground, through which they can go from one fort to another at their pleasure; provisions they have good store; hung-beef plenty round about their kitchen within, and have lately been killing and salting of more.’¹ Hastings’s North Midlands Army contained by estimation some four thousand troops deployed in the various garrisons, able to be combined into a ‘flying army’ when required.² Leicestershire was also ‘the county of Rebel garrisons’, the most important of which was Leicester, where ‘sat the grand Committees of the Midland district’. With the complement of six hundred Parliamentary troops Leicester was particularly well placed to obtain ‘early intelligence of the movements of the little flying armies and scouting parties which every where abounded in its vicinity’.³ Three other garrisons were planted at Coleorton, ‘within cannon-shot of Ashby’, Bagworth and Kirby Bellars, making a total strength in excess of four hundred and twenty horse and six hundred foot. Their stated purpose was to contain the Royalists and ‘recover the lost hundred’ of Framland, which was providing support for Sir Jarvis Lucas’s garrison at Belvoir.*
From 1642 onwards the broad tract of mixed farmland between Ashby, Leicester and the Watling Street became a buffer zone between rival garrisons, the Royalists in the north organized from Ashby, the Parliamentarians in the south and east controlled through the county committees at Warwick and Leicester. The proximity of these garrisons inevitably affected the lives of the smallholders, craftsmen and farm labourers who made up the bulk of the population. For garrisons were at the same time centres of recruitment to the warring factions, administrative command posts and military bases, from which raiding parties were sent out to engage the enemy and to procure supplies. To assess their overall impact on the ordinary inhabitants I shall examine each of these functions in turn.

The pattern of recruitment from the region was set by the local gentry, who were noticeably cautious. Although, as Professor Everitt found, about two thirds of the Leicestershire gentry favoured the king, it seems only a handful of the thirty five important families in the county were prepared to take up arms in his support. More than thirty gentlemen from Sparkenhoe Hundred are listed as having had to compound for their estates as Royalists; but most of these played a very small part, and some changed sides. Apart from Hastings himself, who belonged to the king ‘body and soul’, the most prominent Royalists were Sir John Beaumont of Coleorton, Wolstan Dixie of Bosworth, Richard Dudley of Swepstone and Thomas Roberts of Sutton Cheney. Sir John served outside the county. Dixie, initially enthusiastic for the Royalist cause, later became a member of the sequestration committee for the county. Dudley, who sprang early to the defence of his sovereign, paid dearly for his loyalty under the ‘Oliverious lash’, while Roberts served as a major in Wolesley’s foot, seeing the war through to the surrender of Ashby. Their fates can be taken as fairly typical of the committed Royalists.

Parliamentary sympathisers among the gentry were also hesitant in declaring their support. Petitioners from outlying parts of the county, who almost certainly included gentlemen from the south-west, hastened to reassure Parliament it was ‘not backwardness to serve you, or want of affection, but the remoteness of their dwellings’ that prevented their attendance. Their fearfulness was apparently well founded. In 1643 the Earl of Stamford found that while he was away fighting for Parliament his house at Bradgate had been ransacked, ‘all his horses and cattle driven away, his tenants so plundered that they are made incapable of paying any rents’. The approach of the king’s army severely tested their resolve. When the county committee sent out warrants to defend Leicester in 1645 those who responded ‘came but slowly . . . many came that meant not to fight: there were not of them above 150 that were
willing to take up arms’. Their hesitation proved wise, as the town was sacked and many of the defenders slain or held to ransom.

The level of involvement of the local clergy indicates deeper, religious commitments. Nine clerks from Sparkenhoe Hundred are listed among those who suffered sequestration for supporting the king. Francis Standish, the vicar of Swepstone, was one of many who joined the king’s forces ‘before men could well recollect themselves’. Though he denied that he had gone ‘scouting in the night’ with troops from Ashby, he seems to have spent time in at least three of the Royalist garrison towns. Others, like Thomas Cleveland of Hinckley and John Lufton, rector of Ibstock, offered money or prayers. William Holdsworth, the incumbent of Earl Shilton, openly reviled the Parliament and later stood accused of reading a Royal Protestation in the middle of a sermon, while Mr Crosley of Whitwick was charged with calling Parliamentary supporters ‘traitors, worse than gunpowder plotters’.

Some of the more outspoken of the Royalist clergy from the south-west may have been among the ‘24 parsons in canonical coats’ who rode with Hastings’s cavaliers to read out the king’s commission outside Leicester on the eleventh of June 1642. The most uncompromising, men like Roger Porter of Orton, found themselves hounded out of their livings by their own parishioners. Several took refuge at Ashby, from where they were in turn accused of plundering and informing upon their former parishioners. Those that remained found themselves at the mercy of Parliamentary soldiers from the local garrisons, as for example William Pestell of Coleorton, who was taken to Tamworth and beaten ‘black as a shoe’ according to one report.

The clergy who openly sided with Parliament were just as easy a target for Royalist raiding parties. The most remarkable instance of this took place in March 1644, when a large number of clergymen and churchwardens were summoned to Leicester to sign the National Covenant, declaring their support for Parliament. According to reports Colonel Hastings, with four troops of horse from Beaver-Whorton House, ‘coursed about the country as far as Dunton and Lutterworth, and took near upon an hundred of the clergymen and others’, carrying them as prisoners to Hinckley. A later report described the dramatic rescue of these captives, their number having shrunk to only two ministers and thirty ‘countrymen’. However, Hastings’s well publicized threat to hang any that dared sign the Parliamentary Covenant had its effect as a warning to the clergy in the parishes within reach of his garrisons. As Parliament itself admitted that same year, ‘neither the persons nor the goods of the inhabitants and well-affected to the Parliament are secure in any part of the county’.
Evidence of rank and file recruitment from south-west Leicestershire is more tenuous, primarily because of the difficulty of identifying the origins of ordinary soldiers below the rank of gentry. Campaign reports, news sheets, diaries and letters, the usual sources of information about military matters, do not provide statistics of support from individual parishes, or regions. The garrison muster rolls, where they survive, seldom mention the origin of recruits. Conversely, village records belonging to the vestry and the manorial court do not often mention military enlistment or refer to outside 'commotions'. A search for householders' names disappearing from the parish register around 1642 to reappear subsequently on a garrison muster roll might be expected to throw some light on this matter. However, a comparison of names appearing in Tamworth muster rolls and in the Appleby register has failed to yield a single confirmation of recruitment from that parish. One explanation for this could be that the villagers followed the example set by their landlords, the local gentry and freeholders, who usually had Royalists leanings but were wary of declaring themselves. Certainly some of the royalists who joined the king brought their tenants and retainers with them, especially from places like Swepstone and Sutton Cheney. Orders for Hastings's impeachment in June 1642, for example, refer to his 'wickedly and maliciously' drawing out about three hundred men from Derbyshire, Lincolnshire and Leicestershire. Yet a large proportion of these were Derbyshire colliers; so he is unlikely to have drawn all that many recruits from the south-west.

Conflicting loyalties and a natural desire not to offend their neighbours, or prominent men on either side, may help to explain the lack of enthusiasm for enlistment in rural areas. The response of the trained bands and the constables to proclamations calling out first the Militia, and then the Commission of Array, is instructive in this regard. Although Parliament claimed 'a good appearance ' of the bands in three of the five Leicestershire divisions, there was some apprehension at the 'approach near to Mr Hastings's quarters': the head constable of one unspecified district had refused to deliver the warrants, 'being persuaded by the parson of the town where he lives'. Mr Lufton, the rector of Ibstock, was one of several Royalist clergy who tried to dissuade villagers in the trained bands from going to Leicester on the eighth of June, in response to the Parliamentary warrant. Captain Wolesley and ensign Dudley of the Ashby garrison were both later accused of acting in a similarly obstructive fashion. Wolesley on one occasion offered to pawn his own lands and even to forfeit his life to save George Moore, the constable of Whitwick, should he refuse to obey the summons, while ancient Dudley warned John Mills of Donnington-on-the-Heath that 'his estate was lost, and his life hazarded' if he did obey it. These stratagemgs appear to have met with greater success in north
Leicestershire, where the Royalists could count on more support, than in the south-west, where the mood of the inhabitants swung in favour of Parliament. Parliamentary threats and remonstrances certainly had some effect in dampening support for Hastings in his attempt to assemble a Commission of Array at the Raw Dikes near Leicester two weeks later. If we are to believe Stamford, few turned up. 19

The proportion of inhabitants actually taking part in the war as combatants, in the field armies or local garrisons, was comparatively small. What was the impact on the rural population that sustained them? One of the first shocks that the war had in store for the civilian population was the sudden increase in the number of new taxes that had to be raised for the support of the new garrisons. Both sides quickly developed efficient systems for collecting weekly or fortnightly levies, based upon the hundred. Parliamentary Account Books from other counties suggest that individual troops were 'assigned' groups of parishes for their support. The demands of rival tax collectors in contested areas, where fiscal territories overlapped, tended to blur distinctions between 'hostile' and 'friendly' forces. It is not known exactly which parishes contributed to each garrison, but a Parliamentary tract describing the siege of Leicester in 1645 reveals that:

all the six (Leicestershire) hundreds were thus disposed of; two to Cole Orton and Bagworth, two to the garrison of Kirby, and two to Leicester; and the moneys were all received by collectors and treasurers appointed for every garrison . . . 20

In fact the committee acknowledged that it had been granted powers to raise six hundred pounds a week, but complained that it barely saw half this amount, one of the hundreds, Framland, being 'almost totally cut off' by the Royalists. Recent investigations suggest that the Royalists had a similar system of levies, although instead of allowing the constables to bring in their contributions, the commanders preferred to send garrison quartermasters to collect them. Hastings himself, in his capacity as high sheriff of Leicestershire, signed the warrants. 21 The importance of these levies gave rise to some curious mutual arrangements, such as those discovered by Martyn Bennett at Stathern in the Vale of Belvoir, where the rival garrisons collected their levies on consecutive days. If such arrangements were made in the south-western region, no evidence has yet been found to confirm them; and any accommodation would almost certainly have been abandoned when Parliament gained ascendancy after the collapse of the Royalist north in 1644. 22

Surviving Parliamentary accounts for Warwickshire reveal that parishes the size of Polesworth paid as much as nine pounds a week. 23 We know
too that the inhabitants of Grendon and Wisham in Hemlingford Hundred paid taxes to the Royalist garrisons at Ashby and Lichfield as well as to Parliament. Many of the south-west Leicestershire parishes could well have been in a similar predicament. The actual amounts paid are unknown; but a Parliamentary Assessment from 1647 reveals that the eighty or so townships in Sparkenhoe Hundred were rated at £81.15.0 a month, with individual places contributing amounts ranging from 2s 8d for the hamlet of Wilkinghill to £2.8.4 for the combined parishes of Burbage and Sketchley. In addition to these fixed levies Parliament required that persons worth more than ten pounds a year in land or a hundred pounds in personal estate should lend up to one fifth of their revenue from land or a twentieth of their goods in the form of a ‘Proposition tax’ pledged for repayment through the Public Faith. It is hardly surprising, given the large sums involved, that ‘Many aspersions are laid on the Committee of Leicester . . . and also by one Lilly in a printed book,’ that it was making itself ‘rich with the county’s money’. In fact, as the committee pointed out, the levies mostly went to the support of the garrisons, who were often charged with being wasteful, while they themselves saw their estates plundered and had their persons imprisoned in the service of Parliament.

Only fragmentary evidence survives to assess the material losses and depredations inflicted by the Leicestershire garrisons on ordinary villagers. But some impression of the extent of forced requisitioning in the south-west region is provided by a hitherto unnoticed Exchequer account ‘expressing particularly what free quarter, horses and other goods have been taken’ from the hundreds of Sparkenhoe, Guthlaxton and Goscote, by north Warwickshire garrisons. This account, drawn up in June 1646 by Euseby Cradock, clerk to the Leicestershire county committee, refers to the five garrisons at Coventry, Warwick, Tamworth, Edgbaston House and Astley House and lists one hundred and sixty three claims for reparation. All these items refer to losses caused by Parliamentary soldiers, but there can be little doubt that the Royalist garrisons were guilty of similar acts or worse; witness, for example, Hastings’s fearful reputation as ‘rob-carrier’. And these represented only a few of the claims Cradock had to deal with: ‘Much more it is believed will be charged upon the several garrisons so soon as the Country Books of Account come in’, he adds. Even so, the evidence is sufficient to confirm that the Parliamentary army’s recourse to free quartering, as a practical expedient failing payment of arrears of pay, caused considerable hardship.

Raiding parties from north Warwickshire appear to have been particularly active in south-west Leicestershire between 1643 and 1646. Troops
from the Coventry garrison, for example, visited at least twenty townships in Sparkenhoe Hundred during this period. They usually arrived in fairly large numbers, staying one or two nights before going on their way. Captain Flower and Captain Ottway, with their combined troops of around a hundred men, were well known in the region. The townspeople of Sutton Cheney charged the Coventry garrison five pounds for quartering them while the inhabitants of Sheepy Magna claimed double that amount. The largest claim for free quarter was for a force of two hundred and eleven troops and seventy two horses under Colonel Purefoy and Colonel Bosseville, two of the Coventry commanders, when they set up camp at Hinckley to lay siege to Tamworth in the summer of 1643. The townspeople of Hinckley also played host to one of ‘Tinker Fox’s’ celebrated raiding parties when they provided quartering for twenty three horsemen for one night in 1644.

A common source of complaint by local villagers was the requisitioning of horses, variously described by the Parliamentary committee as ‘stoned horses’, ‘black geldings’, ‘old nags’ &c and valued from five pounds down to five shillings each. Between 1643 and 1646 troops from the Coventry garrison are alleged to have taken fifty two horses worth an estimated £289 from Sparkenhoe Hundred, while soldiers from Tamworth made off with at least fifty and the Astley garrison took eleven more. At Bilston on the sixteenth of June 1645, two days after the battle of Naseby, there is record of a claim from Henry Sealey that Captain Bridge’s soldiers made off with one of his horses, leaving a lame one in its place. Most of the requisitioned horses appear to have been fresh mounts taken more or less at random in the heat of battle or flight. Occasionally there may have been a punitive motive. When a detachment of troops from Tamworth visited Appleby parva in June 1646, not long after the surrender of the Ashby garrison, they rode off with ten horses, two belonging to Charles Moore, the lord of the manor, and a mare apiece from each of his tenants. While Moore was no activist, he is suspected of having Royalist sympathies. It is notable that none of the householders in nearby Appleby magna, who were in the main tenants not of Moore but of Bosworth School lands, needed to make a claim for losses on this occasion.

Parliamentary troops also gave orders for feed or ‘provender’ to be carted from place to place, leaving the local inhabitants to claim for reimbursement. Captain Flower, when temporarily billeted at Stoney Stanton, ordered the delivery of twenty strikes of provender by the inhabitants of Burbage and Sketchley, according to the accounts. On another occasion (or at the same time — the accounts are somewhat vague when it comes to dates) his troop ordered two quarters of provender from Stapleton. Coventry forces took twelve strikes of oats
and three of peas from Mr George Turton of Aston Flamville. Warwick forces requisitioned forty nine pounds of cheese from the village of Frolesworth, while the inhabitants of Swinford in Guthlaxton Hundred were instructed to convey provender from there to Leire ‘by warrant from Mr Mills, the quartermaster of Killingworth (Kenilworth) Castle’, which was at that time under the control of the Warwick garrison.

The local Royalist garrisons also issued warrants for provender. One remarkable incident took place on the fourth of February 1645 when Hastings’s beleaguered garrison at Ashby ‘sent out warrants for carriages to fetch hay’ to bring it into the town. According to one Parliamentary commentator the Coleorton garrison, seizing the opportunity, issued their own warrants to bring the hay to Coleorton:

but Hastings was too quick, and had compelled the country to load the hay, and with a strong guard was bringing it to his garrison (when) Captain Temple, the high-sheriff of the county, having notice thereof, with his troop got between them and Ashby . . .

Hastings’s men attempted to escape, but the Parliamentarians took forty of them prisoner, with sixty horses and the entire load of requisitioned hay. The incident reveals how desperate the Ashby garrison was by this time, as the Parliamentarians tightened their control of the surrounding villages.

Accusations of outright plundering were not as frequent as might be supposed. Even the Ashby garrison was probably not as rapacious as it was painted. As Bennett points out, ‘any army which plundered and ruined the country in the manner attributed to Hastings’ crew would not survive very long.’ Sporadic looting, however, of portable items such as horse gear, money and clothing, by both sides, was inevitable. Firearms were particularly prized. The Leicestershire committee was told, for example, that George Nix, a Coventry soldier, stole a pistol worth four shillings from Richard Cooper of Hinckley. In June 1643, following the fall of Tamworth, captain Willington’s men requisitioned two muskets worth two pounds from Robert Tarleton of Shenton, presumably to prevent them falling into enemy hands. Occasionally the public good was used as an excuse for looting, as is revealed in a claim by Mr Belgrave of North Kilworth, who saw himself deprived of ‘saddles, bridles, boots, spurs, swords, . . daggers, belts, . . upon pretence of public service’. William Mousely of Sibberston accuses Colonel Purefoy himself of forcibly taking ‘money lent to the state’s use’. Householders in Ashby Folville complain of having to give small sums of money to soldiers from Warwick upon threat of plunder of their houses, while Astley House troopers stand accused of taking a rapier, a swordbelt and ‘a snapsack’ from old Mr Goodall of Earl Shilton.
Another cause of dissatisfaction, part of the ‘social cost’ of the war, was the practice of hostage-taking. The Ashby garrison took hostages, as we saw at Hinckley, but further confirmation comes from a report of the king’s army setting out from Ashby to lay siege to Leicester towards the end of May 1645. Prince Rupert’s forces, it is said, did ‘very much spoil the county and (impoverish it by) imprisoning and ransoming the men’. Some soldiers from the Parliamentary garrisons were also accused of taking hostages for ransom in Cradock’s account, though usually the amounts involved were fairly paltry sums, presumably settled promptly. The main offender in this regard seems to have been Lieutenant Hunt of the Astley garrison. He allegedly held the constable of Upton until a payment of £1.10.0 was made for his release. Matthew Pone, the constable of Hinckley, and Thomas Keene, of the same town, were imprisoned at Astley House until a ‘fine’ of five pounds apiece secured their release. On another occasion, about Michaelmas 1643, Hunt is said to have forced Francis Orton of Witherley to pay £1.13.4 for his freedom. These petty inflictions seem to have been part of the pattern of intimidation and coercion practised by both sides in an attempt to assert control in the region.

Clearly therefore the garrisons which were set up in the immediate vicinity of south-west Leicestershire, and even somewhat further afield, had a detrimental impact on the lives of the local villagers. Some general conclusions can be drawn from the evidence presented here. Firstly, with the exception of the handful of gentry who attached themselves to the main field armies of each side and the Royalist clergy who sought sanctuary with Hastings, the population at large shewed little enthusiasm for the conflict. Secondly, as the war progressed the collection of levies and taxes for the support of the garrisons put an increasingly heavy financial burden on ordinary villagers, which made them even more anxious for a settlement of the conflict. The reports of armed incursions and pillaging by the Royalists and of forced requisitioning by the Parliamentary garrisons tend to confirm this impression. Finally the physical threat posed by Royalist raiding parties from Ashby, and by Parliamentary troops from as far away as Coventry, served to intimidate the local villagers into ‘neutral’ or passive attitudes, in conformity with those of the majority of the local gentry. The fall of Ashby in March 1646 was a symbolic end to local anarchy and disorders on a wide scale which met with widespread expressions of relief. Yet many in the region who accounted the surrender of Ashby ‘a great mercy and mighty preservation of the peace and tranquillity of all those adjacent parts about it’ would probably have been equally relieved had the tide turned the other way to bring a Royalist victory.
References:

1. *Perfect Diurnal*, November 16, 1644 in J Nichols, ‘Civil War in Leicestershire’, Appendix IV to *The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester*, III ii, 1804, p 39 (all references to Nichols here are to this Appendix)


3. Nichols, p 45

4. *Narration of the siege and taking of the town of Leicester* in Nichols, p. 48; *Calendar of State Papers Domestic*, 1644, p 285


6. *Calendar of the Committee for Compounding*, I, pp 110-11; British Library, Harleian MSS, 2043 No 2, fos 38 & 40; M Bennett, *loc cit*, p 46

7. Petitions to the Commons and Lords, February 15, 1642 in Nichols, p 17

8. Journals of the Lords, October 30, 1643 in Nichols, p 32

9. *Narration of the siege . . . of Leicester* in Nichols, p 47; accounts of the siege and sack of Leicester are reprinted in Nichols, pp 49-54.


11. Report by Chambers and Stanforth to Parliament in Nichols, p 25


13. Vicars in Nichols, p 33; Letter to Lord Grey, March 6, 1644 in Nichols, p 34

14. Commons Journal in Nichols, p 36


16. Nichols, p 26

17. Letter from Ruthvin and Hesilrigg to Commons, and *A true relation of the transaction of the commands of both houses of Parliament in the execution of the Militia in the county of Leicester* in Nichols, pp 22-3
18. Journals of the Lords in Nichols, pp 19-23
19. *A true relation . . . of the Militia* in Nichols, p 23
20. *Narration of the siege . . . of Leicester* in Nichols, p 48
23. PRO, SP 28/136/33
25. Parliamentary Assessments, Sparkenhoe Hundred; PRO, SP 28/161
26. No record found of the amounts of this tax in south-west Leicestershire.
27. Nichols, p 48
28. PRO, SP 28/161. No accounts for the Leicestershire garrisons appear to survive.
29. PRO, SP 28/161. All further references to quartering &c are from this account, unless indicated.
30. For some of Colonel Fox's exploits, R E Sherwood, *op cit*, pp 113-14, 117-18 *et seq*
31. Whitlock in Nichols, p 40
32. M Bennett, *loc cit*, p 48
33. *Calendar of State Papers Domestic, 1644-5*, p 544
34. Vicars in Nichols, p 66
The role of William Stenson in opening up the North West Leicestershire coalfield was paramount but to date has been relegated as secondary to that of George Stephenson. This was almost inevitable, given the fact of Stephenson’s overall contribution to the nineteenth century. Samuel Smiles, who published his *The Life of George Stephenson* in 1858, did as much as anyone to portray the development of this coalfield as being solely due to Stephenson’s arrival in the area for the planning and building of the Leicester and Swannington Railway. He wrote of Stephenson’s success, ‘When a depth of 166 feet had been reached’, in boring through ‘a dyke of fused granite’ which was a ‘formidable difficulty . . . , — one which had baffled former sinkers, and deterred them from further operations.’¹ Previously contemporaries of both Stephenson and Stenson who were present during the development of the coalfield were painting the picture of its foundation being solely due to Stephenson’s efforts. George Vaughn, who was the Stephensons’ trusty steward of the Snibston collieries from their inception in 1832 to his retirement in 1874, commented at the 1845 Annual Meeting of the shareholders of the Leicester and Swannington Railway that ‘it was certainly owing to Mr. Stephenson’s energy, that the Leicestershire Coalfield was opened’.² So less than twenty years after Stenson had established Whitwick Colliery his efforts as the founding father of the coalfield of North West Leicestershire were being neglected and forgotten.
William Stenson was born in Coleorton, Leicestershire in 1770 and married Hannah Varnham of Coleorton in July 1796. Little is known of his early activities until 1809 when he is found to be working as a mine bailiff at Bixslade near Coleford, Gloucestershire. His employers were Thomas Halford and David Mushet, Mushet being the David Mushet of Alfreton, Derbyshire, who at this time had not yet moved to Coleford. It is probable that Stenson had been sent as one of the Derbyshire men whom Mushet had introduced to his mining venture at Coleford in 1809. Stenson continued to live and work in Coleford until about 1824, his daughter Sarah being born there in 1815.

In 1818 Stenson began his first mining venture as a coal master in the partnership of Stenson, Arnold and Bailey which opened a colliery at Bixslade. William Willis Bailey was born at Coleorton and also had lands in Whitwick Parish, Leicestershire. He must have known Stenson very well since they both spent their childhood together in the village of Coleorton and in the partnership articles he described Stenson as his ‘good friend’. The Bailey family had had a long association with mining in the Coleorton area, William Willis Bailey being a mine owner at Coleorton during the 1820’s. In 1814 Stenson had set up house in Coleford, when he leased Mill Cottage from George Dew. It is in connexion with this that the last evidence associating Stenson with Coleford is to be found; a schedule of deeds for this property was made out for William Stenson by the solicitors in 1824.

Stenson reappears again in March 1827 in a newspaper concerning mining developments in Whitwick parish; he is then described as the proprietor of the colliery being developed and as a first rate mineralogist and engineer. A year later in April 1828 a further newspaper report announces the striking of the first seam of coal at Long Lane, Whitwick by Mr Stenson, engineer. This is of course the founding of the colliery later to be called Whitwick Colliery. Stenson was then fifty eight years old. What had brought him back to Leicestershire is not known but in April 1827 he entered into a partnership with James Whetstone of Dudley, Staffordshire and Samuel Smith Harris, a coal merchant of Leicester, as colliery owners, in Stenson & Co. The proportions each partner took in the partnership were set out as three ninths for William Stenson, four for James Whetstone and two for Samuel Smith Harris. James Whetstone immediately sold two of his four shares to his nephew Joseph Whetstone, the substantial spinner of Leicester.

It has long been believed, but not verified, that Stenson established his colliery in Leicestershire through family connexions, much confusion arising from the prevalence of the family name Stinson in both Whitwick
and Coleorton and with the purchase of Stinson lands near to the site of Whitwick Colliery. William Stenson was not directly related to the Stinsons, who were business people and landowners in Whitwick at that time. Evidence is available, however, which appears to link Stenson to the land on which the Whitwick Colliery was first opened. This land was under the control of a wealthy hosier of Coleorton, William Sherwin, who had become the sole surviving trustee of the will of John Bonnet of Whitwick, who had died in 1823. The deeds to this land shew that in 1808 a Samuel Towndrow of Leicester had interests in these lands and a further indenture, dated 1816, shews Edward Towndrow as a party to a transaction concerning the land. William Stenson’s son William Towndrow Stenson may indicate, through his middle name, some family or other connexion to this land.

The relationship between the Whitwick co-partners and John Bonnet’s son Samuel and William Sherwin during the period 1828 to 1833 has not yet been established. It is most probable that Stenson had the lease of the land vested in himself alone; for in January 1833 he purchased the Bonnet lands for £1,590, obtaining a mortgage from Sherwin for £1,100 to do so. The minerals, however, were still reserved to Sherwin as trustee of the Bonnet will.

Stenson was residing in Hugglescote in 1833, almost certainly in one of the cottages attached to the Engine Inn owned by Mr James Shaw. This was opposite to the site of the house he later erected and which he named Coalville House and which was to be his home until his death. In 1837 the grateful residents of Leicester entertained Stenson to dinner at the Bell Hotel in Leicester and, as a token of their appreciation of his pioneering work in developing the Leicestershire Coalfield, presented him with a £50 silver cup. Nearer to home, at Coalville, a subscription was entered into at Mr Potter’s Railway Hotel to erect a tablet at Whitwick to commemorate the opening of coal pits at that place by William Stenson.

Throughout the 1830’s the Whitwick Colliery Company made numerous purchases of both land and minerals in the area surrounding the Colliery. In 1836, for instance, the company purchased six hundred and ten freehold acres at an average price of twenty pounds per acre. Stenson’s ability to meet his share of the required capital became limited, as some time before 1840 he sold one of his three shares to Joseph Whetstone and matters concerning the share capital came to a head in December 1840 when Joseph Whetstone forced Stenson and Samuel Harris to sign a deed of covenant setting out the new shareholdings in the Whitwick Colliery. In this deed Whetstone alleged that Stenson’s two remaining
Lithograph portrait from drawing by H Denham of William Stenson, Engineer: dated Leicester, July 5th 1841
Leicestershire Museums (Negative A.5804)
shares had been advanced by, and remained due to him, Joseph Whetstone. This rearrangement left the shareholdings of the partners in the following proportions: Stenson two, Harris one, James Whetstone one and Joseph Whetstone five. Stensons share was to remain subject to the amount due to Joseph Whetstone, which was not disclosed. Whetstone had thus become the single most powerful partner in the partnership.

Stenson, however, still operated independently of his partners in the development of land in the fledgling town of Coalville. In 1839 William Sherwin’s son William Sherwin the younger conveyed to him twenty seven perches of land which was to become the site of Club Row in Coalville Place. Stenson profited by selling off individual plots of the land to developers who built on the plots and then let the houses to tenants, who were mostly miners working at Stenson’s Whitwick Colliery. James Cort, an ironmonger of Leicester, and John Fields, a shopkeeper of Whitwick, are typical of the trader and merchant class which bought plots from Stenson.

In 1841 there was further speculation as a result of the poor financial situation of Thomas Cooper of Thornton, who had large land holdings in Hugglescote parish. Cooper had been forced by his creditors to sell a large part of his land. One major parcel was that fronting the Long Lane and comprising several closes, in all totalling over eight acres. To purchase this land Stenson again obtained a mortgage, for five hundred pounds, the major portion of the purchase price of six hundred pounds, on this occasion from Thomas Halford of Leicester. It was not until August 1860 that Stenson paid off this mortgage, obviously with the settlement monies obtained from his retirement from Whitwick Colliery. This land, which by then formed part of the main street of the Coalville of the 1860’s, was later sold as directed in Stenson’s will as prime building plots.

In 1860 Stenson, now in his ninetieth year and housebound and infirm, retired from the colliery company partnership and was paid a sum of £6,750 for his share in the estate and interest of land in Stenson & Co and the Whitwick Colliery Company. In addition he was to receive one ton of coal per week delivered to his residence. The Loughborough Monitor described Stenson at the time of his retirement as ‘a master warmly respected by his numerous workmen; and althouth strict and apparently occasionally harsh in his demeanor, he was at all times a sincere friend of the working man’. Stenson lived for a further sixteen months after his retirement. On the twenty seventh of November 1861 he died at his house in Coalville, the town which he had been instrumental
in founding. The *Loughborough Monitor* published a fitting obituary:
The whole country knows that Mr. Stenson was the originator of Whitwick Colliery many years ago, what he made it, and how celebrated he left it; and thousands have, through him been provided with daily bread, and thousands more to this moment continue to enjoy a warm fireside.

No man can question but that he was the founder of Coalville, or that Whitwick, directly or indirectly, through him has grown into importance and profited greatly.

At length, full of years, he was called away, and this great man, in common with all others had to obey the summons. On Wednesday week a solemn paraphernalia stood before his door, the house which once knew him, knew him no more, and the mournful cavalcade, consisting of the hearse containing the body, eight mourning coaches containing his family, his grandchildren, Joseph Whetstone of Leicester, one of his respected partners, with a few friends and a long procession of coal miners, and the tradesmen of Coalville, slowly and sadly wended their way to Hugglescote, where he was interred in the vault that had received his wife 18 years ago. The deceased for several years had been a rigid adherent to the doctrines of Calvin, and was instrumental in rearing a Chapel in Coalville, in which the Gospel continues to be preached. It affords us much satisfaction to find that the aged deceased was respected for the firmness and consistent views he professed, combined with a sense of his own utter unworthiness and unbated trust in that Saviour who sustained him in his dying hours.

Rev. Mr. Foreman, in the evening preached the funeral Sermon, the Baptists kindly lent the use of their Chapel, in order to accommodate the very numerous congregation. The preacher ably discharged his last office for him. To say the deceased had no faults or failing would be a mistake; both sides were fully expatiated on; not a word of exaggeration or suppression relating to his character was supplied or omitted, and the congregation were satisfied with the impartiality of the oration.

In concluding our observation we can only hope that many men may still be raised up to serve their day and generation as well and as faithfully as Mr. Stenson has done.
References:

1. S Smiles, *The Life of George Stephenson, Railway Engineer*, 1858, p 357
2. *Leicester Advertiser*, January 10, 1845
3. Coleorton Parish Registers; Leicestershire Record Office (LRO), DE 1913/9
4. Letter from Halford to Mushet; Gloucestershire Record Office, D2646/99. I am indebted to Dr I Standing and Dr C Hart of Coleford for help in tracing Stenson in Gloucestershire.
5. Census of Population, 1851; Public Record Office, HO 107/2084
6. Conveyance of mines in the late open fields of Whitwick; National Coal Board area headquarters at Coleorton (NCB), Box 100 No 48
8. Schedule of deeds, John Griffith to William Stenson, December 27, 1821; Gloucestershire Record Office, D637/I/45
9. *Leicestershire Advertiser*, March 3, 1827 and April 5, 1828
10. Articles of partnership; NCB, Box 98 No 14
11. LRO, DE 40/50
12. Deed including extract of John Bonnet’s Will; NCB, Box 98 No 17
13. NCB, Box 97 No 10  
14. NCB, Box 97 No 9
15. NCB, Box 97 No 8
16. LRO, Numerical Survey of Whitwick, 1836
17. *Leicestershire Advertiser*, February 25 and April 27, 1837
18. LRO, DE 40/50  
19. NCB, Box 97 No 3
20. *Leicester Advertiser*, June 13, 1840
21. Deeds to Stamford and Warrington Public House, High Street, Coalville; Marston Brewery, Burton on Trent
22. Wyggeston Hospital papers; Manor of Swannington, Free Suitors List, 1860; LRO, DE 2260/10
23. LRO, DE 40/50
25. *Loughborough Monitor*, December 5, 1861
In his recent study of the British coalminer in the nineteenth century John Benson observes that ‘To most contemporaries, and to most historians since, the problem of industrial safety has been seen almost exclusively in terms of fatal accidents and, in particular, of major disasters’ and that this perspective has resulted in an inadequate appreciation of both the omnipotent ‘drip-drip of death’ and the vast number of non-fatal accidents which characterized the working conditions of the industry. ¹ Similarly Helen and Baron Duckham warn us ‘to keep the spectacular catastrophes in perspective . . . death and injury were the daily companions of colliers, the common lot of their existence’. ² There is perhaps a danger, however, of excessively down-grading the significance of the great pit disaster in the history of mining communities. After all, as the Duckhams observe, ‘A colliery disaster strikes and withers a whole community’, particularly in a coalfield which considered itself largely immune from major accidents. ³ The small Leicestershire coalfield, comprising ten collieries employing 6,271 persons in 1898, is an example. Although 245 miners were fatally injured in the coalfield between 1860 and 1909, there was only one major disaster, the Whitwick Fire of April 1898, which claimed 35 of these lives. ⁴ Such was the impact of this single event that it is firmly embedded in the culture of the Leicestershire mining community to this day.

The principal documentary source for studying the disaster is the official government report which reveals that early in the morning of Tuesday the nineteenth of April, 1898 a fire broke out in the main intake of the old main seam at 1,773 yards from the shaft bottom. ⁵ The thirty five victims were suffocated by fumes arising from burning timbers, which had been ignited by heat in the roof caused by ‘gob fires’, though five men managed to escape by running through the burning timbers.

The coal seam was five foot six inches thick and was worked by the long-wall system. The ‘waste’ or ‘gob’ is the area from which coal has been worked as the face is advanced. It was packed with small coal and stone. ‘Gob fires’ are the spontaneous combustion of the waste. They had been a problem in the seam for many years but had always been successfully contained in ‘the usual way’, the burning material being removed and the affected area bricked up to keep it out of contact with the ventilation current passing down the roadway. The deputy on the night shift had inspected and bricked up ‘fires’ prior to the men starting work and the heat from them ‘was not so great as, in his opinion, to
require special attention'. The outbreak occurred, however, in an area in which the 'fires' had posed a real threat to its safe working three months earlier and it appears, too, that there had been considerable discussion among the men as to the likelihood of the timbers being ignited and these fears had been communicated to the management. Despite the men's concern, however, the mine manager, Thomas Hay, had not inspected the area since the first of April. Moreover the consultant mining engineer for eighteen years, George Lewis, who visited the colliery about once a week on average to consult with the manager on the general problems of running the colliery 'efficiently and safely', had not actually been down the mine for two years.

The Report completely rejected suggestions that the fire might have been caused in some way by the workers on the night shift misusing their candles or smoking but concluded that 'the question is not one of breach of rule, but is one of foresight on the part of those charged with the care and direction of the mine'. Indeed the distinguished authors of the Report emphasized that 'There was a potentially dangerous situation and we do not think that either Mr. Hay or Mr. Lewis appreciated its gravity and merely considered that the gob fires could be easily dealt with in the ordinary way. It appears to us probable that if the circumstances had been duly weighed precautions may have been taken, perhaps, a diversion of the main road away from the gob fires, or the substitution of brick arching or iron supports and cross-bars for timber in the main road'. In retrospect it seems fortunate indeed, given this lack of foresight on the part of the management, that the fire occurred on the night shift when only forty miners were employed, rather than the day shift when over a hundred more would have been at work. George Lewis only 'reluctantly accepted the theory that the fire was in some way caused by gob-fires'. In contrast two members of the executive of the national union, the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, who attended the inquest, claimed that 'It seems there was only one official, Mr. Limb, the deputy, in charge of the mine at night, and that he, having to examine the whole of the mine each night, could not exercise sufficient watchfulness upon the dangerous area ... we are thoroughly satisfied that there has not been sufficient care exercised, that someone should always have been in exclusive charge of that dangerous part of the mine, and we feel confident that it is a case for compensation under the Employers' Liability Act.' The Miners' Federation agreed to pay the legal costs incurred in fighting the compensation case.

The local newspaper, the Coalville Times, is also a valuable source of evidence on such matters as the proceedings of the inquest, the findings of the official enquiry, the heroism of the rescue operations and the fund
established to raise financial support for the dependents of the deceased. ¹⁰ These conventional sources for studying the Disaster are, however, essentially one-dimensional in that they only reveal the ‘public face’ of the event. The historian must seek other sources to examine occurrences ‘behind the scenes’ and he is fortunate in the Whitwick case to have access to the Diary of the Coalville and District Miners’ Association, the forerunner of the Leicestershire Miners’ Association. This recently discovered document is introduced with the words: ‘This book was Provided in June 1891 for the Purpose of Entering all Important Changes that may take place in this district whether for or against the Interest of the workmen, and for sufferance at any future time.’ Entries were made by the first two full-time officials of the Union, Thomas Chambers and Levi Levett, and cease in 1919. ¹¹

This source reveals that the initial unity between both sides of the industry in the face of the calamity, highlighted in the newspaper accounts and symbolized by the rescue operations, soon evaporated over the question of liability and compensation payments to dependents (see Diary Extracts 1, 2, 4 & 5). Of particular interest here is the involvement of the chairman of the disaster fund, T H Heward, the manager of Coleorton colliery, who pressed the Union to accept an out of court settlement that gave the dependents a far lower level of compensation than legal counsel initially applied for in the courts. The Union settled for £910 in compensation (£35 each for 26 persons), when it had earlier intended to claim £5,350 (£205 each) (6, 7 & 8). The Diary reveals, too, that the Union’s only full-time salaried official, Thomas Chambers, was no typical union bureaucrat, as he preferred the perils of the rescue operations to the safety of his arm-chair (1 & 2). He was nonetheless subsequently unable to prevent the Union’s governing body from taking an unsympathetic attitude towards those members made temporarily unemployed because of the disaster (3). The Union was also strongly asserting during its membership drive of the later 1890’s that it was able to obtain higher levels of compensation for its members than an individual employee could obtain acting on his own initiative. ¹² The Diary illustrates the way in which the distribution of the compensation payments was stage-managed by the Union to further this impression and notes the Union’s refusal to assist solicitors acting for the families of non-members killed in the Disaster (9 & 5). In short the Diary reveals that antagonism, hard bargaining, self-interest and perhaps chicanery were as much a part of the Whitwick Disaster as the heroism and generosity enshrined in the public and popular accounts of the event.
Diary Extracts:

1. *Whitwick Colliery Disaster, Underground Fire* (April 19th)

   Early on Tuesday morning 19th April 1898 a fire occurred about 2.30 in the No. 5 Pit upper main seam of the Whitwick Colliery, according to information obtained from the Manager "Mr. J. G. Hay" the Seat of the fire was 1773 yards from the Shaft Bottom. About 8 am the Miners Agent received the information of this Fire and the night men was on the other side of it, the Agent at once went to the pit and found the report to be true, and got permission to go down the pit and went to the fire, the fire was burning fiercely, and the burning timber and debris was falling to an alarming extent. Every effort was being made to get over the top of the fall to rescue the men but to no effect, the fire was gaining ground on them. Seeing the condition in which the poor men were placed in, the Agent made three different attempts to get up the return airway through what is called "Clamp Cabin" but each time failed on account of the dense smoke and sulphur. It was quite clear to any experienced man that the persons on the other side of the fire was dead, 35 persons were entombed.

   Afterwards later in the day a meeting was held in the Colliery office by the Mines Inspector, the officials of the Colliery and the Managers from all round the district. It was decided to abandon all effort to rescue the men, and to build a stopping to prevent the air from getting to the fire.

2. *Nine Bodies Recovered* (April 22nd)

   The Exploring Party including Mr. Hepplewhite, Assistant Inspector, Mr. Lewis Jun., Mr. Hay, Manager, and the miners agent T. Chambers and a large number of workmen went down to the Pit on Friday morning about 10.00 o'clock. An examination was made at the Stopping which was built 115 yards from the Fire. Also iron pipes were built in the stopping so as to convey the smoke after the reversal of the air current into the return airway below where the Exploring party entered the return. Mr. Orchard, Manager Nailstonewood, was placed at the Box to give the nature and temperature of the air current every 15 minutes.

   The Exploring party started down the return airway, Mr. Hay, Manager, Mr. Hepplewhite, Inspector, at the front. Slow but safely did we travel, every nook and crevice was examined. A man was stationed at certain distances along the return as far as the Explorers went and every 15 minutes the Telegraph was sent from one man to the other until it reached the men in front, the first body found was that of "Chas Clamp"
in my opinion lay about 70 or 80 yards from the main intake if he could have travelled a few more minutes he would have been saved.

The 9 bodies recovered this day was as follows: Charles Clamp, Joseph Shaw, William Davis, John Elliott, Albert Limb, Thomas Greasley, Joseph Hings, John Platts and William Belcher.

3. Council Meeting of the Coalville & District Miners Association
(April 30th)

The workmen of the Whitwick Colliery made an application to the above Council for a weeks pay from the Association on consideration that they had been away from work “Six” clear days from “Tuesday to Tuesday” on account of the Fire at No. 5 Pit.

After due consideration of the application the Council decided that pay could not be granted according to Rule 44 which reads — And no person shall receive support until he has been away from work “Six” clear days from his last payment — Accordingly the application was dismissed.

4. Whitwick Colliery Disaster — Adjourned Enquiry at the Masonic Hall, Coalville (May 17th)

The Enquiry commenced at 10 am on Tuesday morning and lasted until late on the following Friday. Plans of the workings and report books were produced.

Joseph Limb, Night Deputy, was first examined and he underwent a most strict and long examination. Also the Manager and the Under Manager, the Agent “Mr. Geo. Lewis” and the Deputies. Also the 5 persons who came through the fire and other workmen who were not in the pit when the fire occurred, were strictly examined by all the legal representatives.

In fact an exhaustive enquiry was made as to the cause of the fire and how it might have been prevented.

At the close of the Enquiry the following is the Jury’s Verdict:

We agree that the men were suffocated by carbon-monoxide gas from a fire which originated in the Main Road of Number 5 Pit at the Whitwick Colliery on April 19th, 1898 in consequence of the faulty nature of the strata. The fire travelled to the timber in the roof from the gob. We agree that we have not had sufficient evidence before us to prove culpable negligence on the part of any person. We agree to recommend greater precaution to be exercised by the more regular attendance of the Head Officials upon any site wherever gob fires exist. And that steel girders be used instead of timber wherever practicable. Also, that all dangerous
places in any Main Road be encased by brick inverted arches. Also, that all return airways be traversed more frequently both by men and boys.

5. (Letter to Mr. Thomas Chambers, Miners Agent, Coalville, from Clifford and Perkins, Solicitors, Baxter Gate, Loughborough, June 8th)

re Whitwick Colliery Disaster

In confirmation of our conversation with you this morning we beg to inform you what has been done and what has transpired since the conclusion of the inquest on the 20th ult. Immediately after the inquest was over we had a short consultation with Mr. Atherley-Jones who was decidedly of opinion that there was a good cause of action against the Colliery Company for negligence under the Employers Liability Act. We subsequently received written instructions from Messrs Haslam and Parrott to give the necessary notices to the Company of the accident which is required by the above mentioned Act to be given within 6 weeks of the date of the accident and they suggested that instructions should be obtained from all the widows and relatives of the deceased men who were members of your Association authorising us to give such notices on their behalf. We accordingly prepared a retainer which we handed to you for signature by the widows and relatives and subsequently received the same duly signed by the representatives of all the deceased men who were in your Association except those who had been represented at the inquest by Sir Thomas Wright & Son or by Messrs Owston Dickinson & Simpson the Colliery Company’s solicitors. We thereupon gave the notices to the Company (28 in all) and there the matter rested until yesterday when we received from the Solicitors to the Company a letter as follows:— "Referring to the 28 notices sent by you to the Whitwick Colliery Company Limited claiming compensation we are instructed to inform you that the Company repudiate all liability in reference to such claims. Yours truly, Owston Dickinson & Simpson". We have also received a letter from Mr. Haslam dated 4th inst. in which he says "The Miners Federation of Great Britain are responsible for law charges from the date of Mr. Chambers’ telegram April 25th up to and including the completion of the inquest. The Leicestershire Miners Association are expected to go in for compensation and if the case should need to go and should go to appeal then at that point the Miners Federation of Great Britain would again become responsible for the costs". We now propose to lay the case before Mr. Atherley-Jones to advise upon the whole case and as to the course he should advise to be adopted with reference to bringing the action for compensation and on receipt of his opinion we will communicate with you again. We may add that we have received a letter from Mr. J. J. Sharpe who states that he is instructed on behalf of some of the widows and relatives and
suggesting that we should co-operate with him in any proceedings that may be necessary but we have replied that we cannot consent to any arrangement by which the materials and information obtained by us at enormous expense to our clients can be utilized by other persons without special instructions to do so.

6. Mr. F. H. Heward, C.C., Hugglescote

Viz, Whitwick Colliery Disaster

At this period every preparation was made between the Solicitors "Messrs Clifford & Perkins" and the Association, to sue the Whitwick Colliery Company in the County Court under the Employers Liability Act for Compensation for the loss of Life caused by the Gob Fire at the above Colliery on the 19th April, 1898.

A Relief fund had been opened and over £6,000 had been Subscribed and there was a rumour about, that if Litigations was resorted to by the Association or Federation the large Subscribers would have something to say as to how the money was going to be dealt with.

This rumour was no doubt the outcome of the following letter from Mr. F. H. Heward, to the Miners Agent.

(Letter to Mr. Chambers, Miners Agent, Coalville, from F. H. Heward, November 21st)

My position as Honorary Secretary to the Whitwick Relief Fund Committee brings me in contact with a large number of people who are interested as Subscribers to the Fund in its ultimate application being of such a character as to command everybodys approval, you know something of the difficulties which are apprehended in various directions if the Miners Federation press their claim. You know also my views as expressed in my letter to the Treasurers of the Coal Exchange Fund. From that position I shall not be likely to depart, but I am strongly impressed that the time has come when those who are responsible should be brought face to face with some of the facts which might be held to justify an attempt to compromise being made which would possibly avoid any Litigation and at the same time add more to the Provision already made for the Widows and orphans than Litigation would give and save them and all the Community from the raising of questions which under any circumstances would be very painful. If yourself, or your Council or Federation, or Solicitors, or anyone in Authority to speak like to see or hear me on the subject I am prepared to seek a way out of the very difficult position in which we are all placed by the present appearance of things, I have no authority for writing you in this way, but I can see trouble ahead for your Clients as well as for every body concerned if
this Litigation goes on to its bitter end. I have nothing to gain or lose by writing you.

7. Special Committee Meeting
Mr. F. H. Heward, Attended (November 30th)

Mr. F. H. Heward, met the above Committee at the Railway Hotel, Coalville, and said that he understood that the Miners Association or Federation was going to Sue the Whitwick Colliery Company for Compensation for the loss of Life caused by the Fire at the above Colliery, and in his sphere of life in going about the County as he did, He came in contact with a large number of people who was interested in this matter as Subscribers to the Fund which had been accumulated for the Benefit of the Widows and Children, and after hearing their expressions “rightly or wrongly” He thought that if the Two Great Parties concerned could possibly be brought together, some arrangement might be arrived at which would be a Greater Benefit to the Widows and Children and all Parties concerned than resorting to the cruel ordeal of Litigation and he was willing to use his best endeavours to get them together if the Committee was willing.

The President informed Mr. Heward, that the Committee had not that Power at present, but they would talk the matter over and see what would be done, and would inform Him as soon as possible. The President thanked Him and, Mr. Heward, withdrew.

The Committee afterwards considered the matter over and decided to call A Special Council, and ask for Power to Settle the Question without resorting to Litigation.

8. Meeting between the Directors of Whitwick Colliery, and the Special Committee of the Association (December 15th)
“F. H. Heward, C.C., Chairman”

This meeting according to arrangement was held on the 15th inst. at the (Royal Hotel, Leicester), between the Special Committee, and the Directors of the Whitwick Colliery.

The Committee worked hard to make the best terms they could for the benefit of the Widows and Children. A long discussion and several suggestions and adjournments took place between the Committee and the Directors, and after a long and Tedious Sitting the following Settlement was Agreed to very reluctantly by the Committee:— The following are the Committee Messrs. L. Lovett, Jas. Glover, T. Chambers, Jno. Taylor, Jno. Blower, Jas. Burton and F. Clay.
Terms of Settlement

Ashby de la Zouch County Court
Brooks and others v. Whitwick Colliery Co. Ltd.
Plaints B1579 to 1604 inclusive

The Whitwick Colliery Co. Limited to pay into Court the sum of £35 including costs in each of the 26 actions such sum to be accepted in full settlement of the plaintiff’s claim against the defendants.

The Defendants to supply 8 tons of coal per annum to each of the Widows of the deceased men as long as they are Householders and conduct themselves in a proper manner and are entitled to payment from the Benevolent Fund as Widows such widows to pay a sum of 2s/6d per ton for such coal delivered free at their residences within a radius of 3 miles as the crow flies from the Whitwick Colliery Company’s Colliery and in case of any dispute as to whether the coal is to be continued to be supplied or not such dispute to be referred to the Committee of the said Benevolent Fund whose decision shall be final.

9. Whitwick Colliery Disaster
The £35 paid to the Widows and Relatives of the Deceased Persons who were Killed at the above Colliery on the 19th April 1898 (Feb 3rd 1899)

The Agent visited the whole of the Widows and Relatives of the Deceased persons who were Members of the association, and requested them to attend at the (Masonic Hall, Coalville) on this date for the purpose of receiving the £35 each which was agreed between the Committee and the Directors of the above Company, 26 in number and they all attended.

The Solicitors, Messrs Clifford & Perkins, and the whole of the Special Committee were present, and after a very appropriate and Brief Address from Mr. Clifford, the £35 was handed over to each of the Widows and relatives: — with the exception of the Two Cases. Viz — (Wileman & Bostock) in the Case of Wileman there was neither, Father or Mother, and the Widow Bostock was Mother-in-Law to the Children left:-

The Committee through the advice of the Solicitors apportioned the money in these Two Cases . . .

All the Widows and Relatives of the Deceased were well Satisfied with the amount of money obtained and the manner in which the matter had been arranged and settled by the Committee without resorting further into Law:

Except in Wileman’s case and the oldest Son wanted to have the whole of the £35 which was wisely refused by the Committee and the younger children protected as previously reported.
The Whitwick Colliery Disaster, 1898: the gathering at the pithead as local h
Hearses collect the corpses of some of the thirty-five victims.

Leicestershire Record Office, DE 1377 (Negative A.3203)
References:


3. *Ibid*, p 14


5. *Reports by Chester Jones and A. H. Stokes on the Circumstances Attending and Underground Fire which occurred at Whitwick No. 5 Colliery, Leicestershire in the Month of April 1898*, Cmd 4928


7. *Ibid*, p 7

8. *Ibid*, p 8

9. Miners' Federation of Great Britain, *Reports of Inquiries Into the Causes of Explosions and Other Serious Accidents From 1890 to 1908*, pp 42-3

10. *Coalville Times*, 22 April, 29 April, 6 May and 25 November 1898

11. C P Griffin, ‘The Diary of the Coalville and District Miners’ Association’, *East Midland Bulletin of Local History*, XVIII, 1983, pp 37-41; original document held at the National Union of Mineworkers (Leicester Area) headquarters, Bakewell Street, Coalville, Leicestershire

REPORTS

EAST MIDLANDS HISTORY FAIR IN LEICESTER

The idea of the county local history fair, at which archaeological societies, local history groups and individuals can have stalls and advertise their activities by mounting exhibits and selling their publications, has been current for some years. The vision of staging a history fair for a whole region such as the East Midlands, however, is mainly due to the foresight and determination of our Honorary Secretary Kate Thompson, based on her post as County Archivist at the Record Office. The project was supported by the British Association for Local History, but she had to set up the organization from scratch and make most of the arrangements herself. Now that the week-end event held in Leicester on the seventeenth and eighteenth of May 1986 has established the success of the venture it will not be such a task to mount the successive fairs proposed to be held at Lincoln next year and then Nottingham.

The Leicestershire Local History Council was represented at its stall and naturally most of the local stalls were occupied by Leicestershire and Rutland organizations and groups, a creditable proportion of the ones on our list. The Museum of Technology site proved a very suitable venue, as the event was also in effect another Museum ‘steam day’, with all sorts of additional attractions, including craft stalls, Morris dancing, early music recitals and Civil War manoeuvres. This meant that stallholders were continually dealing with queries and comments from casual visitors, some of whom were intrigued to find out how much detailed research is being done by amateur groups.

Apart from bringing the whole range of activities to the attention of a wider public through the general publicity of the week-end, one of the most interesting aspects of the event seems to have been the opportunity of comparing notes between groups and individuals attending. A member of one village local history group brought the group to our notice and was then surprised to discover from our list that there is a group working in the very next village.

Now that the East Midlands History Fair has been established and has every chance of becoming a regular annual event, it is to be hoped that Leicestershire societies and groups will find it worth continuing to support the enterprise in other counties in the region. Lincoln Castle should prove a fascinating venue for it next summer.

J G
The creation of the new Harborough Museum within the Harborough District Council Offices, the converted Symington factory, has provided a focus for existing groups in the area and has helped inspire much new activity and research. The Market Harborough Historical Society and the Market Harborough Local History Research Group are both based on the Museum, which is also the object of the Harborough Museum Society. On the ninth of November 1985 a one-day conference was held to draw together the wide range of interested groups and individuals in the area to compare their work and discuss future plans.

The morning session, after the welcome by the Chairman of the Market Harborough Historical Society, Dr. Geoffrey Brandwood, was a talk on 'The current local history scene and the role of local societies' by Dr David Hey of Sheffield University. Having been formerly at the Department of English Local History at Leicester University he enlivened the study of the area by making comparisons and contrasts with other areas and local group activities, especially in Derbyshire.

The afternoon session was made up of a dozen contributions by members of local groups reporting on their projects. Topics covered included starting a group, field-walking, photograph collections, oral history recording, video recording, using probate inventories and publishing. Foxton Inclined Plane Trust members are rebuilding the steam engine house as a museum. 'Harborough and the Great War' has proved a surprisingly fertile field of research for Barry Summers, not only from reminiscences and diaries but also from letters and reports to the local newspaper.

Apart from Leicestershire and Market Harborough societies, local groups represented were from Husbands Bosworth, Oadby, Foxton Inclined Plane and Great Easton, Bringhurst and Drayton. The curator had obtained the use of the Council Suite for the day, which provided ample room for circulation and discussion outside the sessions and for viewing several enterprising exhibits mounted by groups to shew the work they are engaged in.

The day was arranged under the auspices of Leicester University's Department of Adult Education, in co-operation with the Market Harborough Historical Society. In fact much of the initiative and
organization was due to Sam Mullins, the Harborough Museum curator. The enthusiasm of the groups and individuals attending did credit to his continuing work in animating various lines of research among local groups in the town and area.

J G

THE LEICESTER ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVE

This is an ambitious project aimed at compiling an oral record of the working and social lifestyles of Leicestershire people. Contacts with interviewees have been made in many different ways, through organizations, by advertising and by word of mouth. Interviews are recorded in their own homes and then transcribed, catalogued and stored in the archive.

Memories secured in the form of spoken rather than written word have the advantage of helping in the study of local speech and often deal with types of impression which otherwise would go unrecorded. In the three years of collecting to date the archive has already become a store of information on a wide selection of city topics, which makes it a valuable source of primary information for historians of all kinds. It is one aim of the project, however, to make the material of more general use, for example to therapy groups for the elderly, drama groups and local radio. Members of the project give talks on the subject to historical and other groups.

At present the scope of the archive is being extended to cover aspects of life throughout the county and people with memories of village life and agriculture before 1945 are being sought out for interviewing.

One way in which the material is being made more generally available is by compiling cassettes covering different topics from edited extracts from different interviews. There are already thirty three city topics in the catalogue and copies are available at the very reasonable price of one pound each (postage and packing extra).

The project is sponsored by Radio Leicester under a Community Programme contract with the Manpower Services Commission and is based at the premises of Age Concern at Clarence House, 46 Humberstone Gate, Leicester, from where further details and copies of the cassettes are available.

J G
LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETIES

a. Periodicals
b. Occasional publications
c. Member of Leicestershire Local History Council

b ANSTEY Archaeological Group
   Mr M Kerr, 81 Falcon Road, Anstey, Leicester

ASHBY-DE-LA-ZOUCH Local History Society
   Mrs Balderstone, 12 Tower Garden, Ashby-de-la-Zouch

bc ASHBY-DE-LA-ZOUCH Museum
   13/15 Lower Church Street, Ashby-de-la-Zouch

b BARKBY Local History Group
   Mrs Pick, Manor Farm, Barkby, Leicester

ac Herricks and BEAUMANOR Society
   Mr D A Cumming, 18 Victoria Road, Woodhouse Eaves, Loughborough

ac BRINGHURST, GREAT EASTON and DRAYTON Local History Society
   Mr R J Bryant, 10 Musk Close, Great Easton, Market Harborough
   Newsletter

bc CASTLE DONINGTON Local History Society
   Mr B M Townsend, 7 Borough Street, Castle Donington, (Derby)

c COALVILLE and DISTRICT Local History Society
   Miss L Oglesby, Coalville Library, High Street, Coalville, Leicester

c CROFT Local History Group
   Mrs Harrison, 5 Pochin Street, Croft, Leicester

c DESFORD and District Local History Group
   Mrs Fuller, 26 Kirkby Road, Desford, Leicester

bc DUNTON BASSETT Local History Group
   Mr A C Taylor, 3 Station Road, Dunton Bassett, Lutterworth

EARL SHILTON and District Local History Society
   Mr P Lindley, Hinckley Library, Lancaster Road, Hinckley

bc EAST MIDLANDS Study Unit
   Dr M Palmer, Department of History, University of Loughborough

b EVINGTON Local History Society
   Miss A Sharpe, Evington Library, Evington Lane, Leicester

FLECKNEY, KILBY and SADDINGTON Local History Group
   Mrs D West, 69 Coleman Road, Fleckney, Leicester
FOXTON Inclined Plane Trust  
Mr D Goodwin, Bottom Lock, Foxton, Market Harborough

FRISBY-ON-THE-WREAKE Historical Society  
Mr R Pinfold, 2 Hall Orchard Lane, Frisby-on-the-Wreake, Melton Mowbray
Newsletter

GLENFIELD and WESTERN PARK and District Archaeological and Historical Society  
Mr A Huscroft, 50 Chadwell Road, Leicester
Newsletter

GROBY Village Society  
Mrs J Thornton, 7 Chapel Hill, Groby, Leicester

HINCKLEY Local History Group  
Mr D F Allinson, 97 Leicester Road, Hinckley
The Hinckley Historian

HUSBANDS BOSWORTH Historical Society  
Mrs B James, The Coppice, Mowsley Road, Husbands Bosworth, Lutterworth
Bygone Bosworth

IBSTOCK Historical Society  
Mrs S Cattell, 11 Laud Close, Ibstock, Leicester

KEGWORTH Village Society  
Mrs B Moore, April Cottage, 20A New Street, Kegworth, (Derby)
Cogwords

KIMCOTE and WALTON Village History Society  
Mr D V Allaway, Fairhaven, Poultney Lane, Kimcote, Lutterworth
Friends of KNAPTOFT  
Mr D McQuone, 14 Shanklin Avenue, Leicester

KNossington Local History Group  
V Wood, Church View, Knossington, Oakham

LEICESTER Family History Society  
Miss Brown, 25 Home Croft Drive, Packington, Ashby-de-la-Zouch

LEICESTER Literary and Philosophical Society  
Dr G Lewis, 3 Shirley Road, Stoneygate, Leicester
Transactions

VAUGHAN Archaeological and Historical Society  
Miss D C Valentine, 29 Walton Street, LEICESTER
Transactions

LEICESTERSHIRE Archaeological and Historical Society  
The Guildhall, Leicester
Transactions.
a LEICESTERSHIRE Industrial History Society  
   Dr M Palmer, 54 Chapel Street, Measham,  
   (Burton upon Trent)  
   Bulletin  

bc LEICESTERSHIRE Libraries  
   Thames Tower, Navigation Street, Leicester  

ac LEICESTERSHIRE Local History Council  
   The Record Office, 57 New Walk, Leicester  
   The Leicestershire Historian  

a LOUGHBOROUGH and DISTRICT Archaeological Society  
   Mr J P Brownlow, 31 Cowdray Close, Loughborough  
   Bulletin  

c The HARBOROUGH Museum  
   Mr S P Mullins, Council Offices, Adam and Eve Street,  
   MARKET HARBOROUGH  

a MARKET HARBOROUGH Historical Society  
   Mr T Heggs, Harborough Museum, Market Harborough  
   The Harborough Historian  

MARKET HARBOROUGH Local History Research Group  
   Mr S P Mullins, Harborough Museum, Market Harborough  

c MELTON MOWBRAY and DISTRICT Historical Society  
   Mr C Bowes, 7 Palmerston Road, Melton Mowbray  

c MELTON MOWBRAY Local History Research Group  
   Mr J Clayton, High House, 140 Burton Road, Melton Mowbray  

Friends of MELTON MOWBRAY Museum  
   Mr N H Archer, Dapcote Road, Melton Mowbray  

a Friends of MOIRA Furnace  
   Mr B Waring, 11 Ashby Road, Moira, (Burton upon Trent)  
   The Crucible  

c NEWBOLD VERDON Archaeology and Local History Group  
   Mr M Harding, 57 Arnold Crescent, Newbold Verdon,  
   Leicester  

NEWTON HARCOURT Society  
   Mr J Goddard, The Manor House, Newton Harcourt, Leicester  

bc OADBY Local History Group  
   Mr B Elliott, 17 Half Moon Crescent, Oadby, Leicester  

a OLD UNION CANALS Society  
   Mr R Wild, 1 The Green, Lubenham, Market Harborough  
   Union  

bc REARSBY Local History Society  
   Mrs H Jordan, 30 Mill Road, Rearsby, Leicester
RUTLAND Field Research Group
   Rutland County Museum, Catmose Street, Oakham, Rutland

b  RUTLAND Local History Society
   Mr A R Traylen, Rutland County Museum, Catmose Street, Oakham, Rutland

abc RUTLAND Record Society
   Mr B Matthews, Colley Hill, Lyddington, Oakham, Rutland
       Rutland Record

bc SHEPSHED Local History Group
   Mrs L McDermott, 86 Conway Drive, Shepshed, Loughborough

c SOMERBY Local History Group
   Mr R Mellows, The Carriers, Chapel Lane, Somerby, Melton Mowbray

ac WESLEYAN Historical Society, EAST MIDLANDS Branch
   Dr J Waller, 90 Forest Road, Loughborough
       Heritage

bc WHITWICK Historical Group
   Mr G R Hibbert, 81 Parsonwood Hill, Whitwick, Leicester

ac Greater WIGSTON Historical Society
   Mrs D Chandler, 3 Eastway Road, WIGSTON MAGNA, Leicester
       Bulletin

c WOLVEY Local History Group
   Mr D Briant, 5 Hall Lane, Wolvey, Hinckley
THE NORMAN CONQUEST OF LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND: A Regional Introduction to Domesday Book
Charles Phythian-Adams ed Leicestershire Museums, Art Galleries and Records Service 1986 £3.95

There is nothing that approaches the Domesday Book in importance either as the first of the public records or as the most detailed source of information on mediaeval England.

Most local historians have at some time 'made a start' with the Domesday entry for their particular parish; but this has only been generally possible for the last two out of the nine centuries of the book's existence. Antiquarian interest in the eighteenth century led to proposals for a facsimile edition but it was eventually decided to cast special type to reproduce exactly all the abbreviations in the original. The type was designed by the printer John Nichols. The transcription and printing were completed in 1783. This edition, 'monumental, accurate, and complete' remains the standard text for reference.

It is to Nichols too that we owe the first systematic publication of each Domesday entry for Leicestershire, the text extended and translated, in his *The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester*, 1795-1811. In the 1860's the first complete facsimile edition was printed by a new photographic process, photo-zincography. The Leicestershire and Rutland sections were out in 1862 and two years later appeared an extended text with a translation. The first volumes of the Victoria County Histories, *Leicestershire* 1907 and *Rutland* 1908, contain F M Stenton's translation and county commentary. The handiest texts at present available, published by Phillimore under the editorship of John Morris, reproduce in facsimile the eighteenth century text in Nichols's type, opposite a modern translation.

It is one thing to have the original text readily available. Next come the endless problems of interpretation. Local historian will recognize the frustrated reaction to the Victorian facsimile edition, 'no sooner did the
first County appear, than numerous enquiries were made for the means of understanding the quaint and contracted Original; with the very natural remark, "We can't understand it" — "We can't read it." Single entries on their own are practically meaningless. Fortunately Stenton's introduction puts them in county context. Further help comes from the depth of analysis in *The Domesday Geography of Midland England*, edited by H C Darby and I B Terrett, 2nd ed, 1971. The Leicestershire and Rutland sections are edited by D Holly and I B Terrett respectively.

There are few branches of Anglo-Saxon, Viking and Norman studies of England that do not draw on the Domesday Book, but the local historian, grappling with his own particular entries, is easily left in ignorance of the progress made. The ninth centenary has been seized as an opportunity to publish this excellent short review of the whole field of scholarship of direct use to the local historian. The first part is Daniel Williams's general introduction to 'Domesday Book and the Norman Conquest, 1066-1086'. The second part 'Regional Backgrounds to Domesday Book' introduces examples from the two counties throughout, while the third part is a summary of what can be said about the counties in the late eleventh century in the light of the various analyses of the evidence, dealing among other topics with the agrarian economy, rural marketing, churches and the 'City' of Leicester.

Originally planned as a Leicestershire Record Office project, the editorship was entrusted to Charles Phythian-Adams, the Head of the Department of English Local History at Leicester University, at the end of September 1985 and the whole was published by the beginning of March 1986. It bears a few traces of this creditable speed in production, such as the intriguing mis-print concerning 'The substitution of a French for an Anglo-Saxon aristocracy (sic) in the Midlands' on page 23. The system of is an effective way of including specific topics not otherwise assimilated into the text. The diverse subjects are dealt with separately by the different authors but are easily referred to in the list of contents and an ingenious index of Domesday technical terms defined in the text.

This is a rare and very successful example of co-operation between the Leicestershire Museums and members of the staff in several departments at Leicester University. The Museums are to be congratulated on the attractive design and for having abandoned the usual typewriting in favour of justified lines of typesetting. Although only fifty pages in length, and thus easily readable as a whole, this will long provide a really useful work of reference for local historians in the county and a practical teaching resource for schools.

J G
This new account of the history of the East Midlands, defined here as the territory covered by the new frontiers imposed by the Danelaw, includes Bedfordshire and the former county of Huntingdon. Apart from the Derbyshire Pennines, it is a predominantly lowland area, through which passed the roads north and south, with a shifting coastline and many navigable rivers, a useful way in for invaders from northern Europe.

Every aspect of life from the end of Roman Britain to the Norman Conquest is included and great stress is placed on the interaction of land and people. The stages of Anglo-Saxon settlement are reviewed in the light of new archaeological knowledge. The importance of the Christianization of eastern England is stressed, since it owed more to the Roman than the Celtic Church and drew England back within the orbit of the Mediterranean culture. The growing power of the Church reinforced the strength of the rulers and with the extension of monastic land-ownership the Church also developed significant territorial power. Trade and industry developed and Leicester had its own mint. The Viking invasion, after the initial pillage and disruption, brought an increase in trade, industry and commerce in contact with the whole of Europe. Though many questions remain unanswered on the size of the Viking settlement in terms of sheer numbers, there can be no doubt of its lasting influence on the framework of society and the common speech of many parts of the area.

This fascinating and scholarly study is very well illustrated with photographs, maps and diagrams and includes detailed notes and a comprehensive bibliography.

A HISTORY OF LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND
Roy Millward  Phillimore  1985  £8.95

This comprehensive and fully illustrated account of the history of Leicestershire includes the old county of Rutland. Written by a historical geographer, it gives full weight to the interaction of geographical, political and economic factors in the developments which have altered the face of the landscape from prehistoric times until the present day.

In many ways it takes over where Professor Hoskins left off, as it incorporates our new knowledge of the pre-historic, Roman and pre-
Conquest periods. Arranged chronologically, it also includes chapters on special aspects of our history; transport, the coal and hosiery industries, Charnwood Forest and the rapid development of Leicester itself in the last century.

There are some useful maps, plans and photographs, delightful black and white drawings by Helen Millward in the text and a brief select bibliography.

**THE FOLKLORE OF LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND**
Roy Palmer Sycamore Press, Wymondham 1985 £18

This comprehensive account of the myths, legends and customs of the two counties of Leicestershire and Rutland at long last brings together in one volume material from many scattered and often ephemeral sources.

The author casts his net very widely, from myths based on vague historical events, embroidered later with little concern for documented fact or strict chronology, associated with the name of Leicester, Richard III or Charles I (who seems to have slept all over Leicestershire) to a modern ghost story. Places, landmarks, wells and springs, especially those with so-called healing powers, are all recorded. All aspects of human life, sickness and good health, birth and death, courtship and marriage, have their rituals and superstitions. Many of these are associated with the now vanished rural society, but some were transferred to industrial life; the ‘shifting shilling’, the toll paid by a new worker to his new mates, practical jokes and suggestive wedding gifts, associated with horseplay and laughter. Divorce might have been impossible for ordinary people, but in practical terms there were practical solutions. As late as the last century a discontented husband might sell his wife, often on a basis of agreement by all the parties. An illegal practice; in some cases the seller was prosecuted and in others the new partner was at risk, as in the Rutland incident when the buyer was fined one shilling in 1819.

Markets and fairs, including the hiring fair, which slowly died out during the last century, are very fully described. The Feasts or the Wakes, normally held at some time between Whit Sunday and the end of November, were, until the introduction of public Bank Holidays, the only holidays for many working people. Each place had its own Feast Day, with its own traditional customs, including food and games, often with
a fair at the same time. Feasts, like fairs, were frowned upon by the Victorian middle classes as encouraging idleness and immorality.

Former ways of dealing with crime and punishment are recounted, the pillory, the stocks and the whipping of minor offenders at the cart tail through the streets of Leicester. Murder, then as now, attracted much public attention. Hangings, in public until 1868, were held locally in Infirmary Square and drew large crowds. At one time it was thought that touching the neck of a hanged man was a charm which would ensure good health.

Music and drama were not forgotten as a feature of life; Waits at Christmas, village bands, popular ballads and traditional folk songs. The text is given of two traditional Mummers’ Plays, performed at Christmas or in the New Year on Plough Monday. A scurrilous poem by a disgruntled schoolmaster, describing the inhabitants of Wymondham and printed in 1879, is given as an appendix.

This book, with its many excellent illustrations and extensive bibliography, will surely become the standard work on the subject for the general reader for many years to come.

G K L

LEICESTERSHIRE IN 1777: An Edition of John Prior’s Map of Leicestershire
Leicestershire Industrial History Society, J. D. Welding ed
Leicestershire Libraries and Information Service 1984 £3.50

This publication admirably fulfils the need to make more widely available a valuable source of information on the changing landscape of eighteenth century Leicestershire. This aspect is taken up in the commentary, which reflects the industrial interests of the Society’s members.

A coloured reproduction of the whole of the splendid original print, reduced to one ninth, is used as a decoration on the cover. It is a pity it was not printed larger so as to be readable and useful as well. The two dozen map sections, evidently the same size as the original, occupy the right hand pages. They are perfectly legible and are only marred by the manuscript completions of names from adjacent sections. It would have been helpful to shew the edges of the sections with fine lines, with the completions outside in a plain type.

The left hand pages are devoted to the commentary, illustrated with old engravings and forming a useful aid to reading the map, especially where
it picks out features like mines and mills. On non-industrial matters and areas it is less systematic. It fails to note that Kegworth is still shewn as a market town. In the Lutterworth area there are some inaccuracies, including mis-identification of places: the hamlet of Cotes de Val is misplaced and the village of Walcote is not omitted.

There is a well researched introductory biography of John Prior and a section placing the work of his surveyor Joseph Whyman in context. The original list of 264 subscribers, which survives only in a manuscript, is added at the end. To complete the usefulness of this much needed reprint there is a key map to the sections and an index of all the place names included by Prior.

J G

QUARTER SESSIONS RECORDS IN THE LEICESTERSHIRE RECORDS OFFICE
Gwenith Jones Leicestershire Record Office Collections No 2
Leicestershire Museums, Art Galleries and Records Service 1985 £2.75

One of the most important collections in our county record office is formed by the various classes of records of the Quarter Sessions of the Leicestershire Justices of the Peace, not only formal administrative and court papers but also minute biographical details of individuals. The approach to this daunting wealth of material should be made easier by the publication of this summary list of the main collections, which cover mainly from the eighteenth century onwards, and also of associated papers in other collections, for both Leicestershire and Rutland. The list, which is clearly laid out, can on its own do little to clarify the ramifications of the business but is supplemented by information on the various courts and their officers and by explanations of many of the technical terms encountered.

This publication, the second in a new series of guides to the collections in the record office, is enlivened by a few reproductions from the original documents. As an illustration of the diversity of the information they contain, these alone reveal that in my home village of Ashby parva my ancestor John Goodacre and his daughter Sarah were the only people licensed to use hair powder in 1795 and in 1827 Benjamin Stevenson was the keeper of our only public house, the Shoulder of Mutton. Already work on the listing of the Quarter Sessions Rolls by a volunteer group of the Friends of the Leicestershire Record Office is starting to make some of this fascinating material more easily accessible to local historians.

J G
The buildings of Leicester are the theme of Richard Gill’s book, in general those still visible on the ground today, as shown in Chris Dove’s many photographs, though some old illustrations are included to remind us of the many buildings which have been lost, particularly in the present century.

The greater part of the book is concerned in some detail with the development of the streets and buildings of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries we see, or remember, today. It describes the stages by which the town grew out from the mediaeval heart and gives interesting information about the local architects, developers and many little builders who took part in the outward spread of the town. Factories and shops are illustrated as well as the villas and public buildings of the new age of mid-Victorian prosperity. Churches and chapels were the most dominant, often built in the new massive Gothic styles, some like St Andrews with fine spires breaking up the drabness of the modest streets. In the last quarter of the century secular public buildings became imposing looking structures. The new Board schools, in particular, no longer the modest single storey Gothic of the old Church and British Schools, were often two or three storeys high with towers and dominated the terraced streets.

The final chapters describe the way we live now, noting the demolition of whole areas of early expansion, like those round St Margaret’s church and the whole of the Wharf Street area, and the destruction of the old street patterns, to some extent counterbalanced by the creation of whole new housing estates around the city in all directions and of the new satellite township of Beaumont Leys. A fascinating account is given of the Asian contribution to shops and shopping and their new uses for redundant buildings as Hindu temples and Muslim mosques. The author sums up the dominant characteristics of moderation and domesticity which make Leicester such an easy place for the stranger to settle down in.

This book is indeed a most valuable guide to walks around the streets of Leicester.
THE STREET NAMES OF LEICESTER
J D Bennett
Leicestershire Museums, Art Galleries and Records Service 1985 £2

This guide to the street names of Leicester is prefaced by a general introduction and arranged alphabetically under the present name of the street. Every entry contains a brief description of the source, or probable source, of the name and its first recorded appearance in building plans, directories or maps. There was frequently a time lag between the date of the approved building plans and the actual building of the street.

Some well known streets have had several changes of name. Cank Street was originally Shipps Market (i.e. Sheep Market), then Cankwell Lane and Cankwell Street, until acquiring its present name by 1741. University Road was originally Occupation Road, then Victoria Road, after the Victoria Baptist Church at the London Road end, and finally acquired its present name in 1929. These changes in street names, for whatever reason, make the list of former names with their current equivalent a most valuable feature of a very useful guide.

G K L

WEST END AS I REMEMBER IT: Memories of the West End area of Leicester by local people who lived and worked there
Karen Barrow ed
Leicestershire Libraries and Information Service 1985 £1

This booklet of extracts from the ten prizewinning entries in the Leicestershire Libraries second 'As I remember it' competition (Belgrave as I remember it was reviewed in our last issue) covers memories of life in the West End up to the end of the last war. Most of these memories deal with the 1920's and 1930's, though some go back before 1914. Unlike Belgrave, with its nucleus of an old village community, the West End is almost entirely the creation of new urban development at the end of the last century, influenced in the Newfoundpool area by the building of railway houses by the Great Central Railway. The development of the Dannet's Hall estate and then the Westcotes Estate provided space for this outward growth of the West End. Indeed until the 1930's the West End was still very near open countryside, with little building beyond the railway bridge over Narborough Road. The writers or speakers (some of the entries were on tape) depict a great sense of community in the streets; many small shops, local cinemas, chapels, churches, summer time swimming in the Soar and games of every kind in the street. One has the feeling that these houses were of higher quality than the earlier
industrial housing in the Wharf Street area and that the Fosse Road was mainly middle class, with a number of private schools and a higher standard of living. These memories all have one thing in common, a great affection for the West End, the ‘Best End’ of the town, giving an outsider the sense that Leicester, like London, is a collection of villages.

Nicely produced and with delightful illustrations based on old photographs taken before the sweeping changes imposed on the area by new road alignments, this is an excellent record of daily life in Leicester.  

G K L

Samuel Mullins and Gareth Griffiths  The Harborough Series No 2
Leicestershire Museums, Art Galleries and Records Service 1986 £4.50

The core of this book is a series of oral autobiographies of servants gathered at interviews made for the purpose in 1985. It is, however, far more than simply the publication of a dozen reminiscences. Nearly one half is taken up by the authors’ introductory study of the recent history of domestic service, quoting throughout from over two dozen interviews. They emphasize the difference in work opportunities for girls in town and country and touch on the contrasting stigmas of factory work and living in service. In the nineteenth century service was the major occupation for women and, after agriculture, for men too. It reached its peak in the 1870’s and met a decline, the ‘domestic service problem’ before the first World War. The authors note that the popular ‘Upstairs, Downstairs’ image, based on service in large establishments, tends to glamorize the labour and only touches the tip of the iceberg; four fifths of servants were employed in small households to do all kinds of work, very often in worse living conditions, isolated from their contemporaries and with little hope of improving their position.

There are sections on the training for service, on finding jobs, often through agencies, on conditions of work and on the labour-saving devices that came in as fewer servants were engaged. At the end there is a section on the methods and materials of domestic work. These sections are well illustrated with copies of instructions for servants and advertisements for domestic products and appliances, carefully attributed to their sources. There is a neat story recounted by a housemaid of a salesman demonstrating a hoover to her and her mistress. ‘‘Oh’, he said, ‘well of course you must have very good housemaids here because I’m afraid there’s no dust in it’ . . . ’
To make the recorded autobiographies more readable as continuous texts they have been carefully edited and the editing checked with the person concerned. A delightful feature is the surprising range of photographs of servants that supplement these fascinating accounts. Five are from the large establishment at Noseley Hall, including a cheerful one of seven members of the staff ‘during the August ‘spring-cleaning’ while the family was away in Scotland’.

The project to collect the information for this study nearly grew out of hand. Inevitably the memories of local people covered a far wider region than the neighbourhood of Market Harborough and were unrepresentative of servants who lived in smaller households. Even with these drawbacks, which are clearly admitted, this work deserves to sell to a readership wider than the region. Adding to the attractions of the text and illustrations is the really excellent design and production. Although basically in the same format as the first volume in the series, *Forgotten Harborough*, it is in a different class as a publication, from the stylish choice of type faces and headings to the smart green cover.

**J G**

**HIDDEN HARBOROUGH: The making of the townscape of Market Harborough**
Samuel Mullins and Michael Glasson  The Harborough Series No 1 Leicestershire Museums, Art Galleries and Records Service  1985  £3

This is an important contribution to urban history which draws intelligently on a variety of material. It is well known that the sharp increase in the population of cities and large towns in the early nineteenth century, mainly due to immigration from the countryside, led to appalling and crowded living conditions and left a heritage of slums that were for the most part not cleared until well into this century. What is not so well known is that many smaller towns also underwent the same experience. While larger places developed whole new districts of slums that have been the subject of historical studies, here there was little increase in the area covered by the town and the new housing was provided mainly by filling up with small rows of cottages the back yards of the principal premises facing onto the central commercial areas, the high street or the market place. This proximity and inter-dependence of rich and poor is particularly worth examining in the case of a small town like Market Harborough and because this feature of the townscape was not obvious to the outsider the authors have coined their title phrase ‘Hidden Harborough’.

In explaining the origins of this kind of development in the town many
of the expected sources of information have been used, early maps, Census returns, rate books and official reports. Particularly distressing was the fact that the Board of Health Report of 1849 which noted the lack of sanitation, the drinking water coming from contaminated wells and the poor health record of the Harborough yards and courts, was followed by no effective action until the 1880's, when the drinking water was still 'little better than diluted sewage.'

So far the study might have been an account of any one of many similar towns. The reason why this work will be so useful to others is that the authors have seized the opportunity of bringing it to life by illustrating it from two very different sources. Much of this type of housing remained in use into the 1930's, albeit with some improvements such as sanitation and shared water taps, because the schemes for re-housing could not keep pace with demand. The then Sanitary Inspector of the Urban District Council, Bernard Elliott, took the trouble to make an excellent photographic record of the yards and rows. More recently it has been a policy of the new Harborough Museum to build up an archive of recorded reminiscences, which have enabled the authors to draw a vivid picture of what it was like to live in one of these places earlier this century. They touch constructively on nostalgia for the 'community spirit' that was necessary — 'there'd got to be because you're all on one tap' and on overcrowding — 'It must have looked like coming out of the pictures when we were coming out of the houses . . .'

The last section is a record of the hard facts of their research, a gazetteer of the forty eight yards, rows and closes traced, giving the numbers of households and other information and ending up with any traces remaining. In Leicester this phase of development is apparently only represented by one remaining row left standing. In Harborough, apart from a few buildings standing, two of the better rows are still occupied.

It must be said that this work has been let down by the format designed for archaeological reports. The typewritten text and captions have been carelessly pasted up and some passages apparently lost in the process. The numerous illustrations, apart from the photographs by Bernard Elliott from the 1930's, are not attributed to their sources or referred to in either text or gazetteer. The map locating the yards and rows, apparently based on an Ordnance Survey map, would have been more useful if accompanied by a list of their names. These points, however, can detract little from the excitement of reading such a well researched and lively account of one stage of urban development that is all the clearer for having been studied in the case of one typical market town.

J G
More Memories is a sequel to Castle Donington Remembered, a pleasant compilation of old photographs of the village, published in 1984 and reviewed in our last issue. It follows a similar format and consists of a series of photographs and prints arranged in the sequence of a tour of the village approached from Hemington. Short captions are provided describing the location, date and significance of each picture.

The forty photographs have been chosen carefully to provide a balanced and informative illustration of Castle Donington in the early twentieth century. Views of houses, shops, other buildings, local features, people and notable events are all included. The reproduction is very clear. This booklet is also an improvement on its predecessor in the caption content. These are concise, informative and clearly dated. It is pleasing to see photographs which hitherto have been ‘kept in the dark’ made available to a much wider audience. I hope we shall be able to appreciate further publications of this kind in the future.

H E B

NEVILL HOLT: Studies of a Leicestershire Estate
Leicestershire Estate Studies Group, Heather E Broughton ed
Leicestershire Record Office Collections No 3
Leicestershire Museums, Art Galleries
and Records Service 1985 £2.75

A group of students of palaeography classes at the county Record Office have been exercising their skills on the large uncatalogued Nevill Holt collections of documents. Apart from the work of cataloguing, some members of the group have fastened on particular aspects of the collections that interest them. This gathering of their essays does not add up to a coherent account of the family estates in Leicestershire but is a diverse miscellany. One contribution is a translation of a thirteenth century deed for Drayton, with comments on its dating and on the etymology of the field names in it, while another is a transcription of pains and orders regulating Medbourne from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a selection only presumably.

The nearest thing to an overall account is provided by three essays on the family. Heather Broughton unravels the details of manorial succession
from Domesday to the end of the sixteenth century, Mark Gamble takes over to relate some family papers to national events during the Civil War period and Mary Hufford traces the fortunes, mainly declining, of the family from the eighteenth century to the present survivors. There are family trees to illustrate these essays.

Many of the documents are title deeds and the puzzle as to when, if ever, the property concerned belonged to the family, is touched on. Throughout the enthusiasm of the group for their discoveries is evident.

J G

ALEHOUSES OF OADBY
Pauline Buttery and Barry Lount
Oadby Local History Group 1985 £2

Oadby boasts a long history of alehouses. Even as far back as 1538 an inventory records 'malt in the vat' of Roger Lewin. In 1753 Oadby had five registered alehouses, including The Black Dog, The White Horse and The Woolpack, and by 1838 the number had increased to nine. During the last century there have been many changes: two established Oadby inns were demolished to make way for wider roads and large brewing concerns began to take control of more establishments and to 'import' their beer into the pubs which had once brewed their own ale.

This publication opens with an introduction to alehouse history nationally and locally, followed by an account of each of the alehouses that has existed in Oadby. Each account lists the landlords and describes the building and its facilities, illustrated with photographs and documents where available and drawings by Fuzz Pendell. Final chapters are devoted to 'Temperance', 'Ales and Beers' and 'Local Brews and Recipes'.

Oadby Local History Group has eight previous publications to its credit. This new addition must rank as one of the best. The content has been researched thoroughly and is presented in a lively and informative manner.
This booklet was produced to accompany the Local History Exhibition in the village in August 1985. The Foreword states that it is intended not to be a definitive history of Dunton Bassett but to give the reader a ‘flavour’ of past life there.

A concise history of the village provides a good introduction to the main articles, ‘Parish Boundaries’, ‘Agriculture’, ‘Natural History’, ‘Railways’, ‘The Manor’, ‘The School’, ‘The Cricket Club’ and ‘The War’. An interesting plan of the village in the early twentieth century fills the centre pages. These glimpses into Dunton Bassett’s history are enjoyable and easy to read. Some of the more interesting rely on unrecorded information and reminiscence and it is commendable that the group has included these accounts here and thus provided a permanent record of them.

The booklet is illustrated with attractive pen and ink sketches and a pleasing, if not particularly special, cover. More publications like this one, to accompany local events and exhibitions, should be encouraged.

This study is compiled from a number of source documents of the early Victorian period, rate books, census returns, trade directories, parish registers and the rector’s own survey, to provide a ‘valid insight into the community’ of the time. Richard Bird looks at the people of the fields, of the farms, those of rank, the professional people, those of craft and trade and, perhaps the most interesting of all, the others: the keepers of level crossings and tollgates, the hawkers, a ‘Mr. Robinson of the Bengal Civil Service’, dressmakers and washerwomen. The account is not restricted to the people alone; details of the farms and methods of farming, the big houses, the rectory, schools and pubs are also included. A useful appendix, ‘Who was Who in Husbands Bosworth, 1837-1876’, arranged by occupation, completes the book.

Illustrated throughout, this publication is highly recommended to those with family or other interests in the Husbands Bosworth area. It is also a fine example to individuals and local groups of the type of research and publication project which could be undertaken for every parish.
Mr Mackintosh continues to write about Evington in his own individual style. *Bygone Evington* is a guide based on a tour of the village divided into eight groups of buildings. It includes much information from personal memory and over two dozen photographs, which are not reproduced very well. *Royal Leicester* is a genealogical exercise to demonstrate the connexion between Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother and the village through the Burnaby family of Asfordby, Baggrave and Evington. Much miscellaneous information is added and the illustrations end with a *Leicester Mail* photograph of her visit to Leicester in 1928 as the Duchess of York.

**E. PHILLIPS OPPENHEIM, STORYTELLER — 1866 to 1946**

E E Snow  
Evington Local History Society  
1985  
£1.50

Between 1897 and 1943 E Phillips Oppenheim published about one hundred and sixty eight novels and short stories, as well as his autobiography. Immensely popular on the shelves of the circulating libraries of his day, none of them have stood the test of time and they are now curiously ‘dated’. He himself fairly described their quality in a speech to the Wyggeston boys as ‘... still books which you lads may read and pass on to your sisters.’

This booklet describes the years he spent in Leicester as a schoolboy, and then as a young man learning the leather business by day and the craft of writing by night. He lived with his American wife first at Kirby House on Melton Road in Barkby and then at the Cedars in Evington, where he played his part in local affairs. He seldom stayed in one place for long and in 1905 moved to Norfolk, whilst retaining some of his business interests in Leicester. From the 1920’s onwards, apart from the war years, he lived on the Riviera and in the Channel Islands.

Neatly illustrated and with a list in chronological order of his published works, this is a modest tribute to a highly successful practitioner of the craft of popular fiction.
This delightfully written illustrated account of a child’s widening view of the world as he grew up in a large family in West Langton seems effortlessly to recapture the three aspects of his life — the family, the village and the farm.

He describes his parents, his father’s pride in his yeoman status and background, his mother and his brothers and sisters — the eldest already grown up — and his nearest companion, his brother Cyril. His father’s dictum for daily living was ‘Eat well and lie warm’. Eating well was the province of his mother and eldest sister; the hub was the kitchen and the range its centre. Saturday was the day of the big cook, when tarts and pies emerged in a steady stream from the oven, to be completed by the final dough cakes. The days of the week were symbolized by the work done; Monday for washing, Tuesday for the weekly trip to Harborough market, Wednesday for bedrooms, Thursday for downstairs, with its smell of polish and carbolic soap. He slept warm with his brother Cyril on a good feather bed, soothed by the warmth of the kitchen chimney stack. In his childhood consumption was still the scourge of teenagers and his mother’s preventative was never to stop working when doing outside jobs in bad weather and always to strip off wet clothes as soon as the boy came in.

He describes the village street, the two pubs, the church and the chapel, the baker’s and the forge. School was at Church Langton and benefited from the Hanbury Charities. In his childhood the horse was only slowly giving place to the petrol engine and the railway was two miles away.

His father was a grazier with no love for the plough; good grass made good feed and good beasts were his livelihood. Family life revolved round the welfare of the beasts and every child from the age of six had a job to do. Every year brought more jobs and responsibility. Muck-carting, lambing, sheep-shearing and hay-making were landmarks of the farming year. November was the start of the pig-killing operation and great care was given to the distribution of goodies from the pig, a source of good breakfasts throughout the year. Very little actual cash changed hands in his father’s policy of thrifty living. Haystacks carefully thatched and spread throughout the farm were a reserve of both feed and cash and hand-reared calves another source of ready money when needed. Most payments in the village were in kind; an exchange of goods and services dealt with the doctor, the baker and the smith. The traditional barter system gave way very slowly to the cash accounting methods of the
farm as a business which are the order today. The same rule applied in the house; ten tons of coal were bought in every autumn and the fruits from the garden filled the tarts and pies of the Saturday cooking. Plenty of milk, fruit and vegetables ensured good health and the apples, some kept fresh in haystacks, lasted all the year and made for good teeth.

When the author won a scholarship to Harborough Grammar School the pattern of his life slowly changed as he grew away from the farm, but he always retained his own sense of independence of thought and judgement and love of the countryside as a lifelong legacy of his country childhood.

G K L

THROUGH ALL THE CHANGING SCENES: A glimpse of the story of The Methodist Church in Wigston Magna (Frederick Street) Leicester Trinity Circuit
William A Ward The Methodist Church in Wigston Magna 1985 £1.50

This booklet has been prepared to mark the centenary of the erection and dedication of the Frederick Street chapel in Wigston. The history of Methodism in the area, however, commences much earlier, probably in 1819. It is from this early date that the account begins. In its first fifty years the band of Wesleyan Methodists, seventy in number at the most, purchased a plot of land, built two new chapels for worship and completed other minor building projects. How this enthusiasm and expansion has continued to the present day is the main theme of the booklet. Details of the Sunday School, the prominent members of the congregation, the place of Frederick Street in the local circuit and administration and the growth of social activities are included and amplified throughout.

This is a very well researched publication and offers far more than a glimpse of the history of Methodism in Wigston. The presentation and pleasant approach make the book a worthwhile addition to any local historian’s reading list.

H E B
The format of the Museum series is used to its best advantage in these publications, which deal with two of the most interesting methods of archaeological research to have been developed in recent years as alternatives to actual excavation.

James Pickering has been taking aerial photographs since 1938 and has pioneered the identification of numerous previously unknown sites in the Midlands by means of crop and other marks visible only from the air. The core of his joint publication with Robert Hartley, which summarizes the evidence for Leicestershire and Rutland, is a gazetteer of over two hundred sites identified up to 1984, each with a brief description, the Ordnance Survey reference and a sketch plan. Copies of all the original photographs form part of the Leicestershire Sites and Monuments Record at the Jewry Wall Museum.

There is a short section on the general archaeological background by periods. James Pickering’s own account of the history of the photographing of these fugitive traces, visible from above only occasionally and for short times, makes fascinating reading. His section on Leicestershire crop marks helps put the present stage of discovery in perspective and reminds us that many of the questions raised by this new class of evidence are still open to re-interpretation.

Peter Liddle’s Community Archaeology is written as a practical handbook for people interested in the activities of the score of local groups helping to build up the Leicestershire Sites and Monuments Record by means of work in the field. There are sections on earthwork-surveying, hedge-dating and the help to be gained from aerial archaeology and documentary research. The principal section, however, deals with the theory and practice of the activity of field-walking. Following recent ploughing by systematic searching a group can gather valuable evidence to identify sites and classify past land-use. The sub-title of the book might well have been A Fieldwalker’s Handbook.

Although written in the form of a practical guide, it also forms a useful
record of this activity, for the most part inspired and organized by the author, which has led to such vigorous and productive work throughout the county.

J G

FOXTON LOCKS AND INCLINED PLANE
Foxton Inclined Plane Trust
Leicestershire County Council Department of Planning & Transportation (1985) £1.75
THE MOIRA FURNACE: A Napoleonic Blast Furnace in Leicestershire
David Cranstone ed
North West Leicestershire District Council 1985 £5

One of the most energetic local groups is engaged in rebuilding the boiler house of the Foxton Incline as a museum. Their ambitions extend to filling the upper canal approach with water again and even to restoring the boat lift to full working order. In the course of presenting their schemes they have engaged in detailed historical research about the whole project and its original designer and engineer, Gordon Cale Thomas. As one of the principal reasons for the lift ceasing work in 1910, after only ten years of operation, and being scrapped in the 1920’s was the inefficiency of keeping steam up all day regardless of traffic density, there is something to be said for rebuilding the lift using electric power. This little book is very handsomely designed and produced and is illustrated with some excellent photographs and plans.

Lord Moira’s attempt to develop an iron industry at the beginning of the nineteenth century as an offshoot of his coal-mining ventures was a failure. The fame of the Moira furnace as the best surviving furnace from the period is due to the fact that it never suffered from going into full production. This detailed archaeological report begins with an interesting historical account by Dr Marilyn Palmer. Artefacts found during excavations include wooden patterns for casting and a stone mould for casting letters of the alphabet. The report is reproduced in typescript and ends with sixteen photographs which form an excellent picture of the brick structure and its various parts.

J G
EXCAVATIONS IN BATH LANE, LEICESTER
Patrick Clay and Jean E Mellor No 10 1985 £4.50
EXCAVATIONS AT NORTH MANOR FARM, SOUTH CROXTON, LEICESTERSHIRE
T Pearce and Jean E Mellor No 11 1986 £2.75
Leicestershire Museums, Art Galleries and Records Service
Archaeological Reports Series

The tenth Museum archaeological report covers various excavations in the Bath Lane area of Leicester next to the Soar, evidently a busy residential quarter of Roman Ratae Corieltauvorum. Parts of the stonework found may belong to the elusive west wall of the town. Evidence of the military occupation is the boldly decorated cheek piece of an auxiliary cavalry helmet. The principal find from the area is the celebrated Blackfriars mosaic pavement, uncovered in 1830 and finally removed to the Museum in 1977. This is fine work and is dated to AD 140-5. Excavation made possible by its removal revealed traces of pre-Roman occupation, including fragments of coin flan trays, which suggest Ratae had been the site of one of the mints striking the British coinage associated with the Corieltauvi.

The eleventh report deals with the mediaeval moated site to the north of the church in South Croxton. Documentary evidence was of little use in identifying the successive uses made of the site. The moat and platform were apparently made in the fifteenth century but never used for any building like a manor house. A silver penny from the reign of Aethelraed II supports the existence of the village before the Norman invasion.

J G
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