

EDITORS' NOTES

Obituary: Miss Violet Walker

The death occurred in Cumbria on 21st November 1982 of Miss Violet Walker, B.A., F.L.A., a former City Archivist of Nottingham and a committee member of the Society's Record Section for many years. Born in 1900 and a native of Nottingham, she attended Nottingham High School for Girls before proceeding to Royal Holloway College in Surrey, a women's college of the University of London, from which she graduated with a Classics degree in 1923. After a brief spell of teaching at her old school she trained as a librarian at the London School of Librarianship, which included a course in palaeography and archives. She then joined the staff of Nottingham Public Libraries in 1926 initially as a branch librarian but was soon appointed to the position of Reference Librarian in the Central Library. She took an especial interest in the small but growing collection of local historical manuscripts, and when in 1950 a separate Archives Department was created she became its first archivist, also being given responsibility for the reorganization and repair of the fine and extensive series of city archives housed in the Guildhall. She also undertook much of the curatorial work associated with Newstead Abbey and its collection of Byron manuscripts, which was then administered by the City Libraries. Following her formal retirement in 1966 after forty years' service she returned to the library for two years on a part-time basis helping to compile the monumental catalogue of Nottinghamshire Bibliography.

Her knowledge of local history and its sources was outstanding, aided by a phenomenal memory which frequently enabled her to recall not only the existence of a publication on a particular subject but also its exact position on the shelves. Tragically hampered for most of her adult life by chronic deafness she tended to eschew the public limelight, but she carried out anonymously a great deal of the basic research for a large number of official publications and exhibitions, etc. Her first major academic work was an edition and translation of the 14th century cartulary of Newstead Priory, published in this Society's *Record Series* in 1940. Later achievements were the last two volumes of the *Records of the Borough of Nottingham* covering the period from 1800 to 1900 and published in 1950s, edited jointly with the City Librarian, Duncan Gray. She was responsible for the bulk of the original research for these and also for numerous publications issued under the name of Duncan Gray and others, including his *Nottingham Through 500 Years* (1960), but rarely received the true public recognition which she deserved. However she made several notable contributions to this Society's *Transactions* and *Record Series* in her own right, including a paper on the topography of mediaeval Nottingham and a survey of Nottinghamshire funeral hatchments. An especial interest was the history of Newstead Abbey and the Byron family and her major history of the family which she compiled over several years still awaits publication.

Her standards of scholarship and attention to detail were meticulous, as many an academic discovered to his cost. She maintained a lively mind, a cheerful disposition, and an often impish sense of humour right up until the last, despite overwhelming physical disabilities. Future generations of archivists, librarians, and local historians will be forever in her debt for both her sung and unsung contributions to historical knowledge.

Microfilming of Parish Registers

An extensive project to microfilm all the pre-1900 parish registers in the county has been commenced by the Nottinghamshire Record Office during 1982. The demand by the public for access to old parish registers for family history and genealogical research is now so great that many historical registers are at risk of serious deterioration by over-handling, and the substitution of microfilm copies for use by the public in place of the originals is seen

to be the only effective and economical solution to the problem. The Record Office, which is appointed as the Southwell Diocesan Record Office by the Bishop of Southwell under the terms of the Parochial Registers and Records Measure, 1978, houses about 85% of the older parish registers—some dating back to their inception in 1538—of the 300-or-so parishes in the county.

The registers are being filmed onto microfiche 'cards', and each parish's registers will occupy about 5 to 20 fiche according to the quantity of entries, with the exception of Nottingham St. Mary's, which will run to about 450 fiche. On completion of the project in 1983 complete sets of fiche for the whole Diocese will be held at the Record Office, and fiche for all parishes in their districts will be supplied to major libraries throughout the county. This will have the advantage of making a copy available for local people where the originals have been deposited at Nottingham.

Discovery of Manuscripts of Dr. Charles Deering

Mr. S. N. Mastoris has contributed the following note: During research for an exhibition on the historians of Nottingham, held at Brewhouse Yard Museum early in 1982, 11 fragments of manuscript in the hand of Dr. Charles Deering, the 18th-century Nottingham historian, were discovered, 10 of which were hitherto unknown. The fragments were found in the *Stanhope Library Scrapbook*, a commonplace book made up from several late 17th-century booksellers' catalogues bound together, and taking its name from the inscription 'Stanhope Sale 1804' inside the front cover (Notts. Record Office, DD 956). Onto the hundred or so pages of this volume are pasted cuttings from early newspapers such as the *London Chronicle*, the *Idler* and the *Citizen*, all dating from the 1730s to the 1770s, as well as a small number of fragmentary manuscripts in 18th- and 19th-century hands. Of these, eleven fragments were found to be in Deering's hand, and comprise antiquarian notes, copies of epitaphs, recipes, etc. A typescript giving a full transcription and discussion of each manuscript has been deposited in the Nottinghamshire Record Office, Nottinghamshire Local Studies Library, Nottingham University Library and the Nottingham Subscription Library, Bromley House.

How these manuscripts found their way into the scrapbook, and indeed the origin of the volume itself, remain a mystery. The name 'Anne Ayscough' written inside the front cover suggests that the book was originally owned and compiled by the Ayscough family of printers, active in Nottingham throughout the 18th century. Anne Ayscough's son, George, printed Deering's works on the smallpox and local flora and was one of his creditors and executors in 1749. In this way, George Ayscough became the owner of Deering's manuscript of the history of Nottingham and proceeded to publish it in 1751. It seems very likely, therefore, that if Ayscough was entitled to this manuscript, he may have got possession of any odd scraps of Deering's writings as well, and kept them in a family scrapbook. It is interesting to note that a Probate bond for the estate of Anne Ayscough, dated 20th March 1732/3, is bound into the manuscript of Deering's 'History of Nottingham', now in the Nottingham Subscription Library (C.c. 859). An alternative provenance for the scrapbook is that it was started by Deering himself and corresponds to the book noted as '[Manuscript on] Miscellanea Curiosa' and valued at a shilling in the probate inventory of his effects (N.R.O., PRNW, 19th February 1748/9).

The Nottinghamshire Local History Association

The recent reorganization nationally of the former Standing Conference for Local History into a new body known as the British Association for Local History has been reflected at county level. As from 1st January 1982 the former Nottinghamshire Local History Council became the Nottinghamshire Local History Association, with the object of making various improvements in its functions such as providing a more effective link

between the various local history societies throughout the county. The Association is now re-examining its role in relation to these and other organizations within the county. Publication of its bi-annual journal, *The Nottinghamshire Historian*, continues as before, and its editor, Mr. Christopher Weir at the Nottinghamshire Record Office, would welcome short articles and news items, etc. for inclusion in future issues.

Recent Books

This year has seen the publication of a major archaeological reference book in the form of Philip M. Vine's *The Neolithic and Bronze Age Cultures of the Middle and Upper Trent Basin*, British Archaeological Reports, 105, (£16 from B.A.R., 122 Banbury Road, Oxford). The author's name is already very familiar to many residents of Nottingham as he is the city's former Town Clerk, and this publication is based on a Nottingham University thesis completed during his 'retirement' from that office. Its stated object is to bring together, catalogue and illustrate all the known Neolithic and Bronze Age artifacts (other than certain categories of lithic material) from the Middle and Upper Trent Basin, to describe the sites, and to discuss their distribution and significance. The result is a monumental and impressive work of reference which includes a comprehensive catalogue of finds, distribution maps, drawings of many of the artifacts and bibliography covering a major portion of the east and west midlands (although unfortunately excluding Nottinghamshire), together with several chapters of analysis and interpretation.

Recent scholarly interest in the legend of Robin Hood shows no signs of abating, and the latest contribution is J. C. Holt's *Robin Hood*, Thames and Hudson (£8.95). This is an attractive, well-illustrated and readable publication which will appeal to the non-specialist as well as the professional historian. Unfortunately Professor Holt concludes that we are no nearer to identifying Robin Hood as one definite historical figure, and that even the very early mediaeval versions of the ballads reveal a well-developed tradition already in existence with fact and fiction intertwined. Another blow to Nottinghamshire readers is that (*pace* Mr. Jim Lees) he firmly places the origins of the Robin Hood legends in Barnsdale in South Yorkshire !

Throughout most of the 18th-century Nottingham was famous for its brown salt-glazed stoneware, a technique perfected in Germany in the later Middle Ages and adopted in England in the late 17th century. The Morley family began making salt-glazed mugs and other ware in Nottingham in c. 1690, and other potters followed their lead. Nottingham excelled in this type of pottery until it was superseded by a variety of centres in nearby Derbyshire in the 19th century. A definitive and lavishly-illustrated work on the whole subject has now appeared which places the Nottingham wares in their national context and describes and illustrates many examples: *English Brown Stoneware, 1670-1900*, by Adrian Oswald, R. J. C. Hildyard, and R. G. Hughes, Faber and Faber (£30).

Members of the Society will be interested to hear of the new publication by the former Honorary Secretary, Mr. Michael Dobbin, entitled *Nottinghamshire History and Topography: A Select Descriptive Bibliography to 1980* (£25 from antiquarian booksellers or direct from the author at 21, Mapperley Hall Drive, Nottingham). This volume contains detailed bibliographical information on the principal Nottinghamshire historical and antiquarian works together with many lesser publications, and is aimed at the local historian, book collector, and librarian.