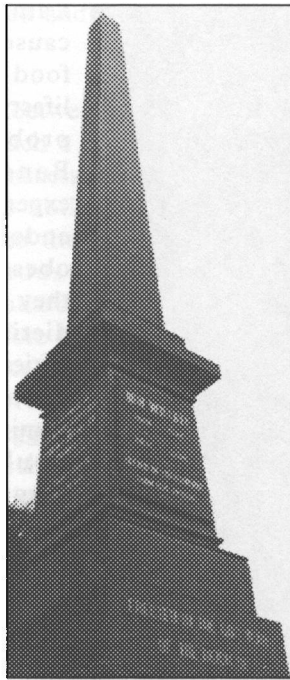


mayor of the new borough, Joseph Griggs, to commemorate Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. The former baths building now houses the Charnwood Museum, and adjoins the appropriately named Queen's Park which also owes its origins to the Diamond Jubilee, when some four acres of land were purchased from the Island House Estate to form the nucleus of a public park. Other parks with royal jubilee connections include Hollycroft Park at Hinckley which was opened as part of the Silver Jubilee celebrations for King George V in 1935. The environment has also been enhanced by a number of trees which were planted to commemorate royal jubilees, as for example at Hathern where a plaque beneath a horse-chestnut records "*Jubilee Tree June 7th 1977, seat opposite donated by B.J.K. Ltd Hathern*". Woods and public footpaths have also been established as jubilee commemorations.

Less common in Leicestershire and Rutland are statues or monuments with jubilee associations, an exception being the imposing Wycliffe memorial at Lutterworth. Taking the form of a tall granite obelisk, this was erected in 1897 to mark Victoria's Diamond Jubilee and commemorates John Wycliffe, Rector of Lutterworth (1374-1384), who as the inscription informs was "*The Morning Star of the Reformation*" and "*The first translator of the Bible into the English Language*".



Wycliffe Memorial, Lutterworth commemorating Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, 1897.

Lastly, mention should be made of buildings with less obvious royal jubilee connections such as the remarkable coffee house in Granby Street, Leicester which was given the name "Victoria" to commemorate the Golden Jubilee, and also of the many streets, houses, factories, public houses and other buildings erected or opened in the royal jubilee years which can be found across Leicestershire and Rutland and which incorporate the word "Jubilee" in their name.

References:

- 1 *Roast beef and plum pudding: Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, 1887.* Keith Ovenden. Leicestershire Historian (1991) p17-26.
- 2 *Victorian commemorative plaques.* Arthur Sadler. Leicestershire Historian (1999) p1-2.

Reinterpreting Daniel Lambert

Yolanda Courtney

Later this year a revised edition of the booklet about the life of Daniel Lambert will be published by Leicester City Museums. Unfailingly popular, this booklet has been revised and reprinted many times since the 1950s, and there is little doubt that Daniel is regarded with affection by the people of Leicester and the many visitors to the display of his clothes and memorabilia at Newarke Houses Museum.

Daniel Lambert was born in Leicester on March 13th 1770, his father, John Lambert, was the keeper of the County Bridewell in Highcross Street. After a seven year apprenticeship to a diesinker in Birmingham's jewellery quarter, Daniel Lambert returned to Leicester in 1791 and took over from his father as Keeper of the Bridewell at a salary of £21 a year.

In Leicester, then a town with a population of c.17,000, Lambert was well-known as the Bridewell Keeper and as a country sportsman and respected for his personality. He was "replete with anecdote, and of a lively turn of mind...with a choice selection of words, and a variety of subjects" as one contemporary put it. However his wider fame in later life and after his death was due to his size. At a time when Britain was at war with Napoleonic Europe, cartoonists depicted Daniel Lambert with pride as a British Champion, for instance the 'Two greatest men in Europe', cartoon of 1806 by S. W. Fores shows Lambert tucking into roast beef, contrasting with soup for a thin-looking Emperor Napoleon. Already a folk legend before he died, his popularity has not diminished with the years. A wax model of Lambert found its way to America and was shown in the Mix Museum in New Haven in 1813 and later in P. T. Barnum's famous American Museum. He took his place in 19th century accounts of the curious and wonderful and appears as a symbol of hugeness in the novels of Thackeray. Pubs and restaurants are still named after him.

Over the years editions of the museum booklet on Daniel Lambert have taken the view, based on contemporary sources, that since he did not eat to excess, his corpulence must have been due to disease. The 2002 edition of the booklet benefits from the work of Dr Jan Bondeson, who visited Newarke Houses Museum to consult source materials held there as part of his research for 'Daniel Lambert, the Human Colossus', a chapter in his book: *The Two-*



Daniel Lambert 1770-1809 courtesy of Leicester City Museums.

Headed Boy and Other Medical Marvels (Cornell University Press, 2000). This is the only account written from a medical point of view, and it challenges the medically uninformed view that Lambert had a gland problem or other unknown disease. According to Bondeson, factors influencing weight increase are genetics, environment (diet) and disease. Obesity is either primary, which occurs without other disease being present, or secondary, where there is 'an external endocrine or genetic cause'. Bondeson examines common and uncommon diseases that cause obesity, but concludes that none of them are consistent with what is known of Lambert. An endocrine cause for obesity occurs, in any case, in only a small minority of cases. Daniel

Lambert had an uncle and aunt who were 'very heavy' but his immediate family were of more usual proportions. His increase in weight seems to date from his move to the County Bridewell, work which involved little exercise. In 1793 he turned the scale at 32 stone. However he remained active in field sports until 1801 or 1802. In 1804 he already weighed over 49 stone, and at the end of 1806, when the *Leicester Journal* announced his departure on tour, he was on a diet but 'still increases in bulk'.

Bondeson concludes that Daniel Lambert had 'primary obesity', caused by too much high-calorie food combined with a sedentary lifestyle. Daniel's condition could probably now be controlled. Bondeson describes his own experiences as a senior registrar in endocrinology in the 1990s when obese patients would claim that they could not lose weight despite dieting. He treated them as in-patients for a week on a strict low calorie diet and they lost weight. 'If Daniel Lambert had lived today, he would probably have been surgically treated with a gastroplasty or a gastric bypass' which involves removing or bypassing part of the stomach, leaving a small 'gastric reservoir' which leaves a feeling of fullness after very small meals. He also concludes that the likely cause of Lambert's death was a pulmonary

embolism, though as there was no autopsy this will never be known for sure.

Daniel Lambert is regarded by many in Leicester as a kind of mascot, but others have a more ambiguous feeling about him as a highlight of a museum visit. His story offers a way in to Leicester's social history for young and old, and it is rare for a set of clothing belonging to an individual of his middling social status to be preserved in a museum. The suggestion that his own actions were responsible for his size is a new perspective, though it remains possible that other medical opinion will modify this view. Dr Bondeson's research reminds us of the need for more work exploring how we engage with the issues of body weight and how we reinterpret Daniel Lambert for 21st century Leicester.