

Editorial

Historians of Leicestershire have much to be grateful to John Nichols for with his remarkable *History of Leicestershire* - a monumental eight volume work of over 5,500 pages, five million words and 2,500 finely engraved plates. It was with considerable pleasure that the LAHS was able to commemorate the bi-centenary of this seminal work in 2015, both through a new Nichols publication by Caroline Wessel, and a candlelit banquet. Julian Pooley, organiser and director of the Nichols Archive Project has kindly allowed his after dinner talk on John Nichols to be reproduced in this edition of the *Leicestershire Historian*.

Engravings from Nichols are one of the main sources of illustrations available for scenes from the period. Here they are used to dramatically illustrate a number of 'Leicestershire's First Lost Houses' that J. D. Bennett turns his attention to, many of which were disappearing long before the dawn of the twentieth century.

Belgrave Hall, in contrast, is one of the graceful houses to have survived from the early eighteenth century. Erica Statham finds out about the building of the Hall by the Cradock family, and in the process discovers documents in the National Archives which throw new light on the family's affairs.

At the same time that the wealthier families of Leicester such as the Cradocks were starting to move further out of town, educational facilities were being established in the towns and villages around the county. Using a range of primary sources, Emma Roberts takes Countesthorpe as her case study, describing how between 1706 and 1919 education in the village went from non-existent to being an important and thriving part of the community.

A little-known group of Leicester men calling themselves Leicester Landgrabbers was formed in 1909 in response to the long-term unemployment of many of Leicester's skilled workmen that had largely resulted from industrial changes. Cynthia Brown explores the Landgrabbers in this fascinating article as part of her continuing research into responses to unemployment in Leicester in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Four years earlier, in one of the more industrialised and very deprived areas of Leicester, the town's new Maternity Hospital known as 'Bond Street' was established, to attempt to reduce the high maternal mortality rate which had raged throughout the nineteenth century. Showing how valuable oral history sources can be, Shirley Aucott tells the moving story of the hospital, its benefactors, the dedication of its staff, of their training, working conditions, and the sometimes harrowing accounts of their work.

Richard Graves completes the poignant story of sisters Irene and Helga Bejach who arrived in Leicester from Berlin just before the outbreak of the Second World War, and who became the 'adopted' sisters of Richard, David and John Attenborough. Part two tells of the sisters' experiences in wartime Leicester and beyond, and their eventual emigration to America.

Leicestershire's waterways and rivers feature in two of this year's articles. Derek Deadman revisits the development of Leicestershire's canals, uncovering new cartographic evidence and extending knowledge on this subject. Meanwhile Bob Trubshaw shares his interest in locations where rivers could be forded and become trading places, examining if there could be continuity from the Iron Age to the Anglo-Saxon era.

A chance find in an antiquarian bookshop in Leicester's Clarendon Park led David Howell to discover the connection between Leicestershire and a widely used Hindustani Grammar textbook, the preface to which had been written by Colonel Mark Kingsley Wardle of the Leicestershire Regiment.

The major event of the year in Leicester and Leicestershire of the re-interment of King Richard III, along with the continuing commemorations of World War I are both strongly reflected in the Recent Publications section. Compiled by Cynthia Brown and her team of reviewers, this outstanding and diverse collection of informative reviews should help whet the appetite for further reading and exploration.

The *Leicestershire Historian* aims to promote the study of the county's history by providing a platform for established and new authors, and through encouraging the pursuit of research and project work. It also aims to publicise the work of local groups and organisations, and seeks to raise the awareness of research sources.

Contributions for future editions are welcome from individuals, local groups, museums and other organisations and should be sent to the Editor for consideration. Articles can be short items or longer in-depth pieces, and can be submitted at any time. If you would like to discuss an idea in advance, please contact the Editor.

Joyce Lee, Editor