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Cover picture: Panel from an embroidered quilt which was part of Loughborough's very successful public fundraising campaign to erect the carillon tower as the town's First World War memorial. The quilt is in the collection of Charnwood Borough Council. (Reproduced courtesy of Leicestershire County Council.) See page 3.

Editor: Joyce Lee

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Editorial

The revival of the Victoria County History project in Leicestershire is particularly welcome, with Julie Attard providing a highly readable and informative account of the Charnwood Roots project, Charnwood being the first new area to be researched by the Leicestershire VCH Trust. Based at the University of Leicester, the project enlisted and trained over 650 volunteers to help investigate the area's history. The methodology developed is now ready to be applied in other parts of the county.

Shirley Aucott's article on working class women and the birth control movement between 1830 and 1930 is groundbreaking work on a topic which is extremely difficult to research, not least because of its very private nature. The first part concentrates on the women and their options. The second part centres on the role played by Charles Killick Millard, Medical Officer of Health for Leicester, a leading national figure in the birth control movement.

Cynthia Brown sheds light on the practices of fortune tellers in Victorian and Edwardian Britain: who they were, their clients, and how the law dealt with them. Local and regional newspapers prove invaluable sources for this fascinating and intriguing subject.

Acute housing shortages for working people in Hinckley in the first decade of the twentieth century led to the building of council houses in the town just before the First World War, some of the earliest in the Midlands. Paul Griffiths examines the reasons for the council's involvement in what had been an almost exclusive private sector activity.

Robin Jenkins provides an atmospheric account of the night-time arrival of a hospital train at Leicester Midland Railway Station, and the dispersal of its casualties, most en route to Leicestershire's 5th Northern General Hospital - part of the county's response to dealing with the thousands of wounded from the Great War.

Over 180 war memorials were constructed by communities in Leicestershire and Rutland between 1918 and 1929 as collective forms of commemoration. Taking an innovative historical sociological approach, Elizabeth Blood examines the process by which these memorials came into being, what lay behind their planning, funding and design, and what they tell us about how ordinary people remembered the dead.

Richard Graves continues the story of Leicester's role in the evacuation of child refugees from the Spanish Civil War where a colony of Basque children was established at Evington Hall in July 1937. Contemporary sources effectively reveal changing attitudes toward the children and their expected return to Spain, whilst later testimonies and interviews are precious records of this unexpected piece of Leicester's history.

Theatre posters and programmes, along with contemporary accounts of the Theatre Royal and The Royal Opera House, are used by J. D. Bennett to illustrate the opportunities which Leicester audiences would have had to see the great Victorian actor-manager Henry Irving perform on stage.

David Howell reflects on John Parsons Cook, the little-known Leicestershire victim of William Palmer, the notorious 'Rugeley Poisoner'. Cook's death in 1855 led to what was infamously called the trial of the century.

A decade earlier, an accidental death on the Leicester and Swannington Railway near Ratby in 1844 came to play an important part in early railway safety. Barry Kendall relates how this lead to significant safety improvements for mixed passenger and goods trains nationally.

Leicestershire churches are rich in carvings, one of the most famous being the Breedon Angel. Bob Trubshaw invites a closer look as he leads the reader into the realms of dream incubation and medieval healers.

This year's Recent Publications section continues to do sterling work, reflecting the wealth and variety of material published about Leicester and Leicestershire, and giving plenty of inspiration for further reading. My thanks to Cynthia Brown and her team of reviewers for this extremely useful and invaluable section of the Leicestershire Historian. My thanks also to the staff at the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland for all their help and support, and in allowing the reproduction of images.

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 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

Bloodshed and Bitterness: How Leicestershire and Rutland got their First World War Memorials

Elizabeth Blood

Introduction

Between 1918 and 1929 at least 180 war memorials were constructed as community focal points in Leicestershire and Rutland. They rapidly became part of the urban and village landscape. Examining the process by which they came into being tells us about how ordinary people remembered the dead, and sheds light on wider issues of power and authority, and the appropriateness of different forms of tribute.

It is through records of the public discussions of how to design, inscribe and locate memorials that we find traces of heated disagreements and divisions. (1) From these accounts it is possible to examine what was of prime importance to ordinary people when remembering their dead, at a time when they, for the first time in some cases, were able to voice opinions. Sometimes they reveal that people who may previously have had little say over new elements in the built environment had new power and influence through their status as ex-servicemen and the bereaved. What kinds of memorial were deemed 'fitting', where should they be placed in perpetuity, and who should take responsibility for them? In short, how have the memorials that can be seen across the counties come into being, and how did these new and documented voices debate them? A close look at the erection of freestanding war memorials locally, even in this short space, can help us to answer some of these questions. (2)

Burbage war memorial, shortly after it was unveiled on the village green, rather than in the parish churchyard. (Photograph by William George Hall between 1921-28, reproduced by courtesy of his granddaughter, Mrs Mary Herbert.)

Background

Traditionally, war memorials were set up by the establishment to glorify leaders and victories. Private memorials to officers were set up in places of worship, but it was not until the time of the Crimean War and later that a popular appetite for war memorials was established. By the time of the Boer War, memorials were being erected to commemorate all ranks, often by public subscription from ordinary people. One way of examining the question of who held new power in the wake of the First World War is to look at war memorial production. Grayzel argued that their mourning had 'a political overtone' in that it was harnessed to stand at the fore of monument production and rituals. (3) This article aims to investigate aspects of the politics of, and participation in, mourning and memorialisation in ordinary towns and villages.

The need for funding for these schemes is a common and significant determinant of the outcomes of some of these projects. The traditional patrons of public art in the built environment had land, labour, and money in their gift and it was understood that, when offered, these relieved a great burden on the donating public, or else enabled a far grander scheme to be carried through. However, the social and political climate in the wake of the First World War was in transition. The contest of authority and shifts in power whether in the sphere of men's votes, women's rights, trade union recognition, or better working conditions and diets, i.e. the break-down of

the 'old order', continues to be a subject of contention and fascination for historians today. It will be seen that the majority of war memorial commissions were more democratic in character than earlier projects that had been 'gifted' by elites to 'the people', but that in several cases, traditional benefactions to such projects were still made in one form or another, often in kind.

Participation, inclusion, democracy?

Although Leicester's Boer War memorial commission came from a public committee, it closely matched the traditional process of the patronage of public art. It was chaired by the largest landowner with the highest status, and proceedings were largely driven by those who would usually wield power; politicians and prominent local businessmen. Similarly, following the First World War, it was not uncommon to find these individuals driving forward the memorial effort, even (or perhaps especially) in the smallest of villages. Local examples are numerous, and involve a local landowner providing either funds, land, materials or labour. (4) At Hallaton in April 1918 the owner of the Manor of Hallaton, Mrs Effie Elizabeth Bewicke unveiled a memorial that eventually included the names of all those who had died, which she had commissioned and paid for in memory of her nephew, Lieutenant Theodore Calverley George Bewicke RN, killed at Pozières on 26th July 1916. At Shepshed, the memorial was commissioned by Mr J. Harriman, J.P., Chairman of the Shepshed Soldiers' and Sailors' Committee, who wanted it to act as a roll of honour of those who had enlisted. It was designed by London-based architects, Messrs John Daymond and Son, and it was unveiled as early as February 1918. (5) The fallen parishioners' names were not all included however, until 1926. At Exton, the Gainsborough family erected a war memorial calvary in memory of their relatives, but located it within a plot of land that could include a wall tablet naming all of the others from the parishes of the estate who died. (6) In the majority of cases however, a more collaborative approach was taken. Due to the public and inclusive democratic nature of these committees, they faced a number of challenges.

One challenge was getting people interested in the public meetings held; knowing they may have to tackle powerful landowners, business owners, or vocal residents, and be accountable for their part in it, some were reticent. Idealistic committees hoped that attendance would be fully representative of local stakeholders, but many committees were disappointed in their efforts to be fully inclusive; many newspapers report low attendance. Despite making direct invitations, at Coalville it was reported that 'only half the named bodies were represented' (7) and at Billesdon that it was 'a very poor attendance, excepting members of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Federation.' (8) In the *Leicester Mail* a month later we read 'Is Billesdon forgetful of her great debt to her gallant sons who fought and died for their country in the war? The question arises in consequence of the small attendance of parishioners at the second meeting […].' (9) Committees urged attendance by appealing to local people's desire to do 'honour' to the dead and provide 'fitting' commemoration of their sufferings and deaths, but it was nevertheless often a small group of committed individuals that did the bulk of the work involved. Quite commonly these were local councillors, religious leaders, prominent townsfolk, and the local landowners, but also parents, spouses and other relatives of the bereaved, or young unmarried women with the spare time to help. When the most vocal members of committees, or the public they liaised with failed to reach a consensus in matters, some disagreements and problems ran so deep that committees disbanded and new ones had to be formed. (10)

The dedication of Hallaton war memorial, commissioned by Mrs Effie Elizabeth Bewicke and designed by Paul Waterhouse FRIBA (1861 – 1924), which took place on 3rd April 1918. (Image reproduced by courtesy of Hallaton in the Great War Research Project.)

Delays and Criticisms

For additional reasons, committees could be the slow route to achieving a war memorial. Where the scheme was carried out by a single individual or couple, such as at Hallaton or Shepshed, the

memorials were unveiled very quickly, even before the end of the War. In places where large numbers of people were involved, with potential disagreements, long delays could occur. Some committees were criticised for slowness or indecision. At Anstey, a letter to the *Leicester Daily Post* urged 'A correspondent writes that he with parishioners would like to know what is being done in regard to the War Memorial […] Some months ago, […] there [was] £1,000 in hand, […]. Since then nothing has been heard of the matter, […] the writer asks that a move shall be made, especially seeing that other villages are putting up memorials', (11) The letter highlights the problem of communication, and was either intended to speed up action, or to complain that their village was losing face by being slower than other places to unveil something. By going through the local press, the transparency of the Committee's actions and accountability for the finances was being scrutinised, too. Such moves could be quite successful because nothing was so poisonous as bad press and the success (including funding) of the scheme depended on public feeling. "Three Warriors Brave" wrote into the *Melton Mowbray Times* about the delay at South Croxton, saying, quite plainly:

> We continually read in the paper about villages having their War Memorials erected. We begin to think it is about time something was done to erect ours […] the money lies idle in the hands of people who seem to have no idea what to do. We begin to think it is about time the matter was left to the lads who went and did their bit; who, at the commencement of the war, did not stop to think, as these collectors and committee are doing, or where should we have been now.

These ex-soldiers clearly see the installation of a memorial as of paramount importance and feel (a)shamed not to see the same recognition for their fallen comrades as was being shown in places quicker to erect memorials. This is a critique of the slow bureaucracy of committees (though it is unclear how many memorials would have come to fruition without them) but also demonstrates that ex-servicemen felt that war memorials were a reflection on them and their war service, as well as that of the fallen, and they should be treated as primary stakeholders. Committees, however, at least on the face of it, were trying to operate democratically, include a very broad range of stakeholders, and reach a fair and practical consensus. They were in most cases unfamiliar with commissioning like work, and had to deal with either shortage or inexperience of available monument designers and builders, and faced difficulties of obtaining suitable materials and rising material and labour costs. They also had to raise funds from a community that had little to spare, and many memorial ambitions were checked by these issues. (12)

South Croxton war memorial was unveiled more than two years after the end of the war, and is an example of a commission that received complaints by local ex-servicemen in the local newspapers about the delays in getting it erected. (Photograph by Colin Hyde.)

Form and Function

Although the range of issues that could cause disagreements included the location of the memorial, its inscription, the names that should be included, and who should build it, the most common debate (and most hotly discussed) was the issue of form. Broadly speaking, disagreements centred around whether the memorial should take the form of a monument ('symbolic' forms), or whether it should be something useful to present and future generations ('utilitarian' forms, such as playing fields, baths, village halls, etc.). This had been the case after the previous (Second Boer) war. At Barwell, where an initial meeting had decided on a Memorial Institute, a news report of a subsequent meeting said 'But in attempting to raise funds for the purpose the committee discovered that a section of the parishioners was actively hostile to the scheme' (13) and later that 'here was a considerable amount of bickering and differences of opinion.' (14) Coalville, too, started out with a difficulty. £375 had come from the local Welcome Home fund with a stipulation that it was for a permanent monument, but many stakeholders were suggesting alternative forms; 'the workers' apparently suggested baths or a clock. (15) Others argued that necessary public facilities should be provided by the local authority, not the voluntary efforts of the bereaved. (16) Furthermore, the concept was for an Urban District memorial that would be subscribed to by all wards, but the newspapers report on the 'Ward feeling' at places like Whitwick and Hugglescote being an issue; the wards would resist contributing to something located at Coalville, even if it was intended to represent them. (17) This highlights the issue of the connection between people and place; collective identity, and the desire to make war memorials a part of the everyday landscape. In this case, Whitwick eventually agreed to join the scheme, but has its own war memorial, too.

While many communities opted for 'symbolic' war memorials, usually in the form of a monument, many favoured 'utilitarian' forms of memorial, such as cottage hospitals, village halls, houses, scholarships, lamp posts, playing fields and more. Pictured here are Oadby memorial homes (photograph by John Sharpe.), and Kirby Muxloe memorial gates (image reproduced by courtesy of Leicestershire County Council).

Location

Elsewhere, religious difference was an issue, especially pertaining to the site for memorials. Churchyards were thought by many to be an obvious choice for a permanent site, but many others felt that this was not appropriate if the memorial was meant to represent the fallen of all (or no) faiths. Canon Hindley's suggestion to have Lutterworth's war memorial in the churchyard was rejected when it went to public vote, because it 'aroused some sectarian feeling' that would not give way, according to a report in the *Leicester Daily Post.* (18) The issue of whether it was appropriate to locate memorials in the churchyard if there was a substantial nonconformist population caused upset and bitterness at Bottesford. Here, it was very clear that some of the feelings behind these discussions were raw and difficult to rein in. Three letters appeared in the *Grantham Journal* in response to the proposal to have Bottesford's memorial in the churchyard, all opposing this, saying it should be more representative of the whole parish. In a letter of resignation from the memorial committee, are the following bitter words from a Mr Pacey:

> To the Chairman of the Committee for the War Memorial of Bottesford / Dear Sir / I feel I cannot attend the meeting to night [sic] am disgusted with the whole affair its [sic] not a case of the different Religious feelings in the Village but Political selfishness […] surely an affair like this to show our appreciation for those who died for us does not need any Political arguments. It's a disgrace to the Village Whatever happens I will not give consent for my poor boys names to be engraved on a Village Dancing Hall or a River Bridge […] I will have nothing whatever to do with the affair Your Faithfully, Mr Pacey. (19)

The disagreement at Bottesford caused a bitter divide. The memorial was finally positioned inside the Church, presumably on a more modest scale than a scheme with unanimous support. The account of the unveiling stressed that the memorial was 'worthy' and that 'universal satisfaction' was eventually reached, (20) but it is doubtful that Mr Pacey would have agreed.

The same debate had a different outcome at Burbage. The committee took steps to financially secure a plot in the churchyard and begin to lay foundations, without clear public agreement. When the public voiced its dissatisfaction, the committee laid responsibility for raising £200 to change the site upon the community. The Co-op threatened to withdraw funding, putting the whole scheme in jeopardy. (21) Again, it is not clear how a solution was reached or who paid for undoing the works already begun, but Burbage's war memorial stands in a small garden at a central road junction, so the call for neutrality in locating the memorial was clearly heeded.

Funding and Costs

Funding, arguably the weightiest issue of all, could have huge bearing on the outcome of the memorial commission, and this is where the tension between traditional elites and new stakeholders in remembrance could emerge. At Exton, Hallaton, Shepshed and many other places, memorials were 'gifted' by those who had the funds or lands in their gift. But most local war memorials were paid for by public subscription; donations, proceeds from fundraising events, business donations, etc. News reports show that donations had to be encouraged by calls to action in the local press, or by inventive fundraising activities such as bazaars, whist drives, dances and fancy dress appeals. Anstey held a Forget-me-not Day and raffle, Whitwick held bazaars, Earl Shilton hosted cricket matches, an auction was arranged by

local tradesmen at Lutterworth and postcards were sold at Snarestone. Loughborough invited the public to lay pennies in a line that they hoped would reach a mile long, and sold commemorative stamps bearing a sketch design of the memorial. In many cases, house-to-house requests for subscriptions were made, and this was a role quite often taken on by women. At North Kilworth, Mrs Whiteman took the Secretary and Treasurer roles on the memorial committee and was long celebrated for having spearheaded for their ideas on the form of the memorial. (23) It must have been hard for people to part with their money not knowing what it would go on. Would they approve of the yet-unknown scheme that their own money was committed to? This question would remain for years; since the site chosen for Coalville's memorial was charmingly known locally as 'the scrap heap'. There were long delays whilst waiting for essential major environmental improvement grants from the Ministry of Health before a memorial could

Loughborough led a very successful public fundraising campaign to erect the carillon tower by Sir Walter Tapper. This included selling commemorative stamps, trying to create a 'mile of pennies' in Queen's Park, and showcasing an embroidered quilt that had local, and some famous, signatures on it. Signatures included those of Herbert Morris and Queen Alexandra pictured here along with the central embroidery on the quilt. The quilt is in the collection of Charnwood Borough Council. (Images reproduced courtesy of Leicestershire County Council.)

the fundraising work to establish the memorial, as well as for ensuring its upkeep until after the Second World War. (22)

At Coalville, money matters caused significant delays. Donors were named in the local press, to encourage more to come forward. The committee tried to make people feel more involved in the decision-making process by, at the same time as knocking on doors for donations, asking them even conceivably be built on the intended site. Loans were commonly taken up, and in some cases contractors were not paid for years after the memorial had been unveiled. (24) In contrast, some places appear to have been enormously successful in raising funds. Loughborough is an example, in raising money for its carillon tower, even before a finalised design was confirmed. Loughborough was held up as a model of success by the *Leicestershire Advertiser*, which heavily criticised the efforts at Leicester (which, at the time

of unveiling the war memorial had raised only £16,000 of its £25,000 target) by saying 'It is indeed a disgrace that nearly seven years after the cessation of hostilities we should be touting around to get money to pay for what should have been bought and paid for at least five years ago. Leicester though some eight times as big as Loughborough has had a struggle to raise as much money as Loughborough has already spent.' Leicester had, by comparison to Loughborough, failed to enthuse the public about its fundraising campaign, or to articulate its ambitions for the final outcome. But time has told that the (over) ambition to secure the Arch by Sir Edwin Lutyens R.A. is one of the triumphs of early twentieth century Leicester planning. (25)

Inscriptions and Names

A heated debate of a different nature arose at Market Harborough. As one of the County Towns, it was natural to assume that it would get a substantial, architect-designed monument. And it did. What became an issue was the inscription. The architect, W. Talbot Brown, for a combination of reasons, designed Market Harborough's memorial as a symbolic one; intending that it would carry an inscription to the war but would not list the casualties. This was not an uncommon feature of architects' war memorials, especially in the wake of the symbolic Cenotaph by Sir Edwin Lutyens, that had proved so poignant and popular in the capital, and especially in large towns and cities where the inscription of so many names was problematic for reasons of cost, space, practicality, aesthetics and accuracy.

Market Harborough, wanting to incorporate names of the fallen from surrounding villages, found that the monument (as designed) would struggle to accommodate the large number of names. It was quite common for a roll of honour or book of remembrance to be produced to accompany a monument. At Market Harborough, the architect was aware that the names would also be duplicated at the local cottage hospital, so he (and, originally, the Committee) had deemed it superfluous to add them to the monument as well. But the public reacted badly, and a sore episode ensued. Spats in the local press between the memorial Committee and unhappy locals tell us that, eventually, the public petitioned the Committee to have names added. Local man George Roe, wrote to the *Market Harborough Advertiser*: 'undoubtedly a mistake is being made'. He argued that despite the plans to preserve the names at the Cottage Hospital and in a Book of Remembrance, the men who died had marched out from the town square, and therefore their names should be inscribed there: 'the Square made sacred by their memory' as he poignantly put it. He acknowledged the problem of cost, but felt there was no point spending any money at all if the names would not be on the monument. (26)

The architect was asked to defend his design, and had written: 'This problem […] is difficult of solution, and even with the most competent handling the result is alike unsightly and inartistic' so amidst the debate he had tried to work the names into his design but was unhappy with the result. He goes on to assure the Committee in his letter that 'The memorial in the Square will be worthy of the men who have fallen and also of the town…[…]…It should and will be an enduring inspiration and incentive to high service and to the noble patriotism which has made our people great' (27), but this lofty rhetoric was lost on the petitioners. After further pressure, the Committee gave way and instructed that the names be accommodated. They then embarked on some damage control in the press, and after insisting that the original exclusion of names had been an artistic decision, laid blame firmly on the unfortunate architect.

George Roe, keen to announce victory on behalf of the petitioners, declared that the whole concept of leaving off the names, was 'not from any neglect or the want of sympathy, but simply as an error of judgement, of which the architect was largely responsible. The architect, in his desire for artistic effect, put the monument before the Roll of Honour, whereas we, the petitioners, put the Roll of Honour before the monument, and rightly so.' (28) Perhaps we can now reserve a little more sympathy for the architect who had to accommodate hundreds of names into his design without raising the costs very much when we see that, in the very voluminous local account of the unveiling of the war memorial, almost everyone involved in the scheme gets a mention, except W. Talbot Brown. (29) This is in fact highly unusual and, regarding the proportions and sculpture on the monument today, something of an omission. It certainly reminds us of how high feelings ran over names and inscriptions in the wake of the War.

Conclusion

Memorials stir strong emotions when debates arise about how to create or manage them; emotions stemming from the grief of losing someone in war, or an appropriated version of this grief that successive generations continue to feel. Prior to the First World War, local memorials were not the punctuation marks in almost every village that they became, so in deciding what to commission for the first time, people quite naturally had different ideas and expectations. Contemporary newspaper accounts are one of the best sources documenting these debates. They also report that those involved in the arguments managed to put their feelings aside at unveiling services, as participation in remembrance was paramount.

Neutral locations for memorials were called for by Co-ops, non-conformists, secular lay people, and those who felt strongly that the dead should be respected equally.

Market Harborough's war memorial, designed by the architect W. Talbot Brown. The names of the fallen were added following a petition. (Photograph by John Sharpe.)

Complaints against delays and about the handling of commissions by committees were called for by ex-servicemen. The form of the memorial was one of the most hotly debated topics, and not all viewpoints could be accommodated. Feelings ran so high that people withdrew their support for schemes, or refused to have their loved ones' names included. Ostensibly all these discussions were about the fundamentals of the commissions, but in fact they reveal more. They demonstrate that people felt the fallen should be afforded a dignified tribute in a place at the heart of the present community and coming generations, and importantly, that equality in the treatment of their memory should be achieved. Public committees, parish meetings, and the local press were effective vehicles for the voicing of these views, and were taken up by those who may not previously have been heard; especially women, veterans, and the working classes. It is important to investigate this period of discussion and division, because the issues that emerge were clearly at the heart of debates about commemoration after the First World War for a very important reason; that the memorials should, in perpetuity, reveal something about what was in the hearts of those who mourned.

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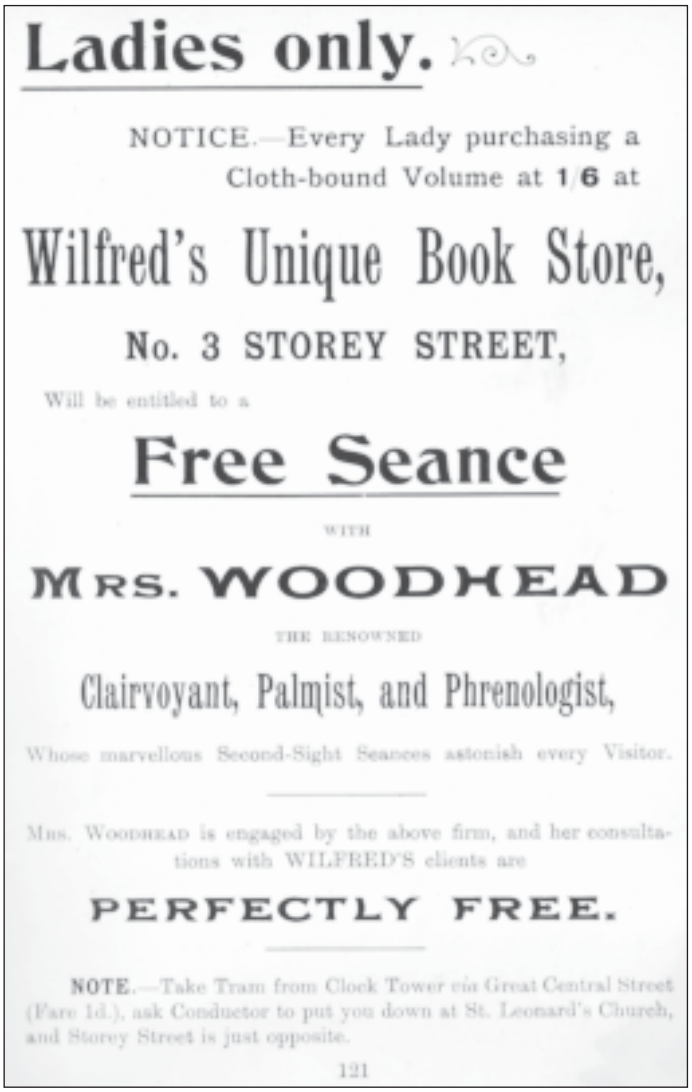
‘With intent to deceive and impose’: Fortune Telling in Victorian and Edwardian Britain

Cynthia Brown

Fortune telling was often a feature of fetes and bazaars in Victorian and Edwardian Britain, including the bazaar at the Floral Hall in Leicester in 1893 in aid of a new Constitutional Club. This offered ‘music, *tableaux vivants*, sleight-of-hand, dramatic performances, palmistry and other amusements’, along with a weighing machine loaned by the local engineers Vipan and Headley, and ‘therefore to be implicitly relied on’. (1) Clairvoyance was also a popular public entertainment, despite sceptical newspaper reports and occasional letters of complaint. The *Leicester Journal* reported in May 1853 on ‘the extraordinary performances of Mr Barnardo Eagle and his daughter, at the New Hall’, the former Mechanics’ Institute in Belvoir Street. The clairvoyant was his daughter, ‘The Mysterious Lady’, but: ‘We need hardly add that Mr Eagle refused to put any questions [to her] *except in his own words*, and in almost all cases, *himself required full knowledge of the information sought before he made enquiries for such information to the lady’*. ‘Bare-faced imposture… repetition of a clever but now stale trick’, declared a letter to the editor a few days later; but their performances still occasioned ‘not a little excitement in the town’ and were acknowledged to ‘attract, amuse, and astonish large audiences’. (2)



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Advertisement from Horn’s Illustrated Guide to the Places of Interest in Leicester*, 1905 openly advertising clairvoyance and palmistry for ‘Ladies Only’.*

Clairvoyance also featured in a smaller way as part of travelling shows such as that by ‘Professor Beaumont’ at the Temperance Hall in 1877, sandwiched between an ‘Indian Shawl Feat’ and ‘Dancing Dinner Plates’, well below the ‘Troupe of Hindoo Conjurors and Snake Charmers’ that headed the bill. (3) Publications such as *The Ladies’ Oracle* by Cornelius Agrippa also offered a ‘do-it-yourself’ means of answering questions about the future over which ‘self-respecting young ladies’ tended to ‘fret’. This was said to be based on his ‘collected knowledge of mathematics and the feminine kind’. Along with ‘Shall I marry a rich man?’ and ‘Will my husband be young?’, they included ‘That which I dread, will it happen by day or night?’ and ‘Shall I do well to confess all?’. (4)

Objections might be raised to these activities on religious or moral grounds, but in general they were regarded as harmless ‘amusements’. It was with some surprise, therefore, that I came across a reference to the conviction of Rupert Montmorency for fortune telling in Leicester in February 1917, and the sentence of two months hard labour handed down to him. (5) Firstly, I had no idea that fortune telling had ever been illegal; and accepting that it was, the sentence appeared rather harsh for what was surely a minor offence. Curiosity led me first to research the legal background, and then to explore some of the other questions that it raised. Who else fell foul of the law in this respect? What methods did fortune tellers use? Who were their clients, and did money change hands between them? What sort of ‘fortunes’ were revealed to them? And given that these tended to be told behind closed doors, how were its practitioners discovered in the first place? The answers to these questions

offer some insights into nineteenth and early twentieth century society from an unusual perspective.

The law under which fortune tellers were prosecuted was the Vagrancy Act 1824, 'for the Punishment of idle and disorderly Persons, and Rogues and Vagabonds, in England'. (6) This was far from the first legislation against vagrants, broadly defined as those 'without a settled home or regular work who wander from place to place and live by begging'. (7) Vagrancy had attracted penalties since the fourteenth century, and well over 20 different pieces of legislation relating to it were passed between 1700 and 1824. (8) Like its predecessors, the 1824 Act was a response to conditions that appeared to pose a threat to the security of the country and its ruling classes, in this case the political unrest and economic depression that followed the end of the wars with France in 1815, and the very visible increase in the incidence of vagrancy and begging in various forms. (9) Section 4 covered 'Persons committing certain offences to be deemed rogues and vagabonds'. They included 'every person wandering abroad, and endeavouring by the exposure of wounds or deformities to obtain or gather alms'; and 'every person pretending or professing to tell fortunes, or using any subtle craft, means, or device, by palmistry or otherwise, to deceive and impose on any of his Majesty's subjects'. (10)

The most accessible sources of information for prosecutions under the Act are newspaper reports of court cases, which often give a great deal of detail. How reliable a guide they are to the actual numbers of prosecutions is another matter, but a search of the British Newspaper Archive online suggests that they were not particularly common. There are relatively few reports of cases from Leicester or Leicestershire until the later nineteenth century, not enough on which to base wider conclusions. Combined with others from elsewhere however, these reports do help to build up a picture of fortune telling during this period. Firstly, the majority of those prosecuted were women, most of them married, for whom fortune telling was often a means of supporting themselves or supplementing a low income. 'I must do something for a living', as Edith Gibson of Nottingham said when charged in 1890. Mrs Mollie Emma Fry, an elementary school headmistress at Biggar in Scotland, said she 'told fortunes to support her husband who was disabled and could not work'. 'Madame Anderson', prosecuted for 'pretending to tell fortunes' in Southport in 1899, was described as 'the wife of a railway porter earning only 17s. 6d. per week'. (11)

The most common method they employed was the use of cards – Tarot or, more often, an 'ordinary everyday pack of playing cards'. These were usually shuffled and cut by the client, and a card then turned up to have its 'significance' explained. Glass or crystal balls were also commonly used, either alongside cards or separately, and 'the planets' might be consulted by these or other means. Eliza Dabell of Nottingham, described as a hawker, was charged with telling fortunes in Leicester in 1884 and sentenced to two months in prison. She was said to have 'visited gentlemen's houses and induced the servants to part with clothing and money on the pretence she would consult the planets and tell them their fortunes, the mediums used being a glass ball and cards'. (12) Charges for these services varied, but commonly ranged from sixpence or a shilling for a basic reading of the cards to 2s. 6d. for something more detailed. Some fortune tellers claimed in court to have made no charge, in the mistaken belief that fortune telling was only illegal in exchange for money. Mrs Fry said she 'did not make an absolute charge, but if they like to pay me they can'. (13) A witness in a case in Kent in 1888 said no money was requested, 'but I left 6d. on the table, because I had heard of her, and knew she did not do this for nothing'. (14)

Fortunes could also be told by post. Advertisements by John Hartwell, alias the 'Great Seer of England, Philosopher, Astrologer, Grand Master of the Mysteries and Secrets of the Seals', offered to 'reveal your future for seven years, 7d.; marriage and other particulars, 2s. 6d. stamps', or advice on 'how to cause lover's visits, 2s. 6d.'. He was prosecuted in Birmingham in 1883 'for victimising numerous persons throughout the kingdom by alleging that he was possessed of the "talismanic art"...', by supplying 'texts relating to prophets, prophetesses, and prophesying', and in exchange for 16 stamps, charms such as that 'for obtaining the love of any person the wearer of it might choose'. He had several previous convictions, and in the previous year had been sentenced to three months imprisonment for 'practising the art of palmistry'. (15) Miss Mary Games was similarly prosecuted for palmistry in Yorkshire in 1893.

> She looked at the woman's hand, and read some wonderful things in the "lines". Amongst these were three offers of marriage, gold mines on the forefinger, a sea captain or an engineer, besides three children… the latter to arrive after the woman who waited on fortune was past forty. In real life she had already been married ten years and had five children. (16)

In Bournemouth in 1900, following a police raid, 'Madame Verona' was charged along with two 'Professors', John Joseph Sparks and Alexander Davies, with 'unlawfully practising a certain subtle craft called palmistry with a view to deceive Her Majesty's subjects'. (17) However, diagrams with the 'meaning' of lines on the hand were widely available, enabling palmists to claim – usually unsuccessfully - that they were simply passing on information compiled by others. One defendant in Lambeth in 1900 claimed 'that he did not tell fortunes but simply

gave practical lessons in palmistry' – but he was still fined. (18) Astronomy, phrenology - based on claims to read character from the shape and size of the head - and physiognomy, in which character was judged from facial characteristics, were claimed as 'sciences' by their (usually male) practitioners, but these were also activities that could lead to a charge of fortune telling. One such case was that of George Frederick Ashton, who appeared before the magistrates in Leicester in 1854 charged with 'unlawfully pretending to tell fortunes by the planets'. He denied this, claiming that as a phrenologist and physiognomist 'he gave written delineations of character… he had given no less than three thousand delineations of character since he had been in Leicester'. The magistrates concluded that he 'did pretend to tell fortunes', but as the main witness against him 'had great objections' to appearing in court, the case was withdrawn. He was nevertheless warned that he would be regarded as a 'rogue and vagabond' if any offence should be proved against him in future, and treated with the 'utmost severity'. (19) In another case involving palmistry in Leicester in 1894 the defendant also received a warning after giving an undertaking 'not to continue these practices' - though he said 'he should continue to read the cards to himself'. Mr Stafford, one of the magistrates, replied that he 'could deceive himself as much as he liked, so long as he did not deceive other people'. (20)

The common penalty for a first offence of fortune telling was a fine of 20s. or 10 days in prison, but in Leeds in 1855 a 'foreigner calling herself the Baroness de Scoulenbourg [sic]' was sent to prison for a month for 'obtaining half a crown… under the pretence of telling the fortune of a young woman' to whom she had 'promised a husband (an elderly gentleman)'. Her instructions that 'to prevent him from being fickle she was to obtain a lock of his hair, enclose the same in a dock leaf, then bury them whole, and "never say nothing to nobody" [sic]' may not have helped her case, having connotations well beyond an 'intent to deceive and impose'. (21) Simply *claiming* a lack of intent was rarely accepted as a defence, but might serve to mitigate the penalty. William Walter Peachey was charged with fortune telling in Leicester in May 1902. He was said to be standing in Gallowtree Gate 'robed in a dressing gown and occupying a stand. He invited young and old to have their fortunes told and several persons accepted the invitation'. For a fee of 1d they received a ticket on which was written a description of their character, and advice for the future, such as 'You are conscientious, truthful and honest, but you need more self-esteem, punctuality and reason'. When charged with 'pretending to tell fortunes', he said: 'I shall not dispute it, but I did not intend to deceive anyone'. The magistrates disagreed about the intent, but 'they did not look upon it as a serious offence, and the charges would be dismissed'. (22)

His offence was committed in full public view, but fortune tellers who practised from their own homes or lodgings were usually exposed through complaints to the police by those who felt they had been duped, or because suspicion was aroused by the comings and goings of their clients. Rebecca Smith, aged 67, a widow, was said to have 'a most extensive business in Birmingham, 'the approaches to her house being generally filled during the day. The police recently rescued her from an attack by a mob of women, who declared that she had defrauded them of money, which they had paid to her'. (23) Nevertheless, successful prosecutions depended on proving an *intent* to deceive and impose, for which evidence of actual fortune telling was required. The most common means of obtaining this was entrapment, instigated by the police.

Retta Powell, also known as 'Madame Aubrey', was prosecuted in Manchester in 1905 for 'having unlawfully professed to tell fortunes with intent to deceive' at a bazaar. Acting on a complaint, a PC Jackson went to the bazaar and asked her to tell his fortune. 'You went there to trap her?', her solicitor asked. 'Well, put it that way if you like', PC Jackson replied. Despite this admission, she was fined 10s. and costs, with a guinea [21s.] extra costs. (24) The wives of policemen were more often used for this purpose, their evidence being regarded as unquestionably reliable in court. In Loughborough in 1910, for instance, the wives of two local constables were sent by Superintendent Agar to the house of Mrs Annie Allan, who read the cards for them and was then summoned for fortune telling. Her solicitor argued that the case should be withdrawn because the 1824 Act 'required that persons should be imposed upon and deceived. The two witnesses went to the defendant at the instigation of the police, who set a trap for her, and they had both admitted that they did not believe what the defendant told them'. As the law dealt with intent rather than results, the argument that an attempted deception had not succeeded was no defence, and despite the Bench accepting there was 'not any serious intention' to deceive, she was fined 20s. or 10 days in prison. In her own defence she said she 'had never made a single charge. She did it simply as a pastime, and was a lady palmist at St. Peter's Church Bazaar in the summer'. (25)

There does appear to be an increase in the numbers of newspaper reports of fortune telling from the early 1890s through to the First World War. This may mean nothing in itself, but it could reflect one of the 'moral panics' or 'manufactured outrages' on the part of the press that characterised a period of growing tension between the European powers, and concerns about Britain's 'character' in the event of war. Although ostensibly directed at protecting the 'gullible', the decision of the Watch

Committee in Leicester in 1912 that 'these illegal practices must cease' may also have owed something to these wider concerns. Whatever the context, the case of the first person to be prosecuted after this decision, 'Madame Beryl', also known as 'Madame Duval', (real name Emily Brown), of Lancaster Road, is interesting in several respects.

She had made no secret of her activities. She advertised as a clairvoyant in the local newspapers, and had a plate on her house 'with the names she used professionally'. In the summer of 1913 however, two women were sent on the instructions of the Chief Constable to obtain proof of her activities to present to a court. They 'asked her if she read the hand'. She said she did, and proceeded to do so. Although the Bench found no evidence that it was a 'bad case', she was bound over in the sum of £10 with one £10 surety and costs. The Chairman of the Bench, the solicitor Evan Barlow, said:

> He had no desire to unduly penalise the defendant, who was only one of many, but to stop these practices… it appeared there were so many fools about that this sort of thing was profitable, not only in Leicester but in London. They must, he supposed, protect these fools, just as they fined betting men to protect the fools who wasted their money with them. (26)

Madame Beryl claimed she had 'no idea that the Act was going to be enforced in Leicester'. When the police issued a general warning to this effect, she reputedly sought advice from the former Chief Constable, Major Hall-Dalwood, and had been told that 'until she received a special warning she could go on seeing her clients'. This 'most extraordinary statement' could not be pursued in the Major's absence, but although the Chairman of the Bench, Sir William Vincent 'thought she was mistaken altogether', the warning that prosecutions would follow if these practices did not stop 'after a reasonable time' perhaps lends it some credence. (27)

Madame Beryl's prosecution highlighted another issue in relation to the practice: that of the apparent impunity conferred by a 'more fashionable clientele' than the servant girls, factory workers and other working class clients who consulted those prosecuted under the 1824 Vagrancy Act. There were 'several persons living in Leicester who professed to tell fortunes', George Ashton claimed in his defence in 1854: 'and they were visited weekly by many who considered themselves the "nobs" of Leicester… Why did not the police take them up, and see what they could make of them'. (28) The solicitor acting for Madame Beryl claimed that: 'In Regent-street, London, clairvoyance was practised to an extent that was a scandal, and one could get one's fortune read in all the fashionable bazaars'. (29)

FORTUNE TELLING IN LEICESTER.

REMARKABLE CASE AT THE POLICE COURT.

DEFENDANT'S STATEMENTS.

At Leicester Borough Police Court, on Tuesday, before Sir William Vincent and other magistrates, Emily Brown (35), married, 20, Lancaster-road, was summoned for pretending to Esther May Thornton and Sarah Ann Orton to tell their fortunes, and deceiving and imposing on them, on July 26.

Mr. Evan Barlow prosecuted on behalf of the Chief Constable, and Mr. W. Simpson defended.

The defendant pleaded guilty.

Mr. Barlow said the action was taken under Section 4 of the Vagrancy Act, whereby anybody who told fortunes was liable to a fine not exceeding £25. The defendant lived at 20, Lancaster-road, and practised under the names of "Madame Beryl" and "Madame Duval." Some months ago the Watch Committee decided that these illegal practices must cease, and a notice was sent out warning those who continued to practise that proceedings would follow. A copy of the notice was served on the defendant. On the instructions of the Chief Constable two ladies were sent to the defendant's residence on Saturday night, and asked her whether she read the hand. She said she did, and, asked what were her prices, said they were 1s., 1s. 6d., and 2s. 6d. One lady said she would have half a crown's worth. Defendant looked through a large glass at her hand, and told her a few of the usual platitudes that she was quick, diligent, and fond of children, and that she was rather run down, but happy, and so on. Proceeding to sex matters, she stated that in the background there was a dark man standing behind and above her husband, that his hair was mixed with grey, and he was rather stout. The second lady at first said she could not afford more than 1s. 6d., but the defendant said she would not get much for that, and told her that her friend had paid half-a-crown, adding: "I can read through the crystal for that." She then consented to have half-a-crown's worth. Defendant told her that she had had a lot of trouble, but that she had got through it and things were going to be much brighter for her. She asked the lady whether she was a widow, and on the latter replying "No," said: "If you are not you soon will be." Defendant closed her eyes for four or five minutes, and then asked the lady if she knew a tall man, stoutish, with light hair and brown eyes. She replied that she did not, and defendant then told her that a man of that description would offer her marriage as soon as her husband passed away, which would be about the end of the year. She also said there was a dark man, but added: "You are not to think about him." The lady asked defendant whether she could tell her anything about her husband, from whom she was living apart. Defendant looked in a glass, and said it was very cloudy, but if he was not dead already he would be shortly. Continuing, Mr. Barlow said the Watch Committee felt this sort of thing was preying on the credulity of people who could ill afford it. There was no doubt this lady and others had carried on a large trade. In view of the fact that this was the first case, he was instructed to leave the matter entirely to the Bench; they did not desire to unduly penalise the defendant, who was one of many, but only to stop these practices.

Madam Beryl was prosecuted under her real name Emily Brown for fortune telling in Leicester in July 1913, Leicester Daily Post*, 31st July 1913. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.)*

Palmistry was included among the entertainments at an 'afternoon party' in 1891 where the hostess had secured 'the assistance of a very clever lady, Miss Jean Dalrymple, a pupil of Miss Rosa Baughan', who was 'robed in white, with gold bands around her head'. (30)

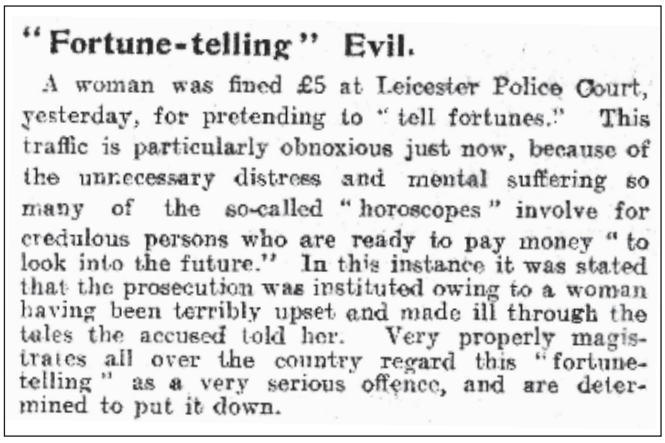
Examples can also be cited locally from the later nineteenth century. At a bazaar in Bradgate Park in 1899, held by the 'kind permission' of the Countess of Stamford and Warrington, a palmistry tent was said to be 'in decided demand'. (31) While the Royal family preferred 'that palmistry is not encouraged in bazaars at which they are asked to assist', at the Leicester Boys' Club Bazaar at the Temperance Hall in 1897, attended by such luminaries as the Mayor, J. Herbert Marshall, the Countess of Warwick and Sir Thomas Wright, 'Miss Helen Murphy's dips into futurity, within the palmistry tent, also proved a popular source of attraction'. (32) The defence that 'palmistry was indulged in high circles and at fashionable bazaars' did not save Phyllis Leslie Tempest of Luton, alias 'Hypatia', from conviction in 1900 (33), but claims of 'one law for the rich and another for the poor' were raised in the House of Commons in 1911 by the MP for Orkney and Shetland, Cathcart Wason. He asked the government to 'give instructions that poor persons shall not be interfered with by the police while exercising their art of fortune telling as long as persons are permitted to carry on the same pursuit in the purlieus of the West End'. (34)

Reports of prosecutions tend to confirm that the vast majority of those who used fortune tellers in this period were working class women, but what did they hope to gain from their readings? Given the emphasis on marriage and motherhood as the 'career' and only true fulfilment of Victorian and Edwardian women, it is no surprise that many readings focused on what was often described rather unkindly in court as 'the usual rubbish': their prospects of marriage, the physical attributes or character of a 'husband-to-be', how many children the marriage would produce, and whether the woman could expect financial security in the future. They put their money on the table, it was said in 1883, 'in the expectation that with a magic surpassing that of Cinderella, they would each become rich, marry an Adonis, and "Live happily ever afterwards"…'. (35) One newspaper report headed 'Singular Credulity of Factory Girls', claimed that the young women who consulted Rebecca Smith were told that 'both fair and dark young men were after them, invariably warning them that the fair were false and fickle, while the others were rich and faithful in their affection'. (36)

These comments certainly reflect the widespread belief that women were 'gullible' by their very nature, but those duped by fortune tellers received little pity or even sympathy in court, and were sometimes subjected to ridicule. Despite being the only witness prepared to appear, Elizabeth Grant of Belgrave, Leicester gave her evidence against John Hartwell in Birmingham 'amidst much laughter, in which the learned Stipendiary, the Clerk… and even the prisoner himself irresistibly joined'. (37) 'People are such fools to consult these (really) "wise" people, it is not surprising that the latter should take advantage of their folly', it was said of the victim of 'Baroness de Scoulenbourg' in 1855; and in one of the few references I found to the prosecution of a gipsy for fortune telling, in Ashby-de-la-Zouch in 1892, the victim was described by the Chairman of the Bench as 'an utter idiot' and asked 'What did you expect?'. (38)

However, it was not only the hard-earned money of the clients that was seen as in need of protection. It was acknowledged that fortune telling had the potential to cause 'a great deal of mischief' or distress to those on the receiving end, or encourage decisions with no rational basis that could have a major effect on an individual's life. Madame Beryl allegedly asked one client if she was a widow, 'and on the latter replying "No"…', said 'you soon will be'. (39) One of Mrs Fry's clients, on turning up the five of hearts, was told that 'if I did not get an offer of marriage within the next two years I should probably go away with an elderly lady and gentleman'. (40) In a 'remarkable story' from Bristol in 1904, two young women 'had their fortunes told, but the results were displeasing to them. One of the girls poisoned herself by taking carbolic acid, and the other had given a lot of trouble, refusing to go back to her situation, and threatening to strangle herself. The police attributed her conduct to the effect of fortune telling'. (41)

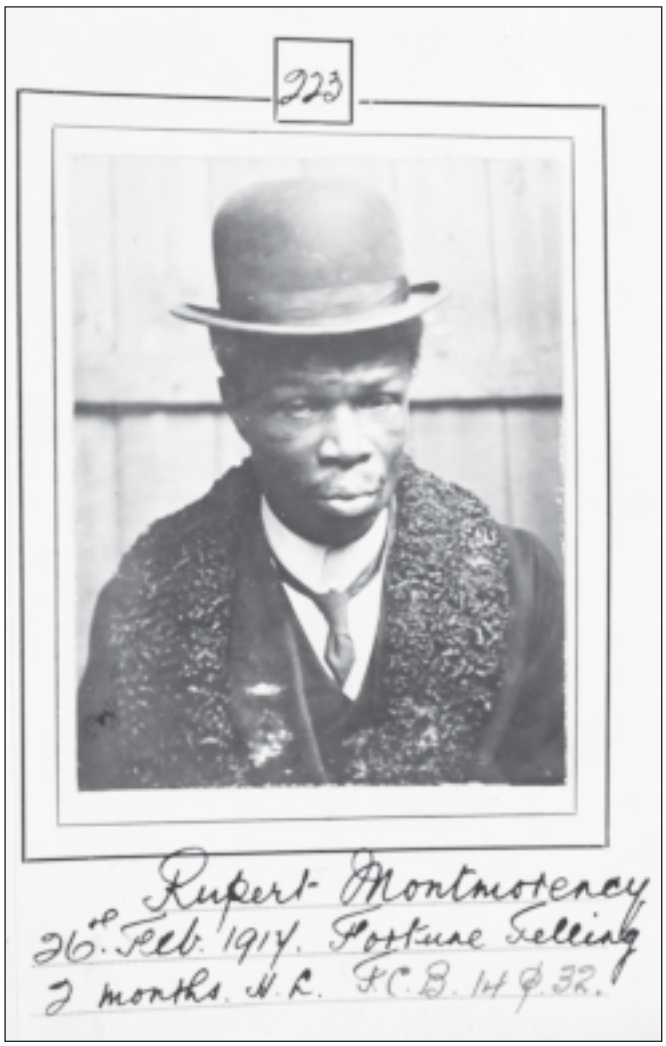
I found no evidence that people consulting fortune tellers in the years before the First World War did so because they had become more anxious about the future, but preying on



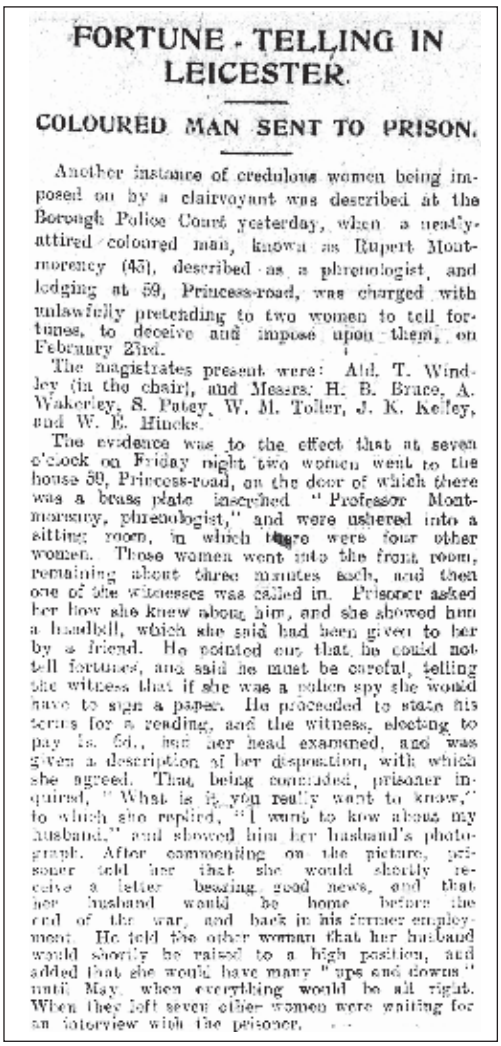
"Fortune-telling" Evil.

A woman was fined £5 at Leicester Police Court, yesterday, for pretending to "tell fortunes." This traffic is particularly obnoxious just now, because of the unnecessary distress and mental suffering so many of the so-called "horoscopes" involve for credulous persons who are ready to pay money "to look into the future." In this instance it was stated that the prosecution was instituted owing to a woman having been terribly upset and made ill through the tales the accused told her. Very properly magistrates all over the country regard this "fortune-telling" as a very serious offence, and are determined to put it down.

Report of a woman being fined £5 at Leicester Police Court for fortune telling in February 1917, Leicester Daily Post*, 21st February 1917. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.)*



Rupert Montmorency, was convicted of fortune telling in Leicester in February 1917. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, Leicester Borough Police records DE3831/302, no. 223.)



FORTUNE - TELLING IN LEICESTER.

COLOURED MAN SENT TO PRISON.

Another instance of credulous women being imposed on by a clairvoyant was described at the Borough Police Court yesterday, when a neatly-attired coloured man, known as Rupert Montmorency (43), described as a phrenologist, and lodging at 59, Princess-road, was charged with unlawfully pretending to two women to tell fortunes, to deceive and impose upon them, on February 23rd.

The magistrates present were: Ald. T. Windley (in the chair), and Messrs. H. B. Bruce, A. Wakerley, S. Putey, W. M. Toller, J. K. Kelley, and W. E. Hincks.

The evidence was to the effect that at seven o'clock on Friday night two women went to the house 59, Princess-road, on the door of which there was a brass plate inscribed "Professor Montmorency, phrenologist," and were ushered into a sitting room, in which there were four other women. Those women went into the front room, remaining about three minutes each, and then one of the witnesses was called in. Prisoner asked her how she knew about him, and she showed him a handbill, which she said had been given to her by a friend. He pointed out that he could not tell fortunes, and said he must be careful, telling the witness that if she was a police spy she would have to sign a paper. He proceeded to state his terms for a reading, and the witness, electing to pay 1s. 6d., had her head examined, and was given a description of her disposition, with which she agreed. That being concluded, prisoner inquired, "What is it you really want to know," to which she replied, "I want to know about my husband," and showed him her husband's photograph. After commenting on the picture, prisoner told her that she would shortly receive a letter bearing good news, and that her husband would be home before the end of the war, and back in his former employment. He told the other woman that her husband would shortly be raised to a high position, and added that she would have many "ups and downs" until May, when everything would be all right. When they left seven other women were waiting for an interview with the prisoner.

The Leicester Daily Post *of 27th February 1917 chose to headline the defendant's racial origins. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.)*

the anxieties of those with loved ones serving at the front during the war itself was regarded with great severity. This brings us back to Rupert Montmorency himself. At the time of his prosecution for fortune telling in Leicester in February 1917 he was lodging in Princess Road and practising as a clairvoyant and phrenologist. According to the report of his trial, he was a native of Jamaica and had lived in France until recently, 'where fortune telling was legal. He came to Britain as a British citizen when the war started'.

On 23rd February he had given 'readings' to several women at his lodgings, telling one that 'her husband would return home before the end of the war and be back in his previous employment'; and another that her husband would soon be 'raised to a high position'. In his defence he said he wanted to 'cheer' them, but in the view of the magistrates the practice of fortune telling 'caused some women a great deal of unhappiness'. His sentence of two months' hard labour, with costs of maintenance 'to be deducted from money found in his possession', also followed a fine of £10 in Manchester for similar offences the previous year. (42)

In Birmingham in June 1917 he was again prosecuted for fortune telling and sentenced to a year in prison with hard labour, having been convicted on the evidence of two female police witnesses sent to his house. One of them, the wife of a soldier serving in Mesopotamia, was told that 'she would be a widow at 45, and would be married again to a man with plenty of money'. Another young woman was told 'she would lose her father within twelve months'. (43) In 1920 he was convicted of fortune telling by palmistry in Nottingham and sentenced to 12 months' hard labour; and in 1923, now calling himself 'Dr Mahomed, alias Costello or Costello de Montmorency' and described as 'the celebrated Indian phrenologist, physiognomist and nerve specialist', he appeared before Hastings Police Court accused of the same offence. (44) In 1932, now aged 59 and practising as a psychologist and phrenologist in Bristol, he was charged with offences against a girl of 14 'whom he employed to answer the door to patients'. Denying these charges, he claimed that 'the girl, having lost her chastity, put the blame on him because he refused to allow her to accompany him to Bournemouth, to which town he was moving his practice'.

Twenty-four previous convictions were proved against him, seven for pretending to tell fortunes and four for being an 'incorrigible rogue'. (45)

There was not much doubt of Rupert Montmorency's 'incorrigibility', but when Madame Verona exclaimed in Bournemouth in 1900: 'Rogue and vagabond! I don't understand it', she was by no means alone. The Vagrancy Act was never intended 'to catch a person in the defendant's position', Mary Games' solicitor said of her conviction for palmistry in 1899, and objections to its use against fortune telling only grew stronger over time. Did Parliament really think that 'an Act passed in a more ignorant age should be used as the basis of persecution of people of high character?', one MP asked in the House of Commons in 1934. (46) Allowing an appeal against a conviction in Scotland as late as 1947, one of the judges expressed the view that 'if there was a social evil in the public profession of fortune telling it was desirable that it should be met by new legislative provisions more happily and more clearly phrased than that passed so long ago as 1824'. (47) Nevertheless, though rarely invoked after this date, the clause governing 'every person pretending or professing to tell fortunes, or using any subtle craft, means, or device, by palmistry or otherwise, to deceive and impose on any of his [or her] Majesty's subjects' remained on the statute book until 1989; and although many others have since been deleted, some of its other provisions relating to rough sleeping and begging remain in force and in use to this day. (48)

References:

1. *Leicester Chronicle*, 4th November 1893.
2. *Leicester Journal*, 6th May 1853; 14th May 1853.
3. Handbill, reproduced in Leicestershire and Rutland Family History Society journal, December 2016.
4. First published by W. Evans and Co. in 1857. This involved choosing a question from a numbered list, closing the eyes to select a symbol from a chart, and cross-referencing this to the page corresponding to the question number.
5. *Leicester Daily Post*, 27th February 1917.
6. 5 Geo. 4. c. 83. Offences under Section 4 carried a penalty of up to three months' imprisonment, but were usually less severe in the case of fortune telling.
7. *Oxford English Dictionary*.
8. See http://www.londonlives.org/static/Vagrancy.jsp for an overview of vagrancy law since the sixteenth century.
9. Its provisions were also influenced by the Society for the Suppression of Mendicity, formed in London in 1818 to discourage begging in London.
10. 'Impose' in this sense meant taking advantage of or exerting control over someone.
11. *Leicester Daily Mercury*, 14th February 1890; *Wells Journal and Somerset and West of England Advertiser*, 7th June 1935; *Lichfield Mercury*, 27th January 1899.
12. *South Wales Daily News*, 21st April 1884.
13. *Wells Journal and Somerset and West of England Advertiser*, 7th June 1935.
14. *Thanet Advertiser*, 10th March 1888.
15. *Leicester Chronicle*, 3rd February 1883.
16. *Leicester Chronicle*, 15th July 1893.
17. *Leicester Chronicle*, 15th September 1900. According to an account book presented in evidence by the police her takings amounted to over £80 in the previous two months.
18. *Leicester Chronicle*, 27th January 1900.
19. *Leicester Chronicle*, 8th July 1854.
20. *Leicester Chronicle*, 10th March 1894.
21. *Grantham Journal*, 20th October 1855.
22. *Nottingham Evening Post*, 15th May 1902.
23. *Leicester Chronicle*, 12th February 1881.
24. *Manchester Courier & Lancashire General Advertiser*, 15th November 1905.
25. *Leicester Chronicle*, 22nd October 1910.
26. *Leicester Chronicle & Leicestershire Mercury*, 2nd August 1913. According to her solicitor there were about 50 people carrying on business as fortune tellers in Leicester at this time.
27. *ibid*.
28. *Leicester Chronicle*, 8th July 1854.
29. *Leicester Chronicle & Leicestershire Mercury*, 2nd August 1913.
30. *Western Times*, 27th July 1891. Rosa Baughan was the author of *The Handbook of Palmistry* (1885).
31. *Leicester Chronicle*, 8th July 1899.
32. *Leicester Chronicle*, 8th July 1907; 20th February 1897.
33. *Leicester Chronicle*, 3rd March 1900. Hypatia of Alexandria was a Greek mathematician in the 4th century. The alias was no doubt meant to suggest a 'scientific' approach to the fortunes she told.
34. *Hansard, HC Deb 9th May 1911, vol. 25 cc1021-2*. Some details of prosecutions in London can be accessed at The National Archives, MEPO 2/1323, Fortune Telling and Palmistry: prosecutions under the Vagrancy Act, 1824 (1910 – 13).
35. *Leicester Chronicle*, 3rd February 1883, reporting on a prosecution in Birmingham.
36. *Leicester Chronicle*, 12th February 1881.
37. *Leicester Chronicle*, 3rd February 1883.
38. *Grantham Journal*, 20th October 1855; *Leicester Chronicle*, 12th March.1892. The reluctance of witnesses to appear under such circumstances also helps to explain the prevalence of entrapment.
39. *Leicester Chronicle & Leicestershire Mercury*, 2nd August 1913.
40. *Wells Journal and Somerset and West of England Advertiser*, 7th June 1935.
41. *Morning Post*, 3rd February 1904.
42. *Leicester Daily Post*, 27th February 1917.
43. *Birmingham Daily Post*, 6th June 1917; 6th July 1917.
44. *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 11th June 1923.
45. *Western Daily Press*, 1st December 1932.
46. *Hansard, HC Deb 5th June 1934, vol. 290 cc 750-1*. Ironically perhaps, the principal witness in the case to which he referred was the wife of a police inspector who had testified to the accuracy of what she was told.
47. *The Scotsman*, 15th November 1947.
48. See House of Commons Library, Briefing Paper No. 07836, *Rough Sleepers and Anti-Social Behaviour (England)*, 13th Dec. 2016 at http://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-7836/CBP-7836.pdf for the number of prosecutions each year from 2006-16.

Leicester's refuge for Basque children from the Spanish Civil War (Part 2)

Richard Graves

This article continues the story of Leicester's role in the evacuation of child refugees from the Spanish Civil War where a colony of Basque children was established at Evington Hall in July 1937. In Leicester, support and friendship came from many members of the local community, including Fred and Mary Attenborough, and the children's arrival generated extensive and daily reporting on the war in Spain, not only in the national press, but also in the pages of the *Leicester Mercury*.

Evington Hall in 1937, home to Basque children refugees. Leicester Mercury*, June 1937. (Reproduced by permission of Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Record Office.)*

The Repatriation Debate

Initial thoughts of a temporary stay soon turned into the realisation of a much longer stay, particularly for those children who did not know the whereabouts or fate of their own family. Although 7 children were reported to have gone back to Spain by January 1938, and a further 22 children who were considered to have parents or friends with homes in comparatively safe parts were repatriated the following March, 45 children were recorded as being at Evington Hall in May 1938.

After May 1938 there is no more reporting in the local press from Evington Hall. Instead, through the spring and summer of 1938, we see comments and views expressed by correspondents through the letters pages. The British public was fairly well-informed at the time about the context for the evacuation of the Basque refugees. By the middle of 1938 it seemed clear that Franco's Nationalist rebels would be the eventual 'victors' in Spain even though the conflict only formally ceased almost a year later. Events in Central Europe were now dominating the news, with the conflict in Spain being replaced by daily reporting on the fruitless attempts to appease Hitler. As Britain faced its own external threats, and as the conflict in Spain extended into a second and a third year, the events at Guernica became more remote in the public memory. More often now, when the public remembered the refugees, a sense of impatience was expressed that as the conflict in Spain had been 'resolved', even though in reality, the situation was far from resolved by Franco's 'victory', the Basque refugees should return home so that Britain could focus instead on the mounting threat to its own existence and identity.

On 26th May 1938 the *Leicester Mercury* published a letter from a group known as the Spanish Children's Repatriation Committee, chaired by Sir Arnold Wilson and based in London. The letter was in response to comments made in an article on 18th May. The letter claimed that the new Spanish Nationalist Government had made education 'a very special feature in the reconstruction of Spain ... and the number of schools already constructed in war time is considerable'. (1) The letter goes on to say that readers need have no concerns about the treatment of children '... returned to their own country and people, as they should be at the earliest possible moment. Any of them who have lost their parents, or whose parents cannot for the time being be traced will be well and carefully looked after by the social welfare organisations of National Spain. These centres have been personally inspected by three members of this committee, who can vouch for their humanity, efficiency and the good food supplied therein, all children being treated with impartiality, quite irrespective of the political colour or acts of their parents.' (2) This letter produced a swift response from Mary Attenborough in her role as Hon. Secretary of the Leicestershire Committee for the Basque Children who wrote to the group saying it 'has not helped to repatriate any of the 1,800 children that have been sent back to their parents by the Basque Children's Committee'. (3) Mrs Attenborough continues:

> We know that at least three of our families in Bilbao and one in San Sebastian are not able to attend school. In one case the aunt of a child still at Evington wrote saying how thankful she was that her

> niece was receiving regular lessons since her little friend who lived in the same street in Bilbao and who had been repatriated to her parents had to 'run the streets' ... We now have 45 children at Evington whose parents are either prisoners or refugees. Sir Arnold Wilson's Committee has previously suggested that these children, too, should be sent back en masse to Bilbao, there to be cared for in institutions – where, no doubt, they would be taught that their parents are traitors and the cause for which they are fighting is wicked.' (4)

Directly addressing those who have supported the cause in Leicestershire, Mrs Attenborough concludes:

> We should be failing in our duty to the children, and to their parents who confided them to our care, if we adopted the course urged by these gentlemen, and I cannot believe that charitable people in Leicester would agree for one moment that we should do so. Our desire is to be able to keep our Leicester children until they can return to their parents, but at the end of June our funds will be exhausted, and if we are not to fail in our task we must beg all our friends to help generously once again. (5)

The continuing debate, both locally and nationally, reflected the divided political sympathies, even in this country, sparked by events in Nationalist Spain. The Spanish Children Repatriation Committee members continued their 'dialogue' with Mary Attenborough through the letters pages of the *Leicester Mercury*. In an attempt to clarify the position once and for all a letter from J. H. McCallum Scott of the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief, in London, states:

> The position regarding repatriation is perfectly clear. The Spanish Children's Repatriation Committee is perfectly aware of this. All those children whose parents are in Bilbao and at liberty are being returned ... The children remaining in this country cannot be reunited with their parents, who are either missing, or political prisoners, or refugees in France or in any other parts of Spain. According to the information we have received (from perfectly trustworthy sources) such children would not necessarily be well-treated on their return to Bilbao. (6)

The Spanish Children Repatriation Committee remained single-minded in its view. In reply to Mr Scott:

> We can without hesitation, affirm that all children, whether their parents can be traced or not, and whatever the politics of parents or relatives, will be cared for by the social welfare centres of Nationalist Spain with the utmost kindness; there is, in fact, no reason why all the Basque children now in this country should not be sent back to the Basque region of Spain. We might mention that three members of this Committee have personally inspected these social welfare centres, and can vouch for their efficiency. (7)

In her final word on the matter Mary Attenborough makes her most impassioned statement yet in a letter in early August:

> If we were to write to the refugee mother of one of our families at Evington and say that we had decided to send her children back to Bilbao into the hands of those same people who are holding her husband prisoner, it would not be much comfort to her to be assured that, in the words of your correspondent, her children will be treated 'with the utmost kindness'. It is difficult for her to realise that the same authority who is still bombing open towns and villages with unparalleled barbarity can be relied upon to treat her children 'with the utmost kindness' ... If we can send back children to parents with homes to receive them, then we think that they should go, whether the parents are in Nationalist or Government Spain – but we will not deliver the children up to their parents' enemies. (8)

The end of the Leicester colony

After August 1938 there are no further reports or letters about Evington Hall in the *Leicester Mercury* until March 1939 when the newspaper reported that the Hall was to become a Convent School:

The only known surviving envelope cover of a letter sent to a child at Evington Hall, sent to Luciano Lambarri from Bilbao on 22nd July 1938 - note the Spanish military censor stamp bottom left. (Cover reproduced with acknowledgement to Cliff Kirkpatrick.)

> Evington Hall, which has eleven acres of land, and which at present is the home of the Basque refugee children, is to be acquired by the Sisters of the Order of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin for use as a convent secondary school. The Leicester settlement of the Order is the only one of its kind in the country. There are eighteen sisters now in residence at their present Convent in Glenfield Road, opposite St. Paul's (Anglican) Church. The Convent School has scholars from kindergarten age up to eighteen. It is stated that the school has outgrown itself, the increasing numbers of scholars and a waiting list making necessary consideration of new premises. The Order will move into Evington Hall in September, and in the meantime the Hall will be adapted for its new purposes. The present Convent is likely to be sold. The cost of the Evington Hall conversion will, it is stated, run into many thousands of pounds. (9)

At the time of this article the colony was still at the Hall, although in view of the comment that adaptation work will be carried out 'in the meantime' it is likely that the numbers of children present had dwindled significantly by March 1939, and it may have been possible to start some conversion work with minimal disruption to the remaining refugees. Evidence that a sale to the Sisters was under consideration as early as the autumn of 1938, is found in the archives of former Leicester auctioneers and estate agents, Warner, Sheppard & Wade, *Evington Hall sale 1938-39*. A letter to solicitors acting for the purchasers, dated 4th October 1938, stated: 'As previously mentioned the sale is at the sum of £5,600 ... The property is at present let to a committee responsible for the Basque children ... In the case of the tenancy of the Hall, as soon as the contract has been signed we will make arrangements so that possession can be available before Easter next.' (10) The minutes of the national Basque Children's Committee meeting in London on 8th November 1938, record that: 'A formal note had been received from Mrs Attenborough informing the Committee that Evington Hall must be closed next Easter, and the Leicester Committee could not obtain alternative accommodation. It was agreed to use the Leicester Home to its fullest capacity as long as it remained open, as the children there enjoy many advantages not available elsewhere.' (11) In February 1939 the Central Basque Childrens' Committee minutes record that:

Plaque situated at the entrance to Southampton Library and Art Gallery, designed by Herminio Martinez for the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the Basque children aboard the Habana.

> Mrs Attenborough reported that when Evington Hall closed, the House Committee would continue its work for the purpose of keeping in touch with the children who were in private houses in the district. Mrs Attenborough thought her Committee would be very willing to cover the whole of the Midland area for the Central Committee if this were necessary. (12)

Mary Attenborough attended the next meeting of the Central Basque Children's Committee on 20th March 1939, but did not attend the next two on 22nd June and 14th July. There is no specific mention of Evington in the list of recently closed colonies reported to the June Committee. However, confirmation that the proposed sale probably proceeded on schedule comes in a book by A H. Kimberlin entitled *The Return of Catholicism to Leicester 1746-1946*. In a reference to the Convent and School of the Nativity, Kimberlin notes: 'Removed in 1939 to Evington Hall (then part of Sacred Heart Parish) where a school could be established in larger grounds and with wider possibilities for education. The school quickly flourished in spite of war difficulties; and reached rapidly the number of 210.' (13) The Convent School remained at Evington Hall until 2011 when it moved to alternative premises. Today the Hall is home to a Hindu faith free school. From the evidence above it must be assumed that the Committee relinquished the lease and vacated Evington Hall sometime between April and July 1939. How many refugees remained by that time is not known. Presumably the remaining children were repatriated, transferred to other 'colonies' or found new homes, and possibly employment within the host community in Leicester or elsewhere. It is not clear what happened to the Basque teachers, señoritas and priests, who originally accompanied the children, and who faced serious personal risks if they returned to Nationalist Spain. Fred and Mary Attenborough were to continue their work with refugees and by July 1939, they had taken in two young Jewish refugees from Berlin, Irene and Helga-Maria Bejach, who were to remain in their care for the duration of the war. (14)

Memories of Leicester

In much the same way that there are very few contemporary records of the Leicester colony apart from the reports and correspondence in the *Leicester Mercury* there are also very few later references after its closure in 1939. However, the very paucity of references makes it worthwhile recording

whatever is available before it all becomes lost with the passing of time and the generation of 1937. One of the aims of the Basque Children of '37 Association, when it was founded in 2002, was to gather and record as many testimonies as possible from surviving refugees and their families, a task never attempted before in any systematic manner. In 2012 to mark the 75th anniversary of the sailing of the Habana, the Association published a volume of collected testimonies entitled: *Memorias: The Basque Children remember and are remembered*. Helpfully, it contains two references to the Evington colony, one from Vicente Alti Carro, the other from Manuel Villeras Martinez.

Vicente Alti Carro describes how he, aged about 6, and his younger sister, Ana, about 5, arrived with 50 other children 'in front of an enormous house, headquarters of a huntsman's club ... The boys' bedrooms were on one side and the girls' on the other. There were army-style beds, but they were comfortable. Life followed its smooth course. We used to go to classes at the Art and Technology College, and at the weekends English families would invite us to spend the day with them. We made a lot of friends like this. The one who used to come most frequently was the well-known film producer, Richard Attenborough. There were other friends, too. Thanks to people like them our exile was made more bearable'. (15) Vicente eventually moved to stay in a family home at Hucknall, Nottinghamshire, and then to another colony, before being sent back to Spain in December 1939 with his sister and another group of children without having had any news of his parents in the meantime. His father had been interned in a concentration camp in France before being 'rescued' and travelling to exile in Chile. Back in Spain, the next few years for Vicente, at home with his mother, grandmother and younger siblings, were times of privation. The whole family was eventually re-united in Chile in August 1945, eight years after Vicente had left Spain on the *Habana*.

On returning to Spain, Manuel Villeras Martinez kept in touch with friends from the Leicester colony who had also returned to Spain, mostly to the Basque region. In 1987, fifty years after they had arrived in England on the *Habana*, a number of surviving former refugees in Spain decided to re-visit the places they had stayed at. Manuel was one of a group of twelve who returned to Leicester in September 1987: 'We were full of anticipation when we went to St. Pancras Station to take the train to Leicester.' (16) The Civic authorities had been contacted and a reception arranged at Leicester Town Hall: 'After waiting for a few minutes, the Mayor was ready to receive us. And, oh, what a surprise! The Mayor and his wife were Hindus! He was wearing European clothes, but his wife was looking fantastic wearing the sari of her native country. I had to speak with the Mayor, tell him about our wanderings during the Civil War, which he only knew about through Hemingway's books, as he must have been about thirty or forty years old.' (17) The *Leicester Mercury* reported this event very briefly: 'Childhood memories of life in Leicester came rushing back when a group of Spaniards made an emotional return to the city.' Referring to 'the dozen visitors' we learn that: '50 years on, the evacuees were greeted by the Lord Mayor Mr Gordhan Parmar and his wife Lalita and chatted about their memories over lunch.' (18) Manuel Martinez explains how the Mayor's secretary accompanied the group in taxis, expressing how surprised he was at the changes which had taken place between 1937-1987:

> ... [the Mayor's secretary] pointed out the little town on the outskirts, Evington, where the colony had been. I remembered various streets which by dint of going to school the same way every day had become etched in my mind; they still existed, but you can imagine how much a town changes in fifty years! In fact, Evington was there but it wasn't the Evington we had known and the drivers were getting very annoyed as we kept on asking the inhabitants we saw. The fields, where the colony Evington Hall had been, contained a whole lot of skyscrapers, each one very close to the other.
>
> We had lost hope of finding it when we asked an old lady who was passing by whether in her childhood she had heard of a colony of Basque children. She replied quite naturally: 'Yes, sir, I've heard people speak about the colony and I had several friends there. It's quite close, behind those skyscrapers and now it's become a school run by nuns.' We each thanked her in turn and her friendly smile filled us with happiness. It was true that behind the skyscrapers there was a little path edged with trees and a fence: at the bottom on the left, we straightaway saw that it was Evington Hall. We knocked on the door and a small nun came out and I tried to explain to her the reason for our visit. She went to fetch the Mother Superior who, luckily, had lived in Gibraltar and spoke some Spanish. With my English and her Spanish, and with her permission, we went to look round the place where we had lived for three years. Tears flowed freely as we thanked the nun for her help and she told us that she had heard it said that her convent had sheltered Spanish children during the Civil War. We said goodbye, thanking her effusively because thanks to her kindness we had been able to realise the dream we had had for so long. We looked back as we left the place, it surely being the last time that we would see the colony which held so many memories of the 'Children of '37'. (19)

David Attenborough recalled an incident in 2010 when he attended a festival in Santiago de Compostela and 'found myself sitting next to a man of about my own age who said

he had come from a hundred miles or so away to the east in order to meet me, since he had been one of the boys at Evington – and he wished to say thank-you. He remembered the whole episode very well and was anxious to say how grateful they had all been. Apparently after the children returned to Spain many of them kept in touch.' (20)

By the end of 1939 some 90% of the original *Habana* refugees had been repatriated. However, a significant number of younger children still remained the responsibility of the national Basque Children's Committee during the war years. Even by June 1941 the Committee had responsibility for 148 children under the age of 14, too young to be financially independent. (21) Most of the colonies had closed by then or retained only small numbers, and the interest of local communities was by now re-focussed onto wartime efforts to protect and in some cases evacuate British children. This increased the financial pressure on the Committee as resources dwindled, and so the idea of 'adoption' by willing local families had become seen as more necessary.

One of the refugees affected in this way was Herminio Martinez. He recalls time spent in Leicester, not at the Evington colony, but with a local family. His story was picked up by Adrian Bell, author of *Only for three months*. Herminio arrived in England on the Habana with his younger brother in 1937 and had lived in colonies in Swansea, Brampton, Tynemouth, Margate and Carshalton. One day at Carshalton in 1940 Herminio was told suddenly to get ready to move and was introduced to a man, Charles Green, who then drove him to Leicester. Mr Green and his wife had a daughter and had read in a Methodist journal about the Basque children. He had driven down to Carshalton hoping to adopt a girl as a 'sister' for his daughter, but was told there were only boys awaiting placement in family homes. Mr Green readily agreed to a change of plan, a gesture, which Herminio described as: 'lovely and generous. Consequently, I finished up in Leicester ... .and there of course I encountered English life for the first time.' (22) Herminio was to spend three years in Leicester during the war years with the Green family: 'How my aunt and uncle tamed me, I don't know. How I adapted to that sort of life, I don't know. Physically I was very, very active; I was tough and of course I couldn't keep still; from the moment I left the house I would tear down the road, jumping over all the garage entrances. I went to junior school. In no time at all I had no end of friends. I think I adapted to that way of life incredibly well.' (23) After three years of a 'thoroughly English way of life' Herminio had to leave his 'pacifist guardians' in Leicester because of the economic hardships they were suffering in the war. He returned to Carshalton, the last remaining colony by 1943. He reflects; 'Whilst I think I was very lucky to have spent those three years with my aunt and uncle in Leicester, I think really that, looking back, it was a period in my life that I value but I'm glad it didn't continue, because I was losing my Spanish background. I was losing my language. Going back to the colony at that particular time meant returning to an environment which brought out the best of Spanish culture.' (24)

When the national Basque Children's Committee was finally dissolved in 1951, there were still 270 of the original group of almost 4,000 children living in England. Herminio was one of these. He eventually settled in London as a young adult and trained to become a teacher. Some years later he took an MA degree in Spanish Studies. He expressed the view of a long-term exile: 'I had this need to establish some sort of roots, intellectual roots, and to find myself. I needed to have a background'. (25) In 2012, on the 75th anniversary of the sailing of the *Habana*, Herminio, then living in a flat in London, was interviewed by Sam Jones, a *Guardian* journalist. The last word belongs to Herminio: 'I am of that Spanish generation that never was, the Spain that never flowered because it was cut off. Life has been very interesting, but I still have within me a sadness, a loneliness. In essence, I don't belong.' (26)

References:

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2. *ibid*.
3. *Leicester Mercury*, 31st May 1938, p.14.
4. *ibid*.
5. *ibid*.
6. *Leicester Mercury*, 28th June 1938, p.14.
7. *Leicester Mercury*, 20th July 1938, p.12.
8. *Leicester Mercury*, 2nd August 1938, p.10.
9. *Leicester Mercury*, 16th March 1939, p.6.
10. Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland (ROLLR): DE3428. Records of Warner, Sheppard & Wade, Box 43.
11. *Basque Children's Committee Minutes and Documents 1937-38*, University of Warwick, Archives of the TUC, 292/946/39/9.
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15. Natalia Benjamin ed., *Memorias: The Basque Children Remember and are Remembered*, 2012, p.10.
16. *ibid*. p.102.
17. *ibid*. p.103.
18. *Leicester Mercury*, 21st September 1987, p.8.
19. Natalia Benjamin, op. cit. pp.103-104.
20. Sir David Attenborough, letter to the author dated 23 January 2015.
21. Adrian Bell, *Only for Three Months: the Basque Children in Exile*, (Mousehold Press, 1996), p.183.
22. *ibid*. p.190.
23. *ibid*. p.193-4.
24. *ibid*. p.205.
25. *ibid*, p.247.
26. *Guardian*, 11th May 2012.

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Dr Richard Ellis (1902 – 1966)
Dr Audrey Eva Ellis (née Russell) (1902 – 1975)

The names of Richard Ellis and Audrey Russell feature prominently in the story of the evacuation and care of the Basque refugee children. Ellis and Russell were two British doctors sent by the Ministry of Health to Bilbao in early May 1937 to check that each child who would be sailing on the *Habana* was medically fit to travel, and to make sure they would not be bringing disease into Britain. Ellis also assisted in the evacuation itself and undertook follow-up work at the reception camp near Southampton. Ellis became a member of the National Joint Committee for Spanish Relief between 1937-39.

Richard White Bernard Ellis was a member of the well-known Quaker family, prominent in many aspects of civic and commercial life in Leicestershire. He was born in Leicester in 1902, youngest of four children of Bernard and Isabel Ellis. One of his siblings was Colin Ellis, historian, author of *History in Leicester*, first published in 1948. The 1911 Census shows the family living in Avenue Road, Leicester. Richard Ellis attended Quaker schools at The Downs and Leighton Park before going up to Kings College, Cambridge in 1920 to study Natural Sciences. He later qualified in Medicine at St. Thomas's Hospital, London in 1926, and went on to the MD and MA in 1931. He trained in paediatrics at Boston Children's Hospital, USA, and then became a member of staff at Guy's Hospital, London. Audrey Ellis was born in Southampton on 31st March 1902.

Ellis and Russell co-authored a 'special article' published in *The Lancet* on 29th May 1937, entitled 'Four thousand Basque children'. The article describes conditions in Bilbao in April/May 1937 and the findings of their medical examinations of the children prior to embarkation. The following extracts from this article paint a picture of a city under siege and the impact on the health of its citizens:

> *The shipload of children from Bilbao, who arrived at Southampton on Saturday is a grim reminder of the magnitude of the refugee problem created by modern warfare. As the arrival of this group of children has already aroused interest and sympathy in this country, we feel that a few particulars of existing conditions in the Basque capital and of our impressions received of both parents and children during the medical examinations carried out there may be enlightening. The Basque Government is making magnificent efforts to deal with conditions becoming daily more impossible. Most of the public services are still operating though the schools have had to be closed owing to the incessant raids, the women and children spending most of the day on the steps of the 'refugios' (or bomb shelters) ready to take cover when the sirens give the alarm. For many weeks the people have been living on beans, rice, cabbage and 35 grammes a day of black bread ... milk and butter are almost unobtainable. There are*

Dr Audrey Russell carrying out medical examinations of Basque children in Bilbao, May 1937. (Reproduced with acknowledgement to the Basque Children of '37 Association.)

Richard Ellis in RAF uniform with Spanish cap. The Spanish caption reads: 'Richard Ellis, one of the English doctors, who cared for the Basque children.' (Reproduced with acknowledgement to the Basque Children of '37 Association.)

small supplies of oranges and olive oil, but only a minimal amount of fresh vegetables. One pregnant mother who brought up five healthy looking children for examination was herself so weak she could hardly stand, and said, smiling, that perhaps she would find some time to eat when her children were in England. Perhaps the most surprising feature of the examination was the good health of the group as a whole, in spite of the conditions of deprivation, anxiety and overcrowding in which they had been living for many weeks. It was evident that even the poorer peasants have a high standard of care for their children, and that before the blockade almost all the latter were well-developed and well fed. The very high incidence of dental caries, however, is probably attributable at least in part to the deficient diet.'

Children lined up for medical examination near Bilbao, Leicester Mercury*, 10th June 1937. (Reproduced by permission of Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Record Office.)*

On 10th June 1937, two weeks after their article in *The Lancet*, the *Leicester Mercury* published a full-page article written by Ellis. This was in the period between the Habana arriving at Southampton and the fifty refugees arriving at Evington. The article set the scene for readers in his native Leicestershire by describing conditions in Bilbao and also the conditions on board the *Habana* itself en route to England. The following extracts are taken from the article:

Everywhere the streets and squares were crowded with people, groups of men standing talking or unloading sandbags, women and children for the most part sitting on the pavements around the bomb-shelters that have been set up in every street. The shops are closed, or opened only for an hour or two a day (since they have nearly all long since sold all they had), the cafes remain open as meeting places, but they too have nothing to sell except camomile tea, without even sugar to make it palatable. Coffee can be had three times a week, meat occasionally when a refugee, evacuated from his farm, drives his cattle into Bilbao to be slaughtered, whilst milk, eggs and butter are practically unobtainable. Dogs and cats (which have a not unpleasant taste similar to rabbit) have practically disappeared from the streets. The bombardment of the city is a matter of daily, and often hourly, occurrence. On the second day I was there, the sirens had given warning of planes overhead, and high explosive and incendiary bombs had been dropped five times before 8 a.m. The schools have all been closed owing to the continual necessity of taking cover, and during clear weather all normal activities are completely disrupted. The city welcomes a rainy day with a sigh of relief, as it means visibility will be too poor for intensive bombing! The children chosen to come to England were selected roughly in the proportion of the different political parties, the Basque Nationalists (who are those particularly anxious to preserve the Basque language and traditions) being the largest single group. The children were embarked sardine-wise in the 'Habana', an old liner converted for refugee transport, and in the early morning we slipped out of the harbour to meet our British naval escort and a high sea in the Bay of Biscay. Owing to the extreme expedition and co-operativeness of the port medical authority, Dr Williams, at Southampton the whole four thousand were re-examined and disembarked in two days, and transferred to a huge camp that had been prepared for them at Eastleigh. It is hoped that local committees will be able to organise homes for groups of children and be responsible for the financial 'adoption' of children within the group.

After the outbreak of World War II in 1939 Richard Ellis went to Hungary and Romania where he worked for a while with Polish refugees. He then joined the RAF where he served as a Wing Commander in North Africa, Italy and Belgium. Richard and Audrey were married on 18th January 1941, both aged 38, at St Marylebone, now Westminster, Register Office. Richard Ellis was described on the marriage certificate as 'Flight Lieutenant, RAF, and Doctor of Medicine, Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, main residence 22, Harley Street, W1.' Audrey Russell was described as a 'Bachelor of Medicine, resident at 10, Woburn Square, WC1'. Shortly after the war Richard Ellis accepted a post as Professor of Child Life and Health in Edinburgh where he spent the rest of his career, retiring in 1964. He died on 15th September 1966, aged 64, at Cholesbury, near Chesham in the Chilterns. Audrey Ellis died on 10th July 1975, also at Cholesbury, aged 73.

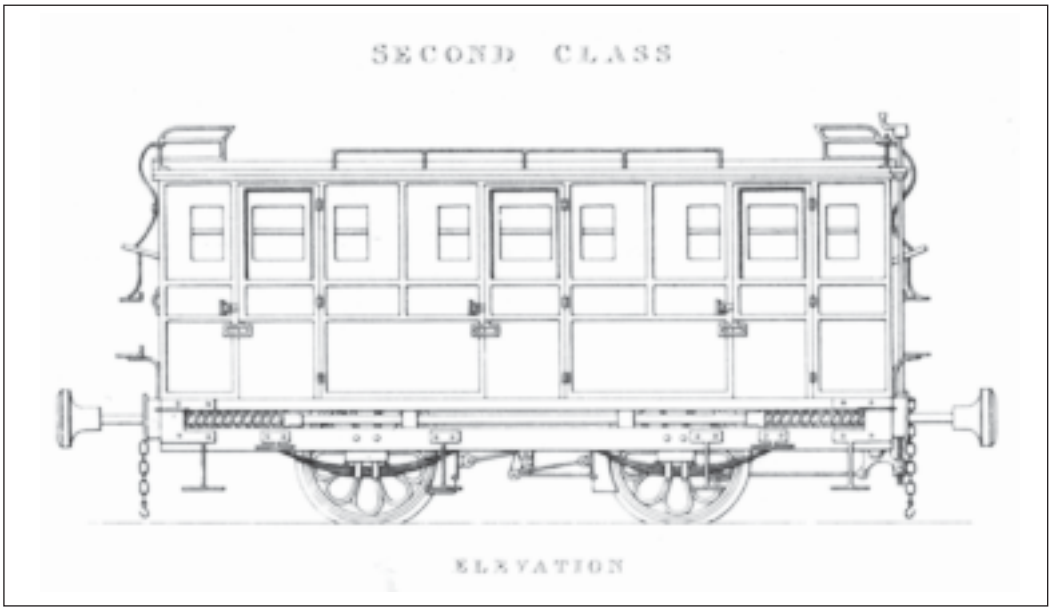
The First Passenger Fatality on the Leicester & Swannington Railway, and its impact on improving Railway Safety

Barry Kendall

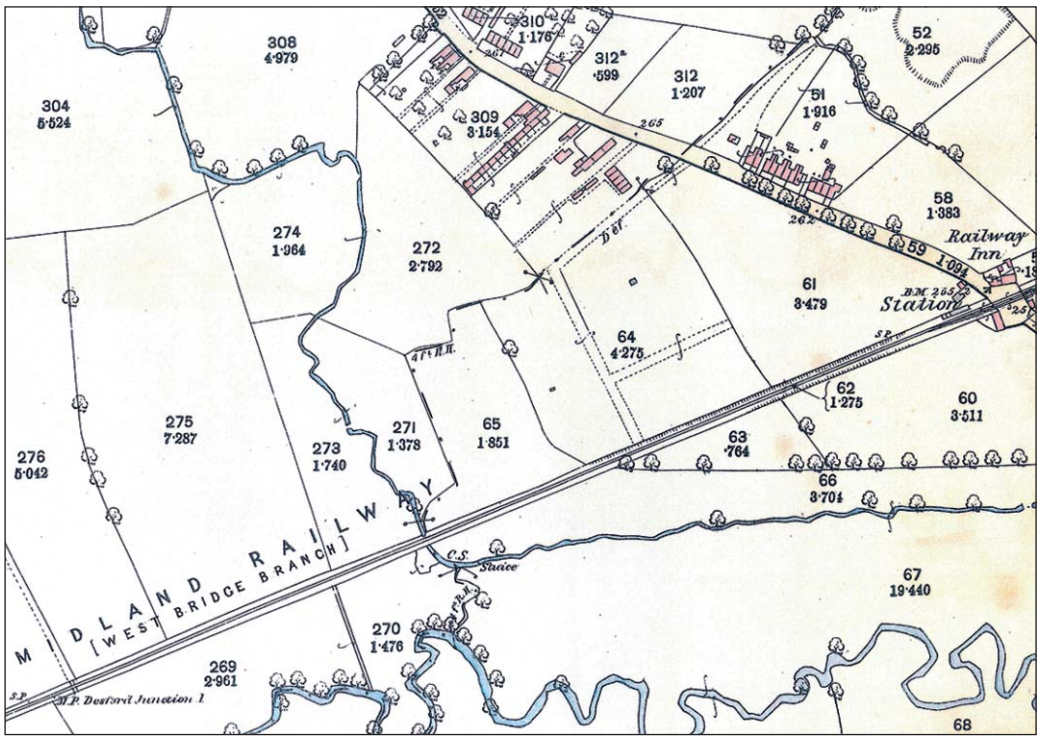
August 1844 had been an exceptionally dry month in Leicestershire with temperatures lower than average for the time of year. (1) Wednesday 28th dawned fine but cool in Hugglescote, where Elizabeth Atkins, aged 22, had been enjoying an extended visit with her sister Matilda, and brother-in-law James Weston, a local baker. Elizabeth had spent the previous 18 days with her sister, who had recently given birth to her second child Sarah, and the time had come for her to leave and return home to Leicester. (2) At 4.30 in the afternoon Elizabeth set out to walk to Bagworth Wharf to catch the 6 o'clock train to Leicester West Bridge, and from there to her home in Redcross Street, where she lived with her mother, a 'stitcher of brace tapes', just a few minutes walk from the terminus. Elizabeth was joined on her journey home by Sarah Daniels who had also been visiting the Westons that afternoon. Sarah and her husband William were neighbours of Elizabeth, living in Carts Lane Leicester, just around the corner from Redcross Street. The women were offered a ride in a cart belonging to Mr Goodacre, who was returning to Desford, the next station down the line from Bagworth. On arriving at Desford Wharf, Elizabeth and Sarah purchased tickets for their journey at the not inconsiderable cost at that time of 7½d.

As had become the custom on the Leicester & Swannington Railway, the carriages formed part of goods trains conveying coal from the mines at Snibston and Whitwick to the wharves at Soar Lane and West Bridge in Leicester. The railway had been promoted originally as a coal-carrying line; the conveyance of passengers not having been seen as a priority by the promoters. However, soon after the opening of the railway in 1832, the enthusiasm of the general public for travel by this new and exciting means of transport, stimulated an unanticipated demand for a limited passenger service on the line. To this end the directors of the railway company authorised the incorporation of passenger carriages in the formation of their scheduled coal trains. Initially, passengers had to travel in open wagons fitted with hard bench seating. However, by the date of Elizabeth's journey the company had invested in three covered carriages, one third class, one composite (part first class and part third class), and one first class, all of which were built at the company workshops.

Elizabeth and Sarah boarded the train, sitting in the last compartment of the two passenger carriages which had been coupled into the centre of the train between the wagons that day (3), and settled themselves in opposite corners of the compartment in anticipation of a pleasant journey home. Departing from Bagworth, the train comprised thirteen wagons behind the locomotive, then two passenger carriages, followed by a further thirteen wagons in the rear. The gross weight of the 13 wagons behind the passenger compartment where Elizabeth and Sarah were sitting totalled 71tons, 4cwt, this load exceeding that permitted for the line, which was to be a significant factor in the light of events that were to follow.



A typical second-class carriage of the period. There were two carriages in the 6 o'clock train from Bagworth to Leicester on 28th August 1844, but it is not recorded which two of the three operated by the Company (one of which was fitted with a screw brake), were in use. (With acknowledgement to Francis Whishaw, Railways of Great Britain and Ireland*, John Weale, 1842.)*



The accident took place west of Ratby Station, not far to the east of where the smaller of the two watercourses can be seen running under the railway line on this first edition 25" Ordnance Survey map of 1886. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland. Map ref. Leicestershire XXX.II.)

At first all was well, but soon after the train had passed New Bridge Lane on the approach to Ratby, Elizabeth and Sarah became alarmed as the train suddenly began jolting and decelerating rapidly. Moments later several of the wagons behind the locomotive and in front of the carriages became derailed. An axle had broken on one of the wagons in front of their carriage, and as the derailed wagon dragged along the track bed, the broken axle dug into the ballast resulting in rapid deceleration and the telescoping of the rolling stock. The thirteen trailing wagons crashed with great force into the flimsy carriages, with the rear compartment of the second carriage, where Elizabeth and Sarah were sitting, bearing the full brunt of the impact. John Nicholson, the Overlooker of the Locomotive Engines on the L&S Railway, was riding on the engine with driver Martin Wetherbourn, and fireman Henry Russell.

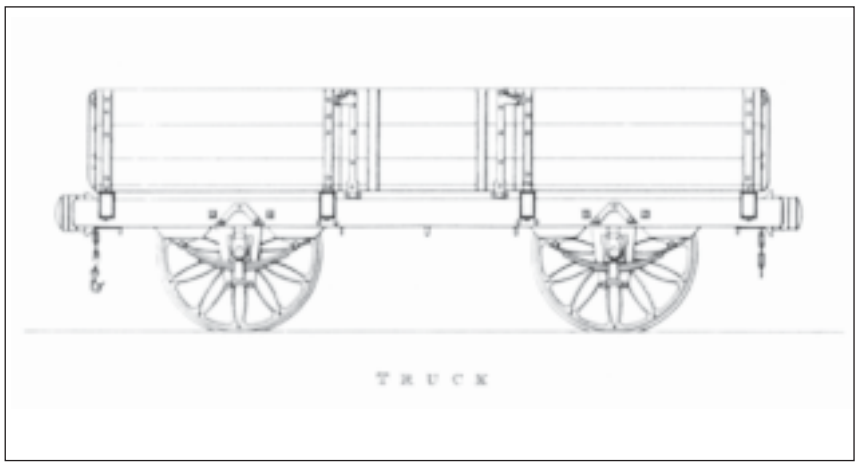
Immediately after the stoppage, Nicholson leapt from the tender and rushed back to inspect the damage and see if help was needed. What Nicholson saw was most of the wagons scattered along the track and the two carriages standing on their ends. The wagon immediately behind the passenger carriages had pierced right through the body of the second carriage. Nicholson managed to free a male passenger from the first carriage, whilst Matthew Needham, the guard, went to the second carriage to help the passengers out of the wreckage. It was then that Needham saw the full horror of the impact, Elizabeth was trapped, pinned down across her chest between the wagon that had pierced the carriage and the front seat of the compartment where she was sitting. He did all he could to free Elizabeth as quickly as possible, but it was very soon apparent that she had not survived the accident.

Needham first laid Elizabeth on the grass. She was then carried along the track bed to the Whitwick Colliery Arms Inn at Ratby, a short distance along the line, adjacent to the level crossing. (4) Nicholson then set out for Leicester, returning later with Thomas Swain, a surgeon who was an assistant of Thomas Paget of High Street. Swain examined Elizabeth's body, finding her face bloated and swollen, with blood oozing from the left ear, nostrils and mouth. Her body was unmarked and no bones were broken, Swain's professional opinion being that Elizabeth had died from asphyxia due to the pressure on her chest. Sarah survived, and surprisingly, Elizabeth was the only fatality.

The inquest into Elizabeth's death was held in Leicester on 3rd September 1844. Having heard the statements from those present on the train, the Jury returned a verdict of Accidental Death, and imposed a *deodand* (a type of fine) of £50 upon the railway company. They also expressed their condemnation of the practice of marshalling passenger carriages in the middle of the wagons of a coal train. They recommended, in the strongest possible terms, that in future, the carriages should be placed at the rear of the train after the wagons. John Gregory, the coroner, duly recorded the written depositions and the verdict of the jury.

Before turning to the report of the Board of Trade Enquiry, and the technical details of the accident, it should be added that the locomotive and the passenger carriages of the L&S Railway were at the time owned by the operating company, and the wagons were owned and maintained by the private companies that used the line for the conveyance of raw and manufactured materials, such as coal and bricks from Whitwick and Snibston, limestone from the Coleorton area, and granite from Groby.

In accordance with the Railway Regulation Act 1840 (3 & 4 Vict. Cap. 97) all accidents had to be reported to the Railway Department of the Board of Trade. This particular incident was investigated by Captain Joshua Coddington of the Royal Engineers, Assistant Inspector of Railways, who attended the scene of the accident a week later on 4th September 1844, accompanied by Mr Gill, managing director of the L&S Railway, and Messrs Hutchinson and Ellis, company directors of the railway, together with John Nicholson who was Superintendent of the Line. The party were confronted by the shocking sight of the derailed wagons and carriages which were almost totally destroyed. The events leading up to the moment of the derailment were described by John Nicholson, an experienced railway man.



A typical mineral wagon of the period. Note the absence of brake gear. The maximum loaded gross weight of a four-wheeled wagon on the L&S Railway was limited by the L&S Railway Act of 1830 to 4 tons. (With acknowledgement to Francis Whishaw, Railways of Great Britain and Ireland*, John Weale, 1842.)*

Born in Northumberland, Nicholson, who had spent many years working for George and Robert Stephenson on Tyneside, was clearly well versed in the operation of railways. Robert Stephenson (son of George) was to be appointed engineer for the line by the promoters of the Leicester & Swannington Company in 1830. It is probable that George Stephenson and his son Robert recommended Nicholson for his position with the Leicester & Swannington Railway. In reply to a question from Captain Coddington regarding the operation of mixed trains, Mr Gill stated that the circular from the Railway Department of the Board of Trade, dated 1st January 1842, had not been received, neither had any suggestion as to the positions of passenger carriages in mixed trains. As the party surveyed the scene of destruction, Nicholson proceeded to give a detailed account of the events immediately before the sudden and abrupt stoppage of the train. He recalled how the train had left Desford at the usual speed of 12 to 13 miles per hour, until, just after passing New Bridge Lane, he noticed that there was an uncustomary mass of sparks and dust from a coal wagon positioned between the engine and the passenger carriages, and that the latter had derailed. The steam had already been shut off as the train was preparing to stop at Ratby Wharf half a mile or so ahead. The fireman applied the tender brake immediately. (5) The train continued on its erratic progress for a further 100 yards until it came to a shuddering halt. In Nicholson's opinion the cause of the breakdown was the fracturing of the axle near to the off-side wheel. On later inspection, he discovered that the broken axle of the wagon had embedded itself into the track-bed to a depth of 18 inches resulting in the almost instantaneous stoppage of the train. Nicholson stated that it was not unusual for an axle to break, but that hitherto no similar accident had occurred, and that he believed this to be the first accident involving any passenger on the line. He went on to say that he had never considered the positioning of the carriages in the middle of the train between heavy wagons to be the ideal place for them, but as it had become customary practice both for operational convenience, and the prevention of delay for the passengers, he had accepted it. The wagons at the rear of the train were destined for Soar Lane Wharf, where they would be un-coupled at the junction of the short branch to Soar Lane, whilst the remaining wagons and carriages would have continued to their final destination at West Bridge, with the minimum of hindrance to passengers.

Captain Coddington was also provided with copies of the witness statements given at the inquest, including that of the guard, Matthew Needham. Needham describes how he boarded the train at Bagworth and proceeded towards Leicester riding on one of the coal wagons in front of the passenger carriages. Soon after leaving Desford he became aware that one of the preceding wagons had become derailed and was dragging those behind off the track. Realising the danger he was in, he leapt from the train for his own safety. His description of events thereafter corroborates that given by John Nicholson. The fact that Needham was riding on a wagon, suggests that the only carriage fitted with a brake was not in use on this occasion. Had it been so, then it could be speculated that the outcome of the accident might not have been so serious. However, in view of the fact that derailment occurred in front of the passenger carriages, the weight of the trailing, un-braked wagons, would nevertheless have caused major damage to the carriages.

In his report to Major-General C. W. Pasley, Inspector-General of Railways, Coddington concluded that the derailment was clearly attributable to the failure of the wagon axle. Having examined the broken axle, and others in the train, he was critical of their design, observing that the

axles are 3½ inches in diameter but are shouldered down to 3 inches at the point where the wheels were keyed on, so that they had the least strength where it was most needed. (6) Surprisingly he did not comment on the overloading of the coal wagons. This factor alone could have accounted for the frequent axle breakages reported by John Nicholson. Regarding the death of Elizabeth Atkins, he was highly critical of the railway company's operating practice of marshalling carriages in the middle of the train, and recommended that in future they should be coupled at the rear. His report, together with comments from Pasley, was submitted to the Lords of the Committee of Privy Council for Trade on 6th September 1844. Pasley's observations on the accident expanded upon the risks associated with mixed trains, and the cause of the crash. He noted that the safest position for passenger carriages in a mixed train, based on previous accident reports, was in all probability at the rear. His report concludes with a recommendation that the axles of all privately owned wagons should be inspected by a competent person in the Company's service, and if found to be defective, be withdrawn from traffic immediately.

Some 45 years later the practice of operating mixed passenger and goods trains effectively ceased with the Regulation of Railways Act 1889 (52 & 53 Vict. Cap. 57) which required all trains for the conveyance of passengers to be fitted with continuous brakes. Exceptions, of which there were a decreasing number, were allowed to run on minor branch lines under special dispensation from the Board of Trade. For example, all trains to Thaxted (Essex) were mixed until the British Transport Commission closed the line in 1952. (7)

The accident at Ratby was one of many which occurred in the early years following the opening of the first public railway - the Stockton & Darlington in 1825. Lessons were learned from every accident, resulting in a process of continual improvement in safety on British railways. These included important safety measures such as the inter-locking of points with signals, ensuring that a signal could not be 'pulled off' until the points had been set for the correct road. This development, in combination with the electric block telegraph, greatly reduced the risk of accidents caused by conflicting train movements at trailing points and junctions. Today, railway accidents are extremely uncommon, having largely been eliminated by the use of 'fail-safe' technology, and those that do occur are generally caused by the technical failure of equipment or human error.

Elizabeth Atkins' death greatly helped to improve railway safety. She is buried in the graveyard of the church of St Mary de Castro, Leicester. The writer, after a whole afternoon spent searching for her grave, has not yet been able to identify the precise location and would be pleased to hear from anyone who can help.

References and acknowledgements:

1. Details of the prevailing weather conditions, courtesy of David Mutton F.R.M.S.
2. Details from evidence given by James Weston at the inquest.
3. Accepted practice on the line at the date of the accident.
4. Name later changed to the 'Railway Inn', *White's Directory of Leicester and Rutland*, 1863.
5. It would be more than 100 years before continuous train braking systems would come into common practice for goods trains.
6. At this date, the axles were made from malleable cast iron. This type of iron is relatively brittle and would account for the frequent breakages reported by Nicholson.
7. Peter Paye, *The Thaxted Branch*, (OPC Railprint, 1984), p.97.

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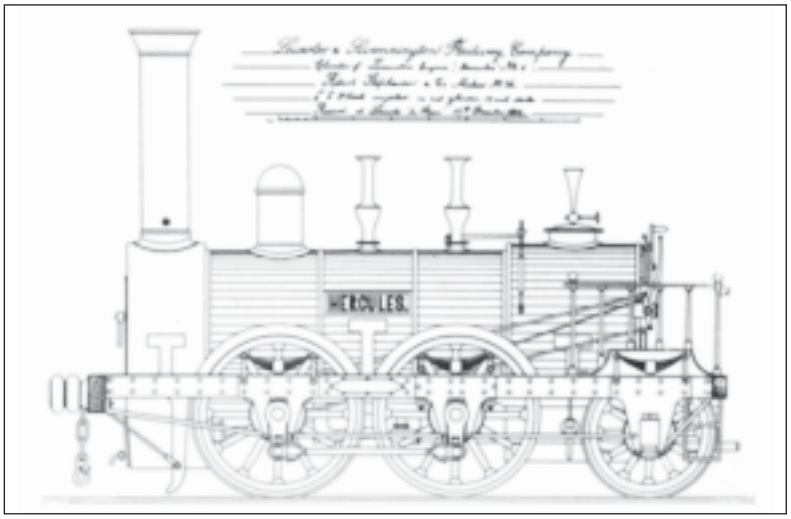


Leicester & Swannington Railway 0-4-2 locomotive Hercules, built by Robert Stephenson & Co., delivered on 17th December 1833. The tender was not customarily shown in early drawings. Hercules was one of ten locomotives in the Company's stock at the date of the accident. The name of the locomotive hauling the train on 28th August is not recorded. (With acknowledgement to C. R. Clinker, 'The Leicester & Swannington Railway', TLAHS*, 30 (1954), p.86.)*

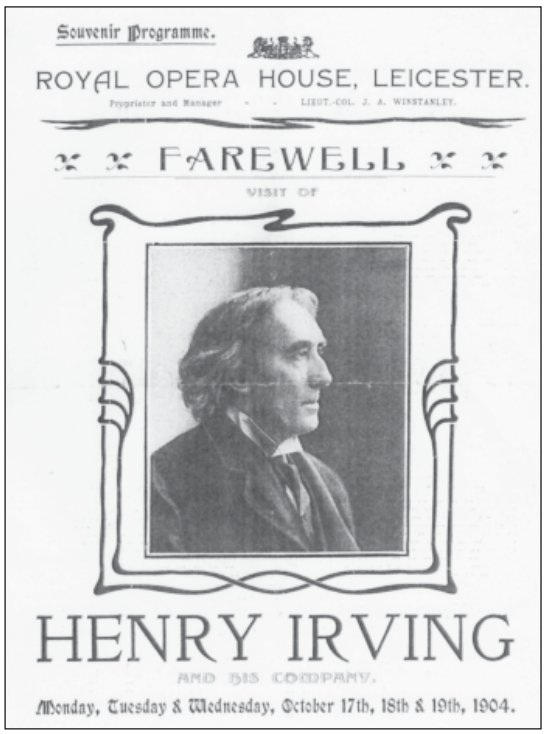
A Giant of the Victorian Stage performs in Leicester

J. D. Bennett

Sir Henry Irving (1838-1905), the first British actor to be knighted, and the recipient of honorary degrees from Dublin, Cambridge and Glasgow, had a theatrical career spanning almost fifty years, embracing Shakespeare, melodrama, revivals and several plays specially written for him. He was manager of the Lyceum Theatre in London from 1878 to 1899, took his company on many provincial tours, and across the Atlantic eight times between 1883 and 1903. With Ellen Terry as his leading lady, he dominated the London stage in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

Audiences in Leicester would have had a number of opportunities to see Henry Irving: at the Theatre Royal, Horsefair Street, in a play called *The Uncle*, in 1869; again at the Theatre Royal, in *Hamlet, The Bells* and excerpts from the *Pickwick Papers*, in 1878; at the Royal Opera House, Silver Street, in *Waterloo, The Bells, Louis XI* and *The Merchant of Venice*, in 1903; and finally, in *Waterloo, The Bells, The Merchant of Venice* and *Becket* in 1904.

Programme cover for Henry Irving's visit to the Royal Opera House, Leicester, in March 1903. (The Author's Collection.)



Souvenir Programme cover for the 'Farewell Visit of Henry Irving and his Company' at Leicester's Royal Opera House, October 1904. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.)

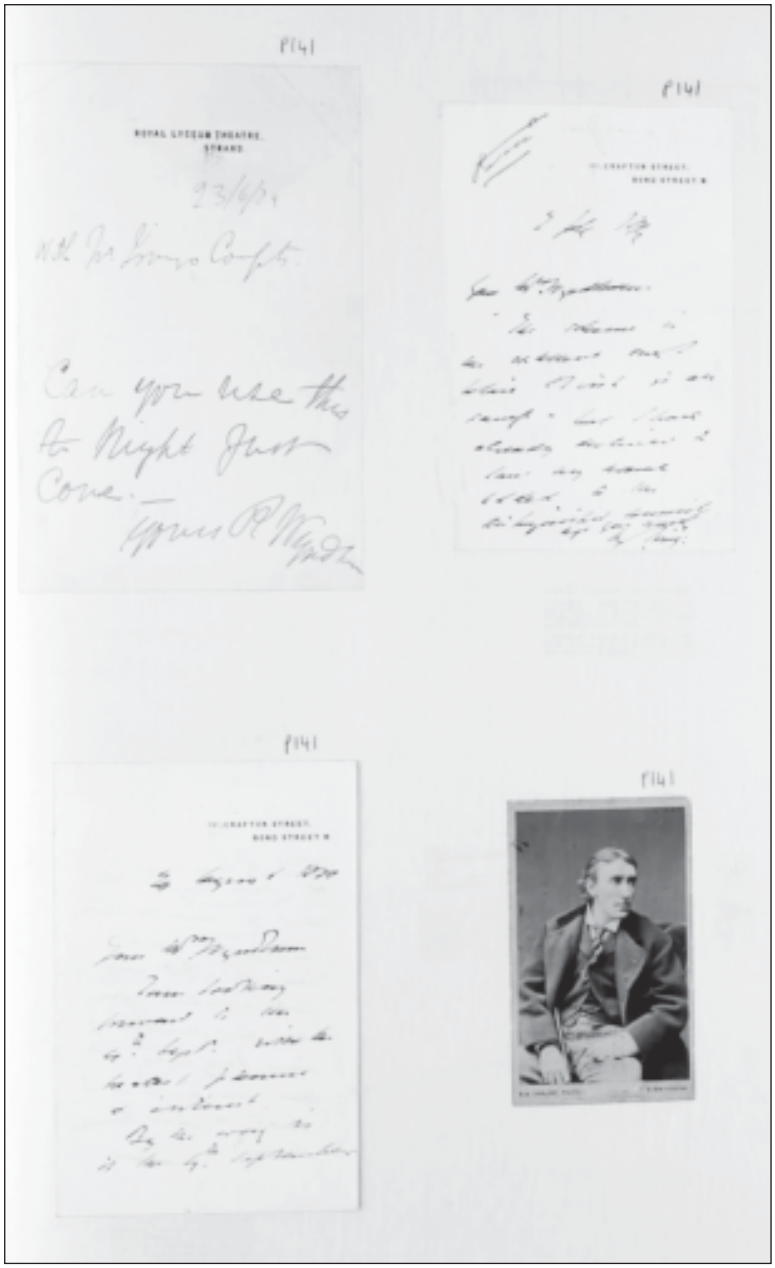
'The Bells ... as handled by the great tragedian ... has great power to thrill and enthrall', remarked the *Leicester Guardian* in 1903, while 'Octo', writing in the *Leicester Mercury* in 1961 about late Victorian Leicester, thought that 'The best shillingsworth I ever spent was to see and hear Sir Henry Irving as Shylock in *The Merchant of Venice*. Unforgettable!'

The Bells was the play with which Irving was most often associated. An adaptation by Leopold Lewis of a French melodrama called *Le Juif Polonais* (The Polish Jew) by Erckmann-Chatrian (Emile Erckmann and Louis-Alexandre Chatrian), it was first performed at the Lyceum in 1871. Irving played the part of Mathias, a burgomaster of a village in Alsace, who fifteen years previously has robbed and murdered a Polish Jew and burned his body in a lime-kiln. Haunted by the sound of sleighbells, which he believes come from his victim's sledge, he dreams he has been convicted and sentenced to death, crying out in anguish 'The bells! the bells!', and dies. It became his most famous role and was repeated many times.

Irving's later years were plagued by ill-health, and in 1905, during a visit to Bradford where he was appearing at the Theatre Royal in *Becket*, he died. Cremated at the new Golders Green Crematorium, his ashes were buried in Westminster Abbey, and he is commemorated by a statue by Thomas Brock, unveiled in 1910, outside the National Portrait Gallery.

Though *The Bells* was still being performed as late as the 1930s, it is now little-known to present-day audiences. However, it was revived a few years ago, in a well-attended production at the Greenwich Theatre, in a new version by Deborah McAndrew, with Sean O'Callaghan as Mathias.

Both the Theatre Royal and the Royal Opera House in Leicester have been demolished, as has the Theatre Royal in Bradford, but the Lyceum still exists, though it was partly rebuilt after Irving's departure.



Letters written by Henry Irving, now in the Record Office archives. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, location mark DE1274/2/p.141.)

The Theatre Royal and the Royal Opera House

The Theatre Royal, Leicester, had been built in 1836 and substantially remodelled in 1873. Work on the town's Royal Opera House commenced shortly afterwards, in 1876. Leacroft (1986) writes that the Royal Opera House was erected 'partly in response to dissatisfaction for sometime expressed regarding the state of drama in Leicester', and 'suggestions that the new theatre would raise provision in the town.'

Spencer's New Guide to the Town of Leicester (1888), provides a fascinating contemporary picture of both the Theatre Royal and the Royal Opera House.

Of the Theatre Royal, the *Guide* says it was a 'handsome building' in the Ionic order of architecture, its principal entrance in Horsefair Street, Leicester, with a stage entrance in the Market Place. Its internal decoration 'having been recently renewed in a very rich, costly style, it is unquestionably one of the most elegant little theatres in the provinces. Very handsome refreshment Bars and Smoking Buffets, have lately been added; these being supplied with daily papers, telegrams, &c., it has become under its present energetic management, a very fashionable lounge.'

The *Guide* describes the Royal Opera House as a 'fine and commodious building ... [which] ... has its main front towards Silver Street, and stretched back occupying the whole depth as far back as Cank Street. It is thus possessed of that great convenience to a theatre, entrances in distinct and opposite directions' which enabled a crowded audience to 'pass out very quickly in a very short space of time'. On the ground floor, in Silver Street, are a series of stone arches leading to the different parts of the auditorium in the theatre.' 'On the first landing 'a lounging and conversation room, a fernery, with fountain, &c.' This gave access to 'a handsome balcony' with twelve private boxes. On the next landing up was the dress circle. Above this, was the gallery which had a separate entrance from Cank Street and could seat 1,000 persons. 'Passing behind the curtain, we find the stage is fitted with every modern appliance, there is a capital series of dressing rooms for the actors and actresses, rooms for officials &c.' The building could be re-arranged so that it could be 'completely changed in character and adapted for many different purposes' including 'promenade concerts, flower shows, balls' and was 'admirably suited for equestrian purposes.' On the top of the building were two large rain-water cisterns, each holding 17,000 gallons, which could be used to flood the whole house in case of fire. 'Notwithstanding, the immediate and rapid growth of Leicester, few people could have anticipated the erection of such a noble building for the purposes of the drama, and we may say for the high purpose of guiding and forming in a considerable measure the art tastes of the people of this town.'

The Royal Opera House closed in 1953, with a brief reopening in 1959, before the final curtain came down in June 1960. The building was demolished and replaced by Malcolm Arcade. The Theatre Royal closed in 1957, and its demolition in 1958 was regarded by many as a serious loss.

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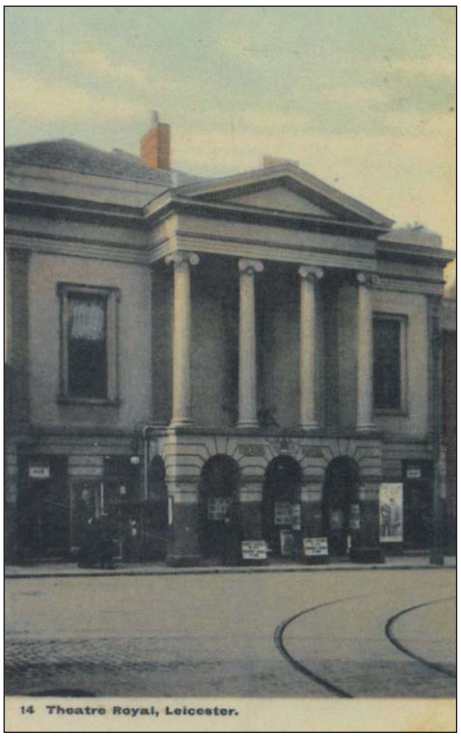
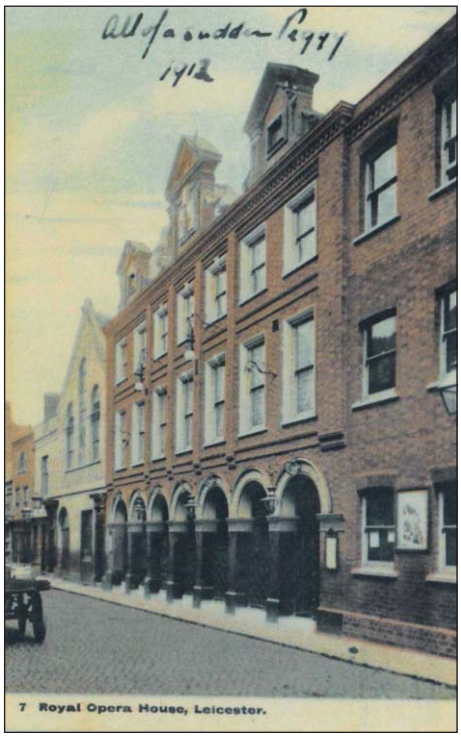


The Theatre Royal, Leicester, as illustrated on an early twentieth century postcard. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.)

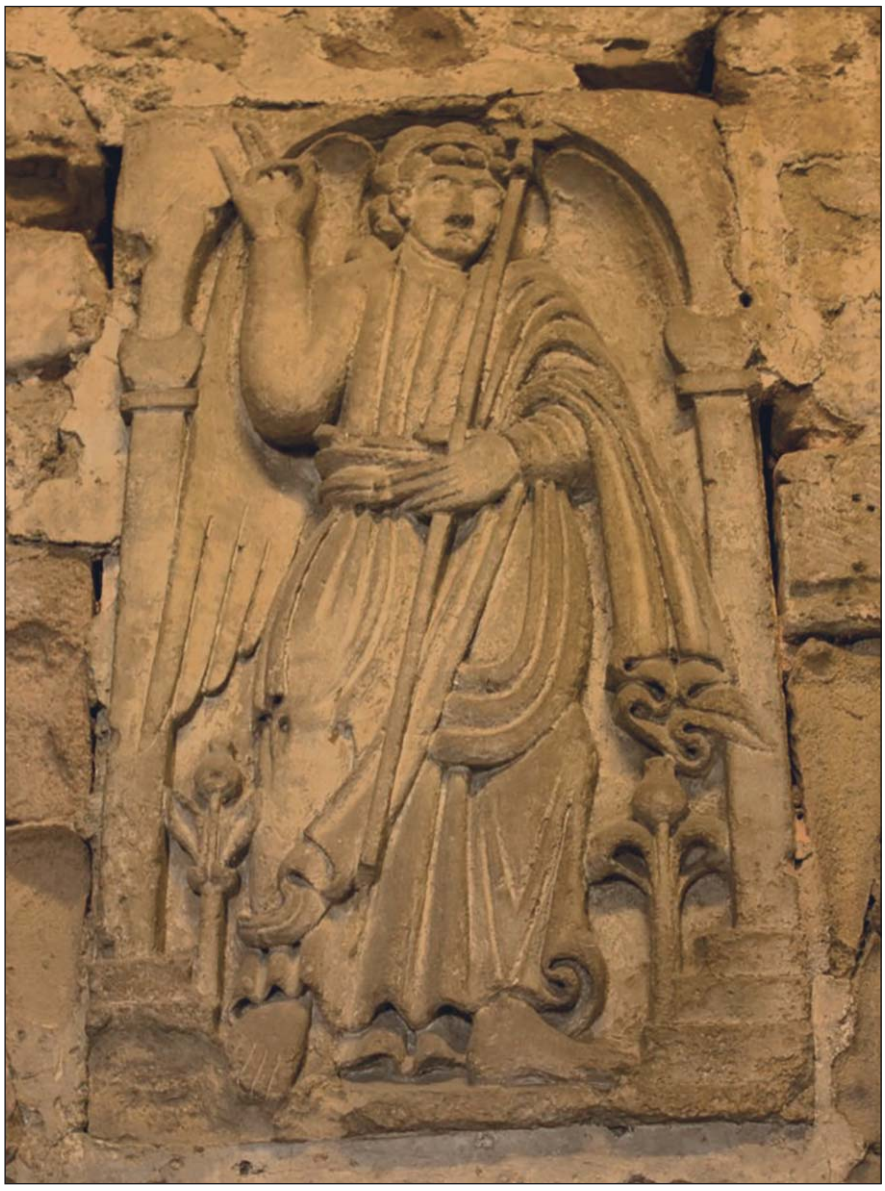


Postcard depicting the Silver Street entrance to the Royal Opera House, Leicester c1906-8. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.)

Breedon's Healing Angel

Bob Trubshaw

Sometime around 675 a church was founded at Breedon on the Hill, inside the substantial Iron Age hillfort dramatically located overlooking the Trent valley, almost certainly the boundary between pre-Roman tribal territories. The modern boundary with Derbyshire runs within a mile to the west of Breedon.



The famous Breedon Angel, Breedon Priory Church – photograph of the original sculpture in the tower. (Reproduced with acknowledgement to Lesley Hexstall and Project Gargoyle.)

The early church evolved into a substantial medieval monastery. After the Reformation almost all the buildings were demolished. The present building is the parish church, originally the nave of medieval monastic buildings, now shortened in length. Inside the nave are a unique set of friezes discovered during nineteenth century restoration work. Originally they decorated the exterior of the second church built on the site around 800. There are stunningly well-carved deep geometrical patterns, very lively 'inhabited vine scroll' – the inhabitants being various animals – and a panel which seemingly depicts a herd of human-headed deer. All very odd and, with the exception of the vine, seemingly not related to Biblical parables.

About two hundred years later, but still in the Anglo-Saxon era, a series of Apostles and other figures were commissioned for the interior. As was most fashionable at the time, they were carved in a Byzantine style, referred to by art historians as the 'Winchester school'. However these sculptures were not carved in Winchester as the stone was more locally sourced, although the masons may have learnt their skills there.

The most impressive of these carvings is now located inside the tower, in an area normally kept locked. However in 2001 a replica, based on a 3D laser scan, was installed in the nave. Unlike the ambiguous subject matter of the earlier friezes, everything about this carving speaks clearly. It is undoubtedly an angel.

Everything about this carving mimics well-established conventions in Byzantine art – the sculpted architectural 'alcove', the folds of the clothing and even the right hand, which is making a gesture of blessing (a gesture which is known as far away as Tibet where modern day Buddhists refer to it as *lhasey zhon-nu*). The original carving has traces of paint in the folds of the wings and, based on Byzantine mosaics and textiles, we can presume that originally this carving would have been brightly painted and probably partly gilded.

Fantastic otherworldly beasts and birds peer out from the magnificent Anglo-Saxon frieze at Breedon Priory Church. (Reproduced with acknowledgement to Lesley Hexstall and Project Gargoyle.)

But look again at this sculpture. There are two plants either side of the angel's feet. Without doubt they are poppies gone to seed. And the carving is clear enough to show that this is not any old common or garden poppy. It is *Papaver somniferum* – the opium poppy. The Latin botanical name means the 'sleep-bringing poppy', referring to the sedative properties of opiates. The distinctive feature is that the seed heads on opium poppies do not split and disperse their seed naturally. They are purely cultivars which require the seed to be manually collected and sown by a human, not by Mother Nature.

The two plant seed-heads on either side of the Breedon Angel's feet. (Reproduced with acknowledgement to Lesley Hexstall and Project Gargoyle.)

The pain-relieving effects of opiates were known at least a thousand years before this carving was created. The side-effects of opiates are sleepiness and vivid dreams. 'Morphine', the name for refined opium, derives from Morpheus who, in Ovid, was the god of dreams (in Greek *morpheus* literally means 'the maker of shapes') and the son of Sleep. However we should see the Breedon angel not so much as an 'angel of sleep' as an 'angel of mercy' – a healing angel.

These poppies tentatively suggest that the healing practices at Breedon included something akin to the Greek practice of dream incubation at special temples known as *asklepions* or *asklepia* (after the Greek healing deity Asklepios). The Romans also built dream incubation temples; the best known example in Britain is at Lydney in the Forest of Dean, although the crop-mark photograph of the unexcavated Roman temple near Thistleton on the Rutland-Lincolnshire border suggests this too may have followed the same layout. Presumably there were others and, plausibly though unprovably, the practices continued beyond the early fifth century.

The 'rituals' of dream incubation temples involved going to sleep and then, the following morning, the specialist *theraputes* (the origin of our word 'therapist') interpreted each patient's dreams to offer advice for a cure or alleviation of the symptoms. As it was essential for patients to have at least one dream worthy of interpretation, did such temples ensure sleep – and dreams for the *theraputes* to interpret in the morning – by giving patients a draught of opium-laced drink at bedtime?

Medieval herbalists made a point of learning which plants were oneirogonic or 'dream-inducing', and needed considerable knowledge of their safe amounts. Cinquefoil was renowned for dream-inducing. Modern-day herbalists have confirmed that mugwort, chamomile, jasmine, rose, viper's bugloss, lavender, Queen of the Meadow, violet and loosestrife are all oneirogonic.

St Mary & St Hardulph, Breedon Priory Church – the church on the hill.

The herbalist potions prepared by the thirteenth century Physicians of Myddfai come down to us in a late fourteenth century manuscript. The sources derive from widely-copied Latin, Greek and possibly Arabic works. Their concoctions include a cure for insomnia (opium infused in milk) and an anaesthetic (opium, mandrake and hemlock) which could be 'reversed' with vinegar. Other sources from the later thirteenth century onwards provide recipes for a powerful medieval 'cure all' known as theriac, with up to eighty ingredients. Some, like the flesh of vipers, were optional. One was not: opium, dissolved in alcohol, otherwise known as laudanum.

The international trade of the early eleventh century which increasingly focussed on Winchester would have ensured a ready supply of opium. Indeed, then as now, opiates may have been among the most profitable goods to transport, as was incense. All churches in Anglo-Saxon and later medieval times used substantial amounts of frankincense, myrrh and sandalwood, imported from the same parts of the Middle East known to be where opium poppies were then cultivated. There is little doubt that major monastic sites, such as Breedon, would have included opium on the 'shopping list' of medicinal requisites. The presence of opium poppies on the depiction of an angel of healing really should offer little surprise. Presumably there are few if any other examples only because complete carvings of tenth-eleventh century angels are rare.

While opiates are highly effective for a variety of serious ailments, they have the disadvantage of inducing often frightening dreams. Now look again at the weird animals on the Breedon friezes carved around 800. Any mason who was skilled enough to produce such work probably had arthritis in his hands and other joints. If opiates had been available then – and there is no conclusive evidence either way – they would have been one of the few ways of alleviating the constant pain. If – and I realise there are several big 'ifs' here – then are these friezes depicting entities he encountered in his dreams?

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Acknowledgements:

My thanks to Leslie Hexstall for allowing reproduction of her photographs, taken as part of Project Gargoyle (see www.hoap.co.uk/gargoyle/ for more details). Thanks also to Lama Khemsar Rinpoche for teachings relating to *lhasey zhon-nu*.

More otherworldly carvings from Breedon Priory Church. (Reproduced with acknowledgement to Lesley Hexstall and Project Gargoyle.)

A New Chapter for Charnwood

Julie Attard

The Big Red Books

There can be few publishing projects as ambitious as the Victoria County History series. Almost a hundred and twenty years since the project began, historians and volunteers across the country continue to piece together the histories of England's wondrously diverse towns and villages.

The VCH is a reference work like no other; it aims to produce a fully researched history of every town, village and hamlet in England from earliest times to present day, encompassing landscape and settlement, ancient archaeological sites and historic buildings, manorial, economic, social and religious history. Its value lies in the meticulous research that underpins each entry. Documentary, architectural, topographical and archaeological sources are combined to create a reliable and comprehensive account of how our towns and villages developed. This considerable breadth and depth of treatment for every village, no matter how small, has made the VCH series the 'go-to' local history reference work, not just for amateur and professional historians, but also for commercial archaeologists, architects, and organisations such as Historic England.

So far, more than 225 volumes and 3,500 parish histories have been published nationally but it will be no surprise to hear, given the scale of the undertaking, that few counties are blessed with their complete set of parish histories. The first Leicestershire volume was published in 1907. A second period of activity after the Second World War, under the direction of W. G. Hoskins, resulted in the publication of two further thematic volumes, a volume of the City of Leicester and the first of the topographical volumes covering the histories of parishes in the Gartree Hundred. During his tenure as editor, Hoskins lobbied the General Editor in London for permission to broaden the scope of the parish histories because he felt they did not adequately represent the lives of agricultural labourers and industrial workers who made up the majority of the parish community. Hoskins' campaign was successful and the VCH has continued to evolve ever since. The original values and commitment to accuracy remain, but the format has developed to meet the needs and interests of modern audiences. Parish histories now include sections on social history, communications, rural and urban development, local government alongside the more traditional descriptions of manorial descents and landed estates.

When funding ran out in Leicestershire in the mid-1960s, there were still some 300 places in the county to research. The current VCH Leicestershire committee took up the baton in 2008 after a hiatus of more than 40 years. An independent charitable trust, the Leicestershire VCH Trust, based at the University of Leicester, was formed to fundraise for the project; long gone are the days when county councils and universities were able to fund a team of historians to further this important work. Today, VCH projects are entirely dependent on the generosity of local people and grant income.

Financial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, local businesses and charitable trusts, allowed the Leicestershire VCH Trust to launch Charnwood Roots in August 2013 - its first major project, to research the histories of 35 towns and villages in and surrounding Charnwood Forest.

Over the past four years, an incredibly generous and industrious team of more than 650 volunteers have helped investigate Charnwood's geology, dig test-pits, measure earthworks, record people's memories, and decipher thousands of documents and maps.

Decoding the Past

> *The lost cannot be recovered, but let us save what remains: not by vaults and locks which fence them from the public eye and use, in consigning them to the waste of time, but by such a multiplication of copies, as shall place them beyond the reach of accident.*
> Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826)

I like to think that Thomas Jefferson would have approved of community history projects like Charnwood Roots. He certainly believed in the value of saving precious archives by allowing public access to them. Archives are one of our most important national treasures. Whenever I make a significant discovery, I find myself silently thanking the nameless custodians of the document who have protected it across the centuries. One of the great joys of the project has been introducing new volunteers to the thrill of working with original primary sources and witnessing their delight as they hold in their hands a document written about their village many hundreds of years ago.

A question often asked about VCH research is: 'Where on earth do you start?' The first step in researching any parish history is to establish what relevant sources have survived. The VCH guidelines list the key sources to be consulted for each section and these range from Domesday to twenty-first century town planning documents. The VCH method is to return to original primary sources, as far as it is possible to do so, in order to avoid repeating any mistakes or misinterpretations that may have crept into earlier studies. Every statement needs to be verified and evidenced. That is not to say however, that we do not benefit enormously from the work of those historians who have gone before us.

Volunteers in search of the poor at the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.

Many of the documents needed are accessible at the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland but local archives do have a habit of ending up in all sorts of odd places - in Charnwood's case from Cornwall to California! Railway magnate, Henry Huntington purchased the Hastings Manuscript collection in 1926 following the death of Reginald Rawdon Hastings. The family archive was to be broken up and sold off in lots but Henry Huntington purchased the whole collection to keep it together. He then took it to his library on the other side of the world where it remains, protected but rather inaccessible. Professor Chris Dyer spent a month at the Library in 2013 transcribing documents and selecting others to be microfilmed for volunteer researchers back in Leicestershire. We have also carried out research in the archives in Lincoln, London, Birmingham, Reading, Staffordshire, Manchester and Oxford to name but a few. Of course, not all documents are in the public domain and photographs, deeds, minutes and memoirs in private hands have also come to light during the course of the research.

Around one hundred people have assisted us with archival research. Led by Volunteer Support Managers Dr Susan Kilby (2014-2016) and Dr Victoria Anker (2016-2017), they have painstakingly worked through thousands of documents. Few volunteers came to us with prior experience of reading pre-nineteenth century documents, so one of our first tasks was to provide medieval and early modern palaeography training to help those that wanted to work on early documents acquire these vital skills.

Medieval documents are particularly tricky to read because they are written in contracted Latin with very different letter forms to the ones in use today. Sometimes the documents have been galled, this being an attempt to make faint text more legible and which may have helped at the time, but certainly does not do so now. Occasionally they are worn, torn or chewed. Fortunately, many of the medieval documents are formulaic. With practice, and armed with some helpful crib sheets and books, it is possible to navigate your way around them and to extract relevant information. As one volunteer put it, 'What seemed impossible now seems merely very difficult!'.

In addition to skills training, we ran thematic workshops on researching footwear, hosiery, poverty, charity and religion and source-based workshops on interpreting maps or deciphering probate inventories. Volunteers have been able to work on subjects that interested them and in a way that suits them, some working alone, others preferring the camaraderie of group research days at the Record Office.

So what have we discovered?

The medieval research has provided fascinating insights into the lives of ordinary villagers, their homes, work, incomes, food, beliefs, rights over forest resources, the laws they laboured under and the responsibilities they carried, conflicts, crimes and relationships. Collectively, the documents paint a vivid picture of the landscape inhabited by Charnwood's medieval residents and the connections between them and the wider world.

To give a few specific examples, we discovered an account roll from 1465 at the National Archives which provided the only direct evidence that we have for a medieval hospital in Belton. The document lists a payment made to Robert Robyn for carrying 18 cartloads of timber and 24 cartloads of mud and stone to Belton 'for repairing the hospital in Belton'. The building, which belonged to Grace Dieu Priory, must have been in existence for some time before these extensive repairs were made.

Charnwood's twelve medieval deer parks were perhaps one of its most distinctive features. Park keepers were employed to maintain the park boundary for their lord, look after his woodland and animals, control access, and catch poachers. From several different documents, we have discovered that in 1485, the park of Loughborough was managed by Libeus Dygby who had a lodge within the park and received a salary of about 60s.8d. per year (c £15,000 today). This

would not have been his only source of income and Dygby would have been quite well-off in comparison to many. We know from various accounts rolls that the going rate for a day's work for fifteenth century craftsmen and women like Richard Sklatyer (a roofer), Giles Halywell (a mason repairing fire backs and chimneys), Margote Dysher (who made wooden bowls) and Henry Bates (a carpenter who made a pig trough and doors for Beaumanor) was about 3-4d.

The documents revealed just as much about the darker side of life. There are tales of tragedy and woe, lust and gambling, petty misdemeanours and gossip, shocking murders, and brazen thefts aplenty. At a single court session held at Loughborough on 29th April 1460, cases presented to the court included affray, conspiracy to rob, blocking roads with dungheaps, the unauthorised redirection of a watercourse, eight women accused of being 'common scolds' and the case of John Bullok who was fined 20d. for entertaining a woman in adultery before conspiring with her to rob her husband and sell the stolen goods.

Installation based on oral history recordings, each box contains an object and story about life in Charnwood during World War II. The installation was displayed as part of the Heritage Festival exhibition at Beaumanor Hall in May 2017.

For the period between the Reformation and the early nineteenth century, our work focussed on enclosure, rural crafts and trades, early industry, religious dissent, poverty and charity. The latter looked at local responses to economic depression and increasing industrialisation. Volunteers delved into Poor Law Records and the archives of small charities set up to support the needy and educate the children of poor families. One method of trying to reduce dependency on relief in the long term was to establish apprenticeships. It was thought that this would enable children from poorer backgrounds with little prospects the chance to learn a trade and secure stable employment. In 1769, Sarah Pratts of Thurcaston moved to Anstey to take up an apprenticeship in housewifery at the tender age of seven. Similarly, in 1779, eight year old John Pollard moved from Newtown Linford to Shepshed to learn framework knitting. Apprenticeships were not always welcomed. When Margaret Mead of Osgathorpe died in 1705, she used her wealth to set up a charity. Margaret's will stated that part of her bequest was to be used to obtain apprenticeships in London for poor boys of Osgathorpe, Thringstone and Belton. Despite her good intentions, local families refused to send their boys so far from home. After much debate and little uptake, the terms were amended to allow local apprenticeships to be obtained for the boys instead.

Investigating the past two hundred years of history has been just as fascinating. We have looked at the development of modern agriculture, transport networks and communications, the impact of Empire and war, the growth of the extractive industries, service industries and modern businesses, education, urban development (including the foundation of the new town of Coalville) and migration.

One source which turned out to be more enlightening than expected was the National Farm Survey, carried out by the Government between 1941 and 1943. During the Second World War, Britain needed to increase food production in response to a reduction in imports. The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries reacted to the crisis by setting up committees in each county to assess every farm and ensure that it was working at peak efficiency. These committees had the power to force farmers to plough up pasture or carry out improvements. If farmers refused to comply they could face their land being requisitioned.

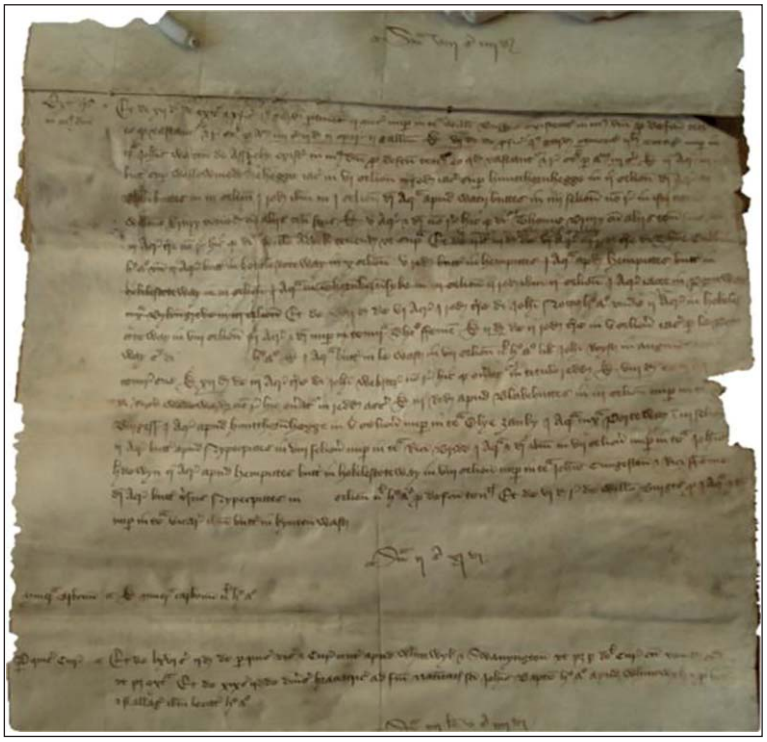
The surveys provide a mass of information about individual holdings, the farmers, their employees, farm size, tenure, crops and livestock, conditions of farm buildings, equipment and most controversially, farm management. Some families owned multiple large holdings, some were small market gardeners and poultry keepers, and others only farmed part-time. Mr Bent of Anstey managed small plots and livestock between cutting hair, Mr White of Thringstone juggled farming with mining, and the indomitable Miss Fox of Maplewell kept shorthorn cattle whilst looking after evacuees. Some of the reports are quite amusing. One inspector, writing about a farmer in Groby stated that: 'This young farmer seems to work hard ... but the land he is farming at present is enough 'to give anyone the pip'. He pays 25/- per acre for land from the Groby Granite Company and they should really pay him that much to take it away!'

Memory Boxes

For the more recent past, we are fortunate to be able to talk to people who have lived in Charnwood and have witnessed the many changes and developments of the past seventy or eighty years. Oral histories have to be treated with the same care as other sources of evidence but they can provide very valuable information missing from other sources, alternative explanations and insights, as well as give voice to those that might be marginalised in the documentary record.

In the first year of the Charnwood Roots project, 30 volunteers received training from Colin Hyde at the East Midlands Oral History Archive in how to record an oral history interview, and then helped us to record people's memories. The recordings focussed on two themes: working lives and experiences of war.

With the first of these, we wanted to create a snapshot of working life in Charnwood during the second half of the twentieth century. This included interviews, several with farmers, some of whom work the hard, rocky upland areas, and others who have left traditional agriculture behind to establish new businesses on old farms. The interviewees' stories reflect many of the social and economic developments of the past fifty years and the changing fortunes of various industries: miners, water treatment workers, printers, factory workers, village shopkeepers, park rangers, those in long-established businesses, and entrepreneurs who have set up their own.



Fifteenth century account roll from Whitwick by Thomas Allerton, bailiff which states, 'coal - nothing this year' showing that coal was being mined in Whitwick at least as early as 1433/4. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, location mark DE66/Box 134/1.)

The second theme, Charnwood's War, mainly captured childhood memories of the area during the Second World War. Alongside the common experiences of rationing, war work, blackouts and bombing raids, there were deeply personal stories of relationships with strangers: enemy Prisoners of War, American soldiers or urban evacuees. After recording the delightfully vivid memories of Gwen Ellis, we tried to track down the Jewish evacuees her family had taken in. Sadly, both Beryl and Alan Rose (who would have been in their eighties) had passed away. However, our enquiries sparked interest amongst other members of Birmingham's Jewish community and several people came forward with their own stories of being evacuated to rural Charnwood. Life was clearly quite confusing for one young girl who had no idea who the hairy man was on her new bedroom wall (Jesus), and no idea why the children at her primary school dropped to their knees when a nun walked into the room.

The full recordings are available through the East Midlands Oral History Archive.

Hidden History

Equally important is the physical evidence of landscape, settlement and buildings. If you want to get to know an area and study its local history, there is really no substitute for pulling on your boots and walking around a village, exploring its streets, boundaries, fields and woodland. The Leicestershire Historic Environment Record has been invaluable for piecing together the early history of Charnwood's villages from previous archaeological discoveries. In addition, we have carried out a modest programme of archaeological research of our own: fieldwalking in Newtown Linford, Thurcaston and Cropston; community digs in Anstey, Whitwick and Rothley; and a landscape survey.

More than 500 volunteers of all ages have taken part in archaeological research. Most of them were involved in one of our three community test-pitting digs. They braved hot sunshine in Anstey, a deluge in Whitwick, and some seriously tough clay in Rothley. Over the three years they collectively shifted 62 tonnes of soil and recovered 4,468 datable artefacts. Those who have watched Michael Wood's superb *Story of England* series in 2010 will be familiar with the technique. A one metre square is laid out and dug in 10cm layers or spits. Finds from each layer of the test-pit are

bagged separately and later identified and dated. Artefacts from an individual test-pit can tell us about that particular site but the real magic happens when you bring together the results from across the whole village. At that point (at least in theory!), you can see the distribution of artefacts from different periods across the village and can begin to answer questions about how the settlement has developed over time. Test-pitting is an extremely useful technique in villages that are still occupied, and is often the only way we can investigate village archaeology outside of incidental finds uncovered during commercial developments. A comparison of results from multiple villages may provide even further insights into the history of the locality.

Beautiful clay pipe with hare decoration found during Whitwick's Big Dig, 2015.

It is important to try to get a good distribution of test-pits across a village; even areas which seem some distance from the current village core can produce interesting results - such as prehistoric artefacts or Roman sites that came long before the settlement. Over the centuries, a village core can shift and there may be periods of settlement expansion or conversely, depopulation and contraction. With a little luck, a programme of test-pitting has the potential to demonstrate this.

Anstey's Big Dig provides a good example of some of these processes. In 2014, 28 test-pits were dug across the village. There had been some limited excavation in the past on Cropston Road at the sites of a housing development and new Co-op store, but there were still large areas of the village where there were no recorded archaeological finds. Seven test-pits produced worked flint with the most exciting prehistoric results coming from gardens located behind relatively modern housing at the edge of the village. A lovely thumbnail scraper was found in a test-pit on Charles Drive and a further possible prehistoric site was discovered on Cropston Road.

Although we did not recover as much medieval pottery as we had hoped to find, the distribution of the early medieval pottery did seem to support Paul Courtney's research, published in *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* in 2003, which suggested that the village grew up as two distinct settlements, each with its own manor and field system, one around the Nook and the other around the Anstey Green. The Nook appears to be the earlier of the two settlements (perhaps ninth to eleventh century). Unfortunately, it has been extensively developed as a shopping area and much of the ground is tarmacked. It was therefore not possible to gather any dating evidence from this core site.

By the fifteenth century, late medieval pottery seemed to be virtually absent both in the centre of the village and at the Green, suggesting that the village had perhaps contracted somewhat in the late medieval period. By the mid-sixteenth century, Anstey appears to have recovered, with pottery from this date and beyond found in most of the pits. There were some areas of the village that would clearly benefit from further test-pitting to improve the data set but the

results are nevertheless interesting. As is often the case with archaeology, we ended up with some answers and lots of new questions!

Of course, you don't always need to dig to find evidence of past human activity. When Hoskins was working on the Gartree Hundred volume, he would have spent many hours exploring the earthworks of Great Stretton and the undulating fields of ridge and furrow surrounding it. Today, we have the benefit of new technologies to help us map and study earthworks and locate subtle, hidden remnants of past landscapes.

In 2014, we had the unexpected opportunity to obtain and analyse LiDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) data for about 50 per cent of the Charnwood Roots project area. LiDAR is an aerial survey technology. A laser mounted on a light aircraft is flown over the landscape and a beam of infrared light is fired at the ground in rapid pulses about 100,000 times per second. When the laser strikes a solid object, the light is reflected back to a detector on the plane. Sophisticated sensors allow coordinates to be collected and from this data, a digital model of the terrain below can be generated. This model can be manipulated with specialist computer software to produce images of the ground surface, a little like an aerial photograph. The data is commonly used by the Environment Agency to study flooding, but the same data sets can be processed in a slightly different way to discover archaeological features. An experienced analyst can apply different techniques to draw out features with surface expression such as banks and ditches, early field systems, housing platforms, enclosures and old routeways.

LiDAR is particularly valuable in wooded areas. Aerial photographs can be immensely useful in open landscapes but in wooded areas the tree canopy obscures the terrain below. Even on the ground, dense woodland undergrowth can limit visibility and make spotting subtle features and earthworks a challenge. Woodland archaeology can relate directly to woodland activities, for example remnants of charcoal platforms or saw pits. Other features hidden in woodland simply happen to occupy a site which has become wooded subsequently, i.e. they relate to an earlier period before woodland colonised the site. Unlike an aerial photograph LiDAR allows you to see through the trees to the ground below because the laser can penetrate the tree canopy. The trees can, in effect, be filtered out to allow an elevation model of the ground below them to be constructed.

The analysis of the available LiDAR data for Charnwood identified around 750 potential features, a third of them in woodland. Not all of the features will prove to be archaeological. Fallen trees and bracken-covered fences can look suspiciously like a linear earthen bank on a LiDAR image. For this reason it is essential that the features are visited on the ground to verify whether they are archaeological. This process is known as ground-truthing and it is a relatively simple but vital part of the research.

It's all in a hole – Anstey's Big Dig, 2014.

We could not verify all of the 750 features during this project so we decided to select a case study to test our methodology. We selected Martinshaw Wood in Ratby because it had a high concentration of around a hundred possible features in a heavily wooded area. Ten volunteers bravely assisted us with this important work and endured all sorts of weather, mud, midges, nettles and thorny bushes. Over two spring seasons in 2015 and 2016, we scuffled around in the undergrowth looking for hidden (in some cases very well hidden!) features. iPads loaded with the LiDAR data enabled us to navigate to within a few metres of each feature. Once we had located it, we then recorded basic measurements, wrote a description of how it related to any features with which it intersected, made any necessary corrections to the plan if we could see something that the LiDAR had missed, drew it and photographed it.

The features range from a large and intriguing enclosure (which may relate to the woodland or may even predate it), banks and ditches pointing to changes in the size and management of the wood, evidence of woodland industry, disused routes and even preserved twentieth century vehicle tracks probably dating from periods of felling.

For those interested in learning more, the full results of all three digs and the landscape survey will be published. Please contact us to join our mailing list if you would like to be kept up to date with research and publications.

Surveying banks in Martinshaw Wood, 2016.

Sharing Stories of the Stone Wood

Public events have been an important means of sharing new discoveries and discussing ideas with others researching the history of Charnwood Forest. It has been a real pleasure to meet so many enthusiastic and dedicated local historians, fieldworkers and archaeologists at fairs and special events over the past four years. These encounters have produced countless valuable leads, insights and connections. We are fortunate in Leicestershire to have such a vibrant and thriving network of local history and archaeology groups – long may it continue!

To reach members of the public with more of a passing interest who probably would not choose to come to an organised history event, we found there is value in selecting surprising or unusual venues for small scale activities and displays. A supermarket in Coalville, a farm and the No. 29 bus were three slightly unusual venues that we carried out artefact handling sessions.

These days, we have come to expect information to be instantly available online. Partly with this in mind, all of the research completed by project volunteers and staff has been entered into an online databank, and at the end of 2017, this will be made publicly accessible. The databank brings together document summaries and transcriptions from a thousand years of Charnwood's history, along with archaeological reports and oral histories. It contains more than 5,000 entries, all searchable by place and by theme.

Over the coming years, we will use this databank to write the parish histories of Charnwood Forest for the Leicestershire VCH series but it has many other potential applications. In May, we used it to create a large exhibition, *Stories of the Stone Wood: A Thousand Years of Charnwood Life* for our Heritage Festival at Beaumanor Hall. The exhibition is modular and portable so that it can be toured in sections around museums, libraries, heritage sites and archives. We are now using the databank to create heritage walking trails and podcasts. We hope that others will be inspired to make use of our data in their own research, publications, heritage panels or creative arts projects.

If you are interested in learning more about how the databank can be used or if you would like a catalogue listing of our exhibition panels, please contact myself at jad17@le.ac.uk for further details.

The Future of Leicestershire's Past

> *The great use of a life is to spend it for something that outlasts it.*
> William James (1842-1910)

Charnwood Roots has been a truly collective endeavour. More than 650 people have volunteered and they have donated a staggering £343,000 of their time to the project. We cannot thank them enough for their vital contribution. We are especially grateful to them for their patience and understanding when we have made mistakes and their continued persistence, diligence and good humour.

Although Charnwood Roots is now drawing to a close, work on the VCH Leicestershire series continues with ongoing parish projects run by my colleague Dr Pam Fisher. Pam has recently published a history of Castle Donington and a history of Buckminster and Sewstern is forthcoming. New research is about to commence on the parish of Ibstock and this will involve a small group of volunteers. Anyone interested in purchasing a copy of the book or finding out more about these projects should contact Pam at pjf7@le.ac.uk.

The data gathered during Charnwood Roots is sufficient for at least three new multi-parish 'big red books'. Our priority at Leicestershire VCH Trust will now be to fundraise to carry out this essential second phase. There are communities all over Leicestershire that would benefit from the experiences and training that projects like Charnwood Roots can provide. There are also many organisations that protect and care for our heritage, such as Historic England, that would welcome the analysed research data and publications.

If you would like to learn more about the work of the Trust, volunteer, or find out how you can support new research into Leicestershire's history by becoming a Friend of the Trust or by joining our 200 Club, please visit our website www.leicestershirehistory.org, and help us to write the next chapter of the VCH Leicestershire, share great stories unearthed during this and other projects, and bring the past to life for all to enjoy.

The Great War comes to Leicester: an Ambulance Train, Midland Railway Station, 1.17 a.m.

Robin Jenkins

The hospital train glides into the station with scarcely more noise or fuss than an ice-skater leaving the rink. Despite its length of three hundred and fifty feet and two hundred and fifty tons weight, there is no sound of braking, and the long sigh of escaping steam seems little more than an impatient exhalation. Everything is judged to perfection; it is a matter of honour with the crew that neither jolt nor noise should disturb the weary and pain-wracked passengers within.

From half a mile away, south of the station, the driver has gradually slackened speed, expertly timing his approach to the gas-lit 'down' platform. It is hardly a familiar run, on Midland rails, for a Great Central Railway locomotive and its crew, but this black 'B9', with its red and white lining, is on war service.

No longer hauling fish from Grimsby, or passengers from Manchester, Nottingham or Leicester to Marylebone, her charge is now Great Central No.2 Ambulance Train. Dragging a load of five varnished teak corridor coaches and associated kitchen, pharmacy, office and store vans; each painted with a prominent Geneva Cross, the powerful 4-6-0 now plies back and forth between the nation's military hospitals and the ports of Southampton, and occasionally Dover.

Tonight, No.2 Ambulance Train has come up from Southampton. Besides her usual staff of a medical officer, two nursing sisters and a dozen men of the Royal Army Medical Corps, the train now carries one hundred and forty-eight wounded and sick soldiers of the British Expeditionary Force. Eighty-four of them are stretcher cases, slung carefully along the coaches. The rest are 'sitting' cases - the 'walking wounded' - with minor body and arm wounds.

Amongst the severely wounded are two privates, Gibson and Cunliff, of the Highland Light Infantry. There are riflemen of the 4th King's Royal Rifles – they have been in the thick of it at Ypres – and men of the Worcesters, the Border Regiment, Suffolks, Leinsters, Bedfords, even the Royal Flying Corps; half the regiments of the B. E. F. are represented.

An ambulance train unloads at the milk siding beside the London Road Station in Leicester. Cot cases are carried out onto a stage, specially designed by V.A.D. supervisor, Mr Leeson, because of the lack of a platform. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.)

Two cot cases await their transport to the Base Hospital. The wounded soldiers may be Belgian or German, since both armies wore such cloth feldmutze caps. The presence of a Leicestershire Regiment territorial argues they are prisoners-of-war; the composure of the patients and amiable disposition of the V.A.D.s suggests allies. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.)

The Leicestershire Regiment is there too. Private Doore, of the 2nd Battalion's 'B' Company is carried on a stretcher from the train. Doore has fought all day and night to hold a stretch of German trench at 'the Orchard', La Quinque Rue. He has fought hand-to-hand with the enemy and has a severe bayonet wound to prove it.

Amongst the 'slightly wounded' there is Herbert Bishop, a Mountsorrel man serving with the 2nd Battalion. Private Bishop is an old soldier, having given up blacksmithing to sign on in the dark days of the South African War, in September 1900. He has served in India and re-enlisted for a bounty of £20 when his time expired. Bishop is a difficult soldier; insubordinate and surly, and has now contrived to wrap himself in barbed wire whilst working in no-man's land. With lacerated wounds to both legs, Bishop has come home to recover.

One of the wounded has a special reception party. Two young Territorials are here from the Depot at Glen Parva, shivering in their thin greatcoats. There is nothing for them to do; the German they have come to meet, still in *feldmütze* cap and baggy, grey *bluse* jacket is severely wounded and in no state to resist or cause them trouble.

Each man (friend or foe) bears, tied to a button on his tunic, a label consigning him to an area of the country. In this case, it is district number III - the Midlands.

There is now the briefest of pauses. The train seems to catch its breath in the gloomy light of the station. Then, as the doors of the coaches swing open, the men of the St John's Ambulance step forward.

There is no need for talk. These men know their business and the cot cases are unloaded swiftly, yet carefully from the train and laid in rows along the platform. Nurses, whose all-covering black cloaks have hitherto hidden them in the shadows, now appear to check that all is well. Tonight, the women of the local Voluntary Aid Detachments' Companies numbers 8 and 18 are in attendance, with urns of tea and trays of biscuits and chocolates.

Outside, within easy reach alongside the milk sidings, hospital and fire brigade ambulances and the cars of well-wishers are queuing for their passengers. Stretcher cases are carried carefully to the ambulances; the St John's men sliding their wounded charges smoothly into the racks through the rear doors, or into the trailers to be towed behind.

The walking wounded are led to the motor cars: Talbots, Humbers, Sunbeams and Stars; all waiting (with chauffeur or owner at the wheel) to whisk the wounded to hospital. One after another, they are filled. Blankets are wrapped around the passengers by the V.A.D.s and away they go, turning onto the London Road in a cloud of blue smoke. Most are bound for the Base Hospital, with ten stretcher cases for the Royal Infirmary.

Within forty short minutes the train is cleared and the wounded carried off to their hospital beds. It is two o'clock in the morning. Superintendent Leeson of the St John's Ambulance nods to Mrs Taylor, commandant of the V.A.D.s, over a cup of coffee; quietly content with a job well done. Their respective teams pack away and are dismissed. A few smiles and jokes - and off to warm beds.

The platform and siding is deserted. It is an understated miracle, as though the shoe-maker's elves had taken to hospital work. There will though be another train tomorrow….

Exhibition:

See the full story of Leicestershire's 5th Northern General Hospital in a major new exhibition *The Base Hospital* at the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, Long Street, Wigston Magna from April until early September 2017.

A Great Western Railway ambulance train unloads at Leicester Midland station's milk siding. The difficulties of unloading cot cases without a platform are evident. 'Not only was great care displayed in handling the men, especially the more serious cases, but a noticeable feature was the ready assistance given to the soldiers in collecting their kits, and particularly the various souvenirs…The memento may only be a piece of devastating 'Jack Johnson', [or] a pay-book riddled with bullets…but…any attention paid in safeguarding these articles is bound to be greatly appreciated.' Leicester Daily Post*, 30th January 1915. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.)*

St John's Ambulance V.A.D. men swiftly transfer the wounded to vehicles just off Station Street, Leicester. A Highlander, his bonnet clearly visible, patiently waits his turn. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.)

Early Council Housing: Hinckley leads the way

Paul Griffiths

Council housing was rare before the First World War. Whereas 1.1 million council homes were provided in England and Wales between 1919 and 1939, only about 25,000 existed prior to 1915. Just one in six councils were involved nationally and fewer still in the Midlands. One of the exceptions was the Urban District Council (UDC) at Hinckley. Its first 12 houses for rent were completed in January 1914 on Granville Road, and by the outbreak of war, another 16 were under construction on Rugby Road and Coventry Road. This article sets out to explain why Hinckley, almost alone amongst the Leicestershire councils, took this unusual step.

TABLE A

Hinckley Urban District Council

COUNCILLORS ELECTED IN APRIL 1910

Votes	Name	Occupation	Politics (see note)	Prior service
881	KINTON, George	Confectioner (retired)	Lib	15 years
783	CHOLERTON, George	Boot manufacturer	Lib	9 years
763	BOTT, William H.	Hosiery manufacturer	Lib	3 years
749	HUNT, John T.	Clothier, etc.	Lib	3 years
669	JOHNSON, Walter	Boot manufacturer	Lib	-
591	ATKINS, Dudley B.	Hosiery manufacturer		-
581	WILLS, John G.	Hosiery manufacturer	Lib	9 years
577	CHAPMAN, Wilson W. C.	Boot manufacturer	Lib	12 years
563	WARNER, William	Trades union secretary	TC	9 years
546	AUCOTT, Thomas	Brewers agent	Con	15 years
540	JEFFCOTE, Andrew	Builder	Lib	12 years
534	PRATT, James	Hosiery manufacturer	Lib	3 years
500	BENNETT, James	Hosiery operative	TC	-
464	BLAKESLEY, John	Hosiery manufacturer	Con	-
461	VEASEY, William	Foreman dyer	Lib	-

(Note: None of the candidates stood as official Party candidates although, according to the Hinckley Times, nine were 'known to be Liberals' and they placed a joint advertisement in the press afterwards to thank voters. Councillor Hunt was not amongst them, but from other sources, can be identified as a Liberal. The Conservatives can also be identified in other ways. Councillors Warner and Bennett, shown as TC, were publicly supported by the Trades Council. Source: Hinckley Times *and* Hinckley Echo.*)*

In Edwardian times, councils were not expected to provide housing. They were permitted to do so by statute but such 'interference' in the market was only tolerated in exceptional circumstances. Public opinion held that the provision of housing was a matter for the private sector, a view that was all the more powerful for being largely unspoken. The only precedent in Leicestershire was not encouraging. Leicester Borough, with a much larger population than Hinckley, built 51 flats at Winifred Street in 1900, but it had involved difficult negotiations with the Local Government Board (LGB) (1), and ten years later, the scheme covered less than 80% of its costs. It was not repeated. Later, Market Bosworth Rural District Council resolved to build 12 houses at Markfield, but as explained later, it was obliged to do so by the LGB. In contrast, Hinckley UDC's decision in October 1912 was taken independently and for reasons of its own. These reasons are examined below after a brief survey of the town and its council. The main economic justification was evident at the time, but the article goes on to speculate that other, less obvious, factors were also involved which help to explain why Hinckley was exceptional.

Hinckley in 1910

Hinckley UDC held its first meeting in January 1895 following elections in the previous December, and thereafter 15 councillors were elected every three years. The Council's area excluded Barwell, Burbage and Earl Shilton (which were part of the separate Hinckley Rural District Council) and its population at the 1911 Census was 12,837. The town was dominated by the manufacture of hosiery, and to a lesser extent, footwear - in 1911, no less than 45% of men and 73% of women in employment worked in these industries. The Council that decided to build council houses was elected in April 1910 and a list of the successful candidates is shown in Table A. (2)

In two respects, the Council of 1910 resembled its predecessors. Firstly, there was a core of experienced councillors. Ten of those elected had served before and some for many years. Notable for their long and extensive experience were George Kinton, a Liberal, and Thomas Aucott, a Conservative. As well as being Hinckley councillors since 1894, they both represented the town on Leicestershire County Council and on the Board of the Poor Law Guardians.

Secondly, the majority of councillors were Liberals. Nine successful candidates had been endorsed by the Party and another was known to be a Liberal. None had stood as Party nominees but their sympathies would have been clear to all in a small town in 1910. It was not unusual for candidates to stand without declaring their Party allegiance, thus, it was said, encouraging electors to focus

on the qualities of the candidates rather than their political programmes. A culture of cooperation had developed in Hinckley. Despite consistent Liberal majorities, Conservative councillors sometimes held positions of power so that Councillor Aucott, for example, served as Chairman in 1909-10. There is no evidence that party politics played a significant part in determining Council policy; major decisions seem to have commanded cross-party support. At the same time, Hinckley's seats on the County Council were uncontested for many years with the Liberals and the Conservatives, in effect, nominating one councillor each.

In two other respects, the Council of 1910 broke with precedent. Whereas industrialists had always been represented, in 1910 the number of councillors describing themselves as hosiery or boot 'manufacturers' increased from four to eight. Counted amongst them were some of the most prominent factory owners in the town. The remaining councillors were largely tradesmen, self-employed men such as shopkeepers, who had experience of running small businesses. Few were employees with manual occupations although the 1910 intake did include a 'hosiery operative' and a 'foreman dyer'.

The 1910 election was also notable because, for the first time, two candidates backed by the Trades Council, representing local trades unions, were successful in the poll. Both Councillors Bennett and Warner had been Liberals in the past but chose to stand independently in 1910. The Trades Council organised a public meeting in their support and 'sandwich men' with placards patrolled the town on election day. Their success was a challenge to the established parties but, it seems, a gentle one. The *Hinckley Times* declared that the election was marked by an 'entire absence of excitement' (3) and, a few months later, Councillor Warner nominated a Liberal candidate to be the prospective Member of Parliament (MP) for Bosworth.

From Idea to Construction

The possibility of building council houses suddenly appeared in the Hinckley press in January 1912, almost as an afterthought to the proposed acquisition of land off Coventry Road for a new recreation ground. In the Council's official records, it was mentioned in a similar context just a few weeks earlier when the press were absent. Neither source indicates which councillors promoted the idea or whether it had been preceded by much informal discussion. For a radical policy, it moved forward remarkably quickly, with the first houses being ready for occupation almost exactly two years later. The main stages in the Council's decision-making process are summarised in Table B at the end of this article.

The pivotal meetings took place on 4th June 1912. A committee which had been set up to consider the Coventry Road land recommended that parts of the site be sold, and from the debate in council, it is clear that councillors wished to see houses built on them. The Council agreed to the sale at its main public meeting, but left discussion of the detailed arrangements until afterwards when it met in private. The only evidence of this meeting is the official minute and this set minimum prices for the land and required the purchaser to construct houses within 12 months of purchase. Significantly, the motion was proposed by Councillor Bennett and seconded by Councillor Warner, the councillors supported by the Trades Council, and its effect, it seems, was to make the terms of sale unattractive to private investors. The most senior councillors, Councillors Aucott and Kinton, took the unusual step of recording their opposition in the minute book, but bearing in mind the composition of the Council, the motion must have been supported by some, at least, of the Liberal manufacturers. A comment by Councillor Bott in the earlier meeting suggests that he was one of them.

However lively or acrimonious the debate on 4th June, it appears to have settled the matter. A consensus quickly emerged; there was no further mention of selling the Granville Road land; the Surveyor was instructed to prepare plans for ten council houses and these were approved on a proposal from Councillor Aucott in October. After an intervention from the LGB, the plans were amended and a scheme of 12 houses was finally agreed. No objections were recorded at the Public Inquiry. Once the decision to build council houses had been made, councillors took considerable care over their design, and, for example, sent a deputation to Lincolnshire to inspect houses near Bourne. Initially, a decision was deferred on the remaining land at Coventry Road, but as soon as the Granville Road houses were complete, the Council decided against a sale and in favour of building 16 more houses of its own.

The Economic Case

The Council resolved to build its own houses in October 1912 because, according to the minutes, 'there was a great demand for houses for the Working Classes in Hinckley, which was not being met at the present time by individual enterprise'. (4) It aimed to tackle a shortage of accommodation for 'working people' and took the unprecedented action reluctantly and only because the private sector was failing to provide what was normally expected. The action was viewed as an exceptional response to an immediate problem, and was not intended as an ideological challenge to the generally accepted social and economic ideas of the time. During 1912,

several Liberal councillors spoke publicly about the shortage of housing and, by 1913, the *Hinckley Echo* was describing the dearth of workmen's houses as 'very serious'. (5)

Hinckley's first council houses, situated in Granville Road,

There were two aspects to the problem. On the supply side, the number of new houses being built had declined sharply. In 1910, the Council approved plans from private builders for 163 houses; the number of such approvals fell to 50 in 1911, 37 in 1912 and 30 in 1913. The trend was a national one and contemporaries seemed confused about the reasons and the appropriate response. A variety of explanations was offered to Hinckley Council including the price of building land, the cost of materials, the method of operating the rating system and the strictness of the building bye-laws. The Surveyor's opinion was that 'the public investor did not want to be troubled with the worry of rent collection, execution of necessary repairs, loss of rents, etc and only then be rewarded with a small interest for his money and trouble'. (6) Nationally, commentators also noted a fall in real incomes, rising taxation, and the attractiveness of alternative investment opportunities. Landlords and property developers amongst the Hinckley councillors would have been aware of the financial position locally. Councillor Jeffcote, a builder, declared that 'there was not a builder in the town who could erect the houses required under the existing arrangements ... outsiders could not do it either or else they would have done so'. (7)

The decline in building was particularly problematic in Hinckley because it occurred when demand for housing was rising strongly. As early as 1907, the *Hinckley Echo*, describing trade as brisk, noted that there was 'hardly a house to be got in the place'. (8) In 1911, it reported that the hosiery trade was booming and cited evidence of factory extensions and enlargements. The Public Inquiry in 1913 was told that the number and size of factories were increasing 'out of all proportion' to the number of houses. (9)

The shortage of housing had a major impact on local employers. Councillor Pratt, a hosiery manufacturer, informed the Public Inquiry that wages were 'very good, especially for female labour, which for want of houses, there was great difficulty getting'. (10) The prospect of comparatively high wages meant that many people were travelling into Hinckley every day to work - the Inquiry learned that about 300 came from Nuneaton and another 300 from the surrounding villages. Women outnumbered men in the hosiery trade and they featured strongly in the daily movement to and from work. In 1912, the Hinckley Manufacturers' Association felt obliged to set up a 'hostel' in the Old Town Hall so that 'hundreds of girls' could obtain warmth and shelter during their dinner hour and whilst they waited for transport home at the end of the day. (11) Whilst the editor of the *Hinckley Times* saw cheap and frequent transport to the villages as the way forward, Councillor Pratt believed that whole families wished to move to Hinckley so that fathers, rather than daughters, would make the longer journey to work.

The housing shortage was of direct concern to Hinckley's manufacturers, several of whom were members of the Council. They had first-hand experience of the difficulties it caused for the recruitment and retention of staff. In November 1912, in an effort to encourage private building, the Council modified its arrangements for collecting rates from landlords (12), but this was only likely to have a marginal effect. In contrast, by building houses itself, the Council could have a direct and immediate impact on the housing situation. Providing the project was self-sufficient as intended, manufacturers could reap the benefits without increasing their costs. The attraction went beyond individual self-interest - easier availability of labour could be expected to stimulate prosperity and encourage firms to expand in the town rather than elsewhere.

Buoyant business conditions were improving the employment prospects for Hinckley's workers, but the lack of new houses was limiting their ability to translate this into better housing conditions. Overcrowding intensified and unfit dwellings continued to be occupied. The Council's scope for taking action in the worst cases was also hampered by the lack of alternative accommodation.

Other Factors

If the shortage of housing for working people was presented as the main reason for building council houses, a number of other factors bolstered the Council's case and helped it to respond to critics. The idea of building houses was a novel one but the Council had several recent achievements to its credit and this gave councillors confidence that they could tackle a new project successfully. Notable amongst the achievements was the provision of a swimming baths in 1910 and the winning of a contract, in competition with Leicester Borough, to supply water to Barwell and Earl Shilton. Throughout the period, Hinckley Council kept its rate steady, partly by using funds from its highly profitable gas undertaking. Confidence in local ability to carry out public works was also boosted by the Poor Law Guardians, who were often current or former councillors; they constructed a children's home at Burbage in 1911 and an infirmary block on the workhouse site in 1912.

Another new factor which encouraged council housing was the Housing and Town Planning Act of 1909. It ensured, for example, that government loans to councils for house building would be available at the cheapest rates and for the longest periods. This produced loan costs below those which private investors could obtain and gave councils a chance to cover their costs on schemes which would be unattractive to private investors.

The Act also imposed stricter inspection and reporting duties on councils in relation to substandard housing, and increased the powers of the LGB. A new mechanism was provided whereby a parish council or a group of four householders could complain to the LGB that a council was failing in its duty to provide housing for the working classes. In response, the Board could hold an Inquiry, and if dissatisfied, insist that such accommodation be provided.

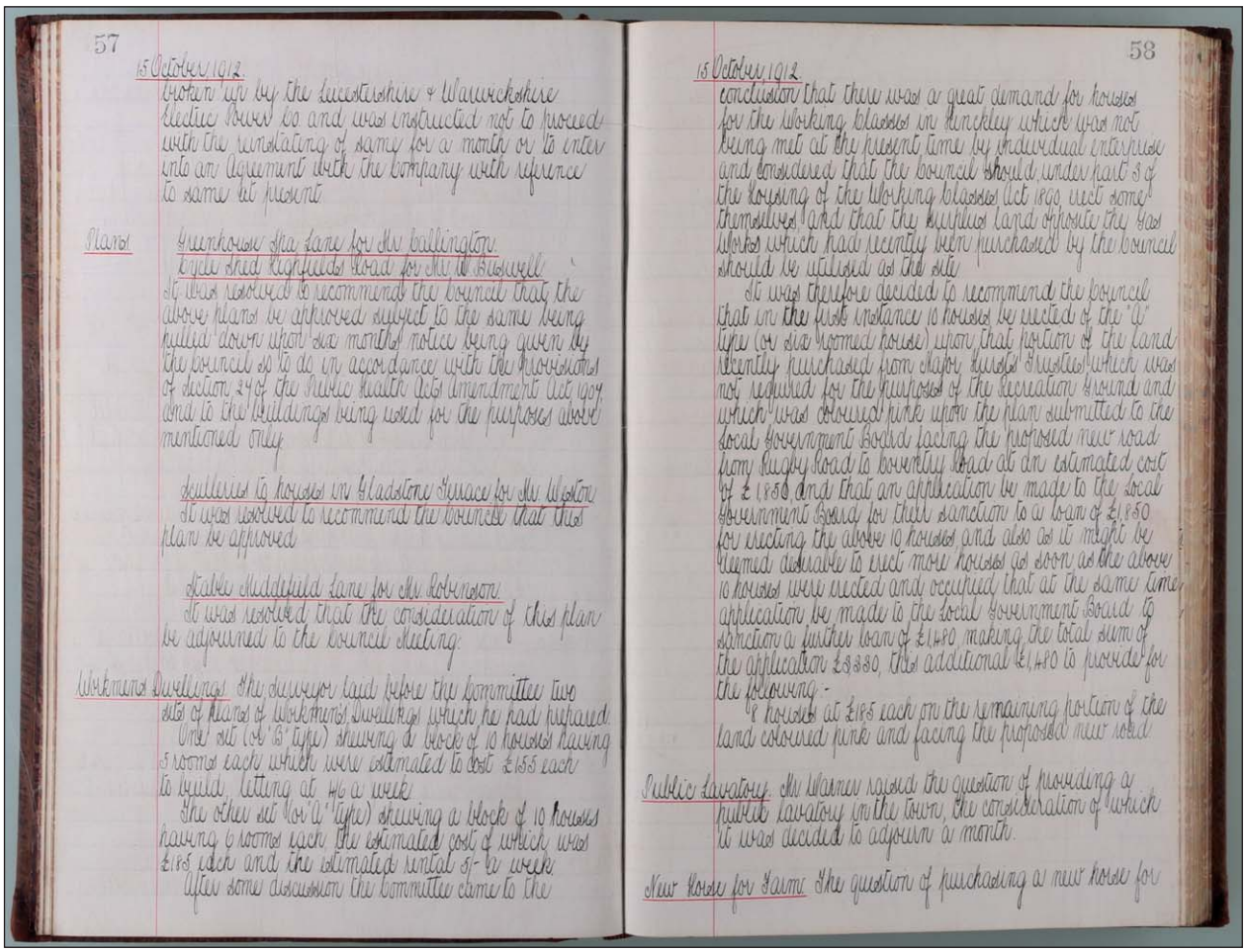
As important as the Act's provisions, was its role in drawing attention to the nation's housing problems and in involving councils in their solution. It also gave the LGB a higher profile in housing matters. Commentators have generally been dismissive of the LGB's record, viewing it as a reactionary and ineffective organisation keener on regulation than promotion, but it seems to have been ever present in the minds of Hinckley's councillors. They observed that it had acted locally in the past and were wary that it might do so again. Their fears were not unreasonable. The local Poor Law Guardians in particular, had had an uneasy relationship with the LGB. It had applied pressure on them to build an infirmary in 1908-09 and refused to approve their choice of workhouse master in 1911. In relation to housing, the Board took prompt action at nearby Atherstone in 1912 after it had received a report from the Medical Officer of Health about conditions in the Yards and was insisting that the local Council build houses. There was also the Leicestershire example of Markfield Parish Council using the Act to obtain a Public Inquiry which, through the LGB, forced its district council to provide accommodation in the village. Whatever the Board's national reputation, it was clearly unwise for Hinckley Council to disregard it.

Powerful as these factors were in favour of building council houses in Hinckley, it is doubtful whether they alone would have overcome resistance to such an unfamiliar proposition. After all, few councils took the same decision. However, the political situation, as viewed from Hinckley, is likely to have provided further encouragement.

Politics

At the start of the twentieth century, politics in most of Britain was dominated by the Conservative and Liberal Parties. As the Reform Acts of 1867 and 1885 increased the number of working class voters, many in urban and industrial areas saw their interests aligned with those of their employers - the wealth-creating Liberals stood in opposition to the vested interests of the land-owning Conservatives. This seems to have been the pattern in Hinckley. In some places, however, the 'status quo' was being challenged by the emergence of the Labour Party which was proving itself capable of winning both parliamentary and municipal elections. It had largely grown out of the trades union movement and, at this stage, was not a well-organised and cohesive party with a clear set of policies. However, it posed a particular threat to the Liberal Party by suggesting that the interests of working people were not always those of their employers. In this light, the election for the first time of two former Liberals as independent Trades Council candidates to Hinckley Council in 1910 was clearly significant despite the apparent lack of press excitement at the time.

The rise of the Labour Party was not inevitable, but where it was perceived as a threat, established politicians had to decide how to respond. Hinckley had not been in the forefront of developments but it was not isolated from them. Indeed, surveying the local scene, Hinckley's councillors may have felt particularly vulnerable. In the January 1910 General Election, the Labour Party won only 40 parliamentary seats but two of these had close connections with Hinckley. In addition, the Party had a strong presence on Leicester Borough Council. Its advance in Leicester was exceptional by national standards, but this was no comfort to the political establishment in Hinckley, bearing in mind the town's



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15 October 1912.

[illegible] by the Leicestershire & Warwickshire Electric Power Co and was instructed not to proceed with the insulating of same for a month or to enter into an Agreement with the Company with reference to same at present

Plans

Greenhouse &c. Lane for Mr Ballington.
Cycle Shed Highfields Road for Mr W Boswell
It was resolved to recommend the Council that the above plans be approved subject to the same being pulled down upon six months notice being given by the Council so to do in accordance with the provisions of Section 24 of the Public Health (Us) Amendment Act 1907 and to the buildings being used for the purposes above mentioned only

Shelters to houses in Gladstone Terrace for Mr Weston
It was resolved to recommend the Council that this plan be approved

Stable Shuttlefield Lane for Mr Robinson
It was resolved that the consideration of this plan be adjourned to the Council Meeting

Workmens Dwellings. The Surveyor laid before the Committee two sets of plans of Workmens Dwellings which he had prepared One set (or "B" type) shewing a block of 10 houses having 5 rooms each which were estimated to cost £155 each to build, letting at 4/6 a week
The other set (or "A" type) shewing a block of 10 houses having 6 rooms each the estimated cost of which was £185 each and the estimated rental 5/- a week
After some discussion the Committee came to the

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15 October 1912.

conclusion that there was a great demand for houses for the working classes in Hinckley which was not being met at the present time by individual enterprise and considered that the Council should under part 3 of the housing of the working classes Act 1903 erect some themselves and that the cricket land opposite the Gas Works which had recently been purchased by the Council should be utilised as the site

It was therefore decided to recommend the Council that in the first instance 10 houses be erected of the "A" type (or six roomed house) upon that portion of the land recently purchased from Major Hinckley Trustees which was not required for the purpose of the Recreation Ground and which was coloured pink upon the plan submitted to the Local Government Board facing the proposed new road from Rugby Road to Coventry Road at an estimated cost of £1850 and that an application be made to the Local Government Board for their sanction to a loan of £1850 for erecting the above 10 houses and also as it might be deemed advisable to erect more houses as soon as the above 10 houses were erected and occupied that at the same time application be made to the Local Government Board to sanction a further loan of £1480 making the total sum of the application £3330, this additional £1480 to provide for the following:-

8 houses at £185 each on the remaining portion of the land coloured pink and facing the proposed new road

Public Lavatory. Mr Warner raised the question of providing a public lavatory in the town, the consideration of which it was decided to adjourn a month.

New House for Farm. The question of purchasing a new house for

Considerable progress was made on the 'Workmens Dwellings' at the Hinckley UDC Highways and Sanitary Committee meeting in October 1912. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, location mark DE3640/72.)

close social, trades union and commercial links with Leicester. On further examination, the parliamentary situation was less disturbing because both Labour MPs relied heavily on Liberal support.

The neighbouring constituency of Nuneaton was held by William Johnson, General Secretary of the Warwickshire Miners' Association. He had first won the seat in 1906 as a Liberal and only became a 'Labour' MP when the Miners' Federation of Great Britain affiliated to the Party in 1909. Johnson was not an enthusiastic recruit and, in both General Elections of 1910, his campaign was organised by the Liberals. By 1914, he was back in the Liberal fold when he lost the Labour whip.

The second local Labour MP was James Ramsay MacDonald, the Party's national Secretary, who held one of the two Leicester seats. He failed to be elected in 1900 but was successful in 1906 when the Liberals agreed not to nominate a candidate against him. By sharing representation, the Liberal and Labour Parties ensured that the Conservatives were excluded and Ramsay MacDonald was elected on this basis in both General Elections in 1910.

Of more immediate concern to Hinckley's Liberals was the municipal situation in Leicester. They were kept informed by a regular column in the *Hinckley Times*, 'Lines from Leicester', which was often hostile to the growing number of Labour councillors on the Borough Council. After the annual elections of November 1910, the Party had 14 councillors and two aldermen. This was not a sudden achievement, which could be dismissed as a 'flash in the pan', but marked a steady increase in representation. The Party was a long way from gaining a majority but it was now an established presence in the council chamber and was growing in experience and confidence. The break between trades unions and the Liberal Party had occurred comparatively early in Leicester and the first independent labour councillor had been elected in 1894. In time, the Trades Council, together with the hosiery and footwear unions, had set up a Leicester branch of the Labour Representation Council, the forerunner of the Labour Party. An attempted rapprochement with the Liberal Party in 1903 quickly collapsed and relations between the parties became increasingly hostile. As the Labour Party's organisation strengthened, the Liberals struggled to maintain a presence in working class wards.

In looking for a way forward, the Leicester Liberal Party did not present its Hinckley counterpart with an attractive model. Arguably, its confrontational stance since 1904 had encouraged the labour movement to take an independent position rather than a cooperative one. Perhaps the leading Hinckley councillors found the example of their other sizeable neighbour, Coventry, more encouraging. Here, the 'radical' Liberals were stronger and a more conciliatory approach was adopted; an early manifestation of this was a programme of council house building. The proposal was initiated by the City Council's first Labour member, elected in 1905, but by building on long-standing agitation from community groups, he was able to gain sufficient support from other councillors. In 1907, the Council decided to erect 70 dwellings on two sites and, three years later, it approved a second scheme. By 1914, it had agreed to build over 200 dwellings but had only four Labour councillors.

TABLE B

Hinckley Urban District Council

KEY STAGES IN THE DECISION TO BUILD HINCKLEY'S FIRST COUNCIL HOUSES

Month	Activity
Jan 1912	Purchased land off Coventry Road mainly for a recreation ground but noted that part of the site might be used by the Council to provide workmen's dwellings.
Jun 1912	Offered part of the Coventry Road site for sale for the erection of houses but then set conditions which made private investment uneconomic.
Sep 1912	Asked the Surveyor, having consulted other councils of Hinckley's size which had provided dwellings, to prepare plans for 10 houses.
Oct 1912	Decided to build 10 houses, each with 6 main rooms, on Granville Road and to apply to the Local Government Board (LGB) for approval to borrow £1,850.
Feb 1913	Considered comments from the LGB after it rejected the Council's designs.
Mar 1913	Discussed the findings of a deputation which visited newly completed council houses near Bourne in Lincolnshire.
Apr 1913	Resolved to accept revised plans and to build 12 houses, each with 5 main rooms, and to apply to the LGB for approval to borrow £2,000. Accepted the Surveyor's 'balance sheet' showing that the houses must be let at 5 shillings per week to cover costs.
May 1913	Supported its proposals at the LGB's Public Inquiry.
July 1913	Received the LGB's approval and accepted a tender for the building works.
Jan 1914	Inspected the first completed houses on Granville Road. Instructed the Surveyor to prepare plans for similar houses on the Rugby and Coventry Roads.
Feb 1914	Agreed plans for a further 16 houses.
Apr 1914	Received loan approval for the 16 houses and accepted the builder's tender.

(Source: Minutes of Hinckley UDC and its Highways and Sanitary Committee, Hinckley Times and Hinckley Echo.)

Conclusions

The written records suggest that economic arguments were uppermost in the minds of Hinckley's councillors when they decided to build their first council houses. This is evident from councillors' comments reported in the local press and from the Council's case presented at the Public Inquiry. The shortage of housing for working people was creating serious recruitment difficulties for local industry at a time of expansion. It was also limiting workers' ability to improve their housing conditions, and generating long journeys to work especially for many women and girls.

In 1910, the election of two councillors supported by the Trades Council suggested that dissatisfaction with the local political establishment, hitherto dominated by the Liberals, was growing. There were local precedents; Labour MPs held two neighbouring constituencies and Labour representation on Leicester Borough Council was strong and growing. The possibility of a sizeable number of working class voters in Hinckley deciding that their interests no longer corresponded with those of their employers was an alarming prospect for the Liberals, and perhaps their leaders saw the housing issue as a way of re-affirming the bond of mutual interest. Council houses offered advantages to both employers and employees, and working with the Trades Council councillors to provide them, publicised very visibly the benefits of cooperation. They sent a message to the electorate that, in Hinckley at least, there was no need for independent labour representation.

Whatever the motives of individual councillors – and doubtless they varied – Hinckley Council's decision in 1912 to build council houses remains a courageous one. Despite the attractions of doing nothing, it was prepared to be different and to adopt a novel and potentially risky idea for the benefit of the town. In so doing with speed and determination, it stood in line with the best traditions of British local government.

References and Notes:

1. The Local Government Board was a body set up by central government to supervise and regulate local government.
2. For further details about the Council, see the *Hinckley Historian,* Summer edition, 2017.
3. *Hinckley Times*, 9th April 1910.
4. Hinckley UDC minute, 22nd October 1912.
5. *Hinckley Echo*, 25th September 1913.
6. From his annual report for 1912, quoted by the *Hinckley Times*, 15th March 1913.
7. *Hinckley Echo*, 31st July 1912 during a debate on amending the rating system.
8. *Hinckley Echo*, 10th April 1907.
9. The Clerk, quoted in the *Hinckley Echo*, 21st May 1913.
10. *Hinckley Echo*, 21st May 1913.
11. *Hinckley Times*, 16th November 1912.
12. A property tax levied by the Council, now replaced by the Council Tax.

Working Class Mothers and the Birth Control Movement (1830-1930)

Shirley Aucott

The practice of birth control in the nineteenth and well into the twentieth century is an extremely difficult subject to research, largely because of the private nature of the subject. This article will look at two different, but inextricably linked aspects of birth control in Leicester. The first part will focus on how working class women attempted to control their own fertility through the use of abortion and abortificant drugs. The second part will centre on Charles Killick Millard, Medical Officer of Health for Leicester (1901-1935) and his crusade to bring safer and more reliable forms of birth control to these women. Although the article will specifically concentrate on working class women, it must not be assumed that middle class women did not experience many of the same problems. Abortion, and the use of abortificant drugs as a form of contraception, had been used by women for centuries, and remains a largely hidden history of women's fertility control which passed from one generation to the next. Statistics on abortion in the nineteenth and part of the twentieth century do not exist and therefore it is impossible to quantify the scale of its use.

GENUINE PATENT MEDICINES sold at the Chronicle Office, and by Masters, chemist, and Combe, bookseller, Leicester; Redfern, Loughborough; Jowet, Derby; Yates and Gifford, Nottingham; Kirk, Melton; Brooks and Reddish, Burton; Wayte, Ashby; Pridmore, Hinckley; Butcher, Nuneaton; Carroll, Lutterworth; and Shephard, Harborough.

Brunswick Corn Plaister	Griffin's Tincture
Balsamic Lozenges, for Coughs, &c.	Hickman's Pills for Gravel, &c
Cajeput Opodeldoc	James's Fever Powders
Cayenne Lozenges	——— Analeptic Pills
Ching's Worm Lozenges	Millman's Ointment
Cooling Aperient Powders	Marshall's Cerate
Citrated Kali for Saline Draughts	Pectoral Elixir for Coughs, &c
Croton Oil (Short's)	Perry's Essence for Tooth-ache
Dixon's Antibilious Pills	Power's Ringworm Ointment
Dalby's Carminative	Quinine Lozenges
Essence Cubebs	Ruspini's Powder and Tincture
Freeman's Bathing Spirits	——— Styptic and Elixir
——— Ointment & Drops	Robberd's Balsamic Elixir
Fothergill's Nervous Drops	Towers's Pills and Essence
——— Female Pills	——— Camphor and Bark
Fluid Extract Sarsaparilla	Turlington's Balsam of Life
Godfrey's Cordial	Vegetable Tooth Powder
	Walker's Drops and Electuary
	Welch's Female Pills

This advertisement for 'Fothergills' and 'Widow Welch's' female pills gives details from where they could be purchased in Leicester and elsewhere. Leicester Chronicle*, 8th May 1830. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.)*

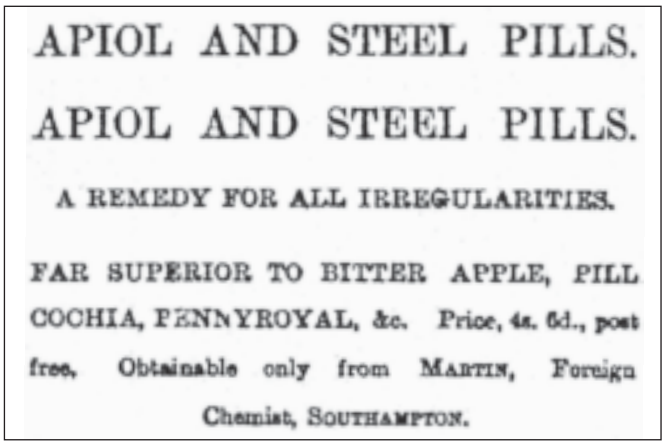
It cannot be denied that Charles Killick Millard held Malthusian and eugenic views, many of which were expressed in his talks and lectures. He was a member of the Eugenics Society, founded in 1907, and became vice-president of the Malthusian League in 1914. These beliefs were very much in the ascendency at the time that Millard was Medical Officer of Health. Indeed they were held by many middle class people across the professions, particularly members of the medical profession. John Welshman has written about the eugenic views that underpinned Millard's birth control campaign, but this article will instead focus more on his overall concerns for the plight of the working class mother. (1) His unstinting efforts to bring knowledge of safer and more trustworthy forms of contraception to the working classes were beset by prejudice and intransigence, but his knowledge and persistence made him a leading national figure in the birth control movement.

On 1st July 1893 an article by Dr Frank M. Pope, a physician at Leicester Infirmary, appeared in the *British Medical Journal*, outlining the case of two women who had taken Diachylon lead plaster for the purpose of procuring an abortion. (2) There were no restrictions on the sale of Diachylon and anyone could purchase it from a chemist in penny twists, or in a spread form used as an adhesive plaster to cover cuts, sores or to rid women of breast milk either after parturition, or at times of weaning infants. The first woman Pope recorded was admitted to the Infirmary in September 1890 and the second in August 1892. This was the first time that Diachylon, used for this purpose, had been brought to the attention of the medical profession. Both women were working class factory workers and both women's lives were lost. Pope's intention was to 'give publicity to the facts with a view to the prevention of similar tragic results'. (3) The death of the first woman was due to lead poisoning, but there was insufficient evidence to prove how the lead had been ingested. It was not until several weeks later that Pope gained information from the medical practitioner who had admitted the woman to the Infirmary. He told him: 'that it had been reported to him in a roundabout and hearsay manner that the deceased had told someone that she had been advised to take Diachylon, either to prevent conception or to procure abortion.' (4) The case was practically forgotten until the second was presented in August 1892. Once again the verdict of the inquest concluded that the woman's death had been caused by lead poisoning. However, this time evidence was given by an aunt of the deceased who explained how the lead had been ingested: '. . . some weeks before her death the deceased had pointed out a chemist's shop and said 'That's where I get the

stuff I take.' When asked what she meant by the word 'stuff' she replied 'Diachylon'. (5) She then went on to say that her niece told her that she would buy two pennyworth of the plaster and then roll it into balls which she swallowed in order to procure an abortion. Pope speculated that the practice of taking Diachylon was most probably widespread in Leicester and other manufacturing towns and cities and that: '. . . the bringing on of premature labour is looked upon as a tolerably safe and easy procedure – a view too often followed by disastrous results.' (6)

Despite the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act, which made it an offence punishable by imprisonment to use an instrument, poison, or other noxious item on oneself or any other woman to procure an abortion, most women did not consider it either illegal or immoral to attempt abortion before 'quickening', particularly if they did it themselves. Proving anyone had attempted or indeed succeeded in procuring an abortion was extremely difficult and many cases must have gone unreported. Further articles about the use of Diachylon began to appear in the *BMJ*. Dr Guy J. Branson of Edgbaston writing in 1899 reported that: 'Some inquiries I made of local chemists pointed to the use of Diachylon as a criminal abortificant being extremely common.' (7) Dr Arthur Hall, physician at the Royal Hospital, Sheffield and Dr W. B. Ransom, physician at the General Hospital, Nottingham, writing in the *BMJ* in 1906 also remarked on the extent of its purchase: 'A chemist [in Doncaster] who set up in a small way about six months ago states he must have sold 100 penny lumps of Diachylon.' (8)

More cases were identified in Birmingham, Nottingham and Sheffield and it was assumed that the use of Diachylon had spread from Leicester west and northwards, particularly aided by the fact that these towns and cities employed working class women in factories, where knowledge could easily be passed from woman to woman. However, in 1900 Dr Moore Bennett of Ruddington, Nottinghamshire told Dr Ransom, that the practice of taking Diachylon was common in his rural district. (9) Ransom also believed that Diachylon was taken by all social classes of women. Both of these statements question the theory of how the use of Diachylon spread. In 1906, Dr Hall and Dr Ransom believed that many cases of lead poisoning in women had mistakenly been attributed to lead in the water supply. They therefore gratefully acknowledged Pope's article for bringing the information to the attention of the medical profession. Hall's article then turned to other worrying products that were being taken by women to procure an abortion: '. . . we have now an equally serious, if less immediately grave, problem to deal with – namely, the sale of quack 'female irregularity' pills.' (10) The sale of such pills was widespread and Leicester newspapers regularly carried advertisements for them and where they could be purchased. 'Widow Welch's Female Pills' were widely sold throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth, claiming to be a safe and valuable medicine in effectively removing 'obstructions' and relieving all other 'inconveniences'. In 1838 they could be purchased from the Mercury Office. (11) An advertisement for 'Fothergills Female Pills' which appeared in the *Leicester Chronicle* in May 1830 stated that they could be purchased from the *'Chronicle Office, Masters Chemist and Coombe Booksellers'*. (12) There were countless other advertisements for pills such as 'Blanchard's Apiol and Steel Pills', 'Madam Dolman's Female Pills' and 'William's Universal Pills' the latter were available from the agent W.R. Harvey, 98 Humberstone Road, Leicester.


APIOL AND STEEL PILLS.

APIOL AND STEEL PILLS.

A REMEDY FOR ALL IRREGULARITIES.

FAR SUPERIOR TO BITTER APPLE, PILL COCHIA, PENNYROYAL, &c. Price, 4s. 6d., post free. Obtainable only from MARTIN, Foreign Chemist, SOUTHAMPTON.

This advertisement appeared many times in Leicester newspapers and although it was not specifically directed at women, the ingredients of the pills were well-known abortificants, particularly Apiol, which is green parsley oil, and the herb, Pennyroyal. Leicester Chronicle*, 28th November 1896. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.)*

Although the advertisements were widespread, there was no action taken to prevent newspapers from printing them. This was despite a major national scandal that took place in 1898 when three brothers, Robert, Edward and Leonard Chrimes, who were supplying women with the 'Lady Montrose Miraculous Female Tabules', were brought to trial. Not only were the brothers supplying women countrywide with the tabules through advertisements placed in newspapers, but they then started to blackmail the women, accusing them of having committed a criminal offence by taking the pills. The brothers were thought to have been carrying out their business since approximately 1894, but it came to an abrupt end in 1898 when the husband of Kate Clifford discovered a letter of extortion sent by them to his wife. He took it to the police and on raiding the brothers' London premises they found correspondence from 475 different women, containing over two hundred and forty pounds. (13) The brothers were arrested and brought to trial in November 1898. One of the main witnesses to give evidence at their trial was:

> Robert A. Berrill laboratory manager to Stephen Wand, manufacturing chemist of 1 Haymarket, Leicester . . . He produced correspondence from H. C. Montrose & Co whom Mr Wand had supplied

> with tabules, pills, powders and castor oil compounded by him . . . Mr Wand supplied £105 worth of this medicine. [The witness] replied that the medicine could not in any way be recognised as a remedy for the ailments suggested in the case. (14)

All three brothers were found guilty and served prison sentences. Stephen Wand and Robert Berrill were cleared of any complicity with the brothers. The judge concluded the case saying that adverts for such pills: '. . . were an ugly blot on the deservedly high character and purity of our press.' (15) However, advertisements for pills continued to appear in newspapers.


LADIES' Pennyroyal, steel, and bitter apple pills, 1s. 2s. 9d., post free.—Mrs. WOODS, 29, West-street, Leicester. w269

This small advertisement for Pennyroyal, Steel, and Bitter Apple pills demonstrates that they were available from a wide variety of sources including an enterprising Leicester woman. Leicester Chronicle*, 15th October 1904. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.)*

According to information given by Hind's Chemist, Queen's Road, Leicester, in 1989, such pills and other known abortificants such as pennyroyal, which had been used by women for centuries, quinine and Peruvian bark, had been sold by them right into the 1930s and probably beyond. If women could not afford to purchase the manufactured pills they would make up their own abortificants, as explained by a woman in Mountsorrel, Leicestershire. She remembered that there was a known recipe used by many women in the village: 'One woman in the village had a recipe of Epsom salts, senna pods and 'Beecham's Pills'. Those were the three and you took them in enormous quantities.' (16) Although never taking it herself she knew women who had, and said that for many women 'It was just getting rid of them yourself. I didn't know the word abortion.' (17)

By the time Millard became Medical Officer of Health for Leicester in 1901, safer and more reliable forms of birth control than coitus interruptus and procured abortion, still widely practised among the working classes, were becoming more available for those who could afford them, or knew of them. For many working class women however, their lack of knowledge and inability to afford new forms of birth control resulted in an almost constant state of pregnancy, exhaustion, extremely poor health and even death. Dr Maurice Millard said of his father's concerns:

> . . . in the deprived parts of the city it was brought home to my father, very vividly, the problem of excessive families . . . The combination of bad housing, poverty and over population and very large families in my father's view was a scandal which was the duty of the medical profession to campaign against. (18)


LADIES—20,000
SAMPLES of our GOLD "TRIUMPH" TABLETS [Registered 336,720] for all Irregularities, GIVEN AWAY ABSOLUTELY FREE. They are far superior to Steel, Pennyroyal, Bitter Apple, etc., speedy, reliable, and perfectly harmless, and are guaranteed effective almost immediately—invariably under one hour—however obstinate the case. THE FREE SAMPLE HAS CURED THOUSANDS OF CASES. Government Stamp on every bottle, so why waste money on worthless remedies. Sworn Testimonials and Samples Free. 1/1½, 2/3, 4/6. Works: Passy Paris. LE BRASSEUR SURGICAL CO. LTD., Dept. B.T. JOHN BRIGHT STREET, BIRMINGHAM. Tel. "Surgical, Birmingham," and "Ardeshir, Paris.

This advertisement for 'Gold Triumph Tablets' were different to other advertisements in that they were given away as free samples. It also claims not only to have a government stamp of approval, but also that they would take effect within an hour to clear 'obstinate irregularities'. Leicester Chronicle*, 2nd November 1912. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.)*

Although Millard believed that it was: '. . . the sacred and inherent right of every married couple mutually to decide for themselves whether and to what extent they should become parents', he became increasingly concerned with the need to improve the health and wellbeing of the working class mother by restricting the number of children she bore. This he believed could be achieved by expanding the work of the Maternity and Infant Welfare Centres to include the giving of birth control advice. (19) To achieve his goal Millard was not afraid to express his views in public and in so doing he became a national figure in the birth control movement and spoke out courageously at every opportunity to convert and convince people that birth control was necessary for everyone who desired it, but particularly for the working class. His presidential address, 'Population and Birth Control', given to the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society on 8th October 1917 began with the following words:

> I do not think there is any occasion to apologise for choosing this subject . . . At the same time I am aware that it is, in certain of its aspects, highly controversial and one the choice of which may not be approved by all. It was for this reason that it was thought better to announce the subject beforehand. (20)

His address covered a wide range of reasons for the use of birth control and, although it contained eugenic and Malthusian views, he showed particular concern for the working class women whose health and lives were being destroyed by constant pregnancies and procured abortions. Millard believed the latter to be as prevalent in Leicester as elsewhere in the country. In support of his argument he cited several Leicester working class women who were in a constant state of pregnancy and then brought his audiences attention to the publication of a book entitled *Maternity: Letters From Working Women*. Published in 1915 it contained 160 letters from working class women who had

been invited by the Women's Co-operative Guild to write about their experiences of pregnancy, childbirth, ill health, exhaustion and the measures taken to terminate a pregnancy. This was the first time that working class women's voices had been given a public voice to express their sufferings. Millard used five of the letters to illustrate his address and extracts from two of them follow:

> I had seven children and one miscarriage in 10 years and three months. This left me at the age of thirty a complete wreck. When my eldest was six years old, I had my fifth baby and had also a miscarriage, and then I went on strike . . . for if I had not a baby at the breast I was pregnant. (21)

Joseph Dare, Domestic Missionary to the Unitarian Chapel in East Bond Street, Leicester, from 1845 to 1877, worked amongst the poor working class from his mission in All Saints Open on Highcross Street, which was situated in Newton Ward, one of the poorest areas in Leicester. Dare's report for 1858 revealed the same circumstances for women described in the letters above and were little changed when Millard delivered his address in 1917: 'Some of the most distressing cases I met with were those poor women during and just after confinement. Reduced by low and insufficient diet, they almost sunk under the additional burden.' (22) Drawing towards his conclusion Millard challenged his largely middle class audience to take particular note of what he called a 'conspiracy of silence':

Dr Charles Killick Millard (1870-1952), Medical Officer of Health for Leicester from 1901 to 1935. (Reproduced from Leicester: Its Civic, Industrial and Social Life *by Chas. Howes, published 1927, Leicester, The Midland Service Agencies Ltd.)*

> It does seem to me something approaching hypocrisy for the educated classes . . . to be quietly and privately availing themselves of the knowledge and means which science . . . has placed at the disposal of mankind, in order to escape from what they regard . . . as the evil of over-childbearing, and yet to join in a conspiracy of silence to keep this same knowledge from reaching the poor who need it so very much more. (23)

In 1918 Millard gave a lecture on birth control at the Royal Institute of Public Health where he again recommended that delegates should read *Maternity: Letters From Working Women*. He went on to say that by establishing birth control clinics in slum areas of large towns, as had been the case in Holland for many years, medical practitioners would not only be able to give women birth control advice, but that they would be able to: 'combat the great and common evil of drug taking and the use of abortificants.' (24)

On 27th November 1918 Millard wrote to Marie Stopes congratulating her on the publication of *Wise Parenthood*, something he had intended to do when she published *Married Love*. (25) Stopes replied two days later thanking him and saying that she agreed with his sentiments that birth control information was very much needed amongst the poor and ignorant. She then went on to say that she had published her two books in a more expensive form for the middle classes: ' . . . chiefly as a matter of tactics, in order to establish the book firmly so as to prevent, if possible, the rows that would follow if it went straight to the poor.' (26) A month later Stopes again wrote to Millard informing him that she had written the first draft of a short pamphlet entitled A Letter to Working Mothers, which she had specifically aimed at the: 'poor class of mother'. (27) Millard replied saying that he thought it would be: 'of the greatest assistance to the poor mother who at present is so sorely in need of reliable advice which she can understand.' (28) He also said that he had shown the pamphlet to Dr Mary Weston, wife of a local clergyman, who, like himself, had added some suggestions to include in the pamphlet. Dr Weston was employed by the Leicester Health Department, as a medical officer in their maternity and infant welfare centres. The pamphlet was published in 1919.

In April 1899, twenty years before the publication of Stopes' pamphlet, Frederick J. Gould of 41 Lower Hastings Street, Leicester, wrote to the honorary secretary of the Malthusian League suggesting that the League: '. . . would do well to prepare leaflets in extremely simple language, suitable for distribution (by women) among working class women. The Malthusian practice spreads among the better educated but not among the proletariat, who most need it.' (29) Gould wrote his letter in the same year that he became full-time organiser for the Leicester Secular Society. He was elected as the Secular Society's candidate on to the School Board, helped to re-launch the *Leicester Pioneer* newspaper and acted as secretary to the Labour group of the Town Council before becoming a councillor for Castle Ward and Wyggeston Ward from 1904-1910. (30)

On Tuesday 24th March 1919 Millard was the first expert witness on birth control to be called before the National Birth-rate Commission. He emphatically stressed that everyone should have access to birth control, but his main focus again fell on the mother: 'Every child born should be

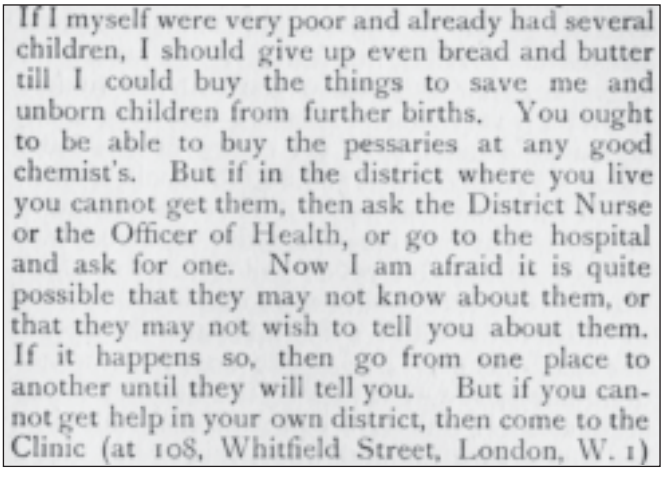
desired by the parents, and especially by the mother, and its coming ought not to be dreaded, or regarded as a disaster.' (31). In April 1920 Millard spoke to the Leicester Rotary Club on the subject of 'Responsible Parenthood' which again rested on the number of children parents chose to have. The *Leicester Daily Post* called it 'An address of peculiar interest'. (32) Millard faced a far harsher and more critical audience in this year when he challenged the bishops' intransigent stance on birth control. At the 1909 Lambeth Conference on 'Marriage Problems' they adopted the stance that it was immoral to deliberately prevent conception. With the forthcoming Lambeth Conference in July 1920 Millard secretly met with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Randle Davidson, who was more sympathetic to his cause, and agreed to Millard sending a memorandum, entitled 'Responsible Parenthood and Birth Control' to every bishop in the Anglican Communion asking them to reconsider their views on birth control. Millard's memorandum expressed the desperate need for the working classes to be given birth control information and access to contraception. To bolster his argument he used quotations from numerous male and female authors on the subject, including the medical profession, and letters he and the Malthusian League had received from desperate working-class parents requesting birth control information. Again he suggested that the bishops should read *Letters From Working Women*. (33) Despite some of the bishops being in agreement with Millard's argument, the Conference rejected his plea and it was to be another ten years before they accepted the use of contraception.

In May 1921 over two thousand people attended a meeting on Constructive Birth Control at Queen's Hall, London which had been organised by Marie Stopes with Millard as one of the speakers. Two months later he joined a debate, published in the *BMJ*, where he put up a strong argument refuting Dr Mary Scharlieb's (consulting gynaecologist to the Royal Free Hospital) argument that disadvantages outweighed the advantages when it came to the use of contraceptives for the: 'over-prolific and heavily burdened mothers.' (34)

In addition to the clergy's hostile attitude towards birth control a large proportion of the medical profession were also opposed to it, fearing that it had harmful physical and mental effects on both men and women. Despite their attitude, the 1911 census revealed they had the smallest families of all categories. However, many medical practitioners were themselves ignorant of contraceptive methods as it was not part of their medical training. They were also fearful that any association with birth control would put their reputations at risk. This can be seen in July 1922 when Millard presided over the conference of the New Generation League (previously called the Malthusian League). The contraceptive section was attended by 164 medical practitioners, some of whom had shown no previous interest in, or connection with, the birth control movement. Although their attendance reflected changing attitudes towards birth control, it still remained a very controversial area for the medical profession to identify with. Consequently, many delegates requested that their names be kept secret. (35)

Medical practitioners' ignorance of birth control was the main reason behind Marie Stopes writing her book *Contraception: Its Theory, History and Practice - A Manual for the Medical and Legal Professions*, in 1923. The preface to the book once again reflected the reluctance of the medical profession and also the legal profession to be associated with the subject of birth control: 'I am indebted to many distinguished medical and legal friends who have helped and encouraged me throughout the production of the book, but who desire not to be thanked by name.' (36)

The same year that Stopes published *Contraception*, the Women's Co-operative Guild Congress passed a resolution urging the Ministry of Health and local authorities to give birth control advice in its maternity and child welfare centres. It is impossible to know whether Leicester members of the Guild supported the resolution as their records have been lost. Hopes were raised in the spring of 1924 when the Ministry of Health published *Maternal Mortality* in which Dr Janet Campbell (Senior Medical Officer for Maternity and Child Welfare) reported that 3000 women died in childbirth annually, induced abortion was widespread, and women with large families faced greater risks during pregnancy due to exhaustion. (37) The latter two aspects had been at the heart of Millard's beliefs for many years. Despite such overwhelming evidence in the report the Ministry of Health released Circular 517 on 30th June 1924 which prohibited birth control information being given in Ministry-run maternity and child welfare centres. This action helped


If I myself were very poor and already had several children, I should give up even bread and butter till I could buy the things to save me and unborn children from further births. You ought to be able to buy the pessaries at any good chemist's. But if in the district where you live you cannot get them, then ask the District Nurse or the Officer of Health, or go to the hospital and ask for one. Now I am afraid it is quite possible that they may not know about them, or that they may not wish to tell you about them. If it happens so, then go from one place to another until they will tell you. But if you cannot get help in your own district, then come to the Clinic (at 108, Whitfield Street, London, W. 1)

An extract from the 1925 edition of A Letter to Working Mothers *by Marie Stopes. The advice given by Stopes was totally unrealistic for many working class women. It also demonstrates how difficult it was for them to obtain the Check Pessary which she recommended. (The Author's Collection.)*

to galvanise birth controllers into what would become a more united campaign to overturn the Ministry's decision. In 1925 the Birth Control Committee appointed a Medical Committee to consider the medical aspects of contraception and Millard was one of the witnesses called to give evidence. Once again he stressed what had been his particular interest for many years: '. . . the working-class mother, who is so often, as I think, overburdened with maternity. This is the aspect which specially appeals to me.' (38) He supported this with evidence of two Leicester women, one who had eleven confinements in fourteen years and the other who had had eighteen confinements in twenty-five years. (39) After the issue of Circular 517 more women's organisations joined the fight to have it overturned with many of them lobbying the new Minister of Health, Neville Chamberlain, who inherited the law from his predecessor, John Wheatley. Several Members of Parliament, including Frederick Pethick-Lawrence (Labour Leicester West), constantly asked Parliamentary questions on state birth control provision for poorer working class women.

On 4th April 1930 the birth control campaign came to a head when a major conference on 'Birth Control by Public Health Authorities' was organised by the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, the Society for the Provision of Birth Control Clinics, the Women's National Liberal Federation and the Workers Birth Control Group (formed in 1924 by Dora Russell and other socialists) and held in the Central Hall, Westminster. Millard presided over the conference and called on the Ministry of Health to lift their embargo which prohibited the giving of birth control information in the Ministry's maternity and infant welfare centres. Dr Harold Chapple, senior obstetrician and gynaecologist at Guy's Hospital, was one of the speakers who drew an impassioned analogy in his lecture:

> . . . to many women birth shock is as real as shell shock was to men in the war. We did not send these poor fellows back to war until they had rested and recovered. Yet women go on having children. (40)

The response by the Ministry to this conference and Millard's role in changing their decision will be discussed in a future article. Also under discussion will be the battle to establish a Family Planning Association clinic in Leicester in the 1940s and 50s.

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The Man from Catthorpe, a Leicestershire Victim - Serial Murder in the Victorian Era

David Howell

In most murder cases that came before the criminal courts in the past, the name of the perpetrator is remembered and recorded in detail, whereas the victims' names are frequently forgotten and rarely given much research or thought. This is true of the following famous case, a cause célèbre in 1856-7, but where the principal victim, John Parsons Cook, a Leicestershire man, is rarely reflected upon.

The Man from Catthorpe

Cook was born in 1827 at Catthorpe Lodge in the village of Catthorpe, the most southerly village in Leicestershire, close to the Northamptonshire border. His father is described as a wealthy local landowner (1), and John was reputedly educated at Rugby. (2) On leaving school he was articled to a solicitor. Aged 21years, he inherited a fortune of £15,000 (3) which provided him with an income to be 'a gentleman of private means'. By the late 1840s Cook had moved into The Springs in Lutterworth, the home of his friend and physician, a Dr Jones.

The Springs, Lutterworth, where John Parsons Cook lived.

With his new-found wealth, Cook abandoned the legal profession and took up the role of full time gentleman sportsman as a cricketer and racehorse owner with an enthusiasm for gambling. According to one source, he 'ran wild' and led a riotous and wayward life, none of which did much for his already less than robust state of health. (4) A contemporary description of Cook makes him sound a somewhat unprepossessing young man, 'a pale thin man with long hair and small moustache, good-natured but with an excess of jewellery, two or three rings always exhibited on his fingers'. Others described Cook as being 'a nice man – ah! very [nice] indeed'.

Cook became an enthusiastic attendee at various annual race meetings, and it was at one of these that he was to meet and befriend his eventual nemesis, a doctor from Rugeley, Staffordshire, with whom he socialised and found a common interest in gambling. In November 1855, they met at Worcester Races, and then again the following week at Shrewsbury, where Cook's racehorse *Polestar* won the Shrewsbury Handicap on 13th November, earning Cook the large sum of £2,200. To celebrate, Cook, in the company of Dr Jones and their fellow Staffordshire racing enthusiast, dined at The Raven Hotel, Castle Street, Shrewsbury. (5)

Dr William Palmer

Cook's friend from Rugeley was William Palmer, a doctor in general practice in the town. Born there in 1824 into a large family of seven children, he qualified as a doctor in 1846. However, he was already a man of questionable background and habits, and had been sacked at aged 17 for suspected theft after three months as a trainee apothecary with Evans and Evans Wholesale Apothecaries in Liverpool. His mother repaid the money. At 18 he was apprenticed for 5 years to a Dr Tylecote in Great Haywood, about 5 miles from Rugeley. Even during this apprenticeship, rumours circulated that he was stealing from his patients. Towards the end of 1846 he went to London and finished his training under a Dr Stegall. He set up in practice in Rugeley around 1847, and appears initially to have been successful with his business.

A Litany of Deaths

Within less than 10 years, much had changed - by 1855, Palmer, by now in his early thirties, had married, was a heavy gambler, a philanderer, and had at least two illegitimate children. His wife was Ann Brookes, the illegitimate child of an Indian Army Colonel, whom he had married on 7th October 1847, and their first child William was born on 11th October 1848. (6) They had four more children, all of whom died in infancy. Their deaths were all recorded by Palmer as due to 'convulsion'.

Whilst infant mortality was a Victorian scourge, Palmer appears to have been extraordinarily unfortunate with the number of child deaths in his family. An illegitimate child of Palmer by his servant also died immediately after a visit by him. Anne Bradshaw, the family nanny, went so far as to believe he had murdered them all by placing poison upon his fingertip and inserting this into the child's mouth.

Not content just to watch and bet on other people's horses, Palmer bought his own racehorses, although lacking the means for their maintenance, and he often ended up in debt to moneylenders. He spent increasingly less time practising as a doctor. He was also to become associated with a number of further 'suspicious' deaths over the period leading up to 1855.

Palmer's mother-in-law was to die during a reluctant visit to him in 1849, she having foretold that 'I shall not live a fortnight'. Palmer did not profit from her death although that may have been his expectation.

A Mr Bladon from Ashby de la Zouch in Leicestershire had visited Palmer in May 1850 to recover a debt owed to him. Bladon became very ill and Palmer referred him to another local but elderly doctor for a prescription. Palmer then intervened, trying to prevent the sick man's relatives from visiting him. Bladon died and was quickly buried. His widow complained that he had left home with a considerable sum of money, none of which was found after his death.

In seemingly similar circumstances, a Norfolk paper reported that a Mr Bly of Beccles, Suffolk died suddenly whilst being attended by Palmer at a local race meeting. Bly had been owed £800 by the doctor, and Palmer sought to fraudulently redress this by attempting to claim this sum from the deceased's estate.

In September 1854 Palmer's wife went to Liverpool to attend a concert and on her return the next day felt unwell and took to her bed. Treated by her husband she rapidly became worse and died within a few days. Her death was recorded as 'English Cholera' and Palmer collected £13,000 from an antagonistic and suspicious insurance company. Later when her body was exhumed in 1856, a different verdict was recorded.

Immediately after his wife's death Palmer found consolation in the arms of his housemaid Eliza Tharm who gave birth to Palmer's next illegitimate child nine months later. The child died aged 4 months in November 1855.

In December 1854, Palmer attempted to insure the life of his brother Walter. A heavy drinker, Walter was unlikely to have made 'old bones' and medical referees advised the several companies approached not to accept the risk, particularly as the original sum applied for was £82,000 - a vast sum in Victorian England. Palmer settled for a much lower sum, and Walter's subsequent death in 1855 was alleged to have been caused by the administration of prussic acid by Palmer. The insurance companies refused to pay out, and private detectives investigated the claim, but this was overtaken by later events when Walter's body was also exhumed in 1856.

Market Street, Rugeley - the former Talbot Arms, now called The Shrew is on the right, and Palmer's former house, now shops, is on the left. (Photographed in 2017.)

At the time of John Parsons Cook's substantial win on the Shrewsbury Handicap in 1855, Palmer's general practice was failing, whilst his gambling debts were mounting to an estimated £11,500. Palmer's chief money lender in London charged exorbitant rates of interest, and Palmer's finances needed a substantial boost of cash. Writs for debt had been issued against Palmer on 6th November.

During a further convivial evening in Shrewsbury on Wednesday 14th November, Palmer bought brandies and sodas for himself and Cook, and was seen by a witness pouring a fluid into a drink in the hotel and encouraging Cook to finish up his glass. Cook almost immediately began to feel unwell with a burning sensation in his throat and left the room. He continued to be afflicted with vomiting and went to bed. On the 15th Palmer lost heavily at the races, and on the 16th, Palmer persuaded Cook, by now a little better, to return to Rugeley with him, where the young man was found a room at the Talbot Arms, opposite Palmer's house. James Myatt, the postboy at the Talbot Arms later told the *Illustrated Times* that Cook 'was a very good friend' to him whenever he came to the hotel, and Cook used to give him a shilling every night that he stopped there. (7)

Palmer was readily on hand to 'look after' Cook at The Talbot. However, rather than getting better, Cook suffered for a number of days from the 16th onwards from violent vomiting, particularly after food or broth was fed to him by Palmer or an employed nurse. A waitress at the Talbot later gave evidence at Palmer's trial that she tried the broth which induced her to vomit and be unwell. Cook was given his medicine doses personally by Palmer, and witnesses later swore on oath that he had closely inspected the tumbler each time, holding it to the light and inspecting it, seemingly to ensure that all the contents had been consumed. Evidence was also given that on the 19th, the one day when Palmer did not visit Cook, his condition improved markedly.

But this improvement was short-lasting, and sometime between the night of the 19th and the following day, Palmer was later said to have purchased 6 grains of strychnine and liquor of opium from a Mr Hawkings, a local druggist. (8)

On the night of Tuesday 20th November, Cook received pills and medicine from Palmer before retiring to bed at about 12.30am on Wednesday 21st, but within 15-20 minutes Cook died an agonising death in the presence of Dr Jones of Lutterworth, who had been called for by Palmer. The woman who attended immediately to 'lay the body out' commented on the rigidity of the corpse so soon after death. This was stated during the subsequent trial to be a feature of strychnine poisoning. The *Illustrated Times* for February 1856 contains detailed accounts from staff at The Talbot who witnessed Cook's sickness, several of whom thought that Cook seemed to trust Palmer completely throughout his illness there.

Less than 48 hours after Cook's death, Palmer, desperate for money, moved quickly to resolve his debts, forging Cook's signature on letters of credit. However, cash which had belonged to Cook had gone missing, and Palmer's fraudulent transactions were not honoured.

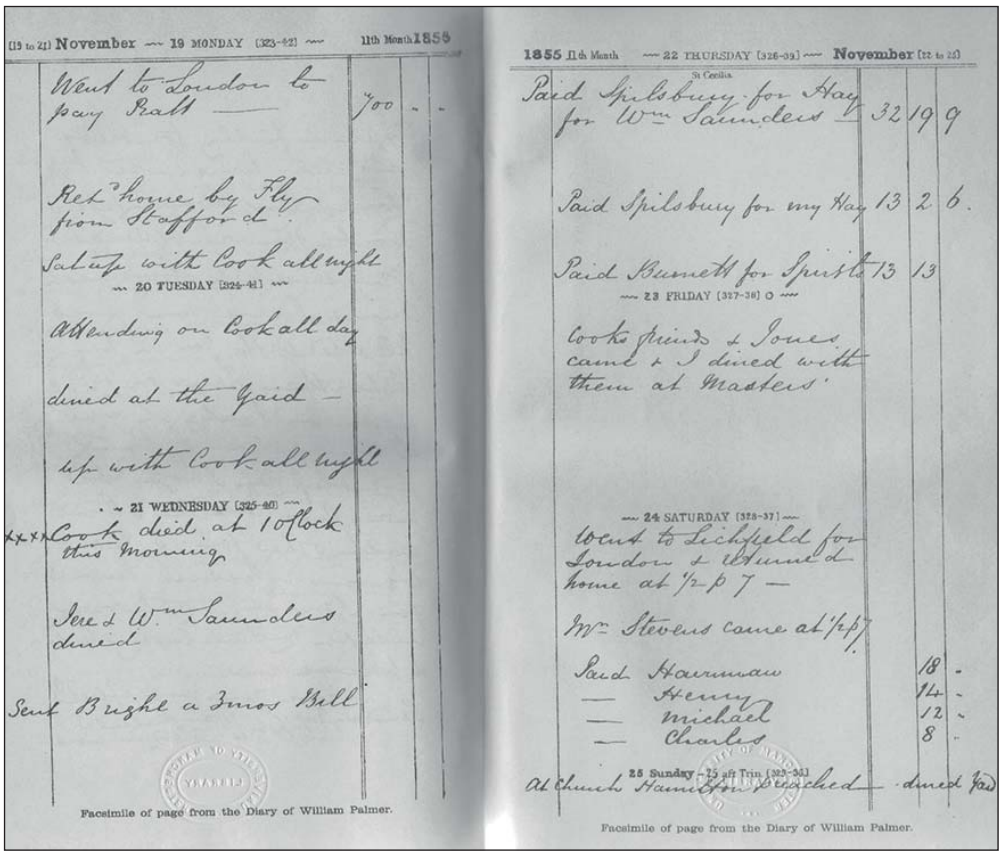
The first post-mortem on Cook held on 26th November was shambolic, and an outcry from Cook's relatives, in particular from his stepfather, as well as from the public, led to Cook's internal organs being despatched to London for 'forensic' examination by Dr Taylor.

Palmer's response was reckless in the extreme. Having ascertained which carrier was transporting the organs from Rugeley to Stafford railway station and checking that they were present and on board, he attempted to bribe the post boy carrying the organ jars to upturn the fly for a consideration of £10. He is said to have told the post boy: 'They have no business taking them: one does not know what they may put in them. Can't you manage to upset the fly and break them?' The post boy was made of sterner stuff and declined the bribe but remembered the conversation. However, Dr Taylor was unhappy with what he had been sent and a second post-mortem followed on 29th November. Palmer attempted to get Rugeley's postmaster to tamper with the mail, and to bribe the Coroner's Officials to destroy evidence.

Meanwhile Cook's funeral took place on 30th November at Rugeley. Why Cook was not buried in Leicestershire nor interred in his stepfather's vault in London, remains a matter for speculation.

The inquest into Cook's death took place in December, and returned a lawful verdict of 'Wilful Murder by Poisoning' against Palmer. Palmer had already been arrested on a civil warrant for debt two days before by the Sheriff's officers, and was under house arrest when he was then arrested by Chief Superintendent Daniel Scully Bergen of the Staffordshire Constabulary on the 15th December for Cook's murder. Palmer was taken to Stafford Gaol.

With growing suspicion of other deaths linked to Palmer, the Home Secretary ordered that the bodies of Palmer's late wife Anne, together with that of his brother Walter be exhumed. The inquest in January 1856 found that Ann had been poisoned by antimony, whilst the evidence for poison from Walter's corpse was inconclusive. (9) In the same month, Palmer's racing stud was sold by Tattersalls for nearly £4,000.



Pages from William Palmer's Diary at the time of Cook's death. (Reproduced by permission of the William Salt Library. Image attribution to: Public Domain, https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?curid=12421024, Manchester University Library copy.)

Palmer was only charged and tried for one murder, that of John Parsons Cook, his Leicestershire victim. He was not charged with his wife's murder as he had already been charged with Cook's. As the Authorities thought that Palmer was unlikely to receive a fair trial in Staffordshire, a special Act of Parliament was passed on 11th April 1856 to enable him to be tried in London at The Central Criminal Court, 'The Old Bailey', instead. (10) The trial commenced on the 14th May 1856. Palmer was aged thirty-one, but according to a number of sources, looked at least forty, acting calm and controlled during his trial. In reality, the move to London provoked widespread national and international interest in Palmer, in what came to be known as 'The Trial of the Century'. Well-known politicians and nobility joined the spectators who crowded into the court. Both the victim and accused were 'gentlemen', with interest laying both in Palmer's notoriety, and in the youth and wild lifestyle of Cook.

It was the first trial in Britain of murder by strychnine, and the complexity of the medical arguments undoubtedly made it difficult for the jury to fully understand. Cook's death appeared to be consistent with strychnine poisoning but the experts could not agree upon this as the cause. However, all the circumstantial evidence weighed heavily against Palmer; whilst a nascent sensationalist press which at that time could publish much more information sub judice than today, proclaimed his guilt even before the trial had started. Palmer had a motive, his name was already associated with a number of suspicious deaths, and he had access to poisons.

The outcome of the trial was very much a foregone conclusion, and despite the inadequacies of forensic medicine, particularly relating to poisoning by strychnine, and considerable bungling by the authorities relating to the preservation of evidence and due process, after twelve days of listening to the evidence, the verdict of the jury was Guilty.

The Lord Chief Justice Lord Campbell - who had been one of those keen to move the trial to London, but for reasons that had Palmer been tried in Staffordshire, his popularity there may have led to a not guilty verdict – appeared to have clearly made up his mind about Palmer's guilt, and gave an adverse summing up, subsequently sentencing him to death by hanging. The sentence was arranged by The High Sheriff of Staffordshire, Lt.-Col. Dyott, to be carried out at 8.00am on Saturday 14th June 1856 outside Stafford prison. (11)

In the meantime, there were many attempts to press Palmer to confess, with various clergymen and prison officials visiting him in the condemned cell. Palmer however remained obdurate: 'Cook did not die from strychnine poisoning' was his repeated mantra. On his last night he was visited by members of his family and took a brandy and water before retiring to bed. He was roused at 2.30am by the Prison Chaplain, again urging him to confess. At 7.40am, Palmer was attended by the High Sheriff and the Prison Governor Major W. Fulford and escorted to the gallows. The Prison Engineer between 1847 and 1872 was Hugh Shelley Bailey, and it would have been his responsibility to erect and dismantle the gallows and supervise the disposal of the corpse by quicklime within the prison walls. (12)

Public hangings drew large crowds. Special trains were run from Birmingham, London and Stoke, and 30,000 – 40,000 spectators were estimated to have gathered outside Stafford prison by the early hours of the morning. As the gaol bell tolled, the escort reached the scaffold, described as 'a huge affair draped in black crepe', where Palmer was met by the public hangman George Smith, wearing his traditional long white smock and black top hat. As Palmer emerged onto the scaffold, a voice from the crowd allegedly yelled 'Hats Off'. Palmer appeared very calm, almost nonchalant, although very pale, and legend has it that as he stood on the trapdoor drop he asked Smith a question: 'Is it safe?' Palmer's last words 'God Bless You' were to the Chaplain. The man described as "The Prince of Poisoners" was dead.

Was Palmer Guilty?

The circumstantial evidence against Palmer was strong, and there is not sufficient space in this article to provide more than a summary review of the whole case. The forensic science relating to the investigation of crime was in its infancy, but the prosecution case supported by the examining doctors and experts of the day convinced the court that Palmer had used both antimony and strychnine to murder Cook. The evidence on poisoning was not clear-cut, and considerable weight was placed on the circumstantial evidence.

Not everyone believed in Palmer's guilt, and between the verdict and Palmer's death, a pamphlet allegedly written by Thomas Wakley, a coroner, was published entitled: 'The cries of the condemned or proofs of the unfair trial and (if executed) the legal murder of William Palmer, lately sentenced to die on a charge of poisoning and reasons why he should not be hanged, from circumstances that have since transpired, unknown to the public, and which were not mentioned at his trial, with suggestions as to what should be his proper fate instead of suffering death, including a strong parallel case of the uncertainty of circumstantial evidence, the weakness of human judgment and the danger of sacrificing innocent life.'

More recently, the celebrated author, poet and critic Robert Graves wrote *They Hanged my Saintly Billy: the life and death of Dr William Palmer*, published by Doubleday in 1957, in which he attempted to show that Palmer was the victim of an injustice.

John Parsons Cook's gravestone can be found close to the main door of St Augustine's Church, Rugeley. Originally it was marked only by an earth mound as shown in the drawing from the Illustrated Times *2nd February 1856. (Reproduced with acknowledgement to Rugeley Library, Staffordshire County Council). It was the Rev Atkinson who in 1859/60 ensured that Cook had a permanent memorial in the churchyard. (Photographed in 2017.)*

At the time, there was clearly strong feeling that Palmer was responsible for Cook's death, even if not due to strychnine, and on the 'balance of probabilities', it seems likely that Palmer did murder his victim from Leicestershire and possibly eleven others for cash and to collect insurance money. (13) But that of course is not the legal test.

A further legend grew up in the wake of the Palmer case that the good burghers of Rugeley thought that the name of the town would be forever tarnished to the extent that trade, industry and investment capital would be affected, and petitioned Parliament for a change of the town's name to that of the Prime Minister of the day, Henry John Temple 3rd Viscount Palmerston. There is though no evidence of this, and the story of a name change to 'Palmer's Town' seems highly unlikely and apocryphal, and the name Rugeley endures to this day.

Palmer remains a notorious figure in crime annals, John Parsons Cook is remembered chiefly as Palmer's friend and victim, and by his gravestone in St Augustine's churchyard, Rugeley, its inscription telling us that Cook was 'AMIABLE AND AFFECTIONATE IN HIS DISPOSITION, KIND AND GENEROUS IN HIS CONDUCT'.

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2. A check of the Rugby School archive registers does not record a John Parsons Cook. His education may have been at a different school in Rugby.
3. Comparable investment value today of approximately £13million.
4. Online sources: http://staffscc.net/wppalmer/?page_id=138 site author Dave Lewis, and www.staffspasttrack.org.uk. Collections of key materials are held by Staffordshire County Museum Service, Staffordshire Record Office, Staffordshire Libraries, William Salt Library.
5. The Raven Hotel has since been demolished.
6. William, called "Little Willy" by his father, went to work as a solicitor in London. He died from coal gas poisoning in 1926.
7. *Illustrated Times* 2nd February 1856. The Talbot Arms, formerly The Crown, was built in 1810 on the site of an older coaching establishment of 1732. The innkeeper Thomas Masters gave evidence at Palmer's trial. The hotel's name was later changed to The Shrewsbury Arms Hotel.
8. Strychnine is a crystalline alkaloid. Within ten to twenty minutes after administration of the poison, convulsions, spasms and stiffness follow, resulting in death from asphyxia.
9. Antimony is a metalloid which causes vomiting when ingested orally, and is fatal in certain circumstances.
10. Act of Parliament. Originally The Trial of Offences Act 1856 but revised to The Central Criminal Court Act 1856.
11. Built in 1794 the prison has been in virtually continuous use since. There were 10 public executions between 1853-66.
12. Anne Bayliss, 'Hugh Shelley Bailey', *Staffordshire History Journal*, 2005. The Author's wife, Catharine Howell, is his great great grandaughter.
13. Historian and broadcaster, Lucy Worsley said Palmer's sensational crime 'made the middle classes shudder'. ... 'The Victorians believed that this new sophistication in the 'art' of murder was caused by the growing industry of life insurance. If you took out a policy on your life, you were also unwittingly giving your family a financial motive to bump you off. And poison was particularly scary because it could come by the hand of someone you trusted, like a doctor, housemaid, even a relative.' http://www.lucyworsley.com/its-publication-day-for-a-very-british-murder/

See also:

Illustrated and unabridged edition of 'The Times' Report on the Trial of William Palmer for Poisoning John Parsons Cook at Rugeley, (Ward & Lock, 1865).

John Godwin, *The Pocket Palmer*, (Benhill Press, 1992).

Stephen Bates, *The Poisoner: The Life and Crimes of Victorian England's Most Notorious Doctor*, (Duckworth, 2014).

Recent Publications
Edited by Cynthia Brown

LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND

OAKHAM LORDSHOLD IN 1787: A MAP AND SURVEY OF LORD WINCHILSEA'S OAKHAM ESTATE

T. H. McK Clough ed.

Rutland Local History and Record Society, Occasional Pub. No. 12, 2016, 104pp, illus., ISBN 9780907464556, £10

This study draws together a range of information on the manor of Oakham Lordshold from a map drawn by William Cullingworth in 1787, and a series of four related field survey books in the Finch family archive. Their format and contents are described and illustrated in the Introduction, which also notes that the map – found as a 'crumpled document' in a cupboard at Burley-on-the-Hill – predates the Oakham enclosure map by some 50 years. As such, it is of 'considerable importance in any study of the history and development of the town'. Successive chapters analyse in detail what the map and field surveys tell us about Oakham in 1787, beginning with its topography and development. People and their occupations are discussed here, as well as fields, enclosure and values, roads, street names, water features, transport and communication. The field books are transcribed in full, with an index. Book A identifies tenants and their holdings, purchases of land and enclosures, and tithe valuations. There are a number of Appendices, one identifying tenants, tradesmen and others mentioned in both the field books and the *Universal British Directory* of 1791. They include Miss Exton's 'French and English Boarding School for Young Ladies', saddlers, staymakers, hairdressers and peruke-makers. Other Appendices consist of transcripts or extracts of documents relating to property transactions and the Egleton Enclosure Award of 1757, which enabled a tributary of the River Gwash to the south of Oakham to be straightened. An extensive bibliography and detailed index complete this fascinating account of the Oakham Lordshold in the late eighteenth century.

Cynthia Brown

ABUSE OF TRUST: FRANK BECK AND THE LEICESTERSHIRE CHILDREN'S HOME SCANDAL

Mark D'Arcy and Paul Gosling

Canbury Press, rev. ed. 2016, 238pp, ISBN 9780993040780, Kindle £4.99 (Hbk. £19.99)

The Frank Beck affair culminated in 1991 with five life sentences for Beck, one of the heaviest penalties ever handed out in a British court since the abolition of the death penalty. *Abuse of Trust* was first published in 1998 (Bowerdean Publishing, ISBN 0906097304). It chronicled how Beck and other men practised abuse in children's homes in Leicestershire for more than a decade, despite complaints. By 2016 surviving copies of the book were very difficult to find. Canbury Press has now reprinted it with additional material in both Kindle and printed versions. Although the book is most useful for social workers and related professionals needing to inform themselves, law and order has always been an important part of social history and has always fascinated people. To my own knowledge the gibbet displayed in the Guildhall in Leicester always attracted children on 'dares' on Sunday afternoons. But this is different. It features children already vulnerable and in the care of Leicestershire County Council, subjected to abuse by an employee of that council. The Beck story is an odd and somehow compelling story of how someone apparently without any kind of conscience took advantage of loose supervision, and played a confidence trick which enabled him to claim he was a leader in terms of ability to manage children's homes and help children. He practised a therapy that had no standing and used it as cover to abuse children and other staff within a framework of weak management. The updated text uses previously unreported material to add a chapter about the allegations against former Labour MP Greville Janner. This is currently a very topical aspect of law and order, and it is essential that lessons of the Leicestershire case should be widely and fully appreciated. It is recommended reading for anyone with an interest in social work and the modern history of law and order, and those who would like to have a very well-rounded knowledge of the history of Leicestershire.

Yolanda Courtney

FARMERS, CONSUMERS, INNOVATORS: THE WORLD OF JOAN THIRSK (EXPLORATIONS IN LOCAL AND REGIONAL HISTORY, VOL. 8)

Richard Jones and Christopher Dyer ed.

Centre for Regional and Local History, University of Hertfordshire, and Centre for English Local History, University of Leicester, 2016, 256pp, illus., ISBN 9781909291560, £16.99

By any account, Joan Thirsk's life was remarkable. She returned from Germany in 1939 and worked at Bletchley Park where her languages made her invaluable to the interception and decoding of enemy messages during the war. A distinguished academic career followed, and this is

the subject of this volume. Whilst little in this fine book is directly concerned with Leicestershire, there are however two attractions for readers of this journal. Firstly, it will be of interest to those concerned with the intellectual history of Leicester and the contribution of the Centre for English Local History. Secondly, the careful consideration of Thirsk's concepts and methods, such as her idea of *pays*, use of maps, and utilisation of agricultural space, make this a handy point of entry as well as providing re-evaluation of these topics. Indeed, whilst it is an entirely scholarly volume, it will have wider appeal by its lively tone. The inclusion of short editorials for each section helps recreate a sense of the event in 2014 from which these papers have been developed. The editors carefully knit all this together to give it much better cohesion than many edited collections generated by symposia. Additionally, readers may be interested to see a diverse range of papers on agency, individuals and consumption, resolutely ensuring that people are not excluded from landscapes considered in terms of *pays* or agricultural productivity. This book is designed to 'honour a great historian by examining her legacy'. Jones and Dyer are entirely successful in this aim, not least in the broad scope of essays in the final sections of the book, which demonstrate the breadth of Thirsk's contributions to scholarship.

Malcolm Noble

THE GREEN BICYCLE MYSTERY: THE STORY OF BELLA WRIGHT AND RONALD LIGHT

A. W. P. Mackintosh

Reprint, 2016 (first published 1982), 12pp, illus., £3.50

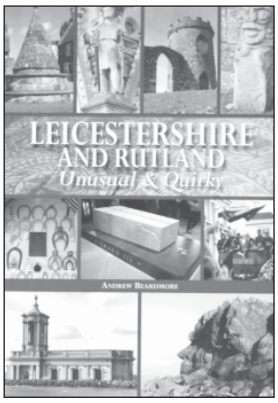
On 5th July 1919 Bella Wright cycled to Evington Post Office, and then to visit her uncle in Gaulby. On the way she had trouble with a wheel and met another cyclist - Ronald Light - who helped fix it. Bella visited her uncle and met up with Light again as she left. They parted at the Kings Norton crossroads. Several hours later her body was found lying on the road. PC Alfred Hall inspected the scene and returned the next day, when he found a bullet. Everyone assumed the man with the green bicycle must have been responsible. Ronald Light realised this, and disposed of the bike in the canal in October. In January 1920 he started a new job in Cheltenham. In February the bicycle was snagged by a barge and the owner traced. The trial took place at Leicester Castle in June 1920. Light (who died in 1975) was represented by Sir Edward Marshall Hall, and a 'Not Guilty' verdict was passed. Mackintosh suggested that as a shot crow was also found nearby, someone was out shooting and Bella's death was accidental: there would have been many service guns around following World War I. Mackintosh tracked down Bella's relatives in 1982 to find the gravestone and made use of contemporary and local information then available. He also notes that the original Green Bicycle was still hanging on the wall in a shop in Evington in that year. This is a brief account, with four line drawings and simple maps, and there are newer books and information on the internet about the mystery - but it is enough to whet the appetite.

Karenna Fry

LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND: UNUSUAL AND QUIRKY

Andrew Beardmore

Halsgrove, 2016, 160pp, illus., ISBN 9780857042743, £19.99



This book consists of two sections, the first of which, 'Conventional Leicestershire and Rutland' provides an overview of both counties from prehistory through to the present, well illustrated with modern colour images. Scattered throughout it are 'Quirk Alerts' consisting of historical 'asides' relating to local places or people with local connections – among them Daniel Lambert; John Bunyan (reputedly converted after handing over sentinel duty at the Siege of Leicester in 1645 to a friend, who was shot dead a few minutes later); and Colonel Cheney, 'immortalised in marble' in Gaddesby church with one of the five horses shot from under him at the Battle of Waterloo. The 'Quirky' section, the larger part of the book, takes the form of an alphabetical 'Shire-Ode' of more 'Quirk Alerts' and 'trivia' (the author's description), ranging from Ashby Magna through 54 other places to Worthington. One of the entries for Moira fits the latter description well enough, noting that the former Rawdon colliery site, now home to the Conkers discovery centre, hosts children's parties attended by Ernest the Badger, Gabriel the Fox, Ashby the Rabbit, and Moira the Squirrel, 'the latter around 5ft 5in tall and with fur that looks suspiciously synthetic'. To some extent at least, Frisby on the Wreake deserved its reputation as 'Leicestershire's Gretna Green', but readers may feel that many of the entries are not as trivial as they may appear at first sight. A short item of 'etymological trivia' on the pronunciation of Belvoir, for instance, is followed by detailed entries on the Vale of Belvoir and the Castle itself that would not be out of place in a standard guide to the county. Similarly, an account of the course of the River Welland from Sibbertoft to the Wash seems far from the 'geographical trivia' it is said to be. There are other examples; but overall the book itself is as unusual and quirky as its title claims, and there is much of interest and real historical value to be found in it.

Cynthia Brown

THE PLACE-NAMES OF LEICESTERSHIRE: PART SEVEN – WEST GOSCOTE HUNDRED AND THE LEICESTERSHIRE PARISHES OF REPTON AND GRESLEY HUNDRED

Barrie Cox

English Place-Name Society, 2016, xxviii + 387pp, 1 map, ISBN 9780904889925, £40

This English Place-Name Society (EPNS) volume completes the *Place-Names of Leicestershire* for the county. In many ways, there is little new to say. It is the product of an enormous amount of scholarship, the kind of hard work which moves forward knowledge. Place-names are vital to historians, and in this journal I have previously noted the complexity of the task, and the quality of its execution in these volumes. These remarks hold for the present volume. In his introduction, Cox literally grounds his discussion in terms of soils, almost evoking what the French call *terroir* or even *pays*. This gives an indication of the approach taken: it is a scholarly exercise that is not based solely in a comfortable study. Local historians now have a superb reference work; and if the cost for all seven volumes is not inconsiderable, it is hardly extortionate. Entries are also online, and members of the LAHS can access the volumes in the Society Library.

Malcolm Noble

RUTLAND RECORD: JOURNAL OF THE RUTLAND LOCAL HISTORY AND RECORD SOCIETY NO. 36

Various Authors

Rutland Local History and Record Society, 2016, 52pp, illus., ISBN 9780907464563, £5.75

The main article in this edition of the *Rutland Record*, 'Isaack Symmes and the Ridlington sundial' by Robert Ovens, builds on an article by Tim Clough that was published in the 1970s following an enquiry to the Rutland County Museum where he was then Curator. The date of 1614 is inscribed on the underside of the sundial, a horizontal one 'almost certainly' made for use in Ridlington churchyard, perhaps to regulate the church clock. Robert Ovens has a particular interest in clocks and timepieces, and provides a detailed description of the design of the sundial and its measurement of time. Its underside is also of great interest, having been used for practice engraving in lettering, scrolls and cartouches. There is a comprehensive account of the life of Isaack Symmes, maker of the dial and an eminent London clock and watchmaker and goldsmith, and of other pieces of his work; and of Sir William Bulstrode who presented the sundial to Ridlington church.

Bridget Wells-Furby's article 'Belton (Rutland) and the Blount family', explores the history of the family that held the Rutland manor of Belton and its associated holdings at Cottesmore and Greetham from the late thirteenth century to 1557. Originally from Buckinghamshire, William Blount acquired the Rutland properties through his marriage to Isabel Beauchamp, lifting the Blounts 'out of the ranks of the undistinguished into the ranks of manorial lords'. Based on an analysis of surviving documents, she is able to trace the probable descent of the manor through later generations, in the context of their wider landholdings. In 'A social study of Vale of Catmose villages in the eighteenth century', Michael Hinman compares and contrasts the villages of Ashwell, Burley, Cottesmore (including the hamlet of Barrow that was administered with it), Market Overton and Teigh. Population is analysed through Hearth Tax returns and parish records, and landholdings from such sources as leases, deeds and estate valuations. Poll books are also used to assess the extent of 'magnate influence' on local votes, and other aspects of social life are explored through wills, and holders of such offices as constable, churchwarden, overseer of the poor, and ale-taster.

A shorter but very illuminating article by Alison Sheridan, Pierre Petrequin and Michel Errera focuses on a stone axe head found at Martinsthorpe in 2015. Non-destructive analysis at a specialist laboratory in France confirmed it to be made of jadeitite, a rock obtained by Neolothic craftsman in the Alpine region of north-west Italy. It is one of only 120 Alpine axes known in Britain, and of a type that has only one other parallel in Britain. This very informative and well-produced edition of the journal concludes with Wendy Scott's coverage of artefacts recorded with the Portable Antiquities Scheme in Rutland, and the customary overview of Rutland history and archaeology in 2015, including fieldwork, historic building recording and the activities of local history societies in the county.

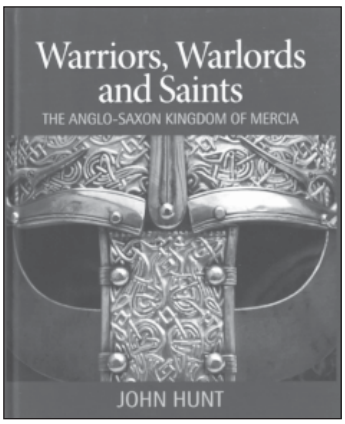
Cynthia Brown

WARRIORS, WARLORDS AND SAINTS: THE ANGLO-SAXON KINGDOM OF MERCIA

John Hunt

West Midlands History, 2016, 166pp, illus., ISBN 9781905036301, £24.99

There are few explicit references to Leicestershire in this history of Mercia, and none to Rutland, but it provides valuable context for their history during the Anglo-Saxon period in a well-illustrated and very readable form. Place names and their origins are discussed as an introduction to an analysis of the origins of Mercia and the warriors and warlords who built the kingdom. Subsequent chapters consider the emergence of a Christian kingdom, including the saints and the presentation of relics, and there is an extensive discussion of art and society in Mercia.



The nature and exercise of kingship, coins, trade, merchants and markets are among the other topics to be covered, along with the arrival of the Vikings in the ninth century and the partition of Mercia. The final chapter examines the fortunes of two families in the tenth and eleventh centuries - those of Wulfric Spott in Staffordshire and Leofwine, earl of Mercia – before considering the impact of Norman 'land-taking' in Mercia. There is also a detailed glossary, and suggestions for further reading relating to each individual chapter.

Cynthia Brown

Other recent publications

THE BIG BANG AND OTHER POEMS
Ray Smart
A. H. Stockwell, 2016

CEMETERY SECRETS
Roy Townsend and Brian Papworth
The Authors, 2016

DARE TO DO: TAKING ON THE PLANET BY BIKE AND BOAT
Sarah Outen
Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2016

JOSEPH: THE LIFE, TIMES AND PLACES OF THE ELEPHANT MAN
Joanne Vigor-Mungovin
Mango Books, 2016

LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND COOK BOOK: A CELEBRATION OF THE AMAZING FOOD AND DRINK ON OUR DOORSTEP
Tim Burke
Meze Publishing, 2016

LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND LODGE OF RESEARCH NO. 2429: TRANSACTIONS 2015 – 16
Various Authors
Leicestershire and Rutland Freemasons, 2016

THE LITTLE BOOK OF LEICESTERSHIRE
Natasha Sheldon
The History Press, 2017

REAL HERITAGE PUBS OF THE MIDLANDS
Paul Ainsworth
Campaign for Real Ale, 2015

LEICESTER

I HAD IT IN ME: A MEMOIR
Leonie Orton
Quirky Press, 2016, 213pp, illus., ISBN 9780992883423, £12.99

Leonie Orton grew up on the Saffron Lane Estate in the 1950s and is the sister of the acclaimed playwright Joe Orton, who died in London in 1967. This autobiography covers the period up to her brother's death and continues with Leonie's own personal story and the legacy of Joe Orton's career and work. For those interested in Joe Orton's life this is a fascinating look at the family environment he left behind when he moved to London. A domineering mother and ineffectual father provided a lot of material for his writing, and specific moments in the family's history make their way into scenes in his plays. The 'casual cruelty' of their mother clearly wasn't typical of families living on the Saffron Lane Estate at the time, but this is a vivid account of a poor upbringing – financially and emotionally - that is an important addition to the published memoirs and autobiographies of Leicestershire people. This is also the story of one woman's journey through life. The book is particularly strong on Leonie's childhood and adolescence in the 1950s and 1960s, but the chapters on gaining an education later in life, surviving an unhappy marriage, and successfully finding a new partner are all told well. The book finishes with reflections on productions of Joe Orton's plays and thoughts on what might have become of certain pages that are missing from his diary. While these are of interest, it is a tribute to the author that by the end of the book the reader is just as interested in her life story as they are in that of her more famous brother.

Colin Hyde

LEICESTER HISTORY TOUR
Stephen Butt
Amberley, 2017, 96pp, illus., ISBN 9781445666648, £6.99

This pocket-sized guide to Leicester is part of a new series from the local history publishers Amberley. Each of its 56 landmarks has a one or two page entry consisting mainly of an image with a few lines of descriptive text. Starting with the Clock Tower, it is arranged in the order of a route around

the city centre, with an accompanying map, also taking in parts of The Newarke and London Road. Many of the images are from old photographs or postcards, and are very nicely reproduced with a blue/grey tint, alongside modern colour images. The publishers invite readers to 'follow a timeline of events and discover for themselves the changing face of Leicester', but the book perhaps works best as an 'armchair tour' rather than an actual walk around the route. Several of the buildings or streets it describes have been demolished, among them the Theatre Royal, The Wyvern Hotel and Applegate Street; and even with the help of the map it would not be easy for visitors or others without local knowledge to identify their former locations on the ground. Nevertheless, it is an attractive and concise introduction to the city's history.

Cynthia Brown

LEICESTER IN 50 BUILDINGS
Stephen Butt
Amberley, 2016, 96pp illus., ISBN 9781445659206, £14.99

This latest work by a well-known local historian looks at Leicester through a variety of its buildings, rather than focusing on a particular period. The selection has been arranged in chronological order, beginning with the Roman remains of Jewry Wall, its oldest standing structure, and concluding with the Fletcher Building refurbishment on the De Montfort University campus. There are examples from most eras, perhaps the largest representation being from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a time of great expansion and change in the city. The author argues that many of Leicester's 'finest' buildings get overlooked because they are not on main streets, and not on a monumental scale. He sets out to rectify this by highlighting buildings that are not so well known alongside some on the tourist trail. The featured buildings cover a wide range of types including municipal, industrial, religious, commercial, leisure and domestic. Alongside those that will be familiar to many readers there are some more unusual choices, such as the remnants of West Bridge railway station of 1832, and St Aidan's Church at New Parks from 1959. Each entry gives the name and date of the building, and continues with a good description of its construction and development, including details of architects and designers. A brief history of the building is included, with information on famous personalities or significant events associated with it. Good quality colour photographs are used for each choice, and make for a visually attractive and easy to use book. Overall it offers an attractive and handy reference volume to a good selection of Leicester's buildings.

Philip R. French

LEICESTER: A MODERN HISTORY
Richard Rodger and Rebecca Madgin ed.
Carnegie Publishing, 2016, 416pp, illus., ISBN 9781859362242, £20

This collection of essays on Leicester's recent history mainly considers the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, although its scope covers Leicester's radical tradition stretching back to the seventeenth century through to a consideration of recent twenty-first century developments in the city. The book is organised in two halves. The first half, 'Understanding Leicester', covers pre-World War II topics and the second half, 'Reinventing Leicester', looks at the post-war period. Richard Rodger provides two informative 'survey essays' to introduce both halves, and the chapters cover radicalism, politics, the Watch Committee, the River Soar, cemeteries and crematoria, pageants, domestic interiors, health provision, town planning, popular culture, suburban expansion, immigration, and the story of the Liberty building.

The editors ask, 'What is the spirit or character of Leicester?', and the writers make a good attempt at shedding light on this elusive question. While some of the chapters enlarge on topics that have been covered in the past, many of the subjects are covered in detail for the first time. To pick just a few examples, both Simon Gunn's chapter on the planning regime of Konrad Smigielski and Rebecca Madgin's on the fate of the Liberty Building speak directly to current events in Leicester, while Stephen Wagg's look at the emergence of the local pop music culture of the 1960s is one of the first times this subject has been considered in any depth. I particularly enjoyed Lucy Faire's writing on the transformation of home, which uses oral history sources to good effect and is a subject to which many people can relate. This book should appeal to anyone with an interest in Leicester's history, whether student or general reader. The writing is of a high standard throughout, it covers a wide variety of subjects, and there are a lot of colour photos, maps and diagrams, many of which have not been published before.

Colin Hyde

LEICESTER PUBS
Stephen Butt
Amberley, 2016, 96pp, illus., ISBN 9781445652610, £14.99

As the name suggests, the main focus of this book is some of the public houses in the city of Leicester, but it also ventures out into the some of the villages and towns directly around Leicester, and further out into the county. In his introduction the author does not claim it as a gazetteer of the pubs but a 'snapshot in time', an aim that he certainly achieves. Each of the chosen pubs has a 'potted' history, and some of the

stories associated with the establishments are told. Each pub is beautifully illustrated with contemporary colour photographs which all add to its charm. The book is separated into chapters that place each pub into a geographical area, and there is an index of them at the end of the book. All the pubs have an address and post code, and would be easy to locate for a visit. The narrative brings the history of the buildings to life, along with some of the characters who frequented them. Overall this is an easy and entertaining read for anyone with an interest in local pubs.

Lois Edwards

THE LIFE OF JOHN FLOWER: 'THE LEICESTER ARTIST' 1793 – 1861 Steve Harris
The Author, 2015, 39pp, (Manuscript)

This manuscript was published in 2015 but only came to the attention of LAHS late last year. It is based on 'all known works' relating to the Leicester artist John Flower (these are listed in a bibliography), with the addition of records held by the Leicestershire and Rutland Family History Society and extracts from local newspaper reports. It begins with a survey of John Flower's life from his birth in 1793 to 1826, when his book of lithographs, *Views of Ancient Buildings in Leicestershire*, was published. This period includes his apprenticeship as a framework knitter, and the patronage of the embroidery artist Mary Linwood, who arranged for him to have lessons from the artist Peter de Wint. His role as one of the honorary secretaries of the Leicestershire Fine Arts Society and Art Union is extensively covered, along with his own work as a teacher of drawing and painting: in an Appendix of extracts from a speech to the Society in 1850 he is quoted as saying 'I never had a pupil who could not learn drawing'. His wider contribution to the town is also noted, including his role as an Honorary Curator for the Town Museum, and his involvement in the Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society as a lecturer and member of its Archaeology and Arts Committees. Other Appendices cover extracts from a speech to the Great Meeting Unitarian day schools in 1855, a list of drawings exhibited at the AGM of the Leicestershire Architectural and Archaeological Society (later LAHS itself), and works exhibited in the Town Museum's Art Gallery in 1894.

Cynthia Brown

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF CHARLES ROZZELL 1754 – 1792: IMPROVEMENTS OF LEICESTER
Duncan Patrick ed.
The Author, 2013, 72pp, illus., ISBN 9780992798802, £5.95

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF CHARLES ROZZELL 1754 – 1792: EPITAPHS AND ELEGIES
Duncan Patrick ed.
The Author, 2014, 64pp, illus, ISBN 9780992798819, £5.95

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF CHARLES ROZZELL 1754 – 1792 POLITICAL SONGS AND SATIRES
Duncan Patrick ed.
The Author, 2014, 96pp, illus, ISBN 9780992798826

These three volumes, as their titles suggest, shed much light on Leicester in the later eighteenth century as well as the life and work of Charles Rozzell himself. The son of Irish migrants to Leicester, and a Roman Catholic in a strongly Protestant Nonconformist town, Rozzell was a framework knitter, teacher, political activist and poet. His poems are rich in comment on events and personalities of the day, and are combined here with extracts from Leicester's oldest newspaper, the *Leicester Journal* (first published in 1753) and other contemporary writings. For instance, the early history of the County Infirmary, established in Leicester in 1771, is traced from the raising of subscriptions through to the opening ceremonies and the dinner and Grand Concert with which they concluded. 'When pain and sickness with their dreary train', Rozzell wrote of the occasion: 'Derange the pow'rs of body and of mind: When morbid humours through the habit reign, Say, where shall man a safe Asylum find? ...'. Many less well-known events are also recorded alongside the taking down of the Town Gates – 'monuments to Gothic barbarism' - in 1774. Among them are an Astronomical Lecture in 1785, a Caesarean operation at the Infirmary in 1777 (the mother died but the child survived), and several cricket matches. Having been beaten by a team of 'junior players' from Leicester, Rozzell advised a team of older players from Mountsorrel to: 'Take Nature's index for your guide, Quit Cricket, and such empty toys; No longer mortify your pride, By being overcome by Boys!'.

Epitaphs and Elegies focuses mainly on the people of late eighteenth century Leicester, both individuals and the 'less fortunate members of the community' who received its charity. It features a number of murders and executions, highway robberies, accidental deaths and accounts of others being 'starved to death' – meaning death by exposure in this context, rather than lack of food. One very interesting item from 1786 concerns an Irish widow, Margaret Perry, whose 'dying request that she be *waked* after the manner of Ireland' was observed by her countrymen and neighbours, who 'lighted candles round her bed and beguiled the time with mirth and festivity'. This particular volume also carries several obituaries of Charles Rozzell himself, who died in July 1792 at the age of 38. Rozzell was a Whig in politics, and often expressed his views in poetry. Some of this is included in *Political Songs and Satires*, alongside colourful reports of elections. In June 1790 - a time of 'RIOTS and DISTURBANCES' against the background of the French Revolution - all four candidates issued a plea that 'that Peace

and good Order should prevail'. This ended 'N.B. It is required that no Sticks may be carried'. Also featured are meetings of the Leicester Revolution Club, a loyalist organisation inspired by the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688 rather than a desire to overturn the existing order. Detailed notes complete each of the three volumes, which have clearly involved a massive amount of research. Each of them offer easy access to a wealth of information about Leicester in the later eighteenth century, and some fascinating insights into the life and times of a man who fully deserves to take a more prominent place in the historical record.

Cynthia Brown

LIFE STORY OF MRS NILIMA DEVI, MBE: AN INDIAN CLASSICAL DANCER IN LEICESTER

Kiyotaka Sato

Memory and Narrative Series 9, Research Centre for the History of Religious and Cultural Diversity, Meiji University, Tokyo, 2016, 202pp, illus.

DISCUSSION PAPER NO. 7: LIFE STORY OF MOHINDER SINGH AND REVIEWS OF MEMORY AND NARRATIVE SERIES 1 - 8

Kiyotaka Sato ed.

Research centre for the History of Religious and Cultural Diversity, Meiji University, Tokyo, 2016, 57pp, illus.

Professor Sato is a scholar of British History in the Faculty of Arts and Letters at Meiji University in Tokyo, and has already published several life stories based on oral history interviews with people from different communities in Leicester. The life story of Mrs Nilima Devi is relatively short by comparison with some preceding volumes, but no less interesting. Mrs Devi was born in Baroda (now Vadodara) in Gujarat in 1953. She recalls having an interest in music and dance from the age of eleven or twelve, one that was encouraged by her father, and going on to combine formal study of dance with a college course in commerce. In 1979 she married Werner Menski, a German academic who 'loved Indian culture and spoke beautiful Hindi', and 'wanted to marry an Indian bride'. In 1980, after a short stay in Germany, she and Werner and their first child moved to Leicester. In the following year she established the Centre for Indian Classical Dance (CICD), beginning with three students; and also became a classical dance *animateur*, demonstrating and teaching dance in schools and colleges across Leicester and Leicestershire. Her important contribution to this aspect of the city and county's cultural development was recognised in 2013 with the award of the MBE. The book is very informative about different styles of Indian dance, with a particular emphasis on Kathak. It also explains the education that it involves, the importance of musical instruments in providing rhythm and 'melodious sound', and the relationship of dance to Hindu festivals. In a very interesting 'Addendum' to Nilima's life story, her husband reflects on his own early life and education in Germany, his academic career in Britain, and the family's life in Leicester. The greater part of the book is devoted to photographs, programmes, posters and other images. Combined with reflections from some of Mrs Devi's students and a series of articles reproduced from the *Leicester Mercury*, it gives a vivid sense of the development of classical Asian dance in the city and county, as well as the life stories of Mrs Devi and her family. Professor Sato's Discussion Paper 7 takes a different approach to a life story from his Memory and Narrative Series. Its subject is Mohinder Singh, who came to Britain as a child in 1964 with his mother and sister to join his father, who migrated to England some years earlier. He gives his own account of his life as a child, his schooldays, his working life and his marriage and family, along with reflections on his identity and his feelings on visiting India in 2009. These are illustrated with family photographs. Some of the most interesting sections, however, are his reflections on the first eight volumes of Memory and Narratives, particularly in the way he compares or contrasts his own experiences to those of other migrants: from 'being both "English" and "Indian" at the same time… the balancing act that most migrants have to contend with', to the importance of television and children's comics in the early stages of learning a new language. Some of his most poignant reflections relate to the effects of migration on families, in particular the 'disintegration' that can occur during the period of separation before they can be reunited with a parent who has gone ahead of them. Professor Sato's Discussion Papers are intended primarily to prompt debate among academic colleagues in Japan, but this unusual approach to a life story also offers many insights into migrant communities in Leicester itself.

Cynthia Brown

THE QUALITY OF LEICESTER: A JOURNEY THROUGH 2000 YEARS OF HISTORY AND ARCHITECTURE

Michael Taylor

Leicester City Council, 2016, 350pp, illus., ISBN 9780956922120, £15

This revised version of *The Quality of Leicester*, first published in 1993, is divided into five sections: 'Origins, Medieval Leicester', 'Tudor to Georgian Leicester', 'Victorian and Edwardian Borough', '20th Century City', and 'Modern City'. This periodisation, dealt with in part thematically and in part historically in the chapters within each section, covers both the broad development of the city and the fuller historical scope of each area. For example, the discussion of Georgian Leicester is considered in the light of its subsequent redevelopment, demonstrating here and in the

changing fortunes of other areas and individual buildings the extent to which visible traces of earlier uses or forms have survived. Leading the reader away from Leicester's Roman and medieval core, by the time the author discusses Modernist architecture he is as far out as the wonderful 1960s Red Hill Service Station. The final discussion returns to where it started, in the heart of the city, where continuities and change can be observed, not least as it has – rather unpredictably – hosted a royal Tudor funeral in 2015. The book includes over 500 photographs, many of them very striking, and they will be a valuable document of the city for the future. An ideal development would be a smartphone app, bringing the people of Leicester, and visitors, into direct connection with their historic built environment. Endnotes provide additional information or explanation. A glossary explaining some of the more technical terms might also be useful, along with a bibliography for those who wish to follow up with additional reading. In conclusion, what is Leicester's quality? There is no single short answer to this question. As this affectionate portrait of the city suggests, it is expressed *en bloc* by many buildings with good features and details, rather than individually by the relatively few outstanding ones.

Malcolm Noble

RADICAL LEICESTER IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR: RESISTANCE, OPPOSITION AND NON CO-OPERATION
Sue Mackrell
Crystal Clear Creators 2016, 61pp, £3.50

The idea that historians should see Leicester as a hotbed of radicalism, from the later eighteenth century onwards, is not new. This tradition continued during the First World War. Citizens were slow to enlist, and numbers remained lower than those for other towns throughout the war. On reflection, this reluctance might prove a source of pride. The underpinning dynamic of resistance is the author's main theme, and this pamphlet does much to bring together diverse material on the ways in which Leicester citizens objected to and refused to participate in the war after 1914. With extensive quotations and excerpts from speeches, this is bound to be of interest to a general readership as well as local historians. There are some ambitious attempts to make many connections through to the present day. In all this, there is much to commend, but the richness of the material does pose a certain problem as most of the text is presented without chapters or subheadings. Breaking up the text, and some illustrations would also be helpful, as the two pictures are on the covers only. Fortunately, these points are addressed in a revised version at www.storyofleicester.info/media/1678/radical-leicester-24-feb-2017.pdf.

Malcolm Noble

Other recent publications

AMONG THE BROAD ARROW MEN OF LEICESTER GAOL: A PLAIN ACCOUNT OF ENGLISH PRISON LIFE
Prisoner B-2-15 (R.A. Castle)
Reprint, 2016 (first published 1924)

IN SUBSEQUENT HANDS (REDUNDANT LEICESTER CHURCHES AND CHAPELS)
D. Gillman
The Author, 2016

AN HISTORIC ENGLAND LEVEL 2 HISTORIC BUILDING RECORDING AT 54-58 LONDON ROAD, LEICESTER
Andrew Hyam
University of Leicester Archaeological Services, Report 083, 2016

OTHER BRITISH VOICES: WOMEN POETRY AND RELIGION, 1766 – 1840 (INCLUDES CHAPTER ON ELIZABETH COLTMAN OF LEICESTER)
Timothy Whelan
Palgrave Macmillan US, 2015

THOMAS COOK 175TH ANNIVERSARY: LEICESTER WALKING TRAIL
Leicester City Council
The Author, 2016

WOMEN'S WRITING IN THE MIDLANDS, 1750 – 1850: SUSANNAH WATTS AND ELIZABETH HEYRICK - A POETRY COLLECTION
Various authors
University of Leicester, 2016 (published online at https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/english/creativewriting/centre/documents/womens-writing-in-the-east-midlands-1750-1850)

TOWNS AND VILLAGES

ASHBY-DE-LA-ZOUCH PAST AND PRESENT: JOURNAL OF ASHBY-DE-LA-ZOUCH MUSEUM, NO. 18, Various authors
Ashby-de-la-Zouch Museum, 2016, 48pp, £5

Law and order in Ashby is the subject of the first article in this edition of the journal by Eric Coxon. It starts with a brief overview of the period before the formation of the Leicestershire Constabulary in 1839, before focusing on Superintendent Lockton, who joined the Constabulary in 1878 and served in that rank in the Ashby area (broadly equivalent to the current North West Leicestershire) from the early twentieth century until his retirement in 1921. Part

3 of 'Growing up in the 40s and 50s', by John Lount, covers his work as an apprentice surveyor for the National Coal Board at Donisthorpe Colliery following National Service. He soon became 'disenchanted' with the job, however, and moved on to a new career as a police officer. Irene Brightmer gives an account of the stained glass windows at Staunton Harold church commissioned by the ninth and tenth Earl Ferrers, and of the firms responsible for executing the work. A transcript of the will of the local apothecary John Mynors suggests that his was a relatively prosperous calling: he left property in nearby villages as well as a house in Ashby, the shop itself, and charitable bequests. Wendy Freer's article on the sunken gardens in the grounds of Ashby Castle reflects archaeological work in 2006 which disproved the popular view of them as former ponds. It also sheds new light on Mount House, the triangular building that formed part of a house on Leicester Road. This was commonly believed to be the 'Irish Fort' built during the Civil War to house an Irish garrison, but the excavations suggest it is more likely to date from the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries. Roger Poynton reflects on his search for his Ashby ancestors, several of them soldiers, including one who was transported to Australia for desertion while serving with the Cornwall Regiment in Canada. 'Roadster' contributes a 'Visit to Ashby August Fair', written phonetically – read it out loud for clarity – and the journal is completed by book reviews and a summary of recent films made by Wendy Freer and Mary Barker of Pudding Bag Productions.

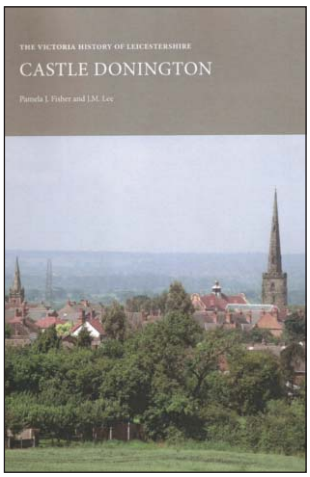
Cynthia Brown

CASTLE DONINGTON

Pamela J. Fisher and J. M. (Michael) Lee

Leicestershire Victoria County History, 2017, 133pp, illus., ISBN 9781909646278, £12; Kindle, £9.50

This is the first Leicestershire Victoria County History (VCH) publication since Volume V of the Red Book series on the Gartree Hundred in 1964, and the first in what is intended be a 'Shorts' paperback series 'aiming to bring local research to publication as swiftly as possible'. It is based in part on a history of Castle Donington parish, including the settlements at King's Mills and Cavendish Bridge, written by Michael Lee for the VCH in the 1950s but never published due to lack of funds. It has been expanded and brought up to date by Pamela Fisher, with the invaluable help of local volunteers and the benefit of access to digital and online sources now available. The Introduction gives an overview of Castle Donington, including parish boundaries, landscape, geology and built environment, and communications from medieval water transport through to East Midlands Airport. The book takes a thematic approach thereafter. The chapter on landownership, for example,



outlines the history of the Donington Park estate from its origins in the thirteenth century, and covers the religious estates of Norton Priory and St. John's Hospital as well as Donington Hall itself – the latter used as a camp for German POWs in World War I and taken over again by the army in the Second World War.

As the section on Economic History notes, the village benefitted from its location on the River Trent, profiting from fisheries, mills and ferries alongside agriculture, the basis of its economy from the late fourteenth – eighteenth centuries. By 1830, however, 39 different trades or occupations were recorded among the 88 resident freeholders who voted in the parliamentary election of that year; and in 1833 it was described as 'having the character of a manufacturing town'. Lace-making and framework knitting were in decline by mid-century, but basket-making, using osiers from alongside the river, remained a significant industry in the later nineteenth century. Other manufacturing industries are also covered in this section, along with markets and fairs, shops, service industries, and the motor racing and music festivals hosted at Donington Park. Religious life from the twelfth century is described in some detail, including a number of Nonconformist congregations, the New Connection General Baptists and Wesleyan Methodists being the largest in 1851. Local government is similarly covered from the manorial courts to parish government and the burial board, with a short section on policing. The chapter on Social History notes the 'close paternalistic and philanthropic relationship' that had developed between the Hastings family at the Hall by the nineteenth century, but this proved difficult to sustain through 'straitened times' after the death of the 4th Marquis in 1868.

This section also covers poor relief, charities, Friendly Societies and schools, and offers some tantalising glimpses of other aspects of village life: the brass band that played regularly at anniversaries and events in the park; the Mutual Improvement Society whose lectures ranged from John Bunyan to the history of printing; and the annual Wakes that in 1841 featured a leopard and hyenas. I say tantalising because I was left wanting to know more about these activities, and wider social relationships within the village: those between Anglicans and Nonconformists, for instance, and between different Nonconformist congregations themselves; or the sort of crimes that the village policemen encountered; and the folk dance festival at Donington Hall

in 1931 that features in one of the images. The standard VCH format tends to preclude this sort of approach, but this is certainly no reflection on the authors themselves, who have produced an invaluable record of Castle Donington over the centuries. The VCH is to be congratulated on the publication itself, printed on high quality paper with a similarly high standard of images. As would be expected from a VCH publication, the book also features a glossary of technical terms and a list of the comprehensive sources on which it is based.

Cynthia Brown

HARBOROUGH HISTORIAN: JOURNAL OF LOCAL HISTORY FOR MARKET HARBOROUGH AND DISTRICT

Various authors
Market Harborough Historical Society, 2016, 74pp, illus., £5.50

This edition of the *Harborough Historian* contains no less than 14 articles in addition to its regular book reviews and reports on local activities. They include Len Holden's analysis of the Midland enclosure riots in 1607, which sets them in the wider context of enclosure at this time and its effects on the poor. Enclosure provided opportunities not only for local landowners to 'cash in' on the growing trade in wool and meat by creating large sheep runs, but also 'speculators' from London and elsewhere. One such example was Cotesbach, near Lutterworth, where enclosure allowed John Quarles, a London merchant draper, to almost double his annual income, and drove its landless peasants to take up bill hooks, scythes, pitchforks and other implements to tear up the hedges and pull down the fences enclosing the land. Vicki Score writes about a joint venture between the University of Leicester Archaeological Services and Hallaton Fieldwork Group to locate the 'lost' chapel of St Morrell, a site of pilgrimage still used as such in 1532. During five years of community excavations it was found to have been built on top of an earlier Roman site. Excavations in 2012 also found several burials around the chapel site, and radiocarbon dating places the graveyard in the period from the late thirteenth to the early fifteenth centuries.

Other articles cover such diverse topics as admissions to the Harborough Workhouse in the first half of 1903; the visit of Queen Elizabeth I to Braybrooke Castle in 1564; the fishmongers of Market Harborough; Shakespeare's associations with the town; and the educational and legal background to Kibworth's National School. There is also a report (along with the cover photograph) on the Green Plaque to honour Sir William Henry Bragg, following his nomination by the Historical Society itself. Sir William shared the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1915 with his son William Lawrence Bragg, for the use of X-ray technology to study the structure of crystals. The plaque was placed on the Café Nero building in Harborough in 2016, and unveiled by Sir William's granddaughter Lady Adrian. Other reports cover Harborough Museum, Record Office acquisitions in 2014 relating to the Harborough district, and a list of lectures and speakers to Market Harborough Historical Society from 2007 – 2015.

Cynthia Brown

HINCKLEY HISTORIAN: MAGAZINE OF HINCKLEY & DISTRICT MUSEUM, NO. 77, SUMMER 2016 AND NO. 78, WINTER 2016

Various authors
Hinckley & District Museum, 2016, 40pp, £1.50

The front cover of the summer edition has a striking image of Christine Egypte Bonaparte, the subject of an article by J. D. Bennett commemorating the bicentenary of the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, and the Hinckley connection with Napoleon and his wider family. Christine was the daughter of one of his brothers, Lucien, whose family landed up in Worcestershire after a failed attempt in 1810 to emigrate from Italy to the United States. The Hinckley connection is with the orthopaedic surgeon Robert Chesser, pioneer of a 'new and most successful treatment in spinal deformity', in whose care Christine was placed after developing curvature of the spine. The article also details her two marriages after returning to France – the second contracted in the mistaken belief that her first husband was dead.

Extracts from scrapbooks compiled by the Baxter family of Hinckley from cuttings in Leicester newspapers also feature in an article by Gregory Drozdz. These cover 1868 – 76 and 1886, and include an item on an 'old soldier' of the Peninsular War, the destruction of the Earl Shilton windmill by a 'rough gale', and annual events such as the August Fair, the ringing of the Pancake Bell on Shrove Tuesday, and the Hinckley Fire Brigade display of fire-fighting equipment, 'presumably in an attempt to reassure the inhabitants of their efficiency in their job'. Ian Philpott contributes a substantial account of his family history research, following in particular the career of Charles Philpott, a baker and confectioner with a shop and bakery on Thorneycroft Road; and some 'historical myths' about Hinckley are debunked by David J. Knight. Among them are John Nichol's account of Hinckley as a manor of the Norman baron Hugh de Grandmesnil (also known as Grantmesnil or Grentemesnil), who is said to be responsible for building the castle and

parish church and laying out a 'beautiful park' – all based on Nichols' use of 'forged medieval charters'. As the author notes, the Internet has made it 'much easier to publish misinformation about the history of the town', and to perpetuate existing myths. The magazine also includes a short item on two early trade directories for Hinckley, (1791 and 1805), two photographs of Hinckley Grammar School students in May 1935, and a woodcut of St Mary's church from around 1850, before its Victorian restoration.

In the Winter 2016 edition Greg Drozdz aims to go beyond 'cliches and stereotypes' to explore how Hinckley was affected in the aftermath of World War I. Using memories passed down through families and other 'tantalising traces', including a memoir written for his son by Private William Sharpe of the Lancashire Fusiliers, he considers how families coped with the loss of husbands and other male relatives, how the poverty that was often a consequence was relieved, and how the sacrifice of the fallen was memorialised. An article by Paul Seaton offers a different perspective on Hinckley Workhouse through the 'pauper lunatics' that it housed. It includes transcripts of visits by a Commissioner of Lunacy in 1858, 1867 and 1872, and a table of inmates in 1860. Hugh Beavin writes about the contents of an account book for 1861-71 for the local firm of Atkins, which is among the archives of the Great Meeting Unitarian Chapel. It contains references to numerous other companies with which Atkins dealt, and - intriguingly - 'considerable amounts of original poetry on a variety of subjects', thought to have been written by Hugh Atkins, who also composed music for the chapel. Shorter articles cover a Hansom cab excursion in 1947 to a Boy Scouts' Jamboree at Belvoir Castle; a report of the Hinckley Grammar School Reunions for 1940 – 52; and the sentence of death passed in 1727 on Simeon Stayne, the recruiting sergeant who killed the Hinckley man Richard Smith 'of bleeding tombstone fame' (the 'blood' was actually an ironstone stain, but gave rise to a superstition that the stone 'bled' on the anniversary of his death).

Cynthia Brown

BUILDINGS AND PEOPLE OF A RUTLAND MANOR: LYDDINGTON, CALDECOTT, STOKE DRY AND THORPE BY WATER

Rosemary Canadine, Vanessa Doe, Nick Hill, Robert Ovens, Christopher Thornton

Lyddington Manor Historical Society, 2015, 368pp, illus., ISBN 9780993482106, £15

This book presents the results of a four year multi-disciplinary project on buildings and their occupants in the manor of Lyddington, Rutland, featuring ordinary village houses and farm buildings rather than churches and the well-known Bede House. It focuses on the village of Lyddington but extends to the wider manor, all of which is very clearly set out in this excellently produced book with the full support of copious maps, figures and illustrations. The project broadly covers the period from Domesday to the nineteenth century but it is principally concerned with the people and buildings of the Manor between the late sixteenth and late eighteenth centuries. The reason for the survival of so much in the Manor of Lyddington was because the manor was poor. There was no tenant-in-chief or manorial lord, and no significant industry: simply resourceful, hard-working communities. Yet such was its resilience, and the rivalry among community members, that many of the houses were rebuilt in the seventeenth century and still survive. There are date stones with husband and wife's initials declaring local pride in this to passers-by. The book sets issues of particular interest, such the seventeenth century 'great rebuilding', against the broader context of settlement patterns, social and economic history and agricultural history. It is very clearly written and explained. Particular mention should be made of the splendid cover image, which conjures up the kind of society the book is about. It shows, probably from the seventeenth century, a village lawyer surrounded by documents, and accepting chickens and eggs as rent or gifts. The richness of the documentary sources has made this project possible, and the book is well worth reading not just for the content about people and buildings in a Rutland manor, but as a practical manual for anyone setting up a project covering topics of a similar nature, including important issues like training, skills and volunteers. The introduction describes how the project started from Rosemary Canadine's first meeting with Christopher Thomas at her kitchen table, and how it progressed to outline and then full applications to the Heritage Lottery Fund. Community involvement was a vital part of the case that won the necessary funding, and it was clearly key to obtaining information from local people, with results that were eventually returned to those people. A Society of seventy members was set up which continues to flourish.

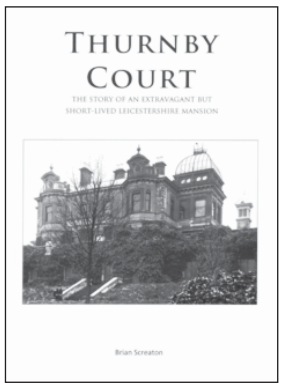
Yolanda Courtney

THURNBY COURT: THE STORY OF AN EXTRAVAGANT BUT SHORT-LIVED LEICESTERSHIRE MANSION

Brian Screaton

The Author, 2016, 83pp, illus., ISBN 9781788087315, £7.95

Thurnby Court was long gone when I was growing up in Thurnby and Bushby in the 1950s and 60s, but the story of the explosion that completed its demolition in 1916 was still very much a part of the local folklore. My father, only seven at the time but well aware that 'there was a war on', recalled that the initial reaction - that it was a German bomb - was as convincing as it was alarming. As this entertaining and very



readable book demonstrates, the explanation was much closer to home. Thurnby Court was built for James Alexander Jackson, a wealthy American businessman, who reputedly became even richer through his involvement in 'running the blockade' during the American Civil War of 1861–65, taking arms and other goods to the Southern States, and cotton from them to Britain. In 1866 Jackson bought several plots of land to the south of Thurnby village square, on which he built a 'Mansion House' in which he and his family were living by 1871. Together with a 'winter garden', coach house and underground stables - which proved very damp and hazardous to the health of the horses – over six million bricks were said to be used in the construction.

Few photos of the interior have survived, but maps and photos of the grounds enable the reader to go on an 'imaginary stroll' around their main features, including a lake and summer house. The author goes well beyond the village itself to explore its wider context. Jackson's own life is related in some detail, up to 1891 when the family moved out of the Court to live in London and the house was let to George Checkland, the owner of Desford Colliery. The Checkland family 'immersed themselves in village life', but moved out in 1901 when their tenancy expired and Jackson's widow Caroline declined an offer to buy. She died in 1911, and by 1914 the house was empty and 'decaying'. A plan to use it as a military prison came to nothing, and after stripping it of anything saleable, 'on a peaceful Sunday morning' in 1916 its then owner, a Mr Heath, completed its demolition with the dynamite responsible for the memorable explosion. The book concludes with an overview of the later use of the site, and of houses elsewhere with a link to the story. There is also a useful bibliography and suggestions for further reading. As the author notes, it all began with the discovery of a postcard in the 1970s simply captioned 'Thurnby Court' – a 'complete mystery' to him, but an excellent example of how a little curiosity can produce something of much wider historical value.

Cynthia Brown

Other recent publications

GARENDON AND GRACE DIEU REVISITED
Majorie Schultz
Panda Eyes, 2016

LOUGHBOROUGH: THE WAY WE WERE
David Arthur
Panda Eyes, 2016

A FURTHER STROLL AROUND BYGONE SHEPSHED
Majorie Schultz
Panda Eyes, 2016

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE QUEEN VICTORIA INN, SYSTON: A BEGINNING – EARLY DAYS TO 1922
Joyce Trousdale and Tina Arrindel (authors); Ian Metcalfe (ed.)
The Authors, 2015

BRIDGE TO BRIDGE (KILBY BRIDGE TO SPION KOP BRIDGE) - DVD
Mike Forryan
Greater Wigston Historical Society, 2016

INDUSTRY AND TRANSPORT

THE DESFORD RAILWAY DISASTER
'PaulMedia' (compiler)
Leicestershire Industrial History Society, 2016, 36pp, illus., ISBN 9780955644573

GLENFIELD TUNNEL: THE STORY OF A MOST HISTORIC HOLE IN THE GROUND
Paul Banbury
Leicestershire Industrial History Society, 2015, 24pp, illus., ISBN 9780955644559

THE LEICESTER AND SWANNINGTON RAILWAY TODAY: A PHOTOGRAPHIC JOURNEY ALONG THIS HISTORIC RAILWAY
Bill Pemberton
Leicestershire Industrial History Society, 2016, 44pp, illus., ISBN 9780955644566

These three booklets, all very nicely produced and well illustrated (mostly in colour), make a valuable contribution to the railway history of Leicestershire, and are very good value. They bring together a wide range of information, technical and anecdotal, old and new, and present it in a readable and attractive format. *The Desford Railway Disaster* tells the story of a serious crash at Desford junction in 1881, mainly by reproducing reports from *The Times*, one of which is a detailed and rather harrowing account of the accident and its aftermath by a passenger on the ill-fated train. Typical of nineteenth century railway accidents, this one was apparently caused by a mixture of bad weather and human error. The report of the inquest, held on the following day, indicates that recent gales had blown down many local signals. The points to a siding had been left open due to the negligence of the signalman (who was found not guilty of manslaughter) and a temporary signal allowed the Burton to Leicester express to be diverted at speed into a stationary coal train. Three people were killed instantly, two others received fatal injuries and several more were seriously

injured. The press reports are allowed, for the most part, to speak for themselves, though there is some explanatory content too. This is a useful record of an unfortunate event. Glenfield Tunnel was the longest railway tunnel in the world when it opened in 1832. The slender booklet, *Glenfield Tunnel*, is a brief and readable account of the history of the tunnel from its origins to the present day (it has been disused since the 1960s). Half of the booklet describes recent work on reinforcing the structure of the tunnel and there are some good 'then and now' photographs. One of the most interesting features is a detailed map showing the line of the tunnel and its ventilation shafts. It is an interesting, if brief, read for anyone interested in the history of Glenfield or of local railways. Some of the information in this booklet is also covered in *The Leicester and Swannington Railway Today*, a very attractive account of the first steam railway in the Midlands, built by George and Robert Stephenson to transport coal from north-west Leicestershire into Leicester in competition with the canals which brought coal from Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. The booklet comprises a brief history and a lot of colour photographs of the line as it is today, plus useful maps and illustrations of a number of associated buildings and other structures. The Swannington Incline remains an impressive feature of the line and most of it can be visited today, unlike Glenfield Tunnel which is partially open only on occasional open days. These three booklets are all produced under the auspices of the Leicester Industrial History Society, which does an excellent job of researching, preserving and publicising the industrial history of our diverse county.

John Hinks

THAT FINE BUNCH OF BOYS AT THE MILL! STEEL TUBE MAKING AT DESFORD, 1941-2006: LIHS BULLETIN NO. 21
John N. Briggs; David Pearce ed.
Leicestershire Industrial History Society, 2016, 108pp, illus., ISBN 9780955644535, £10

Tubes of Desford, which dominated the landscape between Kirby Muxloe and Desford for well over 60 years, had its origins in 1942 when it was established to produce steel tubes for the war effort. Originally known as Eagle Works, this 'factory in the fields' was one of two 'dispersal' units of Tube Products, and its first employees were trained by foremen from its Birmingham parent company, Tube Investments. The book covers its wartime history and that of the early post-war years, along with its association with British Timkin, the leading manufacturer of anti-friction roller bearings, and the highs and lows of its later years before its closure in 2007. Extracts from the *Eagle News*, the company's 1970s in-house magazine, give a sense of industrial relations and the social life of the factory, including the Quarter Century Club for employees with over twenty-five years' service. At Christmas 1971 this donated sixty food parcels to ex-employees and the sick, and held its first annual dinner in the following year. There were also a number of sports teams. Several went through 'lean spells' in 1971, and the Sport and Social Club's Gala in the same year was almost literally washed out by rain, the sack race being 'soggy' and the donkey rides taking only 24p all day. As might be expected of an industrial history society, much of the book is concerned with the technical aspects of steel tube making at Desford. While this may be less accessible to the general reader, it is an invaluable record of the processes of production and the wider development of the industry. There is a useful timeline and glossary, and an extensive Appendix of notes and sources of information. Like the oral histories from two former employees, these provide additional detail and useful context for the main sections of the text.

Cynthia Brown

Other recent publications

CENTRAL ENGLAND SIGNAL BOXES
Dafydd Whyles
Amberley Publishing, 2016

CLARKE'S CARPET FACTORY OF MARKET HARBOROUGH: A SHORT HISTORY
Bob Hakewill
The Author, on behalf of Friends of Harborough Museum, 2016

COUNTY RAILWAY ROUTES: MARKET HARBOROUGH TO NEWARK
Vic Mitchell and Keith Smith
Middleton Press, 2016

GARRATTS AND GUITARS: SIXTY TRAINSPOTTING YEARS – VOL. I: 1955 – 1985
John Stretton
Silver Link Publishing, 2016

LEICESTER BUSES
David Harvey
Amberley Publishing, 2016

MIDLAND MAINLINES: LEICESTER TO BURTON
Vic Mitchell and Keith Smith
Middleton Press, 2016

MILITARY AND WAR

LEICESTERSHIRE AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR
Nick Miller
Stenlake Publishing, 2016, 50pp, illus., ISBN 9781840337600, £10

The introduction to this publication gives a useful and concise overview of the effects of the First World War in Leicestershire, its contributions to the war effort in terms of industry and personnel, and those who had conscientious objections to military service. It consists mainly of photographs and other images, which are very clearly reproduced and accompanied by a useful commentary. Many may be as unfamiliar to readers of existing histories of the war in Leicestershire as they were to this reviewer. For instance, they include photographs of army stable hands at Stoughton (and their dogs), and of farriers based nearby at Leicester Racecourse.

New recruits are pictured at Loughborough Midland station in 1914, wearing an interesting range of headgear and holding their new kit; and female munitions workers at a Leicester factory, wearing their 'On War Service' badges and, in one case, holding a cricket bat and ball. The female contribution to the war is also illustrated by Leicester Ladies Swimming Clubs Gala for wounded soldiers in 1915, along with a number of photos featuring nurses at local hospitals. There are also images of British Prisoners of War in German camps, and of German POWs at the Donington camp in Leicestershire. None of the sources of the photographs in the book are identified, but there is still much of interest here.

Cynthia Brown

ROTHLEY REMEMBERS: MEN AND MEMORIALS
Marion Vincent
Rothley Heritage Trust, 2016, 200pp, illus., ISBN 9780956341587, £15

All fifty-four of Rothley's wartime casualties are recorded in this book, with as much detail of their lives and the circumstances of their deaths as it has been possible to find. Thirty-four of them died in the First World War, among them Private Sidney North of the 4th Battalion Worcestershire Regiment, who survived scarlet fever as a child and was reported to have died of malaria in a Turkish Prisoner of War camp in 1917 at the age of 27. This particular entry is accompanied by an image of the Syston Cottage Hospital where Sidney was treated in 1900, where visitors 'could shout to their children as they were not allowed in to see them'. Many of the other entries for both World Wars have photographs of the soldiers, their military records or wills, and their graves, adding a great deal of interest to accounts of their deaths drawn from War Diaries for the relevant dates. The author had already begun to research the names of the men on the Cross Green War Memorial in Rothley before joining the Leicestershire County Council Leicestershire and Rutland War Memorials Project when it was launched in 2009. In the course of research for the latter she located a number of other war memorials in the village, and these are also described in some detail. They include the organ and World War I Roll of Honour reredos in Rothley parish church, along with the church choir stalls and communion rails given in honour of men who died in the Second World War. Others include memorial plaques in Rothley Wesleyan Chapel and the Primitive Methodist Chapel (the latter now closed); a terrace of four Memorial Cottages in North Street, built after the Great War by Frank Sleath whose son died in 1918; and Cavell Cottage, also in North Street, a memorial to Nurse Edith Cavell who was executed in 1915. The book, which will be invaluable to people with family connections to Rothley, is also available as a DVD.

Cynthia Brown

Other recent publications

REMEMBERING COSBY'S FALLEN IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939 – 1945
Andy Strang
Cosby Heritage Society, 2016

GUNNER JOHN WILLIAM HORNBUCKLE 1893 – 1917
Celia Hornbuckle
The Author, 2016

SOLDIERS WHO LOST THEIR LIVES WWI: HIGHAM ON THE HILL AND LINDLEY
Celia Hornbuckle
The Author, 2016

TIGERS' TALES: THE STORY OF TWO YOUNG MEN FROM COUNTESTHORPE
Penny Mount, Harold Varnam, Patsy Paterson, Ian Paterson
Troubador, 2016

RELIGION AND PLACES OF WORSHIP

REDEMPTION: THE NEW LIGHT BEAMS – THE REDEMPTION WINDOWS, LEICESTER CATHEDRAL
Leicester Cathedral
Leicester Cathedral Chapter, 2016, 17pp, illus., £3

As part of the increased interest in Leicester Cathedral following the re-interment of Richard III, two new windows were placed in St Katharine's chapel. This colourfully illustrated booklet is a guide to the Redemption windows

created by artist Thomas Denny. Although there are only two windows, they are divided into many different panels with different scenes, and the pamphlet is a very useful tool to understand and appreciate the complexity of the work. The windows use scenes inspired by the life of Richard III to illustrate major themes and verses of the bible. In common with the Richard III information panels and guides in the Cathedral, the aim is to make the story relevant to modern life. Using many full colour illustrations, keys, and biblical quotes the guide takes us through the contents of the West and East windows in detail, and explains the choice of subject, its content and religious relevance. Supplemented by quotes from Thomas Denny and a brief biography, it is a very useful guide and attractive souvenir. The detailed illustrations are especially welcome when trying to interpret and understand some of the smaller or more difficult to see panels near the top of the window.

Philip R. French

Other recent publications

ST MARY'S HUMBERSTONE: A SHORT INTRODUCTION AND A CREATURE AND CARVINGS TRAIL FOR ALL AGES
Jan Zientek
St Mary's Humberstone, 2016

SPORT AND LEISURE

JAMIE VARDY: FROM NOWHERE, MY STORY
Jamie Vardy
Ebury Press, 2016, 336pp, illus., ISBN 9781785034824, £20

This biography of Jamie Vardy is a very honest look at his life. He certainly never shies away from telling the reader about both the good and the not so good that has happened to him. The style is almost conversational, with strong language at times. Naturally some of the book is not relevant to Leicester or Leicestershire, but it does go on to tell Vardy's part in what proved to be a very exciting time for the City and County. It gives an insider's view on the meteoric rise of Leicester City Football Club from the Champions League, to the Premiership, from near relegation to being Premier League Champions. It looks at the highs and lows of the 2015-16 season, with all the pitfalls that Vardy himself went through. As well as concentrating on the football, Vardy discusses his personal life and how he has found living in Leicester and Leicestershire. The book is nicely illustrated using pictures both from his footballing career and his personal life. It is a really interesting read, and as the memories of that extraordinary season begin to subside, it will be a lasting testament from someone who played a significant part in an amazing story, with a fairytale ending that put Leicester on the world's footballing stage.

Lois Edwards

Other recent publications

5000-1 – THE LEICESTER CITY STORY: HOW WE BEAT THE ODDS TO BECOME PREMIER LEAGUE CHAMPIONS
Rob Tanner
Icon Books, 2016

FEARLESS: THE AMAZING UNDERDOG STORY OF LEICESTER CITY, THE GREATEST MIRACLE IN SPORTS HISTORY
Jonathan Northcroft
Headline, 2016

OF FOXES AND FOSSILS: THE OFFICIAL, DEFINITIVE HISTORY OF LEICESTER CITY FOOTBALL CLUB
Dave Smith and Paul Taylor
Pitch Publishing, 5th ed., 2016

HAIL, CLAUDIO!: THE MAN, THE MANAGER, THE MIRACLE
Gabriele Marcotti
Yellow Jersey, 2016

THE IMMORTALS: THE PEOPLE'S CHAMPIONS
Harry Harris
G2 Entertainment, 2016

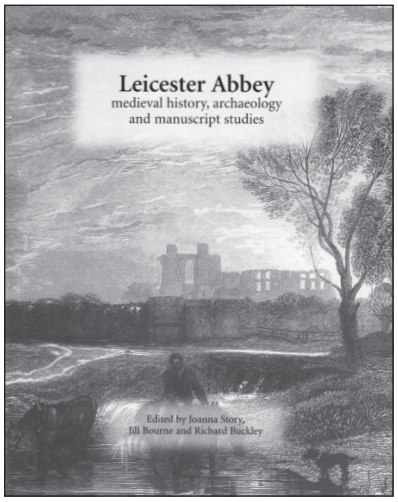
JAMIE VARDY: THE BOY FROM NOWHERE - THE TRUE STORY OF THE GENIUS BEHIND LEICESTER CITY'S 5000-1 WINNING SEASON
Frank Worrall
John Blake Publishing, 2016

KING POWER: LEICESTER CITY'S REMARKABLE SEASON
Richard III
Fourth Estate, 2016

LEICESTER CITY: WE ARE STAYING UP – A FOXES FAN'S EYE VIEW OF THE SEASON OF DREAMS 2015-2016
Steve Jacques
Blue Army Publishing, 2016

THE UNBELIEVABLES: THE AMAZING STORY OF LEICESTER'S 2015/16 SEASON
David Bevan
deCoubertin Books, 2016

Publications for sale



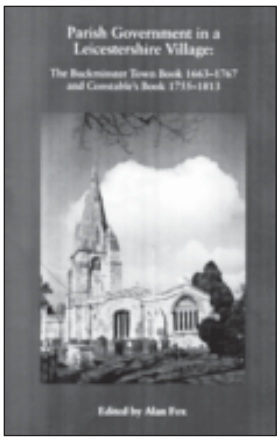
Leicester Abbey: medieval history, archaeology and manuscript studies
Ed by Joanna Story, Jill Bourne and Richard Buckley

Leicester Abbey was founded in 1138 and became one of the most important Augustinian monasteries in medieval England. But it is one of the least known of the Midland monasteries because of the almost total destruction of its buildings and archives after its Dissolution in 1538. This is the first volume on Leicester Abbey for more than 50 years, produced to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society.

The book presents eleven papers by leading scholars and local historians on the social, political and landscape history of the abbey as well as its archaeology, manuscripts, charters, urban rentals and library. Newly discovered charters are published here for the first time, as well as accounts of recent excavations in the abbey and gatehouse that formed the core of the post-Dissolution mansion known as Cavendish House.

2006 Hardback with dust jacket 314 pages Illustrations: many, some colour ISBN 0954238818 Price: £25 (plus £5 post and packing in the UK)

Parish Government in a Leicestershire Village: The Buckminster Town Book 1665-1767 and Constable's Book 1753-1813
Ed by Alan Fox



The first in a County Records series for Leicestershire.

2015 Hardback xxvi + 228 pages ISBN 9780954238841 Price: £15 (plus £3 postage and packing in the UK)

Nichols' History of Leicestershire: a bi-centenary celebration 2015
Caroline Wessel, with chapters by Julian Pooley and Robin Jenkins

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