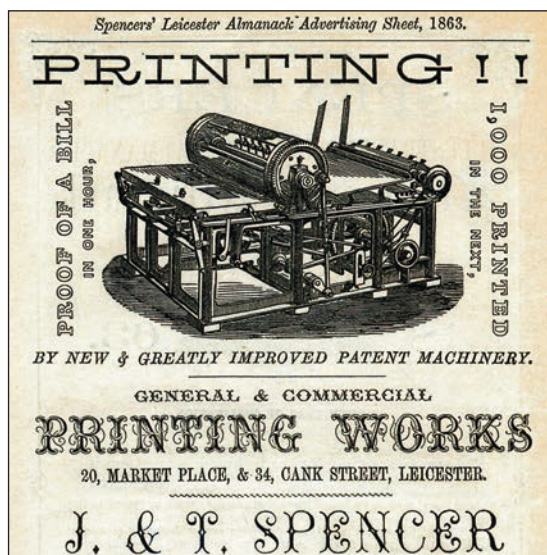


Publishing in Nineteenth Century Leicestershire

J. D. Bennett

The nineteenth century saw an enormous growth in local publishing. An increasing population, an expanding middle class, the growth in adult literacy among the middle and working classes, advances in printing technology and improved distribution networks, all resulted in an output of books, pamphlets, newspapers and periodicals that would have astonished the inhabitants of eighteenth century Leicestershire.



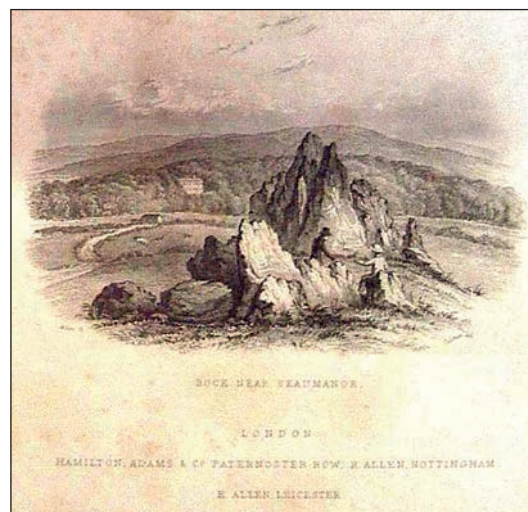
Improvements in printing played a major part in the massive expansion of published material in the nineteenth century.

Throughout the nineteenth century, local publishers were frequently also booksellers and stationers, and sometimes printers and bookbinders as well. In Leicester, there were seventeen booksellers by 1863, a remarkable number, when the population of the town was still only about 68,000. Though not the oldest booksellers in Leicester (that was probably Thomas Chapman Browne at the “Bible and Crown” in the Market Place), most enterprising and significant were the brothers John and Thomas Spencer, ‘English & foreign booksellers, publishers, librarians, photographers, stationers, bookbinders and general printers’. Their shop, also in the Market Place, opened in 1853, and sold new books, some second-hand ones (mostly local) and ‘surplus books at reduced prices’ (remainders). It also housed a flourishing circulating library established in 1854, which by 1895 had 28,000 volumes and 500 subscribers; and in addition they were local agents for the Ordnance Survey.

One of J. & T. Spencer’s first publications was their *Illustrated Leicester Almanack*, issued annually from 1855. Other publications included various guides to Leicester and

Charnwood Forest, maps of Leicester and its environs, James Thompson’s *History of Leicester in the Eighteenth Century* (1871), Mary Kirby’s autobiography *Leaflets from my Life* (1887), Mrs T. Fielding Johnson’s *Glimpses of Ancient Leicester* (1891) and William Andrews’ *Bygone Leicestershire* (1892).

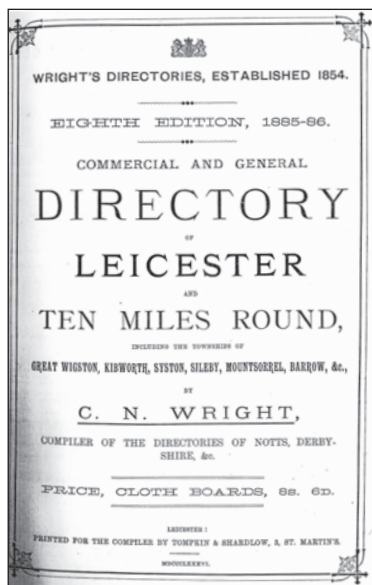
Topographical and historical books were a significant part of the output from publishers in the county, partly reflecting a growing interest by readers in their surroundings and travel. For example, at Market Harborough, William Harrod published his *History of Market Harborough and its Vicinity* in 1808. At the spa town of Ashby-de-la-Zouch, Thomas Wayte published *An Historical and Descriptive Account of the Castle* in 1824, *A Descriptive and Historical Guide to Ashby-de-la-Zouch* in 1831, and *An Essay on Bathing, with Remarks on the Mineral Water at Ashby-de-la-Zouch and Moira* by Dr W. R. Cubitt; also at Ashby, William Hextall published *A Topographical History of the County of Leicester* by the Rev. John Curtis in 1831, and *The History and Description of Ashby-de-la-Zouch* in 1852. At Melton Mowbray, William Loxley published *Melton Mowbray in Olden Times* in 1879 and *Chronological Events in the History of Melton Mowbray* in 1889, both by the Rev John Ward. While at Loughborough, Harry Wills published the Rev W. G. Dimock Fletcher’s *Historical Handbook to Loughborough* in 1881, his *History of Loughborough* in 1887, and Wills’s *Illustrated Guide to Loughborough* in 1889, to celebrate the incorporation of the town as a municipal borough the previous year.



Charnwood Forest with Illustrations by T. R. Potter was jointly published in 1842 by Hamilton Adams & Co. London, R. Allen of Nottingham, and E. Allen of Leicester.

Books issued jointly by two or more local publishers, as well as by a London firm, seem to have been quite common, particularly in the 1840s. *The Midland Counties Railway Companion* (1840), Thomas Rossell Potter's *Walks round Loughborough* (1840) and *History and Antiquities of Charnwood Forest* (1842) were published jointly by Edward Allen in Leicester and Richard Allen in Nottingham, and James Thompson's *History of Leicester* (1849) by J. S. Crossley and Thompson & Son.

As trade grew during the century, so did the need for business directories. Though many nineteenth century Leicestershire directories were published elsewhere, notably by William White at Sheffield and Frederic Kelly in London, or included in the national commercial directories issued by William Holden, James Pigot and Isaac Slater, some were published locally, usually by booksellers or printers. Leicester directories were published in 1815 by John Fowler, in 1827 by Thomas Combe (whose father and namesake had published Susanna Watts' *Walk through Leicester* in 1804), several in the 1840s by Thomas Cook, in 1875 by Samuel Barker and a series by Christopher Norton Wright, the only full-time local directory publisher. An organisation called the Leicestershire Trade Protection Society also published two local directories in 1870 and 1875, and Harry Wills issued a number of editions of *A Loughborough Almanac, Diary, Trade and Street Directory* in the last quarter of the century.



C. N. Wright's Directory of Leicester, 1885-6, published in Leicester, Tomkin & Shardlow, printers, 8 St Martins.

Provincial newspapers were a key growth area of provincial publishing during the nineteenth century and as discussed by Fraser, they could 'both guide and reflect local public opinion'. In the early part of the century there were only two newspapers published in Leicestershire - the *Leicester Journal* (1753) and the *Leicester Chronicle* (1810), but between then and 1900 a large number of titles appeared,

with varying success. The *Leicester Herald* arrived on the scene in 1827, followed by the *Leicestershire Mercury* (1836) and Payne's *Leicester & Midland Counties Advertiser* (1842), which became the *Leicester Advertiser* ('the farmers' friend'). These papers often had more than just a local sale. By the early 1830s, the *Leicester Journal*, for instance, had adopted the subtitle of the *Midland Counties General Advertiser* ('Circulated through the principal Towns and populous Villages in the counties of Leicester, Lincoln, Rutland, Nottingham, Derby, Stafford, Warwick, Northampton, Cambridge, &c.').

Though the newspaper duty had been reduced in 1836 - perhaps resulting in the appearance of the short-lived *Loughborough Telegraph* (1837), published by Daniel Cartwright (who was also an assessor of taxes) - and increased circulation was lowering cover prices, it was the abolition of the tax on advertisements in 1853, the stamp duty in 1855 and finally that on raw paper in 1861 that resulted in a huge expansion of provincial newspaper titles. The *Loughborough Illustrated News* (1854), hoping perhaps to take advantage of the success of the national illustrated weeklies which had appeared in the 1840s, the *Market Harborough Advertiser* (1856), the *Leicester News* (1857), the *Leicester Guardian* (1857), the *Loughborough Monitor* (1857), the *Midland Free Press* (1858) which had moved from Kettering to Leicester, the *Melton Mowbray Times* (1859) and the *Hinckley Journal* (1859) all appeared in fairly quick succession.

The 1860s saw the publication of a further crop of local papers - the *Ashby Advertiser* (1861), the *Ashby-de-la-Zouch News* (1861), the *Harborough News* (1861), the *Hinckley News* (1861), the *Leicester Express* (1861), another *Leicester News* (1861), the *Loughborough News* (1861), the *Melton News* (1861), and towards the end of the decade, the *Loughborough Advertiser* (1868), the *Lutterworth Mercury* (1869) and the *Lutterworth News* (1869).

These newspapers were all published weekly, and it was not until about 1870 that local dailies began to appear. The *Leicester Daily Mail* which had begun as the weekly *Leicester Mail* in 1865, became a daily in 1869, then reverted to a weekly in 1870. That same year, the *Leicester Daily Express* set out its aims in its first issue in February - 'In these days events move with great rapidity . . . [and] unless immediately chronicled, they run the risk of being buried and forgotten ere they have seen the light' - but lasted only a few months. The *Leicester Daily Post* (1872) was rather more successful and continued into the next century, while the *Leicester (Daily) Mercury* (1874) is still with us. There were also several attempts at publishing evening papers - the relatively successful *Leicester Evening News* (1872), the short-lived *Leicester Evening Post* (1874) and the *Leicester Evening Standard* (1885).

Thomas William Rollings Lee
Market Place Loughborough

The Loughborough Monitor

LEICESTER, CASTLE DONINGTON, ASHBY-DE-LA-ZOUCH, AND MELTON HERALD.

No. 532.—THURSDAY, JANUARY 9, 1868. PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY THOMAS WILLIAM ROLLINGS LEE, PRICE ONE PENNY.
REGISTERED FOR TRANSMISSION ABROAD. MARKET PLACE, LOUGHBOROUGH. FOUR THROATLY SHEETS.

<p>Sales by Auction.</p> <p>PRELIMINARY. N. JACKSON Has received instructions TO SELL BY AUCTION.</p>	<p>To be Sold.</p> <p>A BARRAIN—TO BE SOLD, a New COTTAGE FRANÇOISE, in National Walnut Case, by a first class London maker.—The instrument was sent to T. W. R. Lee's, Monitor Office, Lough- borough.</p>	<p>Education.</p> <p>GRAMMAR AND COMMERCIAL SCHOOL, Rutland Terrace, January 29th.</p> <p>THESE are THREE KINDS of EDUCATION afforded there—</p>	<p>Public and Legal Notices.</p> <p>LEICESTER SAVINGS BANK. ESTABLISHED 1817, AND CERTIFIED UNDER THE ACT OF 1863.</p>	<p>Public and Legal Notices.</p> <p>DONINGTON STEEPLE CHASES.</p>
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An early copy of the Loughborough Monitor, 9th January 1868. (Reproduced by permission of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.)

Other local papers which began publication in the last quarter of the nineteenth century included the *Ashby-de-la-Zouch Gazette* (1876), the *Loughborough Home News* (1876), the *Loughborough Herald and North Leicestershire Gazette* (1880), the *Melton Mowbray Herald* (1881), the *Melton Mowbray Mercury* (1881), another *Melton Mowbray Times* (1887), the *Hinckley Times* (1889), the *Loughborough Echo* (1891), another *Leicester Daily Express* (1892), the *Coalville Times* (1893), the *Loughborough Examiner* (1894) and the *Hinckley Free Press* (1897).

The proprietors and publishers of this multitude of new papers included auctioneer Benjamin Payne, who had been part-owner of the *Leicester Journal* before launching *Payne's Leicester and Midland Counties Advertiser*; bookseller Albert Cockshaw, founder of the *Leicestershire Mercury*; local historian James Thompson, who had been an owner of the *Leicester Chronicle* before founding the *Leicester Daily Mercury*; his successor, bookseller Francis Hewitt who owned not only the *Mercury* but later also the *Leicester Chronicle*, the *Leicester Daily Post* and the *Loughborough Herald*; and William Penn Cox who came to own both the *Leicester Advertiser* and the *Loughborough Monitor*.

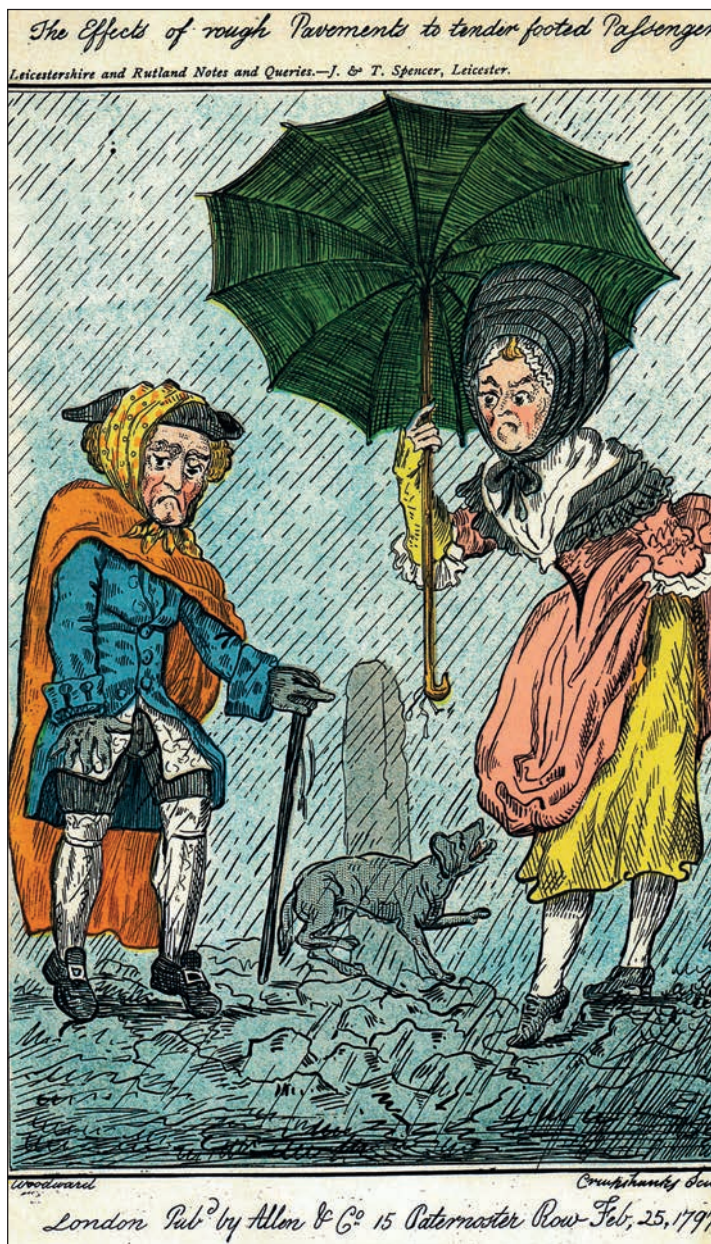
As well as various amalgamations and changes of title, many of these new local papers were fairly short-lived, some lasting only a few years, and in some cases only a few months. It is not difficult to see why: in spite of the increase in adult literacy from the 1870s onwards, and a welcome reduction in cover prices - in the 1830s the *Leicester Journal* cost 7d., but by 1863 was 3d., the same price as the *Chronicle* and the *Advertiser*, and by 1877 had been reduced to 2d.; most of the other local titles cost 1d., while the *Leicester Daily Mercury*, when launched in 1874, was only ½d. - there were simply too many titles competing for what was still a relatively limited market. Though old-established papers like the *Leicester Journal* and *Leicester Chronicle* survived into the twentieth century, only a handful of new local titles did so.

Two monthly periodicals which began publication in 1835 were the *Leicester Conservative Standard*, aimed at a largely middle class market, and the *Leicester Corporation and*

Parochial Reformer, which supported the newly elected Liberal Corporation, and being much cheaper, attracted a wider readership. Neither, however, was long-lived; the *Reformer* ceased publication in 1836 and the *Standard* in 1837. The *Midland Counties Illuminator*, a weekly Chartist journal, had an even shorter life. Thomas Cooper, who returned to Leicester (his birthplace) in 1840, took over its editorship from the veteran radical George Bown in 1841 and began a new series, printed 'on larger and better paper and with better type', which published sixteen issues before it closed down later that year, following pressure from Leicester Corporation. The *Leicestershire Movement; or, Voices from the Frame and the Factory, the Field and the Rail* which began publication in 1850 was also published weekly. 'We propose an attempt to stimulate the minds of our working brethren', announced its introductory address hopefully. It survived till June of that year, its nineteen issues including contributions from people like Chartist poet William Jones of Cosby.

Aimed at a very different market, but also short-lived, were the *Leicester Magazine* (1848), the *Leicester New Monthly Magazine* (1853), the *Midland Counties Historical Collector* (1855) and the *Leicestershire Magazine* (1861), a monthly published by Thomas Henry Cleveland, a printer and manager of the *Leicester Guardian*.

Rather more successful was *Leicestershire and Rutland Notes and Queries and Antiquarian Gleaner*, a quarterly edited and published by John and Thomas Spencer, which began in 1889. They set out their aims in the first issue: 'It has long been our desire to place on permanent record the antiquities, archaeology, folk-lore, quaint manorial customs, popular superstitions, old wives' fables, provincial dialects, old records of our County (Leicester) and the adjoining County of Rutland ... We think a publication such as this ... will be the means of effecting this'. The deaths of the two founders in 1892 and 1893 were no doubt partly responsible for the periodical's demise in 1895. The original *Notes and Queries* was a monthly founded in 1849 and the formula was adopted by a number of local publishers to produce county versions.



'Leicester Streets 100 years ago: the effects of rough pavements to tender footed Passengers', was the colour frontispiece for Spencer's Leicestershire and Rutland Notes and Queries and Antiquarian Gleaner Vol. II, 1893.

The *Wyvern*, an illustrated weekly periodical, began publication in 1891. From the beginning it carried a biographical article featuring prominent local people, each one illustrated by a portrait. It also included a great deal of local historical information on such subjects as windmills, old inns, the conduit, Richard III's coffin, the 1826 Leicester election, Susanna Watts, peace rejoicings in 1815, Plough Monday, the execution and gibbeting of James Cook and local weather. The *Wyvern* became the *Leicester Guardian* in 1899 and survived until 1906.

Interestingly, for many years Leicester also had its own monthly local railway timetable, a mini version of the *ABC Railway Guide*, and much easier to use than the official railway timetables or *Bradshaw's Guide*. This was *Clarke's*

Leicester ABC Railway Guide which began publication in 1875 and continued until 1967. It gave up-to-date details of fares and services to places far and near which could be reached by rail from Leicester, and was originally produced by Frederick William Spridgeons Clarke, an enterprising Leicester printer, who also published a short-lived, humorous magazine called the *Midland Jackdaw* (1878).

By the late nineteenth century Leicester had become an important publishing and printing town, a trend that continued well into the twentieth century.

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Clarke's Leicester ABC Railway Guide continued to be published well into the 1960s.