

Editorial

The topics covered in this year's *Leicestershire Historian* range from the discovery of new and interesting connections between the county and the wider world; to the importance given to teaching, higher education and nursing training in Leicester; and to the lives of three very contrasting Victorian figures, one of whom was a prominent political satirist and leading Radical, another a very local politician, the third the author of a rare surviving collection of Nonconformist sermons. Also featured are articles on how parts of the county responded to national shortages of housing; how the development of guided walks and town trails have radically changed over the last two hundred years; the folklore surrounding landmark stones, and the growing interest in Medieval church graffiti.

A new name to be added to the remarkable list of explorers with Leicestershire connections is that of Dorothy Bovey, a Leicestershire-based twentieth century artist and adventurer who, as Richard Graves keenly discovers, was the botanical illustrator for the Zaire River Expedition in 1974-5, and later was invited by the Sultan of Oman to paint the flora of Northern Oman.

Previously little-known international connections between Leicestershire people and the Spanish Civil War are unearthed by Adrian Pole through eye-witness accounts in contemporary Leicestershire newspapers from Leicestershire tourists, residents and business people caught up in the War in 1936.

Katharine Short provides an illuminating account of the changing role of nurses over the centuries and how important the development of nursing training has been in Leicester, drawing on sources from De Montfort University's Special Collections.

As the University of Leicester celebrates its centenary, the unexpected story behind this institution as the Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland University College and its foundation as a memorial to those whose fell in the Great War is passionately told by Caroline Wessel, making extensive use of material in the University Library.

The Comic History of Leicester is a beautifully illustrated satirical commentary on politics in Leicester. Published under the name of Q.U.I.Z. in 1851 the book is now part of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society's collection and is brought here to a wider public for the first time, providing the basis for Ned Newitt's absorbing article about the Leicester Radical Thomas Emery, who after his death was revealed as the book's author.

Sir John Rolleston, elected in 1900 as Leicester's first Conservative Member of Parliament since 1861 is the subject of Cynthia Brown's study which shows how in the increasingly complex and polarised world of Leicester politics, a 'very local' man could still prove a force to be reckoned with.

Two rare surviving Victorian notebooks of sermons - now in the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland - handwritten by Charles Haddon, minister of Bardon Park Chapel, give Alan Betteridge the unusual opportunity to explore 175 sermons preached by a 'normal Nonconformist minister' in a typical chapel on regular Sundays, providing an opportunity to establish whether popular images of a Victorian chapel sermon are borne out.

Paul Griffiths investigates the very contrasting responses of Hinckley Urban and Rural District Councils to the national severe shortage of housing in the 1920s and early 1930s, using sources from museums and heritage groups in the Hinckley area.

Sally Hartshorne and Colin Hyde look at the ways in which guided walks through Leicester have changed since the first printed example in 1804 to the digital guides of today, showing how Leicester itself has changed, and what the writers felt it important to highlight at the time.

A fascinating array of Medieval graffiti exists in the churches of Leicestershire in the form of ships, daisy wheels, human depictions, heraldic, religious and other motifs. Michael Hawkes gives an introduction to this absorbing topic using pre-Reformation examples from the county, and which it is hoped will stimulate interest and more in-depth recording of graffiti in Leicestershire churches.

Bob Trubshaw explores two landmark stones - the Humber Stone and the St John's Stone. Both are exceptional in the amount of folklore surrounding them which has survived, providing a variety of customs, anomalous experiences and legends.

Recently published research, society journals and histories on topics ranging from medieval earthworks, Leicester street art, Barrow upon Soar Poor Law Union and the buildings of Loughborough, to dresses and dressmaking, Diocesan histories and Donington Park race track, are part of the wide variety of material enthusiastically reviewed by Cynthia Brown and her team of reviewers in the extremely useful and invaluable Recent Publications section. My thanks to the staff at the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland for all their help and support, and for 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.