

THOROTON

Number 30: Winter 2002



Annual Luncheon

This year's annual luncheon was held at Holme Pierrepont Hall on 2 November, courtesy of Mr and Mrs Robert Brackenbury. 101 members and their guests attended. After the lunch Mr John Fox proposed the toast to the Thoroton Society and the President, Mr Neville Hoskins, responded. He drew particular attention to the Society's guest on this occasion, Mr Adrian Henstock, in the light of his forthcoming retirement as Principal Archivist to Nottinghamshire County Council. Mrs Valerie Henstock spoke about the representation of the Pierrepont family and the Hall in some of the county's histories. She had found a vivid description in an anonymously published source of 1835, but was able to tell us more about the writer, Matthew Henry Barker, and his years in Nottingham. After the talk, the Chairman of Council, Professor John Beckett, thanked Mrs Henstock, and also the Honorary Secretary, Mrs Barbara Cast, for organising the event, and Wendy Richardson and her team for providing an excellent meal. Mr Robert Brackenbury led a guided tour of the church to complete the afternoon's events.



From left: Ann Hoskins, Adrian Henstock, Neville Hoskins, Valerie Henstock

~ The Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire ~
~ The County's Principal Historical Society ~
Visit the Thoroton Website at: www.thorotonsociety.org.uk

FORTHCOMING LECTURES

11th January: The Nora Witham Lecture

Thurgarton Priory: The Survival of the Medieval Fabric - Dr Jenny Alexander

Chair: Dr Trevor Foulds

Thurgarton Priory has come down to us in a reduced state, with part of its monastic buildings hidden by a later house. The church was restored in the 19th century, to create a usable structure from the medieval fragments that remained, in a restrained and sympathetic manner that blended the new with the old. As a result the extent of the medieval fabric of the priory that survives has not been fully understood. Recent research however, has managed to separate the 19th-century work from the medieval and has made very interesting discoveries that relate the church to the 14th-century sculptural work of the Southwell pulpitum and the Hawton Easter Sepulchre.

8th February: The Maurice Barley Lecture

The French Medieval Gentleman at Home - Professor Michael Jones

Chair: Dr Sarah Speight

France has a remarkable heritage of medieval buildings; the great Gothic cathedrals and major castles are well-known. Less familiar is the remarkable wealth of domestic buildings that survive in considerable numbers from the twelfth century onwards. Both medieval French urban and rural residences have recently attracted serious scholarly attention, combining documentary and material evidence in the tradition of which Maurice Barley was a consummate master. For twenty years Professor Jones has been involved in projects to survey medieval buildings, especially in Brittany and Burgundy, and has worked closely with the major French authorities charged with protecting them. In this extensively illustrated lecture, in honour of Maurice Barley, who personally knew some of the buildings discussed, these are set in a wide social and historical context. A major concern will be to highlight the domestic circumstances in which gentlemen and their ladies lived in France between the late Carolingian period and the Renaissance.

8th March: Sundials, Noon Dials and Meridian Lines - Mr Douglas Bateman, Secretary, British Sundial Society

Chair: Mr Neville Hoskins

The word 'sundial' usually brings to mind the traditional horizontal dial, but there are many variations. Whilst starting on familiar ground, the talk will be about much more specialised dials that are used for an accurate time check at noon. These in turn can be used to check local apparent time and mean time. One designed by the speaker tells both types of time and the date. Part of the lecture will be about the simple meridian lines, concluding with the superb example in Bromley House library. This line, and the library, has associations with the mathematician George Green, Whitehurst of Derby, and map making.

**ALL THE ABOVE LECTURES TAKE PLACE AT 2.45PM AT THE YMCA,
SHAKESPEARE STREET**

Wednesday 15 January 2003, 1-2pm

Lunchtime Talk at the Weston Gallery, University of Nottingham

'Very lofty and large': The 1769 Plans and Inventories for Nottingham Castle – Dr Trevor Foulds

Admission free but book in advance on 0115 8467777

REPORTS ON LECTURES

12 October: *The East Midlands Earthworks Project* - Dr Sarah Speight

In 1994 Dr Sarah Speight lectured to the Society on the county's early medieval castles (see *Transactions*, vol XCVIII, 58-70), and since being appointed to a full-time position in the University of Nottingham's



School of Continuing Education a couple of years ago she has re-started her work, with the help of a team of volunteers. The early results of her search for the lesser known castles of the East Midlands was presented to members in the first lecture of the 2002-3 session. Dr Speight (pictured here with Dr Chris Salisbury) described how her team work to identify castles, and gave an outline of their method using as her examples Castle Donington, Morley, Castle Bytham, Egmonton and Pilsbury. She estimates that there were more than 200 castles in the East Midlands, of which no fewer than sixty were in Lincolnshire, and that the reason why so few of these

have been known about in the past is a mixture of documentation, or, to be more accurate, the absence of documentation, and a stubborn belief that castles were always associated with political issues. Many castles, she argued, were homes, not fortified sites. The project is ongoing, and anyone wanting to join Dr Speight's team should contact her at the University, or by email: sarah.speight@nottingham.ac.uk. This was an excellent lecture by the Society's archaeology editor, and we look forward to more from her as the project unfolds.

John Beckett

9 November: *The Nottinghamshire History Lecture*

The Good Old Days: the Victorian Working Class Diet in Nottingham - Dr Denise Amos

This was not a lecture for anyone with a fragile stomach. The thought of contracting tuberculosis from ice cream, or something dire from a rogue set of fish and chips, let alone the difficulties of distinguishing adulterated from safe food, was something with which every Victorian working-class housewife had to grapple. Armed with minimal kitchen tools, if, indeed, she even had a kitchen, and cursed by an inadequate budget which probably forced her to feed the family in a monotonous manner, she was never likely to be much of a chef. Consequently the majority of working-class families in Nottingham relied on bread as their staple diet, supplemented with milk, meat (especially bacon), and other occasional delicacies such as jam on bread! This was a fascinating lecture that brought back all too many childhood memories for many in the audience. If you missed it, the graphic details will be in the next *Transactions*!

John Beckett

Architectural Attraction

Around 8.30am on Sunday 17 November the ambitious plans of Professor Terry Bennett to celebrate the life and work of the flamboyant Nottingham architect Watson Fothergill visually came nearer fruition.

About that time, dictated by the need to restrict traffic on George Street, a giant crane hoisted a 12ft replica metal finial onto the top of the spire on the architect's former offices at 15 George Street. The original finial, now disfigured by corrosion, was of cast iron. Its replacement is of welded steel, created over a period of four weeks by local craftsmen guided by original drawings and old photographs.

University of Nottingham Professors Terry Bennett and Sheila Gardiner have privately purchased and are fully restoring 15-17 George Street. They intend to display in the architect's upstairs offices not only his achievements, but also the work of his architectural contemporaries in Nottingham, and later regionally and nationally.

If weather permits the completion of the external work - three attempts were needed to fit the finial on its rain-swollen base - the building itself should be ready this month. Fitting out with exhibition material could be achieved by next summer.

Ken Brand

Nottinghamshire Articles

Members' attention is drawn to the Georgian Group's *Journal*, vol XI (2001) which includes a number of contributions on Nottinghamshire. Giles Worsley has written a short piece on 'Sir Robert Clifton's Belvedere' at Clifton, which includes hitherto unpublished photographs showing the structure largely intact in the 1950s, and then roofless and derelict less than twenty years later. It was demolished about 1969. Peter Smith, of English Heritage, contributes a superb article on 'Lady Oxford's Alterations at Welbeck Abbey, 1741-55', which, although described modestly by the author as a 'first attempt', actually adds significantly to our understanding of the architectural history of Welbeck. If you don't have easy access to the journal ask your local library to acquire a copy.

Neville Hoskins

How different it all was 130 years ago...

At a meeting earlier this year of the Amenity Societies Group and members of Nottingham City Council Leisure & Community Services held at Lenton Grove, the radical changes to Nottingham's museums envisaged under the Forward Plan for the Museums Service ensured a lively discussion.

Wollaton Hall's future was the main topic for consideration, within which the virtual closure of the industrial museum and cramming the natural history collection into the stable block, already earmarked for upgraded catering facilities, became the biggest issues. How different it was 130 years ago...

On 19 January 1872 Sir Henry Cole, KCB, Director of the South Kensington Museum, wrote to the Mayor of Nottingham, in which he proposed the establishment in Nottingham of a Museum connected with that at South Kensington. The main reason for choosing Nottingham above all other provincial towns and cities was the prime position nationally that the Nottingham School of Art had attained under the leadership of its principal J S Rawle.

In fact he noted this feat in his letter when he warmly urged the town to adopt further measures for maintaining the high position, which the School of Art had attained, and 'extending the influence and advantages of further art education by the establishment of a Museum of Science and Art, especially illustrative of those industries which have given to Nottingham the eminent position it holds among the great manufacturing centres of the United Kingdom'.

For such a Museum he foresaw and predicted a great career of usefulness. 'Nottingham', he noted, 'is distinguished for possessing Public Gardens, a Natural History Museum, and a Public Library.'

The Town Council, led enthusiastically by the Mayor. W.G. Ward, took up Cole's challenge at their next meeting and set in motion a chain of events which culminated in the acquisition, conversion and opening of Nottingham Castle as the country's first provincial museum of art.

Ken Brand

(with a little help from T.C. Hine)

PRESS RELEASES

Nottingham: A History by Christopher Weir

Drawing on many years of research, Chris Weir gives a unique insight into the extent of change in Nottingham over the past century, and explores and explains the impact on the city and its people. This illustrated hardback book is price £14.99, and is published by Phillimore & Co Ltd., Shopwyke Manor Barn, Chichester, West Sussex, PO20 2BG. E-mail bookshop@phillimore.co.uk

Bold as a Lion: The Life of Bendigo – Champion of England by J P Bean

'In his meticulously researched book, author J P Bean chronicles the champion's travels and fights and anecdotes from his colourful life. He is a worldwide Nottingham hero, but one who has been largely ignored. J P Bean's book will help to put the record straight.' *Nottingham Evening Post*

Special offer: £7.95 post free (a discount of £2 on the bookshop price) if obtained direct from the publishers, D & D Publications, PO Box 225, Sheffield, S11 7DD. E-mail DDPublications@aol.com

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Details of persons who are members of the Society are held on a computer database. You have a right of access to the information held thereon. Information is not divulged to third parties. Any queries should be addressed to the Membership Secretary.

Keith Goodman

Please send contributions for *Newsletter* No. 31 by 14 February 2003 to Janice Avery, Department of History, University of Nottingham, Nottingham NG7 2RD (telephone 0115 951 5929, fax 0115 951 5948, or e-mail janice.avery@nottingham.ac.uk). The views expressed in the *Newsletter* are not necessarily those of the Editor, the Society or its Council.