



No. 35: Spring 2004

Thorotonians in the Rain

When does a lecture turn into an excursion? Our President, Neville Hoskins, snapped this unlikely picture on 14 February when the lecture hall at the YMCA had to be temporarily cleared due to a fire alarm. As it was raining outside members and visitors attending the Maurice Barley lecture sheltered across the road under the overhang of the former funeral directorship. The picture opposite shows, from left to right, Ann Hoskins, chairman John Beckett, Dr David Crook and Professor Christopher Dyer. The interruption might have been shorter, but for the ten minutes it took the fire brigade to arrive from roughly 50 yards along Shakespeare Street! Fortunately it was a false alarm and Professor Dyer delivered the rest of his lecture without further mishap.



John Beckett

The Maurice Barley Lecture: 14 February 2004

'Another Consumer Revolution? Economic and Social changes in the Later Middle Ages'



Professor Christopher Dyer, FBA, delivered the 13th Maurice Barley lecture on the subject of consumer demand in post-Black Death England. Professor Dyer, who is Professor of Regional and Local History at Leicester University, and Director of the Centre for English Local History, combined artefactual, documentary and archaeological evidence to show that in the 150 or so years following the great plague of 1348-9 consumers enjoyed considerable wealth, reflected in their spending power (on both

food and other goods), their emulation of those socially 'above' them (through house styles, clothes etc.), their purchase of luxury goods including pottery and jewellery, and their pursuit of fashion, for which the best evidence is shoes. He argued that there was a great deal of consuming going on in these years, and that those historians who have seen economic growth as happening only when population was rising have failed to recognise that the two are not necessarily linked. In a lecture laced with contemporary examples, Professor Dyer gave a fascinating account of life in peasant and town households during the late Middle Ages. Maurice Barley would have enjoyed it immensely!

Photograph (above): Professor Christopher Dyer, with Mrs Diana Barley and Professor John Beckett.

With this Newsletter please find papers for the AGM.

Do join us at Keyworth if you can, for what is always an enjoyable occasion - more information on Keyworth inside...

~ The Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire ~

~ The County's Principal Historical Society ~

Visit the Thoroton Website at: www.thorotonsociety.org.uk

KEYWORTH – HOST TO THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Keyworth village has a population of around 7,000 and serves mainly as a commuter place for Nottingham, although the British Geological Survey is a significant employer. The village was mentioned in Domesday, but Roman and pre-Roman finds in 2001 suggested a much longer existence. Until the 19th century it was linear with farmhouses and cottages flanking a quarter-mile long street, now Main Street. At the northern end was the village church, manor farm, village cross, pump and pinfold; only the church remains. The windmill was demolished in the 1950s. A medieval barn remains on Main Street.

The early village had three open fields containing around 3,000 strips plus a large common, which was enclosed by act of 1798. In the 1860s the main source of employment was framework knitting, but only two workshops now survive. Nonconformity came to the village reasonably early and the original chapel can be seen at the end of Elm Avenue as part of a private house. Part of the old village is a Conservation Area and there is a nature Reserve on its southern edge.

Howard Fisher

MORE REPORTS OF LECTURES

Saturday 13 December: *'Your Body Belongs to Me': The Role of the Coroner*: Dr Nigel Chapman

An excellent and informative presentation and talk was given by Dr Nigel Chapman, Her Majesty's Coroner for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, in December 2003. Although the subject matter was extremely serious and thought-provoking, Dr Chapman was an entertaining speaker and members enjoyed a fascinating glimpse into the work of this important figure in our county. Amongst some of the awful facts of Dr Chapman's job, there were some hopeful signs such as the drop in deaths on Nottingham's ring road due to the installation of speed cameras, and the decreased number of fire deaths because of the introduction of domestic smoke detectors. Another role of the Coroner entails making decisions on finds of 'treasure', and Dr Chapman also illustrated this aspect of his work. This was another excellent lecture to round off 2003's superb programme. **BarbaraCast**



Saturday 10 January: The Nora Witham Lecture – *18th-Century Town Houses in Nottingham*:



Mr Peter Smith. The first lecture of 2004 was presented by one of our members, Peter Smith, and attracted an unusually large audience. Peter has worked for English Heritage for many years, and is now their Designation Team Leader for the North, his brief covering listed buildings, ancient monuments, and historic gardens and landscapes from Doncaster to the Scottish Border.

The Victorians photographed many important buildings that were later destroyed, and Peter showed slides of long-lost houses around the Market Place and the Oriental Café on Wheeler Gate. Of particular interest were the rarely seen elevations and plans of the Plumtre House on Stoney Street, which preceded the more familiar version.

Peter showed photographs new to many of us, including the deplorable state of Newdigate House's interior before its restoration in the 1960s. He reminded us that fresh information is still to be found, eg the plethora of

Venetian windows on Enfield House, Low Pavement, which he had thought unique until a recent visit to Ludlow proved otherwise. This was a stimulating lecture that left everyone feeling they had learned a great deal. A guided walk will be arranged as a result of this lecture; further details soon. **Neville Hoskins**

THE EAST MIDLANDS COLLECTION, UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM

Thoroton Society members can borrow books from the East Midlands Collection (Hallward Library, University of Nottingham) if they wish; to do so they need a card from the main counter on Level 2, and will require a passport type photo, plus proof of membership of the Society, plus proof of name and address. Those members with Internet access can consult the catalogue online, which is on the following website: (<http://aleph.nottingham.ac.uk/ALEPH>), although not all EMC is catalogued online yet - much remains on the old card catalogue. Members are also very welcome to use the manuscript collections (as are all members of the public) and for this would additionally need to register with the library (which needs proof of name and address). Descriptions of collections are on the website (<http://mss.library.nottingham.ac.uk/>), as are detailed catalogues of some of the collections.

Corinne Fawcett

OBITUARY - Byron Paul Barrett

Byron was born 78 years ago in West Bridgford, and passed away on Friday 12 December 2003. He was a man of many parts and interests. As a young boy he had stage dancing lessons, and his interest in the theatre brought him into contact with his future wife, with whom he had a daughter, Jane.

Byron was born into the family business of fabrics and carpet supply and fitting, which he followed as his career. The family moved into the city for a spell, then back to West Bridgford where he lived for the rest of his life.

From about 1955 he helped with the Nottingham Museum Society, which led to him becoming one of the founder members of the Friends of Nottingham Museums. This he continued with, taking many active roles within the Friends and helping with the summer outing arrangements. He also helped with the cave tours of Broadmarsh and the sand mine tours in Peel Street, and with Wollaton Hall tours.

Byron was a member of the Heraldic Society, Brass Rubbing Society, Nottingham Civic Society, and gave magic lantern displays at Newstead Abbey, as well as being a cinema projectionist. He had a great interest in clocks, and his collection took up much of his home. He was a quiet, unassuming gentleman, who will be greatly missed by the many Societies with which he was associated. He was keeper of the Book Sales stock, which he brought to each monthly meeting of the Thoroton Society. **Robert Creates**

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE HISTORY ON THE WEB

Collect Britain: Putting History in Place – this is the British Library's largest digitisation project to date. By Summer 2004 an impressive 100,000 images and sounds from the BL's world-renowned collections should be available on line. Two collections which might be of interest to members are *The Notebooks of Samuel Hieronymus Grimm (covering the period 1773-1794)* – this includes 2,500 drawings Grimm made for Sir Richard Kaye, who eventually became Dean of Lincoln; and *Early Ordnance Survey Maps of Nottinghamshire* – including interactive images of maps for the Newark area, Nottingham and south west Nottinghamshire and the Trent valley north of Newark. Check out www.collectbritain.co.uk.



Jones' View of the Seats, Mansions, Castles, &c (1829) - Wonderfully detailed images of some of Nottinghamshire's county houses as they appeared in the early 19th century come from this publication, described as 'a sort of 19th century "Doomsday Book" of many of the fine stateley homes in the British Isles'. The illustration shows the second Worksop Manor, designed by James Paine to replace the Elizabethan mansion burned down in 1761. Only one wing was completed and it was demolished in the 1840s. See

www.antiquemapsandprints.com/geography-travels/BOOK-JONES-SEAT.

Nottinghamshire and Domesday Book - David Roffe, a respected scholar whose research interests include the Danelaw, landscape history, church history, and insanity in the Middle Ages, includes on www.roffe.freereserve.co.uk papers on pre-Conquest Nottingham and on the Nottinghamshire Domesday.

Historical Directories Project, Leicester University - Leicester University is currently running a project to establish a digital library of 18th, 19th and early 20th century local and trade directories from England and Wales. Directories of counties and towns are among the most important sources for local and genealogical studies. Nottinghamshire trade directories already on line include White's county directories for 1832 and 1885-86, and Wright's directory of Nottingham, 1905. Check out www.historicaldirectories.org.

Nottinghamshire History and Archaeology - The Nottinghamshire History and Archaeology site contains numerous texts on a wide variety of subjects, from an article on the Fight at Willoughby Field during the English Civil War, to a guided tour through the late Victorian streets of Nottingham courtesy of *Allen's Illustrated Guide* to the town. Other resources include complete online versions of Cornelius Brown's *History of Nottinghamshire*, White's *History of Worksop*, and a diverse collection of articles drawn from early *Transactions of the Thoroton Society*. See www.nottshistory.org.uk. **Andy Nicholson**

Many prestigious organisations and institutions at home and overseas are members of the Thoroton Society: here are some notes about one of them. The **New England Historic Genealogical Society** was founded in 1845-52 years before the Thoroton Society. It started because of an increasing interest amongst the inhabitants of New England in tracing their ancestry back to the first settlers. In 1964 it moved into its present home in the prestigious Back Bay District of Boston. Its five storey building houses one of the finest genealogical libraries in the country and many other records of interest to researchers-many of which can be consulted on line. It has 20,000 members and in 2000 lent out 23,000 books. See their website at www.nehgs.org for further details and to take a virtual tour of their building. **Keith Goodman**

MERIDIAN LINE ACCURACY

Members will remember that when Mr Douglas Bateman spoke to the Society on Sundials, he showed us pictures of the rare meridian line at Bromley House. He had previously made it operational by installing an aperture plate in the south window, and was able last year to adjust it.

On 17 January this year bright winter sunshine at the appropriate time enabled the accuracy of the installation to be demonstrated. Mr Bateman

had provided a table giving local Solar Noon, and as a clear image of the sun was projected on to the door case it was fascinating to watch it move slowly across to the upright bearing the vertical line, which bisected the sun's image precisely at the forecast time of 12.14 and 28 seconds GMT. Modern watches radio-controlled from Rugby are a great help in this sort of exercise!
Neville Hoskins

WOLLATON VILLAGE DOVECOTE MUSEUM

The new season at Wollaton Village Dovecote Museum – which enjoyed record attendances last year – opens on Sunday 9 May, and will continue on 13 June, 11 July and 8 August, as well as Heritage Weekend on Saturday and Sunday, 11 and 12 September. Some Saturdays might also be included.

For the first time the museum will levy a modest charge of 50p for adults. A vast collection of school photographs, some not yet seen, will be on show – but the highlight will be an exhibition in June marking the 60th anniversary of the D-Day landings. Anyone who can help with exhibits for the D-Day displays, please contact the curator Mrs Maureen Jones on 0115 9282567. Mrs Jones can also arrange group visits to the four centuries old listed building.
Emrys Bryson

BOOKS

Alabaster Images of Medieval England compiled by Francis Cheetham, (Boydell & Brewer, 2003) is an exhaustive catalogue of the remaining examples of these exquisite carvings, much of the alabaster having been carved in Nottingham and the Midlands. Many were exported throughout Europe, and a large number in England were destroyed during the Reformation. Francis Cheetham, who Thoroton Society members will remember gave the Keith Train lecture last year, lists some 2,400 carvings and includes over 400 photographs. The book is available to members of the Society at the special discounted price of £67.50, instead of the usual £90. Further details from Sean Andersson, Boydell & Brewer Ltd, tel 01394 412900, website www.boydell.co.uk.

The Robin Hood Companion by Ronan Coghlan (207pp, 2003, price £7.99 UK) is a complete guide to the famous outlaw in legend, literature and on screen and stage. The first part of this publication contains an A-Z guide of the characters, places and topics in the Robin Hood mythology from medieval times to the present day. The second is a translation into modern English verse of the ballad epic *A Little Gest of Robin Hood*. The book can be ordered from booksellers, www.Amazon.co.uk, or direct from the publisher – if ordering from the latter it is post-free in the UK; orders from Europe should include £1.01 for postage and handling. Cheques are payable to Ronan Coghlan. For further details contact Xiphos Books, tel 028 91458579, or e-mail excalibur@bangor.fsbusiness.co.uk.

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