

THOROTON



No. 42: Winter 2005

CHANGE OF VENUE FOR THOROTON LECTURES

With the December 2005 lecture, the Thoroton Society will bring to an end a long association with the YMCA as our lecture venue. The building will be redeveloped during 2006, and the lecture hall will disappear. We will be moving around the corner to the **Nottingham Mechanics on North Sherwood Street**. Although the Nottingham Mechanics was established in 1837, the current building dates from 2003, and the facilities will, we believe, prove to be excellent for future Thoroton events. We are grateful to our Programme Secretary, Leslie Cram, and to Council members Peter Reddish and Bob Creates for all their hard work in arranging the transfer. Details of our Spring Lecture Programme for next year can be found on page 2 - but remember to go to the **NOTTINGHAM MECHANICS** (and not to the YMCA), for our usual 2.45pm start. To find the Nottingham Mechanics, imagine you are leaving the YMCA, turn right, walk along to the traffic lights at North Sherwood Street, then turn right, and it is on your left-hand side more or less immediately.

REPORT ON ANNUAL LUNCHEON 5 NOVEMBER 2005

Remember, remember, the fifth of November. Well, it may not have been an explosive event, but the Annual Luncheon was thoroughly enjoyed by all those who attended. The venue on this auspicious day (which was the 400th anniversary of the foiling of the Gunpowder Plot) was the West Retford Hotel, Retford, the lunch was excellent, and we were very well looked after in most attractive surroundings - a very well cared-for grand Georgian house.

We usually have a speaker to talk on something appropriate after lunch, but this year we tried something different, which appeared to go down very well with members. A number of luncheon guests were asked to find a piece of writing appropriate to the day to read to the assembled party. And we were presented with a wide variety, from doggerel rhyme to sober recording of the events of 1605. Altogether, the Thoroton Lunch of 2005 was an enjoyable, amusing and entertaining event. Where should we hold it next year - any suggestions?



Picture above: Chairman Professor John Beckett, Hon Secretary Mrs Barbara Cast, President Mr Neville Hoskins.

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

SPRING LECTURE PROGRAMME 2006

Lectures will in future be held at 2.45pm at the NOTTINGHAM MECHANICS, 3 NORTH SHERWOOD STREET, NOTTINGHAM, unless stated otherwise (see p.1 for directions). A bookstall will be available from 2.15pm. Updates of all events are published in this quarterly Newsletter, sent free to members, and on Thoroton's website at www.thorotonsociety.org.uk. We leave our old venue with some sadness, but wish the redevelopment well. We welcome our new venue; and the lecture programme will continue at its current high standard.

Saturday 14 January: The Nora Witham Lecture *Nottinghamshire and Place Names - Paul Cullen*

Dr Cullen is research fellow in English Place Names in the Institute for Name Studies at the University of Nottingham. He is currently working on two books, namely *The Place-Names of Kent, vol. 1*, and *The Vocabulary of English Place Names*.

The English Place-Name Society (founded 1923) aimed to survey the placenames of all the counties of England. Nottingham University has been its home since 1968; the Institute for Name Studies now houses the Survey of English Place Names and several other research projects on both place and personal names. The Society publishes the results of the survey county by county in a series of volumes that explain the meaning and origin of names. The volume on Nottinghamshire was published in 1940, with information such as *River Trent*: a pre-English name from British trisantona, possibly meaning 'strongly-flooding (river)'; and *Nottingham*: Anglo-Saxon, first recorded as Snotengaham in a ninth-century charter, 'village of the followers of a man called Snot'. The initial 'S' was lost in the twelfth century, since it was difficult for Norman-French people to pronounce. Dr Cullen will bring us up to date with information on our county.



Picture: detail from map of Nottinghamshire by Saxton in 1576

Saturday 18 February:

The Gardens of Robert & John Smythson at Wollaton Hall - Peter Smith

Peter Smith has been employed by English Heritage as an inspector of historic buildings for many years. A Thoroton Society member, he has played an active part in lecturing to us and in taking excursions. Recently he has worked on Wollaton Hall's gardens and published his results in the *Journal of the Garden History Society*, Spring 2004, "The sundial garden and house plan mount, two gardens at Wollaton Hall, Nottinghamshire by Robert and John Smythson". His lecture will dovetail with a visit to the gardens in May.

Wollaton Hall's gardens have received scant attention by historians. The talk will explore the extent of the original garden which Robert Smythson planned, and the sundial which was the central feature. It will explain how the garden was extended by John Smythson for Percival Willoughby, and discuss the house plan mount. It will also show how much of these gardens still survive today, hidden beneath the various later remodellings.

Saturday 11 March: The Maurice Barley Lecture

Vernacular stone in the buildings of Nottinghamshire - Graham Lott



Dr Lott is Building Stone Specialist at the British Geological Survey in Keyworth. He has worked as a geologist in the British Geological Survey (BGS) since 1971, specializing in the study of sedimentary rocks. Following the completion and publication of a new map showing the distribution and geology of historic building stone quarries throughout the country (*The Building Stone Resources of the UK*), he published numerous papers and articles on Britain's building stone industry, and continues to answer enquiries for the BGS on all aspects of UK building stones.

Dr Lott's particular interest is the use of local stone for building, and there are still some fine examples of stone buildings in Nottinghamshire - for example, The Manor House, Costock (pictured above). His talk will illustrate the diversity of this stone-built heritage, a heritage which is now under considerable threat from increasingly bland developments, and from a shortage of local stone quarries producing material - not only for repair and conservation, but also in an attempt to encourage new building in traditional local stones.

REPORTS OF LECTURES AND EXCURSIONS

Saturday 8 October: 'The 17th century Book of Games by Francis Willughby of Wollaton' -

Dr Dorothy Johnston, Keeper of Manuscripts & Special Collections, University of Nottingham

Dorothy's lecture treated us to images showing different forms of games, woodcuts of games in progress, the homes of the Willoughby family at Middleton in Warwickshire (which the Society visited in May), and Wollaton Hall, and illustrations from the Book of Games itself. Both Francis Willughby (b.1635) and his lifelong friend John Ray were early members of the Royal Society, founded 1660. John and Francis travelled in England, Wales and on the continent, observing and collecting. This classification of the observable world was going on in England fifty years before Linnaeus from Sweden produced his *Systema Naturae* in 1735. Francis died when he was 36, leaving his work almost entirely in notebooks and specimens, and Ray worked on his notes on fishes and birds in order to get these subjects published. But the Book of Games was handed down over the years, to eventually reside amongst the Middleton papers held by Nottingham University under Dorothy's care. She worked with David Cram and Jeffrey Forgeng, and the Book of Games is now published.

Leslie Cram

Saturday 10 September - Excursion to Merevale Hall



The day began and continued with rain, but this did not dampen our spirits. The first visit was to the Gatehouse Chapel to Merevale Abbey. We were welcomed by the vicar, Janet Casper, who spoke about the church past and present, pointing out some of the medieval stained glass windows. Afterwards local historian Mrs Rita Poulson answered many questions. We then went down to the Abbey ruins, in the grounds of Abbey Farm. The churchwarden and Mrs Poulson spoke of the history of the Abbey itself, after which we went into Atherstone for lunch. The town has livened up in the last couple of years and is promoting itself as a book town, and has a tiny museum celebrating its history as a hatting centre.

The afternoon was spent at Merevale Hall, where Mr Matthew Dugdale (left) showed us around. The house was fascinating:

it had been neglected for a number of years until Mr Dugdale and his family spent much time and money on its restoration. Our interest was in one of the family's ancestors - Sir William Dugdale, the antiquary, who wrote the *Antiquities of Warwickshire* in 1656 and who advised Dr Thoroton when he was writing on Nottinghamshire. Adrian Henstock told us about the Thoroton/Dugdale connection, and a number of relevant documents were laid out for us in the library, a particularly beautiful room. The whole tour was enlivened by many family reminiscences. We visited the garden, before taking a splendid tea at Mansetter Memorial Hall.

Penny Messenger and Margaret Trueman

LAXTON

The seemingly never-ending saga of what happens next at Laxton took a turn for the better when the trustees of the Visitors' Centre met with Chris Bouchier, the Crown Estate's Director of Rural Estates, on 21 October 2005. Mr Bouchier assured the trustees that the Crown Estate wished to see the open field system conserved for future generations, and would do what it could to maintain the integrity of the village. As a sign of goodwill on the

part of the Crown Estate, he made a generous offer to fund improved disability access to the Visitors' Centre, and asked the village farmers if they would come up with proposals as to how the Crown might help them with their work. Since five of the farmers, and one of the small holders, were at the meeting, they had reason to go away with some reassurance, in what everyone acknowledged were difficult days for agriculture.

John Beckett

ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

Volume 2 of the Victoria County History for Nottinghamshire is now available on line. It contains accounts of all the religious houses, friaries and medieval hospitals in the county. Although written in 1910, it still has a good deal of useful information worth consulting - see <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/source.asp?pubid=245>.

The Thoroton Society's own Heritage Gateway continues to receive a good press. *Local History News*, the newsletter of the British Association for Local History, commented in its Summer 2005 edition that 'The Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire maintains and develops the Nottinghamshire Heritage Gateway on its website. The aim is to provide a guide to heritage resources to help researchers, to give access to appropriate websites and introduce relevant sources, and also to publish online an authoritative history of Nottinghamshire. Arranged by Research Pathways - ie topics - the site is clear, easy to navigate, and informative. And it is continually growing as more material is added. Ideally websites like this should be available throughout the country': check it out at www.thorotonsocietv.org.uk/gateway/htm.

**MANY HAPPY RETURNS TO OUR PRESIDENT, NEVILLE HOSKINS,
who will be celebrating his 80th birthday on 31 December!**

BLUE PLAQUES IN THE EAST MIDLANDS

The Blue Plaque Scheme, which will be well known to anyone who walks through London, is gradually being extended to cover the rest of England, and was rolled out in the East Midlands this year. English Heritage is looking to commemorate local people of national or international importance, in their

local context, and aims to work in partnership with local and regional groups. For further information regarding the Scheme, and the criteria for English Heritage plaques, see Thoroton Society's website at this address: http://www.thorotonsociety.org.uk/Thoroton_Society/whatsnew/blueplaques.htm.

NINETEENTH-CENTURY ENGRAVINGS OF NOTTINGHAM

Dorothy Ritchie and Mandy Hodgson of the Local Studies Library at Angel Row have recently been involved in the reprinting of four 19th-century engravings of Nottingham. These are available for sale in all city libraries, and can also be ordered through Angel Row Library's website at www.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/libraries. The prints are available in two sets, each priced £2.50:

Set 1: Nottingham from the North Road, 1813; Wollaton Hall from the River Trent, 1812

Set 2: Nottingham Market Place, 1836; Nottingham Park, 1837.

THE FUTURE OF SHERWOOD

The future of Sherwood was the theme of a one-day conference held on 20 September at Thoresby Riding School, and organized by the Sherwood Advisory Group and Nottinghamshire County Council. Paddy Tipping, MP, gave the keynote address, followed by presentations from key players, including members of the Forestry Commission, English Nature, East Midlands Regional Assembly and Notts. County Council. Delegates included representatives of these bodies plus the National Trust, CPRE, local history societies, and the Thoroton Society.

The conference looked at the protection and management over the next 50 years of various characteristic Sherwood habitats, which by

2055 should, it is hoped, cover at least 95% of their 1835 range (as illustrated by George Sanderson's map).

Although a good deal of the conference concentrated on the natural environment, the proposed Regional Park status for the Sherwood area has implications for the future protection of what was once a medieval Royal forest, with tourism, education and recreational opportunities all being set to increase.

The ultimate aim is to ensure that Sherwood Forest's unique heritage is conserved and enhanced for the benefit of everyone, before it is passed on safely for the pleasure and inspiration of future generations.

Philip Jones

DERBYSHIRE RECORD OFFICE AND DERBY DIOCESAN RECORD OFFICE

Derbyshire County Council's Record Office is the archive office for the county of Derbyshire, city of Derby and the diocese of Derby, holding four miles of original documents. It is legally appointed to hold and make available to the public archives of all types - official, ecclesiastical, business, family, society, school, hospital, industrial, etc - of Derbyshire origin, from the Middle Ages to the present.

The Search Room is open free of charge to members of the public who have registered as users, at the following times: 9.30am-4.45pm Monday to Friday; 9am-12.30pm one Saturday each month (please contact for specific dates). If you wish to look at microform material, you will need to book a reader in advance; email record.office@derbyshire.gov.uk or tel 01629 585347. Check out their website at www.derbyshire.gov.uk/recordoffice.

**Please send contributions for *Newsletter* No 43 by 1 February 2006 to Janice Avery,
email: janaver@waitrose.com. The views expressed in the *Newsletter* are not
necessarily those of the Editor, the Society or its Council.**
