

THOROTON NEWSLETTER



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

Born on his father's birthday, the death of Neville Hoskins on his own eightieth birthday, the last day of the year, brought a 'round' end to a life well lived. From relatively 'ordinary' beginnings as the fourth child of the village draper in Wingate, County Durham, he took up a War Office-sponsored Engineering Cadetship at Constantine Technical College in Middlesbrough. It was here that he met Ann, his wife for over 54 years. Indeed, their Golden Wedding anniversary in 2001 was celebrated with a memorable garden party at Nottingham's Bromley House Library.

National Service took him via Bodmin Moor to Egypt, inspiring a lifelong interest in archaeology. Upon marriage he and Ann settled in Nottingham, where they would spend almost all their married life, acquiring two children, David and Sarah, along the way. Neville originally worked with the Ordnance Survey (his claim to fame being to have set the base line for what became the first motorway in the UK, then the Preston by-pass); later for the Severn-Trent Water Authority and its forerunners.

Following retirement in 1984, an already flourishing career on the local lecture circuit was expanded through the WEA and the Extra-Mural department of the University of Nottingham. His talks, illustrated with his own photography, on such diverse subjects as the River Trent, Tutankhamun, Heraldry, Maidens' Garlands and Local History, are still remembered, not least by his classes of visually impaired students, for whom he took infinite pains to prepare suitable alternative class materials. Neville qualified as a Blue Badge Guide for Nottinghamshire and East Midlands Tourist Boards, and undertook classes to improve his ability as a watercolour artist. Calligraphy and photography were further hobbies and outlets for his artistic talent. He was a Justice of the Peace for 20 years and a Churchwarden for 19, while his own faith gave him the strength to offer comfort to others through his sensitive conducting of non-religious funeral services. He was also a deeply respected member of the Southwell Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches. Yet he still found the time to research and help write a guidebook for his daughter's tiny village church in Buckinghamshire – needless to say, finding historical connections with Nottingham in the process.

Neville joined the Thoroton Society in 1960, and progressed through a role on its Council, then as Vice Chairman, to become its President in 2001, enormously proud that 'a mere lad from a pit village' should be acknowledged by such an august and academic body. He was very involved with the running of the Society, including organizing outings and the Centenary celebrations, and quietly keeping an eye on plans for last year's Garden Party at Bromley House. He was delighted that the family connection would be maintained when his son David joined Thoroton Council in 2005. Neville was for many years a Director of Bromley House Library, 'holding court' there even on the day before his death, as every Friday.

Many local organisations benefited from his association, among them the Notts. Building Preservation Trust (of which he was a founder member), Nottinghamshire Centre of the National Trust, the Civic Society, Sherwood Venture Scouts, and the Talking Newspapers Service for the Blind. Especially those involved in local history, architecture and building preservation will miss his wise counsel and unassuming erudition. He delighted in sharing his wide knowledge, accumulated with a lively sense of enquiry over many years of reading and absorbing information. Typical of this modest man's self-deprecating style is the file he kept of his own published papers, labelled, no doubt with that familiar twinkle in his eye as he penned it: 'Fings wot I rote'. Despite the Damoclean threat of the illness that ultimately took his life, he showed a quiet courage and determination to live life as normally, and as fully, as possible. Thanks to Ann's constant support, he was able to do so to the very end.

The Hoskins Family

SUMMER EXCURSIONS PROGRAMME 2006

Please note that the Wollaton Hall Gardens visit has now moved to 6 May. We apologize for any inconvenience. Further details and booking forms will be sent with mailings

**Saturday 6 May: Visit to the Gardens of Robert & John Smythson at Wollaton Hall
Leader: Pete Smith**

**Saturday 27 May: Excursion to Creswell Crags and Hardwick Hall
Leader: Leslie Cram**

**Saturday 10 June: Excursion to Ashby-de-la-Zouch and Ticknall
Leader: John Beckett**

**Sunday 25 June: Evening visit to Willoughby House, Nottingham
Guide: Pete Smith**

**Thursday 20 July: Evening walking tour of Ashover village and church, Derbyshire
(own transport). Leader: Adrian Henstock**

**Saturday 9 September: Excursion to South Nottinghamshire and
North Leicestershire churches. Leader: Alan Langton**

Register of Nottinghamshire Events and Special Dates

You may recall that your Society requested details of the anniversaries of events in Nottinghamshire so that a register could be kept to aid publication and programme planning. The response was somewhat underwhelming, but I live in hope to receive information on interesting local events or the birth and death dates of people you think are special to your own patch or to the county as a whole.

Last year was, of course, the anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot and at the annual luncheon we explored the local connections with the intrigue. You may be interested that one Luke Akers, worthy of the City of Nottingham who died in 1631, left a bequest to Saint Peter's Church in order that charity sermons could be preached each year to give thanks for the country's deliverance. A second sermon was to commemorate the defeat of the Armada. It seems that the practice lapsed some time ago – does anybody know whether a special sermon was preached last November? Thank you to Peter Hoare for supplying that information.

This year is the 200th anniversary of the death of the Nottingham poet, Henry Kirke White, at the tender age of 21 years (see Terry Fry's article elsewhere in this Newsletter). We understand that there is to be a special event in St Mary's, Nottingham, to commemorate his life. Also look out in May this year for an exhibition in Christ Church, Cinderhill, marking the 150th anniversary of its consecration. I look forward to receiving more information from Society members – or you can pass details to any member of Council. Dates could be of births or deaths of notable Nottinghamshire people, battles, catastrophes, when buildings of note were erected etc. You can also contact me at the following email address: bjcast@aol.com.

Barbara Cast

HENRY KIRKE WHITE – Poet and Hymn Writer, 1785-1806

Henry was born on March 21st 1785 in Exchange Alley behind the Exchange Building, Nottingham, which was the precursor to the Council House now on the site. He was the second son of John White, a butcher whose premises were in the Shambles, a jumble of shops behind the Exchange. There were three sons and three daughters in the family, all baptised at the Independent Chapel, Castle Gate. However, Henry grew up to become a convinced supporter of the Church of England. In 1804 he studied under the guidance of the Rector of Wintringham, Lincolnshire.

Henry's mother, Mary Nevill, was the daughter of a Nottingham framework knitter but her father came from a long line of Staffordshire yeoman farmers. Kirke was the surname of his mother's Great Uncle Samuel, a Nottingham grocer. Mary was much better educated than her husband, and she opened a girls' school in 1798 or 1799.

It was obvious from a very early age that Henry was very bright. He started at Mrs Grassington's school at the age of three and stayed there for two years. Later he wrote a poem about his time there:-

First at the form, my task for ever true
A little favourite rapidly I grew.
And oft she stroked my head with fond delight
Held me a pattern to the dunce's sight.

At seven he was sent to the Nottingham Academy where Byron was a pupil in 1799. There Henry learnt English, Latin and Greek. At 13 he was the youngest member of the Nottingham Philosophical Society. From then until he was 18 he virtually taught himself law, chemistry, astronomy, electricity, mechanics and drawing. He was also a proficient musician and carpenter. He hoped to become a lawyer so studied oratory and when he was only 15 he gave a two hour lecture to a Nottingham Literary Society on the genius of Thomas Chatterton, who influenced his own poetry.

None of this appears to have impressed his father who had wanted him to be a butcher, although he was put to a stocking frame when he was 14: Henry hated it. But his mother came to the rescue and got him an apprenticeship with Coldham and Enfield, attorneys, of Rose Yard (now King John's Chambers). He worked hard from 8am to 8pm and studied and wrote poetry in his spare time but deafness denied him a career in law. When his health deteriorated due to tuberculosis, his enlightened employers gave him leave of absence for a month. He chose to stay in Wilford, writing poems in the little gazebo which stood in Saint Wilfrid's churchyard. Here he wrote:-

Here would I wish to sleep, this is the spot
Which I have long marked out to lay my bones in.

Sadly they are not.

When Henry was 17 he published a volume of poems which attracted much attention. One of the better known ones was 'The Fair Maid of Clifton' and another was 'Clifton Grove' in which were the controversial lines:-

Or, where the town's blue turrets dimly rise,
And manufacture taints the ambient skies,
The pale mechanic leaves the lab'ring loom,
The air-pent hold, the pestilential room,
And rushes out, impatient to begin
The stated course of customary sin.

In 1815 John Blackner, in 'The History of Nottingham', said that White should be horse-whipped for this libel of Nottingham's mechanics. Two hundred years later White's views seem not inappropriate for any Friday night in town.

In 1804 he was well enough to take up a place at Saint John's College, Cambridge, with financial help from his mother, brother and friends. His deafness was a handicap in lectures but he did well in all subjects except mathematics. He worked hard and, in June 1806, he won the University prize for classical

composition and was very excited to be first man of his year at Saint John's. But he still overworked to his ultimate cost.

Henry had suffered from tuberculosis for years and wrote about it in 'Dance of the Consumptives' and the autobiographical 'To Consumption'. But at Cambridge he also had to cope with insomnia and palpitations. At Christmas 1805 he wrote that his "nerves were miserably shattered". He had a fit in July 1806 and bled and blistered, normal treatment at that time. In a letter home he wrote that he was "well except for the doctors".

He died in his room at St John's on October 19th 1806: he was 21. He had written:-

I would not have my corpse cemented down
With brick and stone, defrauding the poor earthworm
Of its predestined dues.

In fact he was buried under a flagstone in All Saints Church, Cambridge. When the church was demolished in 1870 his remains were dug up and cremated. According to the Nottingham Guardian of June 7th 1930, his ashes were found in a dustbin in about 1927 and scattered in Wilford churchyard, but this has not been corroborated. However, in St Wilfrid's Church there is a fine marble medallion of him and a stained glass window bearing the words "In Memoriam HKW". At St John's Cambridge an American admirer paid for a marble tablet with profile and verse, still to be seen in the chapel.

There is a fine metal plaque in Exchange Arcade, Cheapside, on the site of Kirke White's birthplace. Originally a Holbrook plaque was erected on the actual dwelling but, when that was demolished prior to the erection of the Council House, another was put up on the wall of 17 High Pavement where White later lived. Now that plaque has also disappeared. On the colonnade at the Castle is a bronze bust of Henry, also donated by William S Holbrook. It was designed by Oliver Sheppard who included an allegorical figure of Genius on the pedestal.

How talented was Henry Kirke White? Byron, Southey, Wordsworth and Browning all admired his poetry, but Blackner accused him of plagiarism, with some justification. At his centenary banquet in 1906, Professor F Granger of University College said that Kirke White and his contemporaries, Gilbert Wakefield, Richard Parkes Bonington and Marshall Hall, were the most eminent persons Nottingham had ever produced, thus making it a "centre of genius and learning".

However, few people read White's poetry now, although one of the ten hymns he wrote, 'Oft in danger, oft in woe', is well known and still sung. One has to remember that Henry Kirke White wrote most of his poems and hymns while he was still a teenager but, in the end, his reputation was possibly exaggerated by his romantic and tragic early death.

Terry Fry

The Workhouse at Southwell

Students and researchers of the Poor Law and family historians with ancestors who were in the workhouse, will be interested in a new facility available at The National Trust's property, The Workhouse at Southwell. During the restoration of The Workhouse a wealth of research material was collected, most of which has not been accessible to the public. A team of volunteers has catalogued and organized the material, now housed in The Study Room, for learning groups and research colleagues to take full advantage of a professional service managed by trained volunteers familiar with the documentation held within the room. By paying a small annual fee and becoming a member of the Study Room, researchers will have access to various types of documentation relating to the development of the workhouse system, the Poor Laws, and The Workhouse, Southwell, including a database of known staff and inmates, and extracts from the Board of Guardians' minutes. A search service is available for more distant researchers. The National Trust also has a number of special interest tours available this year, including topics such as medicine and mortality, the Revd Becher, the Poor Laws, restoration, and the garden. It also hopes to run family history related study days and workshops. To book any of the above or for further details, contact the National Trust, telephone 01636 817260, or email: theworkhouse@nationaltrust.org.uk.

Philip Jones

REPORTS OF LECTURES

12 NOVEMBER 2005:

***'Southwell and Lincoln: The Early History of our Cathedrals'* – Philip Dixon**

Dr Dixon's running theme was the constant need for re-evaluation as opportunities present themselves, and as new techniques are developed. We heard from him a changing story of the relationship between the villa estate and Southwell minster, with continuity less in favour now than a hiatus in development between the Roman and early Saxon periods. The mosaic floor under the east transept is seen as belonging to the earlier Anglo-Saxon church. Detailed scrutiny has reviewed the impact of 19th-century work, with two archways providing access from crossing to chancel. A reinterpretation of the odd vestry area of the north aisle now sees it as an immersion baptistery with feretory above, providing a one-way system for Southwell's pilgrim traffic. And the Southwell stone was re-presented as one element of an evolving usage from tombstone to tympanum.



In Lincoln, we heard a re-interpretation of Richard Gem's startling early 1980's reading of the west front as a fortified Episcopal palace. Dr Dixon presented a fresh interpretation of the early Norman west front as a tower detached from the Anglo-Saxon church of St Mary, the latter forming the nave for Bishop Remigius's new east end of the 1080s-90s. The suggested parallel was with the Roman or Carolingian triumphal arch. At both Southwell and Lincoln, vestiges of Roman buildings impact upon the medieval minsters. Dr Dixon's excavations in Lincoln's Nettle Yard have reinforced the evidence for a late Roman building, with walls up to 12-feet thick, which had to be levelled for the construction of St Hugh's choir. Was this the governor's palace, and if so, just how much of it was still standing when Bishop Remigius arrived in the late eleventh century? We look forward to future updates from Dr Dixon

Sarah Speight

10 DECEMBER 2005: The Nottinghamshire History Lecture:

***'History and Performance in 19th-Century Nottingham'* – Jo Robinson**

Jo took us into the different political (with a small 'p') atmosphere of the nineteenth century, where it was possible to advertise in the local paper: 'Royal Alhambra Music Hall, Nottingham – wanted, 100 little girls from 6 to 12 to commence rehearsal on Monday next'. It would have been easy to 'wow' us with pictures of actors, the inside of theatres and the front of the Theatre Royal completed in 1865. But Jo gave us new approaches. One was from evidence for the low opinion of the theatre by the churches (the list of eminent guests at the Theatre Royal's opening was rich in civic dignitaries but poor in clergy). Another was the cartographical evidence for the importance of theatres. Using early Nottingham maps, Jo showed us how the position for the Theatre Royal came to be available. The street up to the Theatre Royal was originally called Theatre Street (where it led up to), but was soon changed to Market Street (where it led down to). This Christmas lecture maintained our tradition of academic quality, but was on the 'lighter side', before the mince pies awaiting us for our post-lecture refreshments. We look forward to seeing the lecture in the pages of our *Transactions*.



Leslie Cram

14 JANUARY 2006: The Nora Witham Lecture: *'Nottinghamshire and Place-Names' – Dr Paul Cullen*

At the beginning of the first lecture meeting of 2006, members stood in silence in tribute to our President, Neville Hoskins, who died on New Year's Eve. Professor Beckett expressed our appreciation of Neville and the affection in which he was held by everyone who knew him, and spoke of the outstanding contribution that Neville had made to the Society. Following this reflective start, held in our splendid new venue at the New Mechanics, we were pleased to welcome Dr Cullen, who gave a most interesting and entertaining lecture on Nottinghamshire and place-names. His trawl through the county's byeways and lanes had come up with some gems illustrating the fascinating background to the names we take for granted. Look more closely, Stapleford people, at the remarkable Saxon cross in the churchyard – Paul suggests this is the 'staple' which gave your village its name. If you live in Mansfield, can you identify the breast-shaped hill likely to have led to the naming of your town? If you live in Broxtowe, forget the badger; and in Beeston, forget the bees. There's more to a name than a first reading can tell you: many are more ancient than almost anything else we come across today: and each has a story to tell. Many thanks to Paul for a stimulating and colourful afternoon's lecture.



Barbara Cast

18 FEBRUARY 2006: *'The Gardens of Robert & John Smythson at Wollaton Hall' – Peter Smith (Senior Architectural Investigator, English Heritage)*

Peter's interest in the Wollaton Hall gardens started when he was introduced to Cassandra Willoughby's description of part of the garden laid out with box trees mimicking the plan of the house. As he was unable to find any reference to this in Robert Smythson's original design for the house, Peter undertook further research and discovered a plan by John Smythson, son of Robert, for a later remodelling of the formal gardens at Wollaton. Using images of the Smythsons' plans and his own sketches derived from the descriptions, Peter took us through the development of the gardens from its original concept to its present form. Robert's drawings showed a perimeter containing vegetable plots, an orchard and a parterre, with service buildings distant from the main house. This arrangement appears to have never been completed due to difficulties with the site, and John's remodelling introduced a mound off the terrace to the south of the house – referred to by Cassandra and shaped to match the house plan, including a raised level to match the prospect room. Its probable use was as a stage for players or musicians performing for house-guests on the garden terrace. The mound appears to have been inspired by Lord Bedford's house at Twickenham, and compares well with others at Oxford and Knole and similarities with Queen Mary's Bower at Chatsworth. Referring back to Robert Smythson's original plan, Peter then showed us a circular feature in the centre of the parterre, identified as a sundial, 35ft in diameter, which would have been clearly readable from the main house. Smythson is known to have designed sundials for Fountains Abbey and Worksop Manor and his parterre design was used at Hardwick, another of his masterpieces. Although the parterre at Wollaton has long gone, the centrepiece is still there in the form of a fish pond, and the garden terrace is the present Ha-Ha, overlooking the site of the mound, and now planted with cedar trees.

David Hoskins

Peter will be leading a visit to the gardens on Sunday 25 June.

Politics of the 4th Duke of Newcastle

The University of Nottingham has recently launched online access to resources from its Manuscripts and Special Collections on 'The Politics of the 4th Duke of Newcastle'. The website is intended as an e-learning tool which may be used by a variety of audiences, from school and university students to 'life-long learners'. Those people accessing the site will find digitized materials from Newcastle's diaries and correspondence as well as transcriptions of documents, scholarly commentary and a range of supporting resources including a timeline, biographies and cartoons from the period. Completed themes cover 'The South Nottinghamshire by-election of 1846' and 'Working Class Unrest in Nottingham' with a third theme, on Ireland before the famine, to be published in 2006. For further information check out the website at: <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/mss/online/newcastle-diaries/index.phtml>. Richard A Gaunt

R OWEN WOOD – 100 years old

Members of the Society will be delighted to know that one of our members, Owen Wood [*pictured left*] was 100 years old on 20 January. My wife and I visited him on the morning of his birthday at the Residential Home in East Leake where he now lives. Surrounded by cards and the telegram from the Queen, and looking forward to two parties, he still retains the old twinkle in his eye. Slightly surprised by all the fuss, Owen told us that he joined the Society in 1970 when he retired. At about that time he wrote *The Larger Dairy Herd*, and in 1999 at the age of 93 he wrote *The History of East Leake*. ‘Still got West Leake to do’, he said. He regularly attended excursions, and I remember how thrilled he was on one of the Centenary visits to be taken home in John Fox’s vintage car. ‘I went in one of these on my honeymoon’, he said. We wish him well as he commences his second century.



Keith Goodman

A TASTE OF HISTORY

On 26 November last the Society co-hosted a one-day seminar on the history of food at Bromley House Library. The bill of fare took us from ‘plenty’ to ‘want’ – reminding us of the unrivalled choice, access and variety of food we enjoy today. Mark Dawson examined how the Willoughby family provided for themselves at Wollaton Hall in the 16th century, whilst Carol Allison explored such 18th-century delicacies as ‘wiggs, puddings and pyes’. Denise Amos charted the history and development of school meals before World War II, and Sue Clayton discussed the experience of food rationing 1939-1954. This was a day for intellectual and gastronomic nourishment, and attenders were not disappointed in either respect. The speakers provided food for the audience to sample, and later papers in particular gave rise to an interesting range of reminiscences. This was the first event in what promises to be a popular annual gathering devoted to the subject. It has certainly whetted our appetites for more!



[*Pictured from left to right: standing, Sue Clayton, Carol Allison, Denise Amos; seated, Mark Dawson*]

Richard A Gaunt

Relocation of Manuscripts & Special Collections, University of Nottingham

The department is moving from the Hallward Library to the University’s King’s Meadow Campus, and will close from 13 April until August. The move has been prompted partly by the department’s space crisis. A User Group has been formed to support the project, (one member being Peter Reddish, of Thoroton Council). Leaflets are being distributed to local bodies, and you can check on its progress at: <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/mss>. Comments and enquiries are encouraged (email: mss-library@nottingham.ac.uk). The East Midlands Collection will be moving as well, though we anticipate it will be out of circulation for less time than the rare books and archives. Perhaps when the move is complete a visit can be offered to interested members of the Society.

Dorothy Johnston

Please send contributions for *Newsletter* No 44 by 24 April 2006 to Janice Avery, email: janaver1@yahoo.co.uk. The views expressed in the *Newsletter* are not necessarily those of the Editor, the Society or its Council