

THOROTON NEWSLETTER



No 50: Winter 2007

THE 2007 SOCIETY LUNCHEON - COMMEMORATING THOMAS HAWKSLEY



What a superb event it was! In honour of Thomas Hawksley, one of the greatest engineers of the Victorian period and designer of waterworks around the globe, we held our luncheon at Lakeside, the former Bestwood Pumping Station, one of Hawksley's creations. Members were impressed by the sympathetic way this former municipal building has been converted into a restaurant and function venue. Most of the beautiful Victorian decorative features are still on display and, with the remnants of the waterworks equipment, it is very atmospheric. Luncheon was held in the attractive Tower Room,

looking out onto the colourful gardens, which were bathed in the autumn sunlight. We enjoyed a delicious three-course meal which, along with the venue, surpassed expectations.

A little more on Thomas Hawksley: this year saw the bicentenary of his birth and, after the meal, Ken Brand and John Beckett told us of the life and achievements of this great son of Nottingham. He was born in Arnold on 12 July 1807 in Arnot Hill House, now Gedling Borough Council's headquarters. His father had been a successful manufacturer but, due to a series of misfortunes and international events, failed in his businesses, and died when Thomas was only eight. By then the family had moved into Nottingham. Young Thomas, despite the loss of his father and the family circumstances, overcame these early adversities to become a much sought after water and gas engineer and architect, eventually designing and building waterworks all over the country and abroad. He was a genius in his field to rival Telford and Brunel, so it is amazing that he is so little known, even in his own city.

We have members who rarely miss the annual luncheon, but we are aware that many of our members have never attended. Every year we try to find a different venue and, if possible, one that is associated with a special event and, after the meal, a short talk is given on the subject relevant to the location. Recent venues have included Belvoir Castle, Thoresby Hall, West Retford Hotel, the Saracen's Head in Southwell, Holme Pierrepont Hall and, an old favourite, the Great Hall at Southwell Minster. It will be hard to top this year's, but we will try - why not come next year if you have never experienced a Society Luncheon? 1 November 2008 - put it in your diary now!



Barbara Cast, Hon Sec; email bandpcast@btinternet.com

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

Members of the Society and their guests who attended the Annual Lunch will have heard about Thomas Hawksley. Currently Ken Brand (*pictured right*) is working with a team of people to prepare a booklet on Hawksley and his work, which it is intended to publish next summer, and which we hope will be available (perhaps at a discount) to Thoroton members. There is little doubt that Hawksley's work was of considerable international importance, but it is perhaps sad to think that by the end of his life he had come reluctantly to realize that providing running water and effective sewage disposal was not the complete answer to the high death rates in poor areas of towns. It was this belief which spurred him to undertake the work he did in Nottingham, and then to report on it to the Royal Commission in the 1840s; but in the longer term it was not the only Victorian reform which was critical for improving urban (and especially infant) mortality rates.



John Beckett

Photographs (front page and above) taken at the Annual Luncheon

GIFT AID

Claiming the tax back from the Inland Revenue on membership subscriptions under Gift Aid legislation provides the Society with valuable extra funds. But a recent Budget change means that the amount we can reclaim is being reduced. It is also important that the Society's records of Gift Aid Declarations by members are fully accurate and up-to-date.

We therefore intend to ask members, when they next pay their subscription, to renew their Gift Aid Declaration. A simple form will be sent out with the coming subscription renewal

request, and we would be most grateful if you would complete this and return it with your subscription to the Membership Secretary, John Hamilton, when the time comes.

We are sorry to put members who have already made a Declaration to this extra trouble, but the form is easy to complete, and the money we can claim back from the Inland Revenue is very worthwhile. Thank you for your help. The Declaration form should only be completed by those who pay income tax.

John Hamilton

Nottinghamshire Heritage Gateway

Have you taken a look at the Heritage Gateway recently? New entries are appearing all the time. Recent additions include Goose Fair, garden history in Nottinghamshire, and the market town of Bingham. Coming soon are entries on Nottingham's architects and their work, and on the county's folklore. We have also been in talks with Gary Mills of the University of Nottingham's School of Education, about how

best to present the material to be of use to teachers in our county schools. Gary is undertaking some assessment work for us, with a small group of teachers, and we hope this will lead to further developments on the Gateway. You can view the Heritage Gateway on Thoroton's website at:

<http://www.thorotonsociety.org.uk/gateway>.

SPRING LECTURE PROGRAMME 2008

Saturday 12 January - The Nora Witham Lecture: 'Picture the Past' - Nick Tomlinson

Nick Tomlinson is Project Manager of 'Picture the Past' based at Heanor Library in Derbyshire. In the past, anyone wanting to view the collections of hundreds of thousands of old images in the libraries and museums of Derby, Derbyshire, Nottingham or Nottinghamshire would have had to travel many miles to try and track down the ones they were interested in. This proved to be frustrating and time-consuming for researchers, and a barrier to anyone from farther afield, as well as damaging to the more fragile images from being handled regularly. The collections include photographs, slides, negatives, glass plates, postcards and engravings, recalling the history of our local communities for a hundred years and more. Thankfully, senior staff in four local authorities got their heads together to solve the problem, and the idea of conserving the images using digitisation, whilst at the same time giving people all over the world access to the digitised versions, was conceived. The 'Picture the Past' website was launched in June 2003, and by the end of 2006 over 63,000 pictures had been added. It now attracts over 10,000 visitors every month from all over the world, viewing thousands of pages of images. 'Picture the Past' is a not-for-profit project, making historic images freely available to anyone with access to the Internet via the website at www.picturethepast.org.uk

Saturday 9 February - The Miles Thoroton Hildyard Lecture: 'St Pancras' - Nigel Lowey



St Pancras was a 14-year-old Christian boy, who was martyred in Rome in AD304 by the Emperor Diocletian. In Britain he is better known as a railway station!

This lecture is for anyone who has an interest in history, or architecture, or great engineering. It will describe how the fantastic mid-Victorian Gothic railway cathedral came to be built, and how the long-neglected building

has recently undergone a breathtaking transformation. From the start the station served our Nottingham Midland Station, and it will continue to do so in the future.

The speaker is Nigel Lowey, who is a Nottingham resident, and whose amateur interest in St Pancras over a period of ten years led to him becoming an expert, described as 'a historian of the buildings'.

Illustrations: (above) St Pancras Station before restoration, and (right) the station after restoration



**Saturday 8 March - The Maurice Barley Lecture:
'The use of laser scanning in the archaeological recording of
historic buildings' - Malcolm Hislop and Michael Lobb**

A former University of Nottingham student, Malcolm Hislop is an indirect beneficiary of Maurice Barley's pioneering work that established Nottingham as a centre for the study of historic buildings. He is now a research fellow and project manager with Birmingham Archaeology, where he oversees the unit's historic buildings work. He is author of *Medieval Masons* in the Shire Archaeology series, and has recently published in the BAR series a study of the fourteenth-century master mason, John Lewyn of Durham.

Michael Lobb, who is Birmingham Archaeology's senior Historic Buildings Officer is a graduate of the University of Cambridge, where he took his first degree, and of the

University of York, where he obtained an MA in the Archaeology of Buildings. One of his particular interests is in the application of high-definition laser survey within archaeology, and he has been instrumental in adapting laser scanning to the recording of historic buildings.

The lecture will focus on the historic buildings work carried out by Birmingham Archaeology, with particular regard to the use of laser scanning as a means of recording and interpreting buildings. Recent projects include the grotto at Calke Abbey; the upstanding remains of Valle Crucis Abbey, Denbighshire; Roman fabric below San Giovanni di Laterano, Rome; Byzantine churches at Thisvai, Greece; and the masons' loft in York Minster.

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES AT KEW - VISITS IN 2008

The National Archives at Kew (TNA) is a must at some point in their research for every local and family historian. Sue Clayton, on behalf of the Flintham Society, has organized six coach visits to TNA during 2008 on the following dates:

Thursday 7 February; Tuesday 8 April; Thursday 29 May;

Tuesday 15 July; Tuesday 16 September; Thursday 13 November

The coach will leave Flintham Village Hall at 7am, picking up at The Salutation, Maid Marion Way, Nottingham at 7.45am. Following a comfort stop at Northampton Services, estimated time of arrival at TNA is 11am. The coach will return at 6pm, and after a comfort stop en route, estimated time of arrival at The Salutation is 9pm, and at Flintham Village Hall 9.30pm.

The cost per visit will be £17.50. Any profit will go to the Flintham Society, an educational charity which owns and runs the Flintham Museum and organizes community activities.

To book for any of these dates please contact Sue Clayton direct on 01636 525641, or email her at flintham.museum@lineone.net

Delving into the Society's Archives

In December 1949 this introduction was written to the first edition of the *Journal of the Nottingham Archaeological Society*: 'There are many who cannot take an active part in field archaeology, and cannot attend all the meetings of the Society, and yet are keenly interested in the work. Hence this small quarterly volume, which it is hoped will fill to some extent, a long felt want.'

The articles in this 'new venture' included one on Admiral Howe of Langar who, after renowned service in the Royal Navy, became First Lord of the Admiralty in 1783 and was made Baron Howe of Langar on 17 August 1788. He lies in Langar Church, the 'Cathedral of the Vale' where also, we are told, is found 'a magnificent cloth of rich Italian embroidery in gold thread on a purple ground, embossed with pictures in many colours, discovered in one of the men o' war captured on the Glorious First of June', a sea battle which, the Journal tells us, was 'the Admiral's crowning achievement'. More snippets from the Society's veteran journals in further issues, but one other comment: amongst the contributors is one B W Beilby with an article on medieval sanitation!

Barbara Cast

REPORTS OF EVENTS 2007

13 September - Nottinghamshire Archives and the Papers of Sir Frank and Lady Doris Stenton

Sir Frank Stenton, the noted Anglo-Saxonist and one-time vice chancellor of Reading University, died forty years ago, and his wife Lady Doris, a noted medievalist in her own right, four years later. Subsequently many papers in the family archive relating to Nottinghamshire, where Sir Frank's forebears had been Southwell solicitors, were deposited in Nottinghamshire Archives. Thoroton members took the opportunity to view some of the collection, and to hear a talk by Dr David Crook on the scholarly work of Sir Frank and Lady Doris. David, who was a student at Reading but never met the Stentons, mentioned some of their more endearing family habits - the poached egg for Friday tea being particularly

memorable! Stenton was responsible for the discussion of Nottinghamshire Domesday in the Victoria County History volume on the county, and was also joint editor of the place-names volume. Both Stentons were buried at Halloughton.

During the evening Mark Dorrington, Nottinghamshire County Archivist, told members of the Society about the work of the Archives, and David Ackrel, chief conservator, talked about his work which includes conserving damaged archives and rebinding historic books; and members also had a chance to view the strong room.

John Beckett

9 October - The Keith Train Lecture (in association with Nottingham Civic Society)

This year's Keith Train lecture was given by Jerry Spencer, a town planner and urban designer. He came from Hackney in 1992 on his appointment as Head of the Conservation and Design Team within the City's Planning Department, and left in 1999 to become Head of Planning Services with Gloucester City Council. He now has a private practice.

Jerry came back to Nottingham earlier this year to see how the city had changed, to see how his projects were faring, and to take some recent photographs. All of this preparatory work helped to make his lecture both instructive and entertaining.

He opened with a visual tour of some of the mistakes, disasters perhaps, of the 1960s and '70s where buildings were often out of human scale. He continued, with relish, giving an overview of his time in the city, with particular attention to his team's work in the Lace Market, on the canal side and with the location of street furniture.

Whilst giving personal approval to a few of the more recent developments in the city, Jerry offered some criticism of the aggressive nature of several taller buildings, which he felt were not 'people friendly'. A fair sized crowd considered this a good night out.

Ken Brand

13 October - *Two Centuries of Observers and Recorders of Weather in Nottinghamshire*

Our Treasurer John Wilson, who has had a lifelong interest in meteorology, lectured on 200 years of weather recording in Nottinghamshire. He first considered the general aspects of weather recording, the original being found in old diaries and letters from such people as Major Hayman Rooke in Mansfield. There were reports of people freezing to death in 1776 whilst walking between Redhill and Seven Mile Bottom. In the second part of his talk John named a number of amateur scientists with a passionate interest in meteorology, including Edward Lowe of Highfield House (now part of Nottingham University), a founder

member of the British Meteorological Society in 1850, and James Archer, appointed librarian to Bromley House Library in 1821. The library contains a Treatise on Atmosphere Phenomena (1846), which records a great hailstorm of that year. Other local meteorologists included Henry Mellish (of Hodsock Priory) and John Deverill Walker of Forge Mill and Ruddington. John concluded his fascinating lecture with Watnall Weather Centre, which operated between 1941-95 and was the training ground for Jack Scott and John Kettley of BBC fame.

Penny Messenger

**10 November -The Nottinghamshire History Lecture:
'The Medieval Stained Glass of Nottinghamshire'**

Our annual Nottinghamshire History lecture allowed us to recall our gratitude to the county council for their financial aid towards its costs. Our speaker Dr Allan Barton studied at York for his PhD on 'The Stained Glass of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire 1400-1550'. This is on his website at www.allanbarton.f2s.com/. Although not as rich in remaining stained glass as some adjacent counties, Nottinghamshire has excellent examples: sites include Fledborough, Newark and Southwell. The images in his excellent PowerPoint presentation allowed us close examination of details. He took us chronologically through the stained glass either remaining or now destroyed, but recorded in written accounts or drawings such as by the 17th century antiquarian William

Dugdale. Differences in execution were explained from yellow staining, international gothic or soft style, stipple shading and linear style. In the later medieval period stained glass can often be related back to known individuals - indeed its purpose might be described as an 'intercessory machine', being part of an endowment to a church for prayers for the soul. Dr Barton is currently working on the medieval stained glass of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire for the British Academy project Corpus Vitrearum Medii Aevi (CVMA) <http://www.cvma.ac.uk/>. We can visit this website in the months ahead to see how his work progresses, and we look forward to eventual publication.

Leslie Cram

'Great oaks from little acorns grow'

Professor John Beckett planted the acorn when he suggested we might like to research the parish church of St Laurence for the Southwell & Nottingham DAC church history project. That grew into researching the history of Ossington, Caunton and Cromwell churches as well. Ossington is now on the website, Norwell is with the webmaster, and Caunton has reached the final stages.

The Southwell & Nottingham DAC church history project generated an interest in the history of Norwell which resulted in the formation of Norwell Parish Heritage Group. From that came a generous grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The Norwell Heritage Trail leaflet has been produced and launched. The Children's Trail

working party is ongoing. There are three heritage booklets in preparation, and consideration is being given to an education pack. We have already begun a database of Norwell census returns.

The oak tree is putting out more branches: There are plans for editing the Southwell White Book, which is a major source for the history of Norwell and the county! A dendrochronology project for dating the timber frame buildings in Norwell is starting with the support of English Heritage. Ideas are being generated to look at the supply of building materials in conjunction with the Trent Vale Landscape Project. Be careful when you plant an acorn; oak trees are bigger than you realize!

**Michael and Elizabeth Jones,
Norwell Parish Heritage Group**

New 'corporate' design for Thoroton!

A couple of years ago Council asked Trevor Clayton to take a look at how we present ourselves to the world. Trevor made a number of suggestions, and these led to the redesign of the cover of *Transactions* for volume 109. However, as members will know, Trevor died suddenly at the end of 2005, leaving the rest of the design work incomplete. We have now managed to rescue many of Trevor's early designs from his computer,

and Thoroton's Council has commissioned Michelle Ventura, a graphic designer, to carry the redesign forward. As a result, we hope in 2008 to have a new membership leaflet, and new designs for headed notepaper, posters, the newsletter, and possibly other parts of our 'suite'. Look out for our new appearance early in the New Year - but don't worry, the Thoroton horn will not be disappearing from our logo!

**Please email contributions for Newsletter No 51 by 1 February 2008 to Janice Avery,
email: janaver1@yahoo.co.uk. (text in Word files, pictures in pdf or jpeg file.)The views
expressed in the Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Editor, the Society or its Council**