

# THE THOROTON SOCIETY

Nottinghamshire's History and Archaeology Society



**NEWSLETTER**

**ISSUE 64**

**SUMMER**

**THE 2011 SPRING MEETING AND AGM WERE HELD AT FLINTHAM CHURCH AND FLINTHAM HALL**



*Flintham Hall West Elevation*

*Flintham Hall South Elevation*

*Flintham Church*



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~ The County's Principal Historical Society ~  
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# SPRING MEETING REPORT

By Barbara Cast

Who would believe that we again had a lovely spring, verging on summer, day for our Spring meeting and AGM in Flintham on 30 April? Record numbers attended the first of our newly focused annual meetings.

We met in the church of St. Augustine, a church rebuilt in 1828 but leaving some of the medieval tower crossing.

After a welcome by our President, Dr. Rosalys Coope, the AGM was dispatched with its usual efficiency by Chairman, Professor John Beckett. Keith Goodman, long-time former Treasurer to the Society, was made a Vice-Chairman and presentations of book tokens were made to Richard Gaunt, who stepped down as Joint Editor of the *Transactions* and to John Hamilton, now retired Hon. Membership Secretary. Professor Beckett informed members that, arising from the survey of members, a number of the Society's strands of work have been reassessed in a renewed focus on research and learning. John Wilson has launched a new research group and there are a number of irons in the fire as far as education and learning are concerned. All this is in addition to the work done for the Heritage Gateway by Andy Nicholson and Denise Amos. He also commended the continuing aim of keeping members informed of the Society's activities through the excellent *Newsletter* and the high standards maintained by the Editors of the *Transactions* and he thanked all the officers for their work this year and for their continuing support.

Following the business of the AGM, Sue Clayton, the mastermind behind the day's arrangements, gave a most interesting talk on

the village and especially the church. It seems that there is a lot more to find out about ancient Flintham as Sue has a number of theories just waiting for further exploration to corroborate.

After Sue's talk we moved to the church's next door neighbour, the magnificent Flintham Hall, where we enjoyed a really splendid tea, taken on the terrace overlooking the parkland or in the splendid Great Exhibition inspired library – many thanks to Jacqui Elliott and her helpers from the Flintham Community Shop volunteer team for this. After tea we were formally welcomed to the Hall by Robert Hildyard, the current occupant of this wonderful Thoroton Hildyard family home, who gave us a potted history of the family and the house. We then split into groups, one to tour the village, another to visit the museum and community store, and the other to be guided round the Hall by Robert and his sister Marianne. This guided tour was a most interesting and detailed look at a house which has been lovingly cared for and filled with wonderful pictures and furniture by one family for generations.

Many who attended found that the afternoon had just disappeared and that they had missed out on the other interesting features of the village – we must go again soon to look at what this lively little parish, which strides the Fosse and runs along the banks of the Trent, has to offer.

All those who attended had a most enjoyable and fascinating visit to another of our lovely Nottinghamshire villages – we are particularly grateful to Robert and Marianne Hildyard and to Sue Clayton for making it a great Spring Meeting.

*DEADLINES for items for the Newsletter are 1 February, 1 May, 1 August and 1 November of each year.*

*Copy should be sent to the Editor, Howard Fisher, 21, Brockwood Crescent, Keyworth, Nottingham, NG12 5HQ or by email to handjaf@virginmedia.com.*

*Items can be handwritten, typed or by attachment in Word format, either suffix doc or docx. Pictures, diagrams and maps are most welcome to illustrate an item. Images can be submitted on CD or as email attachment (300 dpi JPEG). Images will be adjusted to suit the publication.*

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*Any views expressed in the Newsletter are those of the author and not necessarily shared by the Thoroton Society, its Officers or Council members.*

# THOROTON SOCIETY RESEARCH GROUP

By John Wilson

In their responses to the Society's membership questionnaire last year, a considerable number of members expressed interest in taking part in a research project. A Research Group has now been set up and the first meeting was held in the Thoroton Room at Bromley House on Saturday, 26 March 2011. Although attended by only a small number, the meeting was very positive. Members described their interests and a number of suggestions were made, including the setting up of a database of members' interests, assisting members with getting their research published and the concept of mentoring for those members new to research. One objective of the database is to enable members to see what studies are currently being carried out and to make contact with other members of the Society with similar interests. Collaborative research projects discussed included the Millennium project to photograph every listed building, the Victoria County History project and the Southwell and Nottingham Diocese Church History project. With the approach of the centenary of the Great War, it may be possible to obtain small grants for groups studying the effects of the war on people at home.

Several members in response to the questionnaire, wished to have more Society lectures in addition to the current six. One suggestion was to have an additional Lecture meeting at which members of the Society could have 10-15 minutes to give a short talk on an aspect of their research.

The research database so far includes:-

- various aspects of village history
- history of the parish of Bramcote (part of the Victoria County History project)
- early coal mining and related road, rail and water transport in Wollaton and surrounding areas
- war memorials, particularly from the Great War
- the history of Bromley House, including its garden
- Robert Taylor, the architect of Bromley House
- slate headstones
- origins of the 'Belvoir Angels' carvings
- church clocks made by Richard Row of Epperstone
- weather and human affairs
- aspects of disease and public health in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries
- history of J. A. Coombs and Co. Ltd., flour millers and purveyors of 'health products'

If other members of the Society wish to join the Research Group and to have their interests included in the research database, please contact John Wilson at wilsonicus@hotmail.co.uk.

It is planned to hold another group meeting later in the year to review progress.

## A PLEA FROM THE HEART

*Denise Amos*

The Nottinghamshire Heritage Gateway has been running now for ten years and in that time we have proved ourselves, but in the last two years it has become increasingly difficult to involve other people (which was the initial intention) and so it has been left to Andy Nicholson and myself to come up with ideas and also to write the material. This has been fine, but we really need some fresh input from people who have a knowledge of some aspect of history which Andy and myself don't always have.

The website is widely read and we have had some excellent responses but fresh blood is needed!

Can anyone help? Advice and assistance is given for shy members!!

Recent comments about the web site:-

*This is wonderfully, clearly designed and easy to navigate, as well as having extremely useful content.*

Elizabeth Williamson, English Heritage Commissioner.

*... the site is clear, easy to navigate, and informative ... Ideally websites like this should be available throughout the country.*

Local History News

# A PLAQUE FOR ARTHUR MEE AT STAPLEFORD

Barbara Brooke

I am sure many of you remember owning, as a child, a prized set of volumes of *The Children's Encyclopedia*, or remember reading *The Children's Newspaper*. If you do, you will not need me to remind you that Arthur Mee was the man behind these and many other publications, chiefly for children, in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

What you may not know is that Arthur Mee was born in Stapleford, in a small cottage behind St. Helen's church, long since demolished and now the site of the church hall. He attended Church Street Board School, now the Arthur Mee Centre of Castle College, Nottingham.

On 22 March 2011 Castle College hosted a ceremony at the Centre, which culminated in the unveiling of a blue and white commemorative plaque to Arthur Mee by his nephew Alan Mee, on the building's front elevation on Church Street.

After initial light refreshments and an explanation of the plaques project in South Broxtowe, Francis Luckcock, a local retired Methodist preacher, spoke of Arthur's early life in Stapleford, of his work as an apprentice reporter on the *Nottingham Daily Express* and appointment as Editor of *The Nottingham Evening News* at the age of 20.

The story was taken up by our Chairman, Professor John Beckett, who spoke of Arthur's move to London and his work on *Tit-Bits* magazine, his move to *The Daily Mail*, where he became literary editor, then his change from

journalism to more general writing. This is not the place to detail his long list of popular publications, many on general knowledge and chiefly for children, but the British Library has over 400 works attributed to him.

John also explained something of the blue plaques scheme initiated by English Heritage, with which he, personally, was involved.

The audience, which included the Mayors of Broxtowe and Stapleford, students from the college, representatives from local schools and members of Stapleford & District Local History Society, and the Beeston Local History and Civic Societies, then moved outside for the unveiling of the plaque.

The three societies mentioned above have joined together, through a small working group, to erect commemorative plaques in recognition of the lives and work of renowned local people and to record places of local historic interest in South Broxtowe.

This is the second plaque, the first to T. H. Barton, the founder of Barton Transport, was unveiled last August. In May two plaques, one to local historian Arthur Cossons and the other to record his re-discovery of Beeston's ancient Village Cross, will be unveiled by his son, Sir Neil Cossons. In the same month, a plaque to commemorate Admiral Sir John Borlase Warren, ground mounted in the Walter Parker VC Memorial Square, in Stapleford, will be unveiled by the Vice Lord-Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire.

A further seven plaques are in the pipeline.



Pat Laly (Mayor of Broxtowe), Francis Luckcock, Alan Mee, Kevin Thomas (Mayor of Stapleford)

## **HOME AND ABROAD – MAPS FROM THE HISTORIC COLLECTIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM**

Maps provide a fascinating point of entry to different cultures and different times. Though their function was often practical, demonstrating ownership and land management, they can also be works of beauty and imagination.

Scattered through the archives and rare book collections at the University of Nottingham are many examples of maps, from the sixteenth to the twentieth century, documenting places both local and far away. A new exhibition at the Weston Gallery, Lakeside Arts Centre, University Park, Nottingham, gives an opportunity to showcase a wide variety of these maps and plans. Local History will be well represented, with exhibits including county maps, town plans, and estate maps drawn from the local family collections.

While each item tells its own story of creation and use, the narrative of the display concerns the people of the Midlands, their knowledge of the physical world and the significance of maps in their lives. The common theme is often one of property and power, but items also illustrate the development of communities in a rural landscape and the pace of urban growth. At an international level we see political aspirations and British perceptions of foreign lands.

A series of lunchtime talks will be held to accompany the exhibition, and members may find particular interest in a talk by our own Chairman, Professor John Beckett, on reconstructing the townscape of Nottingham using contemporary maps. Other talks will focus on early maps, the culture of cartography, and the relationship of maps with war.

The exhibition closes on Monday, 29 August 2011, and admission is free. Further details can be found in the Lakeside *ON* brochure or website [www.lakesidearts.org.uk/Exhibitions.html](http://www.lakesidearts.org.uk/Exhibitions.html) or from Manuscripts and Special Collections, 0115-951-4565 – website [www.nottingham.ac.uk/manuscriptsandspecialcollections/exhibitions/introduction.aspx](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/manuscriptsandspecialcollections/exhibitions/introduction.aspx)

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## **NOTTINGHAMSHIRE ARCHIVES EVENTS 2011**

**WEDNESDAY WORKSHOPS** - find out more about different records held at Notts Archives.

15 June – Family and estate records

20 July - Non-conformist records

17 August – Hospital records.

15 places per workshop so booking is essential and the cost £3.50 per event.

### **THURSDAY TOURS**

These take place on the first Thursday of each month at 2.30 pm and cost £2.00 per tour.

There are 15 places on each tour and can be pre-booked or joined on a first come – first served basis. Booking is recommended.

### **ARCHIVE SKILLS WORKSHOPS**

28 June – Reading parish registers

14 July - Reckoning of time, weights and measures, scales and money.

Booking is essential and each event costs £3.50.

### **MANORIAL DOCUMENTS REGISTER FOR NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**

This half-day seminar celebrates our rich manorial heritage and launches the Nottinghamshire section of the Manorial Documents register.

9.45 am on 21 June. This is a free event but booking is essential.

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# **FAMOUS ENTERTAINERS IN EARLY VICTORIAN NOTTINGHAM**

Terry Fry

In 2009 Michael Payne's dissertation for his MA from the University of Nottingham was entitled *Theatre and Entertainment in Nottingham 1700-1900*. I found it fascinating, especially when I read about two characters called Thomas Dartmouth Rice and Isaac Van Amburgh who appeared in the town between 1839 and 1844.

For many years I collected 19<sup>th</sup> century jugs including one each for these two entertainers, but I had not realized that they brought their acts to Nottingham.

Rice was an American vaudeville performer who brought his character Jim Crow to this country in 1836. It was the first known example of a white man 'blacking up'. His famous song 'Jumping Jim Crow' included the verse:-

Turn about an' wheelabout  
And do jis so  
An' everytime I turn about  
I jump Jim Crow.

The relief moulded salt-glazed jug shows Rice dancing whilst he sings the song. It would have been made as a souvenir when he was at the height of his fame in the late 1830's and early 1840's.



There are various accounts about the origin of the song and name Jim Crow. One claimed that it was based on a song and dance done by an old black man while grooming a horse, another that Rice saw a crippled black boy called Jim Crow performing on the streets of New York.

In November 1839 the *Nottingham Journal* reported that, at the Theatre Royal, 'the great attraction of the week is the celebrated Mr. T. D. Rice, the original and inimitable Jim Crow of the London stage ... Mr. Rice made his first appearance in two new pieces, *The Mummy* and *Jumbo Jim*, both of them well adapted for the display of his peculiar style of Yankee-negro humour ...'.

Unfortunately 'Jim Crow' became a derogatory term Americans used for a black person. It also refers to the practice of segregating black people in the South which continued until the 1960's. So-

called Jim Crow Laws were designed to enforce segregation and deny civil rights until they were declared illegal in the 1950's and 1960's, following massive protests and civil unrest.

I also have a cheaply made relief-moulded jug (with a lion as the handle) portraying Isaac Van Amburgh, a famous American 'Lion Tamer' who appeared in Nottingham three times. 'Cat Acts' began in the United States in 1833 when Van Amburgh first entered a cage occupied by a lion, a tiger, a leopard and a panther. Dressed like a Roman gladiator in toga and sandals he forced the animals to do his bidding with the help of a crowbar. When criticized for cruelty he inaccurately quoted the Bible: 'God said in Genesis 1:26 that man should have dominion over every animal on the earth'.

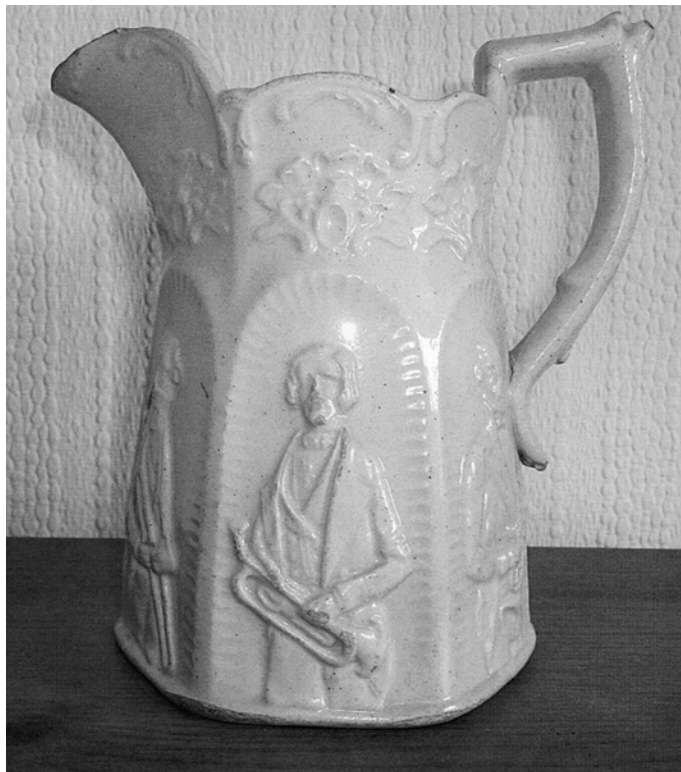


He actually acted out scenes from the Bible, including one where a lion lies down with a lamb. Queen Victoria was a great fan of his act and saw it many times until the lion seized the lamb in its jaws. Van Amburgh's fame led to a painting of him and his animals by Landseer in 1839.



Van Amburgh first appeared in Nottingham in September 1840 at the old Theatre Royal, then the following year at the New Pavilion, Burton Leys (now Trinity Square), which could hold several thousand people, and finally in December 1844 at the Amphitheatre in Thurland Street. The *Nottingham Journal* reported the event and was impressed by the 'immense brick building which has been erected in a wonderfully short space of time; it is neatly papered within and fitted up in the style of the ancient Roman Circus ... The elephant Bolivar was an especial favorite'. But it was the portrayal of Van Amburgh and his lions on the jugs which led to their purchase after the show.

I have another relief-moulded jug portraying the Distin family of musicians, which would have been sold after performances. John Distin, who had played bugle in the Victory Parade after the Battle of Waterloo, and his four sons formed the Distin Quintette (sic) which toured Britain and abroad.



They played old-fashioned pace-horns until they met Adolph Sax in Paris, when they were completely besotted with his new instrument, the Sax-horn. There is a long advertisement in the *Nottingham Journal* November 8<sup>th</sup> 1850 for a concert at the Corn Exchange, Nottingham, in which they proudly proclaim that 'Mr Distin and his Sons will perform their Silver Sax-horns which were presented to them by the late Louis Phillipe in Paris in 1844'. The *Journal* expected the Corn Exchange would 'be crowded to overflowing', especially as everyone would be given a copy of Distin's Polka and a chance to win a 'new cabinet piano-forte manufactured by Mr. H. Farmer and a silver cornet-a-piston'. Later Henry Distin left the group and settled in London establishing a firm making musical instruments. Today that firm has become Boosey & Hawkes.

I am grateful to Michael Payne for his help with this article.

## **BOOKS RECEIVED FOR REVIEW**

The book review section starts on page 10. However a book received for which the review will appear in our next issue is:

*THORPS IN A CHANGING LANDSCAPE* by Paul Cullen, Richard Jones and David N. Parsons



## LECTURE REPORTS

### THE MYLES THOROTON HILDYARD LECTURE 12 FEBRUARY 2011

ROSALYS COOPE - CHARLES II NEVER SLEPT HERE



Our President's lecture was based on one room at Newstead Abbey, the so called 'Charles II' room, which, it has been suggested, was so named because the monarch slept in this bedroom.

Rosalys has spent many years researching Newstead and its various occupants and owners. Her extensive knowledge of the House and whole site was evident in her carefully crafted lecture. We were enthralled by her knowledge and her discussion of the room and, it has to be said, the house in general.

The talk was much more than a discussion about one particular room and gave us all a deeper understanding of the history of the house and priory which preceded it.

Were we aware that some remains of the priory are incorporated into the house as it stands now? We certainly are as a result of this lecture.

The lecture was greatly enhanced by some most informative slides in a PowerPoint presentation and the audience was greatly appreciative of Rosalys' talk as evidenced by the enthusiastic applause at the end.

### THE MAURICE BARLEY LECTURE 12 MARCH 2011

JOHN BECKETT - THE LUDDITES 200 YEARS ON



Two hundred years ago, mechanization posed a serious threat to the status, job security and working conditions traditionally enjoyed by the artisans and craftsmen employed in the Nottinghamshire framework knitting industry. This led to serious outbreaks of machine breaking in the spring of 1811 which proceeded to encompass a

wide number of towns and villages in Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. Machine breaking or 'Luddism' as it came to be known in homage to the anonymous individual who provided its indispensable figurehead (Ned Ludd or Ludlam), has subsequently come to represent a defining moment in the history of labour relations, the Industrial Revolution and the making of the English working class.

In a characteristically lucid, well-informed and deeply researched lecture, the Society's Chairman John Beckett used the bicentenary of the first incident of machine breaking (at Arnold in March 1811) to review the evidence, charting events down to the imposition of the death penalty upon machine breakers in the summer of 1812. Not the least of the interesting themes to emerge from the lecture was the extent to which the local authorities responsible for maintaining law and order (the county

magistrates and the Lord Lieutenant, the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Newcastle) were caught off-guard and continued to exhibit a degree of insouciance which now seems remarkable. Newcastle was unsure whether to regard events as a fairly minor labour dispute, provoked by the employment of (cheaper) female labour and a necessary degree of mechanized production or as something more politically threatening. Time and again, attempts to gain information through the inducement of financial rewards proved unavailing.

By the time the movement gained a name and momentum, from the autumn of 1811, the authorities found it necessary to institute a process of local surveillance (the famous 'watch and ward' measures of 1812) and to protest (in vain) against the government act which made machine breaking a capital crime. Lord Byron of Newstead Abbey famously denounced the measure, immortalizing himself as a friend of the dispossessed, but Beckett was clear that interpretations of the Luddites as a 'mob' bent on indiscriminate riot and pillage were wide of the mark. The Luddites were disciplined, well-organised and specific in those they targeted and they punished anyone who descended to robbery or indiscriminate violence. This suggests that the Luddites had more in common with pre- than post-industrial forms of protest.

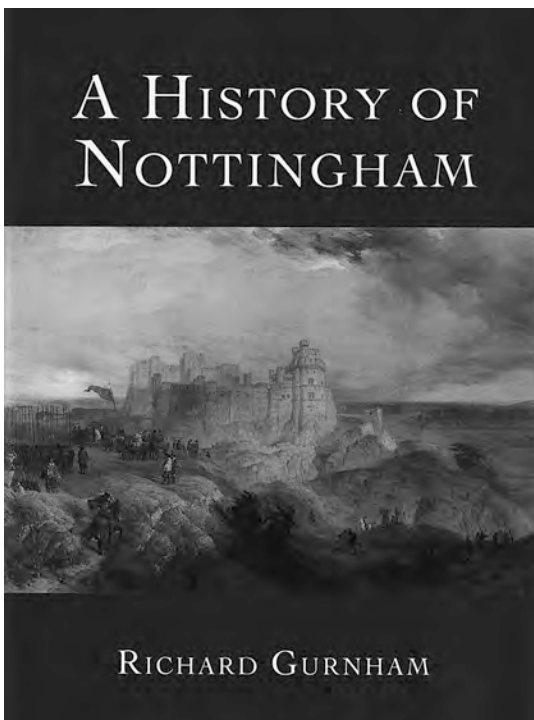
This was a timely and original lecture, delivered to an appreciative capacity crowd. One was left with two abiding impressions: first, the extent to which Luddite fears of mechanization have translated into modern challenges posed by the ubiquitous nature of the world wide web and social networking devices and, second, incredulity that this colourful, dramatic episode in the county's history has never been subjected to the Hollywood treatment. If an enterprising producer ever decides to take up the challenge, they would do well to employ this year's Maurice Barley lecturer as their historical adviser.

Richard A Gaunt

## BOOK REVIEWS

### A HISTORY OF NOTTINGHAM

By Richard Gurnham (Phillimore, 2010) ISBN 978-1-86077-658-8



This book is a synthesis of other people's work, and it contains virtually nothing which cannot be found in *The Centenary History of Nottingham* (republished in 2006 by Phillimore) or in *Nottingham: an illustrated History*, by John Beckett and Ken Brand (1997) or Christopher Weir's *Nottingham: a History* (2002). There is no claim, nor any attempt to claim, originality (no primary sources are used and no footnotes or references offered), although by contrast with the other books there is a stronger emphasis on politics (at least in some periods) at the expense of topography.

The book tells the story of Nottingham from its murky Anglo-Saxon beginnings through its medieval and early modern history, and on to the great disjunction when framework knitting migrated from London to the East Midlands towards the end of the seventeenth century. From 1670 or so onwards the town grew rapidly, finally bursting through its artificial boundaries following the 1845 Enclosure Act. With the incorporation of the surrounding villages in 1877 and the grant of city status in

1897 it became recognized as one of the leading provincial cities. In the twentieth century it changed again: people moved from the city to the new estates, leaving commercial interests to take over the heart of the city, and industry moved on from textiles to a strong commitment to public service.

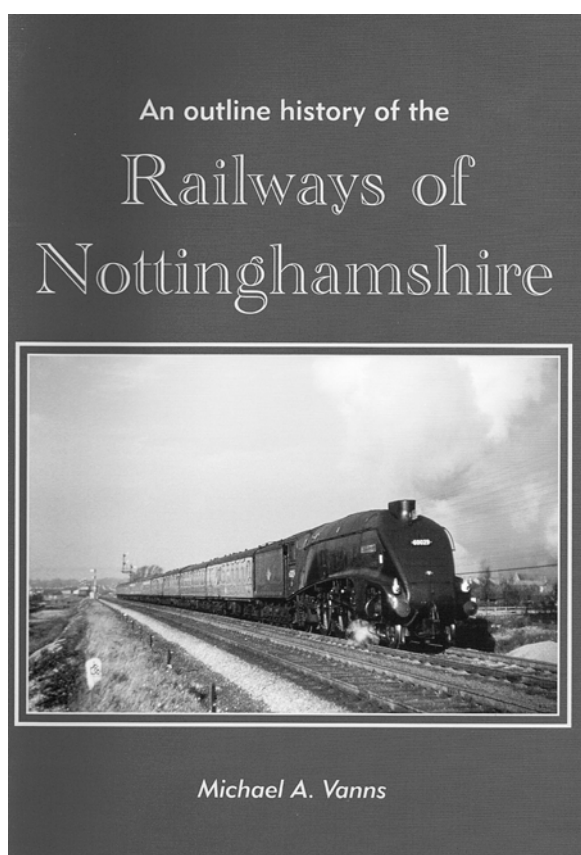
At £20 this is not a cheap book, and the small typeface and the rather uninspiring collection of

pictures, all reproduced in grainy black and white, does not make it leap off the shelf at you. Pity, because this is generally a good series from Phillimore, and they obviously saw it as filling a gap in the market for a medium length book about Nottingham.

John Beckett

## *AN OUTLINE HISTORY OF THE RAILWAYS OF NOTTINGHAMSHIRE*

*By Michael A. Vanns (Notts County Council 2010) ISBN 978-0-902751-67-5*



Michael Vanns' new publication is a welcome addition to those works that he has already had published on railways. The book traces the history of railways in Nottinghamshire in a lucid, logical and well set out manner. The book is well structured with chapters allocated to each of the relevant pre-grouping companies, a chapter detailing the post-grouping companies, the LMSR and the LNER, and subsequent chapters dealing with British Railways and Privatization. There is a comprehensive bibliography for readers wishing to indulge in further study and three sets of tables, one of which highlights the differences in through passenger traffic within

the county between the years 1910 and 2010. The book is also well illustrated with over 80 photographs, maps and engravings.

The history of railways in Nottinghamshire is inextricably linked to that of the coal industry and this book makes that clear. The wealth of the Midland Railway in particular was based on the vast tonnage of coal that it transported both within the county and to destinations further afield. The Victorian rail network was constructed primarily to transport freight: passenger traffic was an additional bonus (though now with the virtual demise of freight on railways the reverse is the case!). Pre-grouping railway history is a classic example of Victorian laissez-faire economics and, once again this is highlighted in the book with examples of the lengths that the private companies would go to in order to protect their own markets, evidenced by the multiplicity of contending lines built to serve the same locality. To illustrate this, the famous episode of the Midland Railway's 'high jacking' of a Great Northern engine in Nottingham station is referred to.

There are, however, one or two notable omissions from the early chapters of the book. Firstly, the significance of the waggonway at Wollaton in 1603/4 is only mentioned in passing ( and then erroneously states that it ran from Wollaton to Nottingham when it actually ran for approximately two miles from Strelley to Wollaton Lane end. This railway is considered to be the earliest known overland railway to run in England, albeit in a very embryonic form. Secondly, there is no mention of the Newark Brake Trials of 1875. These were a significant event in railway history and the fact that they occurred within the county is surely worthy of mention. Parliament had

become concerned with the number and type of railway accidents that were occurring all too frequently on the rail network. An adequate and satisfactory system of braking trains was deemed essential for improving railway safety. Different railway companies employed systems to brake their trains, usually air, vacuum or chain operated. Often, these systems were not compatible with the systems used by rival companies and this could cause problems with the day-to-day running of trains. In an unprecedented degree of co-operation seven companies took part in a series of braking trials on a stretch of Midland Railway line between Lowdham and Rolleston Junction on the Nottingham to Lincoln line to see which system was the most effective. These tests took place on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> June 1875 and were an important step on the path to greater safety on the railway system. (The Midland Railway train proved to have the most effective braking system).

Chapters 6 and 7, whilst containing much interesting historical information, also contain some statements which some readers might find open to debate. To state that the dividing up of British Rail into business 'sectors'; in 1982 was a 'positive' milestone for the railways of Nottinghamshire is one such instance and is certainly open to argument. What is certain is that with the new system of franchises on the railway the sole motive for any operating company is profit, often obtained thanks to

subsidies that British Railways and later British Rail could only dream of. Even with these subsidies GNER and Midland Mainline still lost their franchises. Currently the Government subsidizes Network Rail to the tune of approximately £5 billion annually. It may be true to state that services have improved with more trains operating but it is very questionable whether the quality of service on those trains is satisfactory with overcrowding a constant problem, ( a result of train operators having to hire every carriage that they use, and it is more profitable to run smaller trains overcrowded than to run trains with surplus capacity). The old HSTs (now over 30 years old and introduced by British Rail) still provide the most capacious trains between Nottingham and London.

Michael Vanns' book merits a wide readership from the general public through to the local historian and rail enthusiast. Thanks should also go to Nottinghamshire County Council for supporting the venture.

*Nigel Morley*

*(The book costs £7.50, is A4 in size, and can be bought from all major libraries in the county and from Nottinghamshire Archives or by post by sending a cheque payable to Nottinghamshire County Council, for £10.50 which includes p&p to Libraries, Archives and Information, Communities Department, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, County Hall, West Bridgford, Nottingham, NG2 7QP).*

## ***HARBY – VILLAGE LIFE IN THE VALE OF BELVOIR*** ***The Harby History Group 2010, ISBN 978-0-9567515-0-8***

This book provides an interesting read and is a good example of what can be achieved by a dedicated and enthusiastic history group. Following their research and writing of the book, the group has ensured that photographs, diaries, personal recollections and poems are preserved for future generations in the Record Office for Leicestershire and Rutland.

The book tells the story of Harby from Domesday, continuing through the ages until 1975, and is illustrated with maps, illustrations and photographs. Trade Directories provide information about the village and the people. Topics include: Harby at Work, War Years, the School, Church and Chapel, Women's Institute, and a variety of social activities. There are some surprising and interesting observations of

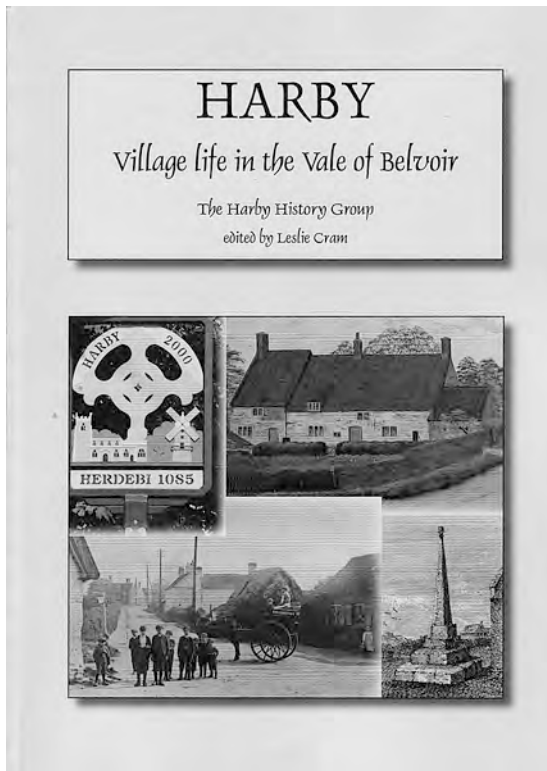
historic and local events recorded in diaries and personal recollections.

Thomas Gee's map of 1790, a 1793 Enclosure Award map, and an interpretation of the 1871 census, help to provide an initial overview of Harby, but much of the content is more recent.

It is noted that although water pumps and wells were not identified on a 1930 map, they were the only supply of water in the village. People recall that, as late as 1944, mains water and electricity were not available to everyone. Tin baths were still in widespread use and there are nostalgic accounts of Monday wash-days with fires lit under the copper and blue bags being added to brighten the whites.

Other villagers' memories from the 1940s include a Sunday School treat of riding on canal barges from Langar bridge, fields of cowslips, haymaking in the summer and riding on the hay wagon drinking bottles of Vimto.

Of particular interest are four volumes of diaries written by the village blacksmith, which span the years 1915 and 1922 to January 1931. The entries are varied and an attractive



combination of local and occasional international events, such as an account of shoeing eight horses and reflections on the torpedoing of the SS Lusitania in May 1915.

Many other aspects of the village are mentioned. The Grantham canal receives its own section and there is a fascinating article on cheese making and the famous Harby stilts. Healthcare during the 1930s and 40s is covered in some detail, along with the decline in the number of farms from the 1950s and the duties of the village policeman. Railway enthusiasts will enjoy a photograph of Harby and Stathern station taken in 1916 and a nostalgic watercolour of the last goods train crossing the bridge on the Stathern Lane in 1964.

War memorials often act as one of the focal points of village life and Harby is no exception. The book explains that the shaft and base of the war memorial cross were originally part of the ancient village cross dismantled by

Cromwell's Roundheads. The base of the cross now includes a list of nineteen men who died in the First World War and eighty-one names of the men who enlisted, fought and survived. The cross also includes two men who died in the Second World war.

A memory of an airman from 207 Squadron, RAF Langar, befriended by a Harby family during the Second World War, is particularly moving. The family heard the massive explosion of Lancaster O-Orange crashing and later learned that the airman was one of the four crew members whose bodies were never found. A longstanding friendship with the family of the airman was subsequently forged. Personal memories of Langar airfield provide a detailed account. In addition to aircraft manufacturer AV Roe and RAF 207 Squadron, the airfield was home to the American 9<sup>th</sup> Air Force and the Canadian Royal Air Force. The WI helped to keep spirits high during the war years with 2,128 lbs of jam being made and distributed!

Histories of the church and chapel are given in detail with engravings and photographs.

The social aspects of Harby life are included and provided enjoyment to the reader. An amusing episode occurred in 1937 at the Coronation Firework display when one attendant selected the fireworks, contained in a washing basket, by naked flame. Spectators ran for cover and the display was over within three minutes!

The book has a comprehensive contents page and useful fact files of dates and happenings together with notes about the contributors. A list of sources is provided together with an index of illustrations and a general index. In summary, this is a valuable and eclectic insight into the minutiae of life in a village and it provides a good pattern for other historians to follow.

Colin Pendleton

*Ed's note: it might seem odd to review a book relating to a Leicestershire village but I defend it on two counts: firstly, Harby is a border village between Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire and the book provides the opportunity for a researcher to have an interesting comparison between a Leicestershire village and an adjacent Nottinghamshire village. Secondly, the book's editor is Leslie Cram, a member of our Society and who only recently stepped down from the role of Programme Secretary.*

## **NEWS OF MEMBERS**

### **KEITH GOODMAN**

Keith was elected to the position of Vice-President of the Society at the 2011 AGM. This is in recognition of his long service to the Society.

Keith took over the stewardship of our finances in late 1992 when the then Treasurer, Martin Pell, relinquished the post. Keith had been Assistant Treasurer up to that time. Keith held this post until he passed it on to our present Treasurer in 2008. Keith was also responsible for booking the coaches for our outings and other events.

In the second issue of the Newsletter in December 1992 Keith gave a short introduction to his life. He was born in Stapleford and at age 11 went to Long Eaton Grammar School where he met Margaret to whom he eventually became married. His degree in Industrial Economics was gained at the University of Nottingham and after serving a three year period as Articled Clerk he qualified as a Chartered Accountant in 1961.

This was followed by a 10 year period of working for the Church of South India in India after which he and Margaret returned to Nottingham and Keith gained a position with accountants Kidsons Impey.

Keith has had a long involvement with the Methodist Church and has a great interest in the history of the church.

### **JOHN HAMILTON**

John resigned from the position of Membership Secretary at the AGM. He and his wife are moving home to the south of England to be closer to family although he remains a member of the Society and has promised to attend events in the future.

John has filled the role of Membership Secretary for several years and oversaw the change to the new style application form and worked very hard on preparing the Membership Questionnaire which was his idea, and the subsequent analysis of the returns.

### **NEW MEMBERS**

We are very pleased to welcome the following who have recently joined the Society:-

Mr. D. G. Bate  
Miss J. Godson  
Mr. C. Skelly

Mrs. H. Dring  
Mr. C. Poole  
Mrs. M. Skelly

Mr. D. J. Garwood  
Mr. M. Roberts  
Mr. D. H. Wileman

## ***FESTIVAL OF BRITISH ARCHAEOLOGY***

The Festival of British Archaeology 2011 takes place between Saturday 16 and Sunday 31 July.

The event is organised by the Council for British Archaeology and will be a fantastic extravaganza of archaeology and heritage related events up and down the country.

Details of events organised for the Festival can be obtained from the website at:

[www.archaeologyfestival.org.uk/whatson](http://www.archaeologyfestival.org.uk/whatson)

***TRANSACTIONS 2010*** was available at the AGM and copies have now been mailed to members who were not in attendance. This is yet another excellent volume with most interesting papers and information. Keith Challis has written a very thought provoking item regarding the state of archaeology in the current financial climate of the country.

## ***MEMBERS AT THE AGM***



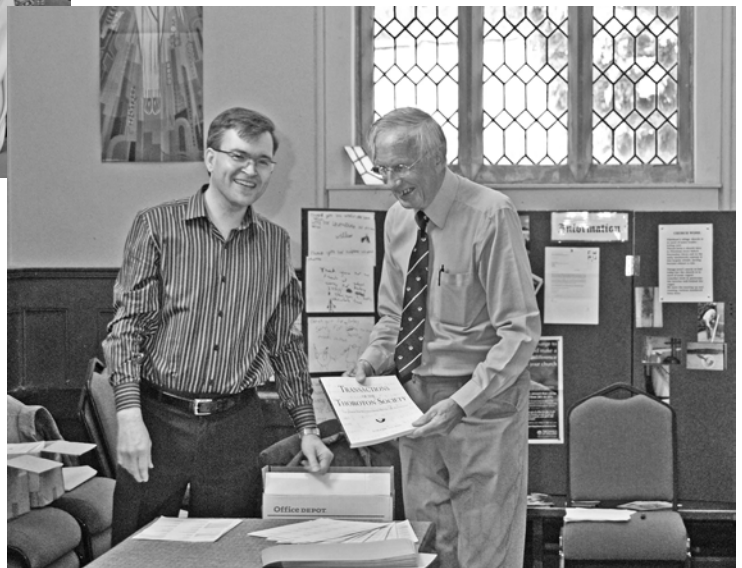
*Robert Hildyard talks to the members outside Flintham Hall*

*John Beckett presents Robert Hildyard with a book in thanks for hosting us at Flintham Hall*



*Ann Hoskins and Rosalys Coope chat in the library at Flintham Hall*

*Richard Gaunt and David Bagley hard at work on the distributions of the Transactions*





*LEFT: Keith Goodman who was elected a Vice-President of the Society at the AGM*



*RIGHT: John Hamilton who relinquished the post of Membership Secretary at the AGM*

*The Nicholson family with Paddy Huxley take tea at the AGM.*

*Hannah Nicholson (second from right) is the youngest contributor to the Society's Transactions.*



All AGM photographs were taken by David Hoskins to whom the Editor is most grateful.

*AGM: members enjoying afternoon tea in the Library and on the South Terrace at Flintham Hall.*

