

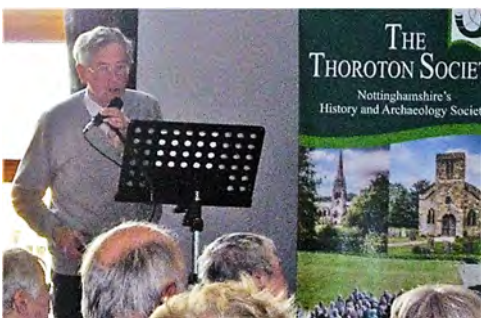
# THE THOROTON SOCIETY

Nottinghamshire's History and Archaeology Society



The Quarterly Newsletter of the Thoroton Society  
*Issue 84* *Summer 2016*

## The Spring Meeting and AGM 2016 – North Muskham



Clockwise from top left: the Village Hall, North Muskham; members waiting for the start of the meeting; some technical adjustments; a superb tea, as always; the speaker Dr David Crook; the President and Officers of the Society.  
Photographs by Janet Wilson

*The Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire*  
*The County's Principal History and Archaeology Society*  
Visit the Thoroton Society website at: [www.thorotonsociety.org.uk](http://www.thorotonsociety.org.uk)

### **THE SPRING MEETING AND AGM 2016 – North Muskham**

Again, we were very lucky with the weather – a spring-like Spring Meeting! The President, Adrian Henstock, welcomed members to North Muskham where we were accommodated in a very well provisioned and commodious hall. He then gave a most interesting potted history of North Muskham as a fairly quiet village surrounded within a few hundred yards by major transport routes of all kinds – the A1 and its predecessor the Old Great North Road, the railway line from London to York and, of course, the River Trent. North Muskham was one of the riverside villages which had a ferry, a diary record of its use being when Abigail Gawthern was ferried across from her country house in Holme to dine at Muskham Grange.

Professor Beckett then presented the annual report and remarked that it showed what a busy Society we were with many activities for members to be involved in – he hoped that those present were taking advantage of the range of opportunities. John Wilson, Honorary Treasurer, went through the accounts which he assured us were sound and continued to present no concerns. He informed the meeting that there had been a considerable increase in the sale of books, including those which comprised the Churm bequest, as well as copies of the Transactions. The major seller was the Newstead Abbey volume edited by Rosalys Coope and Pete Smith which, on its second printing, was still selling well in bookshops and now through international sales. Bookstall sales had also increased, and Margaret Trueman, Philip Jones and Penny Messenger were to be thanked for their management of this. Excursions were also doing well - full coaches were ensuring that they paid their way. This year the cost of Transactions was higher due to it being a bumper edition with many colour illustrations.

The Chair thanked John Wilson for his careful supervision of the Society's finances and also Peter Bloomfield who was the Society's Independent Examiner.

In his Chair's remarks Professor Beckett commended the website for which Andy Nicholson was still the webmaster, even though he has moved to Wales. He continues to manage all the Society's technological communications, quite possible these days. An innovation last year was the Geoffrey Bond Research Award, made possible through the generosity of our life-member. In this inaugural year we had a very good selection of applicants and two research projects were selected for funding – Matt Beresford who, with his teams of volunteers, are very active in the Southwell and Newark areas - and Hannah Nicholson, the youngest member of Council who is undertaking research under the auspices of Nottingham University. The Research Award is being funded by Mr Bond again this year and the Society is also contributing the same sum so that more projects can be supported. John also mentioned that there was to be a third Pevsner guide for Nottinghamshire. Sadly, the death of Geoffrey Oldfield, a long-standing active member and local historian, was reported by the Chair, as was that of Stan Smith, writer on history subjects, and Professor David Hey, who had lectured to the Society, most recently on family names. John mentioned a few of his highlights of the Thoroton year – he particularly enjoyed the Special Lecture by Jonathan Foyle at Kelham Hall and Ted Cattle's outline of the ongoing Nottingham Castle project given at the Annual Luncheon. Professor Beckett concluded by thanking the officers for their contributions throughout the year.

Former President, and current Vice-President, Rosalys Coope was not in attendance for almost the first time since she was a very young member of the Society. Unfortunately, she recently had an accident at home and was 'banned' from venturing out for a while – Rosalys sent her greetings to members.

All officers of the Society were re-elected and those people retiring from Council, but eligible for re-nomination, were duly re-elected.

After the business had been concluded we were pleased that Dr David Crook OBE, Thoroton Council member and former Senior Archivist at the National Archives, gave a most interesting and timely account of the last days of King John who died in Newark Castle on 19<sup>th</sup> October 1216. David told us of the amazing whistle-stop tour he made during those last few weeks of his tumultuous life attempting to defend his rebel and invader threatened realm.

Tea was plentifully provided by Henson's Catering of Claypole and drinks were made and served by a team from St Wilfrid's Church, to whom we are most grateful for all the help they gave throughout the afternoon.

After tea members had the opportunity to visit the Grade I listed St Wilfrid's church. Thanks to Valerie and David Mellors for welcoming us to the church, for telling us about its history and special features and setting out a fascinating display associated with St Wilfrid's. Altogether another interesting and enjoyable spring meeting in a most welcoming village.

**Barbara Cast, Honorary Secretary**

### **REPORTS ON LECTURES**

February 2016 - The Nora Witham lecture. '**Jesse Boot, an Enlightened Entrepreneur**'

Sophie Clapp, Archivist to the Boots Company

On Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> February, Sophie Clapp, Boots Company archivist, gave a fascinating talk on the



Sir Jesse Boot. Picture courtesy of University of Nottingham

life and work of Jesse Boot, Lord Trent, and the ethics that underlay many of his decisions. Jesse Boot was born in 1849. His father, John, was an agricultural worker and his mother, May, a teacher who also made herbal remedies. Owing to ill health, John moved into the town of Nottingham and opened a shop in Goosegate, with his wife, selling 'botanics' – herbal medicines chiefly bought by the poorer residents who lived in the immediate area. When Jesse was aged 10 his father died and he began to help his mother run the business, collecting and processing herbs and working in the shop. At the same time, he gained an elementary education at Agnes Mellors' Free School which he attended until the age of 13. By 21 he was a partner in the company and began to expand the business by dealing in the increasingly fashionable 'patent medicines'. The sale of medicines was, at this time, controlled by professional pharmacists, who usually sold such remedies at too high a price for Jesse's customers so he began to buy medicines in bulk and sell them at a more affordable price. His success was seen as a threat by professional pharmacists not only because their prices were being undercut but also

because he lacked their professional status. To counter this opposition, Jesse advertised aggressively and began to sell any goods (from tinned salmon to soda-siphons) that he could buy cheaply and sell inexpensively. Large plate glass windows were installed in the Goosegate store in which he could display his stock (an innovation that pre-dates Selfridges which is usually credited with inventing window dressing) and an 'American Elevator' was installed so that shoppers could easily reach all

four floors – another innovation as shops were usually only on the ground floor. A further innovation, and one that was much appreciated by the majority of his customers, was a Ladies' Department complete with public lavatory. A change in the law in 1870 allowed companies to dispense prescription medicines (as opposed to simply sell patent remedies) providing a qualified pharmacist was employed. Jesse 'poached' Edwin Waring from a rival and began dispensing, again at a cut-price level better suited to his working-class customers. The business prospered and he expanded into other towns such as Sheffield, always opening shops in the poorer districts. Jesse also brought in improved working conditions for his employees, including a day off and apprenticeships. Later on the company organised staff outings, athletic events and a social club. Aware of his own limited education, in 1913 he started evening classes for employees who were allowed to leave early and were given a meal as a reward for attending. In the 1920s he opened a school for 14-16 year olds.



Jesse Boot's first shop. Picture courtesy Boots Archives

Jesse Boot's first shop. Picture courtesy Boots Archives

The early years of the twentieth century saw Jesse donate his fortune to a variety of good causes, particularly those with a lasting benefit. He made a large donation towards rebuilding the organ at the Albert Hall, and built Alms Houses for war veterans in Wilford. He was particularly concerned with outdoor pursuits and bought land on the embankment by the Trent which he then donated to the City for playing fields and a war memorial. He also donated the Highfields estate in Beeston as a new site for the University, as well as a park and outdoor lido.

### Judith Mills

March 2016 - The Myles Thoroton Hildyard Lecture '*The Trees of Nottinghamshire*'

Professor Charles Watkins, University of Nottingham



The Major Oak 1882 Andrew McCallum

The lecture held on 12<sup>th</sup> March was the Myles Thoroton Hildyard Lecture, dedicated to the memory of Myles (1914-2005) who was for forty years (1961-2001) the President of the Thoroton Society and formerly the Honorary Secretary from 1956-60. He was interested in all aspects of the history of Nottinghamshire and is remembered with affection and respect by many members of the Society. And now to the lecture and another memorable one it was too. For a goodly number of those present, Professor Charles Watkins was not a stranger – he attended the 2014 lunch when he was our speaker, giving us a most informative, interesting and sometimes amusing talk on the Trees of

Sherwood Forest. We welcomed him once again today to speak to us on the Trees of Nottinghamshire.

Charles is the Professor of Rural Geography at the University of Nottingham where he lectures on historical and cultural geography. He is also Chair of the Society for Landscape Studies, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries and a Trustee of the Sherwood Forest Trust. He has a number of books to his credit and had just published a volume entitled *Trees, Woods and Forests* when we met him at Edwinstowe and he was currently researching for a book on *Trees in Art*. Members were most interested in the number of artists who had found inspiration in Sherwood Forest, notably Andrew McCallum, a Nottingham born and educated artist who painted many striking scenes of trees, especially those of Sherwood Forest. His paintings can be found in the V&A as well as in Nottingham Castle Gallery - he was a favourite of Queen Victoria and was allotted a room in Windsor Castle whilst he was painting trees in the grounds.

Another person to draw inspiration from the trees of Sherwood Forest was Hayman Rooke, a retired major who made his home in Mansfield Woodhouse and is well-known as an antiquarian in the area. The Major Oak is named after him.

Professor Watkins informed us that the best fragments of Sherwood Forest are within 25 minutes of the City centre, including that part of Colwick Park which lies atop the cliff – a park within Sherwood Forest. We heard that, surprisingly, there were more woodlands in the county in the 1970s than in the 1830s.

Ancient trees are still a feature of Sherwood Forest but owners in the past also often protected such trees for their antiquity and interest. However, there were many uses for the Notts woodlands such



Ancient oak at Haywood Oaks. Photograph - Charles Watkins

as the making of birch charcoal, an important source of industrial fuel - Sherwood Forest was vitally important for industry. It was also valuable for grazing and pannage for pigs, sheep and, in lesser numbers, long-horned cattle. Richard Neale of Edwinstowe attempted in the 17<sup>th</sup> century to control the numbers of pigs being let loose in his forest lands by imposing a limit of two per cottage. The traditional right to allow pigs to feed in the forest went on into the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Acorns and beech-mast were also commodities which could be sold.

Charles introduced us to many interesting people who lived, worked or wrote about

Sherwood Forest. One such was Christopher Thomson of Edwinstowe who wrote an “Autobiography of an Artisan” in 1847. Thomson, we were told, was a one-man Mechanics Institute, establishing a library and free classes for the local inhabitants. He wrote in his Hallamshire Scrapbook of the rights which people had enjoyed from the forest lands half a century before he was writing and had now lost. It was he who recorded that the Major Oak had previously been used to keep fowls in but, because of the vast size, the fowls were banished and it was renamed.

A most interesting lecture from Professor Watkins – which managed to bring into a clear focus the varied ways in which the forest land and Nottinghamshire trees were so important to the county – valuable resources for us to treasure still.

**Barbara Cast**

### **THE THOROTON RESEARCH GROUP**

It is planned to re-launch the Thoroton Research Group in October this year. A meeting is booked for 10.30am on **Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October**, in the **Thoroton Room at Bromley House**. Attendance at meetings held in the past was poor, with only five people at the last meeting. The purpose of the Research Group is to encourage and support members in their research interests, and especially to promote publication of results. Existing members of the research group, and anyone else interested in joining, are invited to contact John Wilson at [wilsonicus@btinternet.com](mailto:wilsonicus@btinternet.com), or by telephone at 0115 926 6175.

Because a number of Thoroton members have of late sent in results of their research, I have already started a section in this Newsletter entitled 'Members' Research', in the hope that this will encourage publication of more short studies.

**John Wilson**

### **MEMBERS' RESEARCH**

#### **Newstead Abbey Gardens – a request for help**

Peter Smith, in the last chapter of his book with Rosalys Coope about Newstead Abbey, says *'It is to be hoped that the publication of this study.....will encourage someone to take up the challenge of researching the fascinating story of its gardens'* (p.175). I have decided to take up the challenge and research the Victorian and Edwardian formal and kitchen gardens at Newstead Abbey, as well as the lives of the gardeners who worked there. I would be interested in receiving copies of old photographs and colour transparencies of the gardens, particularly before 1965 when the glasshouses were demolished, and also any ephemera, such as letters or diaries, which mention the gardens. I already have copies of most of the guidebooks ever published and a good collection of Edwardian postcards, although there may be some omissions in my collection. The information I receive will hopefully be incorporated into a future publication, and some of it will no doubt be used in the garden history tours which I run for members of the public at Newstead Abbey during the summer months.

Please contact me, Philip Jones, at [philedjones@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:philedjones@yahoo.co.uk) or at any of the Thoroton Society lectures.

#### **1816 – THE YEAR WITHOUT A SUMMER**

1816 became known as 'the year without a summer' owing to the very cloudy conditions and lack of sunlight. The clouds were caused by a massive volcanic eruption in 1815.

##### **The volcanoes**

1816 was a catastrophic year for the population globally. There had been a succession of volcanic eruptions at the end of the eighteenth century, and three serious ones in the early years of the nineteenth century. These were

1812 – Mount Soufriere on the island of St Vincent. This eruption was recorded in a painting by JMW Turner, now in the Victoria Gallery and Museum, Liverpool<sup>1</sup>;

1812 – Mount Mayon in the Philippines;

1815 – Mount Tambora, on the island of Sumbawa, Indonesia. This is considered to be one of the most violent in recorded history. It began in April 1815 and continued for about five months. One of the best accounts of the eruption is found in the memoirs of Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles (1781-1826) who was stationed in Java for several years. Raffles despatched troops to investigate the source of the explosions, as he thought they were due to cannon fire.

It has been estimated that the Tambora eruption was some four times more powerful than the better-known eruption of Krakatoa in 1883. Vast clouds of dust and debris were flung into the stratosphere and covered the whole planet. This had the effect of preventing sunlight from reaching the earth's surface, hence the 'year without a summer'. There is evidence of global crop failures and widespread starvation. 1812 was also, to a lesser extent, a year with little summer.

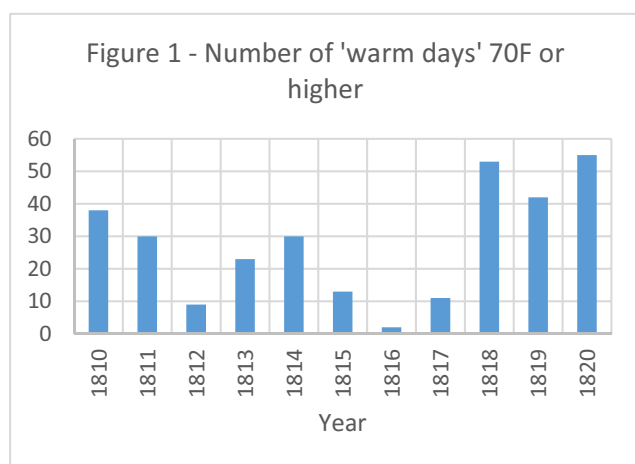
This paper is an attempt to examine the effects of the Tambora eruption and the 'year without a summer' on Nottinghamshire.

### **The Meteorology**

Accurate weather records from the first quarter of the nineteenth century are scarce. There are none from Nottinghamshire which contain the detail that I required, but there is a fine series of records from Derby<sup>2</sup>. The records are contained in a large bound book labelled 'T and JT Swanwick Met Obs at Derby July 1793 to Nov 1838', now in the possession of the National Meteorological Library, Exeter. They are remarkably detailed for the period and include daily maximum and minimum temperatures, barometer readings, rainfall and general comments on the weather.

The weather records were first kept by Thomas Swanwick from 1793 until December 1813, then by his son John Thomas Swanwick from January 1814 until November 1838: a remarkable series of continuous records covering forty-five years. Thomas Swanwick and his wife Mary were proprietors of a school, sometimes referred to as Swanwick's Academy, in St Mary's Gate, Derby. Their son John Thomas was a land surveyor<sup>3</sup>.

**Temperatures** To assess the nature of the 'summer' of the years for which I had data, I checked the number of days in each year in the period 1810 to 1820 when the daily maximum temperature was 70°F or higher. 70°F was usually seen as the marker of a 'warm day' prior to the use of the metric system in meteorology (70°F equates to about 21°C). One would normally expect a day with a maximum temperature of 70°F to have some direct sunlight to warm the air.



The results are shown in figure 1. From this we can see that 1816 had only two 'warm days' when the temperature reached 70°F or higher. Indeed, most days throughout the year are labelled 'cloudy' in the notes with John Thomas Swanwick's daily weather records. 1815 and 1817 were also rather deficient in 'warm days', as was 1812 which suffered to a lesser extent from the two volcanic eruptions that year.

**Rainfall** The rainfall of 1816 was largely unremarkable. There were two incidents of flooding in January, as recorded in John Holmes' diary – see below. However, these may have been caused by very localized storms as no rainfall was recorded at Derby on the two dates mentioned (18<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> January). The severe rain of 12<sup>th</sup> April (34.3 mm, 1.35 ins were recorded at Derby) caused flooding

Days with rainfall over 25mm:			
1810	4	<b>1816</b>	<b>2</b>
1811	2	1817	3
1812	2	1818	3
1813	2	1819	2
1814	2	1820	1
1815	2		

on the Trent near Bleasby on Easter Sunday (14<sup>th</sup> April in 1816). However, the number of wet days (rainfall exceeding 1mm) in 1816 was 109, just a little above the average for the period 1810 to 1820 (102) and exceeded only by 1811 (114 wet days). Incidences of heavy rainfall in the East Midlands exceeding 25mm (1 inch) in 24 hours were, and still are, fairly rare, as shown in Table 1.

**Effects of the Year without a Summer in Nottinghamshire**

The Nottingham Date Book<sup>4</sup>, for 10<sup>th</sup> December 1816, records that ‘Owing to the scarcity of bread, good wheat readily realizing 140s. per quarter, there was much suffering and a great deficiency of employment. A public meeting on the subject was held in the Town Hall, the Mayor in the Chair, at which it was resolved to enter into a subscription for the relief of the destitute, not otherwise provided for. The amount raised was £4,184. In addition to this liberal amount, the London Association contributed twenty tons of red herrings, Lord Middleton gave three hundred tons of coal, and the

Parish of St Nicholas expended £500 on a separate soup establishment. The poor-rates were also excessively heavy.’ The sum raised, over £200,000 in today’s money, indicates the extent of the suffering of the poor. The chart by William Playfair<sup>5</sup> shows wheat prices per ‘quarter’ from the sixteenth century until 1821. This shows the

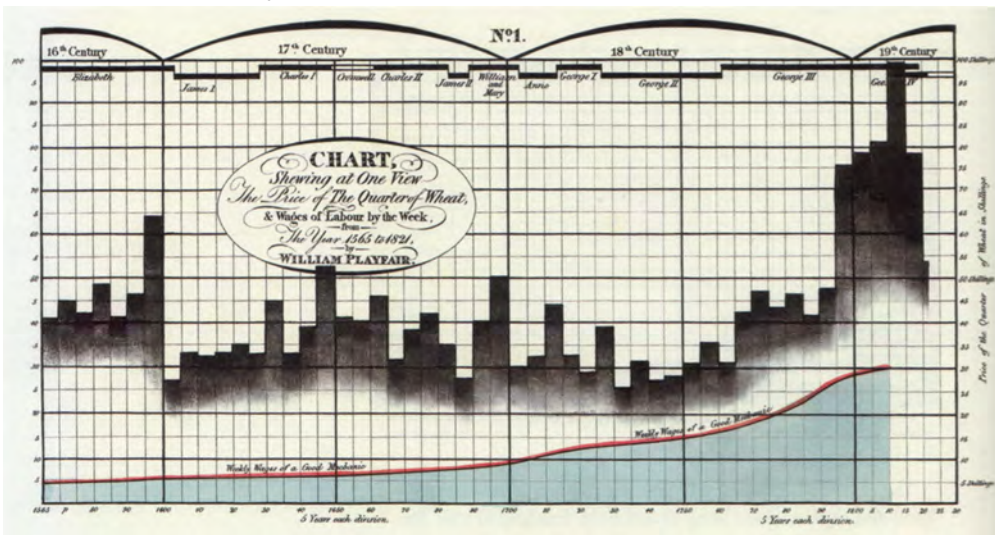


Figure 2. William Playfair’s chart of wheat prices

great leap in wheat price in 1816.

**Evidence from diaries**

Sir Henry FitzHerbert of Tissington Hall in Derbyshire wrote in his notebook<sup>6</sup>:  
 ‘This was the worst year, which was ever recollected. The spring was most severely cold, the snow falling as late as the 7<sup>th</sup> of June; and there was no grass till the end of June. The autumn was unusually wet, so that the Harvest throughout England was very bad, and in the higher parts of Derbyshire, the oats were not out till October, & in many places they were never housed, but remained in small stacks in the Fields all the Winter. Public Credit, which had been abused, was shaken; a great number of Country Banks failed, and several of the principal Mercantile Houses in London, and in the large Provincial Towns stopped payment. The Bank of England, as well as the Country Banks, which continued solvent, greatly contracted their issues; so that it was calculated, that the circulating medium had been reduced in quantity by fifty Millions. The Bank Restriction was stilled(sic) continued, and no gold coin appeared in circulation, & very little silver, & that of the most debased character. In consequence of all this, a third of the working population were thrown out of employment, and became Paupers.



*In some Parishes near Nottingham and Mansfield, the Tenants threw up their occupations, the whole produce of their Farms being insufficient to pay their Assessments for the Poor. This state of things could not be without its moral effect; crimes of all descriptions increased fourfold, & the Prisons were crowded to excess’.*

Samuel Curtis, Land Agent to Henry Pelham-Clinton, 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Newcastle under Lyne, wrote a long letter from Clumber Park to His Grace on 6<sup>th</sup> September 1816 to report on the affairs on the Duke’s estate<sup>7</sup>. He complained that *‘The weather has been for a week past worse than ever, in addition to wet every day we have had frosty nights. Tuesday morning it was so severe that it has nearly killed all the French beans and potatoe tops and I fear the Hops have suffered very much. On the whole I think we have the most impropitious season ever remembered, they have not begun harvest yet at Hardwick, suppose they will begin on the oats next Monday, there is a field or two cut on the forest lands but harvest will not be generally begun untill the latter part of next week. The Corn looks well where it stands up but much is laid very flat and must suffer...*

*...I sincerely hope your Grace and the Duchess will enjoy your trip on the Continent, the weather here is so unfavourable you need not regret your absence from Clumber’.*

Nearer to Nottingham a farmer, whose name we do not know, kept a memoranda book from 1814 to 1848, detailing the regular happenings on the farm<sup>8</sup>. In the entries for 1816, he notes the lateness of the harvest and the length of time harvesting took to complete:

*‘October 16 Finished getting wheat*

*October 21 Finished getting barley*

*NB began to mow barley 11 September so that we were six weeks all but one day from beginning to mow to the dry getting – a very wet harvest.*

*October 23 Finished getting beans, got all in Wednesday – began to mow them 12 September so that they were down six weeks’.*

A gentleman resident in Bleasby, one John Holmes, kept a diary for many years<sup>9</sup>. His entries for 1816 included:

*‘Two small floods happened at the beginning of the year; one on the 18<sup>th</sup> Jan and the other on the 25<sup>th</sup>. The month of Jan was mild and open, with very little frost. From the first of Feb to about the middle of the month, was very frosty, with but little snow. The month of March was windy, but dry; with gentle frosts.*

*A large quantity of rain fell on the 12<sup>th</sup> of April, which caused one of the greatest landfloods ever known, in this village; a large Trent flood followed on the 14<sup>th</sup> (being Easter Sunday) which did a deal of damage, by overflowing the new sown lands etc..... [The rainfall at Derby on 12<sup>th</sup> April 1816 was 34.3mm (1.35 ins). It is unusual in the Midlands to have a day of rain of more than 25mm (approx. 1 inch). See Table 1 above – Ed.]*

*The summer was remarkable wet; the hay in general got very bad, and the corn greatly damaged, by the long and constant rains; so that it was the latter end of Nov before the harvest was finished. The beans was almost rotten in the fields and a quantity of the barley sprouted. A small flood happened in Nov and another on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December’.*

## **Summary**

The evidence from the diaries is of a very wet summer. However, the rainfall as recorded at Derby was not dissimilar from other years in the period 1810 to 1819. 1820 was exceptional in that it was a

very dry and sunny year. I can only assume that because of the lack of direct sunshine in 1816, nothing dried out after rain and therefore crops remained wet. The lack of sun would also have delayed crop ripening, so that yields would be very low and grain prices correspondingly high.

### **Earthquake in Nottingham**

To add to the general misery of 1816, there was a large earthquake in Nottinghamshire on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> March. Earthquakes are not unknown in the County, but this incident was severe. The Nottingham Date Book records

*'Nottingham, in common with a great part of the North Midlands district, experienced a smart shock of earthquake. It was felt at half past twelve pm and as Divine Service, it being Sunday, was not over at the churches, great alarm was expressed by the congregations. At St Peter's and St Nicholas's, the consternation was so great that service had to be suspended for a few seconds, and one lady was borne out in a state of insensibility. The pillars supporting St Mary's tower shook very visibly, but fortunately the attention of the crowded congregation was so engrossed by the eloquence of the Sheriff's Chaplain, and the presence of the Judge and his retinue, that the alarm was but slight....'*

*In many parts of the town and neighbourhood glasses were shaken off the shelves, articles of domestic use displaced, window casements thrown open and other indications manifest of the influence of the subterranean movement.'*

John Holmes of Bleasby recorded in his diary:

*'On Sunday the 17<sup>th</sup> [March], the village and the surrounding county, for many miles, was thrown into the greatest consternation about half-past 12 o'clock, by a serious shock of an earth-quake. Divine service not been over at the parish church the congregation, (and myself) distinctly felt the undulation in the motion given to the building about three or four seconds. It being the Assize Sunday at Nottingham, the judge and his retinue being at St Mary's church, it was perceived to shake very much.'*

### **Notes**

- 1 Personal communication – Curator of Pictures at the Victoria Gallery and Museum, Liverpool
- 2 Scans of the Derby records for the period 1810 to 1820 were kindly supplied by Mark Beswick of the National Meteorological Library and Archives, Exeter. The records are Crown Copyright and information extracted therefrom is used by permission of the Met. Office.
- 3 *The Directory of Derbyshire 1829*, published by Steven Glover, records:  
John Thomas Swanwick, Land Surveyor, St Mary's Gate  
Mary Swanwick and Son, gents' boarding and day school, St Mary's Gate  
as by this date Thomas Swanwick (1754-1814) had died.  
*Glover's Derby: The History and Directory of the Borough of Derby* by Stephen Glover (1842) has a reference to "Swanwick, John Thos., Land surveyor, registrar of births, deaths, and marriages for St. Alkmund's district, and agent for the Sun Fire and Life Office [at] 25, St. Mary's Gate".
- 4 Field, Henry (1884) *The Date-Book of Remarkable and memorable Events connected with Nottingham and its neighbourhood*.
- 5 William Playfair is regarded as the 'father' of modern graphical methods of presenting visual data. In 1822 he wrote to parliament, enclosing the graph, as follows:  
*'A letter on our agricultural distresses, their causes and remedies: accompanied with tables and copper-plate charts, shewing and comparing the prices of wheat, bread and labour, from 1565 to 1821: addressed to the Lords and Commons by William Playfair'*

Source: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Yale, [www.brbl-dl.library.yale.edu](http://www.brbl-dl.library.yale.edu). Accessed 25.2.2016.

- 6 Derbyshire Record Office D/239/M/F 10229 pp4-7. This can be accessed via <https://recordoffice.wordpress.com/2015/04/10/a-volcanic-eruption/>. Accessed 25.2.2016
- 7 University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections (UNMASC) Ne C 6396 Letter from Samuel Curtis to Henry Pelham-Clinton, 6<sup>th</sup> September 1816
- 8 UNMASC MS 99 Memoranda book for a farm in the Stragglethorpe, Holme Pierrepont and Cotgrave area, Nottinghamshire 1814-1848.
- 9 My thanks to Barbara Cast for drawing my attention to the diary of John Holmes.

**John Wilson**

### WHEN “ROCK CITY” ROLLED

As Rock City, the music venue on Lower Talbot Street, Nottingham, has marked the thirty fifth anniversary of its opening – on the 11<sup>th</sup> of December 1980 – perhaps now is a good time to look at the history of this Victorian building. It is 140 years old this year and the first three quarters of its life saw a few changes.

In December 1875, Edward Baker Cox, the proprietor of the Talbot Hotel [Yates’s], Long Row, Nottingham, opened the Alexandra Skating Rink behind his establishment, with an entrance at 13 Market Street. This rink was for roller skating. Indoor ice skating rinks did appear in 1876, but Nottingham’s old Ice Stadium was not built until 1939, just in time to be used as a munitions dump. Mr Cox may have opened this rink as a stop-gap or thought it too small but, for whatever reason, the next year he converted it into the Palace of Varieties Music Hall and proceeded to open TWO skating rinks on Talbot Street. These were our building, to which he transferred the name, the Alexandra Rink, and the Marble Rink, which was situated just up the hill, only separated from the Alexandra by what became the Stanley Place cul-de-sac. Both buildings were built under the auspices of the Leicester and Nottingham Skating Rink Company (Limited), of which Edward Cox was the managing

director, and used the same architects Messrs. Evans and Jolley. The point about this skating rink company is that it held the local concession for Plimpton skates. These skates, patented by the American James Plimpton in 1863, were self-steering, so that as the skater leant to one side the



The Talbot Street frontage of the Alexandra Skating Rink, source: Nottingham Civic Society Newsletter No. 79 (1989) Page 15

This frontage, designed by Evans and Jolley, is stylistically like the completed building, which itself has been much altered, with additional entrances and drains, but is still recognisable.

inside wheels moved closer together causing the skater to turn. This was a great improvement and with the adoption of roller bearings and rubber tyres skating became a lot easier and more enjoyable, especially for the fairer sex. The Alexandra opened on the 24<sup>th</sup> of November 1876 and may have been owned by Mr Cox, which would explain the capital ‘C’s above the first floor windows. Its floor was certainly bigger than its predecessor at 155 x 95 feet against 120 x 45. The skating floor surface was the defining difference between the two Talbot Street rinks. The Alexandra’s skating surface was

of asphalt, supplied by the Birmingham Val de Travers company, while the Marble Rink's floor was - marble. The Marble Rink opened on the 12th of February 1877. The floor, 165 x 45 feet, was paved with slabs of white Sicilian marble with the crevices between the slabs filled with the greatest care, so as to be 'no hindrance to the impetuous course of the skater'. The illumination was by an iron gas pipe perforated with innumerable holes running above the balcony. A lighted wick was fixed in a cradle and then raised to the level of the holes and drawn around the whole building by a man below. I would have liked to have been around when they lit the gas lights, although, on second thoughts, perhaps not. In September 1877 the rink invested in an aquarium and large rockery requiring several tons of the porous limestone tufa. When the aquarium opened it included, amongst its many wonders, two seals. This rink seems always to have been the poor relation of the Alexandra and although it shared attractions it only lasted until 1885. Its fixtures and fittings auction in that May included 600 pairs of the Plympton skates. The building became a warehouse for Pilkington Glass and remained a warehouse until its demolition around 1990, despite the Nottingham Civic Society's attempt to save it.

**THE PLYMPTON SKATE.**



The Plympton Skate is too well known to need any extended description, having been used in rinks for nearly twenty years. We are now prepared to offer this skate to the trade and to rinks at a price corresponding with other skates on the market.

Sizes from 7 1-2 to 11 1-2. Price, per pair, \$3.00.

**Price List of Parts.**

Ebonized Foot Boards.....	per pair, \$o	40
Heel Straps.....	"	35
Toe.....	"	35
Heel Bands.....	each	7
Trucks.....	"	20
Hangers.....	"	20
Steel Axles.....	"	10
Turkey Boxwood Wheels.....	"	5
Cotters.....	per 100,	35
Large Screws.....	each,	3
Rubbers.....	per doz.,	35
Double Rivet Buckles.....	per gross,	50

**PLYMPTON'S ROLLER SKATE**  
As advertised in *Spalding's Manual of Roller Skating*,  
1884



The principle of Plympton's skate as illustrated in *The Champion Skate Book*. c. 1879

The patent 'Plympton Skate - image supplied by author

Meanwhile Alexandra Halls, as it was sometimes called, was designed from the start as more than just a skating rink. Kelly's Directory of 1904 stated that, 'the hall will seat 2,500 persons, and is used for entertainment etc., and also as a skating rink; adjoining are two smaller halls one 65 x 75 feet, with 700 sittings, and another 33 by 22 feet'. So between skating sessions, as the craze waxed and waned over the years, the halls were used for many other purposes. The most common, naturally, were balls, dances and the ubiquitous whist drives, but there were other, perhaps more surprising events. William Gladstone, the four times Liberal Prime Minister, addressed nearly 10,000 people there on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September 1877. He was attending the laying of the University College foundation stone, being between premierships. The rink also hosted specialist entertainments, tight rope walkers, gymnasts and the strongwoman Mademoiselle Valerie, whose 'glorious physique' was 'the one theme of conversation throughout the town'. In late 1880 Mr Cox, 'took back' the Alexandra Rink from the Rink Company and offered it as a home to the Nottingham Gymnasium. The Gym was looking to relocate from Waterway Street, the Meadows - 'an unpromising locality'. They were also attracted by the close proximity to the Turkish baths in Stanley Place which 'offers an inducement of another sort'. The buildings were not only used as a gymnasium as in December 1881 a meeting of the Nottingham Branch of the National Skating Association was held there. This ice skating association had been formed two years earlier to help combat undesirable betting and cheating amongst the sport of Cambridge Fen speed skaters. Nothing changes. In 1882 there was the Poultry, Pidgeon and Rabbit Show, while in 1884 Edward Payton Weston spent two days in the

Alexandra, walking fifty miles each day, which equates to something like 650 circuits of the hall. Weston was a notable American 'pedestrian' [long distance walker] who was attempting a 5,000 mile walk around Europe. The secret of his success was supposed to be his habit of chewing coca leaves. In 1887, to commemorate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, the building's name was changed to the Victoria Hall.

The building now entered what we might call its circus years. In most of the years between 1887 and 1898 there was at least one, and sometimes two. These shows tended to be displays of equestrianism. The width of the main hall allowed plenty of space for the 42 foot diameter ring, deemed the optimum size for an acrobat to stand on a cantering horse. Messrs. Keith, Allen and Quaglieni's Circus was there in April '87 followed by Rowlands in November, and Gilbert's Circus appeared every winter between 1894 and 1898. But horses and ponies were not the only animals on display. There was a 'Grand Troup of Elephants' in Elphinstone's (also) Grand Circus in 1890, although on the 1<sup>st</sup> February the visitors may have been more interested in the 'Exciting Pig Hunt' as the winner received the pig. In April 1895 Herr Seeth presented seven trained African Lions in a 'circular iron enclosure', and a 'well-bred tiger' which rode a 'smart black pony'. The hall did not neglect, between these circuses, its 'bread-n-butter' function and skating continued. In the mid-90s there were regular football matches, on skates, and a champion fast skater was engaged to give demonstrations. They also continued to hold banquets and bazaars into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In September 1903 the hall temporarily became home to a Dahomey Village. This was a troupe of West Africans, from what is now Benin, which included the famous 'Amazon' women warriors who had fought so valiantly against the French a decade before. The Africans showed off - and sold - their Arts and Crafts and gave displays of arms, war dances and songs, half-hourly, admission 3d, 12 noon to 10.30pm. Another warrior tribe used the hall when Keir Hardy MP addressed the local supporters of the Independent Labour Party in 1909, although apparently the hall was not big enough for the crowd. For political balance, in January 1914 the Duke of Portland gave a talk about Irish Home Rule to the Primrose League. The building continued to be used for dances, meetings and functions during the Great War although it was requisitioned twice as a temporary army billet in 1915. After the war



Rock City today – author's picture

and the Victory Ball held there in February 1919, the halls returned to normal but their close neighbour had designs on them. The buildings were sold in the early 20s although the last dancing there was not until Saturday the 5<sup>th</sup> May 1928. With the loss of the Victoria Halls a replacement was required. This was the New Victoria Hall, at the bottom of St. Ann's Well Road, which opened in January 1929. This new building still stands [2016]. It became the Locarno and eventually a Bingo Hall. The original building was taken over as additional storage space by Burtons of Smithy Row, the well-known Nottingham grocery company. Since the 1880s Burtons had warehousing in Stanley

Place, adjacent to the Victoria Hall, and relocated their headquarters there. They had also excavated 120,000 cubic feet of sandstone from under the buildings to create a cold store, accessed by a large hydraulic lift, and installed ice making machinery. The acquisition of the Victoria Hall made commercial sense and it stayed in their possession until the 1960s when Burtons became part of Fine Foods, one

## The Spring Meeting and AGM at North Muskham



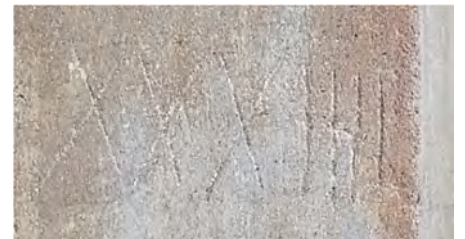
Clockwise from top left: the Muskham Ferry, where a number of members had lunch; your editor after lunch; the view from the pub; members visiting St Wilfred's Church; David Mellors describes the Church architecture and history; the South Porch of St Wilfred's Church (the mass dial is visible on the 5<sup>th</sup> stone from the bottom on the right of the door); the East end of the Church.

Photographs by John and Janet Wilson



**Vicars of North Muskham**

William Vale 1346	Robert de Muscham
Richard Goldthorpe 1470	Thomas Prys 1479
Richard Nicholl 1485	John Knott 1486
Richard Shato 1486	John Langley 1487
Henry Tylar 1506	John Walker 1506
William Taylor 1508	Thomas Ashton 1584
Thomas Clerke 1586	George Evans 1593
Thomas Timble 1620	John Young 1661
Samuel Warkstone 1665	John Warrell 1670
Geraint Burton 1704	George Benlowes 1723
Thomas Leach 1731	William Harding 1735
James Burnell 1778	William Henry Barry 1812
Joseph Arkham Darcy	1825
John Winstanley Hull	1850
Francis Oswald Colley	1902
Walter Danwell Williams	1905 (Hon. Canon Southwell)
Thomas Henry J. Clegg	1937
Edward Arthur Rigden	1946
Richard Roland Dunn	1956
William Harvey Snow	1961 (Hon. Canon Southwell)
Charles Kemp Duch	1979 (Rural Dean Tuxford & Sturwell)
Robert B. Fearn	1983-1994
Prof. Adrian & Margaret Armstrong	1995-2000
Ian Anderson Lambert	2001-2003
Prof. Sylvia Barker	2006-2008
Rev. Canon Susan Spencer	2009-2010
Rev. Colin Wall	2014 -



### St Wilfred's Church, North Muskham

Top row from left – the mass dial; unusual carving in the roof; window commemorating the Barton family.

Second row from left – detail from another window with various family crests; the Vicars of North Muskham; carving in the Porch, thought to be late 12<sup>th</sup> century, showing part of the head of a round-leafed bracelet cross with a disc at the top of the shaft.

Bottom left – an unusual memorial to John Smith, died 1581, showing the terms of his will.

The two pictures on the right show graffiti of unknown age on pillars in the Church. Photographs by John Wilson

of the first UK supermarket chains, although it was owned by a Canadian. The supermarket disposed of the Talbot Street buildings and in 1973 J. Pullen Enterprises, of the Talk of the Town, Eccles, Manchester, received planning permission for the 'Conversion of warehouse into theatre club – Heart of the Midlands'. This was despite previous applications in 1967 to use the building and caves as a discotheque or for "worship and religious instruction" being turned down, because of concerns about traffic congestion. The drawings, by Dudding, Middleton and Mutch, accompanying Pullen's application showed major alterations to the building. Tiers for dining tables, a stage (with pit), suspended ceiling and all the services – kitchen, beer store etc. – were added. Part of the building was demolished beside Stanley Place to provide access for coaches and deliveries. There was even a drawing of the entrance steps detailing the large 'Heart of the Midlands' sign.

**ENJOY THE STARS**

at The **Heart of the MIDLANDS**

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THEATRE RESTAURANT CLUB

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\* CABARET \*

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TONIGHT AND REST OF THE WEEK <b>GENE PITNEY</b>	WEEK COMMENCING 11th NOVEMBER <b>KEN DODD</b>
WEEK COMMENCING 18th NOVEMBER <b>GRUMBLEWEEDS</b>	WEEK COMMENCING 25th NOVEMBER <b>TONY CHRISTIE</b>
WEEK COMMENCING 2nd DECEMBER <b>RONNIE DUKES &amp; RICKY LEE</b>	WEEK COMMENCING 9th DECEMBER <b>ROCKIN' BERRIES</b>

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Advertisement in the Nottingham Evening Post 7 November 1973. © Nottingham Post

The club opened on the 6<sup>th</sup> of November 1973 with Gene Pitney, the American singer, as the headlining act. The intention was for the club to be a membership only, 'sophisticated' nightclub with top acts, dining and dancing into the small hours. Unfortunately, the timing of its opening could hardly have been worse. The country was in a bad way, with dire industrial relations, rising oil prices – they even issued petrol coupons, although they were never used - and rampant inflation, which reached 25% by August 1974. For the first three months of 1974 the three-day week was imposed by the Heath government, and the Heart of the Midlands had to cut its prices. The club came through this period but had to lower its sights to survive. The need for membership was watered down. The calibre of the acts, or perhaps their fees, declined. The food became standardised. In 1977, for £6 you could have a reserved table for four plus Chicken Fayre meal, the infamous chicken-in-a-basket. Although this delicacy in plastic 'baskets' was derided I wonder how history will view our current fad for serving food on slabs of wood and slate. In February 1978 the venue played host to the first Embassy 'World' Darts Championship, organised by the British Darts Organisation. Welshman Leighton Rees won the first prize of £3000. But there did not seem to be enough of these other sources of income and despite having 78-year-old Andy Powell in an Olde Tyme Music Hall as 'your [1979] New Year present to Mum, Dad or Senior

Citizen' the management wanted out. The baton was taken up by Peter K. Miller who renamed the club 'The Big Heart' and relaunched it on the 14<sup>th</sup> January 1980 with the Nolan Sisters as the top act. Mr Miller, who was based in Barrow in Furness, owning Maxims discotheque there, also ran the Fiesta Nightclub in Sheffield. His tenure in Nottingham was short lived. On Saturday the 12<sup>th</sup> April 1980, after a show by the Grumbleweeds comedy group, the Big Heart closed. The Fiesta also shut and at a creditor's meeting in May the dire state of Mr Miller's finances was exposed. Artistes and employees had not been paid. Booked acts were claiming breach of contract and the thousands of advance



ticket holders were trying to get their money back. Mr Miller is alleged to have fled the country owing creditors more than £500,000.

The club was advertised nationally but, in the end, a local company, George Akins Holdings, who operated clubs and betting shops, took an initial eight year lease from September 1980. The company said that after it had refurbished the nightspot it would provide live entertainment for 20 to 25 year olds. And thirty-five years later Rock City still does.

**Keith Fisher**

### **Caves under Nottingham – a request for information**

*This letter was received recently by our Secretary:*

My brother and I were talking recently about the cave systems in Nottingham and the Galleries of Justice/Shire Hall. My brother had worked as an electrician, years before, when the High Pavement courts were still in use; he had re-wired the oldest parts, even the condemned cell and spent some of his lunchtimes reading through disintegrating piles of paper files, some wrapped in ribbons, like the solicitors would use. It has prompted me to look on the internet and hence me finding your contact details. I worked as a secretary with the Probation Service opposite the old Shire Hall, and had the opportunity of a social visit with a group from Probation, into the Courts and down into the prison area, years before it became the Galleries of Justice, so I knew when my brother described the condemned cell.

In the late 1950s, (I was 10 or 11 years old) my sister and I played around caves in the Drury Hill/Broadmarsh area, when train spotting, with the lads. We mostly went into the caves that run alongside the church that is now a cafe, I have heard it may have been part of a tannery. We climbed over a tall wall from the steps and path on Middle Hill, that goes from Weekday Cross, down towards Broad Marsh. We also played in caves behind the old ice stadium and found a leather holdall and let the police know. They came to our house to tell Mum and Dad that they seemed to think the case belonged to a deserter. I have always felt sorry we had handed it in.

The main reason I am writing, is that my sister and I used to babysit for the Vicar of St Catherine's Church in St Ann's Well Road. The Vicarage building is still there at the corner of Plantagenet Street and Lamartine Street. The Vicar told us that there was a tunnel from the cellar down into Nottingham and showed us an ancient door. He had explored a small way but said it was blocked with rocks and rubbish. We were intrigued but never got to look in. I am guessing there are many caves and tunnels that cannot be opened due to costs.

When I looked at maps on the Nottingham Caves Heritage site, I was surprised at the amount that were in the Shakespeare street area and it made me wonder if they might have connected with the Vicarage tunnel.

*[If anyone has any information about this cave system please contact either Barbara Cast or myself and we will pass on the information to the enquirer – Ed]*

### **LETTER TO THE EDITOR**

#### **'Water Porridge Hall'**

It was interesting to read in the spring 2016 issue of the *Newsletter* (p.9) the suggestion that the place-name 'Water Porridge Hall, on the borders of Epperstone and Calverton, was not a building at all, but was instead a field name, somehow connected with the feeding of gruel to 'sadly undernourished farm labourers'.

Is it not more likely that the name was the result of an ironic, whimsical or self-deprecating reply to the Ordnance Surveyor, when the area was first mapped, and referred to the group of buildings which is now known as Moor Farm? Perhaps the name reveals that the undertaking was not as profitable as had been hoped, when purchased or rented, and did not enable the family to enjoy milk or cream with their breakfast oats!

Although, as you say, 'Water Porridge Hall' does not appear on maps after the 1820s, it is evidenced in directories as late as 1855 and listed with 'Criffin' as one of the two outlying farms in Epperstone parish (*Post Office Directory of Derbys and Notts* [1855], p.33). Ironic names are not uncommon for structures and one thinks of 'Stoney Broke' as a house name, while examples of 'Poverty Farm' are easily to be found.

It also seems frankly unlikely that a post-enclosure field would be given a name which celebrates the feeding of 'servants in husbandry' (not farm-labourers) with gruel.

With regard to the report, on the same page, of a section of enclosure hedge being found in Arnold, the parish was enclosed between 1789-91 and hedges would have to have been planted within a few months of the Award. Between 1750 and 1850 some 200,000 miles of hedge are supposed to have been planted in England as a result of parliamentary enclosure (O. Rackham, *The History of the Countryside* [1986], p.190). Such hedges were practically ubiquitous in the Midland counties until recent decades when many were grubbed up to accommodate modern farming methods. The real challenge has always been to find sections of hedgerow which predate the Parliamentary enclosure period.

Dr Tom Smith

*[Thanks to Dr Smith for this. It would seem that our hedge at Arnold is even older than we thought. However, I suspect that the compilers of the 1855 Post Office Directory probably used the same Old Series OS map, with 'Water Porridge Hall' marked. Later editions of the map did not appear for many years as a complete re-survey of the country, extending from 1842 to 1893, was required. – Ed]*

## **NEWS**

### **The new Harley Gallery, Welbeck**

During the last four hundred years the Dukes of Portland and their families have accumulated some eleven thousand items of treasures which now amount to a very large and valuable collection – the Portland Collection. The grandson of the seventh Duke, William Parente, has now moved back into the Abbey itself since the army school has transferred to new buildings in Leicestershire. This has allowed the family not only to open the restored interior of the Abbey to guided tours, but also to promote the building of a new Gallery, the Harley Gallery, alongside the abbey premises, the garden centre and restaurant and shop. Access is off the A60 road to Worksop.

On Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2016, the historian and broadcaster Lucy Worsley officially opened of the new Harley Gallery at Welbeck. This new building, costing about five million pounds, replaces the former Gallery, first opened in the 1970s. This new gallery with its state of the art lighting and show cases (and security) presents a far more spacious and professional means of looking at some of the items, which range from paintings by Van Dyck and George Stubbs to items such as the ear-ring worn by Charles I at his execution, a miniature of Mary Queen of Scots and a stunning collection of silver plate amassed by the Cavendish-Bentinck family over the years. It is a remarkable building, and is now open to the general public. A few members of the Thoroton Society a few months ago were involved in the discussion of the plans for the best way to present the description of the exhibits in the gallery. As a result, we were invited to the official opening on 19<sup>th</sup> March. **Alan Langton**

[The Harley Gallery is just off the A60 between Mansfield and Worksop. The Gallery is open from 10am to 5pm Monday to Saturday and 10am to 5pm on Sundays. The Gallery is closed over the Christmas period and on Easter Sunday – Ed.]

### **Stan Smith**

Thoroton members may remember Stan Smith or, to use his pen name, Ztan Zmith. Stan wrote numerous booklets and pamphlets, mainly relating to the area around Underwood and Bagthorpe, as well as Bulwell. Sadly, Stan died on 13 April, and his funeral was on 27 April. He and his wife Christine attended many local history events, although they were not members of Thoroton.

**John Beckett**

### **The Castle Studies Trust – grant applications**

The Castle Studies Trust is proactively seeking out grant applications for research projects on castles throughout the UK. The focus is on sites which are not in the care of major heritage organisations (eg English Heritage) but which are of some importance.

The Trust currently awards grants of up to £5,000 (although this is under review) to fund or co-fund research projects on such sites. It is intended that grants will initially be awarded for new work on castles, such as architectural and geophysical surveys, or scientific tests such as radio-carbon dating as well as projects to enhance the general public's understanding of castles such as reconstruction drawings.

You can see the type of work that has been funded so far by visiting the Trust's website: [www.castlestudiestrust.org](http://www.castlestudiestrust.org). Application forms are also on the website. The closing date for the next round of applications is December 2016.

### **Historical Maps (24/1/2016)**

Some years ago, I came across a little-known online interactive mapping tool that turned out to be extremely useful in my research. I now want to share some information on that tool as I believe it would be valuable to anyone engaged in historical research associated with Nottinghamshire, but also because its future may be under threat.

*Nottinghamshire Insight Mapping* is Nottingham City Council's external GIS system: <<http://info.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/insightmapping>>. It's built in-house and runs on their own infrastructure to "deliver spatial content to the general public" (quoting their development team). It appears to be a tool designed to be *all things to all people* as it contains many different features, several of which I have not investigated. For instance, tools for planning or surveying that allow custom map annotation and distance measurements. It supports different layers that may be superimposed to identify features or information related to housing, leisure, transport, crime, education, and environment. It also supports detailed street maps, street views, and bird's-eye views whose locations can be found by name, by postcode, or by grid reference.

However, the most important feature for my own work turned out to be a range of historical map layers of Nottinghamshire that could be viewed either individually or overlaid on the modern street map, and I have used this many times for locating where lost streets and buildings would be today. In the top-left corner of the map is a toolbar; one of the options reads 'Road Map' but this may be changed to 'Historical' in order to switch to an equivalent historical map layer. At the same time, a slider control appears through which the historical map can be changed to one from a different date. Another slider

control allows the user to control the visibility of the modern map through the historical map, and I cannot emphasise how startling it is to explore Nottinghamshire with such a superimposed view.

There are a few problems that I have previously discussed with their development team:

- There is an inconvenient Terms-and-Conditions prompt that must be accepted when you visit the site. This is apparently a requirement of the licensing for the OS maps.
- It is not possible to embed an *active map* (meaning that you can interact with it) into an online article, such as a blog-post; in HTML terms, this means that you cannot reference the site from an <iframe> element. This is similarly related to OS licensing, and is in stark contrast to Google Maps which actively encourages this — I have used this feature for putting both active maps and active street views into my blog-posts.
- The toolbar contains an option to ‘Link to this’ which gives you a URL hyperlink (e.g. <<http://info.nottinghamcity.gov.uk/insightmapping/?l=0.21,4.2,4.3,4.7&xmin=455910&xmax=456862&ymin=344699&ymin=345214>>) that can take you back to the same view. Unfortunately, it always returns to the modern map rather than an historical one or any combination thereof.
- The grid reference for the current cursor position is nicely shown in the bottom left of the map, but there is no way to copy it for pasting elsewhere. Also, there is no support for equivalent longitude and latitude values.

Quite recently, the site started prompting users to complete an optional survey. Some of the survey was soliciting possible improvements, but much of it was trying to decide which features were used most (or least). Given that budgets are ever-decreasing, I fear that some features may be axed to cut costs, and given its limited exposure then the historical maps may find themselves on that list.

As well as making greater use of this tool, and getting its problems addressed, there are some rather exciting enhancements that would make it invaluable for research and enhancing our online content:

- Providing earlier map dates than 1875.
- Locating higher grade listed buildings (grade 1 and 2\*).
- Locating conservation areas.
- Locating monuments and other historical features.

If a hyperlink could take you to a specific historical map layer, and also take grid-reference parameters, then it would allow Web sites to link photographic collections to their corresponding time and place, or allow someone to compile a list of historical street names and that could take you to the map and show you both ends of that street (a feature I would even consider paying for).

I strongly urge readers to investigate this tool, and to complete the survey with their own suggestions. It's too good for us to lose.

**Tony Proctor** (<https://www.google.me/+TonyProctor/about>)

#### **Fourteenth Annual Great Nottingham Inclosure Walk.                      1.30 pm Sunday 3rd July 2016**

The walk starts at the river end of Queens Walk, Nottingham, near to Wilford Bridge. Now accessible by tram (Clifton Line) from city centre or station. It goes through all the Recreation Grounds allotted to the townsfolk when their commonable Fields and Meadows were enclosed to give more space for desperately-needed housing. No other town in Britain has anything like it.

Much of this ground was laid out as Walks, recognising that cricket and other team games and events



Queen's Walk c.1904. Courtesy of Mr Spencer and [www.picturethepast.org.uk](http://www.picturethepast.org.uk)

need catering for, and play-space, but that the regular Sunday walks of the family were just as important for the Town's health.

Dr. Judith Mills will start the Walk and she and Dr. Jonathan Coope will accompany the walk to explain the importance of the 1845 Inclosure Act and discuss how the parks and open spaces created by that Act have been used, abused and developed over the last 171 years.

the Forest, where a certificate will be presented to those completing the route. Guides will be available to buy on the day, or from the tourist centre, for your future use. The Forest cafe will be open at the end, highly recommended.

The walk finishes at the Inclosure Oaks, (yes, there are now two), on

**Judith Mills**

### **The Pentrich Revolution Bicentenary 1817 – 2017**

On 9th June 1817 over 300 men set out from villages on the Derbyshire-Nottinghamshire border to march to Nottingham. They thought that they were part of a general rising across the North and Midlands to bring down an unjust and oppressive government. They were motivated by poverty and the hunger of their families, and with all efforts to gain a hearing suppressed, they saw armed revolt as the only alternative.

Unknown to them, the Government was fully aware of their plans, and their agents had actively encouraged the rising. Rebel leaders in other areas had already been arrested. The Derbyshire men were to be used as an example to others. After a trial in Derby, with a carefully selected jury, three were executed, hanged and then beheaded, fourteen transported and others imprisoned. Their families were evicted and homes destroyed.

There was a national scandal at the time due to the role of the government *agents provocateurs*, but the events were soon largely forgotten. Yet they are a significant step in the long story of the fight for universal suffrage and a just society.

#### The significance for Nottinghamshire.

While most participants came from Derbyshire communities the place of Nottinghamshire in these events is significant.

1. The uprising was planned and coordinated by a "secret community" in Nottingham, which had close links to the Luddites.
2. The man who led the march, and one of those executed, was Jeremiah Brandreth, a stocking frame knitter, living in Nottingham with his wife and children, though originally from Sutton in Ashfield.
3. The initial objective of the march was Forest in Nottingham where more than a hundred men gathered believing an uprising was to take place, according to witnesses at the trial.

4. The march was halted at Gilt Brook by Dragoons from Nottingham.

6. Many rebels were initially imprisoned at Shire Hall before trial in Derby, where the Government felt more secure that a jury would convict.

The Pentrich and South Wingfield Revolution Bicentenary Group has been set up to commemorate these events, supported by Derbyshire County Council, local councils along the route, the Universities of Derby and Nottingham, and many local organisations, with the active participation of descendants in England, Australia and the U.S.A. A range of events is planned through 2017. These will include:

\* A day festival at Wingfield Manor on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2017, supported by English Heritage.

\* A festival of walks, including 13 guided walks to tell the story of the uprising and its participants, both along the route of the march and in Nottingham, Derby, Sutton in Ashfield and in Australia. A re-enactment of the full march will also take place in June.

\* Orientation Boards to be placed along the route of the march.

\* A exhibition is being organised by Derby Museum and in local communities along the route. It is hoped that a permanent exhibition will be established afterwards.

\* Derby University is organising an international conference on “Radicalism 1790 -1820” on 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> June 2017. A student conference will also be taking place.

\* Dr Richard Gaunt, Curator of Rebellion at Nottingham Castle, and Associate Professor in History at the University of Nottingham, is giving a presentation on Brandreth to the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire and helping to organise a trip to rebellion-related sites.

\* Local research into the events and into family heritage is already taking place, involving many local groups, and publication of results is being supported. The story is being told through a variety of ways, including art, music and drama. An exhibition of work, inspired by the rising, by local artists is already underway. A choirs’ workshop is planned for Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> October led by singer and song writer Lester Simpson.

We are keen to see these events publicised as widely as possible and would be happy to provide speakers to come to your organisation to talk about the Pentrich Revolution and the bicentenary. In the first instance, please contact Roger Tanner or Sylvia Mason c/o rogerntanner@yahoo.co.uk or sylviamason@uwclub.net.

**Roger Tanner**

### ***Grand Tourists and Others: Travelling Abroad before the Twentieth Century***

**Weston Gallery, Nottingham Lakeside Arts, University Park, Nottingham NG7 2RD**  
**Friday 29 April – Sunday 7 August Admission Free**



From left: From an album associated with Prince Leopold (1853-1884), 1st Duke of Albany, c.1884 MS 317 Manuscripts and Special Collections; From *The world in miniature*, 1825, Briggs Collection, Manuscripts and Special Collections; From C.H. Tatham’s *Etchings*, London (1800).

This exhibition, jointly curated by Dr Ross Balzaretto (School of Humanities) and Manuscripts and Special Collections at The University of Nottingham, takes the visitor on a journey through the history of travel since the sixteenth century drawing on the University of Nottingham's rich archives.

Beginning with the elite 'Grand Tour' of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and ending with the more commercial tourism of the mid-nineteenth century, the exhibition explores the travels of local families and others throughout Europe and beyond. People travelled for education and pleasure, to buy and sell things, to escape pressures at home, and much more besides. The trips of men and women, girls and boys, servants and even pets are recorded. Many places across Europe and some beyond feature among the exhibits, with a special focus on Italy which became and remained the country most people were keen to see.

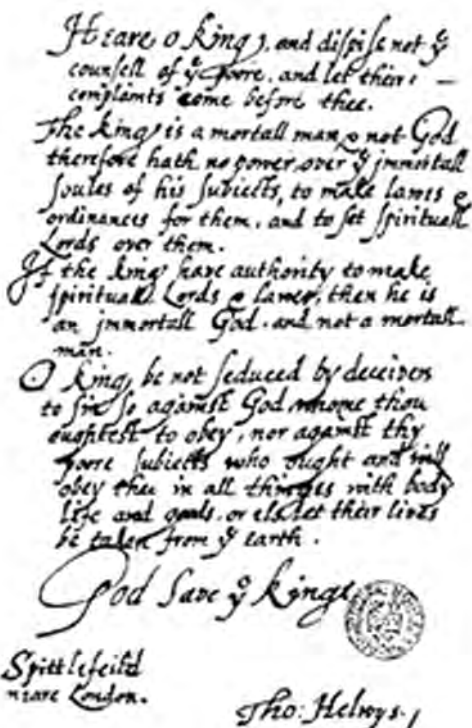
Exhibits include passports, diaries and journals, sketches, bills, prints, photographs and guide books, objects which are still familiar now when we travel abroad. Follow travellers as they walked around Rome, climbed Vesuvius, boated around Venice, and looked at art in Florence. Watch them shop for the latest fashions in Paris, and bargain in Naples. Travel with them as they try foreign food, attempt to speak the local language, and encounter both danger and excitement; just as we do today.

The exhibition will be opened on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> April (5pm-7pm), by Levison Wood, explorer, author of *Walking the Himalayas*, and history graduate (Nottingham 2004).

### Laxton Local History group

There will be an Exhibition of the recent research and publication of the Lottery-funded project by the Laxton Local History Group at Crosshill Farm, Laxton on Saturday June 25<sup>th</sup> from 11.00am – 3pm

### 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Thomas Helwys, founder of the Baptist denomination.



Thomas Helwys was the founder of the Baptist church and a pioneer of religious liberty for all. He is thought to have died in about 1616, probably in Newgate Prison, London. Although the date of his death is uncertain, he was commemorated at a conference at The Well Baptist Church in Retford, the nearest Baptist church to his birthplace, on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> March 2016. Thomas Helwys was born c.1575. His birth place is uncertain, but is believed to be at Askham, near Retford. He was from a well-to-do family, and studied law at Gray's Inn. In 1595 he married Joan Ashmore and lived at Broxtowe Hall in Nottinghamshire. During the early 1600s Broxtowe Hall became a regular meeting place for Puritan clergy who wished to reform the Church of England. Here, Thomas met, and became a close friend of, John Smyth, a preacher in Lincoln. In 1603, a conference was held at Hampton Court Palace at which King James 1<sup>st</sup> (VI<sup>th</sup> to Scots!) enforced uniformity of Christian worship. No deviation from the structure and worship of the Church of England was permitted. At this time, John Smyth began to move from Puritanism to Separatism and in 1606 he set up a Separatist church at Gainsborough, Lincolnshire. Pressure from the Church authorities in 1607-1608 resulted in fines and imprisonment for some of the

Preface to Thomas Helwys' book, reproduced by courtesy of Thomas Helwys Baptist Church, Nottingham

Separatists. Smyth therefore led many of his congregation to Amsterdam in the Netherlands, with Helwys providing much of the funding for the journey. Helwys travelled to Amsterdam, leaving behind his wife Joan and their seven children. Shortly afterwards, Joan was arrested and imprisoned for three months in York Castle.

By 1609, the Separatist congregation in Amsterdam were practising 'believers' baptism' and had developed what became a Baptist ecclesiology. However, by 1611, there were serious disputes on many issues between the majority of the congregation led by Smyth and a smaller group led by Helwys. Smyth's group eventually joined the Waterlander Mennonites in Amsterdam. Helwys wrote the first Baptist confession of faith in *A Declaration of Faith of English People Remaining at Amsterdam in Holland*, which was published in 1611. The following year, Helwys and his followers returned to England and set up the first English Baptist Church at Spitalfields in London. Helwys then published his tract '*A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity*' which contained the first plea in the English language for universal religious freedom. One copy, now in the Bodleian Library, was dedicated to King James 1<sup>st</sup> and sent to him. The preface states:

*Heare, O King, and dispise not the counsell of ye poor, and let their complaints come before thee. The King is a mortall man, and not god, therefore hath no power over the immortall souls of his subjects, to make laws and ordinances for them, and to set spirituall Lords over them. If the King have authority to make spirituall Lords and Laws, then he is an immortall God and not a mortal man. O King, be not seduced by deceivers to sin so against God whom thou oughtest to obey, not against thy poore subjects who ought and will obey thee in all thinges with body, life and goods, or else let their lives be taken from ye earth. God Save ye King.*

*Spittlefeild neare London*

*Tho: Helwys*

The plea for universal religious freedom states: *For our Lord the King is but an earthly king, and he only hath authority as a king in earthly causes. And if the King's people be obedient and true subjects, obeying all human laws, our lord the King can require no more. For men's religion to God is between God and themselves. The King shall not answer for it. Neither may the King judge between God and men. Let them be hereticks, Jews or whatsoever, it appertaineth not to the earthly power to punish them in the least measure.*

Unsurprisingly, Thomas Helwys was arrested and imprisoned in Newgate jail, where he is believed to have died in either late 1615 or early 1616. His followers continued the Baptist tradition, and today there are some 100 million Baptists worldwide. The denomination is now the largest Christian church in the United States<sup>1</sup>.

### The Well Baptist Church, Retford

In 1691 Richard Brownlow, one of the congregation of Baptists in Retford, purchased land on the edge of the town and gave it for the building of a Baptist church. It seems that there were several buildings on the site over the years but no trace of them exists. The last Baptist church, before the present building, was erected in 1871 and the foundation stone is preserved in the present church. In the early years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the 1871 building was deemed too small, and was demolished. The present building was erected in 2008-9. When the ground was being cleared for the new church, some large paving stones which had stood in front of the 1871 building were removed and a well, possibly mediaeval, was discovered. The well is now walled and covered for safety, but stands in front



of the main entrance to the church, hence the name 'The Well' for the church<sup>2</sup>. The Well Baptist Church is a fine modern building which can be hired for conferences.



'The Well' Baptist Church.  
Photograph by Janet Wilson

Following the conference, a coach tour was laid on for members of the Conference to visit a number of local churches connected with Thomas Helwys and John Smyth.

#### Notes

- 1 Information supplied by Rev Dr Tony Peck, General Secretary, European Baptist Federation
- 2 Information supplied by a staff member at The Well.

**John Wilson**

## **YOUR SOCIETY**

### **Geoffrey Oldfield MA, MBE (1920-2016)**

We are sad to report the death of Geoffrey Oldfield, a well-known member of the Society for many years. Geoffrey died on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> April, and the funeral took place at St Giles' church, West Bridgford, on Tuesday 10 May 2016.

Geoffrey Oldfield was born on 12 September 1920 at Westhoughton, Bolton, Lancashire, but when he was just three years old his parents (Frederick and Gladys) moved to Ruddington in search of work. They lodged with George and Harriett Savidge, near Camelot Street. It was here that Geoffrey's brother Donald was born in April 1925.

In October 1925, the Oldfields, with their two boys, moved into one of the newly built council houses in Highbury Vale, Nottingham, and two years later Geoffrey moved to Albert Street Junior School. In 1929 Frederick Oldfield was made redundant, and the family moved to Old Basford where he took on a greengrocer's shop. Geoffrey went to Southwark Street School in Old Basford, and in 1932 he won a scholarship to High Pavement School. Geoffrey attended High Pavement from 1932 until 1936, and he passed the School Certificate (predecessor of O-levels) in five subjects: History, Latin, French, elementary Mathematics and General Science.

On 12 April 1939, Geoffrey started work as a Junior Clerk at the City Treasurer's Department. Two years later, just short of his 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, he joined the Royal Air Force as wireless mechanic 1037525, and he stayed in this post until 21 June 1946. He was stationed at RAF Little Snoring in Norfolk. He was awarded the Defence Medal and the War Medal 1939-45.

After he was demobilised, Geoffrey returned to work at the City Treasurer's Department in Nottingham, and he studied accountancy and book keeping. He eventually rose to become Head of the Rent Office. In November 1949 he was admitted as Associate of the Institute of Municipal Treasurers and Accountants.

At the City Treasury Geoffrey met Jack Smart, and through Jack he encountered his daughter Freda. They soon found common interests in playing tennis, dancing and walking, and on 15 July 1950 they were married at St Faith's church in the Meadows. After honeymooning in Torquay they started

married life at 49 Whittingham Road, Mapperley. Subsequently, in the 1960s, they moved to 268 Musters Road, West Bridgford, where they lived for the rest of their married life.

By this time, Geoffrey was increasingly interested in local history and, perhaps most notably in the history of buildings. Although he never drove a car, Geoffrey was a keen cyclist, and an excellent amateur photographer. He used his camera to document the changing face of Nottingham, as buildings were demolished and replaced from the 1960s onwards. Fortunately, his large collection of images lives on in the Nottingham Local Studies Library, with many of them more widely available through Picture the Past.

Geoffrey joined the Thoroton Society in 1964, and by the 1960s he was attending University of Nottingham and WEA classes on local history. He was a contributor in 1971 to Helen E. Meller, ed., *Nottingham in the eighteen eighties: a study in social change* (Department of Adult Education, University of Nottingham, 1971).

Geoffrey published his first book in 1974: *A History of Basford Rural District Council, 1894-1974*. In 1976 he joined the Council of the Thoroton Society. His first article in its *Transactions*, in 1975, was on the Basford Rural Sanitary Authority, 1874-1894. He remained on the Society's Council until 2000, and was a regular attender (usually with Freda) at society events.

Geoffrey retired from the City Treasurer's Department in 1980, and for the next thirty years he indulged his personal hobbies of local history, writing books, giving local history talks, researching family trees, cycling, swimming, and photography. He was a founder member of the West Bridgford Local History Society, and served as its honorary secretary until 1987. It is an indication of his productivity as a local historian that there are 59 separate entries relating to his work in the Nottinghamshire Online Bibliography. They include several books, numerous articles in the *Nottinghamshire Historian*, *Nottinghamshire Countryside*, the *Sneinton Magazine*, the *Nottinghamshire Industrial Archaeology Society* journal, the *Nottinghamshire Family History Society* journal, the *Basford Bystander*, the *Nottingham Civic Society* newsletter, and several others. His books were on West Bridgford, and on various aspects of the history of Nottingham and its suburbs. The books were always fully illustrated, usually with his own pictures. In 1989 he successfully completed the MA in Local and Regional History at the University of Nottingham, and in 2001 he was awarded the MBE for services to local history.

Geoffrey and Freda had two children: Valerie, born in 1954 and Paul in 1958, and two grandchildren. Freda died in 2012 after 62 years of marriage.

**John Beckett**

### **PROGRAMME CHANGE**

Due to a change in circumstance of one of our speakers, we have amended the lecture programme for Autumn/Winter 2016. The programme for the remainder of 2016 will now be:

Saturday 8 October Archaeology Lecture: Gareth Davies, Archaeologist, Trent & Peak Archaeology - 'Archaeology of the Nottingham Tram, Phase II'

Tuesday 11 October Keith Train Lecture, in association with Nottingham Civic Society: Philip Emerson - 'Channel Crossing – Lace Links between Nottingham & Calais'

*Please note Venue:* Cathedral Hall, Wellington Circus, at 7.30 pm

Saturday 5 November Annual Luncheon: River Trent Excursion. Details to follow.

Saturday 12 November Nora Witham Lecture

Adrian Henstock, President, Thoroton Society - 'Dr Robert Thoroton'

Saturday 10 December Neville Hoskins Lecture

Carol Barstow, Librarian - 'Nottingham Subscription Library 1816-2016'

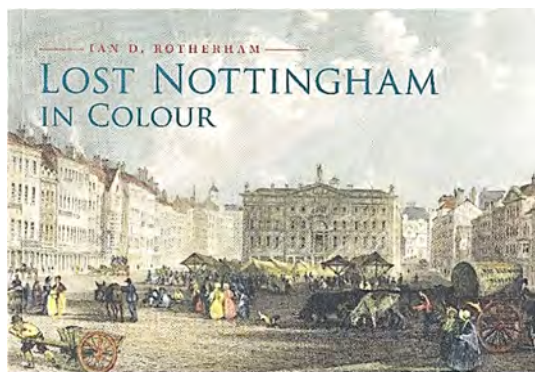
Rev Stuart Bell will now present his Annual History lecture as part of the 2017 programme.

## **BOOKSHELF**

### **LOST NOTTINGHAM IN COLOUR**

By Ian Rotherham

Amberley Publishing £15.99 ISBN 978-1-445653-39-6



Ian Rotherham has gathered together a collection of drawings, painting, photographs and postcards, taking us through Nottingham's past in a series of themes from the mediaeval town to its later industrial, educational and cultural development. We have illustrations of grand features of Nottingham (and in the county) – many are of the castle at various points in its history. The Market Square is well covered; there are some pictures of the significant buildings in the city and interesting pictures of lost streets such as the long-lamented Drury Hill.

Although there is a chapter entitled 'Industry and Commerce' (and there are a few pictures depicting the lace industry and some shops) to my mind it leaves many out – no Boots, no Raleigh, no Players, no Pearsons. And, another disappointment, the chapter on Sports, Theatre, Arts and Culture is mainly of public houses, with two photos of the Theatre Royal but no other cultural or arts illustrations that I could see.

If you like perusing old illustrations of places we knew or have heard of – and most of us do – the book is worth obtaining, but the links between illustrations and the content of each section could be better.

**Barbara Cast**

## **PUBLISHED ARTICLES NOTED**

The Local Historian vol. 46 no 1 January 2016

Cursneh Hill: using antiquarian texts to explore local legends – Elizabeth Round

Antrobus the cleric and Peter the cock: civil war, ministry and animal baptism in mid-seventeenth century Cumberland – James Mawdesley

'On the far side of the hedge': gypsies in local history – Jeremy Harte

The 1756 war Office survey; a source for local historians – John S Hartley

The fortunes of Sandy Baptist Church in the later nineteenth century – Peter Steere

Opinion – a new way of getting local history into print. – Stephen Roberts

Review article: books on Welsh places of worship in London and Wales – d Huw Owen

It's the sources that count: a London-focused review article – Christopher French

## **Erratum**

There is an error in the family tree which we published in the Spring issue. William Frederick Webb's wife's maiden name was Emilia Jane *Goodlake*, not Lake. She was the elder daughter of Thomas Mills Goodlake of Wadley, Faringdon, Berks. Apologies from me, and many thanks to Philip Jones for pointing this out. – Ed.

**THE THOROTON SOCIETY** REGISTERED CHARITY No. 237755

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**RESEARCH GROUP**

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**RESPONSE GROUP**

The Society seeks to respond to matters of historical and conservation concern which arise in the County.

If members become aware of such matters please contact the Group Co-ordinator, Barbara Cast - contact details above.

**VICTORIA COUNTY HISTORY**

A group of researchers continuing the VCH of Nottinghamshire. For information and to join the group contact the County Editor, Philip Riden at [philip.riden@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:philip.riden@nottingham.ac.uk).

**PUBLICATIONS**

The Society publishes an annual *Transactions* volume which is distributed to all members.

The Record Section volumes are published from time to time and are distributed to members paying the extra subscription for this Section. They are also available for purchase by other members and the general public.

Quarterly Newsletters are circulated to every member.

**LECTURES**

Lectures, unless stated otherwise in the programme booklet, are held at the Nottingham Mechanics, 3, North Sherwood Street, Nottingham, NG1 4EZ, commencing at 2.30 p.m. with the Bookstall open from 2 p.m.

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

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email [wilsonianus@btinternet.com](mailto:wilsonianus@btinternet.com)

Items can be handwritten or typed in Word format, either suffix .doc or .docx. Pictures, diagrams and maps are all most welcome to illustrate an item. Images can be submitted on CD, DVD, as an email attachment or sent for scanning. Preferred size 300dpi JPEG. Images will be adjusted to suit the publication.

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