



Leicestershire VCH News

Issue 14

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Celebrating Ibstock's History

When we finalised the text for our Ibstock history and sent it to the publishers for typesetting in early 2020 we anticipated holding a book launch that autumn. The COVID pandemic and the lockdowns that followed threw those plans into disarray, delaying both production and printing. Copies of the book were finally delivered in late 2020, were advertised through social media and sold by post, but with further lockdowns still threatened, there were practical difficulties in planning a launch event.



It was worth the wait. Ibstock Palace Community Centre is a large venue to fill, especially for the launch of a book that many residents have already bought, but we know there is a strong interest in Ibstock in the history and heritage of this village. We believed that a large exhibition on a Saturday morning, coupled with book sales and formal thanks to those involved, would prove attractive. We wanted to involve others who helped with the research and were delighted when Ibstock Historical Society agreed to join us and prepare displays to show alongside our own. Ibstock Palace was duly booked for 23 September 2023.



Our launch event was well attended

Others were then approached, and further table displays were provided by an Ibstock resident who discovered an unbelievable quantity of Roman material in her garden when creating a pond, an archaeologist with finds from the Sence Valley site, a local railway enthusiast, a member of St Denys church and Leicestershire Museums.

The first speaker was HM Lord-Lieutenant of Leicestershire, Mike Kapur, OBE, who is also the President of Leicestershire VCH Trust. He thanked the book's sponsor and outlined the long history of the VCH in Leicestershire. David Wilson, CBE DL, the sponsor of this book, followed by sharing his memories of growing up in Ibstock and visiting the Palace when it was a popular cinema. The High Sheriff of Leicestershire, Henrietta Chubb JP, spoke warmly from her local experience of the Trust's research in the north-east of the county, and the Chairman of Leicestershire County Council, Kevin Feltham, talked about the importance of heritage to local communities.



Before opening the doors

Pam Fisher, the author of our Ibstock book, concluded by echoing the thanks to David Wilson, thanking all those who helped in any way with the research and publication, everyone who provided displays and those who assisted with this launch event.

Our own displays included the early growth of the village, the monastic site, transcripts of all surviving

16th-18th- century probate inventories for Ibstock residents, parish apprenticeships, the village's schools, enclosure, sinking Ellistown colliery, Ibstock's brickworks, buses, sport and leisure. Ibstock historical society displayed part of their extensive collection of old photographs on a continuous feed through the projector, and had displays including farming, pigeon racing, the high street, rationing, old maps and much else besides.

Copies of the book are still available from ourselves—see back page for details.



Summary of the Year, 2022/23

The year was topped and tailed by two large events, our Lutterworth book launch in October 2022 (see page 6) and our delayed book launch and celebration of Ibstock's history in September 2023 (pages 1-2).

We were delighted that Dr Pam Fisher, author of two of our paperbacks, co-author of two others and leader of our research programme received an outstanding contribution award from the national Victoria County History organisation in May.

Our Loughborough research continues, and will lead to two more paperbacks, but progress is slow as we lacked grant funding in 2022-23 to support a volunteer group. Proceeds from our Friends scheme and 200 Club have covered the cost of archive visits to the National Archives at Kew, Lincolnshire Archives (see pp. 3-4 for some of our discoveries there), Lambeth Palace Library (see p. 7) and Nottinghamshire Archives. We have also made many visits to Leicestershire Record Office and Loughborough.

A grant awarded to us in July 2023 is enabling us to research farming across Loughborough parish from the medieval period onwards.

We recognise that during a time of rising prices and squeezed business margins, fundraising will be difficult

in 2023/24. Some grant funders wish to see a cash contribution towards a project in addition to donated volunteer hours, and this poses challenges. We have been in extended discussions since early 2023 on one possible source of funds, and those talks continue.

Sadly we lost one of our patrons this year through the death of Professor Dame Rosemary Cramp DBE. After a Fellowship at St Anne's College, Oxford, Rosemary Cramp joined Durham University in 1955, where she became a leading expert on early medieval archaeology and founder of a major project, the Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture. Since 1977 this project has published volumes covering all stone carvings from the 7th to the 11th centuries across most of England.

On a much happier note, we welcome as a Trustee Professor Elizabeth Tingle of De Montfort University, a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. She has a wealth of experience in historical research and, as a Trustee of Leicestershire Historic Churches Trust and a committee member of Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society, brings first-hand knowledge of the issues and challenges facing organisations linked to Leicestershire's history and heritage.

Loughborough's Old Rectory

We were contacted by the curator/manager of Loughborough's Old Rectory Museum in March with photographs of recently re-discovered carved stones that appear to pre-date both the existing building and the earliest surviving fabric in the church. She wanted to know what we knew about Loughborough in the 10th and 11th centuries. Unfortunately, at this stage of our research this is no more than has already been published. She also advised us that they had commissioned a survey of the standing building and were having some of its old timbers dendro-dated (from tree-ring evidence). The full results are awaited.

We visited Lincolnshire Archives shortly afterwards as part of our research into Loughborough's religious history (Leicestershire having once been part of Lincoln diocese). Two documents there shed light on the history of this remarkable building, and we have been pleased to share our notes with the museum and with buildings archaeologist Neil Finn, who is completing a building survey for them.



The Old Rectory, now a museum, with All Saints' Church in the background

At the core of Loughborough's old rectory is a stone and timber building probably constructed in the late 13th century. This early fabric was discovered as the building was being demolished in 1958, following its sale by the diocese to Loughborough Corporation as a site for new flats and bungalows. The discovery brought demolition to a halt, with semi-demolished walls now abutting the rescued rooms that form the present museum (the museum entrance being in what was once an internal wall).

An engraving of the rectory in 1794 that appears in Nichols' *History* is clearly not the building that was standing in the 1950s. A history of Loughborough published in 1934 claimed that the house had been extensively damaged by fire in 1826. A later author attributed the Georgian-style brick extension to the old work, extant in the 1950s, to an 1826 rebuilding following this conflagration. Neither author quoted a source. Searches in newspapers have failed to identify any press reports from 1826 of what would surely have been a newsworthy occurrence.



The Old Rectory in 1794, as illustrated by Nichols

Clergy houses tend to be well documented, and we have been able to provide a description of the rector's house in 1626 contained within a glebe terrier (survey of land and properties owned by the church) held at Lincoln.

More pertinently, we have also advised the museum and Neil Finn of our discovery of the plans, elevations and invoices relating to an extension added in 1799.

In 1777, a period when the church was trying to encourage clergy to live in their parishes, Thomas Gilbert promoted an Act of Parliament (later known as Gilbert's Act) that enabled the Governors of Queen Anne's Bounty to lend money to incumbents to repair and improve existing parsonages.

The scheme proved popular, and the result can still be seen in many rural parishes, where a large Georgian rectory (often now a private house called 'The Old Rectory') stands next to the parish church. Indeed complaints began to be made by the Governors of the Bounty that some loans were being drawn by incumbents to provide a far larger and more luxurious home than the clergyman needed.

Loughborough's rector, the Rev. Dr Richard Hardy, was granted a loan of £1,350 under this scheme in 1799 to build an extension to his rectory, which cost £1,354 10s. 3d.

The papers filed with his application, now held by Lincolnshire Archives, include plans and elevations drawn by Christopher Staveley of Loughborough 'architect', for an extension of five bays set at right angles to the existing property. A central porch flanked by two columns on either side led through a doorway to an entrance hall, with a living room of 20ft by 25 ft on the left, a drawing room of similar size to the right, three new bedrooms on a floor above, and cellars. The upper floor windows would have square heads and the ground floor windows would be round headed. There was a chimney at each end. This is

very similar to photographs of the building demolished c.1960, and would seem to establish beyond doubt that if there was a fire in 1826 it was very minor (and perhaps did not occur at all).

There are also detailed bills for all the expenditure, one item, for example, recording, 'Paid Carter for Sawing of 1,367 foot of Dole Timber for Roof £2 1s. 0d.' Another bill was for 30 tons of sand with carriage by water, another for 58 ft of stone from Attleborough (interesting that stone is charged by the foot and not by weight), another for lime from Crich (not Barrow, although the Navigation had opened in 1794) and another for 100,000 bricks (for £115).

We were very pleased to be able to draw attention to these records and contribute to the building survey in this way.

Loughborough in the 14th to 16th Centuries

We mentioned in last year's Newsletter that work had begun on medieval Loughborough, and we now bring you some snippets from documents written from the 14th to the 16th centuries.

By the 1330s there was direct trading between Loughborough people and Italian wool buyers. Henry Beaumont in 1332 leased his manors at Loughborough and Whitwick, and his estates at Folkingham and Edenham (Lincolnshire), to Reyner Perini and other merchants of the Society of the Peruzzi of Florence for four years because he was in debt to them, perhaps for not having delivered promised wool. In 1344 Simon Berteville of Loughborough and Sir Robert de Burford were in debt to the Italian merchants Dino Frescatti and Simon Reynier and their partners in the Society of Bardi.

When the clerks of the market of the Marshalsea of the royal household visited Loughborough in 1404-05 they fined ten victuallers, including two bakers who broke the Assize of Bread, and seven brewers who sold their brew by cups and bowls rather than standard measures. In October 1430 ten ale sellers were amerced (fined) for selling ale by the cup rather than using the correct measures.

In 1494 William West was fined for selling beef and pork which was 'unhealthy for the human body'.

The curate in 1518 was accused of being 'so neglectful that several of the parishioners have died

without the sacraments of the Church. When he is summoned to administer to them, he will not do it but abandons himself to games and jesting ... if he knows that there is a sick person to be visited ... then [he] will be off to his fishing and fowling'.

A number of wills from the 16th century mention tools relating to various occupations, providing a flavour of some of the trades carried on in the town.

William Stakes left most of the 'smyth gear' in his smithy, together with shoes and nails, to his two servants in 1518. His better 'stuthy', or stithy – a Middle English word for an anvil – was given to the parish church, and his two servants (probably his employees at the smithy) were given his other anvil.

In 1521 a small pair of walkers' (fullers') shears and a shearing board were bequeathed by Hugh Yereland to Robyn Walker, a surname suggesting he might be descended from a line of fullers. Fulling — a stage in the manufacture of cloth where the material was cleaned and thickened or felted with hands and feet — was also known as waulking, or walking.

In 1538 Henry Dedyke left his son a trough and a vat for processing white leather along with tools for processing sheep skins, for gloves.

In 1539 Robert Syston bequeathed to his apprentice, John Aleson, a pair of bellow boards and a number of specialised tools.

200 Club Winners

For an annual subscription of £50 (which can be paid in quarterly instalments) members of our 200 Club are entered into a quarterly draw for a chance to win a cash prize. We hoped we could attract 200 members, but there are currently just 59. It is pleasing to see that the number of members has increased this year, but more would be welcome!

After paying the prizes, the 200 Club, together with our Friends scheme, currently provides c.£2,500 annually towards our costs. **This income is crucial to us. Almost all our other income comprises grants towards specific projects, but grant funders rarely cover all projected costs**, and we have various administration costs that need to be covered, as well as project expenditure over and above the grant funds.

If you are not already a 'Friend' or a 200 Club member, would you be willing to join? Do you know anyone else who might be willing to become a regular supporter? Do you have any ideas about how we can tell more potential donors about our work? We have achieved many things since the Trust was formed in 2008, but we are reliant on these sources

of income as well as occasional larger grants. See the back page for how to join.

Our 200 Club winners since the last Newsletter are as follows:

September 2022 (53 tickets in the draw):

1st, no. 29, £132.50 John Aldridge
2nd, no. 10, £88.33 George Weston
3rd, no. 39, £44.17 name withheld

December 2022 (57 tickets in the draw):

1st, no. 9, £142.50 name withheld
2nd, no. 43, £95.00 name withheld
3rd, no. 2, £47.50 name withheld

March 2023 (59 tickets in the draw):

1st, no. 42, £147.50 Gerard De Lisle
2nd, no. 13, £98.33 Nick Hill
3rd, no. 56, £49.17 Michael Southall

June 2023 (59 tickets in the draw):

1st, no. 51 £147.50 name withheld
2nd, no. 52, £98.33 Daisy De Lisle
3rd, no. 27, £49.17 John Aldridge

Thank you to all members for your support.

Out and About

In addition to our two book launches at Lutterworth and Ibstock, we have attended several events over the year with displays of our research. The first of these was the excellent Local History Fair organised by Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society, which returned to Beaumanor Hall in March 2023.

The following month we were pleased to join with the English Place-Name Society and the Centre for Regional and Local History at the University of Leicester for a conference 'Leicestershire's Names, Places, and History', to mark the completion of the 8-volume survey of Leicestershire's place names.

In June we joined other heritage organisations from Leicester and Leicestershire with a stand at the launch of the University of Leicester's Heritage Hub.

Dr Pam Fisher delivered talks on the history of Lutterworth to Evington History Society in April and to Market Harborough Historical Society in September.

She also represented the Trust at the two meetings of Loughborough Heritage Forum in October 2022 and April 2023, where it's always a pleasure to update

members on our activities in Loughborough and to hear from other forum members about their heritage-related activities in the town.



Our Stand at Beaumanor

Lutterworth Book Launch

The launch of our Lutterworth book, at the Greyhound Inn on Lutterworth's Market Place, took place on 22 October 2022. Research towards this book began in 2010. Many have helped with funding over this period, and we record our grateful thanks to Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society, the University of Leicester, Lutterworth Area Community Fund and GLP, Lutterworth Town Council and individual donors, including Friends of Leics VCH Trust and our 200 Club members.

Researching a market town requires numerous archive visits. The National Archives at Kew, in south-west London, for example, holds over 1,000 documents relating to the history of Lutterworth. These include records of the major London courts, of the state and medieval records relating to landownership and manorial finances. Not all of these need to be studied, but the amount of information many records contain can make it difficult to see more than 20 items in a single visit of 7 hours (excluding travel time). Even just to photograph the relevant items to read later is therefore time-consuming and expensive.

Other repositories beyond Leicestershire where original documents were consulted for this book include Lambeth Palace Library and archive offices in Lincoln, Northampton, Coventry and Warwick .

The first two speakers were His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant for Leicestershire, Mike Kapur OBE (also President of Leicestershire VCH Trust) and Dr Kevin Feltham, Chairman of Leicestershire County Council. They spoke of the work of the VCH and the value of community history and heritage projects.

The volunteers involved in the research for this book included Lutterworth residents and a group of undergraduate students from the University of Leicester, who joined us for a summer history project. We were therefore delighted that Professor Henrietta O'Connor, then Pro Vice-Chancellor and Head of the College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities at the University of Leicester, was able to attend. In a short speech she highlighted how the VCH brings together academic historians and local people, and has provided skills to university students through their research into the history of a town within the county in which they are studying for their degrees.



Professor Chris Dyer of Leicestershire VCH Trust introduces Professor Henrietta O'Connor of the University of Leicester

The mayor of Lutterworth, Cllr Bill Zilberts, and the Chair of Lutterworth Museum Trustees, Tony Hiron, thanked the authors of the book, Dr Pam Fisher and Dr Andrew Watkins, for their work. The two co-authors concluded the speeches by drawing attention to some of the interesting facts and themes contained within the volume, including the importance of the town's market and how more than one 'transport revolution' influenced and formed the character of the town.

Copies of the book are still available to purchase direct from ourselves (see back page), or for those living in or near Lutterworth, from Lutterworth museum during their opening hours.



The two co-authors address those gathered

Who was Mary Tate?

Women are often invisible within the historic record, but the name of Miss Mary Tate keeps cropping up in our research into the history of Loughborough.

Mary Tate first came to our attention when we began to research the Church of England schools in the town. Mary founded and endowed Emmanuel Girls' School on Bedford Square in 1845, for poor girls over 6 years of age. She also provided an endowment for Emmanuel Boys' School on Wards End, which had been founded by the Rev. William Holmes in 1838. We then discovered that she had also funded an infant school in the yard of the Boot Inn, on Market Place, and rented 'two very long houses' in 1836 to serve as larger infant schools for Loughborough's boys and girls.

When researching the town's churches, Mary Tate's name appeared again through her contribution of £500 towards the building of Emmanuel Church, which was consecrated in 1837.

Although Thorpe Acre did not become part of the borough of Loughborough until 1936, the need to describe the architectural development of Thorpe Acre church for our Loughborough history led us to look at the building of Thorpe Acre church in 1844-5. Within the Thorpe Acre file at Lambeth Palace Library is a letter from the Bishop of Peterborough praising Miss Mary Tate for her exertions, which had been 'the very making of the place'.

Documents in that file, and in a series of letters held at Leicestershire Record office show her involvement in financing the building of Thorpe Acre church,



Thorpe Acre Church before the 1986 extensions, image courtesy of Mike Jones



Emmanuel Church, Loughborough

a parsonage for its minister, an endowment for his stipend and a further endowment to help with church repairs.

Mary was born in 1775 and baptised in 1776 in the then fashionable church of St George, Hanover Square, London. Her family had properties in London (Chelsea and Brompton) and extensive landholdings in Mitcham (Surrey) and around Dibden and Fawley (Hampshire), including a large property known as Langdown House that had probably been built for her father George. Mary was also the life tenant of Burleigh Hall on the edge of Loughborough (the site of which now forms part of the campus of Loughborough University). Burleigh had been acquired by her grandfather Benjamin Tate through his second marriage to his cousin, an heiress, Mary Herbert (née Tate). After the death of her father in 1822, Mary Tate seems to have divided her time between Burleigh Hall, Langdown House and a house in Grosvenor Place, London.

Mary also provided funds towards an extension to Loughborough's dispensary in 1838-9. Looking beyond Loughborough and Thorpe Acre, after receiving inheritances from her uncle in 1821 and her father in 1822, she founded almshouses in Surrey and a school in Hampshire. She died at Burleigh Hall in 1849.

We have contributed an article about Mary Tate's life and some of her charitable gifts to the Lynne About Loughborough website. It can be found at <https://lynneaboutloughborough.blogspot.com/2023/08/mary-tate.html>

Our Paperback Histories

Copies of our four paperbacks can still be obtained from the address below at the price stated. You can also buy online, but every copy bought from ourselves helps fund the research and publication of further histories. Please email us for details if you wish to pay by bank transfer. P&P within the UK is £2.50 per book.

Castle Donington (£10 plus P&P) is known for its airport, music festivals and motor racing, but the village itself tends to be overlooked. A castle was built in the 1150s and several features of a town soon developed, including a market, annual fair and hospital. King's Mills and Cavendish Bridge grew as settlements near the Trent, and their history is also included within this book.

Buckminster and Sewstern (£8 plus P&P) are small villages in NE Leicestershire. Sir William Manners employed Humphry Repton to advise on enlarging a small park and building a mansion in Buckminster in the 1790s, and began to create an estate village.

Many of the houses were built for estate employees by his great-grandson, the 9th earl of Dysart, between 1878 and 1935.

Ibstock (£10 plus P&P) is a large village in north-west Leicestershire where Garendon Abbey once had a sheep farm. Framework-knitting had become important by 1811, but the local landscape and economy changed dramatically when the coal deposits beneath the village began to be exploited from 1825.

Lutterworth (£12 plus P&P) is one of Leicestershire's main market towns, known for its connections with John Wyclif and Sir Frank Whittle. It is a town shaped by transport revolutions — coaching, delays in opening a railway station, the arrival of the motorway and the modern logistics industry.



VICTORIA
COUNTY
HISTORY



Leicestershire

**Leicestershire Victoria
County History Trust**

**Meadowside,
Main Street,
Kings Norton,
Leicester,
LE7 9BF**

**Email:
leicsvch@leicester.ac.uk**

Tel: 0116 252 5722

Leicestershire Victoria County History Trust was launched in May 2009 to support and promote the Victoria County History project in Leicestershire. The Trust works with volunteers across the county to research and publish the history of Leicestershire towns and villages. Training and support is provided free of charge

The Trust relies on charitable donations to support this work. Please consider joining our 200 Club, becoming a Friend of the Trust or making a donation to support ongoing work in Leicestershire. More information is available on our website, at www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/leicestershire, or you can contact us at the address shown in the panel to the left.

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