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East Midlands History and Heritage

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Inside this issue

06 **Voices from the past:**
The Search for medieval graffiti
in Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire

14 **Menace or
inconvenience?**
Nottingham City's response to
the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act

27 **Night tales:**
The incident of the Rufford
Park Poachers

Special issue: Hidden voices

FREE



Welcome

Welcome back to East Midlands History and Heritage, the magazine that uniquely caters for local history societies, schools and colleges, heritage practitioners and history professionals across the region, putting them in contact with you and you with them.

We're very pleased that most of the contributions to this issue come from members of local history societies or similar organisations, and those others who work outside of the university sector. This was always the ambition. We would very much like this trend to continue.

The next issue, December 2016, will be an open call, so there is no predetermined theme. If you want write for us, therefore, you can pick any topic from any period, just so long as it has a strong East Midlands connection. So if you are currently working on a community project, or a private piece of research, and would like to take your findings to a large audience, why don't you email us with the details at: emhist@virginmedia.com.

We can also help with layout, sourcing, writing, and the research itself if need be, but the work remains your own. Keep a look out, too, for matching images that will help illustrate your articles (the higher the number of pixels, the larger we can make the image).

Dr Nick Hayes
Nottingham Trent University

Cover Image - The Rebels Arrive in Ripley, Print by David Bailey. David is member of the local Ripley U3A art group, Matlock Artists Society and the Matlock Portrait Group. He works and experiments with many different mediums: oil paints, water mixable oil, inks, acrylics, water colour. Bailey9sp@btinternet.com

Contents

- 04** Battle-scarred: Surgery, medicine and military welfare during the British Civil Wars
- 06** Voices from the past: The search for medieval graffiti in Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire
- 10** Silent voices of the Lincolnshire poor
- 14** Menace or inconvenience? Nottingham City's response to the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act
- 17** 'For those women have got pluck': The Women's Social and Political Union in Loughborough
- 20** "Slave-trade legacies: The colour of money": Nottingham-based Heritage Project, finalist for National Lottery Awards 2016
- 22** Asylums at war: Duston War Hospital, 1916-1919
- 25** The Pentrich Revolution Bicentenary 1817 – 2017 - and the strange case of 'Oliver the Spy'
- 27** Night tales: The incident of the Rufford Park Poachers
- 30** News and notices – What is happening at Delapré Abbey, and why do we need you?
- 31** News and notices – Step back in time at the 1620s House and Garden, Donington le Heath

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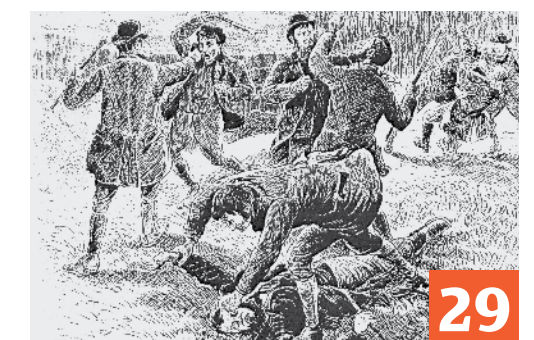
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BY DR ANDREW HOPPER

Battle-scarred: Surgery, medicine and military welfare during the British Civil Wars

Historians of the British Civil Wars (1638-1652) are increasingly taking notice of these bloody conflicts as a critical event in the welfare history of Europe. Previous wars had seen military commanders demonstrate little concern or resources for the welfare of sick and injured soldiers, but during the British Civil Wars, Parliament's focus on the 'commonweal' led to centralized care for those who had suffered "in the State's service".

Further Reading: Eric Gruber von Arni and Andrew Hopper, 'Welfare for the Wounded', *History Today*, 66:7 (July, 2016), pp. 17-23.

These innovative measures were immensely significant as for some they led to improved medical treatment, permanent military hospitals, and a national pension scheme. For the very first time, Parliament publicly assumed responsibility for such matters, signifying acceptance of the State's duty of care to its servicemen, and for the first time their widows and orphans too.

These themes are all showcased in a temporary exhibition, entitled 'Battle-Scarred', which has been curated by a team from Leicester's Centre for English Local History led by Dr Andrew Hopper, at the National Civil War Centre at Newark Museum from 19 March to 2 October 2016. The exhibition builds on a grant from the Wolfson Foundation and comprises four rooms allocated to the themes of civil-war medicine, surgery, aftercare and welfare. The exhibition's aims are threefold. Firstly, it hopes to change the public's perception of medical care during the civil-war period. Secondly, it seeks to provide visitors with a small window into the human cost of the British Civil Wars and to consider how the consequences of such wars persisted well beyond the peace treaties and settlements that concluded them. Finally, in the wake of more recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, it aims to encourage visitors to reflect on what we can learn today about medical and welfare practices from our seventeenth-century forbears.

The exhibition highlights the human costs of the catastrophe of Civil War. It focuses on the practitioners and patients, the servicemen and their families, by highlighting those efforts to save human lives during this disaster. It endeavours to challenge a popular misconception that seventeenth-century medical treatments were incompetent and ineffective, that medical practice was riddled with charlatans and quack doctors, and that in an age lacking modern antibiotics, those suffering from infection were doomed. Instead it points to some medical and surgical treatments that were effective, along with the establishment of the first permanent military hospitals by the Long Parliament at the Savoy and Ely House in London, where the patients enjoyed decent diets, laundered clean bedding and the administrations of a professional staff. Several thousands of petitions survive across England and Wales written on behalf of maimed soldiers detailing how they had survived their injuries but now needed financial support owing to their incapacitation from work. Accompanying them are thousands more petitions from war widows whose husbands lost their lives in the conflict. These petitions hoped to procure pensions, or one off welfare payments. But now they provide us with a valuable window into how voices normally hidden from history – the largely illiterate common soldiers and their widows – remembered this visceral conflict. ▶

Dr Andrew Hopper
University of Leicester



REPRODUCTION BULLET EXTRACTOR, NATIONAL CIVIL WAR CENTRE, NEWARK MUSEUM.



THE WHEELCHAIR OF SIR THOMAS FAIRFAX, THE PARLIAMENTARIAN COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, ON LOAN TO THE NATIONAL CIVIL WAR CENTRE BY KIND PERMISSION OF MR TOM FAIRFAX.



REPRODUCTION OF THE SEAL OF THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE FOR MAIMED SOLDIERS, PERSONAL COLLECTION OF DR ERIC GRUBER VON ARNI.

Voices from the past: The search for medieval graffiti in Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire

BY JAMES WRIGHT AND MATTHEW BERESFORD

The study of historic graffiti has largely languished as an extremely obscure branch of historical and archaeological research. This despite Violet Pritchard's ground-breaking book published in 1967 on *English Medieval Graffiti*, until recently.

About the authors

James Wright is a Buildings Archaeologist with a specialism in Medieval & Renaissance Architecture. He has worked in the field of historic graffiti for several years, and in particular at Knole House and the Tower of London.

Matthew Beresford is a Consultant Archaeologist and Director of Involve Heritage CIC. He is the Project Director for the Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire Medieval Graffiti Survey.

Six years ago, archaeologist Matthew Champion set up the Norfolk Medieval Graffiti Survey. Similarly surveys were quickly established in Suffolk and then for most of lowland England. To date there are now seventeen individual county surveys, including the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Medieval Graffiti Survey (DNMGS), run as a community project by Involve Heritage CIC. Historic England is currently consulting on a draft document of guidelines for good survey practice. Champion's book *Medieval Graffiti* is appearing on the shelves of high street chain bookshops, and conferences are springing up looking at the subject. All of a sudden historic graffiti has become a mainstream hot topic. Why is this, and, how could this subject have been largely ignored for so long?



HEXFOIL OR DAISY WHEEL DESIGN. COMPASS-DRAWN PROTECTION SYMBOL FROM THE SOUTH PORCH AT HAWTON, NOTTS

The answer in part may hang within our societal view of graffiti as a transgressive, moronic eyesore. Banksy may be considered a mainstream artist these days but his anonymity (whilst possibly now an unnecessary conceit) continues to fuel the impression of it being an outsider form of expression. Many of us will be familiar with graffiti featuring names, initials and dates liberally coating our ancient monuments and listed buildings, as well as more everyday sites. The purpose of this type of graffiti seems to be linked to making public statements of visitation, ownership and penetration, sometimes into the deepest, furthest or highest part of a structure. Rare examples might date from the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries, but most of it is modern and in some ways can be considered destructive and selfish behaviour often carried out covertly. Graffiti then, according to this model, is bad behaviour not worthy of study.

Look a little deeper and there is often something older, more interesting and definitely exciting going on amongst the inscriptions. Graffiti begets graffiti. The act of carving on a wall attracts others to do the same. Buried amongst the nineteenth century tourist graffiti are often the scratchings of an earlier age.

At the glorious church of St Mary Magdalene, Newark is a fine sixteenth century door in the west front, which has characteristic linenfold panelling on its external face. The inner face of the timbers is liberally covered with graffiti: names and dates, but also crosses, circles and burn marks. Crosses one might expect to see carved in churches. They are often found near to the main doors and especially in porches. This practice may derive from a time when the porch was a location for parishioners to gather during business meetings.

The clustered crosses can be interpreted not as devotional, but as signatures to verbal contracts between associates.

The circles are neatly cut and still have the central axial point visible from where they were made with a small pair of compasses or, more likely, with a pair of sprung shears – a far more common tool available to ordinary people. The circle is an endless line which is a common type of graffiti design – as with pentagrams, chequerboards and knots – related to a belief commonly held in the medieval period that evil spirits and demons were curious creatures who would attempt to find the end of a line. It followed that the spirits were not particularly intelligent beings as the creation of an endless line led to the demon being literally pinned to the walls for all time. At a time when the belief in the incarnation of evil upon earth was seen as a very real and threatening presence, it was vitally important to the occupants of buildings to offer ritual protection to their structures. Another commonly held belief was that spirits would attempt to penetrate a building wherever the air could pass. Consequently ritual protection marks are most often found in the vicinity of doors, windows and chimneys.

The teardrop-shaped burn marks found on the back of the church door cannot have been practically created by leaving an untended candle to scorch the wood. Experimental archaeology has shown that these characteristic marks can only be made by deliberately holding a candle or taper in a single location at a 45 degree angle for upwards of fifteen minutes. This was a practice that involved an investment of time and energy. Explanations range from further ritual protection – literally fighting hellfire with fire by inoculating the building – to prayer, purification, healing and Candlemas rituals. ▶



BIRD MOTIF FROM THE SOUTH PORCH DOORWAY AT HAWTON, NOTTS



ANNOTATED - BIRD MOTIF FROM THE SOUTH PORCH DOORWAY AT HAWTON, NOTTS

The church at Newark is far from an exception in terms of historic graffiti. Scoping sessions back in 2014 showed that many of our local church buildings, medieval palaces and stately halls bear evidence of inscribed graffiti stretching back hundreds of years. In April 2015, Involve Heritage CIC was awarded a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to conduct a two-year pilot project to survey a limited number of buildings within the counties of Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire. The survey area ranges from Newark and Southwell in the east of Nottinghamshire through to Mansfield in the west, and a collection of buildings in the Bolsover Region of North-East Derbyshire. As of May 2016, we have fully surveyed eight buildings in Derbyshire and seven in Nottinghamshire, and have identified, photographed and recorded well over 2500 separate pieces of historic graffiti. Southwell Minster, in Nottinghamshire, has over one thousand pieces on the ground floor alone, including medieval masons' marks, animal motifs, ritual protection marks, architectural drawings, carpenters' marks, and a whole plethora of intriguing imagery such as shoes, keys, figures and symbols. We have also discovered medieval text and, most excitingly, two examples of medieval musical notation.

From the work undertaken by the survey, there appears to be a very wide-ranging 'hidden language' contained within our churches and medieval buildings. Some churches are heavily inscribed, while others contain just a few examples (and sometimes none). Common across the sites surveyed are the largely expected masons' marks and cross inscriptions, but also a few select images of what are largely believed to represent the ritual protection marks described above.

For example, double-V motifs, often termed 'witch marks', have been found in such high profile buildings as Knole in Kent and the Tower of London, but

The church at Newark is far from an exception in terms of historic graffiti.

also, more locally, in almost every building we have surveyed. Sometimes these are isolated, but most often they are found in clusters, and usually in very specific places. The State Chamber in the Archbishop's Palace, Southwell has them in great abundance (one small memorial plaque has well over a dozen examples of varying sizes inscribed upon it), as does the Minster. The small village churches at Scarcliffe and Ault Hucknall in Derbyshire have them. The wooden church door at Sutton Scarsdale, Derbyshire, again has around a dozen examples carved on to it. They have been found adorning medieval (thirteenth to fourteenth century) church fabric, carved onto doors, pews and church chests, inscribed on seventeenth century alabaster tombs, and, most commonly, within the south porch doorway and on the interior pillars close to the south doorway. This hints back to the point discussed earlier – they appear to be some form of protection symbol centred around access points, and are interpreted as helping ward off evil spirits and preventing them from entering the church.

Similar apotropaic (a word deriving from the ancient Greek meaning to "turn away") examples are the dozens of compass-drawn circles identified during the survey. These range from simple circle designs to the more elaborate hexfoil or daisy wheel shapes, such as that from the south porch at Hawton church, Nottinghamshire. Identical designs have so far been found as

far apart as Kelham church (Nottinghamshire), Hardwick Old Hall, and in the closet room adjoining William Cavendish's bedroom at Bolsover Castle (both Derbyshire). Animal motifs are also well represented, having been found at Southwell Minster (birds and a possible rodent), Hawton (bird), Whitwell (fish), Eglington (bird), and other examples that are not as easy to interpret. Given some of the mythical animals contained within medieval bestiaries, this is not such a surprise.

The DNMGS project is allowing us to try to understand how our region fits into the wider national, and international, spectrum of historic graffiti. The aim is to continue beyond the pilot (although, as always, the level of work will rely on securing further funds) and work towards scoping and surveying all buildings with existing medieval fabric within the two counties – a huge task indeed. Like the other county surveys, it offers significant community involvement. The DNMGS project alone has so far worked with around fifty volunteers who have been trained and supported in survey techniques, recording methods and identification to the standard whereby small groups of project members are now able to go out and record churches on their own and capture the information needed.

Across the seventeen survey groups, we are probably looking at over one thousand trained-up members who are able to actively contribute to the very ambitious task of surveying all the medieval and post-medieval buildings in England. We have come a long way since Pritchard's (in many ways) groundbreaking research just fifty-odd years ago.

The Survey is not without its difficulties though. Funding streams to support the ever-growing database and the vast amount of training and

support needed for each county are not easy to come by in the current climate. Interpreting and dating the graffiti can also be tricky. Some examples are easier than others: carvings of figures with specific clothing styles can usually be dated quite accurately, depictions of ships have characteristic designs which change over time, and illustrations of weaponry can often be dated according to known typologies. Much of the graffiti, however, cannot be dated so precisely. Church graffiti can sometimes be said to be pre- or post-Reformation, according to whether or not it was cut through traces of medieval wall paintings but was later painted over with the limewash of the reformers.

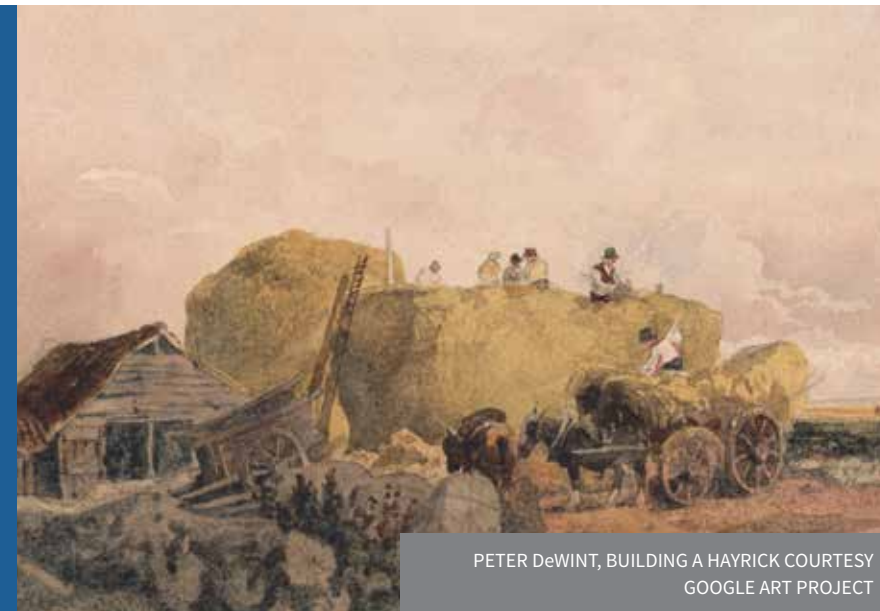
The fact that graffiti in churches was often cut through the highly coloured paintings that once adorned the walls points towards a ready collusion or likely acceptance by the church authorities. It was understood that the inscriptions represented a visual indication of the hopes, fears and desires of the ordinary people. Graffiti was in fact so common and in plain view that it does not appear to have been a transgressive act but was instead carried out as an utterly normal part of life.

This is the thrill of discovering historic graffiti. The marks are often very shallow and difficult to see until a raking torchlight is cast over the surface of the walls. At this point the contrasting shadows pick out designs that have, potentially, not been seen for hundreds of years and have certainly never been recorded and studied. These carvings represent distant voices from our past, the ideas and concepts of the ordinary people of medieval England. These are voices that have been lost until now. 📖

James Wright and Matthew Beresford

Silent voices of the Lincolnshire poor

BY PETER J LEONARD



PETER DeWINT, BUILDING A HAYRICK COURTESY GOOGLE ART PROJECT

The paupers of the past left behind very little information about how they lived. Parish registers, overseers' poor books and other official documents recorded the necessary facts about them but offer only fragmentary details of their daily struggles. From these historians have reconstructed elements of the lives of the poor in a few communities, showing how they avoided the worst excesses of total destitution through a patchwork of local rate-payer funded relief, charity and personal coping strategies.

This article builds on that body of knowledge by extracting from the eighteenth and early nineteenth century parish records of Stow-in-Lindsey, Lincolnshire, details of a small sample of the poor. It then illustrates the importance of other sorts of evidence through a brief analysis of a painting showing a dole being dealt in Stow church.

During the period studied Stow was an open parish of less than 500 people, most of whom owned or worked on small arable farms. The parish registers show that a few families remained in Stow for several generations but mostly the population was mobile, appearing in the records for two or three life-cycle events, baptism, marriage or burial, and then disappearing. The absence from the parish of a resident clergyman, nobility and gentry meant that power was in the hands of small businessmen; they made up the membership of the vestry which administered poor relief through overseers appointed from their own number.

One family that looked to the overseers for help in times of need was the Cockings. Robert Cocking's first appearance in the records was in 1710 when he was paid sixpence (2½p) by the churchwardens for assisting the plumber with lead work on the church roof. Such occasional casual work was an important part of the patchwork of support for those poor who were able to do it. Often it was provided by the overseers but sometimes by private employers. In either case it helped to reduce the charge on the rates. It is tempting also to think there was an advantage for the poor because they found some dignity in being paid for casual employment. Perhaps they did but other studies have identified a sense of entitlement to relief among both the deserving poor, especially the elderly and the sick, and the wider community.

Further Reading: Parliamentary Commissioners Report. *Reports of the commissioners appointed in pursuance of acts of parliament to inquire concerning charities and education of the poor in England and Wales*, Lincoln, 28 (London, 1815 – 1839). Tim Hitchcock, Peter King, Pamela Sharpe (eds), *Chronicle of Poverty: the Voices and Strategies of the English Poor, 1640-1840* (Basingstoke, 1997). Steve King, 'Reconstructing lives: The poor, the Poor Law and welfare in Calverley, 1650-1820', *Social History*, 22 (October, 1997), pp.318-338. Samantha A. Shave, 'The Dependent Poor? (Re)constructing The Lives of Individuals 'On the Parish' in Rural Dorset, 1800-1832', *Rural History* 20 (April 2009), pp.67-97. Barry Stapleton, 'Inherited Poverty and Life-Cycle Poverty: Odiham, Hampshire, 1650-1850', *Social History*, 18 (October, 1993), pp. 339-355.

It was not unusual for overseers to arrange apprenticeships for the children of the poor, who had little say in the matter.

Robert Cocking's son Francis had three wives and twelve children, two of whom survived infancy. He earned money by weaving and casual work, and this may have been supplemented by whatever his wives could earn. The timings of entries in the parish registers suggest each of his wives died in or as a result of childbirth. After losing his third wife, in 1753, Francis cared for his two surviving children but it was becoming harder to make money from weaving and casual labouring work was seldom plentiful. Instead, he increasingly relied on the parish for help. In 1755 his eight year old son Hugh was apprenticed to a local farmer. It was not unusual for overseers to arrange apprenticeships for the children of the poor, who had little say in the matter; in Stow it was farm husbandry for the boys and housewifery for the girls. At least Francis Cocking could still have some contact with his son as he was apprenticed within the parish.

Francis and his daughter, Sarah, continued living in the family home, sustained by occasional casual work and parish relief. It is also possible they received some help from relations who were a little better off. Members of other branches of the family are not recorded as receiving parish support. In 1766 Sarah went into lodgings, paid for by the parish, but after that she is lost to the records. At some point Francis was moved into a poor house and was occasionally paid for repairs to this and other parish properties. In 1772 he must have become unfit for work because he was granted a pension – in Stow it was called the *weekly collection* – of one shilling (5p) each week. Whether out of sensitivity for the shame it brought or ineffective administration is not known but Francis Cocking was not badged with the piece of red material identifying him as a pauper until 1774; he died the following year.

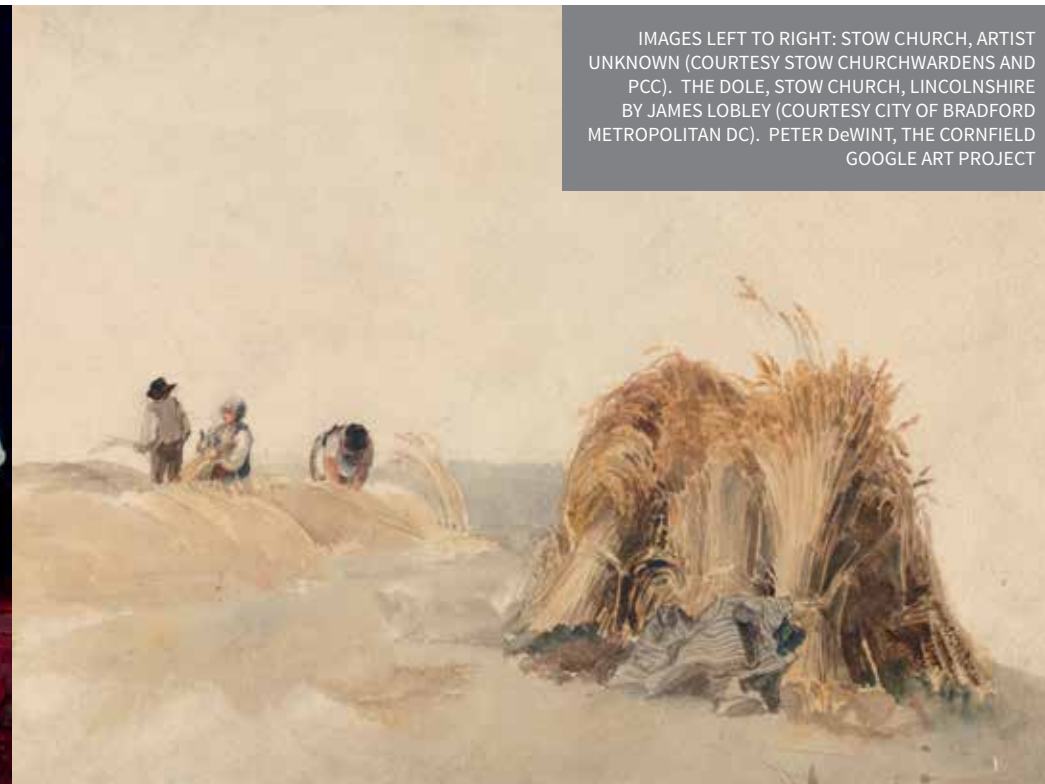
After completing his apprenticeship Francis Cocking's son, Hugh, became a farm labourer in a neighbouring parish. He married Elizabeth and they had a son whose name is not known; in the Stow records he is referred to only as "*Cocking's boy*". Hugh died around the same time as his father. As Stow remained Hugh's parish of legal settlement, despite the fact he had moved to work out of the parish several years before, it was obliged to pay the costs of his funeral. His widow, Elizabeth, moved her son to Stow and the boy immediately received relief. Elizabeth did not stay but her son did and was maintained at the expense of the parish for the next nine years. The Cockings were, in part at least, maintained over four generations and this probably caused grumbling among the ratepayers who saw themselves as hard pressed for money.

In most of the years studied women received the majority of weekly collections. Usually they were widows but some, like Mary Auckland, appear never to have married. In the language of the time Mary would have been

In the language of the time Mary would have been called a "*bastard bearer*"

called a "*bastard bearer*" when, in 1783, she became pregnant by Isaac Wilkinson. When this was known the overseers paid for

a warrant to be sworn against him but it is not clear what happened after that. If the child lived Isaac would have had to pay around two pounds for laying-in and nursing costs and two shillings (10p) weekly; the mother would have been expected to pay sixpence (2½p) each week towards the child's maintenance. ▶



IMAGES LEFT TO RIGHT: STOW CHURCH, ARTIST UNKNOWN (COURTESY STOW CHURCHWARDENS AND PCC). THE DOLE, STOW CHURCH, LINCOLNSHIRE BY JAMES LOBLEY (COURTESY CITY OF BRADFORD METROPOLITAN DC). PETER DEWINT, THE CORNFIELD GOOGLE ART PROJECT

As Hitchcock and his colleagues have shown, however, the majority of pregnancies outside marriage did not go full-term or the child soon died and the mothers, almost certainly sacked from whatever jobs they had, moved elsewhere to begin new lives. This might have been the case with Mary Auckland as she does not appear in the records again until 1826 when she and another woman were paid by the parish for laying out bodies in preparation for burial.

This was part of the role identified in Shave's study as "poor law nurse"; paupers paid by the parish to care for others who were sick or dying, often other paupers.

Mary Auckland, like Francis Cocking before her, lived in one of the parish's poor houses. From the records we know these were constructed using the relatively cheap mud and stud method once popular in Lincolnshire. When she moved in an inventory was made of the contents and this is reproduced above retaining the original spellings, capitalization and punctuation.

The inclusion of two bedsteads might indicate the house was equipped for couples or that paupers were expected to share their accommodation when necessary. Mary occupied this house until at least 1845 and was maintained by a combination of casual payments for her nursing work, weekly collections and an annual payment from a local charity.

Several charities benefitted the poor of Stow, two of which paid for the

education of their children. A third made an annual payment which Mary Auckland and others received providing vestry members thought them to be what the parliamentary commissioners called "fit objects for charity". A fourth charity, from the 1661 bequest of William Tomlinson, provided five pounds four shillings (£5.20p) per year for two shillings (10p) worth of bread to be distributed to the poor by the minister immediately after divine service each Sunday. The use of the word "immediately" in Tomlinson's will suggests

that being thought a fit recipient was conditional on church attendance. Tomlinson also said "that if any by impotency could not come I would not have them forgotten." It is likely that the minister had to make weekly judgements about the nature of the impotency that prevented potential beneficiaries from attending. We do not know what was taken into account in these judgements because there is nothing in

the records about the administration of the charity. Fortunately there is an important record of the bread distribution in an 1860s painting in the Cartwright Hall collection in Bradford.

The painting, *The Dole, Stow Church, Lincolnshire* by James Lobleby is a good if rare example of evidence that can supplement the data from parish poor records. Importantly, such representations can provide perceptions of the human condition that official documents cannot give us. Of course there are dangers in reading too much into any painting. Lobleby held progressive liberal views and came from a working-class background (his father was a currier).

The Dole was his best known work. Here he captures the human dynamics of

what must essentially have been a sad event and these resonate with what we know from the records. The recipients of the dole are sympathetically represented, elderly and young people, the core of the deserving poor; notably working age adults are absent from the picture. The bread is stacked on the front, the symbolic entry point of the church and the place where original sin is washed away and the devil renounced. It is also at the west end of the church, the furthest point from the high altar, perhaps reflecting ambiguity in biblical teaching and the church's attitude to poverty. A loaf is handed by an expressionless, time-worn parson to a young, sad-faced girl who holds out her apron to receive it. The girl stands in a group of much older people. One, perhaps her grandmother, supports herself with a stick and looks on with dignified acceptance while another elderly, grim faced woman gathers up her apron ready for her loaf.

Why is the loaf delivered into the apron? Was this simply the customary way in which women carried goods or was it designed to avoid physical contact between the pauper and her betters? The man has his hat in his hand; would his loaf be placed into it? Closest to the artist the two ends of the spectrum of charity are represented, despair and hope. With despair on her face and wearing clothes that might reflect more prosperous earlier days, an elderly woman sits on a coffin stool waiting for her turn to come. The spirit of hope is in the form of a young, pauper girl; she stands apart from the main group, erect, hands behind her back, defiantly looking away from the artist and towards the south door. She holds the gaze of a middle-class mother who is leaving the church with her well-dressed daughter. Whether there is pity or judgement on the mother's face is hard to say but the social distance is clear enough as she walks out, presumably to her lunch. The characters in the painting are anonymous, except perhaps for the minister, but in their portrayal Lobleby has given them a small voice in their own history. The more we explore and attempt to understand all the evidence and not just the official records the louder and more distinct that voice will become. 📖

Peter J Leonard
The Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology

Inventory of poor house contents 1830

An Account of the Goods and Chattels in the Poor House belonging to the Township of Stow occupied by Mary Auckland.

Two Bedsteads with Bedding, Boulsters, Pillows, Blankets, Sheets and Rugs, Seven Chairs, Three Tables, Corner Cupboard, Side Oven, Fender and Fire Irons, Italian Iron, Two Boxes, one Bucket, Platecase with Plates and Dishes, Two Iron Pots, Two small Irons.

Novr the 1 1830.

Menace or inconvenience?

Nottingham City's response to the 1913 Mental Deficiency Act

BY DAVID S STEWART

There can, perhaps, be few more 'Hidden Voices' than of those with a mental illness or disability. The early years of the twentieth century witnessed an on-going debate on the issue of the care and control of the feeble-minded, mentally defective "human misfits" or, as the *Derbyshire Times* described in 1900, the "Weak and Silly." Local suggestions could be stark and brutal. The Mayor of Portsmouth, for example, advocated "Lethal Chamber for Imbeciles." Whilst legislation in 1913 sought to codify such labels as feeble-minded, imbecile and idiot in terms of ability, in everyday practice these terms were generally applied very loosely.

In the Imbecile Wards at Nottingham's Bagthorpe Infirmary, patients were variously described as lunatic, feeble-minded, idiot from birth, imbecile from birth, or, among the elderly, as imbecile from a specific age (presumably people with senile dementia). The term feeble-minded (i.e. those with moderate learning disabilities) generally implied those "persons who may be capable of earning a living but incapable from mental defect, existing from birth or from an early age, to compete with their normal fellows, or manage themselves or their affairs with ordinary prudence."

Concerns about the decline of the race – aptly illustrated by the high rejection rates amongst army volunteers during the Boer War – undoubtedly focused people's minds on the fitness – physical and mental – of the population. It was widely feared, as Searle notes, that "Britain was breeding a race of degenerates. In this mood of hysteria, the Eugenics Movement made considerable headway." Pauperism, vagrancy, inebriety, immorality and unemployment – all considered to be associated with learning disabilities – led to calls for government action for the betterment of the lives of "this class of person and the safety of their fellow citizens." Many argued that the key vehicle for this was permanent, segregated care.

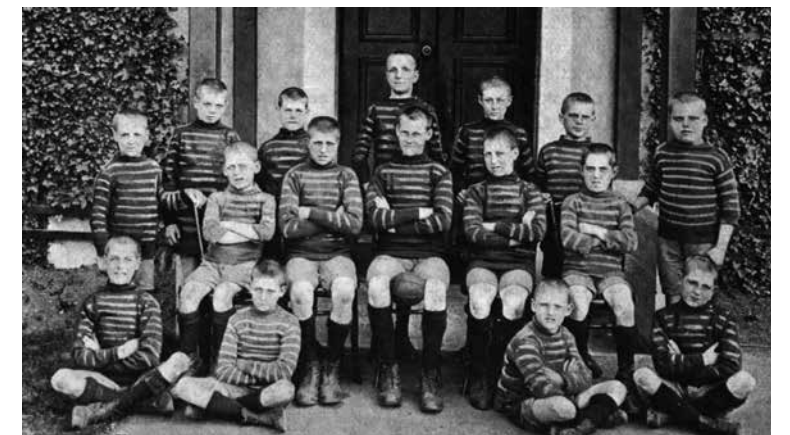
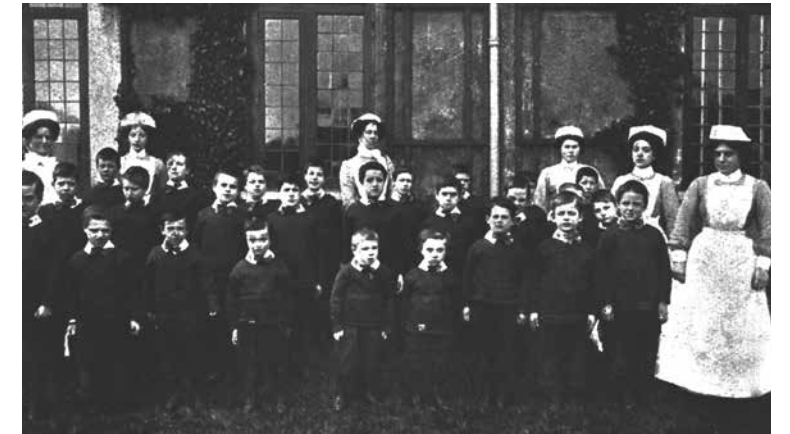
The Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-minded was set up in 1904 in response to pressure from organisations such as the National Association for Promoting the Welfare of the Feeble-Minded: which sought to give a "helping hand to those who were so heavily handicapped in the struggle for existence as to tend, if unaided, to drift into the workhouse, prison or the criminal lunatic asylum." The Commission published its findings four years later. It called for county councils and county boroughs to provide specific institutional provision for the "feeble-minded", treating them as defectives rather than as paupers or criminals. It would be another five years before national legislation would be passed. In the meantime local voices clamoured for something to be done. Nottingham City Council, echoing councillors in Halifax and Birmingham, passed

a resolution on 6th February 1911, that "the inadequacy of control of the adult feeble-minded is a contributing factor of great importance to crime, to immorality and to the problem of unemployment and that this inadequacy of control, because of the greater fecundity of the feeble-minded, severely reduces the mean average of the health, intelligence, the morality and the physique of the race." They called on the government to give them powers to act.

A particular concern related to feeble-minded women having numerous births in the workhouse

A particular concern related to feeble-minded women having numerous births in the workhouse. One common 'gendered' call at the time was for the forced sterilisation of the unfit. Dr Powell, the Medical Officer of the Nottingham City Asylum, had given evidence to the Commission. He was particularly concerned about the detrimental effects of alcoholism. "Worse still, in the case of the mother being drunken, the poison of alcohol is conveyed into the system of the child both before

IMAGES CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: STOKE PARK – GIRLS WRITING HOME. TOP RIGHT: BOYS AT STOKE PARK. (COURTESY DR PETER CARPENTER). BOTTOM LEFT: FOOTBALLERS AT STOKE PARK (COURTESY DR PETER CARPENTER)



“[The Mental Deficiency Act] proposed institutional separation so that mental defectives should be taken out of Poor Law institutions and prisons into newly established colonies.”

birth, and during the nursing period through the milk. Is it to be wondered at, therefore, that a child, ...should develop into a feeble and degenerate individual?”

Yet in contrast to the moral panics of the 1900s, the City had been an early enlightened provider of special education. The Nottingham School Board had followed hard on the heels of its pioneering Leicester counterpart in the provision of classes for pupils considered to be feeble-minded in 1893. It set up the first class at Bath Street Board School, with the American born Emily Scott Thornton as teacher. National legislation in 1898 allowed the School Board extra funding to expand provision. Yet this applied only for the support of more able pupils (a principle not to change until 1970). The 1898 legislation also put educational assessment in the hands of the medical profession, re-enforcing that medical model of disability that has sadly taken too long to change. It was not until 1914 that authorities were compelled to provide schooling for feeble-minded children, twenty years after Nottingham's local initiative.

In 1902, in one of its last acts before control for Education was passed to local authorities, the city's School Board formed an After Care Committee for Defective Children jointly with the Nottingham Poor Law Guardians to oversee the transition of pupils leaving the special schools and classes. They co-opted women in different parts of the City to act as visitors and then offered the newly elected all-male City Education Committee their services, which was

“Britain was breeding a race of degenerates.”

readily agreed to. The idea of an After-Care Committee gives lie to the idea that everyone locally thought there should be permanent segregated care.

Yet most in authority did take that line. In 1902 Thomas Palmer, Chairman of the Nottingham Poor Law Guardians, in citing the practices in Saxony and Prussia which provided permanent asylums for epileptics, argued that this could be applied to a wide range of disabilities. There were also proposals within the County that unions should join together to provide suitable accommodation.

The voluntary sector, in the form of the Nottingham and Notts Association for the Permanent Care of the Feeble-Minded and taking its lead no doubt from Mary Dendy's homes at Sandebridge in Cheshire, resolved in 1912 to purchase Hopwell Hall in Derbyshire as a permanent home. Dendy had been in Nottingham in 1911 arguing for institutional care. With the Duke of Portland as Patron and Mrs Florence Kipping as Secretary, the Association had already raised £1,800 for the cause. The Duke's brother and local MP, Lord Henry Bentinck, was also a keen advocate for permanent care.

The Mental Deficiency Act was finally passed in 1913. It provided for a "division of those with congenital defects or impairment from a very early age into idiots, imbeciles, and the feeble-minded. It proposed institutional separation so that mental defectives should be taken out of Poor Law institutions and prisons into newly established colonies." In practice, however, few were to be established in the first ten years. Dissenters were particularly concerned about loss of liberty. Josiah Wedgwood worried that "to many parents it is a terrible thing to send a child entirely out of their charge...mothers often feel more affection for a feeble-minded child." For all the panics about women in workhouses the law did not apply to those under the control of the Guardians, unless about to be released or those sent there under emergency orders.

Nottingham's initial response was limited to forming a new Mental Deficiency Committee, adding to the existing City Asylum Visiting Committee. The Nottingham Poor Law Guardians were furious for they felt they had far more experience of the feeble-minded. There were 230 inmates in their imbecile wards in 1911. The all-male Council Committee, needing two women under the legislation, co-opted two women Guardians. Caroline Harper and Mary Corner were experienced committee women as well as Guardians. ▶

Lord Bentinck claimed there were at least 1200 defectives in Nottingham, but nobody knew for sure how many or where they lived.

Under the chairmanship of John Tricks Spalding, the wealthy draper and department store owner, the Mental Deficiency Committee was tasked with ascertaining the whereabouts of those who were deemed to be mentally defective. If past rhetoric had been loud, actual numbers were vague. Lord Bentinck claimed there were at least 1200 defectives in Nottingham, but nobody knew for sure how many or where they lived. They decided to ask local clergymen to aid them in their quest, as well consulting the Poor Law Board, the City Asylum and the Education Committee. A Mental Deficiency Officer, or Inquiry Officer, Percy Smith, and Dr Powell from the City Asylum as Medical Officer supported the Committee.

The rhetoric of the 1911 petition now seemed very muted. Rather than dealing with crime and immorality, the Committee's instead focused on children and young people. Those who had been the subject of the earlier concern continued to the responsibility of the Poor Law authorities, over whom the Committee had no control. In April 1915 the Board of Control announced a "restriction of all expenditure owing to the European War", curtailing any possible capital projects. Florence Kipping pressed the Committee to take over the school at Hopwell Hall. The truth was the Association was struggling to remain viable. The Board declined. Neighbouring authorities such as Derby suggested joining up to create provision. Again, the Committee refused, as it did several times later.

In the first few years the Committee was not exactly busy. In 1915 Smith was deployed part-time to the Local Tax Office due to lack of work. Most referrals came from the Education Committee, either those children deemed in-educable or those about to leave a special school. In the majority of cases, it was decided that they should stay at home. The War meant there was little money to set up services and clearly Dr Powell was not particularly keen on permanent care. When the committee suggested a young boy of 7 be sent to

Hopwell Hall, the mother objected, so he stayed at home. In July 1914 the Committee decided to send a girl, aged 9, to Stoke Park in Bristol but then Dr Powell advised against this and she remained in the city, later entering the workhouse. Indeed by 1920, Powell noted that of those notified by the Education Committee, 80% remained with families.

Section 15 of the 1913 legislation gave powers to send defectives to "a place of safety." In the case of Nottingham this meant the Bagthorpe Poor Law Infirmary. This seems to have been used largely for those with more severe disabilities, who were difficult to place in residential homes and schools. One young girl aged 14, who had a job but was before the courts, was given refuge at Southwell House, a temporary rescue home, where Mrs Corner had been very active. The Committee negotiated with local people to become guardians, and families or the committee paid toward the cost.

In December 1914 the Committee entered into an agreement with the National Institutions for Persons Requiring Care and Control. This organisation, established by Rev Harold Burden, provided a number of institutions like Stoke Park for the permanent care of the feeble-minded. As a member of the 1904 Commission it could be argued that Burden had a vested interest in recommending permanent care. Boys who had been sent to Sandwell Hall by the Education Committee were transferred to Guiltcross in Norfolk, also run by Burden.

One father approached the Committee about jointly funding his daughter at St Leonard's Girls Training Home in Hastings, to which it agreed. Whittington Hall in Chesterfield was also used. Not all parents wanted their children to be sent so far away, complaining about high travel costs. When other authorities requested payment from the Committee, it normally acquiesced. It was easier to pay up and let them continue to do this. They are very few references to feeble-minded

women giving birth to illegitimate children in the workhouse, one of the initial sparks for the debate.

As the war progressed the homes put up their fees, for they knew Committees had little choice but to pay. The more disabled a child was, the higher the charge. In the post-war years, the Eugenics Movement rose in prominence. As the Committee began sending more people to homes such as Bentry, Whittington Hall, Stoke Park, Monkton Hall, Starcross and Calderstones, it gave serious consideration to establishing its own permanent institution. This was to be the future Aston Hall, opened in 1926 with beds for 85 girls and women. For those still in the community the After Care Committee, reconstituted as the Nottingham Voluntary Association for Mental Welfare, took on overall responsibility. Spurred on by the redoubtable Evelyn Fox, it established an Occupation Centre at 41 Goldsmith Street in 1923. It was only in 1933 that the City took responsibility, establishing a centre at Colwick Road School (a former Ragged School). Remarkably, it was deemed unsuitable for non-disabled children.

It is clear that despite the early rhetoric Nottingham had no real passion for permanent residential care, or to be more precise, its initial solution was to pay others to provide accommodation rather than to build for itself. In this it was not on its own. The "lack of preventative powers, and still more of resources," generally blunted the impact of the 1913 legislation. Local Medical Officers of Health frequently refused to accept responsibility for "defectives" because of the cost to the local authority. This was not the Manchester of Mary Denny. The separate voices of those with disabilities and their families would have to wait many more decades to be heard. 📖

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'For those women have got pluck'

The Women's Social and Political Union in Loughborough

BY MIKE SHUKKER



CHRISTABEL PANKHURST, PUBLIC DOMAIN VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Canvassing in one of the poorest areas of East London in 1914, docker's wife Melina Walker recalled one woman who, when her husband called her a suffragette, felt flattered, "for those women have got pluck." Such an epithet equally applies to those who worked on the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) in Loughborough around the turn of the century and before the Great War. But how loud were their voices; how prominent was their support?

Of course, suffrage activities did not start with the creation of the WSPU in 1903. Before then, women arguing for the vote were labelled suffragists. One such was Jane Ronniger who, on April 2nd 1875, addressed a Town Hall meeting in Loughborough on behalf of the National Society for Women's Suffrage (which later merged into the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies or

NUWSS). She "dwelt at length on the pros and cons" of reform, holding her audience's full attention as she spoke. According to the newspaper report it was a "harmonious meeting", which then agreed to petition for the removal of the barrier which prevented women from voting in Parliamentary elections.

It was the *Daily Mail*, in 1905, which coined the label 'suffragette' for WSPU members, as a patronising put-down. But Mrs Pankhurst had the wit to recognise how useful the title could be, distinguishing them from the non-militant wing of women's suffrage activity. So, the WSPU happily called themselves suffragettes. The suffragists, however, were to be found in greater numbers all over the country, although no branch was formed in Loughborough.

Before the Representation of the People Act 1918, when men over 21 and most women over 30 were enfranchised, the vote was considered to be a form of property, and you had to own property in order to qualify. Thus, one of the priorities for the early suffragists was agitating for a reform of the



AN EARLY 20TH CENTURY BRITISH WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE LAPEL PIN, PUBLIC DOMAIN VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

legal status of married women, so that they could – independently of their husbands – own and manage property. This helps to explain why, in 1879, when Caroline Biggs “one of the most active speakers of the Central Committee of the National Society for Women’s Suffrage” spoke at Loughborough Town Hall, she addressed this issue. She declared that taxation without a vote for women householders, the “incomplete nature of the Married Women’s Property Act” passed in 1870 (which gave women control over their own earnings) and the “unfairness” of the legislation regarding women’s guardianship of children were “only samples of the one sidedness of the law.” It was not until 1882 that married women secured control over their own property, further extended in 1893 to include any property acquired during marriage, for example, through legacies, etc.

“My experience of the sex is when they really want anything they usually manage to get it.”

Over the years, many supporters of the Liberal Party, and certainly several of the emerging Labour Party members became broadly supportive of women’s suffrage. So it is not surprising to find, decades later, that in the 1906 General Election Loughborough’s Independent Labour Party (ILP) tabled questions on women’s suffrage to the candidates. This elicited very different responses. Maurice Levy, the Liberal candidate and sitting M.P. replied that “for years he had supported the reforms.” By contrast, the Conservative William du Pre, stated that he did “not consider that amongst the women ... there is any demand for female suffrage. My experience of the sex is when they really want anything they usually manage to get it.”

Yet Levy’s support was qualified. He often attacked the principle of only extending the existing limited male franchise to women, based as it was on a property qualification. This would only benefit richer women like the Suffragettes. “The country”, he argued, “would not be convinced by a few noisy demonstrators, whose ideas of justice seemed to exclude the greater portion of their sex from the privilege of the franchise, and whose notion of fairness was an unmannerly disturbance of other people’s meetings.” Instead, he favoured a broader expansion of voting rights for both men and women. Indeed, in 1907 during the Parliamentary debate on the Women’s Enfranchisement Bill, he tabled a Parliamentary motion declaring that “no extension to the franchise will be acceptable which fails to provide adult suffrage.” Suffragettes saw this as a deliberate procedural attempt to block further parliamentary discussion from what they described as this “well known Anti-Suffragist” M.P.

It succeeded. Clearly, like many Liberal MPs, he was no supporter of the WSPU, or its tactics. By June the following year, the Liberal supporting *Loughborough Herald* noted that “Miss Pankhurst and one or two militant suffragettes were working in the town last week.... It was quite expected they would be on Sir Maurice Levy’s track after the dressing down he has given them from time to time.”

Later, the ILP organised a meeting with Annie Kenney, a former mill hand, ILP member and WSPU organiser. Linking the vote with anti-war sentiments and the need for jobs, she insisted “It was the duty of the state to allow a woman a say in how the money of the state should be spent.” Yet despite its publicity-seeking persona of militancy through its assaults on property, the WSPU remained fundamentally conservative in character. The best known figures, Emmeline and Christabel (although not Sylvia) Pankhurst, were, for example, antagonistic towards the newly-formed Labour Party and to industrial action. And, as we have seen, they favoured the retention of the property qualification for the franchise.

As part of the WSPU Midlands campaign, Nelly Kenney (Annie’s sister) spoke in Loughborough, upholding the need for militant methods but noting that the WSPU “were not going to the extreme measures which men took when they demanded the vote.” She was back in Loughborough after the massive WSPU 1908 demonstration, declaring “the Government were trying to hoodwink them in every way... if they could not get a vote by constitutional methods, they must get it by unconstitutional methods.”

December 1908 saw the formation of a Loughborough local women’s suffrage society, but it was “undecided which section to join”, the WSPU or the more moderate NUWSS, which campaigned more through legal and peaceful means. Would the society wear the NUWSS colours of red, white and green; or the WSPU ones of purple, white and green? They went the latter way. Miss Chilton (Secretary) and Miss Hardy (President) organised their first public meeting, addressed by Gladice Keevil of Birmingham WSPU in January 1909. She refuted the key arguments used against the WSPU and claimed that men had “made a hash” of running the country, which needed “mothering.”

In the January 1910 General Election Maurice Levy (majority 1,780) was one of 40 Liberals across the country targeted by the WSPU. Dorothy Pethick and Dorothy Bowker were responsible for organising the campaign: a propaganda shop was opened in Baxter Gate and a series of meetings – some public, some private – were arranged. At various Market Place meetings the WSPU platform was “overturned”, “pushed round from the Fountain to the Fishmarket” and speakers were pelted with “orange peel and eggs”. On such occasions, the Police Station was often a safe refuge for the speakers. When Dorothy Pethick promoted the WSPU case in the small nearby town of Shepshed, highlighting the declining wages and economic position of women, the “large and noisy” crowd made a police escort to the railway station necessary.

On January 19th, 1910, Emmeline Pankhurst spoke twice at Loughborough Town Hall. She attacked the Liberal poster of a woman saying “Don’t let them tax our food”, a reference to the Conservative preference for import tariffs, by insisting that if women had the vote they could stop price rises for themselves. Nor was she particularly complimentary about Levy. His name, she said, “at least descended from aliens”, a reference to his Anglo-Jewish background. She continued that she did not object to his enfranchisement but did resent him preventing “British born women having votes.” Bertha Clarke, who had cycled over from Leicester in her WSPU colours for the meeting reported to the Leicester Pioneer that Mrs Pankhurst “carried her audience off its feet with her powerful interpretation of the great moral issues of the movement.”

The eve of poll saw platforms set up in the Market Place: the Liberals had one, the WSPU two. After police intervention the WSPU held one meeting where Dorothy Pethick, Dorothy Bowker and Miss Brackenbury kept speaking for an hour and a half – diverting attention from the Liberals. They kept this up despite their dray being pushed around as the crowd defied the police. In Loughborough the ‘decapitation’ strategy failed. Levy was returned with a majority of 758. In Parliament, time was found for a ‘Conciliation Bill’ that would have extended the right to vote to some one million wealthier, property-owning women. Put forward as a private members bill, it won a majority of 255 to 88. After an initial acceptance, Prime Minister Asquith refused parliamentary time for it to make further progress. Adela Pankhurst, speaking in Loughborough,

accused him of “attacking Parliament itself.” A similar measure in 1912 was defeated by 208 to 220 votes.

Over the next 3 years WSPU activity included local debates, ‘Cafe Chantant’ events and various WSPU ‘at homes’, as well as the public meetings with national speakers. The Town Hall had been an occasional WSPU venue but in May 1913 the Council decided against letting rooms “in connection with the suffrage movement”. Councillor Clemerson (Liberal) and two others voted against the ban, which others supported due to the movement’s “violence” and “incitement”. This mirrored a national distancing of the Liberal Party from the suffrage cause for similar reasons.



SUFFRAGETTE PROCESSION POSTCARD (PRINTED BY H. SEARJENT OF LADBROKE GROVE LONDON, 1911) PUBLIC DOMAIN VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Yet in Loughborough ‘violence’ and ‘incitement’ had also been directed against the WSPU speakers. July that year saw Charlotte Marsh (who had been amongst the first Suffragettes to be force fed) addressing a Market Place meeting. The missiles flew but Marsh declared her intention to go on for another ten minutes. She told the crowd that it

“Again the Suffragettes have won.”

“admired men ... who stood up for their rights, but they were down on women who did so. They praised men who protested and rebelled in self-defence, but denied women their right to protest in their own way.” Marsh saw out the ten minutes, declaring “Again the Suffragettes have won.”

There was only one reported Loughborough suffragette ‘outrage’. On the evening of October 18/19, 1913, The Red House, a vacant property and so a typical WSPU target, was fired. Fire-raising materials, a copy of the *Suffragette* newspaper and pamphlets in memory of Emily Wilding Davison were found nearby. But as quite often happened, the fire never caught hold and the Red House ended up with no more than a charred staircase. The *Loughborough Echo* claimed there were very

few who would blame the “local ladies”, citing their “essential womanliness” and “intense earnestness.”

From then until the outbreak of the war, there is relatively little local coverage of the WSPU. Possibly the ‘local ladies’ were not as newsworthy as national speakers, heckling and missiles. But amongst the ‘local ladies’ were the early President and Secretary of local suffrage activity, Miss Chilton and Miss Hardy. Their colleague, Miss Judges, led a debate on women and the vote at a local Teachers’ Association (National Union of Teachers) meeting in 1909. There were also the Corcoran sisters, Nora and Kathleen. By 1913 Kathleen was the local WSPU Secretary – and was at some stage arrested for her Suffragette activity. Daughters of

the Borough’s Medical Officer of Health (Dr Thomas Corcoran, who presided over a number of suffrage meetings locally), they also took up the principles of the Women’s Tax Resistance League.

Loughborough’s women’s suffrage heritage grew from early suffragist meetings in the 1870s. In the

By Mike Shukker
Retired Trade Union Education Officer

BY LISA ROBINSON AND HELEN BATES

Nottingham-based Heritage Project, finalist for National Lottery Awards 2016

Inspiring news for small community-led Heritage Projects in the East Midlands



THE GROUP AT MONTAGU MONUMENTS, BOUGHTON ESTATE

Against the odds, a small community-led Heritage Lottery funded project based in Nottingham has reached this year's final of the National Lottery Awards in the category for 'Best Heritage Project'. "Slave-Trade Legacies: The Colour of Money" received a small grant of £9,700 from the 'Sharing Heritage' pot in 2014 for a year-long project. It subsequently beat off stiff competition from over 600 organisations to reach the public voting stage in this year's National Lottery Awards – the annual search for the UK's favourite Lottery-funded projects. Winners of the seven National Lottery Awards categories will each get a £3,000 cash prize to spend on their project, an iconic National Lottery Awards trophy and attend a star-studded glittering Awards ceremony in London, broadcast on BBC One in September.

Project coordinators Lisa Robinson, Director of Bright Ideas Nottingham, and Helen Bates, a PhD student from the University of Leicester, were surprised and delighted at the recent news. They had no idea when they originally planned the project just how much positive interest it would attract from local people and local, regional and national institutions. The volunteer-led project explores the extent to which UK heritage sites acknowledged their links to slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. The project, launched in March 2014, sought to critically assess the interpretative materials and guide-training materials offered to the public. Eventually it recruited 40 core volunteers, and many others who contributed on a casual basis. Volunteers were largely, though not exclusively, from the African-Caribbean community. One key objective was to discover how the transatlantic slave trade impacted on the wealth of certain individuals and sites in Britain. Slavery is often viewed today solely as an American problem. British Heritage sites instead focus on our role in the abolition of slavery, ignoring the large profits British merchants made through the trade. As Lisa Robinson explained: "This was not a 'Black history project' in the traditional sense of the term; it was a project about shared histories. We wanted to give local people the opportunity to challenge local narratives that keep hidden the various contributions that different communities have made, and in particular to focus on the origins of the money used to build and develop these estates over the centuries."

The group visited many sites, three of which were in the East Midlands, to explore each's differing experiences in relation to the interpretation of the links to slavery and Black history. The first site was Richard Arkwright's iconic cotton spinning mill at Cromford, the world's first successful water-powered mill, built in 1771. The visit was linked to the University of Nottingham's Global

Cotton Connections project. The Mill was in then in the process of developing a new visitor centre that would include an exhibition area and offer new learning materials. Yet there was little or no explanation planned to tell the story of the origins of the raw cotton. The guides simply said: "it came on a pack horse from Liverpool." In part the reticence on site to highlight slavery as part of the process was due to the lack of previous specific historical research. Indeed, some of the local mill owners - like the Strutts in Belper - had abolitionist sympathies which seemed strangely out of kilter with their purchase of raw cotton grown by enslaved labour. As Dr Susanne Seymour and Dr Lowri Turner noted, "it is clear that the Derwent Valley Mill owners were securely woven into the Atlantic slave economy even if their personal values, informed in many instances by strongly held Christian beliefs, led them to condemn both the slave trade and, perhaps more tentatively, the institution of slavery."

A very similar story also emerged when the volunteers visited the second East Midlands site

influence on his architectural and artistic interests, or his renovation work. Again, further research needs to be carried out on the potential links between Wildman's income from his Jamaican estate and the money he was spending in Nottinghamshire.

The final East Midlands site visited by the volunteers was Boughton House in Northamptonshire. Archivist, Crispin Powell, offered a presentation on the site's Black History links on which he invited feedback. The majority of the material covered related to the activities of John, 2nd Duke of Montagu (1690-1749). In 1722, he petitioned George I to be made governor of the Caribbean islands of St Vincent and St Lucia. In 1722, St Vincent was classed as a neutral island, and a refuge for Africans who had escaped slavery. When the Governor of the Leeward Islands warned the Duke of the risky nature of any plan to settle St Vincent, he wrote back stating that he "had no thoughts to settle it" and that he just wanted to "keep ... friends" with those living on it. The Duke's plans to settle St Lucia were a complete failure and French forces from nearby

"God Almighty is great; He is the common father of us all; we worship Him, though in differing form, and He hears the prayers of all who with a sincere heart call upon Him and endeavour to follow that universal law He has given to all mankind."

Boughton House are currently developing different presentations to offer to community groups, including one on its Black history connections.

The project has given the volunteers a collective voice and a public platform to share their reflections with local, regional and national institutions including the Heritage Lottery Fund, The National Trust and English Heritage. They have offered critically informed feedback to heritage sites on how they perceived Black history was being represented and interpreted.

Useful other legacies include a website and films, which have been shared through academic and community forums at such events as British Slave-Ownership national workshops, workshops and courses via the Workers' Education Association

The project has given the volunteers a collective voice and a public platform to share their reflections with local, regional and national institutions.



OKLAHOMA COTTON FIELD, PUBLIC DOMAIN VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

of Newstead Abbey. The Abbey was purchased from Lord Byron by Thomas Wildman in 1817. At the time it was in a ruinous state. John Murray, Byron's publisher, described it as "crumbling to ruin ... crumbling into dust." Wildman embarked on a scheme of restoration together with alterations, additions and embellishments. Architectural historian, Rosalys Coop, noted that his "income derived largely from the West Indies" but believed that by the time he purchased Newstead this was "severely reduced", even if his building works continued without "curtailment."

Wildman's Quebec plantation in Jamaica, and his ownership of 241 enslaved people, resulted in him receiving a compensation payment of £4,588 in 1833 when slavery was abolished by Act of Parliament, allowing further work on the property. Volunteers who assessed the interpretation of Wildman's legacy were disappointed that Wildman's slave-ownership was not openly discussed. When questioned, the guide actually said "Wildman never visited Jamaica and his plantations, so there is no need to mention it. It is not relevant." It was thus perceived as having no

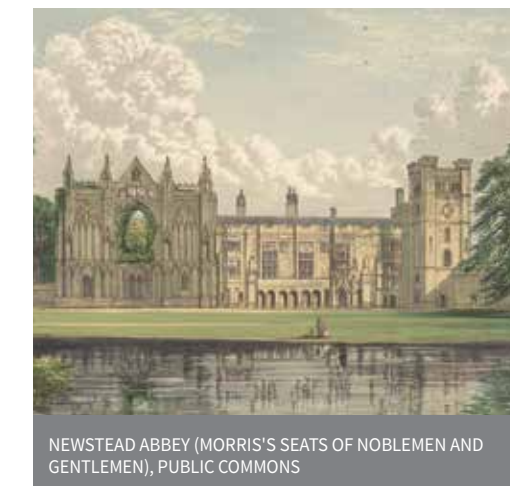
Martinique drove his expedition from the island in a matter of weeks. The Duke also petitioned George II in 1728 "praying that the Island of Tobago may be granted to him instead of St. Lucia and St. Vincent's", but his request was denied. He appears then to have lost interest in pursuing his hopes for acquiring Caribbean estates.

What remains unknown is whether Montagu simply came to the conclusion that developing landed estates in England was a safer commercial option, or had his interest in financial gain from direct participation in the Caribbean slave-based economy started to wane because of ethical concerns? And was this due to increased social interaction and contact with Black people? The Duke was known to have shown an interest and encouraged the young Black composer and writer, Ignatius Sancho, when he was a small boy, and also the Jamaican scholar, Francis Williams (reputedly sending the latter to Cambridge). There is evidence, too, that he took an interest in the education of other Black children, including a Cesar Montagu, who was based on the Boughton estate and who was educated during the 1740s by the local schoolmaster in the estate village of Weekley.

Of particular importance was the attitudinal shift in the Duke's earlier interests in pursuing commercial ventures to his later direct involvement in the freeing of slaves. He assisted in engineering the rescue of the African Muslim, Ayuba Suleiman Diallo, in 1733 and then later Diallo's servant. A letter from the Duke to Diallo, when he had returned to Africa in 1736, stated that he hoped that he remembered "with pleasure the friendship that we had for you here." His expression of goodwill suggests the 2nd Duke of Montagu had developed a belief of equality in race and religion, an enlightened and surely a seldom-heard view in Britain at that time. His letter to Diallo informs us of his belief that:

and at the international conference of the Society of Caribbean Studies held in 2015 in Birmingham. Volunteers gave radio broadcasts, and also fed into digital outputs including a blog, social media and a podcast.

This framework of peer-led investigation has built a strong volunteer network which became known as 'The Slave Trade Legacies Family'. This has led to the founding of Nottingham's first Black History Society – one of the few Black History societies in the UK. They are currently contributing a chapter to a new academic publication on community heritage funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council, and will shortly submit a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund to continue their activities.



NEWSTEAD ABBEY (MORRIS'S SEATS OF NOBLEMEN AND GENTLEMEN), PUBLIC COMMONS

Lisa Robinson
Director of Bright Ideas Nottingham.
Helen Bates
University of Leicester.



Ward 5. War Hospital, Duston.

Asylums at war: Duston War Hospital, 1916-1919

DR CAROLINE NIELSEN

In early 1917, Duston War Hospital opened its doors to sick and wounded Allied servicemen. 'This new Hospital was not actually new at all, but one of twenty-four asylums requisitions as part of the British war effort'. Duston War Hospital went on to care for thousands of men until its closure in 1919. But what happened to its civilian inmates during the war?

Duston War Hospital was in fact the Northampton County Lunatic Asylum, known locally as Berrywood, and the largest asylum in Northamptonshire. Opened in 1876, it was the only institution in the county dedicated solely to the care of the pauper insane. Asylums were central to national medical care in early twentieth-century England. They worked in conjunction with local workhouses, infirmaries and charities. County asylums housed those deemed to be incapable of caring for themselves,

either temporarily or permanently. To enter, individuals or families had to prove that they could not cope with their condition but were unable to afford the full cost of their care. Poor Law Unions often sponsored patients paying for part, or all, of their stay.

County asylums were large institutions. Populations of 800 to 1000 patients were not uncommon. The Berrywood asylum complex routinely housed over 800 patients. The largest hospital buildings contained acute and chronic wards, private patient rooms and an infirmary, whilst the grounds contained a separate working farm, an infectious disease hospital, and a residential block for so-called 'Idiot' children (those with learning disabilities). Berrywood also had a commercial laundry, a recreational hall, and several craft workshops. Patients were divided according to their age, gender, health conditions and social class, and housed accordingly in different parts of the asylum. Many patients were frail and elderly, or those suffering from degenerative neurological conditions.

Asylums were both feared and hated. The diagnoses found in Berrywood's casebooks do not always correspond with our views of mental health and disability. Asylum patients were stigmatised by the association of mental illness with poverty, failure, immorality and hereditary disease. In 1914, there was a widespread assumption that patients, or their wider families, were in some way responsible for their conditions. The popular culture of the time maintained that most mental illnesses and intellectual disabilities were a by-product of moral weakness, either one's own or that of a distant ancestor. As contemporary medicine could not fully explain why some individuals had these conditions when others did not, the stigma only worsened. By the early twentieth century, most people believed that mental illnesses were the result of biological inheritance, a view influenced by a growing cultural interest in eugenics.

The physical conditions within asylums only added to the stigma. Daily life was regimented, monotonous and disempowering. Inmates were

rarely granted any privacy and had very little say over their day-to-day lives. The standard of care varied hugely between asylums, as did staff attitudes towards their charges. While some staff were dedicated to their patients, others were not. Historians like Peter Bartlett, Anne Borsay and Michael Flinn have demonstrated that decades of chronic under-investment meant that most asylums were overcrowded and in serious need of repair.

The outbreak of the First World War led to massive changes in asylum provision in England and Wales. Mounting Allied casualties swiftly caused a national hospital bed shortage. Authorities were forced to look for alternative hospital sites. Despite the enduring image of the stately home hospital with aristocratic lady-nurses, the military authorities preferred the decidedly less glamorous locations of schools, asylums and workhouses. Such institutions were ideal: most were semi-urban with large grounds and ready access to railway lines and main roads. Berrywood was therefore not a natural choice for a war hospital. Berrywood's rural location made it difficult for both staff and visitors to get there. This may explain why it was not requisitioned until August 1915, about five months after most other asylums. Transport issues continued throughout the war. Many of the new Hospital's wartime staff had to catch a specially scheduled bus from Northampton to get to work.

Once Berrywood was selected for war service in August 1915, change came rapidly. It appears to have been the practice of the Board of Control and the War authorities to empty selected asylums within a three month deadline. The problem was that Berrywood had approximately 1113 patients in August 1915. Asylum officials undertook the herculean task of finding them beds in other asylums at a time of national bed shortages. One patient was transferred to South Yorkshire as the asylum officials struggled to find suitable

accommodation. By November 1915, all of the patients were dispersed across eight asylums in the East Midlands area.

Once the asylum buildings were empty, the War Office embarked on a significant remodelling programme. The new 'war hospitals' were almost unilaterally condemned as inadequate for the care of military patients.

The fact that the same buildings had been previously been regarded as suitable establishments for sick children, the elderly and the mentally ill was quietly ignored.

Daily life was regimented, monotonous and disempowering. Inmates were rarely granted any privacy and had very little say over their day-to-day lives.

Relocation of Berrywood Patients, September-November 1915

Receiving Asylum	Men & Boys	Women & Girls
Barnsley Hall Asylum, Bromsgrove Worcester	70	80
Bracebridge District Asylum, Lincolnshire	107	16
Buckingham Lunatic Asylum, Stone	30	40
Burntwood Asylum, Staffordshire	30	30
Cheedleton Asylum, Staffordshire	32	63
Derby Borough Lunatic Asylum, Derby	25	45
Derby County Lunatic Asylum, Mickleover	0	55
Kesteven County Lunatic Asylum, Lincolnshire	10	30
Leicester and Rutland Lunatic Asylum	20	20
Leicester Borough Asylum, Humberstone	40	60
Nottingham City Asylum	50	30
Nottingham County Asylum	26	34
Stafford County Asylum	25	25
Warwick Lunatic Asylum, Gatton	30	40
Worcester County and City Lunatic Asylum, Powick	25	25

Source: Northamptonshire County Record Office, NCLA/2/114/5

The remodelling was as much driven by the extreme surgical needs of the new patients as by the state of the buildings. The First World War created trauma on an horrific scale. Shrapnel and machine gun bullets tore apart muscle and shattered bone. Gas burnt away eyes and corroded lungs. Food shortages and disastrous sieges caused malnutrition and epidemic disease. Very few asylums had dedicated operating theatres in 1915. In some asylums, corridors were internally remodelled to ensure that they were wide enough for surgical trolleys. Not all renovations were based on medical need. Berrywood repairs were often simply for cosmetic reasons: new plasterwork and light colour schemes offered military patients and staff a bright clean environment, and discouraged them from dwelling on their injuries or the fates of the previous inhabitants. Military and civilian authorities, medical staff and patients were at pains to disassociate the residents of War Hospitals from the residents of asylums. All participating asylums were temporarily renamed to facilitate this.

It must be stressed that the War Hospital's scheme initially did try to accommodate the needs of the former inmates' families and friends. Orders were circulated in early 1915 that asylums should be grouped together: patients would only be moved to asylums within a designated region. This would mean visiting relatives would be "spared any avoidable expense and inconvenience". The official 1920 Government report on the scheme went to great lengths to stress that transferred asylum patients were due "similar consideration and sympathy to that which everyone desires to see accorded to soldiers who have served their Country so splendidly".

The practicalities of war and the stigma of mental illness swiftly undermined these good intentions. The need for beds never diminished. The War Office was forced to take over more and more buildings as the war progressed. ▶

This necessitated the repeated movement of civilian patients. Berrywood had accepted 193 patients from Rubery Hill Asylum in Birmingham in March 1915, only for these patients to be moved again in September and October. It is little wonder that the 1920 report highlighted that some relatives “felt deeply a disparaging comparison” when they considered their loved ones’ care.

We can only guess at the impact of these transfers on patients and their families. It is undeniable that the transfers caused hardship and suffering to all those involved. Visiting patients became an area of contention. The central Board of Control argued that “it could not be expected, nor indeed would it be right” for families and friends to visit as they previously had done. Visiting was either curtailed completely or limited to one relative at a time. The distances involved further curbed contact. The majority of Berrywood’s patients were from working-class backgrounds. Many were unable to visit due to the

cost of travelling long distances. The War Office was willing to reimburse individual relatives, but only if the patient was “dangerously ill” or if “the mental state of the patient is likely to be adversely influenced”. Sadly, this meant that the payments were usually only approved in the midst of tragedy when families travelled to comfort the dying or mourn at gravesides.

Bereavement was a frequent occurrence. Wartime asylums had high mortality rates. The historians John Lewis Crammer and Claire Chatterton have argued that overcrowding, malnutrition and a series of cold winters facilitated the spread of deadly infectious diseases like influenza and tuberculosis.

The end of the war did not signal the end of the asylum War Hospitals. Berrywood was one of the first to be transferred back to civilian hands in early 1919 and its patients slowly returned to their former home. This was not the case with other asylums. Many were kept by the military

until the early 1920s. Asylum patients did not usually benefit from the military’s temporary stewardship of their homes. Faced with mounting costs and terrible casualty rates, the military authorities rarely attempted expensive building repairs. Some hospital authorities spent years requesting compensation from the War Office.

The First World War centenary offers us the opportunity to reflect on previously hidden wartime experiences. The lives of those who spent the war in the East Midlands’ asylums are one of the most hidden of all. Their experiences come to us third-hand, mediated by doctors, asylum officials and social welfare bodies. For around 17,000 mentally ill men, women and children nationally, the war meant both separation from family and friends, and the loss of familiar surroundings. Their hidden history reminds us that the horror of wartime separation was not just felt on the battlefields. 📖

Notes

Detailed descriptions of individual asylums can be found in the Board of Control’s History of the Asylum War Hospitals in England and Wales (Stationers Office: 1920); Caroline Nielsen, ‘The Other War Dead: Asylum Patients during the First World War’, AHRC Beyond the Trenches blog, 24th September 2014. <http://beyondthetrenches.co.uk/the-other-war-dead-asylum-patients-during-the-first-world-war/>

There is no central list of those transferred under the War Hospital scheme. Some asylums recorded transfers in their patient case books: please check with local archives about the availability of these materials. Berrywood’s (later St Crispin’s Hospital) are kept at Northamptonshire Record Office. Please refer to their website: <http://www.northamptonshire.gov.uk/en/councilservices/Community/archives/Pages/northamptonshire-record-office-archives.aspx>

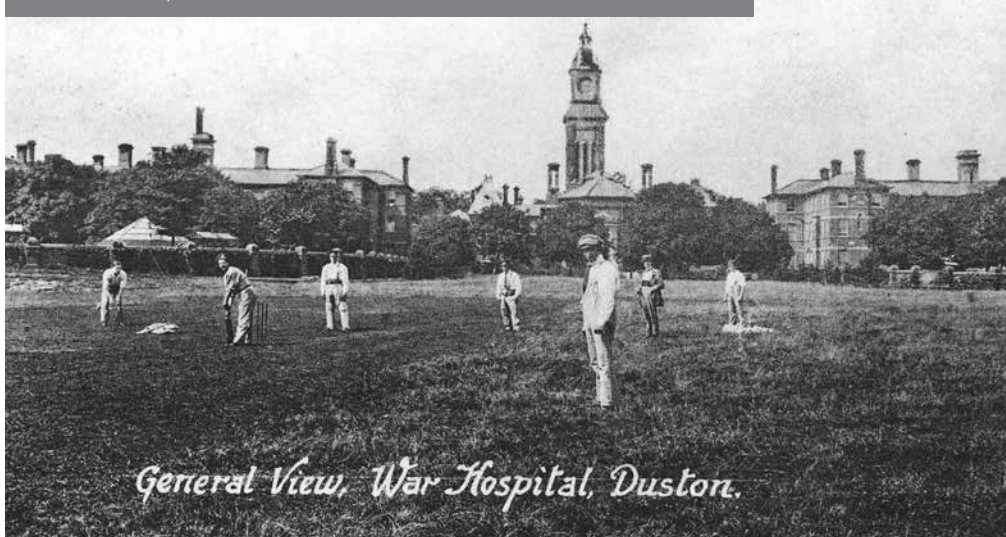
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The author expresses her thanks to Northamptonshire Record Office for its assistance.

Further Reading:

Anne Borsay, *Disability and Social Policy in Britain Since 1750: A History of Exclusion* (Basingstoke, 2004); **Peter Bartlett**, *The Poor Law of Lunacy* (Leicester, 1999); **J. L. Crammer**, ‘Extraordinary Deaths of Asylum Inpatients During the 1914-1918 War’, *Medical History* 36 (1992), pp. 430-441; **Claire Chatterton**, ‘Inpatient Mental Health Care in the First World War’, *Mental Health Practice* 19 (2015), pp. 35-37; **Michael Flinn**, ‘Medical Services under the New Poor Law’, in **Derek Fraser (ed.)** *The New Poor Law in the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1976), pp. 45-66.

DUSTON WAR HOSPITAL CRICKET FIELD (COPYRIGHT NORTHAMPTONSHIRE RECORD OFFICE ARCHIVES)



General View, War Hospital, Duston.

BERRYWOOD ASYLUM (COPYRIGHT NORTHAMPTONSHIRE RECORD OFFICE ARCHIVES)



The Pentrich Revolution Bicentenary 1817 – 2017

– and the strange case of ‘Oliver the Spy’

BY SYLVIA MASON AND ROGER TANNER

On 9th June 1817 over 300 men set out from villages on the Derbyshire-Nottinghamshire border to march to Nottingham. Miners, framework knitters, stone masons, labourers from South Wingfield, Pentrich, Ripley, Swanwick, Alfreton and Heanor were led by Jeremiah Brandreth, a framework knitter from 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, however, the Government was already fully aware of their plans. Indeed its agents had actively encouraged the rising. Informers and spies were commonly used by national and local government at this time to gain information on possible movements for reform. At times their role became that of *agents provocateur*. William Richards, alias William Oliver – and better known as Oliver the Spy – was one of the most notorious of these. He was employed by Lord Sidmouth, the Home Secretary, on his release from debtors prison. He then insinuated himself into the circles of those calling for reform, joining Joseph Mitchell, a long-term radical, on a tour of the Midlands and North. Following Mitchell’s convenient arrest, he continued this tour in the guise of the “London delegate”, proclaiming that any insurrection would be supported by 70,000 in London and 150,000 in Birmingham. At meetings across the Midlands and North he encouraged rebellion and proposed the date be postponed from 26th May to 9th June. Regular reports to Sidmouth ensured that the government was fully informed.

Unfortunately for Oliver, he was seen in the coach of General Byng at Thornhill Lees, near Dewsbury. While he was able to continue his pretence in Nottingham and Derbyshire in the coming days, his role as a spy was shortly to be made public in the *Leeds Mercury* on 14th June. This revelation astounded public opinion, and had a disastrous impact on the government’s reputation. As E.P. Thompson notes, “there were thousands of shop-keepers, country squires, Dissenting Ministers, and professional men who, in 1817 had no idea that such that such things could take place in England.” A “very wide section of public opinion” regarded such practices as being “wholly alien to the spirit of English law.”

The revolutionists from Derbyshire obviously knew nothing of Oliver’s betrayal as they marched towards Nottingham. A few had guns. Most, however, were armed simply with sticks with a piece of iron or spikes attached to them, or hayforks. This is contrary to the claims in the local paper that the “insurgents from Pentrich possessed themselves of all the guns, and fire arms (in the district) of which they had accurate account, which were found on them.” The most serious incident of the rebellion took place when one group visited the ▶



MEN WAITING IN NOTTINGHAM, PRINT BY FIONA IBBOTSON. FIONA HAS BEEN PAINTING PROFESSIONALLY SINCE 1986 AND IS WILLING TO TACKLE MOST SUBJECTS IN A VARIETY OF STYLES. FIONA.IBBOTSON@HOTMAIL.CO.UK

home of Mrs Hepworth. Brandreth banged on the door, demanding arms. Those inside refused to open up. A few of the rebels went to the rear of the house, where a window was broken, and a random shot was fired inside. A servant, Robert Walters, fell mortally wounded.

Brandreth led the increasingly despondent (and dwindling) party with grim determination, urging his men forwards with promises that: "Nottingham would be given up before they got there", then "they would proceed from Nottingham to London to wipe off the National Debt." After marching through the night they passed through Eastwood, reaching Gilt Brook. Here the trap was sprung. The rebels were quickly dispersed and many arrested by a small body of waiting Dragoons. Mundy, one of the magistrates present, afterwards described the confrontation: "we came in sight of the mob who though at three quarters of a mile's distance from us no sooner saw the troops, then they fled in all directions...throwing away their arms". Not a single shot was fired and, within a very short space of time, 48 men had been captured. Some, however, stayed at large for quite some time. Isaac Ludlam was arrested at Uttoxeter, Brandreth at Bulwell and George Weightman at Eccleston, near Sheffield. Thomas and John Bacon were not caught until the 15th August in St Ives Huntingdon, and then only by virtue of the enormous reward of 100 guineas offered for their betrayal.

Forty-five men of Pentrich, South Wingfield, Alfreton and Heanor, were indicted at the Derby Assizes on 26th July 1817 as having committed High Treason, along with "a multitude of false traitors." Meanwhile, in July at a trial in York of men who had joined a rising around Huddersfield, Oliver's role exposure as an agent provocateur led to acquittals. Fear of repetition of this led to his swift removal from Derby. There was no mention of Oliver's role in the October trial of the Pentrich men and the newspapers were prohibited from reporting the case until after the verdict. The jury apparently ignored the graffiti written up on the courthouse wall stating "JURYMEN REMEMBER OLIVER".

The Derby jurors were carefully selected. The Grand Jury consisted of grandees who supported the government, while members of the main jury were farmers from the opposite side of the county who had been carefully vetted to ensure their "reliability". The trials lasted ten days. Three - Brandreth, Turner and Ludlam - were convicted of high treason, and sentenced to death, whereupon ten of the remaining prisoners tendered a plea of guilty on the understanding that their lives would be spared. Hanging in those days did not instantly break the neck, but instead slowly strangled the victim to death. The men were lifted, eventually, to have their heads severed by a knife after the axe blow failed to achieve this. All three were buried in one deep, unmarked grave in St Werburgh's churchyard, not far from the place of execution. Fourteen of the accused were transported. Others were imprisoned. Of those sentenced to transportation, nine received pardons on 1st January 1835, four had already died, and one served the full sentence. In the meantime their families had been evicted and their homes destroyed.



THIS IS THE WORK OF THE GOVERNMENT AND OLIVER, PRINT BY PETER WIGLEY. PETER STARTED WATERCOLOUR CLASSES IN 2001 AFTER TAKING EARLY RETIREMENT. HE SOON BECAME ADDICTED TO PAINTING, MAINLY LANDSCAPES. THESE DAYS HE PREFERENCES TO USE OIL AND ACRYLIC MEDIUMS IN PREFERENCE TO WATERCOLOUR. PETER@PETERWIGLEY.CO.UK

Thompson has seen Pentrich as "one of the first attempts in history to mount a wholly proletarian insurrection, without middle-class support". He notes that "these conspirators were not all the unlettered yokels which some historians would have them be." We should see the Pentrich Rising as a significant step in the long story of the fight for universal suffrage and a just society. The role of the government in using agent's provocateurs caused a national scandal at the time, but subsequently the events were soon largely forgotten.

The Pentrich and South Wingfield Revolution Group have been set up to commemorate these events. Support has already been given by Derbyshire County Council, local town and parish councils along the route in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, Derby University 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. This will include:

- A day festival at Wingfield Manor on 10th June 2017, supported by English Heritage.
- A festival of walks, including 14 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.
- Information Boards are to be placed along the route of the march.
- An exhibition is being organised by Derby Museum, and, if possible, this will also come to Nottingham Castle Museum and the Galleries of Justice. Exhibitions will also be held in local communities along the route. It is hoped that a permanent exhibition will remain at one of these centres.

- Derby University is organising an international conference on "Radicalism 1790 - 1820" on 8th and 9th June 2017. A student conference will also be taking place.
- Dr Richard A Gaunt, Curator of Rebellion at Nottingham Castle and Associate Professor of History at the University of Nottingham, is giving a talk on Brandreth to the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire and helping to organise a trip to rebellion related sites in May 2017.
- 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 by local artists, inspired by the rising, is already underway. A choirs' workshop is planned in October 2016 led by singer and songwriter 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

www.pentrichrevolution.org.uk
Registered Charity number 1166940

Sylvia Mason and Roger Tanner

Further Reading:

John Dring, *A Biography of Jeremiah Brandreth*; Michael Parkin, *Oliver the Spy* (2016); John Stevens, *Pentrich 1817* (Derby, 1977); Edward Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963).

Night tales: The incident of the Rufford Park Poachers

BY SAM MILLARD



FREDERICK BROCK (COURTESY OF RUFFORD PARK ARCHIVES)

On the evening of Monday 13th October 1851, thirty or more men from the Mansfield area were making their way along the Bilsthorpe Road through Rufford Park, with the shadowy purpose of taking game.

The road was a public thoroughfare, but it cut through land recently enclosed by John Lumley-Savile, the Earl of Scarborough. The enclosure of common and waste lands had reduced poor peoples' access to communal resources of food, grazing, fuel and timber. The effects of enclosure were worsened by the impact of the reformed game laws. The Game Act, 1816, the Night Poaching Act, 1828 and the Game Act, 1831 made hares, rabbit, deer, and named forms of fowl such as pheasants and partridge the private property of landowners, which they could legitimately protect by force, and increasingly did. The 1831 Act also set out that wild animals could only be taken by persons possessing a licence, a fee well beyond the reach of most working families. Sometimes the two processes came together and enclosed land was turned into a fenced game park. The animals that roamed the newly-enclosed land were mainly used for sport by the landowners. The workers' perspective was that this game was a God-given right that had been unfairly taken away (a view legitimised in the *Book of Genesis*).

Incidents of violence between poachers and gamekeepers were a common aspect of mid-Victorian society and probably peaked around mid-century. Most of the people arrested by the police in this story were framework knitters. These were amongst the poorest of the poor. The prosperous days of framework knitting had passed. New machines had been introduced that needed fewer operators and fashions had changed. In 1833 a local doctor described the condition of framework knitters as "unhealthy and dyspeptic... pale and emaciated." Another reported, "many were ill fed and ill clothed, demoralized and living in extreme poverty." Many would regularly go out to the forests and fields to catch game. The land owners were equally determined to stop them. They hired, from the same community, keepers to guard their property. These were not people skilled in negotiation: these were individuals who were prepared to defend their masters' property with all the force that they could muster. Often individuals or small groups of workers found themselves being set upon by well-armed gamekeepers. Mostly this would result in a beating; sometimes the poachers would be taken before the court to receive at best a fine, at worst a severe custodial sentence. Poachers knew of the violence that could be meted out to ▶

them and by the same token they were prepared to defend themselves and to protect their catch. That night it was decided that the best form of mutual protection would be to seek game as members of a large group.

The Rufford Park gamekeepers knew that the poachers were coming and what time they would arrive. William Bloom, one of the keepers, later said: "We expected them to come, as it was a nice wind and a little rain and we thought the game would lie that night." Certainly members of the poaching gang were known to the gamekeepers, and vice versa. The gamekeepers were armed with pistols and heavy flails, ready to beat off anyone who resisted them. The poachers, too, had picked up large stones as they walked and put them into their pockets, ready to use in their defence should they be spotted. They made their way toward Inkersall Farm, carrying their heavy nets on their backs. Their purpose was to set them at the side of the road nearby. By this time they had walked several miles from the centre of Mansfield.

As the last of the poachers passed by, the keepers got ready. Quietly they picked up their wooden flails ready for the attack. With the poachers some distance away, the gamekeepers stepped out onto the road, keeping to the shadows. With keepers Frederick Brock, William Roberts and Samuel Herod at the front, they managed to get close to a group of three or four poachers

who were setting their nets. They were seen! A stone flew through the air aimed at the gamekeepers. It landed with a dull thud at the feet of Herod. This was the signal for the mayhem that followed. Roberts and Herod led the charge forward, shouting as they went. The stone thrower and a companion were attempting to climb a stile to get into a nearby field when both were hit about the legs with the heavy flails and collapsed to the floor. The first of the gamekeepers crossed the stile into the field chasing other fleeing poachers. The two injured poachers were struck by further blows from the gamekeepers who followed. Assistant gamekeeper Thomas Charlesworth struck at a poacher (later identified as Samuel Sims) who was lying defenceless on the floor. Charlesworth hit Sims with such force that he heard the bone in his arm crack.

As they chased into the field two more poachers were beaten to the ground but not before they had shouted and whistled for help. Frederick Brock testified, "I knocked another man down and struck him three times on the legs to disable him. He cried out for me not to murder him." Almost immediately the main body of thirty or more men appeared on the scene. A volley of stones flew through the air. All of the gamekeepers were hit, some of them several times. One stone hit Brock's loaded pistol which was held in his waist band. The gun went off, firing the shot into the ground. The flash from the gunpowder set fire to his clothing. Now the poachers were not only being

attacked with flails, they were being shot at too. More stones flew through the air, punches were thrown, curses uttered with threats of dire actions being taken. The gamekeepers struck out at all within range. Brock was hit by a stone and knocked unconscious. From a position on a small bank a poacher threw a stone which hit keeper Roberts on the side of the head. He immediately sank to the ground. Keeper Charlesworth was hit several times at close range and, though not knocked out, he was severely concussed.

Within ten minutes it was all over. The poachers gathered their wounded and ran as fast as they could away from the scene. The gamekeepers tended to their own. They could see that Charlesworth was badly injured but it was Roberts who gave the greatest cause for concern. It was apparent to all that the wound to his head was severe. "I'm done", he said to his fellow keepers. He was carried gently through the woodland to a cottage some 150 yards

away. Meanwhile, unseen by either poachers or gamekeepers, Samuel Sims, nursing his broken arm, crawled his way into the woodland where he stayed hidden, making his escape early the next morning.

News of the altercation soon circulated and the authorities were quick to round up suspects. George Bowskill, a besom maker from the rock houses in Mansfield, was arrested the next day. He had been recorded many times by Nottinghamshire newspapers as being involved in various felonies and

was clearly well known to the local constabulary. Samuel Sims was arrested the day after at Nottingham's Infirmary, where he was being treated for a compound fracture of the arm. By the end of October, sixteen men had been apprehended. More were to follow as news came through that keeper William Roberts had died from his wounds. According to Thomas Middleton Williams, a surgeon from Wellow: "He appeared to have received a blow to the left side of the head...the skull fractured." Now there was now murder to add to the list of offences being drawn up. The evidence, however, was thin. Only the testimony of the gamekeepers could be drawn upon. At the Magistrates' Court hearing in Mansfield held in late October it was declared that there was insufficient evidence to hold most of the suspects.

By March of the following year the authorities felt they had sufficient evidence to charge six of those arrested: Bowskill, Sims, George Dunlop, John Moaks, George Robinson and James Alvey. The trial date was set for 8th March 1852 at Nottingham Assizes. Acting under the direction of the judge, Chief Justice Jervis, the charges of murder were changed to manslaughter and defendants Robinson and Alvey were discharged through lack of evidence. Several local witnesses stood available ready to testify also that Bowskill was elsewhere that night. One recalled: "I attended the assizes to give evidence of the same, and was greatly surprised at the Counsel [for the prisoner] not calling me into court for the purpose." Another said: "I can positively swear upon oath

that I served the prisoner George Bowskill with mussels, about a quarter to nine o'clock, on the night the Rufford Affray took place; I was subpoenaed, and was in attendance at the witness room during the whole of the trial, but was not once called to give my evidence."

Late in the afternoon the judge began his summing up, pointing out that: "The manner in which large bodies of men went about this county for the destruction of property, resisting, even to the death, any attempt to prevent them, was a most alarming state of affairs, and must be visited by the strongest punishment the law could inflict." He also revealed that Bowskill, Sims and Moaks had previous convictions for poaching and that Moaks had, some two years previously, been found not guilty of being involved in the murder of a gamekeeper in Derbyshire. All four defendants were sentenced to 14 years transportation to Australia. Only the youngest John Moaks, however, was transported. He was amongst 305 prisoners that were taken from Portland Harbour on the prison ship Lincelles in October 1861, some ten years after the incident. He completed his sentence in 1865. The others were released quietly on licence from English prisons after 6 years. All returned to Mansfield and kept out of trouble for the rest of their lives.

The trial caused a sensation. It was reported in newspapers throughout the land, from Dundee in the north, to Truro in the south, from London in the east, to Tralee in the west. Broadsheet posters were printed outlining the trial and songs were written, placing the poachers as the gallant heroes of the tale. Their voices were no longer hidden; they became a part of local folk lore.

*A buck or doe,
believe it so,
a pheasant or
a hare, was
sent on earth
for everyone
quite equal for
to share. So
poacher bold, as
I unfold, keep
up your gallant
heart, and think
about those
poachers bold,
that night in
Rufford Park.*

So sang retired farm worker Joseph Taylor, who had been a young man at the time of the incident, to the folk song collector Percy Grainger in 1906. The commonly held view that poaching was not a crime, and the lauding of the poacher as folk hero are captured in popular folk songs of the nineteenth century such as 'The Lincolnshire Poacher' and 'Rufford Park Poachers'. In the meantime the Lumley-Saviles kept their country residence for the pleasure of themselves and the occasional royal visitor.

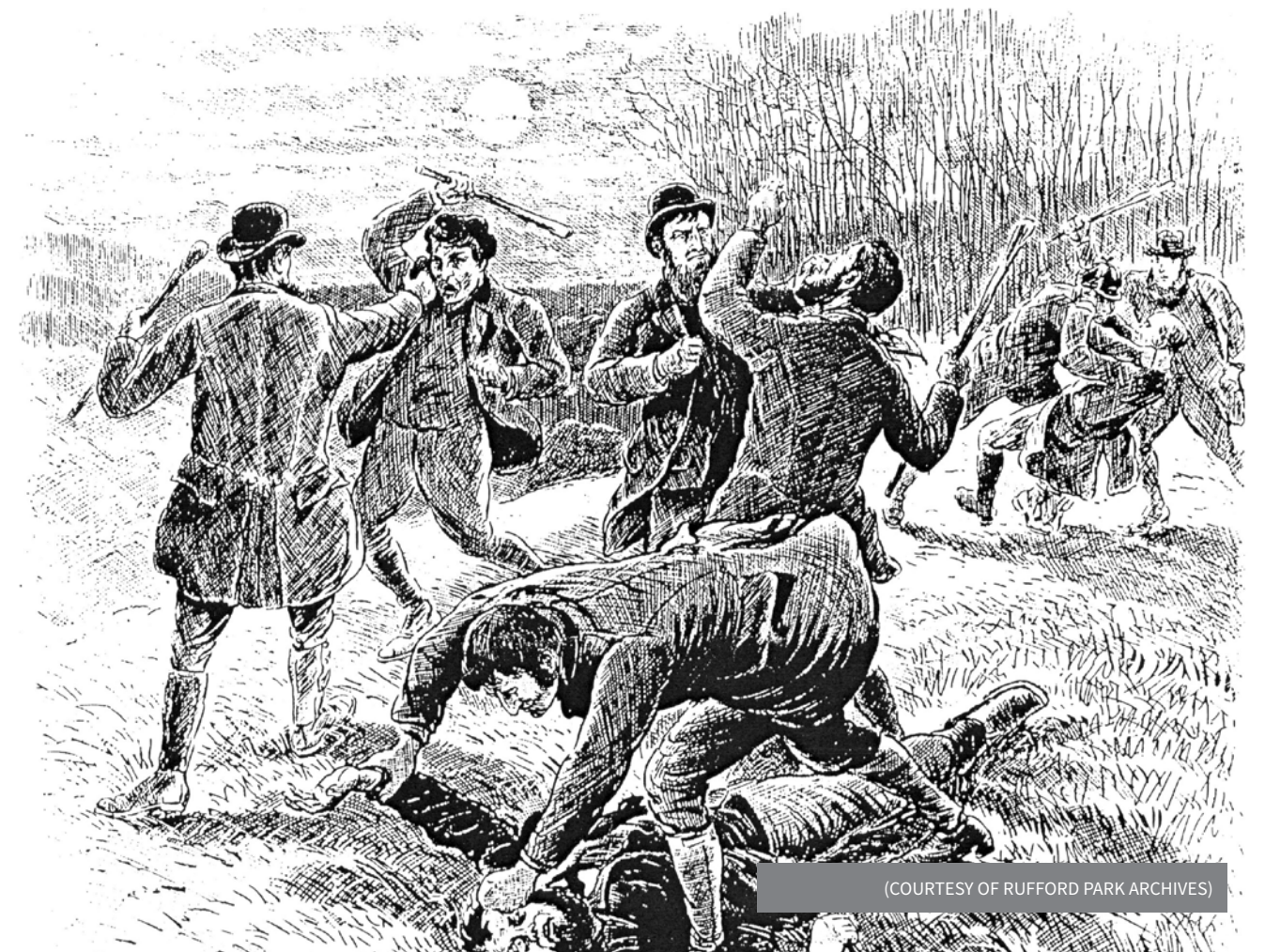
The song Rufford Poachers by Rattlejag can be heard on You Tube. 🎵

Condensed from *Rufford Park Poachers* by Sam Millard available at Rufford Country Park



RUFFORD GAMEKEEPERS (COURTESY RUFFORD PARK ARCHIVES)

“He appeared to have received a blow to the left side of the head..... the skull fractured.”



(COURTESY OF RUFFORD PARK ARCHIVES)

News and notices

What is happening at Delapré Abbey, and why do we need you?

BY FAYE MORRISSEY



DELAPRE ABBEY

Delapré Abbey is a beautiful Grade II* Listed building situated in around 500 acres of grounds and parkland, and is only one mile from Northampton town centre.

Following the success of a Heritage Lottery Fund application in 2013, a £6.3 million project has been underway since early 2015 to do substantial repair and restoration works.

The Abbey will be opening its doors to the public for the first time in its 900 year history in February 2017, with the Delapré Abbey Preservation Trust managing the building as a fantastic historic venue for local, national, and even international visitors.

The restoration is progressing at a pace. The exterior work on the Abbey is more or less complete – the stonework has been cleaned and repointed, roof work mended, and windows conserved and repainted. Construction of the new kitchen for the catering facilities has begun in the gap site on the south range, as well as the new conservatory. This will support a cafe, and there will also be a restaurant located in the Billiard room.

Work is now focussing on the restoration and conservation of the building, setting the scene for the exhibitions and displays of the Abbey telling the 900 year story.

DON'T MISS OUT ON BEING A VOLUNTEER AND BEING A PART OF SOMETHING SPECIAL!

Contact Delapré Abbey Preservation Trust on **01604 760817** or email info@delapreabbey.org

Watch the Volunteer Recruitment video on the website: www.delapreabbey.org

For all of this to be a success and for the Abbey to open with a bang, Delapré Abbey Preservation Trust is recruiting for a large number of volunteers to get involved and be a part of the most exciting, "new" heritage attraction in Northamptonshire. There will be lots of different roles and opportunities for people to choose from, including showing people around the house, keeping the beautiful gardens in tip top condition, and helping with events and educational activities.

This is a very exciting time for Delapré Abbey, so the Trust is hoping to attract people who are passionate about their community, who have time to give something back, and who want Delapré to flourish.

Volunteers will be an essential part of the team and we would love to talk to anyone with an interest about getting involved.

Faye Morrissey, Assistant Community Engagement Officer, Delapré Abbey Preservation Trust

Step back in time at the 1620s House and Garden

CREDIT NEEDED

The 1620s House and Garden at Donington le Heath, formerly Donington le Heath Manor House, has undergone a stunning refurbishment in order to tell the story of its former owners and residents.

This rare and beautiful house is a surviving example of a family home built in the 13th century and then modernised in 1618. The house has been home to many families over its 700 year history, but the Digby family, which included the Gunpowder Plotter Sir Everard Digby, lived in the house for over two hundred years. It is towards the end of the Digby ownership that the newly refurbished house is focused, showing how people lived in late Elizabethan and early Jacobean times.

Visitors can now see the beautifully restored period rooms and talk to our volunteers about the history of the house, the families that lived here, and about life in the 1620s. The house is set in beautiful 17th century style gardens with labelled plants and flowers, an orchard, herb gardens and a maze.

Light refreshments can be enjoyed in the Old Barn Tea Room, where a range of merchandise is also available.

The site will continue its lively series of events that use re-enactment, crafts, hands-on activities, drama, and specialist demonstrations to interpret the history of the site and life at the time.



DONINGTON LE HEATH, 4TH JULY 2006

Lorna Brown
Leicestershire County Council

The site is open from 10.30am – 4.30pm from Thursday to Sunday (and Bank Holiday Mondays) from 26th May to the end of September.

There is an admission charge to the site, which allows unlimited repeat visits during open season. For further information, please visit www.doningtonleheath.org.uk.



THE SCULLERY



In the next issue – Samantha Ball and Katherine Onion, The Workhouse Southwell, owned by the National Trust, are currently researching into its 20th century history for the December issue of EMHH. Hopefully this will prompt further research and discussion on welfare provision across the region into poverty, maternity provision, old age, etc. in Poor Law and Public Assistant Institutions. The Workhouse is currently holding an exhibition, 'From Workhouse to Welfare', until Sunday 6 November 2016, 12noon-4pm (Wednesday to Sunday, Bank Holidays and throughout August).



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