



DERBYSHIRE • LEICESTERSHIRE • LINCOLNSHIRE

# East Midlands History and Heritage

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE • NOTTINGHAMSHIRE • RUTLAND

## Inside this issue

**07**

Tracking East Lincolnshire's lost railways

**10**

Textile tales: the East Midlands textile industry 1980-2005

**14**

Hidden in plain sight Worksop's other war memorial



**FREE**



# Welcome

## MARC FITCH FUND



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'd encourage you to submit work to us for publication. You can pick any topic from any period, just so long as it has a strong East Midlands connection. Articles are normally between 1500-2000 words long. Keep a look out, too, for matching images that will help illustrate your work (the higher the number of pixels, the larger we can make the image). 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](mailto:emhist@virginmedia.com)

We would particularly like to thank the Marc Fitch Fund which has kindly sponsored the design and publication of this particular issue.

**Dr Nick Hayes**  
Editor East Midlands History and Heritage

**Dr Katie Bridger, Dr Helen Drew, Hannah Nicholson**  
Assistant editors

## Contents

- 04** Early memories of Sheila Healey
- 07** Tracking East Lincolnshire's lost railways
- 10** Textile tales: the East Midlands textile industry 1980-2005
- 12** Gainsborough Heritage Association is celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary
- 14** Hidden in plain sight: Worksop's other war memorial
- 18** Perspectives from the provincial press: A Lincolnshire view of women's suffrage
- 22** From priory to pile: the world of John Beaumont and Grace Dieu Priory, Leicestershire
- 25** World War One Memorials
- 29** Fake news and the and the Nottingham by-election of 1803

## Find us on Facebook

We now have a **group on Facebook** to help extend our network of academic institutions, students (undergrad and postgrad), local history groups, and the wider community, who are united by an interest in the history and heritage of the East Midlands area.

To post and comment, just join our group which you'll find by logging on to [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and searching for East Midlands History and Heritage.

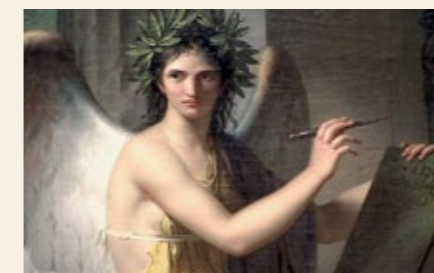
We're also on twitter  
[@EastMidlandsHH](https://twitter.com/EastMidlandsHH)

## So write for us

Let us have details of your news and events.

We'll take your stories about your community's history to a larger regional audience. We'd also welcome articles about our region's broader past. Articles are normally between 1500-2000 words long. Keep a look out, too, for matching images that will help illustrate your work (the higher the number of pixels, the larger we can make the image).

Contact us via our website at [www.eastmidlandshistory.org.uk](http://www.eastmidlandshistory.org.uk) or email [emhist@virginmedia.com](mailto:emhist@virginmedia.com)



## History and Heritage at NTU

**Postgraduate qualifications with flexible study starting September 2019**

**MA History:** This course is ideal if you wish to pursue a historical interest beyond your degree or as preparation for further PhD study. Case studies have included Crusades and Crusaders; Early Modern Religions and Cultures; Slavery, Race and Lynching; Memory, Genocide, Holocaust; Social History and 'The Spatial Turn'.

**MA Museum and Heritage Development:** This interdisciplinary course combines academic interrogation of museums and heritage as ideas, organisations and experiences with creative, practice-based approaches to their ongoing development. It is delivered in collaboration with Museum Development East Midlands, Nottingham City Museums and Galleries, Museum of the Mercian Regiment, the National Justice Museum and Barker Langham.

**MA (by research) Holocaust and Genocide:** Pursue advanced research in the field of Holocaust and Genocide. You will have the unique opportunity to collaborate in research with the National Holocaust Centre and Museum, and be active within regional and national Holocaust memory networks.

Book a place at an open event  
[www.ntu.ac.uk/hum](http://www.ntu.ac.uk/hum)

**NOTTINGHAM**  
TRENT UNIVERSITY



BY MARK HEALEY

# Early memories of Sheila Healey

My mum, Sheila Healey, was born on 19th September 1941 at her maternal grandparents' house at 14 Great Holme Street in the West End area of Leicester. This is the story of her life and experiences based on her own testimony. The house, which has since been demolished, was in the middle of a row of Victorian terraced houses with no front garden, no bathroom and no indoor toilet or hot running water. Her father was Arthur Fitzjohn and her mother was Evelyn Harris.



MY MUM IN 2013 LOOKING AT THE ENTRANCE TO HER FIRST SCHOOL, AVENUE RD INFANTS.



MUM AND HER PARENTS ON HOLIDAY IN 1950

When my mum was born her father was away serving in the British Army during the Second World War.

In the years before starting school, Mum remembered her dad coming home on leave from the army. He had an army bag on his shoulder, was wearing a beret, and looked very smart. She was always so excited to see him because he brought her back sweets including Turkish Delight. She said, "When he did come home my mum and dad went straight into the kitchen and closed the door". This made her laugh when recalling these moments because she always suspected that they were having a kiss and cuddle and were trying to hide it from her!

On another occasion, while her dad was on leave from the army having been stationed in Holland, he brought her back a pair of wooden Dutch clogs: "I wore them all the while and loved them, I used to clomp around loudly in the garden and stamp down the street up to the shops and in the end it got on my mum's nerves". Unfortunately for Mum,

her own mother didn't approve! "She grabbed the clogs off me and threw them on the fire and I cried my eyes out".

Another of my mother's earliest memories was from when she was about four years old. It seems that, as well as fashion, communication has also changed a lot! Mum and her friend from across the road had decided to follow the horse and cart of a neighbour who lived next door. No-one realised that the children had gone missing. Her mum thought that she was at her friend's house, and similarly her friend's parents thought the same! They eventually realised that they were both missing and started to search for them. During the search a man on a bicycle said to the searchers that he had just seen them following a horse and cart near to the West Bridge in Leicester which was miles away. Mum said that when they got back she had a "pasting" and had to go to bed with no tea.

Toys were something that Mum loved to talk about. Every year at Christmas, she would always be given a Rupert the Bear book. She invariably also received colouring books and pencils. But nothing was wrapped in wrapping paper: "just everything placed in a pillowcase". She remembered getting slippers that were "fluffy, which I loved". "Best of all

were rabbit skin mittens with real fur, I loved them too". One year she received a watch and her dad said it had 21 jewels! "Another year I had an umbrella and I couldn't wait for it to rain, and it seemed to take ages before it did rain!". Times were hard then and to get any present was a real treat, even to play games like Ludo and Snakes & Ladders. "Best of all when I was about six years old I remember getting a tricycle for Christmas and repeatedly riding it up and down the street".

Mum's first school was Avenue Road Infants and Junior School in the Clarendon Park area of Leicester. It bothered her that she never had the proper clothes or uniform as her family had so little money. Her first teacher was Miss White who taught her from the age of five until she was 11. She liked Miss White a lot because she would sometimes trust her and her friend Christine to go out and do some shopping for food down on Queens Road nearby. Miss White taught her needlework, which Mum loved, and this stayed with her for the rest of her life. It was her favourite lesson and she remembered making a needle holder as the first exercise she ever did. This is now one of my prized possessions. Mum also liked cooking. She remembered playing in the playground with big hoops and skipping ropes and there was a sandpit which had seashells in it, quite something given that they lived so far from the

coast! School milk was also very popular with Mum, which was icy cold because it was left outside in crates. "I used to love the free school milk and used to drink all my friends' milk because they didn't like it!"

However, Mum always said that she didn't like school, but didn't remember ever being told off. She was shy and said, "I would not say boo to a goose and would never put my hand up in class". She did English, history, geography, religious education, physical education and "science with Bunsen burners". She remembered that in science, "we collected worms in a jar, everyone was squeamish about the worms except me!". My mum always maintained that this was where her lifelong interest in nature started.

Mum hated and dreaded the physical education class in particular. "I couldn't do it because I was a little bit larger than any of the others, I liked the wrong things like puddings!". The children had to climb up the wall on bars and up ropes, and Mum said that she could not do either. "Then we had to have a shower and I hated it, the teacher would make you go in again if she thought you hadn't showered properly, she was horrible!".

During playtime the children played hopscotch and skipping. Also a game called tick, played "off the ground where you had to stay safely on a step so you didn't get 'ticked', also 'snobs' and hide & seek". Mum also described a game called 'double ball' which was bouncing a ball up the wall in a line with all the other girls.

Swimming lessons were at a nearby public baths called Knighton Lane East Baths. The children would walk there from the school, and mum dreaded that too. "I never did learn how to swim, all I ever did was hold onto the bar at the side". "The rubber caps were horrible with a clip under the chin, we never had floats like they have today, and I just couldn't learn". Mum never did learn how to swim.

One day a new electric sewing machine arrived at the school, the first the school had ever had, and my mum said that she was the first to use it. This was because she had been the best girl in the class on the old treadle sewing machine. She made a blouse, skirt and pinafore but unfortunately there was only one lesson per week. "I really enjoyed those lessons", she said, including "sewing, doing button holes, embroidery stitches and everything else". "Most of the others could not even use the treadle sewing machine because it was hard to coordinate, but I took to it". "I would have liked to have done woodwork too, but it was an all-girl school and girls couldn't do that".

Mum also liked the Domestic Science lessons which included cooking and cleaning. Her next school was the Sir Jonathan North School around a mile away, which had a real bungalow in the grounds. This was set up to so that they could practise for later in life. In the domestic science class, the students would spend all afternoon in the bungalow learning how to 'run a house'. There would be between two and four students cooking and two to four students cleaning the bungalow, doing activities such as hoovering and dusting. At the end of the lesson the children ▶



THE NEEDLE HOLDER MY MUM MADE WHEN SHE WAS APPROXIMATELY 9-10 YEARS OLD.



would all eat what they had cooked, then they would swap roles the following week. They also learnt how to have a strip wash and how to use a loofah, and even how to wash their faces properly. Mum said that it was all very thorough. There was a bath in the bungalow which Mum had never seen before as there wasn't one at home. "It was teaching you about how to be a housewife and how to keep your home going. It seems old fashioned now but we all thought it was great". In Mum's first cooking lesson the first thing they made was a jacket potato, then Cornish pasties, which was when they learnt how to make pastry. They were also taught how to make a Christmas cake with marzipan and icing. They had to look after their teeth too, of course! Another thing that Mum and her friends dreaded was the dentist visiting: "It used to go around the school that the dentist is here! It put the fear of god into you!"

Schools were divided into four houses for Sports Day then and mum was in Wycliffe House which was colour-coded yellow. Her best friend was in DeMontfort House which was blue, Latimer House was red and McCauley House was green. Mum was always very nervous when Sports Day was coming up, "I didn't want to do it because I didn't want to be seen to be too good because I would then have been picked for a team and I was very shy!"

After coming home from school, Mum wasn't allowed a key to the house so would visit the library on Clarendon Park Road, which is still there today. They would sit in the window seat where it was nice and warm, looking at the books but not reading them. Mum said that she could always remember the smell of the polish on the floor. "Even now the smell of polish reminds me of the library, it was a nice smell". They had to wait until 6pm when their mums would come home from work to collect them.

Sometimes my Mum's parents would go to the pictures in the afternoon, and she would have to wait for them to come out in the cinema foyer after school. She said that the manager of the cinema would keep his eye on her and her friend. She also appreciated the architecture there: "There were two large lights in the foyer made of glass in the art nouveau style and they looked like open half globes. We were wearing our school berets and my friend and I were flicking them at each other and my beret fell into one of the light fittings". "I was very scared that I would get an 'order mark' if I lost my beret and when my mum came out from the film I had to tell her my beret was in the light". "Mum had to get the manager to get a ladder to fetch the beret out". "It's a funny story now but I was very worried then!"

Life in the 1940s and 1950s was much simpler, no computers, mobile phones, and modern conveniences but I think the modern generation would benefit a lot from learning about those times. I am glad I took the time to talk to my mum and discover what it was like. I recommend everyone to do the same and at the same time you will also appreciate what your parents have experienced. I certainly did! 📖

Mark Healey

*“Even now the smell of polish reminds me of the library, it was a nice smell”*



KNIGHTON LIBRARY, CLARENDON PARK ROAD IN 2019



THE WINDOW SEAT MUM USED TO SIT ON 65 YEARS AGO IS STILL THERE.

# Tracking East Lincolnshire's lost railways

In the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Lincolnshire had a comprehensive railway system and there were very few communities more than a few miles from the nearest railway station.

From Dogdyke to Donington on Bain and Sibsey to Sutton-on-Sea, they offered both passenger and freight services with connections within the county and beyond. By the middle years of that century the damage to the system during the First World War and competition from cars, buses and lorries was rendering many of those stations and lines uneconomic, with some services being withdrawn as early as the 1930s. The railways plainly failed to share in the economic recovery post 1933. Nationally, between 1930 and 1939 some 900 miles of track closed to passenger traffic and the volume of goods handled also fell by roughly ten per cent. As Mowett notes: "It would not be fair to say that the railways, compared to their newer competitors remained in the paleotechnic age; though on rural branch lines ... it might seem to be the case."



A MORNING CLEETHORPES-KINGS CROSS PASSENGER TRAIN COMES TO A STAND AT LOUTH IN THE EARLY 1960S. AT THIS TIME THE STATION STILL HAD ITS OVERALL ROOF.



The urgent need for reliable transport during the Second World War kept most of the lines in service, though the conflict took a heavy toll on both railway stock and infrastructure. By the end of 1943, the four main line companies were running some 500 locomotives which in peacetime would have been scrapped. Trains were being cancelled at the rate of a thousand to fifteen hundred per week because of a shortage of locomotives. The post-war Labour government nationalised the network in 1948, although it was already effectively under government control, as it had been during the war. It was not a particularly contentious act, since some form of public ownership or control was largely inevitable. By then the railways were in a badly run-down condition. Investment in the railways expanded significantly, rising from £40m in 1948 to £81m by 1959. Yet for all this investment, the numbers of passengers carried during the 1950s remained static at about a billion journeys per year,

or some thirty per cent below pre-war levels. Freight levels held up better initially but fell away as the decade came to a close. In 1956 the network ceased to be profitable. Passenger lines across Lincolnshire were especially hard hit, and many were withdrawn from service. The branch lines to the market towns of Horncastle and Spilsby were early casualties, as was the picturesque route that wound its way through the Lincolnshire Wolds from Louth to Bardney.

In 1955 British Railways introduced an ambitious modernisation plan to replace its aging steam locomotive fleet with a new generation of diesel and electric trains. Lincolnshire was one of the first areas in Britain to benefit with the introduction of new diesel railcar units on local passenger services. These were well suited for rural areas and they provided a cleaner, quicker, more comfortable service for the travelling public.

The railcars were far more economical than the steam hauled trains they had replaced, and they did reduce operating costs. Many routes also saw a welcome rise in passenger numbers but unfortunately it was not enough to combat the loss of income caused by the ever-increasing use of the private car.

In an effort to restore profitability, the Government appointed Dr Richard Beeching as Chairman of the British Railways Board in 1961 to advise on a reorganisation of the railway system. Two years later in his controversial report, titled *The Reshaping of British Railways*, Beeching recommended the closure of one third of the country's railway stations, the axing of all branch lines and a reduction of the rail network from 13,000 to 8,000 miles, with a concentration on freight and inter-city services. This included axing many routes in Lincolnshire, and the part of the county to the south and east of Lincoln was particularly hard hit. Within a few years most of the lines in the area were to

The urgent need for reliable transport during the Second World War kept most of the lines in service, though the conflict took a heavy toll on both railway stock and infrastructure.

close, along with many stations on the ones that remained open. Mobility, perhaps, was fine for those with cars, but for the many without, and for those particularly in rural areas, there was almost a return to pre-industrial conditions.

The routes most affected were the Lincolnshire Loop Line from Peterborough to Lincoln by way of Spalding and Boston, and the East Lincolnshire Railway, which left the Loop at Boston to continue to Grimsby by way of Louth and Alford. Both had become part of the London and North Eastern Railway in the Grouping of 1923, and of the Eastern Region of British Railways on nationalisation in 1947. Many parts of both routes closed on the same day, 5th October 1970, along with a number of branch lines served by them, leaving large parts of the county rail-less.

The one exception was the line from Boston to Skegness. The rail link to the popular seaside resort, made famous by

John Hassall's 'Jolly Fisherman', almost certainly survived the 1970 cull because of the large numbers of holidaymakers who travelled there by train during the summer months. Thankfully the 'Poacher Line', as it is now known, is still with us today, although the number of trains that use it is but a fraction of those that would have arrived at 'Skeggy' from towns and cities across the Midlands in its heyday.

Since the 1950s almost two thirds of Lincolnshire's railway network has disappeared but, although the tracks have long gone, it is surprising how many station buildings still survive as private residences. One of the best examples is the Louth to Bardney branch, where no less than five of the seven stations along the route still exist. The quality and substantial nature of the buildings is no doubt one of the reasons why they have survived so well.

#### Bringing a railway back to life

One section of railway in East Lincolnshire is still alive and well today, thanks to a group of preservationists who managed to save the line when it was no longer required by British Rail. Passenger services on the East Lincolnshire line between Grimsby and Boston ended in 1970. For over 120 years the line had served the county well, providing the speedy conveyance of farm produce, coal and fish, as well as a fast, direct route to London. The section from Grimsby to Louth was retained for goods traffic for a further ten years. The impending closure of the line by BR led to the formation of a preservation group who were determined that this remaining stub of the East Lincolnshire line would not disappear off the map. The Grimsby-Louth Railway Preservation Society, as it became known, set about raising the £130,000 that BR was asking for the purchase of the trackbed. Against all the odds and after years of protracted negotiations the sale finally went through and a light railway order was granted in 1991, giving the group the authority to run a heritage railway. The name was changed to the Lincolnshire Wolds Railway and the Ludborough station site became the centre of operations.

Now there was another hurdle to overcome, because as soon as the line ceased to be used by BR in 1980 the demolition men were sent in to

FAST FORWARD TO EASTER 2019, WHERE THE LINCOLNSHIRE WOLDS RAILWAY'S STEAM-HAUL TRAIN DEPARTS FROM LUDBOROUGH STATION WITH A SERVICE FOR NORTH THORESBY. PHOTO: P. ELDRIDGE.



PASSENGERS AT MABLETHORPE STATION QUEUE PATIENTLY TO BOARD THEIR RETURN TRAIN TO NOTTINGHAM ON SATURDAY 15TH AUGUST, 1964. PHOTO: F. J. SOAR.

remove all the remaining buildings, platforms, track and even the ballast. So for the fledgling heritage line it was a case of starting from scratch. Gradually the infrastructure was put back, rolling stock was acquired and a milestone was reached in August 2009 when the first public train ran between Ludborough and North Thoresby stations, nearly 40 years after the last British Rail passenger service in 1970!

Since then the Lincolnshire Wolds Railway (LWR) has gone from strength to strength. The operation is staffed entirely by volunteers who run heritage steam trains at most weekends from Spring to December. A programme of events is held throughout the season which are designed to appeal to both young and old, the biggest being the 1940s Weekend in September and the popular 'Santa Special' trains in the lead up to Christmas.

The LWR is certainly not resting on its laurels and it has ambitious plans for the future. The objective now is to extend the line southwards towards Louth – a distance of just over five miles. Sadly, the original station site in the town was sold off when the line closed, so the scheme will involve building a new terminus next to the Fairfield Industrial Estate. Work started in 2018 on Phase 1, which is the ¾ mile section near to the site of Utterby Halt, which was the next station south of Ludborough. Building a railway is very expensive and this section alone will cost nearly £200,000. A fundraising appeal has been set up to purchase materials such as rail, sleepers and ballast, so that work can continue on the extension.

You can keep up to date with what is happening at the LWR and find out more about the 'Making Tracks for Louth' appeal at [www.lincolnshirewoldsrailway.co.uk](http://www.lincolnshirewoldsrailway.co.uk)

#### East Lincolnshire Railways 50

Next year we will be commemorating the 50th anniversary of the closure of the rail routes in the east and centre of Lincolnshire. Despite vigorous opposition, a large part of the county, which had been well served by railways from the middle of the 19th century, suddenly found itself many miles from the nearest station.

To mark the occasion, a major two-month exhibition of railway memorabilia, photographs, documents and artefacts is to be held next year at Bateman's Brewery Visitors Centre in Wainfleet. The exhibition will run from Saturday August 1<sup>st</sup> to Sunday October 4<sup>th</sup> 2020 and will be supported by a number of special events including a railwayana auction, a schools' art project, study days, lectures and even coach tours of existing sites along the routes of some of East Lincolnshire's lost railways.

For more information or to offer material or help, please contact Mike Fowler on 01767 691401 or email: [m.fowler597@btinternet.com](mailto:m.fowler597@btinternet.com)

**Phil Eldridge**  
Lincolnshire Wolds Railway



# Textile Tales

## The East Midlands textile industry 1980-2005

BY TONYA OUTTRAM

The heritage of the early East Midlands Textile Industry is well known – school children learn about the invention of cotton spinning and the mills of the Derwent valley. The history of Nottingham's lace industry is well documented, as are the hosiery and knitting firms in Leicester, Mansfield and around the region. There are links, too, local universities. Nottingham Trent University's School of Art and Design was founded as a school to train designers for the local machine-made lace industry. However, as you get into more modern times, there is less information available.



SEAMING MACHINES, COOPER AND ROE 1934 (COURTESY RUDDINGTON FRAMEWORK KNITTERS MUSEUM, RUDDINGTON)

Textile manufacture in Nottinghamshire alone employed some 43,000 workers before the Great War. Seventy per cent of these were women, two thirds of whom were young and single.



MENDING, R GRANGER 1966 (COURTESY NOTTINGHAM CITY MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES)

This is why the Textile Tales project is focussing on the late C20 (specifically early 1980s to early 2000s) when the industry was in decline, and the mergers and takeovers that had happened in the 1960s were starting to unravel. The demise of textiles has at times been dramatic and the impact on local communities profound. Textile manufacture in Nottinghamshire alone employed some 43,000 workers before the Great War. Seventy per cent of these were women, two thirds of whom were young and single. By 1939, numbers had fallen by some 15 per cent. In Leicester, hosiery remained the dominant industry, employing 34,000 of the total 135,000 factory workers. It continued to maintain its dominance post-war, accounting for roughly 30 per cent of all manufacturing jobs into the 1970s, although total numbers continued to fall. In certain sectors, notably lace, numbers had declined significantly. Nevertheless, across the East Midlands as a whole, during the 1960s the textile industry still accounted for 20% of the manufacturing workforce, employing some 118,000 workers. Hosiery, particularly, continued to flourish, making fashionable goods such as casual knitwear, jersey fabrics and seam-free stockings. Yet by the 1970s textile output began to fall in absolute terms, and companies began to rationalise and shed jobs.

By 1981 the East Midlands textile industry was described in Parliament as being in a 'catastrophic state' by Mr Greville Janner. In the same year, East Midlands workers marched in protest against cheap imports. The National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers were singing "If you're wearing foreign knickers – get 'em off" as they were marching towards Nottingham's market square (or 'Slab Square' as it is dubbed on the poster advertising the march). It seemed that the protests may have been in vain. In 1988, Mansfield Knitware closed, with the loss of 850 jobs. The local MP, Alan Meale, alleged this was because the owners were shipping the work overseas, where labour costs were cheaper. He also demanded import restrictions. David Lambert, the general president of the hosiery and knitwear union, described the closure as like "amputating the torso of the industry at one stroke." In September 2000, workers from Coats Viyella (with sites in Ollerton and Alfreton announcing closures) took to the streets to protest, gathering outside the Mansfield Marks and Spencer store. Hardly surprising, given that in the 1980s Marks & Spencer sourced 90% of its supplies from British companies; by 2000 this had reduced to 40%. The industry, however, tried to remain positive, with a national conference held in Hucknall in February 2000 entitled 'Life After M & S', looking to adapt and place the emphasis less on fashion, and more onto the manufacturing of technical textiles. This was a transitional era, from the heyday of the past to the greatly reduced state of the industry today. And it is part of a bigger picture. Overall, numbers employed in manufacturing have fallen dramatically: down from 8.9m to 2.8m over the last fifty years. Between 2005-2010 alone, 600,000 manufacturing jobs disappeared, destroying the economic base of many local communities. Surveys suggest a decline of some 30% in textile manufacture in recent years, and employment levels in the East Midlands have fallen to just over nine thousand.

Naturally, there are questions that arise about living and working in the textile industry through these tumultuous times. The histories of the industry often focus on boardroom decisions and management strategies, so that the voices of workers who experienced the consequences of these decisions remain largely hidden. Although they were not in control, they experienced both

changes in working practices and the consequences of management decisions at first hand. It remains difficult to capture the voice of any workforce. There are accounts not usually recorded, and seldom set down on paper. Newspaper articles and trade union records can shed some light, but they seldom convey the experience of daily working life in the round. How did the workers receive their news about the company? Was there a staff newsletter? Were they consulted or did they feel ignored? And what about the social part of work? Did they have a company sports team or a social club? Where did they go for a drink after work? Just a few of the questions that the Textile Tales project would like to ask of its participants in this unique opportunity to hear the answers from those who were actually there.

The Textile Tales project builds on the previous work of lots of more tightly focused projects. Knitting Together, a largely Leicester-focused project from 2001, Made in Mansfield/Mills, Machines and Memories, Mansfield Museum's 2017 project to learn more about the town's textile industry, Nottingham Museums' Lace Unravelling and NTUs Nottingham Lace: Capturing and Representing Knowledge in people, Machines, and Documents, both of which focused specifically on the lace trade, are just four of these projects. What they all showed is that there is clear demand among former textile workers to engage with their heritage, to make contact with other workers, pass on their knowledge and share their stories. Therefore, Textile Tales aims to build on projects like these, filling in the gaps, adding to the information and joining it up to see the 'big picture' of textile heritage in the region.

The National Lottery Heritage Funded project, started in January, has worked with the East Midlands Oral History Archive (one of 7 partners, led by Nottingham Trent University) to train volunteers to carry out the oral history interviews. The volunteers act as a type of 'citizen historian' to collect the oral histories at a series of 'roadshow' events around the region. The first two events, at partner museums Ruddington Framework Knitters Museum and Mansfield Museum, have been well attended, with many stories and anecdotes being shared. Tales of the comradeship between machinists, and the difficult introduction of new ways of working have been both touching and enlightening. Hearing from all workers within the industry is vital to seeing the 'big picture' and so far, we have heard from those who worked the machines, ran the factory shop, worked in the testing laboratory and many other roles.

The next set of events will take place in September in a specially commissioned vehicle, which will help the project to reach some of the smaller places related to the industry. These will be followed by two more events in October at project partners Erewash Museum and John Smedley Ltd, finishing with Lakeside Arts, University of Nottingham in November to coincide with their 'Fully Fashioned' exhibition. The oral history recordings will be deposited with the East Midlands Oral History Archive (for public access) at the end of the project and hopefully provide answers to some, if not all, of the questions above. 📖

Website: [www.textiletales.co.uk](http://www.textiletales.co.uk) / Twitter: @TalesTextile

**Tonya Outtram**  
Textile Heritage: Project Officer – Textile Tales



# Gainsborough Heritage Association is celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary

Gainsborough was a thriving market town set on the eastern bank of the River Trent. Alfred The Great married there back in the year 868. Gainsborough had many royal visitors over the years including Henry VIII who visited the town in 1541 as part of his Northern Progress staying at the Gainsborough Old Hall. Gainsborough's key position alongside the River Trent meant it was seen as a key crossing point. As a consequence, it witnessed many battles during the English Civil War and was held by both the Royalists and the Parliamentarians on more than one occasion. With industrialisation Gainsborough gained two major factories that brought many families to the town for work. One of these was Marshall, Sons & Co., manufacturers of traction engines and tractors including the Field Marshall, threshing machines, boilers and much more. The other major employer, Rose Brothers, was well-known throughout the country as makers of packaging machinery for the confectionery industry and particularly for Cadburys chocolates so your "Roses" chocolates are in fact named after Mr William Rose! The UK's Ping factory was also set up in Gainsborough to assemble golf clubs and heads and still continues its work in the town.

In 1994 a Heritage Association was formed to archive, document, preserve and share this story with the people of Gainsborough and the wider public. The Gainsborough Heritage Association is now celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary this year. Celebrations started in June with a 1940s themed dance to continue fundraising for the Centre's projects and restoration of stonework.

But it had been a long journey. In 1933 a letter appeared in the Gainsborough News:

*"Dear Editor  
On many occasions has the need for a museum at Gainsborough been brought to the notice of the public, but never has any attempt been able to secure a suitable building for the purpose, with the result that many local discoveries which should have been retained for the town have been deposited in the County Museum. That a Museum should be obtained for Gainsborough becomes more apparent every day. When we remember how many thousands of articles may be found in the homes of old Gainsborough people, surely here is a nucleus of a collection which would do justice to the old town. Unique and historical discoveries are continually being unearthed for which there is no public accommodation."*



Those campaigning for a museum drew attention to other nearby towns, and the museum collections that had already developed in those areas. In fact, Gainsborough was way behind many other towns and cities. A series of public museums was developed across England from the early nineteenth century. Some began with natural history collections. Many were established as a source of local pride. After the creation of the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1852 others were established, based on what became known as the 'Kensington Method' – as a "schoolroom for everyone" – and, as sources of design, they became inspiration for local trades people. A second wave of independent museums grew out of the 'New Social History Movement' of the 1960s and 1970s, as local people reacted to the closure of traditional industries and the associated rapid changes to their communities. Yet such initiatives largely bypassed Gainsborough. However, local people who were interested in their area began to research and collect photographs or memorabilia. Discussion groups such as the Delvers were created for people to find out more about their local heritage. As these grew, it became increasingly apparent that there was a need to preserve items of historical importance and create a space for sharing and learning about Gainsborough's story.

In 1993 a momentous event occurred when Paul Kemp and Andy Birkitt, who later became founders of the Association, launched a two-day exhibition held in Richmond House. Paul recalls that people were queuing in the snow to visit the exhibition. As part of the campaign Paul sent a letter to the Gainsborough News in addition to a copy of the letter that was sent to the paper in the 1930s: "When will the people in power who can do something

*about this, realise that very shortly all the history that is attached to the older generation of Gainsborough folk will disappear with them if there is no place for them to leave it to. We have proved there is concern with nearly 2000 people in four days attending our Old Gainsborough exhibition at Richmond House. Will Gainsborough have to wait another 63 years, and my son to write the same letter again, before we can get a Museum."*

Thankfully, support in the early 1990s led to the creation of the Gainsborough and District Heritage Association so the town did not have to wait another 63 years for a museum. The Association was officially created on 16 March 1994 when a public meeting was held at the White Hart Hotel in Gainsborough.

Appreciation was expressed to Nettleham Engineers who offered premises within Marshalls' old offices for the first Heritage Centre based at Britannia Chambers, Beaumont Street. A vote at the public meeting showed everyone in attendance being in favour of the formal establishment of the Gainsborough and District Heritage Association, a huge achievement for the town. The Grand opening of the Gainsborough Heritage Centre included a fantastic array of vehicles from tractors to traction engines to celebrate the historical achievements of the town's industrial past. Gainsborough people had been campaigning for a museum for many years and the exhibition held at Richmond Park showcased donations from historical objects to photographs, with items from the general public being donated and brought in over the exhibition days. The first Heritage Centre expanded with further increases in donations and twenty-five years later people continue to offer historical objects and photographs to ensure that items are not lost.

The Heritage Centre remained in Marshall's old buildings for many years, but a time came when the site was re-developed and the new shopping centre, Marshall's Yard, appeared. Times were difficult for the Association as they had to move, re-house all the archives and find new premises. Luckily, back in 2008 the Association had some good fortune when the Old Post Office building situated on the corner of Spital Terrace and North Street was offered to the Committee by local businessmen Cliff and Carlton Bradley.

Current Chairman Andy Birkitt said in his AGM speech in May 2019 that when "you visit the Centre today what you are witnessing is the culmination of an 86-year journey. Because although in 2019, we are celebrating our twenty-fifth year, those founding members picked up a call for a museum that had been



*made in the town 60 years earlier, who would have thought it. And, with hard work and dedication from a relatively small team of committee members and volunteers the Heritage Centre continues to improve and grow from strength to strength, not only in the physical museum but in the promotion of our heritage through social media and our website to a much wider world audience."*

The Heritage Centre is volunteer-led and continues to thrive and develop with new exhibitions, events, research facilities as well as new technology to further enhance the preservation of historical documents housed in its archives and much more.

Publicity Officer Gemma Clarke said: "Since the Association has moved into the Gainsborough Old Post Office the new Centre has gone from strength to strength. The building has been re-developed on all three of the floors. It was officially opened by Gainsborough actress Julia Deakin in 2016, with new permanent exhibitions including a street scene and

*many fantastic industrial exhibits from apprentice models of tractors to boilers. Over the past few years, the team of volunteers has continued to develop the exhibitions. Museum cases have been provided to protect the archival objects on display. Also added are new permanent features - such as a model of a Marshall Bristol Fighter - that lives in the industrial exhibition space on the ground floor. The Heritage Centre is celebrating its anniversary with the creation of a special video to document its history as well as a special feature exhibition on display during October 2019."*

If you would like to visit the Centre or find out more it is open every Tuesday and Saturday 10am to 4pm and every Sunday 11am to 4pm. Please visit the website on [www.gainsboroughheritage.co.uk](http://www.gainsboroughheritage.co.uk) or call 01427 610526 for more information.

**Gemma Clarke**  
Publicity Officer for Gainsborough Heritage Association



FROM THE TOP: GAINSBOROUGH HERITAGE CENTRE; NO. 1 YARD, OCTOBER 1994; OFFICIAL OPENING, 15 OCTOBER 1994; OPENING PREVIEW



# HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT

## WORKSOP'S OTHER WAR MEMORIAL

BY ROBERT ILETT



WORKSHOP CENOTAPH

On Remembrance Sunday the people of Worksop assemble at the town's war memorial in the centre of the eponymous Memorial Avenue to remember the men of the town who died in the major conflicts of the twentieth century. This memorial is a Portland stone cenotaph designed by the local architect A. H. Richardson and constructed by Lidster & Brammer, also of Worksop.

The memorial was funded by public subscription and unveiled on 30 May 1925 by Lieutenant-General Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien, who had a long connection to the Sherwood Foresters. Affixed to the cenotaph are bronze plaques naming the then known 520 Worksop dead of the First World War, with subsequent additions to commemorate the dead of the Second World War. Yet unbeknownst to most there is another memorial to the men of the town lost in war and this is its history.

The origins of the story start way before the First World War. In the 13<sup>th</sup> century, at the behest of Lady Maud de Furnival, a chapel was constructed as part of the Worksop Augustinian monastery to commemorate her son Thomas de Furnival, aged 38 when slain in Palestine in 1238 at the time of the Fifth Crusade. Lady Maud instructed her younger son, Gerard, to return to Palestine to bring home his brother's remains. These were sealed in a casket mounted by a precious stone titled the *Great Carbuncle* and placed in the new chapel. There it remained until November 1539 when the monastery, Worksop Priory, was surrendered to the King's Commissioners by Prior Thomas Stokkes and his fifteen canons. The buildings, including Lady Maud's chapel, were despoiled. The lead and timbers were sold and the treasures, including the *Grand Carbuncle*, were looted. The church was preserved as it was the place of worship for the local community, although it did suffer from decay until restored in 1845.

Upon the declaration of war on 4 August 1914 Worksop men on the reserve lists were immediately recalled to their colours or ships and the part-time



LADY MAUD'S CHAPEL IN RUINS

soldiers of the Worksop company of the 1/8th Sherwood Foresters and the Sherwood Rangers' Yeomanry were mobilised and moved off to their units' assembly locations. Kitchener's appointment as Secretary of State for War led the call for volunteers for the new armies to which there was an enthusiastic response in Worksop. By the start of December, the *Worksop Guardian* recorded that 248 former pupils of the Abbey Boys school, in addition to those from other town schools, were in the forces and supplemental lists were published on a regular basis.

In April 1915 it was announced that names of those serving would be read at the Priory church services of Intercession during the morning Holy Communion services on Fridays, with a special service on Sunday evenings. As numbers mounted only one half of the names were read at each service, alternating weekly. By October in the following year the effort of reading the names had become too much for the clergy, so only the names of regular attendants or communicants were read.

Canon, the Reverend, George James Audomar d'Arcy, was appointed Vicar of Worksop in 1909. The appointment was in the gift of the Cowley Fathers of the Society of St. John, sanctioned by the Duke of Newcastle, as Lord of the Manor.

Anglo-Irish in origin, d'Arcy was born at Killucan in 1861 and educated at The High School, Dublin. He then studied for both his B.A. and M.A. degrees at St Edmund Hall Oxford. Previously he had served as a curate at Southampton, Liverpool, Luton and Portsmouth and as vicar of St. Patricks in Birmingham. Canon d'Arcy, after the early heavy losses of the war, pressed his Parochial Church Council to approve a proposal in December 1915 that "We should fix upon some definite object to remain perpetually as a memorial of The Great War of the World, and one that should be worthy of the magnificence of the Old Priory." d'Arcy was, by his own admission, good at throwing his weight about. It was thus resolved to support a scheme involving the revival of a 1912 proposal to restore the Lady Chapel and to erect a Calvary "in the grounds of the old abbey which should remind people of the afterlife and the Lord who died to bring them into it." Nothing again was heard of the Calvary after it was mentioned in the first fund raising appeal.

Early in 1918 d'Arcy decided that the funding for the restoration of the chapel as a war memorial should come from all in the Old Parish of Worksop, which included additional parishes over which D'Arcy had no jurisdiction. The public had already rejected d'Arcy's purported authority once, when he had unsuccessfully stood as a local district

### Anglo-Irish in origin, d'Arcy was born at Killucan in 1861 and educated at The High School, Dublin

councillor where he was roundly defeated by a picture framer and an insurance agent. d'Arcy made the funding decision without consultation with the other parishes, the non-Anglican churches, the Councils or the organisations representing the members of the armed services and their families. Canon and Mrs. D'Arcy contributed the then substantial sum of £100 each to the fund which by April stood at £272.10s. It is at this stage that Councillor Tom Pepper entered the scheme ▶



The architect appointed was the well-known church architect Harold Brakspear who had previously been involved in the restoration scheme which was aborted by the outbreak of war.



▲ LEFT PAGE: THE NAMES BOARD ON THE SOUTHERN WALL OF THE CHAPEL RIGHT PAGE: THE CARVED STONE PANELS ON THE CHAPEL NORTH WALL



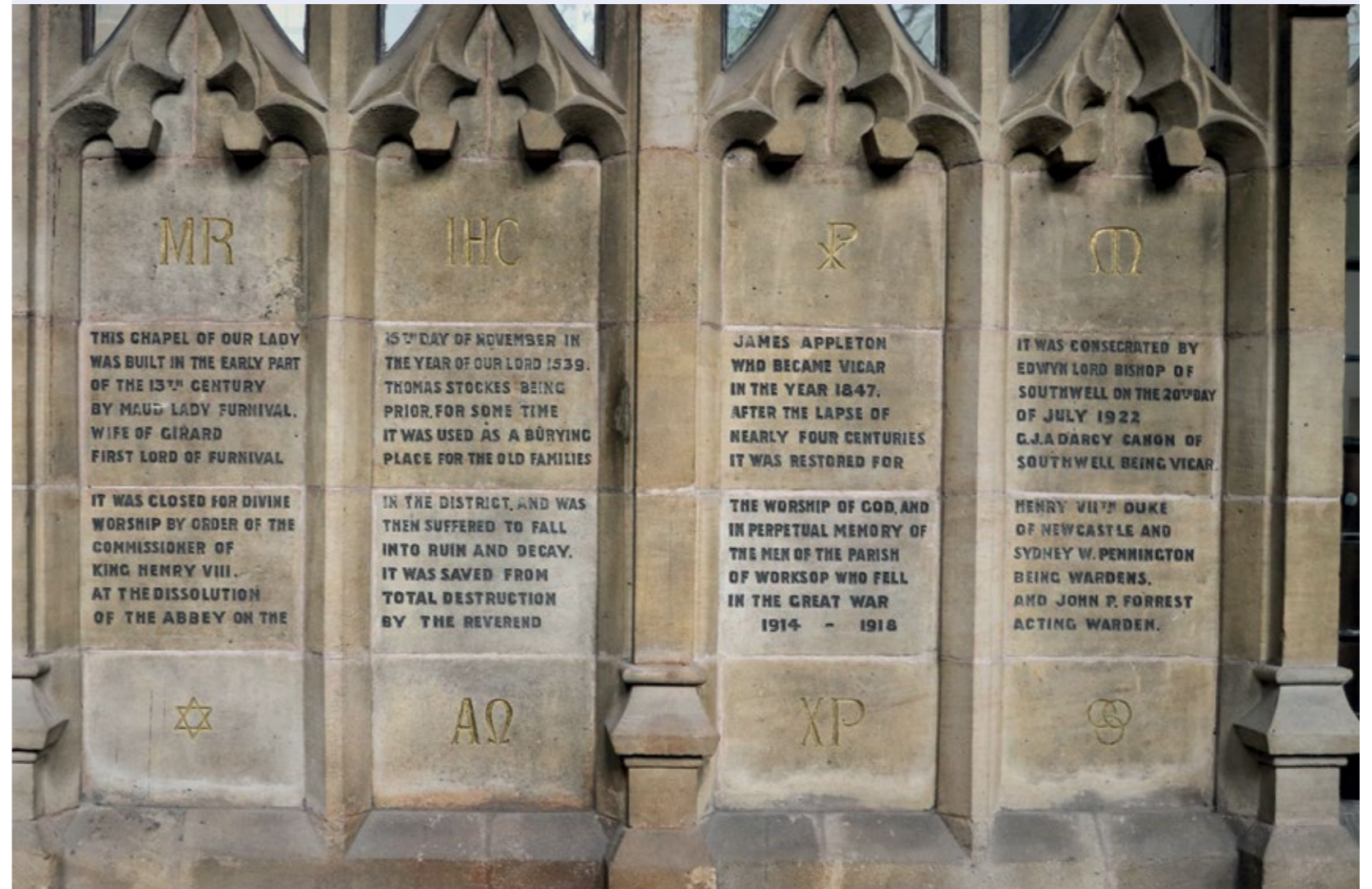
▼ PRIORY WAR MEMORIAL CHAPEL DEDICATION, 1922

by contributing £10 to the fund. Pepper was an entrepreneurial builder who had made a major contribution to the development of late Victorian and Edwardian Worksop. He retired in 1917 and, because of his commitment to the Priory Church, offered scaffolding for the restoration works on the chapel free of charge.

The architect appointed was the well-known church architect Harold Brakspear who had previously been involved in the restoration scheme which was aborted by the outbreak of war. Pepper became a voluntary Clerk of Works to the project, working under the supervision of the architect. Yet the money came in slowly, much to the chagrin of the Canon, particularly since fund raising in other parishes proceeded at a good rate.

By January 1919 S. Anne's had already raised over double the amount raised by the Priory. Work was delayed because of the post-war inflation but the spring of 1920 was fixed for the start of work. In the meantime, a problem arose from an unexpected source. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings intervened, insisting that the purity of the medieval architecture should be preserved. Mr Brakspear and the Society had long been in conflict. *The Worksop Guardian* stated that it was money, not gratuitous advice, which was required. As its editor noted: "there is a small section of the local community who are hostile to the restoration of the Lady Chapel chiefly because of what they consider the Vicar's High Church Views, and their dislike of the Cowley Fathers." The Canon, by contrast, took the view that contemporary hedonism was to blame. Too much money, he thought, was being spent on pleasure and a simpler life would enable money to be applied to the restoration.

By April 1920 the fund stood at £900 but costs had risen, giving had stalled and volunteers were not turning out for stone cutting. The Canon renewed his efforts, stressing the need for a Lady Chapel but making no mention of a war memorial. Thanks mainly to the efforts of Pepper work nevertheless proceeded and by the year end the



first stage of the restoration had been substantially completed. Because of the lack of funding a decision was made to avoid the expense of stone panels for the names of the fallen and to use oak panels instead. Brakspear designed oak panels for the names to be affixed to the South wall of the chapel with Pepper again volunteering to cut the names. The oak panels provided were not seasoned and showed sign of warping so Pepper, at his own expense, provided new panels.

By April 1920 the effects of the lack of consultation were becoming apparent. D'Arcy stated that "Worksop has shut up its pockets and does not seem to care what the result is." Yet it was not unusual for appeals to fall short. There was at times stiff competition between memorialisation projects for public and private money, and strong disagreement, too, about the most fitting form that memorialisation should take. In Worksop, for example, adequate funds were being raised for a hospital extension and the returning servicemen themselves funded the purchase of a Memorial Hall on Potter Street. A public appeal for 100 people to commit £5 per month for the Lady Chapel project, by contrast, drew only one response, although support was garnered from local businessman Charles Longbottom and Lady Maude Robinson of Worksop Manor. The planned consecration by the Bishop of Southwell, Sir Edwin Hoskyns, for November 1921 was postponed because of the debt position but the problem was sufficiently eased for the Dedication to take place on 20 July 1922.

The time fixed for the dedication was 3pm. when, before an invited congregation, the service was held with the Bishops of Southwell and Derby officiating. Other attendees included associated clergy, the Duke and Duchess of Newcastle and representatives of the Sherwood Rangers, Sherwood Foresters, the civic authorities, the British Legion and other invited guests.

The stone tablets set in the North wall of the chapel were unveiled by the Duchess of Newcastle. These tablets mention the Bishop, Canon d'Arcy and his churchwardens but, notably, not the names of the men who made the ultimate sacrifice. These men are commemorated by having their names carved in the wood of the panels on the south wall. After returning to the church the Bishop of Southwell gave an address praising the Norman Conquest as a civilising exercise over the ungodly in England. He considered the expulsion of the Turks from the Holy Land as the major achievement of the war. How this resonated with his audience is not recorded.

After its closure, in 1995, the memorial plaque from Manton Colliery was affixed to the South wall of the chapel and rededicated but no memorial to those killed in the Second World War has been placed in the Priory Church although their names appear on the Memorial Avenue Cenotaph.

Thus, the War Memorial Chapel stands as part of the Priory Church but ever since its dedication, and to this day, it has been referred to as The Lady Chapel. Even well-informed Worksop people are under the illusion that it is the boards within the chapel, and not the chapel itself, that stand as a memorial to the dead of the Great War.

Every Remembrance Sunday the service at the Memorial Avenue cenotaph is conducted by the Vicar of the Priory Church. 📍

**Robert Ilett**  
A Member of The Western Front Association  
& The Worksop History Society



# Perspectives from the Provincial Press: A Lincolnshire view of women's suffrage

BY ELAINE JOHNSON, MA



SUFFRAGETTES, LINCOLN CORNHILL

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed a golden age in provincial newspaper production which was driven by technological advance, rising literacy levels and soaring demand. Although reporting and commenting on mainstream national news, the papers also reflected distinctive local and regional opinion. Searching for evidence of women's suffrage activity in Lincolnshire for a 'Vote 100' exhibition last year, many compelling articles were found across a range of provincial papers. These threw an invaluable spotlight on action away from the major cities, which could be easily overlooked and forgotten. From the papers studied, it is clear that the women of rural Lincolnshire were as concerned about their rights as the women in the towns. They enlisted significant support and encountered similar opposition. It is thanks to the newspaper archive that their part in the campaign can be celebrated.

As early as June 1866, Jessie Boucherett of Willingham, Market Rasen, was listed as a signatory to the petition presented to Parliament by J.S. Mill, and meetings in favour of women's suffrage are recorded in Lincoln in both December 1874 and 1875. For the next forty years, Lincolnshire papers continued reporting national activity which promoted the women's cause. Yet headlines and phrases in the *Lincolnshire Echo*, such as the "Dominance of the Petticoat" (February 1897) and "the country is free for a time from visions of female domination at the polls ... For this relief, much thanks!" (May 1905) suggest that editorial support was distinctly limited. In January 1908,

the women who chained themselves to the railings of 10 Downing Street were labelled "desperadoes" by the *Echo*, although the same report acknowledged, paradoxically, that only by "roughness" and "methods of barbarism" would they achieve the electoral reform they sought. By contrast, with surprising prescience, it was then predicted that once this was achieved, they would, in the future, become "worshipped heroines of the feminine ideal". Were opinions beginning to change?

In October 1908, the Home Secretary, Herbert Gladstone - an opponent of women's suffrage - addressed a Liberal meeting at the Corn Exchange in Lincoln. The *Stamford Mercury* described a crowded hall with hundreds unable to gain admission. By now, suffragettes were renowned for disrupting political meetings and precautions had been taken to prevent this happening, ladies being admitted by ticket only. Despite these measures, twelve women are reported to have created a disturbance and been summarily ejected. Undeterred they addressed the crowd outside and then held another meeting the following day at noon where, despite several missiles being hurled, they were given a fair hearing. This supports the "distinctly friendly note" which had been detected in the disorder at the Corn Exchange, where several women "almost clapped in their delight at seeing a woman venture to make herself heard" (*Votes for Women*). It was, it was claimed, "A decided turn in the tide of public opinion". ▶

**By now, suffragettes were renowned for disrupting political meetings and precautions had been taken to prevent this happening, ladies being admitted by ticket only.**



According to the *Stamford Mercury*, Gladstone was accompanied by his wife, his sister, who was married to the Dean of Lincoln, Edward Wickham, and also their daughters. Unlike Gladstone, Dean Wickham was strongly in favour of women's suffrage and in May 1909 the *Lincolnshire Chronicle* reported him presiding over a large public meeting, in Lincoln Central Hall, of the Lincoln branch of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (N.U.W.S.S.), founded that year by his daughter, Miss L. Christian Wickham. The meeting was addressed by Miss Lamond, a national delegate, who was at pains to reassure the audience that as "suffragists" they had never done anything militant and never would, so there was no fear of them becoming "suffragettes". She reiterated the unfairness of women being prevented from voting merely because they were women when they had the same qualifications which entitled a man to vote. By November 1909, the membership of the branch was about eighty, with others promising to join. The group was preparing a petition in favour of women's suffrage urging an extension of the franchise "as it is, or may be granted to men". Three months later, Millicent Fawcett, the national president of the N.U.W.S.S. held a meeting in Lincoln Central Hall. It is of note that among the women listed as present by the *Chronicle* in May was a Miss Nevile, whose commitment to public service is well recorded in the local press and who later became Lincoln's first female mayor in 1925.

In January 1910, Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, was addressing a political meeting in the Louth Town Hall when two women, hidden in the roof space, not only heckled but dropped a flag through a hole in the ceiling and onto the platform. The *Louth and North Lincolnshire Advertiser* reported that they were eventually ejected, then arrested and charged with disturbing a public meeting, to which they pleaded guilty. However, it is significant that the six men on the bench clearly supported their cause as, after deliberating in private, the case was dismissed.

Further male backing for women's suffrage is seen at the annual meeting of the Lincolnshire Farmers' Union at the end of January 1912, when three ladies in hats and coats interrupted the president's speech: "Mr. Runciman, what are you going to do about women?" According to the report in *Votes for Women*, they were well received by the men present who clapped and cheered them; nevertheless, they were still evicted.

The Bishop of Lincoln, Edward Hicks, was another male advocate of extending the franchise to women. He became joint president of the Men's League for Women's Suffrage, along with Lord Lytton, brother of Lady Constance Lytton, an active suffragette, who was arrested and imprisoned four times for the cause. In November 1912, the *Echo* reported Hicks' address at a service in connection

with the Church League for Women's Suffrage, where he claimed that in the view of the League "the grant of the vote to women citizens was implicit in the Gospel of Christ and was based on Holy Scripture." He asserted this belief "lest any timorous soul should be deterred from taking the side of the suffrage by reason of violent acts done or foolish words spoken by some of its advocates." Advocating N.U.W.S.S. comradeship with their "militant sisters" in Emmeline Pankhurst's Women's Social and Political Union (W.S.P.U.) and emulation of their zeal, he, nevertheless condemned its violent tactics.

It is possible that the Bishop's support for women's suffrage, but condemnation of militancy, influenced reporting of local activity. Certainly, the Lincolnshire press granted greater coverage to the more peaceable N.U.W.S.S. Nonetheless, the *Chronicle* did report on Mrs

**Today, one hundred years since the first female M.P. took her seat in parliament, the names of the vast majority of women who campaigned so vigorously for the vote across across the country are largely unknown or forgotten.**

Pankhurst's speech when she came to Lincoln in 1912, commenting on her "eloquently delivered speech" at the Corn Exchange, which was given "a very warm reception". Perhaps the editors preferred to publicise activity of which the senior clergy and city fathers approved, rather than that which the church condemned.

Two items in the *Lincolnshire Echo* in February 1913, and the contrasting correspondence which they provoked, highlight the strength of feeling on both sides of the argument. "Suffragettes' War on Society" was written in response to the increasing destructive action taken by the group. It reported golf greens torn up, telephone wires cut and shop windows smashed, actions in

angry response to the government's retracted promise of a full consideration of the question of women's suffrage. Although the *Echo* condemned the government for its "pitiable weakness", it warned the women that public opinion was against such activities and would eventually insist on "the punishment they so richly deserve." A week later the *Echo* published "Why women do not want the vote" by the Countess of Jersey. She placed the role of women firmly in the home, if married, and in the sphere of philanthropic and municipal life, if single, thus supposedly giving them little time or inclination "to mix themselves in the sordid strife of party politics".

Ursula Roberts, honorary secretary of the East Midlands Federation of the N.U.W.S.S., was at pains to clarify the difference between the suffragettes of the W.S.P.U. and the suffragists of the N.U.W.S.S. She criticised the paper for giving free publicity to the militants. Helen Page, the assistant secretary of the National League for Opposing Women's Suffrage and a Lincoln resident, viewed things differently. She argued that little separated the two organisations and accused the N.U.W.S.S. of covertly subscribing to the funds of the W.S.P.U. and collaborating with them in several events. Not surprisingly, a lengthy rebuttal of these 'facts' then came from a national representative of the N.U.W.S.S. and further exchanges took place through the columns of the local paper. In the meantime, the secretary of the Lincoln N.U.W.S.S. responded to Lady Jersey's earlier article, challenging many of her assertions, including supplying firm evidence of a significant

increase in women's wages in countries where they now had the vote, a claim in favour of women's suffrage which the Countess had refuted.

The Bishop of Lincoln made *Echo* headlines again a month later. At a meeting of the National Political League he protested against "the cruel and degrading action of forcible feeding." He reminded his audience that men who thought themselves Christian should be supporting the cause for women's suffrage. Not surprisingly, a motion to enfranchise women was carried.

A pillar box on fire in Lincoln, also in March 1913, begged the question: "Who is to blame?". Suffragette action was suggested

but the *Echo* surprisingly reported that no militants resided in the city. There were no clues and no arrests were made. Rumours, however, continued to spread. A year later, Lord Curzon of Tattershall Castle and joint president of the National League for Opposing Women's Suffrage, had closed the castle to the general public, fearing suffragette attack but permitted friends to visit. The castle's commissioner was praised for not admitting visitors without sight of their permit, thus safeguarding the castle from suffragette attacks. One writer condemned a known local suffragette for driving about without her hat and predicted that if she were to "lay her traps" as badly as she drove, she would not be very dangerous.

Today, one hundred years since the first female M.P. took her seat in parliament, the names of the vast majority of women who campaigned so vigorously for the vote across the country are largely unknown or forgotten. Provincial newspapers offer an indispensable guide to the nature and impact of local suffrage movements. They not only conveyed national perspectives and the agency of key figures on both sides of the argument, who were seeking to influence attitudes away from the capital, but also revealed distinctive local and regional variation in bottom-up suffrage activity. Lincolnshire was a county which was associated more with the long, peaceable constitutional march, than the relatively shorter-term sensational militancy. The women are reported as suffragists, not suffragettes, so they may not have been "desperadoes" but they should certainly be acclaimed as "heroines".

This article was inspired by the creation of the 'Vote 100: A Lincolnshire View of Women's Suffrage' exhibition in 2018. A large number of individuals and organisations participated, with lead partners including Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln City Library and the Fawcett Society. The exhibition went on tour and continues to tour in various regional venues through 2018 and 2019. My thanks to those who have encouraged me in the production of this article and have provided helpful comments and suggestions. 📧

**Elaine Johnson, MA**  
Bishop Grosseteste University



Mayor - 1925  
**Maria Elizabeth Nevile**

MARIA NEVILE



# From priory to pile: the world of John Beaumont and Grace Dieu Priory, Leicestershire

BY DR KATIE BRIDGER

**Further Reading:** Ashby de la Zouch Museum for the Grace Dieu Priory Trust, *Grace Dieu Priory, Leicestershire: The Draft Account Book of the Treasurers, 1414-1418* (Belton, 2012). Geoffrey Elton, *Policy and Police: the Enforcement of the Reformation in the Age of Thomas Cromwell* (Cambridge, 2008). John Nichols, *History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester*, 3, pt. 2 (London, 1804). P. Liddle and R.F. Hartley, 'An archaeological survey of Grace Dieu, Belton, Leicestershire', LMAST 95/2 (1995).

*BENEATH yon eastern ridge, the craggy bound,  
Rugged and high, of Charnwood's forest ground  
Stand yet, but, Stranger! hidden from thy view,  
The ivied Ruins of forlorn GRACE DIEU...*



GRACE DIEU PRIORY, NORTH-WEST LEICESTERSHIRE.

William Wordsworth's description of Grace Dieu Priory, north-west Leicestershire, paints a rather modest picture of the site. At a first glance, the ruins of the priory pale in comparison with the magnificent ruins of religious houses elsewhere in the country. Yet the story of Grace Dieu and its occupants lives on in its archaeology and, perhaps most vividly in the archives.

Grace Dieu's history is reminiscent of the many religious houses scattered across the country. It was a small Augustinian priory founded in the thirteenth century and was dissolved in 1538 during Henry VIII's Reformation. The first archaeological excavation of the site was undertaken in 1913, and it has since attracted both archaeological and geophysical surveys during the 1960s and early 2000s. These surveys have significantly improved our understanding of the priory, particularly in those centuries before its dissolution.

There are also glimpses of Grace Dieu's past in the archives. This was shown in the incredibly detailed surviving draft account book for the years 1414 to 1418, which reveals the income and the expenditure of the priory, including the costs of agriculture, construction and servants' wages. But the evidence for life at Grace Dieu

doesn't end there. It was difficult to contain my excitement back in 2016, when Peter Liddle, former County Archaeologist for Leicestershire, casually mentioned that a series of Tudor inventories for Grace Dieu had been discovered by the late Pam Drinkall at The National Archives.

This particular set of inventories was associated with John Beaumont, Esquire, the grandfather of the famous dramatist Francis Beaumont. He had purchased the site of Grace Dieu Priory and its lands from Humphrey Foster, Esquire, for £460 in May 1539, with a view to make it his primary residence in the county. Beaumont was a Crown servant. He appeared frequently on religious commissions, including the survey of monastic houses in Leicestershire in 1536, and was one of the commissioners appointed in 1538 to dissolve Grace Dieu. He was also an informer for Thomas Cromwell, chief minister to Henry VIII, against those who were allegedly threatening the peace of the realm. At the height

of his legal career Beaumont held the position of Master of the Rolls, but he fell from grace for allegedly siphoning Crown revenue for his own use, to the equivalent value of nearly £6 million in today's money!

Inventories recorded all material possessions held by an individual. They were typically arranged on a room-by-room basis, and can also include invaluable detail such as the type and number of kept animals, for example. Interestingly, the horses which Beaumont kept at Grace Dieu are listed individually, and accompanied by a description of their colour, role, and intriguingly, their name. His "horses for the saddle" were a bay horse named Gryffyn, a cole (black) horse named Kyne, a sorrel named Asyby, Beaumont's horse ("my m[aste]r his horse"), and a white horse named Dylks. Amongst his geldings were a cole horse named Kebill, four grey horses named Lyster, Eyre, Bradborne and Pease, two bays named Jackson and Hobbes, a white horse named Denham, two "yonge geldings",

**The adoption of ex-religious houses as gentry residences evidently required some substantial renovation.**

a "donne" and an unbroken sorrel. The importance and, perhaps, the origin of the horses is evident in their names, which were likely taken from the people who had either given or sold them to Beaumont. Certainly, Gryffyn [Griffin], Asyby [Ashby], Kebill [Keble], Bradborne and Denham were names of Midlands gentry and yeomen families.

Another inventory in the series, taken after the one detailed above, gives further information about Beaumont's horses. We discover that Pease was seven years old, hipped, and valued at 40s; Bradborne was seven years old; Kebill was 13 years old, lame, spavined, and valued at 30s; Dylks was 13 years old with a value of 66s 8d; ▶

THE CHAPTER HOUSE OF GRACE DIEU, LATER KNOWN AS 'MASTER HASTINGS CHAMBER'





Eyre, the grey trotting gelding, was 14 years old, same value; Lystar, the white racking gelding, was seven years old, same value; an unbroken dun (brown), bald gelding, seven years old, same value; an unbroken young, small, sorrel colt, six years old, valued at 33s 4d; one trotting sorrel colt, two years old, 10s in value; one pied foal, two years old, 10s, and a trotting gelding named Tomson, seven years old, and valued at 66s 8d.

There are also some fascinating opportunities here for tracing the experience of Grace Dieu through its priory phase and into its transformation into a gentry residence. The adoption of ex-religious houses as gentry residences evidently required some substantial renovation. The state and material goods of Grace Dieu on the eve of its dissolution were captured in an inventory taken by the religious commissioners, which was reprinted by the Leicestershire antiquarian John Nichols. Placing this inventory alongside those discovered by Pam Drinkall at The National Archives makes for some fascinating observations, proposed by Peter Liddle, concerning the changing structure of the property at Beaumont's hands.

Beaumont's increase in the number of rooms is the most striking feature. We see the additions of rooms designed specifically for a family residence, such as the nursery, wardrobe and closet. Unsurprisingly, the rooms designed for household maintenance, such as the dining chamber, hall, buttery, kitchen and brewhouse, remained the same. Elsewhere, room function had changed. The priory's dorter, or dormitory, appears to have become Beaumont's "longe gallery", used for the presentation of his armour and chainmail. The ornate chapter house had become known as "Master Hastings chamber", perhaps the administrative centre of the complex. This probably referred to the powerful Francis Hastings, second earl of Huntingdon, who was Beaumont's cousin through his marriage to Elizabeth Hastings.

Beaumont also divided the pre-existing rooms. Three chambers once known as the inner, chapel and dining chambers became ten separate rooms, and the cloister became two. But the division of the priory's cloister did not remove its religious identity, in name at least. The second inventory suggests that "a pece of the cloister" was used for storage in Beaumont's time, with references to "ii carven cubburds / a litle burde / a olde carpet"; that it was still known as the cloister shows that the building's old identity had not been fully erased.

The stunning detail in these inventories can also reveal how Grace Dieu may have been furnished during Beaumont's time. We learn that in the dining room, for example, that there was a map of France hanging on the wall. In an inner chamber nearby was an arras hanging of the story of Goliath, as well as a "chare wrought with gold and frenged with red sylke". There are multiple references to Turkish carpets and brightly coloured cushions made of velvet, verdure and silk. Perhaps the Beaumont children would have grown up with tales of the Hundred Years' War, with a book by the medieval chronicler Jean Froissart, a "boke of Frosord", recorded in the nursery. The book had

AN ILLUMINATION TAKEN FROM JEAN FROISSART'S CHRONICLES, OR CHRONIQUES, WHICH MAY HAVE BEEN SIMILAR TO THOSE IN THE BOOK RECORDED IN THE NURSERY AT GRACE DIEU.



## The stunning detail in these inventories can also reveal how Grace Dieu may have been furnished during Beaumont's time.

disappeared by the time the next inventory was taken after Beaumont's arrest.

I am a firm believer in uniting history and archaeology during our expedition into past worlds, and in the excavation of both the ground and the archives. This series of documents alone shows that there are many methods for rediscovering the seemingly lost historic environment, and even more questions that can be asked once we have the evidence in front of us. The national narrative of hugely significant events such as the Reformation echoes throughout local history. The tales of John Beaumont and Grace Dieu beg the question, how many other clues to the past lie hidden, simply waiting to be found?

I would like to thank Peter Liddle for bringing these incredible inventories to my attention and his expertise, the late Pam Drinkall for sharing her discovery with Peter, and the Friends of Grace Dieu Priory for being so welcoming and supportive. I would warmly welcome any enquiries into this ongoing project. 📧

**Dr Katie Bridger**  
Centre for English Local History,  
University of Leicester



ALLESTREE WAR MEMORIAL

# WORLD WAR ONE MEMORIALS

On Wednesday May 29th, 1919 the *Derby Daily Telegraph* reported:

*"A parish meeting was held at the school room, Allestree on Saturday evening to consider what form the war memorial and peace rejoicings should take place for Allestree. Colonel Gisborne presided and the room was filled with ladies and representatives of the various denominations and societies in the village... [He said] 'The Allestree men and lads who had fallen had gained honours on sea and land and although they would no more visit the dear old village they all loved so well, their names should and would be household names as long as Allestree stood.'"*

Four years earlier as men joined up, vicars across the country started keeping lists. As Neil Oliver notes: *"this form of remembrance was instantaneous and not a response to death – men taken away from home by the war were being remembered even as they marched away."* In many churches these Rolls of Honour would be used daily as a reminder for prayer. After the War most were re-written and became a point of display that we still see today - St Edmund's church in Allestree has a fine example. (see p. 26 below).

The Rolls were part of the recruitment process itself. In Derbyshire Frederick Arkwright, the great grandson of Sir Richard Arkwright, organised a competition to encourage recruitment. The prize was a memorial cross erected in the winning village, the one with the highest proportion of village men who signed up. In Barrow-upon-Trent, 36 men enlisted, and the stone cross was presented to the village in 1916, with the names of the volunteers already inscribed. Did the men who did not enlist, in this village and elsewhere, feel shame as lists and memorials were produced?

St Michael's church in Derby served a small, poor parish just to the north of what is now the Cathedral. Harry Rolfe had been vicar since 1885 and he probably knew all the 146 young men who joined up. He kept a parish roll, and spent many hours writing to "his boys". Many of the letters they wrote to him were published in his parish magazine. Rolfe was convinced that "our cause is just" and believed that "to go to war with Germany was a young man's clear duty." Yet he also recognised the pain of war, and he must have struggled in his prayers, especially when so many he had known since childhood suffered and died.

Across the country, it did not take long before Rolls of Honour, the lists of those who had joined up, also became records of those who were dead. While a Roll of Honour and the remembering in prayer of those who had died may have been some comfort, people needed more to help them grieve. In many urban areas the practice of erecting street shrines started around 1916, and they became more popular still as the casualty list lengthened after the Battle of the Somme. ▶



The Bishop of London, Arthur Winnington-Ingram, encouraged the idea. At a conference in 1916 he told his clergy, “Don’t be satisfied with your roll of honour in church, go into the streets and make them understand.” In Protestant England some clergy were suspicious of their underlying message and purpose, but many bishops encouraged them to see shrines as part of their outreach work. In Longton, Staffordshire, the Vicar wrote: “the shrine is made the centre from which our women and girls, divided into groups, ... ask if they may come and hold a prayer meeting in the cottages whence the lads have gone”.

There are many reports of local communities paying for more permanent shrines, commonly with gifts of a penny or two, and cared for by the local communities, often by the mothers of those who had died.

Alan Wilkinson notes that “people in the first war inherited their attitudes towards death from the Victorian period.” As most people died at home, most children would have witnessed death. Most funerals took place in church or chapel before going to the churchyard or cemetery. Though the growth of cremation had begun to change burial customs, ashes would normally be buried – people needed a place to visit. However, in this war, that was not possible. The Government made the decision early in 1915 that bodies would not be repatriated. This meant that most people were not involved in any of the traditional rites of passage and had no grave to visit, so the clergy had to work out how they could support those bereaved.

Wilkinson records that “any news of bereavement meant an immediate visit from one of the [clerical] staff.” There would often be a service in the parish church using the words of the Burial Service from the Book of Common Prayer, even though there was no body to bury.

In Derby two of the letters that Rolfe printed in his magazine refer to the deaths of soldiers overseas. In May 1915 Sergeant Dispense Bewley writes from somewhere in Belgium: “When a fellow dies here, [the Chaplain] comes and reads the Burial Service before he is buried and then he is laid in the convent ground here and a wooden cross is erected with his name, etc., upon it.” In May 1917 Private H. Coulson wrote from France:

*“I visited a village church this weekend ... what was most interesting to us was a framed picture, hanging on one of the pillars of the ‘Great Sacrifice’ and round the picture the names and numbers of British Soldiers buried in the cemetery near by. A shelf under the picture carried two vases of flowers, which are kept filled with fresh flowers, and over all is a British flag. A fine tribute surely to our fallen heroes.”*

This information may have been some comfort to people at home, and they needed all the comfort they could get.

As the War came to an end, thoughts turned to more permanent memorials. In December 1918 St Michael’s magazine reported: “The Vicar intends to call a meeting of the Church Council to consider the question of a memorial for our heroic dead.



ST MICHAEL CRUCIFIX



ALLESTREE ROLL OF HONOUR

The crucifix was unusual because the cross was the normal symbol for memorials erected in churchyards and churches.

He will be pleased to receive any suggestions as to the form it should take.” In 1921 a memorial in the form of a crucifix was fixed over the door. The crucifix was unusual because the cross was the normal symbol for memorials erected in churchyards and churches. Jim Corke notes that “crosses were deployed as corporate churchyard monuments for the anonymous dead of medieval parishes, so that crosses used as war memorials have a close ancestral link to them.”

Most communities formed a war memorial committee, which would be composed of local worthies with civic leadership well to the fore. In a town the mayor would be the chair, the town clerk secretary, and the local bank manager the treasurer. In an attempt to achieve participatory representation of community interests, some were extraordinarily large. In Sleaford, Lincolnshire, the committee had twelve councillors, twelve clergy, fifteen ratepayers, eighteen ladies and fifteen ex-servicemen. Many committees held public meetings where there would be discussion about who would be commemorated, the form the monument would take, land acquisition, funding, sight lines, etc. On occasions, the discussions could be protracted and divisive.

The debate about who should be commemorated could also cause problems. Should it be limited to people who had been born in the parish, or had lived there when they signed-up, or those whose parents or other relatives lived there? Even the date of death could cause a problem. In Allesmoree there are seventeen names on the memorial in St Edmund’s churchyard, but Private F. Fisher who died on 11 August 1920, presumably of wounds, is buried in the churchyard. His gravestone was paid for and maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, yet his name does not appear on the Memorial.

In Allesmoree, Colonel Gisborne, the owner of Allesmoree Hall, offered land for a new recreation ground and cricket pitch as a memorial. Then “a discussion as to whether the war memorial stone should be erected in the churchyard or on the recreation ground was settled by the meeting deciding in favour of the churchyard” – it is reported that the Colonel described both ideas as “very good.” There was often a tension as to whether a memorial should be in a quiet churchyard, where there was space to sit and reflect, or on a busy road where it would



DARLEY ABBEY WAR MEMORIAL



THE DEDICATION OF DARLEY ABBEY'S WAR MEMORIAL



“a discussion as to whether the war memorial stone should be erected in the churchyard or on the recreation ground was settled by the meeting deciding in favour of the churchyard.”

be a reminder. Bishop Henson of Hereford wrote in September 1920 that “I am persuaded that the Memorial Crosses, in the Churchyards, on the village greens, where the roads meet, will for many years to come cry eloquent but silent protest against all that divides and degrades village life.”

Most memorials were paid for by private donations and public subscriptions. Most cost between £1,000 and £2,000. In order to encourage donations, the list of subscribers was often published. If people were unhappy with the decisions being made by their local committee there would be problems raising the money. Returning veterans had strong views, and were usually consulted, but if a committee encountered problems, arguments could drag on for years.

In Derby the Midland Railway erected a memorial, designed by Edward Lutyens, on which the names of 2,833 employees are listed on bronze plaques. Three years later, on 11 November 1924, the Bishop of Southwell dedicated the town memorial in the Market Place. This was sculpted by Arthur G. Walker, and during the ceremony a wreath was laid by the mother of the late Private Rivers VC.

In Darley Abbey (on the north side of Derby) the parish and the congregation of St Matthew's decided to erect a War Memorial Cross in the churchyard. A War Memorial committee was set up, with the Vicar (Archdeacon Noakes) as chair, and the Curate (Rev. Hart) and Mr Frederick Cotton as joint treasurers. There were six others on the committee, four men and two women. The Memorial was to be paid for by subscriptions from the residents, congregation and others connected with the village. The Mothers' Union gave £100 and 'Carol Singers 1920' £3-3s-1d to start the collection. The design chosen was that of the architect Sir Reginald Blomfield, and it was made in London by Dove Bros. of Islington, incorporating a 6ft 3in bronze sword made by W. Bainbridge Reynolds Ltd. of Clapham. During 1921 subscriptions were collected. The total cost of the memorial, £346-0s-10d was exceeded by more than £54; there were 199 donations from families and individuals ranging from £100 to 6d. The balance of the account was used for the construction of a permanent base and surround to the cross and for the Roll of Honour Book. A faculty (i.e. the permission required for any major building work in a church) to place the cross in the churchyard was applied for on 2 November 1920 and it was



granted by the Bishop of Southwell. The memorial was erected during October and November 1921, and it dedicated at a special service on 12 November.

In Allestree the war memorial in the churchyard stands beside a lych gate that was another memorial, and there are plaques on the gates to the nearby recreation ground donated by Colonel Gisborne. Thirty years later, after another war, a memorial hall would be opened. In this village, as in so many others, the church and community kept the memory of the dead alive and cared for those they left behind. They may no longer be 'household names', but a hundred people gathered a century later to remember their sacrifice. My thanks to Elizabeth Maher, University of Derby, for the photographs. 📷

**Rev Peter Barham**  
University of Derby

**Further Reading:** Michael Austin (ed.), *Almost like a dream; a parish at War 1914-19 - letters from the Front published in the Parish Magazine of St Michael's, Derby* (Cardiff, 1999). Jim Corke, *War memorials in Britain* (Princes Risborough., 2005). Neil Oliver, *Not forgotten* (London, 2005). Kate Tiller, *Remembrance and community war memorials and local history* (Ashbourne, 2013). Alan Wilkinson, *The Church of England and the First World War* (London, 1978).

# FAKE NEWS

“Over 100 individual printed items could be composed for a single contest.”

## and the Nottingham by-election of 1803

Fake news is generally thought of as a modern phenomenon, emerging in newspapers and social media during the US 2016 presidential election campaign. However, it has a much longer history.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, news was circulated in a number of different ways including in pamphlets, broadsides, and handbills, and, of course, via the press. Whilst the term 'fake news' rarely appears in print, terms such as 'false news' were used instead. During election campaigns, accusations of spreading lies, exaggerations, and false rumours were common, with candidates and their supporters helping to fuel further speculation and intrigue via printed canvasses. Printing offices were typically located in town centres, and so printers and editors were in constant receipt of gossip and rumours to fill their election canvasses. The provincial press was also heavily dependent on the work of unpaid correspondents who could be relied upon to deliver news and information to newspaper offices. Newspapers sometimes acknowledged the receipt of this kind of news, and would often preface information with 'we are informed that', or refer to 'our informant'. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the main newspaper in Nottingham was the Tory *Nottingham Journal*. Like many local newspapers, the *Journal* was printed weekly and consisted mainly of advertisements, along with information copied from the London papers.

Elections often took place with little prior warning, especially if they were by-elections, and it was important that canvasses were on the streets as quickly as possible, responding to gossip and rumours spread by opponents. Over 100 individual items could be composed for a single contest. Reprinted hundreds of times, a handbill rejecting accusations made by opponents could be on the streets within a matter of hours. Some contests were much more hotly contested than others, reflected frequently by the number of ▶



CANVASSING FOR VOTES BY WILLIAM HOGARTH (PUBLIC DOMAIN WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)



canvasses printed. Of all the elections which took place in the East Midlands between 1790 and 1832, it is the Nottingham by-election of 1803 which perhaps stands out in terms of the amount of rumour, gossip, and fake news which was circulated.

In order to fully appreciate the 1803 by-election, it is necessary to look back to the previous year. The general election of 1802 was controversial for several reasons. It was the first election after the 1800 Act of Union, and voting took place less than five months after peace with France had been declared. In 1802, the three candidates standing for election in Nottingham were Sir John Borlase Warren, Daniel Parker Coke, and Joseph Birch. Regarded as a hero for his role in capturing three foreign frigates during the French Revolutionary War in 1794, Warren was a popular figure in the town. Coke had represented the town since 1780, but his support was now waning on account of his continued support for the war which was blamed for the high food prices. Only Birch was unknown to voters. The son of a Liverpool merchant, Birch had diverse commercial interests, ranging from ship

planned to enclose the town's common land to the detriment of the poor.


Polling took place over several days, with those in the franchise being entitled to two votes each. Like the majority of borough constituencies during this period, Nottingham sent two MPs to the House of Commons. In 1802, voting in the town ended on the 6th July. Warren headed the poll with 987 votes, closely followed by Birch with 928. Coke trailed behind with just 636 votes and retired from the contest before the poll had ended.

During election celebrations, successful candidates were carried through the streets by supporters on a chair, typically decorated with their party colours and symbols. Following the election of 1802, the conservative author John Bowles published his *Thoughts on the Late General Election, as Demonstrative of the Progress of Jacobinism* in which he claimed that Birch's chair was decorated with Jacobin colours of red, white, and blue, and was followed by a procession of 24 women whose appearance he described as being "extremely immodest".

Coke mounted a campaign against the result, claiming that many of those who intended to vote for him had been threatened with violence if they did so. Other supporters were allegedly pelted with stones, and had their coats torn and cut with knives as they exited the poll. On the 16th March 1803 the election was declared void. The subsequent by-election between Coke and Birch took place on the 30th May 1803, less than two weeks after war had resumed with France. Over the course of canvassing, over 200 individual items were printed on behalf of both candidates, many of which were later collected and reprinted in a publication known as *The Paper War*. Many of the rumours and fabrications which had first circulated during 1802 re-emerged during the canvass of 1803. For instance, Birch continued to be attacked as a Jacobin and a supporter of the French Revolution, a claim likely to resonate at a time of feared invasion. To counter this, Birch and his supporters were at pains to emphasise their support for the crown, the church, and the constitution. Music formed an integral part of election campaigns, and a number of songs in support of Birch were set to

Sutton (later to become printer and editor of the radical *Nottingham Review* newspaper) printed a range of canvasses in support of Birch, whilst William Harrod produced literature in favour of Coke. The two men were not only rivals in business, but also in their political affiliations. They therefore attacked not only each other's politics, but also accused each other of printing "evil lying things which proceeded out of the imaginations of their own evil hearts."

Both newspapers and election handbills would have appealed to, and been read by, a much broader audience than just those eligible to vote. Attacks in print, especially on candidates, were both an expected and accepted part of an election, helping to build up tension and excitement in the constituency. Establishing exactly what proportion of people would have believed the rumours and false information spread in the press is almost impossible, as is establishing the extent to which voters would have been swayed by what they read or heard. Nonetheless, if we look at the 1803 election, canvasses printed in favour of Birch attacked Coke as an enemy to the working man, who would deprive stocking-frame workers of their livelihoods. Framework knitters made up a sizable proportion of voters in Nottingham. It might have been expected, therefore, that few of them would vote in favour of Coke. Yet in total, Birch received 1,615 votes from framework knitters, whilst 455 voted in favour of Coke. Given the rumours spread by Birch and his supporters, it's surprising that Coke was able to gain so many such votes. On the other hand, war with France heightened fears of a revolution in England and prompted a growth in popular conservatism amongst the working classes, and there was still a not insignificant amount of working-class support for Tory candidates in Nottingham. As such, by stressing the Jacobin principles of Birch, Coke's canvasses may have been effective in gaining the support of those who otherwise might not have voted for him.

In conclusion, therefore, it is clear that whilst newspapers both in Nottinghamshire and elsewhere across the East Midlands were generally keen to print only what they deemed to be accurate and reliable information, occasionally, what we might think of fake news was printed. Rumour, gossip and 'fake news', however, came to play a particularly important role in election canvasses, especially in handbills and other forms of print, where it was largely an accepted part of the election ritual and generally free from accusations of libel. How much fake news was able to sway election results, however, is perhaps more open to debate. 

**Hannah Nicholson**  
University of Nottingham

**Further Reading:** John Bowles, *Thoughts on the Late General Election, as Demonstrative of the Progress of Jacobinism* (London, 1803). John F. Sutton, *The Date Book of Remarkable and Memorable Events Connected with Nottingham and its Neighbourhood 1750-1850* (London, 1852). Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society 1695-1855* (Harlow, 2000). Anna Clark, 'Class, Gender and British Elections, 1794-1818', in Michael T. Davis and Paul A. Pickering (eds.), *Unrespecting Radicals? Popular Politics in the Age of Reform* (Aldershot, 2008), pp.107-124. Victoria Gardner, *The Business of News in England, 1760-1820* (Basingstoke, 2016). Malcom I. Thomis, 'The Nottingham Election of 1803', *Transactions of the Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire*, Vol. 65 (1962), 94-103.

“Twenty-four damsels, dressed in white, ornamented with wreaths of flowers, and carrying leaves of laurel in their hands.”

owning and brewing, to landholding in Jamaica and stock in the East India Company. His business interests gave his opponents plenty of inspiration for attack, and he was frequently charged with being a slave trader and of smuggling corn out of the country in barrels during a famine, accusations which he denied.

Elections during the early nineteenth century were as much about personalities as they were about political issues. In 1803, major electoral concerns focused on war with France, slavery, Catholic Emancipation, and Parliamentary Reform. In his own canvasses Birch championed freedom and reform, especially in terms of civil and religious liberty. Demands for reform were linked with a desire for revolution, and so Birch and his supporters were accused by their opponents of being dangerous Jacobin radicals, inspired by the French Revolution. For many across the country, the French Revolution created fear and distrust. The outbreak of war with France in 1793 only heightened conservative fears of a revolution in England at a time when newspaper production and readership was growing. In turn, Birch's supporters claimed that the majority of Coke's supporters were "Dukes, Lords, Lawyers, and Parsons", and that Coke

Amongst these women, Bowles claimed that one of them, representing the Goddess of Reason, was almost entirely naked. After the procession had ended, Bowles alleged that a mob, some of whom had the French cockade in their hats, danced in the town's marketplace singing revolutionary songs.

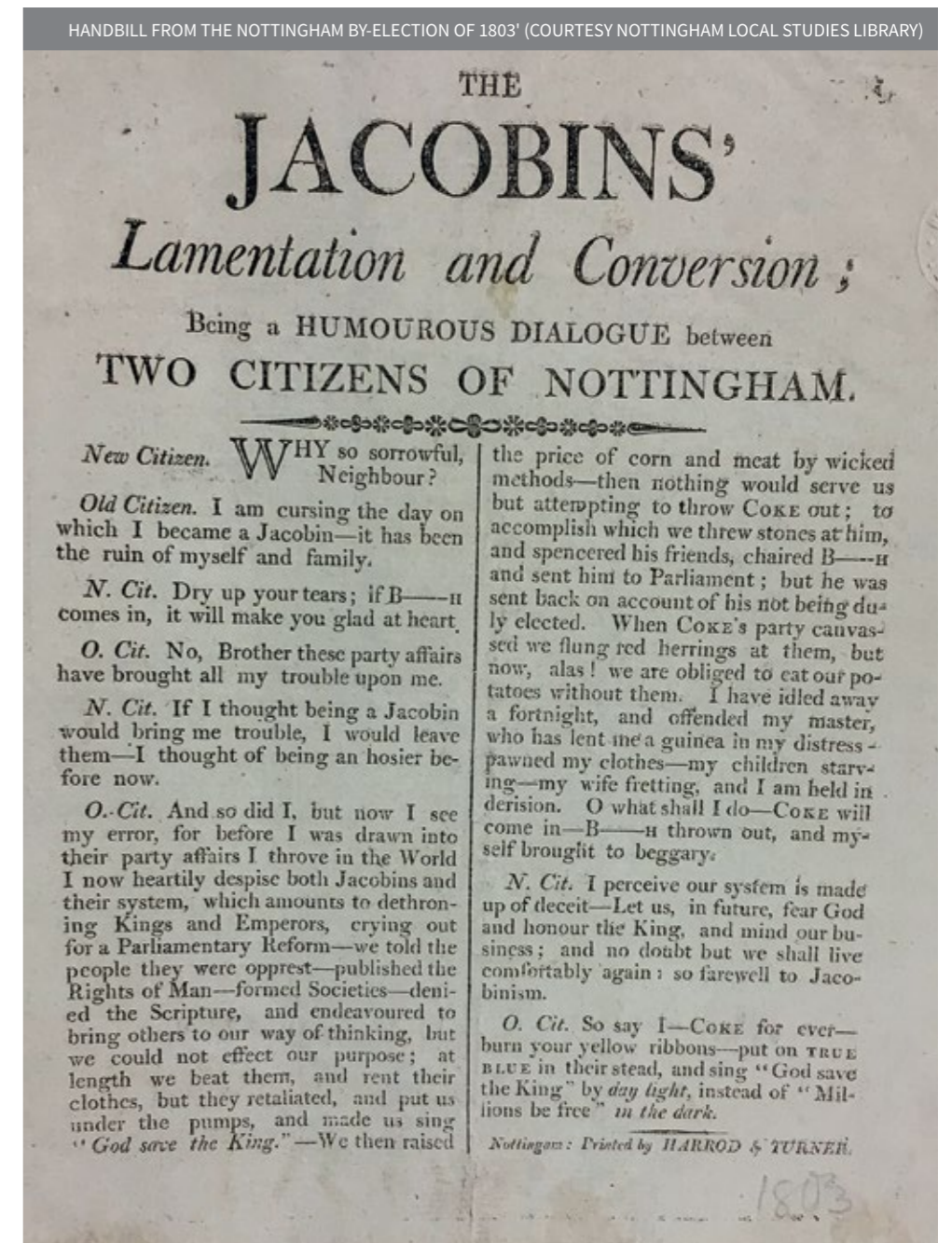
Bowles was a well-known and outspoken opponent of the French Revolution and a fierce anti-Jacobin. His reports are therefore likely to have been over-exaggerated. As one commentator wrote, "I know that a number of idle stories have been industriously propagated, making their way into newspapers and pamphlets; the author of which was either grossly deceived, or was a most barefaced misrepresenter." Furthermore, contrary to reports that revolutionary songs were sung, even the Tory *Nottingham Journal* acknowledged that during the charring ceremony many patriotic songs and hymns could be heard, and that "the greatest good order prevailed." It noted, too, that Birch was not accompanied by immodestly dressed women but by "twenty-four damsels, dressed in white, ornamented with wreaths of flowers, and carrying leaves of laurel in their hands."

patriotic tunes including the national anthem.

The image on the right is an example of just one of the handbills which was printed on behalf of Daniel Parker Coke during the 1803 canvass. An imagined conversation between two citizens of Nottingham, it describes how, during the previous election, Coke was pelted with stones and his supporters attacked. During the conversation, a former supporter of Birch laments ever supporting Birch, which, he suggests, has been the "ruin" of himself and his family. He is now a "True Blue" and a supporter of Coke.

Establishing the authorship of election literature is difficult. Some handbills formed part of a candidate's formal canvass and were likely to have been written by members of a candidate's election committee. Others appear to have been composed by those who hoped to make a profit by selling songs, ballads, handbills, and pamphlets during the course of canvassing. It was these which were much more likely to be based on rumour and gossip, as well as containing false information.

In some instances, printers were responsible for writing canvasses. This appears to have been particularly true in Nottingham, where Charles







DERBYSHIRE • LEICESTERSHIRE • LINCOLNSHIRE

# East Midlands History and Heritage

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE • NOTTINGHAMSHIRE • RUTLAND

---

[www.eastmidlandshistory.org.uk](http://www.eastmidlandshistory.org.uk)

