

THE LEICESTERSHIRE  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
THE GUILDHALL · LEICESTER · LE1 5FQ



## NEWSLETTER 110 Spring 2021

Welcome to the latest edition of the LAHS Newsletter. Contributions to future editions of the Newsletter are as always welcome at any time. While The Guildhall remains closed we will not be able to pick up items sent by post, so please email them to the editor, Cynthia Brown, at [newsletter@lahs.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@lahs.org.uk).

### LAHS NEWS

#### LECTURE PROGRAMME

Our lectures will be held online for the foreseeable future, with booking through Eventbrite. Members will receive notifications in advance by email. Lectures scheduled for late March to May 2021 are below.

#### Thursday 25 March 2021

##### *The Hallaton Treasure: typical rituals?*

Dr Frank Hargrave, Colchester and Ipswich Museums

#### Thursday 15 April 2021

##### *Lost Houses of Stoneygate in Leicester*

Neil Crutchley, Victorian Society

#### Thursday 29 April 2021

##### *Leicestershire Waterside excavations*

Stephen Baker, University of Leicester Archaeological Services

#### Thursday 13 May 2021 – PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE OF SUBJECT

##### *From Log Boats to Roman Port? 30 years of extraordinary finds in the Cambridgeshire fenland*

Grahame Appleby, Leicester City Council

### NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY

Unfortunately the usual reopening after the winter closure could not take place on the first Sunday of February 2021 owing to the national regulations currently in force. The Library must remain closed for the foreseeable future. Members will be notified when it can reopen. However, you may be interested to know that the Society's Honorary Life Vice-President Michael Wood has recently published another book to join his many other titles: *The Story of China: a portrait of a civilisation and its people*. Its subject matter is beyond the scope of the Library, but do seek it out at your public library when they can reopen!

Aubrey Stevenson

Hon. Librarian

## OTHER LAHS NEWS

### 'ROMAN LEICESTER TRANSFORMED'

If you were not able to attend Nick Cooper's recent lecture on 'Roman Leicester Transformed' – or if you would like to listen again – it is now available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ExcV3niE8w&t>.

### LAHS HON SECRETARY

Nigel Atter has recently resigned as Hon Secretary, and we would like to thank him for his friendly and efficient service during his term of office. We are very pleased to tell you that this role will now be filled by Jim Butler.

### JOHN D. BENNETT, LAHS VICE PRESIDENT

We were sorry to hear of the death in October 2020 of John D. Bennett, a Vice President of LAHS from 2009. John was also a prolific contributor to the Society's journal, the *Leicestershire Historian*, over a period of 50 years. The first of his articles, on the Leicester artist John Flower, was published in the Autumn 1968 edition (Vol 1, No 3), and the last, 'Publishing in nineteenth century Leicestershire', in the 2018 edition (No 54). Other articles, reflecting his wide-ranging interest in local history, included 'Leicester cafes' (Vol 2, No 10, 1978-79); 'Leicestershire spas' (Vol 4, No 1, 1993); 'Dickens in Leicester' (No 37, 2001); and 'The Prince Regent's visit to Belvoir, 1814' (No 42, 2006). These and his other articles for the *Leicestershire Historian* are available online at [LAHS - Leicestershire Historian](#). He was also the author of a number of books on the history of Leicester, among them *Leicestershire architects, 1700-1850* (Leicester Museums, 1968); *A Leicester Calendar: 365 dates in the history of Leicester* (Leicester City Council, 1995); and *Writing About Leicester: a local history booklist* (Leicester City Council, 2000).

Other local historians remember John as very supportive of their own work: 'patient, helpful, encouraging and professional', in the words of one. LAHS member Shirley Aucott also has 'very fond memories of John. He was an excellent local historian who was always ready to share information and help with any queries that I had. He was interested in my research and gave me both encouragement and support. *Writing about Leicester* was particularly useful, informative and time saving. When he came to the launch of my book *Women of Courage Vision and Talent: lives in Leicester 1780 to 1925* he cornered me for fifteen minutes and consumed a couple of pieces of cake whilst doing so! John was a thoroughly nice chap, and a great contributor to the history of Leicester. We owe him a great deal'.

## ONLINE LECTURES

### LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY

**Sunday 21 March 2021, 6.30 pm**

#### **The Campaign to Reopen the Ivanhoe Line (CRIL)**

Bruce Wakley

There have been several attempts to reopen the freight only Leicester - Burton line to passengers after it was closed in the Beeching cuts of 1964. CRIL was created around Christmas 2018 for this purpose, and this talk will cover the line and progress to date. See [Programme of Lectures, Meetings and Events \(leicestersecularsociety.org.uk\)](http://leicestersecularsociety.org.uk) for details.

## LEICESTERSHIRE HISTORICAL CHURCHES TRUST (LHCT - MINI-SERIES ON THE HISTORY OF THE ARTS IN LEICESTERSHIRE CHURCHES.

**Wednesday 24 March 2021, 7.30 pm**

**20th-century Stained Glass in Leicestershire - trends and highlights.**

Roger Willson

Fee £5, to raise funds for LHCT. Lectures via Zoom. Links will be sent out 24-48 hours in advance. For details and booking go to [www.lhct.org.uk/events/](http://www.lhct.org.uk/events/).

## HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION, LEICESTER BRANCH

**Tuesday 11 May 2021, 6 pm**

**Sickness and health in Victorian Derbyshire: the notebooks of Edward Wrench, GP**

Dr Carol Beardmore, De Montfort University

The lecture will take place online via Zoom, and booking is through Eventbrite -

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/leicester-branch-historical-assn-lecture-may-2021-tickets-128803608059>.

## VICTORIAN SOCIETY

Booking details for these lectures are at [Watch our online lectures for just £5! | Victorian Society](#).

**Tuesday 23 March 2021 7pm**

**G.F. Bodley and William Morris**

Michael Hall

Burlington Magazine editor Michael Hall explores Morris's friendship with a leading Gothic revival architect.

## VICTORIANS ABROAD

LAHS Newsletter Editor Cynthia Brown will be offering a series of ten lectures after Easter on the theme of 'Victorians Abroad', delivered online via Zoom. These will consider the experiences of people who left Britain during the 19<sup>th</sup> century for other parts of the world. Topics include the British military, migrants to the Empire and beyond, administrators, missionaries, explorers, and tourists. Further information will be available in due course at [Browse courses in the East Midlands | WEA](#).

## ARCHAEOLOGY

### MOUNTSORREL CASTLE EXCAVATION 1849

Tom Welsh, a retired lecturer in Geography at the University of Northampton, has recently placed an article on his website about Mountsorrel Castle, a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SK 582149) that was destroyed by order of Henry II in 1217. In 1849 there was an excavation of what may have been the castle well, and also of mounds on Broad Hill to the west. As Tom suggests, the article 'illustrates the value of newspapers in archaeology. The excavations were reported in various local newspapers at the time, but do not seem to have been recorded anywhere since'. Here is an account from a letter to the *Nottingham Review and General Advertiser for the Midland Counties* (24 August 1849).

'With your permission I will lay before the readers of your widely-circulated journal an account of the excavations that are now going on at the Castle Hill close to Mountsorrel.

We have always had a sort of traditionary account in the town of a secret passage that led from the ancient castle somewhere in the town. There have been several attempts to explore it but as yet all had left the work unfinished. Such being the case, a few young enterprising quarry men (eight in number) commenced in earnest, and through the kindness of Mr Statham, the overlooker at the quarry, in lending them proper sinking tackle, and everything necessary for the work, we are now in a fair way to see it completed. The men work at it after they have finished their usual day's work; they sometimes work until eleven o'clock, so desirous are they to see it completed. They have been at it now more than a month, they have sunk the shaft fifty feet, it is twelve feet by eleven feet wide, and I have no doubt they have got two hundred tons of old building material out of the shaft.

'There is a large quantity of freestone, cut and designed for different parts of a building, a large quantity of oak timber (some of the beams are seventeen feet long and very stout); they have found a stag's horn, and a quantity of bones of different animals, nails and bricks of the quarry form, and other relics, all of which are taken care of. The shaft is cut out of solid granite, and being done long before the invention of powder, makes it a curiosity seldom to be met with. The men work with great energy, although they have nothing for their labour but what is given to them by the visitors, and they have not been few, as it is creating great interest in the neighbourhood. I feel pleasure in stating that their labour has hitherto met with some reward. The opinion of some parties is, that it is a secret escape from the castle, and this opinion is strengthened by the discovery of a tunnel in a back yard of one of the houses on that side of the street nearest the hill; it has all the appearances of a very ancient piece of workmanship, and appears to lead towards the shaft'.

The *Leicester Chronicle* (25 August 1849) believed that the excavation was that of the well of the castle keep, which 'was filled up with materials from the destroyed building, and the black state of the wood recently found would lead us to believe that it was burnt when the work of destruction was complete... We were told that a subterranean passage, used as a pig-stye, may be seen in the back premises of Mr Kirk schoolmaster of the place, and it is likely this may have been connected with the bottom of the well'. For further information visit the website at [Mountsorrel Castle – History Regained](#).

### **BURROUGH HILL IRON AGE HILLFORT SELF-GUIDED CIRCULAR WALK**

Once it is possible to venture further from home, members may be interested in the self-guided walk of Burrough Hill Country Park, put together by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS). As well as taking in the ramparts and main entrances, this will illustrate different aspects of daily life in the hill fort, including craftwork, gaming and Iron Age rituals - [https://ulasnews.files.wordpress.com/2020/12/bh\\_guided-walk-sheet.pdf](https://ulasnews.files.wordpress.com/2020/12/bh_guided-walk-sheet.pdf).

## **OTHER NEWS**

### **FOREIGN PRISONERS AND SKATING – AN INTERESTING REPLY**

In the previous LAHS Newsletter there was an item about French and Dutch Prisoners of War on parole in Leicester, and the pastime of skating to which they introduced the residents during the winter months. This brought an interesting response from Christopher Rigg, as follows: 'In the late 1950s, some foreign visitors found their way to Packington post office and asked Mrs Spare, the post mistress, whether she could help them to find the marriage of an ancestor, who had been a prisoner of war at The Callis in Ashby. He had married the daughter of Packington's Baptist minister, Mr Smith. Would there be any

records about the marriages at the chapel? They did not realize that in those days all the marriages had to be in the Established Church. The Baptist Chapel in Mill Lane had been demolished shortly beforehand, largely by a teenage friend, Roy Sansom, as a holiday job. That chapel was a daughter chapel of that in Barton in the Beans and mother chapel of that in Ashby.

'Mrs Spare passed the request to my father, the Rev. J. Eric Rigg, who in turn asked me to look it up in the registers. The details were duly sent off to Uppsala in Sweden. In the 1980s, I was attending an expert group of UNESCO in Sicily. One evening my wife and I had dinner with Anders Martinsson, Professor of Palaeobiology at Uppsala. In the course of conversation, he mentioned the Ticknall Fault, to which I responded, "How does a professor from Uppsala know about the Ticknall Fault?". Then he explained that his wife had an ancestor from Packington near Ashby, which they had visited many years earlier. I told him that it was I who had looked up that record at that time. At a later meeting in Stockholm, Anders took me to his home and his wife showed me the family Bible.

After the Napoleonic War, the marquis, as a Baptist, was no longer acceptable in French society and was sent as ambassador to the Royal Court in Copenhagen. Their descendents stayed in Scandinavia'. (For information about the Ticknall Fault, see [Historical Society Archives - Ticknall Life](#)).

### **FORMER HOME FOR PENITENT FEMALES, 58 STONEYGATE ROAD**

Following an application by the Leicester Group of the Victorian Society, the former Home for Penitent Females at 58 Stoneygate Road has recently been granted Grade II listed status by Historic England as a building of special architectural or historic interest. The building dates from 1881, and was designed by the Leicester architect William Beaumont Smith. The 'Penitent Females' were unmarried women or girls 'of good character' who had fallen into prostitution, or become pregnant. The Home incorporated a chapel and workshop, and was intended to equip the residents with skills which would eventually allow them to support themselves as independent citizens (usually in domestic service). More recently it housed a Montessori School, but it has been unoccupied for some time. For further information email Rowan Roenisch, [rowan.roenisch@ntlworld.com](mailto:rowan.roenisch@ntlworld.com).

### **FILM OF OLD GRAND UNION CANAL**

A film about the Old Grand Union Canal is now available on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/vFJRPD9tZgk>. It relates to the stretch from Foxton to Norton Junction, where it joins the Grand Junction Canal, and includes an animated section of The Incline Plane.

## **RURAL LIFE PAST AND PRESENT**

### **Out-of-Print and Difficult-to-Find Books**

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## **FULL STEAM AHEAD – AN EXHIBITION SHOWCASING A NEW ADDITION TO LEICESTERSHIRE MUSEUMS’ FINE ART COLLECTION**

In 2018, Leicestershire Museum Collections acquired an oil painting of a view of Melton Mowbray with the newly completed railway in the foreground. The actual title, date and artist are unknown, but we felt it showed an unusual and interesting view of the town. The first trains from Syston ran into a temporary terminus station at Melton on 1 September 1846. The painting shows Melton station and goods yard apparently complete, perhaps in the summer of 1848 when passenger services began over the whole line from Leicester to Melton, Oakham, Stamford and Peterborough.

Since the painting was acquired, conservation work has been carried out to prepare it for display and our former curator, Fred Hartley, has been commissioned to research and develop an exhibition. The result is ‘Full Steam Ahead’ a new exhibition showcasing the painting alongside some of our other railway collections, which will open at Melton Carnegie Museum in summer 2021. Dates have yet to be confirmed due to the ongoing impact of the lockdown, but please check [www.meltonmuseum.org](http://www.meltonmuseum.org) for further updates and information.

Alison Clague, Senior Curator, Leicestershire Museums



(Left) the painting during surface cleaning, and (right) after treatment (Leicestershire Museums)

## **LEICESTER VAUGHAN COLLEGE – ‘VAUGHAN TRADITION’ DROP-IN SESSIONS**

Leicester Vaughan College (LVC) is an independent higher education college set up as a co-operative community benefit society to continue the work of the former Vaughan College in Leicester. Malcolm Noble writes with a request to assist a project that is supported by the LAHS Public Heritage Fund: ‘Shortly before the coronavirus pandemic, we had started the ‘Vaughan Tradition’ project. As we start to feel a little hopeful about an end, we want to run an online collecting session. This will gather stories, pictures, memories, and potential volunteer interviewers and interviewees, and provide an informal opportunity to share memories of Vaughan College. We would love to hear from those who worked or studied there. Attendance is free, and all are welcome. We are having one session on the morning of Saturday 27 March from 11am – 1pm, and another on the evening of Monday 29 March’. Tickets for the Saturday event are now available at [Vaughan tradition drop-in session Tickets, Sat 27 Mar 2021 at 11:00 | Eventbrite](#). If you are unable to attend but would still like to contribute, please email Malcolm at [malcolm.noble@vaughan.coop](mailto:malcolm.noble@vaughan.coop).

## FAILED TO RETURN – PART 1



Hubert Everard 'Bert' Preston in uniform, c1940/41 Courtesy of Helen Dwyer.

LAHS Committee member Joe Hall presents the story of Leicester's Hubert Everard Preston, whose RAF Hampden bomber disappeared over Cologne in April 1941.

At 24 minutes past midnight on 21 April 1941, Hubert Everard 'Bert' Preston's Hampden bomber of 106 Squadron took off from RAF Coningsby in Lincolnshire. The target was an area of the German city of Cologne. Bert was the aircraft's wireless operator as well as being an air gunner. With one operational tour with 44 Squadron already under his belt, Bert was hugely experienced in night bombing operations. Only the previous month he had received the Distinguished Flying Medal from King George VI at Buckingham Palace for his 'skill, coolness and devotion to duty involving 180 hours operational flying'. Bert's three crewmates on the 21 April sortie were men he had flown with only a handful of times before: pilot Ronald Lakin, Canadian navigator Jack Cutmore; and gunner William Burrell from London.

It was the crew's first flight after returning from a week's leave two days before. This time away from operations must have been much appreciated. Prior to this sortie, the four men had endured heavy flak over Kiel on 7 April, suffered a failure of their oxygen supply when again attacking Kiel the next night, and were forced to return to base on 10 April after wireless transmitter issues made continuing their trip to Dusseldorf impossible. Whether Bert had spent his leave back home or with his crewmates is unknown. He was the son of Edward Preston and his second wife Mary (nee

Brackenbury) of 28 Melrose Street, Leicester, the youngest child by 10 years, Bert, who had attended Alderman Newton's School, had a strained relationship with his much older father who had been a hosiery designer and designer of warp knitting machines.

As the Hampden left Coningsby's runway on that dark morning, it headed south-east and joined six others bound for the same destination. The sortie's estimated length was five hours, and their Hampden would be expected back at base around 5.30am. Unlike the mass bomber streams of later in the war, where hundreds of RAF aircraft would fly in formation to and from their target, at this stage of the war Bomber Command could only muster a limited number of medium bombers to send into the darkness above occupied Europe. Each aircraft would make their own way to the target as best they could, and drop bombs at low-level before turning for home.

Bert's first operational sortie had been with 44 Squadron on 17 April 1940 – almost exactly one year earlier. Then, his aircraft had dropped anti-shipping parachute mines at Great Belt, a strait between the major islands of Zealand and Funen in Denmark. Since that day, he had dropped mines off Langeland Island and in the Kiel Canal. Though often seen as safer to fly, these 'gardening' sorties, as they were known, could be equally dangerous when enemy shipping let loose their anti-aircraft guns. Indeed, the Kiel sortie had seen one of the returning Hampdens suffer 30 bullet holes and a shell hole in the tail. However, the perils of gardening sorties, and of operating in Hampdens (known as 'flying suitcases' due to their cramped crew compartments) is best highlighted by an event which took place in the early hours of 14 April 1941. Only a week before Bert Preston's flight to Cologne, his 106 squadron-mate and fellow Leicester man Stewart Sandom was under-gunner on a gardening sortie to Île de Ré, off La Rochelle. Engaged by ground fire at 600 feet over the target, 24-

year-old Sandom nonetheless continued to return fire despite having been hit in the right arm and leg. The pilot turned for home, and the wireless operator – also injured – attempted to administer first aid to Sandom, who by now had collapsed over his guns. The report which the pilot later filed now takes up the story:

‘Cramped conditions, the wounded man’s inability to help himself and the difficulty in fitting a tourniquet over flying clothes which it was impossible to remove made this [the attempt to staunch Sandom’s wounds] impossible. I made a precautionary landing at Upper



The wireless operator/gunner of a Hampden manning his twin Vickers K guns, 1940. © IWM HU 107827. Reproduced with permission.

Heyford, where it was discovered that the under-gunner had died’. Sandom, formerly of 59 Highway Road, Evington, was brought home to Leicester and buried in Welford Road Cemetery (Sec. C. Uncons. Grave 178).

On his way to Cologne, Bert may have pondered his own past operations, and those of friends like Stewart Sandom. Perhaps he had contrasted his own experience with the relative inexperience of his crew. Cutmore and Burrell had joined the squadron from Combat Training School in January 1941, only three months before, though much of March had been taken up

with training the crews and practicing local, cross-country and night flying, plus air gunnery. Despite being only 22, Bert had a Distinguished Flying Medal to show for his 30 missions with 44 Squadron, and had already added to that number since joining 106 Squadron. He had climbed aboard a Hampden bomber over 30 times, and made his way in the dark to targets in France, Germany and Holland. He had endured intense anti-aircraft fire, night fighters, equipment malfunctions, electrical storms and the loss of friends; as well as one crash-landing. One notable day in May 1940, returning from an attack on Givet aerodrome, Bert had looked down to see Dunkirk aflame, ringed with searchlights and anti-aircraft guns, and watched ships off the coast taking the British Expeditionary Force across the narrow sea to safety. Such a wealth of experience doubtless made Bert an old hand in the eyes of those still getting to grips with life on an operational squadron, in spite of his 22 years.

Back at Coningsby, the first of the seven Hampdens headed for Cologne returned almost at once having suffered engine trouble. The next arrived back at 5.26am, with others returning piecemeal until 7.45am when the sixth of the seven aircraft touched down. As the morning wore on there was still no sign of the final Hampden, with the friends of Bert Preston, Ron Lakin, Jack Cutmore and William Burrell doubtless hoping their aircraft had landed at one of the emergency runways nearer the coast. As morning broke and the day wore on with still no sign of Bert’s aircraft, the squadron’s Operations Record Book was duly annotated: ‘Hampden X2986 - Failed to return’.

Part 2 of this article will appear in the next edition of the LAHS Newsletter.

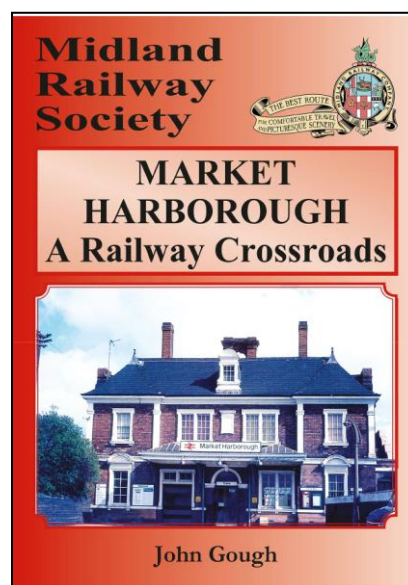


## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

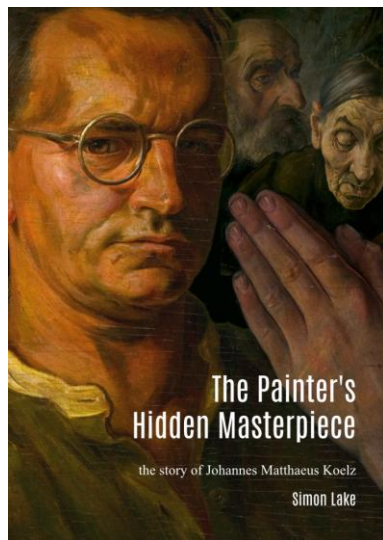
### MARKET HARBOROUGH – A RAILWAY CROSSROADS

This new book by John Gough covers the development of Market Harborough as a junction of three routes: Rugby to Stamford and Peterborough; the Midland main line from Leicester to Hitchin and St. Pancras; and the LNWR/GNR lines from Northampton to Nottingham and Newark. It begins with the early plans for railways in Leicestershire and Northampton, and continues to the remodelled Market Harborough station of 2019. It has over 100 illustrations, the vast majority of which have not been published before, as well as rare shots of the original station and plans and drawings from the resources of the Midland Railway Study Centre. Dr Gough may be familiar to LAHS members as the contributor of articles such as 'Leicestershire Railways: documentation and observation' to *Transactions* (No 74, 2000) – online [2000 \(74\) 99-111 Gough.pdf \(le.ac.uk\)](#). *Market Harborough: a railway crossroads* is available from the

Midland Railway Society at [booksales@midlandrailwaysociety.org.uk](mailto:booksales@midlandrailwaysociety.org.uk), and costs £14.95 + p&p. It can also be purchased online from its website at [www.midlandrailwaysociety.org.uk](http://www.midlandrailwaysociety.org.uk).



### THE PAINTER'S HIDDEN MASTERPIECE



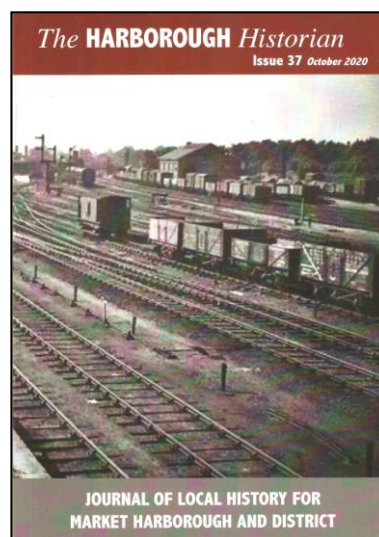
*The Painter's Hidden Masterpiece* by Simon Lake tells the story of Johannes Matthaeus Koelz, a German painter, born in Bavaria in March 1895. He fought in the First World War, winning the Iron Cross for bravery, before following his first dream of becoming an artist, taking up a place at the acclaimed Munich Academy of Fine Arts. Against a backdrop of the rise of Fascism in Hitler's Germany, Koelz painted a secret anti-war painting. Giant in size, the triptych (three-panel painting) crystallized his horror of war. Called 'Thou Shalt Not Kill', it was known only to his immediate family and trusted friends. In 1937, Koelz faced imminent arrest on a charge of pacifist propaganda.

Incredibly, the arresting officer, a Gestapo inspector, turned out to be a former soldier whose life Koelz had saved in the trenches. Given 48 hours grace from this unexpected source, Koelz was forced to dismember his secret masterpiece, cutting it up into pieces that were hidden, and fleeing into exile across the mountain border with Austria with his young family. Arriving in England on the eve of World War II, he was interned and sent to Australia on board the infamous troopship *Dunera*. The artist's story would have been forgotten but for the tireless efforts of his daughter Ava Farrington in searching for the missing pieces of her father's lost masterpiece. These and other artworks came together in a world-first exhibition in Leicester. Now, with the support of the artist's family, Simon Lake is able to tell Koelz's incredible story in full for the first time. *The Painter's Hidden Masterpiece* (176 pages) is illustrated throughout with artworks, colour fold-outs, and family photos never previously seen. It costs £18 plus p&p, ISBN 9781838037000 and can be ordered from [www.simonlake.co.uk](http://www.simonlake.co.uk).

## THE HARBOROUGH HISTORIAN: JOURNAL OF LOCAL HISTORY FOR MARKET HARBOROUGH AND DISTRICT, ISSUE 37, OCTOBER 2020

This edition of the *Harborough Historian*, the journal of the Market Harborough Historical Society, offers a wide range of articles, despite the difficulties of research posed by the closure of the Record Office, libraries and museums during the coronavirus pandemic. The articles include 'The state induced agricultural revolution 1939 – 45' in the Harborough district, characterised by the switch from livestock production to arable farming. This also examines the role of the War Agricultural Executive Committee in the 'impressive' local contribution' to wartime food production.

Another article analyses a notebook relating to the village of Wilbarston and the Platt family, giving insights into such aspects of 19<sup>th</sup> century life as parish affairs, music, song and dance, and local agriculture – the latter by way of 'jottings' and accounts. Parliamentary politics in Harborough from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the life of Thomas Heyrick, 'priest, poet, preacher and native of Market Harborough', and the work of Alfred Wilson, Rector of East Farndon from 1872 – 94 are the subjects of other substantial articles. Shorter contributions include railway development in Market Harborough; Welford in the 1940s; Harborough in 1939 – 41; the de Trafford family; and William Pearson, co-founder of the Royal Astronomical Society, who was recently honoured with a Leicestershire County Council Green Plaque. For further information about the Historical Society, visit [home \(marketharboroughhistoricalsociety.org\)](http://home(marketharboroughhistoricalsociety.org)).



## ONLINE PUBLICATIONS

### LEICESTER'S CO-OPERATIVE COMMONWEALTH, VOL 1, LEICESTER'S RADICAL HISTORY

During the 1890s, there was a steady growth in co-operatively run factories in Leicester. Nearly all were formed on the initiative of the workers themselves with the assistance of other co-operatives and trade unions. These producer co-ops represented a significant experiment in industrial democracy and by the early 20th century. Leicester had more co-partnership factories than any other town in Britain. As a result, the town became the national centre of the Producer Co-operative movement. Ned Newitt has recently published an index of co-operative producers in Leicester and Leicestershire and this is available at [www.nednewitt.com/wp/leicesters-co-operative-commonwealth](http://www.nednewitt.com/wp/leicesters-co-operative-commonwealth).

### JOHN CLIFFORD (1782-1845) AND HIS FAMILY IN NORTH-WEST LEICESTERSHIRE

As the title suggests, this is primarily a history of John Clifford and his family, but includes much historical information about agriculture and industry in North-West Leicestershire, and the villages (including Griffdam, Ravenstone, Hugglescote and Ibstock) where different generations lived. It is written by one of his descendants, also John Clifford, and is available free of charge online at [john-clifford-\(1782-1845\)-and-his-family-in-nw-leicestershire-2020-11-29.pdf](http://john-clifford-(1782-1845)-and-his-family-in-nw-leicestershire-2020-11-29.pdf) ([breedonparishcouncil.org.uk](http://breedonparishcouncil.org.uk)).

### LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND BRANCH, WESTERN FRONT ASSOCIATION (WFA)

*The Tiger*, the Newsletter of the local branch of the WFA, is available online at [Leicestershire & Rutland WFA | Branch Newsletter: 'The Tiger' \(leicestershireandrutlandwfa.com\)](http://Leicestershire&RutlandWFA|BranchNewsletter:'TheTiger'(leicestershireandrutlandwfa.com)).

## A HISTORICAL FOOTNOTE

Edith Gittins is perhaps best known in Leicester as an artist and teacher of drawing. She was closely associated for many years with the Unitarian Great Meeting Chapel, where there is a memorial tablet in her memory – but she was also very active in the cause of women's suffrage. This is an extract from a speech she made on the subject, as reported in the *Leicester Chronicle* (19 April 1890).

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WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE. On Monday evening an able lecture was delivered at the Leicester Liberal Club by Miss Edith Gittins on the subject of Women's -Suffrage... There was a large audience, principally composed of ladies. Miss Gittins, who was cordially received, observed that it was a hard task those women set themselves who undertook the first promulgation of this reform of women's suffrage. They encountered the most violent and trying opposition, and were received with derision, calumny, and insult. But they made the way, and it would be a mean thing if the women of later times let that way be choked up with careless, heedless indifference. (Applause.)...

If women did not ask for the franchise it was said they did not care about it; if they did speak they ran some risk of hard words. Most of the objections raised to the reform had a double edge; for instance that women did not know enough of politics, that in voting they would be influenced by unworthy considerations, and that they were not wise enough. Were all men wise, politically enlightened, and disinterested? If the extension of the franchise on an ever-widening circle to men had been a boon it could not in reason be withheld from women who had the same qualification. The granting of the franchise had not been based in the past on education or wisdom, but it had been conferred as a matter of justice. (Applause.) Wisdom was not a qualification, but the payment of a rate or the possession of land to a certain amount. At the present time about 800,000 women in the United Kingdom had those qualifications, and their contention was that they ought to be able to vote at Parliamentary elections if they wished to do so.

The women of England constituted the greater part of the population, and it was only in accordance with commonsense that the legislature should make an arrangement for ascertaining at first hand what were the needs of the larger half of the nation. (Hear, hear.) If, as asserted by some, the change would result in a gain to the Conservative party, it would be to Liberals a matter of regret, but the fear of that should not act as a deterrent to granting the reform, for even if it were true that the bias of women was Conservative they must still be allowed the right of holding their own opinions. (Applause.)

After dealing with some of the disabilities women now laboured under, chiefly owing to their having no right to vote, Miss Gittins went on to repudiate the assertion that the enfranchisement of women would lead to domestic friction, discord, and unhappiness. The time had undoubtedly come when women must be recognised as independent responsible beings, having the right to think and speak for themselves, instead of being looked upon as inferior subjects, to be governed wrongly or badly as the race of men might decree. (Applause.) A hearty vote of thanks was accorded Miss Gittins on the motion of Miss Charlotte Ellis, seconded by Mrs. Windley, and a similar compliment to the Chairwoman [Miss Fanny Fullagar] concluded the meeting.

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