

THE LEICESTERSHIRE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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NEWSLETTER 124 Autumn 2024

Welcome to the latest edition of the LAHS Newsletter. Contributions to future editions of the Newsletter are as always welcome at any time. These can be emailed to the Newsletter editor, Cynthia Brown, at newsletter@lahs.org.uk.

LECTURE PROGRAMME FOR 2024 - 25 – PLEASE NOTE THE CHANGE OF VENUE

New Walk Museum, our usual venue for LAHS lectures, will be unavailable for some time due to building work. These lectures and the LAHS AGM will therefore take place in the **Rattray Lecture Theatre at the University of Leicester at 7.30 pm**. Doors open 7 pm; refreshments available in advance of the lecture.

Thursday 26 September 2024

Scarborough Lecture - Women and Magna Carta

Sharon Bennett Connolly, FRHistS

The lecture will look at those women who influenced Magna Carta, or lived through it - and those who used it to assert their rights. They include Matilda de Braose, Nicholaa de la Haye, Ela of Salisbury and Isabel d'Aubigny. Sharon is a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and the best-selling author of five non-fiction history books including *Heroines of the Medieval World*; *Silk and the Sword: the women of the Norman Conquest*; and *Ladies of Magna Carta: women of influence in thirteenth century England*.

Thursday 17 October 2024

All Quiet on the Leicester Front?: the US military race disturbances of 1944

Vincent Holyoak, Head of Environmental Management, Historic England

This lecture is part of Black History Month 2024.

14 November 2024

LAHS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – FOLLOWED BY LECTURE

Churchpeople and social change in 19th century Leicestershire

Nick Miller, Professor Emeritus, University of Newcastle

12 December 2024

Leicester: an Anglo-Saxon diocese

Thomas Vare, PhD student, University of Leicester

LAHS NEWS

NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY

The Library has been very quiet this year with more non-members than members visiting the Jury Room. Enquiries are received from outside the Society which usually require referral to the Record Office or other sources. We are not in a position to carry out research for people. Material continues to be received and the Society is grateful as always for those authors and publishers who kindly donate publications.

BOOKS

All published in 2024 unless otherwise indicated.

ALDRED, G. The role and origins of Mercian settlements with the place-name WORTH. BAR, 2023. Donated by the publisher.

CHARLTON, A. Carryer family stories: Leicester, Staffs., New Zealand, Canada, Australia, US. Troubador. Donated by the author.

DYER, L. Loughborough pubs. Amberley, 2023. Donated by the publisher.

ENNIS, T. & ATKINSON, M. Late Iron Age and Roman landscape at Cressing Temple: Essex County Council Field Archaeology School Excavations in Dovehouse Field 1998 – 2005. Essex Society for Archaeology & History Occasional Papers NS no. 5 (EXCHANGE PUBLICATION)

HOLMES, D. ed. History of Market Harborough. Part two: From 1800 to the present day. Market Harborough Historical Society. Donated by MHHS. Part one is already in stock.

HUGHES, S. Merchants and ministers: the Cradock family, trade and Puritanism in 17th century England. MA Local History, Leicester University, 2023. LAHS Dissertation Prize winner 2024. Reference only.

Leicester Cathedral guidebook. 2023.

MILCARZ, J. Living conditions in Polish resettlement camps 1947 – 1960. BA History, De Montfort University, 2023. LAHS Dissertation Prize winner 2024. Reference only. See also LAHS blog 2/6/24.

MILHORAT, E. Herrick family in England and America. 1984. Donated by C. Bushell.

MILLER, N. Church history in Leicestershire. Book Guild. Donated by the author.

MILLINGTON, V. Images from a disappearing world: the Leicester & Swannington Railway. Leicestershire Industrial History Society Bulletin 26, 2023. Donated by C. Hossack.

PAUL, J. Bradgate House and the Greys of Groby: a sketch of their history. 1899. Donated by B. Screaton.

POSTLES, D. Characteristics of the clergy: the Anglican experience in the late-Victorian transition in Leicestershire. Donated by the author. See also LAHS blog 14/4/24.

SATO, K. Research Centre for the History of Religious & Cultural Diversity (Meiji University Tokyo). Discussion Paper No.9 re Memory & Narrative Series about Leicester residents. All in stock. Donated by Prof. Sato.

SPEED, G. & FINN, N. The Anglo-Saxon settlement at Eye Kettleby. Leicestershire Archaeology Monograph 27. ULAS. Donated by G. Speed.

ZIENTEK, J.

A few Leaves from Launde Abbey. 5 vols. 1-3, 2023. Covers the history as a retreat house 1988-2023.

Great Central Railway. 19 vols. This series of text, but mainly illustrations, covers the whole line, not just that in Leicestershire. It must be the most comprehensive survey and is an invaluable record of what has now mainly disappeared. For details of each volume you will need to visit the Library.

Leicester Brewing and Malting Company and the Eagle Brewery: a pictorial story of some of the inns owned by the Company. Amended version.

Memories...of Bishop Bill Down's time at St. Mary Humberstone 1995-2008.

Story...of Snibston Discovery Park. 4 vols. Another invaluable record, this of a Leicestershire museum sadly disappeared.

All the above have been donated by the author who has ensured that an enormous amount of information has been recorded and will not be forgotten. We should all be grateful for what he has produced.

He has also donated copies of:

Collegiate church of St. Martin Leicester...inauguration week 1922.

DAVIS, B. Short guide to Belton in Rutland & its church. 1966 (rev. 2024). Includes information on Wardley.

PERIODICALS, filed permanently, and **NEWSLETTERS**, current copies only on the Library table, along with catalogues from Cottage Books, continue to be received.

A few selected items:

Journal of Historic Buildings & Places 3.2024 includes articles on Hansom and St. Aubyn, architects with Leicestershire connections.

SPAB Magazine Summer 2024 includes 2 articles, including graffiti, on Kibworth Harcourt Post Mill. This building is open for free guided tours on 14/15 Sept. as part of Heritage Open Days. Booking is required.

Heritage Now 8 (Spring 2024) reports that Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society Vols. 1(1953) – 62 (2018) are now freely available at hbap.org.uk/resources/transactions/ . All volumes, except 34.1990, are in the Library and available for loan.

SERENDIPITY...

While reading this from the public library an interesting local piece was found:

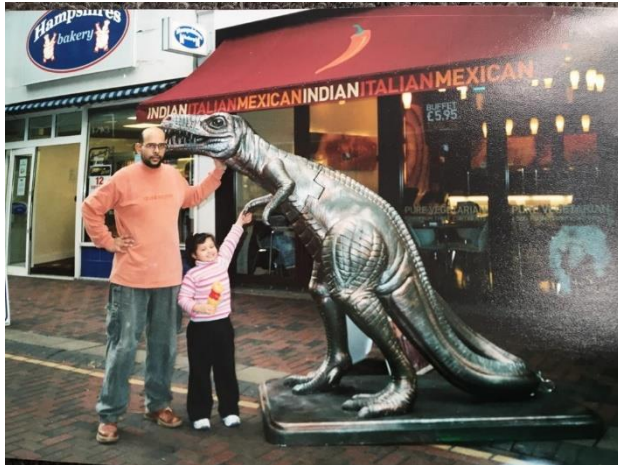
McKAY, S. Secret Britain: a journey through the Second World War's hidden bases and battleground. 2021. p. 183-191: The ears of the Army: Beaumanor Hall.

ADVANCE NOTICE

Sunday 20 October will be the final members' opening of the Library before the regular winter closure.

Aubrey Stevenson, Hon. Librarian

PUBLIC HERITAGE FUND



Sri Lankan-born artist Vipula Athukorale with his daughter Nethmini alongside a dinosaur sculpture he created for a German Museum. Photo taken on Market Street, Leicester, circa 2006. (Courtesy of Vipula Athukorale).

LAHS's Public Heritage Fund are pleased to announce a grant to the UK South Asian Digital Archive (UKSADA) for an exhibition to promote the archive, encourage contributions to its collections, and attract further sponsorship for its activities. UKSADA aims to preserve and celebrate the rich heritage of South Asian communities in the UK, with an initial focus on Leicester and the county. Through digitisation and archiving of relevant materials such as the image on the left, it will ensure that the stories, experiences and contributions of these communities are accessible to present and future generations. The exhibition, entitled 'Stories that should be told' will illustrate the importance of the archive, and

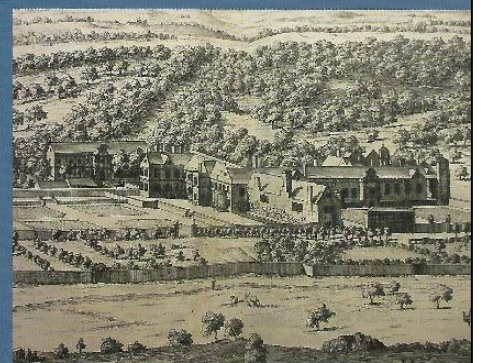
encourage awareness of the diverse narratives that make up the South Asian experience in the UK. It will also tour to various venues in the city and county following its launch later this year.

IF YOU ARE NOT ALREADY A MEMBER OF LAHS - WHY NOT JOIN?

Membership of LAHS offers a wealth of benefits, including copies of our two annual publications, the *Leicestershire Historian* and the *Transactions of the Society*. Members can access our current publications in digital format, and previous publications are available through the Archaeological Data Service. Regular Newsletters and updates on the activities of LAHS are also circulated by email. Very importantly, membership offers a forum for those interested in researching and learning about different aspects of Leicestershire and Rutland's past.

You will also be entitled to vote at our AGM and help shape the future of the Society. Free student membership is available, and carries the same benefits as Individual membership with the exception of copies of the Society's two annual publications and a vote at the AGM. You can join LAHS on our website at [Membership application - LAHS](#) by completing an online application, or printing off a paper copy to send to our Hon. LAHS Membership Secretary Gillian Rawlins, c/o LAHS, The Guildhall, Guildhall Lane, Leicester, LE1 5F. If you have any queries please do contact her at membership@lahs.org.uk. If you have received this Newsletter by post and do not have access to the Internet, please write to her instead at the same address. You will be very welcome!

The Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society



Transactions Volume 97 2023

OTHER NEWS

DONATION OF MINIATURE SCULPTURE OF ABOLITIONIST ELIZABETH HEYRICK

A specially commissioned miniature sculpture of the Leicester abolitionist Elizabeth Heyrick by local artist Corinne Lambert, depicting her breaking the chains of slavery, has recently been presented to New Walk Museum, Leicester. Elizabeth emerged as the winner of an online vote held by family history organisation Findmypast that highlighted five 'remarkable women whose legacies have been unjustly neglected'.

This year marks the 200th anniversary of the publication of her pamphlet *Immediate, not gradual abolition*, which played an important role in influencing the abolitionist movement in Britain and abroad. She also pioneered the first anti-slavery ladies' society and organised a sugar boycott to protest against slave labour.

LAHS member and trustee of the Elizabeth Heyrick Society, Jess Jenkins, describes her as 'a beacon of justice and compassion', and says that the society is campaigning for more recognition of her role here in Leicester and further afield. It intends to produce educational resources, and to liaise with museums and teachers 'so that every child in Leicestershire and beyond grows up knowing and valuing Elizabeth Heyrick and the important values she stood for.

She was a Quaker, so she was very humble. I think she'd have been slightly embarrassed by the idea of a sculpture depicting her, but she would have been delighted that we were remembering the values she stood for'. The Society is also trying to raise funds for a permanent outdoor statue of Elizabeth Heyrick in Leicester. For further information about its activities, visit its website at www.elizabethheyrick.org.



Presentation of the sculpture at New Walk Museum - Jess Jenkins (left), Corinne Lambert and City Mayor Sir Peter Soulsby
(Courtesy of Jess Jenkins)

NEW HERITAGE PANELS – LEICESTER CITY COUNCIL

The number of heritage panels in Leicester has now reached the milestone of 350. The most recent panels to be installed include one commemorating Donald Watson, the man who coined the term 'veganism' and formed the Vegan Society in Leicester in 1944; the story of Laurel Aitken, the 'Godfather of Ska' who moved to Leicester in 1970; a panel remembering the 19th century artist John Flower; and a reminder of the Belgrave flyover, which was constructed from pre-cast concrete in 1973-74 and demolished in 2014. More information about all the panels can be found on the Story of Leicester website.

NEW WALK MUSEUM, LEICESTER – NOTICE OF CLOSURES

As part of a major capital investment in Leicester Museum and Art Gallery, the museum will be closed to visitors from Thursday 5 September to Sunday 15 September 2024 inclusive, due to an initial piece of maintenance work. The Museum will reopen on Monday 16 September 2024, but access will be limited to the Dinosaur and Leicester Stories galleries between 16 September and 20 September while new temporary exhibitions are installed on the first floor. Access to the Ancient Egypt and German Expressionism galleries will reopen on Saturday 21 September. The ground floor art galleries are now closed but will reopen in late 2025. For further information - Leicester Museum & Art Gallery – Leicester Museums.

ARCHAEOLOGY

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES (ULAS)

A major archaeological excavation on land at MIRA Drive (SW Leicestershire, off Watling Street near Higham on the Hill) was completed in late June. This account of part of its findings is extracted from *ULAS News Summer 2024*, with thanks to Dr Gavin Speed. See [ULAS News Summer 2024 \(cloud.microsoft\)](#) for more information about this and other ULAS projects.

The excavation began back in November 2023 as a trial evaluation, with the open-area excavation beginning earlier this year in advance of the construction of a Solar Farm and associated works. The work involved examination of an extensive area containing prehistoric boundaries and settlement that had not been identified in the geophysical survey, and only hinted at in the trial trench evaluation. The poor weather earlier this year caused problems with the initial stripping, and various combinations of exciting plant were tried out to cope with the conditions. The hand excavation will be a significant contribution to later prehistoric archaeology in the area.

The earliest evidence for activity came from several pit alignment boundaries, probably dated to the Late Bronze Age/early Iron Age period. Hopefully this will become clearer in the post-excavation phase of the work. It is unusual to find a 'junction' of these early boundary features, and a lot of time has been spent gathering information from this part of the site. The other interesting thing about the pit alignments is that they have different histories of re-use as a result of their incorporation into later activity that happened around them. For example, one had much of its course covered over by a cobbled surface, presumably with the intention of consolidating soft or boggy ground in the tops of the largely infilled pits. The other pit alignments had more complex histories of re-use, with several episodes of recutting being recognised.



Aerial view of the archaeological excavation, showing the Iron Age round houses and other settlement features.

This may have been associated with the later settlement activity, represented by a linear arrangement of roundhouses, pits and post holes lying to either side of the partially cobbled pit. It seems most likely that the people living here at that time were also responsible for laying the cobbled surface on top of the earlier pit alignment. The roundhouses to the north of the pit alignment were noticeably better preserved than those to the south, and early observations suggest that there may be a distinction between living/domestic areas on the northern side of the alignment, and processing/craft activities to the south. Again, this theory will be tested in the post excavation analysis.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

FRIENDS OF THE RECORD OFFICE FOR LEICESTERSHIRE, LEICESTER AND RUTLAND

Talks take place at 2.30 pm at the Record Office, Long Street, Wigston, LE18 2AH. Refreshments provided; members and non-members welcome.

Wednesday 11 September 2024

The post mistress, the parlour maid and the milliner: three Victorian women in Leicestershire

Mary Bryceland

This talk is based on research undertaken over several years as a member of the Family and Community Historical Research Society (FACHRS).

Wednesday 16 October 2024

Tommy's Mail

Peter Cousins

Exploring the development of the postal service during the First World War when thousands of letters and cards were sent home and abroad.

GREATER WIGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Little Hill Primary School, Launceston Road, Wigston Magna, LE18 2GZ

PLEASE NOTE THE SOCIETY'S NEW VENUE

Doors open 6.45 for 7.15 pm start. Free to members; non-members £4 per person.

Tuesday 17 September 2024

'Sidney's War'

David Humberstone, Chairman, Leicestershire & Rutland Western Front Association

Tuesday 15 October 2024

The history of Wyggeston and Trinity alms-houses

Theresa Phillips

LEICESTER CATHEDRAL

Thursday 12 September 2024, Leicester Cathedral, LE1 5PZ, 6.30 pm

Leicester Uncovered: Leicester's lost medieval churches

Mathew Morris, University of Leicester Archaeological Services

In the medieval period there were 17 churches and religious houses in Leicester. Now only six survive. Mathew Morris will talk about the archaeological excavations over the past 40 years which have discovered the buildings and graveyards of seven of these sites. Tickets £5.50; concessions £3.50. Booking through Eventbrite - [Leicester Uncovered talk: Leicester's lost medieval churches Tickets, Thu, Sep 12, 2024 at 6:30 PM | Eventbrite](#).

Saturday 21 September 2024, 2 pm

Cathedral to St Nicholas Church tour

The tour starts from the Cathedral and ends at St Nicholas Church, the oldest place of worship in the city, exploring the long history of both sites and the various historic buildings along the route. It costs £5 per person, accompanied children under 16 free, and lasts around one hour. It can be booked at the Cathedral Welcome Desk or through Eventbrite - [Leicester Cathedral to St Nicholas Church Walking Tour Tickets, Multiple Dates | Eventbrite](#).

LEICESTER CITY, COUNTY AND RUTLAND AT RISK WAR MEMORIALS PROJECT

Heritage Open Days

Saturday 7 September 2024, 10 am – 6 pm; Sunday 8 September 2024, 2.30 – 5 pm,

Chancel, rear of All Saints' Church, Highcross Street, Leicester, LE1 4PH

An opportunity to view the memorials taken into the care of the Project. There is no entrance charge, and there is permanent ramp access for wheelchair and pushchair users. Toilet facilities are also available, and there are information sheets (storyboards) with each exhibit that provide some history on the memorial and the background on how it came to be with the project. For more information, see [Leicester City, County & Rutland At Risk War Memorials Project - At Risk War Memorials Project](#).

LEICESTER CIVIC SOCIETY

Saturday 28 September 2024, 10.30 am – 12.30 pm

Leicester's Cultural Quarter

Meet outside Curve on Rutland Street (LE1 1SB) to explore the Cultural Quarter and St George's Conservation Area. Several of the original buildings remain, with interesting histories. The walk will be led by James Gunn.

Saturday 30 November 2024, 10.30 am – 12.30 pm

Guided tour of Leicester Cathedral

Meet at the main Cathedral door facing Peacock Lane (LE1 5PZ) for this special opportunity to view Leicester Cathedral after a two-year closure for a complete upgrading of its infrastructure to create its 'Revealed' project. The tour will take in the highlights of the Cathedral, including its chapels, windows, and the Richard III story. Maximum 20 spaces: bookings need to be confirmed by 1 November. **Both tours can be booked through [All Events - Leicester Civic Society](#).**

LEICESTER LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY

Monday 7 October 2024, Hansom Hall, Leicester

Adult Education College, Leicester, LE1 6QL

Beer, bribes, and brawling: an accurate representation of elections in Victorian England?

Nigel Siesage

The mid-nineteenth century is commonly regarded as an age of reform, not least in electoral practice and the extension of voting rights - in contrast to the corruption of the 18th century famously depicted in Hogarth's cartoons. Drawing on the literature and art of the period, as well as historical sources, the lecture will examine the extent to which electoral reform actually changed electoral practice and the various forces influencing electors; and will present some of the more colourful aspects and characters involved in Victorian electioneering. Guest tickets £7; student tickets £3. Further details at [Leicester Literary and Philosophical Society - Beer, bribes, and brawling: an accurate representation of elections in Victorian England? \(leicesterlitandphil.org.uk\)](#).

RURAL LIFE PAST AND PRESENT

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

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LEICESTERSHIRE FIELDWORKERS

Thursday 19 September 2024, 7.30pm, Rattray Lecture Theatre, University of Leicester, LE1 7RH

Star Carr – changing perspectives on the early Mesolithic of Britain

Barry Taylor, University of Chester

Star Carr is one of the most important Mesolithic sites in Britain. Originally located on the shores of an ancient lake, it was gradually buried beneath thick layers of peat, preserving an incredible array of artefacts made from bone, antler, and wood, as well as the remains of the plants and animals that inhabited this landscape. This lecture will discuss the role that Star Carr has played in the development of Mesolithic archaeology, and how 75 years after the first excavations at the site were published in the *Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society*, it continues to provide new information about the hunter-gatherer communities who inhabited Britain during the opening centuries of the Mesolithic. Free: all welcome; no booking necessary. Doors open from 6.30pm. This is a joint lecture with the Prehistoric Society and the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society.

LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY – LEICESTER GROUP

Friends Meeting House, 16 Queen's Road, Leicester, LE2 1WP, 7.30 pm

Wednesday 11 September 2024,

Ghost Signs: tracing the stories behind the shadows of old shop signs on Leicester's buildings

Colin Hyde

Wednesday 9 October 2024

Canal Boat People

Dr Wendy Freer

For further details of these and meetings of LRFHS branches in Hinckley, Loughborough, Market Harborough and Oakham, see [LRFHS - Meetings](#). If you would like to be added to the mailing list for news and meeting updates, please email leicester@lrfhs.or.uk.

MARKET HARBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Methodist Church, Northampton Rd, Market Harborough, 7.30 pm

Wednesday 11 September 2024

The Archaeology of Gumley and Laughton

Bob Gale

Bob Gale, a keen amateur archaeologist, is the chairman of Oadby and Wigston Fieldworkers. This group has done much exploration of local villages including Laughton, Mowsley, Smeeton Westerby and Gumley, working with the University of Leicester and the Hallaton Fieldworkers. Bob will talk about what they have discovered about the villages of Laughton and Gumley, the latter known for its Mercian roots.

Doors open 7 pm. All are welcome. There is a £1 door charge to help with room hire. Non-members pay an additional £3. Further details of the Society's 2024 – 25 programme are now available at [Market Harborough Historical Society - Programme](#).

NEWARKE HOUSES MUSEUM, LEICESTER
The Newarke, Leicester, LE2 7BY

Sunday 13 October 2024, 2 pm

Tigers Caged

Robin Jenkins

Hear an account of the 1st Battalion The Leicestershire Regiment in the defence of Ladysmith and the first campaign of the South African War, 1899 - 1900. It is a story of heroism and hardship, told in the words of those who were there.

Sunday 3 November 2024, 2 pm

The Women's Land Army

Cynthia Brown

The Women's Land Army (WLA) had its origins in the First World War and was reconstituted in 1939 to help maintain Britain's food supplies. This talk will focus on Leicestershire and Rutland to ask who these women were, and how they adapted to work which few of them had done before, drawing on oral histories to illustrate their experiences and how they felt about them.

Tickets are £6 per event; refreshments available. Book online at [Event Details – Leicester Museums](#) or call Newarke Houses on 0116 225 4980.

WOLDS HISTORICAL ORGANISATION

Jubilee Room, Wymeswold Memorial Hall, Clay Street, Wymeswold, LE12 6TY, 7.45 pm

Non-members welcome for a £3 contribution. There is a lift to the Jubilee Room.

Tuesday 17 September 2024

The history of pantomime

Anne Featherstone

Tuesday 15 October 2024

Archaeology of Leicester after Richard III

Mathew Morris

**VICTORIAN SOCIETY ONLINE LECTURE SERIES –
CROSSING BOUNDARIES: VICTORIAN ART AND DESIGN
20 October – 10 December 2024, 7 – 8 pm**

This autumn lecture series returns to one of the aims of the Victorian Society's founders. As well as preserving Victorian and Edwardian architecture, it was created to encourage research into the art and history of the period. Nineteenth-century architects and designers saw the fine and decorative arts as part of an architectural whole – a total work of art. Seven expert speakers will traverse disciplinary boundaries to discuss the use of colour and texture across the whole range of Victorian design. They will look at the key roles played by mosaic, stained glass, embroidery and three-dimensional wall coverings. Further details at [Crossing Boundaries: Victorian Art, Design and Architectures \(victoriansociety.org.uk\)](https://victoriansociety.org.uk).

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

HINCKLEY HISTORIAN – MAGAZINE OF HINCKLEY AND DISTRICT MUSEUM, NO 93, SUMMER 2024

Various authors

Hinckley and District Museum, 36pp, illus

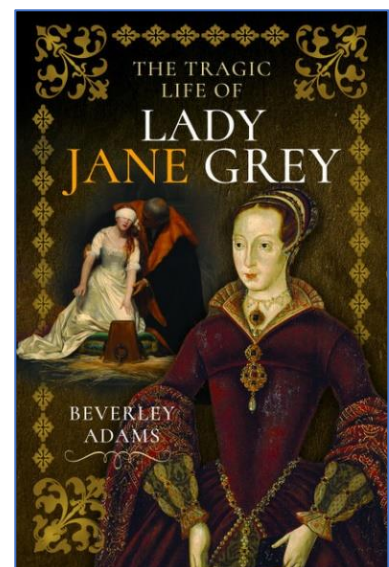
In this edition of the *Hinckley Historian*, Dave Knight reviews some newspaper reports of local events in the early Victorian period – many of them the work of the ‘Hinckley correspondent’ of the *Leicester Mercury*. The earliest of these, from the 1830s and ‘40s, relate to the establishment of the Hinckley Poor Law Union following the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, and the ‘serious and unremitting’ nature of the duties of the Poor Law Guardians in the face of increasing poverty. The insanitary and sometimes unsafe environmental state of the town is also covered, along with the often harsh sentences meted out for petty crimes, and attempts by the working classes to improve their lot, whether through education or the Chartist movement to reform Parliament. Other articles include the tragic death of a child killed by a horse on Hinckley Recreation Ground in 1896; Cecily Pickering’s diary of a holiday in Madeira in 1952, presented by Rose Allinson; and ‘Recollections of Old Hinckley’ around 1890 by an unnamed resident, including Old Lady Linney’s treacle tarts, a pub that became a pawnshop, and the ‘glorious scene’ of the Castle with the grounds ‘thick with trees’.

THE TRAGIC LIFE OF LADY JANE GREY

Beverley Adams

Pen and Sword History, 2024, 224pp, illus, ISBN 978-1399052702, £20

Lady Jane Grey, the nine-day queen is considered to be one of the most tragic characters in English history. In July 1553, when King Edward VI died at the age of just 15 years old, the Tudor dynasty fell into chaos. The king had no legitimate male heirs and was determined his half-sisters Mary and Elizabeth would not inherit his throne, despite his father Henry VIII stating in his will that they should. We are led to believe that on Edward's instructions his cousin Lady Jane Grey was to be proclaimed queen. But who was she? Was she the innocent young girl that our history books tell us she was, or a religious fanatic with the aim of keeping Mary off the throne and England Protestant? Or was she nothing but a pawn to men in the game of power and politics, abused by her parents to marry against her will all for a crown she did not want? This book looks into her life from her early years in relative seclusion at the family home at Bradgate



through to her tragic end on the scaffold at the Tower of London, executed on the orders of her cousin Queen Mary. What was her place within the Tudor royal family, was she ever entitled to claim the throne of England, and do we even recognise her as a true queen today?

The above description is from [Pen and Sword Books: The Tragic Life of Lady Jane Grey - Hardback \(pen-and-sword.co.uk\)](https://pen-and-sword.co.uk), where there are also details of an introductory offer. It is due for publication on 30 August 2024.

A HISTORICAL FOOTNOTE

This item is extracted from an article in the LAHS Newsletter, Autumn 1995, by Rupert Evans, a leading member of LAHS and a distinguished and long-serving member of the History Department of Leicester University.



A SURPRISING VISITOR TO VICTORIAN LEICESTER

Had you been in Prebend Street in the summer of 1850 you might have noticed, calling at one of the more substantial houses, a visitor who had just arrived by train from London. You might have paid him more than usual attention since he was undoubtedly of 'foreign' appearance (foreigners being something of a rarity in Leicester then)... Had you known that the visitor was Giuseppe Mazzini, the Italian patriot and apostle of Italian unity, you might have wondered, among other things, what he was doing in Leicester and why he was in Prebend Street. The answer is, perhaps surprisingly, that he was not engaged in some conspiratorial errand but had simply come on a social call. The house Mazzini visited on this occasion belonged to Joseph Biggs, youngest of the three brothers who held a

dominant place in the industry and politics of Leicester... [but] Joseph Biggs was not the primary object of Mazzini's visit: the real object was Joseph's wife Matilda.

She was one of the three daughters of a remarkable family. Her father was W.H. Ashurst, a London solicitor of strong radical principles with an equally strong commitment to acting upon them within his family. He was a passionate supporter of women's rights... [and therefore brought up his daughters in a spirit of equality and independence... They took a large share in the entertainment of their father's radical friends and particularly of the many foreign exiles to whom their house at Muswell Hill offered a second home. Among them was Mazzini... [but] was his brief visit quite as innocent of political purpose as the record suggests?

It seems more than a coincidence that it was followed by the surprising decision of Matilda to take her two young daughters and travel with her sister Emilie to Genoa and spend the coming winter there. The excuse for it was Emilie's poor health; but it is difficult to resist the conclusion that the expedition was designed, at least in part, to serve Mazzini's purposes. For in the autumn following his visit to Leicester he had gone to Geneva, perhaps to be closer to events in Italy... Even in Switzerland, however, he had to be cautious... How then was he to conduct his extensive correspondence? It could not be trusted to post offices: it would have to be conducted through couriers. It was in this respect that Mazzini could have found the sisters' journey useful. What more innocent couriers could be found than English ladies travelling for reasons of health and accompanied by small children?... Prebend Street is short but it opens the way to a large historical vista and leads to a whole avenue of speculation.

[Mazzini was a leading figure in the short-lived Roman Republic of 1849, from which Giuseppe Garibaldi also emerged as a national hero].

Image – public domain.

This newsletter is edited by Cynthia Brown and published by Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society. Further information about the Society, its publications and other activities can be found on its website at www.lahs.org.uk.