

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



NEWSLETTER 129 Winter 2025

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.

LAHS LECTURE PROGRAMME FOR 2025 - 26

All lectures start at 7.30 pm and are held in the Clephan Building, 0.01, De Montfort University, unless otherwise notified. There is a link to car parking details under each lecture on the LAHS website. Free entry to the lecture. No need to book.

Thursday 11 December 2025

The Beaumanor Coach and its restoration

Amy Bracey

The Beaumanor Coach was commissioned by the Herrick family of Beaumanor Hall in Woodhouse, Leicestershire, in 1740. Its importance as a commission at the time and as a rare survivor today has been recognised as being a highly significant object from Leicestershire Museum Collections and Leicestershire's history, and The Carriage Foundation's research has further enhanced our appreciation and understanding of this 'remarkable, rare and exceptional example of coach building from the first half of the eighteenth century'. The lecture examines the coach, its construction, and conservation by The Carriage Foundation.

Thursday 22 January 2026

30 Years of British comedy

Geoff Rowe, founder of the Leicester Comedy Festival

Geoff will talk about his experience of producing and promoting British comedy, including the development of Leicester Comedy Festival. He will also relate anecdotes about performers he has worked with, including Ken Dodd, Barry Cryer, Jo Brand - and more.

Thursday 12 February 2026

LAHS Members' Evening

The annual LAHS Members' Evening provides an opportunity for members to present the results of their own research to the Society through a presentation of 15-20 minutes maximum with slides. If you would like to participate, please contact the Lecture Secretary at lectures@lahs.org.uk.

Thursday 12 March 2026

Alan and Joan North Memorial Lecture – Septimus Severus and Roman Leicester's links to North Africa

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS LECTURE WILL BE HELD AT JEWRY WALL MUSEUM, LEICESTER

Dr Simon Elliott

Septimius Severus (145-211 AD) ruled the Roman Empire from 193 to 211. Born in Leptis Magna (modern-day Libya), he was the first emperor of African origin. He rose through the military ranks and seized power during a period of civil war, establishing the Severan dynasty. He is known for his military campaigns in Parthia and Britain, as well as his reforms to the empire's military and administration. Simon Elliott is the author of the biography *The African Emperor: the life of Septimius Severus*, on which this lecture will focus. The LAHS North Lecture is named after the late Alan and Joan North, long-standing members and supporters of the Society, who were particularly interested in the Roman Period.

Thursday 23 April 2026

Subject to be notified

Thursday 14 May 2026

Bronze Age metals and metalworking from Leicestershire

Dr Rachel Crellin

As part of the Leverhulme-funded 'A New History of Bronze' project at the University of Leicester we have been studying the Bronze Age metalwork from Leicestershire. Our work has involved studying evidence for the production, use and destruction of these objects using metalwork wear-analysis as well as techniques such as 3D scanning, microXRF and X-ray analysis. In this talk the project will share results from our analyses of material from Leicestershire, and contextualise them within the broader project. There will also be an opportunity to view pieces used for the study from Leicestershire Museums Collections.

ADVANCE NOTICE

Thursday 9 July 2026

LAHS Annual General Meeting

LAHS NEWS

NEW LAHS COMMITTEE MEMBERS

We are very pleased to welcome three new members to the LAHS Committee. Thomas Vare is joining it as co-editor of *Transactions*, and will be working with John Thomas on volume 99. Charlotte Wilson is our new LAHS Membership Secretary, and can be contacted at membership@lahs.org.uk if you need to update your membership details. Steve Marquis is also taking up one of the vacant ordinary member places on the committee.

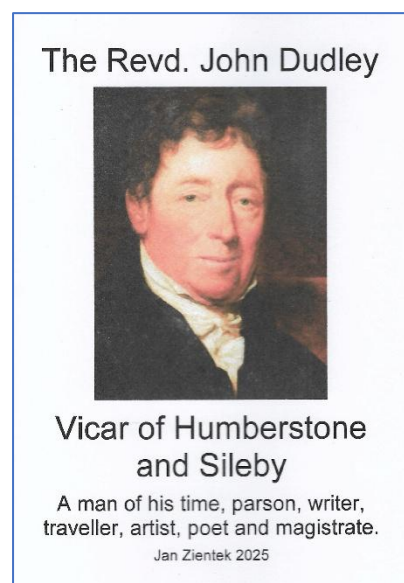
PUBLIC HERITAGE FUND

Earlier this year LAHS made a grant to the Leicestershire Football Archive, a not-for-profit project, to help recruit De Montfort University students to make improvements to the website, create a marketing strategy, and assist with social media. The website is being regularly updated, and includes such articles as 'Why Victorian Fans Wore Trading

Cards in Their Hats' and 'Tony Currie, Alan Birchenall, and a Moment of 1970s Spontaneity', both by Nigel Freestone. You can visit the website at www.leicestershirefootballarchive.com).



NEW RESEARCH BY JAN ZIENTEK



We are indebted to LAHS member Jan Zientek for the donation of more of his research in the form of booklets for deposit in our Library. These are as follows, and will be reviewed in the 2026 edition of the *Leicestershire Historian*.

THE REVD. JOHN DUDLEY – VICAR OF HUMBERSTONE AND SILEBY: A MAN OF HIS TIME, PARSON, WRITER, TRAVELLER, ARTIST, POET AND MAGISTRATE

83pp, illustrated

LETTERS FROM POLAND - LETTERS FROM MEMBERS OF THE ZIENTEK FAMILY, AND THE LETTERS WRITTEN IN 1954 AFTER MARGARET BARRASS WAS INTRODUCED TO STANISLAW SZYMON ZIENTEK; TWO PARTS FROM 1949 – 2025

Part 1, 99pp, illus; Part 2, 99pp, illus

THE HARDMAN STAINED GLASS COMPANY OF BIRMINGHAM

This booklet includes many examples of the glass and gothic metalwork installed by the company, including some from Leicestershire, and is extensively illustrated.

99pp

LEICESTERSHIRE HISTORY MAGAZINE

Issue 2 of *Leicestershire History* magazine will be published in January and include 11 articles. These range from Anglo-Saxon Leicestershire to the Highfields Blitz, through local convicts transported to Australia, a lion attack in medieval Loughborough, aspects of crime and punishment hidden in Leicestershire place names - and more. As a member of the LAHS you will be sent a link to the online version once published, but if you would like to sign up for a print copy [visit the website here](#).

With Christmas on the horizon, don't forget you can also purchase a gift issue which comes with a built-in discount. When you purchase this gift option you receive a copy of the latest issue, plus a unique Leicestershire-themed card and discount code offering the recipient 50% off the next issue, should they choose to subscribe. The gift arrives with you, the purchaser, in a normal envelope. Inside is a copy of the magazine, plus a card (and unsealed envelope) which contains information on how the recipient can get the discount. There is also room on the card to write a message of your own before presenting the gift. Please note that this gift bundle will be posted to the purchaser, not the recipient of the gift. The recipient will not gain access to the online version unless they take out a subscription. To find out more, visit www.leicestershirehistorymag.com and select the 'Gift an issue' option.

LAHS DISSERTATION PRIZES FOR LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY

LAHS awards four annual dissertation prizes for extended projects that focus on the Archaeology and/or History of Leicestershire and/or Rutland. There are two prizes for Archaeology, for the best Undergraduate (BA/BSc) and the best Post-Graduate (M-level) dissertations, and two prizes for History, one for Undergraduate and one for Postgraduate levels. The subject area includes comparative studies, where Leicestershire/Rutland is one of

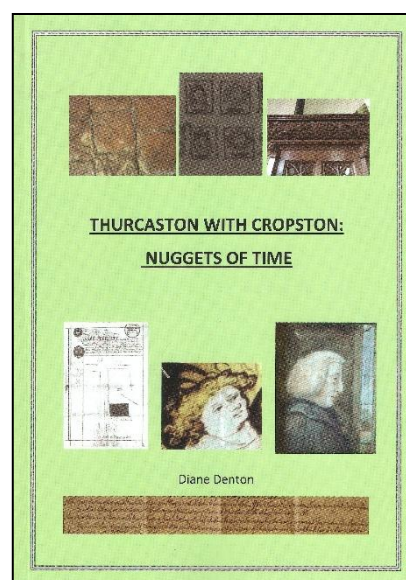
the main comparisons, and where examples from the counties are the majority of those used. It also includes art and design histories, and museum and heritage studies where the focus is on Leicestershire and/or Rutland.

The 2026 prizes are for dissertations written during the 2024-25 academic year. Dissertations should not previously have been published or be in publication. Each prize winner will be awarded £250 and the opportunity to publish some of their work in the *Leicestershire Historian*. The abstract will be published on the LAHS website. Guidelines and an application form, which should be submitted with a copy of the dissertation, are available at <https://lahs.org.uk/grants/dissertation-prizes>. **Please note that the deadline for 2026 prizes is 31 December 2025.** Enquiries should be directed to the convenor of the prize committee, Professor Elizabeth Tingle, at competitions@lahs.org.uk

OTHER NEWS

DIANE DENTON

We were sorry to hear of the death of Diane Denton earlier this year. Diane did a great deal to research and make available the history of Thurcaston and Cropston, and was the first – and only - Heritage Warden for the parish. The articles she wrote for free village periodicals were brought together in 2018 in the book *Thurcaston with Cropston: nuggets of time*, described in a review in the *Leicestershire Historian* as ‘an entertaining and informative overview of the two villages for past and current residents and “outsiders” alike’. Her particular interest in stained glass was instrumental in the detailed survey of the fabric and fittings of Thurcaston church conducted by members of the National Association of Decorative and Fine Arts Societies (NADFAS) some years ago. Her knowledge and skills will be much missed.



LEICESTER HERITAGE BUILDINGS TRUST - 'A NEW VOICE FOR HERITAGE IN LEICESTER'

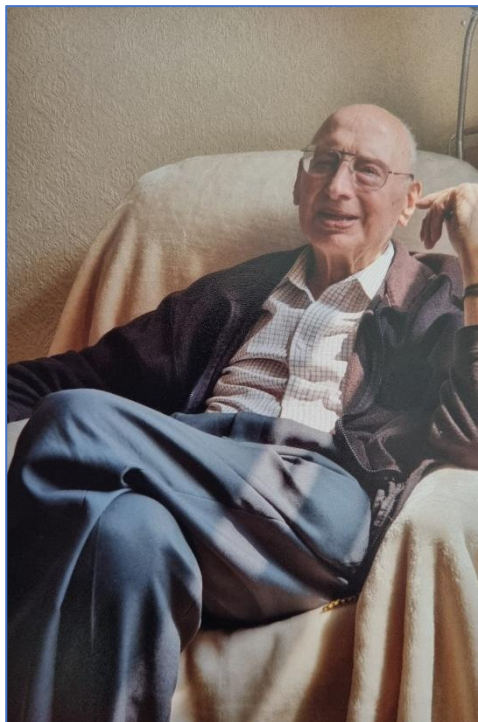
Through Heritage Lottery funding, the Architectural Heritage Fund has been tasked with supporting the delivery of a range of Heritage Development Trust initiatives across the UK. Leicester has been developing its very own Leicester Heritage Development Trust (LHBT), with trustees from a range of backgrounds who share a passion for heritage in Leicester. The LHBT has recently appointed their first team member, architectural historian and conservator Jonathan Gration. 'We are at an exciting stage now with the LHBT', he says, 'looking at the first few buildings we might take on and find long-term sustainable solutions for. Large parts of the city are almost unrecognisable since I moved here in 2013, with a special role played by celebrating the built heritage of the city in many projects. However, there is no shortage of fascinating buildings that still need a viable new use, and that is something we hope the LHBT can contribute to. Taking on listed buildings can be challenging but very rewarding as well'. Further information about LHBT will be passed on to LAHS members as it evolves.

LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL MUSEUMS - THE BRIAN BIDDLES COLLECTION

Leicestershire County Council Museums were delighted to receive a very generous donation from the family of Brian Biddles earlier this year. Brian was a diligent metal detectorist who searched the fields of the Charnwood and Blaby areas for over 40 years, from the late 1970s until early 2020. Brian was a founding member of the Leicester Search Society metal detecting club and also served as its secretary. Although Brian discovered some spectacular finds, his family say, 'he treasured all his finds however big or small they were. He kept everything logged and in his detecting cupboard or safe'.

Brian diligently recorded his finds in a ledger but also responsibly reported them, at first to the archaeologists at Leicestershire County Council, then later to the Portable Antiquities Scheme, so that others could learn from and share in his discoveries. To find out more about the scheme visit www.finds.org.uk. Photographs of Brian have been kindly shared by his family. A selection of the objects is currently displayed at Harborough Museum, Market Harborough, following their initial display at Charnwood Museum, Loughborough.

They include a Medieval gold ring, AD 1400 – 1550, from Narborough, engraved with Jesus on the cross and God above, and St John the Evangelist and the Virgin Mary either side (below left); and a Scandinavian gilded copper alloy disc brooch, AD 850-950, from Cossington (below right). The objects will find a more permanent home in Charnwood Museum over the coming years.



To view the objects discovered by Brian follow this link:

<https://finds.org.uk/database/search/results/finderID/0013F30FD0501239>.

MOUNTSORREL SPARROW CLUB

Cynthia Brown's passing reference to a Sparrow Club in Mountsorrel in her LAHS blog 'The English Sparrow – friend or foe', prompted John Doyle of the Mountsorrel Heritage Group to investigate further. Our thanks to John and the Group for permission to share what he discovered:

'Here in Mountsorrel the "Sparrow Society" appears to have existed for only a few years prior to World War I being first reported in the 8 January 1903 edition of the *Melton Mowbray Mercury and Oakham and Uppingham News*. Like other Sparrow Clubs and Societies, the aim was clearly extermination of the sparrow, and an incentive payment of one halfpenny for every sparrow brought in was offered. Just as clearly though, there was also a social element with the press reporting annual dinners being held at local inns, initially using the White Swan in Market Place but later moving to the "Bull Hotel". We suspect this name is in error and in fact relates to the Bull and Mouth. Although there were village farmers, such as Mark Smith and William Cooper within the membership, other trades were more prominent, including three of the village butchers, Thomas Gamble, Fred Willett and Fred Pepper. One suspects that, as elsewhere, a key driver for membership was the attraction of convivial annual dinners where "a large company sat down to a capital spread" (The White Swan 1904), and "During the evening a capital programme was gone through... the toast of the evening, "Success to the Sparrow Club", being proposed" (See the Bull Hotel opposite in 1906).

'The more serious business of the Sparrow Club was dealt with in the



annual reports with "2364 sparrows had been received during the last year. In addition to that large quantities of eggs had been brought in" (January 1904). Similar numbers of birds were reported in later years, but the flaw in the very localised methods was recognised by William Cooper, the Secretary in 1906. "There was, he said, no doubt that the sparrow was the enemy of the farmer and gardener, but despaired of bringing about the destruction of the sparrow unless adjoining parishes formed similar clubs. Although the club had been the means of destroying so many sparrows they appeared to be as numerous as ever". This he attributed to the "alien" sparrow. The challenge of the "alien" sparrow and a falling number of birds brought in, coupled possibly with the death in 1910 of the then President, John Ward (Master of the Barrow Union Workhouse), seems to have led to the demise of the Club'.

You may also be interested to know that the Leicestershire & Rutland Ornithological Society (LROS) have throughout this year been carrying out a survey of House Sparrows in the two counties. They intend to map their locations and work out the population size, but need help from everyone to do this, members and non-members alike. If you see any House Sparrows, you can report them using the link on the LROS website <https://lros.org.uk/>, which takes you to a simple recording form.

ARCHAEOLOGY - FIELDWORK AT LODDINGTON

During the summer, students at the University of Leicester's School of Heritage and Culture (SHAC) had an opportunity to gain hands-on experience in archaeological fieldwork as part of their undergraduate degree, in a fieldschool run in partnership with the University of Leicester Archaeological Services (ULAS). It was led by Dr Gavin Speed (Project Manager, ULAS) and Dr Philippa Walton (Fieldschool Director and Lecturer in Roman Archaeology, SHAC), in the village of Loddington, six miles from Oakham. This extract from the findings so far is reproduced by permission of ULAS.

'The village has a population of around 80 today, but in the 18th century there were around 130 inhabitants, and a documentary record from the 14th century tells us that there were perhaps around 200 people living there. There are many "humps and bumps" in the pasture fields surrounding the village that show that it has substantially shrunk in size, once being much larger in the medieval period. These subtle humps, hollows, and terraces in the landscape were carefully mapped by archaeologist Fred Hartley (Hartley 2018), revealing the hidden story of a once larger village.

'One of the most striking features is a sunken track known as a "hollow way", which runs south from the vicarage on Main Street down towards the church. This ancient route—likely medieval in origin—was once flanked by buildings, their former footprints still visible as terraced platforms. These platforms, along with traces of ridge and furrow ploughing and old field boundaries, hint at a thriving settlement that extended well beyond the modern village core.



'Near the church, the earthworks become even more complex. A network of tracks and hollow ways once connected houses, outbuildings, and fields. One such track led west to a house still standing in the 1880s, while another curved down to the stream, possibly forming a direct route to the church. Along these paths are the remains of building platforms, closes (enclosed plots), and signs of later land divisions. Another cluster of earthworks lies within Loddington Hall's former gardens, where a series of garden terraces and long ornamental ponds—one still water-filled—add a post-medieval flourish to the landscape, though some terraces may also mark earlier village buildings. Together, these earthworks form a ghost map of a village that has shifted, shrunk, and evolved over centuries—but never quite disappeared. For those who know where to look, Loddington's past is still written in the land...

'The excavation uncovered numerous post-holes forming road-side structures, set within ditched boundaries. Pottery from these features – and nearby pits – included sherds of Stamford Ware, a type of lead-glazed earthenware produced between the ninth and thirteenth centuries. The northern part of the trench contained a later building, with surviving stone walls, tile floors, and a pebbled path, this is likely of post-medieval date...'.

You can read more about the excavations, and what the students gained from the fieldschool in terms of practical skills, at [A Village Through Time – ULAS News](#).

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

GREATER WIGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Tuesday 26 January 2026

Barber Surgeons – their role in the Wars of the Roses

Eddie Smallwood

Tuesday 17 February 2026

Enduring Legacy – the story of Hinckley

Philip Yorke

Meetings are held at the Little Hill Primary School, Launceston Road, Wigston, LE18 2GZ, at 7.15 pm (doors open 6.45 pm). Free admission to members; non-members £4. Any enquiries – secretary@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk.

LEICESTER CIVIC SOCIETY – GUIDED WALKS

The Civic Society is currently planning a new series of walks for 2026. These will include a tour around the city of Derby, a Wigston walks, many new walks around Leicester, and ‘something a little different’, to be disclosed later! Details of will appear at [All Events - Leicester Civic Society](#). Advance booking essential.

LEICESTER VICTORIAN SOCIETY

Tuesday 3 February 2026, Friends Meeting House, Queens Road, Leicester, LE2 1WP, 7.30 pm

Leicester’s Board Schools

Neil Crutchley

The Education Act of 1870 enabled rapidly expanding towns and cities to provide schools in areas where none existed, and enabled School Boards to build and manage these new schools. This illustrated talk will look at the Board’s personalities, its work, and its architectural legacy. All welcome; £3 charge towards the cost of room hire and other expenses. Car parking is available at the Meeting House and in adjoining roads.

LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY – LEICESTER GROUP

Wednesday 11 March 2026, Oadby Granville Tennis Club, Leicester Road, Oadby, LE2 4AB

The alehouses of Oadby

Mark Startin.

Like most similar towns, Oadby had its share of alehouses in times gone by – some of which a few of our ancestors may have known quite well! But these places were often important hubs of the local community. Mark will be sharing tales from the histories of these iconic places. Doors open 7 pm for 7.30 pm start. For further details of these and meetings of LRFHS branches in Hinckley, Loughborough, Market Harborough and Oakham, see [LRFHS - Meetings](#).

RURAL LIFE PAST AND PRESENT

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

Local history, rural and agricultural history, recollections, country characters, farming reminiscences, canals, folklore, traditions and customs, rural occupations and skills, rural architecture, including wind and water mills, country living in the past, Gypsies and other Travellers, etc.

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RICHARD III SOCIETY

Tuesday 19 March 2026, Richard III Visitor Centre, 4A St Martins, LE1 5DB, 7 pm

Medieval Bee Keeping

Caroline Wright

Bee keeping flourished during the Middle Ages with increased demand for honey and beeswax. Honey was used in food, drink and medicine, and the superior beeswax candles found favour with the nobility and the church. This talk will look at the industries that developed around bees, and the practicalities of keeping hives. Free to members; £3 for visitors.

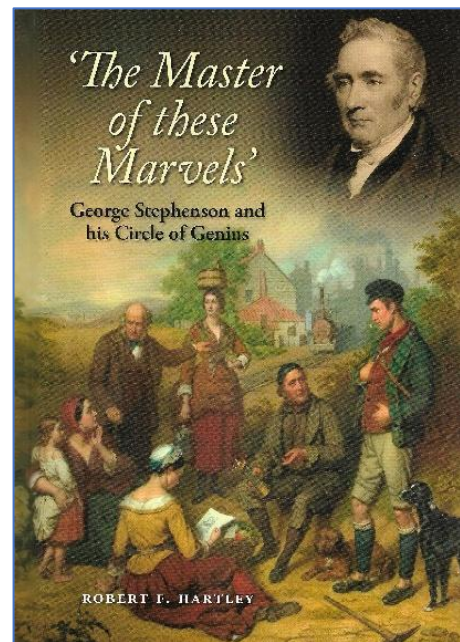
RECENT PUBLICATIONS

'THE MASTER OF THESE MARVELS' – GEORGE STEPHENSON AND HIS CIRCLE OF GENIUS

Robert F. Hartley

Railway and Canal Historical Society, 2024, 400pp, illus, ISBN 9781068687402, £30

George Stephenson was the most influential engineer of the 19th century. As a young man he saw the potential of the locomotive steam engine, and for over a decade studied every aspect of the subject, bringing together all the essential elements of the railway system still in use today. This new and very comprehensive biography draws on recent research done by contributors to successive International Early Railways conferences, alongside the author's detailed study of nearly 100 railway surveys made by Stephenson himself. He also draws whenever possible on the opinions and observations of Stephenson's contemporaries. Among the many aspects covered by the book are three periods of 'Railway Mania', and the 'Circle of Genius' he created around him to ensure that the vast potential of the railways was realised – not only his son and his brothers, but the apprentices to whose training and subsequent employment he contributed. The book is very well illustrated with maps, diagrams and sketches, as well as colour images – one of them of the opening festivities of the Leicester & Swannington Railway at Bagworth in 1832. LAHS has been pleased to support the research on which the book is based.



A WEALTH OF EXTRAORDINARY LUMINARIES FROM COALVILLE AND DISTRICT

Jeffrey Knight

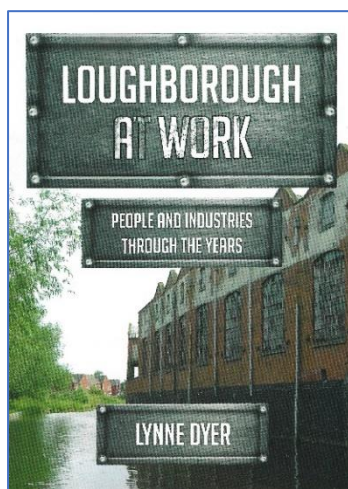
Coalville Meadows Publishing, 2025, 182pp, illus, ISBN 9781036903848, £10

This extensively researched compilation by LAHS member Jeffrey Knight records the lives of those people who helped to build the town of Coalville, encompassing engineering, building, business, sport, the arts, music, and education. Its subjects include three England footballers, several journalists and authors, social housing entrepreneurs, professors and schoolmasters, a trumpeter, and a composer. It also features an introductory section on the origins of the town of Coalville. It can be purchased online at ['A Wealth of Extraordinary Luminaries from Coalville and District' by – Coalville CAN](#).

LOUGHBOROUGH AT WORK – PEOPLE AND INDUSTRIES THROUGH THE YEARS

Lynne Dyer

Amberley, 2025, 96pp, illus, ISBN 9681398120792, £15.99



The latest volume in Lynne Dyer's histories of Loughborough explores the working life of the town and its people, and the trades, businesses and industries that have characterised it through the ages. It begins by looking at early local apprenticeships and trades, many of them common to other towns, giving examples of some of the individuals on record. Among them, unusually, was a woman, Mary Sheppard, who was apprenticed to Samuel Withers, a master tallow chandler in 1681. The woollen industry continued to be crucial to Loughborough's prosperity, but the 'Industrial Revolution brought new employment to the town in the form of canals and railways, bell-founding, engineering and brewing – just as the evolution of large hosiery factories also changed its landscape.

The histories of local companies are explored within the wider context of these changes, among them Herbert Morris, Brush, Zenobia perfumes, and the pharmaceutical company of Fisons. The decline of industry and the growth of other forms of work are also covered, including Loughborough University and retailing in the 21st century.

HIGH FLYING AROUND VOLUME II –

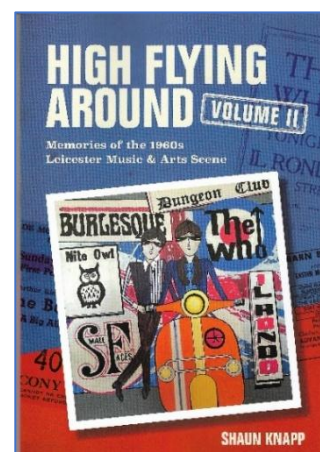
MEMORIES OF THE 1960S LEICESTER MUSIC AND ARTS SCENE

Shaun Knapp

DB Publishing, 2025, 212pp, illus, ISBN 9781780916651, £14.99

In the first volume of *High Flying Around*, Shaun Knapp told the story of the music scene in Leicester in the latter part of the 1960s through members of the popular Leicester band Legay, DJs, designers, agents, musicians, mods, and those that attended the vast number of local music venues. Volume II follows the realisation, after curating the *Mods: shaping a generation* exhibition in Leicester in 2019, that there was 'still so much to do' - so many memories as yet unrecorded from 'the people who were there'. The variety of topics the book covers illustrates this very well, including such subjects as the importance of higher education venues in the local music scene; 'Anarchists, beatniks, CND and folk music' (the Couriers Club and the White Swan); Joe Orton and music; and Leicester women in the 1960s, in the context of wider social change in that decade.

Some of the biggest names in music performed in Leicester, among them David Bowie, Fleetwood Mac and Pink Floyd, but the city also had an 'underground' music and poetry scene – and free concerts organised in 1969 by the newly formed Leicester Arts Lab. The vibrant creativity of the 1960s was also captured in the documentary film *Moving in the Shadows*, made by Joe Nixon after listening to his father John's recorded memories of the 1960s after his death in 2017, highlights of which are included by Joe in the book. *High Flying Around II* will surely prompt still more memories for readers who were themselves 'there' in the 1960s – and offer a lively and very informative insight into the Leicester music and arts scene for those who were not.



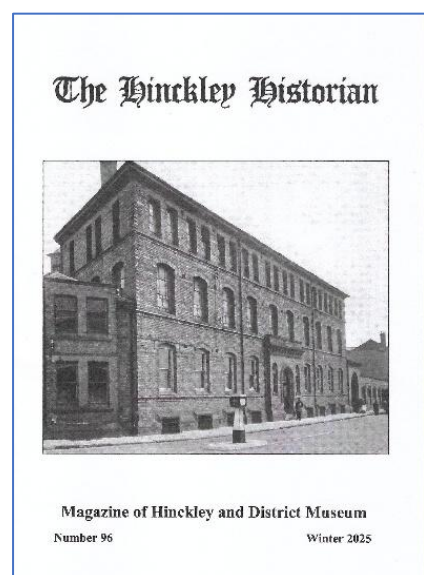
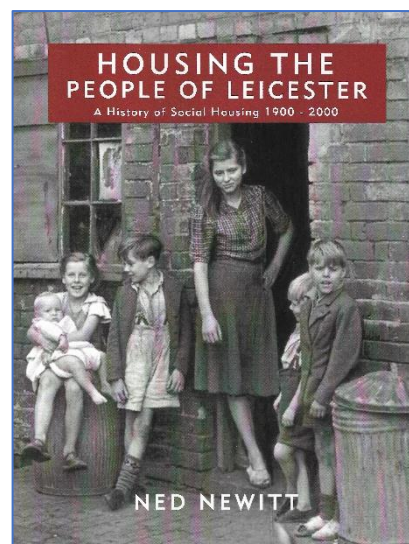
HOUSING THE PEOPLE OF LEICESTER – A HISTORY OF SOCIAL HOUSING 1900 - 2000

Ned Newitt

Leicester Pioneer Press, 2025, 300pp, illus, ISBN
9780955282546, £19.95

This comprehensive history of social housing in Leicester by LAHS Vice President Ned Newitt extends from its origins in the Victorian period through to the end of the 20th century, providing a history of all of Leicester's major estates. The continuing need to address deficiencies in working class housing is examined in detail, and graphically illustrated in photographs and other images – most notably in the chapter on slum clearance between the two world wars. It also gives due prominence to the pioneers of municipal housing in Leicester, who persisted in their belief that 'without good-quality housing, people's life chances were dramatically reduced' in the face of financial obstacles and political obstacles.

Beyond municipal housing itself, an early section of *Housing the People* looks at the Humberstone Garden Suburb estate developed by the Anchor Tenants co-operative, while later sections consider the role of the Housing Renewal programme in halting inner city decay from the 1970s; the growth of Housing Associations; and the treatment of the homeless from the workhouse to the present. As the cover of the book notes, this is not just a social, political and architectural history, 'but goes some way to explain the roots of the current crisis' in housing. At the time of writing it was available at a special discounted price of £15 at [Housing the People of Leicester - Leicester Pioneer Press](#).



HINCKLEY HISTORIAN – MAGAZINE OF HINCKLEY AND DISTRICT MUSEUM, NUMBER 96

Various authors

Hinckley and District Museum, Winter 2025, 37pp, illus,
ISBN 09634738, £2

The main article in this edition of the *Hinckley Historian* is 'The irrepressible Wilson Chapman: Hinckley councillor, trades unionist and businessman', by Paul Griffiths. As the title suggests, his contributions to life in Hinckley over three decades were many and varied, and are covered here in some detail – including his role in other local organisations, and his transition into business as a boot and shoe manufacturer in 1909. A second article by Dave Knight uses

using trade directories, town surveys, health reports and maps to identify a range of Hinckley's factories from the mid-1850s. Many have now disappeared, but the article includes photographs of those that remain. Dave Knight also contributes the final article on 'Public health and the hosiery trade in 1860', with a particular focus on the prevalence of lung disease, and its causes and effects as reported to the Privy Council in the following year.

A HISTORICAL FOOTNOTE

Christmas was always an important occasion in the past for dispensing charity in the form of food, tobacco, clothing or fuel - both through established organisations, bequests, or individual philanthropy. Here are some examples from across Leicestershire and Rutland from the *Leicester Chronicle*, 1 January 1842.

CHRISTMAS BENEFACTIONS.

The poor in the **Billesdon** Union Workhouse at Great Glenn [sic], was plentifully regaled with plum-pudding, roast beef, ale, and tobacco, by order of the Guardians of the above Union, on Christmas-day.

Thurmaston. — On Christmas-day, John Day, Esq. gave one hundred and eighty-five stones of bread to the poor inhabitants of Thurmaston.

Little Bowden. — The inhabitants of Little Bowden were last week presented with three fat sheep by the Rev. H. K. Wood — a welcome Christmas box.

Tur Langton. — A fine fat ox, presented by the Rev. James Ord, was slaughtered by Mr. John Dexter, and distributed to the inhabitants of Turlangton [sic], in addition to which a subscription has been made for the purpose of purchasing 5 cwt of coal for each poor family in the village...

On Christmas-day the hearts of the poor in the **Loughborough** Union-house were made glad by a dinner of plum pudding and roast-beef. On Christmas-eve, the Rev. William Holme, rector of Loughborough, made his annual distribution of beef, tea, and bread, to upwards of 140 widows and widowers. It would be well if this good example would operate upon others who have the means of relieving the wants of the suffering poor at this season of the year.

Whetstone. — Messrs. Allen and Martin, the managers of the Whetstone Charitable Clothing Society, have, during the present week, made their annual distribution of clothing amongst the poor of that populous village. Too much praise cannot be bestowed upon the benevolent members of this excellent association, by whose exertions upwards of £100 worth of warm and useful clothing has been given to their poorer neighbours, at a period when their provident kindness would be so fully appreciated by its objects.

Lutterworth. — By the kindness and liberality of the Right Hon. the Baron Gurney, Lady Gurney, the Rev. J. H. Gurney, and Mrs. Ware, the poor of Lutterworth were enabled to partake in the festivities prevalent at this season of the year, each family being supplied with 6lbs. or 41lbs. (according to the number) of beef a quart of ale, and plum pudding.

Walcote. — The poor of this place were plentifully supplied with beef on Christmas day, by the liberality of — Lindsay, Esq. [sic]

Cottesbach. — The labourers and dependents of J. P. Marriott, Esq. had each a quantity of beef sent to their houses, so that they might comfortably enjoy themselves on Christmas day.

The Earl of Gainsborough has this week sent £30 to be given to the poor of **Oakham and Barleythorpe**, and it was on Tuesday distributed to them in coals.

Geo. Finch, Esq., of Burley on the Hill, has given £20 for distribution in coals and bedding amongst his cottagers and small tenantry in **Greetham**: and a further sum of £5 in aid of the general clothing club.

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.