

Leicestershire VCH News

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Our New Ibstock Book

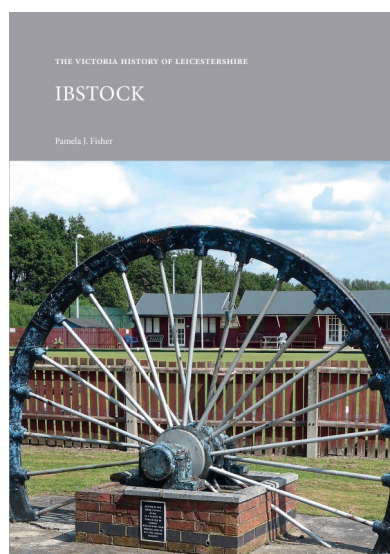
Our paperback history of Ibstock is due to be published in October. Restrictions on indoor 'gatherings' means that it will not be possible to hold a launch event at present. Instead, we hope to hold a celebratory event in Ibstock some time in 2021. Meanwhile, copies of the book will be available to purchase by post.

The book recounts the history of Ibstock from earliest times to the present day. It covers landscape, transport, population, settlement, landownership, economic history, social character, community organisations, schools, religious history and local government.

Ibstock, 15 miles NW of Leicester, was one of the largest villages in the county in the 1920s, but is little-known to many people today outside its immediate locality.

This was a mining area in the 19th century. Ibstock colliery opened in 1825 and closed in 1929. Ellistown colliery was sunk in the parish in 1873. The collieries and their attached brickworks form an important part of Ibstock's history. They drove a rapid growth in population, which created the village we see today – its housing, large sports grounds, former cinema (attractively restored as a community facility), many places of worship, and a range of social clubs and organisations that helped the community survive the closure of the mines.

Ibstock is first mentioned in Domesday Book, when the manor was held by Ingulf, one of the 'men of the Count of Meulan'.



One of Ingulf's descendants had no sons, and Ibstock manor was divided between two sisters in the early 13th century, each half having its own open fields.

Although the two parts were later reunited, the physical division enabled the land in the south to be enclosed for pasture without any need to rearrange the open fields in the north. The south of the parish was enclosed in a piecemeal fashion, by private agreement between landholders, between the 1590s and 1700. The northern part of the parish continued to be farmed in three great open fields until enclosed by Act of Parliament in 1775.

It is rare to catch sight of the process of early enclosure. But we can do so in Ibstock. Thomas Paget bought three closes from Thomas Barwell in 1636 for £90. The conveyance set out that 'if the closes or any of them happen to be thrown open or used in common' as they had been previously, Paget's purchase money would be returned, together with any expenses he had incurred 'in manuring dressing and husbanding the closes', as determined by independent arbiters.

One of these closes was known as Lanefield Close. A will of 1558 records two bridges into Lane Field. One was presumably the road bridge on Overton Road, over the brook. The second became a modern footbridge, also crossing the brook, into what would once have been Lane Field (shown below).



The book can be purchased from ourselves for £9, plus £2 P&P, until 31 December 2020 by sending a cheque payable to Leicestershire VCH Trust to Meadowside, Main Street, Kings Norton, Leicester, LE7 9BF

If possible, please include an email address with your order, so we can let you know if there is any delay, and inform you of the event we are hoping to plan in Ibstock in 2021.

The cost of the book from 1 January 2021 will be £10 plus P&P if ordered from ourselves.

OUR ADDRESS

We have been 'working from home' since March. Our office at Salisbury Road in Leicester (part of the University of Leicester) has been locked down, and we are only able to visit infrequently. This remains the case even though much of the University is now open.

Please therefore note that our address for all regular correspondence and book orders is now:

**Leicestershire VCH Trust, Meadowside,
Main Street, Kings Norton, Leicester, LE7 9BF**

You can continue to email us at leicsvch@leicester.ac.uk

Our registered office remains unchanged.

OUR FINANCES

Covid-19 has caused problems for many organisations that rely on members' subscriptions, donations and grants. How has it affected us? We have always taken care to match the work we take on to the money available. So far, we have been able to balance these and continue many of our current activities, although some work has not been possible due to the closure of libraries, museums and record offices. In particular, this has hampered work on a project on the early history of Loughborough market, for which we hold a Shire Grant awarded by Leicestershire County Council.

So, what does the future hold? When record offices and libraries fully reopen, restrictions will almost certainly apply, such as fewer reader desks and shorter opening hours. These will increase the cost of essential research in distant record offices, as more visits may be required to do the same amount of work.

Fundraising is likely to be more difficult. Grant-giving organisations will have numerous requests. County and district councils are finding it harder to meet all their statutory obligations, and are unlikely to make as many grants as in the past. Businesses have been badly affected, and to many, survival is their most pressing consideration. Many companies that have previously made donations to local causes out of annual profits may not be in a position to do so for several years.

This means that subscriptions from our Friends and membership of our 200 Club will be even more important to us than in the past. We are very grateful to those who have supported these schemes, and hope you will continue to do so. Please encourage any of your friends who are interested in the history of Leicestershire to join. Could you make a bequest in your will? Details can be found online at <https://www.history.ac.uk/research/victoria-county-history/county-histories-progress/leicestershire/support-vch-leicestershire>

200 CLUB WINNERS

Membership of our 200 Club costs £50 annually, or can be paid at £12.50 quarterly. From that sum, 60% goes to fund our work on parish histories, including volunteer training, and 40% is paid out quarterly in prize draws. We currently have just over 50 members although, as the name of the scheme indicates, we hope one day to have 200. More members are therefore very welcome!

You may notice in this list of winners that one number has been won by two people. This is because some numbers were reallocated in January 2020.

September 2019 (54 in draw)

1st, no. 56, Mr M. Chamberlain, £135.00

2nd, no. 22, Mr. D. Deadman, £90.00

3rd, no. 10, Mr I. McAlpine £45.00

December 2019 (53 in draw)

1st, no. 17, Mr P. Holden, £133.50

2nd, no. 15, name withheld, £88.33

3rd, no. 10, Mr I. McAlpine, £44.17

March 2020 (53 in draw)

1st, no. 30, Mr R. Bream, £133.50

2nd, no. 18, name withheld, £88.33

3rd, no. 17, Dr P. O'Callaghan, £44.17

June 2020 (52 in draw)

1st, no. 17, Dr P. O'Callaghan, £130.00

2nd, no. 27, Ms E. Bryan, £86.67

3rd, no. 50, name withheld, £43.33

FUTURE VCH RESEARCH ON LOUGHBOROUGH

Our interest in Loughborough began with the Charnwood Roots Project, which included Loughborough, by far the most complex and challenging of its parishes. Now we are focussing on this important town, and we expect that its history will fill all or most of a red volume, with a text of 160,000 words, or 400 pages.

We have already made a start. A group of

local volunteers did an excellent job of pulling together the evidence on public health in the nineteenth century. This was also relevant to the supply of clean water, and we were able to contribute to the history of the Fearon Fountain, which celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2020, and create a small 'virtual' exhibition online (see pages 7-8). We are planning to research the early history of the market, which has also reached a significant milestone, having received its first charter in 1221.

The next phase of writing the history of Loughborough, in which Pam Fisher will play a vital role, will be to focus on the town's industries. It began as a market town, with a variety of trades and crafts to satisfy the needs of those living in the town and surrounding countryside. It developed specialisms in the eighteenth century in hosiery, malting, lace and woolcombing, and the population grew from 1,700 in the late seventeenth century to 5,500 in 1811.

These were mainly artisan crafts practised in the home, and the transformation and diversification of the town's industries came in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, an important early stage being John Taylor's move to the town in 1839, where he established a foundry, specialising in bells. Major steps in the later nineteenth century included the development of Herbert Morris's factory making lifts and cranes, and also the locomotives, rolling stock, and electrical engines made at Henry Hughes and Brush. Other companies made boilers and cycles.



A bell being
cast at
Taylor's bell-
foundry

Loughborough's industrial base was always diverse, and alongside textiles and the heavy metal industries, publishing developed with the founding of Ladybird books, and also companies making perfume, bricks and pharmaceuticals. These new sources of

employment took the population to 23,000 in 1911, and to 60,000 at the present day.

The research into these many industries will be a challenge, because although a number of books have been published on individual companies, they need to be supplemented by consulting scattered archives, some of which are in the county record office and others are still with the firms.

General questions also need to be answered, for example why so much industry developed in a once small market town? Textiles are probably the key, as they were so dominant in the early stages, and factories producing hosiery and clothing continued alongside the metal and engineering activity in the nineteenth century. The two were connected, because the textile companies as they increased output promoted the invention and manufacture of machinery, William Cotton's business being one example. Also the employment of men in engineering complemented the work available for women in textiles.



We still must ask why large companies involved in heavy mechanical engineering

became established in the town? The high quality transport links by canal and rail helped, but why did a company like Morris with links with Sheffield not remain in that centre of the iron and steel trades?

Industries are important in their own right for the wealth and employment that they brought to the town, and had general consequences, such as the public health problems, and divisions in society that provoked unrest. Among the positive results were improvements in medical welfare, and moves to advance technical education, with the foundation of the Technical Institute in 1909 and eventually a University of Technology in 1966.

CHARNWOOD ROOTS DATABANK

As part of our Heritage-Lottery-funded Charnwood Roots project, volunteers and project staff collected information about the histories of 35 towns, villages and hamlets across the Charnwood area (which stretched over a wider area than Charnwood District Council). Much of the information was uploaded into a databank, with some left to be uploaded after the project ended in 2017.



The unshaded area shows the part of Leicestershire covered by the Charnwood Roots project

Some technical problems were encountered in transferring this data to a new 'host' and improving the search facility, which took time to resolve. This work was completed in January 2020, and we are very grateful to Teri Forey from the University of Leicester IT Services for her work, and to the volunteers who came forward to upload the final items.

The databank contains over 6,500 entries, mostly from documentary sources, which are fully referenced. It is now available online as a free resource for anyone interested in the history of this part of Leicestershire. It can be searched by place, topic, keyword, or any combination of these.

The databank can be found online at <https://www.charnwoodroots.org/databank/> Anyone is welcome to use the information it contains in any way they wish. All we ask is that Charnwood Roots and Leicestershire VCH are acknowledged in any published work or exhibition which uses any of this data.

WORKING IN LOCKDOWN

Archive offices and libraries closed in March, and volunteer groups have not been able to meet since then. But although our publications rely on original research in documents, few of which are online, we have still been able to make steady progress, as the articles in this newsletter show. Inevitably there have had to be some changes to the work we planned to do, but we have been fortunate in the timing of the lockdown, and have had plenty to keep us busy.

One major task has been making final changes, proof-reading and indexing our Ibstock book. We are pleased to have been able to bring this to press during this period.

From the end of February, when some kind of lockdown appeared inevitable, visits were made to the National Archives at Kew, Lambeth Palace Library, Northamptonshire Archives and Leicestershire Record Office. When they closed in March we held over 400 photographs of documents which we had yet to study. Taking notes from, or transcribing, these is well-suited to home working.

We also had a large collection of notes and draft text for our next paperback, a history of Lutterworth. Pulling these together, and adding information from the photographs we had recently taken and digitised sources, including some parish registers, probate records and local newspapers, has meant we are now well on the way to completing our Lutterworth history.

We have also written two articles for publication this autumn in *Transactions of Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society* (about early 18th-century Lutterworth) and *Leicestershire Historian* (about Ibstock between 1831 and 1931). We hope these will also raise awareness of our work, and encourage more people to support us.

The National Archives kindly made their digitised wills free to download during 'lockdown' and beyond, and with the help of volunteers we now have copies of over 300

wills proved in London before 1858 for parishes being studied. These were previously only available free if downloaded when physically present at the National Archives, or for £3.50 each if ordered from home. Having these in hand will save some time when we next visit Kew, and help our research to progress.

Some planned work on Loughborough and Coston has had to be deferred until we can convene volunteer meetings and visit archive offices again (see pages 2, 3-4, 7). We hope these projects will get underway in early 2021, if not before.

We were sorry that we could not hold any events over the summer, such as walks and tours, where we would normally sell copies of our paperbacks, and would have collected expressions of interest for our Ibstock book. Instead, we have created two online resources on Ibstock chapels and the provision of piped water in Loughborough – see pages 7-8. These do not provide any financial return in the short term, but will hopefully stimulate interest in our work.

Everything considered, lockdown has therefore been highly productive, even if not in quite the way we had originally planned.

FORTHCOMING TALK

Dr Adam Chapman of VCH Central Office in London will be delivering an **online** paper, 'Where next for the Victoria County History?', on Thursday 5 November, looking at the progress and direction of this national project. This is part of the regular seminar series held by the Centre for English Local History, University of Leicester. All are welcome to 'attend' via PC or tablet. Questions will be invited at the end.

You can log in from 2pm for a 2.15pm start. The link you will need is:

<https://eu.bbcollab.com/guest/3295c06f14c44056aaa3565c93856d28>

LUTTERWORTH'S BUILDINGS

When the initial lockdown was eased in the summer, we were able to visit the places we are researching and walk around the streets, looking at buildings to identify main periods of building activity and styles.

A serious fire in 1653 destroyed a reputed 80 bays of buildings in Lutterworth, and although some timber-framed buildings are believed to pre-date this fire, we do not know what has been lost.

From the 17th century onwards, two main periods of building activity can be seen. The first of these, between c.1790 and 1840, coincides with the peak coaching period. The three main coach services calling at Lutterworth were a London-Manchester coach from 1787, the London-Chester mail coach from 1788, and a Cambridge-Birmingham coach in the 1790s. It is clear from the town's buildings that this was a period of prosperity for many. New houses were built, and many existing homes were re-styled.



14 Bank Street

The Greek Revival movement was at its peak. This is most noticeable in Joseph Hansom's Town Hall (1836), and on a more modest scale at 14 Bank Street. Other buildings carry a flavour of the style, for example the horizontal rustication seen on the ground floor of The Terrace (originally Wickliff Terrace), newly built at that time on Regent Road, and applied to older buildings including the Hind Inn, the so-called Manor House on Market Street and Hythe House on Woodmarket.

Lean times followed, as long-distance traffic moved to the railways from 1840, but the opening of Lutterworth railway station in 1899 heralded better days to come. Industry arrived, and the growing population needed houses. Many were built near the foundries and the new factories. Council houses were planned as early as 1913, and the first were completed in 1915.

Factory owners and managers also needed homes. The town waterworks opened in 1899, encouraging other businesses, such as Thomas Buck's steam brewery. Shopkeepers benefitted from increasing trade as the population grew. Many new homes for the expanding middle-classes were built along Coventry Road and Bitteswell Road between 1898 and 1939, with their own individual features.



A pair of 20th-century houses on Bitteswell Road

We have enjoyed exploring these from the street, and writing about them for our fourth paperback, the history of Lutterworth, which we aim to publish in 2022.

COSTON CHURCH AND VILLAGE

The medieval church of St Andrew in Coston occupies a prominent raised spot adjacent to the B676 between Melton Mowbray and Buckminster. Driving past, one cannot help but notice the unusually slender spire, sitting on a tower which is largely contained within the body of the church. Extensive earthworks to the south of the church reveal where the village once stood, but there are now fewer than half a dozen houses in the village, which contained 31 households in 1381.



St Andrew's church lost part of its roof to lead thieves in 2018. An application by the parochial church

council to the National Lottery Heritage Fund proposing a community history project and a range of open days and other events in the church was approved. We are leading the history project, but the COVID-19 restrictions have delayed the planned group meetings.

In recent weeks, with restrictions eased, we have been able to explore the building, and have also walked round the earthworks.

The oldest part of the church is the tower, with a deeply-splayed lancet window. The south aisle, with triple sedilia and piscina, has two fragments of 14th-century glass in the east window, depicting the crucifixion and St Mary, and an apparently medieval vine frieze, curiously above the original roof corbels.



The chancel was completely rebuilt in the Gothic Revival style in 1846 (probably the earliest in this style in a Leicestershire church) by Sheffield architects Weighman and Hadfield, with the east window by William Warrington. On the wall is a brass memorial to Temple Crozier, son of the then rector, accidentally killed on a London stage in 1896, in a drama production which proved more dramatic than intended.

Hopefully the community history project will be able to get fully underway in 2021.

Open days, church tours, history and archaeology displays and tours of the earthworks, the latter to be led by Peter Liddle, former county archaeologist, are planned for 2021.

ONLINE TOUR AND EXHIBITION

Our plans for summer events linked to the national archaeology festival in July had to be cancelled, which was disappointing, as we enjoy the opportunity to meet people who are interested in local history, and to make our research findings available to them through talks and tours.

Two of the events we had planned were a tour of Ibstock's nonconformist churches and an exhibition telling the story of the 19th-century 'battle' in Loughborough for a piped water supply. We hope to hold these events in July 2021, but meanwhile, we have turned some of our research on these topics into an online tour (of Ibstock) and an online exhibition (on Loughborough).

These online 'events' also help us to deliver the results of our research to those who for any reason are unable to join walks and talks, or visit exhibitions, but who have an internet connection. The Ibstock 'walk' is also designed for viewing on a smartphone, so those who want to complete the walk 'in real life' at a time to suit themselves could travel to the start point for a 'self-guided' tour following the instructions on their smartphone.



**Ibstock Baptist Church,
the starting point for our 'tour'**

The Ibstock walk includes an interactive map and 'visits' the present Baptist, former Primitive Methodist, former and current Wesleyan Reform and current (and former Wesleyan) Methodist churches. There are

images and information about the history of these buildings and their congregations, and other historic buildings on the route.

The Loughborough exhibition on the provision of piped water opens with the high death rate in the town and the petition of over 200 inhabitants for intervention by the newly-established General Board of Health in 1849.

It explores the inspector's visit and his conclusions — including that the town should have sewers and piped water. It then looks at the 'battle' between what one newspaper called the "do nothing party", the "movers", who wanted the recommendations implementing in full, and the "something must be done" party, who wanted the town to pursue a middle course. Those wishing to improve the conditions of the poor were pitted against those landlords who thought the rates (local property taxes) were already too high, and who had the power to elect a local board, either to implement a scheme, or endlessly procrastinate.

Loughborough's rector, archdeacon Henry Fearon, had welcomed the inspector's

recommendations, and wrote occasional letters to the newspapers when nothing seemed to be happening. Sewers were laid across most of the town in 1854-5, but could not be flushed through with piped water until 1870. The board had been finally been goaded into action by new legislation, and the threat of action by Fearon and others who threatened to form a new company to build a waterworks if the board failed to do so.

You can find the Ibstock walk at https://leicestershirehistory.co.uk/?page_id=3852

The Loughborough 'battle' is at https://leicestershirehistory.co.uk/?page_id=3867



Nanpantan Reservoir, created for Loughborough in 1870



**Leicestershire Victoria
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Leicestershire Victoria County History Trust was launched in May 2009 to support and promote the Victoria County History project in Leicestershire. The Trust works with volunteers across the county to research and publish the history of Leicestershire towns and villages. Training and support is provided free of charge

The Trust relies on charitable donations to support this work. Please consider joining our 200 Club, becoming a Friend of the Trust or making a donation to support ongoing work in Leicestershire. More information is available on our website, at www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/leicestershire, or you can contact us at the address shown in the panel to the left.

Leicestershire Victoria County History Trust is a registered charity (No. 1128575) and a registered company (No. 6683052).

