



# Leicestershire VCH News

Issue 12

Summer 2021

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## Lutterworth goes to Press

Lutterworth was one of the parishes we began to research when we recruited our first volunteer historians in 2010. It soon became clear that this would be a major project requiring a substantial grant to complete all the research that would be necessary to produce a book.

As a market town, Lutterworth's history is more complex than that of any parish we have published so far. The town also has more medieval records, which require specific skills to read and interpret. Now, with the help and support of many people, we have completed the research, written the text and selected the images, including a wonderful watercolour scene by talented local artist Sue Browne, who has kindly agreed we may use it for the cover (see opposite). Positive pre-publication reviews have been received, and the final work has now been sent to the publishers. Publication is expected in the first half of 2022.

This book, researched and written by Dr Pam Fisher and Dr Andrew Watkins with contributions from many volunteers, traces the evolution and development of Lutterworth from small beginnings before the Norman Conquest to the challenges posed today by the town's position as a key location for the modern logistics industry. Lutterworth's people and their roles in shaping the economy, schools, churches, institutions and community life all feature strongly, as does the importance of the market in developing trade between the east and west midlands in the Middle Ages and the later effect of transport changes (including stage-coaches, railways and the modern



**The cover image (by Sue Browne) for our Lutterworth book, to be published in 2022**

motorway network) on people, employment, housing and daily life.

Lutterworth is well known for its connection with John Wyclif, the town's rector from 1374 until his death in 1384. It was also the birthplace of the jet engine, which was developed by Sir Frank Whittle between 1937 and 1942 in a disused foundry building in the town.

What may be less well-known is the importance of the late medieval wool trade to the town's economy. Lutterworth was home in the late 15th century to at least three members of the Company of Staplers at Calais: John Reynolds, who died in 1473, Sir William Feilding, who died in 1471 and was exporting wool in the 1450s and 1460s, and Sir William's eldest son Everard, who died in 1515.

A century later, Lutterworth's main medieval religious guild, which originally

benefitted the town's mercantile interests, might have been expected to lose its assets when guilds and chantries were dissolved at the Reformation. Instead, although some property had to be given up, other land and properties were retained, and the guild seamlessly evolved into the Town Estate, which provided a wide range of benefits to every class of resident then and in later centuries, and continues to be an important town charity today.

If you are on our mailing list, you will be advised when this paperback becomes available for sale. We hope to hold a launch event in 2022 (if no government restrictions prevent this). If you are not on our mailing list and would like to be advised when the book becomes available, please send your contact details to us at [Leicsvch@le.ac.uk](mailto:Leicsvch@le.ac.uk), or to our postal address, which is shown on the back page.

## Our Patrons

It is with great sadness that we record the deaths since our last Newsletter of two patrons of Leicestershire Victoria County History Trust.

Sir Lyonel Tollemache Bt JP DL died in October 2020. He was a great supporter of our work and funded our second paperback, a history of Buckminster and Sewstern, a parish where his family have been landowners since 1763.

The Very Reverend Derek Hole, Provost Emeritus of Leicester, died in September 2021. He was also a great supporter of the Trust and through his efforts we were able to raise a substantial sum of money towards our research in 2016.

We shall greatly miss their support, and extend our condolences to their families.

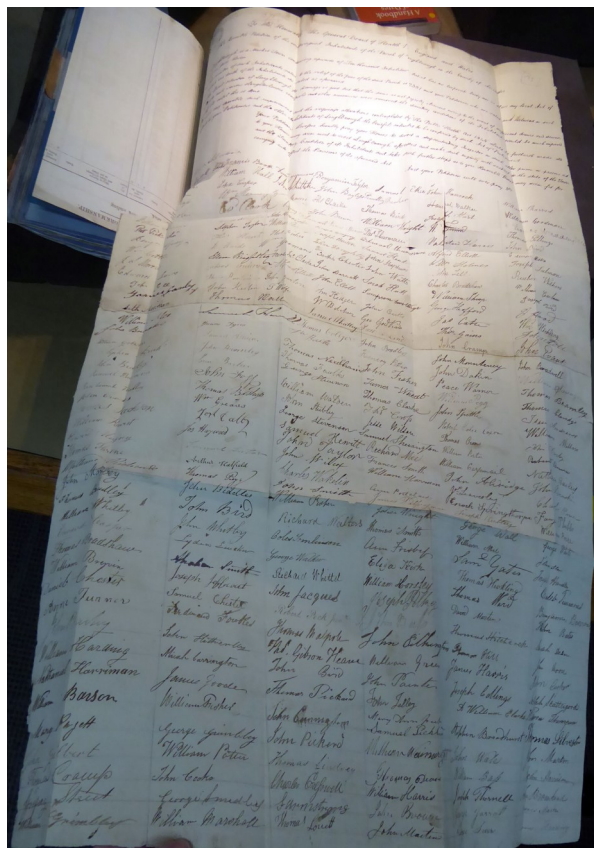
## Water on Tap: Loughborough Exhibition

Our planned event to mark the 150th anniversary of the introduction of piped water to Loughborough in 1870 had to be postponed, but what's in a number? The 151st anniversary is surely just as notable.

A talk (on Zoom) to Loughborough U3A group, entitled 'Penny Wise but Pound Foolish? The Loughborough Water Controversy, 1848–1870', concluded the main part of our research into the provision of piped water and drainage.

This talk set out to explain why, despite widespread recognition in 1848 that the health of Loughborough's residents was dependent upon access to fresh water, it was not until 1870 that piped water was introduced.

The election of Loughborough's first Board of Health in 1850, which would have responsibility for water, sewerage and the cleanliness of the streets, was forced on the town following a public health inspection in 1848. That inspection was brought about by the high mortality seen in the town (and visible to central government following the registration of all deaths by civil registrars appointed nationwide from 1837) and a petition to the General Board of Health in London signed by 279 Loughborough ratepayers asking the board to send an inspector to the town.



The petition to the General Board of Health

The inspection concluded with a direction that a local Board of Health was to be elected by Loughborough's ratepayers. The annual elections could be fiercely contended. Those who would pay the most through their rates (a tax on land and property) also had the least to gain – major landowners would pay heavily for their acreage, and the owners of large houses often already had their own private, uncontaminated, wells and pumps. Water engineering was in its infancy, and we should not be surprised by the board's desire to obtain multiple quotations for the work, or that the few engineers with experience in this work were very busy in other towns and cities. Visits could not be arranged at short notice, surveys took time to produce and written reports took even longer. Delays were unpopular with those who sought reform, but were inevitable. Was the board being 'penny wise', or was it 'pound foolish' to select the cheaper option of a small reservoir from the Woodbrook at Nanpantan rather than much a larger reservoir on the Blackbrook?

The Board rejected the Blackbrook option in 1868 on the grounds of cost. Nanpantan reservoir could supply sufficient water for 12,000 residents, which was deemed to be sufficient. It opened in 1870. The population of Loughborough in 1871 was 11,426. By 1881 the population had grown to 14,861. The reservoir ran dry, but the Board still dithered. They only acted in 1885 when they realised Leicester Corporation was about to buy the Blackbrook rights. A new Blackbrook reservoir to supply Loughborough's water opened in 1906.



**An excursion to the Blackbrook, July 1897**

We also traced the history of two swimming pools. One opened in 1898 in Queen's Park, within the building that is now Charnwood Museum, but there was an earlier pool off Moor Lane, which opened in 1886 and took its water supply straight from the canal. The aim seemed to have been to divert swimmers away from the canal itself, where they were getting in the way of barges.

We drew these strands together in an exhibition, 'Fresh water for Loughborough: the battle for a water supply,

1848–1906' which opened in Loughborough Library, Local Studies from 5 July and ran to 24 September 2021.



The Local Studies Library volunteers were able to borrow a range of artefacts from Leicestershire County Council Museums Services and Leicester Museums and Galleries Collection, which were displayed in cases alongside information from our research and books and photographs from Loughborough Library Local Studies



collection. Objects in the displays included a wooden privy seat, a chamber pot, a blue and white ceramic toilet, a lilac basin, ewer and soap dish for a bedroom and a 1920s swimming cap. We also included handwashing posters produced in the UK and USA in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic, bringing home the continuing importance of access to fresh water, and the relevance of the topic to our lives today.



# Exploring the Shrunken Village of Coston



**Above and opposite: over 40 people attended our public event on a glorious summer day in July 2021**

The village of Coston is 7 miles NE of Melton Mowbray. As we reported last year, we have been assisting Coston PCC with a history project in connection with their application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for a grant to renew part of the church roof following a lead theft. COVID restrictions prevented the project from getting underway in April 2020, and plans for a guided tour and talk about the church were revised when restrictions on gatherings continued into 2021.

Earthworks to the south of the church indicate the sites of former houses, and these had been drawn, analysed and published by R.F. Hartley in 1987. We hoped that, even if indoor events continued to be restricted, these could form the basis for a guided walk in July 2021. With agreement from the landowner and tenant farmers, David Chubb (churchwarden), Peter Liddle (Leicestershire Fieldworkers and former County Archaeologist), Paul Dickinson (Melton Fieldworkers) and Pam Fisher (Leicestershire VCH) took a socially-distanced walk around the site in 2020, and also visited the site of the former watermill and the evidence of fishponds to the north of the church. We agreed that a guided walk would attract interest.

Leicestershire County Council Museums Services were willing to lend finds for a display from previous archaeological work in the parish, and Melton Fieldworkers were keen to do some fieldwalking on local arable fields in autumn 2020, in a manner which would meet all social distancing and 'rule of six' outdoor regulations.

For our part, we consulted published sources for numbers of taxable residents, householders and

communicants in the 14th, 16th and 17th centuries. Dr Leslie Parker's 1948 thesis on the early enclosure of land in Leicestershire provided further specific information about the enclosure of land for pasture in Coston between the 1590s and 1620. There is evidence that some people moved away at that time, but without further archaeological and documentary research it is impossible to say whether the visible house platforms were deserted at that time, or if they related to an earlier period of population shrinkage.

There was a further period of depopulation between 1871 and the First World War, largely as a result of the agricultural depression, which ran from the early 1870s to the late 1890s. The occupiers of small farms found it difficult to earn a profit on their land, and moved away to earn their living elsewhere. The decennial censuses record 164 people living in the village in 1871, but only 75 residents in 1921.

We now know that there was a church in this village by c.1080, when Coston's lord, Henry de Ferrers, gave two thirds of the tithes from his lands here to Tutbury priory in Staffordshire (which he founded), with the remaining one-third reserved to Coston church. A window in the west wall of the present church survives from the late 11th century, and may be part of a church erected by Henry de Ferrers between 1066 (when Henry is believed to have landed in England with King William) and 1080. There is no evidence to show whether or not this was the first church on this site.



By Easter 2021 it started to look hopeful that all COVID restrictions might be lifted by July. A date of July 24th was chosen and advertised, and fingers were kept tightly crossed. Plans were made for a walk around the fields, led by Peter Liddle, a talk and tour of the church by Pam Fisher (either wholly or partly outdoors) and (outdoor or indoor) displays of archaeological finds and historical research. Thankfully, restrictions on indoor events were lifted on July 19th, although face masks were still

advisable indoors. Would people attend just five days later? We needn't have worried. Around 40 people booked, and turned up on the day, many of them joining both the talk and the walk. The weather was perfect – sun, clear skies, no rain, and not excessively hot.

This part of Leicestershire is little-known and an enthusiastic audience, including local people and visitors, departed happy at the end of the afternoon.

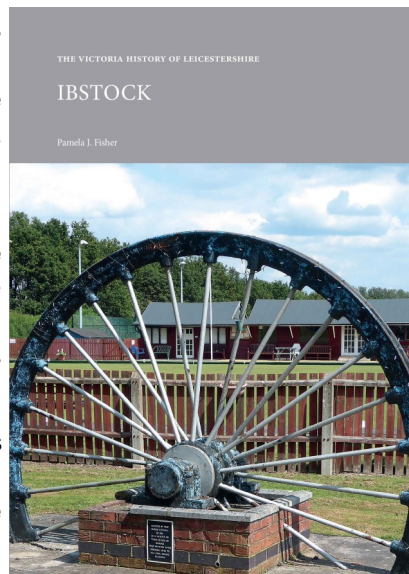
## Ibstock book still available

Our paperback history of Ibstock was published, as planned, in October 2020, although we were disappointed that we were unable to mark this occasion with a launch event.

With the help of Ibstock Historical Society (who assisted us with the research), we were able to publicise the book to many who might be interested, and we were delighted to sell 73 copies by Christmas.

The cover image alludes to Ibstock's 19th and early 20th century mining heritage, with a mining wheel, and the sports ground in the background, which was funded by a levy on the coal industry. The village has a much longer history, told within these pages through archaeological discoveries from the pre-Roman, Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods and research from a wide range of original documents, from Domesday Book to the 21st century.

A monastic estate in the parish had its origins in a gift to Garendon Abbey by the lord of the manor, Robert de



Burton, in thanksgiving for his release from captivity and the release of his son. They had been taken prisoner during the period of lawlessness known as the Anarchy, which was triggered by rival claims to the throne following the death of Henry I in 1135.

Almost a century later, in the 1210s, the failure of the Burton family to produce a male heir resulted in the division of the manor between sisters. The direct result was the creation of two field systems, one for each manor. These continued separately until the late 1500s, when the Stafford family, who had inherited one manor, purchased the other one. Land exchanges and the

enclosure of the fields of one of the manors (for pasture) soon got underway, while the lands of the other manor continued to be farmed as common fields, with common grazing, until 1775.

Aside from agriculture, early industry included lace-making and framework knitting, but as one of the largest settlements in a rural area, by the late 17th century

other craftsmen and retailers could earn a living here. There were also small-scale brickworks, but it was not until the late 19th century that the profitability of the clay within Ibstock's soils began to be realised at any scale.

Diverse religious views led to the founding of four chapels and, by the 19th century, to tensions with the Anglican church over the education of children. These were only partially resolved when Thomas Paget gave a plot of land for a non-denominational school in 1845. Following the closure of this school in 1873 for financial reasons, the Anglican church did all it could to be the only provider of education in the village, but it lacked the money required to maintain its monopoly, as the population grew rapidly through the expansion of the coal industry.



Some of the Roman building materials and other archaeology found in the garden of a house in Ibstock

The research and publication of this book was only possible through the generous financial support of David Wilson Esq, DL, which we are pleased to acknowledge with our thanks.

We still have copies of this 145-page book available at £12, including UK P&P. If you would like to buy a copy, please send a cheque payable to Leicestershire VCH Trust to Simon Gravett, Meadowside, Main Street,

Kings Norton, Leicestershire, LE7 9BF, or email us at [leicsvch@le.ac.uk](mailto:leicsvch@le.ac.uk) for information about how to pay by bank transfer.

It remains our wish to hold an event in the village to mark this publication and to celebrate Ibstock's history, but we have not yet fixed a date for this.

## 200 Club Winners

For an annual subscription of £50 (which can be paid in quarterly instalments) members of our 200 Club are entered into a quarterly draw for a chance to win a cash prize. We hoped we could attract 200 members, but there are currently just 57. We also have a Friends scheme, for those willing to make annual donations towards our work, where we suggest a minimum annual payment of £20. The Trust can collect Gift Aid on donations through the Friends scheme if a Gift Aid form is signed by the donor.

After paying the 200 Club prizes, **these two schemes together currently provide £2,800 annually towards our costs. Almost all our other income comprises grants towards specific projects**, and cannot be used for other purposes, such as the completion of work which is only partially funded by a grant (few funders will cover 100% of projected costs), preparatory work towards grant applications, general administration costs, outreach and publicity. We run a tight ship, which has become exceptionally tight at present.

If you are not already a 'Friend' or a 200 Club member, would you be willing to join? Do you know anyone else who might be willing to become a regular supporter? Do you have any ideas about how we can tell more potential donors about our work? We have achieved

many things since the Trust was formed in 2008, but unfortunately **we cannot sustain our present level of activity indefinitely without increasing our sources of funds**. See the back page for how to join.

Our 200 Club winners since the last Newsletter are as follows:

September 2020 (54 tickets in the draw)

1st, no. 10, Mr George Weston, £135.00

2nd, no 51, Mr Dominic de Lisle, £90.00

3rd, no. 33, name withheld, £45.00

December 2020 (58 tickets in the draw)

1st, no. 54, Mrs Emma Compson, £145.00

2nd, no 6, Professor Chris Dyer, £96.67

3rd, no. 1, Mr Gerard de Lisle, £48.33

March 2021 (58 tickets in the draw)

1st, no. 34, name withheld, £145.00

2nd, no 12, Mr Peter Holden, £96.67

3rd, no. 36, Mrs Gillian Gravett, £48.33

June 2021 (57 tickets in the draw)

1st, no. 56, Mrs Rebecca de Lisle, £142.50

2nd, no 35, name withheld, £95.00

3rd, no. 10, Mr George Weston, £47.50

A big thank you to all members for your support.

# Loughborough: Our Next Steps

Last year we anticipated that the next step in our research would look at the industrial history of the town. Some preliminary research into the type of publication which would sell well enough to generate the funds required to complete further Loughborough research has convinced us that our first steps towards a full history of the town should focus on the period from 1750 to the present day, and that this would best be divided into two paperbacks, one looking at social, cultural and religious history, and the other covering landscape, transport, population, housing and industry.

We believe that the social, cultural and religious history volume will be the simplest to complete with limited funds, and will generate the wider contacts and interest in the project that is needed to help us with the research and funding of further topics.



Loughborough Mela, 2019

We are very grateful to Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society, who have agreed to support us with a grant for research over the next 12 months into topics including the histories of the town's sports clubs, theatres, cinemas, amateur music groups, the Loughborough Mela, the Polish Club, libraries, visiting entertainments such as circuses, feast weeks and outdoor events such as carnivals, the town's schools, the role of Loughborough University in providing training facilities for competitors in the Olympic and Paralympic games, the histories of the town's many places of worship, including the Mosques, Temples, Gurdwara and 'New' Evangelical churches, and the roles that these places of worship have played in providing social spaces and events for Loughborough people.



This unassuming building was Loughborough's first purpose-built theatre

That's a long list which will take more than 12 months to complete. We are seeking volunteers to help with this research. What will they be asked to do? That's perhaps easiest to answer through an example. You may have walked past a place of worship built in the 19th century. The date of the building may be engraved on a tablet. Its opening is likely to be recorded in newspapers, which have now been digitised, and which will have told their readers who the architect was, how much the building cost, how the money was raised, how many people it could accommodate, etc., etc. Some volunteers will be finding and recording this type of information for us, and not just about religious groups, but also sports clubs, societies, etc.

Religious groups which began to worship together in, say, the 1980s, the 2000s, or indeed in 2020, may meet in the houses of members, or perhaps in a room in a school or sports centre. Some may have bought and converted a former factory, or raised money to build something which precisely meets their needs, but may not wish to talk about cost or fundraising. Yet their history is as important as the history of groups established in the 19th century, or before. If they don't own a building, or have a website or Facebook page,

how do we identify them? How can we demonstrate in our final text that they are as important as older groups? What information should we record? How do we obtain that information? We are looking to recruit volunteers with different skills to help us, and ideally volunteers who have different connections and interests.



**The sign tells us that 'King's Church meets here'.**

**We need help to identify ALL religious and other groups in the town, and to collect information about their history and current activities.**

Finding groups is likely to require a combination of internet searching and asking around. A different set of skills may be required to identify, meet and talk to key people, and for this part we are looking for outgoing volunteers who can build trust and rapport with different people, perhaps over several visits, and who are good at asking open questions as part of a natural conversation, listening to the replies, and typing up an accurate record of what has been said, and who provided the information.

To repeat, this is not just about religious groups. Our topics are far wider, but the process for finding information about, for example, a tennis club, the local Rotary, a musical theatre group, etc., will be broadly similar. An interest in what the group does will clearly be an advantage in framing questions.

We are not looking for a major time commitment. Volunteers with an interest in the group or groups they are researching is more important to us. We are very happy if people only want to look at a single organisation, or if they want to help with many.

If you think you can help us, even just to point us towards other people we should talk to, then please contact us, preferably by email to [leicsvch@le.ac.uk](mailto:leicsvch@le.ac.uk).



Leicestershire

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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](http://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).**

