



Leicestershire VCH News

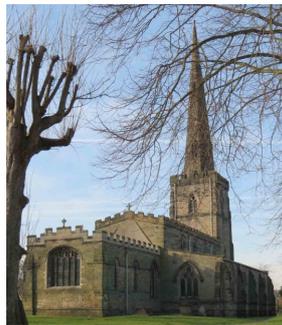
Issue 15

September 2024

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Out and About



St Edward's Church Leicestershire has more events in the annual Festival of Archaeology than any other county, and we were pleased to contribute this year with a talk and tour of St Edward's church, Castle Donington, led by Dr Pam Fisher.

Architectural and documentary evidence provide evidence of religious customs and practices before the Reformation and changes to the church's dedication. Three large monuments within the church are from three different centuries and made from three different materials (stone, brass and alabaster).

At the end of the tour, Delia Richards provided a brief introduction to the Town Book. Begun in 1634 and continuing until 1832, this can best be described as a record of anything that local people thought worthy of recording. It opens with the number of sheep held by each resident in 1634 and includes manorial customs, local by-laws, the annual accounts of parish officers, local and national taxation records and details of unlawful religious meetings.



Castle Donington Town Book

We joined other heritage organisations from Leicestershire and other East Midlands counties in March with a stand at the University of Leicester's Heritage Hub event. This was an opportunity to display and discuss with the public some of our recent research, to make useful contacts and to bring ourselves up-to-date with what other organisations are currently doing.



Heritage Hub Displays
Image by courtesy of the University of Leicester and Nick Osborne

We were delighted to be invited by the Friends of the Centre for Regional and Local History at the University of Leicester to deliver a brief talk ahead of the main lecture on their annual Hoskins Day. Dr Pam Fisher drew from each of our published paperbacks (on Castle Donington, Buckminster and Sewstern, Ibstock and Lutterworth), highlighting some of the more unusual features and events dating from the 9th to the 19th century that have shaped the history of these towns and villages.

It is good to see so many local history groups in the county flourishing again

after the disruption caused by the pandemic. In May Dr Pam Fisher delivered a talk on the history of Lutterworth to members of Cosby Heritage Society, attended by about 50 people.

We have visited Loughborough to meet those involved with organisations in the town, to see and understand specific buildings and to visit locally-held archives, including visits to Unity House, built for the Medical Aid Association in



1889 (left) and the original Convent chapel, by Charles Hansom, built in 1864 and now part of Amherst School, Loughborough Schools Foundation (above).



2023-4 Progress

A bequest has enabled us to make good progress with our Loughborough research, and the draft text for our first Loughborough book, on the social and cultural history of the town from 1750 to the present, is nearing completion. This will include an introduction to the physical and built environment, the development of the town, its population, the major topics of education and religion and a host of smaller topics, including social character, charity, poverty, medical care, libraries, museums, theatre, music, sport, the Mela, popular politics, pubs, community centres, etc.

A reviewing and editing process will follow the completion of the draft text, maps need to be drawn and images selected. Alongside this, work is also progressing on our second volume, on industry and

transport since 1750. By researching the two books in tandem we can ensure that we identify all the connections between the topics, and also minimise duplication between the two texts.

We are also researching the earlier history of Loughborough, and are close to finishing some specific research on medieval farming. This will feature in a later publication telling the full story of Loughborough's past.

We continue to seek funding opportunities to support research in other parts of the county. Our aim still remains to see the story of every Leicestershire town and village included within the renowned Victoria County History series of books.

Changes to Our Trustee Board

Gerard de Lisle, known to everyone as Squire de Lisle, has decided to stand down as chair of the Leicestershire Victoria County History after many years of service. He was invited to take the chair at an early stage of the VCH's development when a rather informal committee managed our affairs, and more recently he has chaired the board of Trustees. He is a historian himself and recently published a book about a relative's part in the Sudan campaign of 1884-5. He has always been an enthusiastic supporter of the VCH, and has been unfailingly optimistic about our achievements and future plans. He helped us to make useful contacts, and was a cheerful and welcoming presence at various launches and meetings. He conducts committee meetings with good humour and

briskly, allowing member to have their say, but moving the business forwards with an eye on the clock. Indeed, he is so anxious to keep the meetings short that he sometimes has to be reminded that he has passed over items on the agenda. He will be difficult to replace, but we are looking for a new chair.

The Trustees have been looking for new members of the Board, especially those who can bring to our work useful experience. We are pleased to welcome David Wykes, who is a considerable expert on local history, and especially of Leicestershire, and has served for many years as director of Dr Williams's Library, a vital source of information on non-conformist religious institutions.

Housing Loughborough's Workers

Loughborough's industries, and its population, grew rapidly from 1870. Few employers provided accommodation, and could not be expected to do so on the scale required. Buying a house was beyond the capacity of most workers, who therefore needed to find a home they could rent.

We've recently been looking at how these houses were supplied in the 1880s and the 1920s.

The 1880s

The 'Paget Building Estate' covers nearly 30 acres to the south of Derby Road and west of Hastings Street. The land had been owned by Charles Paget of Ruddington Grange, Notts. He died in 1873 bequeathing it to trustees for his son Joseph of Stuffynwood Hall, near Pleasley, Derbys, and Joseph's heirs. Joseph wished to sell the land for housing, and steps were taken to convert his life interest into a freehold and to extinguish two minor rights of way over the land.

A grid pattern of new streets was planned. These were later named Havelock Street, Leopold Street, Oxford Street, Paget Street and Station Street (the latter being close to Derby Road station, which opened in 1883). Tenders were sought in 1884 to construct the streets, and connections were laid for water, electricity and gas.

One hundred plots of slightly differing sizes were set out, each on average large enough for four two-bedroomed houses. These were released for sale on a piecemeal basis. Most of the houses were built and occupied by 1892. The purchasers included builders, investors and speculators.



The houses were generally laid out in long terraces, with alleys at regular intervals for access to the rear. Most are described in the records as 'cottages'. These had two upper windows, one window downstairs and a door opening on to the street. Most had two downstairs rooms and a kitchen, with two bedrooms upstairs. Some were larger and a small number had a front garden. Some individual houses and some pairs have plaques giving a name and date of construction (the image above is from Leopold Street).

The workers who lived in these houses were vital to the success of Loughborough, but so too were the people who owned and rented out the properties, who are often a forgotten part of Loughborough's story.

Records relating to the 1910 Finance Act list the owners, occupiers and extent of every property and piece of land in the country. How many owner-occupiers would we see on this estate? What were their occupations? A second property provided an income when employment became too physically demanding (state pensions were not introduced until 1909). Would there be pairs of houses in single ownership on this estate? Or might the pattern of blocks of four remain, suggesting long-term investment?

There were 324 occupied houses in Leopold Street, Oxford Street and Paget Street in 1910, 31 of which were owner-occupied. There were 81 other owners, 48 of whom lived in Loughborough, often elsewhere on this estate. Twenty-seven of the owners were women, three of whom owned more than five properties. Among the male owners, 25 owned more than five properties. There were two long-distance investors, living in Manchester and Scarborough.



Leopold Street, nos 28 to 32 and beyond

The owner-occupiers of five adjacent houses in Leopold Street (nos. 28-32) were a carpenter, the wife of a wood sawyer, a brush maker, a tailor and a greengrocer. Some people owned a pair of houses, but groups of four houses in the same ownership still appear, including some owned by women. In Oxford Street, Ellen Warren (wife of William, a commercial traveller selling earthenware) owned nos. 10, 12, 14

and 16, and Sarah Allgood owned nos. 42, 44, 46 and 48. Mary Ratcliff (widow of a farmer and threshing machine owner) lived at 39 Storer Road, and also owned a row of 13 houses on Leopold Street (nos. 71-83).



The Paget Arms, on the junction of Oxford Street and Paget Street

Importantly, this was also a community. A few of the properties were shops and there was a pub—the Paget Arms—although some had objected to it being built. St Peter’s Anglican church and large Sunday school were built on Storer Road, at the end of Paget Street, and the ‘Christians (sic) Meeting House’ stood on Oxford Street. Today, many of the houses are occupied by students—the streets are now a short walk from Loughborough University campus.

The 1920s

Loughborough’s first council houses were built in 1920. Three things are striking—the scale of need and the way the council worked with both builders and employers.

After talking to employers, an assessment found that 500 houses were required to meet the needs of anticipated industrial development, and another 630 homes were needed to rehouse those living in ‘unfit dwellings’ or in ‘unhealthy areas’.



Houses on King Edward Road built in 1920

Eleven (mostly small) sites were submitted to the government for approval. Meanwhile, discussions were opened with the local Builder’s Federation. Four of their members submitted tenders to build pairs of houses on a site between Derby Road and

Knightthorpe Road, where 130 houses were planned. The first phase was for just 28 houses. All those members of the Federation who had tendered were offered a share of the work, at a common price, but with so few houses in the initial phase two members refused to sign contracts, as it would not have been economic to supply just the single pair of houses they had been allotted. These were taken up by other members of the Federation who had been offered larger allocations.

Most of the funds were provided by central government, but the council was expected to raise some money locally.

Negotiations were also held with a builder who was not a member of the Federation to build 24 houses on King Edward Road (alongside the Great Central Railway line). The first houses were complete by the end of that year (below left).

Building began on the Shelthorpe Estate, off Leicester Road, in 1926. Barry Parker, who with Ray Unwin had designed Letchworth Garden City, was engaged to draw the plans. It was a world away from Loughborough’s earlier developments: the houses were in pairs or short rows of four, cul-de-sacs replaced the grid pattern and housing density was much lower, with properties having front gardens that stood behind wide tree-lined verges .

The red bricks were made by Tuckers, whose clay pit was less than half a mile from the site. Tuckers also provided some of the funding when the Ministry ruled that the unit costs were too high. In return, some of the houses were set aside for Tucker’s employees.



Houses on Shelthorpe Estate

By 1927, 109 houses had been completed on the Shelthorpe Estate and another 88 were underway. A school followed, and there was also a public house. Further land was purchased later, and by 1970 Shelthorpe Estate contained 523 dwellings.

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 59. More members would be welcome!

After paying the prizes, the 200 Club, together with our Friends scheme, currently provides c.£2,500 annually towards our costs. **This income is crucial to us. Almost all our other income comprises grants towards specific projects, but grant funders rarely cover all projected costs**, and we have various administration costs that need to be covered, as well as project expenditure over and above the grant funds.

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 we are reliant on these sources

of income as well as occasional larger grants. See the back page for how to join.

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

September 2023 (59 tickets in the draw):

1st, no. 8 £147.50 I. McAlpine
2nd, no. 40 £98.33 J. Maloney
3rd, no. 41 £49.17 Name withheld

December 2023 (58 tickets in the draw):

1st, no. 52 £145.00 D. De Lisle
2nd, no. 28 £96.67 Name withheld
3rd, no. 16 £48.33 D. Deadman

March 2024 (60 tickets in the draw):

1st, no. 23 £150.00 Name withheld
2nd, no. 11 £100.00 Name withheld
3rd, no. 22 £50.00 Name withheld

June 2024 (59 tickets in the draw):

1st, no. 30 £147.50 J. Attard
2nd, no. 45 £98.33 S. Pochin
3rd, no. 11 £49.17 Name withheld

Thank you to all members for your support.

Chartists in Loughborough, 1839

You can almost feel the fear in the air in 1839. Chartists (seeking political reforms, including the vote for all men and the secret ballot) were holding open air meetings in the town. Newspapers were reporting similar meetings across the country.

It then became known that the Chartists in Loughborough were meeting in small groups in people's homes. What were they plotting? There were rumours that weapons were being manufactured for them, and some had heard that the Chartists were paying 1d. each week into a fund to buy firearms.

The county police force had only recently been established, and Loughborough had just two policemen. Local magistrates could appoint local residents as unpaid special constables in times of unrest, and if there were serious problems, they could

apply to the government to send in the army.

The magistrates met in March 1839 and appointed over 400 special constables. Many of those appointed refused to attend training in countering disorder.

The local Conservative Society identified 100 people (some of the special constables and some others) who were willing to train and act, and Loughborough solicitor Beauvoir Brock found another 50.

On 17th May, eight residents wrote to the Home Secretary, Lord John Russell, as follows:

My Lord, We, the undersigned inhabitants of Loughborough being duly authorised to represent the intentions of an association of special constables and other respectable inhabitants who have agreed to embody, arm and organise themselves for their mutual

defence and the protection of life and property in this neighbourhood, respectfully request that your lordship will be pleased to forward to us immediately, directed to Mr Thorp, Bulls Head and Anchor Hotel, Loughborough, sufficient fire arms to effectually arm 150 men.

It is the wish of the body we represent that we should be at least supplied with 100 muskets and bayonets, 100 brace of pistols and 50 cutlasses ...' (The National Archives, ref. HO 40/44, f. 237.)

Unfortunately, the reply does not survive, but we know some weapons were supplied. These were returned to the Home Department on 21 May, just four days after the request was sent. The railway had not yet opened. The letter reached London by mail coach, was read by someone at the Home Department, they sent an order

to the Tower of London, who counted and packed the weapons and sent them to Loughborough, where they arrived within four days.

That leaves no time to investigate if they were being sent to someone respectable, and little time to arrange any security. The risk of the weapons falling into the hands of criminals seems immense.

Loughborough was just one of many places fearing violence from Chartists at this time. The *Leicester Herald* on 11 May reported that arms and ammunition were being sent from the Tower 'by railroad and by water conveyance' to many parts of the country. A troop of soldiers had also been requested in Loughborough, and presumably arrived before the weapons, hence the speedy return of the arms.

Loughborough's Two Workhouses

Our recent research on Loughborough's workhouses has been shared with a wider audience through two online 'blogposts'.

Loughborough's first workhouse was agreed in 1749 in a hope that this would reduce the cost of providing for the town's poor. A property on Sparrow Hill owned by the Burton charity was converted to house 70 paupers, and the names of those who provided materials or labour were listed in the accounts, which are now held at Leicestershire Record Office (ROLLR, ref. DE664/34).



An 1837 plan of Loughborough shows the workhouse to the east of the church: image courtesy of Loughborough Library.

The building was briefly described in 1855 in the *Nottingham Journal* as measuring 44 feet by 33 feet and standing three storeys high. A later photograph survives in Loughborough library local studies collection. The workhouse building was demolished in the 1960s, and the site became a Royal Mail delivery office in 1966.

A surviving set of workhouse rules reveals that the paupers would make cloth, not for sale as this could harm local businesses, but to make clothes for the inmates to wear. Bedtime in the winter was at 8pm 'to save fire and candle' (ROLLR, DE664/41a).

By 1803 the workhouse seems to have housed only those unable to work through disability or old age. It had 29 residents in 1815, a year when poor relief was provided to a total of 385 people in Loughborough who were living outside the workhouse.

You can read more and see the photograph in our online post, published by Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society, at <https://lahs.org.uk/blog/loughboroughs-first-workhouse>

The 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act created Loughborough Poor Law Union. A new workhouse needed to be built to house the poor of the 24 Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire parishes within the Union.

The old workhouse was no longer required. The previous article mentions the fears aroused by the Chartist meetings in the town in 1839, and the arrival of the army. Several residents wished the army to remain in the town indefinitely, and it was agreed that a troop could be stationed in the town if a barracks was provided with stabling for 50 horses. The old workhouse was considered ideal, the building was converted and the stables were built.

The new poor law faced public opposition before its full provisions came into effect. In our Lutterworth research we recorded an assault on the bricklayers building the new workhouse there. The most significant protests in the Loughborough Union seem to have occurred in Shepshed in 1837.

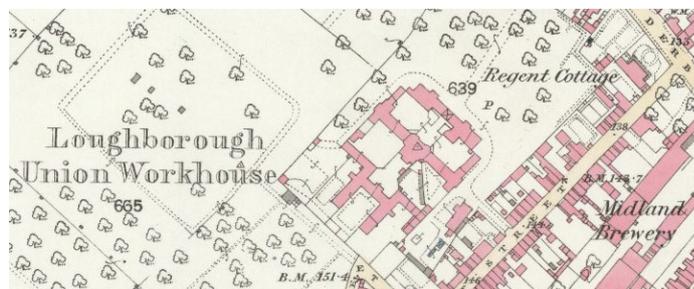
Like Loughborough, Shepshed had also had a parish workhouse, which could accommodate 80 paupers. Under the new system, Shepshed paupers seeking poor relief would have to enter the new workhouse in Loughborough.

Edward Dawson, a county magistrate, received news in December 1837 of a riot in Shepshed. When he arrived with a few others they found that the Relieving Officer, who was responsible for providing poor relief across one of the two districts in the new Poor Law Union, had been met by a mob of some 300 people and been forced to take refuge in the parish workhouse. He was detained there for five hours by the mob, who were throwing large stones, breaking the workhouse windows. Stones were also thrown at Dawson and his party, who escaped to the Vicarage, where they remained until 10pm, when the mob dispersed.

There was also trouble that month in Belton, where the contractor's bread cart was broken to pieces and the bread stolen.

Loughborough Poor Law Union was run by an elected board of 28 guardians, whose first task was to build a new workhouse for 350 paupers. They identified a site at the junction of Derby Road and Regent Street (see plan opposite), and invited architects to compete for the business, with the building to cost no more than £6,000. The winning design was by George Gilbert Scott and William Bonython Moffatt, who between them designed 44 workhouses across much of England.

The main entrance faced Derby Road and was flanked by the board room to the south and a chapel to the



The site of Loughborough Union workhouse, 1883: OS 25", Leics XVII.8, image from National Library of Scotland, CC-BY, <https://maps.nls.uk/>

north. The central building contained the accommodation for the master and mistress, and we assume the men and women were in the two wings. We have not found a record of where the children slept. External walls created four recreation areas for men, women, boys and girls.

The building contractors were George Myers and Richard Wilson from Hull, who submitted the lowest tender, for £5,647. This appears to have been their first contract outside their home area. Myers went on to design many Catholic churches for Pugin and two Catholic cathedrals in England.

Our online piece has more to say about the early workhouse staff, about its care for the sick (with some detail that may surprise you) and includes a photograph that we have now discovered is of the last Board of Guardians, taken at the time of their final meeting when the Board was disbanded in 1930. You will find the piece on the Lynne About Loughborough blog at <https://lynneaboutloughborough.blogspot.com/2024/08/loughboroughs-second-workhouse.html>

Paper Newsletters

Did you receive this Newsletter by email or in paper form by post? The cost of stamps keeps rising, and although we have benefitted from holding a supply bought before the last two price rises, this stock is now nearly exhausted.

We are keen to continue keep in touch with those on our mailing list, but if you receive a paper copy and would be willing to receive future issues in electronic form, we would be grateful if you would complete the form that has been enclosed with this issue and either return it to us by post, or send an email to

leicsvch@leicester.ac.uk asking to receive future issues electronically, and we will amend our lists accordingly. If you now receive a paper copy and wish to continue to do so, there is no need to do anything, paper copies will continue to arrive.

If you have received this mailing by first class post, and wonder why we did not use second class, it's because we had to 'swap out' our old stock of stamps when bar codes were introduced, and Royal Mail swapped our 'large' second class stamps for 'small' first class ones.

Our Paperback Histories

Copies of our four paperbacks can still be obtained from the address below at the price stated. You can also buy online, but every copy bought from ourselves helps fund the research and publication of further histories. Please email us for details if you wish to pay by bank transfer. P&P within the UK is £3.00 per book.

Castle Donington (£10 plus P&P) is known for its airport, music festivals and motor racing, but the village itself tends to be overlooked. A castle was built in the 1150s and several features of a town soon developed, including a market, annual fair and hospital. King's Mills and Cavendish Bridge grew as settlements near the Trent, and their history is also included within this book.

Buckminster and Sewstern (£8 plus P&P) are small villages in NE Leicestershire. Sir William Manners employed Humphry Repton to advise on enlarging a small park and building a mansion in Buckminster in the 1790s, and began to create an estate village.

Many of the houses were built for estate employees by his great-grandson, the 9th earl of Dysart, between 1878 and 1935.

Ibstock (£10 plus P&P) is a large village in north-west Leicestershire where Garendon Abbey once had a sheep farm. Framework-knitting had become important by 1811, but the local landscape and economy changed dramatically when the coal deposits beneath the village began to be exploited from 1825.

Lutterworth (£12 plus P&P) is one of Leicestershire's main market towns, known for its connections with John Wyclif and Sir Frank Whittle. It is a town shaped by transport revolutions — coaching, delays in opening a railway station, the arrival of the motorway and the modern logistics industry.



VICTORIA
COUNTY
HISTORY



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, 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).



**Leicestershire
County Council**