



Leicestershire VCH News

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Exploring the History of Nanpantan

In the final months of 2024 Charnwood Forest Geopark offered small grants from their National Lottery funding for community heritage projects within their area that could be completed by 31 March 2025.

The Geopark includes Nanpantan, a small village within the ancient parish of Loughborough, some 2 miles south of the town.

We had already researched the history of Nanpantan's school and church for our first Loughborough book, but wanted to know more about the community and Nanpantan's businesses – the farms and a pub, as our second Loughborough paperback will focus on the economic history of Loughborough.



We were intrigued by what looked like, and are, estate cottages. Who lived here?

Our grant application was successful. With just four months to complete the research and put on a public display we appealed for volunteers to help. Within a few days over 30 people had expressed interest.

We held our first volunteer meeting in December in a converted barn at Home Farm, Nanpantan.



Volunteers looking at old photographs of Nanpantan

Our plan was to focus on census records and online newspapers, both accessible free of charge on PCs in Loughborough library, together with trade directories (some online), details from sales particulars for farms (held in the county record office at Wigston) and the World War II farm surveys held at the National Archives in Kew, and old photographs of the village that the volunteers might be able to find.

The Charnwood Forest canal terminated in a wharf at Nanpantan, where coal was transferred from barges to wagons that would be drawn by horses along a railroad to Loughborough. The canal opened in 1794. Did the canal company erect any buildings at the wharf?

Apparently not. We discovered that the area around the crossroads and the wharf was part of the unenclosed Charnwood Forest until 1829, when the first plots were laid out. Many of the houses had become part of the Paget Estate (of Nanpantan Hall) by 1910.

The first census to list Nanpantan as a separately identifiable place was in 1901 when there were 260 people living in the parish in 49 households. They included farmers and farm workers, employees at the reservoir, two hotel proprietors, a tailor, a wheelwright, a policeman, a solicitor, the clerk to the Poor Law guardians, a retired Anglican clergyman, and a printer, stationer and bookseller.

Thomas Potter's *History and Antiquities of Charnwood Forest*, published in 1842, mentions a property known as Nanpantan Cottage situated 'beneath the hill of Nanpantan', owned by Thomas Warner (co-owner of Cartwright and Warner, hosiery manufacturers).

The present Nanpantan Hall stands almost midway between two hills, named in the Charnwood Forest enclosure award as Great Nanpantan and Little Nanpantan. Thomas Warner was allotted 12.5 acres of land in the enclosure award, and this included land known as and adjacent to Little Nanpantan Hill. Nanpantan Hall is believed to have been built for Thomas's grandson, Edward Handley Warner, probably in the 1870s. We don't know if it was built on the same site as Nanpantan Cottage.

We were very excited to discover a newspaper report of a factory outing for the employees of Cartwright and Warner to Nanpantan in 1829. Factory outings became an annual event for Cartwright and Warner's employees. The first outing had been held in 1824, although we have no record of where they visited that year.

Early employee outings (in any part of the country) seem to have attracted little attention from historians. This is therefore a particularly valuable 'find', especially as the first outing was only eight years after the Luddite machine attacks in Loughborough, a time when employers were perhaps especially keen to establish good relations with workers. The report in the *Leicester Chronicle*, 5 Sept. 1829, reads:

"On Tuesday, the people in the Angola factory of Mr Thomas Warner, Loughborough, had a general holiday. They marched in procession, two and two, to the number of 150, from the mill on the Nottingham-road, through the town, having at their head six boys dressed in Angola, with drawn swords.

"The party proceeded to a spot on the Forest, three miles distant, generally called the Nan-pan-tam, where an excellent dinner was provided for the whole body, consisting of old English roast beef, and plum-pudding, accompanied by plenty of ale, rum, and wine. Dancing then

commenced, with great vigour, if not in the highest style. Tea and supper succeeded.

"A number of ladies and gentlemen assembled, to witness the gratifying spectacle of so large a body of persons, all neat and clean, enjoying themselves at the expense of a beneficent master."

Angola was a mix of cotton and worsted (wool) used for hosiery, underwear and shirts. The march through Loughborough would have been a good advertisement for the business, as was the press report, and perhaps it was written by Thomas Warner. The outing would have boosted morale and encouraged loyalty and hard work from employees, with the walk through the town also drawing wider public attention to the firm's munificence.

We can perhaps assume that the food and festivities took place at Nanpantan Cottage, and a report of a later similar outing in 1845 said the party 'repaired to Nanpantan Cottage' when it began to rain.



The Outwoods at Nanpantan

By the 1890s Nanpantan was being referred to as 'The holiday resort of the people', although admittedly that was by someone whose business interests were closely linked to creating that resort. That's another story, part of which we have included within a brief blog post for the Institute of Historical Research, at <https://blog.history.ac.uk/2025/09/the-holiday-resort-of-the-people-exploring-the-history-of-the-community-at-the-crossroads/>

Leicestershire VCH Trust is very grateful to Charnwood Forest Geopark and the Heritage Fund for funding this research.



The Year in Brief

Leicestershire VCH Trust has had a very busy and very productive and successful 12 months.

When we produced last year's Newsletter we had no idea we would shortly be investigating the history of Nanpantan with a new group of volunteers. You can read about this project, and its unexpected and exciting findings in the first two pages of this Newsletter. The project ended with a public event in Nanpantan Hall in March.

Two self-guided walks were produced as part of that project, and these can be downloaded at https://leicestershirehistory.co.uk/?page_id=5351

We have now completed the first draft of our forthcoming paperback, *Loughborough Since 1750: A Social and Cultural History*. This book, by Dr Pamela Fisher, has passed its reviews by the historical and architectural editors at VCH Central Office and by an anonymous peer reviewer selected by them. We are currently working on final revisions to the text and the cartography for the volume. A draft was placed online for public

consultation, and copies circulated to many people in Loughborough. The consultation period has now closed, but the draft will remain online until the final text is sent to the publisher, and can be found at https://leicestershirehistory.co.uk/?page_id=5251. The online text is not the final version—there have been many changes and additions since it was prepared.

There will be two other Loughborough publications. A second paperback will look at the economic history of Loughborough since 1750. A few months ago we visited the National Archives in Kew to collect information from the Ministry of Agriculture's (as it then was) files held there and also some of the early records relating to the Loughborough canal.

The third Loughborough publication will be one of the VCH's iconic 'Big Red Books', which will cover the history of Loughborough and its immediate neighbouring villages from earliest times to the present. Towards this and with the help of Dr Andrew Watkins, we have now completed our research on the rural economy of Loughborough in the Middle Ages.

Presentation to our former Chair

In last year's Newsletter we advised that Gerard de Lisle, known widely as Squire de Lisle, had stepped down as chair of the trustee board of Leicestershire Victoria County History Trust. His place as chair has been filled by Gordon Arthur.

We said farewell formally with a presentation in March, at the Heritage Hub event held by the University of Leicester. Our gift to our former Chair was a book, *Fire and Sword in the Sudan* by Rudolf Carl von Slatin. This is a personal narrative, first published in 1896, of Major-General von Slatin's experiences fighting in Sudan during the Mahdist War of 1881–99. Squire de Lisle's ancestor, Rudolph de Lisle, was killed in January 1885 during the battle of Abu Klea. He had been part of a combined British infantry and naval force that had encountered Sudanese fighters while crossing the Bayuda desert on the way to relieve the besieged city of Khartoum, then being held by General Charles Gordon.

We thank Squire de Lisle for his support of the Trust since its formation and wish him well for the future.



Squire de Lisle (right) receives the book from Gordon Arthur

Out and About

Several members of Leicestershire Victoria County History's committee attended the University of Leicester's Heritage Hub event at the University in March, and the local history fair organised by Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society in July, a little way outside our county, in Oakham.

We always enjoy attending such events and engaging with the public to tell them about our work in the county.



***We were
joined by
100 people
at
Nanpantan
Hall to
mark the
conclusion
of our
project***

The highlight of the year was our event in Nanpantan, where we presented the results of our research to local people and others. We were delighted that we could be joined that evening by HM Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire (Mike Kapur, our President) and the Deputy Mayor of Charnwood (Cllr David Northage).

Dr Pamela Fisher has delivered three talks about our recent research and the work of the VCH in Leicestershire, to the Friends of Charnwood Forest at Woodhouse Eaves in January, to the Rotary Club of Leicester in April and, also in April, to Rugby Archaeological Society.

She will also be speaking over the next six months to a new VCH group in Spalding, Lincolnshire in November, to Nanpantan Ward Residents Group in January, to Anstey Local History Society in February, Lutterworth Local History Group, also in February and to the Friends of the Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland in April.

Charities for the Poor

The first instalment of our history of Loughborough, a social and cultural history of the town since 1750, researched and written by Dr Pamela Fisher, with the help of numerous people in Loughborough and elsewhere, is due to be published in 2026.

An important aspect of Loughborough's social history is how the town has looked after its poorer residents.



Three large charity boards on the north wall of All Saints' church (above) were painted in 1811 and provide brief details of 13 town charities. These were not 'one-off'

donations, but sums of money invested (usually in land), or intended to be invested, to provide an income that would support a charitable cause in perpetuity.

The best-known charities within the town are those of Thomas Burton and John Storer. The former is now associated with Loughborough Endowed Schools although its original remit was far wider. John Storer's name is now attached to John Storer House at Wards End, which opened in 1966.



The John Storer charity has grown from modest beginnings in 1713, when John Storer, probably of Walton on the Wolds, transferred to John Woodroffe (apparently his nephew) and ten others, in trust, a house, orchard, cottage and garden in Biggin Street and a yardland (perhaps 30 acres) and a further 8 acres of arable, meadow and pasture in Loughborough's open fields. The income was to be spent on providing bread to Loughborough's poor each fortnight, made from half barley and half wheat and rye, and to provide coats or upper garments each year to six or more poor children of Loughborough aged between five and 12 years, to be distributed in the middle of October.

Upon the enclosure of the open fields the land became an allotment of 27 acres on the edge of the town. As Loughborough's population expanded, this landholding increased in value.

Some of the land was sold for housing development in the 1880s (the 'Storer Estate', extending south-west from what became Storer Road), with other land sales in the 1950s and 1960s. The proceeds enabled John Storer House to be built, to provide a large room for day care and a kitchen to produce meals for the elderly. The facilities have since expanded and the charity now supports people and communities across Charnwood.



The value of Loughborough's smaller charities has been eroded by inflation, although in their time the donations were meaningful sums. Four of the town's charities, the gifts of John Fowler, John Dawson, William Hawley and William Mansfield, were combined in 1882 in a single charity, known as the Small Gifts Charity, and new trustees were appointed.

As part of our research for our forthcoming book, we have been looking into the background of these four charities to learn a little about their donors.

Malting was one of Loughborough's main industries in the 17th century, and maltsters were among the town's wealthiest inhabitants. William Hawley was a maltster who died in May 1691 and was buried in the graveyard at All Saints' church, Loughborough. His will mentions that he had a house in Loughborough with outbuildings and 'maltrooms', but doesn't mention which street this was on. William left three sons (Robert, Henry and Joseph) and three daughters (Katherine, Mary and Elizabeth).

He bequeathed £20 'into the hands of the Trustees (for the time being) for the Towne lands of Loughborough' (these would be the feoffees of the

Burton charity). This was to be 'laid out in the purchasing of lands', the income from which was to be distributed annually between ten poor widows of the town.

Unfortunately, the feoffees at that time failed to buy any land, but held the money and gave 2s. (£0.10) annually to each of ten poor widows on St Thomas's day. The feast of St Thomas, apostle and evangelist, fell on 21 December, helping recipients to afford something extra for Christmas.

William Mansfield described himself as a gentleman in his will of 1715. He lived in Loughborough, where he owned a house, cottage and land, and he also owned a house and land in Kegworth. William was buried at All Saints' church, Loughborough on 28 December 1715 and was survived by his wife Jane.

William left £2 annually in his will, to be paid from the rent from his Kegworth property, then occupied by Robert Rowland. This was to be divided between 20 poor widowers, who would receive 2s. each (£0.10) annually. This was also distributed on St Thomas's day.

John Fowler was a mercer, someone who sold different types of cloth and often other kinds of imported goods, such as spices, sugar, dried fruits, etc. His burial service was also at All Saints' church, on 20 February 1682. John Fowler owned The Crown in Loughborough, The Swan in Mountsorrel, a house and land in Loughborough Parks, a yardland in Loughborough's open fields, four acres of meadow, further meadow and a barn in Barrow-upon-Soar and a lease in Ulverscroft.

He left a bequest of £100 to the 'Trustees for the Towne of Loughborow', to be laid out in land with the income used to pay for an apprenticeship for one poor boy of Loughborough each year. In this instance the sum was used to purchase four acres in the 'Middle Park'. By 1839 the annual income from this investment was £15 8s. 7d. (£15.43), and two boys were being apprenticed each year at premiums of between £5 and £10.

When he made his will in 1678 John Dawson, who described himself as a gentleman, was living in Great Yarmouth. He asked for £100 to be invested, with the rents or profits to be given to the parson and overseers for the poor of the parish of Loughborough for the use of 'the poore of Loughborough (wherein I was borne).' He appointed his brother Joseph as executor.

Joseph Dawson used the money to buy 16 acres of land in Middle Close in Loughborough Park and a property in Churchgate. These were conveyed to the rector, churchwardens and overseers of Loughborough and 13 other people as trustees. From the annual income, 4s. (£0.20) was spent on bread every fortnight, which was distributed to the poor, with the residual income laid out every three years on an apprenticeship for a poor boy.

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 62. Membership numbers are stable, but we would welcome more.

After paying the prizes, the 200 Club, together with our Friends scheme, currently provides £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 also have to cover preparatory work towards grant applications, outreach, marketing and publicity, maintenance of websites and other general administration. We run a tight ship, which has become exceptionally tight at present.

If you are not already a 'Friend' of the Trust 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 without increasing our sources of funds.**

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

September 2024 (59 tickets in the draw):

1st, no. 55, £147.50 P. Feakin

2nd, no. 60, £98.33 J. Cryer

3rd, no. 52, £49.17 Mr H. Butler

December 2024 (62 tickets in the draw):

1st, no. 47, £155.00 Mrs R. de Lisle

2nd, no. 57, £103.33 name withheld

3rd, no.23, £51.67 Mr R. Brooks

March 2025 (63 tickets in the draw):

1st, no. 31, £157.50 Mrs R. de Lisle

2nd, no.16, £105.00 H. Irons

3rd, no. 32, £52.50 M. Holmes

June 2025 (62 tickets in the draw):

1st, no. 22, £155.00 Mr J. de Lisle

2nd, no. 37, £103.33 name withheld

3rd, no.11, £51.67 P.J. Fisher

September 2025 (62 tickets in the draw):

1st, no. 52, £155.00 Mr H. Butler

2nd, no. 33, £103.33 name withheld

3rd, no. 5, £51.67 Mr R. Bream

A big thank you to all members for your support. New members are always welcome, see the back page for our contact details.

Charnwood Forest Enclosure

If you've ever had cause to look at the Charnwood Forest enclosure award of 1829 held at the County Record Office in Wigston (QS 47/2/4), you will know that it's not the easiest document to peruse. There are two large binders, each very heavy and containing many sheets of parchment. These record who was awarded each of the 1,759 plots of land across Charnwood Forest that were then being enclosed for the first time, and provide maps showing the location of each individual plot.

The award has been photographed, so the Record Office doesn't need to produce the original each time someone asks to see it. The original binders are not easy for their staff to move from the storage space to the reading room,

nor for a researcher to find sufficient desk space to look at them, but using the digital version also poses challenges because of the number of images and the time it takes them to load.

The award is arranged as an alphabetical list of the people who were allotted land. If you are looking for a specific person, perhaps an ancestor, or the lord of a particular manor, it is straightforward to find details of how much land they received and precisely where that land is. Until a few years ago it was much more difficult to interrogate the data from the other direction—if your house, for example, was built on a plot allotted in the award, it could take a long time to identify who received that land in 1829.

Leicestershire Victoria County History's Charnwood Roots project, which ran from 2013 to 2017, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, worked with volunteers to transcribe information contained within several enclosure awards, including the mammoth award for Charnwood Forest. This was truly a labour of love, and took many hours to transcribe. The information is now held in a free-to-use databank, accessible online. All we ask, if you do use this information, is that you acknowledge your use of the Charnwood Roots databank and the web address.

This data proved invaluable for our Nanpantan project, as the land around Nanpantan crossroads fell within Charnwood Forest. The enclosure maps enabled us to identify the plot numbers where houses were built, but

without the Charnwood Roots transcript, it would have taken a long time to identify who received these plots.

If you are interested in Charnwood Forest, the document we used (which covers many parishes) can be found at <https://archive.charnwoodroots.org/report/4197/> and is labelled 'Charnwood Forest Inclosure Parishes Analysis 11.3.3 b).xlsx'.

There is a huge amount of other information within the Charnwood Roots databank, which covers many different aspects of Charnwood's history and many parishes and places within Charnwood (widely defined). You can find the search screen at <https://archive.charnwoodroots.org/search/>

A New Charnwood Project

Charnwood Forest is a truly remarkable place. Its distinctive landscape includes many outcrops of rocks, the oldest of which were formed in the Ediacaran period, nearly 600 million years ago.

Charnwood Forest's geology contains fossils that provide evidence for some of the oldest animals yet discovered on this planet. The rocks are therefore of international importance to scientists and others, and yet are little-known to the public outside the immediate area.



An outcrop of Ediacaran rocks from The Outwoods, that date from around 560 million years ago.

In 2020, 17 organisations working together were successful in securing more than £2.7M from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to help conserve and celebrate Charnwood Forest through a Landscape Partnership Scheme. These projects are promoted publicly as Charnwood Forest Geopark and readers of this newsletter may have seen the new interpretation boards at various sites, including The Outwoods, Groby Pool and within Bradgate Park. Charnwood Forest is currently in the process of applying for UNESCO Global Geopark status.

The Geopark is also keen to promote the wider heritage of the Charnwood Forest area, and we were pleased to be able to play a part in this through our Nanpantan project, which ran from November 2024 to March 2025.

We are delighted to advise that we heard a few days ago that we have been awarded another grant by Charnwood

Forest Geopark, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, to produce a series of 'Digests' introducing the history of twenty places within the Geopark area. When complete, these will be made available to the public through the Geopark's website.

Some of the information needed for these Digests was collected by our own Charnwood Roots volunteers between 2013 and 2017, and is held in the Charnwood Roots databank mentioned above. Some other historical information will also need to be collected, including details for the parish of Thornton, which did not form part of the Charnwood Roots project.

We shall be recruiting volunteers to help us with this work in the New Year. Meanwhile we are identifying the new material required and developing guides and training on how and where this information is to be found and recorded.

The final phase, later next year, will involve writing up this information in a consistent format and in a style that will be accessible to the general public, while at the same time meeting the standards set for VCH parish histories, as we would like to use them, with minimal changes, as the introductions to parish histories within future VCH volumes.

The project will be run by Dr Pam Fisher and Dr Susan Kilby, who are both known to many readers of this Newsletter. We are not seeking offers of help at this point, as the final details have yet to be agreed, but we will be issuing a call for volunteers in the first quarter of 2026. This will be sent to everyone on our existing digital mailing list, and advertised more widely on social media and through local publications.

Our Paperback Histories

Copies of our four paperbacks are available direct from ourselves at the prices below. Either send a cheque to our treasurer or drop us an email asking for the details for payment by bank transfer, remembering to say which book(s) you want and providing your postal address. Every copy bought from ourselves helps to fund further research. **Please add £2 towards P&P for each book.**

Castle Donington (£8, 2016, 133pp.) became the site for a castle in the 1150s and several features of a town soon developed, including a market, fair and hospital. King's Mills and Cavendish Bridge grew as settlements near the river, and their history is also included within this book.

Buckminster and Sewstern (£8, 2017, 127pp.) are small villages in the north east of the county. 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. Ironstone was quarried in both villages in the 20th century, with the land reinstated for farming.

Ibstock (£8, 2020, 145pp.) is a large village in north-west Leicestershire where Garendon Abbey had a sheep farm. Framework-knitting became important by 1811, but the local landscape and economy changed when coal deposits began to be exploited from 1825.

Lutterworth (£10, 2022, 155pp.) is a market town in south Leicestershire, with a local importance in the medieval period and in more recent times beyond its connections to the theologian John Wyclif and the engineer Sir Frank Whittle.



VICTORIA
COUNTY
HISTORY



Leicestershire

**Leicestershire Victoria
County History Trust**

**Meadowside,
Main Street,
Kings Norton,
Leicester,
LE7 9BF**

**Email:
leicsvch@leicester.ac.uk**

Tel: 0116 252 5722

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 on the left.

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



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