
THOROTON

Number 4: December 1993



A Message from the Chairman . . .

1993 has seen the Society running a vigorous programme of lectures and excursions, and we hope to be just as active in 1994. We trust that you have enjoyed the fare provided for you by Council.

We welcome two new officers to their positions in the Society. Dr Carol Allen has succeeded Hazel Salisbury as joint editor of *Transactions*. She and Adrian Henstock will be working in tandem, and they have already proposed one significant change, which is an alteration in the format and size of *Transactions* to make better use of the available space (and keep down costs!) particularly in printing archaeological matter. Council approved the change at its October meeting, and the new style *Transactions* will appear for the first time next April. The editors will explain the changes at the AGM.

Our other change of personnel involves the lecture secretaryship. Dr Maurice Caplan is slowly working out his notice, after seventeen years in post, and by the time of the next AGM Mrs Jean Nicholson, fresh from successfully completing the MA in Local & Regional History at Nottingham University, will have taken charge. Jean is already shadowing Maurice at lectures.

Congratulations to Jean on her academic success, and our thanks to Maurice for so many years of selfless service to the Society. We hope he will no longer be kept awake at night worrying about slide projectors with dud bulbs and microphones without amplifiers!

Sadly we have lost this year one of our longest standing Council members, Stan Revill, and an obituary appears elsewhere in this *Newsletter*.

One change which we hope to see come into force in 1994 may well please members who often feel frustrated by overlapping events with other Societies. We have proposed to Mr John Plumb, Director of Leisure Services for Nottinghamshire County Council, that the Local Studies Library on Angel Row should keep a register to which societies can contribute details of their events and enquire if there were likely to be clashing events on the same day. Mr Plumb has agreed to pursue the matter, and we hope the register will be up and running early in 1994.

On behalf of Council, may I wish all members of the Society a Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

John Beckett

MR STAN REVILL, BA

Stan Revill was a stalwart of the Society's archaeological activities. A member of Council for 33 years until April 1993, he died 10 weeks later on 1 July 1993.

He taught at Henry Mellish School, but will be remembered mostly by members (some of whom found their first piece of pottery under his guidance) for his archaeological work and his WEA lectures. In the 1950s he and Mrs Revill were active in the Peveril Archaeological Group and worked at Lenton Priory, the Moot Hall site on Friar Lane, at Thurgarton Priory and at the Stoke Bardolph Manor site. In the Thoroton Society he was a member of the Archaeological Committee for many years and excavated Roman sites at Thurgarton, Epperstone and Broxtowe.

In the wider field he spent many summers excavating in South Wales with Professor Grimes. Stan followed Dr Barker as Chairman of the then CBA Group 14 and represented the East Midlands on the CBA Council.

In the 1960s Newstead Abbey was administered by Nottingham City Library and Stan excavated there under the direction of the Librarian, Mr F C Tighe, whose sudden death meant that the dig was never fully written up. The notes and slides were mislaid in the process of later transfer to Newstead; when fairly recently they were found, Stan offered to collate the slides and notes; sadly, failing health prevented his doing this. Meanwhile, in the 1970s Stan himself directed a small but valuable dig in the Cloister

Garth at Newstead, beneath the windows opposite the Chapel/Chapter House, which established several useful facts about the chronology of the cloister walk and, since mediaeval carved statues (probably from the Priory Church) were found under the buttresses, proved that the latter were post-dissolution additions. Finds from this dig are on display in the cloister. Stan's notes and photographs from this excavation together with a drawing of a 14th Century 'quarrel' (a pierced diamond-shaped ventilating pane from a window) - one of two discovered here - are in the Newstead files.

Latterly Stan was a very regular user of the Nottingham Subscription Library and supported the campaign to preserve its old and valuable books. On several days a week he could be found there at lunchtime, pleased to chat with old friends on many subjects.

Stan could sometimes be gruff, and had 'his opinions' (notably on the archaeology of Newstead) but he was a dear man and a good friend, and he will be sorely missed.

*Nancy Mulholland
Rosalys Coope*

The Keith Train Lecture 1993

The eighth Keith Train Lecture was given on 22 October by Demitri Porphyrios, an architect whose work has a distinctiveness that owes little to fashionable styles, whether modernist or post-modernist. Mr Porphyrios explained fluently and persuasively, and with a delightful dry wit, the principles from which his architecture is derived - in terms of human scale, traditional materials and building methods, and the spatial relationships found in vernacular buildings and in older townscapes.

These principles were well seen in his recent competition design for the Inland Revenue building in Nottingham - a design which was finally not chosen but which had received a good deal of favourable comment from those visiting the exhibition of short-listed designs in the Council House. It was based on the concept of the Oxford college, with interconnected buildings of a relatively small scale, which also recreated a sense of enclosed and open spaces such as older town centres can often develop, and which parts of Nottingham retain. The use of brick as the main facing material and the use of pitched roofs also reflected the dominant building fabric of the city; and this no doubt helped ensure its popularity.

Mr Porphyrios also described several other designs, with photographs of completed buildings showing the closeness of the reality to the designs and allowing us to appreciate his points about the need to relate buildings to each other and to their surroundings. Thus the new court for Magdalen College, Oxford, on a very sensitive site, was designed to take up themes from traditional college architecture but to reflect the needs of a modern university; the resulting buildings relate sympathetically to their older

partners. The new village near Ascot, which Mr Porphyrios traced from its green-field site to its completed and inhabited state, showed how he has been able to use a combination of modern ideas and traditional forms to create something that has more than a resonance of vernacular style. Designs for other building complexes, in a Mediterranean context, showed the same awareness of traditional patterns of buildings and the spaces round them.

The architecture of Demitri Porphyrios is, he claims, one that returns buildings to the individuals who use them, that does not impose itself beyond the essential, and that allows a society to function in an environment of human scale. This is a sound principle, remote from concepts of 'machines for living in' or pure functionalism. In Mr Porphyrios's hands it leads to buildings that are immediately accessible. They give the effect of being 'historical' or 'traditional', which in an age concerned with 'heritage' guarantees their popularity.

Peter Hoare

A Society such as Thoroton runs on volunteers, and behind the scenes a lot of work is put in to arrange excursions and lectures and to ensure their smooth running. Such mundane matters as putting out chairs, bringing, setting up and clearing away equipment, transporting books, running the bookstall and providing that welcome cup of tea are among the many jobs that have to be done. The Chairman asked at the November lecture for offers to help Mrs Huxley with her tea rota; speak to her or any of the officers if you would like to help.

REPORTS OF EXCURSIONS 1993

12 JUNE - SOUTH WINGFIELD, SOUTHWELL MINSTER, HALLOUGHTON MANOR FARM & THURGARTON PRIORY

A successful day started with a visit to South Wingfield Manor built by Ralph, Lord Cromwell in the 1400s. Our guides were David Taylor and the English Heritage custodian from Bolsover. After lunch in Southwell, Hazel Salisbury escorted us round the Minster, and for those who thought they knew the building she was able to introduce them to new features of interest. Then on to Halloughton Manor Farm where the owner, David Crane, allowed us to see inside the Tower House and later additions as well as the dovecote. On to Thurgarton, where Eileen Durrance and her team revived us with an excellent tea in the village Hall. This was followed by a visit to the Priory, by permission of The Boots Company PLC. Hazel Salisbury talked about the Priory and we visited the Undercroft and Church.

Nancy Mulholland

29 JUNE - LYDDINGTON BEDE HOUSE AND WING

The June excursion took us to the Rutland village of Lyddington to visit the Bede House and the Church of St. Andrew. The Bede House was originally a fifteenth-century palace of the Bishop of Lincoln. Lyddington was an important seat of ecclesiastical administration, and the palace had extensive

parklands with fish ponds. It was sequestered in 1547 and later became the property of the Cecils of Burghley. Sir Thomas Cecil converted the surviving buildings into an almshouse or bede house, a function retained until the 1930s.

St. Andrew's Church adjoining the Bede House is a spacious building. The nave and aisles were rebuilt in Perpendicular style in the late fifteenth century. The church has two features of unusual interest; wall paintings restored in 1937, and (in the chancel) five niches which contained acoustic jars.

Tea, at Wing, was provided by the local Women's Institute, and a short tour of the village took in the forty feet turf maze.

The journey home included a diversion to see something of Rutland Water and the villages of Edith Weston and Empingham.

Geoffrey Oldfield

18 SEPTEMBER - KINGS MILLS, MELBOURNE AND HEMINGTON

This visit to the Derbyshire-Leicestershire border began at Kings Mills, on the south bank of the Trent below Donington Park at Castle Donington.

Mills have been recorded here since Domesday. They were powered by the flow of the Trent, directed by a long and substantial stone revetted dam, set diagonally across the river (though now breached). We inspected the wheel pits and two of the great iron wheels, dating to the early 19th century.

After coffee at the Priest House Hotel, we moved on to Melbourne. Howard and Lindsey Usher of Melbourne Civic Society guided us around the Norman church. With its cruciform plan, central tower, clerestory passage and massive arcades it appears more like a monastery or cathedral than a parish church. The three original semi-circular apses of the east end were replaced in mediaeval times by the usual squared chancel and side chapels. Elements of Norman sculpture, including the depiction of a green man and a miser, hinted at more extensive schemes of carving, now lost.

Lunch in the Melbourne Hall Tea Rooms was followed by a guided walk around Melbourne, beginning with the remains of the Castle, and noting timber-framed and thatched houses, as well as an abundance of 18th and 19th century brick buildings. We saw the decorative work of Robert Bakewell, the blacksmith, in the Melbourne Hall grounds, which retain their classical layout with formal avenues, fountains and statuary.

Finally, the party visited the excavations currently in progress at Hemington, of which further details are included elsewhere in this *Newsletter*.

Chris Salisbury



The 1994 Excursions will again offer a variety of visits, by popular request, mostly within Nottinghamshire and its neighbouring counties. The programme card gives details of dates and venues; please make a note in your diaries now.

* * W I N T E R L E C T U R E P R O G R A M M E * *

Saturday 15 January 1994

**The Nora Witham Memorial Lecture
WOMEN'S HISTORY IN NOTTINGHAM-
SHIRE, 1550-1950**

by Mr Christopher Weir, BA

Chairman: Mrs Jean Nicholson, MA

This illustrated lecture looks at the lives of both wealthy and poorer women and attempts to trace how their status and fortunes changed over the years. It draws on a wide variety of original sources, including letters, diaries, probate and parish records.

Chris Weir is a senior archivist with the County Council's Archive Service and a former editor of the *Nottinghamshire Historian*. For many years he has been a part-time local history tutor with the WEA and the University Adult Education Department. His publications include *The Nottinghamshire Heritage and Village and Town Bands*.

Saturday 12 February 1994

**COLEORTON - A LANDSCAPE WITH
COAL MINES**

by Robert F Hartley, BA

Chairman: Mr Steph Mastoris BA

This talk deals with the large amount of evidence for mining in the Medieval and post-Medieval periods in this parish. Central to the story is the 'lounge' opencast coal mine site which has greatly added to our knowledge of 15th and 16th Century mining. It has been possible to see and record mine galleries from as early as 1450 at least, as the excavating machines of the opencast contractors open them up. Many finds have been salvaged, including pit-props, leather boots, shovels, sledges and some remarkable items of costume. As conservation is completed and as finance permits many items are being displayed at Snibston Discovery Park and at the Jewry Wall Museum in Leicester.

Robert Hartley is an archaeologist with the Leicestershire County Council Museum Arts and Record Service. He has been engaged in a number of important archaeological projects.

Saturday 12 March 1994

**The Maurice Barley Memorial Lecture
SEVERNS AND THE WHITE HART - TWO
NOTABLE TIMBER-FRAMED BUILDINGS**

by F W B Charles, BA, MA, FSA, RIBA

Chairman: Mr John Severn, MA, FRIBA

Severns, formerly at Middle Pavement, Nottingham was threatened with demolition in 1968, saved by the efforts of Maurice Barley, and has been rebuilt at Castle Gate. An account of the building and its reconstruction will be found in the Society's *Transactions* of 1970 in which it was dated to c1450; it has since been dated by tree ring analysis to c1340.

The White Hart contrasts with Severns in size, style, original function and date. Its main structure, fronting the market at Newark is c1460, though the rear wing could be more than a century earlier.

Since both buildings will be known to members, the lecturer will concentrate on their lesser known aspects, mainly timber construction and their original form. They are mentioned and illustrated in *Conservation of Timber Buildings*.

ANNUAL LUNCHEON 1993

The Society's Annual Luncheon is an occasion to which many members look forward as an opportunity to meet friends in attractive surroundings, and the success of this year's event has encouraged Council to plan another next year. For the third time, the Great Hall at Southwell was the venue on 23 October. With heraldic glass and portraits of princes and prelates forming an appropriate setting, we sat down to a pleasant meal of the high standard we have come to expect. Professor Beckett proposed the loyal toast and Geoffrey Oldfield proposed 'The Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire' to which the Chairman responded, before introducing the guest of honour and speaker, Mrs Victoria Jarvis of Doddington Hall. She related the history of the Hall and the story of its owners, well-laced with anecdotes; many of her audience will be planning to visit or re-visit Doddington in 1994.

All lectures are held in the YMCA, Shakespeare Street and begin at 3 pm. Non-members of the Society are welcome.



NEWARK CASTLE EXCAVATIONS 1993

The Newark Castle Trust has been busy again this summer with another extensive archaeological dig at the Castle. The Trust began work last summer, when it was chiefly concerned with explaining the layout of the north eastern defences. This year the main aim was to elucidate the Saxon post-holes and their relationship to the north curtain wall, and to unblock the entrance to the undercroft. Visitors have been able to see the archaeologists at work on the site, and have been particularly excited by the discovery of several well preserved human skeletons, as well as significant findings about the Saxon origins of the Castle. The work has been directed by the Chairman of the Trust, Dr John Samuels (member of Thoroton Council), with considerable help from Pam Marshall, who will be known to members from the recent Wollaton Hall project. To celebrate the success of this year's dig, your Chairman was among those who attended an official viewing on 7 September, and then enjoyed a magnificent lunch at Le Gourmet, a local French restaurant. Our congratulations to Dr Samuels on leading this exciting dig, which is already producing 'two new theories a day', in Pam Marshall's words, as the interpretation of the Newark site continues. Anyone wishing to join the Newark Castle Trust should send an SAE to Dr Samuels at 6 Old North Road, Cromwell, Newark NG23 6JE.

John Beckett



A THIRTEENTH CENTURY BRIDGE OVER THE RIVER TRENT

During August 1993 a previously unknown 13th Century bridge was discovered in the parish of Hemington, just down-stream of the confluence of the Derwent and the Trent. Ennemix Construction Materials plc have stripped topsoil from an ancient course of the Trent, revealing the foundations of four piers of a large timber bridge, of similar size to the Old Trent Bridge in Nottingham.

Two of the bridge's piers were constructed of massive oak piles driven into the river bed to form a six-sided cut-water or starling. The piles were reinforced by a horizontal ring beam, made of six timbers, half-jointed together, and housed into the top of the piles. The whole pier base was then filled and stabilised with tons of stone hard-core.

The other two foundations were of stone and probably carried flood arches, supporting a road over the low-lying fields beside the Trent. One of these is of high quality masonry, with meticulously cut and chamfered stone blocks locked together with iron clamps. Because the distance between the starlings is 10 metres it is believed that the decking would have been of timber.

Robert Howard of the Nottingham University Tree Ring Dating Laboratory has analysed two of the wooden piles, giving a suggested date of AD 1260, in the reign of Henry III. The methods of construction are similar to the famous Old London Bridge.

Then on 6 October remains of an even earlier structure were discovered 100 metres downstream. Very large timbers were revealed in the quarry face, and the main effort of the excavation moved to the new site. The team has uncovered two 'caissons' consisting of horizontal, diamond-shaped, lap-jointed frames supporting double rows of 'log cabin' jointed planks to form an open box. These lie on the river bed and have been filled with tons of stone to form pier bases. On top of one is a fallen bridge trestle over 7 metres high. There is also a double row of braced piles, which may be a repair, as the caissons have been displaced by a flood surge. One dendro date on a caisson suggests a date of AD 1190, and Gustave Milne has confirmed the 11th Century date of the carpentry and stressed the national importance of the site in the study of early building techniques including a unique precursor of the chase-tenon joint.

English Heritage has recognised the tremendous importance of this site and is assisting in the recovery and preservation of all the timbers.

Chris Salisbury

LOCAL HISTORY FAIR AT RUDDINGTON



On Saturday 11 September - one fine day among several that were distinctly otherwise - Chapel Street in Ruddington was lined from end to end with market stalls for the Local History Fair.

The Society had taken a double stall and was able to display to advantage publicity materials, photographs of activities, finds from archaeological digs, copies of historic maps and volumes of *Transactions* and part of Bernard Beilby's huge collection of photographs of Old Nottingham.

There was a constant stream of interested visitors, not only from the general public but from members of the many other societies and clubs represented there. For this occasion 'local history' covered a wide field; from the National Trust to a Meccano Club, several Local History Societies were present, together with displays from the Nottinghamshire Archives, the Local Studies Section of the County Library and the embryo Nottinghamshire Historic Gardens Trust.

As a direct result of the day's activities the Treasurer has received several enquiries, many of which have been converted into membership. Ten or so members turned out to set up, man the stall, and dismantle the display, and their assistance is very much appreciated. With such a gathering of like-minded people it was a fun day, too. The assistance of one small helper might revive ideas of Young Thoroton!

GEOFFREY OLDFIELD: A PROFILE

I was born in Lancashire, but have lived in or around Nottingham ever since I was two years old. My interest in the history of the town dates from 1936 when I first started work at Viyella House on Castle Boulevard. I walked from the Old Market Square through the narrow streets around St. Nicholas' Church, and thought about the way the area had developed. In 1939 I joined the City Treasurer's Department but five years' war service in the RAF took me away from Nottingham.

I returned to the City Treasurer's Department in 1946. My work occasionally brought me into contact with

aspects of Nottingham's history. One of my tasks was dealing with tithe redemption annuities, and I had to find out about these and other matters concerned with the Corporation's ancient estates.

* * *

My interest in local history became more disciplined in 1954 when I joined a WEA course on Nottingham's history. This course and its successors over the next few years were tutored first by J D Marshall and then by Stanley Chapman. In 1958 I joined the Thoroton Society, mainly as a means of receiving the annual volumes of *Transactions*. I did not attend many lectures or go on excursions in my early years; although on moving to West Bridgford I was able to go to one or two in South Nottinghamshire, my appearance on a bicycle causing a few raised eyebrows!

I continued to attend WEA classes on local history, one of which resulted in the publication of a book edited by Helen Meller, *Nottingham in the Eighteen Eighties*, to which I contributed. This whetted my appetite and I joined the first certificate course in local history run by Nottingham University with Alan Rogers as tutor. This led to my being asked to write the official history of Basford Rural District Council on its demise in 1974.

I had always been over-awed at lectures and excursions by the erudition and scholarship of Professors Chambers and Barley and by Keith Train. It was perhaps the confidence gained on the certificate course that led me to remind Keith Train that he had in his capacity as science master at High Pavement School guided Class 1A, of which I was a member, on nature rambles!

We were to become good friends later and eventually he would address me by my christian name instead of the usual 'laddie'.

I joined the West Bridgford Local History Society at the inaugural meeting and was appointed secretary. Later I was co-opted onto the Committee of the Nottinghamshire Local History Association, and invited to become a member of the Thoroton Council.

* * *

Since retiring in 1980, I have been able to devote more time to local history, combining it with my interest in photography. I have published two and three-fifths books (the three-fifths being my share of one on West Bridgford). I lectured in local history for the WEA, and between 1987 and 1989 I studied for the MA in Local and Regional History at Nottingham University.

After our son and daughter left home my wife, Freda, became an associate member of the Society and we are regular attenders at meetings, excursions and functions, subject to the overriding claims of two young grand-daughters!

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Contributions to future Newsletters are welcome. Please write to The Editor, Mr F N Hoskins, 12 Forest Road East, Nottingham, NG1 4HH. The views expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Society, nor of its Council.
