

# THE THOROTON SOCIETY

Nottinghamshire's History and Archaeology Society



No 53: Autumn 2008

**Tuesday 14 October at 7.30pm: The Keith Train Lecture,  
in association with the Nottingham Civic Society:  
'Necropolis Nottingham' - Cllr Catharine Arnold  
At the Cathedral Hall, Wellington Circus (off Derby Road)**

Cllr Arnold turns her attention to our two great Victorian cemeteries,  
their fascinating history, and even more intriguing residents.

**Saturday 18 October: 'The Hatfield Trackway and Platform: A  
Neolithic Ceremonial Site in a Wetland Context' - Henry Chapman**

Henry Chapman is one of the investigators on the television programme *Time Team*. His publications include *Landscape Archaeology and GIS*, and with R Van de Noort, and J Collis (2007), *Sutton Common: The Excavation of an Iron Age Marsh-Fort*. His lecture will cover investigations on Hatfield Moors, South Yorkshire, an area just north of Nottinghamshire and west of the junction of the Trent with the Humber. A timber 'corduroy' trackway was discovered which crossed a shallow pool onto a corduroy platform, dating to the late Neolithic when local water tables were rising as a secondary response to rising relative sea level. The architecture of the site within its landscape suggests that it was constructed for ceremonial purposes rather than as a hunting platform or routeway.

**Saturday 8 November: Nottinghamshire History Lecture - 'Eating and  
Drinking in Nottinghamshire Households 1540-1640' - Mark Dawson**



Mark Dawson received a PhD last year from Nottingham University for his study of food and drink within the household of the Willoughby family of Wollaton, Nottinghamshire and Middleton, Warwickshire. He works as a computer technician, but has continued his interest and research into food and drink in the early-modern period. For this lecture he will turn his attention from the households of the gentry to those of the masses, focusing on information to be gleaned from probate records on food and drink.

Mark has had an article on the seasonal consumption of foods published in *Petits Propos Culinaire*, a journal covering culinary history, and has a chapter on changing tastes in sixteenth-century England in the forthcoming publication *Food and Drink in Archaeology* - a collection of papers from the Food and Drink in Archaeology Conference held at Nottingham University in May 2007. His PhD thesis is due to be published in early 2009 by Prospect Books as *Plenti and Grase: Food and Drink in a Sixteenth Century Household*. [Illustration: *The Outer Kitchen at Wollaton Hall. Mark Dawson*]

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~ The Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire ~  
~ The County's Principal Historical Society ~  
Visit the Thoroton Website at: [www.thorotonsociety.org.uk](http://www.thorotonsociety.org.uk)

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**Saturday 13 December: 'John Blow - Son of Newark:  
A Tercentenary Tribute' - John Morehen**

Our Christmas lecture will be given by John Morehen, Emeritus Professor of Music at the University of Nottingham. John studied at Oxford, Cambridge and the College of Church Musicians, Washington DC. He was Sub-Organist at St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle. From 1973 he was lecturer and then professor, and became the first Head of the School of Humanities at the University of Nottingham. He has written widely on music of the 16th and 17th centuries. As an organ recitalist, lecturer, examiner and adjudicator, John has toured worldwide, and has made over a hundred radio and television broadcasts in the UK and abroad.

John Blow, our county's most famous composer, was born in Newark in 1649, and died three hundred years ago. He sang in the Chapel Royal Choir and was organist of Westminster Abbey, organist of the Chapel Royal, Choirmaster at St Paul's Cathedral, royal instrument tuner and the official Chapel Royal composer.

He wrote a great number of anthems and church services, as well as a small amount of instrumental music and one opera, 'Venus and Adonis'. Blow died in 1708 and is buried in Westminster Abbey. The lecture will include examples of his music.



**Stonehenge - the mystery/history continues!**

Out of our county - but of vital national importance - is the ongoing saga of how to best conserve and showcase Stonehenge, the internationally unique and splendid testament to the ingenuity and skills of our ancestors. Should we do it on the cheap and spend all our money on (in some eyes) more important but ephemeral institutions - or should we really seek to find a solution worthy of such a magnificent place, which will enhance and protect it in a fabulous setting which will draw visitors and 'worshippers' of all kinds for years to come?

If you would like to join in the debate, you can find out more on English Heritage's website at <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.14171>.

**Bestwood Country Park - call for information**

A major project is beginning on Bestwood Country Park, which will include restoration of the listed winding engine house, engine and headstocks, and the building of a new adjacent visitor center and education facility. The new centre and engine house will contain interpretation and exhibition areas regarding Bestwood.

Paul Norton, who is Project Officer for Interpretation at Nottinghamshire County Council's Community Services Department, is interested in any historical material on Bestwood to add to the existing archive, which would help to portray Bestwood's history in greater detail - particularly its later industrial heritage of coal mining and iron production. If any members have imagery or written material that they feel would be of interest, and are willing to let Paul have copies (or for him to copy it) - or if they know of further information sources, would they please contact him at [paul.norton@nottsc.gov.uk](mailto:paul.norton@nottsc.gov.uk), tel 01623 822944 ext 228, or write to him at The Abbey, Rufford Abbey Country Park, Near Ollerton, NG22 9DF. Paul is also interested in obtaining relevant mining tools, personal miners' equipment and other coal mining ephemera to make a three-dimensional display.

**ANNUAL LUNCHEON 2008**

**You will have received a booking form with this Newsletter. In honour of Southwell Minster's 900 years celebrations we are returning to Southwell's Saracen's Head. The date is Saturday 1 November - why not visit the Minster in its birthday year and/or the Workhouse, and make it a whole day out?**

## REPORTS OF EXCURSIONS

### Thursday 29 May - Newstead Abbey - Leader John Beckett

In glorious weather, over seventy members of the Society - more attending an excursion than I can ever remember - assembled outside the front door of Newstead Abbey. Our leaders should have been our Chairman Professor John Beckett, and our President Dr Rosalys Coope, but unfortunately illness prevented Rosalys from attending.

First came the lectures, and John, who had been well briefed by Rosalys, spoke about the history of the building and its former occupants. Any study of Newstead before 1630 relies completely on an interpretation of the archaeology, as there are no

archival records. The estate was granted to the Byron family in 1540. Much of the priory church was demolished and used for building materials - only the west window remains - but the domestic buildings of the priory were converted over the generations into the family home that we now see.

The Curator, Haidee Jackson next spoke about some of the items in the collection at Newstead. Many of these are associated with the 6th Lord Byron, the poet ('mad, bad and dangerous to know'), to whom Newstead is something of a shrine. Although inextricably linked to Newstead, Byron spent little of his life there. A building much in need of repair with limited funds at his disposal did not enable him to do much except refurbish one or two rooms. He was, perhaps, more interested in drinking claret with his friends. A fine monument to his dog, Boatswain, who died of rabies, stands in the garden.

After the lectures we were taken on an extensive tour of the Abbey and were able to see some of the architectural evidence which had contributed to recent thinking about the way in which the Abbey had developed. (See Rosalys Coope's article in *Transaction of the Thoroton Society* vol 111). All in all this was a fascinating visit, throwing much new light on a house very familiar to the people of Nottingham, but which still offers areas for future research.

Colour was added to the day by the presence of a wedding party who had just celebrated their marriage in The Orangery. Dressed in medieval costume, they were enjoying demonstrations of archery and falconry in the grounds before repairing to the city's Tales of Robin Hood, from where they had hired their outfits. (Rumour has it that John Beckett has made a provisional reservation for the costume of the Sheriff of Nottingham, in the hope of persuading the Secretary that it would be a good place to hold the Annual Luncheon.)

**Keith Goodman**

[Pictures - top: John Beckett lecturing outside Newstead Abbey; bottom, left to right: John Beckett, Haidee Jackson, Janice Avery]



## Wednesday 18 June - Nottingham University Manuscripts & Special Collections - Leader Dorothy Johnston

During the evening Dorothy Johnston, Keeper of Manuscripts & Special Collections, welcomed members of the Society to the new accommodation at King's Meadow Campus. Over forty members attended, and the staff and volunteers were most attentive and welcoming, offering refreshments at the start and end of our visit. We were divided into groups, each of which in turn was introduced to a different area of the department's work. The principal area, not normally seen by the public, was the Store, which provides about 8kms of shelving with environmental and security controls. In the Conservation Workshop staff explained the problems of treating degraded paper and a

technique for restoring strength to paper with additional paper pulp was demonstrated. The Digitization Studio showed the equipment and technical work involved in the department's efforts to support access and preservation through the provision of digitized copies. Finally, in the Reading Room we had a chance to see selected items from the collections, and were reminded that Thoroton members are allowed access to the collections, including that of the East Midlands Local Studies Collection. (This is summarized in Newsletter No 52; or it can be viewed at [http://www.thorotonsociety.org.uk/Thoroton\\_Society/news/](http://www.thorotonsociety.org.uk/Thoroton_Society/news/)) **Leslie Cram**

## Saturday 12 July - Grantham and East Nottinghamshire Churches - Leader Alan Langton

Forty-four members of the Society enjoyed a visit to three churches - each, as it happened, in a different county. First we visited Grantham in Lincolnshire [*pictured right*], where the height of the spire and dimensions of the church make it a mini-cathedral in its own right. We were treated to a fine tour, conducted by Mr Brian Buttery, who has been verger of St Wulfrum's for many years. He has a fund of knowledge and a gift of presentation, which kept members entertained for a full hour.

Our next stop was the church of St Mary in Bottesford, Leicestershire, where the parish administrator, Mrs Judith Wells, gave us an informative talk on this splendid church, which also has a fine spire, and an association with the Manners family and the Dukes of Rutland and their family tombs.



*[Photograph: Colston Bassett old church]*



Our third stop was at Colston Bassett, Nottinghamshire, where the Society's own Adrian Henstock, a knowledgeable student of the area's churches, gave us a tour of the impressive new church - even if excessively large for such a small village - and its predecessor out in the fields, a ruin which is now excellently protected by English Heritage. The day was suitably completed by a very good Thoroton tea in Granby Village Hall.

**Alan Langton**



## BOOK REVIEWS by John Beckett

**Miranda Rijks, *The Eccentric Entrepreneur: A Biography of Sir Julien Cahn Bt. (1882-1944)* (The History Press, 2008: price £20)**

Sir Julien Cahn was one of Nottingham's most successful inter-war businessmen. The son of a German-Jewish émigré, Albert Cahn, who moved to Nottingham in 1883, Julien worked briefly for Charles Foulds, the music chain, before joining the family firm, The Nottingham Furniture Company, at the age of 20. He turned this into a major national enterprise as Jays & Campbells, largely through the innovative development of hire purchase schemes, and in the process became immensely wealthy. He was not content to sit back and count his money, but he struggled to gain wider social acceptance in the anti-Semitic atmosphere of the time. To raise his personal profile he undertook numerous philanthropic

works, and financed and ran the Julien Cahn XI, the most famous private cricket club in the world.

He was a Master of Foxhounds, though he was scared of jumping the fences; and his love of cricket was undermined by being frightened of the ball! He is still remembered locally for buying the historic parts of Newstead Abbey in 1931 and presenting them to Nottingham City Council, in order to preserve the name of Byron for evermore - although, in fact, he showed no interest in Byron otherwise. Miranda Rijks, who is Cahn's granddaughter, has written a richly entertaining book about one of the county's more interesting businessmen.

**Ben Cowell, *The Heritage Obsession: the Battle for England's Past* (Tempus, 2008: ISBN 978 0 7524 4096 5)**

For Thorotonians curious as to how we have come to live in a modern world which seems to be obsessed with heritage, this is a useful, and very well written guide. It traces the origins of the conservation movement, the views of the Victorians, and the role of groups such as the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, Campaign to Protect Rural England, and the National Trust. It goes on to show how attitudes changed out of all recognition after 1945, with the arrival of listed building status, and subsequently country house visiting as a leisure pursuit, the formation in 1984 of English Heritage, the creation in the 1990s of the Heritage Lottery

Fund, and the modern debates about conservation and preservation.

Ben Cowell gave the Thoroton Society's Nottinghamshire History Lecture in 1997, and he has subsequently worked both for the National Trust and English Heritage. He is now a senior civil servant in the Department for Culture, Media & Sport. Ben knows the ground, and in this volume he has written a careful and clear account of how conservation came to be a part of our way of life, and also asks some of the questions that we need to pose about the point of heritage, and what we are preserving and conserving for.

### **Balderton - Past and Present**

Three years ago a Heritage Lottery Fund grant was made to Newark and District Photographic Society to undertake a project to record Balderton in the present day, in comparison with what it was like in the past. The Society placed adverts in the local press to seek contributions from Balderton residents by way of photographs and recollections of the village from their youth. This DVD is the result of the completion of the project and is highly recommended to anyone interested in Balderton, and is a very good example of how to present such a project to the general public. The DVD runs for about thirty minutes and plays on domestic DVD players or through a computer DVD player.

The older photographs are merged into the recent ones and then shown side by side with appropriate placing caption. Sometimes there are just two images but often three or more, which provide the viewer with an interesting comparison of the building and places depicted. Perhaps a weakness is that the older pictures are not dated, but most contain good clues that allow for an approximate date - I think they are all twentieth century with several post-World War Two. There is a musical background over which is played the voices of several people giving personal recollections of Balderton past.

This is an excellent example of what can be achieved in a modern idiom to produce an educational and entertaining snapshot of the history of a village via images. *The DVD is available at £6 (inc p&tp) from Ralph Bassett, 43, Riverside Road, Newark, Notts, NG24 4RJ. Cheques payable to Newark Photographic Society.*

**Howard Fisher**

## Thoroton Response Group

Since the last Newsletter several representations have been made on national policies that affect our county. Comments were made on the Society's behalf on the Draft Heritage Protection Bill. It was made clear that the general direction of the draft bill was welcomed in making heritage protection clearer and more transparent and the processes involved simpler for all parties; however local authorities should have a well resourced and skilled conservation team to deal with heritage matters on behalf of the people they serve, and the advice of these officers should be considered material in any decision made on heritage matters: this is not always the case in the Society's experience. We also said local authorities should be obliged to take action on works undertaken to heritage sites without consent: again, not always done. And finally, that county history and archaeology societies should be included as consultees; since they bring together professional and amateur expertise and knowledge that is focused on the county as a whole.

The group drew to English Heritage's notice a number of buildings considered at risk, in the hope that they be included in the new Buildings at Risk Register, or at least be looked at by EH officers.

The other major policy paper responded to was 'History in Views', Nottingham's skyline and its hillside location being pointed out as reasons for being careful about the impact of tall buildings on a historic city's skyline.

There have also been a number of planning applications commented on and application lists are scanned for potential problems. However, we cannot pick up on everything, so please let us know of your concerns if you feel the Society should make representation. Tell us your local concerns about planning applications, changes in land management, threats to local landmarks etc. We will try to investigate and comment to the appropriate authority if we feel that would assist. Contact me, preferably at [bandpcast@btinternet.com](mailto:bandpcast@btinternet.com), or at the usual address.

**Barbara Cast**

## Delving the Society's Archives

Recently we looked at the earliest *Journal of the Nottingham Archaeological Society* dated December 1948. Following the article mentioned in the last Newsletter, the Journal went on to look with R M Butler at Nottingham Friaries. Noted was that of the White Friars sited around Friar Lane. The writer regretted the demolition of the old houses at Friar Yard, which it was felt might have preserved some of the walls and overlain the foundations of other buildings, but no investigations were done. Little was known about the Franciscan Friary located between Greyfriar Gate and Carrington Street: at the time a new store was proposed to be built there, and it was hoped something of the Friary might be

found. According to the article, the Chesterfield or Greyfriars Cross was demolished in 1612 to repair the Hethbeth (Trent) Bridge, but the author hoped something of the base might be found during pipe laying - does anyone know if it was? There is a lot of interest in this article: how much has been found out since then about the friaries and the Rowell, a stream which ran until 1785 between Friar Lane and the Leen and made the area around St Peter's and Houndsgate very muddy in wet weather; and the Athilwell Spring from which a conduit was made by the friars: what of these is known today?

**Barbara Cast**

## Bromley House

On 28 May Bromley House launched a new website containing details of its users and their borrowing activities between 1816-1916. Compiled by Neal Priestland, the information provides a snapshot of middle-class life in Victorian Nottingham. Cheek by jowl, as it were (at least in the pages of the records, if not actually in the building at the same time) were to be found the leading businessmen, lace entrepreneurs such as Thomas Adams, and Richard and Thomas Isaac Birkin, Lewis Heymann and Ernest Jardine, hosiery entrepreneur Matthew Needham, the banking Wright family, architects such as TC Hine and Nottingham's great water engineer Thomas Hawksley, together with its borough surveyor Marriott Ogle Tarbotton. Leading town figures such as George Coldham, Henry Enfield, and Thomas Wakefield were also on the roll. There is much more to it than this, since Neal has provided an introductory assessment of members' backgrounds, and their addresses - 30 per cent of them lived in The Park! To find out more log on at: <http://www.ashbracken.com/BrHouse-HTML/BrH1816-Index.html>. If the web is not to your taste, you can browse Neal's work in hard copy in the library.

**John Beckett**

**Howard Fisher is taking over the role of Newsletter Editor.**

**Please send contributions for Newsletter No 54 by 1 November 2008 to**

**Howard Fisher, email: [hf773@btinternet.com](mailto:hf773@btinternet.com), (text in Word files, pictures in pdf or jpeg files); or tel: 0115 9372898. The views expressed in the Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Editor, the Society or its Council**