

THE THOROTON SOCIETY

Nottinghamshire's History and Archaeology Society



No 54: Winter 2008

EDITORIAL

As I start my task as Editor of the Newsletter I must sincerely thank Janice Avery for the excellent work she did during her period in the editorial hot seat. Under Janice's stewardship the Newsletter developed and has provided our members with excellent information about the Society, its past activities, and giving tasters of those to come. Janice took over the reins with issue 19 in Spring 2000. Rest assured, there will continue to be the same seeking for

contributions amongst you all; not only the regular stalwarts who produce reports of meetings, photographs and future events, but from other members. In connection with the latter, I would be interested in anything in which members have been involved, whether directly in Thoroton Society events or not. If there is a Thoroton connection, no matter how tenuous, please let me know about it. My contact details are given at the end of this issue.

THE ANNUAL LUNCHEON

We were nearing capacity for this year's annual lunch when it returned to The Saracen's Head in Southwell on November 1st. Members were not disappointed: the room was most attractively turned out, the Saracen's staff were very helpful and the food extremely good, with much of it locally sourced.

Rosalys Coope, President, and John Beckett, Chairman, presided over the event and we were pleased to welcome Robert Hildyard, nephew of Miles Thoroton Hildyard of affectionate memory, who proposed the toast to the Society. Also very welcome were the Very Revd. Dr. John Moses and Mrs. Susan Moses, who have settled in Southwell on the retirement of Dr. Moses as Dean of St. Paul's. Dr Moses, now a member of the Society, gave the after lunch talk which

'lifted the dome of St. Paul's', giving his inside view on how this great national and much loved building and institution works. He spoke of the momentous occasions in the recent past where the cathedral has been called on to respond to people's desire to come together to express feelings of sorrow and shock, and also to celebrate great happenings. He described the privilege he felt on being able to spend his last ten years of ministry in such a place. Those listening to him felt that they were also privileged to hear him speak so eloquently and movingly.

All in all, it was a very good luncheon.

And for next year, something completely different.

Barbara Cast, Hon. Secretary.



*Left: The Very Revd.
Dr. John Moses*



Right: Mr. Robert Hildyard

~ The Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire ~

~ The County's Principal Historical Society ~

Visit the Thoroton Website at: www.thorotonsociety.org.uk

THE WENTWORTH OUTING

How fortunate the Thoroton Society is to have such a loyal group of members who support the various visits that we make, such as the one to Wentworth Castle in South Yorkshire on 6 September 2008. We had a full coach and several other members made their own way there. On arrival we were greeted with biscuits and a good supply of tea and coffee, after which we were split into two groups; one to go round the House and the other to go round the Garden. Leaving the Visitor Centre we entered an area named after John Arnold, the first Head Gardener at Wentworth. This was planted with a fine dahlia border and gives excellent vistas across the park. The meadow below is being managed to promote wild flowers and tulips in the Spring. The path from here took us to a ha-ha, said to have been built in 1713 by Joseph Bower, and on to a fine dry stone bridge constructed by the Yorkshire Dry Stone Walling Association. From there we moved up to the Corinthian Temple that has recently been cleaned and restored giving a glimpse of a rotunda to the south east. This is in harmony with the Palladian south front of the House. William Wentworth no doubt saw this type of architecture whilst on the 'Grand Tour' in 1741. From the Temple we passed down Cedar Walk, lined on one side by handsome blue cedars planted by the Vernon Wentworth family in 1870. Close by is the rare Victorian Conservatory made famous by the BBC's Restoration Series and in dire need of being restored to its former glory. Also in this area are the Azalea, Union Jack and Victorian Flower Gardens. For those with a head for heights the next place of interest was Stainsborough Castle.



Wentworth House

This is a folly built in the late 1720s as a playground for the children of the house on the site of a Motte and Bailey. From the top, on a clear day, there are commanding views over the surrounding countryside including Wentworth Woodhouse.

After a pleasant lunch the two groups changed over and the morning's Garden group went on a tour of the house. This is now part of the Northern College of Adult Education and, although most of the fixtures and fittings have gone, the magnificent ceilings and covings are still in place. Of particular note are the Blue Room, the Long Gallery, the Jacobean Staircase and the Cantilevered Staircase.

Wentworth's house and gardens merit a visit for anyone. Our day finished with a famous Thoroton tea with our thanks to the very knowledgeable guides who led the groups and to our leaders, Ceril and Derek Little.

Bill Clark



Members enjoying the day

THE THOROTON RESPONSE GROUP

In the last issue of this Newsletter, the TRP reported that it had commented on the draft Heritage Protection Bill. Since then the House of Commons Select Committee on Culture, Media and Sport has considered the draft bill and highlighted some of those matters about which the Society had concerns. This included the need for conservation officers in planning authorities to be properly trained, resourced and regarded. The Select Committee said 'Conservation officers, in sufficient numbers and with adequate training, will be critical to the successful implementation of the Bill. We recommend that the Government sets out a strategy for maintaining sufficient numbers of conservation officers with the necessary skills.'

The MPs on this committee were also concerned about the lack of reference to enforcement, saying, 'We consider that such a review [of enforcement] should be conducted as a matter of urgency and the results published with a view to improving the operation of legislation.' This was also a matter which the Society commented upon in its response, as was the inclusion as statutory consultees of such organisations as ours. The Select Committee said that there should be 'a clearer context for the involvement of the voluntary sector (including local civic and

amenity societies, historical and archaeological groups) by incorporating the word 'organisations' - as well as individuals - into the category of those with special knowledge or interest to assist heritage authorities.'

The Society also commented on the planning application for the Odeon site, which is next to Bromley House, setting out reasons why this application should be refused. The final sentences in our letter says, 'It is hoped that Nottingham City Council, with a city of immense historic and architectural worth to care for, will reject a proposal which through design, materials, height and dominance would entirely spoil this important part of the city centre. It should be possible for architects to design something which would maximise the site available, make a top quality 21st century statement and yet blend with its surroundings without dominating them.'

As yet, members have not raised matters which they wish the Response Group to consider - please, if you have concerns regarding building or land use changes in the county, let us know.

Barbara Cast on behalf of the Thoroton Response Group.

LOCAL HISTORY: the death of a great tradition

Local History classes have been available in Nottinghamshire for more than a century. They were the stock-in-trade of Nottingham University's Adult Education department, founded in 1920, and over many years in the Workers' Education Association. J. D. (David) Chambers, graduated in History at the university in 1920, and was immediately appointed staff tutor in Adult Education with responsibility for local history. He worked in tandem with Arthur Cossons (about whom we shall hear in our February 2009 lecture) and W. E. (Bill) Tate. Subsequently, Maurice Barley became local history tutor after the Second World War, and the position has more recently

been filled by Alan Rogers and David Marcombe.

But what of the future? The Nottinghamshire Historian, 81 (2008), reports (p.6) that 'for the first time in many decades, the WEA has no local history courses listed in its Nottinghamshire courses guide, partly because there are no tutors available to teach them. In part this is because they now have to have Institute of Learning qualifications. So where next? Do we let it drop, or should a Society like Thoroton be working to ensure it does not disappear altogether? Your views are welcome.

John Beckett

THE ARCHAEOLOGY LECTURE - Saturday, 18 October 2008

HENRY CHAPMAN - THE HATFIELD TRACKWAY AND PLATFORM: a Neolithic ceremonial site in a wetland context



A few miles north of the Nottinghamshire border, to the west of the junction of the Trent with the Humber Estuary, are Thorne and Hatfield Moors, the largest peat bogs in Britain. Dr. Henry Chapman explained the environmental history of the area and how the rising sea level after the last Ice Age led to the formation of raised mires and a decline in tree cover in the Neolithic. He then concentrated on the corduroy trackway leading from dry land to a platform in the middle of a lake discovered at Hatfield. It was constructed of pine trunks from which a radiocarbon date was obtained putting it into the Neolithic as the earliest known trackway from Britain. No artefacts were discovered. Henry then discussed possible interpretations of the unique structure, comparing it to known monuments such as henges, favouring a ceremonial use of the platform which could be viewed from the land. During the lively question and discussion period after the lecture, the interpretation continued, including the possible significance of its approximate northerly orientation, and we were

reminded of other trackways, all of later date, which have been found in the north of the county.

FUTURE LECTURE PROGRAMME, 2009

Saturday, 10 January - The Nora Witham Lecture

Bromley House in Context: Nottingham Subscription Library and the Library World of Nottinghamshire before the Public Libraries Act. - Peter Hoare

Mr. Peter Hoare, MA, DipLib, MCLIP, FSA, HonFLA, was University Librarian at the University of Nottingham 1978-93. In retirement he works as a freelance librarian and consultant on historic libraries, and is one of the Directors of Bromley House Library. He recently stepped down as chairman of the Historic Libraries Forum. He has worked on the history of libraries for most of his professional career, with interests ranging from the 17th to the 20th centuries in the British Isles and across much of Europe. He was General Editor of the three-volume *Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland*, published in 2006, and joint editor of its third volume (1850-2000).

Nottingham Subscription Library was founded in 1816 and moved to its present home, Bromley House, in 1822. Only a few libraries of this kind survive today, but in its early days, before the Public Libraries Act of 1850 and before the first municipal libraries, Bromley House was one of many. The 'library scene' in Nottinghamshire in the early 19th century was remarkably lively, with book clubs, commercial circulating libraries and Mechanics' Institutes in towns throughout the county - along with other varieties, some of them unique to Nottingham.

Bromley House c1900



Saturday, 14 February - The Maurice Barley Lecture
A Nottinghamshire Historian - Arthur Cossons (1893-1963) - Neil
Cossons

Sir Neil Cossons OBE, MA, FSA was born, brought up and educated in Nottingham. After reading Geography at Liverpool he entered Leicester Museums as a graduate trainee and his subsequent career was in the museum and heritage field, retiring as Chairman of English Heritage in 2007. From a curatorship at Bristol he was appointed Deputy Director of Liverpool Museums at twenty-nine, and the first Director of the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust in 1971. In 1983 he became Director of the National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, and was for fourteen years Director of the Science Museum, London, retiring in 2000. He has published and broadcast extensively on industrial archaeology and conservation. Appointed OBE in 1982 and Knighted in 1994 he holds honorary doctorates from the University of Nottingham and Nottingham Trent University.

As a Nottinghamshire headmaster, Arthur Cossons devoted much of his life to the history of the county. He was a passionate campaigner for the preservation of the county's heritage and for setting up of a county museum and a school loans service. He published extensively on the turnpike roads of Nottinghamshire and other counties, and in numerous letters and articles, often decrying demolition or advocating preservation. It is that story and the wider context of his life and times that his son, Neil Cossons, will be addressing in the 2009 Maurice Barley lecture.



Arthur Cossons

Saturday, 14 March
Recent Archaeological Work in Nottingham - David Walker

David Walker has worked for Trent & Peak Archaeology for over a decade (on and off) and has worked on archaeological projects from the Palaeolithic to the post-medieval, both in Britain and abroad. He is currently a Project Officer for TPA, and heads-up their Survey and Geomatics team. David's professional interests are in geomatics and high-definition survey; his research interests are in ceramic production and experimental archaeology. He holds a Master's degree in the scientific analysis of archaeological materials and a Doctorate in experimental and ethnographic approaches to the understanding of pre-industrial ceramic production. Both degrees were taken at the University of Nottingham.

David's talk will discuss recent archaeological work by Trent & Peak Archaeology in the centre of Nottingham. He will include Garner's Hill, the site of the soon-to-be-opened Centre for Contemporary Arts, Nottingham (CCAN), and Western Street, a rare glimpse of Nottingham's important medieval ceramic industry.

THE 2009 EXCURSIONS PROGRAMME

These dates are for your diaries. Full details of the excursions will be in the Spring Newsletter.

Saturday, 9 May Boston Stump, Brant Broughton and North Muskham

Wednesday, 17 June evening visit to the Newark Resource Centre

Saturday, 11 July Isaac Newton connections at Woolsthorpe and Grantham

Thursday, 10 September Arbury Hall near Nuneaton

ST. ANNS ALLOTMENTS HERITAGE PROJECT

St Anns Allotments, otherwise known as Hungerhill Gardens, were established around 1835 and are probably the oldest and largest in Europe and certainly the oldest in Nottingham. In 2001 their status was recognised by them being listed Grade2*.

Funds have now been secured from the Heritage Lottery Fund to help preserve the heritage of the site including the restoration of historical buildings and developing an archive of garden history.

Volunteers are being sought to become involved in the project and there are several areas where people can work:

- Advising and supporting staff and volunteers in developing the project
- Interviewing current and past gardeners for an oral history archive
- Supporting research into the people, plants, wildlife, geography and history of the site
- Giving talks and presentations about the project
- Practical help on display plots
- Giving the group memories about the allotments

For further information contact the Heritage and Outreach Team, Mo Cooper and Helen Keating, STAA, 3 John Folman Business Centre, Hungerhill Road, St Anns, Nottingham, NG3 4NB. Tel: 0115-911-0207, email: mo_heritage@staaallotments.org.uk. There is also a web site at www.staa-allotments.org.uk.

REVIEWS

Alfred Bowley, *Basford Between the Wars, 1919-39* (Basford and District Local History Society, 2008: copies available from Christine Smith, Secretary, 44, Cherry Tree Close, Brinsley, Notts., NG16 5BA - 01773 783009)

Thoroton Society stalwart, Alf Bowley, has brought together a number of well known local historians, including Geoffrey Oldfield and Terry Fry, to contribute to this book of essays, based largely on oral testimony. Topics covered include education, housing, employment, Basford wakes, health, transport, fashion and clothing, public houses, leisure, cinemas, memorials and churches. It is a good read and it contains some fascinating pictures - look out for the young Alf on p. 63!

John Beckett

Elain Harwood, *Nottingham* (Pevsner Architectural Guides, Yale University Press, 2008: £9.99)

The first edition of Pevsner's *Nottinghamshire* appeared as long ago as 1951 (with Cornwall, one of the first two county guides published), and was revised for a second edition in 1979. A full revision of the Nottinghamshire guide

would need substantial funding, but since the Pevsner series was taken over by Yale University Press, a new series of city guides, published with the financial support of English Heritage, has been started. Written by Elain Harwood, who works as an historian for EH, the book has an introductory essay on Nottingham's architectural heritage through time, a chapter on the city's 'major buildings' - St. Mary's Church, Nottingham Castle, the Council House, St. Barnabas' Cathedral and Nottingham Playhouse - and then a series of twelve walks (four in the city centre and eight in the outer areas), and three excursions, to Wollaton Hall, Newstead Abbey and Boots. The book has numerous colour illustrations, and each of the walks is accompanied by a clear map showing the route. Ms. Harwood is a local and she knows the territory. The result is a clear guide to Nottingham, and if even Ken Brand, who knows a few things about the city's architecture, has found new information in the book, the rest of us can feel confident that few stones have been left unturned. An ideal Christmas present!

John Beckett

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

For Thorotonians who are 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, the role of groups such as SPAB, CPRE and the National Trust, before showing 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 has subsequently worked both for the National Trust and English Heritage. He is now a senior civil servant in DCMS. He knows the ground, and he has written a careful and clear account of how conservation came to be part of our way of life, and also to ask some of the questions that we need to pose about the point of heritage, and what we are preserving and conserving for.

John Beckett

Tim Cooper, *Laying the Foundations: A history and archaeology of the Trent Valley sand and gravel industry* (Council for British Archaeology, 2008: ISBN 978 1 902771 76 2)

This 160 page, profusely illustrated book is No. 159 in the CBA's Research Report series. It covers the history, processes, impact and people concerned with this important industry in the East Midlands. The author traces the use of sand and gravel to a charter of 1589 mentioning 'gravel beds' at Aston-upon-Trent and follows the history to the present day. The various companies are described along with their plants and processes, with familiar but passed names such as Hoveringham Gravels Ltd, ARC Aggregates and Trent Gravels Ltd being used as case studies. The issues of the impact of the pits on the landscape and what happens when they are exhausted are dealt with in detail and the associated archaeology is also discussed. The final chapter deals with the people involved in the industry and has interesting oral comments from several of them.

There are maps and diagrams together with nearly ninety illustrations in both colour and black and white. The text is well written in an easily readable style. This industry has played, and still does play, an important part in the landscape features of the Trent Valley and this book provides a very good review of its significance to our region.

Howard Fisher

NEWS OF MEMBERS

I hope that this will become a regular feature of the Newsletter where members can tell us of events, activities and projects in which they are involved. Please do not be shy to let the Editor know about these things.

We extend a very warm welcome to our members who have recently joined us and hope they have a long and fruitful membership of the Society:

Ms G. D. Chalk
Mrs S. Clayton
Mrs L. P. Holloway
Mr. A. G. Humphries
Ms J. M. Knights
Mrs B. Lees
Miss C. J. McCarthy
Mr R. Murray

A NEW CD

Nottinghamshire Local History Association has produced a CD containing facsimile reproductions of the Nottinghamshire Local History Council newsletters from 1968-1973, and The Nottinghamshire Historian from 1973-2007.

The Council was formed in 1953 to bring together organisations and individuals interested in all aspects of local history in the county. It

subsequently became the Association, and its newsletter evolved into The Nottinghamshire Historian, which is now published twice a year. The CD includes a list of articles from 1973 to 2007 as an index.

The CD is obtainable from Derek Walker, Cratley, Back Lane, Eakring, Newark, NG22 0DJ, with a cheque payable to NLHA for £10 to cover postage and packing.

NEW FINDS AT SOUTHWELL

Some members may have read in the local press that further impressive Roman remains have been found on the old Church Street school site which is scheduled for a housing development.

The existence of a very large and important villa has been known for many years and it was expected that this development would reveal more of the site. Very substantial walls have now been found and further archaeological investigation is under way.

With a site known to be so important, it

would have been anticipated that the greatest care would have been taken to maximise the opportunity to excavate. It is to be hoped that the new finds will be the start of a full investigation and interpretation of what is believed to be the centre of a major Roman estate which, in some form, may well have continued into later periods.

Reports of previous excavations can be found in the Transactions.

Barbara Cast

MYSTERY CORBELS



Does anyone recognise this corbel? With its partner, it is now holding up an outbuilding at a stone mason's yard in Lowdham and the owner is curious to know where they came from. He has been told that they were from the old Exchange building which preceded the Nottingham Council House but they don't look as if they fit in with its architecture or period.

All information to the Hon. Sec. please on 01636-830284 or email: bandpcast@btinternet.com

Items for the next issue of the Newsletter No. 55 should be sent by 1 February 2009 to Howard Fisher. Email: hf773@btinternet.com. Address: 21, Brockwood Crescent, Keyworth, Nottingham, NG12 5HQ. Tel: 0115-937-2898

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