Friends of the Centre for English Local History

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Newsletter

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Welcome to the Friends Newsletter for 2025 - packed with news and items of interest for the discerning local historian

Cover photo: a couple of Friends plan their new careers

A WORRYING YEAR

EDITORIAL

It is hard not to feel a bit gloomy this year with the uncertainty hanging over the future shape of History at the University of Leicester (more details of this in the Chair's report).

There are still reasons to be cheerful, however, and this newsletter brings you some of them. Read on to see the positive side of belonging to the Friends, and supporting the Centre for Regional and Local History. For those of us fortunate enough to have studied at the Centre, there are many opportunities for us to stay engaged, and maintain our fascination with the study of English (and Scottish, Welsh, and Irish) local history.

As publication of the Newsletter more or less coincides with Halloween, we also bring you news of the disappointing non-appearance of the ghosts of Grace Dieu Priory (see page 40), together with speculation about the possible misidentification of the gentleman who haunts the Darnley Arms in Cobham, Kent (see page 46).

Contents

Chair's Report

Anne Coyne - Chair

This is my report as Chair of the Friends for 2024/2025. When Michael Gilbert wrote his final Chair's report last year, he detailed the difficulties the Friends and the Centre had faced during the previous few years, that was the Covid pandemic and the closure of Marc Fitch House. Unfortunately, the challenges continue, and as you are all probably know in June of 2025 the University announced that History, including the Centre for Regional and Local History, would be part of a change consultation process due to financial pressures facing the University. This process is still ongoing and the outcome is not likely to be known by the time of the AGM on the 18th of November.

Despite the unknowns, the committee of the Friends remain committed to promoting and supporting the study of Local History as taught by the Centre. In 2025 to date, we have supported post-graduate students and PhD researchers with Small Grant Awards to help meet research and travel costs. We would like to do more so if you know of a current postgraduates or PhD candidates who are studying some aspect of Local History at the University of Leicester, please direct them to the application form on the website.

THE FRIENDS – GRANTS AND BURSARIES – Friends of the Centre for English Local History

One success of 2025 is the launch of the Phythian-Adams Award; this provides financial assistance to students studying for the BA in History at Leicester University who are preparing their dissertation topics and need to visit and conduct research at an archive within the UK. Applications are made via Dr Angela Muir.

Hoskins Day was a great success again with 57 people attending. Professor Mark Gardiner gave the keynote address and the talk focused not on the rural landscape but the dwellingscape and looked at the extant medieval houses. Hoskins Day also featured two postgraduate students Chloe Phillips, researching Black Histories of Cornwall prior to 1900 and Rob Hedge, who is examining the patterns of small rural settlements in North Worcestershire and South Shropshire between the 11th and 15th centuries.

There have been two student placements this year at Spalding Gentleman's Society who are currently running the Fenland Study centre at Ayscoughfee Hall.

We have held two very interesting study days this year. The spring visit was to the Buddhist centre at Thornby Hall looking at the building and its history, followed by a tour of Naseby Battlefield. The autumn visit was to the local museum at Ashby de la Zouch, a talk about the history of Grace Dieu Priory and then followed by a tour of the ruins of Grace Dieu and the surrounding estate. Everyone who joined the study days,

enjoyed these but the study days did not attract the expected numbers. The study days are designed for Friends to join so I would encourage you to come along to the next one. If you would like to visit a certain town or area for a day or examine a certain topic related to local history, please email me with those suggestions. It is your Association so please tell us what you would like the committee to run. We may have to curtail the study days if they are not supported in the future.

Our social media presence continues to expand with engagement increasing with both followers and other associations. I would like to conclude by thanking all members of the committee for their hard work throughout the past year. So, thank you to Karen, Mary, Mandy, Sue, John and Michael. As always if we have more committee members we can do more to promote the study of Local History, so please email me if you would like to volunteer. We will make some minor changes to the constitution at the AGM so please join us online as we need 20 people present to authorise the changes.

I would like to thank you all for supporting the Friends and I look forward to meeting you in person at one of our events.

Anne Coyne

Centre Report

Dr Angela Muir

Associate Professor of British Social and Cultural History

Director of the Centre for Regional and Local History

Hello friends! I'm delighted to once again to be writing to you as Director of the Centre for Regional and Local History, not only because it's a wonderful position to be in, it also means we're still standing despite the current uncertainty! Regardless of what the future holds, I'm extremely grateful for the continued support of the Friends.

Over the past year the Centre has worked closely with the Centre for Urban History. In the Autumn of 2024, we joined forces to deliver a joint seminar series, alternating between our traditional day of Thursday and CUH's Friday seminars. The rationale behind this was make the most of the limited budgets available to research centres, and to show the University that we can work together as we have recently been talking about merging the Centres to help ensure our survival. Other than the slight inconvenience of some events occurring on a different day, this has so far worked well and our successful collaborations have been recognised by the powers that be. We're told there will be another review of centres in the near future, but we do not yet have details of that. I suspect other more pressing matters (discussed below) will need to be resolved before they revisit the status of individual centres.

One exciting development this year is our MA studentship in Black British local history, which is in partnership with the Black Cultural Archives (BCA) and is named after ELH alumnus, Len Garrison. This has been in development for a couple of years so it's great to finally get it off the ground. Len was a student of the Centre in the 1990s, and wrote his MA dissertation on West Indian migration to Nottingham in the mid-

Twentieth Century. The studentship covers the full tuition for students, as well as a small living stipend and research allowance. The students awarded the studentship will complete the MA Local History Pathway, which will also include the heritage placement module offered by CUH colleagues. Student placements will be undertaken at BCA in London. Funding for the studentship was provided by an anonymous bequest to the Centre, for which we are extremely grateful. Two applicants were offered the studentships (Annette Pateman and Xi-an Hector) and we are excited to see their research develop over the coming year!

In more sobering news, as many of you will be aware, this past summer the University announced what they're calling 'Pre-Change Engagement'. This is a process that precedes formal redundancy consultation, as agreed with the University and College Union. Several areas of the University were threatened with closure, and History was identified as an 'at risk' area, meaning we don't face closure but do face the possibility of losing a large number of staff. This resulted in three weeks of strike action at the beginning of the autumn semester, and at the time of writing, two more weeks scheduled for November should the situation not be resolved. We do not yet know which members of staff are at risk, but should have a clearer idea soon. Naturally this is an anxious time for us all as it jeopardises the future of the Centre. The Centre has already ridden out many storms, and hopefully it will do so again now. We will not go down without a fight! The Friends have shown their support and solidarity in this difficult time, which we truly appreciate. You have been an integral part of the Centre through thick and thin, and our hope is that we can continue to work closely with you for decades to come.

Angela Muir

HOSKINS DAY

ATTENBOROUGH BUILDING, LEICESTER, MAY 10

Once again we held Hoskins Day at the Centre's home in the Attenborough building. We also repeated the special tours of the David Wilson Library. We continue to have supporting papers as well as the 'main' event. This year Chloe Phillips shared her work researching Black Histories of Cornwall prior to 1900 and Rob Hedge told us about patterns of small rural settlements in North Worcestershire and South Shropshire between the 11th and 15th centuries.

MARK GARDINER

Looking at medieval houses: 'Dwellingscapes' before the Great Rebuilding

The University of Lincoln's Emeritus Professor Mark Gardiner was our keynote speaker.

Professor Gardiner began by describing his memories of reading Hoskins' *The Making of the English Landscape* at school. This book changed how he saw the landscape and sparked a life-long interest in landscapes and the people who occupied them. For this Hoskins Day lecture, he focused on medieval housing, not of the landed aristocracy but of town and village folk. He commented that although authors such as Maurice W. Barley attribute their interest in buildings to Hoskins's work and his assertion that landscape is a product of human action, Hoskins himself seemed more interested in deserted villages than extant medieval buildings or evidence of building; domestic architecture was not one of his central themes.

Until the 1970s we knew little about what medieval buildings looked like. Published technical drawings of, for example, roof joints were available but these were full of technical and somewhat obscure terms. C. A. Hewett and others aimed to capture the finite details of the techniques of medieval constructions and the innovations of the craftsmen who built them. There was a feeling that if we could construct a timeline of carpentry and masonry skills, we would be able to date medieval buildings. But the development and use of dendrochronology superseded this approach and we are now less dependent on detailed examinations of constructions.

In his talk, Professor Gardiner proposed that medieval houses were not just functional but were intended to be seen and appreciated, both inside and out. They were part of the landscape built to be seen and we can look at them and try to work out what the householders were trying to achieve when they incorporated new innovations or decorations. Little has been published on what medieval houses looked like on the outside. Studies of vernacular architecture tend to look at 'ordinariness' and 'utility' so miss the essential point that houses were built to be looked at. Owners paid substantial amounts of money to build them and they deliberately chose to incorporate features such as decorative brickwork or a stone pedestal.

The Old Shop (The Yeoman's House), Bignor, West Sussex.

'Jetting' was one design choice for medieval houses. The Old Shop in Bignor is one example, with "jetting" overhanging the upper storey of a house which has projecting on the two ends and is recessed in the centre. The jetting adds

complexity, and cost, to the build but it appears on late-14th century buildings. The traditional argument is that it adds space to the building where plot space was at a premium and many examples are seen in narrow streets in towns. However, jetting was also used on rural houses on ample plots – there are 789 recorded instances on Wealden buildings. Are they there to add interior space or is this about 'massing'?

The Ulster Museum

If we look at the Ulster Museum in Belfast, we see a Brutalist building bereft of ornamentation – it is all about mass, space and projecting lumps of concrete. It is a strong design, conscious and deliberate that shouts it is a Designed Building. Look closer and we see a key feature of its design – strong concrete elements which stress horizontality and linearity.

The Guildhall, Thaxted

The Guildhall, Thaxted, Essex is also consciously designed and has jetting. The traditional view is that this is a device to reduce damp issues or that it is a by-product of the design of the wooden frame, but it is not on every building. Like the Ulster Museum, it is a design choice.

5 Newbiggen Street, Thaxted

The medieval building on 5 Newbiggen Street in Thaxted was originally two shops at ground level. Its design places a stress on verticality to hold daub and wattle in but uses jetties to break up the vertical massing with a horizontal line and makes the building more interesting to passers by.

The way we look at buildings now is different to how medieval people did; we do not often look up to see roofs and chimneys. The Place Farmhouse, Tisbury, has a very ornate chimney pot which you would only see if you looked up. This is a display item which emphasises the height of the building and suggests a high-status house with a large fireplace below. Another elaborately decorated chimney pot was found during an archaeological dig on Goosegate, Nottingham.

Books on vernacular buildings do not talk about roof furniture and glazed tiles but we know there was a wide variety on stone, slate, tile, and thatched roofs. Roofs were expensive and your neighbours were expected to look at them. Stephen Moorhouse suggests roof furniture was

a standard part of medieval building and many remains have been found on archaeological excavations.

A digital reconstruction has been made of The Jew's House, Lincoln showing how it could have looked when it was built around 1180, but this reconstruction may be wrong because the chimney would have been higher and have a decorative cowl. The chimney of this house is on front of building, not hidden away, which may be a conscious decision to provide something for the people in the adjacent marketplace to admire.

The Jew's House, Lincoln

The late 14th and early 15th centuries saw higher living standards and higher buildings – those with money wanted bigger and taller buildings; the height of rooms rose by one metre from the 1490s to the early 15th century. Examples of taller domestic buildings from this period include South Kyme Tower, Lincolnshire (mid-14th century, gentry built); Morton's Tower, Guyhirn, Cambridgeshire (late 15th century bishop's house); and Hussey Tower, Boston, (c. 1450, gentry built). All these tall buildings were in spacious, flat landscapes and were built to be seen.

Moving on to consider the interiors of extant or archaeological remains of medieval houses, we can see that these were also made to be seen. Crown posts serve a structural purpose as they support the ridge purlin and ensure the structure rigidity of the roof. During the 13th century, home owners started to ornament the crown post and braces – this would have cost a significant amount of time and money so must have been requested by the home owner. Medieval craftsmen expended a lot of effort, skill, and time on crown posts even though they were blackened by smoke and would only be seen by a few people. Highly-decorated crown posts with especially fine joints echo those seen in churches and they would have encouraged people to look up to appreciate the height of the room as well as the workmanship. Getting rid of aisles and pushing posts back to the wall also cleared space timbers to allow visitors to be impressed by the roof.

The Old Deanery, Salisbury

The Old Deanery, Salisbury was built around 1249/50. It features an early crown post and remnants of old roof timbers painted red – one way to get people to look up.

In the 14th century, home owners began to raise the height of roofs as seen at Meare Fish House, Somerset, built in 1330, which has Gothic arches and a roof built for display. Guesten Hall, Worcester Priory, built in c.1340, has cusping and moulding which add to a huge display to impress visitors. At ground level home owners decorated walls as at Longthorpe Tower, Cambridgeshire, dating from 1330 which features wall-hanging paintings.

The Meare Fish House

The decorative work was not done voluntarily by builders and carpenters; it is likely that some features were specifically requested by clients. Some mid-15th century building contracts include a list of features to be copied from other buildings in the area. Although these are described in technical terms, the contracts do not provide detailed specifications, so presumably details were agreed later after discussion between the home owner and craftsmen.

In conclusion, houses built in the later Middle Ages were actively and positively designed to be seen as a mark of status and as a way of reinforcing home owner's view of themselves. This may seem obvious but this has been ignored by archaeological and historical writing. Many questions lie unanswered including whether there were regional design trends; whether homeowners chose to pay for technical innovations; and the dichotomy between show and privacy. We must also consider how archaeology can inform our thinking about medieval houses - excavations reveal partial remains but we do not know what the building was and what it looked like. However, there are only a limited number of ways you can put together the elements of a building. You can extrapolate a standard but there could be conscious variations. The main challenge to historians and archaeologists is that few peasant houses have survived.

Longthorpe Tower, Cambridgeshire

Karen Donegani

Professor Phil Batman Family History Prize

The Professor Phil Batman Family History Prize is awarded annually for outstanding work on any aspect of the history of the family undertaken at any UK University or Higher Education Institution. There are undergraduate and postgraduate categories. Here are the winners of the 2024 prize.

Undergraduate winner: ***'No Place to be a Child? The Persistence and Peculiarities of Children's Play during the Second World War in London and Liverpool'***

Berry Pillot de Chenecey, King's College London.

Operation Pied Piper – the mass evacuation of children from urban 'target' areas to the relative safety of rural Britain – has long dominated popular discourse surrounding children's experiences of the Second World War. Whilst the scheme itself directed a spotlight onto the urban children of war, the legacy of evacuation has cast the experiences of those who remained city-dwellers into the shadows. This marginalisation of the 'non-evacuated' is upheld by the wealth of written and visual depictions of evacuees which are widely available and routinely circulated. Consequently, the overriding image of British youth during the Second World War features a huddle of smartly dressed children on a station platform waving goodbye to their teary-eyed mothers, each donning a hand-written identity label and a single bag of belongings. Collective memory has also been configured by ossified government-issued propaganda which declared the city to be no place for a child as Britain descended into war and the threat of an aerial bombing campaign loomed. However, as will be illuminated by the children who speak to us through the sources in this paper, urban children found their own 'paradise for play' amidst the smoking ruins of Britain's cities.

Through an inter-city comparative study, this dissertation endeavours to challenge the marginalisation of the experiences of the 'non-evacuated', illustrating the distinct experiences of urban children in Britain's war-torn cities. Drawing from autobiographic accounts and photographs, this study illuminates how wartime children metamorphosised the objects, spaces, and characters of war to incorporate them into their worlds of play, leveraging an enduring sense of optimism, perceived invincibility, and insatiable curiosity.

Through colonising tears in the urban fabric of their cities – such as the disordered and unprogrammed spaces of bombsites – according to their individual imaginations and needs, as well as undertaking various roles within wartime society, this paper seeks to understand how children confronted and contended with the traumas of war as 'sub-adults'.

Posgraduate winner: ***'The diaries of William Dennis: tenant farming in South Holland, Lincolnshire 1848-1913'***

Felicity Dennis, Masters in Historical Studies from the University of Oxford

The research is based on evidence drawn from the unpublished diaries of William Dennis, my husband's great great grandfather. They are a rare and fascinating resource which offer a unique insight into the life of the tenant farmer in South Holland, Lincolnshire. William kept a diary almost continuously, from 1848 when he was 24 years of age until his death in 1913. His obituary states that he was a diarist but it is unclear if he intended it to be read by others. William featured frequently in the local press and these newspaper reports were used to corroborate diary entries about specific events, to identify individuals and as background material. The diary evidence has been related to current historiography, which sets it in the context of current historical enquiry and provides for a richer analysis.

The land around Sutton Bridge was owned by Guy's Hospital Estates, and its fertile farmland and the lack of an aristocratic landlord meant that for a tenant farmer, it was a place of opportunity. William's diaries provide a unique perspective on how tenant farmers in the region were able to exploit this environment.

By analysing the three themes of agriculture, politics and religion which best exemplify William's life and passions, his diary entries give a rare insight into the important role tenant farmers played within South Holland society. He was a well-respected farmer and his two very different farming experiences during the agricultural depression illustrate what factors were key to his resilience and economic survival: his unsuccessful foray into Northamptonshire and his farms in South Lincolnshire. William was a proud radical and a supporter of the Liberal party. He and other tenant farmers were politically active and embraced the opportunity to be involved in local politics. For him the most important motivational influence was the Methodist religion, whose nonconformist values led him to follow a liberal ideology and inspired him to take on local leadership roles to drive reform.

This research points to the characteristics of the South Holland region which created an environment that shaped the social, cultural and economic life of the people, and enabled tenant farmers to occupy influential positions within the community. It was the interconnections between the agricultural, political and religious aspects of community life which enabled William Dennis and his fellow tenant farmers to be a dominant social group. The scarcity of unpublished tenant farmers' diaries, and their limited use in historical enquiry into rural society in the second half of the nineteenth century, offers an opportunity for this research to contribute to the current body of knowledge.

Centre Seminars

2024 saw a full centre seminar programme. For the first time, Urban History joined us with their seminar series. Here are some reports of the proceedings:

Reimagining Leicester's black spaces

Using women's memories of interracial romantic relationships to expand our understanding of the origins of everyday British multiculturalism between 1960 and 1990

Dr Sue Bishop (University of Leicester)

The number of migrants settling in Leicester increased significantly from the 1960s through to the 1990s. The 1981 Census reported 1.8% of the Leicester population considered themselves to be "West Indian"; those identifying as Asian made up 22%. People who identify as being of mixed heritage are now the fastest growing ethnic group in England, with around 1.7 million reported in the 2021 census, a 300% increase since 2001. In Leicester, those of mixed heritage now make up 1.9% of the population.

Sue explained the reasons why Black people came to Leicester in the 1950s. There were employment opportunities, affordable housing, and existing migrant groups. However, those employment opportunities were often lower skilled as non-UK qualifications were not accepted by employers; affordable housing was often in the wrong place; and Government and locals wanted assimilation rather than the growth of distinct communities within the city. From the 1960s, black people in Leicester began to get involved in political action to seek improvements and demand change.

Her research uses oral histories to explore the changing nature of Black Britishness in Leicester and explores individual perspectives of the past. She focused on white British or Irish women who had a relationship with men of African or African Caribbean ethnicity and argues that Black people invited people of other ethnicities into their spaces and challenged the use of urban spaces, many of which became multi-cultural spaces.

By the 1980s, 33% of the Black people in Leicester lived in Highfields where they felt safe in their own public spaces (places of worship, sports clubs, associations such as LUCA and ACCC) and in their private home spaces. Some previously white venues in Highfields became Black spaces including some hotels and pubs. However, Highfields was seen as an undesirable area by those who did not live there, with press reports of red-light district activities, reports on noisy parties, robberies; and the alleged 'Black' riots in June 1981 which involved whites, Asians and Black rioters. Some public spaces in other areas of Leicester began excluding Black people or making them feel unwelcome but others emerged as multi-ethnic places, especially soul music venues and events. Places that played white music were less welcoming to mixed couples.

Based on 23 interviews with white women who had relationships with Black men during this period, Sue concludes that mixed couples met haphazardly, for example when walking home from school. The women had very positive memories of the 1980s and recalled their visits to house parties at Black family homes where they were welcomed, though some party-goers were surprised to see them. Such parties were advertised by word of mouth.

Blues parties gradually became commercial and were no longer held in personal domestic spaces. Some women said these parties were druggy and smoky but they felt safe there with their boyfriends. They felt less safe as a mixed couple in more open public spaces and were intimidated by racist remarks, looks, and violence, especially at night. However, at least one woman said she enjoyed the attention and others commented that Black boyfriends were different and exciting - cool and confident, better-dressed and better dancers than their white contemporaries.

Karen Donegani

Reinventing the town: how Colchester used the past and its place in marketing activities in the long-nineteenth century

Dr Michael Sewell

Dr Sewell started by providing a summary how Colchester has been marketed, from the early modern age to the current claim to be "Britain's First City."

Colchester was a thriving port, benefitting from sixteenth-century Dutch immigration and industrial expansion but the city was in a poor state after the Civil War, with the priory in ruins and the town walls collapsing. The town was also hit by £74K fine imposed by Fairfax; suffered from an outbreak of the plague in the 1660s; and suffered a loss in trade due to the Spanish war.

Reinventing the town began in the eighteenth century when it was promoted as a romantic ruin with cattle wandering around the castle grounds and Roman walls. There was some effort to preserve the castle and walls, and local historians began to examine why it was such a state of decay. A new market was set up, with a new Market Cross, but this was outside of the walls away from the historical sites. The town attracted some investment with the construction of Georgian houses and a theatre.

During the early nineteenth century, the focus shifted to promote the town's modernity and industrialisation, trying to emulate the emerging cities of Manchester and Birmingham. The Roman gate was taken down to widen the streets; holes were punched though the town walls to accommodate the new railway; streets were renamed. But local people mourned the loss of the walls and expressed a sense of loss of local identity.

The later nineteenth century saw a shift back to promoting Colchester as an historic town. Railway guides and posters of the time were illustrated with historical landmarks and references to local histories and folktales. Georgian local histories were repurposed and references to Whigs removed. Cattle no longer roamed the castle grounds and castle itself became a museum. St Johns Abbey Gate was renovated; local businesses promoted the Oyster Feast and other festivals and used local historical themes on their product packaging. Local schools taught local history and street names in the "New Town", built in the 1870s, referred back to Roman era and to the Civil War with Cromwell, Fairfax, Lucas and Ireton streets. A monument to Lucas and Lyell was erected in Castle Park. A new Town Hall, which replaced the old Moot Hall and the first Town Hall, opened in 1882. The front exterior featured statues of key figures from the town's history, omitting those of the civil war era who were commemorated in a museum inside the Town Hall.

This approach continued into the twentieth century. The 1909 Pageant was a success with 30,000 locals and tourists attending. Everyone including the Army joined in the event, though some were worried about sensitivities around the Civil War section. Unlike some of the English pageants of the 1900s, Colchester's pageant focused only on very local histories.

In the 1950s and 1960s, those promoting the town again switched to publicising the town as a retail hub but this was a short-lived approach and the town has moved back to promoting itself as an historical town.

Dr Sewell then considered what makes a "successful reinvention." Place and identity must be at the heart of any new approach and it is important to look at the past, present and

future. Cass Sunstein proposed that a “useable past” * should be visible (extant buildings), consistent (use same periods and locations in each reinvention) and needs to be modernised and reinterpreted. It is also important to reconcile the past and remove blame by distancing from recent events. [Cass R. Sunstein, “The idea of a usable past”, 95 Columbia Law Review 601 (1995)]

In conclusion, place reinvention is a cyclical process. To successfully deliver any promotion you need a strong sense of local pride, a collaborative approach, freedom from political interference and local ownership of the scheme. Historians have much to offer!

Karen Donegani

‘One can hardly believe that a great city ever flourished in this spot’: the construction of ancient Memphis

Dr. Robert Frost (University of Leicester)

The location of the ‘lost’ Egyptian city of Memphis remains the subject of a lively debate. In this talk, Dr Frost considers what we can learn from written sources, ancient and modern, about the location of Memphis.

Classical writers tell us that Kings of Egypt diverted the Nile to the east of its original course and built a city on the river bed, using lakes and reservoirs to keep the river in its new location. Is this true? Possibly there is a grain of truth. The Kings were keen to boost Egypt and focussed on the strategic value of the Nile Delta. Was this city Memphis? Is Memphis under modern Cairo along with Babylon and the Monastery of St Jerome?

Scriptural history favours an alternative location - Giza, a view favoured by those keen to identify biblical sites. Giza is above where the Nile floods but it is rather full of pyramids – was there actually a city there? Some said there was because Memphis was actually very small. The Romans said it was 6 miles from the pyramids but Pliny said 15 miles away. D’Anville looked at ancient measurements and argues Pliny was using different units which explains the difference but his own map of Memphis situated to the west of the Nile metropolitan area is based on incorrect data.

Richard Pococke, an English traveller (1705-1765) took a different view. He identified river banks which could have protected a city; environmental evidence of re-directing the river. He calculated that Memphis would extend into

the desert if it was at Giza and that was not sustainable. Although acacia wood grows at Giza this is unlikely to be a legacy of a city abandoned form over a millennium. His map shows Memphis on the extreme edge of modern Cairo, a proposal backed by other writers including Fourmat and Savary who visited the site.

Thomas Shaw, a student of antiquity, opposed Pococke's view. He said Memphis was at Giza, at a narrow part of Nile valley with a side channel to Memphis. Shaw did not undertake a field study and does not show Memphis in his maps. A group of academics support Shaw's work including Sicard, Norden and the authors of the Modern Universal History.

In the early nineteenth century, Col. James Rennell place the ancient city back into the landscape with a 3D map and looked at changes in land use in the Nile Delta over time as the head of the Delta moved downstream. He placed Memphis at Metrohenny (Cairo) rather than Giza. A group of Egyptologists, John Gardener Wilkinson, Edward Lane, and James Burton visited the site in the 1820s and concluded that Metrohenny was the more likely location.

A century later, the Egyptologist Flinders Petrie proposed that rather than a high-density built urban city, Memphis may have been like London – a region of villages and fields which slowly merged into a city. This idea has been adopted and refined. Memphis may have been a high-density rural zone, long and narrow, stretching along the banks of the Nile, perhaps for up to 30 km.

In conclusion, Dr Frost notes that those debating the location of Memphis did not divide along national lines but rather into those working from ancient texts and those who made expeditions to the potential sites. To locate Memphis, we need to consider both ruins and texts; be aware that maps were often re-used and errors become truths; and challenge the modern, Western conception of what makes a city.

Karen Donegani

Unpacking the Dryad 'Handicrafts' collection: towards a global movement of 'arts and crafts' in Leicester.

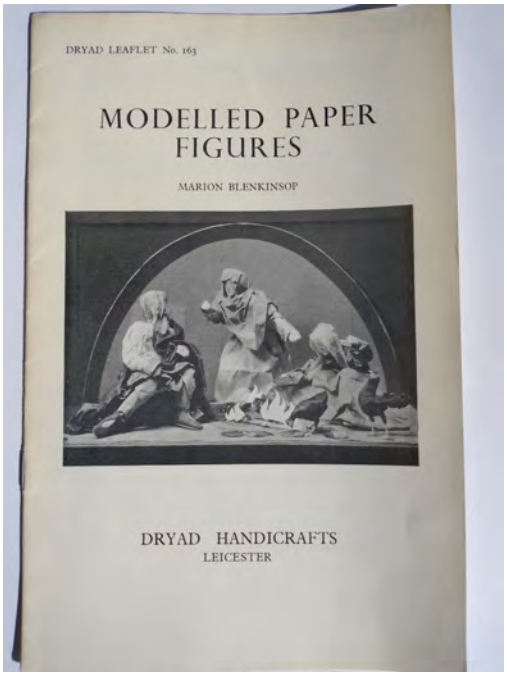
Maria Chiara Scuderi (University of Leicester)

In this well-illustrated talk, Maria discussed the origins and purpose of the Dryad Handicraft collection assembled by Harry Peach after the first world war and deposited with the Leicester Museum and Art Gallery in 1968. As part of her PhD, she has curated an exhibition of some of the items from the collection. She is particularly interested in examining how the global context of the collection links to a very local, Leicester context.

The collection was assembled by Harry Peach, owner of Dryad Handicrafts during the period 1918-1936. It is global in scope, source, and products (which include basketry and wooden objects) and the collection complements those of the British Museum. Fixing a provenance for items such as baskets is difficult as they were often made by nomadic peoples. "Missionary exhibitions" were a regular source for Peach – agents brought goods to England from missions overseas – but also retail shops which imported goods from Africa.

Originally the collection provided an educational resource – examples of handicrafts from around the world were lent to schools to be used as teaching aids. Dryad's publishing wing, Dryad Press, produced booklets and leaflets to provide instruction and inspiration for those taking up the crafts.

But the origins of Peach's commitment to promoting handicrafts emerged earlier, during World War One. In 1907 Peach set up the Dryad cane furniture business which won many international design awards but by the mid-1910s the business declined so he passed unused basketry materials to the Leicester 5th



Northern General Hospital (now Fielding Johnson Building, University of Leicester) to be turned into baskets by wounded Belgian soldiers. This use of handicrafts as a form of occupational therapy was developed more widely over the coming decade – A. H. Melrose wrote that craft work is a medicine and matched different crafts to specific groups of people e.g. those with epilepsy, older men with cardiac diseases – each had a recommended craft.

After the war, in 1918, Peach began selling handicraft materials commercially.

Peach was not a designer (he had many designers on the payroll at Dryad) but he was passionate about good design, techniques, and patterns. He was also a successful businessman. He spent a lot of time in Germany (especially Leipzig) France, Russia, and the

USA, attending international trade and design shows. He sourced handicraft materials for his collection from all continents via a network of agents. He was no anthropologist – he did not focus on the use of the objects he collected.

Peach's intention was to collect examples of good handicraft design that could be adapted and adopted by British crafters and specifically to promote a "global" arts and crafts movement in Leicester. He exhibited his collection at the Dryad showroom and used his Dryad Press to publish instructional booklets and leaflets offering practical guidance to beginners and experts – those in formal educational settings and home hobbyists.

Some photographs in the Dryad booklets show items made in Leicester what appear to be inspired by African goods. Is this cultural appropriation or hybridisation? Scuderi argues that Peach encouraged the appreciation of African baskets pokerwork and that these were not copied or claimed as a Leicestershire invention. Peach helped to promote the development of craft skills especially on leather, glass and wood. Dryad sold craft materials such as plain whitewood boxes from Slovakia for poker work - easy to use, ready to decorate, and encouraging self-expression.

Karen Donegani

Colonial City as an Austere City: insights from sanitary modernisation of colonial Madras.

Dr Viswanathan Venkataraman (King's College London).

Dr Venkataraman is researching the emergence of water supply, wastewater management and sewage systems in Madras. This talk focusses on the engineering, funding and cultural issues surrounding the installation of sewage systems and considers why it took so long for Madras, the third largest city in Colonial India, to catch up with other Indian cities.

The emergence of sewage systems was a main feature of growth of colonial cities but late nineteenth century Indian cities did not modernise their systems in the same way as European cities. Some historians have said that 'spatial apartheid' was applied in Indian cities, with sewage systems in different areas of cities reflecting race and affluence, resulting in 'dual cities' with different experiences and facilities. Dr Venkataraman argues first that austerity policies were also a dominant theme in colonial policy making and affected the improvements to sewage systems in Madras. He also considers the lack of agreement between engineers on how to implement improvements. His conclusion is that the delays in providing adequate sewage system in Madras was a result of underfunding rather than cultural differences and engineering policies.

Sanitary engineering emerged as a distinct discipline from the mid-nineteenth century with the founding of institutions, government bodies and a growing awareness of the impacts of poor sanitation on the spread of disease. The 1890s saw the systematisation of engineering knowledge in published books, journals and standards but there was no clear policy or funding model for colonial cities. It was left to local authorities to provide funding, unlike the railways which were funded directly by imperial bodies. The 1896 outbreak of plague in Madras nudged the municipal corporation towards improving the sewerage system but although Madras was the third largest city in India it was nowhere near as rich as Bombay or Calcutta because of very low rateable values. Madras couldn't afford improvements and would be reliant on any colonial money it could get. Some colonial funding was provided in the 1900s and 1910s but this stopped after the First World War.

By this time, underground sewerage networks were standard in most UK towns and in some Indian cities. There remained many questions around the use of combined or separate systems, the use of pumps and where to dump sewage. Calcutta adopted a combined approach with wastewater mixed with sewage whilst Bombay kept these separate. Both cities provided indoor plumbing and European style wcs as well as 'native' wcs such as Doulton's "Hindostan".

Traditionally, most cities had open drains with gullies for liquids and night soil and night-soil workers (caste in India) to remove solids. There was a debate on how much could be improved in Indian towns. Some engineers said Indians had no sense of smell so were content to have open drains and as they had no adequate water supply to houses, would not cooperate with the new sewerage system. In the 1890s, the Madras Sanitation Engineer said Indian people would not use wcs properly but other engineers said it would work with some adaptations and this Adaptive System was implemented in Madras. By the start of the twentietht century some areas of Madras had a patchwork of open drains and closed sewers, with open drains draining into sewers but no wcs. After another outbreak of plague, the water supply was

improved by the use of pumping stations but this work was not completed until the 1930s.

During the 1920s and 1930s, several adaptations were introduced including the use of “silt catchers” and provision of cheaper wcs made of cement rather than porcelain and flushed by bucket. These cheaper wcs were designed for poorer areas and were initially provided on demand but later became mandatory. Priority for new sewers was given to commercial areas and densely populated areas, An outbreak of cholera in 1927 made all adaptations mandatory and for a short time the colonial authority provided more grant money though not enough to finish the task. The colonial administration continued to restrict the powers of the Madras authorities and stopped advance payments to the city – the municipal corporation had to do sanitary work and reclaim money from the colonial administrators.

By 1940 only half the houses in Madras had a wc.

The delay in improving the sewerage system in Madras was a result of austere action rather than productive inaction, of crisis deferral. The local authority adopted adaptations to reduce costs and meet perceived difference in demands. The colonial administration provided limited funding in response to crises of plague or cholera rather than as a planned improvement over time. They prioritised balanced budgets over welfare.

Karen Donegani

‘No more living on top of the works’. Housing, commuting and social life in post-war Welsh steel communities.

Professor Louise Miskell (Swansea)

In the early twentieth century steel workers, like many industrial workers, lived close to the steel works, often in houses built by the steel companies. They could see and hear the works and lived alongside fellow workers. By 1950s things changed in the Welsh steel towns as workers moved to houses away from the new post-war steel plants and commuted to work, a change made possible by improved roads, faster bus services and car ownership.

Geographers say the changes in the South Wales steel industry after the war was part of the UK industrial restructuring, 1950-1980s. But this is debatable – the steel industry was not shrinking; it was concentrating as new processes for rolling tinplate meant 24/7 working in larger factories. Companies merged and moved away from the numerous small tin-pate rolling plants, blast furnaces and steel furnaces to large integrated works on larger sites. Jobs for men were not lost as numbers increased but work was relocated to new, fewer, larger plants. In contrast, women’s jobs were lost.

Professor Miskell is researching the impact of this change on the housing needs for steel workers and how housing strategies changed during the 1950s and 1960s.

During the 1940s and 1950s, the South Wales steel companies expected the local authorities to provide council houses for their workers but Port Talbot Borough Council already had a post-war housing shortage and long waiting lists. A proposed solution was to build a new town. Approval was sought from the appropriate body - the Welsh Board of Health – to build a new town on a ring-fenced 500-acre site within borough. The Board rejected this plan, citing several reasons – the new town would be self-contained; it would concentrate incomers in one location; there would be a lack of social balance; and the economic health of the town would be reliant on one industrial concern. These concerns reflected memories of the depression era when steel works closed and whole communities suffered. Interestingly, none of these objections were reported in the local press who were told the plan was abandoned because of mining subsidence on the site.

This decision reflected the recommendations of the Principles of New Towns Committee 1946. The Committee concluded that new towns must be socially mixed and balanced; there must be multiple employers and industries; and attract people of higher income level as well as those traditionally living in council houses. The Committee stressed that the character of a new town to be right from start – it would not evolve into a sustainable community.

Instead of a new town, the Welsh Board of Health asked local authorities across the wider area to provide some housing for steel workers, for the good of the industry. Some authorities agreed and built small housing estates for steel workers - Port Talbot an initial 700 houses, Penybont 320 and Porthcawl 100.

However, during the 1950s, the Sandfields estate in Port Talbot expanded. It provided traditional 2 or 3 bed houses with gardens. There was a mix of pre-cast concrete houses, aluminium prefab bungalows and some more expensive houses located near the public park with French windows (for the middle managers). By end of the 1950s, there were 3,500 houses on estate and Port Talbot had a new community which was reliant on a single industry but not located next to the steel works.

A decade later, the Llanwern Spencer Steelworks opened with over 6,000 on the payroll, many moving from smaller steel works in South Wales. This time there was no thought of building a new town. The County Council proposed new houses scattered across existing towns in South Monmouthshire on sociological grounds and persuaded local authorities to build small estates. This resulted in a distribution of steel workers, with no mono-industrial communities. Cardiff University collected oral history interviews with this group of workers - 86% said they met with their work mates less often outside of work; their work mates now lived up to 12 miles apart; and people now travelled directly home at the end of the shift. This was very different from the pre-war socialising after work. However, some interviewees said they appreciated having a garden in their new house and new gardening clubs were very popular. They also appreciated the extra space in their homes and developed new hobbies and interests. Some saw it as a move up the social scale and spent more time visiting the coast and the sea. A shift from socialising with work mates to spending time with neighbours and family. This shift was also a result of the change from day time shifts to 24/7

shifts in the new steel rolling plants and changed the pattern of family life.

The distancing of homes from the workplace was not because the steel plants moved, rather because of a change of social policy in the UK. To avoid mono-industry towns, there was no new town next to the new works. The changes brought benefits to workers even as it distanced workers from their fellow workers outside working hours.

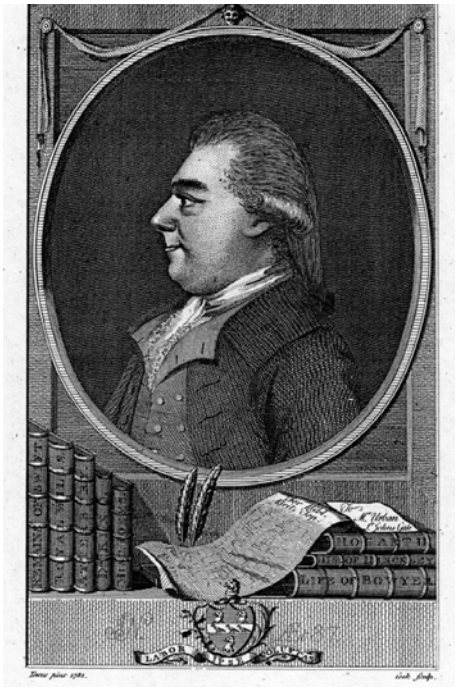
Karen Donegani

The Book that Changed My Life: Discovering the Archive of John Nichols (1745-1826), author of the History and Antiquities of the Town and County of Leicester

Julian Pooley, Surrey History Centre and Centre for Regional and Local History

An amazing story of diligent research work, serendipity, and sheer good luck.

The 'Book that Changed My Life' is not John Nichols' *History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester* but a tiny, handwritten diary offered for sale in a Hampstead bookshop over forty years ago. Thinking this small volume would be useful for learning how to read early nineteenth century handwriting and being of local interest to his location, a young student spent a weekend pondering whether to pay out a few pounds for it. Luckily, Julian went back on Monday morning and bought it.



This small book turned out to be the diary of a young woman, Mary Ann Nichols in which she mapped the social world of her family, the Nichols family of printers of parliamentary papers; printers and publishers of antiquarian histories, volumes of literary anecdotes and the first printing of *Domesday Book;* and editors and proprietors of *The Gentleman's Magazine* from 1782-1856. Researching this small book led to the discovery of a very large family archive including correspondence with hundreds of people in Britain and abroad.

The first challenge was to research Mary's life and locate her private papers. A codicil to her will states that her journals were to go to her niece and her letters to her nephew. An unplanned search of John Batts' 1976 edition of *British Manuscript Diaries* listed the journals. Many of these were still with the family, though some had been sold to private collectors. The journals were rich in content and included her travels in England and Europe along with family news and sketches.

Not all discoveries were through published sources. Julian located papers by forming friendships with Nichols family members and getting to know people who lived in houses once inhabited by the Nichols family. This provided the opportunity to rummage around in attics and a death-bed bequest for him (and the Surrey History Centre) to take custody of a large set of family papers.

He came across a portrait of Mary and her siblings at Holmwood Park; found letters from John Nichols to a man in Gumley, Leicestershire during the period 1791-1826; found the family papers of Joseph Cradock, writer, bibliophile, and amateur actor 1741-1826. He also found Mary's autograph collection, which was mentioned in her will. Some collections had been purchased by Mary who was actively collecting family papers that came up for sale and made an index of some of the letters.

The collection tells us many things about John Nichols. He was an accomplished printer who published parliamentary papers and designed a bespoke typeface for the first print of the Domesday Book. He wrote many letters. He was fond of literary anecdotes and published the substantial Biography of the Press. He wrote to his wider family, to business acquaintances, to famous people such as James Cook at Repton, and to himself (as Editor) at *The Gentleman's Magazine*. He was immersed in the cult of genealogical research and often published lineages and debates over lineage. However, he was an astute businessman who eventually doubled the circulation of *The Gentleman's Magazine* by widening its appeal from the gentry to include trades and professionals – he did this by making it more entertaining and less focussed on genealogy. He pioneered a new process of peer review for his published works, sending drafts to friends or local experts for review before publication. He

also published his memoir serially – a new way to publish.

So… why did Nichols write *History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester*? He had local links as both his wives came from Hinckley and his children spent time there with their grandparents. He made regular visits there and had kinship links to poets and antiquarians in the county. To support an inheritance claim, he researched his wife's family to show she was a descendant of a large estate. His book includes pedigrees, seals, and devices but he expanded it to cover landscape and used his contacts with the County families who subscribed to his work to gain access for this his agents (often *The Gentleman's Magazine* readers) access to family archives.

Julian Pooley is building a calendar of the Nichols' family correspondence between 1745-1873 and a descriptive list of other documents they accumulated. It lists over 7,000 letters and 21,000 records. The calendars are stored on a Microsoft Access database, allowing the original order of the undisturbed private collections to be preserved while permitting indexes to be made of the senders of recipients of letters. The database is not yet online but may be consulted by prior appointment at the Surrey History Centre. For more information see:

https://le.ac.uk/english-local-history/about/collections/julian-pooley

Karen Donegani

Quest for a Cohesive Diaspora African Community: Reliving Historic Experiences by Zimbabweans in Britain

Dr Christopher Roy Zembe (De Montfort University)

Dr Zembe began by commenting that the focus of Black history in Britain is on the experience of African Americans and few academics are looking at the impact of colonialism in Africa on the African diaspora. His talk was based on oral histories exploring the experience of those Black Africans who came to Britain from Zimbabwe. He research has so far confirmed that colonialism and post-colonial events have a lasting impact on the African communities in Britain. He also reminded us that 'Africa' is a construct – it is a continent of huge diversity and even a 'national' group may made up of several multicultural and ethnic groups.

Dr Zembe provided the historical context for the migration from Zimbabwe to Britain in the early twenty-first century. There are two major ethnic groups in Zimbabwe, Shona and Ndebele with minor groups including Whites, Asians (mostly Indians) and mixed race which must not be overlooked. In Zimbabwe it is difficult to define who is 'African.' 80% of Blacks are Shona and 15% are Ndebele – it is important to remember this when looking at the Zimbabwean diaspora. In pre-colonial times, Ndebele were raiders and the Shona had power but in the 1830's the Ndebele settled in the west of what is now Zimbabwe and became powerful. In response, those who spoke the Shona language, previously organised into many small sub-kingdoms, were spurred onto to merge into one kingdom. The British capitalised on these tensions and dealt mostly with the Shona whom they saw as the "rightful people" to deal with. Regions within the country were named according to their predominant ethnic group and ethnic particularism was applied to, for example, separate football clubs for Shona and Ndebele players.

During the fight for independence from Britain, the independence movement split along ethnic lines, with Nkomo's ZAPU (Ndebele) in the west and Mugabe's ZANU (Shona) in the east. Post-independence elections in 1980 saw the Shona win 57 of 80 Black seats and so 'defeat' the Ndebele. Post-colonial conflict saw a series of mass killings and genocide known as the Gukurahundi, a Shona language name which loosely translates as 'the early rain which washes away the chaff before the spring rains.' One significant event was in 1982 when weapons were found on land owned by disgruntled ZAPU people and on land controlled by criminal gangs. The focus of the authorities

was the killing of innocent Ndebele civilians rather than the criminal. Alongside military action, the Shona authorities started to force Ndebele people to speak Shona. The 2000s saw continued violence with a shift to the enforced removal of white farmers and their farm workers.

In 1971, fewer than 10,000 babies were born in Britain to Zimbabwean parents. In 2011, this had risen to 120,000. The boom period for migration was 2001-2011, starting with those coming to train and work as nurses, including the nursing course at De Montfort University, and later those coming to work as carers during the post-COVID years. The early migrants were from the Shona communities who had a closer and more positive view of the British. In contrast, the Ndebele did not see Britain as their first option for migration.

Those who came to Britain brought memories of the Gukurahundi. Dr Zembe's oral history interviews with Ndebele people in Leicester brought up memories of family members, neighbours and friends killed by the Shona. They do not say the killings were by the government, authorities, or army but were a result of an ethnic war. They speak a different language to the Shona people in Leicester and will speak English when talking to Shona. Young Ndebele Zimbabweans talk about Gukurahundi even though it happened long before they were born. There is some intermarriage but the two communities usually have separate social activities and gatherings.

Shona people may blame the Ndebele for starting the conflicts of the 1980s but they are more likely to forget the post-colonial violence and young Shona are less likely to be aware of it. Social media posts regarding the country they left behind are often very hostile along ethnic lines.

The Zimbabwean diaspora in Leicester also divides into different groups according to their immigration status- Illegal, Asylum Seeker, Non-Asylum Seeker etc. There is some jealousy around this status and hostility including verbal mocking.

Dr Zembe is not convinced that the rift between the Shona and Ndebele is mending - there is a lot of history between them and some are not yet ready to be seen as 'Zimbabweans' in Britain. The best hope is for the next generation to make friends across ethnic lines especially in music, sport, and other leisure activities; for businesses to employ from both groups; and for current reconciliation moves in Zimbabwe.

Dr Zembe is now expanding his research on African diaspora in Britain. His early research suggests British Kenyans are also split along ethnic lines; Nigerians by both religion and ethnicity; and Rwanda by an ethnic divide after a civil war.

Karen Donegani

Almost Urban? Approaching the archaeology of small-town life in medieval England

Professor Ben Jarvis, School of Archaeology (University of Leicester)

Urbanisation is a defining feature of medieval England in the period 1150-1300, one that is particularly associated with the process of commercialisation. Most urban dwellers lived in small towns less than 2,000 inhabitants and there was a high level of diversity in the size and character of these small towns.

The ENDURE Project capitalises on a critical mass of archaeological data and innovations in archaeological science to ask how diverse urban lifeways were transformed by the 14th and 15th century crises – a hundred years which saw climate change, crop failure, the Black Death and warfare. It asks how urban communities lived with and through these crises and a decrease in the population from 4,750,000 to 2,080,000.

Although the project is rooted in archaeology, it adopts an interdisciplinary approach to:

1. Understanding urban intensive assemblages

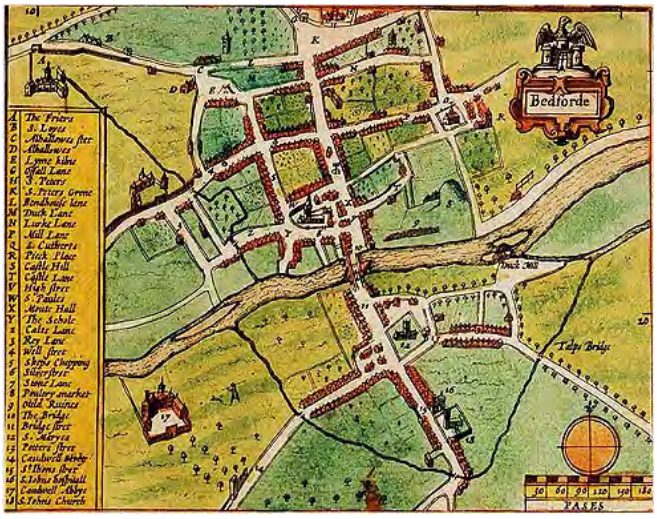
2. Developing a research approach to urban lifeways.

3. Explaining the endurance of urban communities in the 14th and 15th centuries.

This phase of the project focusses on three research themes - Production, Commerce and Domesticity. Professor Jarvis acknowledges that other themes, such as religion, are important but are outside this first phase. For each theme, the project team will study the available historical and archaeological sources and research outcomes in several disciplines: Structural remains, Zooarchaeology, Archaeobotany, Artefacts, Organic residue analysis, Isotope analysis, and Historical research.

Method of Investigation	Production	Commerce	Domesticity
Structural Remains	Infrastructure	Spaces of Commerce	Houses & associated structures
Zooarchaeology	Food & craft production	Livestock & meat trade	Diet & human/animal relations
Archaeobotany	Food & craft production	Aquisition of non-local plants	Diet, fuel, building materials & horticulture
Artefacts	Tools & craft waste	Objects of trade	Activities in domestic space
Organic Residue Analysis	Food processing	Aquisition of non-local foodstuffs	Cooking & eating
Isotope Analysis	Animal husbandry	Livestock & meat trade	Domestic space & animal husbandry
Historical Research	Ownership of animals, crops & equipment	Traded commodities	Activities in domestic space
	Chronology		

The key challenges faced by those who research medieval small towns include a dominant paradigm of characterisation; the site-focussed approach of development-led archaeology; a failure to develop holistic methodologies; a 'block-time' approach to change which does not recognise that change happened over different time periods in different communities; and a focus on the dates of foundation of towns rather than on the history of towns over time.



The concepts of "decay" and "decline" are also a challenge. The use of such terms implies an apex of urbanism before the Black Death but urban life after the Black Death was different rather than decaying or declining. Towns emerge for many reasons – market towns in nucleated rural settlements and 'Enterprise zones' within rural manors are just two models.

The project is mapping the development of small towns in relation to Roberts and Wrathmell's settlement zones rather than to English counties and they are mapping change in 50-year slices. Their key observations to date are that before the Black Death, boroughs dominate in North and West province; market towns in South and East Province. The earliest (pre-Conquest) urban development was in the South and West provinces and there is local diversity, for example the inner Midlands which had market towns associated with strong rural areas and East Yorkshire which was late to urbanise and had a low number of boroughs.

The project's multidisciplinary approach promotes the challenge of assumptions. Were noxious industries really segregated from housing and other commerce?

The project is looking at a way to characterise small towns and this is turning out to be a complex model. Towns associated with large monastic estates may be isolated from other towns by protectionism, because of sparse settlement in the wider area or because they were on the hinterland between estates. An early foundation date does not necessarily lead to growth. The concepts of 'decline' and 'decay' are often misleading a town can flourish in one

historical period and decline in the next and, as urban excavations show, different parts of a town may decay whilst an adjacent area is thriving.

Professor Jarvis suggests we should think about Disturbance rather than Decline and Decay.

In summary, the project's findings so far are that small towns in the medieval period were, and continue to be, complex and diverse forms of settlement. There are different pathways to urbanisation which may be examined using critical concepts such as distribution and difference. Difference is not a "lack" of something, it is a different outcome of the urbanisation process.

Further reading: https://enduringurbanism.wordpress.com/

Karen Donegani

Friends we have lost

We have sadly lost a few good friends in the last year

Philip French

Phil Batman asked us to remember his good friend, Philip French:

"Philip French died aged 65 on 8 November 2024. An expert on the history of Leicester working at Leicester Museums and a firm supporter of the CELH, Philip will be remembered by friends on the MA course for his warmth, humour and enthusiasm."

Professor Charles Phythian-Adams

We were all greatly saddened by the loss of Professor Charles Phythian-Adams in May, who was so central to the Centre for English Local History and the founding of the Leicester tradition. A personal recollection of Charles by Keith Snell appears on the Friends website and can be found at https://www.englishlocalhistory.org/wp/2025/05/19/professor-charles-phythian-adams-28-july-1937-13-may-2025/.

centre News

Professor Christopher Dyer (Emeritus)

Edited book

A Rental and Court Rolls of the Estates of Winchcombe Abbey, 1341-1362. Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, Gloucestershire Record Series, 38, 2025.

Booklet

From Slavery to Freedom: How Worcestershire People Gained their Liberty 1000-1600. Worcestershire Historical Society Occasional Publication, no. 15, 2024

Articles

'Pottery and its historical importance, 900-1550', *Medieval Ceramics*, 44 (2025), pp. 67-79

'New developments in the study of living standards in late medieval England, 1989-2023', *New World History*, 6 (2025), pp. 94-112

Book reviews

P. Hopkins, *Medieval Morden*, in *Surrey Archaeological Collections*, 106 (2024), pp. 425-7.

B. Jervis, C. Briggs et al. *The Material Culture of English Rural Households*, in *English Historical Review*, 140 (2025), pp. 227-8.

Lectures, presentations etc

Were medieval roads better than ours? Welford-on-Avon History Society, September, 2024

Carpenters in the middle ages, Norfolk Historic Buildings Group, October 2024

Reconsidering medieval living standards, with some help from material culture, Arthur Lewis Lab., University of Manchester , March 2025

Two Worcestershire towns: the ups and downs of Broadway and Alvechurch, Worcestershire Archaeological Society, April 2025

Pottage in medieval England, Diet Group, Oxford, April 2025

Documenting a crisis: Winchcombe Abbey and its estates, 1340-1381, Oxford University economic and social history seminar, April 2025

The importance of Burton Dassett Southend: combining history and archaeology, Banbury Historical Society, March 2024

Carpenters in the middle ages: an important craft in need of a history, Wealden Buildings Study Group, March 2024

How do we know about Worcestershire peasants in the middle ages, and what do we know? Worcestershire Historical Society, April 2024

Professor Keith Snell (Emeritus)

Keith Snell has completed a book on Africa, where he was mainly brought up, covering especially Tanzania, Mozambique, the Congo, Kenya, Uganda, the Cameroons, Ghana and Nigeria. Among other things, it deals with the Mau Mau, the 1960-1 Congo War, and the Biafran War (from all of which he was a refugee). There is much coverage also of African forestry and post-colonial issues. Three publishers so far have expressed interest. He is currently writing a book about Cambridge. He is an honorary editor of *Rural History* for which he still works. His research on the history of loneliness continues, with various podcasts in preparation. He is also analysing his data on symbolism of the natural world and church/cemetery memorials over time.

Recent publications include:

Professor Charles Phythian-Adams, 28 July 1937 – 13 May 2025, a personal memoir by K.D.M. Snell', https://www.englishlocalhistory.org/wp/2025/05/19/professor-charles-phythian-adams-28-july-1937-13-may-2025/.

'Charles Phythian-Adams', https://le.ac.uk/about/history/obituaries/2025/charles-phythian-adams

"The history of loneliness: what we know so far. An evidence-based resource for newcomers to the field', *WHO Europe Behavioural and Cultural Insights Hub*, 2024 (with F. Cooper *et al*), 2024. https://bci-hub.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/HoL%20BCI-HUB.pdf

Dr Juliet Bailey (Honorary fellow)

Publications:

Juliet Bailey, Alister Sutherland & William Farrell (2024) 'Views of England and Wales: A New Online Collection', Midland History, 49:1, 117-119, DOI: 10.1080/0047729X.2023.2299036

Dr Susan Kilby (Honorary fellow)

Publications

John Baker, Jayne Carroll and Susan Kilby, 'Bringing the Survey home: adventures in community engagement', *Journal of the English Place-Name Society*, 55 (2023), 88-103

S. Kilby, 'Conflict and co-operation: managing water in riverine settlements in the later Middle Ages' in Á. Carvajal Castro (ed.), *Disputing the Land, Shaping the Landscape. Rural Conflicts in Europe from the Early Middle Ages to Contemporary Times* (Brepols, Turnhout), forthcoming 2025

Presentations:

April 2023 '*Wete* and *drye*: the importance of place-names in the management of dynamic landscapes', Space and Names in the Middle Ages, Faculty of Arts, Charles University, Prague

Sep 23 'Bringing the survey home: adventures in community engagement', English Place-Name Society Centenary Conference, Nottingham

Oct 23 'Place-Names and Landscape Futures in the Upper Onny Area, National Trust (online)

Oct 23 'Creating resources for schools: aligning with the National Curriculum in England', University of Nottingham

Feb 24 'Naming Elton's Medieval Fields: A Scientific Perspective?', Middle Nene Archaeology Group

Mar 24 'Peasant Perspectives on the English Medieval Landscape', Global Peasants Network, University of Cambridge

Apr 24 'Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them: Extraordinary Ordinary Landscapes', The Folklore Society

May 24 'Knowing Your Place: The Importance of Place-Names in Medieval Settlement Study', Medieval Settlement Research Group Spring Conference, University of Nottingham

May 24 'Naming Elton's Medieval Fields: A Scientific Perspective?', Cambridge Antiquarian Society

Jun 24 'Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them: the Romanesque Capitals of St Kyneburgha, Castor and the Local Landscape', Northamptonshire Record Society Spring Lecture

Jun 24 '*Wete and Drye*: Managing a Dynamic Landscape', Global Peasants Network, University of Cambridge

Jan 25 'Sources for Peasants in the Landscape', Global Peasants Network, University of Cambridge

Jun 25 'Living with change: the dynamic later medieval landscape of Alrewas, Staffordshire', Medieval Settlement Research Group Spring Conference, University of Leicester

Dr Mandy de Belin (Honorary fellow)

Publications:

'Edward Harley's horse bit' in *The Civil Wars in 100 Objects*, A Hopper (ed), 2025.

Presentations:

'Naseby: landscape of a battle', Oxford University Continuing Education, Naseby: The Memory of a Battle in a Changing Landscape on 22nd – 23rd March, 2025.

Anniversary tours of Naseby Battlefield with the Naseby Battlefield Project, June 11th, 13th 2025.

Tours of Thornby Hall and Grounds, Heritage Open Day, September 14th 2025.

Dr Pam Fisher (Honorary fellow)

Presentations:

22 Jan 2025 Friends of Charnwood Forest at Woodhouse Eaves: 'Ibstock: More than just a Mining Village'

7 April 2025 Leicester Rotary in Leicester: 'Leicestershire Victoria County History and the History of Loughborough'

12 April 2025 Rugby Archaeological Society in Rugby: 'The Making of Modern Lutterworth'

Yvonne Cresswell (Honorary fellow)

Publications:

Cresswell, Yvonne (2025). Review of *Manx Myths, Mysteries & Miscellanies* (2023), by Robert Kelly. *Folk Life: Journal of Ethnological Studies*, Volume 63, Number 1, 72-74

Cresswell, Yvonne & Davies, Collette (2025). Art in the Isle of Man. In T.Thornton, H.Mytum & M.Hoy (Eds), *The Isle of Man, 1405-1830: Social and Economic History - Volume IV, Part 2* (pp.328-348). Boydell Press.

Papers:

Living with the Wire: Civilian Internment in the Isle of Man during the Second World War, Manx National Heritage & Wiener Holocaust Library Seminar, Manx Museum, Douglas, Isle of Man, 30th November 2024

Welcoming the Stranger & Exercises in Feeding the Five Thousand: Extending Hospitality in Manx Methodist Chapels, Methodist Studies Seminar (Westminster Oxford Research Network), Lincoln College, Oxford, 7th December 2024

Community Engagement/ Education

Talks to Isle of Man WIs, Friends of Manx National Heritage, Castletown and Kirk Michael Heritage Trusts, Celtic Congress, IoM Family History Society and other Manx community groups on various Manx topics (e.g. Manx art, Manx crofting life & folklore, civilian internment)

Living with the Wire: Civilian Internment in the Isle of Man during the Two World Wars and *Manx Art & Design; Manx National Art Collection*, 'Introduction to the Isle of Man' modules/ BA (Hons) History & Heritage and Blue Badge Guide training, University College Isle of Man

Peace & WAR

The first Friends' outing of the year visited two neighbouring - Northamptonshire parishes, each offering a very different subject of study

The morning started at Thornby Hall – an historic house that is now a Buddhist centre. We congregated in the meditation room, with a background of wood panelling and Buddhist statues. A talk accompanied by slides first described the role of the New Kadampa Tradition is preserving historic buildings around the country, showing images of Gothic revival Conishead Priory in Cumbria, eighteenth-century Kilnwick Percy Hall in Yorkshire, and nineteenth-century Ashe Hall in Derbyshire. The tradition purchased Thornby Hall from a school in 2017 and set about converting it into a meditation and retreat centre.

At first glance, upon entering the courtyard guarded by gatehouses and seeing a splendid Northamptonshire ironstone façade, you would imagine you were meeting an important Jacobean building, but appearances are deceptive. This 'front' of the hall was entirely a creation of a 1920s 'makeover' instituted by Captain Arnold Wills, grandson of the tobacco millionaire H O Wills. Captain Wills was the third in a series of rich gentlemen who had bought and then extended Thornby Hall. They were attracted by the prospect of spending their winters hunting with the Pytchley. (This was a very popular way for the rich and the socially connected to spend their time – to an extent that is hard to appreciate nowadays.)

There was, however, a much older building lurking at the heart of Thornby Hall. The site had its origin as a grange farm to Sulby Abbey, a Premonstratensian foundation situated some four

miles to the North of Thornby. At the time of the dissolution, it had been leased out, but there was a house there complete with garden and orchard (and land distributed around the open fields of Thornby). In order to date the older parts of the building, the services of buildings archaeologist James Wright were secured. Primarily using the surviving windows for dating, two side wings were dated to the mid-sixteenth century, with the hall house between them dated to the mid-seventeenth century. Clearly no one would have built two wings with nothing in-between, so the suggestion was the surviving stone-built structure replaced an original timber-framed hall house. There was the possibility that the original stair tower was the oldest standing structure, possibly dating to the 1490s. Having heard its story, the Friends were able to tour the actual building and examine it for themselves.

After a break for coffee and cake, we reconvened in the meditation room for a talk by Buddhist teacher, Pet Finden, and a guided meditation, which provided us with the 'Peace' part of our day. We were then fortified by a light lunch before setting off for Naseby, two miles away, and the 'war' part of the day's activities.

Following the story of the Battle of Naseby involved visiting many sites. There are specially-built viewing points around the area, and the first one we visited was 'Rupert's view'. This is situated on the high ground as the Royalist army marched out of Market Harborough past East Farndon in the early morning of 14th June, 1645. There we were introduced to the 'major players' on the Royalist side. Despite having a commanding view to the south, Prince Rupert was unable to see the Parliamentary army assembling at Naseby windmill, around four miles away, because they were concealed by the ground falling away. We heard how a group of scouts rode out to Clipston, but totally failed to see sight nor sound of the 15,000 or so members of the opposing army just up the hill from them. Rupert himself then rode forward, and this time spotted his opponents, who were by this time marching in file westwards. They were relocating to a better battle site, but Rupert mistook this movement for retreat, and so sent messages back to his army to leave their high ground and themselves move to the west to intercept and attack their opponents.

It was also time for the Friends to relocate, so we drove back towards Naseby, this time stopping at Fairfax's View, half a mile outside the village itself. Here we were introduced to the major players on the Parliamentary side. From here, Fairfax and Cromwell would have had a very good view of the Royalist battalia deployed to their north. The Generals decided that their current position was too advantageous, and that they wouldn't be able to draw the Royalist forces to engage, and so, based on local intelligence, they decided to relocate their army to Broadmoor, a more gentle valley, around a mile to the west. This is the movement that

Rupert had mistaken for retreat, but the result was that, by about 10 am, the two armies were taking up positions on either side of Broadmoor, and getting ready to engage.

We next relocated to Sulby Hedges, where a key part of the early battle unfolded, and were greeted by civil war re-enactor John. This is where we had a bit of fun dressing up and getting to handle some of the weaponry (no Friends were harmed…). We also learned of the significant role this area had on the day of the battle. The parish of Sulby had been turned over to sheep production by the monks of Sulby Abbey (remember them?) and at this point a large stock-proof hedge bordered the open fields of Naseby. Cromwell deployed dragoons along this hedge to fire through at Rupert's cavalry and needle them into action.

From here we moved to our final location – the Cromwell monument, where we got to survey the actual battlefield from the viewpoint of the parliamentary army. Now subdivided into arable and pasture fields, we had to imagine back in time to when it was part of the Turmore open field – separated by a small stream from the Royalist battalia drawn up on Dust Hill in Sibbertoft parish. Here we followed the action of the battle itself, from early advantage to utter defeat of the King's forces and the capture of their entire infantry.

We then returned to Naseby village hall, for a cup of coffee and piece of cake, and a chance to discuss our experience of the battlefield tour. The experience was definitely enhanced by the tour guides Mark Linnell and David Russell-Parsons – both retired military men, one cavalry and one infantry, and one a Royalist supporter, and the other on the Parliamentarian side.

Mandy de Belin

What the editor does at night…

I have, alas, reached the age where I sometimes find sleep elusive, and while I used to have the World Service as a night-time companion, I have now started turning increasingly to history podcasts. Here is a roundup of some of my regulars. These can be found on the BBC Sounds App - and so are all free - although they are not BBC productions. I do not love them all equally, so this is a (gently) critical review, in no particular order.

The Rest is History – the format here is Dominic Sandbrook and Tom Holland discussing what is mostly 'big event' history, although there are some interesting diversions (for example, I very much enjoyed a recent episode on the scandalous Rector of Stiffkey). I am aware that these two probably do not share my political outlook, and I do sometimes find myself growling at my iPhone, particularly at some of Sandbrook's comments and interpretations.

Short History of – this format has a very distinctive narrative style. It always begins with the same sort of anecdotal introduction, and very much belongs to the 'storytelling' format of history. It covers an eclectic range of subjects, and I'd recommend it when you're in the mood for something more in the entertainment than analytical line. Early episodes are voiced by actor Paul McCann – later episodes are voiced by someone who sounds very much like Paul McCann.

Betwixt the sheets – the clue is in the title, it is hosted by sex historian Kate Lister and is definitely an adult listen. It is interesting and informative with some good guests who have often researched deeply into the subject matter. My only complaint is the 'honky-tonk' piano music that periodically appears – it can get wearing when you're listening to more than one episode.

Cautionary Tales – this is presented by Tim Harford who is a Financial Times journalist, best known for presenting Radio 4's 'More or Less'. This is a fascinating look at some of history's major and minor disasters (some famous and some I'd never heard of) and the role that seemingly trivial actions played in bringing them about. Absolutely fascinating!

After Dark – a fairly lighthearted look at some fairly dark episodes in history. Presented by two hosts, Dr Maddy Pelling and Dr Anthony Delaney, who have a lot of 'banter' going on. Again this is probably one for the adults. They often have expert guests on particular subjects, and is generally informative as well as entertaining.

Not Just the Tudors – this podcast is presented by Professor Suzannah Lipscomb, it tends to cover subjects from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and is often most definitely about the Tudors. This is usually a fairly serious listen and has some very good guests.

I am also a fan of **The World Turned Upside Down** podcasts - but I consume these during daylight hours from my laptop - maybe they will appear on the Sounds App one day (or do I mean one night?)

Wildlife unfriendly…

Richard Stone is intrigued by an old photograph

This interesting photograph, which I would date to around 1890/1900, was found among a small collection relating to the Staffordshire village of Rolleston-on-Dove. Eight men in overcoats pose in front of a five-bar gate accompanied by a large bull-terrier type of dog. All are equipped with a stout stick and wear a protective guard strapped on the left arm.

What can they be about to do? My conclusion, and I'm open to suggestion, is that they are gamekeepers employed by the Rolleston Hall Estate of Sir Oswald Mosley (father of the founder of the British Union of Fascists) preparing to cull badgers. I cannot think of another wild animal capable of inflicting serious injury, wolves and wild boar having been hunted to extinction in England probably soon after 1300, followed by wildcats by the middle of the 19th century. Badgers are normally quiet, shy creatures but weigh up to 35 pounds with strong claws used for digging, a fearsome bite and are dangerous if cornered or threatened. It isn't badger-baiting. Although outlawed by the 1835 Cruelty to Animals Act, this certainly continued but was a covert activity and not one for which those involved would pose for a photo.

Public attitude to wildlife has changed completely over time. Today, we are more

concerned with conservation and reintroducing species than in slaughtering them. We feed our garden birds and consider ourselves fortunate if a hedgehog takes up residence. Historically, persecution was not only commonplace, in many cases it was compulsory.

An Act for the Preservation of Grayne, popularly the 'Vermin Act', was passed in 1532. After a series of poor harvests, the Act was updated and strengthened in 1566, designating a long list of creatures as 'vermin'. Apart from deer and hare, which were reserved for sporting gentlemen to hunt, hardly anything was exempt beyond dormice, shrews, voles and interestingly red squirrels which may be connected to the use of red squirrel fur, known as 'vair', for trimming heraldic garments. As well as badgers, the official list included foxes, hedgehogs – widely believed to suckle from cows! – polecats, stoats, weasels, otters, moles, and wildcats; amongst bird species listed were eagles, harriers, kites, crows, rooks, choughs, woodpeckers, shags, kingfishers, starlings and house sparrows. It was incumbent upon every man, woman and child to uphold the law and take every opportunity to kill these creatures. As an encouragement, churchwardens were authorised to pay a bounty out of the income raised by a church rate. Parishes not deemed to be pulling their weight risked being fined.

Proof was typically the head of the animal which would then be cut in two to show payment had been made and prevent the possibility of double counting. Some bodies may well have ended up being cooked and eaten. Sparrow pie was a once popular rural dish and badger ham something of a delicacy. Badgers and wildcats attracted a bounty of one shilling (12 old pence). Hedgehogs fetched 4d; stoats and weasels one penny; three crows or 12 starlings also earned a one penny reward. In the 17th century, bounty was paid on almost 5,000 wildcats. The churchwardens' accounts for my home village of Barton under Needwood record 1,194 sparrow heads presented for bounty between January and June 1774 at a penny per dozen. In many cases the recipients are named as 'son of …', perhaps an indication of the damage a small boy can do armed with a catapult.

The Vermin Act was amended in the 18th century and repealed as obsolete in 1856. Gamekeepers on private estates continued with many traditional activities to control what they considered 'vermin'. Badgers were given limited legal protection in 1973. Landowners were exempt. In 1995, the Protection of Badgers Act was passed extending the scope of the earlier Act. However, more recently, the supposed link with Bovine TB has meant the return of large-scale culling of badgers in selected areas. The jury remains out on its effectiveness. Sir Oswald Mosley, who died in 1915, was a keen huntsman and a regular with the local Meynell Hunt. He took a keen interest in farming, breeding shire horses and pedigree cattle at Rolleston, and provided financial support for Professor Allan MacFadyen's experimental work on the possible transmission of tuberculosis from animals to humans.

Johan Zoffany

Richard Stone treats us to a bit of art history

Johan Zoffany [c.1733 – 1810] spent six years in India from 1783 to 1789. His intensely detailed paintings chronicle an India of racial integration and cultural engagement before attitudes changed, and a gulf opened up. Popular and successful in his lifetime, this very individual and largely neglected artist came back to public attention after a Royal Academy Exhibition in 2012.

Zoffany lived an interesting life. Moving from Germany to Italy before settling in England and spending six years in India, leaving mistresses and illegitimate children in his wake. He was born near Frankfurt, then a free city state, where his father worked as a cabinetmaker. At the age of 17 he walked to Rome, sketching and painting the scenery along the way. Rome in the mid-18th century was a magnet for artists and their patrons. The English gentry on the Grand Tour invariably wanted a portrait and a view to take back home. In 1760, Zoffany moved to London painting portraits and what were known as 'conversation pieces', informal groups posed in a domestic or natural setting.

This included a 1762 painting of David Garrick, with his wife Eva, brother & business partner George, and Colonel George Boden, taking tea in the Thameside garden of Garrick's Villa, on Hampton Court Road.

Zoffany's rich patrons included George III and Queen Charlotte. He was commissioned by the Queen to paint the Medici art collection at the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. Charlotte expected a record of culture, Zoffany delivered what she described as 'a gallery of Philistines'.

Temporarily in bad books, Zoffany decided a trip abroad would be a good idea and persuaded the East India Company to approve a visit to India as a portrait painter. He arrived in in 1783 with letter of introduction to Governor General Warren Hastings.

At Hastings' instigation Zoffany painted flattering portraits of the Indian elite to help further the company's aims. Out of genuine interest in Anglo-Indian society he also painted scenes of everyday life.

His Indian masterpiece is Colonel Mordaunt's Cock-Match. John 'Jack' Mordaunt (dressed in

white) had been loaned out by the East India Company to serve as bodyguard to Asaf ud Daulah, Nawab of Awadh in Lucknow.

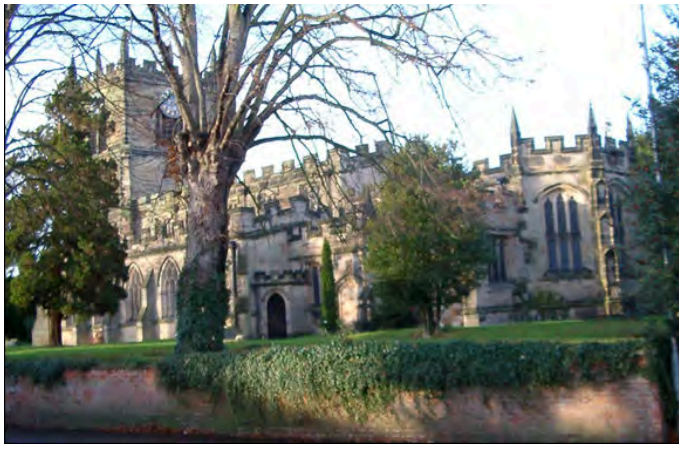
The detail in this lively panorama has a documentary quality. The handlers wear turbans: Mordaunt's red, the Nawab's white. Zoffany put himself on the far right-hand side of the painting, seated and holding a paintbrush.

On the voyage home, Zoffany's ship was wrecked in the Andaman Islands. Threatened with starvation, it is alleged lots were drawn by the survivors and the unlucky loser, a young sailor, eaten.

John Taylor *of* Barton under Needwood

Richard Stone rounds off with a visit to an interesting church

Very few churches were built during the reign of Henry VIII. St James Church, Barton under Needwood in Staffordshire is one. Built between 1517 and 1533 replacing a 12th-century chapel-of-ease in the parish of St Michael, Tatenhill. Originally dedicated to St Mary Magdalene, it changed its name to St James after the Reformation and became a parish church in 1881. The nave and aisles were widened in the 19th century, but architecturally it retains a rare Perpendicular Gothic unity.



St James' was paid for by Dr John Taylor, a local boy made good who was born in a cottage, probably on the site now occupied by the church, around 1480. John was one of triplets, an unusual enough occurrence to attract the attention of Henry VII, when he was in the area hunting in Needwood Forest. After meeting the infant John and his siblings, Rowland and Nathaniel, Henry offered to pay for the children's education. The sovereign's private expenses for 1498 record a payment for '… wages of the King's Scoler Taillor at Oxenford'. John proved a gifted student. Ordained into the Church in 1503, he became rector at Holy Trinity, Sutton Coldfield the following year. In May 1509, he

acted as one of the royal chaplains at the funeral of Henry VII in Westminster Abbey. A position as a clerk and chaplain to Henry VIII followed. He accompanied Henry at the famous 'Field of the Cloth of Gold' meeting with Francis I of France, in 1520.

In 1527, John Taylor was made Master of the Rolls, the second most senior judge in the kingdom. His church appointments included archdeacon of Derby (1515), archdeacon of Buckingham (1516), and archdeacon of Halifax (1528).

John Taylor's coat of arms, featuring the heads of the three brothers and two Tudor roses, appear on a weatherworn carving on the north side of the tower of St James'. The date 1517 is carved on the south side. There is a better-preserved example of the crest over a now blocked doorway. The coat of arms appears again inside the church along with Latin inscriptions added around 1700, in the spandrels of the nave arches, which summarise Taylor's career. In these he is described as gemellorum natu maximus or 'eldest of twins' in the absence of an appropriate Latin term for triplets.

John Taylor died in 1534. He may well have intended St James' would be his last resting place, but it is thought he was buried at *St Anthony's Hospital in Threadneedle Street, London (John Stow, Survey of London, 1598) which by then had become an annex of the College of St George at Windsor Castle and effectively a royal 'free' chapel. The Hospital, destroyed in the Great Fire of London in 1666, was subsequently rebuilt but demolished in 1840.

**St Anthony was the patron saint of domestic animals and swineherds. He is typically shown with a pig and one is supposed to have kept him company in the desert. The runt of a litter was once known as a 'Tantony Pig'. A traditional source of income for St Anthony's Hospital came from pigs. Any pig brought to market deemed unfit to be sold for food, was claimed by the brothers of the hospital, fitted with a bell, and set free to scavenge in the streets. Identified by the bell hung around its neck as under the protection of St Anthony's, the pigs tended to thrive. Feeding a St Anthony's pig was seen as a charitable act. As a result, these 'free-range' strays soon fattened up to a point where they could be sold or used to feed the poor.*

*Two of our best friends are **Professor Andrew Hopper**, and **Dr Ismini Pells**, previously of the Centre, and now of the University of Oxford Department for Continuing Education, and we are always happy to report their news:*

Two open access publications that can be read for free online:

Andrew Hopper, Ismini Pells and Martin Bricknell, 'Veteran welfare past and present: sociological analysis of the Civil War Petitions, 1642–1718', *Frontiers in Sociology*, 10 (2025), doi.org/10.3389/fsoc.2025.1495269

'The politics of military welfare in Yorkshire and the memory of the Civil Wars, 1642–1709', *English Historical Review* (2025), doi.org/10.1093/ehr/ceaf002

The Civil War in 100 Objects will be released on 10 November 2025.
https://www.worldturnedupsidedown.co.uk/product/the-civil-war-in-100-objects/#:~:text=In%20this%20book%2C%20leading%20experts,legacy%20of%20the%20civil%20wars.

The World Turned Upside Down podcast has now published over 100 programmes and have dozens more in production for next year. It has been running for two years and has reached 100,000 listens. https://www.worldturnedupsidedown.co.uk/

There is a forthcoming spring special event on the subject of the Civil Wars at Christ Church: https://www.chch.ox.ac.uk/visit/special-interest-event It is entitled *Britain Turned Upside Down: Civil War and Republic, 1640–1660.*

It is a public event so anyone can register but tickets are about £800, although this includes meals, accommodation in college and drinks.

Friends news

Dave Fogg Postles

Publications:

'Pro bono pacis et concordie: arbitration in English ecclesiastical courts in the later middle ages', Law and History Review (forthcoming, 2025)

'The "politics and poetics" of Pentecost in the late-medieval English Church', Reading Medieval Studies (forthcoming, 2025)

'New lives? Flows of people in and out of Loughborough in the middle of the nineteenth century', Local Population Studies (forthcoming, 2025)

Richard Stone

Presentations:

'The Knights Templar at Home' Mid-Trent and Mercia Historical Association [12 October, 9 November, 14 December 2024]

'Maps and mapmakers' Mid-Trent and Mercia Historical Association [15 April 2025]

Richard is still producing a video on YouTube every Friday, Follow this link https://www.youtube.com/@HistoryRich/playlists to access the playlist.

Grace Dieu Priory

The Friends' second outing for 2025 found us assembling at the Museum at Ashby-de-la-Zouch on a Saturday morning in late September. Here our study focus was Grace Dieu Priory, an Augustinian nunnery whose ruins can still be viewed from the Loughborough to Ashby road.

We began our day with a talk and some slides, expertly delivered by Ken Hillier, who was clearly fascinated by the whole subject of medieval monasticism. The story started at the end, with the Dissolution of the priory and its surrender on the 27th October 1538. Sixteen women, who had known no other life, had to leave the Priory carrying all their possessions (although the blow was somewhat softened by them being granted a pension). The 38 lay men and women who were employed as servants at the Priory perhaps found themselves in a worse position. The story of the Priory had begun in 1239-1241, when it was founded by Roesia de Verdun, a wealthy widow. Grace Dieu housed an order of white nuns of the order of St Augustine the bishop. Roesia's splendid tomb was transferred from the Priory to Belton church at the time of the Dissolution, but has since been found to be empty of her actual remains (which are rumoured to have been buried in the churchyard).

Many of the accounts that we know of monasteries come from the Bishop's Visitations, and by their nature they tended to highlight the less desirable behaviours that were to be found in these institutions. Grace Dieu was no exception to this. They were meant to be poor and chaste, and to never leave the Priory precinct, but at least one cellaress was found to be travelling around the neighbourhood, rather than attending the required church services, sometimes riding pillion behind the (male) priory chaplain. The Priory also had several 'good' reports, however, it seems that it was by no means a den of iniquity.

After the Dissolution, the priory entered the hands of John Beaumont. He converted the Priory buildings to become his manor house, and the ruins we have today are as much of manor house as nunnery. Beaumont was stripped of his offices and estates in 1552 after falling into disgrace, but Grace Dieu was recovered by his widow some five years later. It then stayed with the Beaumonts until 1686 when it was sold to Sir Ambrose Phillipps of nearby Garendon Abbey. He wanted the estate, not the manor house, and a considerable part of it was then pulled down, and it entered its period of long, slow deterioration and became the haunt of 'poets, artists, trespassers, and ghosts'. The Priory ruins and surrounding estate remained with the same family (although they became the March-Phillipps de Lisle family), and they built Grace Dieu manor house in the early nineteenth century. The manor was leased out for many years, then became a Catholic school, but is now a football academy. The trust running the school first leased the priory ruins to the Gace Dieu

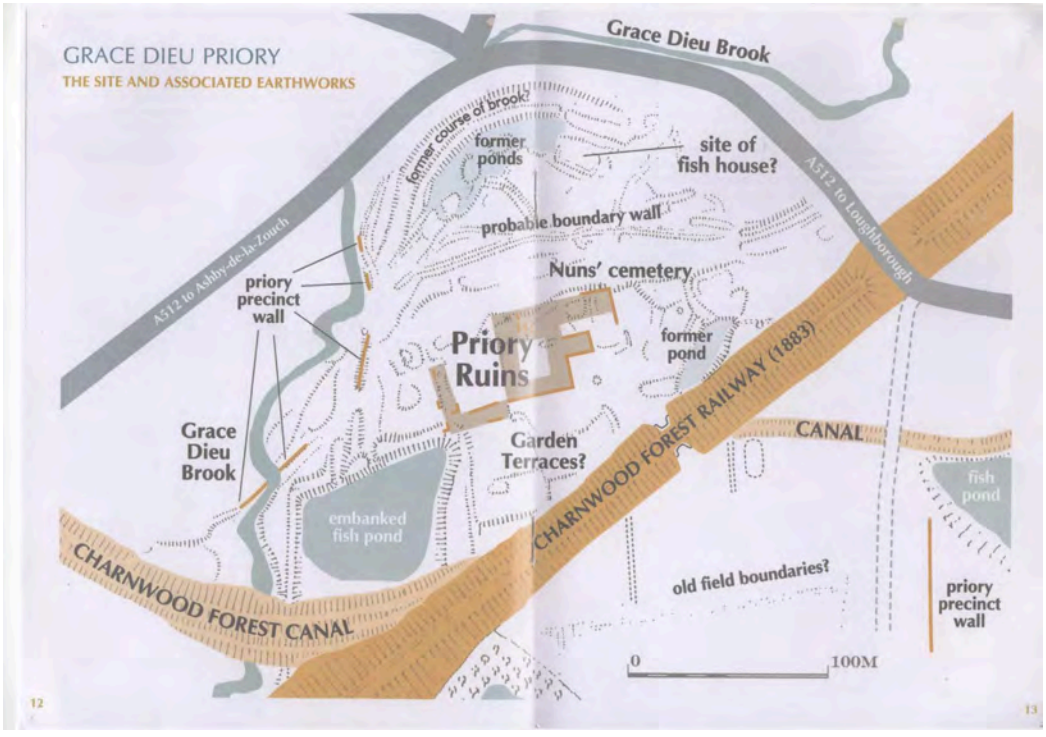
Trust and then sold them to them for a nominal sum.

Having been introduced to the history of the Priory we then took some time to tour the small but fascinating museum, before enjoying lunch and then setting off for the Abbey itself, a short car journey away.

There we met Ann Petty, our guide for the afternoon. We started off by exploring the very lovely woodland, still owned by the de Lisle family. Here we encountered two more ruins – the remains of the Charnwood Forest railway and the Charnwood Forest canal. Both built primarily to transport coal, both without connection to the wider rail or canal network, and so both destined to ultimately fail. The railway can be traced through a very obvious embankment and a fine viaduct, but the remains of the canal are somewhat harder to spot.

We finally reached the ruins of the Priory itself, and found them indeed to be atmospheric and romantic. Some test pitting has been done on the site, but because it is a scheduled monument the trust are very limited as to what they can do in terms of archaeological excavations. Many areas remain to be explored which could reveal more details as to the life of Grace Dieu in its 300 years as a nunnery and 150 years as a manor house. The trust had previously run ghost tours of the site, and we got to view some mysterious photographs from that period, showing figures lurking in the ruins that had not actually been there. I was very disappointed when I reviewed my photographs of the day and found only images of Friends and of some of the very many dog walkers that frequent the woods and the ruins.

Mandy de Belin



VICTORIA COUNTY HISTORY

Leicestershire

News from the

Victoria County History

It's been a very busy year for Leicestershire VCH and September 2024 feels light years away. Leicestershire VCH remains exceedingly grateful for a bequest made available towards our work by the Centre for Regional and Local History, that has enabled us to achieve so much. Twelve months ago we were close to finishing our draft text for our fifth paperback – a social and cultural history of Loughborough since 1750. The histories of religious worship and of education were complex and the more general social history section had to cover so many different facets of life in the town – social character, local politics, community organisations, sport (a history of sport in Loughborough could fill 20,000 words on its own), the poor laws, charity, medical care, friendly societies, migration, theatre, cinema, music, the list goes on. Even locating the parish boundary before 1888 for the opening section proved tricky – the western boundary had various detached parts that are shown only in a surveyor's plan now in the Ordnance Survey archives at Kew, unhelpfully drawn over a map of a different part of Leicestershire and with no scale – this had to be deduced from the twists in the course of the river Soar and an unusual boundary feature in the south.

Estate cottages along Nanpantan Road, with the former pub at the crossroads

In addition to this publication, two more will follow. A second paperback, also covering the period since 1750, will focus on economic history and related topics. The third publication will be one of the iconic VCH 'big red books' of 180,000 words. This will include our post-1750 research, the earlier history of Loughborough, and the histories of Hathern, Dishley, Thorpe Acre and Garendon. Research is now complete on medieval Loughborough and projects are also underway on several other parts of this planned work. Please get in touch if you would like to help (my email address is below).

Our previous paperbacks were published by the University of London Press, but changes at that press have meant that we (and other VCH counties producing paperback histories of single parishes) have needed to find a new publisher. (Nothing has changed for the VCH 'red book series', which will continue to be published by Boydell and Brewer.) We have reached an agreement with HobNob Press to publish our Loughborough paperbacks as a 'partnership publication' supported by the Central VCH Office. HobNob is a local history publisher based in Gloucester, and the business is run by a local historian who has worked closely with the VCH for many years, so we are in good hands. Quality control for the text remains unchanged, with paperbacks having to

pass through the same peer review and editorial process, still conducted by the VCH London office, and the new books will continue to be part of the national Victoria County History series.

We now have positive peer review comments on our first Loughborough text and are working on final amendments and maps ahead of publication. This is a few months later than we anticipated this time last year, as will now be explained.

I'm sure readers of this article will all be aware how research can lead off at tangents, and where time (and money) allows, some of these can be very fruitful to explore. We followed one such tangent over three months (and more) from late December 2024, and this has led to some fascinating findings and valuable community involvement.

When the municipal borough of Loughborough was created in 1888 its boundary deliberately excluded the extensive farmland in the south of the parish, and this area became the civil parish of Nanpantan in 1894. In addition to some scattered farmhouses, the new civil parish also included an Anglican church (opened as a mission room in 1888), a small school (opened by Loughborough School Board in 1893) and a cluster of houses with a pub grouped around a minor crossroads.

The crossroads area intrigued me. Loughborough's history as an important manufacturing town is apparent in its many streets lined with Victorian terraced houses or 20th-century council-built properties. Little more than two miles to the south-west of the town centre, the ten or so pre-First World War houses that stand at Nanpantan crossroads seem to belong to a different world. Their apparent age, individual nature and matching paintwork immediately identifies these as 'estate cottages'. This area fell just within the 'waste' of Charnwood Forest, and their plots were laid out in the 1829 Charnwood Forest enclosure award.

Our event at Nanpantan Hall

Charnwood Forest Geopark was formed by a stakeholder group of public and private sector bodies and was awarded lottery funding to investigate and promote the heritage of Charnwood Forest and to seek UNESCO Geopark status. Last autumn they offered short-term grants for community heritage projects, and Nanpantan falls within the area they support. We submitted a grant application for a volunteer project to commence in December 2024 that would explore the social history of this community, find out more about the history of the scattered farms within the former civil parish of Nanpantan and produce two self-guided walks. These would be launched at a public event in March 2025 where we would also display our findings.

Our funding application was successful. I booked a converted outbuilding at Home Farm in Nanpantan for volunteer meetings and appealed for volunteers. My aim was to provide them with training in using the online census and newspaper records available in Loughborough library, and for them to supplement their findings with information gathered from records held in the Record Office at Wigston, other online sources such as trade directories and data I would gather from the World War II farm survey records at Kew. As Nanpantan would be difficult to identify in records before the civil parish was created and named in 1894, and because its population in 1901 was only 260, I hoped there would be enough material to keep everyone occupied.

The response to our appeal for volunteers exceeded my expectations and 31 people were involved either as part of our core research team or helped with other information and old

photographs. The 100 tickets for our closing event, held in Nanpantan Hall, were fully booked within five days of going online and we were pleased to welcome HM Lord Lieutenant of Leicestershire Mike Kapur OBE and the (then) Deputy Mayor of Charnwood, Cllr David Northage (now Mayor). The response clearly demonstrates the strong appetite among the public to find out more about the history of places and communities, and the importance of projects such as the VCH. Sadly, funding to support such projects is not always easy to find.

What I had envisaged as a small 'mini-project' turned out to be much larger. Nanpantan in the 19th century, though small, was far from a 'rural backwater'. Our volunteers found descriptions of formal factory outings from Loughborough to Nanpantan beginning as early as the 1820s, a prize fighter caught training in Nanpantan for a fight in 1851 against an opponent who later became the heavyweight champion of England, and a licensing application when the pub changed hands in 1883 that was supported by a police superintendent who had seen 'about a thousand people sitting on the roadside outside the applicant's house'. By the late 19th century, Nanpantan's location on the edge of Charnwood Forest, and its pub with an astute landlord who recognised and invested in its potential, drew day-trippers and excursionists from across a wide area.

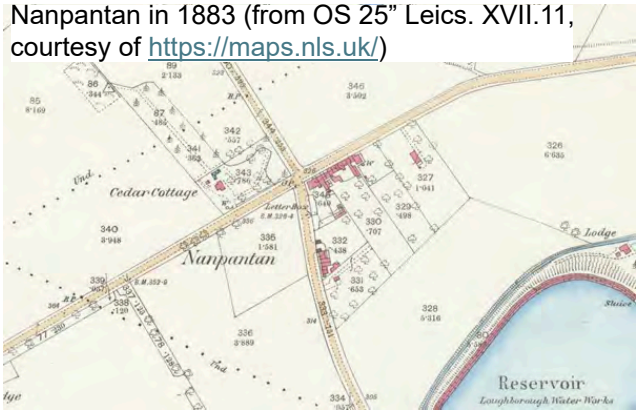
This leads into something wider than 'local history'. Relatively little research has been done on factory outings, employee 'benefits' or 'holidays' before statutory holiday entitlements, and we've collected some wonderful examples taking us back to the period shortly after the Luddite attacks in the town. Our Loughborough paperbacks will be enriched through the incorporation of some of this material and a separate article is in progress. We have also written a brief online blogpost at https://blog.history.ac.uk/2025/09/the-holiday-resort-of-the-people-exploring-the-history-of-the-community-at-the-crossroads/

Although our Nanpantan project formally ended in March, while I am writing this report two of our project volunteers are still beavering away in documents and exploring local fields to research a previously unknown and important industrial past in Nanpantan, initially identified from newspaper advertisements and other snippets found during the project research (more will be revealed in our second Loughborough book).

Our two self-guided walks (Nanpantan village and the former Charnwood Forest canal) can be found under the heading 'Nanpantan' on our news page at https://leicestershirehistory.co.uk/?page_id=3681 (these will be on a webpage of their own in due course).

Work planned for 2025–6 will include seeing our first Loughborough paperback through to publication, organising the book launch, finalising our 'holiday resort' article and continuing to research the modern economic history of Loughborough and early modern Loughborough and progressing with a history of the village of Hathern.

Nanpantan in 1883 (from OS 25" Leics. XVII.11, courtesy of https://maps.nls.uk/)



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Made possible with Heritage Fund

CHARNWOOD FOREST GEOPARK

Tales of student

Funding

Postgraduate students at the CRLH have been happy to receive funding this year from the Hoskins Duffield fund (and in some cases the Friends too). Here they share how this funding has furthered their researches.

The Hoskins-Duffield funding enabled me to make the most of an opportunity to give a short talk about my research in London. I had been successful in an application to take part in the annual IHR British History in the Long Eighteenth Century Seminar's Lightning Talks 2025 event, which takes place in the evening; the funding enabled me to attend this and to stay in London overnight and research in the British Library one day and The National Archives the next.

The talk was a useful opportunity to succinctly describe what my research project is looking at, answer questions and network. My project is 'Women's public lives in four Warwickshire urban centres, 1660-1740'. It involves piecing together fragments from many archival sources to see how women contributed to urban life, how the nature of the towns influenced their lives, and make comparisons between the towns. The research I did in my two days in London involved looking at disparate documents which will contribute to different sections of my thesis.

At TNA, I looked at a deposition of a woman who got attacked by four men at her stall at a fair near Birmingham's Bull Ring in 1727. The attack was because of her husband's political views, but for me it was useful to learn she had attended the fair for more than 20 years to sell gingerbread; not many market traders leave a trace.

Another huge document focused on the pulling down of a Protestant meeting house in Birmingham during the Sacheverell riots of 1715. Male witnesses gave evidence about the damage to the building. A widow of 60 who 'well knew the meeting house and the garden behind' described in detail damage done to the garden. This will be useful for my work on women's involvement in religion.

I also looked at a couple of court documents from 1716 about attempts by relatives of Edward Inge, of Charterhouse, Coventry, to challenge his will in which he left property and goods to spinster Eliabeth Elliott, 'a poor girl', who taught his daughter after his wife went away. I already know Elliott's will, in which she shows herself as a strong-willed non-conformist, so these documents add to her story.

At the British Library, I read the minutes of Sir Thomas White's charity from 1712-22, when it was being properly run after a scandal involving Coventry council's mishandling of its finances. These revealed a number of women acting as guarantors for loans to young businessmen, some of whom I have come across in other areas of research, which adds to my knowledge of them and their financial contribution to the town.

I also photographed letters of the Hopkins family at the British Library, including some from Edward, one-time Coventry MP, making arrangements with local people to bring his bride home, and from Anna-Maria herself, though these, and some court documents from TNA, need further analysis. The research days were very useful in allowing me to access documents not available online.

Julie Chamberlain

Our second story of student funding comes from Nicole Salomone, who received an award from the Friends for archival research, and found more on her trip than she expected.

The Hidden Histories Along the Cobham-Luddesdown Footpath

Nicole Salomone, MA

In the early Autumn 2025, The Friends of the Centre for English Local History provided a small grant for me to visit the Kent Archives, located in Maidstone, County Kent, to continue local history research associated with my doctoral thesis. As sometimes occurs, an adventure sprang into being when the archivist needed time to look for further requested records. The hotel that I was meant to be staying at overbooked for the night, thus causing me to stay at the Darnley Inn in Cobham. This is where my adventure begins, and where the wonder of local history filled the short gap in time while I awaited to hear from the archivist. What follows summarises the history of the sites that I visited as I walked the footpath between St. Mary Magdalene's Church in Cobham and Luddesdowne Church in Luddesdown, County Kent.

Cobham, County Kent

Before we review the sites visited in Cobham, it is important to understand the size and history of the village and civil parish. Located in the Gravesham District County Kent, its population has doubled since 1841 when it was recorded as 758.[1] The town has Anglo-Saxon origins with a church recorded in the village since at least the early twelfth century.[2] The de Cobhams acquired "lands in Cobham and Shorne from the de Quartermere's..." during the early thirteenth century.[3] The de Cobhams and their descendants, the Brookes, remained active in the community and provided generously for the church until the seventeenth century when James I gifted Cobham to the Stuarts.[4] "In 1715 the lands passed by marriage to the Blighs, who were created Earls of Darnley in 1725," and who remain closely associated with the village.[5]

The Darnley Arms, Cobham

While in Cobham, I stayed at the Darnley Arms – the oldest pub in the village. The Darnley Arms was built during the late twelfth century and was used as a hostelry for coaches that travelled through the village.[6] The Inn's three rooms have been renovated to modern standards and are positioned cosily over the dining area. Locals gather here regularly for drinks and conversations – inside on cold or rainy evenings, and on the veranda when the weather is warmer. The pub is dog friendly, and I met a lovely working cocker spaniel, named Connie, who thought I was more interesting than treats! (See Figure 1)

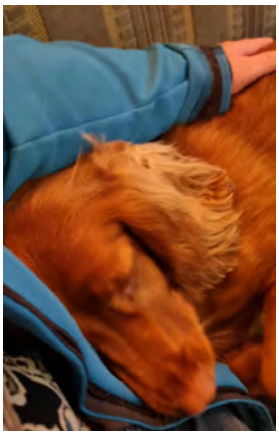


Figure 1: Connie and Nicole at the Darnley Arms[7]

According to local lore, the ghost of Sir Thomas Kemp(e) wanders the grounds, having spent a night at the Darnley on his way to be executed

[1] "Cobham," *North West Kent Family History Society*, 2025. https://www.nwkfhs.org.uk/addington-crayford/cobham; Sam Honey, "Cobham: The stunning Kent village linked to Charles Dickens used to film The Crown," *Kent Live*, 3 January 2023. https://www.kentlive.news/news/kent-news/cobham-stunning-kent-village-linked-7990194. As of the 2021 census, Cobham has a population of 1,470.

[2] "History of Cobham Village," *Cobham and Luddesdowne Kent*, 2025. https://www.cobham-luddesdowne.org/buildings/cobham-church/history-of-cobham-village.

[3] "History of Cobham Village."

[4] Ibid.

[5] Ibid.

[6] "About Us," *The Darnley Arms*, 2025. https://www.thedarnleyarmscobham.co.uk/about-us; "Darnley Arms," *Cobham & Sole Street Historical Society*, 2025. http://www.cashs.org.uk/darnley-arms.html.

[7] Nicole Salomone, "Connie Cuddles," Location : The Darnley Inn, Cobham, County Kent. 2025.

in Rochester. However, due to his relationship with the King, he was pardoned and chose to live out the rest of his days at the Darnley Arms.[8] The date attributed to this death was 1410-1414, which caused some confusion when looking into the history of this claim. This was, in part, because there were several people of the same name who lived in County Kent during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: Sir Thomas Kempe (1414-1489), Sir Thomas Kemp (1446-1520), and Sir Thomas Kempe, MP (1513/1517-1591).[9] Since the death dates of all of these men are too late for them to be the Darnley Inn ghost, I submit the theory that Darnley's ghost may be that of Sir John Oldcastle.

Sir John Oldcastle (1370-1417) received his knighthood by 1400, "and in the autumn of that year he served on Henry IV's campaign against the Scots, first under the banner of Lord Grey of Codnor and later in the King's own retinue."[10] A successful military man, his services were called upon again in 1401, 1403, and 1404, resulting in his being granted annuities and land holdings and being elected as the Member of Parliament for Herefordshire (1404).[11] In 1408, he married Joan de la Pole, *suo jure* Baroness Cobham, at which time he was styled Baron Cobham. This expanded his holdings and he was raised from the House of Commons to the House of Lords.[12]

Concurrently, Oldcastle's religious views aligned with those of the Lollards – a pre-Protestant movement that was initially led by John Wycliffe.[13] It is believed that Oldcastle may have been introduced to the Lollard movement while residing in Herefordshire during the 1390s, and archival evidence suggests that he agreed with their message that the clergy should not have priestly powers by 1410.[14] As a landed Baron with powerful connections - including King Henry IV and Prince Henry V, Oldcastle's religious loyalties came under scrutiny by Thomas Arundel, Archbishop of Canterbury.[15] Arundel began prosecuting Lollards for heresy, including people in Oldcastle's circle of acquaintances. During the last Parliamentary session of King Henry IV's reign, a convocation was called and Oldcastle was accused of heresy; however, this came to an end with the death of the monarch a fortnight later.[16]

The convocation was reconvened at King Henry V's first Parliamentary session, where evidence was produced of Oldcastle's anti-clerical views.[17] Despite the evidence against him, three months passed before King Henry V granted royal permission for Arundel to arrest him – when it became clear that Oldcastle would not renounce his religious convictions.[18] Oldcastle's trial was held at St. Paul's (London), on 23 Sept. 1413, where he was questioned by the young barrister John Kemp.[19] After being found guilty, he was imprisoned in the Tower of London until he escaped on 19 October 1413.[20] Over the next several months, Oldcastle and his followers planned an uprising to occur at St. Giles of the Fields (London), but only a small number attended – about eighty of whom were arrested

[8] Ibid. "Darnley Arms," *Cobham & Sole Street Historical Society*.

[9] "Sir Thomas Kemp (1446-1520)," *Family Search*, 2025. ID: LHW7-5TL. https://ancestors.familysearch.org/en/LHW7-5TL/sir-thomas-kemp-1446-1520; "Sir Thomas Kempe, MP," *Geni*, 30 September 2025. https://www.geni.com/people/Sir-Thomas-Kempe-MP/6000000006230972440; "Thomas Kempe (abt. 1414-1489)," *Wikitree*, 2025. https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Kempe-183. This profile is managed by the England Project.

[10] "OLDCASTLE, Sir John (c.1370-1417), of Almeley, Herefs. and Cobham, Kent.," *History of Parliament Online*. Originally published in *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1386-1421,* ed. J.S. Roskelly, L. Clark, C. Rawcliffe, (Boydell and Brewer, 1993). https://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1386-1421/member/oldcastle-sir-john-1370-1417.

[11] Ibid, "OLDCASTLE, Sir John (c.1370-1417), of Almeley, Herefs. and Cobham, Kent.," *History of Parliament Online*.

[12] Ibid.

[13] J. C. Carrick, *Wycliffe and The Lollards*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908); Chris Roberts, *Heavy Words Lightly Thrown: The Reason Behind Rhyme*, (Waterville: Thorndike Press, 2006), pg. 192; Revd Dr Richard Turnbull, "Wycliffe and the Lollards: sowing the seeds of the English Reformation," *The Christian Institute*, 2025. https://www.christian.org.uk/features/wycliffe-lollards-sowing-seeds-english-reformation.

[14] Ibid, "OLDCASTLE, Sir John (c.1370-1417)"; Frederick Hitchen-Kemp, *A general history of the Kemp and Kempe families of Great Britain and her colonies, with arms, pedigrees, portraits, illustrations of seats, foundations, chantries, monuments, documents, old jewels, curios, etc.*, (London: The Leadenhall Press, 1902), pg. 42.

[15] Ibid. "OLDCASTLE, Sir John (c.1370-1417)."

[16] Ibid. "OLDCASTLE, Sir John (c.1370-1417)"; "Oldcastle, Sir John," in Hugh Chisholm (ed.) *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 20, 11th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1911), pg. 11.

[17] Ibid. "OLDCASTLE, Sir John (c.1370-1417)."

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid. "OLDCASTLE, Sir John (c.1370-1417)"; Ibid, *A general history of the Kemp and Kempe families of Great Britain and her colonies*, pg. 42.

[20] Ibid. "OLDCASTLE, Sir John (c.1370-1417)."

and about half of which were executed.[21] Oldcastle avoided capture until December 1417, when he was arrested and tried before Parliament. Having already escaped the Tower of London once, he was sentenced to death by hanging, and was executed on 13 December 1417 at St. Giles in the Fields.[22]

While Oldcastle's story does not directly align with the story of Thomas Kempe, the ghost of Darnley Inn, there are a few interesting connections. First, Oldcastle's connection to Cobham was more sound than a few nights spent on the way to execution. Secondly, he was closely connected with Henry IV and Henry V, which staved off his prosecution for months. Thirdly, Oldcastle's death more closely aligns with the dates supposed than the Kentish Thomas Kemp(e)s' from the same period. Finally, the barrister at his trial was John Kemp, thus the blending of the popular name 'Thomas' with the barrister's last name 'Kemp', may have occurred as the story was passed through the centuries. Or, perhaps, this was a way for those in the village to remember Oldcastle without being directly connected with his 'heretical' views.

Cobham College

"You should go see the Monastery." This was the advice given when I asked what to see while in town. The 'monastery,' I have come to learn, is the remains of the kitchen or refractory that sits opposite Cobham College.

Located down a road that largely resembles a driveway, Cobham College was founded in 1362 by Sir John de Cobham, styled the 3rd Baron Cobham, and was situated next to the parish church of St. Mary Magdalene with a covered processional passage connecting the two buildings[23] The college was set up in a quadrangle, and included a residence for five priests, a hall, and a kitchen or refectory on the south-east side.[24] (Figure 2)

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

[23] "Cobham College, Kent," *Britain Express*, 2025. https://www.britainexpress.com/counties/kent/properties/cobham-college.html; A. A. Arnold, "Cobham College," *Kent Archaeological Society* (1905), pg. 73.

[24] Ibid, Arnold, "Cobham College," pg. 73.

Figure 2: Remains of Cobham College's Kitchen[25]

When King Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries the priests who inhabited the College "surrendered voluntarily" to George Brooke, the college Patron, thus allowing the building and its holdings to remain in the Brooke family, rather than being absorbed into the Court of Augmentation.[26] Ownership of the college property was officially transferred back to the Brookes family in 1598 via 'An Acte for the establishment of the new College of the Poore at Cobham in the Countie of Kente', at which time the college was repurposed as an alms-house for twenty-one elderly parishioners.[27] Water, sewer drainage, and electricity were added in 1956 and further updates were made in the 1980s, thereby allowing twenty-nine people to live there presently.[28]

Silverhand Estate

"When you go down the footpath, travel through the orchard and the vineyards, over the hill, and you'll come to Luddesdown Church." This was the advice given by one of the women who worked at the Darnley Inn while we discussed my plans for the day. I had expected perhaps a small apple orchard, and had no idea what to expect regarding the vineyard. What was not anticipated was a footpath through an orchard that left me staring at a hole in a hedge reminiscent of Lewis

[25] Nicole Salomone, 'Remains of Kitchen or Refractory on South-East Side of Cobham College,' Location: Cobham, County Kent, 2025.

[26] Ibid, "Cobham College, Kent."

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, with the knowledge that I was expected to walk through it or abandon the adventure entirely.

The public footpath connecting St. Mary Magdalene's in Cobham to Luddesdowne Church cuts through the orchard and vineyards of the Silverhand Estate. The Estate was named after King Ludd, who "was stripped of his rank and title" before a silver hand prosthetic was made to replace the hand that he had lost in battle.[29] The Estate is connected to Luddesdown Court, "one of the oldest inhabited buildings in England, dating back to the 11th Century where it was once owned by Bishop Odo of Bayeaux, the half-brother of William the Conqueror."[30] According to the Gravesham Borough Council, prior owners include Aymer de Valence, a Lord Ordainer who was responsible for limiting the power of Edward II and Piers Gaveston, 1st Earl of Cornwall, as well as the fourteenth-century Welsh Prince Owain Glyndŵr.[31] Presently, Silverhand Estate is the first carbon-negative vineyard in the United Kingdom and "the largest single estate vineyard in England and Wales," with locations across Kent, Sussex, and Essex.[32] (Figure 3)

Figure 3: Silverhand Vineyards on the Cobham-Luddesdowne Footpath[33]

The Village of Luddesdown and Luddesdowne Church, County Kent

If you follow the footpath into the orchard and through the hedge, down the road and across the vineyards, it will bring you to the village and civil parish of Luddesdown. A settlement has been recorded in this area since 200BCE; its name was written as *Ledesdune* – meaning "village in the hills" in the *Domesday Book* and appears it as 'Luddesdown' in 1610.[34] As per the 2011 census the village is home to over 200 people. Each person that I met there was kind, helpful, and eager to share information about the church.

Luddesdowne Church is located at the edge of the Silverhand Vineyards and next to Luddesdown Court. Gravestones are scattered throughout the well-maintained churchyard, hinting at the centuries-old history that lay below the surface.[35] The church was not scheduled to be opened; but, serendipitously, a church

[29] "Our Story," *Silverhand Estate*, 2025 https://silverhandestate.com/our-story/#:~:text=A%20Historic%20Sustainability%20Milestone%20at,innovative%20winemaking%2C%20and%20environmental%20stewardship. .

[30] "Luddesdown Court, Kent: 1,000 Year-Old Manor Said to be The Oldest House in England," *Exploring GB*, 2023. https://www.exploringgb.co.uk/blog/luddesdowncourtoldesthouseinengland; "Luddesdown Court: Stunning historic Manor House with Vineyard Views," *Produced in Kent*, 2025. producedinkent.co.uk/producers/luddesdown-court.

[31] Ibid, "Luddesdown Court, Kent: 1,000 Year-Old Manor Said to be The Oldest House in England."

[32] Rebecca Farmer, "Silverhand Estate is big, bold and beautiful," *Vineyard*, 19 June 2025. https://www.vineyardmagazine.co.uk/grape-growing/silverhand-estate-is-big-bold-and-beautiful/#:~:text=Silverhand%20Estate%20has%20a%20fascinating,famous%20tapestry%20of%20all%20time

[33] Nicole Salomone, "Footpath through Silverhand Estate Vineyard," 2025.

[34] "Home," *Luddesdown Parish Council,* 2025. ; "Luddesdown," *Discover Gravesham*, 2025. http://www.luddesdown-pc.gov.uk/community/luddesdown-parish-council-13072/homehttps://www.discovergravesham.co.uk/luddesdown/luddesdown.html
. This site indicates that while the church name includes an 'e' at the end, the village name is spelled without it.

[35] "Luddesdown Memorials," *Cobham and Luddesdown Kent*, 2025. https://www.cobham-luddesdowne.org/buildings/luddesdowne-church/luddesdowne-memorial.
The Church is in possession of "an up-to-date churchyard plan

inspector from one of the national trusts was on-site that day. The woman who opened the church for him was kind enough to allow me entrance, and she gave me a tour of the churchyard as well, pointing out the urn garden, memorial benches, and the Cheeseman Vault, which houses the bodies of the prosperous farmer Richard Cheeseman (1778-1844), his wife Maria (1784-1859), and is situated next to the body stone of their son Edward (1828-1830).[36]

Luddesdown Church is dedicated to Saints Peter and Paul, and is listed as a Grade II building according to Historic England.[37] (Figure 4) The original Saxon church that was mentioned in the *Domesday Book* was reconstructed during the twelfth century.[38] The earliest verifiable parts of the church that stands now hints that the northern and western walls date from the thirteenth century, likely built by local nobility during the church reforms of King Henry III.[39] The tower and south aisle were added in the fourteenth century. However, the church seen today is largely from the Victorian reconstruction that took place after the nave roof collapsed in 1865. Until the end of the nineteenth century the church's stained glass and wall and ceiling paintings were decorated in the revival style of the Oxford Movement.[40] Other historical features of the church include "a 14th century log ladder in the tower, three medieval bells, a 15th century brass, and fine Caen stone reredos depicting the Last Supper installed in 1873 and designed by Ewan Christian," and a "15th century Montacute brass."[41] Pictures of the inside of the church are prohibited for publication without the expressed permission of the parish council, so will not be shared here.

Figure 4: Luddesdowne Church

Luddesdown: Saved from the Ministry of Defense, County Kent

There is a sign on the the Luddesdown Village Hall that reads:

> *1984 Luddesdown Valley was saved*
> *from the Ministry of Defense*
> *Remembered on the 30th anniversary*
> *December 2014*

According to Kate Ashbrook, the General Secretary for the Open Spaces Society, during the early 1980s the Ministry of Defense (MoD) wanted to use 630 acres of farmland across the Luddesdown Valley for "up to 90 days a year for mine laying and for up to 12 weekends for infantry training with pyrotechnics and helicopters."[42]

Upon learning of the MoD's plans, the community formed the Luddesdown Action Group, now known as the Luddesdown Society. At the time Ashbrook was the secretary of the Dartmoor Preservation Association, and had previous experience with such operations run by the MoD. Ashbrook presented evidence of open craters and unexploded bombs that remained after similar training had been carried out in Cornwall.[43] After a weeks-long inquiry in 1984 it was determined that the MoD's request would be denied. Thus, thirty years later in December

recording all known burials from the late 17th century to the present day."

[36] Ted Connell, D. E. Williams, "The Monumental Inscriptions in the church and churchyard of the St Peter & St Paul's Church in the Parish of Luddesdown, Kent," *Aspects of Kentish Local History*, 2025. https://tedconnell.org.uk/LFH/GRS/LUD/00.htm.

[37] "Parish Church of St. Peter and St. Paul," *Historic England*, 2025. https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1096342.

[38] Mary Harris, "The little-known Kent village people struggle to pronounce with the 'oldest lived in house in England," *Kent Live*, 5 July 2024. https://www.kentlive.news/whats-on/whats-on-news/little-known-kent-village-people-9386249.

[39] Franz Kampers, "Henry III," in *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910). https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07228a.htm; Ibid, "Luddesdown Memorials."

[40] Ibid, "Luddesdown Memorials."

[41] Ibid, "Luddesdown." Ibid, "Luddesdown Memorials."

[42] Kate Ashbrook, "Savouring the Luddesdown Victory," *Campaigner Kate*, 13 December 2014. https://campaignerkate.wordpress.com/2014/12/13/savouring-the-luddesdown-victory

[43] Ibid, "Savouring the Luddesdown Victory."

2014, there was a gathering to celebrate their victory, and this sign was erected. (Figure 5)

Figure 5: Sign on Luddesdown Village Hall[44]

St. Mary Magdalene's Church, Cobham, County Kent

By the time I made my way back to Cobham, the church of St. Mary Magdalene's had been opened. The church inspector (James) informed me that Cobham's parish church had "the finest collection of medieval brasses in the world," a claim that is echoed with the caveat "by reputation" on the Cobham-Luddesdowne Church website.[45] Situated on the highest point in Cobham, next to the hall of Cobham College, this Grade I historic church nearly breathes history.[46]

While a church had been on this space before the twelfth century, most of what stands presently was built upon the 1220 reconstruction that was financed by the de Cobhams.[47] Only the chancel still remains of this construction. According to the Cobham and Luddesdowne Kent Church website, its size is "exceptionally large for a parish church" because the de Cobhams appeared "to have regarded it as their own Chapel and place of burial."[48] Between 1360-1370, Sir John de Cobham financed the reconstruction of "the nave with its two aisles, raised the roof… added the porch and parvis", and the tower.[49] Later reconstructions include a Victorian restoration of the chancel arch overseen by the architect Sir George Gilbert Scott (1811-1878) imitating the original style.[50]

Adorning this space are many items of interest, such as the six bells in the tower, the medieval monumental brasses, Brookes Tomb, and tilting helm reproductions hanging above the chancel. Four of the six bells that are housed within the tower were cast by Joseph Hatch of the Hatch Bell Foundry during the seventeenth century; the others were added during the twentieth century.[51] Short descriptions are provided below of the monumental brasses, Brookes Tomb, tilting helms, and the Hayes Vault.

St. Mary Magdalene's Church: Monumental Brasses

Fifteen of the twenty medieval brasses in St. Mary Magdealene Church's collection adorn the pavement in front of the high alter the chancel. While the placement and completeness of the brasses are a remarkable sight, it has not always been so. According to eighteenth-century notes, the brasses were bundled into an old chest, and the contemporary historian, Edward Hasted, said that the brasses were "very loose, that in all probability they will soon be purloined, as numbers of the same sort were by some workman a few years ago."[52] What exists currently were expertly restored during the late 1830s through early 1840s, and 1860s.[53] (Figure 6) The first restoration was overseen by Charles Spence, who was "a clerk of 1st Class in the civil department of the Admiralty (Pay Office)" and an associate of the antiquarian John Gough Nichols, FSA (1806-1873).[54] Spence and Nichols were involved with the second restoration (1860s), however the work was done by J.G. Waller who copied "evidence of antiquarian drawings" to heighten the authenticity of their appearance.[55]

[44] Nicole Salomone, "Sign on Luddesdown Village Hall," Location: Luddesdown, 2025.
[45] "Cobham Brasses and Helms," *Cobham and Luddesdowne Kent*, 2025. https://www.cobham-luddesdowne.org/buildings/cobham-church/cobham-brasses.
[46] "Parish Church of St. Mary Magdalene," *Historic England*, 2025. https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1350259.
[47] "Our Churches," *Cobham and Luddesdowne Kent*, 2025. https://www.cobham-luddesdowne.org/buildings/cobham-church.
[48] Ibid, "Our Churches."
[49] Ibid.
[50] "Cobham, St Mary Magdalene Church," *Britian Express*, 2025. https://www.britainexpress.com/counties/kent/churches/cobham.htm.
[51] Ibid, "Our Churches."
[52] Edward Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*, vol 3. (Canterbury: W. Bristow, 1797), pg. 429.
[53] Ibid, "Notes from the Archives: Medieval Brasses in St Mary Magdelene Church in Cobham."
[54] Ibid.
[55] Monumental Brass Society, "Joan de Cobham," *Monumental*

Figure 6: Brasses in front of the High Altar at St. Mary's, Cobham[56]

Most of the brasses are of the de Cobham and Brooke families, the earliest of which is that of Joan de Cobham, who died circa 1298. The following description of her brass, which dates to circa 1305, and a transcription of the inscription along its border has been provided by the Monumental Brass Society:

The brass features the full length effigy of a lady wearing a loose gown with demi-sleeves over a kirtle, her head covered by a veil, and a wimple enveloping her neck and the lower portion of her face. Over her is a canopy and round the edge of the slab of Purbeck marble an inscription in rhyming Norman-French, reading:

DAME IONE DE COBEHAM GIST ICI
DEUS DE SA ALME EIT MERCI
KI KE PUR LALME PRIERA
QUARAUNTE IOURS DE PARDOUN AVERA

(Dame Joan de Cobham lies here, God have mercy on her soul, whoever prays for her soul shall have 40 days pardon).[57]

St. Mary Magdalene's: The Brooke Tomb

Situated between the medieval brasses and the high alter sits the tomb of Sir George Brooke, Lord Cobham (1497-1558), and his wife Anne Bray(e) (1501-1558), who lay atop the tomb in recumbent effigy. The tomb is made of alabaster and black marble, and is a remarkable example of Elizabethan era craftsmanship. Like the brasses, the tomb had fallen into disrepair by the late-eighteenth century. Charles Spence collected and arranged the remaining fragments and his letters indicate that he performed "a lot of practice work and functioned as an intermediary between John Gough Nichols, [George] Hammerton, J.G. Waller and F.C. Brooke" during the mid-nineteenth century.[58] The result was a completed tomb showcasing George Brooke, Anna Bray(e) encircled by their fourteen children, each adorned with colourful heraldry. (Figure 7)

Figure 7: Brooke Tomb, St. Mary's Church, Cobham[59]

Mourning figures representing their fourteen children encircle the tomb, with five of their ten sons and two of their four daughters on opposite long and short sides, respectively. Each figure is intricately adorned with their affiliated heraldry and are shown kneeling on pillows. Only one, George Brooke (1533-1570), is shown in a half-kneeling position, and the pillow on which he knelt is black. (Figure 8) A local woman from the area, Janet, told me that she had been told that George Brooke (son) was carved in this position because he owed the family money and could run away faster! According to Raymond H. D'Elboux's analysis of the tomb in 1949, this rising position may have alluded to the refuge that George took in Antwerp to escape "his German creditors."[60] It is interesting how the sentiment of history permeated local lore.

Brass Society, 2025. https://www.mbs-brasses.co.uk/index-of-brasses/joan-de-cobham.

[56] Nicole Salomone, "Medieval Brasses in Front of the High Alter, St. Mary Magdalene's, Cobham," Location: St. Mary Magdalene's Church, Cobham, County Kent, 2025.

[57] Ibid, "Joan de Cobham."

[58] Raymond H. D'Elboux, "The Brooke Tomb, Cobham," *Archaeologia Cantiana* 62 (1949), pg. 49; Ibid, "Notes from the Archives: Medieval Brasses in St Mary Magdalene Church in Cobham.

[59] Nicole Salomone, "The Brooke Tomb," Location: St. Mary Magdalene's Church, Cobham, County Kent, 2025.

[60] Raymond H. D'Elboux, "The Brooke Tomb, Cobham," *Archaeologia Cantiana* 62 (1949), pg. 55.

Figure 8: George Brooke (son), in Half-Kneeling Position[61]

St. Mary Magdalene's: Tilting Helms

Hanging from the upper walls of the chancel are four tilting helms which are medieval reproductions of three jousting helms and an armet combat helm. It was customary during the late middle ages for helms to hang in a church after a funerary procession.[62] According to the 1986 evaluation of these helms, two are from circa 1380, the third from the early sixteenth century, and the final was an armet, the style of which began to be developed in the fifteenth century. The combined appraisal for these artefacts was £185,000.[63]

St. Mary Magdalene's: The Hayes Vault

Although not a popular attraction when visiting the church, my attention was drawn to a black border that runs through the centre of the church floor with the following engraved words: "The Ground between ye two Marbles North [pew post attaches here] ye Burial place of ye Family of Hayes of Oullet in ye Parish containing Twenty [pew post attaches here] in breadth & fourteen feet in length West of this Border is…" The statement ends abruptly when different tiles were laid to the right of it. Queries to volunteers working at the church about this curiosity and the Hayes Family Vault yielded no answers. However, the detailed research of D. E. Williams recorded on the *Aspects of Local Kentish History* website, sheds some light on this mystery when it referenced Ralph Arnold's book, *A Yeoman of Kent*.

The book recounts the life of Richard Hayes (1725-1790) who was a prosperous farmer in Cobham. As a child Richard (d. 1790) "lived with his uncle, Richard Hayes senior, at Owletts" and inherited the house and "a considerable amount of property" upon the death of his uncle.[64] According to Williams, Ralph Arnold recorded the following inscription on the Hayes Tomb in 1949, which was no longer present on the tomb in 2018 when Williams surveyed the churchyard:

> This Vault the Burial Place of
> the family of Hayes
> of Owletts in this Parish
> was erected in the year of our Lord
> 1763 with the consent of the
> Churchwardens, Parishioners and
> Inhabitants of this Parish
> Assembled in Vestry
> December 23rd 1762.[65]

Owlett's is a red-brick seventeenth-century house which was initially built for Bonham and Elizabeth Hayes in 1684, and is currently owned by the National Trust.[66] In 1792, Edward Hasted explained that when the Hayes vault located inside the church became full, "another was granted to them in the church yard, by the good will of the parishioners," thus explaining why the

[61] Nicole Salomone, "George Broke, 1533-1570," Location: St. Mary Magdalene's Church, Cobham, County Kent, 2025.
[62] Ibid, "Cobham Brasses and Helms."
[63] Ibid.
[64] Ruiha Smalley, "A Cobham gentleman of the 1700s: Mr Hayes Diary," *Shorne Woods Archaeology Group*, 5 February 2021. http://shornewoodsarchaeology.co.uk/a-cobham-gentleman-of-the-1700s-mr-hayes-diary.
[65] D.E. Williams, "St. Mary Magdalene Church, Cobham, Kent M.I.s with Index of names Monumental inscriptions (pre 1900) In the church and churchyard, With concise (pre 1858) wills, notes and photographs," *Aspects of Kentish Local History*, 2018. https://tedconnell.org.uk/LFH/GRS/COB/00.htm.
[66] "Owletts," *Britain Express*, 2025. https://www.britainexpress.com/attractions.htm?attraction=3676; "Owletts," *National Trust*, 2025. https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/kent/owletts.

vault in the churchyard required permission to be erected.[67] This answers the mystery of these stones, where they came from, and what they represent. No longer affixed to the Hayes Tomb in the churchyard, the remaining border stones have been repurposed as interior tiles. (Figure 9)

Figure 9: Part of the Border of the Hayes Family Tomb[68]

Conclusion

It is often assumed that history is found in the archives. However, on this bright, sunny day in September 2025, I was introduced to the histories surrounding the Cobham-Luddesdown Footpath in a space of a few hours between archival sessions. Thank you to the Friends of the Centre for English Local History for their generous funding which enabled me to take a peek at these otherwise obscure local histories.

[67] Edward Hasted, *The History and Topographical Survey of the County of Kent*, vol 3. (Canterbury: W. Bristow, 1797), pg. 431.
[68] Nicole Salomone, "Part of the Border of the Hayes Family Tomb," Location: St. Mary Magdalene Church, Cobham, County Kent, 2025.

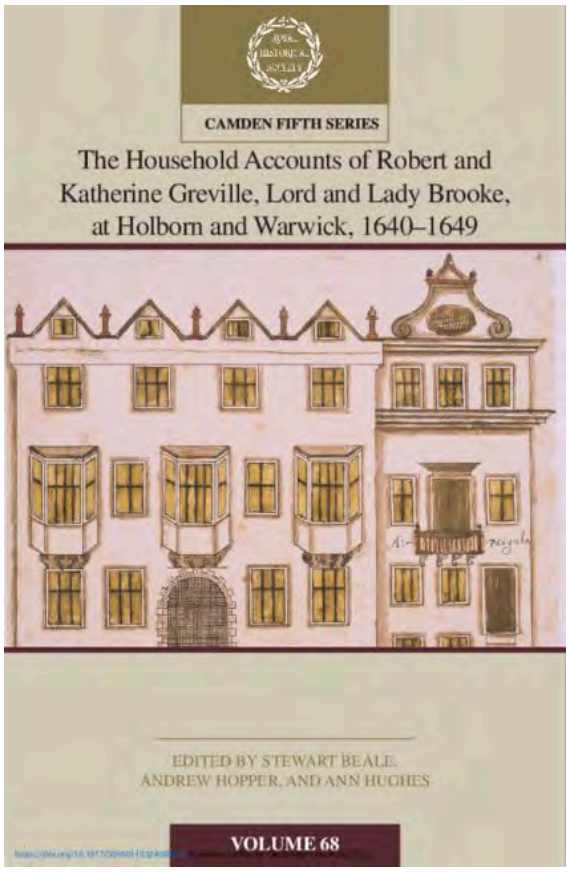
Book Reviews

This year's book review section is dedicated to the type of book that can make the life of a local historian so much easier – two collections of meticulously researched, transcribed, and (in one case) translated historical records.

The Household Accounts of Robert and Katherine Greville, Lord and Lady Brooke, at Holborn and Warwick, 1640-1649

Edited by Stewart Beale, Andrew Hopper, and Ann Hughes (Cambridge 2024)

This book brings us sets of accounts covering the period 1640 to 1649 relating to the household of Lord and Lady Brooke. The accounts cover both Warwick Castle and their houses in Holborn and Hackney. Their estates in Warwickshire and in other counties also make some appearances. A sizeable introduction gives valuable information about the nature of the accounts and who they were kept by. It also introduces the major (and minor) characters, both those who produced the accounts, and those whose lives are recreated by them.



Robert Greville, 2nd Lord Brooke, was a prominent Parliamentarian peer and might have played a more important part in the unfolding of the Civil Wars, but met an untimely death at the hands of a sniper in Lichfield in March 1643. He left behind a young widow, Katherine, who had already born him five sons. The first set of accounts are the work of two of the senior servants of the Brookes, John Halford and Joseph Hawksworth. The rest are accounts kept for Lady Brooke on behalf of her son, Francis (by then holder of the Brooke title). The accounts that are transcribed and presented in this volume are nine volumes amongst some two hundred records of accounts surviving in the collection of the Grevilles. They are held in the Warwickshire record office and our currently undergoing a much-needed process of re-cataloguing.

In addition to the family, and their senior servants, the accounts introduce us to a range of other characters of all social standings. An invaluable 'Biographical Directory' is included as an appendix. This lists many of the people who are mentioned in the accounts and gives what biographical details are known of them. The accounts refer to men and women occupying all positions. Unsurprisingly this list includes many of the aristocratic relations of the Grevilles: Lady Brooke was a member of the Russell family and so her mother and sister-in-law, both Countesses of Bedford, appear frequently. Many of the servants are naturally named in the accounts, and biographical details have been recovered for many of the more senior ones. These include, intriguingly, George Sadesky, a Bohemian nobleman whose family had lost their estates as a result of the 30-years war. He married an Englishwoman, and both were retained as gentry servants in the Brooke household, with him taking responsibility for the

hounds. He served in the Parliamentary cavalry, rising to the rank of Adjutant-General of horse by 1648. There were two gardeners named George Medley, the younger serving as a drummer in the Warwick Castle garrison between 1642-45 before resuming his gardening duties. Outside of the members of the household, servants, and relatives, the accounts also record the names of many of the tenants of the various estates that the Grevilles held in Warwickshire and further afield in the counties of Oxfordshire, Lincolnshire, Staffordshire, Gloucestershire, Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire, and Somerset.

The accounts were not recorded with the sort of rigor that might be expected of modern book-keeping and often made reference to other documents that have not survived. They do, however, give an invaluable insight into many aspects of the social, economic, and domestic arrangements of large seventeenth-century households. They also cover the period of the Civil Wars, and so inevitably contain material related to that turbulent time. Some of my favourite entries concern the routine keeping, feeding, and treating of horses. These include all sorts of equines from high-quality coach horses to humble nags working in the mills. Other things that caught my attention is the appearance in the accounts of toys for the young Brooke sons, and even buying a knife for a four-year old. Among the servants are several references to 'Bess the dwarf', the 'Indian boy', and 'black Dick', diversity is represented in the seventeenth century, but at quite low wages. There is copious information for students of food or of horticulture, for the running of a large household, and the details of estates that span several counties. The accounts are helpfully grouped into categories with headings such as 'Travelling charges', 'Garden charge', 'Diet', 'Apparel'. Invaluable footnotes give guidance to some of the more obscure terms encountered and some of the historical events that entries relate to. This book repays attention whether you read it from cover to cover, or dip in and out.

Mandy de Belin

A Rental and Court Rolls of the Estates of Winchcombe Abbey, 1341-1362.

Edited by Christopher Dyer, Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, Gloucestershire Record Series, 38, 2025.

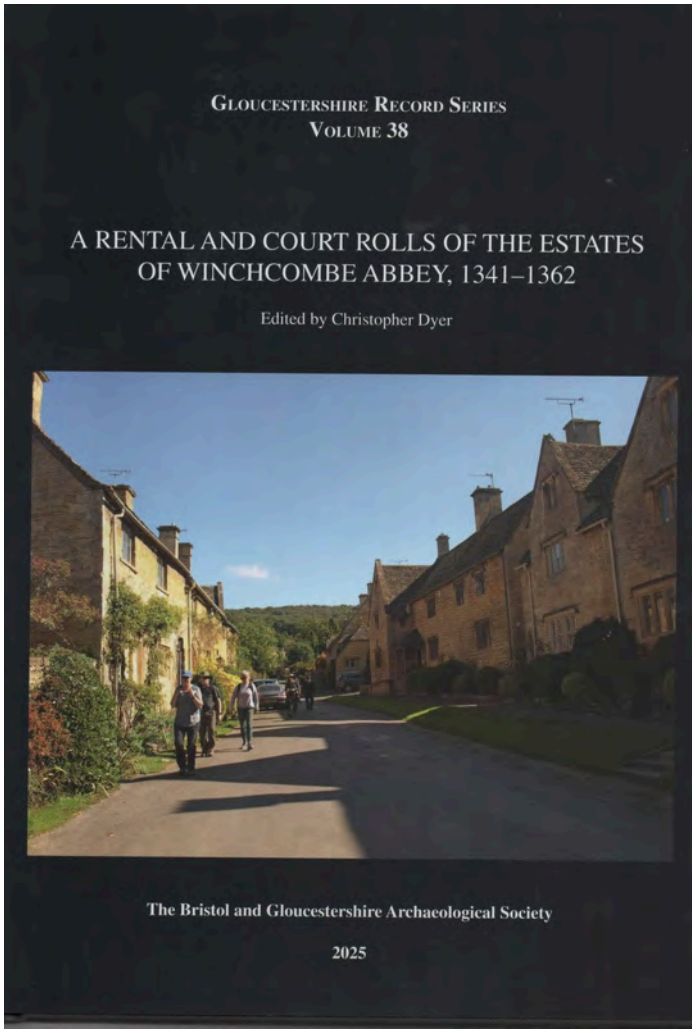
Our second volume of records comes from a different period and a different source. They comprise records from Winchcombe Abbey in Gloucestershire covering their many manors, mainly in Gloucestershire, but also in Oxfordshire, with one outlier in Warwickshire. A rental survives, covering the years 1355-8, and court rolls cover the years 1341, 1341-2, 1357-8, and 1361-2.

This work also comes with a very useful introduction. This places the Benedictine house of Winchcombe Abbey in its Gloucestershire context, and gives us a thirteenth and fourteenth century timeline for its economic fortunes, and when it acquired the manors that are the subject of these records. It also introduces us to some of the Abbotts, including Wiiliam of Sherborne, who was in place between 1340-52 and so for the period of some of the records as well as the momentous plague years. He apparently became increasingly unpopular with the monks during his term, and retired in 1352. He was replaced by Richard of Ipwell, who held office for the remainder of the records.

The introduction gives information about the Abbey documents from which the included records were transcribed, including a detailed description of their physical form and condition. It also summarizes the purposes of the records and the information that they contain, relating them to the known history of the Abbey and its fortunes. One particularly interesting feature of the rental was that it gave the order of the tenants' houses along the village streets,

allowing the reader to recreate the structure of the settlement.

Winchcombe Abbey kept the details of the manorial courts of all the manors in its estate on a single roll (in contrast to the normal practice of most lay estates, where court records were kept separately for individual manors). The introduction goes on to describe the structure of manorial courts, who attended them, and how they were run, which is useful for anyone who comes to the book because they are interested in the history of a particular settlement, rather than being a medievalist. It is notable that Winchcombe did not hold the right to the view of Frankpledge for all its manors, with other lords collecting the profits of administering justice to the Winchcombe tenants (which could cause some local tensions).



The manors were concerned with arable agriculture, but the Abbey also had considerable numbers of sheep and a wool business. There was a great variety of settlement patterns across the estate: the Abbey had not sought to impose any sort standard plan. The introduction also highlights some distinctive features of the estate, in comparison with other areas of Gloucestershire. Many holdings comprised an entire yardland, and as the records progressed many tenants came to hold multiple yardlands. Neither were the tenants burdened with heavy rents or services.

The records themselves provide us with many interesting snippets of medieval life. The introduction itself suggests some areas of study that might be aided by studying them. These include the consequences of epidemics, forms of tenure, relations between lords and tenants, disputes among peasants, and personal and placenames. The translation of the records from Latin and the modernization of many of the terms help to make the records widely accessible. Helpful footnotes supply context and explanations where needed. A glossary explains any of the terms used, and an index of persons, index of places, and a general index all help with more targeted research (although this book also richly rewards 'dipping in and out').

One challenging aspect of this work might be getting your hands on a copy. *The Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society* operate a subscription model, and you have to join the society and pay an additional £15 to receive their annual hardback publication. In better news, copies are freely available on eBay (which is where I acquired mine).

Mandy de Belin

2025 AGM

Minutes of last year's AGM and Treasurer's Report in advance of this year's AGM

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Friends, held on Tuesday 19 November 2024 at 19:00pm by Zoom

Present: Mary Bryceland, Anne Coyne, Mandy de Belin, Karen Donegani, Pam Fisher, Michael Gilbert, Sue Hughes, Graham Jones, Stephen Marquis, John Parker, Carol Perkin, Sylvia Pinches, Dave Postles, Andrew Wager, Ralph Weedon

The meeting was opened by the Chair, Michael Gilbert, and was quorate.

Apologies: Freda Raphael, Sue Rumfitt, Elizabeth Pegg, Marion Hardy, Phil Batman, Trixie Gadd, John Goodacre.

Approval of the minutes of the AGM held on 21st November 2023.
The approval of the minutes was proposed by Mandy de Belin, seconded by John Parker. Approved as an accurate record.

Matters arising from the minutes: none.

Chair's report
Michael Gilbert spoke about his report which had been circulated with the Agenda.

This is my last report as Chair of the Friends and it is pleasing that we are continuing to grow and develop as a group. The past five years have been exceptionally challenging both for the Friends and for the Centre and could have led to our demise. In 2020 we had the double hammer blow of Covid and the closure of our spiritual home in Marc Fitch House. We had to curtail our in-person activities for a number of years although successfully moving online with the provision of talks, lectures and even a virtual Hoskins' Day. The loss of Marc Fitch House was a particularly sad event with the challenge of maintaining the Centre's unique character during the move to the Attenborough Building on the main campus. This combined with the financial difficulties faced by the university, and academic institutions in general, have placed the future of the Centre at risk. It is a tribute to Angela Muir and Richard Jones that it has been able to weather these storms and to continue to provide high quality local history teaching and research.

These trials have inevitably brought the Friends and the Centre ever closer together. We have been instrumental in helping to set up the joint Centre for Regional and Local History and Centre for Urban History libraries in the Attenborough Building. We have been able to run a series of events for members including, most recently, the Study Day at the Centre for Fenland Studies in Ayscoughfee Hall Museum, Spalding in September. We are planning another Study Day at Naseby in spring 2025. This year's Hoskins' day was particularly successful bringing together a number of speakers including

Colin Hyde and Pam Fisher as well as our Hoskins' Day lecturer, Professor Corinne Fowler. It was well received with double the attendance from the previous year. The placement programme has continued with the Friends facilitating opportunities for students and researchers, so far successful placements have been found for three MA and Undergraduate students. Work on the programme is continuing with three organisation offering placements in 2025 (SGS, Spalding; Delapre Abbey, Northampton and St Mary Magdalene Church in Newark). Through our website and social media engagement we are attracting considerable interest. A final optimistic point to note is that the Friends membership is continuing to grow.

Inevitably, there will be difficult times ahead and with falling numbers and financial challenges the future of the Centre may continue to be at risk. Along with that the future role of the Friends must be discussed. I believe we must be more that just an alumni group for the university and embrace a wider role in supporting study and research into local history. This would include inviting and even encouraging membership from outside our normal catchment of the Centre. Our membership has a wealth of knowledge on all aspects of the discipline and I am sure can offer much more in terms of supporting students and publishing research material. The support of the Friends is a valuable asset to the Centre.

Finally, I would like to thank everybody for their support for the Friends over the past five years. It has been a pleasure and privilege being the Chair of the body and it is pleasing to be able to leave in a robust state for the future. I would like to wish the Friends and my successor my very best wishes.

Regarding links with the local history community Dave Postles commented that he had recently taken on the role, with LAHS, of making links with other local history groups.

Sylvia Pinches said she is still teaching on the Advanced Diploma in Local History at Oxford Continuing Education and continues to push FCELH and its events.

Treasurer's report with the annual accounts

Karen Donegani presented her report which had been circulated with the Agenda.
The report and annual accounts were also available on the Friend's website.
Friends of the Centre for English Local History
(Registered Charity no 1073528)

Treasurer's Report

A summary of the accounts for the year 2023-24 is provided on the AGM page of the Friends' Website. Printed copies have been sent by post to those members we cannot contact by email.

The Friends' assets, including investments at market value on 30 September 2024, are £36,509.96, an increase of £2,932.02(8%) over the year. This increase is largely due to the improved performance of our investments. Money in the bank remains stable at £24,814.81 compared to £23,251.94 at the start of the year.

For the second year, Hoskins Day costs were kept to a minimum as the Centre paid for the refreshments provided. Our two study days, in Wallingford and Spalding, made a small profit. Administrative costs are reduced compared to last year but the Committee agreed to support the Centre by covering the cost of transporting a collection of Victoria County History "Red Books" to the library. A one-off payment for the digitisation of the Friends' Papers is shown as Publications costs.

The overall cost of printing and distributing the annual Newsletter has reduced significantly by digital publishing, however, the cost of printing and distribution to those requesting a paper copy has increased.

We received fewer requests for student support compared to last year, with £714 paid out. Research support grants are now available to any University of Leicester MA History student or PhD candidate who is undertaking regional or local history research.

Claims to the HMRC for the Repayment of Gift Aid for the past 3 years have been submitted but will be included in next year's accounts.

Our financial position is sound, and we can meet and financial obligations for the coming year. In view of our lack of contractual commitments, we do not have a reserves policy at
The moment – all funds are available for meeting our charity objectives.

There had not been a response from the Independent Examiner who had been sent the accounts several weeks earlier. However, he has not reported any problems. When his report is available it will be posted on the website.

The annual membership remains at about 170. Although there had been quite a bit of churn in membership resulting from deaths, and resignations, usually due to ill-health, the numbers have remained stable due to the recruitment of new members. The membership fee remains at £12 for single membership, and £15 for joint membership; the fees have not increased for many years.

Karen noted that we have received fewer requests from students on the History MA, and PhD students, for grants. This has resulted in having more in the accounts than we had budgeted for. One of our aims is to provide such grants so we have decided to extend this offer to any UoL post-graduate student (MA or PhD) who is researching a Regional or Local History topic.

Our investments and savings have also done well this year.

Michael commented that funds can be used to subsidise the cost of events to encourage participation.

Approval of the accounts:

Proposed by Sylvia Pinches and Seconded by Anne Coyne. Approved.

Election of officers and committee

The nominations, with proposers and seconders, were displayed via Zoom.
It was agreed to elect the officers and committee en bloc. All were elected.
The following list of nominations was shared on screen:

Officer	Standing	Proposed	Seconded
Chair	Anne Coyne	Mary Bryceland	Karen Donegani
Secretary	Mary Bryceland	Michael Gilbert	Anne Coyne
Treasurer	Karen Donegani	Mary Bryceland	Michael Gilbert
Membership Secretary	Karen Donegani	Mary Bryceland	Michael Gilbert
Editor of the Newsletter	Mandy de Belin	Anne Coyne	Michael Gilbert
IT coordinator	John Parker	Mary Bryceland	Anne Coyne
Committee	Sue Hughes	Michael Gilbert	Mandy de Belin
Committee	Michael Gilbert	Mary Bryceland	Anne Coyne
Committee	Vacant		
Committee	Vacant		
Committee	Vacant		
Student Representative	N/A		
Student Representative	N/A		
Centre Representative	N/A		

Mary commented that there are still spaces on the committee and people could be co-opted throughout the year but wouldn't be able to vote.

Karen and Mary had discussed the difficulty of gaining nominations when our members seldom meet together so can't be approached personally, and can't sign nomination forms in person. We need to make it clear to members that they can be nominated, proposed and seconded via email.

Michael asked if anyone online would like to be co-opted - no-one came forward.

Student reps come from the student body – none in 2023-24.

Actions following change of officer:

Karen asked the meeting to approve that the new Chair, Anne Coyne, be given access to the bank accounts:

(a) Mandate change forms for NatWest, the Cambridge & Counties Bank and IFLS CAF to be signed by Michael Gilbert (Outgoing Chair), Valerie Anne Coyne (Incoming Chair), Patricia Myfanwy Mary Bryceland (Secretary) and Karen Donegani (Treasurer) as required.
(b) Karen Donegani (Treasurer) to forward mandate change forms to NatWest, the Cambridge & Counties Bank and IFLS CAF.

Proposed: Mandy de Belin, seconded: Graham Jones. Agreed.

Appointment of Independent Examiner

Karen had not be able to contact Paul Shipman by any means although he had expressed his willingness to remain in the role.

Should we need a new IE this can be done by the Committee and doesn't have to take place at an AGM.

Policies

Karen spoke about The Charity Commission's latest effort to encourage charities to develop a governance framework through policies. As responsible Trustees the committee members have a duty to act responsibly, reasonably and honestly So in line with CC advice we are developing policies which will be implemented over the following year or two. Policy documents will be reviewed by the Committee and mad available to members on the Friends website. Committee members are responsible for ensuring adherence to the policies but members are welcome to comment at any time. Several policies have been drafted, reviewed and adopted and are on the website. These include Role descriptions for officers and committee members, Communications, and Complaints. These are in addition to the Data Privacy, and Cookies policies which had already been made available. Further work will be undertaken over the next year. The approach will be risk-based – if we recognise there is a risk a policy will be developed to ensure that we improve the way we work and are consistent in the way we deliver. The Committee will be responsible for reviewing the policies to ensure that they remain up to date and to ensure that we audit our work.

Michael commented that this would not be an onerous task for anyone considering joining the committee but just formalises our work.

Any other business

Michael was thanked for his five years as Chair. Dr Graham Jones added his thanks to Michael and the rest of the Committee, also to Mandy De Belin for her excellent Annual Newsletter.

The next event, in April, will be *Peace* (Thornby Hall) *& War* (Naseby battlefield). Hoskins Day will be in May,

END OF MINUTES FOR THE 2024 AGM

Friends of the Centre for English Local History
Registered Charity no. 1073528

Receipts and Payments Account for the year to 30 September 2025
Final, as reviewed by Independent Examiner

Receipts and payments		2025	2024
Receipts		£UK	£UK
	Donations	1,629.00	1,815.00
	Gift Aid payments	844.93	0.00
	Dividends & Interest	1,102.98	1,097.22
	Publications & 2nd hand book sales	359.57	115.40
	Study Day tickets	425.00	570.00
	Total	4,361.48	3,597.62
Payments			
	Student Support	899.84	714.62
	Admin/IT costs	490.44	201.08
	CRLH Library support	104.64	159.54
	Publications	0.00	168.00
	Newsletter	125.67	181.19
	AGM Expenses	27.22	40.60
	Hoskins Day costs	127.28	38.21
	Study Days costs	968.00	531.51
	Total	2,743.09	2,034.75
	Deficit/surplus (receipts less payments)	1,618.39	1,562.87
Excess of income over expenditure			
	Opening funds at 1st October 2024	35,459.84	33,896.97
	Deficit/surplus (receipts less payments)	1,618.39	1,562.87
	Closing funds at 30th September 2024	37,078.23	35,459.84
Breakdown of closing funds at 30th September 2025			
Bank balances	Cash	0.00	0.00
	Natwest Bank Current Account	2,893.44	4,059.37
	Cambridge & Counties savings account	23,539.76	20,755.44
	Sub-total	26,433.20	24,814.81
Investments			
	Investment Assets at cost:		
	IFSL CAF ESG Income and Growth Fund	10,645.03	10,645.03
Total funds (Bank balances plus investment assets at cost)		37,078.23	35,459.84
Closing assets at 30th September 2025			
	Bank balances	26,433.20	24,814.81
	Market value of investments:		
	IFSL CAF ESG Income and Growth Fund	11,866.31	11,695.15
	Total	38,299.51	36,509.96

Karen L. Donegani (Treasurer)
16th October 2025

Friends of the Centre for English Local History
(Registered Charity no. 1073528)

FRIENDS OF THE CENTRE FOR ENGLISH LOCAL HISTORY, HYPIR Post Room, Attenborough Tower, University of Leicester, University Road, LEICESTER LE1 7RH