

Stapleford and District Local History Society



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Free to Members

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MEETING REPORTS

10 October 2012

GRACE'S DIARY: THE JOURNAL OF **GRACE JANE DEXTER 1884 – 1893** **by Dr Rowena Edlin-White**

Rowena began her talk by quoting L P Hartley: '*The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there.*'

She explained that this was a theme she was hoping to illustrate using the diary of Grace Jane Dexter. Importantly, she had brought the actual diary to the meeting for us to look at. She had also worked out that she was related to Grace, who was her Grandma's aunty.

Grace Dexter wrote diaries all her adult life and this talk was about the first volume 1884 - 1893, which she started when she was eighteen. She didn't write every day, but now and then wrote a resume of what had been happening in her life.

This first diary begins with a summary of her life so far. She had experienced a happy childhood. Some older siblings had died so she was much loved and valued and brought up almost as an only child.

She had tried being a teacher at the age of fourteen, had stuck at it for three years, but then had to give it up because of her health. She found teaching very difficult, probably because she herself had been home educated. She wanted desperately to be a teacher and spent a lot of time while writing this diary studying for various teaching qualifications.

Her very Victorian attitudes are found in her description of the sufferings of her brother John, who lost his wife and daughter, and also in her feelings of self reproach and despair that she is not perfect. Some of these ideas come from the Victorian books she read, which she lists in the diary. She displays the typical Protestant work ethic and, as a Baptist, thinks it her duty to educate herself as much as possible, to improve herself and to worry a lot about wasted time.

In 1885 the family moved to Whatstandwell in Derbyshire. Grace begins teaching at Lea School (teaching 'gentleness and Christian courtesy') and here she meets Florence Nightingale. (Florence Nightingale's childhood home was at Lea Hurst and she continued to take an interest in the area all her life.)

Grace later visits Florence in London in the winter of 1885. Florence read *The Charge of the Light Brigade* to her and Grace says she found her charming and easy to converse with. They continued to write to each other after this visit. Grace writes in her diary that, while she was in London, she was shocked by the signs of extreme poverty, saying '*They do not want charity, they want opportunity*'.

Grace struggled with discipline in her class and was not happy to use corporal punishment. She was gradually demoted and then dismissed. She wrote to Florence Nightingale about this.

She started teaching again in Broadmarsh in Nottingham. She gained a permanent position with a wage of £40 per year and was so pleased to be able to support herself. She had 86 pupils in her class and after school had to visit homes to collect school fees. She was once again astounded and dismayed by the poverty she saw.

Grace eventually gained all the qualifications she needed to be a teacher. She became a good teacher and a capable Baptist Church fundraiser. She later moved to different schools and this section of her diary ends with her teaching at a school in West Ham in London.

Rowena closed the talk by pointing out how different some of the Victorian views and attitudes were, and noted that some aspects of life, such as the horrors of poverty, were still the same today.

This was a very well constructed talk. Rowena had cleverly chosen extracts from the diary that gave us brilliant insights into the life and character and emotions of Grace Jane Dexter. Although there were no illustrations we all had a very good picture of Grace.

Postscript: Grace Jane Dexter lived 98 years (1865 – 1963). In 1901 in Duffield she married Herbert Dupree, a stone cutter from London. They had no children and he died in 1945 in Bath. Grace lived there for another eighteen years.

'*Grace's Diary*' was published in 2005 and is available for sale at £6.00 or members can borrow it from the Society's library.

John Shaw

14 November 2012

WOMEN AT WAR **By Maureen Rushton**

The great strength of this talk was the succession of photographs illustrating the many ways that women had been involved in the two world wars. The sources for women's contributions are very rich now, including an oral history collection at the Imperial War Museum, as well as the plethora of photographic archives.

During the World War I (1914 – 1918) a series of photos showed women working as drivers in the Auxiliary Army Corps, (considered outrageous!) and they also worked as ambulance drivers. One Alice Remington learned the mechanics of the vehicle as well as how to drive it. Others became dispatch riders. Men resented women doing this work and sometimes sabotaged their vans. A variety of factory jobs were done by women, including munitions work. At *Boots the Chemists* they were making respirators.

Nor was heavy work considered beyond the fair sex. Images of women laying the foundations of buildings and working on aeroplanes appeared on the screen. Before the war many jobs were considered unsuitable for women. However, during the war women filled many posts formerly done by men: window cleaners, postal workers, moving coke around the gas works in London, working as conductresses on trams, becoming 'Lumber Jills' in the forests. Photos illustrated each occupation. For those who wanted to work on the land, there had to be three referees with each application.

Then there was the immense contribution that women made to the nursing of the wounded, both in field hospitals and the convalescent homes in Britain.

However, when the war ended in 1918 the work in the factories stopped and Winston Churchill remarked that women were 'thrown on the street'. Between the wars women went back into the home, or found jobs in service or offices. Women routinely left paid employment in many walks of life when they married.

With the Declaration of War in September 1939, women again came forward to play a vital part in the war effort. Even before the war started, a vast army of women helped to organise the evacuation of one and a half million children and young mothers from the cities of Britain. By 1941 there was compulsory call up for all unmarried women over 21, with

exceptions for mothers with children under 14. Women were needed in the factories. They were paid less than men and so were a cheap alternative. They soon found their feet in the new environment and seven and a half million were allowed to join a union, after initial resistance from the men. The images continued to flash across the screen; women working on the construction of fighter planes; women flying the completed planes to their fighter stations; girls making Molotov cocktails; girls doing their three week training in plane spotting.

There was the world outside the armed forces and the factories. Women used ingenuity to inject fashion into the limited clothing ration; woollen garments unravelled and re-knitted; clothes unpicked and re-arranged; Ministry of Food recipes conjured meals from vegetables and the meagre meat ration. As the war continued, the demands for labour grew. The armed forces were the first choice of many women, but their needs were finally met and so many young women found themselves 'directed' to work in factories or in the Women's Land Army or a variety of occupations. Photos filled the screen; a gang of women demolishing a bridge on the LNER railway; a lady painting white lines on the road; a bus conductress; a window cleaner; post women; a woman collecting 'pig swill' (from a bin left in public for waste food to be collected); street cleaners.

For women who were not called up there was the Women's Voluntary Service which, together with the Red Cross and the Women's Institutes, provided services for the bombed out and the displaced; mobile baths; emergency food vans; emergency washing services.

The BBC had moved out of London, but it provided trustworthy information and shows such as ITMA (It's That Man Again) and Monday Night at Eight (appreciative noises from the audience) raised morale. An underground studio ensured services would be maintained.

Maureen's talk came to an end. Her meticulous research for photos to illustrate the talk left a truly remarkable picture of the multi-faceted contribution of women in wartime.

Meg Oliver

12 December 2012

CHRISTMAS SOCIAL EVENT

The usual formula – a delicious buffet, a raffle with lots of prizes and two quizzes organised by Pat and John Hodgkiss – was enjoyed by all.

9 January 2013

HALLAM FIELDS – THE STORY OF A COMMUNITY FORGED FROM IRON by Stephen Flinders

It's always a good sign when we have to put extra chairs out! Stephen introduced the talk by explaining that he had inherited it from Danny Corns and that, as Danny was there in the room, he might interrupt and add some details. Danny's credentials included not only his extensive research but also the fact that he had been brought up in Hallam Fields. During the evening Stephen showed us a slide of very young children from the local school and Danny pointed out his dad on the front row.

Stephen explained that, although there had probably been people in the Fields area during Roman and Medieval times, and even though the Erewash Canal had been opened in 1779, the evidence from the 1851 Census shows only one family in a farm there. In 1861 there was still only one family listed there. The farm building was there for a long time and later became the local school. (Stephen remembers going there for band practice.)

In the 1860s the area altered a lot and in 1868 24 houses were built, because the local industry was beginning to grow. In 1846 Benjamin Smith had built three foundries, but they had not been successful. Various owners had tried after that, but it was not until the Franco-Prussian War in 1870-71 that the huge demand for steel came from Europe, and Stanton became a major producer.

By 1871 the population had really begun to grow. There were then about 105 families in Hallam Fields. The real surprise is that at least 70 of those families came from well outside the area. There were a lot of people from the West Midlands, but also from as far away as Scotland. Many families arrived by canal. In this way a 'separate' community established itself. They had their own shop and baker and school and church. There is evidence that services were held in a house (9 North View) until a church, known as the 'Tin Tabernacle', was built. This lasted from 1880 - 1895 and was later moved and rebuilt in Ilkeston. The church that still stands there, St Bartholomew's, was opened in 1895. This church became a good centre for this now close-knit community. We were shown several photos of the Church Lads' Brigade, who had a local, lively and unrepeatable nickname!

The curate of this church was Rev Machell Cox from 1908 – 1948. It was during the early part of this incumbency that the church was hit by a Zeppelin bomb in 1916.

We then saw various pictures of streets, school children, floods (frequent) and special celebrations in this small community. Stephen pointed out how close the houses were to the actual coke works and how difficult this must have made life. There was one brilliant photo of all the washing hanging out on clothes lines very, very close to the heavy, black smoke of the coke works.

The talk ended with the school motto which Stephen recommended to us:

Whoever you are, be noble
Whatever you do, do well
Whenever you speak, speak kindly
And give joy wherever you dwell.

As usual with Stephen's talks, not only were there good slides and excellent research, but the talk was delivered with infectious enthusiasm and plenty of humour. There is no doubt that everyone present learned a lot and really enjoyed themselves.

John Shaw

13 February 2013

**ST PANCRAS – HISTORY, NEGLECT AND
REGENERATION**
by Nigel Lowey

On a snowy, winter evening, when you would have been reluctant even to turn your cat out, we were privileged to hear Nigel Lowey's enthralling history of St Pancras Station. On that day, Nigel had experienced a very challenging journey from St Pancras to Nottingham; a journey that normally takes just under two hours took almost eight. It was a close call!

The ultimate aim of the Midland Railway was to transport passengers to and from London and, when construction of the line reached the Home Counties, they secured an agreement for running powers over the Great Northern line into Kings Cross, but the phenomenal number of passengers wishing to visit the Great Exhibition of 1851 caused so much congestion that Kings Cross Station could barely cope. The Great Northern was highly critical of the time Midland Railway trains occupied a platform

at Kings Cross when platform space was at a premium. Over the ensuing years, the Great Northern and Midland Railways were at loggerheads. It all came to a head when a Great Northern train arrived in Nottingham and was chained to rails and the rails removed.



St Pancras Station and St Pancras Renaissance Hotel

The City of London would not allow the building of any railway south of the Euston Road, so an Act of Parliament was established in 1863 for a station to be built in the parish of St Pancras. This was a contentious issue as it involved slum clearance around Agar Town and Somers Town, resulting in some 32,000 people being made homeless. Additionally, St Pancras churchyard had to be levelled and many bodies re-buried.

The station had to be built at a sufficiently high level to clear the Regents Canal and William Barlow, the architect of the train shed, had to consider many options. He came up with the brilliant idea of a roof that sat on the ground rather than on supporting walls and was strengthened by cross members just below platform level. The 688 cast iron pillars were manufactured by the Butterley Company in Ripley in 1867 and the resultant train shed was completely free of any obstruction. With a span of 254 feet and a length of 700 feet it was the widest single span in the world for over 100 years. The space below the platform was used primarily for the storage and handling of beer barrels.

Beyond the train shed was the magnificent Gothic style hotel designed by George Gilbert Scott. Eleven architects were in competition for the contract and Scott, ignoring all the rules of the competition, was successful; his design was by far the grandest and most expensive of all the designs. St Pancras Station dominated the Euston Road and was so designed that it completely dwarfed and hid Cubbitt's Kings Cross Station, even to the extent that the statue of Britannia on the top of the building faced Kings Cross.

It took nine years to complete construction and at that time the Midland Railway was having serious financial problems, having opted to build the Settle to Carlisle line as a direct route to Scotland. To save money, the plans for St Pancras had to be changed and the building was reduced by three floors. Even so, it was built with many new innovations but, surprisingly, without running water. The building's rich, red colour was achieved by using Grippiers Bricks formed of Mansfield sandstone, manufactured at Mapperley brickworks in Nottingham.

After the railway regrouping in 1923, the upkeep of the station passed to the London, Midland and Scottish Railway. They found it was too difficult and not economic to modernise the building and, as a result, it closed as a hotel in 1935 and was used as offices by the railway company.

After many years of neglect, and following the Beeching Report in the mid 1960s, there was increasing pressure to close the station altogether.

However, its saviour came in the form of Sir John Betjeman, who campaigned vehemently against closure and managed to secure Grade 1 listed status. Fortunately, that saved the station but it didn't prevent the continued neglect of the interior. In 1985 it failed its fire certificate; in 1988 all the original equipment was sold and the interior stripped bare; by 1990 it was proposed as a home for the homeless and the train shed as a sports hall!

Then along came privatisation and '*this pile of bricks at the end of the railway*' was given away and the renaissance began. St Pancras was chosen to replace Waterloo as the destination of High Speed Line 1 from the Channel Tunnel. The train shed was extended and renovated to accommodate Eurostar services to the continent, normal services to the Home Counties and the Midlands, high speed services into Kent and South East England and Thameslink services from a new underground station built just below the existing platforms and shopping area.

The train shed has been embellished with a new clock, identical to the one that was dropped and reassembled in a garden at Thurgarton, the Meeting Place, a statue of a couple embracing, and Sir John Betjeman. His statue has the profile of the train shed in the folds of his coat! The train shed was completed on time and within budget.

Finally, the top three floors of the station building have been converted into luxury flats, whilst the rest of the building has returned to its original role as a hotel. Now known as the St Pancras Renaissance Hotel, it has had all the original décor restored. Traces of the original carpets and wallpaper were found and they have been faithfully copied and replaced.

The hotel is open to the public and for £20 you can enjoy a 90 minute tour. Nigel recommended that we go and have a look and, maybe, enjoy a meal at the Gilbert Scott Restaurant.

Phil Burton

13 March 2013

WOLLATON HALL AND PARK

by Tim Preston

This talk was characterised by some absolutely excellent photo slides, but for the purposes of this report you will have to imagine them!

Wollaton Hall was built between 1580 and 1588 by Sir Francis Willoughby. (Mr Preston said he could not find out how Francis Willoughby had gained his knighthood, but he suspects it may have been

bought). The Willoughbys had a successful coalmining business. The foundations of the hall were built of stone from the recently destroyed Lenton Abbey, and the upper building was clad in stone from Ancaster in Lincolnshire. The architect was Robert Smythson.

Sir Francis's plan was to build a grand house for two reasons, firstly to have a house that Queen Elizabeth could come and visit, and to have a house that would belong to his family for a long time to come.

In both of these aims he was frustrated:- Queen Elizabeth didn't ever come to visit, and his only son died during the building's construction. Sir Francis himself didn't even move into the mansion. He himself died in suspicious circumstances in 1596.

Mr Preston pointed out the very large room at the top of the building which at one time was thought to be a ballroom. Because the only entrance to the room is a small door in one corner, more recent opinion is that it was an exercise room for use by ladies in inclement weather.

He also pointed out that Wollaton Hall did not really have a front or back, but actually had four fronts. In the picture of the South facing 'front', cells could be seen just below ground level that were used to punish unruly servants.

We were then shown a very detailed Willoughby family tree and it was noted that the family name was Bugg (they bought Wollaton in 1317) and they later changed their name to the 'more attractive' Willoughby.

A later Willoughby, another Sir Francis (1635 - 1672), was one of the very first ever 'naturalists' and it is because of him that Wollaton Hall is a Natural History Museum. (Mr Preston said that many visitors had expected a stately home, so a living room had been created in the hall. He showed us a picture of this room and declared that it was all fake!)

There is still a link to the Willoughby family who now live in Middleton, part of Manchester. The family visits Wollaton often. In 1925 the hall and park were sold to Nottingham City Council, who quickly recovered their outlay by selling off quite a lot of land for housing.

Close up pictures of the building showed the newish servants' quarters (1823) built in Bulwell stone with numerous busts of famous ancient Greeks housed in alcoves. Statues to fill the many remaining empty alcoves were ordered from Italy but were lost in a shipwreck in the Bay of Biscay.

We were shown excellent picture of the cellars, tunnels and wells under the house, including the Admiral's Bath reservoir.

The focus of the talk then moved into the park, where we saw the coachman's house, a red telephone box (now a listed building), the lake and boathouse and the extensive stables, later used for housing police horses. Slides showed the Transport and Industrial Museum and steam engine, the extensive camellia house, the wooden huts used by paratroopers and later prisoners of war in World War Two and the 7 mile wall around the park, built in 7 years by 7 men and one apprentice.

Finally, we saw slides of the livestock in the park: the two herds of red and roe deer and the white cattle, once resident in the park, re-introduced in 1988 and then moved on to Clumber Park. The last slide was of a magnificent, but easily missed, 500 year old oak tree.

Mr Preston was relaxed and good humoured and, with his excellent slides, kept everyone's interest and reminded us how lucky we are to have such a magnificent building and park so near.

John Shaw

Death of the Rev. Patrick Bronte. B.A.
From the Ilkeston Leader dated 15th June 1861.

The Rev. Patrick Bronte. B.A., incumbent of the village of Howarth, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, has just died at his parsonage. The deceased was father of Charlotte, Anne, and Emily Jane Bronte. The authoresses originally well known as Curer, Acton and Ellis Bell. He was born on St. Patrick's Day in 1777, and consequently was 84 years of age. Mr Bronte was himself an author, having at different periods written, and published two small volumes of poems. He was highly respected by the people among whom he lived. The perpetual curacy of Howarth, valued at £170 per annum, is the gift of the Vicar of Bradford.

9 April 2013

A VISIT TO BRODSWORTH HALL AND GARDENS SOUTH YORKSHIRE

After a smooth run via the M1 and M18 the Viking coach with the Beeston Society and friends reached the grounds of Brodsworth Hall before 10 o'clock.

In two groups we were given guided tours of the grand rooms on the ground floor. The house was built in the 1860s by Frenchman, Charles Thellusson, to display his fabulous wealth and provide a comfortable home for his family. Rich wall hangings, original paintings, enormous chandeliers, marble sculptures, hand made wallpaper and thick carpets recalled the house's Victorian heyday. However, this house is unique in that it has not been restored, but has been 'gently conserved' since it was gifted to English Heritage, following gradual decline and neglect in the 20th century, including a wartime period of requisition by the armed forces. Thus we saw it in a state of faded, well worn glory, more or less as it was lived in by the last family members during the 1980s.

The gardens tell a very different story in that they have been fully restored from a 'jungle' when English Heritage arrived to a 'collection of grand gardens in miniature' with statue walks, views from the restored summerhouse over the formal gardens and beyond, to the pleasure gardens and wide expanses of topiary and majestic trees. Teams of gardeners and volunteers were busy cutting back, weeding, planting and tending the fern dell and maze of nearby footpaths. I was particularly impressed to see a narrow 100 yard long archery course in a safe, secluded area near a former shallow quarry, complete with furnished target house.

After a bite of lunch we returned to the hall to experience 'Duty Calls', an exhibition about the life and times of the hall and local people during both World Wars. The photographs, letters and recorded memoirs, alongside information about the succession of army units that were based there, brought those, now far off, times vividly to life.

A short journey by coach took us to Doncaster to visit some of the town's ten distinctive markets all on one site, clustered around the ancient Corn Exchange. It was soon apparent why it has won 'Britain's Best Market' award. After a wander round the well stocked stalls, a peep into one or two of the other shops, and a hot drink, it was time to board the coach for the journey home at the end of an interesting and unusual outing. Thank you Alan!

Barbara Brooke

18th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 10 APRIL 2013

CHAIRMAN AND SECRETARY'S REPORT

I am pleased to report a successful year for our Society, with varied and interesting talks at our monthly meetings. The Diamond Jubilee edition of our newsletter boasted, for the first time, the cover and 6 other pages in full colour, and included contributions from eight members. It is always a good read, with reports of meetings and outings, as well as historical research and newspaper snippets of local interest.

Nigel Brooks and Alan Clayton continue to give history based talks to local groups and I gave my annual Stapleford history talk to George Spencer students in July. Eileen Bloor and I led two walks round Stapleford Town Trail, one as part of the Broxtowe Guided Walks programme and the other as part of the National Heritage Open Days weekend.

Eileen, Nigel, Colin and I mounted a comprehensive display of items from the Society's archives at Stapleford Care Centre as part of the NHS National Older People's Day in October, which also gave a public outing to our Society's new roll-up freestanding banner. The four of us were kept busy throughout the event, with a constant stream of visitors expressing great interest in everything and wanting to buy cards, DVDs, teatowels etc.

Keith Goodman has obtained from Ralph Penniston Taylor's executor, his extensive research material about Stapleford, which includes a single copy of a hand produced illustrated history, nine books of tightly written notes, hundreds of glass negatives, slides and prints and photocopies of ancient documents. Keith has already transcribed the books, and these have been photocopied. Everything else of interest has been scanned and copied. There is material here for years of research.

In recent weeks three huge images have appeared in empty shop windows at the Roach, all enlarged from our Society's photographs, of a charabanc in Church Street, a Sunday School parade and a view of Derby Road in the early 1900s. This is part of a Broxtowe Borough Council initiative to make empty shops look more interesting. Watch out for more!

Many members enjoyed taking part in Beeston Society's outings to Melton Mowbray and Rockingham Castle, Oxburgh Hall and Wisbech and Wrest Park and St Neots.

Later this Spring the unveiling of two plaques will take place in Stapleford. We have already taken delivery of the one for St John's C of E Primary School and the unveiling will be part of a special day celebrating the school's return to its own premises after refurbishment. As the second oldest school in the county still operating in its original building, they certainly have

something to celebrate. Wesley Place Methodist Chapel plaque is currently on order and its unveiling will be some time in May or June. As both these buildings are Grade II listed, a good deal of work has been involved in obtaining listed building consent.

A plaque was unveiled recently in Chilwell at the original head office of Gregory's Roses, and the reception afterwards at the family house next door was hosted by Mrs Rosemary McCarthy, nee Gregory, and her brother Tony, and attended by four generations of the family. Tony spoke interestingly about the company's more recent days based at Stapleford by what is now the A52, near the roundabout, now known as Bardill's, but then as Gregory's. He could also remember, as a small boy, seeing the crashed plane on their land in 1944, as mentioned in our World War Two book. He was so interested in what I told him about the book that I sent him a copy afterwards.

The Society is taking part in the Nottinghamshire project *Trent to the Trenches*, which aims to record details about many aspects of World War One on the centenary of its outbreak in 1914. Malcolm has researched information about the nearly 200 men from Stapleford who fell, and this has been sent in to become part of a comprehensive county record.

We have held four Committee Meetings during the year, when reports are presented of all the many activities members undertake. I'd like to pay tribute to all committee members and thank them for their efforts in ensuring the Society runs so smoothly. Pat Hodgkiss, as Treasurer, keeps our finances in order, assisted by husband John, and produces the annual balance sheet. I'm sure she will also thank C J Lucking & Company for auditing our books, and Robert Butler for organising this. Thanks to Nigel for arranging the programme and for handling publicity, and to Pat Kelly, helped by Dorothy Prentice, for operating the library. We have recently had a turn out of surplus books to make space for new ones! Thanks to the Archives group members, Eileen, Nigel, Colin and myself, who chose the items to put on display tonight and have enough items to sort and record to keep us busy for many years to come. Thanks to Malcolm for editing the newsletter and for finding new material, to Meg Oliver and John Shaw for their reports and to Eileen for the sales stand. Many thanks to Lillian and Tony Britton for dealing with the refreshments at our meetings, which we all appreciate. Finally, thank you to all members who support our Society and make it the great organisation it is.

Best wishes for the coming year and keep your fingers crossed that the Maycliffe Hall keeps operating.

Barbara Brooke
Chairman and Secretary

REPORT OF THE TREASURER AND MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

As you will see from the Statement, we made a surplus of £151.38 over the year. This was due to the fact that we had an unexpected windfall of £240.00 from an un-presented cheque which had covered ten months' rental for the hall in 2011. We also had a donation of £200 from the Methodist Church to be used towards the cost of the blue plaque for Wesley Place Chapel. Were it not for these two items we should be showing a deficit.

We had a couple of 'one-off' expenses during the year, purchasing a banner for advertising the Society at events, and the scanning of 'Old Stapleford' photographs from glass negatives, which were part of the Ralph Taylor archives. No doubt we shall be seeing some of these when Nigel gives his talk later this year.

As ever, grateful thanks to Robert Butler for auditing the accounts on behalf of the Society. Thanks also to John and members of the committee for their continued support.

Membership during 2012 was on a par with the previous year. We had a couple of meetings that were very well attended, especially by visitors. Anything on railways or Stanton, seems to draw in the crowds. The monthly average attendance by members over the year was 28. We do have several members who cannot make it to the meetings, but continue to pay their subscriptions towards expenses. We all need to try to persuade more people to join the Society as current membership attendance on a meeting night does not cover the ever-increasing costs of a good speaker, and may mean we have to consider increasing our current charges.

Pat Hodgkiss
Treasurer and Membership Secretary

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

No other nominations were received, so the following Officers were re-elected for a further period of two years:

Chairman and Secretary – Barbara Brooke
Treasurer and Membership Secretary – Pat Hodgkiss

ARCHIVE MATERIAL ACQUIRED 2012/2013

Items received from Kibworth History Society, Leicestershire in connection with Johnson & Barnes Ltd, which was founded there in 1901, prior to expansion to Stapleford and Leicester.

Death and funeral of Mr J T Johnson: Market Harborough Advertiser, 29 October 1917

Funeral of Mr William Barnes: Harborough Advertiser & Midland Mail, 6 January 1933

Photographs of plots in Kibworth Cemetery, J T Johnson & W Barnes

Photograph of 25 years long service watch, Mr H Mann, Kibworth

2 photographs Kibworth factory c1910

2 photographs Kibworth factory 1992

3 photographs of housing on site of Kibworth factory 2012

Paper bag, Frisbys shoe shop

Photocopy of the "Graphic" Illustrated Shopping Guide for Stapleford & Sandiacre and Coronation Souvenir for 1937

A Gillings, Hatter and Tailor – wooden coathanger

Photocopy of programme for Grand Concert, Albert Hall, Stapleford, 13

November 1923 in aid of Stapleford War Memorial Fund

Cuttings from Long Eaton Advertiser, Poole's garage business, 33 Nottingham Road with family and van

Nottingham Post, 20 February 2010 – 'Bygones' article and photographs, Chambers Pencil factory

Ilkeston Advertiser cuttings:

24 May 2012, Hickings Lane Skate Park reopens after revamp

14 June 2012, Cheque for £1,000 to Link Youth Café

28 June 2012, 1360 Squadron ATC win E Mid. Wing Banner compn.

Kelly's Directory Nottinghamshire 1930s: Beeston & Stapleford UDC, Beeston, Stapleford, Bramcote

Kelly's Directory Derbyshire 1930s: Sandiacre

Stapleford & Sandiacre News, 3 September 1920: Photo and cutting of Memorial Service held on Toton Lane recreation ground

Aerial photograph 1927: Halls Road School and housing, Chambers Pencil factory, Johnson & Barnes factory

Derby Mercury, 14 April 1880: Opening of new Co-operative shops in Albert Street

Derby Mercury, 1 January 1840: Death of Lady Caroline Warren

Derby Mercury, 16 October 1839: Sale of freehold property: 3 messuages and frame shop near the Cross, Building land fronting Toton Road

Stapleford Parish Magazines 'Home Words for Hearth and Home':
January – December 1896, January – December 1899 (photocopies)
Long Eaton Chronicle, October 2012: Stapleford Carnival montage
Johnson & Barnes Ltd, brochure advertising employment (copy)
Hemlock Stone leaflet + information for talks on Heritage Open Day 2006:
1) Hemlock Stone, 2) Bramcote Hills Estate, by B M Brooke
Leaflet of poems written by participants in The Creative Perambulations of
Sherwood Forest led by Dave Woods (4 copies)
Service of Commemoration of L/C Walter Parker VC, St Helen's Church
29 April 2012
Order of Service, Remembrance Day, Walter Parker VC Memorial Square, 11
November 2012
Photograph of Rene Shimwell (and chorus!)
Photograph of Girls' Training Corps, Nottingham, WW2
Photograph of Dr E A Kingsbury
Leaflet: 'Lace: Here: Now' Nottingham City and County – September 2012 to
February 2013

ADDITIONS TO THE SOCIETY'S LIBRARY 2012/2013

Basford Bystander, Feb/Mar 2012 no.150, April/May 2012 no.151,
June/July 2012 no.152, Aug/Sept.2012 no.153, Oct/Nov.2012 no. 154,
Dec/Jan 2013 no.155, Feb/Mar 2013 no.156
Local History News, Winter 2012 no.102, Spring 2012 no.103, Summer
2012 no.104, Autumn 2012 no.105, Winter 2013 no.106
The Local Historian, Volume 42, Feb.2012 no.1, May 2012 no.2, Aug.2012
no.3, Nov.2012 no.4, Vol.43, Feb.2013 no.1
Nottinghamshire Historian, Autumn/Winter 2011 no.87, Spring/Summer 2012
no.88, Autumn/Winter 2012 no.89 (interesting articles – Notes on a 19c
Childhood, Twice celebrated Peace 1918-1919, Growing up in the Vicarage in
the 1930s)
'Battle of the Flames' by David Needham (Nottinghamshire's fight for
survival in WW2)
'Nottingham – Murder and Crime series' by Adam Nightingale
'Nottingham Railway Stations' by Lund (extra copy)
'The Cromford & High Peak Railway' by Rimmer
'The Lake Counties' by Arthur Mee
'Church History, Stapleford St Helen's'
'Open Churches – weekends'
'Around and About Town' – Ilkeston & District Local History Society
(extremely interesting)

'Mining and Industry in South Derbyshire and N W Leicestershire on old Picture Postcards' by Mark Bown
 'North Derbyshire Collieries on old Picture Postcards' by Alan Bower
 'Nottinghamshire Trams on old Picture Postcards' by Grenville Jennings
 'The Green – a Journey through Time' by Basford and District Local History Society
 The following three books by the Nottingham Evening Post were kindly donated by Stan Newbold. (They are full of interesting articles, photos etc.)
 'Bygones, Volume 1'
 'Bygones, Golden Jubilee Volume'
 'Nottingham's Millennium'

Programme for 2013

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 12 June | The History of Toton Marshalling Yard
Phil Burton and Brian Amos |
| 10 July | Feeding the English Country House Dr Wendy Freer |
| 14 August | Views of Old Stapleford Nigel Brooks |
| 11 September | Edward Carver – a Journey in Family and Local History
Peter Hammond |
| 9 October | The History of Sheffield Manor Lodge – Past & Present
David Templeman |
| 13 November | The Story of Hopwell Hall John Shaw |
| 11 December | Christmas Social Event |

STAPLEFORD PUBLIC LIBRARY, LOCAL STUDIES RECENT ACQUISITIONS

The Chilwell Ghost by A R Dance
 Awsworth Through Time by Bryan Maloney (L90.2)
 Nottinghamshire Almshouses from Early Times by Elizabeth A Earl (L30.56)
 Walking the Nottingham/Beeston Canal with Echoes of its History by Bill Newton
 Memories of Beeston Rylands – Personal Memories of a Rylander by Bill Newton
 Part 1 – Memories of the Canal, River Trent and the Floods of 1947
 Part 2 - Memories of Beeston Rylands, Personal Memories of a Rylander

14th September 1831. "John Choulerton, 14th Foot from Stapleford, in Nottinghamshire, Lace-worker Knitter, aged 18, 5ft 6 ins., hazel eyes, brown hair. Deserted 17th August from Cheetham Barracks, wearing light fustian jacket and white duck trousers."

NOTTINGHAM REVIEW, 31st December 1847.
 Died at Stapleford on Christmas Day, Mrs Penelope BUTLER in her 84th year. She was well known in the surrounding villages having spent a life of great usefulness in the above neighbourhood where she practised as a midwife and applier of leeches and having by long experience having obtained some practice knowledge in the therapeutic art was much sought after by that portion of the inhabitants so poor as to be unable to procure the more expensive aid of qualified medical practitioners.

Fire Brigade

Prior to the advent of the Parish Engine the fighting of fires was a communal affair. In June 1774 the blacksmith in Sandiacre was fitting a particularly large iron tyre to a wagon wheel. This required a larger fire than normal and in so doing sparks set fire to surrounding buildings. The church bells were rung backwards and this summoned all the Stocking Weavers from Stapleford who passed water hand-to-hand from the Erewash and put out the fire in about an hour. In 1833 parishes were given the power, if they so wished, to provide and keep up fire engines. By 1841 Stapleford had a fire engine which attended a fire at a steam flour mill in Sandiacre at the junction of the Erewash and Derby canals. It is described as a small engine belonging to Mr Streets of Stapleford and was on the spot within a remarkably short time after the alarm was given. However, it would appear that standards must have fallen by the time the newly formed Parish Council took over the fire fighting responsibilities in 1895. They set about transforming the fire brigade with enthusiasm and vigor. The first thing that they did, in typical Methodist fashion, was to buy a set of Rules for each fireman. This was followed shortly after by the purchase for each man of a Brass Helmet with chain and chinstrap for 17s. 6d, a Belt, axe and chain for 11s. 6d., a Life line with hook for belt 1s. 6d., and a pair of Best Wellington Boots for £1. 6s. 0d. Tunics were bought a year later. Having equipped the men they next tackled the problem of fitness and efficiency. The Parish Council Minutes record a long dialogue over the years with the members of fire brigade. There were calls for voluntary practices which were rebuffed by the fireman demanding 2/6d. At one point the whole brigade was dismissed only to be reappointed shortly afterwards minus one or two members. Over the years their efficiency improved and by the 1920's and 30's they were sweeping the board at local and district competitions and even representing the county at national level. Equipment was a constant source of irritation between the brigade and the parish. The brigade demanding more up to date equipment and the parish refusing or buying a cheaper alternative. When the parish council took over in 1894 the engine was operated manually and the power of the jet was dependant on the muscle power of those who worked the two side handles. A new manual engine was bought in 1905 but *this was not satisfactory and was exchanged by Merryweathers for a Steam Fire Engine of the Greenwich Class.* The steam engine worked the pump and the whole was horse drawn. Steam could be raised in 10 minutes whilst the engine was on the way to the fire and on arrival was of sufficient pressure to pump the water. However, finding horses was always a problem. The fire brigade did not have their own horses and relied on borrowing them from local famers. On one occasion they borrowed the local Co-op delivery horse which was passing in the street when the call came in to attend a big fire near the railway station only to find when they came to return to the fire station that, in the meantime, the horse's

driver had quietly retrieved it. Some idea of the times taken to attend fires can be found in the Brigade's Log Book which records their activity between 1914 and 1936. In March 1915 they were called to a stack fire at Cossall nearly 4 miles away. The call came at 2p.m. They had difficulty in finding horses and eventually left at 2.55p.m. arriving at Cossall 3.25p.m. In spite of the delay they saved half the stack. They must have presented a fine sight rattling through the country lanes in their brass helmets, bells ringing and trailing smoke and steam from the boiler. There was considerable dissatisfaction at times with the Parish Council and their refusal to buy up to date equipment. The last entry in the log in April 1936 states that "Wilkinson and Baxter require new boots. The boots they are wearing have been in use 17 years." It is difficult to be specific about the appliances that were in use over the years. The Parish Council Minutes often agreed to purchase new equipment only to rescind or postpone it at the next meeting when they couldn't agree on a price and it dropped from view. As was stated above a new manual engine was bought in 1905 but this was not satisfactory and was exchanged by Merryweathers for a Steam Fire Engine of the Greenwich Gem Class. In 1914 a quote from Barton Bros. of £250 was accepted for a lorry chassis on which to mount the steam engine. This appears to have fallen through because a month later all the members of the brigade attended the Lighting and Watch Committee and, according to the minutes, said "The officers and the firemen are thoroughly disappointed. Coop horses are not suitable. Not fair on the Brigade and they will not accept any responsibility. They will not leave the Fire Station with the Fire Engine without horses." In 1918 Atkeys sent over a lorry to try out and this pulled the steamer as a tender with satisfactory results. Shortly after Bartons were asked to tender again. In 1920 an escape ladder was purchased from Merryweathers. In June 1923 the log records "Attached the new motor to steam engine and towed same very satisfactorily." Two months later they attended a competition at Arnold, "Proceeded to above place on Tender. I am pleased to report the Stapleford Parish Council is given great credit for having purchased such a useful first turn out". The brigade obviously enjoyed their new found facility to get to a fire quickly but quite why Engineer Wilkinson was reported for driving in a reckless and dangerous manner when returning from a fire is not known. In 1928 a Dennis pump was purchased and the log indicates that there was also a Republic. The steamer was last used in 1929 but it was not until 1933 that the firemen who operated it gave up their badges. In 1929 there is also a reference to a turbine. The Nottinghamshire Archives contains a picture of a fire engine probably taken in the mid 1920's with a full complement of fire fighters proudly holding a large cup.

The Parish Engine has been housed in a number of places. Until the construction of the purpose built fire station next to the library in October 1909 the engine was kept in a building behind the Pinfold although it was also kept in a building on Isaacs Lane at one time. There have been a number of attempts to close the station down but it has survived. The present fire station is on Pinfold Lane almost exactly across from the site of the old Pinfold and Engine House.

Keith Goodman

Note: The main sources used for this article are the Minutes of the Parish Council and a Fire Brigade Log covering the period 1914 to 1936. Many names appear. The original of this article has references and footnotes and I am happy to let anyone have a copy. I welcome any information on or photos of the fire brigade which can clarify some of the issues above.



Horse-drawn fire engine in the yard of Church Street School about 1912



Manning the History Society's stand at the Older People's Day
at Stapleford Care Centre, 1 October 2012
Colin Rowland, Nigel Brooks, Barbara Brooke, Eileen Bloor
with Stapleford Deputy Mayor David Grindell

From the Labour News dated August 1948

A plea from West Avenue, Stapleford.

Dear Sir,

I should like to bring to your notice the disgraceful state of the public thoroughfare known as West Avenue. This road has never progressed beyond the foundation stage, and as the drainage grids are all at least three inches above any possible water level, it will be appreciated that in wet weather the road becomes impassable without ruining shoes and soaking feet. Further, the lack of any demarcation of a pavement means that there is a very real danger to pedestrians, and particularly to children, from the considerable amount of road traffic of all types. This danger is accentuated by the fact that vehicles tend to hug the sides of the road where the going is somewhat better. This recently caused an accident to a child, though fortunately the injury was only slight.

During the war and immediately afterwards the position was accepted by the residents, as it was realised that both labour and materials were in short supply. But since then it has been found possible to surface and pave Wadsworth Road, although this contained fewer houses, and was never in such a state as West Avenue. Wollaton Road, outside the Cemetery, and one side of Hickings Lane from Ilkeston Road, Bramcote to Central Avenue, Stapleford, has also been paved recently, though the number of houses is very small.

I hope that the Councillors representing this district realise the seriousness of this plea. The votes of West Avenue and adjoining roads might well prove decisive in ensuring that they are not re-elected at the next election.

Yours faithfully

Leslie M. FOX

57, West Avenue, Stapleford.

Response from the Editor of the Labour News (West Avenue is a private street, not yet taken over by the Council, and is therefore in a different category from Wollaton Road and Hickings Lane. The order of priority for the making up of private streets by the Council is a matter in which the representatives of Stapleford would naturally have a very large say, since they would be assumed to know their own area and its needs. They apparently felt that Wadsworth Road had the greater need. It looks as though they were wrong. Perhaps they gave insufficient consideration to the matter. Mr. Fox should advise his fellow residents to vote Labour next time. — Editor)

(Courtesy of John Morral.)

AWFUL AND BRUTAL MURDER.

From the Ilkeston Leader, May 2nd 1861.

About half-past twelve o'clock last night, a very awful and brutal murder was committed in Bath-street, Ilkeston. It appears that some words had passed between George Smith, a young man about 20 years of age, and his father, Joseph Smith, about some trouble the former had got himself into. George, it is understood had got possession of his father's bank book, and went to Nottingham to try to obtain the money. He drew £5 of his own, but failed in getting any of his father's. When he returned his father was in bed, but got up to let him in. The father said, "George, you'll have to alter." George proceeded to pull off his coat, waistcoat, and boots, as if intending to go straight to bed, and his father took up a pipe and lighted it. George then shot his father from behind, who fell dead instantly. George then ran out, and called a man up, and said, "My father has shot himself." The pistol, which was quite new, has been found in a garden near to which he passed on the way. A scream of murder from a sister aroused the neighbours, and a policeman was fetched. George returned, and was at once hand-cuffed. Samuel Smith, brother to Joseph, had come into the house, and had a younger brother of George on his knee consoling him. George said, "Uncle, I'll shake hands with you, but it must be with my left hand." He continued in very offensive language to speak to his uncle, who told the policeman to take him off or he should perhaps kill him. He was then taken to the lock-up. George had lately got into trouble — two different girls having children by him, and had on Thursday told a man he was going to France. He tried to persuade a young man to go with him. He said he had plenty of money to pay for both. The father was a very kind and indulgent parent.

Miscellaneous News.

Ilkeston Leader, May 2nd 1861.

A RESULT OF THE FRENCH TREATY. — The following advertisement appears in the Manchester Guardian. 'Matrimony. — A gentleman of Lyons, travelling in England since last October, who will probably be located in London, should the treaty be ratified is most anxious to form the acquaintance and friendship of an English or Scots young lady, with a view to a matrimonial alliance. References, &c.' By the way, what does the 'gentleman of Lyons,' mean by the expression, 'should the treaty be ratified?'

THE ILKESTON MURDER

From the ILKESTON LEADER dated 17th August 1861.

THE PREPARATION OF THE FATAL DEED.

EMBODYING THE FACTS OF THE CONFESSION.

The facts of the murder are simply these;- George Smith, of Ilkeston, lacemaker, 20 years of age, having got into trouble through forming a liaison with a girl of the same town, was anxious to get money enough to enable him to leave the country. His father, a steady industrious tradesman had accumulated some £15 and deposited it in the Savings Bank in Nottingham. George knew of this money, and it appears on the morning of the day on which the fatal deed was committed he secretly obtained the bank book and went to Nottingham to the bank and asked for £14. The banking clerk asked him if the book and money were his. When he replied that they belonged to his father he was told that he must produce a note, signed by his father, or the money could not be paid him. Of course this put an insuperable difficulty in his way. He had no money with him, so in order to pay the expense of a companion who had come with him, and whose railway fare he had promised to pay, and to enable him to have something like a spree, he pawned the bank book for a sovereign. He went with his companion to a public and took with him also a girl whom he met in the street. He left the girl and his companion while he went as he said, to get directions of a person, but really to buy a pistol and powder – shot he either purposed obtaining at another place, and forgot it, or he meant to use some he might have. It appears that while in company of these two persons he formed the determination to take the life of his father. Upon his with the pistol, the girl persuaded him to accompany her to her house. Here he exhibited the pistol. The girl expressed alarm, when he answered, "I shall do no harm to those who do no harm to me, but if my own father offended me I would shoot him." In his confession he is reported to have said, "I intend shooting my father when I get home tonight." This however is not probable, had he said this the girl would doubtless have stated it in evidence as there was no motive why she should not, and she did say straight forwardly enough, and repeatedly at the inquest examination and trial, that he said, "I would shoot my own father if he offended me." He joined his companions and at the proper time duly arrived home by train. He met a friend at the Ilkeston station and went with him to a public house. He went out once or twice. The first time to send a little girl to buy him some shot-corns. The second time he went home saw his father had left the sofa and gone out, thus saving his life for a few hours, as George intended shooting him then, had he found him still asleep. He again joined his companions at the public house – the pistol in his pocket. During a game at bagatelle his state of feeling much improved, and he thought what a fool he had been to get the pistol and think of shooting his father.

He then determined he would not do it. About half past eleven he went home. His father had returned and retired at his usual time. He had been told that George had gone to enlist for a soldier, and he was very much agitated in his mind about it. He went to bed, but was unable to sleep. Thinking that if George was gone for a soldier, he might have left some note to that effect, he told his next eldest son, with whom he slept, to get up and get a light. He then took the light and went down stairs. In a drawer he found a piece of paper, and imagined it to contain the information he sought, although the writing upon it was not legible. He called Henry to him, and they together scrutinised it, but could make nothing out of it. Henry went again to bed, and his father took his pipe and said he would sit and see whether George came. By then he had filled his pipe, and before he had time to light it George came in. The father asked George whether he had been to Nottingham. He answered no; he was sure he had not. His father then said, "you must not go on so, the door is open for you all hours of the night." All the good feeling was entirely dissipated, and all the demon roused by this speech. The father now put his pipe to the fire-embers to light it. George, who ha in silence pulled off his shoes and coat, now came quietly behind and placing the muzzle of the pistol under the left ear, fired the whole of the contents into his father's head. He fell dead in an instant, the brain protruding, and blood flowing profusely from the wound. The murderer ran out of the house with the pistol and threw it into a garden near to. He then ran to the house of one of the young men with whom he had been during the evening and to whom he had said upon coming from home when he loaded the pistol in the pigsty, "I believe my father will make away with himself," rapped loudly at the door and said, "oh do come, my father has shot himself, I told you he would." The report of the pistol had roused his brothers, and their cries had wakened their sister and her husband. When George returned he was charged with the murder, but he very stoutly denied it, and fell down upon his father's body and kissed him. However the case was too clearly against him, and he was taken into custody by a policeman who was called in. He threatened to stab the policeman, and had he possessed the weapon he asked for, doubtless would have taken a second life. He was taken to the lock-up, and thence before a magistrate. The Inquest was held, and the case was very black against him. The verdict, "Wilful murder against George Smith." At the examination before the magistrates, notwithstanding that the prisoner made some apparently contradictory statement, the case blackened, and became more and more clearly against him. All along until the trial, and even then to the last moment, he thought he should get off. He had stoutly denied the charge and offered some explanation. When the judge put on the black cap and began to address him previous to passing the sentence, the prisoner very vehemently and, with considerable *zang froid* addressed at some length the judge and the people in court. It had the effect of increasing the judge's sense of his guilt, and the awful sentence was passed. His emotion was apparent, however much he endeavoured to hide it. He was conveyed from the prisoner's dock to the condemned cell in a very excited and awful state. 27

CONDUCT OF THE MURDERER IN THE CONDEMNED CELL.

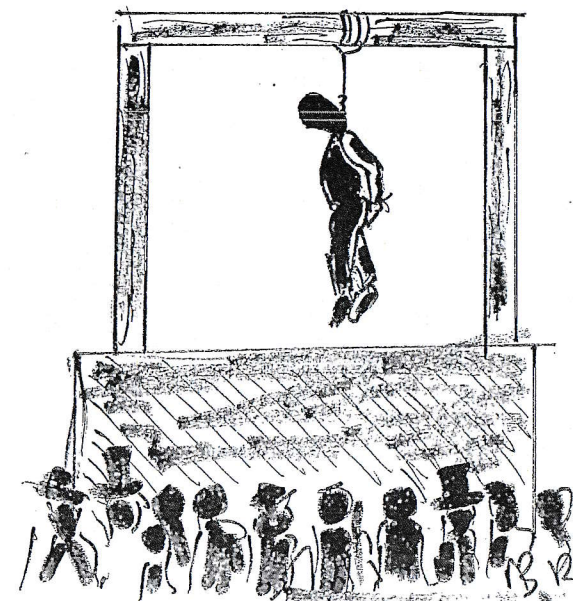
Upon his first removal to the cell, specially used for the confinement of those condemned to die, its awful aspect and fearful associations seemed to have very considerable influence upon his otherwise stolidly insensible state. A wild, almost demoniacal stare was on his face, and his very actions were in character with a very serious apprehension of a doom the most awful. When the excitement produced by the trial, and the hearing of the dread sentence, had a little worn off, and he became more subdued, he seemed fully to anticipate the commutation of his sentence. It was not a little either, of the serious reasoning and warning of the High Sheriff, and the religious ministrations of the Chaplain of the prison, that was needed to dissipate so unfounded an expectation. He is next reported to have been in earnest preparation for the death awaiting him. Opinions – where picked up it is scarcely known – differing somewhat from those inculcated by the Clergymen attending him seemed to discourage them in no small measure in their religious instructions, and they could not feel satisfied of his spiritual safety until he had confessed the adoption and realization of their own theological ideas and position. A full and frank confession of the crime was made by him to the Governor of the gaol, but owing to some unwillingness, either of the murderer himself or the authorities, of its being publicly known, a somewhat incorrect account was at first given. At length the full and authentic confession appeared, and is embodied in our account of the commission of the fatal deed. Notwithstanding that his religious instructors felt satisfied that they had brought him to a genuinely penitent condition, he at times revealed all his former stubbornness of mood. Last week he was unwilling to kneel during the prayers at the chapel, and when remonstrated with said, “do not see the need for it.” “I know what you want, you want me to pray to Christ, but I shan’t. I have been taught differently from that.” “I pray to God.” “But you are not praying to God now.” “But you are not praying to God now.” “But I shall do.” He was unconcerned about his soul’s welfare while in the chapel. The pious persuasions of the Chaplain it is said, at length overcame all these scruples, and he was fully prepared – excepting occasional evidence of obstinacy – for his fate. As Friday drew nearer he seemed to lose strength of nerve very fast. He has generally slept and ate well, and talked with firmness and confidence, when in the mood, to his visitors, but during the last few days the certainty of his awful death seemed fully to take possession of his mind, and at last he was completely broken down, though more is nerve than in a moral sense. He was very much effected, though not altogether free from obstinacy, when his relatives took their leave of him. To them, poor creatures, more than to him was a heart-rending conflict. The susceptibilities of his nature to a real affection was evinced by the emotion he manifested when he took final leave of the young woman who had a child by him, and whom he intended marrying.

THE EXECUTION

The fatal day, Friday, broke a dull cold grey, but cleared up into unclouded splendour before noon. From a very early hour, the occasional footfall broke in upon the half-slumbers of many excited dreamers, telling that some were even then on their way to the dread place. During the morning the different roads leading into Derby were thronged by an eager crowd; all sorts of conveyances that could be put into use were heavily laden with anxious, curious persons all eagerly journeying to Derby. The fatal drop was in the process of erection from Thursday morning, and was worked at during the night, and for some time in the morning previous to the execution. During Thursday night thousands visited the front of the prison to see the awful gallows. Each visitor immediately he entered the town wended his way towards the one common place of interest and curiosity. A conversation took place between two spectators in front of the prison an hour or two previous to the execution, during which a remark was made, which is worthy of the attention of legislators and philosophers. A person said “he out not to be hanged.” Another person answered, “he ought, and if there were not a hangs man ready he would not hesitate to hang him himself”, he had repented and was forgiven and would no doubt enter heaven immediately. The former person remarked, “*if he is fit for heaven, he is fit for earth.*” The gallows, erected on the top of the prison, looked very awful in the distance. Although by its elevation giving an opportunity to unnumbered thousands to see all took place upon it, it was too high up for the spectators to see any lineament of the murderer’s face or well hear a word he might utter. The crowds who came and went during the morning stood with up-turned eyes towards that ominous, black engine of death, and with many unutterable thoughts and feelings, and many unreportable remarks, shook their heads and turned away, some pitying the poor wretch and wishing he might yet have his life spared others only too eager to return and witness him hang between heaven and earth-fit for neither place – a spectacle of the misery and ignominy which ought evermore to come upon guilty of such an unnatural and diabolical crime. The breakfast half-hour of the different mills and factories was principally spent by those employed in them, especially by the younger portion of both sexes – young women predominating – in visiting the scene of the coming event. Whether influenced by indication towards one, who besides taking the life of his father, had destroyed the peace and prospects of several of their own sex or drawn hither by no other than the prevailing curiosity, we know not, but important lessons might be learned by them. Young men of about his own age were the most striking feature of the crowds travelling the roads, parading the town, and occupying the space in front of the gallows. The turnpike road from Nottingham revealed the state of curiosity amongst the same class of young men in that town and as early as seven o’clock in the morning there were many dusty arrivals. Amongst the crowds everywhere, Ilkeston people, and again youths of his own age, and some girls, were the prevailing element. Some person, thinking there might be good done amongst the spectators, mounted a chair and began preaching and giving away tracts as early as half-past nine.

At nine o'clock in the morning it was reported from within the prison that the condemned man had exhibited no very satisfactory repentance; that he was yet stubborn and seemed scarcely affected by his position. During the previous night – his last night on earth – he did not sleep well but was very calm and quiet throughout. He had lived during the last few days as well as the Governor's table could supply him and it was reported on no very untrustworthy authority, that he had even ordered dinner for eleven o'clock this morning and among the things specified as his desire were, *two quarts of ale*, mutton chops and peas – it was said, a bottle of wine. From nine o'clock the people began to fill up the different spaces available around the prison – by hundreds and by thousands they came – and still they came. It is estimated that there were no less than 20,000 persons present. At ten minutes to twelve the passing bell began its solemn call, and immediately the prison clock struck twelve the procession appeared at the head of the stairs leading to the gallows – two or three policemen then Calcraft, then the Chaplain and then George Smith. He at once knelt down on the trap door and prayed fervently. The persons nearest heard part of it. He was understood to pray that God would be a father to those deprived of a father by him, that his end might be a warning to all who witnessed his execution. His last words – many times repeated – were, "Oh Lord receive my spirit." His prayer occupied nearly five minutes, he stood in a recess about five minutes, and also five minutes he stood over the drop with white cap on his head and his hands clasped before him. Suddenly the mysterious belt was touched, and he fell. In a moment he began to struggle, and continued to do some minutes – then all was over. His demeanour was firm to the last, not in bravado, but conscious of his position, with nerve enough to endure all. He walked very firmly to and fro, as required, on the scaffold. His appearance then was quite a fair illustration of his conduct during the last few days of his life. He was not defiant, he was cool, he was firm, with a constitution fitted to endure without manifesting his feeling. In his internal condition he was almost all that could be desired, - at the same time, all his bearing, all his sayings, all his actions evinced a power of thinking and judging for himself. He very earnestly shook hands with the hangman. All was done deliberately, decently, impressively. May his prayer be answered in the future lives of his companions, and in the well being and consolation of his near relatives and friends.

Editor.



THE ILKESTON LEADER

Saturday August 24th 1861.

The Editorial

PUBLIC MORALITY; OR GEORGE SMITH AGAIN

Friday noon week witnessed the mournful end of the youthful murderer George Smith. A regret was universally expressed that one so young, and in appearance so interesting, should deliberately commit so horrible a crime; but due consideration of its diabolical character, - committed without provocation - excepting anxious and affectionate parental reproof be so denominated, and without any conceivable motive - all which were supposed to influence him being denied - leaves the public conscience without remorse, and the public sense of justice, in a humane sense, satisfied. Of course the abstract question of the utility and even rightness of capital punishment has been widely discussed, and many well-sustained verdicts given against it; but many persons, who had long been averse to this mode of punishment, did not feel that their plea for its abolition was strengthened by a case like this - the commission of one of the most unnatural crimes on earth, followed up at the trial with the most shameless effrontery, and iron-nerved defiance ever heard of, - coupling the falsest and fiercest denial of guilt with the most vehement and apparently sincere language of religion. Two questions arise out of the case. Did he die penitently? What method of training youth could be adopted to prevent the kind, of depravity which sustained the motive for such a deed?

ILKESTON LEADER

MAY 23RD 1861.

THE ALLEGED MURDER AT ILKESTON

FROM THE DERBY MERCURY, MAY 22.

To the Editor of the Derby Mercury.

Sir, - From the letter which appeared in the *Derby Mercury* of last week, signed "An Enquirer," and the remarks of the editor of the *Derby Reporter* thereon, it appears that the public are at a loss to understand why the recent case of murder at Ilkeston was gone into by me after the coroner had concluded his investigation and returned a verdict of wilful murder. It is right that the public in general should not be kept in ignorance or left to grope its way in the dark with reference to such a matter. Until very recently I had always abstained from interference in cases where the coroner had previously taken the matter in hand, and was induced to depart from that practice only in consequence of the observations made by the judge on the trial of Sarah Aldred, at the Winter Assize of 1859, for the murder of a child at Shipley. Mr Justice Willes in that case objected to admit in evidence the examination of the prisoner before the coroner, and complained that she had not been taken before the magistrates and examined, as her statement would then have been admissible. Being aware that in the metropolis, in the large towns, and in many counties the magistrates were in the habit of investigating all such cases, quite irrespective of the coroner's proceedings, and feeling that this practice was not only the most correct in point of law, but also the fairest as regards the accused, and the most conducive to the ends of public justice, I determined to adopt it future. The prisoner is not, as "Enquirer" admits, compulsively present at the coroner's inquest, I add that he has no legal status whatever before the coroner, there being no charge against any one until the enquiry is closed, and the prisoner, who is present, and has a right to cross examine every witness. At the conclusion of the case the magistrate is required to state the charge to the prisoner, and after duly cautioning him, to ask if he wishes to say anything in answer to it. The prisoner's statement thereupon (which is often most material), becomes evidence, and may be used on the trial. The coroner, has no right to ask the prisoner any such question. Moreover, in the event of any witness who has been examined before a magistrate dying or becoming incapacitated, his deposition may be read on the trial; whereas no deposition taken before the coroner, whether taken in the prisoner's presence or not, is admissible in such an event. What would be said then, if a murderer whose guilt was morally unquestionable were to escape, as might well happen for want of such evidence? The public press would assuredly not be slow to accuse the magistracy of a culpable neglect of duty, and for my part, I do not see what valid or sufficient excuse could be made, for, when, as in the recent case, a person is apprehended by a police-constable, it is the clear and imperative duty of such constable, immediately to convey the accused before a magistrate (but in nowise

before the coroner,) and it is equally imperative on the magistrate to hear the charge and if there be adequate grounds for so doing, to commit the prisoner for trial or for further examination (Vide 11 and Vic, cap.43.) The magistrate is not if he wished it, legally justified in directing the prisoner to be taken before the coroner, to wait the decision of his jury neither could the policeman if he were charged (as before he might be) with neglect of duty in not conveying the accused before a justice at once, legally accuse himself by pleading that the delay has arisen from his attending with the prisoner upon the coroner's court. Again, the coroner has no power whatever to remand or detain a prisoner pending his inquiry, and it is certainly neither lawful, desirable, nor even safe that he should be kept from day to day in the hands of the police, instead of being remanded to the proper gaol, as in the late case he was within ten hours after the death. The magistrates have many advantages over the coroner in these enquiries, and particularly as regards the police, who are under their control and are responsible to them for the due performance of their duties, and it cannot be questioned that in these investigations the police have to perform a part not less important than that of either the magistrate or the coroner, The Editor of the *Reporter*, in a leading article, repeats the question made by "Enquirer," Why the expense and excitement of this second examination. As to the expense I trust that "Enquirer" is sufficiently answered, and even if the expense were made greater than in this case it is likely to be a question would not deserve serious consideration when the life of a fellow creature and the administration of justice in so serious a case, is at stake. As regards the excitement, and the imputation of a desire to gratify a morbid curiosity, I beg to state, that it was my special study to prevent unnecessary excitement and thwart mere morbid curiosity by conducting the examination as quietly as possible, and refusing to admit strangers who had no better object for being present.

I remain, Sir, your obedient Servant,

John Radford

Smalley, 20th May 1861.

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2013 issue of the Newsletter is 30 September 2013.
Material can be given to any of the above named.
This is YOUR newsletter! We'd love to hear from you!**

Front cover drawn by Nigel Brooks:
St John's Church of England Primary School,
founded and endowed by Dame Caroline Warren in 1837