Nottinghamshire Local History Association

The Association was formed in 1953 to bring together organisations and individuals interested in all aspects of local history in the county. Meetings are held twice a year in the form of a seminar or one-day school and members are charged preferential rates.

The Association publishes The Nottinghamshire Historian twice a year and members receive a copy of each issue, the price being included in the annual subscription.

Membership of the Association is open to everyone. Details of membership can be obtained from our website or by email from:

treasurer@nlha.org.uk

The cover image is The Civil War Museum, Newark. Photo credit: The Woodhead Group.

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A bi-annual magazine of news, views and articles concerning
Nottinghamshire local history and conservation.
Editorial

Welcome to our latest edition of The Nottinghamshire Historian. I can’t believe that we’re already almost one-third of our way through 2020, I find the older I get the faster times flies!

I have decided to trial a slightly different styled magazine this time around and hope that you enjoy reading it as much as I have. I begin with the first in a series of articles on historic days out in Nottinghamshire. This edition, the spotlight is on Newark and I hope to bring you some interesting things to do there.

Sadly, our chairman John Parker will be standing down at the next AGM, I am sure many of you will appreciate the hard work and dedication that he has given to the organisation over the years. We at the NLHA pass on our heartfelt thanks and wish him the very best for the future.

Finally, if you enjoy our magazine and would like to contribute, please get in touch with me to discuss details. If you have any suggestions about articles that you would like to see featured, let us know. I would be pleased to receive articles, especially from individuals or groups who have not previously gone into print.

editor@nlha.org.uk Origination by Sarah Seaton. Printed by Adlards of Ruddington. Copy date for next edition, 1 August 2020.

Editor: Sarah Seaton

Autumn Day School October 2019

Speakers and topics were; George Rogers, The Cromford Canal; John Vanags, Wheels in Mansfield; Professor Michael Wilkinson, The History of Motor Car Manufacturing in Nottinghamshire and Bob Massey, A Road by any Other Name.
A Day out in Newark

We begin a series of history-based days out around our beautiful county starting with the historic town of Newark and its surrounding area. Here you will find something of interest for everyone, in fact we would suggest several days out here to benefit from the amazing things on offer. Please let us know of your experiences if you travel there.

*Published by J Deeley, Soho, 1812*

We begin with **Newark Castle** which stands majestically beside the River Trent. Originally founded in the mid twelfth century by Alexander, Bishop of Lincoln it was initially of wooden structure but was rebuilt in stone before the end of the century. It was ravaged during the English Civil War in the seventeenth century and subsequently restored to the version that stands today. There is a free museum at the Gilstrap Centre which sits within the Castle grounds and historical displays such as the King John and the Knights Templar exhibitions can be found on site. Throughout the summer there are seasonal tours of the whole site offered including those locked away to the general public. For more information and opening times please visit their website at newark-sherwooddc.gov.uk

The **Newark Air Museum** enables the visitor to immerse themselves in the history of aviation. Over the last 40 years, the museum has collated a significant archive of local, national and international interest and offers an inquiry service free of charge but donations are always welcome. The museum has a substantial number of aircraft, a comprehensive list can be found on their website as not all aircraft can be on display but special arrangements can be made for the others. There is also a dedicated engine building, with many engines on display. Their Lancaster Corner displays an eclectic collection of World War 2 artefacts associated with RAF Winthorpe, a nearby training base and the Famous Lancaster Bombers. Here you will find an original bouncing bomb amongst many other fascinating items.

There is also a memorial garden, a Victory Garden complete with Anderson Shelter and a Royal Air Force Regiment Display.

For more information and opening times please visit their website at www.newarkairmuseum.org

*Vintage Aircraft at the museum. Photo credit: Roland Turner.*
The Newark Town Hall and Art Gallery is housed in the grade 1 listed building built in 1776 and is of outstanding architectural merit. A visit to the building in itself is well worth it. On display there you will see civic robes and maces, civil war coins (made out of church plate) and artwork from local artists associated with the town. There are also temporary displays covering a multitude of different topics subject to change throughout the year. For more information and opening times please visit their website at newarktownhallmuseum.co.uk

St Mary Magdalene Church is a large medieval church with the highest tower in Nottinghamshire and the fifth tallest in the UK. It has served the people of Newark for over 800 years. Parts of the church date from the 11th, 12th, 14th and 15th centuries. It has two chantry chapels, one with a painted panel depicting a scene from the Dance of Death. There are old monuments and a 14th century fine brass. The church has medieval choir stalls and important fragments of stained glass. There are also some great links to resources on the Southwell and Nottingham Church History Project website. For more information and opening times please visit their website at stmnewark.org

The Queen’s Royal Lancers and Nottinghamshire Yeomanry Museum is situated in the Newark area at nearby Perlethorpe. It is home to the collections of the Queen’s Royal Lancers, the Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry and the South Nottinghamshire Hussars. Here you will learn about the cavalry from its earlier times on horseback, through to the tank divisions of the World War 2 and modern-day battles such as Iraq and Afghanistan. For more information and opening times please visit their website at qrlnymuseum.co.uk


The National Civil War Centre is full of facts and artefacts relating to the English Civil War in the seventeenth century, of which Newark played a part. During this time neighbour fought neighbour and brothers battled against each other in one of our most turbulent times in our history. There are many interactive displays to tempt every age and even an interactive app that guides you through the streets of Newark to follow the Civil War Trail, which introduces major characters of the war period so that you can experience the war from their perspective. There is also a café, shop and room for hire. There is an excellent online database giving stories of people caught up in the war throughout England, Scotland and Ireland. For more information and opening times please visit their website at nationalcivilwarcentre.com
Farewell to John Parker

It is with regret that we report chairman John Parker will be standing down at the next AGM. John attended his first day School/AGM on Saturday 27th March 2010 at Ravenshead; the topic was ‘What about the workers’. Whilst at the event John was encouraged to join the NLHA by Derek Walker, Robert Howard and Brian Anderson. At the time he was looking to apply to do the BA History course at the University of Nottingham and he needed to demonstrate an interest in studying history by showing membership of clubs and societies, so agreed to come on board, he chose the NLHA because the subscription was much less than Thoroton! John was elected to trustee/committee at the Spring AGM of 2011 and one year later he became chairman. Since his term in office John Has achieved many great things:

- May 2011 involved with Young Person’s Competition (On the Trail) with Chris Weir and Nottinghamshire Archives. Acted as judge in October 2011. Awards ceremony 28 November.
- Started Angel Row Forums at Local studies Library, Angel Row, 15th March 2012 (alongside Robert Howard and Dorothy Ritchie)
- Youth Heritage Conference 18 July 2012 at Lakeside with Chris Weir

- Publication grants fund set up, first payment to East Leake for the publication of John Bley
- Judge (alongside Chris Weir) at Nottingham Archives Young Person’s Competition (My Life Diary) 14 May 2010. Nottinghamshire Archives received Nottinghamshire Heritage Award for this competition (John Parker and Mark Dorrington attended ceremony)
- Hosted/organised numerous Day Schools
- Written articles for the Nottinghamshire Historian
- Newsletter editor
- Supported people with their local history quests.
- Website Editor
- Enclosure walk leader
- Previous Angel Row Forum organiser
- Facilitated web space for local history groups along with David Anderson. Introduced new constitution/ change of status 2016

We all wish John the best of luck with his next venture, which will be...?
Nottingham is a city best known for its connection to a legendary outlaw known for acts of robbery, charity and daring. But it wasn’t just Robin Hood who dared to escape the city’s Sheriff. Many real criminals from times gone by have attempted daring escapes from the County Gaol, now the National Justice Museum.

Nottingham’s County Gaol sat for centuries on High Pavement in the modern Lace Market district of the city, its front dominated by the Georgian façade of the Shire Hall. To its rear, a 70 foot drop down a sandstone cliff led into what was once the Narrow Marsh area, inhabited by the city’s poor.

The gaol was situated between the richest and the poorest of Nottingham society and both views of the building reflect this. While the front contained the splendour of the courts, the rear was a vast brick wall designed not only to deter escape but to stop the cliff face crumbling down onto the hovels beneath.

Inmates of the County Gaol were always transitionary, awaiting trials and sentencing before being transported to distant penal colonies or even hanged. Is it any wonder that escape attempts were made when the sentences were so harsh? What does a prisoner have to lose? To prevent escape heavy leg irons were often fitted, but in a time before any prison service or government control, security could vary drastically.

In 1764 Nottingham’s resident gaoler was awoken at midnight by one of his
inmates who clearly had the freedom to walk around the building. The inmate (who may have paid the gaoler for this greater freedom) reported that he could hear strange sounds coming from the pits area, beneath the gaoler’s lodge. The pits were the oldest part of the gaol and occupied by the most unfortunate prisoners who had to await their fates chained up in the confines of a sandstone cave. On investigating, the gaoler found one such unfortunate, a man named James Rutland, making a break for freedom.

He had somehow filed off his chains and picked the lock of one door and was attempting to break down another when he was discovered and returned to the pit. Unfortunately for him the sound of him removing his chains had alerted the inmates upstairs.

Four years later, a new gaoler was appointed by the name of Richard Bonington who not only ran the County Gaol but also Nottingham’s Town Gaol which was conveniently also located on High Pavement, but now no longer exists.

Bonington was a diligent gaoler for over 20 years until 1786 when three prisoners broke out over the roof and climbed down into the street below. To add insult to injury another man escaped on the same day using a key he had made to pick the locks with.

Two years later, a young woman was locked up in the Town Gaol for stealing and soliciting. Mary Brammer carried out an audacious escape after crawling through a hole in the gaol wall that was over 20 inches thick and squeezing through the gap.

Although Mary escaped, she was later captured in Sheffield, where she was caught picking someone’s pocket. She was returned to Nottingham, this time to the County Gaol where she stayed until being given the unfortunate honour of being the first woman from Nottingham to be transported to Australia.

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Gaoler Bonington retired the following year and his son took up the position. The dilapidated town gaol was demolished and rebuilt. The County Gaol continued to struggle on with various improvements to its cell blocks as the 19th century began.

Bonington Junior may have been more diligent than his father as he managed to stop a couple of escape attempts in their tracks. John Hewitt was caught in the act of trying to remove the rope from the gaol well. He wasn’t the first person to take this approach and the staff were wise enough to keep an eye on it.

In 1800 two forgers under sentence of death managed to slowly file the bars
of their cell and replace them with pieces of painted wood to avoid suspicion. Where the painted wood came from is a mystery, but both were once again caught in the act.

Unfortunately, a gaoler can’t be everywhere at once and the staff may consist of very few individuals; such as two turnkeys or assistant gaolers, a chaplain and a surgeon who worked very few hours. The gaol was also occupied by both male and female convicts with no female staff until the middle of the 19th century. Gaolers and their turnkeys would often have to appear in court or help in the transportation of convicts, which often left the gaol understaffed. Thief Joanna Ledwich waited for one such opportunity to make her break for freedom in 1831.

While the gaoler was busy overseeing an inmate’s court appearance, Joanna knotted together several sheets and made an escape rope. She flung the rope over the wall and preceded to clamber down the 70 ft drop, down into the slums of the Narrow Marsh. Her hand-made rope struggled to cope with her weight and it unravelled during her descent.

A witness watched her plummet down into a yard where she was met by an accomplice, indicating there was some planning involved with the timing of her escape. Despite any injuries she may have received, Joanna fled the scene. Newspapers advertised a reward for her recapture and described her as having thick black hair and eyebrows and having an Irish accent. Like fellow escapee Mary Brammer, she was sentenced to transportation but unlike Mary she made it away and was never seen again.

Several steps were taken by the Victorians which put an end to many escape attempts. Female prisoners were now supervised by a matron and kept under constant surveillance as they toiled in the laundry. Male inmates were kept in their cells for 23 hours a day with only an hour of exercise in utter silence. There was also now a Police Force with detectives able to hunt down any escapees. Despite all this, the gaol was still yet to see its greatest escape!
On the cold afternoon of the 31st December 1843, several prisoners were taking the air in the exercise yard. They were all under sentence of transportation for their parts in various burglaries in Sutton Bonington and Fiskerton. As a group, they had conspired to escape and waited patiently for their opportunity.

Turnkey John Williams unlocked the yard gate and entered, carrying a pitcher of milk for the prisoners’ supper. He was in the process of bowling out their daily ration when inmate Joseph Smith tackled him from behind, grabbing him by the neck; while others held him down and stole his keys. The group of seven then locked Williams in the yard and headed up through the building, locking down the Governor’s house so that no help would come from that direction, and headed for the Turnkey’s lodge.

The men brandished socks filled with pieces of coal and soap and would have made an intimidating sight as they rampaged through the gaol. In the lodge sat a number of debtors, working under the supervision of an elderly Turnkey who they locked in a coal cupboard, before offering the debtors a chance for freedom. They declined, wanting no part in the escape.

The desperate group headed on towards the exit but by now Williams had fled out of the yard. In pursuit and barring their way out was head gaoler William Lownder. He had bumped into the group by accident and must have been shocked to see the group, who outnumbered him seven to one. Smith, the most violent of the group, was once again the first to act, swinging his improvised weapon at Lownder’s head. With a crack the gaoler was down, under a torrent of blows before his keys were also taken and the gang headed for freedom. Turnkey Williams was now in hot pursuit and before they could all break free he tackled one of the men to the ground. He was powerless to stop the other six from climbing over the railings on to High Pavement and leaving, before he had chance to raise the alarm.

Within minutes, 22 policemen were dispatched to apprehend the fleeing felons. The group had been seen running towards Sneinton and had quickly split up. The intelligent ones amongst the group had changed their clothing, swapping their prison uniform for stolen shirts from clothes lines.

Thomas Barton however, was not so clever. He fled into Colwick woods where he stumbled into a game keeper who was immediately suspicious of his yellow and black patched suit. Realising he looked as if he had just escaped from an institution, Thomas
came up with a novel excuse. He claimed he was an inmate of the local lunatic asylum and he had just popped out to meet a friend and would return after his meeting. The game keeper may have not trusted the story, or more likely thought Thomas should be returned to the asylum. Either way, Thomas was back behind bars within two hours of his escape.

25 year-old escapee William Thomson was found a few days later in a house on Johns Street in Sneinton. On his person he had a pistol, shot and a set of lock picks. Governor Richard Butler Brierly and the Sheriff of Nottingham issued a reward for the capture of the other escapees, who seemed to have fled Nottingham.

Police Inspector Reynolds hunted down John Binns a week later hiding in a relative’s house in Leeds. He was clapped in irons and returned to Nottingham, where he and his fellow escapees waited to be transported. Escaping must have been in John’s blood for he later escaped from the penal colony seven years later, in 1851.

The last to be caught was Joseph Bower who was caught six years after the event. He was only brought to justice after his abused girlfriend told the police his whereabouts. Clearly, she’d had enough of the way he was treating her.

That just leaves Thomas Green and Joseph Smith, who had hit Gaoler Lownder on the head. Lownder had been given a fractured skull during the assault, but the culprit was never seen again. Out of the gang of seven, two got clean away and never served their sentence.

The gaol went through another stage of redevelopment, but it was a doomed cause. The building had become a mismatch of different eras built upon each other, with different ideas of what a gaol should be.

In 1877 the prison service came into being and Nottinghamshire County Gaol was one of four gaols closed immediately after falling into government hands. Its staff were pensioned off and inmates moved to the local house of correction.

The impressive Shire Hall on High Pavement would continue to be used
as a court until 1986 but the gaol at its rear was abandoned and forgotten. Today the Pits area where James Rutland broke out of his chains still sits at the bottom of the building, carved into the rock of the cliff face. The wall that Joanna Ledwich climbed down can still be peered over from inside the museum, by those that don’t mind heights.

Working in the museum that now inhabits the site, I’m often asked two questions. Firstly; “Are there ghosts?” And secondly, “Did you have any escapes?” Well in this article I’ve answered one of those questions. When I tell the story of Joanna Ledwich the response is usually, “Good for her,” and very few people ask what her crimes were. Perhaps we still like the idea of the noble outlaw, who can beat the system, despite the odds.

The National Justice Museum, based on High Pavement in the Lace Market is open Monday - Friday from 9am – 5pm and Saturday - Sunday from 10am - 5pm, with last paid entry at 4pm. Visit nationaljusticemuseum.org.uk for more information.

Twitter, Instagram: @justicemuseum
Facebook: National Justice Museum

Nottingham’s Final hangings

The last six people to be hanged in Nottingham were:

Samuel Atherley 1909 – Killed his common-law wife Matilda Lambert by cutting her throat, he then murdered their three children; Annie, five, John, eight and Samuel, two. Their throats had also been cut but Annie and Samuel had additionally been beaten with a hammer.

Percy Atkin 1922 – Buried his wife Maud whilst she was still alive.

Albert Burrows 1923 – In 1920 Albert killed his wife Hannah (nee Calladine), their baby son Albert and Hannah’s four-year-old daughter Elsie. On a day out in the Peak District he killed his wife and son and threw their bodies down a disused mine air-shaft, the following day he took Elsie to the same place and killed her. Albert had married Hannah bigamously and returned to live with his first wife. In 1923 Burrows sexually assaulted and murdered four-year-old Thomas Wood who was a neighbour of theirs and took him to the same mine shaft. Police found Thomas’s body and eventually discovered the rest of Albert’s family down there.

Arthur Simms 1924 – Killed his nine-year-old sister-in-law Rosa Armstrong. Simms strangled the young girl with one of her own bootlaces, she was found still clutching a bag of sweets he had bought her.

William Knighton 1927 – Killed his mother at their home in Ilkeston by cutting her throat.

George Frederick Hayward 1828 – The final hanging in the city. Hayward murdered Derbyshire woman Amy Collinson by cutting her throat.
At the March Assizes in 1784 nine prisoners received the death sentence from Mr Baron Eyre. Ann Castledine, aged 28 years for the wilful murder of a new-born female illegitimate child, Robert Rushton for beating his daughter to death; Robert Brown and Matthew White for robbing William Lineker of Plumptre; Thomas Henfrey from Stathern and William Ryder from Stonesley, near Waltham for highway robbery of Mr Richard Caunt of Plungar; John Briggs for burgling the house of William Doyes of Whatton; Thomas Blackner for burgling the house of William Rhodes at Hucknall Torkard and Nathaniel Waters, for stealing twenty yards of linen from the shop of Mr C Ledbeater of Mansfield, Grocer. Before the judge had left town, five of them were reprieved; Castledine, Rushton, Henfrey and Ryder were all still hung at Gallows Hill.

On March 13th 1795 David Proctor was tried and condemned before Mr Justice Rooke for raping his ten-year-old step-daughter Charlotte Waters. The evidence was overwhelming and Proctor was sentenced to death without mercy. Proctor exclaimed ‘This is real murder!’ He was hung on the 25th at Gallows Hill attended by a Baptist Minister. Proctor, who was very devout proclaimed his innocence all the way through to his last breath. David Proctor was 36 years old and lived in Broad Marsh, he was originally from Sheffield and a razor grinder. He was interred in St Mary’s Churchyard.

On 24th March 1805 the new Hephzibah chapel opened. The chapel was built on the Paddock near Broad-Lane. The Rev. Mr Dawson of Keyworth, and the Rev. H Crockford, pastor of the church, and formerly of the Zion Chapel, Halifax Lane, gave a sermon.
The telling of the Mayflower Pilgrims story, for which 2020 is the 400th anniversary, has traditionally emphasised those who sailed with the ship from Southampton to the coast of what became Massachusetts. Of these several had Nottinghamshire connections – the two best-known are William Brewster and William Bradford. Also of significance were Katherine Carver, who was one of the White family of Sturton le Steeple and later of Beauvale, and perhaps her husband John Carver whose origins are uncertain although we do know there had been Carvers in Sturton le Steeple during the 1600s.

The focus on the people who went away to America, mainly via the Netherlands in 1608, has resulted in a very narrow tale bereft of much of its wider significance. For example, the role of Nottinghamshire’s John Smyth as the driving force of separation is often neglected and indeed coverage of Sturton in a new leaflet for Mayflower 400 totally ignores him although both Smyth and John
Robinson, the ‘pastor of the Pilgrims’, were born there.

The role of Smyth and Thomas Helwys, from Broxtowe, in championing the cause of religious liberty is a Nottinghamshire story of global significance that has also been omitted from the Mayflower tale. That Smyth and Helwys also started the Baptist denomination has perhaps led to a reduced interest about them from the earlier American Congregational historians who framed the story. Moreover, the focus on the voyage of 1620 makes it convenient to ignore the evidence that most of the peers of Brewster et al did not leave the country at all – they stayed to continue the fight into the Civil War when associated names like Whalley and Ireton became nationally significant.

The purpose of this article is to focus on the origins of the radical puritanism in Nottinghamshire that gave rise to the separation of 1606-8; perhaps in a further article we can reflect more on what happened after the Pilgrims had gone. When we look at where this radicalism came from, we can see that the story of New England really began in Nottinghamshire in the mid-1530s.

It is well known that Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury through the crucial years of English Reformation, was born in Aslockton in Nottinghamshire in 1489. Throughout his life he kept in contact with his many relatives and friends both from our county and neighbouring Lincolnshire, chief amongst them being Sir John Markham. Markham, a friend of thirty years who probably knew Cranmer in his youth, was from a substantial family previously based at ‘Great’ Markham and later at Cotham; Markham had been in the service of Lady Margaret Beaufort and was an early adopter of ‘forward’ religion. As early as 1537 Cranmer noted that ‘Sir John of long season hath uneignedly favoured the truth of God’s word:’ one would love to know the definition here of ‘long’. Cranmer also spoke up for Nottinghamshire men like Anthony Neville and was related through marriage to many others, such as Richard Whalley, of a family then on the rise.

The Lincolnshire and Yorkshire risings of 1536 proved a crucial turning point for these gentry. Markham was especially prominent in serving the King loyally, and in the aftermath Thomas Cromwell and Thomas Cranmer relied heavily on them for the dissolution of the monasteries. The dissolution of Lenton Priory involved Markham, Sir John Hercy of Grove, George Lassells of Sturton (later Gateford), Richard Whalley and John Babington; here it is very significant that all of these were related to each other directly or by marriage, and at least indirectly to Cranmer. Markham and Hercy were married to sisters. Whalley and Lassells were both at times employed by Thomas Cromwell whilst Babington’s will made clear his Protestant beliefs.

It is worth a moment to think about the Protestant trail through the Whalley family. Richard Whalley (1498-1583) was trusted to dissolve monasteries and profited from this, purchasing the Welbeck estate; his son Richard (1558-
1632) followed the puritan path and presented the great puritan pastor Richard Bernard to the living of Worksop in 1601. His son, Edward Whalley, was related to Oliver Cromwell by marriage, played a significant role in the Civil War and famously fled to New England as a regicide in 1660.

Much less well known is the name of Sir John Hercy, but his significance for the Pilgrims is very great. In 1536 Hercy was the childless lord of Grove near Retford, the dominant landowner in that part of the county. Through his many sisters he was related to most of the significant Protestant families – including the Markhams, Denmans, Hatfields (who were also related to Cranmer) and the Nevilles. Many of these did well out of the dissolution – for example the Nevilles gained the lands of Mattersey Priory, but it is worth being aware that one of this family was imprisoned as a separatist in 1608 and then fled to Holland – so again we have a puritan tradition. Hercy’s father had also taken on the guardianship of three Lassells children from Sturton, with whom they were also related, and which Sir John then continued. Often this extended family worked together: in April 1539 Norwell Chantry was being handled by Hercy, Markham and Nicholas Denman who was Hercy’s brother in law.

We could fill an entire volume with Hercy’s family connections to other evangelical and puritan families. Thomas Disney (1579-1623) of Norton Disney married as his second wife Elizabeth Denman of Retford and his third Bridget Nevile of Mattersey – both relatives of Sir John Hercy; Disney owned Beauvale, where John Robinson went to woo Bridget White in the early 1600s.

Hercy’s sister Anne married Nicholas Denman and this created a powerful family with manors at Ordsall and West Retford. William Denman, a Cambridge graduate, had been ordained at Grove Chapel by the Bishop of Hull in 1551, the home of Sir John Hercy his uncle. He became rector of Ordsall from 1550; under Mary I he was summoned in 1554 and deprived in 1556 due to being married and he fled to Europe. Clergy appointed by Richard Whalley were amongst several others deprived in the area. After his period in exile, Denman was restored to the living at Ordsall in 1559 by Royal Commission and left a remarkable monument in his church, now lost, but which ended with the words: ‘At length, being dead, I lie under this heap—Dead! Ah! Mistake! — I live a blessed life; the earth has my carcass; my Spirit inhabits Heaven.’

Hercy’s death in 1570 made the Denmans wealthy and Rev William Denman became Lord of the Manor of West Retford in 1572, the title passing to his brother Francis in 1588. The Denman family systematically appointed puritan clergy and were happy to accept those who were evidently nonconformist into their livings; they effectively protected repeat offenders such as Thomas Hancock. John Denman married the sister of Walter Travers, a controversial radical clergyman from Nottingham who was of international prominence for many years. They continued Hercy’s
policy of bringing evangelical preachers into the area making Babworth a puritan church under Robert Lilley and then Richard Clifton – it was a nonconformist centre many years before Clifton was deprived in 1605, an event which began the process that eventually led to the sailing of the Mayflower. Other families followed the same approach of appointing progressive puritan clergy – the Wasteneys at Headon being another example. In 1605 a large group of Retford people were charged with illegally going to hear John Robinson preach at Sturton, this group containing several members of the extended Denman family such as the Sloswickes, whilst it was inevitably one of the Denmans who disrupted the first Easter service after Clifton had been removed from Babworth. So, again, it is very easy to trace a continuous line from Hercy to Clifton, Brewster and the Mayflower.

Yet another significant connection has largely been missed from this story. We have mentioned Hercy’s care for the Lassells children – George, John and Mary. They were originally from Sturton. George played a major role in the downfall of Lord Darcy, the previous lord of the manor of Sturton, after Darcy’s treacherous role in the risings of 1536-7. Sir John Babington wrote to Cromwell in July 1537 to report that he’d met George Lassells in London and discussed the belief that Darcy had received warning from the conspirator Aske (then in the Tower with George’s cousin Christopher) to stay away. Lassells told how he had been sharing a bed at Gainsborough Old Hall with Thomas Estoft, who described how Darcy had arranged with Aske, who had been invited to London for Christmas by Henry, to set post horses on the road from London to Lincoln so he could be warned if he was in danger and ‘again raise the people for his deliverance.’ Darcy was executed in London in June 1537 and Aske was hung in chains at York in July. In 1540 Lassells got the manor.

Mary was sent off to London to spend some time in the household of the Duchess of Norfolk before getting married; in about 1536 she was living there with Katherine Howard, the future queen. John was found various roles in London through the support of Cromwell and Cranmer, though he lost at least one because of his evangelical views. However, by 1539 he had a place in the King’s household and was the leader of a radical Protestant group within it – at a dangerous time. Lassells’ attempt to keep a low profile was disrupted when his sister Mary told him that she did not wish to associate with the Queen because of her immoral behaviour before marriage – a disclosure that Lassells took to his compatriot Cranmer and which set off a cataclysm of events leading to the Queen’s execution but left Lassells a marked man with bitter enemies.

Lassells’ political vulnerability lay in his progressive faith, then far in advance of Henry VIII’s and also ahead of Cranmer’s - especially on the topic of the ‘real presence’ in the mass which Lassells rejected. In 1546 Lassells was one of several people arrested, including his close associate Anne Asyscough (often spelt incorrectly as
‘Askew’), from a family with both Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire associations. Much of their correspondence has been preserved, even from within the Tower, and Anne was famously tortured. Along with two others, they were burnt at Smithfield in 1546 for heresy.

The significance of this event for Nottinghamshire has been largely forgotten, but it shows that the radical gentry of the county produced one of the most important martyrs of the Reformation and specifically one who was at the centre of power supporting one of the most challenging new ideas.

The BBC series ‘The Tudors’ left Lassells out entirely, with Anne Ayscough burnt alone whilst the Church of England remembers Anne every 16th July but not Lassells. Yet Professor Dickens has seen Lassells as the leading figure: ‘Lascells and not Anne Askew was the leading spirit of the group.’ Famously, Cranmer absented himself during the proceedings that led to the burning of these two with home associations for him; within a few months he had also come to agree with them on the issue of transubstantiation. Of course, Cranmer himself was to meet a similar death within a few years.

When the Mayflower sailed in 1620, its leading passengers were thus propelled by a radical tradition from their homeland stretching back at least ninety years. We can easily trace the trail of influence from Markham, Hercy, Lassells and Cranmer to Denman, Whalley, Clifton and the Brewster. Probably Smyth provided the catalyst. We can also trace it forwards to major figures in the civil war like Edward Whalley, Henry Ireton, from a puritan family planted into Attenborough by evangelical gentry, and Ireton’s cousin John Hutchinson. These, together with the less convincing figure of Gilbert Millington, were the four Nottinghamshire gentry who signed Charles I’s death warrant after a struggle in which religious issues played a dominant role.

Adrian Gray’s book on Nottinghamshire’s religious heritage, Restless Souls Pilgrim Roots: The Turbulent History of Christianity in Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire, is being published by Bookworm Retford in early 2020. He helps with Mayflower 400 and other topics for the community projects Bassetlaw Christian Heritage and Pilgrims & Prophets Christian Heritage Tours, raising awareness of Nottinghamshire’s unique heritage. You can book tours or talks and follow events at:

https://pilgrimsandprophets.co.uk/
https://bassetlawchristianheritage.com/
https://www.facebook.com/PilgrimsAndProphets/

Sources
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John Coffey, Persecution and Tolerance in Protestant England, 2000
D MacCulloch, Thomas Cranmer, a Life
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Some of Adrian’s books on the subject

Poet’s Corner - Di Slaney

The original inspiration for the poem was coming into possession of two historical documents from the family of the farmer who used to own and run Manor Farm in Bilsthorpe, when our 400-year-old farmhouse was part of a large working farm. The Ordnance Survey map of 1920 was the first starting point, where I could see the names of places that no longer exist in the modern day, and then I looked further into the details of the many lost farms in the immediate Bilsthorpe area, many of which had fantastic, evocative names like Labour-in-Vain. The catalogue Particulars, Plans and Conditions of Sale of the Rufford Abbey Estate from 1938 gave much more background information about the nature of those farms – whether they were dairy, how many buildings and what type, how many acres for the overall holding – and from this and other useful documents about the nature of farming in the area (attached), I was able to let my imagination start to build a picture of a lost time. I tried to make the language speak of that loss of heritage, with the repetition of Not and No of Nottinghamshire emphasising the sadness of the disappearance of a way of living that will never come again.

Di Slaney. Picture Credit Di Slaney

This particular poem won first prize in the Four Corners Poetry Competition 2015, organised by St Cross College, University of Oxford. It was also published in Reward for Winter by Valley Press (2016).
Ingar's Holt

is nothing now; no brushwood, ash or elm, no marker boundary to the mor, no bolthole cover for the son, his father famed for everything he lacked, no bracken beds for village girls too slow to run, no heathered haze to gravel pit, no quick cut on to Cockett Barn, no pheasant flush or rabbit tracelines through the mud. Nothing left now, none of it.

Labour-in-Vain

is nowhere now; no farm of dust and stones to ire the tithemen used to fecund work, no bricks or slates or tiles that propped the granary wall against the turnip house, no sickly cows whose milk ran thin and drenched the empty calf box, no horses lathered with the toil of dredging hard small gains. Nowhere but here now, this hostile soil.

Wycar Leys

is not the same now; no dairy for the lord, the kiarr long gone down to the holt, no byres rousting pigs to troughs higgled with turnips, no parlour maids smirking secrets through the cream, pressing tokens into curds wheyed down for love, no farmhands cagged with clay dragging their Sunday Best home. Not the same now, in any way.

Parson's Pond

is nobody's tryst now; no rector eking acres to sweat a shilling, no fishing rights for enclaved few, no ribald gossip at the pump, no carpe diem at the open view, no ginnel out to Stoney Field, no windbreak there to choke the gusts that barrel through. Nobody trysts now, or knows how to.

(Right) Excerpt taken from The London Gazette January 19th, 1883 and part of the inspiration for Di's poem.
Historian’s Classified Ads

We are pleased to offer our readers the chance to buy and sell their Nottinghamshire based memorabilia, selling through us ensures that your item stays within the area for many more generations of Nottinghamians to enjoy.

Please note that due to the Historian being published on a bi annual basis, sale will not be immediate, if you urgently want to sell an item, we suggest some of the popular online platforms. If you wish to sell an item through us, there is no charge. Brief description plus up to 3 images and contact details can be sent to editor@nlha.org.uk.

Images must be in jpeg format and descriptions sent via email or word document. If you are selling an item with a history behind it, we would love to hear the story.

For Sale

Sherwood Forest Map (Framed) size 18 1/2 inches by 23 inches. Rare map by Bob Sharman £40. Email editor@nlha.org.uk

Volunteering Opportunities

A new venture in North Nottinghamshire is looking for dedicated volunteers to be part of a heritage project.

Situated 7 miles north of the city centre, the grade II listed sites (2 of them) are places of both medieval and monastic interest. One site encompasses the remains of a fortified medieval manor house, the other a potential monastic grange. You do not need any previous experience but must have a willingness to learn. There is no upper age barrier but we welcome children 14+ accompanied by a volunteer adult as we are keen to offer work experience to those wishing to enter the world of heritage/history.

We are an inclusive organisation and welcome everyone.

Roles include: - Volunteer Liaison Gardeners Researchers Heritage Guide (on site) Heritage Guide (walking tours) Archaeology Assistants General office work & Movers and Shakers (to help arrange, clean and organise). If none of the above roles are of interest to you but you would still like to be involved, or if you would like to discuss anything further please send an expression of interest to:

greasleycastleproject@gmail.com
Book Reviews

**Hawksworth** is a very comprehensive and interesting history of a Nottinghamshire village that probably many of us have never visited. Anne Dunne successfully picks away at the layers of history to reveal a really noteworthy story of a village from Norman times to the present day. This book is a MUST for anyone wishing to research the place where they live as it is packed full of remarkable history, colour photographs and original documents to guide you. You can buy it through Amazon for £10.

**Sneinton People** is a really detailed study of locals in the 1980’s. Seven people were interviewed (two a couple) and each tell a vivid account of their lives. Those interviewed by Dave Ablitt were a vicar, WWI veteran, national union president, drug addict, scrap man and Iranian refugees. The study does not just look at the 1980’s but delves deep into the interviewee’s past to tell of some truly remarkable stories. Book can be purchased via Five Leaves book shop and Amazon for £5.

**Welcome To The Cheap Seats** by Andrew Graves is a look at social history through cinema. A very clever and detailed book that takes the working class out of their everyday lives and into the imagery and storylines depicted through the silver screen and beyond. This is an excellent down-to-earth viewpoint that encompasses films such as Saturday Night and Sunday Morning, Kes and Billy Elliott. Films are looked at through genres such as The Other Side of the Kitchen Sink and Don’t let the Bastards Grind You Down. Great read for cinema lovers, social historians and anyone with an interest in the past. The book can be purchased at Five Leaves Book Shop and on Amazon for £9.99.
Website Reviews
Sarah Seaton

YouTube

One well known website that has gone from strength to strength is YouTube. YouTube is one of the major players in many realms of life today. People use it for a multitude of things; reviewing new items, learning how to do something, such as learning languages or crocheting, but did you know that there is also a wealth of history within its archives? If you type in Old Nottingham, it comes up with many amazing glimpses into our city’s past. There is an excerpt of Mitchell and Kenyon’s ride through the city in 1902. This shows both old and new Nottingham and is a MUST for any local history enthusiast, it really brings the past to life. There are many other short films such as Slab Square 1950’s and Nottingham City Centre 1972. Great for nostalgia!

YouTube is a great history resource, many of the Time Team episodes are on there, showing local(ish) digs such as Codnor Castle. Many local historians have uploaded films too such as a Nottingham Castle Tour and Sneinton in the 1980’s. One of my favourites is called Gimme Shelter, a look at the Nottingham Slums and the people who lived there in the 1960’s and introduced by the late Ray Gosling. This is a MUST for natives of the town and those interested in social history.

You can experience a cave tour, castle tour and many others from the comfort of your own armchair.

There are also short films such as The Mystery of Scrooby Manor, spooky tales from the Trip to Jerusalem pub plus many more!

youtube.com

Protestation Returns

One of the earliest types of census returns that we have are the Protestation Returns of 1641/2. By order of the House of Commons, all adult men were asked to swear an oath of allegiance to the Protestant religion in 1642. Their names were duly inscribed in a list in each parish, and the list sent back to Parliament.

The first page of Radford’s Protestation Return Source:
digitalarchive.parliament.co.uk