

THOROTON



No. 41: Autumn 2005



MYLES THOROTON HILDYARD

There are few members who are able to remember the Society before Myles's presidency, and even fewer whose memories include his joining in 1933. His interest in archaeology, particularly in Minoan civilization, began when he was at Eton: little did he know then that Crete would play such an important part in his life. Local History had begun to cast its spell on him in 1928, when his father inherited Flintham, which became the family home. Myles's father, Judge Hildyard K.C., was not interested in ancestry or Victoriana, or the Thorotons - as far as he was concerned, the family were Hildyards. An ancestor, Colonel Thomas Thoroton, had changed his name to Hildyard on marrying an heiress in 1815, and Myles was later to write: 'If I had had children I would have changed my name again'. He was fascinated by the Thorotons, whose connection with Flintham had lasted over 200 years, and with the near neighbourhood for even longer. In particular, he valued his descent from a brother of Dr Robert Thoroton, in whose honour the Society is named.

Having completed his training as a barrister, Myles joined the Sherwood Rangers when war broke out, and was soon bound for France, then Palestine, and in 1941 for Crete. Soon the island was overwhelmed by the German airborne invasion and orders came to evacuate. After several frustrated attempts to leave by sea Myles and his unit found themselves imprisoned. He and a fellow officer managed to escape to the hills, and for two months were sheltered by friendly Cretans, some of whom regularly visited Flintham after the War. Myles and his colleague were able eventually to reach Turkey, on the way being entrusted with a steel box of 'secret papers' which they handed to the military attaché in Ankara. It was this Cretan episode which earned Myles his M.C. After the war he returned to Flintham and took up farming and estate management. His father died in 1956, and Myles inherited the house and estate. That year he became Honorary Secretary of the Society, and he was elected President in 1961.

Over the next forty years Myles improved and enhanced the estate, and brought the neglected house to its present glory, in particular restoring the wonderful library and its unique conservatory. Thoroton Society members have had several opportunities to visit the house and grounds, most memorably in 1997, the Centenary Year, when 146 members joined Myles on the south lawn. Myles had always taken a great interest in the gardens and in the park. It was appropriate therefore that the Society should mark his forty years as President with the gift of a tree: a *liquidamba styraciflua* was planted on 17 November 2001, which should soon be coming into its autumn splendour.

Neville Hoskins

CONGRATULATIONS to our Chairman, Professor John Beckett, who has been seconded to the University of London, and who from September this year will become Director of the Victoria County History. Fortunately, John intends to remain in Nottingham, and to continue as Chairman of the Thoroton Society. We wish him every success for the future.

ANNUAL LUNCHEON: Saturday 5 November

With this mailing you will have received details of this year's Annual Luncheon at the West Retford Hotel, which is a splendid Georgian hotel in lovely grounds at Retford. Those who attend our Annual Luncheon report a very enjoyable occasion so, if you haven't been before, why not try this special social event in Thoroton's calendar? Book your place for 5 November and enjoy a sparkling lunch!

~ The Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire ~

~ The County's Principal Historical Society ~

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

AUTUMN LECTURE PROGRAMME

Please note - Saturday lectures are on the same dates as on the programme card, but in a different order

Saturday 8 October: *The 17th-Century Book of Games by Francis Willoughby of Wollaton*, by Dr Dorothy Johnston, Keeper of Manuscripts & Special Collections, University of Nottingham

Francis Willoughby (1635-1672) was head of the Willoughby family of Middleton, Warwickshire and Wollaton, Nottinghamshire, his son Thomas becoming the first Lord Middleton. Francis has become perhaps the most famous member of his family through his scientific interests, his association with fellow members of the Royal Society, and his close collaboration with John Ray, the natural historian. Together, Willoughby and Ray made expeditions throughout England, Wales and on the Continent, collecting specimens and making observations about

the natural world. After Willoughby's death, Ray edited his work on birds and fishes. During the 1660s Francis Willoughby began to painstakingly record his study of games, occasionally speculating about their origin or features, and paying particular attention to games played by children. His work was left in obscurity at his premature death.

Now forming part of the Middleton Collection which is held in the University of Nottingham Manuscripts Department, the work has recently been edited by D. Cram, F. Forgemag and D. Johnston (Ashgate, 2003).

**Tuesday 11 October: The Keith Train Lecture, in association with Nottingham Civic Society
Refurbishment in Nottingham, by Ken Powell**

Mr Powell who is architectural correspondent and author of several books on architecture, is currently writing a book for RIBA on refurbishment in Nottingham over the last twenty years. The lecture starts at 7.30pm, at the Cathedral Hall, Wellington Circus, Nottingham (entrance at the junction of North Circus Street and Upper College Street).

Saturday 12 November: *Southwell and Lincoln Minsters: Origins and Development*, by Dr Philip Dixon



Philip Dixon was Reader in Medieval Archaeology at the University of Nottingham, and is Visiting Professor at the University of Aarhus. He is also Archaeologist for the Dean and Chapter at both Southwell and Lincoln, and Archeological Commissioner for Cathedrals of the Cathedral Fabric Commission. The cathedrals of Southwell and Lincoln are well known, but recent work has thrown light on the earliest phases of the buildings, and this might perhaps begin to change our views about the intentions of their founders. This lecture considers the location and nature of the Anglo-Saxon churches that preceded both Minsters, and provides new evidence for the shape of the first cathedral at Lincoln.

Picture left - the west front of Lincoln Cathedral

**Saturday 10 December: The Nottinghamshire History Lecture,
Theatre and Performance in 19th-Century Nottingham: or 'Wanted, 100 Little Girls', by Dr Jo Robinson, Lecturer in Drama, University of Nottingham**

Dr Robinson will discuss her current research project on theatre and performance in nineteenth-century Nottingham, through which she is seeking to build up a picture of the competing performances within the town, from Shakespeare at the Theatre Royal to penny readings in local school and church halls. Taking as its starting point a page of advertisements from the *Nottingham and Midland Counties Daily Express* of Saturday 30 September 1865, the lecture will explore the variety of performances on offer to audiences within Nottingham, which included drama, pantomime, music hall, lectures and concerts. It will also raise questions about how we might begin to understand those audiences and the choices they made in attending the theatre.

FOOD, GLORIOUS FOOD! A day seminar on Food will be held at Bromley House on **Saturday 26 November**, from 10am to 4pm. Speakers will address subjects such as 16th- and 18th-century food, the history of school dinners, and rationing between 1939-54. This should prove to be a very entertaining and interesting day, with buffet lunch and, hopefully, some samples of the period foods. The cost will be between £10-£15. For further information and/or to book, contact Carol Allison, tel. 0115 9473134.

REPORTS OF EXCURSIONS

Saturday 21 May - Middleton Hall and Middleton Church, Warwickshire

Leaders: Dorothy Johnston and Leslie Cram

The approach through gravel works did not prepare us for the striking first view of Middleton Hall (pictured right), the seat of Wollaton's Willoughby family, with its restored sixteenth-century and Georgian wings. Professor Ian Dillamore gave us an excellent presentation on the history of Middleton, and on the Willoughby family's links with Nottingham, and their connection with iron working. We were then shown plentiful evidence of growth through 500 years of this rambling house, followed by walks in the grounds and Ian's guided visit to the early ironworks. The Willoughby family owned Middleton Hall from the late Middle Ages, but through circumstances



reduced by death duties in the early twentieth century were forced to sell it, along with Wollaton Hall. By the 1970s much of Middleton was crumbling. Fortunately a team of dedicated local people formed a Trust to raise funds and preserve the site, with its various buildings, water, wildlife and emerging industrial history.

At St. John the Baptist Church, Dr Johnston related the Willoughby family's history, and pointed out features of interest, including an enormous 17th-century monument to Francis and Cassandra Willoughby and their naturalist son Francis, founder member of the Royal Society.

Thanks go to our Leaders and to our Middleton hosts for a first-rate visit to a site little known in Nottingham. Not only was the location of great interest, it was good to see the many activities involved in the successful preservation of a historic house. The day was great fun and enjoyed by all, with regular refreshment, especially a delicious tea close by the grand staircase.

Pauline Miller

Saturday 25 June - North Nottinghamshire Churches

Leaders: Jean Nicholson and Michael Jackson



Our first stop on this tour was at Osberton's immaculate church. It was built in 1833 by George Foljambe as a memorial to his wife, and was originally a private estate chapel, but was later converted into a parish church. Here our jovial coachdriver Graham, organist and choirmaster of Edwalton, gave an impromptu recital!

We then had time to take a quick lunch at Retford, where many members enjoyed the Farm & Country Festival in the garden of the Museum, before moving on to visit Yorkshire's Austerfield, with its lovely twelfth-century church. An unusual feature of the church is the tympanum over the south doorway (pictured left), depicting a dragon. Our journey then took us on to Finningley church, whose sturdy wooden roof attracted much attention, as it was not made for this church, and might have come from Mathersey

Priory. Misson was the next place on our agenda, which proved to be a lovely flower-filled surprise, before we travelled on to Scrooby for tea and strawberries. The day ended with a tour of Scrooby church with its medieval wood carvings, and a walk to the Manor House. This was a very full and enjoyable day, which was sadly Michael and Jean's swan song.

REPORTS OF EXCURSIONS

Tuesday 12 July - Victorian Nottingham and the Adams Building

Leader: Ken Brand

On an extremely warm and pleasant evening, Ken Brand led a party around Victorian Nottingham, the highlight of the tour being a visit to the Adams Building in Stoney Street - and what a building! Dominating the Lace Market, it is now Grade II listed. Thomas Hine was the architect, and what an impression it must have created at that time - in contrast to the surrounding plainer and more functional industrial buildings - with its Anglo-Italian elevations, two-storey central light well and grand staircase. The original owner was Thomas Adams, who was a Victorian industrialist and staunch Anglican. Much of the building's basement was devoted to a chapel which was capable of accommodating over five hundred workers and managers, who were able to attend daily service before work. Two tea rooms were provided - one for men and one for women. We visited the lace lofts, which were designed to admit maximum light for the workers. In most other buildings these were glazed with square timber windows, but Hine's innovative designs incorporated iron panels with round-headed windows.

Various alterations were made to the building over the years, and by the early 1990s it was in a serious state of decline. In 1996 the Lace Market Heritage Trust acquired it, restored it, and it is now occupied by New College Nottingham. Restoration of the Adams building triggered a revitalization of the Lace Market as a whole. Many thanks to Ken for an excellent tour, which he conducted in his usual incredibly informative yet relaxed style - the evening was thoroughly enjoyed by everyone.

Janice Avery

Saturday 23 July - Newark, Besthorpe and Ossington

Leader: Alan Langton

The visit to Newark parish church and the historical tour around it had special significance, as they coincided with a most impressive Flower Festival. A notable authority on Newark church, Miss Brenda Pask gave us the benefit of her knowledge and research. At Besthorpe we were able to benefit from Mr Peter Connelly's considerable archaeological expertise, and were inspired by his enthusiasm. We were able to trace the development of the site from the Neolithic-Bronze Age remains through to evidence of the Romano-British settlement. This tour brought vividly to life Mr Connelly's October 2004 lecture to the Society. The final part of the day saw us move on to Ossington, with its church built in the wood in the eighteenth century by Robert Denison, in memory of his brother, William. Statues of both brothers by the Belgian sculptor, Nollekens, stand in a beautifully maintained church. We were addressed by a member of the Ossington congregation, Mrs June Boulby, and entertained by an unusual barrel organ. The day ended in the village hall, where we enjoyed a splendid salad tea.

REGISTER OF EVENTS

You should have received with the last mailing a request for dates marking significant local events, births, deaths etc. So far Thoroton members have been a little slow in coming forward! If you know of any such anniversary, especially those of a particularly local nature, please let the Honorary Secretary know, and we will be able to plan ahead in order to reflect the event in our programme. Write to Barbara Cast, Honorary Secretary of the Thoroton Society, at The Little Dower House, Station Road, Bleasby, Notts, NG14 7FX, (or contact her at bjcast@aol.com).

CHANGE OF VENUE FOR THOROTON LECTURES

The Society's Officers were recently made aware only by the appearance of planning applications, that we will almost certainly lose the use of the YMCA Hall for our lectures. Subsequent frantic telephone calls have led to a possible solution. It is most probable that from 2006 the Saturday lectures will be held in the new Mechanics' Hall, which is situated at the foot of North Sherwood Street. Exact details have yet to be finalized, but there could possibly be changes to the year's programme. In addition, it might not be possible to hold lectures regularly on the second Saturday of the month. It is important that members look out for notices in the Newsletters.

Neville Hoskins

Please email contributions for *Newsletter* No. 42 by 1 November 2005 to Janice Avery at janaver@waitrose.com.
The views expressed in the *Newsletter* are not necessarily those of the Editor, the Society or its Council.
