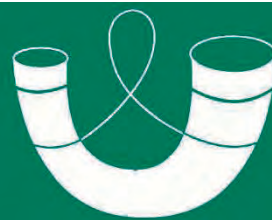


# THE THOROTON SOCIETY

Nottinghamshire's History and Archaeology Society



The Quarterly Newsletter of the Thoroton Society

Issue 101

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Stanley Frederick Johnson, the restored grave tablet. See article on page 8

Photo: Kevin Powell

*The Thoroton Society of Nottinghamshire*

*The County's Principal History and Archaeology Society*

*Visit the Thoroton Society website at: [www.thorotonsociety.org.uk](http://www.thorotonsociety.org.uk)*

## THOROTON SOCIETY'S NEW CHAIRMAN

### Dr Richard Gaunt

Dr Richard Gaunt, the new Chairman of the Council of the Thoroton Society is a native of Derbyshire who still lives in Codnor. Richard undertook his first degree in the Department of History at the University of Nottingham, and after training to be a teacher he returned to the University in 1996 on a research fellowship to study the political activities of the fourth Duke of Newcastle of Clumber Park. He completed his thesis in 2000 and was recruited to the academic staff. He is now an associate professor (the modern way of describing senior lecturer/reader).

Richard's historical interests have concentrated mainly on the political world of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He gave the Nottinghamshire History Lecture in 2000 on, appropriately, the fourth Duke of Newcastle, and in 2003 he published an edited version of the duke's Nottinghamshire diaries as volume 43 in the Thoroton Society's Record Series. Since that time a steady flow of publications have appeared in a whole range of journals as well as several books. Many of the articles have appeared in *Transactions of the Thoroton Society*, and Richard was History editor of the journal 2008-11. His Nottinghamshire publications are listed with full bibliographical details in the *Nottinghamshire Bibliography*.

Richard has lectured regularly to the Society and has spoken (often more than once) at numerous local history society meetings around the county. He is active in the Nottingham Civic Society and has also been heavily involved in the recent renovations to Nottingham Castle (under the sobriquet of Curator of Rebellion). He is a member of the city's Heritage Forum. For several years Richard was Chairman of the Friends of Nottinghamshire Archives, and he has been a member of the Thoroton Society's Council since he became editor in 2008.

Richard has curated three exhibitions at the Weston Gallery, Nottingham Lakeside Arts, on Gladstone, Waterloo and (sadly cut off by the enforced temporary closure of the gallery) the Prince Regent (King George IV). His recent interests include caricature, cartoons and songs, and the Pentrich Rebellion.

Outside of Nottinghamshire Richard has been equally active. His publications include a bibliography of Sir Robert Peel, and he is currently lead academic editor for the journal *Parliamentary History*.

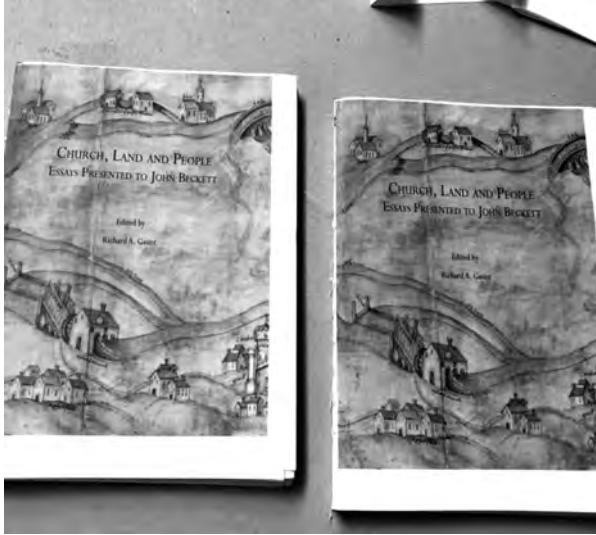
**John Beckett**

*A full account of his academic interests and outputs, as well as a discussion of his historical thinking, can be found at:*  
<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/humanities/departments/history/people/richard.gaunt>.

## MORE SOCIETY NEWS

The Society is delighted to announce that the fiftieth volume in its Record Series has been published. *Church, Land and People. Essays Presented to John Beckett* has been published to commemorate John Beckett's outstanding contribution to regional history, and especially the history of Nottinghamshire, during an academic career of forty five years, the last thirty of them as Professor of English Regional History at the University of Nottingham. The volume also marks the end of John's twenty-eight years as Chair of Council of the Thoroton Society and has been published to coincide with his seventieth birthday. The original plan was to surprise John with the book at the end of the Cust Lecture, which he was scheduled to give at the University of Nottingham as a 'valedictory' on 24 June. Given the intervention of COVID-19, it was decided to make a private presentation of the book, close to John's birthday, to be followed by celebratory opportunities for Thoroton members at the Annual Lunch on 7 November and at the re-scheduled Cust Lecture (date to be confirmed). John is also scheduled to give a valedictory lecture to the Thoroton Society in January 2021.

The presentation copy (see pictures) was specially bound for us by Andy Graves of Sycamore Bookbinding. Subscribers to the Record Section will be receiving their copies by post (if they have not already done so) imminently. The book is available to members of the Thoroton Society who are not subscribers to the Record Section for £22 plus £3 postage and packing; non-members may purchase copies for £32 plus £3 postage and packing. It is fair to say that John was delighted with the book, which is copiously illustrated. He was particularly impressed by the fact that the secret had been kept by everyone involved with the project for a period of three years!



The fly leaves showing the cover illustration (Andy Graves)



The final presentation volume with companion (Andy Graves)

**Richard Gaunt**

### TRIBUTE TO PHIL OWEN 1954-2020



It is with great sadness that we have to report that Phil Owen died on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2020 after losing his battle with prostate cancer. He will be sadly missed by all his friends.

Phil was very much a Nottinghamshire man. Born in Mansfield, he was brought up in Kirkby in Ashfield. In November 1973, just before his nineteenth birthday, he joined the army in the Intelligence Corps where he served his full term of twenty-two years. During his time in the army he was posted to many parts of the world (including Northern Ireland, Germany, Belize and the Falklands)

which gave him a lifelong interest in travel and the history of the army. On leaving the army he obtained a degree in History at Bolton. Following that, he returned to his Nottinghamshire roots: he bought a place in Bingham and began working for the Nottingham City Council. He obtained an MA in Local and Regional History at Nottingham University. He continued working for the Council until deciding to retire early after he became ill. In 2016 he became a volunteer in the Sherwood Foresters regimental museum at Nottingham Castle.

Phil's interests were wide ranging. The army was always a very important part of his life and his knowledge about it was extensive. He regularly attended both the Saturday Local History Seminars and the Thoroton Society meetings and enjoyed the latter's day trips. He always enjoyed going away on holiday and seeing new places – often with his mother or friends – but he was also quite happy going off on his own, particularly when the trip had a military leaning.

A lover of books, especially about the army, his home was overflowing with them. He was a great walker and also enjoyed meeting friends to go to the theatre or cinema, or for coffee or meals. He was a very private man, polite, friendly and kind who spent a lot of time laughing. He was writing a book about the South Notts Hussars which his mother said he had finished but that he was saddened that he didn't index it before he became too ill to work. A lovely man dying too early.

**Harriet & Stewart Buckthorp**

## **ANNUAL LUNCH, NOVEMBER 7th 2020**

This year our luncheon is to be held at the Welbeck Banqueting Suite at the Masonic Hall, West Bridgford. There is ample parking with an entrance off Balmoral Avenue. The postcode is NG2 7QW. The date is Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> November and the time is 1pm - you are asked to arrive by 12.30pm. The lunch will cost just £21 per person for a three course meal, including a traditional main course plus a vegetarian option, and tea or coffee. A variety of drinks will be available for you to purchase from the Bar.

We are using our Annual Luncheon this year to celebrate the services to the Thoroton Society of Professor John Beckett and Mrs Barbara Cast, both of whom are retiring from their respective roles as Chair of Council and Hon. Secretary this year. John Hess (formerly political editor of BBC East Midlands and a Thoroton Society member) will be our Master of Ceremonies. The lunch will also celebrate the publication of *Church, Land and People. Essays Presented to John Beckett* (volume 50, Record Series).

**IMPORTANT NOTE** – At the time of writing (23<sup>rd</sup> July), under social distancing, the Hall is allowed to accommodate only thirty people. However, we will proceed as in previous years, in the hope that by November we can have our usual crowd of around 75 members and friends. If this is not possible and numbers need to be restricted, we will operate a first-come-first-served, members-only system. Anyone who cannot be accommodated will be notified. However, should the coronavirus restrictions still be in place and it is necessary to cancel the event, all respondents will be notified either by email or telephone, and all cheques will be shredded. Should you wish your cheque to be returned to you in the event of cancellation, please enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

**John Wilson**

*(Please see the booking form for the Annual Lunch mailed to you with this Newsletter)*

## **FUTURE EVENTS**

Due to the continuing pandemic situation we are unable to offer any certainty as to when Thoroton activities will be resuming. The Society officers are working towards a possible restart in November but this will be subject to appropriate guidance from the Government and still liable to change at short notice. We will be keeping members updated through the website and the e-bulletin

and, for those unable to access either, there is a contact telephone number for me printed on page 19 of this newsletter.

**David Hoskins.**

**New member of the Thoroton Society since the last edition:** Jeremy Lodge

## **CONTRIBUTED ARTICLES FROM MEMBERS**

### **Laxton and the Black Death**

(This article originally appeared in the May 2020 edition of the Laxton Parish Magazine. It is reproduced here because it was felt that members of the Thoroton Society would find it interesting - if a little gruesome!)

I suppose that because I am a professional historian, people often ask me to compare events in history. Pandemics do not come along very often, thank goodness, but I have had several people ask me how Laxton might have fared in the Black Death of 1348-9. Most of us probably know little about the Black Death but have been prompted to ask questions by the present pandemic. In what follows you might even see some interesting parallels!

The Black Death, or great pestilence, or great plague, as contemporaries identified it, came from the east, probably along the Silk Road from China to reach Europe in 1347 and to arrive at Melcombe Regis near Weymouth in 1348.

Victims would notice tumours in the groin or armpits, and these would spread while black spots (hence the 'Black' Death) appeared on the body. This was followed by acute fever and vomiting of blood. How did any individual feel when they first spotted the tell-tale swellings and pustules which threatened a short, agonising illness and probable (or so they would have assumed) death, usually within two to seven days after infection took hold?

Most people must have assumed the worst when they first exhibited the tell-tale signs, although surprisingly the plague was not necessarily fatal: around half of those who caught the plague recovered.

How did you stop it spreading? Readers will not be surprised that the key was isolation. At Kibworth, Leicestershire, Michael Wood showed how bars were placed on the roads which passed through the village, but the movement of people simply could not be stopped, particularly during the daytime, and mortality was as great as in surrounding communities. Fourteen tenants died in Kibworth Beauchamp during April 1349, and many more in adjoining Kibworth Harcourt. People simply did not want to have their movements curtailed but without isolation, or social distancing, there was no way of stopping the pandemic from spreading.

Perhaps one-third to two-thirds of manorial tenants across the country died. There was no National Health Service of course, and no hospitals, let alone care homes. You just had to make do within your family unit.

Manor courts met regularly to oversee the transfer of land as estate tenants died, and we can assume this happened in Laxton although the court rolls have not survived for the Black Death period. The villagers had somehow to keep going in the hope that one day normal life would be restored. Then, as now, no one was any longer sure of what normal was.

There was barely time to bury the dead, and survivors had no space to mourn because they did not want to be overtaken by famine. Between funerals they had to press on with the day to day business of ploughing, sowing and reaping, quite apart from looking after the animals.

The aftermath was also painful: such huge population losses inevitably affected a whole way of life. It took something like 200 years to recover, and in that process numerous villages were deserted, many others shrunk, and the old manorial structure was brought to its knees. It never recovered.

What do we know about the Black Death in Laxton? The most reliable interpretations use turnover of clergy, since we usually have a list of clergy persons which includes this information. At Laxton Adam de Whileheved was instituted in December 1348, but he was quickly followed by Roger de Middleton in August 1349. If you see a new clergyman in 1348 and another in 1349 or similar it looks like plague. Since clergy were expected to tend their flock they were inevitably in the front line when it came to comforting the sick.

Other historians look at the contraction of fields, which was the case at Laxton. Where it looks as if there has been contraction of the open/common fields, it *implies* population decline, almost certainly from 1348-9.

It is hard now to imagine, given the passing of time and our quite different views of God, the devil, and medical men, just what it was like to live through the Black Death. The bland record of tenancy changes immures us to the sickness, the funerals and the mental torture through which whole communities passed. How did a community which believed in God's punishment being delivered through illness and death reconcile the events of 1348-9 with the state of their immortal souls?

Just how many people died? Probably 2.5 – 3 million nationally, but no one was counting carefully. This would represent a figure of c.50 per cent mortality. The decline in the economy indicates that it was severe – just as many are predicting a decline or even collapse of the economy after coronavirus.

There were other parallels with today, including the idea of isolation as a way of stopping the virus spreading. The Black Death generation very quickly established the importance of isolation, which was used for similar epidemics, as at Eyam in Derbyshire when the Black Death arrived in 1665. The people of Eyam stayed and cared for their own, shutting themselves off from the outside world. Eyam became a plague quarantine to stop the spread of the disease. Local people chose to die to save others from the same fate.

The personal tragedies which lay behind the appalling figures for 1348-9 are largely lost to us. For a few months village life must have been disrupted, if only because people kept clear of each other – social isolation or social distancing – in a vain attempt to avoid the contagion, but the scale of the disaster was such that communities were torn apart. Rents went unpaid, and cottages and land were surrendered to the lord.

Burying the dead was a problem. The clergy must have done their best to administer the last sacrament in this Roman Catholic community, but they were vulnerable. Both the vicar of Kibworth Harcourt (and his sister) succumbed to the plague so there was no one to take the funerals. Nor was time available to dig individual graves in the churchyard. At Kibworth, the new vicar simply bought a field, hastily requested the bishop to licence it as a cemetery, and then arranged for victims to be laid in open pits to save time. Someone in the community would be persuaded to dig a plague pit, line it with lime, and throw the bodies in. It was not seemly, but there were no alternatives. I wonder whether the burial teams wore masks?

The stench, the pain, the turmoil of these months can only be guessed at as community after community buried so many of its members, adults and children alike. Did they close the churches or stop taking funerals? No, not like today, although probably churches closed by default since no one wanted to take a plague-ridden body into the church for a funeral.

Many of the methods, such as quarantine, which have been used today for coronavirus have a long history, and of course there was the problem that no one knew what caused the Black Death or how to deal with it, so social distancing was all they had. Here we are, several weeks into lockdown, and social isolation is the name of the game, particularly for the elderly and the sick. But - and this is the good news - we have hospitals and medical scientists, and we already know about the virus. If we can find a vaccine, we can bring this problematic interlude to an end.

The current pandemic is frightening, but not as much as the Black Death.

**John Beckett**



## What is required of the Vicar's Wife?

*A transcript of notes and jottings compiled, mainly between 1910 and 1917, by Mrs Francis Olive Lavinia Williams, wife of Walter Hanwell Williams (Vicar of North Muskham 1905 - 1937)*

She must never be tired, or ill, or out of sorts. She must never want to be like other women and have a friend in to see her or to stay a day or two to relieve the deadly monotony of a secluded village life. She must be always at the beck and call of all and sundry, to fetch and carry, and do all the odd distasteful little things that no-one else wants to do.

The Vicarage must never want cleaning like other folk's houses, the work must be done, or ought to be, by magic, at odd times or in the night, if the parishioners don't happen to want anything done for themselves. Food, fruit, flowers, soup, books, old linen and money, must always be on tap in plentiful quantities at the Vicarage. Sympathy must be ready to flow like water whenever asked or desired. When the lady at the Vicarage comes to die – 'No flowers by request', only a dustpan and brush and duster, and a bundle of those endless blisters, Parish Magazines and Mothers' Union Journals, may be laid upon her coffin.

The verb to 'live' has never been conjugated at the Parson's home, it has only been 'exist' in a backwater of respectable poverty, few clothes or 'covers', and perpetual hard work.

If Anything goes wrong in the Sunday School or Village generally, blame the Vicar and his Wife, their backs are broad enough for anything. It is so convenient to have a couple of scapegoats to put all responsibility and censure upon, so easy to be perfect when there are two downtrodden people to sit upon without any consideration or thought of their wants and feelings. How would some of the good folks of Muskham like to have to provide expensive soups, jellies, fruit and luxuries out of thirty shillings a week of housekeeping money? Let them try it and see how many nights a week they can sleep soundly and not have to lie awake planning how to make sixpence do the work of a shilling, and sometimes two. There are some good friends and true in Muskham who bring sunshine and brightness whenever they come to the Vicarage, and they are ever welcome. But for them life would be hard and dull indeed, friends who have been loyal and backed up their Vicar splendidly, all honour to them. But there are many who look upon the Vicar and his wife in many parishes as drudges only fit to toil and slave upon next to nothing a year, to look respectable, educate their children, and help to keep half the Village without a murmur. How far I wonder would they make £190 a year go, with an eighteen-roomed house to work and a garden that is a white elephant?

Many a day has the Vicar's Wife got up early and helped with a hard morning's washing, cooking and cleaning: got ready and been out all afternoon Visiting or taking Magazines, just got in for a hurried cup of tea and then off again Visiting until eight. Come in too tired even to crawl to bed, and when next day she has been Visiting again she is met with the time-honoured tale 'You never come to see me'. Thankless work, hard work, heartbreaking work, to one worn out with numerous tasks too many for one person, and yet what will you?

All hope abandon ye who undertake to become a Parson's Wife. Never will you give or get any satisfaction. Never will you be done. Never may you expect to find any good in anything you have ever done, it is human nature, the people must ever be finding fault, must ever be abusing someone. Well, let them, the Vicar's Wife is the most suitable one to call over the Virtuous parish coals, that is what she is there for. Some day, who knows, some day early in the morning, when the sun creeps up and warms the dew upon the glistening grass, perhaps the Vicar's Wife may slip away unseen, stepping over her threshold with her eyes looking ever upwards and beyond all earthly loads of sorrow, grasping the hand maybe of a Guiding Angel upward and onward to that land where everlasting spring abides. And perhaps there, in that new and great land, that larger life and greater liberty, perhaps there may be that passionately longed for, but never found blessing here on this earth - REST.

F.O.L. Williams

**Margery Brown**

## Ethel Webb and the art of Japanese gardens

Ethel Webb, daughter of William Frederick Webb, owner of Newstead Abbey, Nottinghamshire, was reputedly one of the best amateur gardeners in England at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1892 she visited Yokohama, Japan, with her father and sister Geraldine, as part of a world tour. The visit fired Ethel's interest in Japanese art and gardens, and inspired her to create a Japanese room, and later a Japanese garden at her home, Newstead Abbey. She had already been instrumental in laying out the rock garden at Newstead.

Ethel's notes, preserved in the archives at Newstead, demonstrate that she designed the garden herself, based on Josiah Conder's book *Landscape Gardening in Japan* (1893). She began importing lilies, peonies and irises from the Yokohama Nursery Company in 1896/97. Although the Japanese garden at Newstead was substantially complete by 1910, it was started in 1899, making it possibly one of the oldest Japanese gardens in the United Kingdom still in existence.

I am researching the achievements of this Victorian lady at a time when gardening was becoming a perfectly respectable pastime for ladies, and when tackling even the toughest practical jobs was becoming an acceptable activity.

Philip E. Jones

## Seeking a Better Life: The Story of Pvt. 138615 Stanley Frederick Johnson (1890-1918)

At the end of the 'Great War' in 1918, many families were thankful that their loved ones had returned home safe, although many lived with terrible injuries and were mentally scarred forever. By 2013, fifty three civil parishes throughout England and Wales were declared as 'Thankful Villages' (none were listed in Scotland or Ireland). The term was popularised by the writer Arthur Mee in his book *Enchanted Land* (1936) where he wrote that 'a Thankful Village was one which had lost no men in the Great War because all those who left to serve came home again'. In Nottinghamshire, there were four 'Thankful Villages', Cromwell, Maplebeck, Wigsley, and Wysall. But across the United Kingdom and 'the Empire', as it was once known, many families were thankful and none more so than the Johnson family who lived on Albert Grove, Lenton Sands in Nottingham, for their son came home on leave prior to the armistice being signed on 11 November 1918.

This was a joyous event for the family because this was only the second time that they had seen Stanley since he had left for Canada in 1908. Stanley Frederick Johnson was born on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1890 to Frederick Sewell Johnson and his wife Alice Sills Johnson at their home on Burford Road, Forest Fields. His father was a manager in a lace warehouse and his mother was listed as a housewife in the 1901 Census. Stanley had two sisters, Nellie and Maggie, and two brothers, Harold and Leslie (Nellie and Harold were the eldest boy and girl). Stanley went to local schools but there is no information as to the type of work he did after finishing his education. By the time of the 1911 census, the family had moved to Albert Grove. However, Stanley was not listed in the census because, two years earlier, at the age of eighteen, he decided to emigrate to Canada. He sailed on the Canadian Pacific Line steamship *Corsican*. The ship docked at Quebec on 25 July 1909 and Stanley started his new life in Canada. The reason for leaving England is unknown. However, approximately half of the Canadians who enlisted in the 'Great War' were first generation from the United Kingdom and many came to Canada to find work during a recession.

Stanley moved to the Toronto area and lived there for the next six years, starting work as a butcher. It was whilst living there that he met Cora Corrigan, who was born in Canada; her parents were of Irish descent.

On 4<sup>th</sup> August 1914, England declared war on Germany. It was a war that many thought would be over by Christmas, but this war was going to be different. As news came back to England of the



fighting and the casualties, two new words began to appear - 'trench warfare' - warfare in which opposing armed forces attacked, counterattacked, and defended from a permanent system of trenches dug into the ground. Between August and December 1914, the British Expeditionary Forces losses totalled 95,654. The British army could not sustain these losses and so the call went out to the nation. Lord Kitchener's campaign, promoted by his famous 'Your Country Needs You' poster, encouraged over one million men to enlist by January 1915. But this was not enough to keep pace with mounting casualties and so the call went out across the seas to the Empire. Britain's colonies went on to contribute over two and a half million men to fight for Britain during the war. This meant that Britain had soldiers fighting from all five continents: Europe, America, Australasia, Asia, and Africa. Although the Canadians had been in the war since the start, it was the Second Battle of Ypres, fought from 22 April-25 May 1915, which brought the war home to the people of Canada, as it was the first major battle fought by Canadian troops in the 'Great War'. The untested Canadians distinguished themselves as a determined fighting force, resisting the horrors of the first large-scale poison gas attack in modern history. More than 6,500 Canadians were killed, wounded, or captured in the battle. In 1915, these initial losses shocked the Canadian people and so the call to enlist was heard. Some 630,000 Canadians signed up during World War One; of these, some 425,000 went overseas as part of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, and an estimated 8,000 served in the Canadian navy.

On 30 July 1915, a 24-year-old man would step into a Toronto recruiting office and sign up. He was Stanley Frederick Johnson. He was described as 5 feet 8½ inches tall, of fair complexion, with blue eyes and brown hair. He had a 38-inch chest when fully expanded (with an expansion of 5 inches). He gave his next of kin as Alice Sills Johnson (his mother) of 7 Albert Grove, Lenton Sands, Nottingham, England. Pronouncing him 'FIT' for service, he was now Pvt. 138615 Stanley F. Johnson and was part of 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force.

He was sent to Niagara Camp at Niagara-on-the-Lake for training. It was whilst here that Stanley suffered his first injury, a bruised knee which required medical treatment. On 29 March 1916, the battalion was sent to France and Stanley was promoted to acting lance corporal. He sailed from Halifax in Canada to Liverpool aboard His Majesty's Transport Ship *Empress of Britain*, arriving on 4 April 1916 and transferring to Bramshott Military Camp in Hampshire. In early June 1916, his unit was sent to France and, by the end of the month, he was transferred to the 3rd Infantry Battalion, Toronto Regiment. This was the regiment in which he was to serve for the duration of the war. However, this transfer would see him reduced to the rank of 'private' again. During the war, the 3rd Infantry Battalion saw action in many areas of France and Belgium, including Ypres, the Somme, Arras, Vimy Ridge, Passchendaele, and Amiens. These names became all too familiar to the 'British Tommy' and their families back home. It is likely that Stanley saw action in many of these battles and, like many of the soldiers, the war took its toll and he did not survive unscathed. On 9 September 1916, Stanley was admitted to hospital, suffering from shell shock, concussion, and the effects of gas. He re-joined his unit on 22 October 1916. The following month, an outbreak of respiratory infection (termed purulent bronchitis) began to appear amongst the armed forces and Stanley contracted it; he was sent to a British army convalescent hospital at Etaples in Northern France. Many soldiers were admitted to the hospital, suffering from the infection, with high temperature and coughs, and were diagnosed with influenza. Stanley was again diagnosed with shell shock, influenza, and myalgia, and remained in hospital from 25 November-12 December 1916. Once again, he was pronounced 'fit' and re-joined his unit. On 13 October 1917, Stanley was granted ten days leave and returned to the family home on Albert Grove in Nottingham. On his return to duty, he went back to the front line. The 3rd Battalion 'D' Company, the unit Stanley served with, was involved in various battles and skirmishes; however, there is no evidence in his army or medical records to indicate that Stanley ever received an injury by gunshot or shrapnel which would require medical treatment.

And so the war passed into 1918. Stanley had continued his relationship with Cora Corrigan. From the time he joined up, twenty dollars each month was stopped from his pay and sent by bank draft to Cora in Canada; in mid-1918, these payments began to be returned. Stanley never went back to Canada, after leaving in March 1916, and Cora went on to marry William Bridge on 13 August 1918. As the war entered its closing stages, Stanley was granted fourteen days leave commencing 27 October 1918 and, once again, he returned home - except this time, he would return to a very different Nottingham. In November 1918, Nottingham was in the grip of an influenza epidemic; 884 deaths were recorded during November alone. At the height of the disease's second wave, the City became the second most afflicted borough in Great Britain. The schools were closed for three weeks and men returning from the war were employed as grave diggers. With Nottingham as it was, and with Stanley's poor state of health, both malnourished and suffering fatigue, it is understandable that he quickly contracted influenza. Sadly, this in turn led to pneumonia. Stanley died surrounded by his family at 7 Albert Grove on 12 November 1918, the day after the armistice was signed. His funeral took place in the Church (Rock) Cemetery the following Saturday, 16 November, with his grave marked by a white marble tablet. Stanley was one of 1,396 people killed in Nottingham during the 1918-19 influenza pandemic, whilst in London over 23,000 deaths were recorded. Around the world, an estimated 50 million people died. During and after the war, family members could elect to provide their own memorial for their loved ones, but for those who had fought in the 'Great War' and were designated as 'war dead', the Imperial War Graves Commission (instigated in 1917), provided a Portland stone memorial for the fallen. Family members could add a small sentiment at the bottom of the memorial, consisting of no more than 66 letters: each letter cost 3½ pence. However, Stanley's family did not need to do this, as his comrades in arms stepped in and provided a fitting memorial.

This reads: **'This tablet was placed here by the Officers, NCOs and Men of the D - Company, 3rd Canadian Battalion, Toronto Regiment as a mark of affection for Pvt S.F. Johnson. Died on 12th November 1918 whilst on leave from France'.** (See photograph on front cover of this Newsletter)

Sadly, for Stanley, the better life he had been seeking in Canada, when he left Britain in 1909, only lasted a few years, before he was thrown into the horrors of war on the Western Front. Thankfully, he has a grave which commemorates his life and his passing in an area of Nottingham he would have known as a boy and as a young man. So it is that, in the words of Laurence Binyon's poem 'For the Fallen', 'At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember him'.

My personal involvement with Stanley started in 2012, whilst doing research in the Church (Rock) Cemetery for a guided walk on behalf of Nottingham Civic Society. At that time, his grave was just another war grave in the cemetery, but I was intrigued by the fact that he died the day after the armistice was signed whilst home on leave. My investigations led me to write to Major (Ret) John Stephens, Curator, The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada Regimental Museum and Archives (<https://qormuseum.org/>), the name of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian Battalion today. We were able to piece together Stanley's life and army service to the extent that Stanley is now not just a name on the Roll of Honour but has a web page telling his story: <https://qormuseum.org/soldiers-of-the-queens-own/johnson-stanley-frederick/>.

For a number of years, a small Canadian flag has flown beside the tablet marking his grave, but over the years the tablet had begun to sink into the ground and become discoloured. So, in 2018, to mark the centenary of his death, I paid my own tribute by restoring the grave and having the tablet cleaned and raised on a plinth. On 12 November 2018, I placed a wreath of poppies and a new flag at his final resting place.

Stanley's comrades in the 3rd Battalion returned to Canada from England on the steamship *Olympic*, sister ship to the *Titanic*, arriving in Halifax on 21 April 1919, then travelling to Toronto by train. They demobilized on the afternoon of 23 April 1919.

### **Acknowledgements**

I am grateful to Major (Ret) John Stephens, Curator, The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada Regimental Museum and Archives, for his help and assistance in connection with this article.

**Kevin Powell**

### **John Thomas Becher**

John Becher, clergyman, social reformer and Vicar-General of Southwell Minster, was born in 1770 in Cork, Ireland. He was a pupil of Westminster School, and studied at Christ Church College, Oxford, gaining an MA in 1795. He was presented by Trinity College, Cambridge, as curate at Thurgarton and Hoveringham in 1799, and subsequently held several livings, becoming Southwell Minster's Vicar-General in 1818 until 1840.

He held a number of other positions during his lifetime but is probably best remembered for his work on the 'problem' of the poor. He was the driving force for the creation of a workhouse at Southwell and for the design and building of the Workhouse on the Upton road in 1824, now in the care of the National Trust. It became an exemplar for workhouses up and down the country.

The regime of his workhouse was to make life there hard and unpleasant in order to deter those who were not working but were able – regarded as the idle and profligate. The sexes and ages were strictly segregated which meant that families were split up – wives from their husbands, children from their parents. Work was hard and repetitive. However, the children did receive an education. The infirm and 'blameless' were treated with a greater compassion. In 1824 a union of 49 parishes called the Thurgarton Hundred Incorporation was created under Becher's direction, which allowed paupers from these parishes to be sent to the new workhouse in Southwell rather than each parish making their own arrangements. His writings and practice were influential on the construction of the new Poor Law of 1834.

On a lighter note Becher befriended Byron whilst he was living in Southwell – Becher was recipient of several poems by the poet such as:-

Candour compels me, BECHER! To commend  
The verse, which blends the censor with the friend;  
Your strong yet just reproof extorts applause  
From me, the heedless and imprudent cause;  
For this wild error, which pervades my strain,  
I sue for pardon – must I sue in vain?

Becher died in the house he had had built, Hill House, in 1848.

**Barbara Cast**

## **THE THOROTON EXCURSIONS**

Excursions have been an essential part of the annual programme for members of the Thoroton Society almost from the beginnings of its existence in 1897. Our Newsletter editor Paul Baker has asked me to make a few comments about my time as organiser of excursions, before I hand over the baton to new organisers in 2021. I have thoroughly enjoyed this role in the Society's management since 2005; it has always been most rewarding. There have been some fifty excursions since 2005,

and from the start I have been most fortunate to have had the occasional helping hand from several Thoroton members, including Margaret Trueman and Penelope Messenger, Richard Gaunt, Pete Smith, Ceril Little, Philip Jones, David Knight and Adrian Henstock. We have also been very fortunate to have had the expertise and knowledge of so many people associated with the various places we have visited, as well as the host of people who have provided us with luncheons and teas at all these places. I also wish to express my appreciation for the professional and totally reliable way in which Sharpes Coaches have provided us with miles of delightful routes and helpful and very safe drivers, especially on some occasional hair-raising manoeuvres on tight corners and narrow roads. I do also have to compliment all Thoroton excursion participants for the excellent time-keeping on every excursion, and the meticulous obedience to return on time when 'let off under their own steam'. It is very sad that because of the virus, 2020 has proved such a disaster for excursions, even though most of the organising had already been arranged. We do hope to be able to include some of these missed ones in the 2021 programme, or later.

For the record, the list of visits since 2005 includes the following :

2005 : Besthorpe and Ossington  
2006 : Stapleford, Melton Mowbray, Broughton Solney, and Granby  
2007 : Repton, Trowell and Wollaton  
2008 : Grantham, Bottesford, Colston Bassett  
2009 : Boston, Brant Broughton, North Muskham  
2010 : Grimsthorpe, Harlaxton, Worksop, Blyth, Carlton in Lindrick, Winkburn, Horological Institute  
2011 : Ashbourne, Beauvale Priory, Ilkeston, Greasley, Scampston Hall, Birdsall House, Stamford  
2012 : Lichfield, Archaeological sites, Stamford, Attenborough, Melbourne, Stoke Dry, Deane Park  
2013 : Stanford House, Brodsworth Hall, Rotherham, Ashfield, Little Moreton Hall, Cheadle  
2014 : Tutbury, Egmont, Rufford, Newby Hall, Stow, Doddington  
2015 : Warwick, Baddesley Clinton, Louth, Heckington, Pilgrim Fathers' Trail, Gainsborough Hall, Ecclesfield, Wentworth Woodhouse  
2016 : Bilborough. Southwell, Woodthorpe. Clifton, Sheffield Manor, Kimbolton Castle, Buckden  
2017 : Pentrich Rebellion sites, Leicester, Bosworth, Lamport Hall, Hallaton, Tickencote, Helpston  
2018 : Broughton Castle. Earl's Barton, Barton on Humber, Marston Hall, Brant Broughton, Middleton Hall, Stoke Golding  
2019 : Ashover, Ault Hucknall, Bolsover Castle,, Historic sites of Sherwood Forest, Bletchley Park, Fotheringhay, Kirby Hall.

In addition, we have had several half-day visits to archaeological work at Nottingham Castle, a tour and tea at Burgage Manor Southwell, the gardens at Newstead Abbey, and Welbeck Abbey. Most excursions have averaged about thirty-five participants, and there has always been a hard-core group of regular members, a few even doing all the excursions. The largest number was the fifty who followed Richard Gaunt along the route of the Pentrich Rebellion. Perhaps one of the most unusual trips was the tour of Sherwood Forest by vintage bus which attracted over forty members. Only on one occasion did I manage to leave two people behind, but they followed in their own car and joined the party later! I wish the new Organiser(s) well for the future, although we may well run some of those planned for 2020 in 2021. So there will be some shared responsibilities in 2021. I have thoroughly enjoyed doing the organising, and participating in the trips too, of course. Amazingly, there are still many aspects and sites of historical interest for future programmes.

***(Photographs as reminders of a few of these excursions are on the back page of the Newsletter.)***

**Alan Langton**

## **WORKING DURING LOCK DOWN**

### **Community Health Care in Beeston and District Between the Wars.**

Armed with memberships of Ancestry and the British Newspaper Archive online, I set about my lockdown research into healthcare between the wars. In March 1919, the Cedars Red Cross Auxiliary Hospital closed, and the YMCA opened Beeston Neurasthenic Hospital at Beeston Hall on Middle Street, now the site of a Tesco Petrol Station. Dr George Cole (of Smith, Cole and Hannon), who had been Resident Medical Officer at Bagthorpe (City) Isolation Hospital and had worked at Bagthorpe Military Hospital in WW1 became the Medical Officer. Many of the Red Cross volunteers helped out. The patients learned boot and shoemaking, horticulture, rug making, carpentry and joinery. Entertainments included amateur dramatics and weekly whist drives attended by local philanthropists and well-wishers. Dr Cole described 'an atmosphere of cure'. The neurasthenic hospital closed in 1923 having treated over 500 patients.

In these pre-NHS days when folk struggled to consult a doctor and were afraid to go into hospital because that was where one died, community nursing care was delivered by Beeston's two nursing societies, Beeston Church Nursing Association and Beeston Nursing Society. In 1910 Nurse Eleanor Stannard was employed by the association and Nurse Sarah Armstrong by the society. These two ladies delivered devoted service for over two decades. Families that could not afford a private nurse paid a small fee for the district nurse to visit. Nurse Stannard was appointed Beeston's first health visitor in 1916, a part-time post.

Following the 1918 Midwives' Act, Beeston opened a Child Welfare Centre, first by Councillor Eleanor Littlewood's home at Manor Lodge, Middle Street and then in a single-story, purpose-built building on Dovecote Lane where it remained for over 50 years. Councillor Littlewood was chair of Beeston Welfare Committee, which ran the clinic and organised the St John's Ambulance volunteers. Dr Warner, Beeston's Medical Officer of Health, oversaw the clinics. Nurse Stannard was the first duty nurse at the inaugural clinic on 3 January 1922. By 1923 the health visitor was Nurse Ann Rose, who was soon averaging 70 home visits each week and there two clinics at the welfare centre. As Beeston's population increased, the welfare centre grew to include ultraviolet light treatment, introduced in 1927 mainly for rickets, and a winter Red Cross rheumatism clinic from 1930. Nottinghamshire Education Committee used the centre for school clinics and, later in the 1930s, for the school dental service, auditory and clinics. Beeston Church Nursing Association also employed a midwife. There were seven midwives working privately in Beeston c1935. One of these was Rose Mary Anne Green who had been a cinema assistant at Nottingham's new Electric Cinema before her training. In 1934 Nurse Armstrong retired from Beeston Nursing Society and the organisation disbanded. Beeston Church Nursing Society reformed into Beeston Nursing Society and sought to employ two Queen's Nurses, specialist District Nurses. Beeston folk often had to take expensive taxis to Bagthorpe Infirmary, now the City Hospital, so in 1927 Labour Councillor Joseph Willberry's first resolution to the UDC was to acquire a motor ambulance. Beeston's first ambulance was loaned by the Red Cross. Its upkeep costs were met by fundraising and contributions from some patients. The Red Cross drivers, day or night, were unpaid volunteers. In 1933 Beeston UDC bought a new ambulance and the Red Cross Ford was now only used to carry infectious cases to the isolation hospital. The UDC purchased it from the Red Cross, but still relied on volunteer drivers. We can conclude that the community and the UDC worked together to provide healthcare between the wars alongside the several private GP practices in Beeston

**Jill Oakland**

## Friends of Nottinghamshire Archives: still active, despite lockdown

Like many other organisations, Lockdown hit just before our AGM was due to be held, so we had to postpone. This was going to be an important meeting as we had to elect new committee members and a new Chair, as well as making a few changes to our constitution. We decided that a couple of things couldn't wait so we co-opted the new committee members and an Acting Chair until we could hold an AGM. Another casualty of lockdown was the Savile Papers project – a collaboration between FONA and Nottinghamshire Archives. A small group of FONA members were working on previously uncatalogued papers from the Savile collection. Working as a group we were able to exchange ideas and information which made the whole collaboration more enjoyable and more informative as we were able to cross-reference details with each other. We were at the point of starting to plan an exhibition and conference for early 2021, but that has had to be put on hold for the time being. So with the Archives being closed and meetings impossible, for a few weeks we held our breath, waiting to hear what would happen next. When it became clear that nothing was going to happen for a long time, we decided that we could not let things linger. We held an on-line Committee meeting, via Zoom, to make a few decisions. This was a new experience for many of us, but one that's proving very useful and effective, and will probably continue for the foreseeable future. The first decision we made was to hold a 'Virtual AGM' and many thanks have to go to David Anderson who masterminded this event.



The AGM papers had been circulated before lockdown, so we did not – constitutionally – have to send them out again. Instead we contacted all our members, mainly by email but a few by post, to explain what we were doing. All the paperwork was posted on our website and links provided in the mailing (or in hard copy for those few who don't use email). Everyone was given 10 days to respond with queries or suggest items for Any Other Business. After the 10 days had elapsed, everyone received a second mailing, with a link to the voting paper. Not only was this successful but the participation in the 'virtual' AGM was probably much higher than if we'd held a physical one. This means that we now have a fully mandated committee all of whom are keen to get FONA moving again as soon as is practical.

Our programme sub-committee is brimming with ideas for events. We didn't just stop at an AGM though. Three of our members have produced videos and – again supported by David Anderson – FONA now has its own YouTube channel. As none of us had made videos before, it was quite nerve-wracking but rewarding and we're planning to add more in the next few weeks. As each video is short (10-15 minutes) it's a very good way of reporting those nuggets of research that don't warrant a written article and potentially they will reach a far wider audience. You can find the videos on <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVXJ1DIsCNOtTxJCfHViyNQ> (or go to YouTube and search for Friends of Nottinghamshire Archives). Another FONA project has been a 'Lockdown Diary' collaboration. Several FONA members – and contacts of members – have written about their experiences during lockdown, under a general title of *100 days that changed the World*. It's proving to be a substantial document with contributions ranging from 15 or so pages to 100 pages (a page-a-day). These are going to be compiled into a single volume and deposited in Nottinghamshire Archives, and maybe used in other, exciting ways. And as far as the Savile project is concerned, even though lockdown is easing, we can't meet yet because of the restrictions on use of The Archives, but we are all raring to go as soon as we can meet again. Our exhibition and conference will probably be late rather than early 2021 (or even 2022), but I'm pretty sure we'll get there.

**Judith Mills, Chair of the Friends of Nottinghamshire Archives**

## The University of Nottingham Museum

The University of Nottingham Museum first opened in 1933 but has changed its size and location several times. It was reopened, after a long period of closure, in January 2008 when the University employed the current Keeper. At the time, the Museum was in a room, in a building in the middle of University Park Campus, that also housed the Department of Classics and Archaeology. The Museum moved to its current location in Nottingham Lakeside Arts when the old building was pulled down in 2011. From January 2020 the Museum became part of Manuscripts and Special Collections and University Libraries, keeping its current location in Lakeside. The collections cover a 250,000 year period of mainly regional archaeology with smaller collections from Italy, Greece, Cyprus and Egypt. A great strength of the artefacts is that they reflect everyday life during this long period of time.

Reopening the Museum meant developing the Museum from scratch. It gained Accreditation within a couple of years and also started to fund raise in order to develop Collections, Learning and Public Programming. Museum Development has been supported by Arts Council England, Museum Development East Midlands and the National Heritage Lottery Fund.

The Learning Programme includes four cross-curricular travelling exhibitions on Prehistory, Romans, Saxons and Vikings which our PhD Learning Facilitators and student volunteers take into primary schools. The Exhibition Programme has included *Viking: Rediscover the Legend* (2018), the largest exhibition to leave the British Museums and York Museum Trust. Our first resident artist, Carol Adlam, won a World Illustration Award (2018) for her exhibition and publication *The Thinking Room*.

The Public Programme also includes the *Archaeology NOW* lunchtime talks which are given by local speakers along with those from national organisations, including the British Museum and National Museum of Scotland. Another development is the annual *Nottinghamshire History and Archaeology Festival*. In total 59 different community groups have participated over the last 7 years along with archaeological units, museums, archives, heritage organisations and universities. There are also experimental archaeologists, re-enactors, musicians, storytellers and craft makers. The *Thoroton Society* also joins us every year with a stall. The Museum also undertakes collection-based teaching and research projects with both undergraduate and postgraduate students from a wide selection of University Departments. Other work includes regional Sector Training in collaboration with regional and national partners. The Museum is the regional centre for the British Museum Money and Medals subject specialist network and has also supported the Council for British Archaeology East Midlands to undertake training. As part of the British Museum International Training Programme the Museum also welcomes international colleagues to Nottingham every year.

The Museum Volunteer Training Programme works with both students and community. Without the amazing volunteer support the Museum could not undertake all the work that it does within the Learning and Collections Programmes. Over the last few years the Museum has collaborated with the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Finds Liaison Officer who has also trained our volunteers to help identify and record objects. This also led to an exhibition to celebrate 20 years of the Portable Antiquities Scheme in Nottinghamshire.

The Museum is currently closed and all staff continue to work from home. The Staff are Clare Pickersgill (full time Keeper); Michelle Johnson (part time Administrator) and Mark Laurie (one day a week Collections Development Manager). Work still includes fundraising. The Museum received funding from the Arts Council England Emergency Response Fund which will allow it to continue to employ its Collections Manager to assist with the reopening of the Museum.

The funding is also supporting the Museum to examine new school projects for the next academic year as the Travelling Exhibitions will not be able to go into classrooms. There has also been an online Programme in collaboration with #InWithLakeside which includes this year's



*Nottinghamshire History and Archaeology Festival*. This can still be found on the Lakeside website. The first Twitter exhibition called *Still there, Still Waiting* was developed by Carol Adlam showing some of her work of the Museum displays and visitors. Collections Care, Assess and Development work also continue including enquiries and the monitoring of collections. The Museum continues to support student projects and is planning next year's teaching with Departments. Volunteers can also continue to work remotely with Maria Kneafsey (Finds Liaison Officer). The Museum is also starting to plan and prepare for reopening. Finally, Development work also continues including planning for future exhibitions in collaboration with regional and national partners.

Clare Pickersgill

### What lockdown looked like to Manuscripts and Special Collections

The University of Nottingham's Manuscripts and Special Collections closed its doors on 20<sup>th</sup> March and since then staff have been working from home. Adjusting to life away from our 3.5 million archival documents and 80,000 printed items, has been a challenge. The joy of being able to have a drink at your computer (something that is never normally allowed in case you spill tea on a 12th century deed or a photograph from the Second World War) has been balanced by the daily frustration of 'if only I could look at that document I could answer this in 5 minutes....' Nevertheless, there are lots that we have been able to achieve over the last few months, including some of those behind the scenes jobs that we always mean to do but never quite have the time for.

Collections Work: One way that we've had to adjust is in our approach to cataloguing. Without the luxury of access to the original documents, we've been doing a combination of new cataloguing using images of documents, and upgrading existing catalogues by adding more detailed information. As the keepers of the University archive we hold the official records of the University of Nottingham and its predecessor, University College and the papers of former staff and students. Whilst working from home we've been able to make our post-1948 University records, and our collections of University photographs, more accessible by adding entries to the online catalogue: (<https://mss-cat.nottingham.ac.uk/Calmview/>)

Other collections that we've added to the online catalogue are MS 733, the Papers of John S. Hoyland, Quaker and Missionary (1887 – 1957), descriptions of penances dating from 1628 – 1641 contained in the Archdeaconry of Nottingham collection, reference AN, and new catalogue entries for the archive of the Dukes of Newcastle, reference Ne.

Exhibitions: Another big challenge that lockdown presented us with was the closure of our exhibition space. Staff have been working with colleagues from the Departments of History and Health Sciences on a two-year project on Florence Nightingale. An exhibition was due to be held in our gallery in the Lakeside Arts Centre between April and August of this year, timed to coincide with the bicentenary of Nightingale's birth. When the lockdown happened just a month before the exhibition was due to open we reacted quickly to turn it into an online exhibition: **Florence Nightingale Comes Home**. This is available on our website. We still plan to open the physical version of the Nightingale Exhibition as soon as we are able:

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/manuscriptsandspecialcollections/exhibitions/online/florence-nightingale/index.aspx>

Behind the Scenes: That is just a taster of some of the work that we've done during lockdown. Other jobs include testing our new digital preservation system, collecting digital records documenting the University's response to the pandemic, adding descriptive metadata to our digital images, and adding subtitles to our video content to make it more accessible.

Next Steps: Staff are now planning the return to campus and deciding what our future service offer will look like. To begin with we will be offering an expanded enquiry and reprographics service and looking at how we can safely reopen the reading room. We will be continuing to get to grips with new ways of doing things, including developing online teaching and events, but no matter what the future looks like the collections will remain at the heart of what we do.

Hayley Cotterill

## BOOK REVIEW

**Marian Bannister: Heroic Nurse on the Western Front and at Dunkirk**

**Author: Jill Oakland**

**Published by Beeston and District Local History Society, 2020)**

ISBN 978 0 86071 823 9, 57 pp. Copies available from Waterstones

Marian Bannister was born in 1879 and brought up in one of the poorest parts of Nottingham. She was one of seven children born to Samuel Bannister and his wife Harriet Widdowson. Two of the children died very young. Marian was the second of the children to be born, and she died only in 1970, by which time she was 91. She did not marry, and she spent the great majority of her active life as a nurse. It was in this capacity that she served on the Western Front in the First World War and returned to France when the Second World War broke out in 1939. She was among the last women to be evacuated from Dunkirk. Jill Oakland has woven the story of Marian and war into a longer biographical narrative which includes her training as a nurse, and her active career in medicine. The book is also well contextualized: readers will learn a great deal about nursing in the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries, including the role of nurses in the World Wars. Marian Bannister was brought up in Nottingham where her father, Samuel, had several shops and thriving business interests. The family moved to Beeston, where Samuel became an Urban District Councillor. He could afford to educate his children well and Marian went to High Pavement School. She then managed a grocery shop on Colwick Street on behalf of her father, before deciding to become a nurse. She trained in Sheffield, and then spent time in Lincoln before moving in 1912 to Hastings for midwifery training. From there she moved to West Hartlepool, and then on to Hull Royal Infirmary. She was in Hull when the First World War broke out on 4 August 1914. Three months later she was one of 2,000 or so trained civilian nurses who was accepted into the Queen Alexander's Imperial Military Nursing Service Reserve, and on 5 November 1914 she crossed the Channel to Boulogne.

Marian's war started at number 5 General Hospital, Rouen on 7 December 1914, under canvas. She stayed at Rouen until June 1915. Jill discusses Marian's various postings to different positions in northern France through the wartime years. Despite the Armistice in November 1918, Marian remained in France to help nurse victims of the Influenza Pandemic. She was demobilised in November 1919, and within days had taken up a new peacetime role at the London Hospital for Diseases of the Throat. By June 1921 Marian had moved on again, this time to the post of Matron of the Ministry of Pensions Hospital, at Highbury, Birmingham. The rather splendid house which had been built in 1878 by the Birmingham MP Joseph Chamberlain, was turned into a convalescent hospital for recovering soldiers. Marian showed the Prince of Wales around in 1928 and stayed at Highbury until it closed early in 1932. Marian returned to Beeston, where she stayed for two years, but she was not ready to retire and in 1934 she took a post in Skegness before returning to London to take up another position, this time with the Home and Colonial Nurses' Association. When the Second World War broke out in September 1939 Marian returned to the front. Marian's age was against her at this point, but her seniority and previous experience in northern France counted in her favour. She crossed the channel to Cherbourg on 12 October 1939 and remained in France during the period known as the Phoney War. This came to an end in Spring 1940 and Jill writes vividly of Marian's experiences retreating across northern France, under heavy aerial bombardment and ducking under trains to avoid pieces of flying shells. She and her nursing staff reached Dunkirk on 26 May. At 9 p.m. that evening Marian was among the nurses and patients who left for England on the

*Worthing*, a heavily overloaded hospital ship. The nursing staff on board worked through the night tending the wounded until they docked at Newhaven at 5 a.m. on Monday 27 May 1940. In these dramatic conditions Marian Bannister's war came to an end. She was given notice of her retirement, which was to be on 30 June 1940. She was not yet finished, moving in July 1940 to become Matron of Alton Emergency Hospital in Hampshire, where she stayed until the end of the war. It must have been something of a come-down compared to sitting in a railway carriage for a whole day with fragments of shell raining on the roof! And so her remarkable career came to an end, and Marian returned to Beeston where, with her sister Ann, she bought a house in Endsleigh Gardens. Here she tended her garden and talked to passers-by, but we know little about these years. Her story took on its own momentum when she died in 1970. One local paper described how she was the last woman to leave the beach at Dunkirk, as she 'stayed to the last to evacuate the wounded'. Well, not quite, but the sentiment is uncontested: Marian Bannister was a remarkable woman. Even without the two World Wars she would have been recognised for her nursing career. As it was, she twice went to war, and on both occasions was in the thick of things (or at least as far as women were permitted to go in the thick of wartime).

**John Beckett**

### **Notes from the Editor**

I would like to thank all the contributors to this Newsletter for providing a good selection of articles for this issue.

Firstly, I received an interesting, and very relevant, contribution entitled 'A Plague on all your Houses!' about the cholera epidemic of 1832. Unfortunately, the email disappeared and I do not know who wrote this as the article was not signed. If the author of this piece will contact me, I will be pleased to include the contribution in the Winter Newsletter

The Castle Development project has continued throughout lockdown and the Gatehouse Bridge work has been completed, and also the new lighting in Mortimer's Hole, allowing a safe environment without detracting from the atmosphere of the Cave. The new Changing Places located next to the Gatehouse is nearing completion. The Exhibition fit-out contractors are on site and the Adventure Play structures are progressing well. I hope that there will be some more articles on the history of the Castle in the Newsletters over the next 12 months. In 1966 King John was the special topic paper I sat for A Level History. Having recently read the book *King John - Treachery, Tyranny and the Road to Magna Carta* by Marc Morris, I came across this passage below which I hope will act as a catalyst for other members' contributions about the history of the Castle.

'In 1174 Henry gave his youngest son John the castle and county of Nottinghamshire, the lordship of Marlborough and an annual payment of £1000. So begins a rather turbulent connection between King John and Nottingham Castle.'

I have a full list of publications of pamphlets and books published by Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire Labour History Society (NDLHS). I have arranged for titles and prices to be on the website, but more details and orders can be obtained by either sending your name and postal address to Chris Richardson, 2 Devonshire Promenade, Lenton, Nottingham, NG7 2DS or by emailing me and I will email the full list to you.

All contributions to the Newsletters are welcome but please note that there is a restriction to the length of articles that can be included. Longer research items will be passed on to the editors of *Transactions* for their consideration for publication.

**Paul Baker**

## THE THOROTON SOCIETY OFFICERS

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**Chairman:** Dr Richard Gaunt:

**Vice-Chairman:** David Hoskins: [dhoskins@talktalk.net](mailto:dhoskins@talktalk.net) and 0743 611 4158

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**Treasurer:** John Wilson BPharm MPhil FRSPH email: [treasurer@thorotonsociety.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@thorotonsociety.org.uk).

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**Honorary Administration Secretary:** Rosemary Muge: [rosemarymuge@gmail.com](mailto:rosemarymuge@gmail.com)

### SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Individual Ordinary membership £27.00

Associate member (at the same address) £6.00

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Individual Record Section membership £16.00

Combined Ordinary and Record Section £38.00

Institutional Ordinary membership £27.00

Institutional Record Section £22.00 (non-UK £26)

### RESEARCH GROUP

Meets twice a year. Contact for details: John Wilson email: [treasurer@thorotonsociety.org.uk](mailto:treasurer@thorotonsociety.org.uk)

### RESPONSE GROUP

The Society seeks to respond to matters of historical and conservation concern which arise in the County.

If members become aware of such matters please contact the Group Co-ordinator, Barbara Cast - contact details above.

### VICTORIA COUNTY HISTORY

A group of researchers continuing the VCH of Nottinghamshire. For information and to join the group contact the County Editor, Philip Riden at [philip.riden@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:philip.riden@nottingham.ac.uk).

### PUBLICATIONS

The Society publishes an annual *Transactions* volume which is distributed to all members.

The Record Section volumes are published from time to time and are distributed to members paying the extra subscription for this Section. They are also available for purchase by other members and the general public.

Quarterly Newsletters are circulated to every member.

### LECTURES

Lectures, unless stated otherwise in the programme booklet, are held at the Nottingham Mechanics, 3, North Sherwood Street, Nottingham, NG1 4EZ, commencing at 2.30 p.m. with the Bookstall open from 2 p.m.

**DEADLINES** for Newsletter items are 1 February, 1 May, 1 August and 1 November of each year.

Copy should be sent to the EDITOR, Paul Baker MA FRGS email [editor@thorotonsociety.org.uk](mailto:editor@thorotonsociety.org.uk)

Items can be handwritten or typed in Word format, either suffix .doc or .docx. Pictures, diagrams and maps are all most welcome to illustrate an item. Images can be submitted on CD, DVD, as an email attachment or sent for scanning. Preferred size 300dpi JPEG. Images will be adjusted to suit the publication.

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Acknowledgement of authorship and photographer will be given where this information is known.

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**PHOTOGRAPHS FROM SOME MEMORABLE EXCURSIONS  
ORGANISED BY ALAN LANGTON**



Top Row L August 2015 Gainsborough Old Hall

R May 2016 Southwell Minster

Middle Row L June 2013 By the canal on the Ashfield Excursion

R May 2015 Baddesley Clinton

Bottom Row L June 2014 Doddington Hall

R July 2017 Lampport Hall