

**FRIENDS OF NOTTINGHAMSHIRE ARCHIVES (FONA)**  
*established 2012*

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# NEWSLETTER

No.3

June 2013

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## MEMORIES OF A COUNTY ARCHIVIST



*Adrian Henstock (2<sup>nd</sup> from right) gathered with Friends of Nottinghamshire Archives at their recent Annual General Meeting. The business included the presentation of four paperweights to the Archives, for use in the reading room.*

**After the business meeting, at which the events of the year were reviewed and the subscription rates and constitution were formally adopted, Adrian Henstock reviewed his life as an archivist.**

Adrian opened his talk by announcing that he had been retired almost 10 years to the day and it was almost 20 years to the day that the Archives building was opened by HRH Princess Anne. Adrian was pleased and excited that the new addition to the building had finally received approval and would give an additional 20% of much needed storage space. Adrian had been involved right from the start with the plans for the design of the original building.

Adrian had been an archivist for nearly 50 years, starting as an assistant at the Nottingham Central Library, when his boss was Miss Violet Walker, a librarian who had been promoted as the first archivist in 1949. He spent a two year 'apprenticeship' cataloguing Title Deeds at the oldest depository in Nottingham. The Library had been collecting manuscripts since the 1880s in a single sequence starting at M (for Manuscript) 1. Adrian finally put a stop to that system himself at M 24000! The archivists also had responsibility for the official City Archives in the Guildhall Basement which included Council Minutes from 1369 and Borough Court Rolls from 1303. They were well catalogued, restored and well kept next to the police cells!

When Miss Walker retired, Adrian was promoted, and Miss Val Lacey became his assistant. Miss Lacey eventually became Mrs Henstock (seen next to Adrian on the cover picture!). At this

point, Adrian had moved to the County Records Office in the old Judge's Lodgings in High Pavement with the search room being the Judge's Dining Room.

In 1974 it was announced that the City and County Councils were to be amalgamated. This was vigorously opposed by the City because of their 1449 Charter which stated that the City was to be an independent county borough 'forever'. The *Nottingham Evening Post* headline at the time was "Battle of the Charters". After much discussion on all sides, there was capitulation and the two archives services amalgamated. This brought with it a complete change of culture. The team was amalgamated with the Leisure Services and they had to think more in terms of promoting the archives to more popular audiences, rather than purely for legal or administrative purposes.

At this time there was a great interest in family history and an Outreach Officer was appointed to promote the documents in the archives.

Adrian talked through some of the major events during his time working at the Archives:

1. In 1972 Adrian managed to get the Nottingham Probate records brought to Nottingham from where they had been stored for

- years in York. They had been stored as individual rolls in annual bundles. It was a huge job, first to flatten the documents and then to catalogue them – 60,000 documents over two years.
2. All pre 1900 Parish records were microfiched. This was combined with a quinquennial inspection in 1972. This was a hard logistical exercise with four Parishes being inspected each day.
  3. Some large family collections were deposited at the Nottinghamshire Archives
  4. The ancient Borough records of Newark and some of Retford were deposited.
  5. The Southwell Minster archives including the Bishops' Transcripts were deposited during the week that he retired.
  6. The National Coal Board records were deposited.
  7. The Guild Hall records were deposited. These included much of the administration material for the City elections
  8. A Holme Pierrepont Charter of Henry II in c. 1160 was deposited at the Nottinghamshire Archives. This had been found in a house in The Park.

All of the above major events were illuminated by Adrian with some very funny personal encounters.

During questions, Adrian was asked what the biggest positive change to have taken place during his life in the Archives had been. Adrian felt it was the cultural change he had mentioned

whereby the archives were now used for public purposes rather than just administrative purposes. He felt that they were now more a business and there was a higher public awareness and use.

As a thank-you for his time and reminiscences, Adrian and Val were presented with a 12-month membership of FONA.

*Report by Cherry Knight.*

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## **MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS**

The AGM marked the commencement of a new membership year. Those who joined during the past year are asked to renew their support for the organisation by sending their current year's subscription as soon as possible.

Cheques should be made payable to: **Friends of Nottinghamshire Archives**. Please send to: Treasurer c/o Nottinghamshire Archives, Castle Meadow Road, Nottingham, NG2 1AG.

Members should bring their card to the next meeting in order to have their programme details updated. Please encourage other societies and potential friends to support us through taking out membership.

A reminder that the rates are £10 for individual membership, £15 for joint membership (two individuals in the same household), £18 for family, £5

for junior membership, £25 for institutions (including local history societies) and £50 for corporate membership.

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## **NEW PROGRAMME FOR 2013**

Saturday 29 June 2013  
Members' 'Bring a Document' at Notts. Archives 11am

Thursday 26 September 2013  
Visit to East Leake & talk 'John Bley' by Keith Hodgkinson 2pm

Saturday 16 November 2013  
'Heritage meets the future' Ruth Imeson & Tim Warner (venue tbc)

Saturday 15 March 2014  
AGM: After-business Speaker Sophie Clapp (Boots Archives) (venue tbc)

Please support our programme and also keep suggestions of potential events coming in! During the building work on Nottinghamshire Archives, some events will be re-scheduled to another local venue. We will keep you updated!

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## **MORE STORIES FROM THE ARCHIVES**

Last year's event 'Bring a Document to tell a story' yielded some fascinating insights into the interests and lives of our members. Here are more stories from November which were too good to remain untold...

### **DOUBLE TAKE IN SHERWOOD FOREST - or great oaks from little acorns...**

Elizabeth Robinson and Marjorie Penn both brought in photographs of family visits to the Major Oak in Sherwood Forest; the two photographs being only one year apart.

Elizabeth's family photograph was a Sunday school outing of 1896. Elizabeth's grandfather, Edwin Gandy, was a clerk working for Sir Ernest Jardine, who made lace machines. He married Caroline Gamble, a dressmaker, in 1901. Edwin Gandy went on to start the Army and General Stores on Carrington Street, which sold camping equipment. It appears that her family (and she supposed many families of that era) were keen to be out of doors and Elizabeth also brought along photographs of her grandfather and his brothers at their rowing and cycling clubs. Luckily Elizabeth's family had "hoarderitis" and much of the information is now lodged in the Nottinghamshire Archives.

Marjorie's photograph at Sherwood Forest was a day trip by train to this major tourist attraction, from Yorkshire in 1897, showing her grandmother, whose ring Marjorie still wears. Marjorie's grandmother used to embroider the shrouds used in family undertaking business. Marjorie's grandmother's four sisters lived together in the family home after the death of their father and all worked in the Yorkshire clothing trade, Bertha as a Worsted spinner and Hanna as a cloth

burler. Their family home is now posh townhouses!

### **SLEEPY LEDGER at the back of a drawer**

Cathrin Wharton brought along an accounts ledger in an embroidered pillow case which has been kept at the back of a drawer at a family farm. The ledger is from 1796 but is in an amazingly good state because of its hiding place. The ledger shows school and funeral fees, and the purchase and sale of household items up to 1814, when Cathrin thinks the affairs of the family must have been wound up. Cathrin has done some cursory research on the ledger, but as the original family who owned it was Wilson, this could be quite difficult, although it appears that the family had interests in the West Indies and Cathrin has found a Wilson who died out there, but cannot be sure if it is the relevant one. Cathrin will be doing further research and will report back in the future.

### **RED HOT BARONET ... or Royal Male?**

Jenny Page brought along a tantalising part of what she thinks is part of a carriage door with a plethora of emblems in the design of the coat of arms, where the crown suggests a baronetcy. Family legend was that the door panel was from the coach in which her great-grandmother went to church. However, further family history suggests the source of the panel could be her grandmother's father, who was a coachman, or it could have

belonged to the well-to-do family where a great-great-grandmother was in service and in whose coach she could possibly have travelled to church. As Jenny knew nothing about the piece, she took it along to an Antiques Roadshow at Newstead Abbey and they confirmed it had come from a carriage door and was mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. They suggested it could be from a Royal Mail coach, but Jenny is not so sure. The coat of arms is clear, but much of the paint is black and bubbled suggesting it is fire damaged. The motto on the piece is "Loyal Until Death". The piece is one of a pair, the other of which has been lost.

### **COVER STORY ... or cover up?**

Graham Crisp presented an amended letter to his grandmother from the Machine Gun Corps Record Office / War Office stating that her husband had been killed in action on 9 June 1917. Graham discovered that the date differed from that shown on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and the Ypres (Menin Gate) Memorial websites, which show the date as 10 June 1917. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission said their date was consistent with that advised to them by the Service Authorities and they could offer no explanation why the dates differed; this made Graham very curious.

Through further enquiries, Graham discovered that his grandfather was killed in the Battle of Messines Ridge, which the Germans had occupied since 1914. The Allies had driven over 20

tunnels under the ridge during the German occupation. These tunnels had been charged with explosives and were detonated at 3 am on 7 June. The explosions were followed by a nine mile long, three section, three phase attack by allied troops from many regiments. Graham's grandfather was in the third phase in the central section, which was due to advance during the afternoon of 7 June. Unfortunately, due to a communication problem, the section set off late. As a consequence, the two side sections spread out to fill the gap. The battle was the first major success of WW1, the Allies achieved all of their objectives and more besides. However, as a result of the late departure of the third phase of the central section and the consequential spreading out of the side sections, many soldiers ended up in the wrong places. It was decided to correct this under the cover of darkness on the night of 8 June by moving the misplaced troops to their intended positions. These troop movements were mistaken by the Allies' Forward Observation Officers, located on the ridge behind them, as German troops preparing for a counter attack and SOS barrages were called for. This caused the Germans to bring down their own protective artillery barrage. The unfortunate troops were caught in this for two hours. The War Diary indicates that the 33<sup>rd</sup> Machine Gun Corps was involved in the Battle of Wytschaete (the central section) from 7 to 12 June. The same War Diaries show the number of Officers and ORs (Other Ranks) killed on each day: 7<sup>th</sup> 1 officer and 1 OR, 8<sup>th</sup> 1 Officer and 5 ORs, and none on the following days. It seems

quite likely that those killed on the 8<sup>th</sup> were the result of the above barrages. Graham fears that his grandfather could have been killed by friendly fire and the "amended notice" could be a cover up of the mistake.

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## **CONNECTING WITH PARTNER ORGANISATIONS**

We would be pleased to hear of ways in which we can support organisations with close connections to the Archives. Friends will have received a mailing regarding the Nottingham Civic Society Walks and Talks programme for 2013 (the Civic Society is an institutional member of FONA) and we would be happy to advertise events of interest to our members from other member groups.

Likewise, if you are a member of FONA, and involved in other societies which may share our aims, please tell them about us and encourage them to join!

Chairman:

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We intend to publish our next newsletter in the autumn – if you would like to become involved in the production of the newsletter on a regular basis, please get in touch!

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