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# From the FONA Committee

It's been four months since the last Newsletter, and as things are beginning to open up, August seemed a good time to get in touch again. We committee members hope you'll find something of interest in this edition.

Looking forward, like many organisations, we're tentatively starting up our talks programme, and thinking about 2022 which - as our 10th Birthday - could be an exciting year.

If you have any suggestions for events, then please do get in touch.

### **What have you been doing for the last 18 months?**

Like many organisations, this newsletter mainly reports what FONA has been doing during the Pandemic, but it is YOUR newsletter, and we'd love to know more about what YOU have been doing.

The last 18 months have been difficult what with archives being shut and little opportunity to travel anywhere - and the

internet only goes so far, doesn't it? Nevertheless, maybe you have started to do some research that you wouldn't have thought of in 'normal' times. Or maybe you're looking forward to picking up where you left off last year? Or maybe now the Archives has re-opened, you're excited about starting some new research.

Whatever the case, I'm sure your fellow FONA members would love to know about it. It would be great to hear from you and all you have to do is send me a few lines outlining your work - let's say 50 to 100 words, no more, though you could include a picture if you like.

OR, if it helps, you could ask question about your research, as maybe other FONA members have come across the same knotty problem as you and found the answer. A problem shared is a problem halved, as they say!

In other words - we'd love you to share what you're working on and find out how you're progressing. Do please get in touch.  
[chair@fona.org.uk](mailto:chair@fona.org.uk).

## FONA on FACEBOOK

Our Facebook page has been up and running for two years now and the followers keep coming! We now have 222 people following our page.

We are working to improve the page which has recently had a facelift. We would like to reach more people so we would love you to join us and if you have something you would like to share that would be even better!



Some of our posts have seen a huge number of engagements and we have been able to help with enquiries through our page. Let's keep this going!

<https://www.facebook.com/Friends-of-Nottinghamshire-Archives-FONA-2558655500820773>

**Judith Mills**  
Chair and Newsletter Editor

# FONA programme for 2021

## 16 October 2021

### *Conscientious Objectors in World War Two in the UK.*

Margaret Christopoulos



Margaret's talk to FONA will take an unusual angle on World War Two experiences as it focuses on Conscientious Objectors, examining the climate of the times in the 1930s, the complex reasons behind the Objectors' decisions, and what they did during the War. It will also reflect, briefly, on what they later thought of those war-time experiences.

Before retiring, Margaret Christopoulos was a Careers Adviser. More recently, she has investigated the history of Conscientious Objectors in both World Wars of the 20th Century

*If possible, this will be a 'live' talk at Nottinghamshire Archives though it may have to be on-line, depending on circumstances at the time. It may even be both! Watch-out for more information about this event.*

**December 2021** - date to be confirmed:

**Christmas Crackers** - An informal social event, with an emphasis on fun when members can share short, seasonal snippets of Nottinghamshire's history.

*Again, either 'live' or 'on-line' or both - as the situation develops.*

**Postponed visits:** it was with regret but great understanding that the proposed visit to Norwell had to be postponed. We have decided not to go ahead with the suggested visit to George Martyn's Barn and other places in Keyworth, however, the Barn will be open 2-5pm on 11th and 18th September, as part of this



*Photograph courtesy of Keyworth Conservation Area Advisory Group*

year's Heritage Open Days Festival. More information on the Heritage Open Days website <https://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/visiting/event/george-martyns-barn>. The website lists many other places that will be open for visitors during September.

# Alice Oldacres and the Portrait of Mr. W. H. Barrow

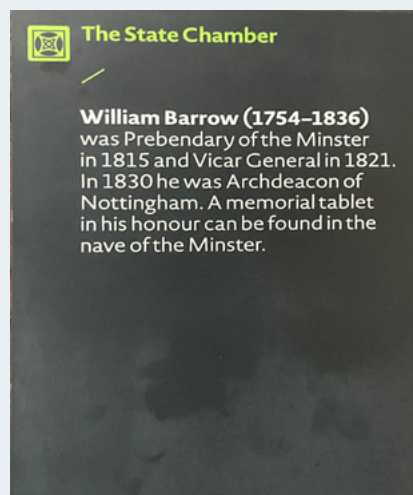
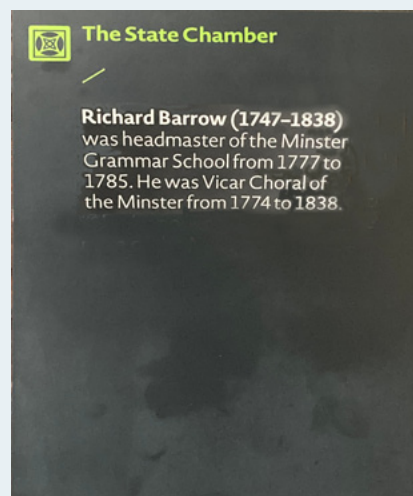
Karen Winyard

It's been lovely to be back researching in the Archives this year, even though the opening times have been limited. I've had a productive time reading through the two volumes of Samuel Collinson's diaries for the FONA podcast I'm working on, as well as a bundle of correspondence relating to the Savile family. But I've missed being able to consult the card index and catalogue systems.

There's one person in particular I want to follow up now browsing through the catalogue folders is possible: Miss Alice Oldacres.

I stumbled across Alice whilst researching William Hodgson Barrow of Southwell (1784 - 1876). Barrow was a magistrate and MP for South Nottinghamshire from 1851 to 1874, and pre-eminent amongst the Poor Law Guardians of the Southwell Union from its inception. His father, Rev. Richard Barrow, was Vicar of Bleasby 1774 - 1778, Master of the Southwell Grammar School 1774 - 1785 and Vicar Choral from 1774 - 1838. In addition, he held numerous other church positions, which led to his being described as "a pluralist of the first water".<sup>1</sup>

Barrow's uncle, Dr William Barrow, was also a prominent clergyman



who held the post of Vicar General of Southwell from 1821 and was appointed Archdeacon of Nottingham in 1830. William Hodgson Barrow followed in the footsteps of his uncle, George Hodgkinson and his eldest brother, George Hodgkinson Barrow, and entered the law rather than the

church. His connection to Alice Oldacres is something of a mystery.

By chance I found a reference to William Hodgson Barrow in the *Nottingham Journal* 14 July 1910 under the heading: "THE CASTLE MUSEUM. Interesting Relics Bequeathed by the Late



Miss Alice Oldacres." Alice proved to be comparatively wealthy, leaving an estate of over £12,052, wealth inherited through her mother rather than her father. She bequeathed a number of items to the Nottingham Castle Museum including "The portrait of William Hodgson Barrow, once "Father" of the House of Commons."

This was exciting as, although there's a portrait of Barrow's father in the Archbishop's Palace, Southwell Minster, we've no image of his son, William. Unfortunately, an email enquiry to the Castle Museum led to a dead end. The registrar at Nottingham City Museums and Galleries checked their collections database for me and, although they located the bequest of items from Miss Alice Oldacres, the portrait was not included.

Alice, (1852 - 1910), was the daughter of Rev Samuel Lealand Oldacres, vicar of Woodborough and his wife Marianne, third daughter of Joseph Potts Esq., of Calverton. After her father's death in 1876, Alice and her mother moved to live in 'The Hollies' on Mansfield Road, where Alice was an active member of the community, serving as organist at her church and leading a Band of Hope and Bible classes.<sup>2</sup>

It looked as though the bequest had been misreported by the newspaper. An earlier report in the *Nottingham Evening Post* 23 May 1910 said: "It was announced at the Nottingham City Council today that the following objects had been bequeathed to the Castle Museum local collections by Miss Alice Oldacres ..." but the portrait was not included in the list.

I obtained a copy of Alice's Will, dated 28 June 1907, to see for myself. In a codicil, 4 March 1910, Alice set out a number of bequests to friends and relatives which ended with:

“To the Nottingham Castle Museum the following articles namely card of Richard Oldacres School terms, the sword and red coat of the Reverend Samuel Oldacres, his Commission as Captain of the Trent Vale Volunteers and his Silhouette likeness. The small silhouette likeness of S. L. Oldacres and a larger one with cap and gown. The sword of Captain Thomas Oldacres Hewes and his Commission as Cornet of Horse. Also mariners compass, sextant and line engraving of engagement between three French ships and one English one. The portrait of William Hodgson Barrow, once Father of the House of Commons and a pair of Flint and Steel pistols. Also the portrait of Captain Thomas Oldacres Hewes in oils by Wilkinson Padley but if this is not hung in the Castle for any reason I declare that the same shall be returned to my executors and fall into my residuary estate.”

There could be no doubting the bequest had been made, but the portrait appears to have been

lost. Perhaps it was rejected by the Castle Museum, or perhaps it had been damaged or was judged unsuitable by Alice's executors. Reading Alice's Will more closely, I've come to the conclusion that she painted the portrait herself. She bequeathed a number of paintings to friends and relatives. One, to Annie Bowler, was "her portrait painted by me". Clear evidence Alice was an amateur artist.

Of the 12 paintings mentioned in the Will, the only one given an attribution is the portrait of Captain Thomas Oldacres Hewes, the work of Wilkinson Padley. Alice disposes of portraits in oils of her parents, watercolour paintings of Woodborough Church and Woodborough Vicarage, an oil painting of Miss Welby and an oil painting with swans, without mentioning the identity of the artist. The inference is that she painted them herself. How she came to be friends with William Hodgson Barrow and to paint his portrait is likely to remain a mystery.

So, whilst I may never find an image of William Hodgson Barrow, I have found the interesting personage of Miss Alice Oldacres and I'm hoping to trace more of her story in the Archives very soon.

<sup>1</sup> Bell's New Weekly Messenger 1 April 1838.

<sup>2</sup> Nottinghamshire History, <http://www.nottshistory.org.uk/articles/mellorsarticles/mapperley8.htm>

# News from Nottinghamshire Archives



Ruth Imeson, Heritage Services Manager

## Nottinghamshire Archives Recovery from Covid

On Tuesday 20th July we welcomed our customers and friends back into the archives on a walk in basis. We were delighted to see so many familiar faces, some of whom were waiting outside even before we had the chance to unlock the front door. We have removed the requirement to book in advance and our full range of searchroom services are available at the following times:

- Tuesday 9am-7pm
- Wednesdays 9am-5pm
- Thursdays 9am-5pm
- Fridays 9am-5pm
- Saturday 9am-1pm

Further details are available on our website.

<https://www.inspireculture.org.uk/heritage/archives/our-archive-services/>

## Volunteering at the Archives

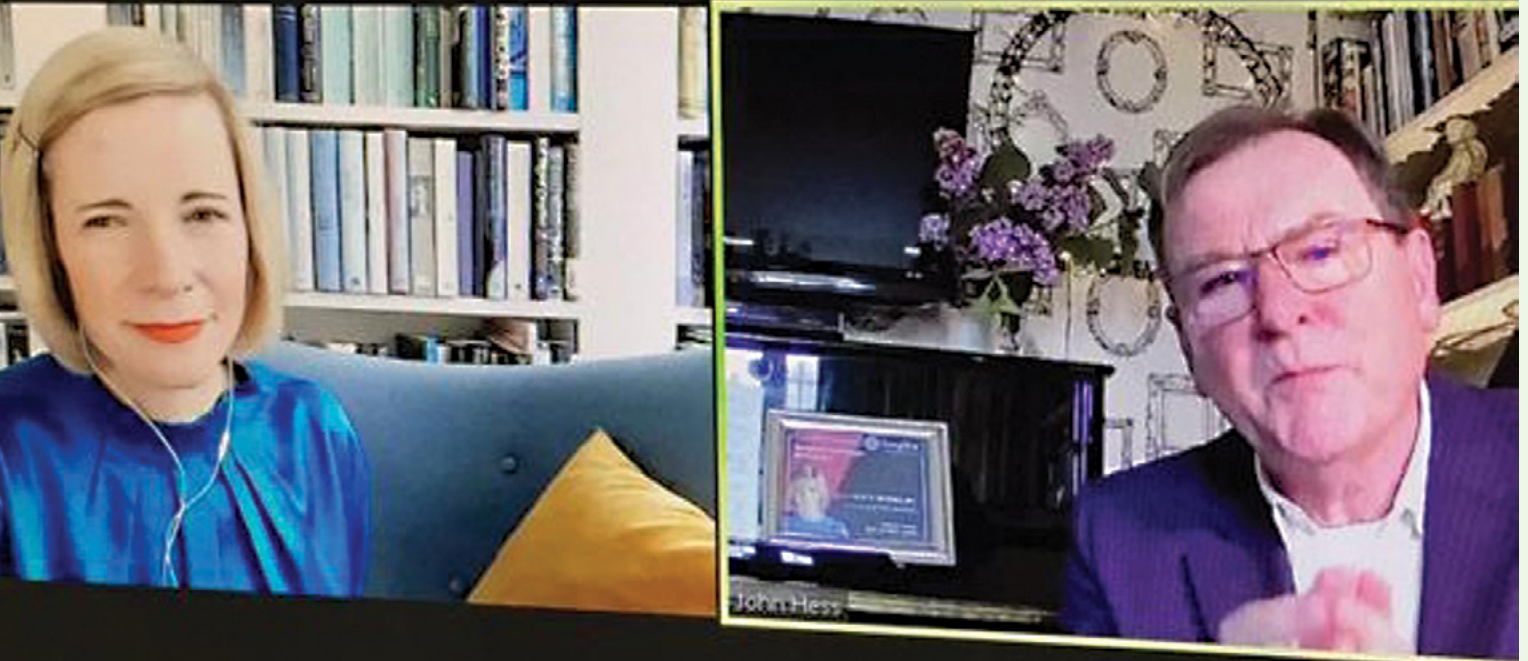
Many of you have asked about our volunteering programme. Inspire will relaunch its volunteer programme in September. We are currently reviewing our volunteer offer and expect to start contacting volunteers from mid-late August. Please bear with us as we need to ensure a Covid-secure environment to keep our volunteers and staff safe.

## Nottinghamshire day

You may have heard that Nottinghamshire County Council has voted to hold a Nottinghamshire Day each year on 25th August. This year is likely to be largely online for obvious reasons. This is an opportunity to celebrate some of the county's history and heritage. There will be a virtual exhibition on the Inspire Picture Archive amongst other 'events'. The County Council will be providing more information about the Day in due course.



# Lucy Worsley - on loving history and sharing the fun.



**By John Hess, FONA Member, Inspire Board Member and Retired BBC Correspondent**

Lucy was coming home, albeit virtually, on-line and via Zoom. You could sense it in the sparkle in her eyes and with a radiant smile as wide as an Elizabethan frilly neck collar. I had the joy of interviewing Lucy as part of the Inspire Nottinghamshire Local History Fair, itself also an on-line event this Covid year.

Lucy joined the live 'chat' from her home near the Tower of London and was soon surfing a sentimental journey looking back at her West Bridgford days. There was the inspirational teacher at Bridgford School who sparked Lucy's early interest in things historical, the volunteering on Saturdays at Bridgford library and the joy of spending teenage time in the cafe at Jessops (in the era before its John Lewis rebranding).

"I just loved history at school. My Nottingham years were happy times" she told me and more than 160

other Worsley fans who had signed up for the on-line conversation.

Lucy is omnipresent these days on television. Like *The Simpsons*, hardly a day goes by without one of her TV history programmes being screened somewhere around the globe. *The Tudors*, *The Georgians*, *The Victorians*: it seems no fascinating period of English history - how they dressed, ate, slept ... and the rest of it - escapes the unique Worsley TV treatment.

And yet, it's only just over 10 years since her first BBC series; it was about how homes have changed over the centuries. Her TV showreel since then has gone into super drive, establishing Lucy as the pre-eminent TV historian of our age.

What's remarkable is that her father - a scientist

- wasn't best pleased that his daughter was so fascinated with history, and not so much with Bunsen burners or the periodic table. But Lucy was hooked on history, especially Tudor England.

"It's pure enjoyment," she said. "I like the nitty gritty of what life was like ... it gives you a sense of perspective."

Of all the historical characters from history, the one she would most want to meet is Queen Elizabeth the First. "She was smart, intelligent and snarky. She had to be to survive."

Katharine of Aragon, the first wife of Henry the VIII, is also on the Lucy roll call of honour. "Katharine showed such dignity and courage. She was also a very bright spark."

After studying history at New College Oxford, Lucy's first job was also fairly close to home, at Bolsover Castle in Derbyshire.

"I had six brilliant years at Bolsover. It was such a great place to be" she told us. But even her first job for English Heritage - overseeing the conservation and exhibition work - had a touch of the serendipity about it. A chance reading of a book about the Elizabethan country home and architect Robert Smythson (by Mark Girouard) fired her imagination.

"I read it in one afternoon and it introduced me to the world of playboy Cavalier William Cavendish and the fantasy, fairy-tale castle he created at Bolsover." At this stage of our talk, you could already sense the infectious joy and enthusiasm Lucy brings to all of her history talks, whether on-line or on the tele. "It's a fantasy, gothic, romantic, chivalric recreation of a castle on a hill in Derbyshire. And it's so full of secrets ... built to impress the King, Charles I. It's an outrageous, idiosyncratic place that captures the Cavalier spirit of its creator."

Unfortunately for William Cavendish, the Royal visitor to Derbyshire wasn't too impressed by what Bolsover and the Duke of Newcastle had to offer. But for Lucy, the 'chivalric recreation' of Bolsover was her career launching pad to becoming a Chief Curator of Historic Royal Palaces, later a TV presenter and successful author.

Across our Zoom connection, I brandish a copy of *My Name is Victoria*, from West Bridgford library, and

one of her recent history stories particularly aimed at younger readers. She's also written about Jane Austen and her sisters, Fanny and especially Anna. "She's another of my prickly women," Lucy confesses.

As our conversation came to a close, it's easy to sense the passion Lucy has for wanting to share her love of history. But, as she admits, one of the difficulties can be having a modern mindset on historical events and figures, especially in relating it all to TV audiences. "We are having to look for the modern in the past so it's familiar enough for viewers to engage with it. ... I don't mind doing crazy things in my television programmes and dressing up, if it acts as a hook in getting viewers, especially younger people, interested. Maybe they'll find out more, ask questions or go to the library to get out a book. That would make me very happy."

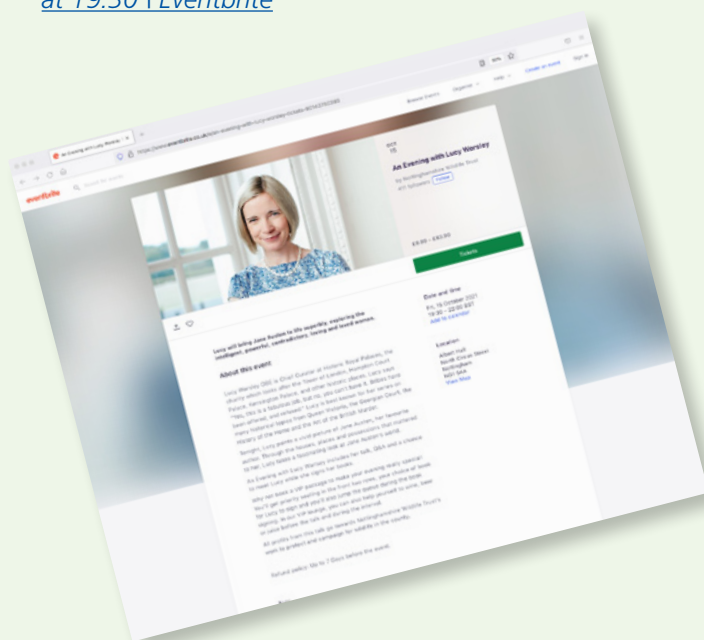
Lucy's now delving into the whodunnit world of Agatha Christie and the British fascination with murder. "Her victims and her crooks are very often female, and her stories were quite feminine." Lucy left us with a few clues to the next big Worsley project - but that may have to wait for another talk.

John Hess

PS:

There's a chance to spend **"An Evening with Lucy Worsley"** at Nottingham's Albert Hall, on Friday, October 15th.

[An Evening with Lucy Worsley Tickets, Fri 15 Oct 2021 at 19:30 | Eventbrite](#)



# In Their Own Words

an on-line talk by Karen Winyard, 22 May 2021.

In some ways we could not have chosen a worse day for Karen to give this fascinating presentation because 22 May was the first Saturday after families were allowed to meet up, indoors and in larger groups. Consequently, a select group of 10 met to hear her talk, though about 30 apologies had been received.

Karen explained that she had first become involved in dramatizing historical research through the Southwell Workhouse Storytellers - a group used by the National Trust for both in-house and outreach performances. They believed that



*Karen performing the story of Mary Trynor, an orphan and inmate of Southwell Workhouse. Mary's character was developed by Chrissie Burton, a student of Nottingham Trent University's Theatre Design degree course, as one of her final assignments. See FONA Newsletter 21 for full details.*

10 minutes of 'storytelling' could convey as much information as a 60 minute 'lecture'. As an example, she explained that

in 2015, to coincide with the General Election, the Workhouse Storytellers staged *Politics and Paupers* which replicated an 1851 election.

As the audience moved from room to room around the Workhouse, they encountered the candidates, some of the inmates, officials and others all of whom told their 'stories'. They heard about and in some ways experienced both everyday workhouse life and mid-19th century electioneering. Finally, those who were eligible had to cast a vote under 1851 rules. This, of course, ruled out many members of the audience, while some of these who were able to participate found public voting to be intimidating.

Karen then illustrated the power and the pitfalls of storytelling, using two case studies.

The story of Sarah Godson highlights one of the pitfalls - that of imaginative 'gap-filling' becoming accepted as researched fact. In 1854, Sarah Godson was an inmate at Southwell Workhouse. She was reported on a number of occasions for disruptive behaviour, including 'misbehaving during divine service'. A story was written about her life, and, for lack of other detail, the writer 'imagined' that she'd bared her bum in church - an hilarious episode which enhanced the tale. This version of Sarah's life became embedded in Workhouse publicity, including a Twitter thread; even Dr Paul Carter, the National Archives principal domestic

record's specialist, heard about and tried to research this invention.

Further research on Sarah using parish, court and asylum records, on-line newspapers and census information - all accessible at Nottinghamshire Archives - revealed Sarah's true and sometimes more tragic story.

Karen's second case study demonstrated the power and immediacy of storytelling, again using Workhouse records; in this case about Mary Tyler, aged 8, who, like Sarah, demonstrated disruptive behaviour to the extent that she was tied by a rope to the woman in charge of the school room. But their stories were different; Mary and her sister were taken into the Workhouse as orphans. The two girls were together for a year or so, but when Mary was 7 they were separated and shortly after her younger sister died. Her poor behaviour was caused by emotional and physical loss and 'associating with depraved characters which is not easily prevented'. She may also have been subjected to abuse. She was finally admitted into Sneinton asylum aged 25, and lived there for another 49 years, dying in 1928, aged 74.

Mary's story was told in an 'interactive performance' at the Workhouse. Karen relates that At one point I gave the end of a piece of rope tied around my waist to a member of the audience to hold so that I was restrained as Mary had been, whilst I threw "stones" (sponge painted black) around the room. We posed the



question, was Mary bad or mad? Sitting in rows on the schoolroom benches, the audience was able to experience Mary's story on many levels, as classmates vulnerable to her violent outbreaks and as adults wondering how to best care for Mary and we hope it also resonated with our present concerns over our current education system.

Recreating history in this way allows the researcher, writer, performer and audience to 'walk a mile in another's shoes'. Dramatizations can make history more meaningful and improve understanding but in order to properly and respectfully represent people and situations, 'informed imagination' may be needed to fill in the gaps in the official records -

though great care must be taken to not over embroider and allow fiction to be taken as fact. Careful, thoughtful, dramatization can also help us learn about ourselves and our attitudes, and how these have changed over time. Karen's talk effortlessly illustrated all these aspects of good storytelling.

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## FONA at Newark Book Festival



*Our Chair, Judith Mills, and the FONA stall at Newark Book Festival.*

With so many events being cancelled this year, there has been very little chance to publicise FONA's latest publication *Lockdown 2020: the first 100 days*.

Looking for as many opportunities as possible to distribute our books - and let people know about FONA at the same time - on 11 July we had a stall at the Newark Book Festival. Bob Stoakes produced an attractive table-top display panel for us and Karen

Winyard crocheted a banner. There was a prize for the best-dressed stall, though we didn't win it! Anyone who knows Newark market will probably remember that the market stalls are very big, so we were 'forced' to share the stall with the Thoroton Society, which was a delightful partnership for us both.

It was a successful day as we sold a number of copies of *Lockdown 2020* and a copy of *Identity* - the 'coffee-table' book we published to accompany the 2017 'Signed and Sealed' conference. It lavishly replicates 40 signatures found in documents held in Nottinghamshire Archives.

If you'd like to find out more about the *Lockdown 2020* book, there is a video uploaded to our YouTube Channel (go to our website <https://fona.org.uk/> and click on the big red button to find it.) It sells for a very reasonable £4.50 plus P&P. It is also available from Five Leaves Bookshop, Nottingham. [Contact https://fiveleavesbookshop.co.uk/](https://fiveleavesbookshop.co.uk/). There are also a few copies of *Identity* left - a lovely present for someone at only £10.00.



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If you would like to contribute articles to the FONA Newsletter please contact Judith Mills, Chair.

[chair@fona.org.uk](mailto:chair@fona.org.uk)