

FONA[®]



Newsletter 32 August 2023



The launch of
FONA's latest book

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Hello from the Editor



Welcome to the summer edition of the FONA newsletter. You will find it packed with articles on diverse themes including a 19th century carpenter's work book and ballooning, alongside updates from both FONA and Inspire Nottinghamshire

Archives. Plus, details of FONA's exciting new book: *Rufford Abbey & Beyond. Estate, Villages and People*. Perfect reading for these long hot (and wet) summer days. FONA owes Judith Mills a tremendous vote of thanks for her hard work as editor of the FONA newsletter since she took over from Richard Gaunt in 2019. Together with Bob Stoakes, Judith has set the bar very high and I step into her editorial shoes with some trepidation. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this issue, contributions which have inspired me to run a regular Members Profile slot for short pieces about how you came to history and archives, whether as an occupation or a hobby. Please do send me your stories of your adventures in archives to: karen.winyard@fona.org.uk. If you do have an idea for a piece for FONA's newsletter, don't wait for a copy deadline. I will collate anything I receive and hold on to it for the next issue. As always, thank you to Bob Stoakes, for continuing to do an amazing job with the layout, ensuring the FONA newsletter continues to be 'top quality'.

Welcome New Members

A very warm FONA welcome to:

Dina Abbot, Nottingham
Dean Collier, East Leake
Derek Turner, Retford
Richard & Margaret Lansdall, Calverton
Sally Woollard, Carlton,
Janine Buckley, Farnsfield

We look forward to meeting you all at future events.

From the Chair

It's been a busy time for FONA since the last Newsletter. In March we had our AGM when we agreed structural revisions to the Constitution, without changing the intent or aims of our group. If you would like to see the updated Constitution, you can find it on our website by clicking on the link at the bottom of the page <https://fona.org.uk/home-2/membership/>.

We also elected - or more accurately - re-elected the Committee for 2023-24. They are:

Chairwoman: Judith Mills
Treasurer: David Anderson
Secretary: VACANT* (Cherry Knight acts as
Minuting Secretary for meetings)
Members: Cherry Knight, Ruth Strong,
Sian Trafford
Ex-officio: Ruth Imeson

Although Karen Winyard decided to resign as a Committee Member, she volunteered to take on the job of Newsletter Editor for which I am extremely grateful. And Bob Stoakes continues to offer his professional skills as a graphics artist to ensure that everything we do - from newsletters, to exhibition materials to books - is of the highest quality.

If you have any skills or experience that you think you can offer to FONA - without having to join the Committee - then please do get in touch with us. In particular, we need someone with an interest in 'social media'.

After the AGM, we had an engaging talk from Emily Gillott on John, 1st Lord Savile and his archaeological interests (see p.9). Our next event was a 'work-in-progress' talk by Ruth Imeson on The Travels of Richard James, who she is researching for her PhD. This was a very different and intriguing subject for a FONA talk. I am sure we will hear more from Ruth in due course.

FONA members have been active in other ways as well. On 11 March, the Savile Project Team led the University of Nottingham's Saturday Seminar, talking about the project and some of the research findings. Also in March, Karen Winyard took part in an episode of the Radio Nottingham podcast, Notorious Nottinghamshire. The episode, The Exorcist and the Witch Hunt, is now available on BBC Sounds: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0fq463g>. On 13 May, FONA had a stall at the 'Hands on History' event (aka Great Nottinghamshire History Fair) at Mansfield Library. This showcased the Savile Project and forthcoming book, as well as offering some 'hands-on' experience in palaeography. And in June, I gave a talk to Beeston History Society on FONA.



FONA at 'Hands on History' in May.

Towards the end of 2022, FONA was nominated for two Inspire Culture Awards: *Celebrating Heritage Together* (our July 2022 series of events) was nominated for the 'Innovative Partnership' Award, though we were not finalists. This award was won by the amazing Miner2Major project. Secondly, FONA's Savile Project was nominated and shortlisted for the 'Creativity and Innovation' Award. The Team attended the Awards Ceremony on 29 June. We did not win the Award but have been presented with a certificate and badge.



Judith Mills, Ruth Strong, Karen Winyard & Bob Stoakes receiving their finalists' certificates. Photo courtesy of Inspire [inspireculture.org.uk](https://www.inspireculture.org.uk)

Although we were not successful in our categories, I am delighted to be able to report that two of the Archivists were recognised. Richard Burman was shortlisted in the 'Inspiration to Me' category, while the Creativity and Innovation Award went to The Mother of Tension project, a contemporary dance-theatre performance themed on conflict and war to which both Richard and Jamie McMurtrie had both contributed. You can read more - and see photographs - about the Awards on the Inspire Culture website.

<https://www.inspireculture.org.uk/whats-on/news/2023/06/30/the-stars-of-inspire-winners-at-the-inspire-awards-2021-23-announced/>



As well as giving talks and attending Award Ceremonies, the Savile Project Team with Bob Stoakes have been working on writing FONA's latest book *Rufford Abbey and Beyond: Estate, Villages and People*, which was officially launched at Rufford Mill on Friday 18 August.

Judith Mills



FONA is Hot Off the Press

Inspire, Nottinghamshire County Council and FONA joined forces to create a very special book release for *Rufford Abbey and Beyond: Estate, Villages and People*. The book is the final outcome of FONA's Savile Project. Sheila Leeds, Judith Mills, Ruth Strong, Pauline and Jim Chettle and Karen Winyard catalogued and researched about 100 boxes of documents deposited with Nottinghamshire Archives by the Savile family. The team found an extraordinary diversity and depth of detail in the collection that forms an important contribution to our county's heritage and decided the best way to share this was by publishing a book. A book that warranted an official launch.

FONA received tremendous support from Inspire and Nottinghamshire County Council. The event was held at Rufford Mill, in the beautiful grounds of Rufford Abbey

park, and Councillor Ogle, the chair of Nottinghamshire County Council, officially launched the book.



The Talbot Room, Rufford Mill.



Judith Mills, Ruth Strong and Karen Winyard read extracts from the book.



Left to right: Ruth Strong, Peter Gaw, CEO of Inspire, Councillor John Ogle, Chair of Nottinghamshire County Council, Judith Mills and Karen Winyard after the launch.

We also enjoyed a fascinating glimpse into the work of the archives from Ruth Imeson, that demonstrated how important this service is not only in terms of Nottinghamshire's heritage, but for history generally. The archives hold documents and artefacts that are relevant both to the UK as a whole and even further abroad; a relevance that is manifested by the Savile collection.



Ruth Imeson, Heritage Services Manager, Inspire.



Judith Mills with Lord Savile.

Peter Gaw, CEO of Inspire, along with trustees Mark Dorrington, John Hess and Diana Meale also attended.

Rufford Abbey and Beyond: Estate, Villages and People is now available to buy for only £6.50 and it's well worth every penny. Contact Judith Mills chair@fona.org.uk to order your copy and we'd recommend you don't delay - it's selling fast.



News From Nottinghamshire Archives

Windrush and Hip-Hop Musical Theatre

Between March and June Nottinghamshire Archives has worked with partners to create two exciting, creative events. In March we enjoyed the hip-hop musical theatre project live at the Lakeside Theatre; whilst 22nd June saw over 100 people celebrating the 75th anniversary of the arrival of the ship the Empire Windrush in England.

Thanks to a grant from the Imperial War Museum's 1914-1918 NOW fund, we were able to work with Inspire's Youth Arts team and the amazing choreographer Gareth Woodward to create a new work of art based upon the history of conflict in the twentieth century. The aim was to reinterpret archives in new and engaging ways to question young audiences and encourage them to consider the impact of conflict on the UK and its peoples. The artists worked with a group of young people to create an innovative dance performance.

The key archive was the collection of John Edward Hammill of Mansfield (ref: DD/2733). Hammill was a conscientious objector during World War II and was required by a tribunal to work alongside German prisoners of war. He made many friends with whom he corresponded and many of these letters are within the collection. Archivists Richard Burman and Jaime McMurtrie created a welcoming experience for the young people when they visited the archive. The first performance of the Mother of Tension was so loud that the seating was shaking, families of the young dancers were on their feet cheering, and a great time was had by all.

Above image: Mother of Tension hip-hop musical. Courtesy of Nottinghamshire Archives.

On 22nd June we held our most ambitious and well attended event to date. Over 100 people enjoyed Caribbean food, an exhibition, calypso music, oral history interviews, and the opportunity to speak to elders from Nottingham's black community. One elderly lady was very moved to see a photograph of her husband in the exhibition. He had passed a few years ago and the lady had never seen this photograph of him before.

Our partners for this event were a local charity named Always Community. They had received funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to interview over 50 local residents on their Windrush decision. The focus was not on their lives in Nottingham, but rather on why they decided to move here and the impact upon themselves and their families. We will be working more closely with Always Community, so please watch out for a second exhibition during Black History month in October.

Ruth Imeson
Heritage Services Manager

HMT Empire Windrush. Public domain image.



Photographic display, part of Nottinghamshire Archives' Windrush exhibition. Courtesy of Nottinghamshire Archives.

Learning on the Job. Archives and a Young Historian

Chris Wrigley, Emeritus Professor of History, Nottingham University.

With hindsight, the Dorset County Record Office in Dorchester was far from impressive for a county record office. It was entered down some steps and was below ground level beneath the county council building. Nevertheless, it was a wondrous place to me in the late 1960s. It was a shrine to real history, history based on archives. It was presided over by the reassuring and efficient Miss Margaret Holmes, the first county archivist for Dorset, in post 1955 to 1983. She was very knowledgeable about the contents of her record office and swiftly brought me some late nineteenth century Conservative Party records. I was excited to be reading a primary source dealing with such matters as the activities of the local Primrose League.

The Beaverbrook Library in its opulence was a contrast to the frugality of funding for the public sector Dorset archive. It was set up in honour of Lord Beaverbrook

(1879-1964), the press lord and politician. The Library was in an Express Group building in St Bride Street, which runs at an angle off Fleet Street. You entered the building by a modest side door, walked up bare concrete steps, passing a room filled with huge rolls of newsprint to the second floor where you entered the library by another inauspicious door. Once in, you faced Walter Sickert's portrait of Beaverbrook and behind that best quality archival fittings. There were several large glass-topped display cabinets, containing first half of the twentieth century documents, cartoons and pamphlets. There were three or four large wooden tables for researchers to use, with documents brought out to them by an elderly former Express Group employee, Bill Igoe. The library was soundproofed, necessary because of the very loud sound of printing presses in operation.

The Beaverbrook Library opened to readers on 25 May 1967 and closed in 1975. The major collections were Lloyd George, Bonar Law and Beaverbrook (opened after AJP Taylor had published his biography *Beaverbrook* in 1972). These two collections of Prime Minister's Papers had been bought by Beaverbrook (1879-1964) and housed in his home, Cherkley Court, Leatherhead, which he owned from 1910. The Lloyd George Papers were housed in the former cinema until Beaverbrook's death. The first archivist at the Beaverbrook Library was Rosemary Collin Brooks (1920-71), a very capable woman who had worked for Beaverbrook at Cherkley and had come with the papers. She was a fount of knowledge on Beaverbrook's Papers. Earlier, she had worked for MI5. Rosemary Brooks enjoyed talking to the researchers who came to the Beaverbrook Library, mostly after the research seminars held in university vacations from December 1968. After the seminars, as she drank Bell's Whisky in a nearby pub, she talked of her father, William Collin Brooks (1893-1959), who worked for Lord Rothermere and later for Lord Beaverbrook. Rosemary had many anecdotes about people the researchers were studying. She told me that her father had asked Arthur Balfour why Austen Chamberlain had not been a success as Conservative and Unionist leader. Balfour replied, 'Because he was a bore.' Rosemary Brooks was a very committed archivist and very much a guardian of her father's memory. She died relatively young, in one of her many asthma attacks.

The Beaverbrook Library had the eminent historian AJP Taylor as its Honorary Director. Alan Taylor was generous with his time to readers in the library, whether overseas, distinguished or young. On 29 November 1968, I was sent from Birkbeck College to seek his advice on the viability of Lloyd George topics for PhD research in the light of the former Prime Minister's Papers. He gave me nearly half an hour. He liked my idea of 'Lloyd George and Labour' and delivered something like one of his television lectures on the subject to me. I left walking on air, thinking I was embarking on one of the best topics on early twentieth century history.

The Lloyd George Papers are uneven. Before the First World War, the collection is relatively thin. His first wife Margaret kept newspaper clippings of reports of his speeches in Wales, especially in north and central Wales. He himself was careless in keeping correspondence. Fortunately, when Frances Stevenson became his secretary in 1913, she was more careful in this regard. Later, when he began work on his *War Memoirs*, initially in 1922, she organised his archive. The lesson I learned

from the pre-1914 period of Lloyd George's career was not to privilege manuscripts over the newspaper reports and the Hansard (Parliamentary) records. Before the digitalised National Newspaper archives, the newspaper clippings were very helpful and often very revealing. For instance, he spoke in favour of old age pensions in the 1892 general election, and I found him in the late 1890s appealing to the extreme end of nonconformity, the Wycliffe preachers.

I went to more austere archives in London. I worked in the British Library archives in 1968-69, usually on Saturday mornings as I could drive to and park in the British Museum on the Russell Square side of the building. The Papers of Balfour, Campbell-Bannerman, Herbert Gladstone and others were available in a room behind a ground floor exhibition room. This was a golden age before the high security of later years, let alone the conditions visiting the archives in Belfast. I also worked in the Round Room, perhaps beside the ghost of Karl Marx.

I spent more time in the Public Record Offices in Chancery Lane and Portugal Street. The Chancery Lane Record Office was very memorable as the route to the long main reading room went past a smaller room which was occupied by many medieval historians with long rolls of documents on special stands to read them. To me at 21, most of these researchers seemed



Public Record Office, Chancery Lane, now the Maughan Library By Flaming Ferrari on English Wikipedia, Public Domain.

very aged. In the main search room, I began by reading the official 'History of the Ministry of Munitions', which had been printed but not published. I spent a few days making notes in pencil. The lesson I learned there was to check carefully the locations of printed documents. In this case I should not have assumed that the only available copy of the several volumes of this unpublished book was in the PRO. Someone working in the reading room told me that there was a copy in Senate House Library, London University, the building next to Birkbeck College. So, I went with two bags of sixpenny pieces and photocopied the important parts for me. This enabled me to work on this important material when I stayed with my parents in Bridport over Christmas 1968.

I spent enjoyable times touring archives in Scotland, Wales and many parts of England. There were Lloyd George Family Papers as well as papers of friends and acquaintances in the National Library of Wales, which I first went to in 1969. It was then an old-fashioned place. I liked its thoughtful provision of light lunches. You needed to book within half an hour of the National Library opening for the snack lunch of the day. I enjoyed



National Library of Wales By Ian Capper, CC BY-SA 2.0.

baked beans on toast, followed by rice pudding or a sponge pudding with custard. You either had the day's item or you went without. The food was brought to the basement, where the very few people eating there sat not far from buckets and mops and other cleaning items. I remember well working quietly in part of the library for reading archival material when a very loud southern state American voice asked for help to find out about his Welsh ancestor. The very polite librarian asked where he lived. The American did not know. Any idea of places nearby? The reply 'I only know he lived near the sea' did not narrow things down, given the north, west and south coasts. What was his surname, produced the killer blow, 'Jones'.

I read some letters partially in Welsh with the help of a Welsh/English dictionary. The lesson here was to get help where you can. After the National Library closed,

I walked down to the town and went to a pub with students behind the bar. I got the help of one of them, a Welsh speaking man, who translated my notes in Welsh. I thanked him with a pint of beer. Far from the Welsh passages in letters being major secrets, it was almost always friendly good wishes before a signature.

Perhaps the archive which was most memorable for me was that which housed Lord Carson's Papers which I saw in Belfast at the height of 'The Troubles' in 1970-71. The Northern Ireland Record Office was an obvious target for bombers. As a result, the archives functioned in the Law Courts. After arranging in advance to see some documents, I went with some trepidation into central Belfast. I entered the building between well-constructed machine gun emplacements. The main lesson there was to finish my research as quickly as I could.

My early work in various archives was a very happy period of my life. I was excited by not knowing what I would find in smaller collections, which often housed unexpected nuggets of good information. For instance, there is interesting correspondence in the Elibank Papers in the National Library of Scotland between Lloyd George and the Master of Elibank on enforcing dilution of labour on the Clyde 1 January 1916.



A view of the National Library of Scotland. Creative Commons Attribution - Share Alike 4.0 International. Author: Jwslubbock.

The archives were also enjoyable for who you met in them. When I travelled round much of the UK, I often found others doing the same. This was so with the Canadian academic Professor Michael Fry who was working on Lloyd George's foreign policy. In the Beaverbrook Library, I developed friendships with Michael Dockrill, later Professor at King's College, London, Peter Lowe, diplomatic historian of Manchester University, and Roy Douglas, British and diplomatic historian of Surrey University. Working in the Beaverbrook Library, I was stimulated to come across many eminent historians as well as retired politicians such as Richard Law and Dingle Foot. Meeting such historians there and in other archives gave me confidence in my research and as a person.

Rufford Abbey, Excavating the Archives

Ruth Strong, reviews Emily Gillott's talk.

Following the AGM, Emily Gillott, Planning Archaeologist for Nottinghamshire County Council gave a very interesting talk that



Emily Gillott at FONA's AGM.

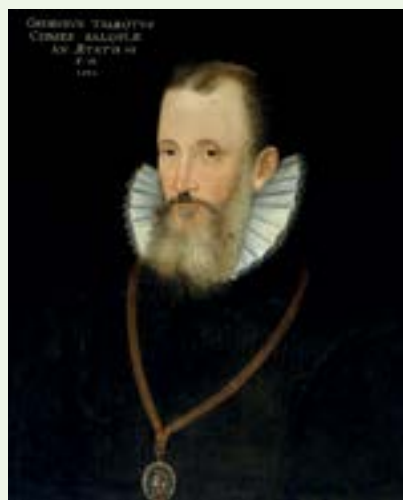
dovetailed well with the work of FONA's Savile Project. Emily's talk focussed on the research carried out into the origins of Rufford, an exercise attempting to put together a synthesis of what is known about the site from prehistory onwards by looking at archival documents and old maps, especially looking for changes to the house and gardens.

Emily noted that John Lumley Savile, the first Lord Savile, in addition to being a diplomat was an amateur archaeologist - but more of that later.

The Historic Environment Records for Rufford have evidence dating back to the Roman occupation judging by cropmarks indicating farmstead level activity. In the Domesday Book Rufford is mentioned as one manor.

Documents describe how, when land was given to the monks to build an Abbey in the 12th century, the people were 'cleared away' to Wellow. Later, trouble developed between the Abbey monks and the people of Wellow when the monks banned activities which were considered village rights.

Remains of medieval engineering can still be detected in the form of man-made water courses and a water meadow system. The rivers still run on the courses set for them and aerial photography shows a water meadow system. After the Dissolution in 1536, the Abbot became vicar of Rotherham and the church was dismantled. The estate was given to the Talbot family, in the person of the 4th Earl of Shrewsbury. The Abbey was converted to a home by George Talbot, 6th Earl of Shrewsbury, a conversion that seems to have been



George Talbot 6th Earl of Shrewsbury By Rowland Lockey - Levey, Santina M., *The Embroideries at Hardwick Hall, National Trust, 2008, Public Domain.*

carried out rapidly and may have been influenced by the necessity of providing accommodation for Mary Queen of Scots. George Talbot was charged with holding Mary Queen of Scots as a prisoner and Rufford could have been one of the many places she was held.

In 1626 Rufford passed to the Yorkshire Savile family, when Sir George Savile of Thornhill married Mary Talbot, who had inherited the Abbey and estate. Under the Savile family Rufford was extensively added to. Buildings were not knocked down, just added on as wings to the original edifices. The development of the buildings and gardens at Rufford Abbey



Emily Gillott outlining the various building phases at Rufford Abbey.

benefited from the first Lord Savile's interest in archaeology. During his career as a diplomat Lord Savile spent much time in Rome. He took part in the excavations at Lake Nemi and bought some land on the site of the villa of Antonius Pius. (*Emperor of Rome 138-161 CE*). Some of his finds, such as a well-head, were used in the gardens at Rufford Abbey. A mystery surrounds this well-head. Two were in the gardens but not noted in the sale catalogue

when the estate was broken up and sold. There is a possibility of more missing artefacts from the orangery which was used as a museum. Four carved marble roundels set into the wall of the kitchen gardens at Rufford were moved to the Castle Museum.

The archived materials include interesting correspondence with both incoming letters and drafts of outgoing letters, which are hard to interpret without context. There are, however, hints of occultism. The documents generally give insights into the experience of running the estate covering a wide range of subjects. Some documents are

memos with scribbles and cartoons. Eighteenth century letters referred to matters of the landscape, concerning repairs to dams and roads.

Letters from John, first Lord Savile to his father during his Grand Tour contain very detailed, accurate descriptions of his travels and reveal an insight into why he was a successful diplomat. In 1859, he followed the trade routes into Russia and his notes describe the clothes and houses of the people and the method of panning for gold with hides in Tashkent. There is evidence from various documents and letters that John Savile Lumley

(as he was before inheriting Rufford Abbey) was regarded as an authority on antiquities, had a thirst for knowledge and was a passionate man. Letters survive from a lifelong correspondence with his friend William Lowther, that indicate an intense friendship. In the letters, Lord Savile's nickname was 'Dick' and Lowther was 'Bill' and it is clear great affection existed between them.

This account is only a brief summary of the detailed and interesting presentation given by Emily and our thanks go to her. The results of her investigations are eagerly awaited.

A 19th century Work Book - Part One

Judith Mills

At the FONA Members' 'Show and Tell' event in December 2022, I gave an overview of an early 19th century workbook I'd been given (see the February Newsletter) and said I intended to do more work on the book after which I'd write a longer piece on it. The book appears to be a work book belonging to a carpenter who lived in Averham named Richard. Apart from his Christian name, and that of his wife, Margaret, the book contains no information about its owner.

The villages - or more technically - hamlets of Averham, Kelham and Staythorpe are linked because of their proximity to each other and by a shared Parish Council (PC). About a year after I moved to Kelham, I became a Parish Councillor. A very

long-established member of the PC, Ian Justice, learning that I was interested in history, surprised me at one meeting by handing over an old book which he had found in his house when he first moved in. He said I could have it to keep. Sadly, both Ian and his wife Maureen have passed away in the last few years, so I have not been able to ask them for more information about the book's history.

An initial skim through suggested it was a work or account book of some kind, possibly of a carpenter or similar craftsman, though he took on many different types of work.

The first thing I needed to establish was who had written the book. This involved working with census and

parish records, and I am not a family historian so there are gaps in the research, though I was reasonably successful in the end.

The earliest entry was on the very damaged inside front cover. It said, 'Came to Averham in 1799'. Tucked inside the book were four pieces of paper. One, in Maureen's writing, began 'Previous occupants of our house were named May ...!'. The other three pieces were copies of the 1851 census for Staythorpe and sure enough Elizabeth May lived in Staythorpe with her two sons and a servant and is described as being a 'Cottager with 14 acres'. But there was no one called Richard or Mary. As this was 50 years after the first entry, I looked at the 1841 census for Staythorpe but again could not find a Richard or a Mary. Then I

Richard Lee's workbook.



realised that Maureen's note was a red herring because what we had both overlooked was that the first entry said they came to Averham, not Staythorpe.

I then checked the 1841 census and sure enough, there was Richard and Mary Lee in Averham. The 1841 census does not record as much information as later censuses, but it did note that Richard was 70 years old, which would make him 28 when he began the book; just about the right age for him to have completed an apprenticeship and worked as a journeyman, before setting up his own business. Mary at 74 is a bit older but the age difference was not uncommon; she may have been in service or even a young widow. Richard is described as being a cottager.

Moving on 10 years to the 1851 census, Richard still lived in

Averham, but was a widower so Mary must have died though I could not find a burial record for her. Again, he is a cottager but has 11 acres of land. His son, Robert (aged 45) also a widower now lived with him. Robert's wife, called Sarah, had also died leaving him with three children: Robert (20), Sarah (presumably named after her mother, aged 18) and John (15). They had a servant, Mary Glazebrook, aged 15, who was born in Halam.

Parish Records show that Richard's son, Robert, was baptised at St Michael and All Angels, Averham on 11 February 1806 and was buried at Averham in 1856. I was not able to find a date of death for Richard.

Jumping on another 10 years to 1861, census records show that Richard's grandson, Robert was a carpenter employing 1 man and 1

apprentice. Strangely he appears to live by himself, but next door to his still unmarried sister, Sarah, who is listed as the head of the household owning 10 acres of land. In fact, it is possible that they lived in the same building but for purposes of the census declared that they had separate households. The youngest brother, John, lived with his sister Sarah and he was also a carpenter. This confirms my original impression that Richard was a carpenter.

The rest of Richard's book is a fascinating snapshot of the three villages at the beginning of the 19th century because it records his clients, what work they commissioned him to do, how much he was paid and what other tasks he took on. I will write more about that for the next FONA Newsletter.



Balloon ascent by Windham Sadler from canal side Crescent, Birmingham 1823. By Anonymous - <https://dams.birminghammuseums.org.uk/asset-bank/action/viewAsset?id=19713&index=60&total=62&view=viewSearchItem>, Public Domain

up, up and away!

One of the most exciting spectacles of the 19th century was a balloon ascent and balloonists, or aeronauts, enjoyed celebrity status. Several of the diaries and memoirs held at Nottinghamshire Archives bear witness to the fascination aeronauts and their adventures held for the people of Nottingham.

Joseph Burdett, (also known as Joseph Moss), was fourteen when he played truant from working with his stepfather to see James Sadler make the first manned balloon ascent from Nottingham on 1st November 1813.

It was much talked about before the time, at last the day arrived.

I and my father was still working at Bilborough so at dinner time on the day named about twelve o'clock I took my dinner in my hand and went on the road to look what quantities of people there was going towards Nottm. I ventured to ask what time the Balloon went up and they said about two o'clock. I kept walking on with the young man I asked and eating my dinner at the same time. I thought I should like to go so I went about two hundred yards further considering what to do, when all at once I was compelled by the current to go on for the temptation was so strong that I could not resist it so I went rejoicing towards Nottm. in company with a crowd of people and left father to shift for himself.

I had several misgivings on the road as I knew I was playing truant

but I got into such jovial company that I pressed on with them until we got into the meadow at Nottingham. There was a great number of people there already and thousands kept adding to their numbers; the day was very fine and every one was cheerful and in good humour. We had about two hours to wait before the Balloon was ready, at last after several ups and downs it rises and the breeze being in the right direction it rose splendidly and majestically up in the air and went right over the thousands that were feasting their eyes to see it amidst the most deafening shouts and clapping of hands as it is possible for me to describe.

(The Memoirs of Joseph Burdett, 1813 – 1817, DD 1177/1)

Joseph Woolley, a stockinger from Clifton, may also have been present that day, although his diary entry is less effusive, simply noting that the ascent took place, 'amongst

the largest crowd of spectators I ever saw in my life on any occasion.' (Diaries of Joseph Woolley, DD 311).

John Rainbow, governor of the House of Correction in Nottingham, also records balloon ascents by James Sadler, his son, Windham and Charles Green in 1813, 1823 and 1826. The latter occasion was Green's first ascent from Nottingham and was described by Rainbow.

On Wednesday the 2nd of August Mr Green having filled his Balloon a great number of persons (one or two at a time, both ladies and gentlemen) ascended a considerable height by cords attached to the Balloon, Mr Green always accompanying them. And the same on Thursday to about half past one o'clock when Mr Green ascended with a gentleman and was seen a considerable time by the multitudes assembled to witness the ascent ... (Diary of John Rainbow, DD 808/1)

According to the Nottingham Date Book, as quoted in Iliffe & Baguley, *Victorian Nottingham Vol 10*, page 57, the ascent was made from the

centre of the Market Place, and around eighty or ninety people enjoyed a partial ascent in the balloon, paying 10s 6d each for the privilege.

Not every ascent was successful, as stockbroker and writer Samuel Collinson noted in his diary entry for Monday 24th August 1863,

A fete at Tom North's, Basford Park in aid of the funds of the general hospital. Coxwell ascended in his balloon about 5 o'clock & I have just heard that the balloon has burst when up in the air and has fallen near Arnold & that Coxwell is killed. Poor fellow, what a sad thing to be killed in furnishing a spectacle for a gazing crowd. His loss is really a public one as he was the only man to be trusted in taking up Mr. Glaisher to follow his scientific experiments on the atmosphere. (Diary of Samuel Collinson M382/1&2)

In fact, as Samuel records in his next entry, it was not Mr. Coxwell who was killed in the accident. There was an insufficient supply of gas and Coxwell, being a heavy man, did not believe the balloon would carry

his weight. Rather than cancel the event, Coxwell prevailed upon an acquaintance and fellow balloonist, James Chambers, to ascend in his place, with tragic results.

It was this element of risk and danger that drew men (and women) to engage in these aeronautical adventures and which thrilled and fascinated their audiences; with the newspapers reporting the aeronauts' escapades with relish. As the century progressed aeronauts took even greater risks by making parachute jumps from their balloons. One such parachutist was a young lad from Nottingham who styled himself 'Professor Russett' and whose daring leap was recorded in the *Nottingham Daily Guardian* of the 2nd September 1889, as quoted in Iliffe & Baguley *Victorian Nottingham Vol 10*, pages 59 & 60. Sadly, I have yet to find a diarist who writes about 'Professor Russett', or to discover his real name.

Karen Winyard

Mo Cooper is Dancing Through Time

Do you know anyone who attended the Morrison School of Dance at Clarendon Chambers as a child? Local Historian Mo Cooper is working with When Women Gather, (a wellbeing cultural project) to capture memories of this dance school. Please contact Mo on mocooper@yahoo.co.uk or telephone 07950472022.

And while you have your dancing shoes on, why not shimmy down to Gedling House for a brand-

new opening as part of Heritage Open Day 2023. Gedling House was the home of John Turney, the Burnside family, the Elliots - and various ghosts. During lock down I researched the history of this beautiful building on behalf of the new owners - the Kadampa Buddhist Centre, and now we are opening our building for HOD for the first time. Expect a newly restored Georgian Mansion, stories from servants and owners, a little talk by myself, cake, rolling

lawns ... and a chance to try a bit of meditation. See <https://www.meditateinnottingham.org/product/heritage-open-day/> for more information. And if you have any stories or knowledge about Gedling House ... I'm still researching!

Mo Cooper
mocooper@yahoo.co.uk

Correction to last issue

On page 3 of the February Newsletter, it said that 60 guineas was the equivalent to 7 months' salary for Jo Fitzhenry's father. It should have read 'about one month's pay'. Apologies to Jo.

Dates for your Diary

9 & 16 September 2023	Showcasing Local Artists & Makers at George Martyn's Barn , 31 Main St, Keyworth, NG12 5AA. For details contact sheilakingdom@gmail.com
12 September 2023	Tour of Nottinghamshire Archives 11.00am
14 September 2023	Tour of Nottinghamshire Archives 2.30pm
16 September 2023	Archives Escape! New Wave at Nottinghamshire Archives . Time and further details tbc
16 September 2023	Heritage Open Day at Gedling House 11am - 3.30pm.
5 October 2023	Introduction to Bookbinding: Pamphlet Binding Workshop 10.30am - 11.30am Cost £10 at Nottinghamshire Archives
12 October 2023	'Marching in Time' Discovering your Military Ancestors 10.30am - 12.00pm at Nottinghamshire Archives. Cost £5
27 October - 20 December 2023	Fantasy: Realms of Imagination Exhibition at Nottinghamshire Archives.
18 November 2023	Who the Devil were the Deverills? By Peter Duke, FONA meeting at Nottinghamshire Archives 10.30am for 11.00am
30 November 2023	Behind the Scenes In The Conservation Workshop , 2.00pm - 3.45pm at Nottinghamshire Archives. Cost £3.
2 December 2023	FONA Members' Christmas Social at Nottinghamshire Archives, 10.30am for 11.00am



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