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Newsletter 33 November 2023

FONA sends all its
members Warmest
Season's Greetings

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Welcome from the Editor



Winter is nearly upon us and there is only one more FONA meeting to enjoy this year, and it promises to be truly memorable. At ten in the morning of 2 December eight lucky and intrepid FONA members will be locked into the Escape Room at the Archives with only an hour in which to pit their little grey cells against the Archive's puzzle master and win their freedom. What happens should they fail? I dread to think, but they may miss out on our final talk of 2023 from Dave Mooney about the folk customs of the East Midlands — and of course on the tea, coffee and mince pies we'll be providing. A fitting finale to what has been a fantastic year for FONA, and I hope to see you all there. In the meantime, this winter issue of the FONA newsletter brings you a host of interesting articles including a puzzle to solve about Kelham Hall and a thrilling account of a Nottinghamshire balloonist. Chris Weir has kindly provided an account of his early interest in archives and, as this is the time of year traditionally associated with the telling of ghost stories, we finish with something a little on the spooky side. Thank you once more to Bob Stoakes who has created another FAB issue with his graphic design skills.

Contributions for the FONA newsletter are always welcome at any time and should be sent to the editor, karen.winyard@fona.org.uk

Letter from the Chair

Only a short letter from me this issue with two updates; news about items FONA has recently purchased for the archives and an addendum to FONA's latest book, *Rufford Abbey and Beyond. Estate, Villages and People*.

FONA's Latest Acquisition



James Hole Castle Brewery, Photo Karen Winyard.

In September, Richard Gaunt alerted me to a set of accounts for the James Hole Castle Brewery in Newark, being sold by Jarndyce Antiquarian Booksellers. Ruth Imeson confirmed that Nottinghamshire Archives already held a collection of items about the Brewery and this set of accounts filled a gap. The book was duly purchased and it came with a bonus of two copper printing plates. They have all been deposited in the Archives (Accession Number 10476).



Page from Castle Brewery Accounts, Photo Judith Mills.

The Castle Brewery building still exists on Albert Street, just off Beaumont Cross and has been converted into flats. Since buying the book, Jarndyce has forwarded an enquiry it received from one of the flat owners who is researching the history of Castle Brewery and brewing in Newark. He is hoping to produce a small booklet and I hope he will send in an article for the Newsletter in due course.



Two printing plates from Castle Brewery, Photo Judith Mills.

Rufford Abbey and Beyond: addendum

FONA's new book *Rufford Abbey and Beyond* is selling very well and one avid reader, Michael Jackson, has been in touch to correct an assumption made (by me!) and provide additional information about game shooting. I'm grateful to Mr Jackson for the additional information.

On p.77, I assumed that the reference to 'moor game' being supplied to the Abbey referred to moor hens but have been informed by Mr Jackson that this is another name for red grouse. But it is unlikely that grouse would be shot on the Nottinghamshire Estates as they are moorland birds (as the other name suggests). Mr Jackson has identified a 'shooting box' or house owned by Lord Savile near Hebden Bridge at the beginning of the 20th century, where grouse most certainly would have been on the sporting agenda.



Red grouse on Burley Moor., Yorkshire. Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-SA.

James Nelson and Stuart Shead have provided some more fascinating information on game birds found in Nottinghamshire via FONA's Facebook page. They point out that, according to the naturalist Sir Joseph Whitaker, grouse, peregrines and Golden Eagles were to be found on Mansfield Heath.

The problem, however, is that the reference to moor game was in a document dating to 1819-20, 80 years or so before Lord Savile owned the shooting box, or Sir Joseph Whitaker published *Notes on the Birds of Nottinghamshire*. Further research would also be needed to establish who owned shooting rights over Mansfield Heath. At the time of the document, Rufford was held by Hon. and Rev. John Savile (aka Black Jack) who was the fourth son of the 4th Earl of Scarbrough (also brother to the 5th and 6th Earls and later became 7th Earl), so the most likely explanation is that he shot grouse on his family's Yorkshire estates, not at Rufford, but exactly where we don't know.

An Erratum will be added to all remaining book stock to correct the error assumption. Those of you who have



Lagopus lagopus scotica. Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-SA.

already bought a copy might like to update their copy.

As you will see on p16, we have an exciting programme in place for 2024 and I look forward to seeing you all at our last meeting of this year, on 2 December 2023 when we will be enjoying mince pies and exploring the customs of the East Midlands with Dave Mooney. Assuming I've managed to make it out of the escape room!

Judith Mills

One of My Bookshelf Favourites: Nottingham: A Biography

Chris Weir

What gets us into archives and local history? It's probably different for everybody. For me it was coming across a newly published book by Geoffrey Trease titled *Nottingham: A Biography*. This book was published by Macmillan (London) in 1970 and it still sits on my bookshelf at home and is still a favourite - and is still dipped into all the time. If it wasn't for coming across this book, pretty much by accident, I might never have got into local history or applied for a job in archives. Up to 1970 I had studied geography at Reading University which involved a paper on historical geography and

two papers on town and country planning that included work on the development of new towns across the UK and how eras of settlement in towns and cities had brought with them many different cultures and architectural influences. I had explored, with friends, areas around Reading like the Downs where there had been ancient settlement and where evidence of ancient landscapes could be discovered but I didn't really see it developing beyond the feeling that cycle rides and walks could be a lot more interesting if there was a history element to them. Around

that time, I also discovered another book that inspired me to learn more about local landscapes. This was *The Making of the English Landscape* by W.G. Hoskins. It had originally been published in 1955 but went into numerous 'Impressions' over subsequent years.

In 1970 I was in London. I was a Community Service volunteer with the West London Family Service Unit in Notting Hill. Occasionally I came back to Nottingham to visit friends and family, usually by coach but sometimes, if I had enough money, by train.



Chris with his copy of 'Nottingham: A Biography'.

On one occasion I had come up to Nottingham by train and on walking into the town I found myself gazing into the window of Sisson & Parker, a renowned bookshop with a lovely staircase and shelf after shelf of wonderful books. On that day the shop had a front window display of a book by Geoffrey Trease on the history of Nottingham. I was curious. I had lived near Nottingham for much of my life but knew very little about its history. I popped in and started

leafing through *Nottingham: A Biography*. Reading the 'Personal Introduction' hooked me straight away. He argued that everyone has a 'personal view of a city' and they relate that to their own interests, such as cricket, football, Nottingham Castle, Goose Fair, Robin Hood, local writers, the shops and the local industries. Trease himself was Nottingham 'born and bred'. He talks about the view of Nottingham as the train 'glides' into the station, he describes 'prowling round the old Lace Market' and walking along Castle Gate and seeing the 'ghost of what was fashionable Nottingham'. Though he left Nottingham to pursue his writing career he returned to the city while penning his book to see if there had been any changes. Interestingly one of those was his observation that 'giant' flats were transforming the skyline; a trend that continues apace today! All great stuff, so informative and

so well written. I dipped into my pocket and the book became a friend for life. A few years ago, the cover was suffering from use and time but I had it preserved by a book conservator. The book will probably outlast me!

A year or two after buying the Nottingham history I was living in Nottingham, working at Social Services, when I saw an advert in the local newspaper for a Miscellaneous Records Assistant at the City Archives on South Sherwood Street. I had never heard of archives but the advert intrigued me so I applied out of curiosity. *Nottingham: A Biography* had inspired my interest in Nottingham's history and here was a job that was all about history. I was lucky enough to be appointed to the post and was soon immersed in a future in the past.

A Nottinghamshire Balloonist: Henry Truman (1888 - 1963)

Luke Danes

Henry Truman was born in the market town of Bulwell on 5 December 1888, the first child of farm labourer Henry Truman the elder and his wife Isabella. By around 1905 the Truman family had moved to Town Farm in the village of Nuthall, five miles west of Nottingham, where Henry and his younger brother William helped their father with the day-to-day tasks.

The early years of the twentieth century had witnessed a resurgence in ballooning and many provincial galas and flower shows hosted spectacular balloon ascents and parachute descents by the famous north-London-based dynastic aeronautical company Spencer Brothers Ltd. Members of the public were keen to experience the thrill of a balloon flight for themselves, and Henry's

turn came at Ilkeston in August 1908 when he was taken aloft by one of the five Spencer brothers, Sydney Spencer. This was followed by several further ascents over the next few years.

What started as a hobby soon became much more serious, and before long Henry had apparently learnt to pilot balloons himself and was combining his regular work on the farm during the week with flying for Spencer Brothers Ltd at weekends. Despite the outbreak of the First World War in July 1914, Henry was flying at events across the country and on occasions even performing his own daring parachute descents from the balloons. However, conscription was introduced in January 1916 for all unmarried men between the ages

of eighteen and forty-one, and by late August Henry had been called up for military service. Given his wealth of skills and experience, Henry found himself attached to the Free Balloon Section of the Royal Flying Corps (RFC), based at Richmond Park in Surrey.

Between January 1917 and November 1918, Henry made eighty-five day and night balloon flights from locations across the country. The night flights required Henry and his colleagues to test the reactions of ground-based anti-aircraft searchlight crews, and he was often impressed by their effectiveness. On 1 April 1918 the RFC merged with the Royal Naval Air Service to form the Royal Air Force (RAF), and Henry was transferred to this new armed service with the rank of Corporal. Henry's final wartime balloon flight came just six days before the Armistice.

In March 1919 Henry gained his Aeronaut's Certificate from the Royal Aero Club, the body responsible for all private and recreational flying in the United Kingdom. Shortly after, Henry was transferred to the RAF Reserve and was finally demobbed on 30 April 1920, having reached the rank of Corporal Mechanic.

When Henry returned to work with Spencer Brothers Ltd, the business was now in the hands of Captain Henry Spencer, and his children Ena and Percival. Having gained his Private Pilot's Licence and Licence for Free Balloons in 1924, Henry piloted many of the Spencers' balloons during their busy summer display seasons and continued to work with Ena and Percival following their father's tragic death in 1928. However, the trio's ballooning adventures came to an abrupt and unceremonious end in May 1931 when the Air Ministry declared that parachutes should only be used in an emergency and not for public entertainment. After having participated in more than 100 events with Spencer Brothers Ltd, there is no record of Henry working with them again or making any further balloon ascents or parachute descents. In contrast to a life filled with peril, danger and excitement, Henry passed away suddenly and peacefully at his home in Nuthall on 10 January 1963, aged seventy-four.

In January 1984, the documents that Henry had accumulated during his ballooning career were deposited in Nottinghamshire Archives where they were catalogued and given the collection reference DD/1026. The highlights of the collection are four logbooks covering the periods 1908-1922 (DD/1026/1), 1908-1929 (DD/1026/2), 1916-1918 (DD/1026/3) and 1923-1931 (DD/1026/4) in which Henry meticulously

recorded details of each of his balloon flights. These details included the balloons' names, cubic capacity and civil registration; take-off and landing locations; names of passengers or parachutists; amount of ballast used; weather conditions and wind direction; duration of flight and brief technical notes. It must be remembered that Henry did not fly hot air balloons as we know them today, but rather gas balloons held aloft by either hydrogen or coal gas. Nor were the balloons dirigible (steerable) and they relied on the release of gas (known as 'ripping') or the dropping of sand ballast to achieve lift or to descend. The subsequent dangers that Henry faced are strikingly brought to life through his matter-of-fact writing, and his logbook detailing his First World War experiences is perhaps a hugely unique document in its own right.



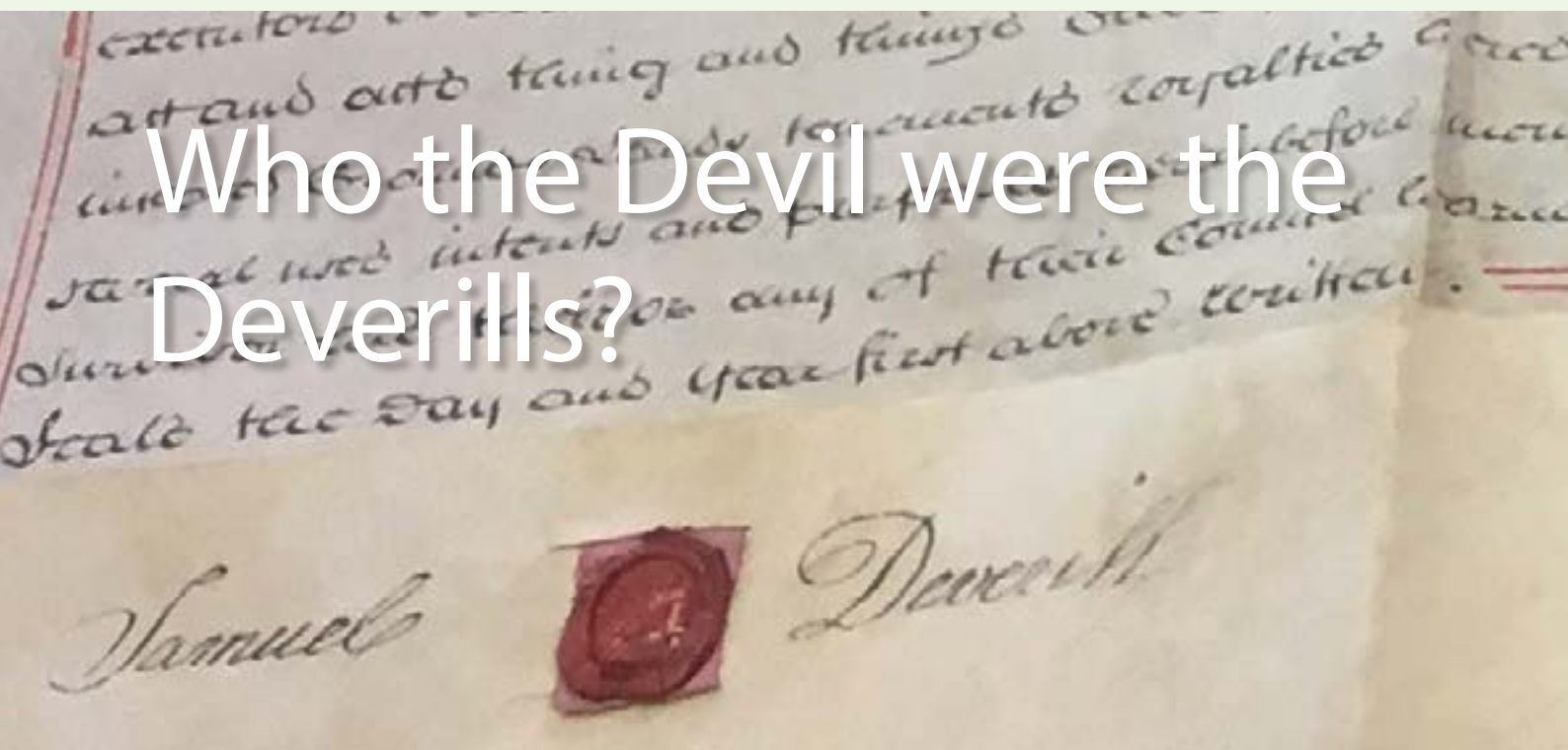
Undated studio portrait of Henry Truman by Nottingham photographer John Willis Ryley. The uniform is that of Spencer Brothers Ltd (DD/1026/9/10). Courtesy of Inspire Nottinghamshire Archives.

Another highlight is an album (DD/1026/8) which includes photographs of Henry and members of the Spencer family, photographs of balloon galas and some aerial photographs, possibly taken by Henry himself. Smaller items in the collection include Henry's Aeronaut's Certificate (DD/1026/5); Henry's Private Pilot's Licence and Licence for

Free Balloons (DD/1026/6); Henry's Association Générale Aeronautique membership card and badge (DD/1026/7/1-2); various informal and studio photographs of Henry (DD/1026/9/1-14); local and national newspaper cuttings, loose photographs of Henry with various balloons, and several Spencer Brothers Ltd balloon flight certificates which were issued to Henry between 1908 and 1910 (DD/1026/10); a letter from Ena Spencer (DD/1026/11/1-2); newspaper cuttings and obituaries (DD/1026/12/1-8) and business cards under the name 'Harry Truman' (DD/1026/13). A nice physical item complementing the documents is the

cap badge from Henry's Spencer Brothers Ltd uniform (DD/1026/14), which can be clearly seen in many of the photographs described above.

Henry Truman's documents bring gas ballooning - a long-forgotten and archaic relic of the past - vividly to life, with his logbooks and photographs putting the researcher directly in the balloon basket alongside him. Of course, the final word must go to Henry himself. Following the Keighley Gala in June 1926, Henry summarised his flight thus: 'The Balloon was fine and gas good. it was the Victoria[']s first ascent' (DD/1026/2).



Karen Winyard reports on Peter Duke's talk from FONA's meeting, 18 November.



There was an excellent turn out for Peter Duke, president of the Nottinghamshire Family History

Society, who has been researching the Deverill family following FONA's purchase of an 18th century marriage settlement between

Samuel Deverill of Clifton and Elizabeth Hooton of Newton, Shelford.

The earliest surviving records indicate the Deverill family were originally based in Arnold. The parish register records two brothers there in the 16th century: Richard and Humphrey Deverill. It was Humphrey's grandson, John, who moved to Wilford in the 17th century; and in turn it was John's grandson, Benjamin, who made the move to Clifton with Glapton. Samuel Deverill, born 1744, was

Benjamin's youngest child.

The marriage settlement, dated 1774, sets out the agreement negotiated between the Deverill and Hooton families as regards the provision to be made for Samuel and Elizabeth upon their wedding. Marriage was not a romantic affair but a means of creating family alliances and securing family lands and wealth. On his marriage Samuel was to receive £2,000 and in return was to ring fence Deverill land in Arnold for Elizabeth's benefit. The land in question was rented

out and generated an income. The settlement provided for the addition of further land should the value of the rental income be reduced, to ensure Elizabeth would have the sum of £35 per annum guaranteed to her should she outlive Samuel. The couple were married at Shelford in June 1774 and the marriage was, at least from Samuel's point of view, a success. They had eight children. Elizabeth spent almost the entirety of her married life in a state of pregnancy and died giving birth to their youngest child, Hooton Deverill.

Peter provided us with a fascinating account of the varied fortunes of Samuel and Elizabeth's children. Of the four daughters only one, Maria, never married. The eldest daughter, Anne (known as Nancy) married Richard Morley of Sneinton Manor, who with his brother John, founded the hosiery firm, I & R Morley.

Elizabeth married Richard Stevenson, a well-to-do farmer from Barton in Fabis. Their son, also Richard, died aged 26, although he had already begun to make a name for himself as a scholar, achieving his MA at Trinity College Cambridge.

Jane Deverill was less fortunate. Her first husband, a ship's broker named Robert Pyke, provided her with a comfortable life in the affluent area of Liverpool known as West Derby. Unfortunately, Robert left her widowed with one child, a daughter, and her second husband, Francis Stanley, was an agricultural labourer.

Samuel and Elizabeth's sons also experienced varied fortunes. William Hooton Deverill married well. His wife, Elizabeth Hassall, was the daughter of the Earl of Chesterfield's land agent. They had only two children, a son and

a daughter. Sadly, their son died aged four and when William died in 1823 his inherited Deverill lands and property were sold by his wife, probably to the fury of her Deverill relatives, and the proceeds used to fund her lifestyle in London's high society with her daughter Mary. By contrast his brother Benjamin, game keeper for Sir Gervas Clifton and sometime churchwarden and parish constable at Glapton, married a woman of greater mettle. His wife, Dorothy Kirkby, survived him by twenty-four years and inherited the family house and lands at Glapton, which she continued to manage and farm alone for the rest of her life. Sadly, Benjamin and Dorothy had no children and the fate of the property after Dorothy's death is something of a mystery.

Benjamin's brother, Samuel, also married into the Kirkby family and with his wife Betsey, had twelve children. The couple lived in Nottingham, Samuel creating a brewery in the town on Bridge Street. As they prospered, they 'moved up in the world' socially. Betsey began to call herself Elizabeth and they moved from their home 'above the shop' in Bridge Street to the more salubrious Pelham Street. Samuel served as one of Nottingham's Aldermen for many years and was Mayor in 1824.

The youngest child, Hooton Deverill, had an interesting career in the lace industry, which he revolutionised by inventing an adaptation to the jacquard machine enabling it to produce machine made lace that rivalled the handmade product. Hooton sold the patent to Richard Birkin. As he never married, Hooton had no children to add to the Deverill descendants. But his father, Samuel, contributed one more child to the family's history.

Samuel married again after Elizabeth's death, a woman named Sarah Stanford Thorp, and had a son in 1804, baptised Gervas Stanford Deverill. Gervas was quite a character. He eloped to Gretna Green with his first wife, Jemima Bland as they were both minors, although they married officially in York in 1823. Jemima died a year later. Gervas married again in 1835 and with his second wife, Anne Spencer Julius, had seven children, five of whom survived to adulthood. Gervas had a military career, serving with the 16th Regiment of Light Dragoons and the 90th Regiment of Light Infantry, Perthshire Volunteers. He saw action in the Crimean War, where he was wounded, and also served in India. When he died in France in 1859, he had attained the rank of Colonel.

One document and one Nottinghamshire family sent out tendrils that spread throughout the county, touching on Nottingham's Corporation and its hosiery, lace and brewing industries; and beyond to London, France, the Crimea and India. But throughout this extraordinary journey the lives and loves of the individual family members provide an intimate context and continuity to the family's story.

And there's another chapter in the Deverill's history for Peter to explore. Three of Samuel's grandsons, children of his son Gervas, emigrated to Hawaii. George Charles Deverill was part of a delegation sent to Honolulu in 1862 to deliver Queen Victoria's christening gifts to Prince Albert, the son of Kamehameha IV and Queen Emma. George remained in Hawaii where he was joined by his brothers William and Alfred, and the three settled there. I sense a sequel talk ...



Fantastic Archives and where to find them

If you go down to the archives today you will be greeted by dragons, elves and gargoyles. Inspire is part of the Living Knowledge Network and is hosting a taster of the full *Fantasy Realms of Imagination* exhibition currently on show at the British Library in London. We have also created our own pop-up exhibition aptly named by archivist Richard Burman *Fantastic Archives and where to Find Them*. The exhibition will be at the archives until 20th December, before moving to Worksop and then to Kirkby-in-Ashfield libraries. See the latest What's On brochure for further information and a guide to heritage events for the next four months.

We have had some monstrous additions to the Inspire Picture Archive.

Please take a look at our online Fantasy exhibition and add an image or two of your own.

https://www.inspirepicturearchive.org.uk/search_results/keyword/Fantasy/date_from/1595/date_to/2026#search-results



A rare glimpse of a monster in Nottingham. Image courtesy of Inspire Picture Archive.

During the Heritage Open Days festival archivist Richard Burman led a team of enthusiastic volunteers in the creation of an escape room event. Visitors solved clues as they moved around the archives building, before saving Professor Raleigh from being lost in time.



Richard Burman and Raleigh Chopper.

Supported by the National Trust's New Wave funding programme a fun time was had by all with many people enjoying the chance to have their photo taken with an iconic Raleigh chopper.

Since April we have received over 130 accessions including a series of deposits of administrative papers of the Thoroton Society, plans for the Retford electricity network, a large number of Anglican parish registers and other records, documents relating to the 2006 Nottingham Drop in the Ocean Music festival, the Nottingham branch of the Royal Scottish Country Dance Society, and a box of Second World War letters between a navy cook and his family.

We have also begun work on plans to commemorate the 80th anniversary of D-Day on 6th June 2024, and the anniversaries of VE and VJ Day in 2024. Also look out for Lord Byron themed events in April 2024 which sees the bicentenary of his death.

We would like to thank FONA members for everything you do to support Nottinghamshire Archives, in particular the purchase of an account book for James Hole and Co., Castle Brewery. This support is invaluable and helps to ensure that unique historical records are preserved.

Ruth Imeson

Heritage Services Manager

Abel Collin's Almshouses - Legacy & Opportunities

From the Charity's Trustees

Whilst the present-day almshouse site has been in Beeston for over 80 years, the charity itself and some of its earlier homes date back much further, to 1708. Initially, the late Abel Collin made a significant legacy in his will for the erection of 24 'little houses' to be made available for the poor of Nottingham. This first site was on what is now Friar Lane – and the homes were built in the early Georgian style. A little over a century later, the charity was able to further extend its portfolio of homes through the acquisition of land in the Broadmarsh area, resulting in a further 20 homes on Carrington Street.

These two sites remained in the centre of industrial Nottingham and close to the heart of the city until well into the 20th Century.

The move to the current day site at Beeston started in 1936, when the Carrington Street site was sold and the proceeds of the land sale enabled the charity to purchase a much larger greener site on the outskirts of Nottingham – providing homes for approximately 100 residents. The first almshouses at Beeston were completed in 1938, and today form the classic 'crescent



The Almshouses photographed in 2016.

shaped' edifice fronting the Derby Road. This local landmark provides 24 two bed roomed houses and 2 bungalows, built in the Arts and Crafts style in traditional materials of brick and wood. The homes were a statement to the Arts and Crafts Movement, showcasing craftsmanship, simplicity, utility and beauty – and with regular upkeep and sensitive modernisation remain delightful homes to live in today.

Through the central archway and behind the traditional almshouse frontage, the site opens out into a low-density residential area with several acres of landscaped grounds and a range of more modern building styles. Following on from the 1930's houses, a further 38 homes were built between the 1950's - 1990's. Much of this work was funded by the sale of the remaining city centre site at Friar Lane, which was demolished in favour of the new inner ring road, and for which the charity was compensated to move the homes. Of these mid-20th century homes the majority are the smaller 1 bed bungalows, providing suitable accommodation for one person and laid out mainly in short terraces. There is also a handful of 2 bed bungalows suitable for two people. Each property has a small sitting out area at the front to take advantage of the sunny south facing aspect.

The last of the residential developments at Beeston is recent, and provides a very uncharacteristic but contemporary style of accommodation. These are the four Drury bungalows, built in 2010, following the transfer of funds from the former Drury Homes in Chilwell. These Chilwell almshouses could not be modernised to meet the standards of the day, and so it seemed fitting that something more contemporary and environmentally sustainable should be built on the site at Beeston. These four units are popular with residents as they are very light and airy, and have an excellent outlook overlooking the sloping grounds from the top grassy bank.

Much of the focus for the current Board of Trustees is about maintaining the residential estate, in order to provide as many up-to-date homes as possible, as demand remains high. With over 60 homes in all, it is an ongoing task, and to make it more manageable there is a rolling programme of general maintenance and improvements. The charity has always tried to maintain its link with its past, and there are many building features that can be seen on the older buildings on site which replicate some features of the former city centre buildings. Such features are found in the communal buildings that accompanied the 1930s development at Beeston.

The Hall is one of the site's most prominent buildings, and provides a real focus for our residential community - as a place to meet, to enjoy informal recreation and to provide a communal space for residents and families to enjoy. It is the most recent building to have undergone significant refurbishment and upgrading in 2018/19. The local planning authority required any new building to be in keeping with the architecture of the site – and this has been achieved through the addition of a substantial extension to the original Hall and creation of an outdoor terrace. The refurbished interior now provides a modern kitchen, an extensive seating/coffee lounge area, a large multi-purpose meeting room/activity space, a small hairdressing facility for residents and facilities for the disabled. It is a very open, light and welcoming space and is popular with residents and families alike. Immediately outside the Hall a new terrace was built, enjoying a sheltered southerly aspect and plenty of space for outdoor chairs and tables, and shade umbrellas in the summer. The small garden area that surrounds the terrace is planted with shrubs and seasonal displays and is partly maintained by residents and the gardening group.

With the recent success of the Hall, the Trustees are looking to the future and recognise that there are still interesting challenges ahead - particularly those that focus on energy efficiency. When the original site was built it was deemed practical to build a large boiler house, serving the crescent of 26 homes, and providing a local district heating system. It was

considered ahead of its time in the late 1930s, but in recent decades has been unused, as individual homes now have independent heating systems. The building, however, is quite attractive, considering it was just a boiler house - and it provides many opportunities for redevelopment. The current thought is to remodel part of the boiler house, particularly the interior, to provide suitable office accommodation. The charities' offices are currently located in one of the smaller bungalows, and if moved, this will provide one additional residential unit as well as moving the office into a more purpose-built environment. A lot will depend on the feasibility of re-modelling parts of the interior and associated costs - but the Trustees remain optimistic that this is the most sustainable solution for the building and will bring it back into some form of use.

Finally, the charity intends to continue with "looking forward" whilst recognising the importance of its heritage. There will be ways to update and remodel a number of the smaller units and introduce greater energy efficiency measures alongside sustainable building solutions. The focus is not just on the homes but also embraces the extensive grounds, where there is potential for a more varied scheme of naturalised planting and increasing environmental diversity. The Trustees are closely involved with staff, residents and outside bodies and aim to continue providing pleasant homes for local Nottingham residents well into the future.

How Many Kelham Halls have there been?

Judith Mills

Most written reports on the present Kelham Hall, including the current website, say that it is the third building in the grounds, but this is not strictly true. Depending on how you count, it could be the only building or the fifth, or even sixth building on the site.

Between 2017 and 2018, Matt Beresford (MB Archaeology) led a National Lottery funded project entitled 'Kelham Revealed!'. As part of that project, the cellars of the Hall were surveyed by volunteers led by Standing Buildings Archaeologist, James Wright (Triskele Heritage). They found the remains

of a medieval structure which, though too few to be diagnostic, do suggest the first building on the site was medieval though not a grand Hall. The full report on the archaeological findings is published on the Kelham Revealed website (<https://kelhamrevealed.wordpress.com/project-legacy>).

While it was not a Hall, this building may, by the end of the sixteenth century, have been a substantial house owned by the Sutton family who were the lords of the manor of Averham, about half a mile away. They did not have a significant land holding in Kelham until

after the Reformation but by 1583, a Mr Henry Sutton was playing an active part in the life of Kelham Church, being appointed to allocate seats in church and also as collector of Tithes. He is possibly the great uncle of Robert Sutton, 1st Lord Lexington who built the first Kelham Hall. In 1624, Robert's younger brother 'Henry Sutton, gent, and Mary his wife, also Katherine, Frances and Elizabeth Sutton his daughters' were excommunicated as 'recusants' i.e., for following Roman Catholic practices. Henry died in 1625 but his daughters were constantly presented to the Archdeacon's Court for recusancy.¹

The first mention of a Hall at Kelham is in Robert Sutton's Will written in 1666. Robert was created 1st Lord Lexington for his services to Charles I during the English Civil War. As a result of that service, he suffered great losses including the destruction of his manor house at Averham but recovered some of his fortune after Charles II restored the Monarchy in 1660. The first Kelham Hall was probably built after the Restoration but before the Will was written and it is not unreasonable to suggest that it was built over the top of whatever house the recusant Suttons owned.

There are no surviving pictures of this 17th century house but some idea of what it looked like is possible because in 1726, following the death of Robert's son, also Robert 2nd Lord Lexington, a detailed, room by room inventory was drawn up for probate. This extensive inventory, held in the Manners' family archive at Belvoir Castle, comprises about 12 pages and lists not just rooms, but also furniture, pictures and soft



From Probate Inventory listing contents of Lord Lexington's Parlour and The Red Damask Bedchamber. Courtesy of the Duke of Rutland, Photo Judith Mills.

furnishings. There are about 8 ground floor rooms including three parlours, a great drawing room, a little drawing room and the Granby Hall. There were three staircases, many bedchambers including one called the Red Damask Bedchamber (complete with a 'Closestools box' in the closet), over two upper floors, while the outhouses comprised a laundry, a still house, stables, bake house, brewhouse, workshop, kitchens and a House of Office (toilet) in the garden.

According to an article in *The Great Houses of Nottinghamshire and the County Families* written by L Jacks in 1881, this house was 'destroyed by fire in the reign of William and Mary' that is sometime between 1688 and 1702. The existence of the inventory however implies that either the fire was not as destructive as Mr Jacks thought or there was extensive rebuilding in the intervening years. Jacks' article is available on the Nottinghamshire History website <http://www.nottshistory.org.uk/Jacks1881/kelham.htm>

Whichever is the case, the 2nd Lord Lexington's Will made provision for the Hall be to be renovated or rebuilt according to a plan he had already signed off, described as the Platt Model, and £500 a year was set aside until the work was finished. What the Platt Model was is unclear; though there was an architect and builder called George Platt working at about this time who was noted as a builder of country houses. <https://www.parksandgardens.org/people/george-platt>

Robert's only heir was his daughter, Bridget, who was the 3rd Duchess of Rutland. Consequently, many of the records relating to her time at Kelham are in the Manners' Archive at Belvoir Castle which I was given access to in 2018. In addition to the probate inventory, these include many workmen's bills relating to the rebuild. They list the cost of taking down partitions and wainscoting, moving pictures into other rooms, making doors, Venetian Windows and cornices. This all suggests that the original hall was being updated to a more 'Georgian' style. Wings were added to the original building with hundreds of thousands of bricks being made on site. There are also bills for garden work including the Old Garden, New Garden, pond garden and ditching and building a 'canal'.

Bridget inherited Kelham Hall and its vast estates 'in trust' for her lifetime and another condition of Robert's Will was that after her death, the Hall and Estate would be inherited by whichever of her sons changed their name to Sutton, and from 1736 onwards the family have been known as Manners-Sutton.

¹ Transactions of the Archdeaconry Court, Vol 3: 1626-1675.

Nothing more appears to have been done to the house until 1842 when Anthony Salvin rebuilt some of part of the house in a Renaissance Revival style. Salvin's scheme cost £9,000; the work being completed by 1846. Only a few years later, on the night of the 26th November 1857 the whole house, apart from Salvin's Service wing, was burnt down.

George Gilbert-Scott was commissioned to rebuild the house in a Victorian Gothic style, but he was not the only architect who put forward a plan; the RIBA picture library includes an unexecuted design by Lewis Vulliamy dated 1858.

adjacent to the car park and the Dome. A little like John Henry, their plans to develop the Hall further were never completed as the exposed brickwork around the doors to the Dome testify.

The Hall is now owned by a hotel group under the name of The Renaissance at Kelham Hall. Plans to convert the building into a hotel have not yet begun.

Clearly over the years, the Hall has had multiple incarnations, but does this mean multiple Halls or just one Hall which was regularly refurbished and modernised to the current taste?



Left, north front of Kelham Hall as built by George Gilbert Scott and right, an unexecuted design by Vulliamy both showing the remains of the Salvin wing to the right-hand side. Unexecuted design reproduced courtesy of RIBA Collections Ref: RIBA20075.

It is, of course, well known that despite £40,000 being expended on Scott's lavish Victorian Gothic building, it was not finished as John Henry Manners-Sutton ran into debt.

In 1903, the Hall was bought by the Society of the Sacred Mission (SSM) which added the dormitory block



Dormitory Block built by the Society of the Sacred Mission, early 20th century with Gilbert Scott hall to the right, Photo Judith Mills.

One building or five or six? You decide.

A more extensive report on the Hall and the village investigated by the Kelham Revealed project, including the church, bridge and medieval village can be found on the project website <https://kelhamrevealed.wordpress.com/project-legacy>. The Heritage Room mentioned on this webpage has now been dismantled though one or two items from it are on display in Kelham Church.

Author's Note: In the last edition of the Newsletter, I promised to complete my write-up of Robert Lee's workbook. However, this is proving more complex and fascinating than originally anticipated, so I hope this note about Kelham Hall is an interesting alternative.

Judith Mills

Marianne Harriet Mason - Psychic Investigator

Karen Winyard

Under the reference DD 716/51 in Nottinghamshire Archives, you will find the typed manuscript of *A Pioneer Life*, the memoir written by Marianne Harriet Mason, a remarkable woman whom history has overlooked.

Marianne was born in London on 19 February 1845 and spent her childhood in Laugharne in Wales before her family returned to their native Nottinghamshire where they built Morton Hall in Babworth, Ranby.



Marianne Harriet Mason by M Taylor, <http://www.kew.org/blogs/library-art-and-archives/the-marvellous-achievements-of-marianne-mason>, Public Domain.

Marianne ought to be celebrated as the first woman Poor Law Inspector (an appointment she received in 1885); a talented watercolour artist and botanist (the Collection at Kew hold over 400 plant studies Marianne produced); and as an expert on folk music. She made

an important contribution to the study of musical oral traditions and folk songs and published *Nursery Rhymes and Country Songs* in 1877. Although her achievements in these areas are little known, you can find reference to them if you search the internet. What you will not find is the intriguing fact that Marianne was also one of the original members of the Society for Psychic Research (SPR).

The manuscript of *A Pioneer Life* is contained in 39 bundles or packets of typescript and packet 9 covers notes on the eclectic combination of 'Psychical Research, Gardening, Folk Songs & Furniture'. Marianne begins,

There is much interest now in Psychical Research, that the admission of non-members of the Society to the general meetings of the Society has to be strictly limited, while the meetings of members only are packed; and the members, especially the Presidents, include many great names. The beginnings of the Society were, like most other things, very different. Only a few people, among whom I was one, were interested in the subject, and our early experiments brought us into touch with each other. I joined the Society at its beginning with Mr Edmund Gurney, Mr Frederick Myers, Professor and Mrs. Henry Sidgwick and Professor Barrett, and we met at first in a small dingy room in an unfashionable part of London. These meetings attracted some rather queer people.

There follows a fascinating account of Marianne's involvement in early experiments in telepathy, including her work with two sons of General Sir George Foley, which she wrote up in 1882 in an article titled 'Thought Reading' for Macmillan's Magazine, Vol 46. More of Marianne's experiences featured in SPR's first publication, *Phantasms of the Living*, co-authored by Edmund Gurney, Frederic Myers and Frank Podmore, published in two volumes in 1886.

Marianne also details a number of her own, personal, experiences of possibly paranormal events but she is by no means convinced by all things supernatural. She accepted the reality of telepathy and was open minded about hauntings:

There also seems to me enough evidence for the belief in certain houses or places being haunted; but I do not believe in ghosts, or the appearance of spirits. It may be that those who have gone through some dreadful or unforgettable experience, or who have committed some crime which rests on their minds, dwell upon the scene, brooding over what took place there, in such a manner that the pictures in their minds may be impressed telepathically upon persons in the place. Or it may be that some places have the power of echoing what has happened in them like a phonograph.

Ghosts were not the only element of the supernatural that Marianne emphatically rejected:

As to the "Poltergeists", that is persons who have the power of moving inanimate matter only by will power and without touch, I do not believe in them. I have seldom, if ever, heard of a case which was not apparently one of the most simple and elementary fraud. It is the lack of appreciation of the value of evidence, and of the proper methods of investigation that can have made anyone believe in them.

I wonder if the Society's investigation of The Enfield Poltergeist in 1977 would have changed her mind. Certainly, SPR members were divided on the Enfield Case which led to a retrospective investigation that concluded there was 'good evidence for paranormal phenomena described by credible informants', although this only applied to those incidents that had been clearly observed. (See Donald West's article on the Society for Psychical Research, <https://psi-encyclopedia.spr.ac.uk/articles/society-psychical-research>)

Marianne was quick to spot a fraud and had little time for mediums.

To myself the difficulty of belief in the action of spirits of any kind, whether good, bad or indifferent, in such manifestations or performances, is not the triviality of the messages but the complete absence of proof of spiritualistic agency. I have had very little experience of professional mediums, and that little has been of unmitigated humbug.

But perhaps the most amusing anecdote concerns Marianne's scepticism about Madame Helena Blavatsky, the co-founder of the Theosophical Society and celebrated 19th century mystic.



Madame Blavatsky By Historical and Public Figures Collection - New York Public Library Archives, Public Domain.

At the time we were experimenting at Cambridge, Madame Blavatzky was in full swing, and it is curious to remember how many people she deceived. We were discussing her one evening at Cambridge, and I ventured to observe that I did not believe she had, by a psychic process, created the cup and saucer to match a particular set, which was found missing at a picnic party and discovered buried in the ground at a spot indicated by her and conveniently at hand. "What!" said Mr. Gurney with scorn, "do you really believe that Madame Blavatzky goes about India burying cups and saucers?" "I can believe it more readily than that she goes about creating them", I answered. Afterwards the Society for Psychical Research sent investigators out to India to inquire into the whole thing, and the frauds were discovered and exposed.

I think you had to get up pretty early in the morning to put one over on Marianne Mason.

Dates for your Diary

- 2 December 2023: 10.00 am** **Escape from the Archives.** Limited to 8 places, FONA members only. Free event. Followed by
- 2 December 2023: 11.00 am** **A Calendar of Customs of the East Midlands**, a talk by Dave Mooney (& Nancy). *Explore a year in the traditional folk customs of the East Midlands, from mob football games to Maypole dances and mummers plays, this lively talk incorporates live music, puppetry and a wealth of personal anecdotes.* Free to FONA members, guests are asked to make a £3 donation. Coffee, tea and mince pies from 10.30 am.
- 20th January 2024: 11.00 am** **Food and Drink in Tudor and Stuart Nottinghamshire**, a talk by Mark Dawson. *A look at the foods being eaten and patterns of dining in the county from c.1540 through to c.1700. What foods did people eat? Where did their food come from? Was the food of the county different to that elsewhere and indeed how did food differ in different parts of the county? Based largely on evidence from probate inventories, but incorporating other sources to present a picture of everyday eating and drinking for ordinary people in Nottinghamshire in Tudor and Stuart times.* Free to FONA members, guests are asked to make a £3 donation. Tea, coffee and biscuits from 10.30 am.
- 16th March 2024: 11.00 am** **The AGM** followed by a talk by Val Wood, title to be announced.
- 18th May 2024: 11.00 am** **The Caves of Medieval Nottingham - the documentary evidence**, a talk by Dr Richard Goddard, University of Nottingham. *Nottingham has been known for its vast system of caves since the Early Middle Ages. Richard's talk examines Nottingham's medieval caves using the borough court rolls and other records held by the Nottinghamshire Archives. These reveal a huge amount of information about what the caves were used for, who owned them and their value to their owners. Importantly they reveal the experiences of everyday living in medieval Nottingham.* Free to FONA members, guests are asked to make a £3 donation. Tea, coffee and biscuits from 10.30 am.
- Summer Events** To be announced.
- 19th October 2024: 11.00 am** **In and out of Wedlock: four 19th Century Case Studies**, a talk by Karen Winyard. *The 19th century saw an increasing movement to reform the legal system both generally and with regard to married women's rights. At the same time women, though disenfranchised, were becoming politically active with the feminist movement in its infancy. The battle for women's suffrage could not be fought successfully until there had been radical changes in society's perception of women, particularly married women, changes that could only be achieved as women found the courage to share their experiences in and out of wedlock. This talk looks at four women who found that courage in their own personal lives and contributed in their own small way to the groundswell of public opinion in Nottinghamshire.* Free to FONA members, guests are asked to make a £3 donation. Tea, coffee and biscuits from 10.30 am.
- 30th November 2024:** **A members meeting;** the theme to be agreed.