



Newsletter 34 February 2024

# Nottingham High School Accounts



Dancing Through Time



An Aeroplane called  
Nottingham



Time and Bromley House

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# Welcome from the Editor



It is hard to believe we are already in February and have enjoyed our first FONA meeting of the year, but time really does fly when you are having fun. Speaking of time, two of our members have new books out. Elizabeth Robinson's *Time and Bromley House*, explores the fascinating concept of time and its associations with Bromley House. The amazing illustrations are also by Elizabeth, a woman of many talents. Another beautifully illustrated book, Janine Buckley's *Country House Stables of Nottinghamshire*, takes us back in time to the period when the horse reigned supreme, revealing surprising facts about Rufford Abbey, Park Hall and Newstead Abbey. I heartily recommend them both. Many thanks go to Luke Danes, Yvette Gunther and Mo Cooper for providing excellent articles on such a diverse range of subjects. We love to read about your projects, so keep those articles coming. As always, thank you Bob Stoakes for designing the layout.

Contributions for the FONA newsletter, ideally between 500 and 1,000 words, are always welcome at any time and should be sent to the editor, [karen.winyard@fona.org.uk](mailto:karen.winyard@fona.org.uk)

**Welcome** to Vanessa Shaw and Susan Beddows, who joined FONA in December. It's always great to see new faces.



# From the Chair

By the time you read this, we will be half-way (if not more) through February and have already held our first meeting, so it seems a bit late to wish you all Happy New Year. Nevertheless, for those members I've not been in touch with yet, I hope that 2024 is a good year for you.

The year has got off to a good start with a super talk by Mark Dawson which, if you missed it, you can read all about on page 14.

Our next talk is on 16 March, immediately following the AGM when Val Wood will explain why 'A Woman's Place is in the Archives', and our May talk, as already advertised, is about the Caves of Medieval Nottingham.

In addition to the programme announced in the November/December 2023 Newsletter, I'm delighted to be able to let you know about two ADDITIONAL events.

- 20 July 2024. Dave Mooney makes a return visit to tell us about Street Music and Busking. Those of you who came to his talk in December will know that Dave is both knowledgeable and entertaining, and his talk was so well received we decided to invite him back. (See page 12 for more on Dave's talk).
- September – date to be arranged – we will be joining the Thoroton Society for a visit to the Horological Museum and Archives at Upton. On learning that both FONA and Thoroton were contemplating this visit, it seemed sensible to join forces.

I have already mentioned the AGM on 16 March and the Agenda and Reports will be circulated at the end of February. I'm delighted that all the existing Committee has agreed to stand for re-election.

But yet again I have to appeal to members to consider joining the committee. At the moment we are very small and on at least one occasion in 2023 the Committee was not quorate. If you think you could spare a bit of time to help with organisation and decision making, please do contact me. We meet four times a year, ideally in person but occasionally by Zoom.

And on a similar, but less official basis, we need volunteers to help with tea/coffee and washing up before and after our meetings. If you can help from time to time, please let me know.

Finally, and sadly, I have to report that David Makin passed away in December. Anne and David have been members since FONA first began in 2012 and have regularly attended all our events. I'm sure he will be missed by many.

**Judith Mills**

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## Time and Bromley House

**Elizabeth Robinson**



*Elizabeth with her book and one of the clocks in Bromley House Library.*

Thirty-three years ago, I went on a tour of Bromley House with the Librarian, Jane Corbett. I applied for membership, and was told I would hear the result after Christmas. Happily, I was accepted.

At the time I was taking about ten exams on gardening, including garden history. Jane Corbett had realised that the days of Nottingham being heavily polluted were over, and the garden could be restored to give pleasure to members of the Library. She asked me to be the gardener. The question arose as to whether the garden could be restored in the sense of taking it back to 1752, when the new house was completed. I was a member of the Nottinghamshire Historic Gardens Trust, so I knew that I needed to research the garden, the house and the family, as those three interesting subjects make one unit. So began many years of research.

As the years went by, I realised I had a lot of information on the fascinating subject of 'Time', though it was not relevant to my main research. Bromley House (originally Smith House) had been built by Sir George Smith, of the banking family, on his marriage to Mary Howe, a descendant of James I of England, VI of Scotland. There were interesting connections to clocks and watches in Lady Mary Smith's family. Bromley House was completed in 1752, the year the calendar was changed. I wonder if that caused problems for the clerks at Smiths Bank.

The Nottingham Subscription Library was formed in 1816. Its success encouraged the Library to buy Bromley House as a permanent home in 1821. The interests of those early members of the Library led to the purchase

of clocks, and the establishment of a Meridian Line. A sundial was purchased for the garden. I realised that as the clocks were old their faces had become quite worn, and sometimes it was difficult to read the writing on them. For that reason, I decided to illustrate the book. I hoped that this would make it clearer for members of the Library, or visitors, to understand the timepieces at the Library and the history they revealed. It is believed that clocks in Nottingham were set to Bromley House time.

I came from an arts background: going to Nottingham Art College for four years, where I graduated in Fashion and Textiles. I worked as a fashion designer in Nottingham, and continued to draw and paint - the interest of a lifetime.

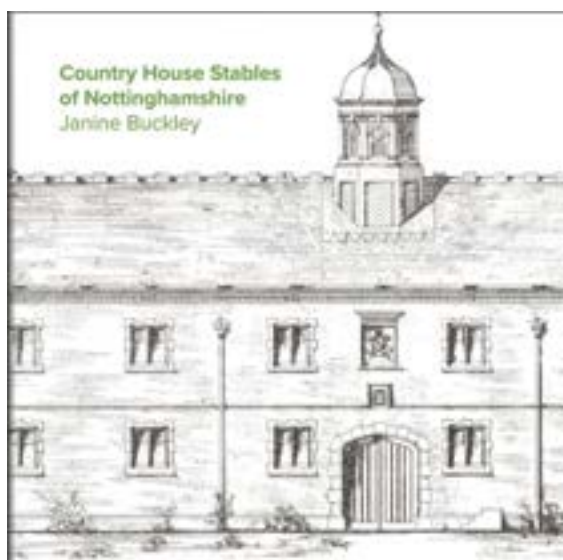
We also have a sense of time regarding history, and the Library has books reflecting this. The opinion on when the world was created has changed considerably over the years, and is a fascinating subject to explore through the books in the Library.

I am convinced that time has speeded up during my lifetime, but unfortunately, I am short of evidence to prove this.

*Time and Bromley House* is available from Bromley House Library, price £4.

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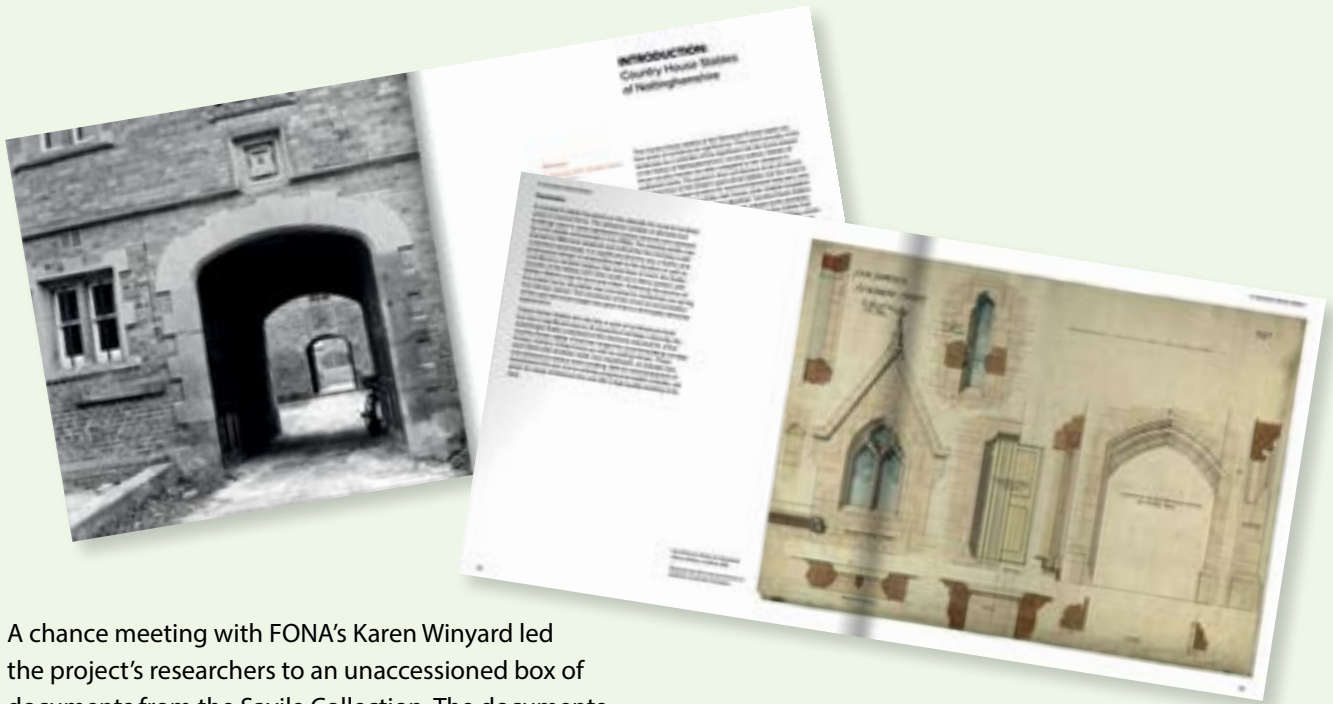
# Country House Stables of Nottinghamshire



**Janine Buckley's book about country house stables is also hot off the press.**



The lottery funded Miner2Major scheme has been championing the built heritage of the Sherwood Forest Area in publishing this fully illustrated book. Written by Buildings Archaeologist Janine Buckley, MA who combines her passion for equestrian history and architecture in this celebration of country house stables.



A chance meeting with FONA's Karen Winyard led the project's researchers to an unaccessioned box of documents from the Savile Collection. The documents within, which had been processed by FONA volunteers, unlocked secrets about the complex alteration to Rufford's 17th century stables that had previously baffled scholars. The Country House Stables project held volunteer training at the Nottinghamshire Archives and one keen volunteer went on to research and co-write the chapter in the book on Newstead Abbey Stables.

Through four case studies at Rufford Abbey, Rufford Farm Stud, Park Hall and Newstead Abbey, this publication examines the form and function of country house stables, the architectural significance of the buildings, their history, and their eventual adaptation

for other purposes. Discover how the buildings themselves reveal details of those who worked in them, the experience of the horses that lived in them, and the relationships between human and horse. Learn about messages found under floorboards and how the marks made by horses tell their own stories.

Printed copies of Country House Stables of Nottinghamshire are available free of charge in larger Nottinghamshire libraries, The Book Case bookshop in Lowdham and Five Leaves bookshop in Nottingham. It is also available to download as an e-book <https://online.fliphtml5.com/hjkdu/qjcw/>

# Greetings from Nottinghamshire Archives

## Ruth Imeson

Welcome to 2024. We have lots to look forward to in the coming year.

Depending upon when you read this the archives building might be closed to visitors. We are welcoming contractors for two weeks to undertake essential building repairs. These will occur between 6th February and 17th February.

The building and car park will be closed to visitors during this period. We look forward to welcoming everyone back from Tuesday 20th February. Some staff will remain onsite during the building works and we will be offering the following remote services:

- Remote enquiries via email and

telephone (Tues-Fri)

- Reprographics service
- Research service

## IPA

[www.inspirepicturearchive.org.uk](http://www.inspirepicturearchive.org.uk)

The Inspire Picture Archive is steadily increasing with over 37,600 images at the time of writing. There is something for everyone. Why



not have a browse and add your own comments or keywords directly to the site? If you are interested in architecture or a fan of misericords check out the Terry Fry collection. Search through over 600 images of famous and not so famous buildings. And if anyone can identify either the men, the pub or the dog in this photo please let us know!



*Mystery photo from the Terry Fry collection. Courtesy of Inspire Picture Archive.*

## New FONA Catalogue

Those items which have been generously purchased and deposited by FONA have been gathered together under one collection. This is now known as 'DD FONA'. If you have ever wondered what 'DD' stands for it means either donated or deposited documents. These are documents which have come from the general public rather than a formal organisation such as local government or a religious body. The catalogue is available on our online catalogue:

<http://nawcat.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/TreeBrowse.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog&field=RefNo&key=DD+FONA>

Also on The National Archive's Discovery catalogue:

<https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/9a1448fa-f993-41aa-96e6-16dcb2338359>

There is even a direct link to your website from the latter.

This is a great collection ranging from the fascinating diary of Dr Ernest Ringrose (1869-1959) of Newark, the 1660 terrier of Woodborough, the Deverill marriage settlement which you've heard about from Peter Duke, and the thoughtful lockdown diaries of FONA members.

Thank you to all FONA members who have contributed to the purchase of these documents.

*The Diary of Dr. Ernest Ringrose, DD/FONA/1/2/1. Courtesy of Inspire Picture Archive.*



## Recent Accessions

Since November 2023 we have received 35 new collections. Several are from religious organisations such as the Church of England or the Methodist Church, educational establishments, and societies such as the Magdala Lawn Tennis Club and the Nottingham and Notts Photographic Society.

## Hands on Heritage

Inspire's Heritage teams will be running the ever popular Hands on Heritage event at Mansfield library on Saturday 18th May. Last year over 900 people attended which was three times the usual figure for the history fair event which had been held on a Sunday in previous years. Please do pop along if you are in the area.



*Archivist Jaime McMurtrie, and Conservator Paul Fuller at the 2023 Heritage event.*



# An aeroplane called *Nottingham*

Luke Danes



*Royal Aircraft Factory RE.8 'Nottingham.' Courtesy of Inspire Nottinghamshire Archives (DD/458/1)*

At three o'clock in the afternoon on Saturday 27 October 1917, a large crowd of around 20,000 men, women and children assembled on the Forest Recreation Ground to witness a unique ceremony, having no doubt seen the daily advertisements for it in the preceding week's Nottingham Evening Post. For most of those present, this would have been the first time they had ever seen an aeroplane, and if the weather had allowed, they would have been treated to a flying demonstration. This aeroplane was not just any normal aeroplane, however; this particular machine had been given the name Nottingham and was about to be handed over to the Dominion of New Zealand in appreciation of her providing men and resources to the motherland during the ongoing war.

Similar ceremonies had already taken place in towns and cities up and down the country, including Leicester, Leeds and Sheffield, whose Chambers of Commerce had funded machines for Canada, India and Newfoundland respectively. This philanthropy had been instigated by the Imperial Air Fleet Committee (IAFC), a group of British businessmen who had joined forces shortly before the First World War with two main objectives: to increase awareness of the need for aerial defence across the Empire, and to present each part of the Empire with

a military aeroplane which would ultimately form an Imperial Air Fleet for the Dominions.

Following an appeal by the IAFC, the Nottingham Chamber of Commerce announced in early September 1917 that they would raise the necessary funds to present an aircraft to New Zealand. They had been quick to remember how, in 1913, the New Zealand government had provided the battleship HMS New Zealand for the Royal Navy, which had subsequently fought in the recent battles of Heligoland Bight (1914), Dogger Bank (1915) and Jutland (1916) and were therefore naturally keen to reciprocate the favour. Nottingham's Chamber of Commerce mainly represented the city's lace and hosiery manufacturers, and subscribers included big names such as Birkin & Co alongside bicycle manufacturers Sir Frank and Harold Bowden of Raleigh, and tobacco manufacturers John Dane and William Goodacre Player. Within three weeks, the Chamber of Commerce had raised the 2000 guineas needed to buy the aircraft, with Lieutenant Colonel William Henry Blackburn, chairman of the council of the Chamber of Commerce, himself contributing £100.

The aeroplane itself was a Royal Aircraft Factory RE.8 with the name Nottingham painted directly onto each



side of its fabric-covered fuselage. Following a series of speeches, the presentation ceremony culminated in the aeroplane being handed over to the IAFC by the president of the Nottingham Chamber of Commerce, the sixth Duke of Portland, William Arthur Cavendish-Bentinck, before it was officially named by the Duchess of Portland, Winifred Anna Cavendish-Bentinck. The Duchess then dutifully smashed a bottle of champagne which had been fixed to the aeroplane's propeller and it was accepted by Sir James Mills on behalf of the High Commissioner for New Zealand, Sir Thomas Mackenzie, who was absent due to illness. Other dignitaries who were present included the Mayor of Nottingham, John Ernest Pendleton and the Sheriff of Nottingham, Richard Henry Swain.

The ceremony was extensively reported upon by both the Nottingham Guardian and the Nottinghamshire Guardian, and film footage from the day can be viewed on the British Pathé and Imperial War Museum websites via the following links: [britishpathe.com/asset/77199/](http://britishpathe.com/asset/77199/), [britishpathe.com/asset/77229/](http://britishpathe.com/asset/77229/) and [iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1060005435](http://iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1060005435).

During the ceremony, dignitaries from the IAFC presented three of the accompanying ladies with souvenirs, and each received 'a Mahogany Inlaid Casket' (DD/458/1) with a lid featuring a New Zealand kiwi and the motto 'Onward', and a sumptuous New Zealand flag resplendent with a personalised inscription. These had been specially designed by Mrs Sarah Hannah



*Mahogany casket which was presented to Mrs Laura Blackburn. Inspire Nottinghamshire Archives (DD/458/3). Photo: Luke Danes.*

Harris Coza Scott, wife of the IAFC's visionary honorary secretary, Charles Joseph Fairfax Scott. The IAFC's president, Lord Desborough, William Henry Grenfell, proudly presented these to the Duchess of Portland, followed by Lord Hugh Cecil, vice-president of the IAFC, to Miss Helen MacKenzie, daughter of Sir Thomas Mackenzie. Alfred Docker, chairman of the executive of the IAFC, then handed the same two gifts to Mrs Laura Susannah Blackburn, wife of Lieutenant Colonel Blackburn.

In July 1971, the casket and flag which had been presented to Mrs Blackburn, along with several



*Personalised New Zealand flag which was presented to Mrs Laura Blackburn. Inspire Nottinghamshire Archives (DD/458/4). Photo: Luke Danes*

documents from the ceremony which had been in her possession, were donated to Nottinghamshire Archives. Although Nottinghamshire Archives does not appear to accept what we might think of as 'museum artefacts' for its collections, at the time these items were presumably kept together to preserve their integrity in helping to illustrate a fleeting, but nonetheless fascinating, part of Nottingham's First World War history. Mrs Blackburn's collection was given the reference DD/458 and contains the following: official programme for the presentation ceremony (DD/458/1); menu for the luncheon on the day of the presentation ceremony (DD/458/2); casket (DD/458/3) and New Zealand flag (DD/458/4). Two further items in this collection do not relate to items 1–4.

The quality and detailing of the casket and flag reflect the grandeur of the occasion and the significance of the gesture made by the Chamber of Commerce. The presentation ceremony programme lists all the subscribers to the fund, whilst the menu shows that even in wartime, the dignitaries still dined on the finest possible cuisine. Collectively, these items form a tangible link to a single day in Nottingham's recent past which has been all but forgotten.

What happened to the aeroplane Nottingham? She soon joined 15 Squadron in France before force-landing on 30 November following an encounter with enemy aircraft. Pilot, Captain Thomas Stuart Malcomson, survived, but observer, Lieutenant Laurence Vernon Desborough, was killed. The aircraft later joined 59 Squadron but crashed on 31 March 1918 whilst being flown by Second Lieutenant A Wilde. By 11 August 1918, the name Nottingham had been transferred to a second RE.8, which joined 9 Squadron. This second aircraft survived until at least January 1919.

I would like to thank Alexa Rees, archivist at Nottinghamshire Archives, for helping to make this article possible.



# Nottingham High School Accounts 1577-1699

Yvette Gunther

*A section of the oldest existing annual accounts of the Free School of the Town of Nottingham. Photo Yvette Gunther.*

Last summer Nottingham High School's previous solicitors returned ten boxes of documents and other items that we no longer needed to keep as a statutory requirement and I was asked if I was interested in taking a look before they were disposed of. Buried deep in one of the boxes was an item I had been wondering about for many years.

I had read in *A History of the Nottingham High School* about the very early School Warden's Accounts so I knew that at the time Dr Adam W. Thomas wrote it in the 1950s the accounts were in the School and in a fairly good state of preservation. I'd seen some very poor photographic prints of them in the present Archives but not the originals and I was afraid they were long gone.

To find them in the bottom of a box of miscellaneous and mainly irrelevant "stuff" was an archivist's dream. Running from 1577 to 1699 most of these annual returns are written in Latin but the layout and content follow a clear pattern to which, for a non-Latin reader, the several later pages written in English hold the key.



*The first clearly legible account in English, signed off by Charles Harvey, Mayor and Burgess of Nottingham.  
Photo Yvette Gunther.*



*Morocco bound ledger of the School's accounts.  
Photo Yvette Gunther.*

AW Thomas mentions that the accounts were originally written on single pieces of paper rather than in a ledger so it is no small miracle that so many survived. By the time they reached me in the present archive these were pasted onto blank leaves and preserved in an elegant volume bound in red hard-grain morocco with gilt tooling. The style of the binding suggests that it dates from the second half of the 19th Century, and the quality of its materials and execution indicate that it was an expensive and prestigious commission. These factors lead me to believe that it was executed in the 1860s, around the time when we moved from the dilapidated building in Stoney Street, our premises

from the mid 16th century, to our present building on Arboretum Street. Although much of our 19th and 20th Century binding work was undertaken by Derrys of Wheelergate, there is no binder's ticket in the volume, so it is possible that this is the work of another binder. The book we now hold shows beautiful, high quality conservation methods which have stabilised and preserved the fragile 450 year old papers, some just scraps, very well.

The School was fundamentally financed by donations from the people of the town. In 1512 the foundress, Dame Agnes Mellers, Widow and Sir Thomas Lovell, then Governor of Nottingham Castle were granted a royal licence to acquire property to the value of Twenty Marks for the foundation and building of "a certain school, evermore to endure". (Our Foundation Charter with Henry VIII Seal and subsequent Elizabethan Charter and

the benefit of the school in the will of John Heskey, Innkeeper and Mayor at the time of his death in 1558. The records of accounts show that the income from this particular piece of land amounted to almost exactly the salary of the Master of the Free Grammar School from 1513 for the next 300 years.

At the top of each balance sheet is the date, the year and title of the reigning monarch, the account title and the names of the school wardens who had drawn up the account. Under the ordinances of Dame Agnes, school wardens were appointed by the Burgesses of the town and acted as trustees of the School's income. Occasionally, in an obvious conflict of interest, the School Wardens were also the Aldermen who audited the accounts they wrote. From the accounts we also learn the names of the Masters and, after 1592, also the Under Masters or 'Usher' of the Grammar School of the

town of Nottingham who taught the sons of the town in those early years.

The first set of accounts in English, which are of the year to Michaelmas 1687-88, gives an indication of how the school functioned in the last year of the reign of James II. In that year payment to the Headmaster Gowin Knight was £50.00, a sum it had been since at least 1663, my lack of knowledge of written Latin numerals at this point a disadvantage.



*Accounts and Inventory of the Schoolmaster's house furnishings signed by Gowin Knight MA Oxford, Master of the School. Photo Yvette Gunther.*

Seal are kept in Nottinghamshire Archives). Although Sir Thomas Lovell was one of the most powerful figures in England at this time, Dame Agnes Mellers also plainly had great influence in the town and a list of the donors exists detailing each original gift, some as an annual donation such as that of Henry Cost, Sheriff of Nottingham 2 Shillings annually; or a one-off donation like that of the fletcher John Awod, a gift of 12d. By the time of the first of the accounts, the income shown was from the rental on property and small pieces of land given, a tenement; a piece of garden in St Peter's Churchyard; some three acres of land in Todeholes, and later in the mid-16th century the tithes of hay from the fields and meadows surrounding the town left for

The Usher, Samuel Birch was paid £28. Both also earned livings as vicars to local churches, Knight at Ashby-de-la Zouche and Birch at Basford. The Master was also allowed to teach private pupils and would take payment direct from them to supplement his own income. He also had the use of a furnished two bedroomed schoolmasters' house beside the School, charging for boarding pupils who lived a distance away, an inventory for which sits beside the accounts. Amongst other items Gowin Knight had to sign for two dressers, five shelves, iron bars for the fireplace; a bucket, a chain and a rope at the well. In this same year a payment of four shillings a year was made to the sexton of St Mary's for the Tolling of the Scholars bell, a payment which remained



the same until 1801 and two shillings a year to the chamberlains of the School house, again a cost that didn't change until a long way into the 19th Century.

On most pages during this period there was a credit balance but that was rarely carried forward and was apparently absorbed into the expenses incurred by the Town corporation on other unconnected activities. As mentioned previously, the school wardens were not independent of the town council which unsurprisingly appears to have led to a conflict of interests. In 1807 it was ordered that the school warden's account should be kept separate from other Corporation's moneys, specifically in Messrs. Wrights' Bank. This doesn't appear to have happened as 20 or so years later the Charitable Commissioners and the Commissioners appointed to enquire into municipal corporations both selected this feature of treating school income as corporation wealth, for special condemnation. As an insight into the

unique position of the school within the fabric of the administration and life of Nottingham over the last 500 years, so much can be drawn from these accounts and they deserve more investigation.

Later ledgers in the archive give an even richer description of the development of the school from 1795 to 1837. For now, I'm keeping a sharp watch out for the ledger of 1699-1795. It must be here somewhere!

*A History of Nottingham High School 1513-1953* by Adam W. Thomas. Pub: J. and H. Bell Ltd., Nottingham 1957

I am grateful to our antiquarian book consultants, Type & Forme of Grantham, for their notes on the binding of this volume.

All images courtesy of Nottingham High School.

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## Dancing through Time - Celebrating the life and work of Miss Nora Morrison

Mo Cooper



*Miss Nora Morrison receiving her MBE in 2010.  
Courtesy of R. Grant.*

During the autumn of 2023 I was invited to act as researcher for LW Arts CIC, a community project based at Clarendon Chamber, Nottingham. They are a centre for dance, music and arts and had been contacted by Rachel Grant – an ex-Bond Girl who lives in New York. 'Did they know that Clarendon Chambers was the base of the Morrison School of Dance?' Rachel had campaigned to have Miss Morrison recognised with an MBE in 2010 and was excited that the studio was still used for dance.

LW Arts managed to secure a small grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to investigate and celebrate the story, not just of Miss Morrison, but her studio in the old Midland Institute for the Blind. At Inspire Nottinghamshire archives I found minutes from the RMIB, newspaper cuttings and a great publication *A Centenary of Service to the Blind, 1843-1943*, by A.C.V. Thomas. (I found the same book sitting on my book shelf much later .... Note to self really must catalogue my books sometime!!!). This book has the most incredible pictures of the old building and details of activities carried out by the institute, it also helped to

piece together how the building developed over 50 plus years to dominate the corner of Chaucer Street and Clarendon Road.

Once I'd established an initial timeline, we then put the word out through radio, newspapers and social media and started to collect people who had memories of the dance school itself. Some emailed me, others wrote to me, talked on the phone or agreed to a filmed interview. I was also tipped off about an out-of-print autobiography written by Miss Morrison: *Brick by Brick, Step by Step*, N. Morrison, Diamond Press. I eventually tracked the book down at the reference section of Nottingham Local Studies Library. Staff there kindly dug it out and arranged access whilst the Central Library was closed.

What I discovered was a close relationship between Miss Morrison and the Institute for the Blind. Nora was born in 1917, and was a gifted dancer from an early age - in fact she started teaching at the age of thirteen! After leaving the Bluecoat School when she was sixteen, she started work at the institute, dealing with administration and supporting the blind community. Very quickly she volunteered to teach blind students how to dance. She recalled,

*I devised a syllabus of keep fit exercises for the visually impaired girls at the institute. They were very agile and receptive. ... Next with the older more infirm community, I started them sitting on chairs and moving separately, each part of the body, then they stood, holding on to the chair backs and lifting their legs. Next they moved into a ring independently repeating the exercises. The classes were accompanied by a blind pianist who could play anything from jazz to classics. The team of blind people became quite well known and demonstrated their skills to other handicapped bodies. ... When I stopped working at the institute I still returned twice a week to take classes.*



Miss Morrison and her young dancers at the Cooperative Arts Theatre circa 1997. Courtesy of Marva Tucker.



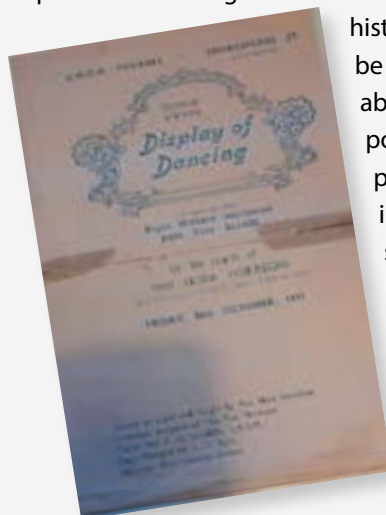
Young dancers at Miss Morrison's studio circa 1997. Courtesy of Marva Tucker.

Nora set up her first independent dance school in 1940 on Mansfield Road, renting rooms at the Bluecoat School in 1947. She was particularly known for her high standard of teaching ballet. She fitted in her teaching whilst still continuing to work at the Blind Institute. Each year she put on shows to fund raise for the Institute.

When the Bluecoat School moved in 1967 the Blind Institute offered Miss Morrison the use of rooms on Chaucer Street where the Morrison School of Dance stayed until the institute moved out in the 1980s. The City Council bought the old building, with the Chaucer Street part becoming today's Women's Centre, however they offered the dance school the old concert hall within Clarendon Chambers, where it stayed until 2013. In all Miss Morrison taught dance in Nottingham for over 80 years.

I completed over 5 hours of interviews, plus collecting photographs and memorabilia, including show programmes dating back to 1945. These will all be deposited at Nottingham Local Studies Library for future

historians, or would be dancers to learn about dance training, potential careers, and a particularly touching interview with a male student who was at the Royal Ballet for 17



Programme for Miss Morrison's show, 1945. Courtesy of Miss Gillian Hurd.



years. From these resources we have created a half hour film about the building, the dance school and the future of the studio. Our celebration event on 16 December 2023 provided a perfect unveiling for the film and display, with past students in tears and in stitches.

For 2024 I will be developing my research into a talk as part of my portfolio of subjects.

To see the film: <https://youtu.be/NJxNJ8wmQyY?si=rZE6ZAnl-0lxKe26>

For more information on Mo Cooper's work: <https://mocooper.weebly.com/>

For information on adult dance at Clarendon Chambers: <https://www.whenwomengather.uk/>

# Haxey Hoods, Mummers and a Poor 'Owd 'Oss

## Ruth Strong reports on Dave Mooney's talk from 2 December 2023

FONA members gathered for the last meeting of the year to listen to a presentation by Dave Mooney on the Folklore and Customs of the East Midlands. Dave's entertaining and informative talk followed the wheel of the year from January to December. What followed was an interesting gallop through the year of local song, puppetry, poetry and plays.

Dave discussed what defines folklore and customs and the forms they can take. Broadly mob football games, plays and performances with song and poetry which were passed on through oral transmission and generated by the folk (ordinary people), and not attributed to specific individuals. Some aimed to raise money such as Mummers' Plays and groups touring the village singing. This type was common and may have been a seasonal way for Agricultural Labourers to earn money when there was no work available. All the examples given followed the church year or the agricultural year, which is not surprising, given that most of the population worked in agriculture in one form or another when these customs originated.



Dave's talk began with an account of a Lincolnshire custom, the Haxey Hood, that took place on Epiphany, 6th January. This was a mob football game linked to a story thought to date from 1360 in honour of the Lady of the Manor, Lady de Mowbray. There are actually twelve games; one for boys and the rest for adults. The adults' game is much rougher; the men form a 'sway' (like a rugby scrum) which is pushed to the goal (the pub). A game starts when a hood is tossed in the air

and won when it is touched by the pub landlord. Beforehand, a group of thirteen 'Boggins' go round the village pubs collecting money to pay for any damage caused.

Other mob football games were described, such as the Hallaton Bottle Kicking held on Easter Monday, played between the villages of Hallaton and Medbourne in Leicestershire. This included a Hare Pie, blessed by the church and distributed among the people. The 'bottle' is a small wooden barrel, fortunately, not glass.

Mummers Plays are a custom with a long tradition, performed between Christmas and Plough Monday. Each was specific to the

area and performed in rhyme in local accents. Some used archaic instruments such as the bladder fiddle; an inflated bladder attached to a pole, strung with catgut and played like a cello.

Some customs were unashamedly begging. They happened at a time of year when there was little or no work on the land. 'Poor Owd Oss' made his appearance before Christmas and up to Plough Monday. A horse's skull was mounted on a stick like a hobby horse and carried by a group around the community asking for money. There were songs traditionally associated with Owd Oss. Dave gave a demonstration of songs accompanied by playing the bones and his harmonica. The songs



had been written down in 1902 by a local woman, Marianne Mason for the Nottingham Museum. A similar character was used in Derbyshire called 'Owd Top' with the difference that this was for children and the folklore passed from child to child. Dave gave a performance of 'Owd Top' using glove puppets and songs.

Originally, many customs involved the village church, like the Rocking Ceremony which takes place in Blidworth St Mary's on the first Sunday after Candlemas. This custom dates back 400 years and is

held at churches called St Mary, in honour of the Virgin Mary. A special service is held with a baby, born in the Parish as near to Christmas as possible, placed in a cradle in church. The custom fell into disuse but was revived in Blidworth in 1922 and the babies' names are written on an honour roll. Many of these customs have become secularised and now it is difficult for the Parish to find babies for the Rocking Ceremony. The parents must have faith and be members of the Church of England, not other denominations.

Victorian Romanticism led to a revival of what were thought to be benign medieval customs such as the Maypole Dance. The Wellow Maypole Dance, celebrated at Whitsun, involves the crowning of a May Queen with her retinue of servants, Morris dancing, the



presence of a steam organ and is generally a good day out. The Wellow Maypole is thought to be the biggest in Europe.

A similar celebration occurs on Oak Apple Day, 29th May in Castleton. The date celebrates the restoration of Charles II in 1660 and is also his birthday. Here a 'king' has flowers dumped on his head and is given beer when taken round the village pubs. This ceremony includes a church service, music and a parade which is part of a 'beating the bounds' ceremony (once common as a method of reinforcing knowledge of the parish boundaries).

Derbyshire villages still celebrate Well Dressing. This is associated with beer festivals and village fetes. The area around a well is decorated with a picture or collage of stones or shells. The underlying reason is unknown, but it might have been linked to the plague well of Eyam; intended to pacify water spirits or simply to recognise the importance of the well as the community's source of water. The occasion was traditionally linked to the church with a blessing but has become more secular and has also spread to other regions.

Summer was noticeably sparse of folk customs. There was more work available on farms than in the winter months.

Christmas Carols were part of local folklore but with a difference, using words specific to each village, so locally known. The villages specified were Hathersage and Castleton, but Beeston was also mentioned. At one time the Beeston singers would sing non-stop all night before stopping to have breakfast.

Dave Mooney's lively performance gave us an interesting look at folk customs of the East Midlands, accompanied by laughter. A fitting start to the Christmas season on the day before the first Sunday in Advent.



You can find details of Dave Mooney's publications on: <https://www.amberley-books.com/author-community-main-page/m/community-dave-mooney.html>



# Their Daily Bread - and so much more

Karen Winyard



who originated from Cotham in Nottinghamshire. A copy of this seventeenth century work is held by our county library.

Less expectedly, Mark also drew on archaeological reports, court records of tithe disputes, archdeaconry court cases (which often include incidental details of daily life), and probate records, particularly household inventories.

individual homes. Wheat and Rye were the grains commonly used in Nottinghamshire for the three main types of bread: Manchet (finest wheat), Cheat (wholewheat) and Household (mixed grains). Malted barley was essential for brewing ale, which was drunk by everyone, water being unsafe and wine too expensive. Over the course of the sixteenth century, ale was gradually replaced by beer made using hops.

We enjoyed a real treat on 20 January, with Mark Dawson's talk about Food & Drink in Tudor & Stuart Nottinghamshire; a veritable feast of fascinating facts. Mark explored five communities in Nottinghamshire: Misterton, East Drayton, Farnsfield, Southwell and Cropwell Bishop, using a variety of primary sources. As you would expect, these included diaries, household accounts (in particular those of the Willoughby family), and printed books on cookery and household management of the period, including *The English Huswife*, written by Gervase Markham,



These sources reveal that people were as much the producers as the consumers of food and drink. Staples such as bread, beer and cheese were produced within the community. Locally grown grains were milled and baked within the villages, although Mark believed that bread would have been made by bakers for sale, rather than within

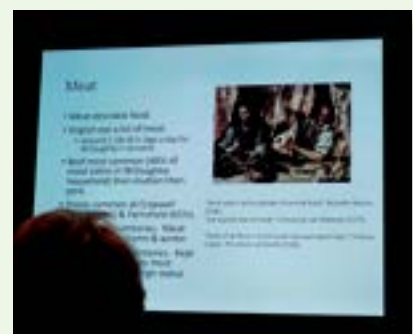
Milk was used for cheesemaking rather than as a drink. Dairying became increasingly common during this period and cheese was the main product as it was easily portable and kept well. Probate inventories reveal that many people kept cows (71%) and owned dairy equipment (44%).

The type of meat regularly consumed may have differed according to location. The English had a reputation for eating a lot of beef, but villages like Farnsfield and Cropwell Bishop which had sheep may have eaten more mutton. Pigs were commonly kept, but pork was a seasonal meat eaten in autumn and winter, much of it salted down as bacon. Poultry was a high-status



17th century writer Gervase Markham.  
This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY.

Title page of *The English Huswife* by Gervase Markham, 1615. By Attrib. to Gervase Markham - <http://www.godecooking.com/PDF/CookingPDFs.html> (in &#039;Manuscripts&#039; archive), Public Domain.



meat reserved for special feasts. Hens were generally kept for eggs rather than for the table, whilst fish was essential given that 40% of the year was designated as periods of fasting.

Fruit and vegetables were widely consumed and people commonly had a small garden where produce was grown. Parsnips, onions, radishes and parsley were common. Unexpectedly, cabbage was a relatively new dietary addition. More exotic vegetables available to the wealthy were artichokes and cucumbers. Alongside the fruits

we commonly grow today, there were also medlars, quinces and crab apples.

There was an international element to trade in food and drink in this period. People were not totally self-sufficient. Fruits such as pomegranates and citrus were imported, along with dried figs and dates. Sugar and spices were also available, but imported goods were expensive. Cheaper imports were pepper, ginger and dried fruits such as raisins and currants. The most common and cheapest spice was mustard and salt was essential.

Producing, trading and consuming food and drink was significant and central to life in the early modern period. Whilst we consume many of the same foodstuffs, perhaps we have lost much of that relationship between community and produce that was so meaningful in the past.

If you would like to read more of Mark Dawson's work, his books can be found on this link:

<https://mdfoodhistory.weebly.com/publications.html>



## An Exciting Upcoming Event from The Family History Federation

The Family History Federation is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2024 and a series of events are being held around the country, to provide help and resources for people wanting to research their family history.

If you have ancestors who lived anywhere in the East Midlands, and you want to find out more about them, this is the event for you! We are using the University of Nottingham "Studio 7" at Kings Meadow Campus – which hosted "Who Do Think You Are" in its former life as Carlton TV Studios. We open to the public from 10:00am to 4:00pm and can offer the following:

- Free admission
- Free onsite parking
- Onsite Café (open all day; lunch 11:30-14:00)

If you are starting from scratch, you can benefit from Family History Societies with local knowledge and resources, and see what books and software are available to help you. If you are experienced and have hit a "brick wall" with an elusive ancestor, come and get tips on how to break through.

We have two speakers who will share their experience with topics of interest to family historians:

11:00 Martin McDowell: *How to research ancestors using DNA, and discover new family matches*

13:30 Peter Swann: *Ancestors before 1600 (have you got links to historic/famous family trees?)*

The talks will last about 30-40 minutes and the speakers will be available afterwards to answer any questions you may have about their presentations. Also, if you want an Ancestral DNA Test, these will be available for sale at the Family History Federation stall.

Information on the event will be provided on the Notts Family History Society website - go to this link <https://nottsfhs.org/east-midlands-fhf-really-useful-family-history-show/> which provides links to the other geographically based Family History Societies, and will be updated with additional information month-by-month: current list of Exhibitors; Café Lunch menu;



travel directions & local road map; etc.

Exhibitors booked so far:

We have invited a number of organisations to become exhibitors at the event, anyone else with a family history connection or interest who want to apply to become an exhibitor can contact the event coordinator by email to [shopmanager2@nottsfhs.org](mailto:shopmanager2@nottsfhs.org). There is a separate exhibitor entrance and bay for unloading; set-up time is 9:00 to 10:00 and clear-up time is 16:00 to 17:00 on the day.

Gary Stephenson, Event Coordinator, Notts Family History Society & Family History Federation.

- **Family History Federation**
- **Notts Family History Society** (co-hosts)
- **Derbyshire Family History Society**
- **Leicestershire & Rutland Family History Society**
- **Lincolnshire Family History Society**
- **Chesterfield & District Family History Society**
- **Nuneaton & N Warwickshire Family History Society**
- **Family Tree Magazine**
- **Nottinghamshire Archives & Record Office**
- **University Manuscripts & Collections**
- **Families in British India Society**
- **Romany & Travellers Family History Society**

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## Dates for your Diary

**8 March**

**Nottingham Women's History Group** are celebrating International Women's Day with a group stall at Nottingham Central Library.

**16 March**

**FONA AGM**, followed by a talk by Val Wood: **A Woman's Place is in the Archives**. The focus of this talk is the role of archives in uncovering the contributions of women to Nottingham's history over the course of the last century. It will outline the background of the recently opened Feminist Archive for the East Midlands located within the Manuscripts and Special Collections at the University of Nottingham. Venue: Nottinghamshire Archives.

**13 April**

**Nottingham Women's History Group Talk by Carole Powell: Elsie Inglis**, Scottish doctor, surgeon, suffragist, founder of the Scottish Women's Hospitals and first woman to hold the Serbian Order of the White Eagle. Venue: New Central Library, 1 Carrington Street, Nottingham. Time: 1.45 - 3.45pm. No need to book; NWHG ask for a donation of £5.

**18 May**

**FONA talk by Dr Richard Goddard: The Caves of Medieval Nottingham - the documentary evidence**. The talk will examine Nottingham's medieval caves using the borough court rolls and other records held by Nottinghamshire Archives. Venue: Nottinghamshire Archives.

**20 July**

**FONA talk by Dave Mooney on Street Music and Busking**. Venue: Nottinghamshire Archives.

**September**

**Joint visit with Thoroton Society to the Horological Museum and Archives at Upton**. Exact date tbc.

**19 October**

**FONA talk by Karen Winyard: In and Out of Wedlock. Four 19th Century Case Studies**. The talk considers four Nottinghamshire women who had the courage to share their experiences of marriage and contribute to the groundswell of public opinion regarding married women's legal rights. Venue: Nottinghamshire Archives.

**30th November**

**FONA members meeting**, theme to be agreed.

FONA meetings at Nottinghamshire Archives start at 11.00am, (except 16 March which is 10.45am) with refreshments available from 10.30am. Free to members. FONA asks for a £3 donation from guests.



## Cover photographs

### Nottingham High School Accounts

Photo Yvette Gunther. Courtesy of Nottingham High School.

### Dancing Through Time

Photo courtesy of Marva Tucker.

### An Aeroplane called Nottingham

Courtesy of Inspire Nottinghamshire Archives (DD/458/1).

### Time and Bromley House

Photo courtesy of Jared Robinson.