

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the 2009 issue of our newsletter. This is an extremely short editorial because we have a lot of very interesting news and stories to include in the limited space available. If you would like to comment on any of the items, please feel free to contact me. We would particularly like to hear from you if you can add to the *Sugar Bakers* and *John Cecil Noel* articles.

Robert Ovens

rfovens@yahoo.co.uk

ARCHAEOLOGY

Exciting Acquisitions at Rutland County Museum

As many of you will know the Romano-British Town at Thistleton is one of my ongoing projects. We have field walked the site to determine the extent of the town, assisted Leicester University with two geophysical surveys on the site of the temple and surrounding buildings and this summer we may be lucky enough to help the university with excavation (assuming the funding is forthcoming - we will know at the end of this month).

I also work as a volunteer at Rutland County Museum and it was a tremendous surprise when English Heritage phoned to say they had boxes of items from Thistleton and did we want them. Yes please! They arrived a few weeks ago and we were over the moon to open a box containing over 70 Roman brooches, many of them in excellent condition, and two further boxes filled with hundreds of Roman coins.

These finds were the result of excavations carried out in the 1950s by Ernest Greenfield in advance of the ironstone quarrying. There was no museum in Oakham at that time and material was sent to many different places for identification. Along with the boxes came several identification reports on metalwork finds including other jewellery, personal hygiene items such as tweezers and nail cleaners, and tools. English Heritage claim not to have these items and their whereabouts is unknown. We can only hope that when museum stores are being cleared they will come to light and be offered to our museum.

Cataloguing these finds will take a while, but as an interim measure three brooches are now on display in the Roman case on the gallery. A permanent display, possibly including some of the coins, will be constructed once we know exactly what we have.



Copper alloy bow brooch in excellent condition complete with pin (Kate Don)



Copper alloy and enamelled zoomorphic 'running dog' brooch in superb condition, complete with pin (Kate Don)

Kate Don, Archaeological Convenor

Archaeological Field Walking

The Society's Archaeological Team continued its field-walking project on Beaumont Chase in October - in spite of the worst weather for over twenty years!

The first field we surveyed has produced masses of worked flint. The initial impression is that it comprises mainly Neolithic and Early Bronze Age material and is later than the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic finds from the top of

the hill. The sheer quantity may point to a 'settlement' or 'core area' by the Eyebrook - all good stuff which no one knew of before.

A *Rutland Times* article on Elaine Jones and her book the *Oakham Parish Field Survey - archaeology on the ploughland of Rutland* led on to a BBC Radio Leicester interview with Chris Baxter who introduced her with a rendering of *Girls - just want to have fun!*

If your idea of fun is field walking, then please contact Kate Don (01572-767701) or Elaine Jones (01572 823421).



Field walking on King's Hill, Beaumont Chase (Elaine Jones)

BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR LOCAL HISTORY

We have received details of the BALH programme for 2009, with a note saying that our members are most welcome to join in any of the Association's activities.

Specific details and booking forms can be found on the BALH website (www.balh.co.uk) as they become available. Alternatively details can be obtained from: BALH, PO Box 6549, Somersal Herbert, Ashbourne DE6 SWH.

Below is an outline of the current programme:

2009

May 13th Verulamium, St Alban's Cathedral and St Alban's Museum.

June 6th Professor Nigel Goose's lecture on Almshouses. Friends' Meeting House, London.

July 9th-12th Local History in Britain after Hoskins. Conference at Leicester University. (See our review of *The Midland Peasant* below, which includes more details of this conference).

July Avonscroft, Bromsgrove.

September 15th Newark Castle's part in the Civil War, and a cruise on the Trent in a former Salter steamer.

October The Guardian Newspaper Archive and the London Museum.

November 7th Hull Conference, New Research into the History of Yorkshire.

2010

Conference in Lincoln.

2011

Conference in Aberystwyth.

JOINT MEETINGS PROGRAMME

Rutland Local History & Record Society (RLHRS) and the Friends of Rutland County Museum & Oakham Castle (FRCMOC).

Thursday May 14th - 7.30 pm at Rutland County Museum

RLHRS AGM

Followed by:

All dusty documents and even dustier archivists? Are Record Offices in need of a makeover?

Dr Margaret Bonney, Chief Archivist, Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.

Thursday June 11th - 7.30 pm at Rutland County Museum

The Battle for the Harvest in the Second World War, a Case Study.

Dr John Martin, Principal Lecturer in Economic and Social History, De Montfort University.

The campaign to increase domestic food production in the Second World War has been widely acclaimed as an 'unqualified success story'. According to the prevailing wisdom, under the direction of the state, progressive, more productive farming methods revolutionised agricultural production and enabled the country to avoid being starved into submission. Iconic images of the Women's Land Army illustrated the remarkable achievements in winning the battle to increase self-sufficiency. This case study, by focusing on the experiences of George Odum, an internationally renowned progressive farmer, is intended to transform our understanding of this crucially important phase in agrarian history. It will also provide a new appreciation of the role that the state played in mobilising the economy and society for a total war.

Saturday July 11th - 7.30 pm at Oakham Castle

The Tennants Lecture

Details of the subject and speaker will be circulated later. There will be a charge for this meeting.

The 2009/2010 program is currently being prepared and will be sent to all paid-up members in August. Details of the first event in this new programme are now available as follows:

Saturday September 12th

Guided Historical Walk - Ridlington Park

Start at 2.00pm.

Meet at St Peter's Church, Belton in Rutland.

Leaders: Sheila Sleath & Robert Ovens

Distance: Approx. 6 miles. Duration: Approx. 3 hours.

Terrain: Footpaths and fields. May be muddy in places.

Well behaved dogs on leads are welcome.

Ridlington Medieval Hunting Park was a royal deer park from its foundation in the twelfth century until the early 1620s. This guided walk explores the history of the park, the boundary of which can still be traced through surviving topographic features.

LANGHAM VILLAGE HISTORY GROUP

The Life and Families of 17th Century Langham

- The Exhibition

Langham Village History Group is staging an exhibition and book launch from Saturday 2nd May to Monday 4th May (11am to 4.30pm daily) at Langham Church of England Primary School.

Admission is £2 (no charge for accompanied children, 12 years and under).

This event is the culmination of a two year research project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund under its Local Heritage Initiative.

There will also be a special 17th century service at Langham Parish Church on Sunday 3 May at 6pm.

Who lived in Langham?

What did they do?

How did they live?

What did they wear?

What did they eat?

Which families held the wealth and influence?

What did they leave behind them in their wills?

Who helped the poor?

How were children educated?

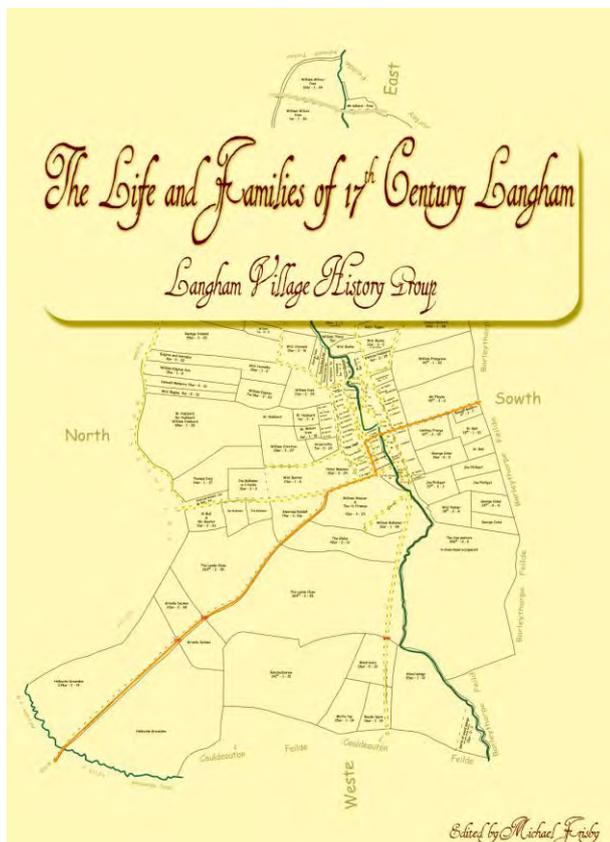
What did the village look like?

Why were they paying so much in taxation?

To find out the answers, visit the exhibition, or for much more information, buy the illustrated, hard back book of 192 pages for £9.99. (Or do both!)

The Life and Families of 17th Century Langham

- The Limited Edition Book



Members of Langham Village History Group have written 23 chapters based on their researches:

Contents: ~ Timeline ~ The Parish Map of 1624 ~ Langham Maps ~ Farming ~ The Land ~ Trades and Occupations ~ The Church ~ Charities ~ The Bells ~ Pastimes and Customs ~ Roads and Tracks ~ Transport ~ Costume ~ Goods and Chattels ~ Food ~ Fuel ~ The Role of Women ~ Education and Learning ~ The Written and Spoken Word ~ Health ~ Cost of Living ~ Taxation ~ The Lords of the Manor ~ The Noels and the Civil War ~ Epilogue ~ List of Family Names.

Family Cameos: ~ Edgson ~ Clarke ~ Hornby ~ Palmer ~ Sculthorpe ~ Hubbard ~ Spell ~ Sharpe ~ Ives.

Excerpts from: ~ wills, inventories and timeline

The Life and Families of 17th Century Langham can be pre-ordered:

From Langham Village History Group,
Glebefield, 69 Church Street, Langham,
Rutland. LE15 7JE

By accessing the LVHG website at

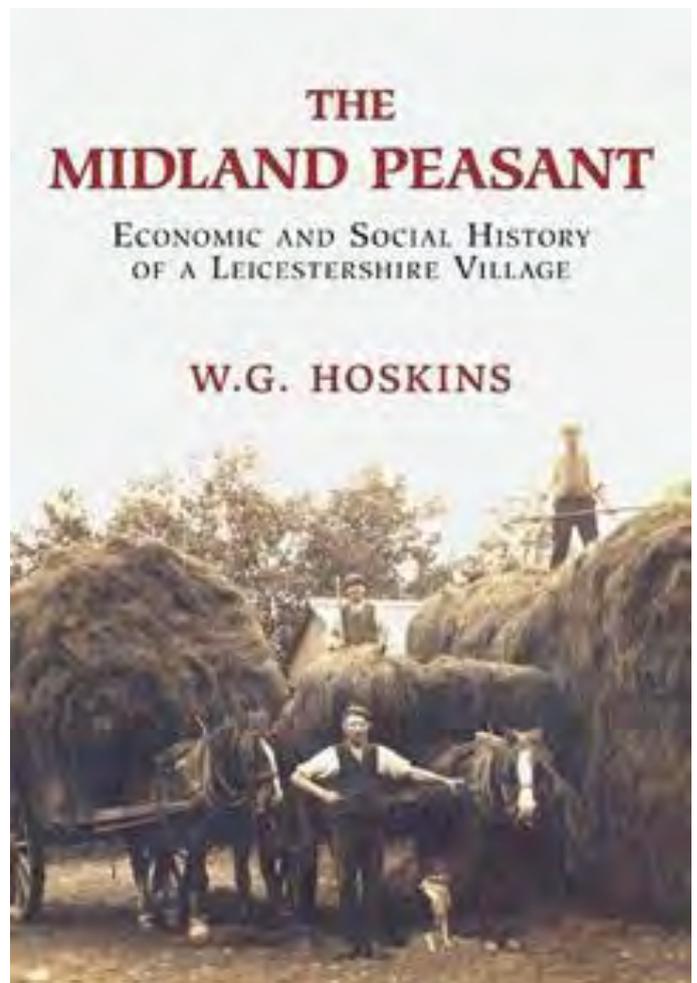
<http://www.langhaminrutland.org>

Or by emailing an order form request to

order.form@langhaminrutland.org

BOOK REVIEW

The Midland Peasant: The Economic and Social History of a Leicestershire Village by W G Hoskins (Phillimore 2008 xxviii + 322pp ISBN 978-1-86077-525-3. £18.99. New paperback edition.)



Professor Hoskins had two golden periods in his remarkable life. The first was between 1955 and 1959 when he published *The Making of the English Landscape* (1955) followed by *Leicestershire: an illustrated essay in the history of the landscape* (1957) and in the same year *The Midland Peasant*, concluding with *Local History in England* (1959).

As a result, Hoskins became the leading local historian in the country and was recognised as a pioneer. He made local history popular and revolutionised the approach by turning attention to the understanding of the historical landscape.

The second golden period was in the 1970s when he reached millions through his TV programmes. The associated books *English Landscapes: How to read the man-made scenery of England* and *One Man's England* consolidated his position as Britain's premier local historian.

Recently, a series of fiftieth anniversaries and new editions of his publications has revived interest. To mark the 100th anniversary of Hoskins's birth in 1908 a new paperback edition of *The Midland Peasant* was issued with an introduction by Professor David Hey, a former student of Professor Hoskins.

Although published in 1957, Hoskins had been working on this book since the 1930s when he lived in Wigston Magna and lectured at the University College, Leicester. According to David Hey, despite Hoskins' 'huge and deserved fame ... many of us regard it (*The Midland Peasant*) as his greatest contribution to the study of English Local History'.

This book is a study of the Midland peasant farmer and the open-field system in which he worked all his life as revealed through the records of Wigston Magna. Hoskins attempts to reconstruct this society transformed by the enclosures of the 1760s which 'altered its farming almost beyond recognition, and changed the entire culture and habits of the peasant community'.

Wigston Magna was particularly suitable because it was Leicestershire's largest village; it was within a few miles of Leicester; it had been on the frontier of Danelaw; it had a large population of free peasantry; it had no interference from monasteries and the lords of the manor were absentees.

Additionally, it had an exceptional number of medieval peasant charters, conveyances, leases, mortgages, wills and inventories which revealed a great deal about buying and selling land between one peasant family and another. Hoskins was able to follow individual families right through the economic changes that occurred over centuries. He reaches the 1900s and still he can detect family continuity.

This was a model study especially in the use of the historical documents. Apart from its scholarly approach it was written in Hoskins' very fluent and memorable style:-

'On emerging from the grave into the bright sunshine once more, I saw all around the visible evidence of the continuity of life in this community whose history I was trying to unravel.

'Beneath the modern field-pattern, laid out nearly two hundred years ago, I saw the rolling succession of ridge and furrow that spoke of arable cultivation for a thousand years before that . . . all this, the long history of this village set in the green Midland landscape, was visible without moving more than a few yards.'

Basic to all this was his understanding of landscape and how people related to it. All through the book he is conscious of the setting of settlements, farming and industry. Phrases such as 'an east-west ridge', 'an extensive cap of glacial sands', 'forested clays', 'high ground', 'the ground falls away' proliferate and his eye for man-made patterns in the landscape was superb.

As David Hey comments, 'Fifty years on, *The Midland Peasant* remains an outstanding study, well worthy of a new edition'.

Bryan Waites

A conference entitled *Local History in Britain after Hoskins* organised by the Centre for English Local History, University of Leicester and the British Association for Local History is to be held at the University of Leicester 9-12 July, 2009 to mark the 50th anniversary of the publication of *Local History in England* by W G Hoskins. (Tel: 01162 522765)

BRIEFS, SUGAR BAKERS, AND THE CIVIL WAR

As part of our research on the Great Fire of Belton in 1776, we have been looking in detail at the Uppingham Churchwardens' Accounts. One intriguing entry almost begged us to find out more:

The names of such persons who contributed towards a Brief for a ffire att ye Sugar Bakers at London which was collected ye 3rd November 1672.

There then follows a list of the names of 72 local residents who contributed a total of £1 0s 2d.

So who were the Sugar Bakers?

But first a little about Briefs:

A 'brief' is a letter commending a charitable appeal. Few original briefs have survived but most early Churchwardens' Accounts include basic details of collections, often jotted on spare pages. After the Reformation, briefs were issued by the Privy Council or (after 1660) by the Lord Chancellor, and came to the parishes in the form of 'Letters Patent' which were to be read from the pulpit in Church.

These appeals were usually for funds towards church repair, or helping towns or individuals who had lost property through flood or fire. Occasionally there were more obscure appeals such as aiding persecuted Protestants overseas or paying ransoms to free Christian captives.

It was usual to make the collection at the close of the Sunday service, although house to house collections were sometimes organised. The sums collected were then handed to a travelling collector or to the Chancellor at the time of a Bishop's Visitation.

It was a system which was easily abused and much of the

money never reached the cause for which it had been collected. The printing, administration and distribution costs were also high, and the system was eventually abolished in 1828.

Returning to Sugar Bakers, a quick search on the internet soon put us in contact with Bryan Mawer of Wellingborough. Bryan's website can be found at <http://home.clara.net/mawer>. It provides lots of detail on the history of sugar refining, including a very long list of fires in the industry. The earliest fire was at the refinery of Juxon & Sheppard at Cole Harbour, London in 1672. Collections for the sufferers are noted in the Parish Registers of Bunbury, Cheshire, in September 1672, and Uppingham in November 1672.

At the heart of the sugar refining process are large vats where the raw sugar is heated, hence sugar baking. It is generally agreed that the sugar trade began in the UK, in London, about 1544, with two cane sugar refineries. Today there is only one. In between, a vast number of individuals and companies have come and gone, in an industry, which until the 20th century, was a notoriously labour intensive, hot, exhausting, and dangerous place to work. Workers were expendable and continually exposed to the risks from boiling sugar, scorching containers, scalding steam, heavy objects, poor building design, and, of course, fire.

The Bunbury brief provides a little more information about the fire:

1672 Sept. 15. Collected in the parish Church of Bunbury for Matt. Sheppard, John Juxon &c, refiners of sugar for the city of London who had loss by a feirce and terrible fire which broke out in a sugar house in Cole Harbor in the parish of Great Allhallowes the sum of eleaven shillings & tenpence.

There is evidence of the Juxon family being involved in sugar refining from as early as 1614. Thomas Juxon is listed as the partner of Matthew Sheppard though his death in 1672 may account for John Juxon, his brother, being mentioned above. John and Thomas Juxon and Matthew Sheppard were parliamentarians, and all were captains in various regiments. Thomas was described by a royalist commentator as 'a sugar baker living in St Thomas Apostle, a most violent ass'.

Thomas Juxon kept a Journal for the period 1644-47 and this was published for the Royal Historical Society by Cambridge University Press in 2000 (*The Journal of Thomas Juxon, 1644-1647* - ISBN 13:9780-521-65259-9). However, sugar baking only gets a brief mention . . . he probably had other things on his mind!

Robert Ovens & Sheila Sleath

THOMAS BARKER'S WEATHER RECORDS AT LYNDON HALL

In 1988 the Society published *The Weather Journals of a Rutland Squire*, edited by John Kington, as the second volume in its Rutland Record Series. Recently, we were approached with an enquiry as to whether the volume was still available, which it is, and the following note about a

current Met Office project has kindly been supplied by David Parker:

Lancing College Library, Sussex, holds a weather diary by Thomas Barker of Lyndon Hall (1722-1809) covering 1748-1763. These records are being scanned into electronic files by Storm Dunlop and Anne Drewery, Lancing's Archivist, in collaboration with the Met Office Hadley Centre. The daily records include temperature, pressure, rainfall and wind. The mean sea level pressure data in particular have potential to support the international ACRE project ([see http://www.met-acre.org/](http://www.met-acre.org/)) which plans historical analyses of European climate back to the mid-18th century in order to assess climate variability and extremes and their past and future impacts. The temperatures could be used to improve the Central England temperature record (Manley, 1974) if they have a good outdoor exposure, rather than being taken in an outhouse as was common in the mid-eighteenth century. The existing record of daily Central England temperature begins in 1772 (Parker et al., 1992) and benefits strongly from Thomas Barker's 1777-1789 record of outdoor observations, held in Met Office archives. So, if we could find Thomas Barker's diaries for 1764-1776, we could refine the 1772-1776 daily Central England temperature record and extend it back into the 1760s or 1750s, depending on the quality of the observations.

Bibliography:

Kington, J, (ed), *The Weather Journals of a Rutland Squire* (RLHRS 1988).

Manley, G, 1974. Central England temperatures: monthly means 1659 to 1973. *Quarterly Journal of the Royal Meteorological Society* **100**: 389-405.

Parker, D E, Legg, T P, Folland, C K, 1992. A new daily Central England Temperature series. *International Journal of Climatology* **12**, 317-42.

Tim Clough

A NEW LOCAL HISTORY WEBSITE

www.britishlocalhistory.co.uk asks members of the general public to contribute, discuss and voice their ideas about local history, genealogy, family trees, ancestry and historic events, social history, momentous occurrences, people and interesting history related websites. Together with links to and from local history societies it offers a rich environment for local historians.

Members of the public are invited to contribute stories, images and videos and to discuss numerous British social and local history related topics. There is also a forum for every major town in the UK (including Oakham and Uppingham) where ideas can be shared with the local community, and even a page giving the day's local history programmes on television.

This site is currently under development and consequently there are some areas which are not yet operational, but it does appear to offer a lot for those interested in local history. The growing history article repository is particularly attractive with nearly 3000 articles already on the site at the beginning of April 2009.

THE BATTLE OF WAKEFIELD AND THE LAST JOURNEY OF RICHARD 3rd DUKE OF YORK

On 19 March 2009, the following email from Shirley Levon (shirleylevon@talktalk.net) has recently been sent to the Society:

I am a member of a research group, part of Wakefield Historical Society. We are researching the reburial of Richard Duke of York in July 1476 at Fotheringhay. He had been buried at Pontefract in January 1460/1 with his second son, Edmund Duke of Rutland, after the battle of Wakefield, but was exhumed in 1476 by order of his son (then Edward IV).

The funeral procession, with great ceremony travelled from Pontefract to Fotheringhay, and the journey included stopping at Doncaster, Blyth, Tuxford, Newark, Grantham and Stamford. Although they did not stop overnight in Rutland it seems clear that they passed through the eastern part of the county, including the villages of Stretton, Tickencote and Great Casterton. We hope to celebrate the 550th anniversary of the Battle of Wakefield [in 2010] by researching and if feasible recreating the journey.

The project is in its initial phase, but we hope to find specific and general information about the towns, villages and the general area on the route the procession followed, and the people who may have greeted them at each stopping place (aldermen & burgesses, clerics & friars etc).

To enable this we hope at a later date to contact and involve local societies and individuals who may have particular knowledge of this area of Rutland. If you could suggest any of your members, or other local historians who might be interested it would be very helpful to us.

If you are able to help, please contact Shirley at shirleylevon@talktalk.net, or contact me and I will forward any messages.

Another royal passed through Rutland to Fotheringhay 126 years later. This was Mary Queen of Scots and it was to be her last journey alive. Her route, as a prisoner under heavy armed guard, from Chartley, Staffordshire, through Leicestershire and into Rutland, included the ancient ridgeway path through Martinsthorpe, Manton, and Edith Weston.

This part of the journey was on Sunday 25th September 1586. On the orders of Elizabeth I, who saw her as a threat to the English throne, Mary Queen of Scots was beheaded at Fotheringhay on 8th February 1587.

*There is a more detailed account of her last journey in *The Heritage of Rutland Water*, page 210.*

Robert Owens

JOHN CECIL NOEL

We get a steady trickle of Rutland-related enquiries via the Society's website (www.rutlandhistory.org) and from visitors to the museum. They very often result in some very interesting research - one such started with a letter from Robin Cameron of County Antrim, Northern Ireland, who had recently visited Rutland:

Recently while on holiday in England I spent a few hours

in Oakham and visited the excellent little Museum, from where I obtained information on your Society.

I was visiting the town partly in the hope of obtaining some information which could help me expand on some details I already had about . . . John Cecil Noel, formerly of Cottesmore House . . . [in Cottesmore].

My interest in . . . Mr Noel relates to my researches for a book I am writing [to be published in 2009] on the history of a rather rare 2-seater sports model of pre-War Riley car [Riley 15/6 MPH] . . . one of which was first registered to Mr Noel of Cottesmore House in February 1935. When I first obtained that registration information [Rutland registration number FP 2831] . . . I wrote to the Town Clerk of Oakham, asking him whether the said gentleman might still be alive, or if any surviving family could give me information on him or the car.

A . . . reply from the Earl of Gainsborough to whom the Town Clerk had forwarded my letter . . . explained that John Noel had been a second cousin of his, but had sadly been killed during the Second World War. Lord Gainsborough explained that he personally had been too young to remember anything relevant . . .

. . . recently by chance I learned that a John Cecil Noel had entered and driven an Aston Martin to 11th place in the 1934 Le Mans 24-hour Race, and also had entered an Aston Martin for the 1935 Le Mans Race, though the car was driven by another on that occasion.

It seems . . . certain that the Le Mans driver and the John Cecil Noel of Cottesmore were one and the same person, and I thought I might find some confirmation . . . in Oakham Museum or . . . Library. I searched [Stamford Mercury] microfilms . . . around the time of the Le Mans Race [June 1934] . . . but could not spot anything in the short time I had available. Coming 11th in that famous and gruelling as a private entrant was no mean feat, and as few people would enter such a major race . . . without extensive previous experience of racing, I would be surprised if John Noel had not left any records of his competition motoring career locally.

I should be very grateful if any of your members could add anything to my knowledge of the gentleman in question.

Unfortunately, we were unable to locate any additional details on John Noel's motor racing exploits, but Tony Traylen's *Old Motors of Rutland* (In Rutland Series, No 13) reveals that his cars, including a racing Rapier 35 hp, an Auburn Straight 8, and the Riley 6 cylinder (Riley 15/6 MPH) were serviced by Dale & Pearce, whose garage was on the corner of Gaol Street and High Street, Oakham.

Ancestral Homes of Rutland (In Rutland Series No 18) also confirms that motor racing was 'in the blood' because in the 1920s Gerard Cecil Noel, John's father, would drive his racing car at hair-raising speed up and down the Queen of Bohemia's Drive in Exton Park.

Cottesmore House, sited in Cottesmore on the road to Exton, was built about 1900 for Gerard Cecil Noel. He lived there until his death in 1934 and his widow continued there until 1940.



Cottesmore House circa 1910 (Jack Hart Collection at Rutland County Museum)

John Cecil Noel was Gerard's second son and he returned to live at Cottesmore House in 1936 following his marriage, at the age of 29, to Nancy Margaret Hood on 9th July 1936 at All Saints Church, Nettleham, Lincolnshire.



The marriage of John Noel to Nancy Hood at Nettleham Church (Nettleham News, Spring 2006)

In the Second World War Cottesmore House was requisitioned by the War Office. In 1944 it was occupied by riggers of the US 92 Parachute Maintenance Company and the rooms were stacked with parachutes intended for use during the D Day landings.

In the 1950s it was hit by lightning and set on fire. The remaining shell was subsequently demolished.

The following has been prepared by Robin Cameron for the Newsletter. It brings together most of what we know about:

John Cecil Noel and his Cars

John Noel of Cottesmore House and his elder brother Tom were both keen motoring enthusiasts, a trait they apparently inherited from their father. The brothers each owned powerful Mercedes Benz sports cars in the 1920s, and John also owned an eclectic selection of other sports and racing cars, including a Grand Prix Ballot, a Straker

Squire, a racing Wolseley and an American Auburn straight eight saloon.

In the 1920s and early 1930s John took part in races at the Brooklands track in Surrey, sometimes in borrowed racing cars such as Bugattis and Mercedes. In Capt (later Sir) Malcolm Campbell's Grand Prix Talbot he came 2nd in the 1928 Easter Meeting there.

In the early 1930s John Noel owned two small 9-horsepower Riley saloons, first a Monaco and later a Falcon model, presumably as everyday transport, and in 1933 he also bought a 1½ litre Aston Martin International open 2/4 seater sports car.

For the 1934 Le Mans 24-hour Race the Aston Martin Company fielded a team of three Works racing cars. In addition two Aston Martins were entered privately, one being John Noel's, which he co-drove with J C N Wheeler. In the early stages of the Race the Aston Works team cars were going extremely well, challenging the Alfa Romeo which eventually took first place. However one by one they fell out either through driver error or mechanical failure. This opened an opportunity for a team of six cars from the Riley Works to move up towards the lead. Two six-cylinder Riley sports/racing cars came 2nd and 3rd, while smaller engined Rileys finished 5th, 6th, 12th and 13th, capturing the team prize. Meantime the two privately entered Astons kept going, with one finishing in tenth place, and John Noel's car crossing the line in 11th place, at an average speed of over 63mph for the 24 hours. John Noel entered his Aston again for the 1935 Le Mans Race, but with others driving it.

Presumably it was a combination of previous good experience with Riley cars, and being impressed by their performance at Le Mans in June 1934, which prompted John Noel to place an order later that year for a six-cylinder Riley MPH sports car, the road going version of the cars which had come second and third in the Race. It was the most expensive model in the Riley range, at £550, and only a dozen or so of them were sold. FP 2831 was registered in John Noel's name in February 1935.

After his marriage in 1936 John Noel gave up racing, and in due course decided to sell the Riley. The photographs here were taken by its second owner Victor Auckland of Huddersfield when he went to purchase the car around 1937, and they show it sitting outside Dale & Pearce's garage in Oakham, which had serviced it and other cars belonging to the Noel family.

Sadly John Noel and all the crew of the bomber he was flying in as observer were lost without trace on a mission in 1942. Since then his old Riley MPH has been through many hands, being taken by one owner to South Africa shortly after the War, where it stayed for over 40 years. It is now back in England, fully restored and used by its present owner for pleasure and some competition work in Vintage Sports Car Club events.

Robin Cameron



John Noel's Riley circa 1937 outside Dale & Pearce's garage in High Street, Oakham, looking east (Roger Auckland)



The same location, but looking west (Roger Auckland)

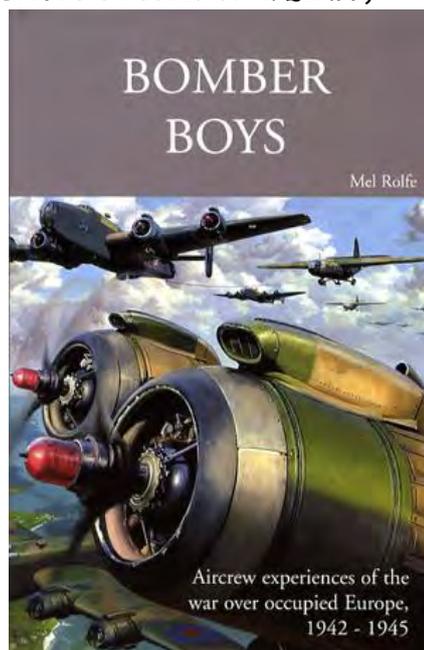


A recent photograph of John Cecil Noel's Riley 15/6 MPH - now restored to its former glory - see:

<http://www.oldclassiccar.co.uk/1950racing.htm> and http://web.ukonline.co.uk/rileyrob/images/mph_fp2831.jpg

BOOK REVIEW

Bomber Boys by Mel Rolfe (Octopus Publishing 2007 256pp ISBN 978-0-753715-57-4. £17.99)



I purchased this book from the bookshop on a P&O car ferry for £5. I was on a day trip to Calais - £19 return for the car and passengers, and this included 6 bottles of a very palatable white wine, and a full English breakfast. Not bad, but on top of this we had a wonderful sunny day exploring the Opal Coast between Calais and Cap Griz Nez. This is highly recommended, and so often missed, especially by those who fly through Calais, or Sangatte at the French end of the Channel Tunnel, on their way to other parts of France and beyond.

As I was to find out later, the book was the icing on the cake. On casually flicking through my eye was drawn to the first words at the beginning of Chapter 3 - 'Victor Wood's 12 Squadron Lancaster . . .'. Well, the only Victor Wood I know of was the proprietor of a former garage in Oakham - was it the same person I wondered. It certainly was. Well into the chapter we are told that he was born in Dublin of English parents, and at the outbreak of the war he was a young apprentice at a Leicester garage, servicing Army vehicles. Before the war he had joined the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve to spend his weekends flying Tiger Moths at Desford airfield, his consuming passion. By 1941 he had managed to extricate himself from his reserved occupation, and in August 1942 ' . . . the tall, good humoured twenty-three-year-old was commissioned and by May the following year he was flying Lancasters operationally from Wickenby in 12 Squadron's C Flight'.

Victor was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his exploits, some of which are told in this chapter. There are nineteen other chapters telling the stories, often for the first time, of a few of those remarkable yet largely unsung men who took huge risks in the fight against the enemy. An excellent read for those interested in World War II flying.

Robert Owens