

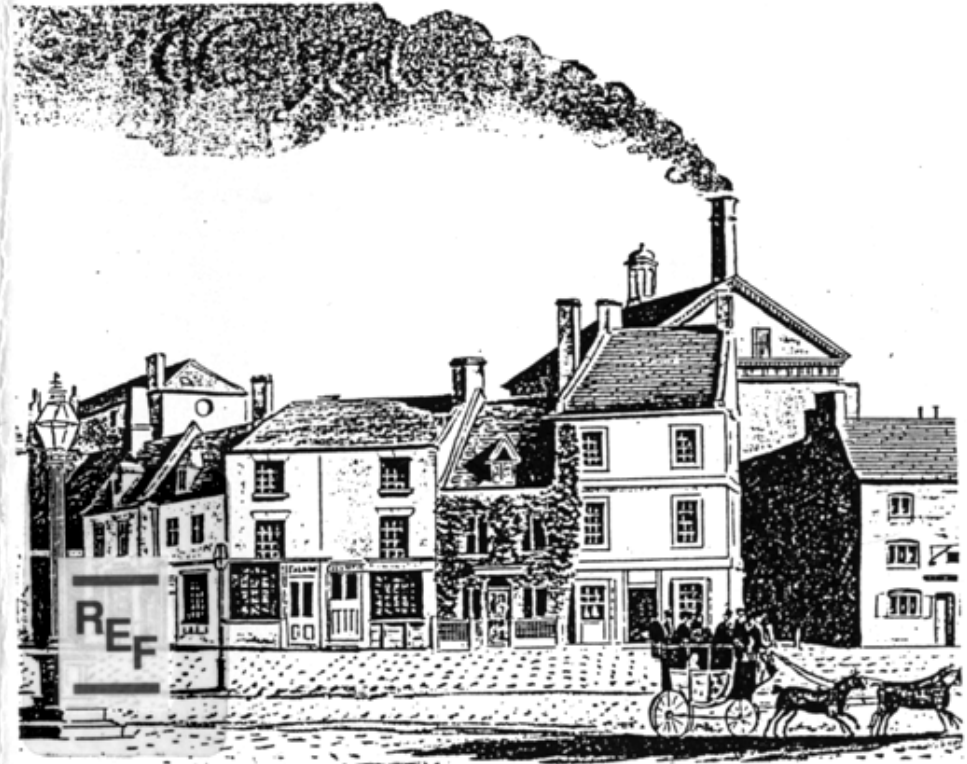
The Market Harborough Historical society was founded in 1931 and has been active ever since as a forum for those interested in the history and archaeology of the area. The Society holds a series of lectures every winter and spring and organises a number of excursions to places of interest during the rest of the year. Membership details are available from the Secretary.

The Society's collection of artefacts and photographs formed the basis of the Harborough Museum, which was opened in 1983 as a joint venture by Leicestershire County Council and Harborough District Council. The Museum collects and displays local artefacts and interprets them along with the general history of the Harborough area. It organises a series of free public lectures and temporary exhibitions throughout the year and is used for meetings of the Historical Society and the Market Harborough Civic Society. The Museum is located on the first floor of the District Council Offices in Adam and Eve Street and is open every day except Christmas Day, Boxing Day and Good Friday. (10.00 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. on Monday to Saturday; 2.00 p.m. to 5.00 p.m. on Sundays). Admission is free.

THE HARBOROUGH HISTORIAN

Number Fourteen : 1997

- * Great Bowden Show
- * Local Maternity Provision in Harborough
- * The Free Church Council
- * Market Harborough's Carpet Factory



The North-East corner of the Square, 1836, showing the gable end and chimney of the carpet factory

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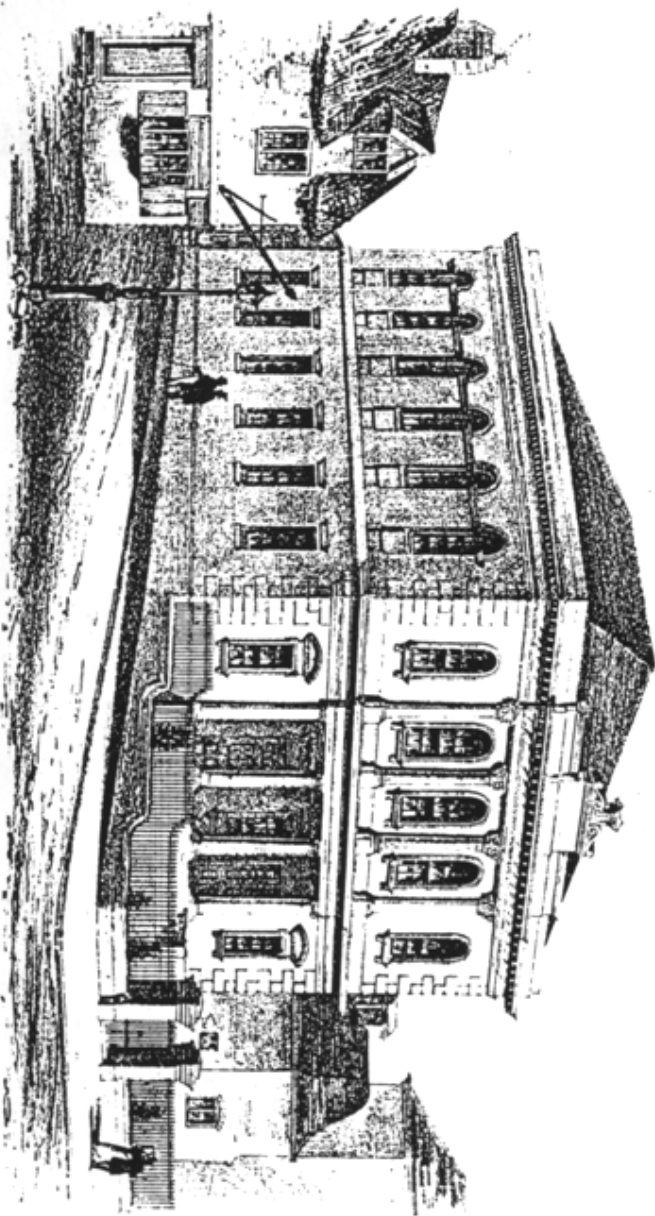
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The Harborough Historian is published jointly by the Market Harborough Historical Society and the Harborough Museum. It was first published in 1984 and contains short articles and notices of research in progress on the history of Market Harborough and the 40 or so parishes within 10 miles of the town which forms the collection area of the Harborough Museum.

THE INDEPENDENT CHAPEL, MARKET HARBOURGH.

Designed by William Hunt Archt. Leicester



Engraved by Brown & Douth, Leicester

MARKET HARBOURGH AND DISTRICT
FREE CHURCH COUNCIL

For many years the Nonconformist or Free Churches had a profound influence on the spiritual and secular life of Market Harborough. A great many of the town's businesses were owned by their members and names which come to mind are those of Clark, Shindler, Cort, Eady, Gardiner, Elliott, Pickering and others. A number were councillors or held other public offices.

In October 1897, a meeting was held among representatives of the Free Church denominations in Market Harborough to discuss the formation of a local Free Church Council. Its objects were to be to promote the spiritual life of the churches by cultivating closer fellowship and by adopting united evangelical action, to consider questions affecting the moral and social welfare of the community and to furnish opportunities to Evangelical Free Churchmen for concerted action upon questions affecting their common interests.

The inaugural meeting was held on February 17th 1898 when it was decided that the Council should embrace all the Free Churches which were not affiliated to any other Council within a ten mile radius of Market Harborough. The Rev. W. E. Morris, long standing minister of the Congregational Church, was elected President, Rev. W.H. Slack, Baptist Minister and Mr W. Spriggs of Foxton were elected Vice-Presidents, Mr Eady was Treasurer and

Mr J.H. Clark the Secretary. In a short time, besides the three town churches, some thirty village chapels were linked to the Council.

Soon after the formation of the Market Harborough Council, in 1901, the National Council inaugurated a plan for simultaneous missions to be held throughout the land. A programme of meetings was arranged for the Market Harborough area by the local Council. Between January and March, meetings of a week's duration were held in twenty villages, with a final mission held in the New Hall in Market Harborough from 18th to 27th March.

Another evangelistic exercise followed the purchase of a set of forty magic lantern slides depicting scenes from the life of Our Lord and during November and December 1909 a series of lantern lectures using Mr Cort's "powerful limelight lantern" was organised to be presented in the New Hall, Market Harborough and in various villages in the area. These lectures were being advertised at intervals up to 1921 and the slides appear to have been last used in 1939 (the slides and script are still in existence).

In 1910 the Free Churches, in collaboration with Anglicans in Market Harborough, presented an exhibition in the Assembly Rooms entitled "Palestine in Market Harborough". Exhibits depicted everyday life in the Holy Land with replicas of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Mount Zion and other Biblical scenes.

A matter which concerned the Council in its early days was the

question of services in the workhouse, whereby, it was decided to request the same facilities to be offered to Free Church ministers as was enjoyed by their Anglican counterparts. In 1906 a further request was made to conduct services with the inmates of the workhouse once a month continuously throughout the year, instead of being confined to the autumn and winter.

The introduction by the Government of the Education Bill in 1902 caused great concern amongst Non-conformists throughout the land. The Non-conformists protested at the levying of rates for the support of denominational schools in which religious teaching was carried on of a type with which they disagreed, whilst at the same time they were denied the privileges enjoyed by the Anglicans in the management of schools and employment of teachers. In Market Harborough a public meeting was called on 2nd May 1902 which it was reported, was well attended and a resolution condemning the Education Bill currently before Parliament was unanimously carried.

The dispute about education carried on until 1910 before a settlement was reached. In the intervening years, protest continued. Locally, prominent Non-conformists were summoned before the magistrates for refusing to pay what was called the Poor Rate, although what they were refusing to pay was the portion of the rate which paid for denominational schools. Some had distraint placed on their household goods which was usually bought in by friends and returned to the owners. In 1907, the

Baptist minister, Rev. W.H. Haden spent seven days in Leicester Jail for refusing to pay the Education Rate.

The Free Churchman

Towards the end of 1903, discussions took place concerning the provision of a monthly magazine for the district. The suggestion was approved and it was decided to issue a magazine beginning with the New Year 1904. The magazine was duly launched at a charge of one penny. It was reported that the first issue was a great success and a further 150 copies had to be obtained. Many paid one shilling in advance to cover the cost for a year. Advertisements from local traders, most of them members of the Free Churches, helped to cover the cost of printing.

For some years the magazine paid its way but it became increasingly difficult to cover the cost of production and there was a reluctance to raise the price to a more realistic level. It continued for sixty years but increased costs of printing and a falling circulation eventually forced its closure and the last issue appeared in December 1965.

With concern for the welfare of young people, particularly girls, who often left home at an early age, a branch of the Free Church Girls' Guild was formed in 1901. This attracted an initial membership of 108 girls and met fortnightly during the winter with an average attendance of 40 to 60.

The Free Church Institute

In 1915, discussions took place regarding the provision of premises in the town centre for Free Church work and with a view to furthering the work of the Free Church Girls' Guild. As result of this, two rooms were rented at 44 High Street and opened as the Free Church Institute. This was open daily, except Sundays, and a reading room and facilities for billiards were provided. In 1921 a much more ambitious project was undertaken. Alnholme House at the corner of Abbey Street and Fairfield Road was acquired. This provided more commodious accommodation with rooms for young men's and young women's activities with a small library and reading room and facilities for billiards. The grounds were laid out for tennis and bowls. The Institute flourished for several years but by the early 1930s membership had decreased and it came under severe financial strain. It closed in June 1934.

A matter of concern to the Council was the question of Sunday Observance. In 1921, it was reported that local sports clubs, (tennis and motor) were holding matches and events on Sundays and it was felt that means should be used to educate public opinion against the desecration of the Sabbath. In 1924, protest was made against the opening of the Wembley Exhibition on Sundays and in 1934 concern was expressed about the opening of businesses and the increase in motor bus excursions and other events taking place on Sundays. During the Second World War, protest was made without effect, about the holding of A.T.C., Army Cadets and Home Guard parades and activities during the times of

Sunday School and church services. Another matter of concern during the Second World War was the opening of cinemas on Sunday evenings although it was acknowledged that this might be necessary in the interests of members of the armed forces stationed in the town. Later, the question of Sunday games in Welland Park came under discussion.

Evangelistic activity declined in latter years although an exhibition entitled "This we Believe" was held in the Conservative Hall as it was then called (now the Theatre) in 1960. This was a national exhibition which was touring the country and was booked for a week by the local Free Church Council.

A venture into young people's work was started in 1942 by the formation of a united Free Churches Youth Group. This was continued for three years and then disbanded, individual churches making their own arrangements for youth activities.

The occasion of the Annual General Meeting was for many years held in the spring with a public meeting in the evening to which an eminent speaker was invited. United services were and still are held by the town Free Churches on Good Friday and Christmas Day but with the formation of a local Council of Churches, more of the services on special occasions are held with the Anglican churches.

The number of village chapels has dwindled to a mere handful. In 1920, thirty-four village chapels were listed as belonging to the Market Harborough and District Free Church Council. Of these, in 1995 twelve survive. The local Free Church Council became a shadow of its former self and by the mid 1980 s had virtually ceased to exist.

Douglas Wooldridge
October 1995

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50 YEARS AGO FROM THE LEICESTER MERCURY

Mr A J Bright, headmaster of Market Harborough Grammar School, in his annual report at the school's annual speech day today, said: 'Last year I appealed to parents to regulate the attendances of their children to the cinemas. This year, I must ask some parents to exercise more parental control in allowing their children to attend cinemas and dances and to roam the streets at night without any definite object. I feel still that many children are allowed to go to cinemas too frequently in term-time and often to unsuitable films.'

Churches affiliated to Market Harborough and District Free Church Council in 1920

Market Harborough Baptist *	Market Harborough Congregational *
Market Harborough Wesleyan *	Ashley Congregational
Braybrooke Baptist *	Clipston Baptist *
Caldecote Congregational	Drayton Wesleyan
East Langton Congregational	Great Bowden Congregational *
Great Easton Wesleyan	Foxton Baptist
Husbands Bosworth Baptist	Husbands Bosworth Wesleyan *
Kibworth Congregational *	Kibworth Wesleyan *
Hallaton Union *	Lubenham Congregational
Medbourne Mission Hall	North Kilworth Union
Oxendon Union	Sibbertoft Union
Slawston Congregational	Saddington Baptist
Middleton Congregational	Snecton Westerby Baptist
South Kilworth Congregational *	Sutton Bassett Wesleyan
Walton-by-Kimcote Baptist *	Wilbarston Congregational
Stoke Albany Wesleyan	Naseby Wesleyan *
Mowsley Congregational	Mowsley Wesleyan
Theddingworth Congregational *	Tur Langton Congregational
Welford Congregational *	

*Churches still open in 1995.

A MARKET HARBOROUGH CARPET FACTORY IN 1828

"On entering Harborough from East Farndon, the first tall steam engine chimney which I have seen since I left London, pointed out a seat of industry; and I found on enquiry, that it was the carpet manufactory of Messers. Clarke.¹ I was told, that it gives employment to above six hundred people, and it is a very flourishing concern, having its wholesale depot in Kenton Street, Brunswick Square.² On application, these gentlemen very politely and without reserve, shewed me through the establishment; and to say, that I was astonished at the perfection and ingenuity displayed in every step of the process, is inadequately to describe my feelings. Such another scene of motion and activity is not to be met with anywhere nearer to London, and it is the first of the kind as we advance from the south into the manufacturing districts. The fleece wool is sorted - then scoured - combed by machine or hand, but for more perfect work by hand. It is then run through a breaking frame and carding engine, so as to produce a perpetual sliver. Thence it is carried to various drawing frames, to produce regularity in the combined fibres. It is then made into a roving, and carried to the spinning frame and made into single worsted - afterwards doubled, and then ready for scouring and dyeing, warping and wearing. Thus the wool passes through seventeen processes or sets of hands, to produce the warp.

These gentlemen employ about ninety carpet looms, many of them

of the most curious and complicated construction. The *simple* (thus called, but more properly the *complicated*) carries the figure, and determines the warp; and is in the carpet weaving so complicated an affair, as to be intelligible only to those who form it. Mr Thomas Clarke has recently taken out a patent for simplifying, conferring greater precision, and reducing the labour in the production and variation of the pattern.³ I saw his plan in action; but to describe it would be impracticable, without many drawings and much study. By means of this invention the firm have produced a very elegant carpet called DAMASK, which has a silky, glossy effect, and an embossed appearance, very rich by candle light, and likely to be adopted as an improvement of the ordinary Brussels carpeting, at the trifling advance of only 1s. per yard.⁴

The wool manufactured by this establishment, is about 45 packs or 11,000 lbs. a week; consuming 5 cwt. of soap; and producing upwards of 4,000 yards of Damask, Brussels, Super-Kidderminster, and stair or Venetian carpeting per week: besides considerable yarn for the rug and fringe trade.

The men, women and children employed are about five hundred, from 24s. to 6s. and 3s. per week, for about twelve hours' labour per day; and they seem in general to be healthy. They have four holidays in a year; but the employment is constant. The steam engine is a thirteen horse power. The carpet warp contains 2,000 worsted threads if Brussels; but the Damask, which is a yard wide, has nearly 3,000; the Kidderminster, a yard wide, about 1,000.

Messrs. Clarke are natives of Harborough; and while the tammy trade flourished were in that line, but when it failed they turned their capital to the carpet trade; and may be regarded as the benefactors of the place, for except in their line all industry in this vicinity is at a stand.⁵

This extract, from Sir Richard Phillips book, A Personal Tour through the United Kingdom, was published in the Leicester Chronicle on 22 November 1828. Phillips (1767-1840), author, bookseller and publisher, lived in Leicester from 1788 to 1795 and founded the short-lived Leicester Herald. He subsequently moved to London, where he prospered as a publisher. He was made a Sheriff in 1807 and knighted the following year.

The rapid disappearance of the coach trade in the early 1840s, as a result of competition from the railways, had a knock-on effect, leading to the failure of the Harborough Bank in 1843, which in turn led to the closure of Clarke's factory. It is not listed in White's Directory for 1846, though the London Directory of that year shows the firm as still occupying their London premises. By 1850, they had gone from there too, and the premises had been taken over by a coach builder. In 1861, part of the premises in Factory Lane was purchased by R. & W.H. Symington for use as a corset factory; the remainder was acquired in 1876. It was subsequently enlarged several times, what had once been Clarke's carpet factory was demolished in 1973.

Notes:

(1). In 1806, a factory for spinning worsted by steam power had been built in Tag Lane (later Factory Lane), and a few years later, carpet weaving was added to the enterprise. The firm, called originally Clarke & Hall, was known as Joseph Clarke & Sons by 1822. It was described as John Clarke & Sons in 1835, or, in the London Directory, as John, T. & G. Clarke, carpet manufacturers, worsted and yarn spinners and dyers.

(2). By 1835 the wholesale depot had moved to Ropemakers Street, Moorfields, with additional premises just around the corner in White Street. The firm also had other mills at Burton Latimer, near Kettering.

(3). Patent no. 5501, 26 May 1827, 'manufacturing carpets'.

(4.) It was called "The Royal Damask Carpet".

(5). The making of tammy - a fine, glazed worsted - had been the town's mainstay since the mid-eighteenth century, but went into a decline c.1810. It was replaced for a while by the manufacture of carpets, though worsted spinning also continued.

J.D. Bennett

ALL THE CHINA IN THE MATERNITY UNIT WAS PINK

Market Harborough's Twentieth Century maternity and infant welfare services were developed and practised independently from the rest of the Leicestershire as Harborough Urban District Council ran its own Health Authority. The only other market town in Leicestershire to do so was Loughborough. They both, of course, had to relinquish their administrative responsibilities to Leicestershire County Council in July 1948 when the National Health Service was introduced. We are told by the Leicestershire Medical Officer of Health, Dr G.H. Gibson, "that these two authorities felt considerable regret at the parting with these services, which had been built up with great care and enthusiasm". However, he goes on to say that the goodwill and the co-operation all round resulted in a transfer that was carried out "very smoothly". (1)

Initially the maternity and infant welfare services developed by Market Harborough Urban District Council concentrated primarily on the infant. The Medical Officer of Health Reports paid little attention to the maternity provision in the town, despite the passing of the 1902 Midwives Act which introduced the statutory training and regulation of midwives. It was not until the passing of the 1918 Maternity and Infant Welfare Act and the establishment of the Ministry of Health, in 1919, that more attention was paid to the local maternity services. This is not surprising as most Authorities throughout the country concentrated primarily on improving the

Price 2d.

Souvenir Programme

Market Harborough
HOSPITAL
CARNIVAL

Saturday, September 18th, 1937.



Two Coppers to help towards the Hospital.

health of the infant in preference to the health of the mother. High infant mortality rates, the poor physical state of Boer War recruits, a declining birth rate amongst the middle-classes were all responsible for action being taken to improve the health of the infant rather than the mother. Indeed during the period 1902-18 such was the growth of interest and activity in infant welfare that it can be seen to constitute a "new movement" to educate the working-class mother in "good" child care practices.

Poverty, the general health of the mother and the relationship between her health and that of her baby was given scant attention. The working class mother was instead often blamed for the ill-health, or death, of her infant. Although Market Harborough never had a very high infant mortality rate the mother was often targeted as the cause, particularly with regard to "improper feeding of infants". H.G. Coales, the Inspector of Nuisances, raises this issue in both reports for 1906 and 1907 claiming that it was due to "remedial ignorance" on behalf of the mother (2). He recommended that the person registering the birth be given guidelines on the correct feeding practices. Unlike the Medical Officer of Health for Leicester at this time, Dr Killick Millard, he did not realise the futility of this practice as some babies were not registered until perhaps six weeks after the birth when, if there was a threat to the infant's health, bad practices would already be established.

With further regard for infant welfare, Harborough Urban District

Council decided to go it alone on 16 May 1910 with the adoption of the 1907 Notification of Birth Act and the employment of a part-time health visitor to implement it. The Act meant that all medical practitioners and midwives had to notify the Authorities within twenty-four hours of a birth. If the baby was thought to be in any danger then it was recommended that the health visitor should pay a visit to the baby's home as soon as possible. What is particularly interesting about this action is that Harborough adopted the Act sixteen months before Leicestershire County Council. They did so despite being recommended by the County Medical Officer, Dr T. Robinson, not to adopt it separately on the grounds it would be cheaper, more uniform, more effective and easier to administer, if it were adopted by the whole county⁽³⁾. The County Council had originally adopted the Act in 1908, but the Local Government Board declined to sanction it before District Councils had been given the opportunity to adopt it themselves. Dr Robinson was clearly displeased with Harborough's decision to adopt the Act, declaring that they had spoilt its uniformity across the county. He rather tersely said "Those districts (initially Coalville had also decided to adopt the Act independently) which are adopting the Act are only getting at their own expense what they would have got at the expense of the County"⁽⁴⁾.

The work of the Harborough Health Visitor, Nurse Hewes, was frequently praised by the M.O. in his reports, claiming that she "...had been of greatest service in keeping infant mortality rate at such a low figure"⁽⁵⁾ a report given by L.E. Snape in the County

Medical Officer's Report for 1912 stated that young mothers in Market Harborough were particularly taking notice of her instruction". Others were taking the trouble "to conceal long tubed bottles; and, if a dummy be seen, to say how little it is used". Some mothers, however, were condemned for going back to work a few months after the birth instead "of staying at home to give their babies their rightful milk"⁽⁶⁾.

Long tubed feeding bottles, popular since the 1890s, allowed babies to feed un-aided by their mothers. They soon became discredited by the medical profession because they proved to be extremely unhygienic, as the thin tubes were impossible to clean. Hence thousands of babies died annually from gastro-enteritis contracted from the bottle dubbed the "murderer". The use of this kind bottle continued well into the twentieth century, but was eventually replaced by the boat shaped bottle introduced around the time of the First World War. The dummy was also strongly discouraged by the medical profession at this time, with some Authorities mounting zealous anti-dummy campaigns. To what extent Harborough's anti-dummy campaign went remains unknown.

The part-time Health Visitor became full-time in 1917 and her duties increased to include midwifery. In 1919, along with the M.O., she was authorised to supply milk to expectant and nursing mothers free of charge, or at a reduced rate for "necessitous cases". The same year saw the opening of Harborough's first

Maternity and Infant Welfare Centre. It opened for three days a week with an average attendance of fifteen mothers a day. The Health Visitor continued to visit babies in their own homes up until the age of five years.

The Centre was also attended by the M.O. for fortnightly medical inspections. At this stage there was no voluntary group of women actively working in infant welfare in the town. Perhaps the M.O.'s comment on this in his report stirred local middle-class women into action, as, by 1920, he recorded that in addition to the Centre's normal opening hours it was opened one afternoon a week by a committee of voluntary ladies.

The new Centre obviously proved to be very successful as plans to extend it were mooted, but action was halted because the Ministry of Health was deliberating whether it should remain under local District control, or be taken over by the County Council. Harborough District Council were reluctant to spend rate payers money on expanding the Centre if they were going to lose control. The year 1924 saw another bid by the District Council to preserve the lives of infants born prematurely. It purchased an incubator for hire in the babies' own homes. The M.O.'s report for that year claimed that it had been used with success. However, no mention of it appears again so it is difficult to know how much long term success there was. Incubators at that time were rather primitive affairs, but nevertheless it was quite a progressive purchase made by the Council.

The work of the Health Visitor continued in much the same vein until the outbreak of the Second World War, when because of evacuated mothers and babies, her work load increased dramatically. As a consequence, another full-time health visitor was appointed with specific responsibilities for evacuated infants and children. She visited them in their homes and held a special clinic once a week. At the end of the war the main Health Visitor resigned and was temporarily replaced by a Mrs Turner. Miss A. H. Shutt eventually became the permanent replacement.

Maternity provision by the District Council, was slower to get off the ground than infant welfare. Mothers in Market Harborough in the Nineteenth and early Twentieth centuries were largely dependent on the medical practitioner and/or the local handy-woman attending them during their confinements. Much of course depended on which social class you belonged to and how wealthy you were with regard to whom you engaged. There were no lying-in facilities in Harborough until May 10th 1910 when the Cottage Hospital opened. Even then only the occasional maternity case was admitted. Consequently, the vast majority of babies were born at home. Hospital births did not feature greatly until the 1930s when it became more medically fashionable.

St Luke's provided some lying-in facilities, but these were usually only provided for unmarried mothers, prostitutes and destitute women. The only other maternity service for poor married women was provided by the Dorcas Society, who supplied five boxes of

clothing for such women in their confinements. This charitable deed was taken over by the Harborough Nursing Association (begun in 1885) circa 1902. (7) The Nursing Association nurse took some maternity cases, but because of the pressure of work there were periods of time in the 1890s when regulations concerning maternity cases were drawn up by the Association when the hospital opened. Applications for the midwife's attendance had to be made to the matron four months before the expected time of confinement. The prospective mother also had to give the name of a doctor in case complications arose. Added to this the new rules made it very clear that the midwife would only attend married women. This was ensured as all applications went before a monthly sub-committee.

The minimum confinement fee at that time was seven shillings and six pence, half the amount being paid when booking the midwife and the balance at the confinement (8). Although the fee now sounds a ridiculously low sum of money, it was then a considerable amount as the average weekly wage for a working class person was about one pound a week. The majority of the working class women, therefore, continued to use the services of the handy-woman whose fee was considerably less. Perhaps even more important, she would also often provide some child care and domestic duties for the confined woman. No mention of handy-women is made by the M.O., but Harborough is certain to have had its fair share as did other towns, villages and cities. Their duties also included laying out the dead, sitting up with the ill and

giving general child care advice. For obvious reasons they were often at odds with the professionals in the field.

By 1919 the Council employed one midwife, in addition to the Health Visitor who also practised midwifery. In 1921 there were two registered and certificated midwives working in Harborough, one for the council, the other operating privately. Important ante-natal work being done by the Council midwife was reported to be increasing, but because of a declining birth-rate by 1923, the Council could no longer justify her full-time position. She was therefore dismissed, but paid a subsidy that allowed her to work privately on condition that she continued to carry out ante-natal care under supervision of the M.O., Dr C.T. Scott.

The health of the mother in relation to that of her infant was now receiving more attention. It was even more unusual to take steps to improve the post-natal health of the mother. Post-natal examinations were being carried out in Harborough as early as 1924. This was a very early venture into post-natal work as many authorities were only just getting their ante-natal care organised and running. An indication of how important and advanced this work was in Harborough can be seen in the Leicestershire M.O's report for 1949. Of the 34 women attending the ante-natal clinic in Harborough all received post-natal examinations.

The figures for post-natal examinations in other centres in the county in no way came anywhere near this. In Coalville, for

example, of 78 women seen ante-natally, only two of them received post-natals. In Hinckley it was only 24 women out of 212 who received post-natals(9). The story is the same across the whole county.

Several Harborough Medical Officers showed concern in their reports that there was no lying-in hospital in the district, although they did comment that the hospital occasionally took fee paying maternity cases and that maternity patients were also admitted to St Lukes. Despite Harborough not having a lying-in hospital (or rather perhaps as a result of not having one) where women are more open to infection, Harborough's maternal mortality was very low. For example between the period 1930 to 1936 there was only one maternal death in over seven hundred births (10).

Lying-in facilities were to increase in the mid 1930s largely due to medical concern and a growing demand from mothers themselves. In 1934 the Hospital Committee and the District Council agreed that it was becoming increasingly necessary to expand existing provisions. However, because of limited financial resources the venture was thought to be impossible. Two legacies, in 1935, which amounted to £6,500, changed this and allowed the Committee to purchase property at 105 Coventry road for a new nurses home and to convert the vacated the home into a four bed maternity ward (11).

The Council subsequently made an annual grant to the running of the new four bed unit in return for the admission of necessitous cases at a reduced fee. The popularity of the maternity ward at the hospital was self evident as fifty per cent of the total number of births in Harborough took place there during the first year it was open 12. Such was the demand for beds at the Hospital from Harborough and surrounding districts that demand soon exceeded accommodation. The Hospital Committee was forced to launch an appeal for funds to build a larger and separate maternity block. The response from local families, firms and the general public was tremendous.

By 1940 public subscriptions had reached a total of £3,854.18.10. In addition to this the Hospital Equipment Fund had provided £550 and the Trustees Fund a further £2,100. The Linen Guild had also met the total cost of the linen for the new unit. Despite these efforts another £2,000 was still needed and it was suggested by the Hospital Management Committee that the Special Ladies Appeal Committee try to raise this sum in order to prevent them from having to ask the Trustees to sell further investments (13).

The new building had originally been expected to be completed in 1939, but due to the outbreak of the Second World war and the subsequent shortage of building materials it did not open until 1941. Annual admissions then rose to an all time high of approximately 400, with patients coming from as far away as Corby, Wilbarston, Dingley and Sutton, although Market Harborough

women were given priority (14). The maternal population of Harborough increased during the war years, but this did not put a particular strain on local services as most evacuated women had their babies at specially opened maternity homes elsewhere in the county.

In addition to a stay of on average fourteen days, the District Hospital operated a very strict visiting scheme for the relatives of nursing mothers. Eva Wardle (known as Brownie) who became a maternity nurse in the maternity unit at Harborough in 1940/41 explained why:

"We wanted to ensure that the mother had a 'good' rest, so for the first three days only the husband could visit. Then on the fourth day the grandparents could go in. This helped to get the mothers milk established. Of course if there was anything seriously wrong then things were very different. The situation was also different during the war. If the husband was away in the army then either of the grandmothers was allowed to visit every day. Children were not allowed to visit at all because of the risk of cross-infection... and none of the visitors were allowed to touch the baby. You see the risk of infection was always feared that's why all the china in the maternity unit was pink. This way we never got any china from anywhere else in the Hospital".

The visiting of private patients was much the same, although they did get slightly preferential treatment when it came to facilities provided. Eva recalled this with some amusement. "Private patients

had a rug on the floor, a tray with a tray cloth and a teapot".

Despite the growth of maternity provision for the married mother there was little in the way of provision for the unmarried mother, apart from St Luke's, until the opening of the new maternity block at the District Hospital. From as early as 1921 the Harborough M.O. expressed concern that "There is no maternity hospital for unmarried mothers" (15). Leicestershire County Council had opened a hostel for unmarried mothers in Leicester in 1920. But..."only unmarried women with their first babies were admitted, and not even then if their moral character has been generally bad" (16). Due to an insufficient number of mothers admitted the hostel was forced to close the following year. Provision for unmarried mothers was then made available at St Saviour's home, Northampton, where the average length of stay was ninety nine days (17). During the war years the illegitimacy rate increased dramatically in Harborough from ten births in the five years proceeding the war to sixty four in the five year period of the war. Many of these mothers appeared to have had their babies at the district Hospital remaining within the safety and security of their home environment. Although when the County Council took over responsibility for the care of illegitimate children in 1948 there were four unmarried mothers from the area in St Saviour's Home, Northampton (18).

Despite the comment from the County Officer of Health that the hand over of medical services in July 1948 went " very smoothly",

there must have been some heartache felt by many Harborians at losing control of services they had worked so hard to achieve and in which they felt considerable pride. Many people would also have lost jobs and status as committees were disbanded and voluntary workers made redundant. Collecting boxes for hospital and Infant Welfare Centre funds, too, soon became a thing of the past as Harborough launched itself into the National Health Service which brought about many changes and benefits.

Shirley Aucott

"Mothercraft and Maternity - Leicester's Maternity and infant welfare Services 1900 - 1948" by Shirley Aucott.

Leicestershire Museums, Arts & Records Service 1997 £6.50

A woman's work may not only be "never done", but it has also gone consistently unrecorded. Shirley Aucott has used both official records and oral history to tell a story which helps to redress the balance, and the result is both highly readable and well-referenced.

In the 1890's, one child in five in Leicester died in infancy. This book tells how a relatively small number of dedicated individuals battled to introduce better infant feeding, trained midwives, and more information for mother-to-be. It details the gradual increase of public funding for maternity care, leading up to the introduction of the National Health Service in 1948.

In describing the gradual arrival of trained professionals on the scene, the author is keen not to undervalue the stirring work of the self-taught "handy-women" of late Victorian Leicester.

- R.F. Hartley

Notes

1. Leicestershire Medical Officer of Health Report (L.M.O. of H.R.) 1949.
2. Market Harborough Medical Officer of Health Report (M.H.M.O. of H.R.) 1906.
3. L.M.O. of H.R. 1907
4. L.M.O. of H.R. 1908.
5. M.H.M.O. of H.R. 1912
6. L.M.O. of H.R. 1912
7. Notes on Market Harborough Cottage Hospital by J.C. Davies.
8. *ibid*
9. L.M.O. of H.R. 1949.
10. M.H.M.O. of H.R. 1936.
11. Harborough Mail December 30, 1982, p.11.
12. Notes by J.C. Davies.
13. Market Harborough and District Hospital and Nursing Association
56th Annual Report 1940.
14. *ibid*.
15. M.H.M.O. of H.R. 1921.
16. L.M.O. of H.R. 1920.
17. L.M.O. of H.R. 1922.
18. L.M.O. of H.R. 1949.

ONE PENNY.

Great Bowden Horticultural Society.

Programme of Athletic Sports,

Affiliated to Leicester & Rutland Athletic Association.

PONY GYMKHANA,

FLYING EXHIBITION, afternoon & evening,

By Mr. R. W. H. Philpott.

Held in a Field on the Dingley Road, kindly lent by Mr. H. Barber,

ON MONDAY, AUGUST 5th, 1912.

Gates open 1 o'clock. First Race 2.10 o'clock,

Admission to Ground: 1 to 4, 1/-; 4 to close, 6d.

The Count Fritz Hochberg will present the prizes at the close of Sports

Sports' Judges—

Dr. Thomas, J. J. Clark, Esq., Geo. Green, Esq.

Referee—The Count Fritz Hochberg.

Starter—W. H. Hay, Esq.

Timekeepers—A. T. Harris, Esq., G. Thwaites, Esq.

Handicapper—Mr. D. Lucas.

Joint Hon. Secs.—F. JOHNSON & T. ALLARD.

MIDLAND COUNTIES A.A.A.

Competitors are requested to report to M.C.A.A.A. through their Club or Sports Secretary any case of unfair or inconsistent handicapping to prevent as far as possible frivolous complaints being made, and all cases so reported must be accompanied by a deposit of 2/6 to be returned or not at the discretion of the Committee.

1 Concert Party—2-0

2 100 Yards Flat Race—(Handicap)—First Prize value 40/-
Second value 20/-, Third 10/- 1st and 2nd to compete in Final.

2-10		HEAT I	yds
5	Frank Dunkley, unattached	...	9
6	Albert E Holyoak, Leicester Harriers	...	11½
14	Walter Peberdy, Harboro' Thursday FC	...	11
19	H Huckerby, Great Bowden, unattached	...	10
23	F Gibson, Uppingham C & AC	...	13½
2-15		HEAT II	yds
24	J H Gamble, Leicester Harriers	...	10½
25	G Smith, Leicester Vict. Gym. Club	...	9
30	C. Bickel, Great Bowden, unattached	...	7 10
31	J W Neaverson, Peterborough A.C	...	10

Geo. Green & Co. Printers, Market Harborough.

THE GREAT BOWDEN SHOW

Part 1. 1896-1956: The Original Great Bowden Show

There had been a Show in Great Bowden at least a century ago, certainly by 1896. It was run by the Great Bowden Horticultural Society, whose officers and committee contained all the Nobs of the village. It was a country show in the traditional sense, rather than a garden show. There were children's and adult's sports, a gymkhana and displays of various kinds. The exhibition of garden produce was a minor matter.

By 1912, although the Show was still run by the Horticultural Society, the gardening element had disappeared. There was now a full programme of handicap races, a Flying Exhibition, a Gymkhana, and in the evening Dancing and a Grand Firework Display. The event was held in a field off the Dingley Road and was clearly very popular. The gentry were still involved: the Starter for the racing was W H Hay, Esq, of Great Bowden Hall, and the prizes were given out by the Count Fritz Hochberg, a regular hunt-season visitor from Germany.

All this came to an end with the First World War, the last Show being held on that sun-drenched Bank Holiday of 1914. For the next 32 years nothing much seems to have happened, except in 1937 when an elaborate Fete was organised for the Coronation of King George VI. There was a Carnival Parade, Sports on the recre-

ation Ground, a Baby Competition, a Children's Tea and an Old-folks' Tea, a Whist Drive, a Children's Social and a Dance in the Village Hall, all on the one day (Wednesday, 12 May). But between the Wars that was about all.

A New Start

Then in 1946, a few months after the end of World War II, a programme of social events was organised in the Village Hall to raise funds for a resumption of the annual Show. Over £116 came in and preliminary adverts began to appear in the local paper. One of these promised a Comic Dog show (Best children's pet; Fattest dog; Thinnest dog; Dog with the most spots, etc.) and on August 5th, Bank Holiday, the Show duly took place. A total of 1929 people came, paying £134 at the gate, and at the end there was a balance of £140 to carry forward.

Beside the Comic Dog Show there was a Gymkhana, as in the old days, but the long gap meant that the whole programme could be considered afresh. And circumstances had changed. The Dig-for-Victory campaign of the war years had spawned a lot of allotment societies, many of which held a summer show of produce. Thus there was a different model for the organisers of our Show to look at and the garden exhibits became the centre piece. The pattern of classes and sections set out in the 1946 Schedule is recognisable as the basis of today's Schedule. Classes A,B & C (flowers, fruit, vegetables) were open to amateurs resident in Great Bowden, an amateur being defined as one who did not employ a full-time or

part-time weekly gardener or offer produce for sale (That would have caused trouble in a lot of allotment societies!); Class D was for amateur ladies of Great Bowden; E, F & G were children's classes; and then there were the open classes for residents of Great Bowden, Little Bowden and Market Harborough, and one for Gentlemen's Gardeners, Nurserymen or amateurs from the three townships. Finally, a Honey Section was arranged by the Market Harborough Beekeepers' Society.

The attendance on the day was very gratifying, but what about the entries? It is instructive to compare the Schedule with the list of prize-winners in the local paper of 9 August 1946. Of the 34 sections in Classes A, B & C only 21 had entries; in the 15 children's sections only 6 had prizes. Despite the public interest in the Show - which may have been due largely to the ponies and dogs - there was evident difficulty in getting residents to exhibit their produce.

The Chairman of the Show Committee was Mr Philip Symington (of Nether Green Lodge) but most of the work fell on the Secretary, S M Balchin, father of the present Vice-Chairman. It was he who had written to the whole village raising funds to set up the Show and for many years he remained a key figure in the village's public life, including the Show. Indeed it is clear from the records that without his initiative and determination little might have been done, although he himself warmly acknowledged the support he had from his Chairman.

With a substantial fund to carry forward there was no problem in holding a regular annual Show on similar lines. The second, in 1947, attracted over 2,500 people and up to 1950 similar numbers came. The Schedule was gradually enlarged: in 1950 the vegetable class had grown from 12 to 20 sections and additional craft classes had appeared.

Decline

Then things went wrong. The Gymkhana, one of the main attractions, had been run by Bert Peaker, Huntsman to the Fernie. But he died suddenly in 1948 and it proved difficult to find anyone to take it over. By 1952 it was dropped altogether "because no one could be found to assist the Committee". The Comic Dog show had given way to the serious Dog Show - in effect an Exemption Show. Perhaps it was thought demeaning that Man's Best Friend should be treated facetiously: there can't have been a shortage of comic dogs. But the horticultural entries had also declined. Clearly the early momentum had been lost.

Sid Balchin, who had been Secretary from 1946 to 1952, now turned his attention to the Coronation. As for the first Show, he wrote to all householders seeking donations to a fund for the celebration and once again, on Tuesday 2 June 1953, he organised a mammoth programme. It started at 8 am and ended at 11 pm with a torchlight Procession from the Green to the Bonfire and Firework Display. There was a Sports Programme of 18 events "Bring your own Egg & Spoon and Sack, an Elizabethan Pageant,

Children's tea, Old Folks' Tea, Whist drive and Dance in the Village Hall". The whole thing was hugely successful.

But the August Show was another story. The old Show Committee was missing Sid Balchin's energy and organising skill. He had been succeeded as Secretary by Mr C A Weston (of the Old Hall) who regularly lamented the declining support. In 1955 a desperate effort was made to revive interest. Help was sought from the Westerby Basset Hunt, later of Welford but provisionally lodged at Mr Weston's Old Hall: they produced a Gymkhana and a parade of hounds. Mr R F Thomas of Theddingworth gave a sheep-dog demonstration (but afterwards excused himself "as just an ordinary working farmer who couldn't give much time to sheep-dog training". what happened to the sheep is not recorded). Lt-Col E F S Morrison gave a lively commentary throughout the afternoon. But none of it helped much. There was a good entry for the Pony events but the garden produce and crafts "looked lost in their tent". In Class A there were prizes in only 8 sections and in Class B only 1.

That was it. The post-war revival had fizzled out. A meeting at the Great Bowden School the following May, with only seven people present, decided to dissolve the Show. Someone suggested that a new Garden Society might be formed and one can hear the weary tone of voice in which it was agreed that "if it is formed it can have the £28 left, plus the 4 cups and other items".

By that time it was too late to do anything for August 1956 but the Westerby Basset stepped in to offer a Children's Gymkhana and Fete "for the benefit of the younger children of the district". A number of side-shows, including Long Alley Skittles, was arranged and a parade of hounds under the direction of Mr C Bevin, joint Master, assisted by S Phillips, Huntsman. The Master subsequently recalled that "The ponies were beautiful and well behaved; the children were charming and quite well behaved; but the mothers were dreadful". So too was the weather. There was drenching rain throughout the Bank Holiday Monday. The side-shows had to be moved into the marquee and the attendance was dismal. It looked like the end.

(Part 2, in the next issue of the Harborough Historian)

Arthur Jones

CURATOR'S COLUMN

At the end of my first year at Harborough Museum (beginning with a six-month secondment from October 1995), I look back on a busy time, when I have learned a lot, and met a great many people. The committee and members of the Historical Society have made me welcome and smoothed my path to becoming a member of the local community.

History and archaeology have figured largely in our temporary and new displays. The survey work done by Leicestershire Museums' staff at Stonton Wyville produced a temporary exhibition and a sell out lecture by Peter Liddle, with an audience which included practically the whole population of the village.

Earlier survey and excavation work at Drayton had resulted in the salvage of a mid-4th century Roman mosaic pavement from a villa site. The mosaic has been conserved in Leicester, and has been "en route" to Harborough for some time. It was installed near the entrance to the museum during the summer, by the Archaeology Conservator in Leicester, Rolly Read. The Museum Service's designers created a setting for the mosaic, and new signs for the museum, and we also took advantage of the opportunity to revamp the Historical Society display case, and bring several of the Society's photographs out of store and on to display. The new arrangement presents a very positive image of the Society for our

visitors, and includes a dispenser for the programmes, with the membership application form.

As has been the case for several years now, the future shape and size of the post-reorganisation Leicestershire Museums, Arts & Records Service is still uncertain. However we do now know that the existing county will be broken up in 1997, with the reappearance of "Unitary Authorities" in Rutland and Leicester.

The good news in this story, as far as I am concerned, has been the spirit of co-operation between the County and Leicestershire Districts – especially Charnwood and Harborough, in working together and putting a consistent case for the two-tier arrangements and the "status quo". The Museums Service has also been championed - sometimes far beyond the call of duty - by many County and District Councillors, who clearly appreciate the work we have done. This story has been running for a long time now, but by the time the next Historian is produced we really should know the outcome!

Fred Hartley

Reviews of Recent Publications

"Seventy Years Back" by William Webb

Leicestershire Museums, Arts & Records Service, 1996. 48pp, £4.75.

Mr Webb writes of his childhood in Harborough in the 1920s, and does so with a freshness of vision, and an accuracy of observation, that raise this book above the general run of memoirs. Although it is full of period detail, in many ways it harks back to earlier eras, with descriptions of playing tipcat, and running down the streets with hoops, driving cattle to the market, and sharing baked hedgehog with a Romany couple.

Carefully edited by Steph Mastoris, and pleasingly produced by Design & Co., this book should delight all who read it.

"Northamptonshire in the Early Eighteenth Century - The Drawings of Peter Tillemans and Others". Edited by Bruce A. Bailey.

Northamptonshire Record society Volume XXXIX, 1993-4, 221pp, £20.

Northamptonshire is fortunate in having a Record Society with the vision and resources to produce such a fine publication. In doing so they accomplish a project left unfinished in the 18th century, for Peter Tillemans and several other artists were commissioned by John Bridges in 1719 to provide a comprehensive record of the buildings and monuments of the county.

Only a few of these were eventually reproduced as engravings when Bridges' History was published in 1791, but luckily 269 ink and wash drawings survive in the British Library, and they are beautifully reproduced in this volume. The notes on the dust jacket suggest that they form the finest visual record of any county for their period, and there seems no reason to dispute this. Highly enjoyable as works of art, they are also an invaluable source of historical reference.

The **MARKET HARBOROUGH HISTORICAL SOCIETY** was founded in 1931 and has been the focus of historical and archaeological activity in the area ever since.

The Society's activities include:

A series of monthly lectures from September to May held at the Harborough Museum.

Excursions to places of historic interest.

The publication of **The Harborough Historian**, a journal for articles on the history and archaeology of the area. This is issued free to members.

The collection of artefacts and documents relating to the local history of the area. The collection is deposited at the Harborough Museum under the auspices of the Society's Museum Trust.

Membership is open to all and costs £5 per year for a single person and £7 for couples.

Officers of the Society, 1997-98 include:

President: Douglas Wooldridge

Chairman: Stephen Barker

2, Kilworth Court

North Kilworth

Leics, LE17 6JE

Tel. : 01858 880974

Secretary: Mike Thornton
Oaken Ridge
Carvells Lane
Naseby
Northants NN6 6DH
Tel.: 01604 740058

Treasurer: Chris Oldham
Tel.: 01858 434412

Editors: Stephen Barker and Jane Snelling

Liason Officer: Jane Snelling
Tel.: 01858 431974 (Answerphone)

All meetings take place in the Harborough Museum at 7.45 p.m. on the second Wednesday of the month, unless otherwise stated. please use the entrance in fox yard (a lift is available on request for those who have difficulty with the stairs) Transport to meetings can be arranged by contacting the Secretary. Please give 24 hours notice if possible. Admission is FREE to members , the entrance charge to vistors is £2.