

Dear Member,

This is the first of a series of regular newsletters. We hope to publish one every quarter, that is in the months of January, April, July and October, to keep you up to date with our society's news and activities, and to mention other points of local history interest. Our aim is to both inform and entertain! The letter will also fill you in on anything that you missed if you were unable to attend the previous meeting.

Our A.G.M. in December 1985 combined business with pleasure! The officers elected were the same as last year. At meetings in 1986, speakers will talk on Heraldry roundabout Desford (March), The Hinckley Times Newspaper (May, at Peckleton church), and the Duchy of Lancaster (November). Details of all meetings are on the new membership cards. The Victorian Party which followed the A.G.M. was enjoyed by all. Long skirts and antique lace set the scene for mince pies, mulled wine and "live entertainment". What a nice change it was from watching the telly!! We listened to some 19th century Top of the Pops, recitations, both serious and hilarious, and had our initiative stretched by an historical treasure hunt. Father Christmas (who bore a slight resemblance to our Chairman!) arrived to distribute sweets, just as we were all joining in a sing-song of olde tyme music hall songs. Thanks to all who helped with the preparations for this most successful evening.

At our January meeting we were fortunate enough to have Pam Drinkall as our speaker. She is an active member of this society, and also Museums Education Officer at Oakham Museum. Her expert knowledge on the subject of "The Domesday Book", combined with a sense of humour and a "not-too-academic" approach to the subject, made an extremely interesting and entertaining evening. The Domesday Book, written in 1086 in two volumes on parchment, recorded the "assets" of the new Conqueror. The questions answered in it were - name of place; who held it before 1066 and now; how many men and ploughs; how much meadow and woodland and how many mills, fishponds etc. We learnt that "Deresford" was an area of three carucates (each approx. 120 acres), had land for 4 ploughs, 1 villager with 1 plough!! 4 acres of meadow, and woodland measuring about $1\frac{1}{2} \times 1\frac{1}{2}$ miles. With the aid of a number of maps of Leicestershire, shown on a projector screen, of the recorded population, plough teams, mills meadow, woodland, and a relief map of the county, we learnt much about the area at the time of the Conquest. Then looking at pictures of a cruck building and old farming methods, we were easily able to form a vivid mental picture of Desford in 1086. Thank you, Pam!

Please note that the Local History team will soon be defending the Shield which they won at the Village Quiz last February. This year's competition takes place on February 26th at 8.00 pm at the Junior School, and if it is anything like as exciting as last year's nail-biting final round, I advise you to bring your tranquilisers! Anyway, do come and support your team!

Shell Petrol Co. are sponsoring a Village Venture Contest, and the History Group has been asked by the Parish Council if we would be willing for The Wheel to be entered as Desford's project. We are very pleased to represent the village in this way.

I would like to recommend to you an excellent little booklet entitled "History of the Church and Parish of Newbold de Verdon". It is by Dorothy Fox and clearly sets out the history of Newbold village, the Hall, school, church and rectory. The final part acts as a guide to the church. It costs 70p, available from the rectory, and usually Newbold newsagent, and is a good value addition to your collection of local history literature.

To get the maximum enjoyment from our next talk on March 18th - Heraldry roundabout Desford - I suggest you bring some crayons or felt pens - colours yellow, red, blue and black. What is in store?!

And finally, in this cold season of wintry weather, some entries from the Log Book of Desford School in the year 1908 on which to ponder. Nov 4th A new stove was brought today and put in the porch ready for setting on Saturday. Nov 5th After measuring the new stove found the wrong size had been sent. Nov 6th School visited by men to arrange about setting of new stove, After pointing out that the wrong one has been sent, it was decided to wait until Mr Fowler has been interviewed. Nov 7th Mr Fowler's assistant has visited the school today and said the stove is to be changed! Nov 9th Temperature at 9 am 41°!!
Dec 12th The new stove has been fixed today!!! Times have not changed, have they??!

A happy and prosperous new year to you all.