

Desford and District Local History Society

Newsletter

Spring 2019



Report Back from a very enjoyable AGM on January 15th

A lot of AGMs cannot always be said to bring laughter and stimulating thought. This year our Desford and District History AGM was one that certainly did.



We began with brief reports from Caroline Wessel (President), Bernard Grimshaw (Chair) and Dennis Casson (Treasurer). After a look back at all the various activities and talks we had over the last year by both Caroline and Bernard; it was obvious that it had been a very successful year indeed. They passed on their grateful thanks to all those members who had contributed towards this

outcome.

Dennis reported back that the Society has over £1000 to carry forward and the subscription would remain at £12 with the complimentary tea/coffee at meetings. On the night over 44 members re-enrolled and this has risen to 50 members. Dennis estimates there could be about another 10 to be added to the total.

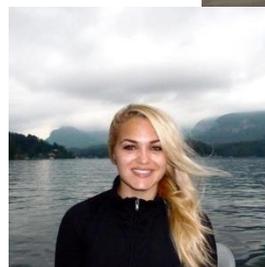


Angela Thomas (Secretary), after commenting about talks and visits in 2018 gave a resume of activities booked for the next year beginning with a talk by Dr Iain Hambling about T.G.Green



Co Ltd on March 19th 2019.

This will be followed on May 21st by about the De Montfort University



Elizabeth Wheelband telling us Heritage Project

The first visit (Friday 3rd May 2019) will be a local visit to Market Harborough with a heritage trail guided walk as well as a chance to visit the small, but very interesting Museum opened in 1983 in the former R & WH Symington Corset Factory.





After the appointment of the next year's committee; all offering to stand for another year plus the addition of Linda Grimshaw as a new committee member; members enjoyed a small buffet and drinks provided by various members.

There then followed about an hour of 'entertainment'.

Dennis Casson started the second part of the agenda with three very entertaining renditions of well-known monologues by Edgar Marriott. These monologues became well known after being performed by Stanley Holloway.

Firstly, Dennis read 'Canute the Great'; then 'The Fair Rosamund' and finally 'The Lion and Albert'



Images taken from illustrations of Marriott Edgar's monologues (Born 1880, died 1951).

We then enjoyed vintage material from our archives, a CD about The Desford Industrial School which harked back to our talk the previous September by Sally Prytherch called 'Elsie May Dearest', followed by a CD lent by John Richards showing images of 'Desford Past.'



The third and final contribution was from John Russell, who had us trying to make up our minds about the case for or against the telling and teaching of nursery rhymes to young children. Should we continue or discontinue this practice.

Both serious and funny it really did make you think.

The meanings behind the rhymes are often chilling and macabre. John certainly had me trying to discover more and search the internet.

We definitely had a most memorable AGM this year.

More contributions from Betty Dickson's alphabetical card index sent in by Caroline Wessel

ARTISTS-

Just a little more information about Frederick Rust from our last newsletter. There is an actual plaque commemorating his memory on the Free Church Wall. See if you can find it next time you walk down the path from Pickards Play Area. Though extremely faint you can see his first name is without the k.



BULLOCK HALL BARN - a sumptuous brick-built parlour (built 1791 - 1857) to accommodate Desford cattle-breeder Henry Chamberlain's prize cattle; it was situated in a field by the stream at the bottom of the hill in Leicester Lane. There were cellars underneath for the storing of root crops and a yard with stalls around it. By 1982 it had all but disappeared and the bricks and tiles were stolen.

The **CALVINIST CHAPEL** (or Strict Baptist Chapel) on High Street was built and opened about 1800, fell into disuse about 1900 and was demolished possibly in 1937. Members of its Mother Chapel in Leicester would come to the Desford chapel on outings during the summer months. William Gadsby, the Apostle of the North, was minister at this Desford Chapel for a while. He had a thriving congregation in the heart of Manchester's poverty and squalor; was a vigorous voice against injustice and founder of the Gospel Standard magazine.

William Gregory, the Desford shoemaker, was the last person to be buried there. Although the chapel building is now demolished, its well-maintained graveyard site, still with some gravestones, is a peaceful area open to the public. *Currently being 'revamped' by DCAG- Open Gardens, with seats and planting.*



William Gadsby was born at Attleborough in Warwickshire on 3rd January 1773. When about twenty years of age he was baptised and joined a Baptist Church at Coventry that was pastored by Mr John Butterworth.

In 1796 after marriage to Elizabeth Marvin he moved to Hinckley and joined a few people there who met in a barn. His first sermon was preached on Whit-Sunday 1798 at Bedworth and soon after a chapel was erected for him at Desford in Leicestershire. In the year 1805, he moved to Manchester where he remained until his death

Does anyone know anything more about these or have any photographs? If so, please contact: Molly Marcus Telephone 01455 823004 or e-mail mollymarcus@aol.com

More Card indexes compiled by Betty Dickson in the 1950s appear in our next newsletter. I hope you find them as interesting as I do.

Who was Betty Dickson?

Caroline is working on a collection of Desford Personalities of the Past. Here is her account of Mrs Elisabeth Dickson (1906 - 1998)

Betty Dickson's name was synonymous in Leicestershire with local history. For almost five decades she researched, published and promoted it through her work in Desford and on various history committees countywide.

Betty's interest in local history was sparked off when she came to live in Desford in 1945 and joined some W.I. ladies to record the village's history. In St Martin's Church Parish Chest, she discovered registers and other documents dating back to 1559, which she worked on with boundless energy and then arranged for their safe storage with the County Archivist. She was instrumental in the founding of Desford & District Local History Society and worked tirelessly, helping to organise its exhibitions and activities.

Mrs Dickson was also a member of the Leicestershire Archaeological & Historical Society, Leicestershire Local History Council, Society of Genealogists, Leicestershire Family History Society, East Midlands Heraldry Society, British Association of Local History, Leicester Museums and Friends of Leicestershire Record Office, serving on the committees of several of these organisations. She loved the history of her home county, not just as a meticulous researcher and writer herself, but to engender pride in it amongst others. Her *History in Desford* (1974, out of print) and *Recollection of Desford* (1986) still inform and delight the people of Desford

Thanks for all the information Caroline - Molly Marcus for our History Newsletter



Changes: Do you remember these in 1997?



Extending the Post Office



Closing down of Stich in Time

and earlier - total transformation of the old Off-Licence, previously owned by Chawners; later Wilsons.



Desford and District Local History Society

Newsletter

Summer 2019



Since the last newsletter came out there has been quite a lot of activity both talks and visits. For those who were unable to attend either the talks or the visits, here is a brief resume of those events.

The Church Gresley Archives



Dr Iain Hambling gave an extremely interesting and informative talk about the way the simple pottery was used. First in many households for basic utensils.

Later the pottery evolved into very fine pieces that could be found in the more affluent houses of the gentry. He showed not only slides to illustrate his talk but also brought along many

pieces for his audience to handle. Many of these pieces worth £100s.



Photographs by Steve Thorpe



De Montfort University Heritage Project

Tuesday May 21st about the De Montfort Heritage Project was the subject of tonight's meeting with two most entertaining talks. The first from Katherine Short (Special Collections Manager) who told us the background to the growth of De Montfort University since its founding in 1869 enabled from wealth generated as Leicester became an important prosperous city. Throughout the following years it grew as more and more other sites became under its control. Included in

this was Leicester Technical School, later Leicester Polytechnic. Soon after it merged with City of Leicester College of Education in 1976 and its official status changed to that of De Montfort University.

The Heritage Project brought together an archive team whose job it was to sort, collect and look after the amassing amount of rare and valuable special artefacts both for student and public reference.

In the second part of the evening Elizabeth Wheelband (Special Collections Heritage Curator) told about her role as curator and involvement in displaying various aspects of the growing collections for both students and others. Part of this are the Temporary Exhibitions which relate to specific dates e.g. NHS 70th Anniversary.

The Museum itself opens to the public on Heritage Sundays - Last Sunday of the Month as well as Heritage Open Days. More information can be found on the DMU Heritage website.

A visit to Heritage Project is mentioned later when a small group were given a guided tour.

Friday 3rd May, Market Harborough Museum and Heritage Trail guided walk



On Friday 3rd May a group of about 25 of the Desford History Society made our way to Market Harborough. We met our guide Roz in the Museum in the centre of town. The museum is a very interesting building as it had been the iconic Victorian corset factory. Now it is a museum mainly about the products of Symingtons but also about the history of the town. Several of us visited the museum in the afternoon and found it very interesting. There is also a library in the building. We enjoyed teas



The Hallaton Treasure

and coffees in the stylish cafe.

A most enjoyable day was spent by around 20 members being guided round the central area of Market Harborough.

Roz, our guide, had worked in civic planning with a heritage bent so she guided us through the town with this in mind. She told us how Harborough had been an important staging place on the road to London and that Inns in the town had been used for stop - off points.



There were several yards behind these Inns with more buildings which were used to store goods and accommodate horse and carriages. Some are now cottages and small shops. Roz also told us how the main street had been altered and widened to allow carriages to have easier access.

We visited the cattle market which is now a huge carpark for two large supermarkets, but she pointed out a very interesting Victorian Building which was used by farmers during cattle auctions. We visited the memorial park near the river Welland, looked at the Church and the Old Grammar school. It was built in 1614 using funds donated by a local benefactor. We were impressed by the construction and age of the



building which stands in the middle of the town near the church.



The earliest parts of the church date from the 13th Century, with most features dating from 14th and 15th centuries. There are ten bells in the belfry.

We also visited the indoor market which has been refurbished.

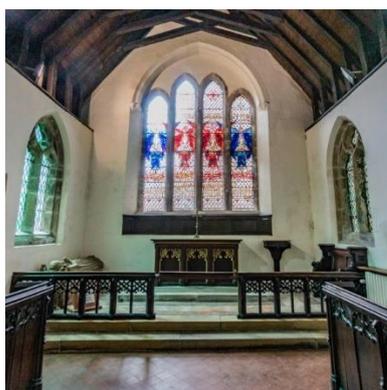
After our most interesting guided walk we retired to various eating places for lunch and enjoyed an afternoon looking around the town.

(Article by Pam Wocha, Photographs by Molly Marcus)

Visit to DMU Heritage Project on June 14th

On a very wet Friday, fourteen of the Desford History Society met at Leicester Castle. Our guide, Elizabeth Wheelband, (who had earlier given a talk on May 21st with Katherine Short to members), gave a very informative talk about the origins of the Castle.

Later our guide took us around to see both old and new



After walking through the gateway to the Trinity Hospital and Chapel, founded by Henry Plantagenet in 1330 we entered the chapel with its beautiful stained glass window.



This was designed by Christopher Whall in the 19th Century. The hospital is now owned by De Montfort University and the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor's offices are there.



We visited the great Medieval Hall which at one time was the largest Medieval Hall in Europe. We admired the beautiful wooden roof and the panelled walls.

The castle had been used until 1990s as a magistrate's court and there were holding cells in the basement which we visited.

(Article by Pam Wocha and Photographs by Huw Thomas)



'De Montfort University's Heritage Centre showcases the rich history that surrounds the campus and tells the story of the university and its contribution to teaching, research and the lives of our students over 145 years. It hosts two gallery spaces which will support our ongoing temporary exhibitions programme. Built around the medieval arches of the Church of Annunciation, the Heritage Centre tells visitors the story of The Newarke and how this historic location developed during Roman settlement, expanded into a significant religious site during the 1300s and is believed to be where King Richard III's body was laid out for public view, before he was taken to Grey Friars Church.'



Three more Contributions from Betty Dickson's Alphabetical card index sent by Caroline Wessel



THE CHIMES, Main Street, belonged to Miss Mary Carrington who died in 1951. It was much altered with a new staircase and a bow window. The shop part was found to be of cruck construction . Miss Muriel Goulton opened the

haberdashery shop, The Stitch in Time, in part of the building in 1957. Before that it had been the Post Office, run by Postmaster, Edward Yarnall, and his son, William, had a saddler's shop on the premises.



CHURCH LANE, nos. 26 & 27. The two houses in Church Lane called East Dean and Manor Croft are on the site of what was the Old Glebe farm. In its early deeds, it was described as a homestead with barns, stables, cowsheds and outbuildings. Rector John Fry sold it to Thomas Prior (landowner of the Priory, Main Street) in 1834. In 1837, when 'Little' Albert Goodacre lived there, it was apparently thatched.

CHURCHYARD OF ST MARTINS. The oldest tombstones were behind the altar - 1717 Wall, 1723 Morris and 1724 Dorrell. When the churchyard was levelled some old gravestones were used to bank up the sides. The Rural District Council gave permission for the oldest part of the church to the north to be re-used - but it never was. (when in 2017 alterations were made to the church interior, more gravestones were found on the floor of the chancel.)

..... (More in the next issue)

Who was Mollie Phoebe Rippin (University College of Leicester (1924-6)

(Another of Caroline's, Desford Personalities of the Past)

Miss Mollie Rippin was born on 19 Dec 1905, the second of two daughters of Mr William Heycock Rippin and his wife, Florence, who lived in an eight-roomed house in Central Avenue, Leicester. William Rippin was an accountant and ran his own high-quality printing and publishing business in Leicester.



Mollie was educated at a private boarding school where her best friend was Pauline Trevelyan, daughter of the 'unconventional' Sir Charles Trevelyan, 3rd Baronet. Mollie would frequently visit the Trevelyan home, Wallington, in Northumberland, set in 100-acres of parkland. Here she became immersed in the literary, artistic, politically controversial and eccentric world surrounding the seven Trevelyan siblings, whose father turned from Liberal to Socialist MP, and whose uncle was the celebrated historian and author, G.F. Trevelyan.

Mollie Rippin was a full-time student at the University College of Leicester (now the University of Leicester), studying English, French, Latin and Geography, graduating in 1924 with an Arts degree, a BA in English, and in 1925/6 gained a Latin Final Pass. She lived at Sunbreak, Little Lane, the family home in Desford, and spent the rest of her life in the village. She frequently spent her holidays walking in the Austrian Alps where she gained an extensive knowledge of Alpine flora.



During her lifetime at Desford Mollie had a great love of botany, gardening and rare plants, and during WW2 organised a Herb Committee, collecting plants for vital medicines, while her father ran the WW2 local Land Fertility Association. During the war the Rippin family home became well known for welcoming the young pilots at the nearby RAF Desford Flying School, who were training for dangerous airborne action against the enemy.

Mollie's father, (Seen in the family photograph) Alderman William Rippin, was a forceful and outspoken man who, as a Councillor, played a major part in quelling local opposition to the proposed installation of piped water in Desford. He also worked tirelessly for the Leicestershire Footpaths Association for 50 years, was its Chairman for 32 years, and a leading light in the Leicestershire Ramblers' Federation. His work is honoured by a memorial plaque on Charnwood Forest's Beacon Hill.

Miss Rippin was Hon. Secretary of the Leicestershire Archaeological & Historical Society from 1964 to 1973 and served on its Research Committee, Lectures & Excursions Committee and Social Committee. She was a Director of the Rippin publishing business and book shop into old age. She died at Desford on 14 December 1987.

Important Reminders

- Peter Liddle's talk about The Archaeology of Groby Old Hall will take place in **St Martins Church** on Tuesday 16th July 2019.
- For those who have signed up for the visit to Ashby Church, heritage centre and guided Walk - (Wednesday 11th September 2019), you will need to hand over your £13 per person at the above meeting. Spaces still available.
- The Festival of Archaeology, Leicestershire and Rutland, is taking place now until Sunday 28th July. More information can be seen at:

<http://leicsfieldworkers.co.uk/festival-of-archaeology>

Desford and District Local History Society

Newsletter

Autumn 2019



Since the last newsletter came out there has been quite a lot of activity both talks and visits. For those who were unable to attend either the talks or the visits, here is a brief resume of those events.

Trip to Marlow 26th June

As usual with Colin & Margaret the trip was a master/mistress piece of organisation. Every eventuality was covered with loads of information about the places we were to visit. Despite the 8.00 am start the coach was full, though one or two of us looked a little bleary eyed. A very pleasant coffee stop at Bicester Avenue Garden Centre revived any flagging spirits. We were met at Marlow by two guides who gave us conducted tours of the town. Marlow, in the county of Buckinghamshire, is situated on the River Thames between Henley and Windsor and has been



designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is a lovely mix of old narrow streets, many listed buildings and of course the magnificent Thames. Famous former residents include Sir Steve Redgrave, Thomas



Love Peacock, Jerome K Jerome, TS Eliot, Percy Bysshe Shelley & his wife Mary who wrote the novel Frankenstein while living there!

The tours were very thorough and informative.

A quick bite to eat at one of many excellent cafes in the town and then back on the coach to visit Greys Court, which is a National



Trust property in Oxfordshire. It is a charming old family home and garden. The façade of the house is Elizabethan, but inside, over many years, it has been extensively modernised.



The gardens were beautiful and some of the group went on a guided tour around them. It would be good to return and spend more time in both the house and garden!

On the way home we stopped off at The George & Dragon for a convivial meal and drinks. We arrived back in Desford having had a great event packed day out.

Apparently, this will be Colin & Margaret's annual excursion swan song. I am sure I speak on behalf of all History Society Members when I say that I think we owe them a huge debt of gratitude for organising such well organised and memorable trips. They will be a very hard act to follow. Volunteers?

David Marcus

The meeting on July 16th in St Martin's Church:

Groby Old Hall, a talk by Peter Liddle

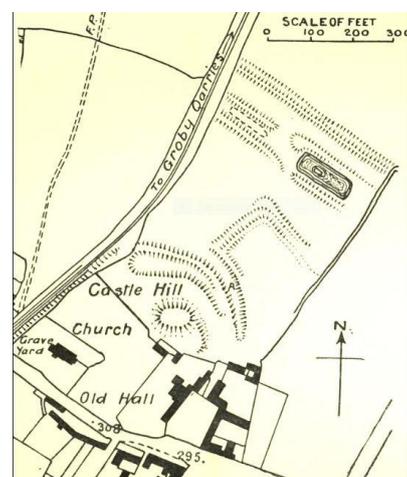
As we have come to expect, the talk by Peter Liddle in July was both informative and interesting.

Groby Old Hall is a partly 15th century, grade II listed, brick-built



manor house, near to the site of Groby Castle, (destroyed circa 1175).

The grand hall of the original building was probably built by the Ferrers family, Barons of Groby, but passed to the Greys after Sir Edward Grey married Elizabeth Ferrers, granddaughter and heir to the 5th Baron Ferrers, around 1432. One of the most notable members of the Grey family was Elizabeth Woodville, (wife of John Grey, the son of Sir



Edward). She became the wife of Edward IV, on John's death.

The red brick gatehouse in the picture above, is one of England's earliest brick buildings. The house probably incorporates much earlier remains, and blackened roof timbers indicated a great hall. The house decayed and fell into disrepair over a long period until it was purchased in 2009. This led to an historical survey being undertaken and part of the medieval wall at the rear of the hall indicated that there may be more below ground.

The rebuilding of a collapsed churchyard wall meant the below ground potential became clear and led Peter Liddle to contact the Time Team and suggest the site be the subject of a Time Team excavation, which happened in 2010 and led to further understanding of the history of the last 600 years of Groby Old Hall.



Angela Thomas

Desford Personalities of the past (from Caroline Wessel)

CECIL J.W. LANE (1890-1937)

The name 'Lane' may not be familiar to many people in Desford; but the Desford Industrial School (est. 1881, closed 1978), the reform institution for 'naughty boys' up on the hill near Botcheston, certainly is. Cecil Lane was its Headmaster from 1916 till 1937 and is noted for his success in changing the very harsh (and even cruel by today's standards) regime to a softer, more caring one. He came from a family of farmers near Melton and served in the Royal Garrison Artillery during WW1, then became a teacher in Leicester.



In Mr Lane's time at the Industrial School, Mr Sydney Gimson was its Chairman of Governors and the two men formed a close friendship. Sydney Gimson and his brother were prime movers in the Leicester Secular Society and Sydney's country cottage, Stoneywell in Charnwood Forest, is now a National Trust property open to the public.

The above photographs show *Cecil Lane*.

The boys at the Industrial School were mainly from the inner cities and had become involved in petty crime in order to survive - victims of society, rather than wicked. At Desford all the boys were taught a trade or craft, such as tailor, shoemaker, or baker, and worked on the School Farm, which would fit them to earn a decent living in adult life. Cecil Lane changed the name to Desford Boys' School, he introduced a prefectorial system, privilege walks, allotments for boys, summer camps away, and a house system with housemasters acting as 'fathers'. He raised the School's sports and athletics to a high standard and his obituary stated that 'under Mr Lane's headmastership Desford School achieved marked success in the special work for which the school was designed. The School is run generally on what might be called public school lines. The boys, given some measure of responsibility and trained to cultivate and rely on esprit de corps in securing the happiest forms of discipline, responded readily to these standards. Thus, Mr Lane commanded both the respect and confidence of the boys, and the results of the Desford training have been shown in the subsequent careers of the scholars.'



Desford Boys School in 2010

Cecil's wife, Dora, died in 1936 from septicaemia, leaving a small daughter, Jo. But Cecil remarried the following year when twenty-three boys from the Boys School sang in the choir. His bride was Sydney Gimson's cousin, Norah, who had been acting as his housekeeper and companion. However, on Cecil and Norah's honeymoon in Scotland he was taken suddenly ill in Glasgow and died there – only eleven days after the marriage. Norah and Cecil's little daughter were looked after by the Gimson family.

The School greatly mourned the loss of a much loved and respected headmaster.

Thanks to Mrs Janet Charles for family details. She lived in Desford in the 1950s and is the granddaughter of Cecil Lane. *Sydney Gimson*



Continuing the Alphabetical Card Index compiled by Betty Dickson in the 1950s (Supplied by Caroline Wessel)

Common Land

A poem that refers to the 18th and 19th century Enclosure Acts, which took away from the poorest members of the community and distributed amongst the wealthiest.

*'Prison awaits the man or woman
Who steals the Goose from off the Common?
But leaves the greater Felon loose
Who steals the Common from the Goose?'*

Cottages on Main Street, Desford

Where the War Memorial now stands used to house cottages. It is said that they belonged to the Chamberlains, whose large residence stood almost opposite, and that they housed their old servants in them. Bessie Bott and Jack Bent lived there at one time. The Relieving Officer used Bessie Bott's cottage as his headquarters, distributing loaves and two shilling pieces to the poor.

Cottages opposite Manor Farm, High Street, Desford

These were timber-framed and thatched and were demolished sometime after 1929. They belonged to the family of John Moss, who had a carpenter's business. His workshop was in one of the cottages, where he also made wooden coffins. In one cottage a dear old soul called Mrs Greenman lived - she always had a tortoiseshell cat!

Important Reminders

- . Tuesday September 17th, 2019: A tale of wealth, separation, murder and a hanging. The story of Staunton Harold Hall.
- . Tuesday November 19th 2019: The work of the Leicester Victorian Society by Peter Ellis

Desford and District Local History Society Newsletter Winter 2019



Recently, someone with connections to the Desford Industrial School sent the archivists an article and photographs of an initially harrowing but eventually quite uplifting tale. Three sons, brought up to thieve in a London Market, virtually abandoned and sent to Desford, and a daughter to a similar institution for girls. Then a parental alias to avoid paying the then equivalent of child maintenance. But, graduating at 16, the boys and their sister went on to make something of themselves, get steady jobs and the boys kept in touch with the school about their progress. I hope the Archivists will write the full story for a future newsletter and show the photographs. Because that is truly local history in our own backyard.



Good, historical narratives have been the society's hallmark this year, have they not? From Green's Pottery, through University Heritage and Groby Old Hall via murder and mayhem at Staunton Harold to a calm but most interesting description of the work of the Leicester Victorian Society.

Our Programme Group have given us a truly varied and relevant programme, and the speakers have lived up to their billing.

And you have given the group your support by some cracking attendances at those talks, which gives your committee heart to carry on, and brings a smile to our Treasurer's face when visitors are involved!!

So: thank you for your support and a very Happy Christmas to you all.

Bernard Grimshaw

Christmas Tree Festival 2019

Remember our AGM on 21 January 2020: please volunteer for an office or to be a committee member!!.

A Tale of wealth, marriage, separation and murder *David Marcus*

On September 18th our guest speaker was Gay Evans, who gave us a lively and informative talk concerning a murder that happened at Staunton Harold hall in the 18th century. She uncovered this story while researching her family history. She noticed that there appeared to be a change of surname of some of her ancestors from Cutler to Curtis and was intrigued to know the reasons why.

It transpired that one of the Cutlers had been on the fringe of some of the people who worked at the Hall. Sir Robert Shirley built the Hall in the 17th century along with the church. The latter is now owned by the National Trust. The whole estate was eventually owned by one of Sir Robert's descendants, Laurence Shirley the 4th Earl Ferrers. He was a louche character who had a wife, a mistress and four illegitimate daughters. He was very fond of alcohol and when drunk could be violent and very unpleasant. Such was the level of drunkenness and intimidation that his wife, Mary, asked for a separation, a process that was most uncommon in those days. Eventually the separation took place. Because he was a nobleman the estrangement had to be processed through parliament. It would seem that his drunkenness and rages continued unabated after the breakup.

The estate was managed by his steward John Johnson. One day he sent for Johnson having made sure that most of the servants were not in the building. He made him kneel and shot him in the body. A Dr Kirkland was sent for to try and save him, but he died the following day. The Earl tried to escape but was apprehended by a man called Cutler, who was the distant relation of Gay's referred to above. The Trial of an Earl had by tradition to be by his peers at the Palace of Westminster. Earl Ferrers conducted his own defence arguing that he was insane, using as many of his staff as possible to give witness as to his general state of mind. Gay use testimony from the proceedings very effectively, using members of the audience to play the various parts. Despite this, he was unanimously found guilty by all his fellow peers. He was sentenced to death by hanging, though apparently, he said it would be more fitting for a nobleman to be beheaded. This request was refused, partly because bodies that were hung were used for dissection in local hospitals! He lost an appeal and in May 1760 he was hung at Tyburn, which is very close to the current location of Marble Arch and Edgware Road. Apparently rather gruesomely it took the noble lord eight minutes to die!

Gay postulated that his death had perhaps helped avoid a French style revolution in Britain. The general public could see that even the aristocracy could not escape the majesty of the law. It was a stimulating and thought-provoking talk leading to many questions after the main presentation.

Continuing Desford Personalities of the past (from Caroline Wessel)

Mrs Maud Pickering

Maud spent her childhood in Desford and lived there for the rest of her life. Her name will be remembered by many older Desfordians as the author of delightful poems that appeared in St Martin's Church Magazine every single month.

In 1997 a booklet of these poems entitled *A Garland of Seasonal Poems* was published, at which time Mrs Pickering had produced one every month for sixteen years. She was a keen reader, lover of nature and observer of life. Her first poem was written to celebrate the royal wedding of Prince Charles and Princess Diana, and she had success with other publication, including *Love and Laundry* (1992). In *A Garland of Seasonal Poems* Mrs Pickering revels in her love of nature - of flowers, fields, rainbow or brook. She often captures the nostalgia of bygone rural years, is sometimes profound in her views of the world, and at others , charms and entertains with her humour and canny observation of human behaviour.

THE MIRROR NEVER LIES

*She looked into the mirror,
Good looks were all in vain:
Although her eyes were lovely,
Her features very plain.
She asked the mirror, was she pretty,
The mirror answered back,
"No, it is a pity,
Though your hair is thick and black".
One day she met a young man
Whose features too were plain;
But his smile lit up his face
Like sunshine after rain.
He thought her eyes were lovely,
She thought his smile was sweet -
And now they have two children,
No eyes or smile could beat.*

THE TEA COSY

*"Put on the cosy, Jane,
Whenever you make the tea!"
It was her first day as a maid,
A country lass was she.
She was feeling very nervous
And found it hard to know
Where knives and forks and spoons
Or anything should go.
She picked the cosy up and thought
What a funny thing to wear,
And placed it on her head-
It made the mistress stare,
To see the cosy on her head.*

BYGONE YEARS

*Down the fields and meadows
We children loved to go,
We had no fear of lonely walks,
So many years ago,
Picking wild flowers in the fields
And bluebells in the wood.
What lovely times we had,
Our days were happy, life is good.
We were not afraid to wander
Hand in hand down leafy lanes,
Or sit upon the grass,
Making daisy chains.
So many wild flowers that grew,
But today there's very few:
Much of nature's beauty lost
That we as children knew.*

*Surprised she might well be;
It gave the company quite a start
When bringing in the tea.
Later on Jane understood
And cried, "Oh deary me,
I'm grateful, Mum the teapot wears
That hat instead of me!*

*Does anyone know the dates of birth and death for Mrs Pickering, or have a photograph of her?
If so perhaps they could be passed on to our secretary Angela Thomas or brought to the AGM
21st January 2020*

Continuing the Alphabetical Card Index compiled by Betty Dickson in the 1950s (Supplied by Caroline Wessel)

Bull's Head Pub, Main Street

A very old house, part cruck construction. At one time it was a communal bake house where Desfordians took their Sunday dinner to be cooked in its great ovens.

Bus Service

A Desford Service probably started about 1921 with a small bus carrying around 20 passengers. They used to run races with the Midland Red Buses - very exciting! Handleys was the first bus from Desford. It started at the top of Lindridge Lane, had wooden seats and an entrance at the back. In 1925 Mr Jones, a local carrier, ran a bus from Newbold called 'The Verdon Rose'. The first double-decker buses started in 1949 on the 'Comfort' service.

Blue Bell Cottages

Date of 1770 was on one door. There were two cottages in the Blue Bell yard that had interesting brickwork. They were demolished in 1961.

Ben's Hut

Where the old Leicester Swannington Railway (1832) crosses the lane to Ratby there used to be two gates which had to be opened in turn to let the trains through. An old man called Ben is said to have had a hut there and it was his job to open and shut the gates. Traffic on the roads had to wait while he slowly went from one gate to the other. In later years this old line was only used by the Alexandra Stone Works, the main line traffic to Desford going by the newer line at Desford Junction.