

# **THE VICTORIAN SOCIETY LEICESTER GROUP NEWSLETTER**

---

The national charity campaigning for the  
Victorian and Edwardian historic environment

**MARCH 2011**

---

## **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

### **YEAR ENDED 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2011**

I present below the report for my tenth full year in office. I have to say that there are times when it feels like it has been a lot longer, but then again on other occasions time seems to fly by.

Once again I am pleased to be able to report that the Group continues to be in a generally healthy state both actively and financially. Further information on our finances is of course shown in the Treasurer's Report. We continue as usual to liaise closely with the National Society. Although there has not been a further meeting of Regional Groups in the last year, we are kept informed of discussions at the Trustees meetings and I personally have met up with H.Q. staff at lectures and the Annual General Meeting.

Here I should like to express my appreciation of Colin Cunningham, who stood down as National Chairman at last year's AGM held at the Black Country Museum. We have always found him extremely helpful and appreciative of the work of our Group. We look forward to building up the same sort of relationship with his successor - Professor Hilary Grainger - who attended the Brian Allison Memorial Lecture.

We have continued to have good relations with other local conservation groups, in particular the Leicestershire Industrial History Society and the Leicester Civic Society. After the demise of the 'Bowstring' Bridge in 2009 things have been a little quieter, but more information on this may be found in the 2010 Building Sub-Committee Report. We have also become a Group member of the Friends of the Framework Knitters Museum at Wigston.

At this point I usually make reference to the lectures and events which we organised during the year. Unlike 2009 there were no significant problems - even with the abnormally cold weather in December. Thus our talks covered the History of New Walk, Victorian Garden Design, The Crimean War and Victorian Stained Glass in the first half of the year. From September onwards we heard about the Slums of Leicester, an armchair tour of Nottingham and (at Christmas) Victorian Toys. In November the Brian Allison Memorial Lecture was given by Andrew Bailey (Chief Cashier of the Bank of England) on the subject of lessons from Victorian financial crises.

Our summer events included two coach trips - to Manchester and Wisbech - together with visits to the Town Hall and various churches. There was also a guided walk in Oadby. Suggestions for other visits are always welcome.

Now may I turn to the Committee who do make my life so much easier. During the year Rowan Roenisch indicated that she no longer wished to stay on our main Committee

although still glad to help out on the Building Sub-Committee. Many thanks to Rowan for her work over the years. However, we do have one new member - Paul Griffiths - who has moved from Nottingham to Leicester. The remainder of the Committee are prepared to continue - Peter Ellis, Marion Hare, Cliff Dunkley, Grahame Lees, Eileen Chambers, Christine Jordan, Carole Face and Neil Crutchley - many thanks for all your work.

Finally I must not forget to thank our Honorary President, Malcolm Elliott and our Vice President Richard Gill for their continuing help, support and advice.

Jon Goodall

1<sup>st</sup> February 2011

*A Leicestershire Victorian Alphabet*



## Augusta Ada **L**ovelace 1815-1852

Although her life was short, she only lived for 36 years, Augusta Ada Lovelace anticipated by more than a century most of what we think of as brand-new computing. Her work with Charles Babbage and his Calculating Engines produced what she called 'the plan'. In hindsight what Ada had proposed was a programme stored on punch cards for use on an early computer, the Analytical Engine of 1843.

Born in 1815, her father was the poet Lord Byron and her mother Annabella Milbanke. The marriage was short lived, and in 1816 Lord Byron went to live abroad. Ada never saw her father again. It was due to her mother's encouragement that she studied mathematics, under the guidance of tutors. She excelled in the subject and was also an accomplished musician and linguist.

In 1832 she met Mary Somerville, a mathematician who had just published 'The Mechanism of the Heavens', a book on mathematical astronomy. Mary became Ada's tutor in mathematics and science.

Through Mary, Ada met both her future husband, William King, and Charles Babbage, whose ideas for a new calculating engine fascinated her. Babbage conjectured that a calculating engine could not only foresee but could act on that foresight. By observing what Babbage had designed and by asking him questions, Ada soon became an expert on the inventor's work. When he changed his plans and began to design his analytical engine, Ada saw tremendous possibilities in the machine. She understood it better than most other people older and more experienced than she. Beautiful, charming and temperamental, (she and her husband were now the Earl and Countess of Lovelace), mathematicians of the time thought her a magnificent addition to their number.

Babbage reported on the development of his proposed new engine at a seminar in Turin in 1841. An Italian, Luigi Menabrea, wrote a summary of what Babbage described, and published an article in French about the development. In 1843 Ada

translated the article, and Babbage suggested that she add her own notes, which she did, predicting that such a machine might be used to compose complex music, to produce graphics and would be-ried for both practical and scientific use. Her footnotes and a explanatory sections greatly enhanced the original and the finished paper was three times as long as Menabrae's. Babbage was very pleased with the work and published and distributed it, modestly signed with her initials 'AAL'. This paper was the summit of her career, but she felt it was unbecoming for a woman of her social class to publish anything so 'unfeminine'. She suggested to Babbage that he should write a plan for how the engine might calculate numbers. This plan is now regarded as the first 'computer programme'.

Ada's health began to fail and she died in 1852, but she and Babbage had laid some of the early conceptual groundwork for high technology by helping to develop an early computer. Technology of the time was not equal to translating their ideas into practical use, but the Analytical Engine had many features of the modern computer. It could read data from a deck of punched cards, store data and perform arithmetical operations. The computer language, ADA, a general-purpose language' designed to be readable and easily maintained, is named after Ada Lovelace. Her mother had lived at Kirby Mallory Hall, in Leicestershire; and Ada probably spent some time there as a child. There is a monument to her in the churchyard.

*Ted Humphreys*

Thank you to Ted, who supplied the material for this contribution.

Would any member care to contribute an item of any special interest as we go through the Victorian Leicestershire Alphabet - any ideas for M, N or O? Please let Eileen.(0116 292 5824) or Marion, (0116 273 9710). know if you are willing to contribute.

## **BUILDING SUB-COMMITTEE REPORT YEAR ENDED 31<sup>st</sup> DECEMBER 2010**

### **Members of the Building Sub-Committee:**

Jon Goodall, John Aston, Peter Ellis, Gwyn Jones, Christine Jordan, Janet Lawrence, Richard Lawrence, Grahame Lees, Rowan Roenisch, Mike Taylor, Jenny Westmorland. During the year the Sub-Committee has unfortunately been affected by the ill-health of some members. Jenny Westmorland felt obliged to resign from the Sub-Committee and John Aston has been unwell for some time (at the time of writing being in the General Hospital). We wish them both well. Janet Lawrence also suffered a period of ill-health in the year, but is now fighting fit and we thank her and Richard for their hosting of Sub-Committee meetings.

### **Overall View of the Year**

The economic climate has continued to discourage new developments and indeed certain developers have ceased trading. There continues to be a surplus of office space and city centre apartments. About the only continuing growth area seems to be the

provision of student accommodation and one wonders how long this will continue. A major decision which may influence the office accommodation market relates to the City Council's own main building. This requires major repair work and a decision will presumably be made in 2011 as to whether such repairs will be undertaken (requiring temporary offices to be available) or a complete rebuilding or relocation.

The downside of any stalling in new developments remains the reluctance of developers or owners to spend money on the maintenance of listed buildings or those in conservation areas. A striking example in the heart of the city is the former Eastgates Coffee House (Edward Burgess 1885) where there is now a large area of what appears to be rotting wood on the Eastgates frontage.

### **Significant Areas of Activity or Concern**



1 -The former 'bowstring' bridge in Western Boulevard

This was, as noted in last year's review, finally demolished in late 2009 (together with the Pump and Tap public house). De Montfort University has still to come up with definitive plans for the new sports centre on the site. However the adjoining viaducts are being demolished so perhaps something may occur in 2011 (finances permitting).

2 - Churches:

St Saviours (George Gilbert Scott 1875-7) is our main concern. It has remained closed for regular worship for a few years and in January 2010 a meeting of interested parties, (including ourselves) was held with the Church Commissioners to discuss the way forward. Since then nothing has been heard and, regrettably, there has been some vandalism.



In the same parish the splendid church of St Barnabas (Goddard and Paget 1884-6) has also now closed for regular worship and we await developments. At least with it being adjacent to a thriving primary school there should be reasonable security. Neither of these churches has been deconsecrated so they are still subject to the Church of England ecclesiastical exemption relating to planning procedures.

### 3 - Silver Arcade (Amos Hall 1899)

The premises on the upper floors have now been closed for some years. In August the owners announced in the Leicester Mercury that they were due to start refurbishment in the very near future. At the time of writing there is little sign of such work.

### 4 - Thomas Cook Hotel, Granby Street.

There has been no change in the situation regarding this building, although the shop occupying the ground floor is now vacant. Although the developer owning the premises has now gone out of business, planning permission for redevelopment was renewed (despite a significant number of objections) by the administrators.



### 5 - Miscellaneous Banks:

The three large vacant banks in the city centre (Natwest St Martins, Barclays Horsefair Street and HSBC Granby Street - shown left) exhibit little signs of activity.

### 6 - Wheatsheaf Boot and Shoe Works, Knighton Fields Road East:

The new owners of this massive former Co-op factory have put forward some imaginative plans for its re-development -

mainly for housing. The theatre on site would not be affected. However we understand that the police have expressed some disquiet over the resultant street layout.

## Other Activities

Throughout the year Jon Goodall has been the Society's representative on the City Council's Conservation Advisory Panel. Again, reflecting the slowdown in activity, not all of the monthly meetings have taken place due to a lack of agenda items. It is worth mentioning here that a new Conservation Officer (Jenny Timothy) has been appointed at the City Council and we look forward to maintaining a good relationship with her and her colleagues.

Looking to the future one would expect the economic climate to improve and to bring with it an upsurge in development, so may I again repeat that more volunteers are always welcome.

## PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS AND EVENTS - Spring 2011.

### Lectures

Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> March

**The Lost Houses of Stoneygate** - Talk by Neil Crutchley

Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> April

**Thomas Cook's 19<sup>th</sup> Century Competitors** - Talk by Bob Gibson

*All lectures take place, unless otherwise stated, in the Small Hall (Room 3) of The Leicester Adult Education College, Wellington Street, Leicester at 7.30 Admission £2.00*

### Events

Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> April

**Visit to the Central Baptist Church and William Carey Museum, Charles Street**

Meet at the Church at 7.00 pm.

Cost £5.00

Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> May

**Full day visit to Sheffield – including Town Hall, Lyceum Theatre, Cutlers' Hall and St Marie's RC Cathedral**

By train from Leicester approx 9.00 am

Cost £12.00 transport not included

Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> June

**Visit to St Thomas' Church and Victorian South Wigston**

Meet at St Thomas' Church at 7.00 pm

Cost £5.00

Booking forms for these visits are enclosed

*Visits planned for later during the summer:*

- Papplewick Pumping Station and the DH Lawrence Birthplace, Nottinghamshire
- A guided walk around Aylestone Park
- A Tour of notable churches in N.W Leicestershire

Details of these events will be included in the May mailing

Disclaimer: You participate in events at your own risk and neither the Society nor its officers or servants accepts liability of any kind whatsoever, however arising. The Victorian Society reserves the right to cancel, after or postpone events if necessary.

***Further details of the Victorian Society from  
the Leicester Group Chairman: Jon Goodall - 0116 239 3744  
Membership enquiries: Peter Ellis - 01455 291 694  
Event Bookings Mrs Marion Hare - 0116 273 9710***

**Evening Visit to  
Central Baptist Church and William Carey Museum  
Charles Street Leicester**

**Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> April 2011**

**Cost: £5.00**

**Meet at the Church at 7.00 pm**

The Baptist Chapel has a fine interior and its archives are comprehensive. The adjacent Museum has many artefacts concerning the earliest of our missionaries who carried out a faithful ministry at Harvey Lane Chapel, which was, along with . Carey's cottage, demolished to make way for the Holiday Inn. The Church records and Museum were transferred to Charles Street Baptist Church. Refreshments (included) will be available. The visit is expected to last between 1 and 2 hours.

Booking deadline: **Friday 25th March 2011**

**Full Day Visit to  
SHEFFIELD  
(travel by train)**

**Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2011      Cost: £12.00 (travel not included)**

**Travel by train from Leicester Station, leaving at 9.00 am approximately, subject to current time-tables. Precise details of concessionary fares and timings will be sent to those booking for this visit as soon as possible.**

The visit, guided by members of the Sheffield Group of the Society, will include tours of The Cutlers' Hall (with refreshments), The Town Hall (EW Mountford 1890-97), the restored Lyceum Theatre (WGR Sprague 1897 "*stands comparison with the best of his London theatres*") and St Marie's RC Cathedral (Weightman and Hadfield 1847-50). All these venues are within a short walking distance of one another.

There will be a short tram ride from the station into the area of these venues, concessionary bus passes can be used for this.

Booking deadline: **Friday 29<sup>th</sup> April 2011.**

## **Evening Visit to St Thomas' Church and Victorian South Wigston**

**Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> June 2011**

**Cost £5.00**

### **Meet at St Thomas' Church - 7.00 pm**

(public car park in Countesthorpe Road, Arriva bus 47 or 48 from City Centre, or train to South Wigston Station)

The tour will start with a visit to St Thomas' Church (Stockdale Harrison & Sons 1892-3) led by the Vicar, Revd. Peter Day. This will be followed by a guided walk around the Victorian Village of South Wigston, led by guides from the Wigston Civic Society, concentrating on Blaby Road, the Victorian shops and places of worship, returning to St Thomas' Church Hall for light refreshments. It is expected the visit will last for approximately 2 hours

Booking deadline: **Saturday 28th May 2011**

Please return the enclosed application forms to the Bookings Secretary

**Mrs Marion Hare, 10 Church Road, Evington, Leicester LE5 6FA**

by the dates indicated, enclosing payment to "The Victorian Society"

Note: You do not need to send individual cheques if booking for more than one event.

Please note that our visits may present a variety of hazards including uneven surfaces and stairs, low head heights, low lighting and building or demolition works. There may be stairs or uneven surfaces which cannot be avoided, and long periods of walking or standing. Should you have any questions about your ability to participate in an event, please contact us. Children under 18 must be accompanied by an adult. Participants are reminded that they participate in events at their own risk, and neither the Society nor its officers or servants accept any liability of any kind whatsoever, howsoever arising. The Victorian Society reserves the right to cancel, alter or postpone events if necessary.

Cancellations: No refunds will be given for cancellations for events costing £10 or less, but as a courtesy to others we ask that you let us know if you cannot attend an event for which you have booked. In other cases, cancellations will be accepted and fees returned up to a month before the date of the event, but will be subject to a £10 deduction per ticket for administrative costs. Separate arrangements may apply for weekend visits and foreign tours and terms will be clearly stated on the printed details in each case.