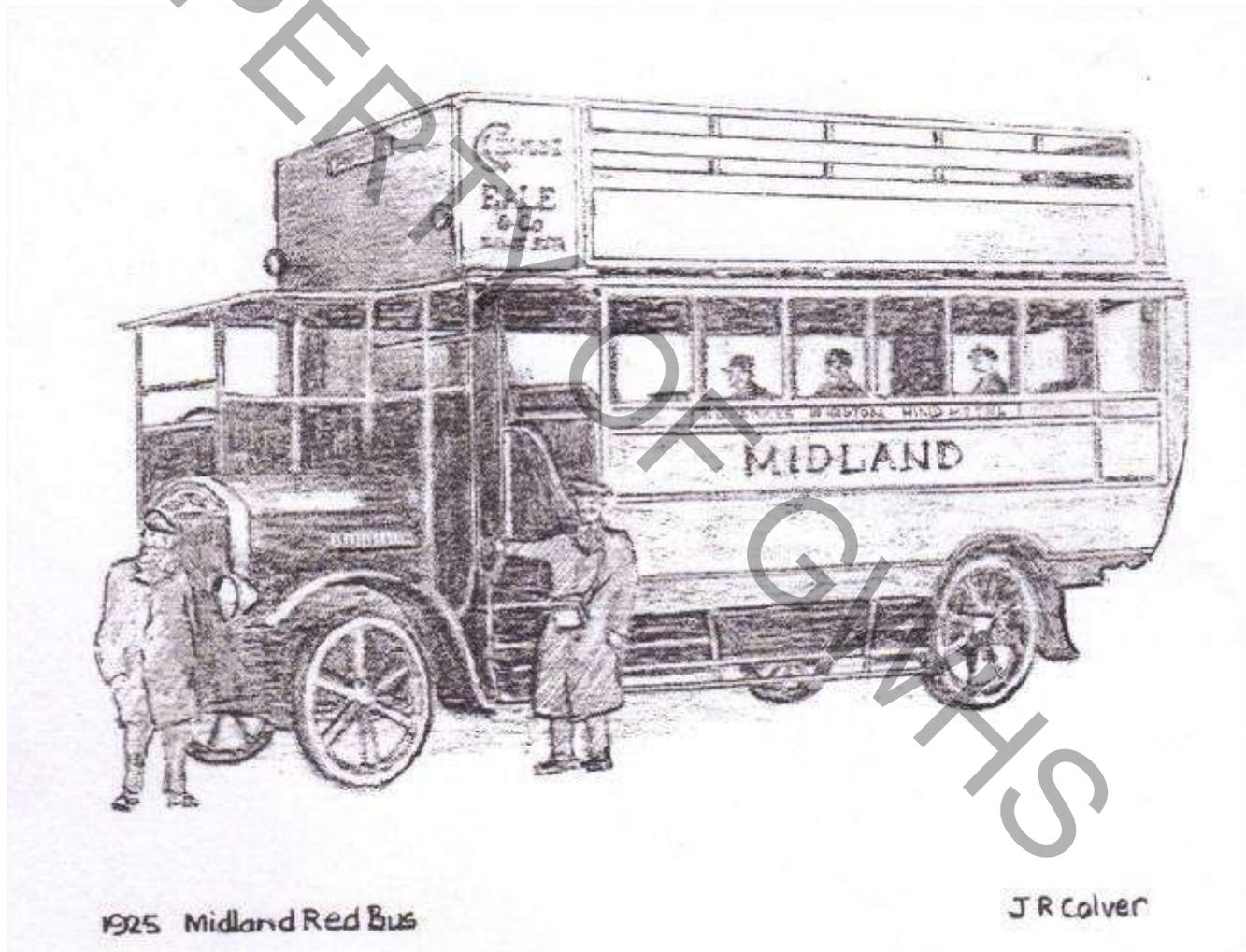




Greater Wigston Historical Society
White Gate Farm, Newton Lane, Wigston Magna Leicestershire

BULLETIN 56



PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS - FEBRUARY TO AUGUST 2000

Wednesday 16th February 2000

A.G.M. followed by The Peace Memorial Park Improvements' - David Toseland
7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

Wednesday 15th March 2000

'Leicester's Waterside - Historic Development from West Bridge to Frog Island' -
R.T. Gregory
7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

Wednesday 19th April 2000

'Medieval Manor Houses of Leicestershire' - Peter Liddle, Keeper of Donington
7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

Wednesday 17th May 2000

Visit to Melton Carnegie Museum for a Taste of Melton' - a look around, talk by
Jenny Dancie, the curator, and samples of local produce with small glass of wine.
Coach from Paddock Street 6.30p.m. Please notify the Secretary by 30th April to
reserve a place.

Wednesday 21st June 2000

Visit to Earls Barton Museum and church with optional refreshments in the tea shop
(members to order and pay for anything they want at the time).
Coach from Paddock Street 6.30p.m.
Please notify the Secretary by 31st May to reserve a place.

Wednesday 16th August 2000

Visit to Cross Street Methodist Church with talk on 'History of Methodism in
Wigston' by a church member. Meet 7.30p.m. outside the church

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FRONT COVER DRAWING

Jim Colver's cover drawing this time shows a Midland Red Bus of the type used about
1925. Note the solid tyres which, combined with much poorer road surfaces, must
have made for an incredibly bumpy ride!
The route taken according to the sign under the side windows was Newarkes,
Wigston, Hind Hotel.

The Bulletin is published three times a year on 1st February, June and October.
Articles etc. (which are always welcome) should be submitted to either of the Joint
Editors three clear weeks before the publication date please.

Joint Editors: Mrs. Chris Smart, 197 Queens Road, Leicester.

Mrs. Tricia Berry, 7 Wensleydale Road, Wigston.

OCTOBER MEETING

In October the society welcomed a return visit from Cynthia Brown, Education and Development Officer, with Leicester City Museums Service. Her subject on this occasion was a look back on the history of the Service in Leicester since it was formed 150 years ago. She mentioned various events held during 1999 to commemorate this anniversary and particularly the open day on 18th June when Lord Richard and Sir David Attenborough made a rare joint visit. They helped to celebrate the opening of the first Museum in New Walk and also Welford Road Cemetery, both on the same day in 1849, by the then Mayor of Leicester, William Biggs.

It all started with the encouragement of an Act of Parliament in 1845 which allowed museums to be charged half the normal rates. Leicester was one of the first towns to take advantage of this and bought, for £4212, Joseph Hanson's redundant school building. 10,000 objects were donated by members of the Leicester Literary & Philosophical Society, while other benefactors were Dr. George Shaw, Samuel Stone, William Gardiner and the Duke of Rutland. Nathaniel Plant was appointed first curator at a salary of £50 per annum and the opening day was 21st June 1849.

Other acquisitions followed, notably 600 birds and animals from Henry Bickley, insects from Henry Walter Bates, Egyptian Mummies from the travels of John Mason Cook and 600 rocks, minerals and samples of grain from the Great Exhibition. Not forgetting in 1926 the fondly remembered giraffe when a window had to be removed before it could be installed.

It was noted that in the early years it was mostly the poorer less educated people who visited museums because it was their only chance to see such items whereas the richer could read books or travel abroad to see things first hand. The reverse situation now tends to be the case.

Between 1881 and 1893 eighty seven pictures were bought and in 1910 reproductions were first sold. Sunday opening was introduced in 1891. Alterations have included extending the lecture hall and art gallery in 1876, new wing and council room in 1892, new extension in 1913 and fireproof extension for archives in 1930. Notable events have included a meeting of the Society for the Advancement of Science in 1907 when 2500 guests attended and a special loggia was constructed outside. The visit of King George V in 1919, the display of Princess Elizabeth's wedding dress in 1946 when 70,000 people visited in 10 days and a centenary reception in 1949.

Over the years the Museum Service expanded to include other sites. The Jewry Wall area was purchased in 1935 initially for a swimming pool but following excavations led by Dr. Kathleen Kenyon the true nature of the Roman remains was realised. Belgrave Hall was purchased in 1936 and the Newarke House and Chantry House next door opened in 1940. In 1974 18, Highcross Street (Wyggeston House) opened. In the same year the service combined with Leicestershire. In 1996 a new museum (the only purpose built one) next to Jewry Wall opened. When the service once more split from the county in 1997 other museums previously managed by the county came under their control, namely the ancient Guildhall, Science Museum in Corporation Road and the Magazine.

In 1997 the total visitor numbers for all sites was 250,000 showing there is still a healthy interest in the town's history and culture.

After some questions and discussion the Chairman, Edna Taylor, thanked Cynthia for a most enjoyable, interesting and at times amusing talk.

NOVEMBER MEETING

On Wednesday the 17th of November the society met to hear David Freer of the National Trust speak on the Work of the National Trust. The talk was accompanied by slides.

The National Trust was founded in 1895. Most people are familiar with its acorn and oak leaf logo. Its founders were concerned by the lack of planning and uncontrolled building that was taking place in the country at that time. Their first purchase, in 1895, was four and a half acres of land at Barnouth. Alfreton clergy house, acquired in 1896, was their first building (for which they paid £10). They are the largest conservation body in the world and their acquisitions include houses, mills, churches, coastline and whole villages. Once purchased or gifted properties cannot be taken from the Trust, this is their inalienable right. The National Trust is a charity, their income is derived from fees, subscriptions and endowments. One of their major sources of income comes from TV companies who want period settings for historical dramas. The organisation requires about £100,000,000 per annum to function. If a property is offered to the Trust it must come with an endowment for its upkeep.

If a person joins the National Trust they are given a local centre, in our case Leicester, and given free access to all properties. Unfortunately there are no Trust properties in Leicester or Leicestershire, apart from Staunton Harold.

Staunton Harold Chapel was built in 1653 during the Commonwealth period. The Trust owns the church and the land immediately surrounding it in the grounds of Staunton Harold Hall now a Sue Ryder Home. Other nearby properties are Clumber Park, the East Midlands office of the Trust; Hardwick Hall, just off the M1; Kedleston Hall and Calke Abbey.

Each property has different qualities to offer the Trust and the public who subsequently visit. Calke Abbey was the home of the Harpur Crewe family. It contained many interesting items, for instance, a new, unpacked 18th century four poster bed. One million pounds alone was spent on restoring the roof. Kedleston Hall, by Robert Adam, was offered shortly after Calke Abbey. The furniture was made by Adam for the house so the Trust additionally had to raise the money to purchase the furniture.

The Trust has restored gardens, such as the one at Biddulph Grange. The gardens at Hidcote Manor in North Gloucestershire and Sissinghurst Castle in Kent are world famous. It owns sections of coastline, for instance, in Pembrokeshire and Norfolk. The North Norfolk coastline at Blakeney was purchased as part of the Enterprise Neptune

Appeal. They also own large tracts of land in the Lake District and in North Wales. They provide facilities with their properties and land, toilets, car parks, campsites.

Many more properties than those described here were illustrated in this talk. I think I now have a greater appreciation of the work of the National Trust. The evening ended with questions and notices. Many thanks to Peter Freer for a most interesting and informative talk.

DECEMBER MEETING

This month 48 members, an increase from last year, gathered for the Christmas Social. The evening began with a very good 'true or false' type quiz devised by Edna Taylor which covered a wide field including general knowledge, local and natural history etc. from which Diane Lawrance emerged a worthy winner. Then followed a team quiz on Leicestershire local history organised by Stella Tweed which included some rather difficult anagrams. The rules were changed from previous years in that instead of questions being read out they were written on slips of paper and had to be collected by a member of each team one at a time. This caused quite a degree of excitement and rushing about. Winners here by a close margin were Margaret Ward's team.

After all this effort everyone enjoyed a really delicious buffet of sandwiches, pork pie, salad etc. followed by trifle, mincepies and wine or fruit juice, beautifully prepared and set out by Caroline Bodman who was ably assisted by her husband.

The evening was rounded off with a raffle organised by Peter Clowes when festively wrapped prizes quickly disappeared as the lucky numbers were drawn. Edna Taylor then thanked all who had helped with the arrangements and wished everyone a very Happy Christmas and special New Year greetings for the coming Y2K. She reminded us of the next meeting, hoping we would all remember to come, because it sounded a long way off to the next Millennium!

JANUARY MEETING

The first meeting of the new millennium was to have been Brian Johnson on the history of Leicester's cinemas, including Oadby, Wigston and South Wigston. Unfortunately Mr. Johnson was ill and a replacement speaker had to be found at very short notice. Once again our member Peter Clowes was able to stand in with a mystery collection of slides from his own collection and the collection of the late Dennis Taylor.

The first set of slides were taken about 10 years ago and were designed to accompany the video JVanishing Wigston_. However, changes were noticed in Wigston even in the last decade. Then followed a set of slides of Wigston taken in the late 1960s. In this case the changes were astonishing and showed the transformation of Wigston, with village streets and familiar shops, to the town that we know today. A lot of the slides being taken just prior to or during demolition. Lastly we were shown a collection of slides of the Wigston Framework Knitters Museum, these slides are usually used for publicity purposes.

Peter finished off the evening with some reminiscences of his own experience as a cinema projectionist at the Magna Cinema during the war years.

Thanks must go to Peter for showing his slides at short notice, and providing us with an interesting and informal evening.

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BEREAVEMENTS

Sadly we have to report the death of two members since the last Bulletin.

On 10th October 1999 Doris Chandler passed away in Leicester General Hospital following a stroke. Doris had been Secretary of the Society since 1984, only retiring quite recently when ill health made the job too much for her. The Society owes her a big debt of gratitude and she will be fondly remembered by many, both past and present members. She leaves a daughter Jane and family who live in Yorkshire.

A number of members went to her service at Gilroes Chapel prior to cremation. A donation in lieu of flowers was sent to Curtis Weston House, her home for the past year, for the residents comfort fund.

On 4th January 2000 Connie Sharman also passed away after being taken ill and having an operation which tragically did not solve her problem. She had been a member for about 4 years, joining following the death of her husband. She leaves two sons and a daughter and four grandchildren.

Connie was a life long member of All Saints Church where she had been baptised and married. Several friends from the Society went to her funeral there, which was followed by cremation.

Our thoughts are with the families of both at this sad time.

STANHOPE ROWTON SIMPSON C.B.E.

Stanhope Rowton Simpson, who was known by his second name of Rowton, was born on 7/5/1903, the second son of Herbert Simpson, a local solicitor, and his wife Sarah Anne. An older son, Maurice Rowton, had been born in 1900 and a daughter, Mary Margaret, was to follow in 1905. All three children were baptised at St. Thomas's Church, South Wigston. The family lived at The Limes in Blaby Road. In later life Rowton was to recall that one of his earliest memories was of being woken on his seventh birthday in South Wigston by newsboys calling "The King is dead" announcing the death of King Edward VII.

However within another two years Herbert Simpson had moved his family to live at 16, Salisbury Road, Leicester, which was no doubt more convenient for attending his legal practice based at Rowton Buildings, Bowling Green Street, Leicester. He still retained close contacts with Wigston though, maintaining a legal office there. In due course his son Maurice joined him in partnership, the practice being known as Herbert Simpson & Son and later Herbert Simpson Son & Bennett. This familiar name, but with some new partners' names added, remained until quite recent times, only losing its identity when it was absorbed by Harvey Ingram, now known as Harvey Ingram Owston.

Rowton, like his father and brother, also trained for a legal career, reading law at Rossall and Magdalene College, Cambridge, where he won a Boxing Blue in 1925. He then decided on a more adventurous life joining the Sudan Political Service in 1926. He served in the Blue Nile, Kordofan, Bahr el Ghazal, Berber, Mongalla and Khartoum Provinces, rising to the position of District Commissioner, during the period of Sudan's government as an Anglo-Egyptian Condominium. In 1937 he received the Order of the Nile 4th Class (at a time when it was usual for the Egyptian Government to award honours to Sudan Government officials). He was a charming and kindly administrator who was known as "Sim Sim" to his Sudanese friends. Once a party of tribesmen visited him in Khartoum North and found him with feet on the desk, smoking a pipe, his face screwed up in deep thought. They quickly fled, suspicious that he had rabies!

On 7/8/1930 at Kirkley, Suffolk Parish Church he married Contance Evelyn Adams the daughter of Henry Clement Adams, a company director. The couple were to have a son and three daughters.

In 1945 Rowton joined the legal department in Sudan as Commissioner of Lands and Registrar General. An admirer of Lord Kitchener's earlier contribution to the Condominium and in particular his policy of not allowing foreigners to buy land in order to protect the rights of the Sudanese, he continued with this and expanded it, becoming in his own right an innovator and reformer. He was adamant that land was an asset with a commercial value and belonged to the state as custodian for the Sudanese people, and the Town Lands Scheme, which he devised, provided that land should be auctioned and not awarded to any class of people on any preferential basis.

He retired from Sudan in 1953, and was appointed a CBE, before becoming an advisor on land policy at the Colonial Office. He was not afraid of the battles he sometimes had in order to get his own, nearly always sound, proposals accepted. In 1973 he published '*Land Law and Registration*' a large work which established his reputation as a leading authority in land law. In this field his advice was often sought especially by the governments of newly independent countries. In 1976 he was awarded a PhD by his old university.

Even in his nineties Rowton wrote strong letters in defence of people's rights. When things did not go according to his wishes he was liable to say "It breaks your poor old heart". He died in July 1999 aged 96 years.

Tricia Berry

Sources: Obituary in the *Daily Telegraph* 23/7/1999 (Thanks to Duncan Lucas for giving me the cutting). Marriage certificate. St. Thomas's Church parish records. Various directories

THE BUSHLOE HOUSE FURNITURE

This story seems to run and run. Richard Carter has managed to track down the auction list for the sale of the contents of Bushloe House in 1942 when Miss Evelyn Owston, the eldest daughter of Hiram Abiff Owston, died. The auction list is the property of Mr. T.E. Harrold, whose grandfather was a groom at Bushloe House.

The sale took place on the 28th and 29th September 1942 and was in the hands of Warner, Sheppard and Wade of Halford Street, Leicester. The catalogue runs to 24 pages, so great is the amount of items to be sold. Not only antique and modern furniture are included, but books, paintings, jewellery, carpets and rugs, a piano, quantities of plants and garden tools, and an ATCO MOTOR MOWER (printed in capitals, as though it was a star piece and the latest invention).

Perhaps the number of goods for sale is not surprising in view of the size of the house. On the ground floor were the library, morning room, dining room, drawing room and billiard room, all roughly 20 feet square. Upstairs were 11 bedrooms, 3 dressing rooms, a work room and bathroom. Then there were the entrance hall, kitchen and servants' hall, greenhouse and garage.

The whole catalogue offers a snap shot of social history and economic geography too, showing how the well-off furnished and decorated their homes in Victorian and later times, and which countries of the world Britain traded with to obtain these desirable goods. It is a pity we cannot photo-copy the whole list, since space does not permit, but we can perhaps look at two pages which give some insight into that period. I must declare here that I am no expert on antiques, but my son-in-law's mother knows quite a lot and was helpful when we went through the items at Christmas.

All the rooms were carpeted with the best makes of carpet, and they are all named: Turkey, Axminster, Persian, Brussels, Wilton. The word 'ebonised'¹ occurs on nearly every page. It means wood, usually beech, stained black to look like the expensive rare hardwood, ebony. Mahogany and rosewood were equally prized. The oak four-tier corner whatnot would be a set of free-standing open shelves for displaying ornaments on. 'Fiddle pattern' refers to the violin-shaped handles on cutlery. 'Chased silver' has an embossed design gained with a hammer and punch rather than by casting or engraving.

'Sheffield plate' I do know a bit about, having been brought up there. Anything plated is made of base metal coated with silver or gold. Silver plating was invented in 1742 by Thomas Boulsover, a cutler living in the Sheffield area. While repairing a knife, part copper and part silver, he accidentally fused the two metals. This gave him the idea of coating copper with silver and he coated buttons, buckles and snuffboxes. Later, his apprentice applied the process to tea urns, tankards and candlesticks, and such well-known firms as Walker & Hall and Mappin & Webb took up the idea, marketing their goods as 'Sheffield Plate'.

By 1850, a new and cheaper process of electroplating ousted the earlier invention, which then became known as 'Old Sheffield Plate' (as in the catalogue), far and away

Lot.	Description.
5 0 19	Four ebonised and gilt single chairs with upholstered backs and seats in moquette
10 10 20	Pair ebonised and gilt armed chairs upholstered in moquette
5 0 21	Upholstered easy chair
16 0 22	Ebonised rush seated chair, and folding chair in plush
2 0 23	Ebonised two-tier table, 24in.
14 0 24	Pair of serge window curtains, and two casement curtains

BREAKFAST ROOM.

0 0 25	Turkey carpet, 12ft. 6in. by 11ft. 9in.
10 10 26	Persian rug, 8ft. 7in. by 3ft. 9in.
6 0 27	Pierced fronted fender, pair rests, fire implements, and Wilton rug
10 0 28	Carved oak coal box
15 0 29	Inlaid rosewood three-tier stand
15 0 30	Oak framed couch in crimson plush
0 0 31	Mahogany corner armed chair with loose seat in plush
0 0 32	Carved oak cupboard, 4ft. 6in., with two panelled doors and cupboard over, fitted shelves
10 0 33	Oak four-tier corner whatnot
15 0 34	Two ebonised gilt framed single chairs, and library stools
0 0 35	Pair easy chairs upholstered in plush
10 0 36	Ebonised table with octagonal top, 3ft.
10 0 37	Ebonised framed table with octagonal top, 2ft. 6in.
10 0 38	Oil painting, "The Cricketer," 19in. by 14in.
10 0 39	Oil painting, "Hunter," by J. Dowell, 24in. by 30in.
15 0 40	Pair—"Landscapes with Cattle," 14in. by 22in.
41	Oil painting, "River Scene," by M. C. W. Flower, 36in. by 24in.
42	Old oil portrait, 11in. by 9in.
43	Water colour drawing, "Coast Scene," 12in. by 21in.
44	Six various cushions
45	Pair casement curtains

OLD SHEFFIELD AND OTHER PLATE.

46	Thirteen fiddle pattern dessert forks (various)
47	Eight engraved fish knives
48	Four Old Sheffield Plate coasters

Lot.	Description.	nos.	dents.
49	Six wine and spirit labels	...	31
50	Three pairs nut cracks, five serviette rings, etc.	...	5
16 0 51	E.P. mounted flask with bayonet top	...	15
52	Smaller ditto	...	14
4 15 0 53	Pair Old Sheffield Plate table candlesticks, 12in. high	...	5
4 0 0 54	Pair Old Sheffield Plate telescopic table candlesticks	...	20
55	Engraved circular salver, 14in. diameter	...	8
56	Chased and embossed biscuit box	...	15
1 10 0 57	Chased and embossed ewer	...	...
58	Plain oval meat dish, 18in.	...	...
4 10 59	Set of three engraved oval entrée dishes and covers, 11in.	...	...
60	Engraved oval breakfast dish, 9in.	...	...
61	Oval breakfast dish with bead mounts	...	...
62	Chased and embossed oval cake basket with handle	...	...
3 10 0 63	Fluted kettle, stand and lamp	...	...
64	Two four-bottle cruets	...	...
2 0 0 65	Two ditto	...	...
66	Twelve pairs of engraved fish knives and forks in mahogany case	...	...
4 0 0 67	Twelve pairs of ditto with curved ivory handles in case	...	...
1 17 0 68	Twelve pairs of fruit knives and forks (one fork missing)	...	...
2 0 0 69	Engraved circular salver	...	...
6 0 0 70	Engraved two-handled coffee tray, 24in.	...	...
1 0 0 71	Engraved cake knife and fork with carved pearl handles in case	...	...
1 10 0 72	Two Old Sheffield Plate snuffer trays	...	...
17 0 73	Batter dish and cover	...	...
1 4 0 74	Two chamber candlesticks	...	...
1 0 0 75	Engraved E.P.B.M. teapot, and syphon stand	...	...
1 10 0 76	Twelve table knives	...	...

SILVER.

46 0 77	Twelve fiddle pattern table forks	...	31
50 0 78	Twelve Ditto	...	32
50 0 79	Six fiddle pattern table spoons	...	15
40 0 80	Six ditto	...	14
7 10 0 81	Twelve fiddle pattern table forks	...	20
5 10 0 82	Twelve ditto	...	20

more valuable than the newer invention. E.P.B.M. means electroplated Britannia metal, a kind of pewter (an alloy of tin and lead).

Some prices have been put alongside the items, and they seem unbelievably low, even allowing for the inflation of half a century. In the jewellery section, a diamond and sapphire cluster ring has £54 against it. A Charles II two-handled porringer, with cover, decorated, and dated about 1680, has only 90 shillings against it. At least the ATCO MOTOR MOWER rises to £56! Are these starter bidding prices, or what the articles fetched? I do not know. On the last page of the catalogue is written Total of Sale' £146.9.0....again unbelievable. Perhaps that was for one room or one day.

No wonder Mrs. Elizabeth Gordon wishes that her mother and aunt had not sold everything. Now who is she, and how do we know? Well, she is where another strand of the story comes in.

In the autumn, Duncan Lucas sent a copy of the last Bulletin to Mrs. Gordon, a granddaughter of H.A. Owston, living at Brora, Sutherland, in the very far north of Scotland. She replied, showing great interest in the Christopher Dresser article and saying that she remembered the furniture so well, especially the frogs painted on the wardrobes, and the great beds where she had slept many a night in her childhood. She regretted that everything had been sold, but thought that since it was war time, people were not thinking about the future. She was not at the sale as she had just had a baby.

It is noticeable that in the whole 24 pages of the catalogue there is not a single mention of Christopher Dresser. Perhaps that is because his name had been quite forgotten and it is only in recent times that his value has been recognised. Or is it that all the Dresser furniture was bought up beforehand by the Victoria and Albert Museum? That seems unlikely in war-time. It is a mystery that Mrs. Gordon might be able to help with.

At the end of her letter to Duncan, Mrs. Gordon mentions that she had recently been reading the early diaries, written at Bushloe House by her mother and aunt, about daily life there from 1888 onwards. Now if we might be allowed to see those, what a fascinating article or transaction might follow? Perhaps even yet we have not heard the last of Bushloe House.

Mrs. Gordon kindly asked if she might donate a subscription to the Society. We welcome her warmly as a member, and are pleased that the Society is known in such a far distant place.

Edna Taylor

LETTER SENT BY ROBERT MARTIN FROM HANS PLACE, SLOANE STREET, LONDON, TO HIS DAUGHTER, MISS E.A. MARTIN, ANSTEY PASTURES, NR. LEICESTER, DESCRIBING A VISIT TO THE GREAT EXHIBITION 1851

Dear Nellie and Robbie,

We have been in the Great Exhibition all day and I think you will be glad to hear all about it; so having an hour on hand this evening I will give you my first impressions.

It is altogether a wonderful place, first for its vast size - being quite as large as the Front Field at home and the Pasture Meadow, that is, about 107 acres all under glass; there are two large elm trees - more I believe under a part of it and a great.....blaze of curious objects, many statues. Machinery of all kinds with which Robbie would have been delighted. Large horns/herds? of Moose, Deer and Buffaloes, some of which I should have liked very much myself.

Such numbers of people were there - some thousands - among whom was the Old Duke of Wellington, who came very near to us and seemed pretty well for a man of his age.

We saw about half of the Exhibition and go tomorrow to see the rest, in a cursory manner it is true, but still we shall see most of the things best worth seeing.

We met Mrs. John Scott and her friends and we go to see her on Thursday.

Our Monday event, Uncle Charles took us to the House of Lords and House of Commons - in both of which we heard a debate and were fortunate in hearing some of the best speakers.

We also saw the Exhibition of Pictures at the National Gallery and I was much pleased with a picture of Old Oliver Cromwell after the Battle of Naseby and some others.

London seems very full of people, there is a continual roll of carriages. It is all very well for a bit, but I should soon tire of it and be glad to get to the country again, to the Rook and the Crow.

I must tell you more about the Exhibition when I see you, for I find it impossible to describe it in a letter - it is such a huge place and there are so many things in it of all sorts and size.

Mama desires her best love to you all - and hoping to find you all well on Saturday. I

am, my dear Pets, Your very affect. Papa, Robert Martin

Thanks to Jim Colver for kindly transcribing this letter for us. It is in Leics. Record Office, Ref: DG6/D/204b. The letter, dated 20th May, is folded with the address written on the outside, before the introduction of envelopes. There is the impression of a stamp but this has been removed. It brings to mind our present Great Exhibition at the Dome, and whether visitors to that will write of their impressions in such enthusiastic terms.

* * * * *

OLD FASHIONED EXPRESSIONS

Here are a few more for our occasional series.

For instance we might:

- 1) Refer to something of little value as a 'white elephant'
- 2) Describe bad behaviour as 'beyond the pale'
- 3) Look back with pleasure on a 'red letter day'
- 4) Mention a betrayal as being 'sold down the river'
- 5) Turn disadvantage into advantage by 'turning the tables'

Origins:

- 1) The rare albino elephant was much prized in Old Siam, but its upkeep was costly, thus it was likely to prove a valueless gift.
- 2) A pale is a long thin post used in making fences. Therefore beyond the pale meant the wild area outside the enclosure.
- 3) In church calendars holy days and festivals were traditionally written in red.
- 4) From America and refers to troublesome slaves being sold to owners of plantations lower down the Mississippi where conditions were harsher.
- 5) In the mid 18th century backgammon was known as tables. Often the board would be turned around so a player had to play what had been his opponent's position.

QUEEN VICTORIA'S GOLDEN JUBILEE 1887 REPORT FROM WIGSTON MAGNA

The celebrations commenced on Monday 20th June. At 2.30p.m. the children attending the mixed schools assembled on 'The Bank'; and having sung the National Anthem, they, headed by a brass band paraded the village and then adjourned to their respective school for tea, which over, all the school children formed a procession and marched to Mr. Ingram's grounds where a lengthy programme of 22 races for boys and girls was gone through.

Meantime, the aged people and widows, to the total number of about 350, partook of a substantial meat tea at the village hall [in Frederick Street] and in a shed in Mr. C. E. Sharp's yard [near to the entrance of Long Lane in Bell Street], followed by an entertainment in the hall, at which wine, ale, stout, tobacco and snuff were freely distributed.

Messrs. A. Abbott, A. Hill, J.T. Sharp and J. Clark took part in the entertainment and subsequently dancing was indulged in. It was highly delighting to see old men and dames of upwards of eighty years forget for a time their infirmities and trip it to music. During the entertainment, at the request of the Rev. S. Robinson, who presided, the aged guests drank the health of the Queen with musical honours, by singing the National Anthem.

Those unable to attend from age or other infirmities were given an equivalent in kind the next day.

In the field, some thousands of people gathered. The decorations, though not of a gorgeous nature, gave the streets a lively appearance and the gas illuminations at night were of various designs. There was a display of fireworks about 11p.m. The decorations remained on Tuesday and at night the illuminations were repeated. On Tuesday, Mr. Joseph Hassall, farmer, gave at his residence in Bulls Head Street an excellent dinner to his work people, the evening spent in a convivial manner.

Thanks to to Jim Colver for transcribing this from the Leicestershire Chronicle (and reminding us where the village hall and Sharp's yard were situated). It sounds to have been great fun. It is a pity things like this do not happen these days. What a lovely way it would have been to celebrate the Millennium.