

Local Communities in Charnwood



The Lords of the Manor of Loughborough

Loughborough is an ancient town situated in the heart of the Charnwood Forest. The name Loughborough derives from the Anglo Saxon word "burgh" meaning a town, and, probably, a personal name which became "Lough."

The primitive settlers who first came here were attracted to this spot by a number of natural features. The River Soar led directly to the Trent Valley, forming a natural means of communication between the north and south, and to the east and west of the fertile Soar Valley the land was relatively poor and unproductive.

When the Romans came evidence suggests that they took over this settlement from the Britons. In the grounds of nearby Mount St Bernard's Abbey, an urn was found filled with Roman coins dating back to the year 244.

1066

When William the Conqueror ascended the throne, he gave considerable estates in Leicestershire, including the town of Loughborough, to his nephew, Hugh Lupus of Avrenches, son of Richard, Earl of Orange and the Countess Emma, half-sister to the Conqueror. He made him Earl of Chester in 1070. By this time Loughborough had become a settled township around which agriculture predominated. Hugh Lupus died in 1102, and was buried in St Werburgh's Abbey. For upwards of 100 years the Manor of Loughborough continued in his family until in the early thirteenth century it passed into the hands of Hugh le Despencer.

1221

Hugh Le Despencer obtained grants to institute a Thursday market and Loughborough's favourable location encouraged King Henry III to grant a Royal Charter in 1221 for an annual fair on the eve and feast of St Peter ad Vincular. In the following year Despencer obtained permission to hold another fair on the second Thursday in November which is still held today.

1265

When Despenser, who had joined Simon de Monfort, was slain at the battle of Evesham, the Lordship of Loughborough was granted to his widow Alivia, daughter of Philip Basset of Wycomb.

Loughborough Fair

The rights to hold Loughborough Fair were sold to the Local Board by the last Lord of the Manor in the 1880's, and the fair has continued to be held in the streets of the town ever since. The fair commences on the second Thursday in November and is declared open by the Mayor reading a copy of the original 1221 Charter from the Town Hall Balcony

"The King to his Sheriff in Leicester – Greeting,

Know that we have granted by our Charter to our trusty and well beloved Hugh Le Despenser that he and his heirs may hold forever a weekly market each Thursday in his Manor of Loughborough and also that they may hold there a fair each year to the extent of three days that is to say on the eve, day, and morrow of the Feast of Our Blessed Saint Peter Ad Vincula and further that they may hold there a fair each year to the extent of three days that is to say on the eve day and morrow of the Feast of All Souls

Given at our Court at Westminster this 28th day of April in the year of Our Lord 1228"

Brian de Insula, who quelled an insurrection of rebellious Barons and took the castle at Mountsorrel, was at one time the most powerful subject in the realm and it is said that he had a grant of the Manors of Loughborough and Beaumanor from Henry III. He died in 1294.

1295

Hugh Le Despenser, son of John and grandson of the above-mentioned Hugh, saw the Barony restored to the family in 1295. He was created Earl of Winchester in 1322 but, along with his son, Hugh "the Younger Despenser", was executed and attained* in 1325/6. Edward III, when Duke of Lancaster, granted the Manor of Loughborough to Henry, Lord Beaumanor and Alice, his wife. He

*Attained - Consequences of sentence of death or outlawry.
(All lands, titles and estates forfeited and redistributed to others)

confirmed this grant in 1327 on his accession to the throne. In the 1380's Lollard preachers visited Loughborough and Richard II visited the town in 1387, the same year John Wycliffe preached here.

1460

John, Lord Beaumont, who espoused the Lancastrian side in the civil war was slain at Northampton in 1460. His son William, Viscount Beaumont who succeeded him was taken prisoner at Towton Field in the following year. He was later attainted* and sentenced to forfeit his title and all his Manors and lands, including the Manor of Loughborough.

1464

In this year King Edward IV granted the Manor and Lordship to Sir William Hastings, whom he had recently created Baron Hastings. The grant was confirmed in 1467 but in 1483, having offended Richard, Duke of Gloucester (later Richard III) Hastings was sent to the Tower of London and beheaded.

1485

William, the last Lord Beaumont was restored to the Manor in 1485. Henry VII visited the town in 1486 and spent the night in a house standing just outside the gates of the Parish Church. The town's sympathies were with the Crown during the Civil War and both Charles I and Prince Rupert came here during that period.

Loughborough was rapidly increasing in prosperity with the wool trade an important feature in the life of the district at this time. Textiles became a massive area of development and several merchants earned their fortunes including Thomas Burton, a member of the Company of the Staple at Calais. Burton died in 1496 bequeathing legacies for both the upkeep of the town's road bridges and for other charitable purposes.

William, Lord Beaumont died in 1507 and in 1509 his widow married John de Vere, Earl of Oxford. Upon her death in 1527 the Manor of Loughborough was granted to Thomas Grey, Third Marquis of Dorset, in exchange for certain Manors in Northamptonshire. Grey was the father of Lady Jane Grey of Bradgate Park and Jane's mother Frances, was the daughter of Princess Mary the younger sister of King Henry VIII. Lady Jane Grey was crowned Queen of England on the 10th July 1553. There was little support for her from the people who rightly considered that Princess Mary was the rightful heir to the throne and she was executed at the Tower of London on 12th February 1554.

Her husband, Guilford, the son of the Duke of Northumberland who was agent to King Edward VI was executed on Tower Hill.

1554

The Manor and Advowson* of Loughborough were granted to Sir Edward Hastings, second son of George, first Earl of Huntingdon. Sir Edward was created Baron Hastings of Loughborough in 1557 and in the same year obtained a confirmation of the said grant. He lived at the Manor House on Sparrow Hill. On the death of Queen Mary he retired to a hospital at Stoke Poges, Buckinghamshire, which he had founded. He resided there until his death.

1575

In 1575 Queen Elizabeth I granted the Manor and Advowson to Henry, third Earl of Huntingdon, nephew of the preceding owner. In 1595, on his death, his estates passed to his brother, Sir George Hastings who became the fourth Earl of Huntingdon. Sir George had resided at Loughborough as early as 1568 and in 1579 one of his children, Dorothy, was baptised at the old church. It is uncertain when he ceased to reside at Loughborough but in 1596 he was recorded as living in Gopshall. He died in 1604 and was buried in Ashby.

1600's

The Hastings family continued to possess the Manor and a large portion of the town of Loughborough until the beginning of the 19th century. The town was hit by plague in 1609 which lasted over a year killing many people. A skirmish was fought at nearby Cotes in 1644 by the opposing sides of the Civil War and in 1666 a great fire swept the town.

1700's

By the beginning of the industrial revolution agriculture in the district had undergone vigorous improvement, and a major contribution to national prosperity came from the work of the agriculturalist Robert Bakewell (1726-1795), who farmed at Dishley. As a centre for transport Loughborough benefited from the turnpikes of the early eighteenth century and in 1776 local enterprise led to the canalising of the River Soar fostering both trade and local manufacturers.

1800's

Loughborough's woollen industry came to specialize in hosiery and

*Advowson— Right of presentation to a benefice or church living.

knitwear, but both lace and cotton were produced in the town. Luddites attacked John Heathcoat's factory for machine-made lace in 1816 because of the unemployment it generated in the hand-worked trade.

In 1818 the Manor was purchased by the great foxhunter Thomas Denning.

In the 1830's the local prosperity saw the population increasing rapidly. The availability of local engineering skills and favourable transport, as well as a big order for bells for the parish church, brought Taylor's Bell Foundry to the town in 1839 and the Midland Counties Railway opened its station on Nottingham Road in 1840.

Lord of the Manor Thomas Denning died in 1846, and by his will reportedly left the Manor to Thomas Cradock.

In 1850 the first Roman Catholic convent formed in England after the Reformation was established, and in the same year a local Board of Health was set up to address the lack of drainage and pure water, which was causing an abnormally high death rate and limiting the town's growth. Further unelected Local Boards with statutory duties were established including the Schools Board, the Burials Board and the Lighting and Watch Board.

The textile trades required bleaches, dyestuffs and machines and to meet these needs engineering and chemical industries were developing. William Cotton's patents of 1864 gave the town a world wide reputation for taking the lead in the development of knitting machinery.

Towards the end of the century the Charnwood Forest Railway terminating at Derby Road, and the Great Central Railway off Leicester Road came to Loughborough, and Thomas Cook organised his first excursion bringing day trippers to the town for a temperance rally.

1880

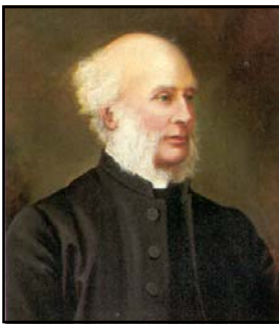
It has long been believed that in 1880 Thomas Cradock sold his rights as Lord of the Manor to the local Board of Health for the sum of £1000, although the legal papers relating to the sale show the vendor as being a lady, possibly his mother!

1888

At the request of 1274 ratepayers to the local Boards a petition was submitted to the Crown which saw Loughborough granted a Charter of Incorporation. This established an elected Council which took over the

responsibilities of all the Boards. The population of the town at this time was 18,000. Elections were held within a few weeks of receipt of the Charter and with a poll of 88% a Liberal Council was returned. Local businessman Joseph Griggs was chosen by the Council to be it's first Mayor and he accepted the responsibility of "sorting out the town". The 1888 Charter remained in force until the reorganisation of local government in 1974 saw Loughborough subsumed into the newly created Borough of Charnwood.

Water and Sanitation in Loughborough



Archdeacon Henry Fearon was born at Grayfield, Sussex, where his father was rector, and he was educated at Winchester where he gained an open scholarship to Emmanuel College, Cambridge. Ordained as a priest in 1826, he showed no enthusiasm for the Church and for the next twenty years he taught Classics and Divinity at Cambridge.

At the age of 46 he gave all this up and accepted his living — that of All Saints Church, Loughborough. His pastoral duties brought him into close contact with the townsfolk of Loughborough and the poverty and misery he found aroused deep compassion in him. Rejecting the usual Victorian attitudes of piety and sympathy, he tuned his attention to the practical issues of the time, in particular the appalling housing, deplorable drainage and the poor physical health of his flock. Godliness and cleanliness went hand in hand in Fearon's eyes.

In Fearon's day the science of sanitation was little understood. Cholera and typhoid diseases were rife and it was obvious to him that lack of drainage and fresh water was the substantial cause of much of this misery. Cesspools were the only receptacles of sewage and were often close to the wells from which the townsfolk drew their water. The town was filthy and the stench at times unbearable. Industry stagnated because of the lack of water supply and the town's population actually fell between 1851 and 1861 censuses. The 1849 outbreak of cholera resulted in Fearon and his supporters petitioning the General Board of Health in London requesting the establishment of a Local Board. An Inspector was sent to hold an inquiry and he recommended that the

authority of Guardians and Surveyors in sanitary matters was not sufficient and that a Local Board should replace them.

Fearon persevered against bitter opposition and, supported by one lone medical man, Dr John Palmer, he promoted a campaign for a Local Board of Health. The Board first met in March 1850, but it proved timorous in its approach to the sanitary condition of the town and fearful of the wrath of ratepayers in defence of their own pockets. Despite the outbreaks of epidemics, the Board proved apathetic in the first twelve years of its existence. Finally, in exasperation, Fearon promoted a Company to supply water from the Blackbrook. This galvanized the Local Board into supporting the alternative Woodbrook scheme. However, the majority of the Local Board still refused to take action and five out of the twelve members resigned. The 1867 election was fought on the issue: the resigning members were restored and eventually an Act of Parliament was passed in 1868 authorising the Board of Health to construct a reservoir, piped water supply and drainage. In 1870 the first water supply was laid through the town from the newly constructed Nanpantan Reservoir, using the Woodbook source from the Charnwood Forest.

A fountain was erected in the Market Place at the sole expense of Archdeacon Fearon. It was unveiled on the 31st August 1870, when the forest water first flowed officially into the town and the Local Board of Health accepted the gift in trust for the town. The Venerable Archdeacon drew the first draught of water expressing wonder that it was necessary to have such a formal ceremony for so trifling an event. A vote of thanks to the Archdeacon was moved by the President of the Loughborough Temperance Society, who expressed the Society's view that... *"while they cannot but regret the increased facilities in the town for procuring other beverages not so innocent in their character, they rejoice at the opening on this occasion, of a water fountain, which will afford to the inhabitants and every passer-by a refreshing draught of pure water."* Fearon was a great supporter of Working Men's Clubs and championed the right of working men to their glass of beer against the powerful temperance movement at that time.

The implications of providing a fresh water supply and adequate drainage were profound. Between 1866 and 1882, the population of Loughborough increased by nearly 40%. The incidence of sanitation related diseases decreased dramatically and new industries, particularly those dealing with dyeing processes, were attracted to the



The Fearon Fountain

In the centre of Loughborough Market Place stands a Victorian drinking fountain gifted to the town by Archdeacon Fearon which symbolizes a significant change in Loughborough's history.

town by the abundant water supply. Within 10 years the Nanpantan Reservoir proved inadequate for supplying the increasing requirements of the town and design work was recommenced on the Blackbrook scheme.

Archdeacon Fearon survived until June 1885 and his tolerance, humility, intellectual vigour and generosity made him a much loved and influential figure. Despite the many changes in the town centre over the last 150 years his fountain has maintained pride of place in the centre of the market.

The fountain was the work of a Mr Forsyth and was constructed at an original cost of £160. It was restored to its original appearance in 1981 and re-inaugurated by the Mayor of Charnwood Councillor F. J Mckeown. It was restored once again after the pedestrianisation of the Market Place and was again re-inaugurated by the Mayor of Charnwood Councillor Ida Thurlby on 23rd February 1999 after the original inscription had been re-cut as the erosion of the years had made it illegible.

*"Our common mercies loudly call.
For praise to God, who gives them all"*

Queens Park

Loughborough Park, once referred to as "Handkerchief Park" owing to its size, was extended by the generosity of Joseph Griggs, the first Mayor of Loughborough, in 1906. Griggs donated six acres for the park and also land for the Carnegie Library opposite on Granby Street.

The Baths in Queens Park



Prior to 1897 the public baths in Loughborough consisted of wooden huts at the edge of the Canal which had the luxury of having an attendant to fish dead carcasses out of the gratings every morning.

Joseph Griggs offered to build the town a public baths and swimming pool as a memorial for Queen

Victoria's Diamond Jubilee of 1897. Built at a cost of £3000, the baths were formally opened by the Marquis of Granby on 10th August 1898. The dedication plaque read; *The building was first erected as the Queen's Memorial Baths to commemorate the 1897 Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria. It was presented to the town of Loughborough by Joseph Griggs D.L., the first Mayor of the Borough of Loughborough and was opened on the 10th August 1898.* The baths were described at the opening as *"a worthy tribute to a glorious reign"*.

The facilities provided were four first class baths and five second class baths, for which 12 admission tickets cost 9d, the laundry at the back had three large tubs, a "large revolving washing machine with wringer" and a hydro extractor to spin dry the laundry before airing on clothes horses. The Baths were hugely popular from their opening and during July 1901, when temperatures hit 90F in the shade, over 1000 visitors a week were recorded.

The swimming pool itself was filled with 70,000 gallons of water and operated on the "filler usage system". It cost 2d to swim in the morning when the water was fresh and clean, 1d for the middle classes later in the day, and 1/2d for the children in the evening by which time the water was dirty. In the evening a gang of men would empty the pool, scrub, clean and refill it ready for the following day. It was heated by a 20-horse power Cornish boiler that piped steam around the building. It was not until 1934 that a chlorination and filtration system was added.

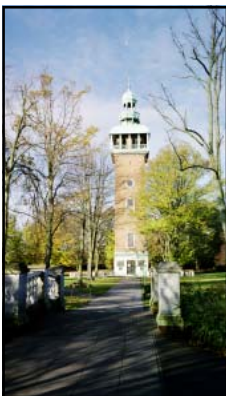
During the water shortages of June 1956 there was concern about the amount of water used however the townsfolk were assured that, "the water is used many times over" being purified through pressure filters and chemically treated before re-use. Unfortunately by 1971 the plant

had developed faults, air bubbles occurred in the system and occasionally the pool was found full of muddy water and had to be closed for cleaning. Shortly afterwards the Memorial baths were closed altogether and were eventually replaced in 1975 by a swimming pool in the Council's new Leisure Centre.

After closure the building was used for storage purposes until in 1980 it was proposed that it should be renovated and used as a general hall to be hired out. Seven steel beams were laid across the pool, and 35 tons of concrete slabs put on top. The hall was redecorated, the roof repaired and the building rewired at a cost of nearly £135,000. An informal opening was held on 15th July 1980 to rename it Queens Hall and the Mayor Councillor J. Abell unveiled a plaque. In 1981 a cafeteria and patio garden was added for use during the summer season by visitors to the park. In 1982 Queens Hall received a special commendation in the Europa Nostra Awards, which are given to projects involving the protection of cultural and natural heritage in Europe. Queens Hall was particularly commended for its attention to detail and the high quality of design and workmanship.

In 1998 the Council decided to turn Queens Hall into a museum and it was again closed for renovation. The Charnwood Museum opened to the public in April 1999 and was officially opened on the 11th May 2000 by HRH The Duke of Gloucester. Since it's opening the museum has proved to be very successful and it's café, with seating both inside the museum and outside in the park is very popular with both tourists and locals.

The War Memorial Tower and Carillon



Construction of the tower in Queens Park began in November 1921 and following the installation of the Carillon the Memorial was dedicated in July 1923.

The full height of the tower, from the ground to the top of the cross, is 46 metres (151 feet) with a climb of 138 steps from ground level to the viewing gallery. The Carillon consists of 47 bells, the heaviest weighing 4.27 tonnes (4 tons 4 cwt).

A piece of music entitled "A Memorial Chime" was composed for the opening ceremony by Edward Elgar.

Communities Across Charnwood

The Borough of Charnwood covers an area of 108 square miles and has a population of just over 157,000, less than a third of whom live in the principal town of Loughborough. The geological nature of the Borough is split into three different areas.

Charnwood Forest (an ancient forest) covers the western side and consists of hard rock, slate and granite outcrops, which owes much to ancient volcanic activity and earth movements. The eastern area is the Wolds, which is high rolling countryside. In between is the Soar Valley, through which flows the River Soar on its way to join the River Trent in Nottinghamshire. Between the River Soar and the Wolds is the flood plain, which restricts any development in that area.



Anstey (population 6262)

A large village in the south of the Borough, containing a small industrial and large residential community, which has good shopping facilities and is best known for its 15th century arched pack-horse bridge, which is only 5 feet wide. The church dates from 1846 and is built of Mountsorrel granite. The parish borders the City of Leicester.

Barkby (population 343)

A small attractive village situated in the Wolds, which is mainly farming and residential. The ironstone church dates from the 18th century.



Barkby Thorpe (population 48)

This small, mainly agricultural hamlet is situated on the edge of the Wolds and borders onto Leicester City. It contains within its parish the remains of the medieval village of Hamilton.

Barrow upon Soar (population 4815)

A mainly residential community situated on the bank of the River Soar just above the flood plain, 3 miles south of Loughborough. Most of the industry within the village lays along side the London Midland Railway. The village recently had its rail link with Leicester restored. The church was rebuilt

between 1862 and 1870 and the Victorian almshouses of 1825 are of particular interest. The village has good shopping facilities and the River Soar provides a valuable leisure amenity for the residents. There is evidence of Roman occupation in the village.



Beeby (population 83)

This tiny hamlet is found in the south east of the Borough and is a wholly farming community. The church includes some 13th century work and a screen from the 14th century. The tower and chancel date from 1819. In the 14th century the village lost most of its inhabitants due to the Black Death.

Birstall (population 11900)

This large mainly residential commuter village is in the south of the Borough and borders on to Leicester City. The village stands beside the River Soar. Evidence from parts of the church date from Saxon times and the ironstone church tower was rebuilt in 1860. In the old part of the village are several examples of timber framed cottages. The village has good shopping facilities but little industry. The preserved Great Central Railway now has its southern terminus here called "Leicester North" near the site of the old Belgrave and Birstall Station. Nearby Wanlip Country Park provides another valuable leisure amenity for the village.



Burton on the Wolds (population 940)

A farming village situated in the Wolds area of the Borough. In the centre of the village is the 18th century Burton Hall, once the home of the Countess of Huntingdon, which later became an NHS nursing home but is now privately run.

Cossington (population 690)

Situated between the River Wreake and the River Soar, Cossington is a quiet, attractive residential village, which includes several old cottages along Main Street. The church is a mixture of the 13th and 14th century architecture. The Village Pound has recently been restored and it is thought to be the only village locally to stage a





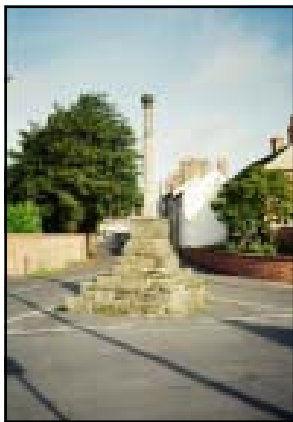
“Midsummer Pound Ceremony”.

Cotes (population 42)

Cotes consists of a few houses, which straddle the main A60 Loughborough to Nottingham road at its crossing of the River Soar. This bridge crossing was the site of a skirmish during the Civil War in 1645. Between the bridge at Cotes, which originally had 13 arches and was rebuilt in 1797 with 8 arches, and Loughborough, was a raised causeway under the control of the Bridge Masters who were responsible to the Lord of the Manor of Loughborough for the upkeep of the bridges. On a raised mount at the side of the river is the site of the old Manor House. The Old Water Mill, which stands to the south of the bridge, is now a public house.

East Goscote (population 3074)

East Goscote was named after a medieval hundred and until 1965 contained only a few houses. Most of the new addition to the village was completed by 1976. The village, which was built on a former Ministry of Defence site, stands along side the Leicester to Melton road and contains little industry.



Hathern (population 1818)

The village straddles the A6 trunk road two miles to the north of Loughborough. Hathern was once a centre of the hosiery and framework knitting industry and many of the old cottages of the frame workers are still in evidence around the village. In the 19th century a resident of Hathern, John Heathcote, invented a mechanical device for making lace, which led to riots, forcing him to move away from the area. The March Phillipps De Lisle families all have connections with Hathern, in particular the church, which was built in the 14th century and has a Saxon font. In 1698 Dame Mary Phillipps, the wife of Ambrose Phillipps, presented the church with a Silver Chalice, which is still used today. Edward Thomas March Phillipps became Rector of Hathern church in 1808. On arriving in the village he described it as “a barbarous place” and in 1850 said, “Verily Hathern is a cage of every unclean beast. What is to become of it?” The Rector’s comments have gone into folklore because the village is now referred to as “Wicked Hathern.” Hathern has a very successful Brass Band, which supports local charities



through their concerts.

Hoton (population 299)

Hoton is situated on the A60 Loughborough to Nottingham road, four miles north of the town on the Nottinghamshire border. It is a mainly farming community and Hoton has several timber framed and Georgian houses. The church was rebuilt in

1837.

Mountsorrel (population 6122)

The village stands on the line of the old A6 trunk road, which has now been bypassed. This has led to some of the historic building in the centre of the village being restored to improve and enhance the area. The River Soar, which at this point forms part of the Grand Union Canal, flows just to the east of the village and when in flood, makes access over the river impossible. A very narrow bridge, which crosses the Mountsorrel lock, provides access to the village from the Soar Valley. The river provides a valuable leisure amenity for the village. In the centre of the village is a domed Butter Market erected in 1793. Overlooking Mountsorrel is Castle Hill, the site of



a Castle reputedly once slept in by King John. Brian de Insula who quelled an insurrection of rebellious barons took the Castle. It is said that he was granted the Manors of Loughborough and Beaumanor by Henry III. Mountsorrel is a large commuter village and has a sizeable industrial base. Within the parish of Mountsorrel is the largest granite quarry in Europe.

Newtown Linford (population 970)



A most attractive village situated in the Charnwood Forest. The name means "new town on the ford" and stems from the village being moved to it's current location from land that was taken by the Bradgate Estate. The River Lin flows through the village into Bradgate Park and then on to the River Soar. Bradgate Park extends over 850 acres and was created from the Charnwood Forest over 700 years ago as a hunting and deer park. It looks today much the same as it did in the middle Ages. In the Park are the ruins of Bradgate House, a brick mansion built by Sir Thomas Grey, 1st Marquis of Dorset and the great grandfather of Lady

Jane Grey the nine day Queen of England. The church was built in the 14th century and contains a stained glass window dedicated to Lady Jane Grey. Bradgate Park attracts over one million visitors each year.



Prestwold (population 79)

Prestwold is in a very quiet rural location just over a mile east of Loughborough. It is the home of the historic Prestwold Estate, home of the Packe family since the mid 17th century. Prestwold Hall was built by the family in the 18th century. The family church was rebuilt around 1890. A natural burial ground was opened on the estate in 2000.

The burial ground is a cemetery managed along ecologically sound principles and open to all. Instead of headstones, trees or shrubs are planted to serve as natural living memorials.

Queniborough (population 2403)

Queniborough is a mainly residential village with modern housing built around the older timber framed houses. This attractive village lies to the east of the Borough and is surrounded by farms. The church with its crocketed spire is described by Pevsner as one of the finest in Leicestershire and features a brass plate to Margaret Bury dating from 1633.



Quorn (population 4,635)

Quorn stands on the old A6 now bypassed and is mainly residential. It's original name was Quorndon, which was a hill where querns were found. A quern was a millstone and reference seems to indicate areas where granite is found. Built of granite, St Bartholomew's Church dates from the 12th and 13th centuries. Quorn Hall, one of the

finer buildings in the village, was built for Thomas Farnham around 1430 and was later remodelled by Hugh Maynell during his occupancy in the 17th century. The Farnham Family, which had lived in Quorn since the 13th century had then moved to Quorn House which is now the headquarters of the Rosemary Conley Diet and Fitness empire. Hugh Maynell was considered to be the "Father of English Fox Hunting" and established the Quorn Hunt at the Hall. Quorn has good shopping, a community college and other leisure facilities. The River Soar flows through the centre of Quorn and is an important leisure amenity for the village with walks, boating and canoeing. The village was once an important centre for the manufacture of elastic textiles and hosiery. The canal/river used to bring coal to the Gas Works, which have long since gone. Quorn and Woodhouse Station is one of the stops on the preserved Great Central Railway.



Ratcliffe on the Wreake (population 135)

This is a very attractive village, which is mainly farming and is situated to the east of the A46 road (The Fosse Way), close to the River Wreake. The church is 14th century with a needle spire. To the west, along side the A46, is Ratcliffe College, a fine Georgian building and the first Catholic College to be established in England after the reformation.

Rearsby (population 883)

The village is located on the main Leicester to Melton road and is a residential community in a farming area. A tributary to the River Wreake flows through the village and is crossed by a medieval packhorse bridge just five feet wide. The river often floods in the winter and access to part of the village is achieved only through a private farmyard and over a modern bridge built by the farmer for his own use.



Rothley (population 3160)

The village developed from the Middle Ages as a market for the forest area and in the churchyard is a 9th century Saxon Cross. In the grounds of nearby Rothley Court is the 13th century Chapel of the Knights Templar, which is open to the public. Rothley Court became a hotel in 1960.

Local industry in the village included knitwear and in the last few years the village has expanded with new housing as a popular residential area close to both the forest and Bradgate Park. Rothley stands on the old A6 trunk road now bypassed. William Wilberforce worked here in the 19th century on his parliamentary bill to abolish slavery.

Seagrave (population 424)

Situated on high ground between the Wreake and Soar Valleys, the village is residential and surrounded by farms. It has some new housing, but little development has taken place in the village. Parts of the church date from the 13th and 14th centuries and it contains a musical instrument from the 16th century called a Serpent, which was more common before organs became popular.





Shepshed (population 13146)

Situated to the north west of the Borough, close to the M1 motorway and other large towns and Cities, Shepshed is an attractive commuter town. "Shepshed" means a hill where sheep once grazed. It has a medieval market place and a church, St Botolph's, which was built between the 13th and 15th centuries. The church is surrounded by old cottages, some of

which are thatched and has close associations to the March Phillipps De Lisle family, who are large landowners in the area. The Charnwood Forest Railway, which ran between Loughborough and Coalville, passed through Shepshed. This railway opened in 1883 and was closed in 1963. Just outside of Shepshed is Fenny Windmill, one of the last to grind corn in the area. The mill is now a private residence. Shepshed has grown into the second largest town in the Borough attracting employment to its industrial estates because of its central location and the town has good shopping, sports, and social facilities.

Sileby (population 6805)

Sileby is located on the east of the Soar Valley just off the A6 trunk road and above the flood plain. Modern residential development has extended around the old village where some of the old framework knitter's houses still survive. The many hosiery and footwear factories have now all gone but recently Sileby has managed to attract some new employment into the village. The rail link with Loughborough and Leicester was restored with the opening of the Ivanhoe Line, which is supported by Leicestershire County Council. The Grand Union canal is close to Sileby and boats can be hired from the Sileby marina.



South Croxton (population 228)



A mainly farming community, this attractive village lies on the hill in the east of the Borough. The ironstone church stands at the top of the hill on a former Saxon site and is from the 14th century. At the bottom of the hill on Main Street is the village pub. Every two years the village holds the South Croxton Arts Festival, a popular celebration of painting, sculpture, music and the performing arts.



Swithland (population 213)

Situated in Charnwood Forest, the village was a site of slate quarries from Roman times until the 19th century, and Swithland slate is a much sought after roofing material for housing. Swithland, meaning land cleared by burning, is an attractive village and because of its location any development is restricted. The church is 13th century with additions from the 17th century. It stands at the end of the village close to Swithland Hall, the ancestral home of the Earls of Lanesborough.

Syston (population 11040)

The town of Syston is situated in the east of the Borough, 3 miles to the north of Leicester on the Melton Mowbray road. Syston is linked to the M1 motorway by the A46 Leicester Western Bypass and industry is attracted to the town because of its good road and rail links. The small historic centre of Syston has been recently redeveloped and the town has good shopping facilities. There is a community college, a swimming pool, good sports and leisure facilities, and a number of attractive parks.



Thrussington (population 516)



Thrussington is a small farming village hidden away in hilly countryside and situated in the east of the Borough just off the Fosse Way (A46). In the centre of the village is a green surrounded by houses, two pubs and an ironstone church part of which is 13th century. At the edge of the village is the River Wreake crossed by a raised causeway over the flood plain, leading to Rearsby.

Thurcaston (population 835)

A small residential village situated to the west of the Soar Valley, Thurcaston has joined with Cropston to form one parish. All Saints church has a 12th century tower, which was improved in the 15th century and contains a very early slate headstone dating from 1641. The village has a pub/restaurant and an infant school.





Thurmaston (population 9364)

Thurmaston, which borders onto Leicester City, is a large industrial village and is situated in the Soar valley in the south of the Borough. Watermead and Wanlip Country parks lie to the west of the village and provide many walks and water activities for visitors. The Grand Union Canal and the River Soar pass through the parks, bringing many tourists into the area. Although very close to Leicester, the community retains a strong independent identity within the village despite being split in two by the A46 dual carriageway. Thurmaston has good sports and shopping facilities and the road and rail links make the village attractive to industry.

Ulverscroft (population 85)

Ulverscroft, meaning where Ulf farmed his croft, is unusual in that it has no village centre. This parish is situated in the heart of the ancient Charnwood Forest, and the houses and farms are scattered in this very attractive part of the Borough. Ulverscroft Priory was founded in 1154 by the Earl of Leicester and closed in 1539 during the dissolution of the monasteries. The ruins of the Priory are still visible, but are not open to the public. Ulverscroft Grange and Ulverscroft Manor are two distinctive properties which are owned by the Shuttleworth/Clarke Foundation who provide day visits by the elderly and disabled where lunch and entertainment are provided, enabling them to enjoy this beautiful part of Charnwood.



Walton on the Wolds (population 250)

Walton is situated to the east of the Soar Valley high in the Wolds area of the Borough and is mainly a farming and residential parish. The church dates from the 18th century and has a brick tower. The small village green is surrounded by attractive properties.

Wanlip (population 180)

Wanlip is situated alongside the River Soar in the south of the Borough. This is a small farming and residential village, which has little room for future development. Close to the village is a major sand and gravel extraction works and a resource and reclamation water treatment plant.





Woodhouse (population 373)

Woodhouse, meaning house in a wood, is situated in Charnwood Forest close to Beacon Hill, which is open to the public and is one of the highest points in the Borough. Within the village is the Beaumanor Estate, originally the home of the Despencer family in the 13th century. The present Hall dates from the 1840's and was built by the Herrick Family. The estate is now owned by Leicestershire County Council and is used as a conference venue and as a residential centre for school and youth group activities. The village is mainly residential and farming and it is in a conservation area. The church is 14th century.

Woodhouse Eaves (population 1810)

Woodhouse Eaves, meaning houses on the borders of a wood, is a residential village and is a popular stopping point for walkers from the Beacon and Bradgate parks. Because of the number of visitors the village attracts, there are a number of pubs and eating-places to be found. The village, and in particular Windmill Hill, the site of a windmill which burned down in 1945, offers great views across the Soar Valley towards the Wolds.



Wymeswold (population 1076)

The village is situated to the north east of the Borough and is mainly farming and residential. Some industry is found to the south of the village on a disused RAF airfield but it does not disturb the peace of the village. The church is 14th century and was restored by Pugin in 1844. The village contains some very fine Georgian buildings

and over thirty listed buildings.

FURTHER READING

Charnwood Forest in Old Photographs
by Ian Keil, Wallace Humphrey and Don Wix.
published 1991 by Alan Sutton Bath Press Avon.

Historical Handbook to Loughborough
by Rev W.G. Dimock Fletcher MA
published 1881 by H Wells of Loughborough

The Story of Loughborough 1888 – 1914
by W. Arthur Deacon
published 1979 by Loughborough Echo Press Ltd.

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