

# Rowell Heritage

*the magazine of*

**ROTHWELL ARTS & HERITAGE CENTRE**



**No: 32**

**January ~ March 2020**

**£2.50**

# Rowell Heritage Magazine

Dear Readers,

Welcome to our first magazine of 2020.

In this edition we have tributes to Celia Jones and Rae Greenshields ~ two sadly missed locals who will be instantly recognised by anyone they may have chanced upon.

We have a concise history of the efforts required for Rothwell's public library to come into existence ~ at a time when that very existence is facing its greatest threat.

Did you know there were Rowellian Chelsea Pensioners or that the town's residents in Victorian times included a comedian (an official one, that is)?

There is a feature on one of Rothwell's town farms and some of its celebrated occupants, plus another look back into the archives at some of the more outlandish happenings in the town.

We have the second of our Recollections of the life of Leonard Buswell, growing up in Rothwell; some poetry from Northants poet Joseph Goodson on the bone crypt; alongside our other regular features.

As we start another year, we take time to consider the events of 2019 and look forward to what could be a year of true vision ... 2020!

We hope you enjoy reading this issue and remember, if you have a story to tell or memory to share, we'd love to hear from you.

The Editorial Team

Please could we remind our Friends of the Heritage Centre that your membership subscription for 2020 is now due and can be paid at the centre.

Membership entitles you to a free copy of the Rowell Heritage (usually £2.50) and reduced admission fees at most of our events.

Submissions etc. to:

[editor@rothwellheritage.org.uk](mailto:editor@rothwellheritage.org.uk)

Deadline for submission of articles or adverts for the April ~ June issue is **March 13th, 2020**

Please note that whilst every care is taken to ensure accuracy, no liability will be accepted should any of the contents of this magazine be incorrect.

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# Rothwell's Chelsea Pensioners

by VALERIE PANTER

Whilst doing some research recently for my own family history I came across eight Chelsea Pensioners recorded on the 1851 census for Rothwell. Bearing in mind that the census is just a snapshot in time of who was in a property on census night, I was intrigued as to why there were so many in Rothwell.

So I abandoned the Parker research to delve a little deeper and discovered the following ...

From 1692 until 1955, all Army pensions were administered and paid from the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, which is how we get the term Chelsea Pensioners. But did you know that there are two categories of Chelsea Pensioner?

In-Pensioners, who surrendered their Army pension and were admitted as residents of the Royal Chelsea Hospital, and Out-Pensioners, who lived 'Out' in the UK or abroad and received their pension in cash from agents around the country ~ like the ones living in Rothwell in 1851 listed below:

many invalids made their way back into service: wooden leg, eye-patch and all.

Families of pensioners were not allowed to live with them in the Hospital so many lived in the Greenwich area. In many ways the Hospital was more like a workhouse than a retirement home as we understand it today.

By 1815, there were almost 3,000 sailors living in the hospital. According to recent research by the Greenwich Maritime Institute, the average pensioner entered at 56 although they ranged in age from 12 to 99 (younger pensioners had been injured at sea).

In 1869 the Hospital closed and the Royal Navy began to pay pensions directly to former sailors.

*(Below: A Greenwich Pensioner sits with a Chelsea Pensioner, telling stories of their campaigns: each is disabled in various ways.)*

NAME	BORN	ADDRESS IN 1851 CENSUS	WHERE BORN	LIVING WITH
William Alderman	1775	Meeting Lane	Rothwell	Alone widowed
Benjamin More	1779	Wales Street	Rothwell	Son and daughter, widowed
John Wright	1811	High Street	Leigh, Rutland	Brother
Thomas Burrows	1787	High Street	Rothwell	Wife and stepson
Richard Broom	1778	High Street	Rothwell	Wife and sons
John Hardwick	1782	Madams Hill	Rothwell	Lodger
Joseph Marlow	1782	Madams Hill	Rothwell	Wife
Henry Bambridge	1770	Glen Road	Rothwell	Wife son and daughter

I also discovered on the same census there was a John Eagle (born in Desborough in 1805) living in Crown Yard with his wife and family and he was recorded as a Greenwich Pensioner. I'd not heard of that term before either, so more research followed.

The Royal Hospital, Greenwich (built in 1698) was the naval equivalent of the Royal Hospital, Chelsea. Like Chelsea, it had In-Pensioners and Out-Pensioners and the sailors and marines contributed sixpence a month from their pay towards the upkeep of the hospital.

Pensioners originally wore a uniform of dark grey with a blue lining and brass buttons. The colour of the uniforms changed to brown and then later changed again, to blue. Pensioners who broke the rules were forced to wear a yellow coat known as the 'canary' and make amends with extra chores.

By all accounts the 'Greenwich Geese' (as locals referred to them) were a rowdy bunch and barely resembled our modern image of elderly pensioners. Records show frequent fights and other behaviour shocking to the public morals of the time.

It was not uncommon for pensioners to leave and return (after a waiting period) to the Hospital. Alternatively,



Coloured etching by R. Dighton after himself, 1801. Credit: Wellcome Library, London. Wellcome Images images@wellcome.ac.uk <http://wellcomeimages.org> Published: March 1801

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# Rothwell Public Library: A History (and a Future?)

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by SYLVIA DAVIS

A PUBLIC LIBRARY had been mentioned in the Education Survey of 1833 as being attached to the Holy Trinity Sunday School, but it would most probably have just contained books that were religious in nature and were deemed suitable by the church. Secular libraries began to appear in Britain during the mid-19th Century, and the Free Library Movement was one of the many groups in the mid-Victorian period working for the “improvement of the public” through education.

The Public Libraries Act of 1850 allowed municipal boroughs in England and Wales to establish library facilities and pay for staffing (but not books), using funds raised from the rates at a maximum of half a penny in the pound. Provision could only be made however, if a borough's population exceeded 10,000 and where at least two-thirds of rate payers had voted in favour of such a move in a specific poll. In 1855, the rules were changed and the population requirement was reduced to 5,000.

Local improvement boards and commissions, and parish vestries, were also allowed to become library authorities and the rateable charge for libraries was increased to one penny. This was still not enough for councils to fund new libraries so their growth was heavily dependent on the donations of philanthropists.

Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919) was a Scottish-American industrialist, entrepreneur and philanthropist who was hugely generous in funding the development of libraries in the United States, Britain, Canada and other English-speaking countries. I found an article written about him by the American editor Isaac F. Marcosson (1876-1961) and it contained some surprising information about Rothwell:

*“The smallest Carnegie Library in the world is on the historic Island of Iona just off the Scotch coast. It is less than fifteen feet long and scarcely as wide. It is on a sea-swept spot, and the walls are of granite and nearly two feet thick. It is used by fishermen.*

*The smallest town in England to adopt the free library act, which enables the towns to tax the people one penny for every pound's worth of property, is Rothwell in Northamptonshire. The building used for a library was partially built 300 years ago and never completed. It was intended to be a marketplace.”*

On 24th Feb 1877, the Northampton Mercury reported that Rev Richard Morton, vicar of Rothwell, chaired a meeting at the Grammar School to form a Working Men's Society and Public Library. It was decided that that this institution should be called the Rothwell Temperance Society Reading Room and Public Library. Membership was to be 4 shillings a year and initially, meetings would be held in Rev Morton's schoolroom.

On the first night that the library opened there were 35 subscribers and a few weeks later, schoolchildren were allowed to have tickets too. There is mention of a library room in 1892 so it might well have been used until the opening of the main town library.

The Market House was designed and partly built by Sir Thomas Tresham in 1577 but was not completed for

more than three centuries. Some basic restoration work had been carried out in 1827 but it was in Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee year of 1887 that a movement was started, mainly at the suggestion of Frederick Barlow, to complete the Market House and convert it into a Library and Reading Room for the use of the townspeople.

A Restoration Committee was formed and plans were prepared which if carried out would ‘make the building into what Sir Thomas Tresham intended it should be - an ornament to the district and a benefit to the inhabitants of Rothwell’ (Alfred Chamberlain).

Subscription money was already available to be put towards the funding, a bazaar had been held and various



*Captain John Borlase Maunsell Tibbits, Lord of the Manor of Rothwell, who gifted the Market House*

contributions had been received from concerts. This money was for refurbishment and books for the library/reading room which was to be on the upper floor.

The Lord of the Manor, Captain John Borlase Maunsell Tibbits, had gifted the Market House and any manorial rights that he had over it. He also donated £50 for furnishings and stock. The architect J A Gotch estimated that the cost of the structural alterations would be £700 (around £81,200 today). Frederick Barlow was Chairman of Rothwell Urban District Council at that time so made an application to the Local Government Board for a loan to fund the building work, and in the end the alterations cost £753.

In 1895 the Market House was opened as a meeting room and office for the council, while the upstairs was a reading room.

The newly constituted Library Authority met on the 16th January 1896 and it was decided that a combined post of caretaker and librarian should be created. Miss Elizabeth Ann Tebbutt put in an application and her salary was set at ten shillings a week. It was decided to appoint her if she was prepared to attend a one week training session at Clerkenwell Library and if a satisfactory report on her work was received. All went well and she took up the position.

The new library, located on the first floor, opened on the 19th March 1896 and members were able to borrow books free of charge. Guests were invited to the opening ceremony but had to pay for the public luncheon which cost 2 shillings and sixpence for gentlemen and two shillings for ladies.

The library became the most popular institution in town and in 1899 it issued 11,000 books. In the same year the Library Committee agreed to allow Miss Tebbutt two shillings a week extra over the winter months to cover the additional work required in clearing up and making fires.

In 1902 Miss Tebbutt reported that the library had been established for 6 years, there were 600 borrowers and 70,295 books had been lent out during this time. 11,308 books had been issued during the previous year and fiction and juvenile literature accounted for 10,631 of these. There were 2,321 volumes in the library (1,974 for lending and 347 for reference) and about 40 books were loaned each day.

Kettering Library had been opened in 1904 by Andrew Carnegie himself and it was his very generous donation

that had enabled it to be built. Rothwell's appeal for help was finally responded to in July of that year when Mr Carnegie offered to pay half the debt of £700 on the library if the other half was raised by local effort.

On 18th July 1916 the Library Committee noted the resignation of Elizabeth Tebbutt and she died aged 85 on 1st April 1938. Her gravestone records that she was the first librarian in Rothwell and had held the position for 21 years.

Her brother, Frederick J Tebbutt, was a particularly distinguished Rowellian who held several local posts in the town and in addition he became the Chairman of the

Northamptonshire County Library Committee.

The Public Libraries Act of 1919 reformed the old system, abolished the restriction of the penny rate and enabled county councils to become library authorities. This was a major boon for rural areas as it permitted small parish authorities to relinquish their existing responsibilities to counties. Provision made across wider and less populated areas could be more realistic, based on a broader tax base and more sensible economies of scale. The library service was becoming a national one.

The service in Northamptonshire developed significantly in the 1920s and there is a report in the Northampton Mercury of October 25th 1929 of the 3rd Annual County Library Conference at County Hall. Mr A F Austin, Chairman, described how the Central Library had been housed in the old Northampton gaol ... *"The dark and grimy prison in which Mr Raymond Irwin, the County Librarian, has been confined for the past three years is being transformed, and they are letting in the light and sweetness of knowledge"*.

Figures were provided, indicating the growth and progress of the service in the county. In 1926 there were 63 branches serving a population of 39,000. Now there were

163 branches serving about 100,000 readers, or about two-thirds of the population of Northamptonshire and the Soke of Peterborough.

It was deemed that "Each library centre should be made as attractive as possible and librarians should know their books and try to overcome the reluctance of people to try new authors. They must not take the attitude that non-fiction works were dull and dry. When a new selection of books arrived they should try to manage a talk on them and make suggestions regarding the less well-known authors".

On 22nd Jan 1969 the Evening Telegraph reported



***"A library outranks any other one thing  
a community can do to benefit  
its people.***

***It is a never failing spring in the desert".***  
**(Andrew Carnegie)**

that 'A special five-man library committee is to be set up by Rothwell Urban Council to deal with running and improving the library'. Then, in 1972, Rothwell's Library Authority decided to hand over the service to Northamptonshire County Council. By now the first floor of the Market House had become inadequate and people had been pressing for a purpose-built library in a central location which would be easily accessible to all residents, including the elderly and infirm.

On 4th April 1972, while the library was closed for Easter, the old stock was taken away and nearly 10,000 books from the county library at Northampton were brought in. All this was in preparation for the proposed

move to a new library which it was anticipated (wrongly) would be in three years' time and it was stressed that the public would have the advantage of being able to draw on the county stock of over half a million titles.

The new library was to be built on the site of the grammar school which had been demolished in 1970 and which in turn had been built on the site of St Mary's Chapel. It wasn't until June 1984 however, that the foundations of the library were actually laid. The building was completed exactly two years later and was able to display 16,000 books on the shelves, compared with the 6,000 books in the old premises. It also contained a meeting room and small kitchen.

This is the programme of the official opening:

Northamptonshire County Council Northamptonshire Libraries Opening of Rothwell Library Thursday 31st July 1986 7.30 p.m. Guests to be seated by 7.20 p.m. Welcome by the Chairman of the Leisure and Libraries Committee Councillor J. L. H. Bailey, M.A. Councillor George Pollard, Chairman of Northamptonshire County Council, will declare the Library Open The Mayor of Kettering, Councillor J. W. Cosby, will propose a vote of thanks to the County Council Councillor S. P. Ogle, Chairman of Rothwell Town Council will second the vote of thanks Light refreshments and inspection of Library by guests
---

Details of the construction:

<b><u>Technical Details</u></b>	
Architect:	Director of Land and Buildings
Mechanical & Electrical Consultant:	B. L. Joslin & Associates
Structural Engineering Consultant:	Tapsell Wade
Building Area:	373 m2 (4,015 sq ft)
Cost per m2:	£557.26
Contract Cost:	£254,000
Possession:	4th June 1984
Completion:	4th June 1986
General Contractor:	John Cox Construction (Midlands) Ltd (In liquidation November 1985)
Mechanical Sub Contractor:	Clelac Plumbers Ltd
Electrical Contractor:	T. F. Cave and Sons Ltd
Internal Doors: Supplier:	Sharpland and Petter Ltd
Exterior Windows and Doors: Supplier:	F. Pratten and Company Ltd
Brickwork: Supplier:	Caernarvon Red Wirecut Sand-faced bricks Butterly Brick Company

**A new chapter is about to start in the history of Rothwell Library for it will no longer be part of the statutory service in Northamptonshire. The days ahead will be challenging and it is very much hoped that such a valuable asset will be retained for the town. The Friends of Rothwell Library are to be commended for doing everything possible to ensure that it stays open.**



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## CELIA JONES

1941-2019

~ A TRIBUTE ~

Celia Cotton, daughter to Cliff and Mabel and brother to Michael was born on 1st June 1941 at their house in Ponder Street, Rothwell. Celia attended Rothwell Secondary Modern and was honoured to have been the school's Head Girl. A life-long Rowellian, she went on to live at Cecil Street before marrying David Jones and moving to Rushton Road.

Celia went on to make a tremendous contribution to the life of the Town. She was often seen cycling the streets of Rothwell to provide home help to the elderly ~ and went well beyond her job description, visiting her ladies and gentlemen, getting their shopping and making Christmas visits with her freshly baked mince pies.

Celia served on the Rothwell Town Community and Sports Association Committee and was involved in all the fundraising events, often preparing and serving refreshments. She also volunteered for the Manor House Coffee Morning which moved to the Sunday School buildings, and took over the organization of the Rothwell Methodist Church Afternoon Teas when Mrs. Read retired.

Celia was a member of Rothwell Methodist

Church and the Thursday Club, Mothers Club and Tuesday Afternoon Fellowship that all met there, and was a member of the Labour Party.

When David became a Councillor and eventually served as Chair of the Council on two occasions, Celia threw herself into civic life and particularly enjoyed meeting and encouraging projects that helped the disadvantaged. Celia had a kind and loving heart for all, but especially towards those who found themselves living through hard times. In honour of Celia's commitment to community life, she and David were invited to the Buckingham Palace Garden Party.

Celia died in the 79th year of her remarkable life that was filled with love and kindness to all who had the privilege of knowing her. She has left her mark in the hearts of many and will be fondly remembered as a woman of tremendous kindness and care who did much to improve the lives of many in the Town that she served, loved and lived in all her days.

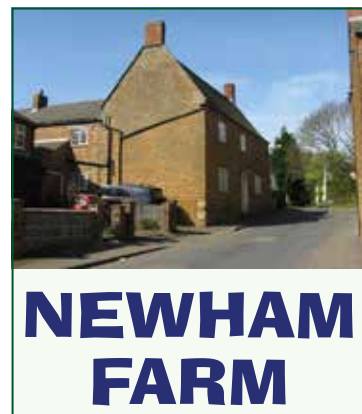
Our thoughts and prayers are with her family, husband David, sons Chris and Nick, their wives Les and Sarah and her seven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

# Rothwell's Town Farms:

**Y**ears ago there were many 'town' farms in Rothwell, parts of some can still be seen today. One was Newham Farm, which was sandwiched between Wales Street, Fox Street and High Hill Avenue, with the fields a few kilometres to the west towards Harrington.

The photograph on the right shows the farm in Wales Street as it is today. Other images in this article were taken from the farmyard.

*Michael J Richardson has given us his account of staying with relatives at the farm. This is his story and photographs. Some readers will remember the family well.*



I have many happy memories of this house when it was a working farmhouse. My great-uncles, Thomas and Charles Nichols, and great-aunt, Emily, lived and farmed from there. My grandfather, Harry Brice Richardson, was a half-brother, one of the 14 (*I think*) children of Andrew Nichols (1860-1939).

In the early 1950s I was a young teenager and would spend the school summer holidays with Uncle Tom and Aunt Emmy. They were brother and sister and they shared half the house, while Charlie, another brother, lived in the other half with his wife Mary and their son James.

Tom and Charlie ran the farm, which I assume was tenanted, but I don't remember any regular farm workers. It was a 'town farm', with the farmyard at the back of the house (which I have since discovered is a Grade II listed building) going through to High Hill Avenue, with the fields along Harrington Road, if I recall correctly.

I don't remember them keeping any cattle or other stock but they must have done, because no work was done on a Sunday except a walk round the fields to check on the stock. The only concession to Sunday work was carrying a sickle to cut down



*Building the corn ricks (1952)*

thistles as they walked through the fields.

As my visits were for the summer holidays, harvest was in full swing. I think the main cereal crop was barley, recalling the scratchiness of it.

In the 1950s, before the days of combine harvesters, corn was cut with a binder. The first task was to cut a swathe of corn with a scythe all round the field to clear the way for the tractor and binder to get in. I thought the binder was magic, and could not work out how it could cut and collect a bundle of corn, tie it up into a sheaf, and drop it behind.

The sheaves were collected and stacked in groups of six or eight (stooks) in the field to allow the grain to dry. As the binder got nearer to the centre of the field, the small island of corn still to be cut was carefully watched to catch any rabbits making a bid for freedom.

Tractors were still fairly new technology, at least on this farm, and horses were used to cart the corn back to the farmyard where the stacks were built. When the stooks were dry and ready to be brought in, the horses were hitched to the carts and taken out to the field to bring the dried sheaves back to the farmyard.

There they were built into rectangular stacks,



*1952 view of Rothwell Church and farmhouse as seen from the top of a newly built corn stack. The largest building, on the left with two prominent chimneys, was one wing of the large farmhouse.*



*Gathering in the harvest (1953). The horses were 'Metal' and 'Nellie'. The farm yard has gone and is now Newham Close*

tapering off at the top to a ridge, then thatched to keep the rain out until the threshing machine visited later in the year.

It was thought a great treat to be allowed to sit on the horse on the way out to the field but, to be honest, it was very uncomfortable without a saddle with hip bones digging into my nether regions.

Tom and Emmy's part of the house went back from the street, with the main living room looking on to the street ~ a favourite lookout point. There was a cool pantry with marble work tops, a living, working kitchen, a sort of scullery, with curing bacon etc. hanging from hooks, and a wood store.

Upstairs there were several bedrooms and, forever in my memory, a most magnificent florally decorated lavatory basin (I wonder if it survived?), with squares of Radio Times and the local newspaper on a piece of string.

I mentioned this at the Waitrose checkout recently, in respect of a possible shortage due to Brexit, and the cashier said 'Oh yes, we were taught about that in history at school!'

The back door led out to the farmyard and outbuildings ~ grain stores, tractor sheds, stables, stackyard, etc., and in the southwest corner a walled garden with fruit trees.

Uncle Tom was a well-known figure in the town and served on the Town Council for over 20 years, with three spells as Chairman.

He was very active in many local groups,



*Emily Nichols (1892-1975)*



*Emily Nichols and Jean Nichols at Newham Farm (1953). Jean Fraser (Nichols) has told me that the other two people in the photograph are Mia (Maria) Nichols on the left and her daughter, Emily, on the right. Mia's husband was Fred Nichols ~ they lived in the Wolverton/Bletchley area, so were probably visiting to help with the harvest.*

especially both Rothwell and Kettering Conservative associations and the Holy Trinity Church and its groups. He served in the choir for many years, and was the official cross bearer for more than 50 years.

Both Tom and Emmy were active churchgoers for much of their lives, but something resulted in their alienation in later years. A visit to the bone crypt still remains in my mind.

Tom was also well known for looking after the cloakroom at dances and other events in Tresham Hall, spending his free time doing the most intricate of fine patterned knitting.

***I probably only had two or three holidays at the farm and occasional visits en-route between Nottingham (where I went to University) and Redbourn, Herts, where I lived, but they left lasting memories of Rothwell.***



*Tommy Nichols (1898-1982)*



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Rachel Gloria (Rae) Greenshields

# A Lovely Friendship

by ANNIE MACCORMICK

*Rae sometimes accompanied me on some cold, wet and windy visits and on some scorching hot days too when there was hardly a breath of breeze. She was always smiling and never complained, instead she drew and painted alongside me, cheered me on and passed on tips and information and wisdom from a lifetime of art. She was a delightful companion and I deeply valued her friendship.*

We began our visits together on 12th May 2010. At first I was hesitant to take her with me because I had just started my book about the gardens at Kelmarsh Hall and I thought, foolishly, that she might be a distraction. How wrong I was! She loved being in the open air with me, painting the flowers and listening to the birds singing in the trees. She helped me immensely by choosing a photograph from a selection supplied by my husband and she produced a lovely portrait of me to be printed in my book. It really flattered me as not only was it skilfully painted by Rae, but she had chosen a photograph taken some years previously!

This was Rae's forte ~ portraiture. She painted very natural pictures of people ~ but now she was trying something new. She wanted to learn from me the delicate art of flower painting. That is why she wanted to come with me to the Kelmarsh Hall gardens. As it happened, we taught each other because Rae was a genius with colour ~ which is my weakness ~ and I passed on tips to her about line and shape.

Rae was great fun to be with and she had a good sense of humour. There was a time when we were shut in the Chinese Room in the Hall when we walked from the garden, at almost closing time, to look at the wallpaper and to compare reds. Having been shut in by mistake (the room has a concealed exit when the door is closed) we had to shout long and loud to be let out. We laughed with relief when we were let out by a smiling, apologetic guide.

There was an occasion in the walled garden when I heard a small grunt and I looked up to see that

somehow Rae had fallen down into the camping chair and her legs comically shot up into the air. At first she didn't see the funny side but then she joined in with my loud hearty laughter!

The Kelmarsh Hall Gardens proved to be an ideal location for Rae. There was the vinery, full of exotic plants like Brugmansia, lilies and orchids which we could draw and paint if the weather grew grey and wet. There was the cosy Lime Shed Gallery which was a good meeting place for a chat with visitors. Also the café which served delicious food. There were lovely pictures to look at when the art exhibitions were hung there. Being a very sociable person, Rae enjoyed all this.

On alternate Monday afternoons we have our art club in Rothwell. I first met Rae in the gallery upstairs in the Arts and Heritage Centre in Bridge Street. We moved to the United Reform Church in Fox Street where I shared a large table with Rae and got to know her better and then the group moved back to the Arts and Heritage Centre where it still meets.

There Rae sat in her usual place in the top corner of the room where the light from the bay window fell onto her table. She was always kind in sharing her opinions with us if asked, but once she had arranged her art equipment and started to paint, she ceased talking and went into her own little world. Her concentration was remarkable.

At her funeral, packets of bird seed and wild flower seed were given out. This was such a lovely and typical gesture.

*Thank you Rae for illuminating my life.*



## Introduction by SYLVIA DAVIS to the article by ANN FEATHERSTONE

VAL PANTER made a fortuitous discovery this summer when she spotted an unusual entry in the 1841 Census. It was for a man named Tom Lawrence who was staying in Pudding Bag Lane, Rothwell, where most of the residents were agricultural labourers.

Tom however, was listed as 'comedian'.

City or Borough of \_\_\_\_\_ Parish or Township of Rothwell Enumeration Schedule 33

PLACE	MOVERS	NAMES of such Persons who slept therein the preceding Night.	AGE and SEX		PROFESSION, TRADE, EMPLOYMENT, or of INDEPENDENT MEANS.	Where Born	
			1	2		3	4
<u>Pudding Bag Lane</u>		<u>Thomas Lawrence</u>	<u>20</u>		<u>Comedian</u>	<u>N</u>	
		<u>Agnes</u>	<u>20</u>			<u>N</u>	
		<u>Stephen</u>	<u>2</u>			<u>N</u>	

When Val mentioned this in an email, I decided to see if I could find out more about Thomas Lawrence

and started by looking for him in later Census records. Then I delved a bit further and came across some newspaper articles featuring a Tom Lawrence whose 130 year old joke book had been published in a work by Professor Jacky Bratton and Dr Ann Featherstone.

It seemed very possible that this might be the man who had been staying in Rothwell in 1841 so I decided to contact Ann. I didn't really expect a reply but I couldn't have been more wrong ~ Ann was delightful and so helpful. She had a busy writing and speaking schedule but she very kindly offered to write an article for our magazine and we are honoured to include it here.

Ann is a retired lecturer and teacher as well as an author. She writes non-fiction books and articles

# Thomas Lawrence

THE CENSUS enumerator on 6 June 1841 discovered an unusual resident in Pudding Bag Lane, Rothwell: Thomas Lawrence, aged 20, a comedian.

In the 19th century, 'comedian' did not have the same specific meaning as it has today. Then it was a catch-all term for a dramatic performer, an actor.

It was the week of the Rowell Feast, so Tom was doubtless there in the company of other showmen and travelling theatricals to provide entertainment in a make-shift theatre or 'fit-up'. He was a Londoner, from a family of performers and showmen.

His father, also Thomas, was a London showman who ran a travelling theatrical company, and his uncle Morris travelled a peep-show (an old-fashioned optical illusion) around Devon and Cornwall, settling down in Plymouth where he opened a firework factory. Morris died alongside his son and seven other men in 1863 in a terrific explosion at his factory.

Tom Lawrence's early career is a mystery. There is little doubt that he was an itinerant performer, attaching himself to shows which travelled the country, attending fairs and feasts, performing in barns and inn yards.

Ten years after his brief stay in Rothwell, he turns up in Spalding, Lincolnshire, a member of Mr Douglas's theatrical company. This was an important engagement. Douglas's portable theatre was a large show which travelled the Midlands and

East of England and it was here that Tom, now a mature 31-year old, gained valuable professional experience.

Portable theatres were common sights in towns and rural areas. They were theatres taken to communities on the back of wagons, built up in a field or a large pub yard and opened for a week or a month or six months. Wooden shutters held together by pins and brackets formed the walls, the wagons formed the stage and the roof was canvas, held up by king-poles inside.

They had scenery, props, costumes, a small orchestra and a company numbering twenty or more. They performed the latest melodramas, old plays, Shakespeare and knockabout farces. Tom Lawrence was well placed to learn the craft of acting.

But by 1867, Tom seems to have abandoned his theatrical career and joined the circus. Why he made this change is not known, but theatres in the 1860s were in the doldrums, and it may be that the circus simply offered better money. And was not quite such a dramatic move as it might first appear; Tom becomes a circus clown which, in the 19th century circus, required him to talk as well as cavort.

He was with Powell, Footit and Clarke's Great Allied Circus and later Footit's Allied Circus for around five years and in that time gained some little fame as Lawrence the Clown. It was during this period that Tom compiled his 'gag books', a collection of the poems, wheezes, speeches and



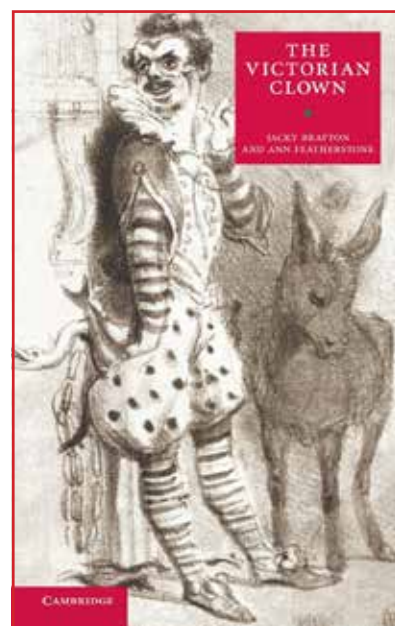


and is also a historical novelist with two published novels to her name. Her particular interest is the 19th century and its popular entertainments: music hall, theatre, circus and fairs.

Ann has appeared on 'The One Show', 'The World's Oldest Joke' (with Sir Michael Grade) and in documentaries about fairs and circuses on BBC4.

She has twice been a guest expert on 'Who Do You Think You Are?', once with Sheridan Smith and in the 2017 series with Sir Ian McKellen.

In May 2019, she appeared in the second series of BBC1's 'A House Through Time'.



## ACTOR, CIRCUS CLOWN, THEATRE PROPRIETOR

### A brief life of Thomas Lawrence (1821-1895)

short dramatic pieces that he performed in the ring.

Writing them up in two ordinary exercise books, they formed the basis for my book with Professor Jacky Bratton called *The Victorian Clown* (CUP, 2006).

The circus clown's job was crucial to the success of a circus. Filling in the gaps in a performance so that the programme ran smoothly without any hitches or leaving an empty ring, he was glue that held it all together.

Between the equestrians leaving the ring and the tumblers entering, Tom would run out and keep the audience entertained, telling dreadful jokes ~ "What is the difference between a canoe and Joan of Arc? One is made of wood and the other is Maid of Orleans" ~ insulting the ring master ~ "They say that handsome children always grow up into ugly men, so you must have been very handsome when you was a child" ~ and discoursing on subjects as varied as poverty, money, marriage, soldiers and a leg of mutton!

It was hard work, travelling the country, performing every night, helping with the maintenance of the circus and supporting his wife, Sarah, and their growing family. But he seems to have been able to put some money by, because in 1873 he places the first of many advertisements in the Era, the trade newspaper for the theatrical profession. He wants 'an ENTIRE THEATRICAL COMPANY' for his new portable theatre.

It was probably built in Nottingham, where Tom seems to have friends or relatives, and was a large structure holding, it was claimed, up to 1,000 people. From Nottingham he went to Burton on Trent, then a popular town for travelling shows, and from there into Lincolnshire, ending his first year's business back in Nottingham for the October Goose Fair.

He called it Lawrence's Great Allied Theatre, no doubt after Powell, Footit and Clarke's circus company where he spent those formative years.

By the 1880s, and into his 60s, Tom Lawrence was still traversing the country with his portable theatre. Times were getting more difficult, however, for travelling folks. The increasing bureaucracy in local boards and councils regarding showmen and their licences, the availability of pitches and the continuing hostility towards them shown by many churchmen, made life very difficult for portable shows.

Tom Lawrence died on 5th July 1895, aged 74, in Glasgow. Not known for travelling his portable in Scotland, he was perhaps in the city to sell his Great Allied Theatre. A Mrs Ferguson bought it and continued to travel it well into the 20th century.

From London to Rothwell to Nottingham to Burton on Trent and finally Glasgow, Tom's life spanned circus and theatre, fairgrounds and fetes, highs and lows. What changes he must have seen. What a life to look back on.

**ANN FEATHERSTONE**



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Mr Barton has suffered with a hearing loss since the young age of 8 years old, so has been using hearing aids for most of his childhood and adult life. Just before Christmas he accidentally dropped his hearing aids in the toilet (we are almost all guilty of dropping objects such as mobile phones down the loo). Panicking on how he would manage to carry on through his day to day life without his hearing aids, he used some 15 years old NHS hearing aids that have been in the draw to see him through - unfortunately having no luck, continuing to struggle.

Hear4u ordered Mr Barton some Unitron Moxi Fit 600 as requested by the customer. These were received next day and Mr Barton was booked in for a home visit delivery as soon as possible.



Our fantastic audiologist arrived at Mr Barton's house prompt with all the equipment needed, including his new hearing aids! Paris professionally fitted the hearing aids and made sure Mr Barton was comfortable with the fit and settings of the aid. From the moment of the hearing aids being switched on Mr Barton said he could hear his wife talking to the dog in the kitchen. Mr Barton had not heard certain sounds for a long time, for example if people are in a different room having a conversation. He could also hear the wind and the rain on the conservatory roof again something he could not hear with his old hearing aids.

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Mr Barton was delighted he was receiving his new hearing aids in the comfort of his own home, not having to go outside of his comfort zone or worrying how he will travel to his appointment. Paris was very thorough explaining procedures and the technology of the hearing aid, for example; how the hearing aids work, plus how to change wax traps, batteries, domes and what is included in the Hear4u package. Mr Barton is over the moon with his hearing aids, how they fit, how they look - they are smaller, sleeker and better sounding compared to his old hearing aids.

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# From The Archives ...

by **STUART IRONS**

There was obviously not much in the way of news happening around Rothwell in early 1875, as these stories from the *Northampton Mercury* of 23rd January would indicate. Good to see they had light-hearted “*filler*” stories back then too, though I’m guessing the cat drowner wasn’t overly amused ...

## ★ R O T H W E L L ★

**THUNDERSTORM:** On Sunday morning, at about three o’clock, a violent storm of wind and hail, accompanied lightning and thunder, an occurrence most unusual at this season of the year, passed over Rothwell.

The storm lasted for about three quarters of an hour, during which the flashes were frequent and exceedingly vivid, and the peals of thunder extraordinarily long and loud.



**SERIOUS EFFECTS OF A SCRATCH:** A few days ago, a man, named Sharman, was engaged in drowning a cat, he received a scratch from the terrified creature.

He thought but little of it at the time, but the day following his hand began to swell with frightful rapidity. Removed to the Infirmary, it was found that nothing could be done for him, and he has returned home with his hand in a shocking state.

His condition is considered to be very critical and fears are entertained lest his reason should become affected.

**THE TOWN TIME:** The clock in the venerable church tower, by which the other clocks in the town are usually regulated, has lately taken to certain freaks unworthy of its age and position. For several weeks past its habits have been most irregular, and during the last few days it has been a quarter of an hour in advance of the railway time at Kettering and Desborough.

On Sunday, the farmers driving from a distance to the places of worship, imagining themselves to be in good time found the services already advanced, on their arrival.

It seems that the clock hands are loose, and sway to and fro with wind. We have also been informed that the little boys, aware of this, every now and then make the clock a mark for stone throwing, for the express purpose of displacing the pointers.

We commend the care of the clock to the parish churchwardens and of the little sprites of mischief to the town constable, as it is very needful that some remedy should be provided for our present irregular chronometry.

---

*On a more serious note ...*

**Northampton Mercury ~ 30th March 1894**

## SHOCKING CARRIAGE ACCIDENT AT ROTHWELL

A shadow has been cast over the Easter festival at Rothwell by the death, the result of a carriage accident, of Miss Florence Brown, daughter of Mr A. Brown, confectioner, &c, of Rothwell.

It appears that on Sunday afternoon Miss Maud Tailby and Miss Nellie Kilborn, of Desborough, accompanied Miss Georgina Brown and the deceased lady, all of Rothwell, and went out for drive in a little four-wheeled pony carriage.

All went well until they had descended the steep Windmill Hill, from Kettering to Rothwell, and about quarter of mile from the latter place. When the foot of the hill was reached Miss Tailby, who was driving, touched the pony with a whip, and the animal suddenly plunged forward, thus causing the front portion of the carriage to touch its flank.

This naturally caused the animal to increase its speed, and Miss Georgina Brown becoming alarmed, jumped out of the carriage, calling to her sister Florence to follow her example. Beyond few bruises Miss Georgina Brown was uninjured, but her sister, who had followed her, fell with a sickening thud to the ground. The other occupants

fortunately retained their presence of mind, and did all they could to stop the frightened pony.

Although stunned by her fall, Miss Georgina Brown at once ran to her sister’s aid, but it was apparent that she had sustained very serious injuries. A young man from Kettering rendered all the assistance in his power, and fortunately at this period Mr T. Dunkley, the captain of the Rothwell Fire Brigade, arrived on the scene.

Mr and Mrs Dyke, who were driving to Kettering to catch a train, came a minute or two later, and very kindly gave up their vehicle for the conveyance of the unfortunate young woman to her home. Dr. John More was speedily in attendance and did his best for the injured girl but despite all his efforts she died about four o’clock on Monday morning.

It is supposed that the deceased’s skull was fractured. The unfortunate young woman, who is about 22 years of age, was widely known throughout this district, and much sympathy is felt for her relatives.

At the New Inn, Rothwell, Tuesday afternoon, the inquest was held by Mr J. T. Parker. The jury returned a verdict of “Accidental Death.”





# Janet Bassett Gallery

## Wild Nature Exhibition

14th December 2019 — 1st February 2020

As winter arrives, so does our new exhibition. Warm yourself in the gallery as you explore some brilliant local artists – students from Montsaye Academy and artists Annette E Sykes, Brenda McKetty, Pat Bustin, Stella Benford, Conrad Johnson, Peter Watts, Anna De La Mare and Caroline Duffield.



Upstairs at Rothwell Arts & Heritage Centre. Mon: 10am — 3pm & Tue to Sat: 10am — 12.30pm. 14-16 Bridge Street, Rothwell, Northamptonshire, NN14 6JW. [rothwellheritage.org.uk](http://rothwellheritage.org.uk) | T: 01536 711550 | E: [rothwellheritage@gmail.com](mailto:rothwellheritage@gmail.com)



A large, stylized white letter 'B' is superimposed over an abstract painting. The painting features warm, earthy tones of red, orange, and brown, with some cooler blue and green accents. The brushstrokes are visible and expressive, creating a textured, layered effect. The 'B' is positioned on the left side of the image, with its right side overlapping the text area.

# B

# Janet Bassett Gallery

In this edition, we look at the work of talented local artist **Conrad Johnson**.

Conrad qualified as an art teacher in the early sixties and he is now able to enjoy his passion to 'create' full time! He believes that the enjoyment of making images is mainly in the 'doing' – so when painting he likes to actually see the brush-strokes favouring a painterly style. His subjects can range from portraits and figures, to landscapes and still life; and the style from representational to abstract. However, it is usually the landscape that provides initial stimulus for most of his subject matter. Being inspired by an image glimpsed in nature, he makes a series of sketches before carefully composing the picture, or he will compose from photographs of the 'glimpses' which he will then work at on the pc, cutting, pasting, cloning and resizing, experimenting with colour, tone, shape and texture. Then, this elaborately worked out composition provides the impetus to begin painting.



Discover local art in our gallery upstairs at the Rothwell Arts & Heritage Centre



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Early Session (6pm - 7.15pm) for Years 5+6

Later Session (7.30pm - 9pm) for Year 7 and up

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meets at the Community Centre in Rothwell and new members are always welcome, as are adult volunteers.

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# Recollections... by Leonard Buswell (1909-2000)

*Back in 1991 I asked my father, Leonard Buswell, to write down some of his early memories. In the early 20th century he lived at 14/16 Bridge Street ~ where the Heritage Centre now stands (just two stone cottages in those days) ~ and helped his father with the family plumbing and decorating business, based in the yard at the back of the premises.*

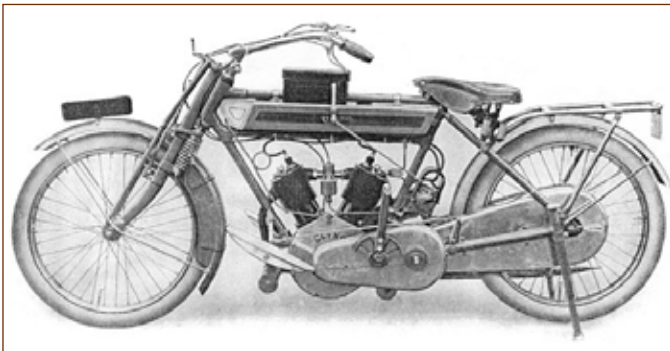
*In the second of these recollections he describes some of his early life, starting work and building a business.*

[Explanatory comments in square brackets.]

JEAN BUSWELL

**M**Y FIRST recollection is when my father took me along to the fair and I saw a Rowell Fair engine. I was then 4 years old. The next thing I remember was my fifth birthday party, after which I started my education at the C of E School in Rothwell. [The school closed in the 1960s and the library and fire station were built on the site].

Once a week my mother went to Thorpe Malsor to see her mother and father and I walked there with her, and she pushed a pram with my brother. As I was not very old I got tired when we walked back after stopping for tea.



*An early Clyno two-stroke model ~ at that time made at a factory in Finedon*

Occasionally my father would come to Thorpe later on his motorbike. It was an old 'Clyno' two-stroke without gears. He had to run with it to start it and then jump on. I also had to run and jump on behind and hold on to his leather belt, but it was better than walking.

Sometimes Mr Sumpter would come round Thorpe delivering bread and he would let me ride home to Rothwell on his bread cart.

My grandfather on my mother's side was head gardener at Thorpe Malsor Hall, so I was able to walk round the grounds and lake when the owners were not in residence. At that time there was no electricity or gas at Thorpe, and they had to use oil lamps for lighting and cook on the fire, and although there was no electricity at Rothwell we had gas light and a rather primitive gas cooker.

When I was eleven I took the eleven-plus exam, and

though I didn't get a scholarship to Grammar School, I managed to pass for Kettering Central School. I was not keen on going, as I had to do two hours' homework each evening and was also supposed to do an hour's music practice, but I am afraid this got neglected. I had to take sandwiches for dinner as there were no school dinners at this time.

Once I started school at Kettering my pocket money was increased to 6d a week. I could now afford to go out on Saturday afternoon, and with a friend I should go to the Co-op for a bar of sticky toffee, and walk to Desborough through the fields and go to the matinee at the cinema. The toffee cost 1½d and the cinema 1½d so we had a good half day out for 3d (in old money).

About this time I became interested in the wireless, and with my friend Bernard Brown [son of Arthur Brown, Confectioner, who had a shop at 6 Market Place], we decided to make a crystal set [an early form of radio].

In the evening we were given 2d to buy chips for supper, so we decided that instead of chips we would save up for parts to make a crystal set. We also walked home from Kettering some days and saved 3d bus fare.

Eventually we had saved sufficient to send off to Gamages for a reel of enamelled copper wire, crystal and 'cat's whisker'. We found a cardboard former and wound the wire on this to form a coil. We then fitted a slider on a rod and moved this up and down to tune in.



*A home made crystal radio set*

We were delighted to find that this worked, and we could receive Daventry 5XX after erecting a long high aerial.

When we constructed a radio it was the usual practice in those days to mount the controls on an ebonite panel to insulate them. As we were hard up we used a piece of 3-ply wood. To improve the insulation we lit a small fire in Bernard Brown's yard and put the plywood on a tray. We begged one or two candles and melted the wax in the tray, the theory being to impregnate the wood and leave a film of wax.

How effective or otherwise this was I do not know, but anyway the radio worked after a fashion.

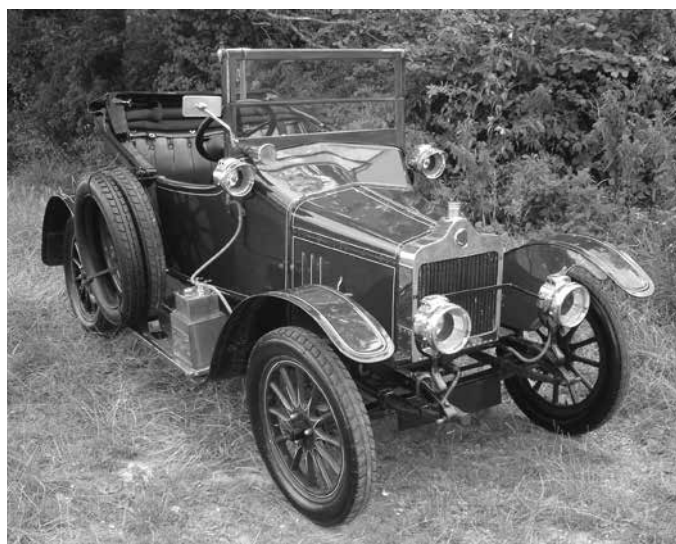
I should have stayed at school for four years, but in the Easter before I was due to leave in August there was an outbreak of smallpox in Kettering, and being afraid I might catch it I did not return to school after the holiday, but started to work in my Father's plumbing and decorating business [at 14/16 Bridge Street – where the Heritage Centre is now].

We started work at 7.30am which I thought was a bit early, but was told that my grandfather had worked from 6am to 6pm and sometimes walked to work as far away as Kelmars, which was 6 miles in each direction.

When I first started to work I was given 2s 6d a week, and out of this managed to save 1s or 1s 3d.

At this time we did not have a car but pushed a hand truck with our steps, planks and buckets all over Rothwell, and occasionally to surrounding villages or farms, and then went backwards and forwards on our bikes.

Sometimes in the winter the village pump at Harrington would get frozen, and I had to go and help



*The 1914 Standard open tourer*

our plumber repair it. It was a very cold job which I did not enjoy. I also walked around Rothwell repairing frozen pipes.

In 1923 we got our first car. It was a 1914 Standard, an open tourer fitted with brass carbide lamps and no self starter and a top speed of barely 35 mph, but it was better than walking.

By this time we were beginning to take an interest in girls, so decided we must learn to dance. We started to go to 'Socials' in the Congo [Congregation Church, now the United Reform Church, in Fox Street] schoolroom on Thursday evenings. This cost us 6d and we had to change our shoes and wear 'dancing pumps'.

Sometimes we would also go to the Church Hall at Desborough on Saturday night and this cost 4d. We also went occasionally to dances in the surrounding villages. I remember on one occasion we went round Thorpe for a walk and found there was a dance in progress, and seeing someone we knew was there, we quickly walked home to Rothwell, changed our clothes and walked back to Thorpe, went to the dance, and afterwards walked home again.

We used to decorate new houses for local builders and I often went to Mr Lewis's Carpenter's shop [in The Avenue] and primed all the doors, windows and skirting boards before they were taken to the building site. The window sashes were then brought to our paint shop and my father would glaze them.

We bought our putty in 1 cwt kegs, and usually when we got to the bottom of the keg it would be too hard to use, so I had to add linseed oil and 'knock it up'. This was a very messy job as I had to finish off by kneading it in my hands.

In those days there was no Dulux etc. We bought white lead as a paste in small kegs. We had powdered red lead which we mixed with it to make priming. We also bought yellow ochre and burnt umber in 28 lb kegs. This was used to mix graining colour and thinned with linseed oil and turpentine. Grained front doors to imitate oak were very popular at this time.

The white lead was used to paint the exterior of windows, mixed with linseed oil and a small amount of dryers. The ochre and umber were used to mix brown paint or to tint the white lead when required. The coloured exterior paint was then varnished to improve wearing qualities and to give it a shine.

The best houses had their exterior doors either grained and varnished or white enamelled. The enamel was thick and gooey and was difficult to

apply. It had to be brushed about in all directions and then 'laid off', otherwise you would end up with a lot of runners. It took three times as long to apply as modern gloss paints, but the finish was harder and the shine far superior.

When I had mastered the art of painting and mixing colour, I next had to learn paperhanging. To do this I was sent on cheaper jobs with a boy to do the pasting. We would take our kit on the truck and paper a room on a Saturday morning for 5s. We had to be cheap as there were at that time several women who went round papering for other people for about half a crown.

We bought barrels of powder colour in red, blue, green, ochre and umber, and large cakes of whiting by the ton.

On spring and summer evenings I would go up the yard to the 'paint shop' [an outhouse used for storage] with my father. We would break up lumps of whiting into a large keg and soak it with a bucket of water. We mixed some of the powder, and with this we were able to tint the whiting. We then added size to bind it. Ladies used to bring buckets and ask for 6d of whiting or 2 shillings worth of colourwash, which served as a cheap form of distemper.

At the end of the decorating season when our merchants were changing the wallpaper books, we would buy all the remaining papers from the old book at a very keen price.

We put this into racks in our 'paper shop' [another outhouse], and women came from miles around to buy it as we were able to offer it at very low prices. In some cases it was as low as 4d a roll, most of it was 6d, and the best quality was 1s a roll.

The work on new houses was very cut price and we made hardly anything out of it but it was somewhere to put the men in the bad weather when most people did not want you to work inside and it was not fit to paint outside.

Prices for new houses got lower and lower until we were doing all the plumbing and painting inside and out including the spouting, glazing, painting and distempering, also supplying and fitting the bath, toilet, sink etc for about £26. In those days not many houses had central heating.

By the nineteen thirties I was saving up to get married, and as I was only earning about £2 10s 0d a week, decided to do something to supplement my income.

I had always been interested in radio, or wireless as it was then called, and had made a number of battery

sets, but about this time a number of commercial *All Electric* sets appeared.

I had managed to save about £20 and with this I bought two sets from my wholesaler and put them in our bay window for sale [at this time 14/16 Bridge Street was just two stone cottages]. After work I canvassed the new council houses as soon as they were completed and managed to sell quite a lot of *All Electric* radios, as most people had only got battery sets which used accumulators and 120 volt HT batteries.

A good radio at that time cost about 12 guineas, and this represented about a month's wages to most people, so they were well worth selling.

I also bought myself a charger and started to charge accumulators for 4d or 6d. For three years I took nothing from this work but ploughed the money back to purchase stock.

In 1934/5 we had alterations to the house, and taking out one of the bay windows, replaced it with a small shop window, opening the shop in the evenings and Saturday afternoons. ■

*The final part of the Recollections series will appear in next quarter's magazine.*



351 JOHN O' LONDON'S WEEKLY INTERIOR WORLD

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Look for this sign

1931 advertisement for one of the new all-electric radios  
(Photo: Copyright © 2016 Mike Edwards, The KB Museum)



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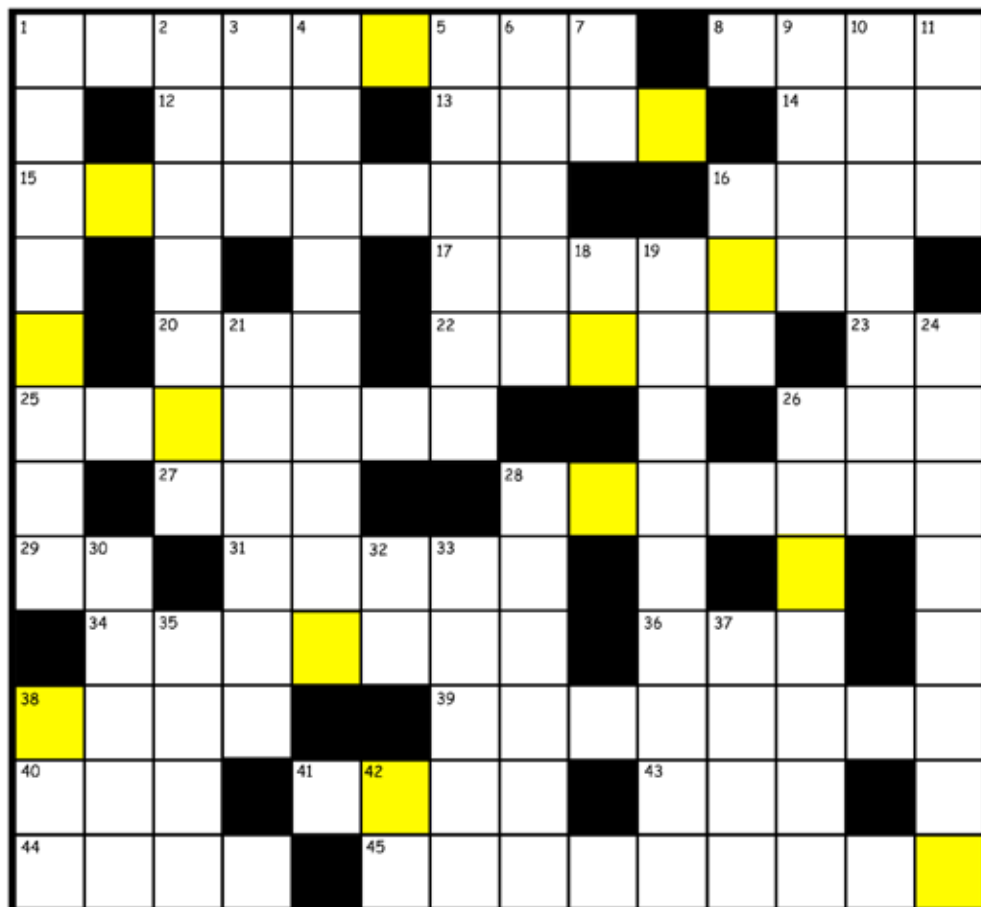


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# Rothwell Ladies Thursday Club

THURSDAY CLUB



We are a non-denominational group but generally meet in The Methodist Church, Market Square, Rothwell NN14 6BW every Thursday evening during school term time at 8pm. *Admission: £2 for members and £2.50 for non-members, which includes tea/coffee and biscuits.*

Ladies of all ages are welcome to come along – we offer you a warm welcome and a variety of speakers and events to suit all taste buds! *Come along one Thursday and give us a try!*

For further information contact: Barbara Farmer 07759 167994 (patbarfar@gmail.com) or Janette Rowland 07708 229060 (janetterowland@hotmail.com)

## 2019/2020 COMMITTEE

Chairman:

Janice Constable ~ 01536 710938

Secretaries:

Barbara Farmer & Janette Rowland

Treasurers:

Dorothy Rudkin & Pauline Toseland

Committee: Tricia Butcher & Pam Hill

9TH JAN	<b>Antiques</b> .....	JAMES BURTON
16TH JAN	<b>Castles</b> .....	RICHARD LEY
23RD JAN	<b>Lifeways Group (old Health Centre)</b> .....	BROOK SAVAGE ~ SCHEME MANAGER
30TH JAN	<b>Scams</b> .....	KEN JACKSON
6TH FEB	<b>Jewellery</b> .....	SUZANNE LINE
13TH FEB	<b>Vietnam</b> .....	BEA CHARLTON
20TH FEB	<i>half term</i>	
27TH FEB	<b>Amy's Vintage</b> .....	AMY
5TH MAR	<b>King John</b> .....	JEN SMITH
12TH MAR	<b>Outside My Comfort Zone</b> .....	HILARY GUY
19TH MAR	<b>Wildlife of the Scottish Highlands &amp; Islands</b> .....	NEIL MCMAHON
26TH MAR	<b>Visit to Warkton Church Monuments</b> .....	ALAN & PAULINE TOSELAND
2ND APR	<b>Plant Exchange, Fashion Show Arrangements, Seasonal Refreshments</b> .....	MEMBERS' EVENING



The group enjoying a demonstration by Michelle Tyler of Love in Bloom



Sandra Marlow being presented with her Raffle Prize

## The Arts and Heritage Centre would like to thank everyone who has supported us this year.

IN ADDITION TO OUR DAY TO DAY DISPLAYS AND WORK IN THE CENTRE WE ARE PROUD TO HAVE HELD MANY SUCCESSFUL EVENTS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR.

THE **JANET BASSETT GALLERY**, MANAGED BY **PETER WATTS**, HAS PUT ON NO LESS THAN FIVE EXHIBITIONS THIS YEAR WITH SOME STUNNING ART AND CRAFT WORK PRODUCED BY LOCAL ARTISTS.

WE'VE HAD EVENINGS WITH PSYCHIC MEDIUMS **TRACY BAYES & DENNIS BINKS**, A SOLO DRAMA (**I AM JOHN CLARE**) BY **ROBIN HILLMAN** AND WERE THOROUGHLY ENTERTAINED BY PERFORMANCE POET **KEZZABELLE (WEAVING WORDS INTO ART)**.

WE CO-HOSTED A **FASHION SHOW** FOR **TRUDI CLAIRE** AND THE ANNUAL **ROWELL FAIR TART COMPETITION**.

IN THE SUMMER WE HELD OUR FIRST **STRAWBERRY FEST** AND ENTERED A FLOAT IN THE **CARNIVAL**, WINNING NOT ONE BUT TWO PRIZES.

ANOTHER FIRST FOR US WAS AN ON-LINE FACEBOOK

AUCTION AND WE HAVE SEEN OUR FACEBOOK GROUP (**ALL ABOUT ROTHWELL**) GO FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH. IT NOW HAS OVER 1000 MEMBERS.

AS USUAL WE SUPPORTED CHARITY WITH THE ANNUAL **MACMILLAN COFFEE MORNING** AND WE ALSO HAD A TALK ON **GUIDE DOGS FOR THE BLIND**.

IN THE AUTUMN WE LEARNED MORE ABOUT LOCAL HISTORY WITH A TALK BY **MIKE STROUD (CURSE OF THE TRESHAMS)** AND SUPPORTED LOCAL SELLERS AND CRAFTERS WITH OUR WINTER **TABLE TOP SALE**.

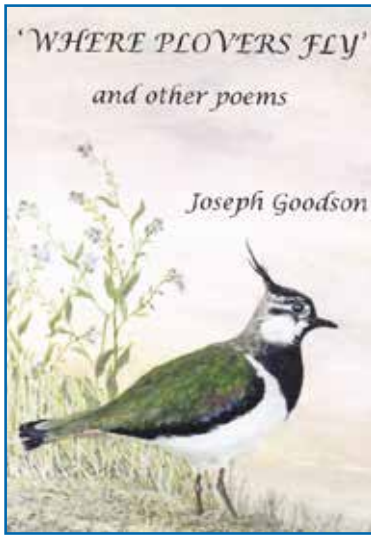
SO IT'S BEEN A VERY BUSY YEAR. **DID YOU GET TO ANY OF OUR EVENTS?** HOPEFULLY NEXT YEAR WILL BE JUST AS EXCITING AND BUSY.

KEEP A LOOK OUT FOR THE ADVERTS HERE IN THE MAGAZINE, ON FACEBOOK AND POSTERS AROUND THE TOWN.

**MAYBE YOU NEED ONE OF OUR ROWELL HERITAGE CALENDARS TO WRITE DOWN THE DATES. THEY ARE ON SALE IN THE CENTRE NOW, ONLY £5.**

# 2019 ROUND-UP





# Where Plovers Fly

This month we've included a couple of poems written by a Northamptonshire man called **Joseph Percival Goodson**. They were taken from his book *'Where Plovers Fly'* which contains poems about several Northamptonshire towns such as Brigstock,

Fotheringhay and Grafton Underwood Airfield. He also wrote about everyday things like a weathercock, a tea cosy, the January sales and even a rubbish tip.

The first caught our eye because it is about Rothwell Bone Crypt. It is rather macabre, but then, piles of bones buried deep beneath a church is a rather ghoulish subject. Joseph's usual style was more uplifting, like the second poem 'To Spring'. Now that is something we are all looking forward to.

The following is taken from the introduction and was written by his nephew, Graham Bell, who kindly gave us permission to publish it. Graham also illustrated the book.

*Joseph Goodson left his native Nottinghamshire at the age of nineteen to train as a lumberjack at Brigstock Camp, in the heart of Rockingham forest, bound for Canada. However he met and married my aunt, Marjorie, and lived in Old Dry Lane, Brigstock, for the rest of his life. He loved his adopted county of Northamptonshire and its countryside. A manual worker with a succession of jobs, Uncle Joe had no worldly ambition. But his burly physique belied a sensitive poetic spirit, and he found fulfilment in a creative life: as an amateur musician - principal cornet player in the village band and tenor in the church choir; as an amateur oil painter - focusing on colourful local scenes (some of his examples of his painting are included to illustrate the poems); but above all he was an exceptional poet - some of his poems have been read on BBC Radio and in 1971 he was awarded the Certificate of Merit by the International Who's Who in Poetry, and he was a founder member of Kettering Poetry Group. He was also an active member of the Workers' Educational Association. I told him that although I didn't always understand his poetry, I loved the sound of it. Timeless in style, it has the feel of sentiment and nostalgia, with a touch of humour here and there. John Clare, Northamptonshire's 'peasant poet' was Uncle Joe's main inspiration and the epithet 'a poet is born, not made' could apply to him too.*

## Rothwell Crypt

*A devil's bakehouse this with bones to rank,  
white skulls like loaves in a batch,  
devoid of leaven of life;  
and more, in death's dungeon  
to wait the kindling flame -  
the spark which once had fire with hope  
their risen clay.*

*What chilled assemblies these,  
where bones of men in calm agreement  
lie close-piled to scheme;  
all faults unsolved to wait  
midst damp and fust;  
and factions stable  
with death's mute herd  
to subscribe no thought,  
no probing of mind;  
from flesh once quick,  
some learned, some great  
but here, stacked and still.*

*What lost opinions these  
to charnel shades,  
what class distinctions  
heaped to count no more;  
proud sire with serf,  
arms with other men's wives  
and none disturbed,  
since all must grin and bear -  
where the spider wisps its webs  
where things now past unite.*

## To Spring

*O sigh for the spring,  
for the sky blue note  
of the cuckoo's throat,  
for the sheen'd wing,  
for the brooding rooks  
on piles of sticks,  
for the little brown birds -  
their mating tricks;  
for striving mole  
and half-cut ricks,  
for the steaming calf  
which the dun cow licks,  
for the flow of warmth  
on slate and bricks,  
for the power  
which makes men sing.*

# CTB

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