



NEWS REVIEW

Lincoln Record Society



THE LINCOLN RECORD SOCIETY

It's a great pleasure to have been asked to produce a foreword to this issue of the News Review. I still regard myself as a fairly new member of the LRS Council, though I realise with some surprise that I was first appointed in October 2003 – more than 15 years ago.

I became aware of the local and regional history 'scene' in Lincoln from 1996, when I started teaching at the new Brayford Pool campus of the University of Humberside. The Humanities was one of the 'pioneer' subjects that attracted students to the University for the first time in the city. I moved to Lincoln a few years later in 1999. Dennis and Joan Mills made me feel very welcome in my new home city and it was Dennis who invited me along to my first Lincoln Record Society AGM and associated talk. This took place at The Lawn and was accompanied by a handsome high tea – about which I had been forewarned by Dennis. I came to realise over time that this was a standard and hugely appetising aspect of the Lincoln Record Society membership package.

I had initially been a little reluctant to become a member of the Society since I saw myself principally as an historian of the nineteenth-century. I had always erroneously associated record societies with the study of earlier periods. Dennis's involvement suggested to me that there was something to be gained from becoming a member of the Lincoln Record Society – apart from the cake. What became clear very quickly was that engagement with the Lincoln Record Society encouraged a move away from a rather blinkered view of periodisation – so often an obstacle within academic history – and encouraged the exploration of themes across much longer chronological periods.

Reflecting upon the past twenty years or so of my association with the Lincoln Record Society, I realise how its publications and activities have intersected with some parts of my own career – both as a higher education teacher and researcher. A number of the Society's publications became staple editions of my teaching resources in Lincoln, extending from the early-modern period to the twentieth century. These included, for instance, David Hickman's edited work (volume 89) on *Lincoln Wills*,

1532-34, a valuable source of material on the early-modern family and kinship relations.

LRS publications also provided much useful information which

I used extensively in my teaching of nineteenth-century social and cultural history – particularly the content of the volume edited by Rod Ambler on the *Lincolnshire Returns of the Census of Religious Worship, 1851* (volume 72) and the very handsome volume edited by Dennis Mills and Rob Wheeler – *Historic Town Plans of Lincoln, 1610-1920* (volume 92). This last volume has proved invaluable over the years to my research on the development of the city of Lincoln. Throughout the research for the neighbourhood volumes produced by the Survey of Lincoln, with which I've been involved, the *Historic Town Plans of Lincoln*, co-published by the Survey and the Lincoln Record Society, has been a constant and important reference source since its publication in 2004.

Returning to my earlier misplaced prejudices regarding record societies it is worth noting that the Lincoln Record Society's publications have over recent years catered very well to the needs of those with interests in the later-modern history of the Diocese of Lincoln. Amongst the Society's first 69 volumes the Victorian period or later only featured twice – volumes 31 (*Lincolnshire Church Notes by William John Monson, 1828-40*, edited by John, Ninth Lord Monson) and 59 – *the Letters of the Cholmeleys at Wainfleet, 1813-1853*, edited by Guy Hargreaves. However, from volume 70 onwards 11 volumes in the Society's main series – 28% of the publications – have contained substantial amounts of material on this later period (namely volumes 70, 72, 75, 82, 92, 94, 96, 98, 102, 103 and 105).

One of the great strengths of the Lincoln Record Society is that its activities extend well beyond the publication of works of historical scholarship. It has always played an



important role in providing a forum for exchanges of ideas about the history of the Diocese of Lincoln. Recently it has done so through the invaluable introduction of the newsletter, as well as through its regular organisation of conferences. I have found this aspect of the Society's work particularly useful since my move south to Kent, providing the opportunity to return and to meet fellow members with shared interests in the documentary sources of this extensive and varied historic diocese. I am hugely grateful for this - and of course the scholarship of the volumes' editors, together with the boundless enthusiasm, skill and industry of the Lincoln Record Society's Honorary General Editor, Nicholas Bennett.

This issue of the News Review brings some exciting information about the dates and programme for our

upcoming Autumn conference - make a note to save the dates for the 21-22 September, as you won't want to miss it! There are also some invaluable insights from our Honorary Treasurer Ken Hollamby about his role as treasurer and membership secretary. It is with great sadness that we include an obituary for one of our longstanding members, Neville Birch, who was involved in LRS activities from 1992. Hollie Morgan shares some fascinating findings from her work with Neil Ker's manuscript fragments up at Lincoln Cathedral Library. And our Honorary General Editor, Nicholas Bennett, provides an interesting history of the man behind the Usher gallery, James Ward Usher. We hope that you enjoy it!

Andrew Walker



LIFE AND TIMES OF THE LRS HON. TREASURER

My wife Lesley and I moved to Lincoln in 2000 after having worked in Aberdeen for twenty-three years. We had previously lived in north-east Lincolnshire from 1967 to 1977. Shortly afterwards, Lesley became a volunteer in Lincoln Cathedral Library where Dr. Nicholas Bennett was the librarian. Nicholas had been Hon. Treasurer since 1982. In 2002 he was elected General Editor when Professor David Smith resigned from that post and the Society were seeking a new Hon. Treasurer. Knowing my background, he sent a message home asking whether I would consider accepting the post. He said that it wasn't particularly onerous but omitted to mention that membership administration was part of the task (!).

The munificent bequest of Kathleen Major, a notable historian of the medieval cathedral and diocese of Lincoln, to the Lincoln Record Society in 2006-2007 changed the role of the Hon. Treasurer. It provided the Society with substantial investments to manage and the opportunity to expand our range of publications and other activities.

The role of the Hon. Treasurer is now more like that of the business manager of the Society. It falls into four main areas. The first is the traditional activity of a treasurer, looking after and accounting for the monies received and disbursed by the society. This includes working closely with our investment advisors, Brewin Dolphin. As a registered charity our accounts have to conform to the rules of the Charity Commission. I maintain all of the accounting records and files using Excel spreadsheets and prepare the annual accounts to trial balance stage. Once I have balanced, I hand over the files, both paper and digital, to Wright Vigar our accountants. They prepare the formal accounts that you see in our annual report. When I get the final accounts from Wright Vigar, I prepare the five-year plan for consideration and approval by Council. The five-year plan shows the results for recent years, the current year's budget and result, and plans for the next five years.

Once approved, the Finance and Publications committee uses the plan to assist in making its decisions.

The second part of the role is that of managing the Society's membership records. When I took over as Hon. Treasurer each member had a paper record showing the member's subscription history and the volumes received. Today each member has an individual Word file with essentially the same information. This makes it easy to see a member's subscription status at a glance. Many members pay by standing order and each year I review the records to identify those who have not paid and then raise invoices. Then I prepare regular reports for the Finance and Publications Committee and the Annual Report.

The third task is that of managing the Society's publications. I hold a small stock at home but the bulk stock is held in Bognor Regis at the Wiley warehouse, who are contracted to our publishers Boydell & Brewer. A small stock is held in the Boydell & Brewer's warehouse in the USA. There is a stock record for each volume showing balances at each location and movements in and out of stock. Using the data collected over many years I advise the editors on print runs which, because of changes in book production, can be shorter than in earlier years. Now that the whole process from writing the texts to printing the volumes in digital short run reprints is very much easier. I have regular meetings with staff at Boydell and Brewer to plan our future publishing activities. From time to time we organise book stalls at our own events such as book launches, the AGM, conferences and similar events run by other organisations.

The fourth task is working with members of our team on matters digital. Recently we have contracted with Boydell & Brewer to host our website on their server. All of our volumes have been digitised but so far we have not found a satisfactory and cost effective way to put them on-line. Discussions continue and we hope to resolve this matter soon.



Sooner or later, my time as treasurer will come to an end. One of the responsibilities of our trustees is succession planning. There is no requirement for these tasks to be done by one person. This is simply the way that the role developed, particularly after the Major bequest. What we are looking for are members with particular skills who would be prepared, in time and with training, to take on one of these roles.

Please contact treasurer@lincoln-record-society.org.uk if you are interested.

Ken Hollamby

Note from the editor – Ken does an incredible amount of work behind the scenes and we are very grateful to him for everything that he has done and continues to do. If you feel that you might be able to help out, then please do get in touch for a chat.



A PILE OF PARCHMENT AND A PALAEOGRAPHER

A few weeks ago, finding myself with time to spare in London, I baffled my sister by announcing that I would “treat myself to a few hours with a manuscript at the British Library.”

“No normal person”, she reliably informed me, “would consider that a treat.” As far as I am concerned, that ‘normal person’ is missing out. Even the most jaded, hardened manuscript scholar will admit that to be confronted by a manuscript—whether it be a beautifully-bound, pristine Book of Hours with jewel-like illuminations or a stained and battered bundle of mismatched leaves covered in generations of scrawl—is a delight and a privilege. I am fortunate enough to have spent much of my adult life studying medieval manuscripts and documents and the texts contained within them, and yet I still feel a thrill in the presence of such material. Imagine my delight a few weeks ago, then, when I visited Exchequer Gate to find a pile of parchment scraps waiting for my perusal. On closer inspection, it turned out to be a folder of manuscript fragments used in binding, along with some handwritten notes by the late, great Neil Ker.

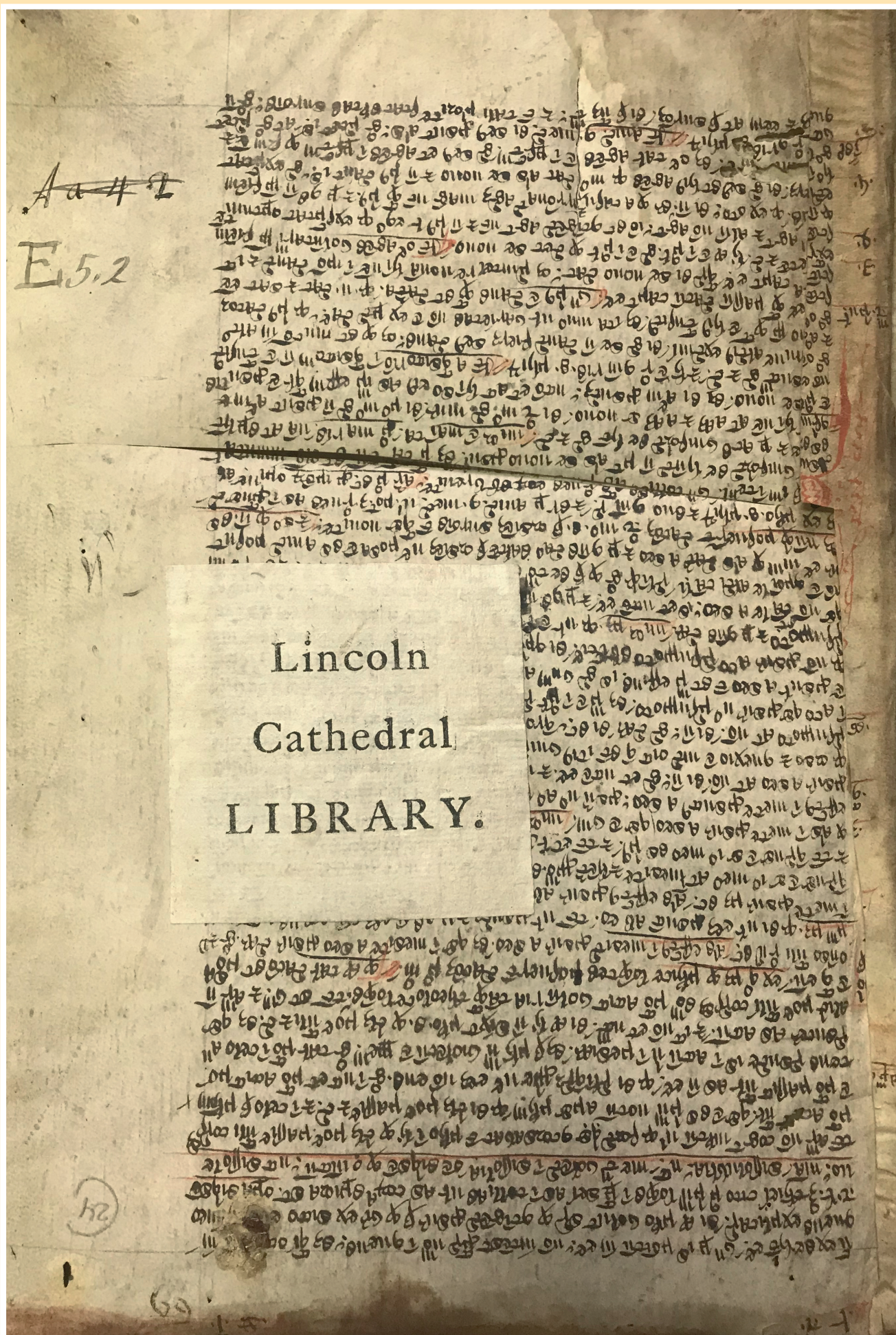
Neil Ker (1908-1982) was a palaeographer and scholar of Anglo-Saxon literature. His *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon* (1957) is a go-to for any scholar of Old English Manuscripts, and forms the foundation of many a present-day digital manuscripts project. Ker wrote catalogues of medieval manuscripts and libraries, and his work was so diligent and consistent that he is hardly ever found to be wrong. He had the ability to carry the hands of several scribes around in his head, so that he could compare writing across manuscripts and across institutions. Neil Ker is the closest thing we have to a patron saint of palaeographers, so I was excited to have access to his handwritten notes and honoured to have been able to add to them. His notes were preliminary and do not include all the fragments in the folder. The fragments did not feature in the Cathedral library catalogue, so it was my job to transcribe his notes, make additions where necessary, and to finish off what Ker started.

Many of the fragments in the folder show clear evidence of having been used as pastedowns. Some of them have the remains of paste obscuring the text on one side of the sheet, while others have the outline of binding material around the edges. Many of the fragments are undoubtedly from the bindings of Lincoln Cathedral

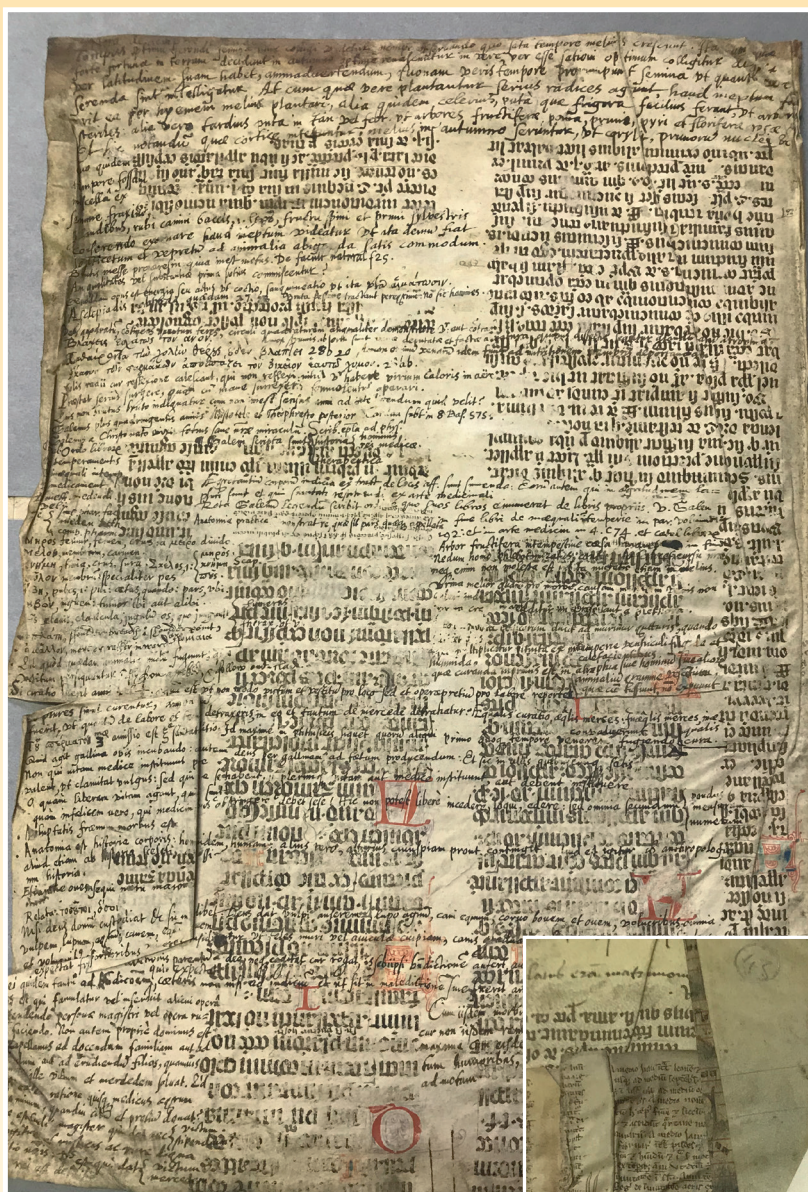
Library manuscripts: they have the remains of the Cathedral’s bookplate, often at 180 degrees to the writing, indicating that the sheets were pasted to the book boards upside-down, a common practice probably designed to distinguish the binding material from the book’s written content. Some of Ker’s notes on individual leaves suggest that they are ‘probably from an Oxford binding’. How did he know this? According to Oldham’s *Shrewsbury School Library Bindings* (1943), localisable bindings were almost confined to London, Oxford and Cambridge (p. xxvi). In the introduction to *Fragments of Medieval Manuscripts used as Pastedowns in Oxford Bindings* (1954), Ker tells us that Oxford and Cambridge ‘employ[ed] separate sheets for pastedown and flyleaf, the flyleaf being a piece of paper [...] and the pastedown a piece of parchment from a medieval manuscript’, but that this process became ‘almost exclusively an Oxford custom after 1570’ (p. vii). Our single leaves covered in paste are, therefore, clues informing us of the manuscripts’ early-modern binders. It makes sense that our Cathedral’s manuscripts were bound in Oxford. Until 1541, Oxford was part of the Diocese of Lincoln, and the Bishops of Lincoln retained significant landholdings in Oxfordshire. What makes less sense, on first glance, is why what appear to be perfectly serviceable, and in some cases rather beautiful, manuscripts were broken up and used to bind the books. The answer lies in the advent of the printing press. The first book was printed in Oxford in 1478, just two years after Caxton set up the first printing press in England. According to Ker (1954), the canon and civil law manuscripts were replaced by printed copies, which were considered more up-to-date, and Oxford binders used the manuscripts as binding material. Eventually people began to favour print copies of other kinds of works including philosophy, and the manuscript copies made their way to binders’ workshops by the middle of the sixteenth century. The single sheets in this folder, including some works on canon law and some philosophical commentaries, could tell a similar story.

My favourite fragment is no. 22: a folio containing part of book 2 of the *Decretals* in a fourteenth-century hand, with a surrounding gloss. Its later additions give us a glimpse into its story. On one side, covering nearly every space, in several hands and 180 degrees to the original text, are notes in Latin and Greek, which appear to be medical. Some of this writing looks suspiciously like lecture notes,



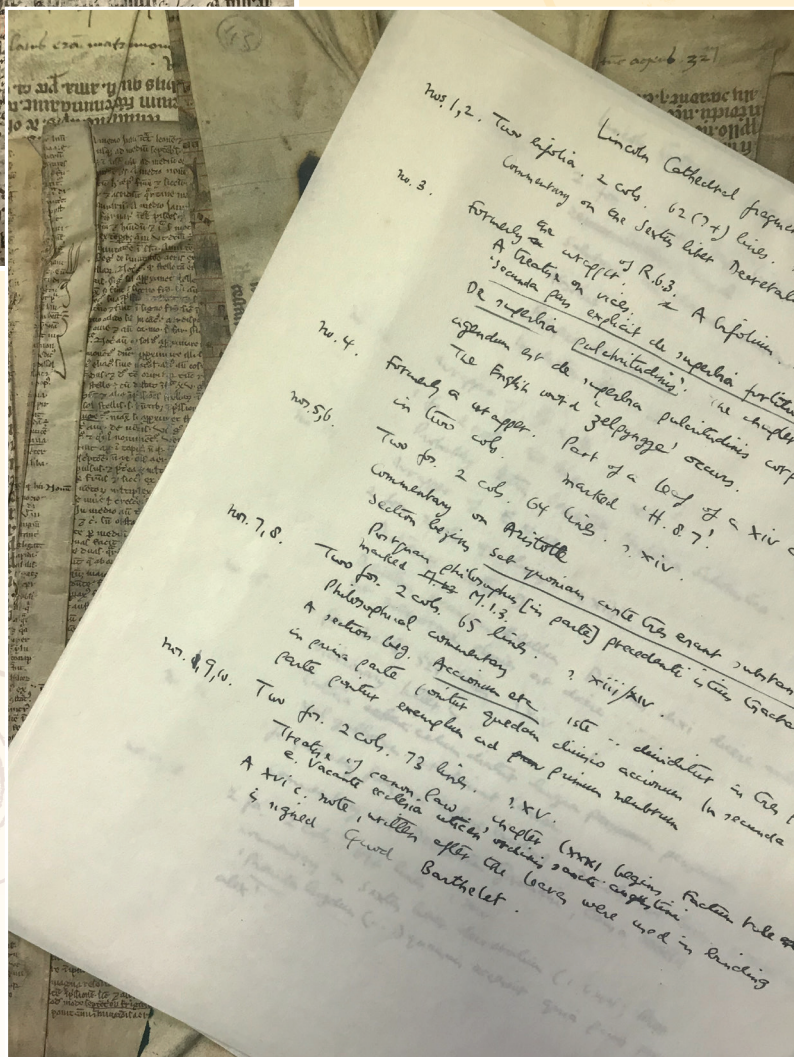


Handwritten notes by Neil Ker on manuscript fragments from Lincoln Cathedral library; and fragments.



with such wisdom as 'Anatomia est historia corporis', which might suggest that the leaf was used as part of the binding of a medical textbook. The other side, again at 180 degrees to the main text, records the births of several people in a sixteenth-century family, as we sometimes see in family Bibles. More work needs to be done on it, if we are to determine the history of that leaf.

Dissecta membra they may be, but the folder contains many interesting pieces, each a treasure in their own way. In addition to the single sheets used as pastedowns, which are probably from Oxford manuscripts, there are several bifolia used as wrappers, with their old shelfmarks still attached. Some more research on these pieces to match them up with their books may unlock their histories. I did my small part to add to their story: Ker's notes were only half-complete and several parchment sheets were unnumbered, which meant that they were difficult to distinguish from one another and near-impossible to →



catalogue. With great trepidation, I accepted the proffered pencil and (years of codicological training screaming at me to put the pencil down) numbered the rest of the leaves. There is nothing to describe the feeling of writing on the same sheet of parchment that was first written on

around 700 years ago. To continue numbering manuscript fragments, picking up my pencil where Neil Ker had put his down was, whatever 'normal people' might say, a rare treat.

Hollie L. S. Morgan



NEVILLE BIRCH 1932–2018

Neville was born, raised and educated in the Tamworth area of the West Midlands. On leaving school in 1948, he followed his father and uncle working for the Midlands Electricity Board at one of their local power stations. Here, he was employed as a trainee apprentice in the machine shop, obtaining his ONC in electrical engineering. Following a three year break with the Royal Air Force, he returned to the Midlands Electricity Board, subsequently obtaining another ONC, this time in mechanical engineering.

It was whilst working with the Electricity Board that he found his niche in training and instructing apprentice technicians. In 1959, he left the Board to take up a post with the Tamworth College of Further Education as an assistant lecturer in mechanical /electrical engineering. He decided that this was to be his career and in 1964 he successfully applied for the post of lecturer at, what was then known as Lincoln Technical College, on Monks Road. By this time, Neville had married Maureen and their two children John and Sheren had just started school.

Settled in Lincoln, Neville developed an interest in industrial archaeology. He was one of the founding members of the Industrial Archaeological Group of the Lincolnshire History Society and became the Group's Secretary, as well as the editor of their newsletter. In 1972, he was elected as Chairman of the Group. The Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology (SLHA) was formed in 1974 and in 1997 Neville was elected Chairman for a two year period. At that time, he was instrumental in setting up the afternoon Sunday Specials when three short talks on varying subjects of historical / archaeological interest are presented. These have carried on to the present day.

Over the years Neville wrote many articles for SLHA publications. At the time of his death he had been working on a major revision of his book, first published in 1972, 'Stamford, an Industrial History'. Fortunately he was able to complete the draft which, when edited and published, will be a fitting tribute to Neville and his work as an industrial archaeologist.

Neville was an active member of the Railway and Canal Historical Society, resigning as sales officer only when his illness got the better of him in 2018. He was secretary of the Lincoln Engineering Society from 2000 to 2010. For 30 years he was a Guide in Lincoln Cathedral. He set up



The late Neville Birch

the Industrial Archaeology Group at the Sleaford U3A. In 1994 Neville was awarded a degree with honours from Hull University in Regional and Local History.

Neville was supported by Maureen in most of the activities that he was involved in. In November 2017 they celebrated their Diamond Wedding Anniversary.

Neville joined the Lincoln Record Society in 1992 and found time amongst his many interests and activities to be our secretary from 2002 to 2006.

Ken Hollamby

My thanks to Eric Newton who has allowed me to quote from the eulogy he gave at Neville's funeral service in Lincoln Cathedral on December 17th 2018 and to Jon Sass for the picture.

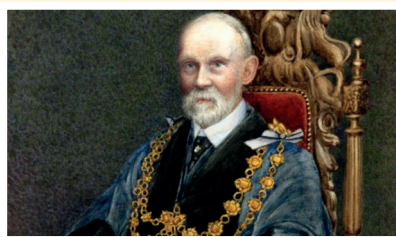




JAMES WARD USHER (1845-1921) AND THE USHER GALLERY

Currently the fate of the Usher Gallery in Lincoln hangs in the balance, as there is a question mark over its future as a public art gallery. The Usher Gallery has been an important part of Lincoln's cultural heritage since its construction in the 1920s. Yet the history of the man behind the gallery is not well known. Rightly celebrated as one of Lincoln's greatest benefactors, James Ward Usher came from a family of only modest circumstances. He was born on 1 January 1845 in Lincoln. His father, James Usher, came from Bulwell near Nottingham where he was baptised on 30 July 1807. By 1836 he had established himself as a watchmaker in Lincoln, setting up his business near the Gowts Bridge, and on 22 September in that year at Waddington he married Miss Ellen Harrison, housekeeper to the Dixon family of Lincoln maltsters. Little more than three years later, on 18 December 1839, Ellen Usher died in childbirth and was buried in the parish of St Swithin.

By 1841 James Usher had moved his watchmaking business to No 28 Silver Street and at about this time he met Jane Duckett who was to become his second wife. Jane, who was born at Tetford in the Lincolnshire wolds in 1811, was the daughter of a blacksmith. In 1841 she was in domestic service in the household of the prominent Lincoln attorney – and chapter clerk of the Cathedral – Robert Swan who lived at No 12 Minster Yard (Graveley Place). James and Jane were married at the church of St Peter in Eastgate on 14 April 1842 and it is pleasant to note that one of the witnesses who signed the register was 'Fanny Sophia Swan' – not, one imagines, the young daughter of Jane Duckett's employer, who was indeed named Frances Sophia Swan but was only four years old



Portrait of James Ward Usher, Image and Copyright, Lincolnshire County Council, Usher Art Gallery.



The Usher Gallery in the Temple Gardens

at this date, but more probably Robert Swan's unmarried sister Sophia who was living with their widowed mother close by at No 8 Minster Yard.

The newly-married pair established themselves at No 317 High Street, a house on the east side of the highway, just south of the Cornmarket, part of the site now occupied by Barclays Bank. Here their son, James Ward Usher, was born in 1845, to be joined by his younger brother, Alfred Henry, in 1848. James Usher continued to trade as a watchmaker and by 1851 he was described as a master, employing two men. By 1856 the family had moved to No 192, a house on the opposite side of the High Street, on the corner of Swanpool Court (the site is now occupied (March 2019) by Boots Opticians, formerly Dollond and Aitchison) and the Usher family business was to remain here throughout the lifetimes of both father and son.

The young James Ward Usher was educated at Lincoln Grammar School and later at Totteridge Park School in Hertfordshire but by March 1861, aged 16, he was working with his father at 192 High Street. Both father and son were described as jewellers. Between 1867 and 1871, James Usher took his son into partnership in the business which was thenceforth known as 'James Usher and Son'. James Usher senior retired from the business in 1874 and moved with his wife to a house further south on the High Street, near the junction with Portland Street. James Usher died in January 1882; his wife Jane died in October 1891.

Under the management of James Ward Usher, the jewellery and watchmaking business became very successful. His promotion of a range of 'Lincoln Imp' jewellery in the form of tie-pins, cuff-links and brooches brought him both income and a renown that spread far beyond the city itself. Although he never sought to play a role in civic affairs, he was appointed High Sheriff of the city in 1916. He remained a bachelor, lived simply on his own with a housekeeper to look after his domestic arrangements. He never moved from the house and shop at 192 High Street. He died at his home in Lincoln on Tuesday 20 September 1921.

A great philanthropist, James Ward Usher left money to the city of Lincoln for the construction of the gallery after his death. He also left his collection of clocks, watches and paintings which became the basis of the Usher Gallery's permanent collection. It was officially opened on 25 May 1927 by the Prince of Wales who said in his speech: "It seems to be a fine thing that an act of such munificence should be inspired in a man by pride in his native city and affection for his fellow citizens". Let us hope that the Usher Gallery can continue in its original purpose, as a space to exhibit James Ward Usher's gift to the city, alongside other works of art and temporary exhibitions.

Nicholas Bennett



LINCOLNSHIRE AND THE WARS OF THE ROSES



The Lincoln Record Society is delighted to announce the dates for their Autumn conference, on Saturday 21st and Sunday 22nd September 2019! This stellar research conference throws the spotlight on fifteenth-century Lincolnshire and the cast of characters involved in the national dynastic conflict, the Wars of the Roses. The main conference will take place on 21st September at the International Bomber Command Centre, Canwick Hill in Lincoln, 10am – 5pm with lunch and refreshments included. The programme of speakers will include:

'Impostors, embezzlers and revolution from within: the sheriff of Lincoln and the mechanics of Henry Tudor's conspiracy against Richard III, 1483-85',
Sean Cunningham, The National Archives

'Cecily duchess of York: Lincolnshire Landowner, Mother of Kings',
Joanna Laynesmith, University of Reading

'A King's Mother about Town: Lady Margaret Beaufort in Stamford',
Rachel Delman, University of York

'The Road to Losecoat Field: The story of the First Lincolnshire Rising',
Nicholas Bennett, University of Lincoln/Lincoln Record Society

'Bridging the Divide: Parish Guilds and Lincolnshire Communities in the Wars of the Roses',
Claire Kennan, Royal Holloway University of London

'A Local Event on a National Stage: the Lincolnshire Rebellion of 1470',
Jonathan Mackman, University of York

'Peacock feathers and Pater Nosters: The post-mortem identity of Sir Thomas Burgh, (c.1430-1496)',
Marianne Wilson, University of York

On Sunday 22nd September 9.30am-5pm there will be an excursion to Gainsborough Old Hall, St Edith's, Coates by Stow, and Stow Minster

So save the dates, 21st and 22nd September 2019, and await the full programme and booking form in the near future!



Nineteenth century painting of the exterior of Gainsborough Old Hall by Rev. C. Terrot (image and copyright, Lincolnshire County Council, Usher Art Gallery)

