



LIBRARY NEWS 2025 OCTOBER - DECEMBER

OPENING HOURS

Oct. 8th	1.30 - 3.30
Oct. 26th	10 - 12
Nov. 12th	1.30 - 3.30
Nov. 29th	10 - 12
Dec. 10th	1.30 - 3.30
Dec. 28th.	CLOSED

WEBSITE

The newsletter can also be found on the website on the library page along with all the library information and the search facility for the catalogue. All books new to the Library are on the catalogue and suggestions are always welcome.

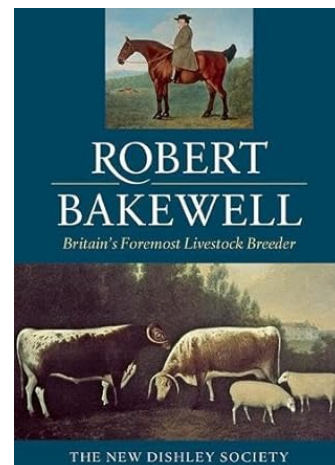
A SELECTION of BOOKS NEW to the LIBRARY

Both the following books have been given to library for review.

Robert Bakewell: Britain's foremost livestock breeder New Dishley Society, 2025. 366pp

Robert Bakewell 1725-1795 farmed at Dishley near Loughborough and is recognised as one of the key figures of the 18th century Agricultural Revolution. His systematic approach had a profound impact on the cattle, sheep and horse breeds of his time. His Dishley Longhorns, or

Improved Longhorn, through their early maturing beef carcasses became the leading cattle breed across the Midlands until superseded by Shorthorns in the mid 19th century. He transformed the traditional Leicestershire Black Horse into a new efficient Midlands type of Shire horse. Similarly he was instrumental in the improvement the local Leicester sheep into the Border Leicester which remains a leading breed today.



More generally Bakewell was exceptional in his regard for the welfare of his livestock treating them with a gentleness and care that was unusual in his time. He became well known through his flair for promoting his breeding stock and his generous hospitality. In spite of high fees for his sires he was not a good businessman and was made bankrupt in 1776.

This volume, edited by Tim Bacon for the New Dishley Society, commemorates the 300th anniversary of Bakewell's birth. It isn't a biography but is a collection of essays on different aspects of his work and legacy, and is an updating and extension of an earlier 1995 work by Pat Stanley: *Robert Bakewell and the Longhorn breed of cattle*. The majority of contributions in this new work are by Pat Stanley, a leading authority on Longhorn cattle, and Janet Spavold, author of many works on South Derbyshire, particularly Ticknall. Chapters on topics such as *Bakewell and the art of breeding* and *Distribution of Bakewell livestock* are ex-

tremely detailed and based on profound research in primary sources. Anyone without a basic knowledge of Bakewell's life and work will probably find it best not to dive straight in to this volume but to go first to an outline biography. Two possibilities available online are:

Robert Bakewell – pioneer of modern livestock farming
<https://www.rbst.org.uk/robert-bakewell-a-pioneer-of-modern-livestock-farming>

and David WYKES: Robert Bakewell 1725-1795 of Dishley, farmer and livestock improver

<https://bahs.org.uk/AGHR/ARTICLES/52n1a3.pdf>

This book is well produced, with fine colour illustrations, based on painstaking research by writers with an obvious regard and enthusiasm for Bakewell's work. It is a significant contribution to understanding his achievements, and the way in which, through an intuitive understanding of livestock breeding, he opened the way to modern scientific approaches. It also reminds us that the impact of the 18th century Agricultural Revolution was as great as its contemporary industrial counterpart.

Richard Finch

John Walker's Commonplace Book. A Traveller in the 1670s

Anthea Jones Editor. Hobnob Press 2025
149pp

We were asked to review this book as John Walker on his travels came through Derbyshire. John Walker was, as what is described in the editor's preface "a leisured English gentleman". He held a job

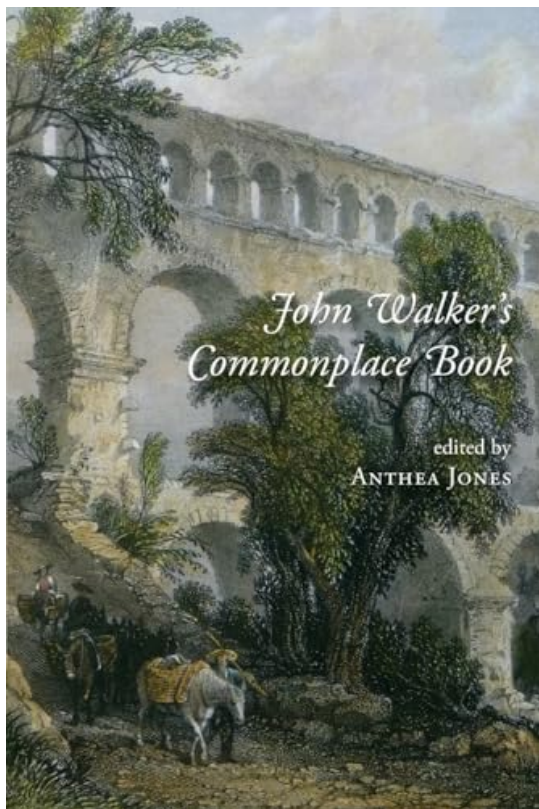
as Chief Usher of the the court of the Exchequer, a hereditary Office which John Walker's grandfather had purchased in 1603. John appears not to have discharged many of these duties but took some financial remuneration from the fees for which his deputies worked. Presumably this gave him income and the freedom to 'occupy his time in an interesting way and avoid the gentleman's tendency to idleness' (p9). There are very few published 17th century travel 'diaries', the ones springing to mind are Celia Fiennes, *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes* and *Through England on a Side-Saddle* both available in modern reprints. They were begun in the 1690s, slightly later than John Walker, so this volume is useful addition to the genre. The preface gives a resume of John Walker's life at a time of change in English history and how his political and religious views fitted in to the current thinking.

John Walker travelled extensively making 11 journeys through England, Scotland., Wales, The Netherlands, France, and what he described as a 'small voyage to the Channel Island'. He avoided Italy seemingly because of his aversion to Roman Catholicism.

Commonplace Books were in effect notebooks which information could be jotted down for future references. The editor explains her editorial processes in the preface with regard to spelling and punctuation. In this edition, Walker's spelling has not been changed and the punctuation seems to have needed virtually no alteration, both of which make it so interesting to see how the language has developed over the centuries but I wonder if just one example of a small section of the original manuscript would have given a context for the editor's

starting point. There may have been reasons for this. There are simple maps of Walker's journeys, showing the considerable distances he travelled.

John Walker visited Derby and other Midland towns on his way north to Scotland. He is not over complimentary about the Bridge Chapel but visited All Saints and mentions a well-built Town house, which may well have been Exeter House, then saying "all the rest but ordinary" but this is 1674 before Derby blossomed in the 18th century. He visited Derbyshire again in 1677 travelling through the Peak District on a trip not dissimilar to a 21st Century traveller, visiting Chatsworth, Haddon Hall and Hardwick Hall the Devil's Arse, Mam Tor, Poole's Hole as he called it.



Journals often reflect the writer and Walker's descriptions are very factual with little adornment. We will never know if he was like that but he doesn't shy away from using words like 'poor'

and 'meane'. Walker's observations cover churches, commerce, fortifications roads, industry, housing, in fact everything you would expect from a gentleman traveller with a keen eye for his surroundings. We are grateful to Anthea Jones for editing this to give us a mid-17th century view of parts of our own country and of Europe.

I was informed last week by her son that Anthea Jones sadly has died at the age of 89. Amongst other writings mostly connected with the Gloucester area, she also edited a work by Thomas Baskerville, another 17th century traveller but who did not venture into Derbyshire.

Journeys in Industrious England by Thomas Baskerville Hobnob Press 2023 306pp.

Anne Allcock

Linked to the John Walker book, there is on the shelves a booklet written by Marion Johnson. *Travellers in Derbyshire* is an anthology of journeys in Derbyshire in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries and was compiled by Marion Johnson when she was Senior Lecturer in Education at Derby Lonsdale College and was designed as a Resource Book for teachers. Many of you will recognise Marion Johnson's name as a writer of a number of books on Ockbrook and Borrowash which are in our collection. There is no date on the booklet but we think it may have been around the late 1970s. In her introduction 'Marion Johnson' explains her choice of less well-known writers whose work then was not so readily available over the more famous people who travelled through Derbyshire eg Celia Fiennes, Daniel Defoe. Their travels were already in modern re-

ports at that time. It is a very useful booklet containing 21 journeys which include eg Lady Arabella (sic) Stuart's Royal Progress, 1609. This is likely to be when she visited Chatsworth. A German Gentleman on a walking holiday (1782), A Frenchman visits Buxton (1798), Mr Mavor's advice to Tourists (1800), To Boarding School on the Mail Coach (1828). They make interesting reading. John Walker's book may well have been included in her compilation had it been in publication. Given the date of this booklet some of the information may now have been updated but it is an interesting starting point for anyone looking at travellers' perceptions of Derbyshire throughout the centuries.

One of the joys of going through boxes of donated books is that you drop across titles which, although they may already be on the shelves of the Library, pique your interest and you have another look at them. One of these was *The Matlocks and Bakewell. Famous Derbyshire Health Resorts 1893*. This edition was produced by Christopher Charlton of the Arkwright Society in 1984. The subtitle - 'being a concise and comprehensive account of their history and progress with commercial appendices for the use of residents and visitors' - shouts sales pitch for the district and the book does that in spades. As Christopher Charlton says in his introduction there is such an optimism and confidence about this publication. This sits well with Victorian sense of improvement, a word which crops up or is implied with regularity and which was also prominent in Richard Keene's Almanac which was mentioned in the last newsletter. The writers of this book certainly did not sell the district

short. The numerous hydropathic establishments are all described in glowing terms, including the 'rules of the house'. If you want an early night, The Elm Tree has lights out at 10 in the winter and 10.30 in the summer and woe betide anyone who is late for a meal - they are fined one penny for unpunctuality. The businesses are also described in such positive terms that one would be forgiven for thinking that all shopkeepers and business owners in the district were fine upstanding business men with the customer at the centre of everything. I am sure they were. The shop titles and the language of selling might, to our perhaps more cynical 21st century eyes, be flowery and over the top but the desire to advertise and to promote one's business does not change and the Victorians were masters of self-promotion.

The book is liberally sprinkled with literary quotations and lovely sketches of places, establishments and goods. This is such an uplifting picture of The Matlocks and Bakewell. If you want take yourself back to the 1890s as a resident or tourist at any level of society, reading this book will allow you to revel in the outwardness and confidence of the writers. It may well make you want to revisit the Matlocks and Bakewell to see how many of these places and businesses still exist though not now in their Victorian guise.

I'll leave you with this -

Mr Michael Wright Hydropathic Bath and Patent Ascending Douche Manufacturer, General Tin, Iron, Copper, Zinc-sheet worker, General Ironmonger, Smedley Street, Matlock Bank. (a description of the douche is provided as is the hollow tin-ware chest warmer). This business survived until 2005 though not as a manufacturer of hydropathic goods.

JOURNALS RECENTLY ARRIVED

*The Leicestershire Archaeological and
Historical Society Vol. 98 2024*

*Staffordshire Archaeological and Historical
Society Vol 56 2025*

A Study from Upland Staffordshire
- Leek in the Medieval and early
Modern Periods. This is a very
substantial article.

AND FINALLY

There will a DAS talk in Strutts on Saturday 29th November at 11am and the library will be open as usual at 10 am.

See you there before the talk for a gentle browse and maybe a look at the books mentioned in this edition.

The Library Team

