



Bradley Church

Martyn Glover Creative Commons

LIBRARY NEWS 2026 OCTOBER - DECEMBER

OPENING HOURS

October 14th	1.30 - 3.30
October 31st	10 - 12
November 11th	1.30 - 3.30
November 28th	10 - 12
December 9th	1.30 - 3.30

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.

The views expressed in the articles are entirely those of the individual contributors and not necessarily those of the Society

A SELECTION of BOOKS NEW to the LIBRARY

From Ruddington to Cromford Samuel Price and his Family Line

Deborah Elliott 2025 140 pp. A family history of a framework knitter who started work in Nottingham then moved to Smedley's Mill, renting a house with his family in Holloway and by 1881 was the only framework knitter left in Holloway. An interesting picture of life as a framework knitter.

Bradley Just another Village? Bradley Community Heritage Group 2006 96 pp. A history of Bradley near Ashbourne now a village slightly off the beaten track but at one time it sat on the line of the ancient roadway between Ashbourne and Belper. The title indicates there was more to Bradley than 'just a village'. This links in nicely with David Wright's articles later in the newsletter about the Kniveton Leiger.

James Wyatt Architect to George III

John Martin Robinson 2012 370pp. A beautifully produced book about the important Georgian Architect who as Architect of the Ordnance designed the Derby Ordnance depot in 1805.

John D'Arcy contacted me in the summer inviting us to have a look at Joan's library. Most of you will remember Joan, a long standing member of the Society, who died in 2020 - a passionate local historian and much missed by so many people. Like our visit to Gladwyn Turbutt's library it was such a privilege to look at Joan's library and to see the full extent of her interests. Joan was also an enthusiastic supporter of the library and we very grateful to John for allowing us to take any books which we wanted for our collection. We have added some 50 books and pamphlets and there will be an article on the books in the January

edition of the newsletter. We thank John for his generosity and kindness in allowing us to visit and having a lovely time enjoying Joan's extensive collection.

The Kniveton Leiger

A few months ago I had an email from David Wright of Bradley saying that he had completed a translation from Latin of The Kniveton Leiger and would we be interested in a copy. I of course said yes and it started an interesting journey. I knew we had a copy of The Kniveton Leiger on the shelves so I began there. Our copy is Volume 7 of the Derbyshire Archaeological Society Record Series for 1972-3 edited with an introduction by Avrom Saltman, M.A. PhD. At the time he was Professor of History at Bar-Ilan University, Israel. It is also No 24 in the Joint Publications Series, published by H M Stationery Office for the Historical Manuscripts Commission. The introductory notes also state that "this edition of the early 14th century Leiger or register of title deeds and other evidences of the Kniveton Family, now preserved in the muniments of the Dean and Chapter of Lincoln, has been prepared by the Derbyshire Archaeological Society".

I came across this description on the Medieval Bookshop Site

"The leiger or cartulary of the Kniveton family of Bradley in Derbyshire is a rare and unusually early example of its type. It documents the rise to local eminence of an obscure Danelaw family in the thirteenth century."

The Kniveton family was prominent in Derbyshire for 4 centuries and Saltman writes, admittedly well over 50 years ago, in his wide ranging and interesting introduction, that this leiger is about all that was left to posterity by the Kniveton Family. Perhaps more has come to light in the intervening years.

As David says in his lively article which follows, these were legal documents concerning land issues, money, debt and a host of other things when life was lived round Land. What also comes out is the wrangling of families and how widows often had to fight for their rights and entitlements.

By translating these documents David has opened up another world for us and together with Saltman's introduction we have now have access to a 13th and early 14th century world of families, landownership, law, society and the running of a district in Derbyshire. To the best of my knowledge this is the only translation of the Kniveton Leiger so David is to be thanked for doing it. Having spoken to David, his work on this has led him down all sorts of avenues and given him plenty to explore. For anyone who knows Bradley and the surrounding District or who have long family connections there I'm sure you will find something to catch your attention.

David has written an article for us about the Leiger and its context and has given a glimpse into a possible day in the life of the clerk.

We have a hard copy of the translation in library but also a copy on a memory stick if anyone wants a particular document.

There are some references to the Kniveton family in an article in Miscellany Vol 9 part 5 Spring 1982 - "Civil War and Civil Strife in South West Derbyshire 1250-1499" by Professor S.A. Barker.

David has also offered to translate the Glapwell Charters which we also have on shelves so it will be interesting to see what they turn up!

A DAY'S WORK

David Wright

Whenever we settle down to translate something of any length there is always a moment when we start to think not just about the text, but about its background as well. Who wrote it? How and where was it written? What were the pressures on the writer? How good or accurate was he? And so on.

Then we have to decide what we are trying to do. When the original is something of literary or artistic merit the challenge is not just to produce a "mechanical" translation but to create something that bridges the gap between the culture, time and conventions of then and now and that does justice to the merit, literary, poetic, narrative or dramatic of the original.

Even when, as with the Leiger, there is no literary merit at all in the original, a translation still has to bridge the gaps between then and now, between an intensely rural and limited environment eight hundred years ago, where the majority

of people could neither read or write with any fluency, if at all, and where there were two distinct groups of people, farming communities who lived in the villages, spoke English, and seldom travelled far from them, and the people who did travel, the nobility, merchants, drovers, soldiers, and so on, and might also speak Latin or French.

So what was the world of the Leiger?

First it was a world of small distinct communities. The villages referred to in the Leiger, Ashbourne, Bradley, Kniveton, Sturston, Atlow, Parwich and so on are all within a few miles of each other but completely separate. And of course within the village everyone knew everyone else

Second it was a world where for the vast majority of people there was only one thing of value. If we look at the metropolitan world of the seventeenth century as seen in the diaries of Samuel Pepys we see him living and working in a city, saving money, accumulating wealth and possessions, speculating and lending his capital at interest, and dealing with a well-developed commercial and banking community in the City of London. But in the world of the Leiger the only asset of real value was LAND, or produce from land, (such as rent, crops or wool/cloth). Money as such was of little importance, and apart from the sheep-runs that produced wool, farming was always close to a subsistence level.

Third it was a world that used a network of legal agreements, primarily leases, to transfer farming rights from the main landholders down to his tenants and subtenants, often in quite small packages.

Fourth it was a world that could at times be very modern in some ways. One not-

able aspect of the Leiger is that with hardly any exceptions the documents that are copied into it were written by "professionals". They were in Latin, the language of diplomacy the church and the law, not in English or French, and were clearly drafted following proper precedents. Obviously they were not the work of amateur writers, but experienced clerks, either lay or in orders. The Kniveton family as high-status retainers of the Ferrers Earls of Derby would have at least one such professional clerk on their staff, and most other wealthy landholders would do the same.

Then it was a world where the holders of land were often in dispute with one another. All through the Leiger we can see references to litigation and disputes over unpaid debts, fishing rights, grazing rights, land ownership, dower rights and so on. The Kniveton family in particular seem to have lived in constant dispute, with court cases dragging on for months or years.

Indeed it was this atmosphere of dispute that gives us the Leiger when Henry of Kniveton had his clerks compile a collection of the various legal documents that underpinned the holdings and claims that made up his estates. We can picture them sorting through the piles of old dusty documents stored in various chests and cupboards in his houses in Bradley and elsewhere, discarding minor and time-expired documents, and then deciding what needed to be copied into the Leiger, and what did not. And as there are over five hundred documents in the Leiger this must have been a major exercise.

So we may possibly picture the scene. It is a cold day in Spring and the Easter Session of the Hundred Court has been in

session in the great hall of the manor all morning. The clerk has been hunched over his desk wearing out his goose feather pens one by one making notes and recording the decisions as Sir Henry works through the agenda. Despite the fact that he has managed to put his desk close to the fire he is feeling the cold and longing to put down his pen, get something to eat, and warm himself up.

Still everything has gone smoothly. The Spring and Summer ploughing and harvesting schedule for the common fields has been agreed and the work allotted to the various village families. Arrangements have been made for some necessary repairs to the mill and millpond. A couple of disputes about wandering cattle and holes in fences have been dealt with. The usual crop of claims about poaching, fighting, and so on have been dealt with and the malefactors duly fined or punished with the consent and approval of the village. Various rent payments that have fallen due have been paid and properly recorded.

Now comes the last item on the agenda. There are three or four minor leases to be sealed, plus one major lease. They are all ready, carefully written out and copied properly the previous day. The minor leases have been read to, explained and checked by the villagers and the major lease discussed with and approved by the other clerk. He has only had to enter the date and list the witnesses on each copy. Then he takes the whole bundle and spreads them out one by one on the table before Sir Henry. All the interested parties gather round and then work down the line melting the red seal wax on the appropriate places and then pressing their seals, signet rings or thumbs into it. Everyone takes their copy and the work

of the court is complete. Sir Henry closes the court and calls for wine and food for himself and his guests while the villagers disperse to their homes.

At last. The clerk's work is nearly done. He now collects up Sir Henry's copies of the lease documents files them away, and locks the rent receipts in the secure chest. Then at last he can rest, eat and drink something warm, and get the writer's cramp out of his hands.

He still has to make arrangements with the parish priest for the court decisions to be recorded and displayed in the porch of the parish church. But that can wait.

David Wright

Journals recently arrived

Post medieval Archaeology Vol 60 part 2

And Finally

One of the books which came our way from Joan's library was a history of the Derby Photographic Society 1884 - 1934. There was a tantalising comment about H.H. (Arnold-)Bemrose (1857 - 1939) - 'a man of rare scientific achievement'. A member of the publishing firm of Bemrose, he was one of the many enlightened amateur Victorians who contributed so much to geology and many other scientific pursuits. A search came up with an article in the East Midlands Geologist from 1983 in very glowing terms about Bemrose's contribution to Derbyshire geology. Worth investigating further and no better place to start than the articles

he wrote for our journal in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and in the first volume of the Victoria County History of Derbyshire.



Come and have a browse one day!

The Library Team

