

The Victorian Rubbish Dump

Rubbish was very different in the Victorian era. Milk was delivered into your own container, straight from the churn with no bottles or cartons to dispose of. Food was fresh, and fruit and vegetable peelings would go onto the compost heap, whilst other scraps were fed to the chickens or rabbits, which were either eaten or kept as pets. Food bought in shops was weighed out into paper bags for the shopper to put into their own wicker basket to take home. These bags or paper would be burnt on the range or the open fire or even on the bonfire. Although canned foods were starting to be processed, it would be a few years before they were widely available.

Once read, newspapers were cut into squares, pierced with a skewer and hung on the wall with string for use as toilet paper, or used as firelighters, wrapping in the grocers shop, or best of all, to wrap fish and chips!

Coal and wood ash was never thrown away. It would be spread over the garden or allotment to improve the soil and keep the slugs at bay. Even soot from the chimney was saved for a year so that it lost its sulphur content and could be dug into the soil.

Items that could be mended would be mended. Travelling tinkers would repair leaking pots and pans or staple together pieces of broken china, and knife grinders would sharpen knives, metal utensils and gardening implements. Clothes were passed down through the children, being mended or altered when they became thin or torn. When they could no longer be mended, the best parts would be cut out and used to make clothes for small children or to make rag rugs.



The rag and bone man (also known as bone grubbers, rag gatherers or totters) would travel the streets collecting unwanted household items. He didn't pay much but it was better than nothing. He would re-sell rags by the lb (pound weight) for paper making; metal would be sold to the smelting works and bones would be sold to merchants for the making of soap, or made into handles for cutlery, toys or ornaments. Very little went to waste, but if all else failed, unwanted items would go to the rubbish dump.

During the last few months, a rubbish dump has been found on the outskirts of Quorn, and with the

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permission of the landowner, a dig has taken place. Parts of the site were found to be Victorian, whilst other areas were as late as the 1940's. The finds included a surprising number of scallop shells, broken ornaments and crockery, accumulators (radio batteries that had to be charged at the local shop), pot lids and bottles.



Milk bottles appeared in the 1920's and had the dairyman's name on them, so that they could be returned to the correct supplier. The Co-operative Society in Quorn (opened in 1862) was one of several dairies in the village and many bottles have been found by the diggers showing the names of W. Allen, E.C. Russ, and Moss. As glass bottles became more popular, the stoneware ginger beer bottle started to go out of production in the 1920's. Bottles from the chemist often had his name moulded into the glass, with poisons being contained in very distinctive bottles.



Many Codd bottles were also found at the Quorn site. These bottles had a marble in the neck and were used mainly for carbonated drinks, including beer. The glass marble was kept in place by the pressure of the contents. Due to the amount of pot lids found in this and other rubbish

tips, "Woods Areca Nut Tooth Paste" seems to be the most common toothpaste brand during the 1800's and early 1900's. The inkwell liner for a school desk has the words "Midland Educational Company Ltd" around the edge. Many people will remember the Midland Educational shop on Market Street Leicester, but may be surprised to know that it opened in those premises in the 1870's.

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Newsletter No. 6 October 2020

Hi and welcome to our sixth Kirby Muxloe Local History Group Newsletter

Since the Covid-19 virus pandemic continues, we've produced another newsletter to keep in touch with you, so please accept it with our compliments.

Although St. Barts Church Hall will soon be re-opening, we have decided that the risks are too high to restart our meetings at this time, regardless of whether the government restrictions would allow it or not. We do not anticipate any meetings before May 2021, but we will continue to review the situation.

Mike Gould (Chair) Val Knott (Secretary)
Kate Traill (Treasurer) Judith Upton (Archivist)
Kerry Burdett

We start by again turning back the clock and continuing on our virtual walk around 1945 Kirby

① Continuing our stroll along Desford Road, we take a look at the people who are living there, in and around 1945. Number 20 is where Frederick Bowley and his son Frederick Bowley junior live. The Bowley's are steam threshing machine proprietors and when their giant steam propelled machine leaves their premises to travel round to the stack yard at Castle Farm, the noise is so loud that all the children run out to watch as it trundles by. The roller is so large and high that the small children can hardly see the top!

② At number 64, we find the Cooper sisters: Amy and Edith. Amy is a teacher in Leicester, Edith is a housekeeper. There is another sister named Beatie. At number 66, are the Lant family, consisting of Mr and Mrs Lant and their two sons, David and John. Moving into the present day for a short time, we notice that their daughter is blanked out on the 1939 census, as she will still be alive in 2020. Two weeks ago, Mrs Beth (Elizabeth) Ellis née Lant contacted the History Group via K.M. Facebook. We then exchanged emails and she told me that her father was a village A.R.P. Warden in WWII (I found his name on our list) and that they had a black Labrador named Noble. Beth said that Noble could sense or hear when the German bombers were getting near and started to howl. Her father used to say that the dog could hear the planes coming over the English coast! This acted as an early warning long before the sirens went off. We know that dogs have very acute hearing and so he most likely did hear or sense the imminent invasion before it was discernible to the human ear. It has been reported that during WWII, some dogs did have an amazing sense of impending attack. Beth told me that their house had been demolished to make way for the building of Jubilee House; she has sent us a copy of the Kirby Muxloe New Freehold Land Society Rules, a Passbook and an old official guide to K.M. Castle. More pieces of interesting memorabilia to add to our archive. We are most grateful to Beth for her interest.



③ So back to 1945 and at number 72, we reach the house where Pam Stafford lives with her parents Leslie and Lillian. Pam is 16 years old and by 1952 will be married to Peter Cooper, who lives at "Brooklyn", 40, Main Street. Although the address is Main Street and the house has a long driveway from Main Street, it can also be accessed by foot from Desford Road. Peter lives there with his parents, two brothers and a sister. During the war, Peter's family got together with three other families, including the Rowe's, and built a substantial air raid shelter at the bottom of their gardens. The shelter was built into the bank and made out of concrete. The families used the shelter every time the air raid siren sounded. It gave them good protection during the bombing of 1940, especially as their conservatory roof was blown right off! Peter will soon reach his eighteenth birthday and will receive his "calling up papers" on the same day. Within a few weeks he will be enrolled to serve in the Fleet Air Army for two years. This is still called "hostilities service", National Service will not begin until 1949. Peter and Pam will live in the village for the rest of their long lives.

④ Next door at number 74, is the home of P.C. Kempin the village "bobby". There is a large notice board in the front garden and it is always covered with the latest "police news". At this time in 1945, if boys or girls were up to mischief and caught by P.C. Kempin, after reprimanding them for their misdemeanours, he would then march them straight home to be chastised by their father. P.C. Kempin was always aware of trouble in the village. In one incident, when some girls were attending a Girl Guides meeting in the scout hut in the Free Church car park, a group of boys found it hilarious to open the door and throw in a stink bomb! This was reported to the policeman who then came along with his dog and waited until the boys tried to repeat their act of mischief. P.C. Kempin would jump out and reprimand the boys, remove the leather belt from his trousers and "whack" the boy's legs with his belt. The boys were wearing short trousers! Ouch!! In years to come, people will remember this time as when law and order was kept by the village policeman. In later years how many people will look back and remember their experiences with P.C. Kempin. His wife has a beautiful contralto voice and on "V.E." Day, this year (1945), Mrs Kempin stood on a large box in the corner of the school playground and sang "Land of Hope and Glory". Everyone was crying and laughing at the same time, there were so many conflicting emotions. Many people will still remember this day, well into the twenty first century.

Quakers in Kirby

A few years ago, we were given a handwritten pocketbook that appears to be a history of Kirby Muxloe in draft form that was never published. The author is a William H. Ripplin, who had lived on Church Road in 1901, but appears to have moved to Desford by the time he was writing his book, sometime after 1902. This article has been transcribed from the book, with little editing needed.

At one time there was apparently a fair number of Quakers living in & around Kirby, for on 25th of January 1670, a meeting was held at the house of John Penford at Kirby Mucklow (observe the name is spelled Mucklow) for the purpose of giving charitable assistance to the poor. Informers came to the meeting & found them consulting about works of charity.

John Penford desired the Informers to look into the books of account, then lying open, so that they might not misrepresent the cause of the meeting. Probably this was done, but the Informers went & got a warrant to bring John Penford, William Wells, John Carr and Richard Woodland before the Justices at Bosworth.

They appeared there & were charged with being at a Seditious Conventicle; they desired that the Informers might give in their depositions in their hearing, but the Justices would not grant it; for indeed they were so partially disposed that one of them, the Lord Beaumont, told John Penford, whom he knew to have a considerable estate, that "he would bring him to poverty".

John Penford was fined £20 for the meeting being held in his house & £10 for a preacher, though no preacher was there; they also fined several others £3-6. 8 each so that the whole amounted to £50.

Penford and Woodland appealed to the Quarter Sessions & retained Council to plead their cause there. But so arbitrary were the Justices that they refused to try the appeal, unless the appellants would first take the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy, which they refusing to do, the Court awarded treble damages against the plaintiffs, as if they had been cast upon trial, though it was apparent that they had both Law and Equity on their side.

The result of this appeal was that Penford would have stock and goods taken off his farm to the minimum value of £90, for the records of the time prove that the distraints were always much in excess of the claim.

A Sovereign (£1) at that time would purchase as much as £5 will do now, so that the total cost of a meeting to benefit his poorer neighbours cost John Penford £500. In permitting that meeting at his house, he was but carrying out Christ's precepts to "Love his neighbour". It was rather a dear experience, but dear as it was, it did not change him from rather obeying Christ's commands than a church's tyranny.

Two years later in 1672 he was again in trouble, for he refused to pay towards the repairs of the Steeple

House, or St. Bartholomews Church. In old Quaker writings, Churches are generally spoken of as Steeple Houses, because they denied (that) consecration could make any four walls & roofs a church & considered consecration an unwarrantable superstition. For refusing to pay for Church repairs he was brought before an Ecclesiastical Court, was excommunicated & by a writ de Excommunicato Capiendo committed to Prison, where he continued two years. I may remind you prisons in those days were not health resorts, fitted up with every sanitary appliance & convenience, but were often holes underground, dungeons indeed for body & mind.

At the old Town Hall at Leicester there is a dark hole still described as the Quaker's Dungeon & a knowledge of old records makes one realise the name was not given without good cause.

These sad experiences were not sufficient to daunt John Penford, for in 1680 he was again fined £20 for allowing a meeting at his house for supplying the necessities of the poor & other works of Charity. The informer this time was John Dixon, priest of the Parish, Rector of Glenfield, who hearing of the intended meeting, informed Wenlock Stanley of Braunstone by letter, who sent three of his servants to the meeting. They heard neither praying nor preaching there, yet Lord Beaumont & Justice Roberts fined John Penford not only for the house £20, but also £10 for a Preacher, though no Preacher was there. He appealed again to the Quarter Sessions but the Justices there refused to hear his lawful plea & gave treble damages against him. So that for a second time, merely for exercising the primitive right of man to succour the needy, stock & goods to the value of about £100 were taken from him, but if reckoned in our currency to the value of £500. So this man for practicing common Christian principles is fined to the extent of £1000 & is also imprisoned for two years. He was a man of Kirby whose memory we can respect at this lapse of over 200 years, who did the thing that lay nearest to him, little thinking that centuries after his sorrows, this brave testimony to truth should prove an incentive & encouragement to those who enjoyed the simple blessings, the right to worship God in sincerity & freedom from compulsory creeds & doctrines.

One third of the fine recovered from these prosecutions was paid to the Informer, so that the Rector who was not above such conduct would place a sum equivalent to £150 in his pocket by acting as a Common Informer.

In the same year, John Penford of Braunstone Gate Leicester for attending a Friends Meeting had 3 cows taken from him, valued at £14. Whether this was the same man, I cannot say; it is possible he occupied a farm on the outskirts of the town as well as at Kirby, but there is nothing to identify him with certainty. In the records of the Religious Persecutions in Leicester, there are several Penfords mentioned & on various occasions they were heavily fined.

MG & William Ripplin

A Legal Landmark

At the same time that the Penford case, described in "Quakers in Kirby", was happening, a similar event was taking place that would be a landmark in British justice and our legal system. I came across the story when I was researching the Quakers and was surprised that I had never heard of it before. The Mead and Penn case is similar to our local Penford case in many ways, but its effects would echo down the ages!

After the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, Charles II resumed the Stuart's favourite family pastime - religious persecution. The Conventicle Act of 1664 banned the assembly of any more than 5 non-Anglicans. Thousands were prosecuted, including Presbyterians, Quakers and Catholics. Those found guilty were imprisoned or even transported. But that didn't stop two Quakers, named William Mead and William Penn. They had not just broken the rule of five, but in 1670, they had preached to a crowd of hundreds. They were duly hauled before the courts - but then they had a stroke of luck.

Many people thought that the Act was morally unfair and unjust. On the jury were four such people, led by a merchant named Edward Bushel, and they bravely declined to find the defendants guilty of a criminal offence. The judge was incensed and called Bushel "impudent". But Bushel was passionate, obstinate and a good orator. He stood his ground, and the rest of the jury rallied round him. When the jury failed to bring in the "right" verdict, the judge had them shut up in Newgate gaol, without "meat or drink, fire or tobacco" to reconsider their decision - or to starve!

The future looked bleak - many died in that prison, long before their sentence expired. But Bushel didn't give up. He managed to get a writ of *habeas corpus* heard. We tend to think of this as something that crops up in murder cases - supposedly that you cannot charge someone with murder without a body (which, incidentally, is not true), but it is actually a recourse in law through which a person can report an unlawful detention or imprisonment to a court and request that the court order the custodian of the person, usually a prison official, to bring the prisoner to court, to determine whether the detention is lawful.

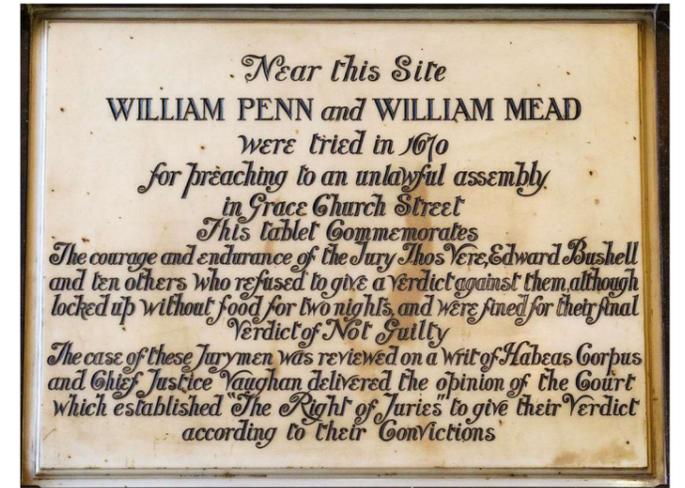
So it was that Sir John Vaughan, Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas gave the verdict of the court. Not only did he decree that the jury had been imprisoned illegally and should be released, but he also stated, in an historical ruling, that juries should return verdicts in accordance with their conscience and that no juror should ever be punished for the verdict that they reached. That clear and unambiguous ruling has stood the test of time. From that day to this, no juror has ever been prosecuted for the verdict that they have brought, no matter how perverse it may appear to a judge.

A plaque at the Old Bailey records the landmark verdict.

If you have access to the Internet, you can hear the story for yourself on the BBC website, from which this story has been written:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0165zgb>

MG



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The Victorian Rubbish Dump (continued from back page)



One of the pits at the Quorn dig - Note: no plastic!

Thank you to Sue Templeman for the Quorn dig information and photographs

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