

# What's on!

## September 2024



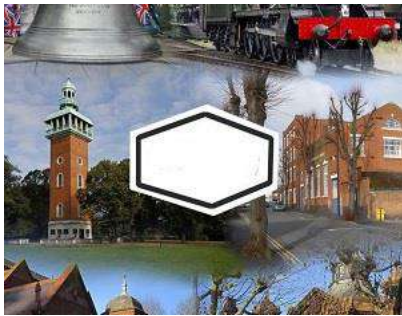
### Diary Dates:

The Mystery Object

14/15 September Military Memorabilia Roadshow

30 September Loughborough Heritage Forum Meeting

**Heritage Open Weekend.** This is a national event where heritage sites and organisations do something a little different, open up areas that are normally off limits to the public, free entry for some locations that normally charge. See [Loughborough's events](#). In our case, invite people to bring along any items of military memorabilia for identification or just to talk about it.



Thanks to Cassie, we will have a table in Charnwood Museum, a few objects from the collection (Collection Trust has told museums to stop saying 'our collection' as, of course it is not ours. They suggest 'collection in our care') a few retail items and a laptop so we have access to the catalogue and the internet. (Christine please note)

I am happy to be there throughout the opening hours, this is something I am looking forward to. There is no rota but if anyone wants to join me for an hour or just pop in to say hello then you are most welcome and I will give you a lesson on the Modes catalogue.

Attached is the poster listing all the other events taking place over the weekend 14/15<sup>th</sup> September and a flyer advertising our offer. Could I ask that you print off our flyer and find somewhere to display it, pub notice boards, supermarkets, shop windows. It is a small challenge that I hope you will all take up.

**Loughborough Heritage Forum.** 30 September at Longcliffe Golf Club. This forum, the heritage organisations and sites in Loughborough, meet twice a year, supported by the Loughborough Building Society, it discusses and coordinates heritage activities in Loughborough.

It is through this forum that I met a gentleman that, hopefully, we can return the two large Brush Engineering memorial slates to the Brush site where they rightfully belong, rather a poor photograph but the red circle is the badge of the Leicestershire Regiment (they didn't get 'Royal' until 1947) and on the other memorial the is a badge of the Leicestershire Yeomanry but I believe these were added afterwards, probably by over enthusiastic carillon volunteers. What was there originally? We will probably never know.



**The Way Forward.** I attended a meeting, along with Luke and ex-councillor James Poland, with a number of CBC officials, as you know the Leicestershire Yeomanry Association have challenged their decision not to allow the public to access the stairs. For the first time in all the interactions we have had with CBC a way forward was suggested. No simple solution however. CBC have asked us to commission a ['Fire Strategy'](#) report. They will make a contribution to the cost. Once they have it they will make a decision on how much risk they are prepared to accept.

I contacted five companies that offer fire strategy reports, four responded and at this moment in time one has submitted a quote. I also contacted Leicestershire Fire Service and asked if the Loughborough Station had an operational procedure for action in the event of a fire in the carillon tower. They don't! However, they are visiting the tower to formulate one.

None of this impacts on the plan for the ground floor which will go ahead (extremely slowly) with a deadline of Easter 2025 (which no one believes is possible) We need to make some real progress with the stories we want to tell and identify the objects to go alongside. Judging by the response to my email I obviously didn't make it clear. The story boards are magnetic and can be changed quite easily. We can write any number of stories.

**Army Museums Ogilby Trust.** When Colonel Ogilby founded AMOT 70 years ago, most regiments had their own regimental depots where the museums were to be located and thus their influence on soldiers, both old and new, could be immediate and fundamental. This automatic close bond between museum and soldier is now a rarity, particularly with the centralised training of recruits.

AMOT's work as 'The Voice for Army Museums' is advocating on your behalf to stakeholders such as the MOD, local councils, media, educational establishments, grant-giving bodies and Government to safeguard Army heritage. Read more: [Home - Army Museums Ogilby Trust](#)

**Mel's Comment.** When I went to the Leicesters' depot at Glen Parva their museum was located within the barracks (now located in Newarke Houses) and regimental history was taught to all recruits. When I joined the battalion new arrivals were taken on a guided of both the Sgts Mess and Officers Mess to see and hear about the silver, the paintings and historical objects held in each mess.

**Boring but True.** Why 'Mess'? The word mess is an old English word, meaning, much the same as it does today, untidy, unorganised. But it was also the name of a 'all in stew' anything and everything thrown in. The food was cooked in a central kitchen and then delivered to the various classes within the unit, thus; the Officers mess, the Sgts mess. Anyway, that's what I believe.

**Humour in Uniform.** On the subject of the Sgts Mess here is a joke -



Afghanistan 2007 and British troops ambush a group of Taliban, in the fire fight that follows one Afghan escapes and runs into the mountains and desert of the surrounding area. Hours later, his tongue swollen with lack of water and nearly driven mad with thirst he sees a figure in the distance.

He staggers towards the figure crying “water, water” on arrival he is met with a smartly dressed British soldier who politely informs him that he has no water but he can sell him a regimental tie. “What the \*\*\*\* can I do with a tie? I need water” the man croaks. “Water, water” he cries. The soldier explains that over the brow of the hill is a tent, the Sergeants Mess, there, the man will find all the ice cold water he can drink and the man staggers off in the direction the soldier indicated.

Twenty minutes later he returns in a worse state than when he left, “they won’t let me in without a tie” he screams.

**Regimental Ties.** The Royal Leicestershire Regimental tie is, black, red and pearl grey. Supposedly; red for Royal, black in memory of Gen Wolfe, killed at the Battle of Quebec in 1759 and pearl grey the colour of the facings (the visible lining of the redcoat they wore) which they adopted after the Battle of Princeton in 1777. What I have never understood is that on many regimental ties, particularly infantry regiments, the stripes go, the American way. Right to left. Why?

**Government intentions?** The newly appointed culture secretary Lisa Nandy has promised to use the cultural and creative industries to drive economic renewal.



Nandy acknowledged the "neglect" of cultural institutions. Speaking at the Science and Industry Museum in Manchester, she said: “This museum, like so many of your institutions, help to shape and define us as we shape and define them. We pass them down from one generation to the next. And we neglect them at our cost.”

Nandy pledged to “take the brakes off” the cultural and creative industries. She said: “Through our partnerships with our mayors, councils, businesses and charities, we’re putting rocket boosters under our growing industries – film and theatre, TV, fashion, video games, heritage and tourism – to take the brakes off the economy, create opportunity for every child and to export our incredible talent across the world.”

She added: “When we turn to face the nation again in five years’ time, it is our ambition that we will face a self-confident country, at ease with itself, where all of our people see themselves in the story we tell ourselves about ourselves as a nation – their contribution seen and valued.”

Nandy cited the nearby, council-funded People’s History Museum as her favourite cultural institution. She said: “These are the councils who have always understood that the history of ordinary people and the ideas that drove them cannot just help us not just to interpret the past, but can help us navigate the future. That museum reminds us that change doesn’t come easily.”

**Leicestershire & Rutland Heritage Forum (LRHF).** Following the positive message from Lisa Nandy above the local scene is not so positive. Below is a statement sent out by LRHF:

To Heritage Forum Members,

It has been far too long since an LRHF update has been issued, my apologies for this, I wish it had been earlier. Following the appeal for people to assist with the Forum's Coordination Group I had a few responses from people who said they would like to help, but had so many family, heritage and other commitments they felt they could not find the time. It is easy to empathise with their situation as I have been in the same boat.

**Forum Meetings.** In recent years there have been a number of successful and well attended Forum events, but far too many which have been poorly attended. I believe that time has moved on as there are now more localised networks based in all or most district and unitary council areas. This is great, as people and organisations can meet without travelling such long distances. The important thing is that in these networks so many people are meeting and sharing heritage ideas that relate to their areas. For this reason, Mike and I felt that it is no longer viable to hold Forum meetings. It is also why Forum members have not been asked for membership subscriptions this year.

**Heritage Awards.** For the dozen years I have been involved with the Forum, the heritage awards every couple of years have been a great success. All the recent ones have had 40 plus entries from a wide range of organisations. It would be a great shame to lose the heritage awards and the two of us had a chat about how to progress this. Even when Chrissie rejoins the coordination group, after her museum reorganisation in October, we need more bodies.

Our intention is thus to contact other organisations with a widespread interest in the heritage of Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland, with a view to finding one or more partner organisations to help run the awards. If you have a suggestion of a suitable organisation, please let me know, contact details of an appropriate person would be particularly helpful.

Based upon the usual cycle of two years the next heritage awards would be entries in January 2025 for projects ending December 2024. This will certainly not be the case. Late 2025 or early 2026 is much more likely, assuming that we can find a partner organisation.

**Newsletter.** The Forum newsletters have always been an interesting showcase of so many activities that have either taken place or are planned. It is intended to produce another one, so please let me have short articles and a photo or two by Saturday 24th August, so that it can be issued by the 28th. It may not give you that long, but most people tend to leave it until close to the deadline. So, tell us what has been happening and share future events.

<http://www.lrhf.co.uk/>

<https://www.facebook.com/LRHForum>



One of the photographs on our entry on the LRHF website. When we had a museum.



**The Yeomanry Room.** The *Loughborough Echo* covered the story of the Local TA Unit hauling up the display cases through the trapdoor of the floor in about 1987. The text reads:

Two cases of kindness went through the ceiling at Loughborough's War Memorial Carillon. Gifts from local business men, the two glass display case have been installed on a new floor in the tower which has been set aside for memorabilia of Leicestershire's fighting past.

Tricky

Getting them up through the trapdoors was a tricky task, so Carillon warden Mr. Sam Evans called in the experts – men from Loughborough's Territorial Army unit of the LDY Coy 7<sup>th</sup> Royal Anglian Regiment.

Orchestrating the squad's efforts to lift the fragile cargo up the inside of the famous bell tower was Lt. Rod Burns.

"We were delighted to help out," he said, "especially as the cases will contain relics from our regiment's past."



**The Mystery object.** Last month's mystery object was obviously a pump but very much from the Cold War era. It is a Mk2 Porton NBC Resuscitator, Porton Down was the British, and probably still is, defence research centre for chemical and biological weapons (the emphasis was 'defence', developing precautions and antidotes rather than offensive weapons.



The resuscitator allowed soldiers to administer mouth to mouth without the physical contact. We have one in the collection complete with its wooden box. It has never been used, thank God. Chemical weapons have been banned in a number of conventions but many countries still stockpile chemical weapons and occasionally use them, the Americans in Vietnam and probably the most devastating chemical attack was in 1988 when Iraq used Mustard Gas against Kurdish civilians killing between 3,200 and 5,000 men, women and children.

This month's mystery object (shown at the top of the page) is a little less sophisticated than the pump but, to me, just as interesting.

M Gould

25.8.24