Finding Nottinghamshire's People

Tracing your Story in the Archives



Tracing our ancestors has proved a fascinating challenge for generations. Historically, researchers sought evidence to establish a claim to a title or noble descent, but today increasing numbers pursue family history as a hobby. Publications and television programmes such as Who Do You Think You Are? show how a family's past experience can powerfully resonate with an individual's life today. Many people want to discover more about the life and times of their ancestors.

Family and local historians can draw on internet resources, but few of the original documents are available online. There is a rich and often overlooked world that lies beyond the indices of census and birth, marriage and death records.

This exhibition uses the collections of both Nottinghamshire Archives and The University of Nottingham's Manuscripts and Special Collections to uncover the lives of some of Nottinghamshire's people. Whether they were born into wealthy families or came from a much poorer background, almost all of our ancestors will have left a trail in the archives.

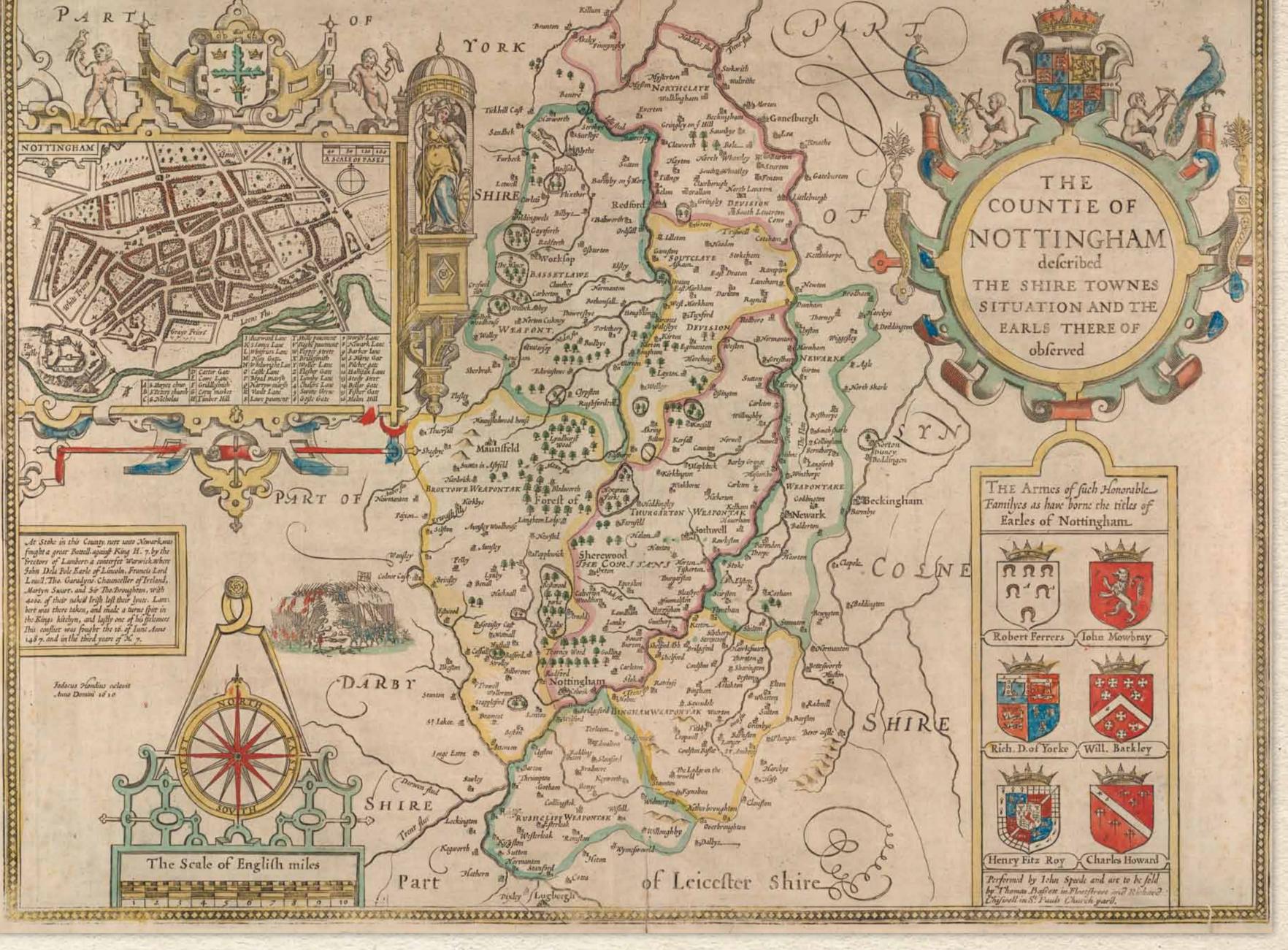
Core records of parish and civil administration are featured, but the focus is on the added value that lies in our broader archival heritage. The documents provide stories about many different individuals, from familiar figures of power and reputation to ordinary Nottinghamshire folk, or families who moved here from other places.

Resources include the records of churches, businesses, hospitals and other organisations and the private papers and photographs of individuals, families and estates. Original documents offer the evidence of family groupings and their critical life events from cradle to grave. Together they reveal how diverse and rewarding the study of family history can be, shedding light on past communities and their experiences.

The exhibition has been jointly curated by staff from Nottinghamshire Archives and Manuscripts and Special Collections at The University of Nottingham.



Extract from the Hutchinson family pedigree Nottinghamshire Archives, M/5416



Map of the county of Nottingham, by John Speed, 1610

University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections, Not 1.B8.C76



Photograph of Mrs Mellors and son outside their shop, Chilwell, early 20th century University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections, MS 682/25



Photograph of Wrench family group at Park Lodge, Baslow, Derbyshire, c. September 1868 University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections, Wr Ph 12







Lucy Hutchinson

1620 - 1681

A seventeenth-century biographer and poet

Nothinghafmshire's Leople
Ancestral Stories from the Archives

Lucy Hutchinson, née Apsley, was born in 1620 in London. She received a far broader education than was normal for girls at the time. She composed songs and developed a significant literary talent. She was highly regarded for her translation of Lucretius' De Rerum Natura and credited with the anonymous biblical poem Order and Disorder (1679).

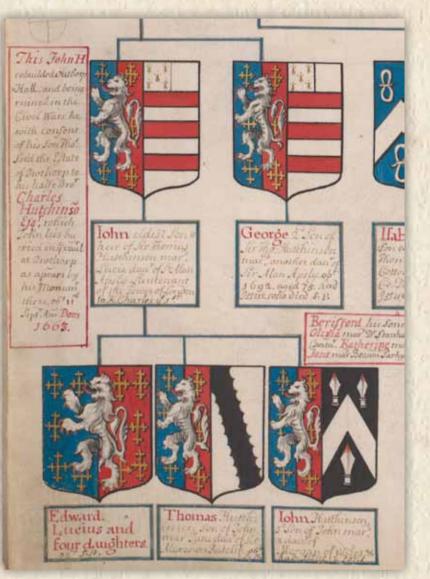


Engraving of Lucy Hutchinson by Samuel Freeman, c.1825-1850 © National Portrait Gallery, London

Lucy resisted early pressure to make an advantageous marriage to help resolve her family's financial problems, despite a number of offers from arranged suitors, until she met John Hutchinson (c.1615-1664) of Owthorpe in Nottinghamshire. Writing later of their courtship, she highlighted his admiration of her skills as a poet and writer and described how he encouraged her talent. Sadly most of her early poems and songs have not survived.

The couple married at Holborn in 1638. In 1642 Civil War broke out between the supporters of Charles I and those who wanted Parliament to have a greater role in running the country. The puritan John Hutchinson enlisted in the Parliamentarian army and was appointed governor of Nottingham. Later he signed the death warrant of Charles I. When the monarchy was restored in 1660, his involvement in the execution led to his imprisonment. After her husband's death in 1664 Lucy and their eight surviving children faced difficult circumstances.

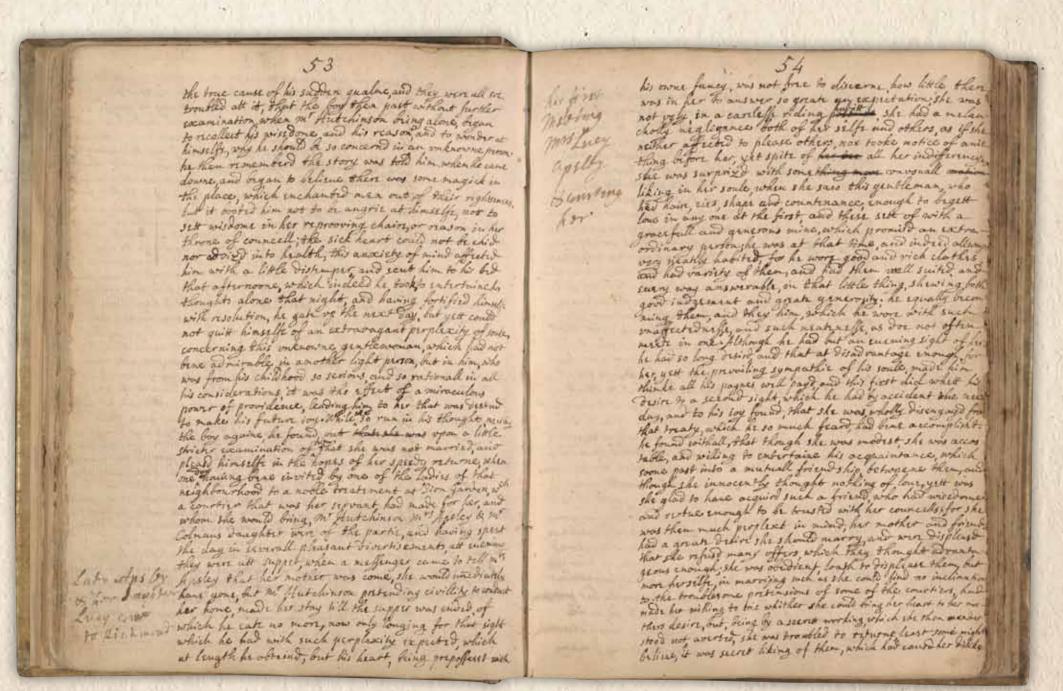
Hutchinson's biography, Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson, was written by his wife in c.1671. Originally intended only for her family, it was published in 1806 by a descendant, the Rev. Julius Hutchinson. Lucy gives a vivid account of her husband's character and their life together. She also provides a record of great value to historians of the Civil War and of Nottinghamshire. She died at Owthorpe in 1681.



Coat of arms of John Hutchinson and his and Lucy Hutchinson's children, compiled 1712 Nottinghamshire Archives, M/5416



Deed of Sir Thomas and John Hutchinson, and Sir Edward Hungerford and Allen Apsley on the marriage of John Hutchinson and Lucy Apsley, 1638 Nottinghamshire Archives, M/691

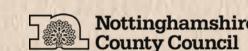


Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson by his wife, Lucy Hutchinson, c.1671: extract relating to the courtship between John and Lucy in 1638 Nottinghamshire Archives, DD/HU/4











Mary Howitt

1799 - 1888

A writer and her family



The letters between Mary Howitt and her family illustrate the significance of female relationships in maintaining family memories. They provide a rare glimpse of nineteenth-century women's views of social, political, and domestic matters.

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Letter sent by Emma Alderson from Cincinnati, Kentucky to her mother, Ann Botham, in Staffordshire, c. 1884 University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections, Ht/7/2/17

Largely forgotten today, Mary and her husband William (1792-1879) were prolific authors who lived in Nottingham from 1822 to 1836. Their collaborative work included popular literature for adults and children, and often revealed their concern for humanitarian issues. Mary's poem 'The Spider and the Fly' and their translations of the stories of Hans Christian Anderson are among their best known works.

After their marriages, Mary, her sisters Emma Alderson and Anna Harrison, and their mother, Ann Botham, lived far apart, often in different countries. They maintained their relationship through articulate and frank letters. Many are challenging to read, as they are written in 'crossed' form, with the paper turned and reused to save postage.

Their affection and closeness, despite the difficulties of communication, is striking. The letters are intensely personal reflections of daily life and contemporary society, and provide an uncommon insight into women's perspectives of their lives as wives and mothers. A recurring theme is the anxiety of repeated pregnancies and childbirth.

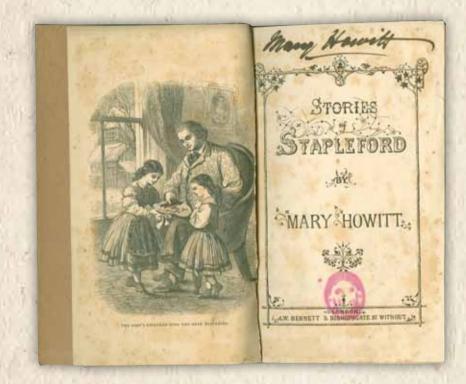
Through illnesses, miscarriages and separation from loved ones, they took comfort from their religious beliefs. Raised a Quaker, Mary's struggles with religion are clear. She investigated Spiritualism before converting to Catholicism in 1883.

The letters express frustration with the limited role women were allowed to play in society and their opinions on issues such as slavery and the American Civil War.

The family was well-travelled: Emma and her husband emigrated to America; Mary's husband William and their two sons travelled to Australia; and their daughter studied in Germany. William and Mary eventually settled in Italy, where both are buried.



Letter sent by Emma Alderson from Cincinnati, Kentucky to her mother, Ann Botham, in Staffordshire, c. 1884 *University of Nottingham* Manuscripts and Special Collections, Ht/7/2/16



Frontispiece and title page from 'Stories of Stapleford' signed by the author Mary Howitt, c. 1864 *University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections, EMSC Not 1.W8 HOW/MY*



A crossed letter from Mary Howitt to her sister Anna declaring that the two were 'never made to be parted', c. 1822 *University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections*, Ht/1/1/5



Bust of William and Mary Howitt at Nottingham Castle Museum by the sculptor George Frampton *University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections, MS 565/56*

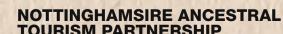


Illustration of 'Hunting Opossums at Midnight', from 'A Boy's Adventures in the Wilds of Australia: or, Herbert's note-book', William Howitt, 1858 University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections, Not 1.W8 HOW/W









George Africanus

1763 - 1834

Slave, freeman and Nottingham citizen



The story of George Africanus, a former slave from Sierra Leone who became a successful entrepreneur, illustrates the importance of civil and business records in tracing a person's history. His date and exact place of birth are unknown, but he was about three years of age when in 1766 he was brought to England, where he became a servant to the Molyneux family in Wolverhampton. We do not know when or how he came to Nottingham, where he was settled as a free man in the 1780s, although the Molyneux family did have links with the county.

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Marriage register entry for George Africanus and Esther Shaw at St Peter's church, Nottingham, 3 August 1788

Nottinghamshire Archives, PR/2039

On 3 August 1788 he married Esther Shaw, a local girl who had been baptised at St Mary's church in Nottingham in 1768. George was recorded on his marriage licence as a brass founder, but he did other work as well; by 1815 a local business directory lists him as running a servants' register office on Chandlers Lane in Nottingham.

City records show he also owned property in Nottingham. As a freeholder he had the right to vote in parliamentary elections. George played a part in community life; in 1816 he was included on a list of special constables who were responsible for 'watching and warding' the local streets to protect their property and others' during times of social unrest. In 1829 George bought substantial property in Chandlers Lane which included two other properties let out to tenants.

George died in 1834, aged 71 years, and was buried in St Mary's churchyard in Nottingham on 25 May. He was survived by his wife Esther, their daughter Hannah and grand-daughter Sarah.

A plaque was erected at St Mary's churchyard in 2003 in memory of Nottingham's 'first black entrepreneur'.

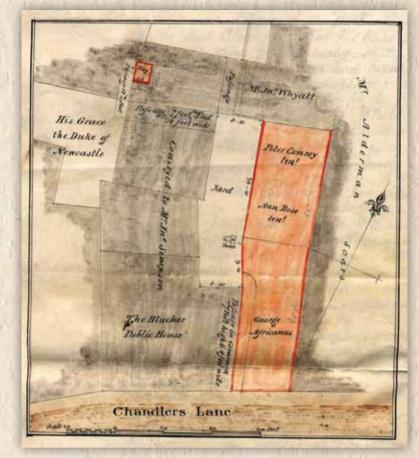
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Watch and Ward Register listing individuals enlisted to serve as special constables, 1816

Nottinghamshire Archives, CA/1490

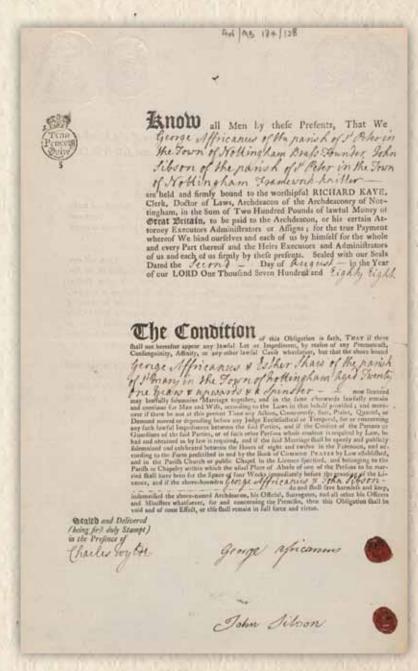


Plaque commemorating the burial place of George Africanus at St Mary's churchyard in Nottingham *Private collection*



Plan of property on Chandlers Lane, Nottingham, purchased by George Africanus in 1829

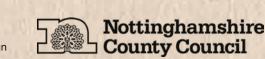
Nottinghamshire Archives, M/11044



Marriage bond of George Africanus, 1788
University of Nottingham *Manuscripts and Special Collections*, *AN/MB/184/128*









William Mompesson

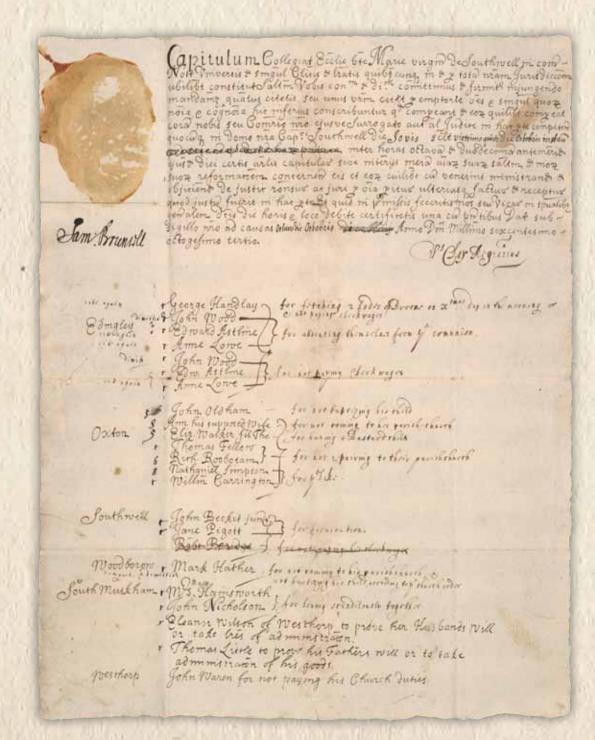
1639 - 1709

A clerical life

Nothinghalmshire's Leople

Ancestral Stories from the Archives

The church played a significant role in recording the lives of individuals and communities. Clergymen, who themselves often left their birthplace to establish careers and their families in other locations, had unique opportunities to oversee parish life and observe families in transition.



Citation for people to appear before the court of Southwell Chapter, October 1683 Nottinghamshire Archives, SC/8/2/196

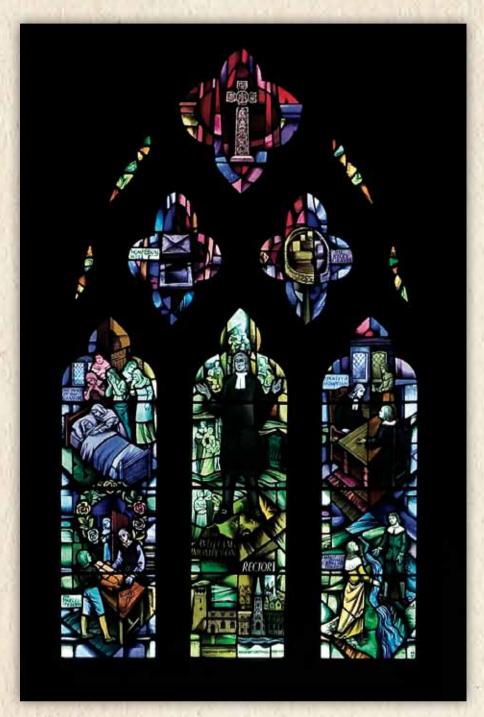
William Mompesson was born in Yorkshire and was appointed to the Derbyshire rectory of Eyam in 1664.

He is most commonly remembered for his actions during the bubonic plague epidemic of 1665-66. When plague reached Eyam in September 1665, William persuaded the community to confine itself to the parish, aiming to prevent the disease from spreading. Up to four in ten of the parishioners consequently died, including William's wife Catherine. Contrary to his own expectations, William survived and in 1669 became the rector of Eakring in Nottinghamshire.

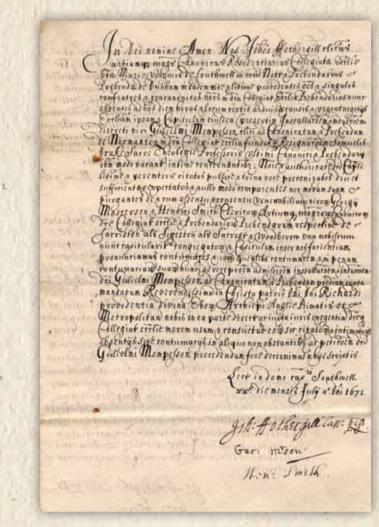
In 1671 he was installed as one of sixteen prebendary canons of Southwell Minster. A prebendary was a parish, the profits from which were used to support the Minster. In addition to their parish duties, the canons also shared responsibility for running the Minster and its estate. During his career at Southwell, William oversaw the building of a new residentiary house for the canons. His accounts dating to the 1690s show progress of the work.

The proceedings of ecclesiastical courts gave church officials further insight into the life of the community. Local people attended the Southwell Minster Chapter court to account for their spiritual and moral behaviour. Offences included sexual misconduct, disorderly behaviour, failure to attend church and non-payment of church dues including tithes. These court records are invaluable sources for local historians.

William Mompesson died at Eakring on 7 March 1709, having served as rector of that parish for nearly forty years. His parish register is a critical source for historians researching their ancestors in this community. His burial is recorded by a brass plaque.



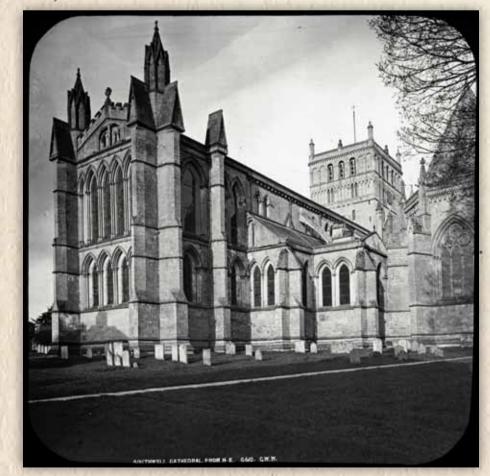
Stained glass window at Eyam Church, showing William Mompesson © Mark Titterton Photography and Design



Proceedings for the installation of William Mompesson as Prebendary of Normanton, 20 July 1671 Nottinghamshire Archives, SC/4/1/363



William Mompesson's accounts for the building of the canons residentiary house, 1690 SC/6/5/13



Lantern Slide of Southwell Minster, by George Washington Wilson, 1898 University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections, Ev 34

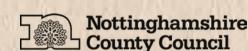


Photograph of Southwell Minster choir, 19th century Nottinghamshire Archives, PR/25168











The Pelham-Clinton Dukes of Newcastle

1639 - 1709

An aristocratic lineage



Arrangements for the inheritance of title or property could require detailed genealogical evidence, particularly when the constraints of male primogeniture were in question. The archives of the Dukes of Newcastle include many papers showing how rights were transferred when the male line ended.

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Extract from the illuminated pedigree of the Clinton family, 1648

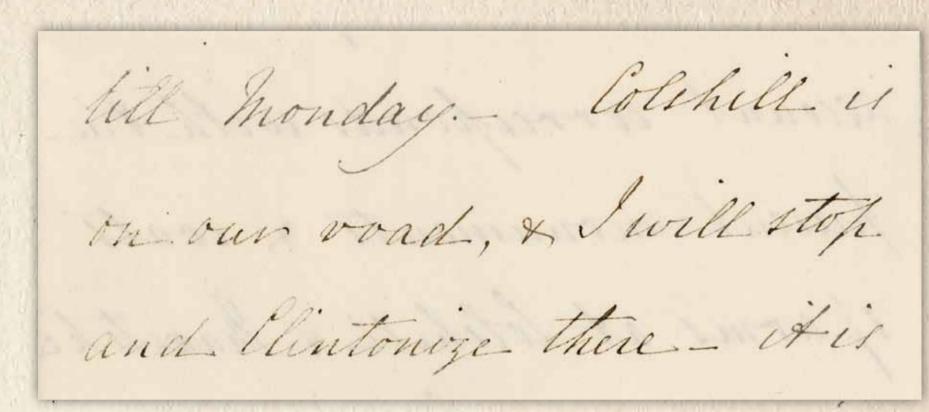
University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections, Ne X 674

A magnificent parchment pedigree of 1648 records the Clintons from their Norman forebears to the time of Theophilus, 4th Earl of Lincoln (d.1667). It provides images of early ancestors, and identifies families linked by marriage. This became a valuable record for the Dukes of Newcastle under Lyne when Henry Fiennes Pelham-Clinton, 9th Earl of Lincoln, became the 2nd Duke in 1768. His successors were proud of their Clinton ancestry and in 1822 the roll was extended to record more recent family members.

The 4th Duke hoped to trace the Clinton family line back to a royal Anglo-Saxon origin and commissioned research by the antiquarian T.D. Fosbrooke and others. An earlier forged Old English text linked to Leominster, Herefordshire, was claimed to be accurate, leading the Duke to muse: "probably we have to boast of having the blood of the great and admirable Alfred running in our veins in a purer and more direct manner than we could otherwise have laid claim to".

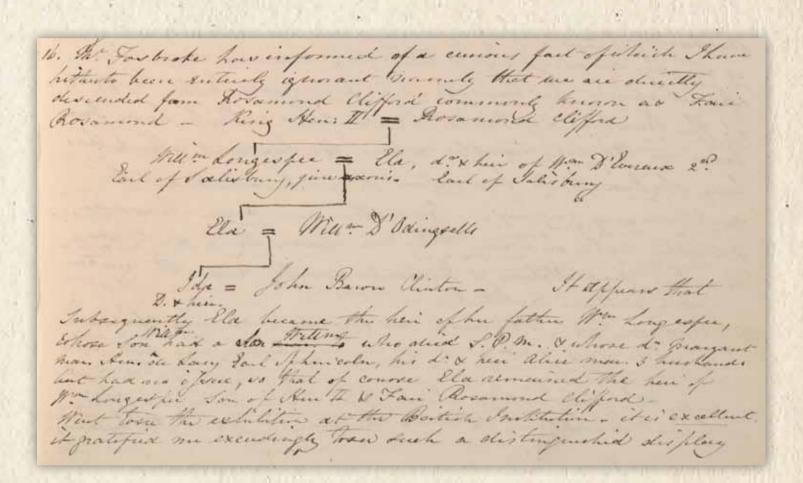
Other family members shared in the research. In August 1833 the Earl of Lincoln wrote to his father about its progress, and promised that as he travelled north from Leominster through Coleshill, Warwickshire, "I will stop and Clintonize there". His son, Lord Edward Pelham-Clinton, continued the work and the College of Arms provided a new family tree in the 1880s.

When the Newcastle ducal title expired in 1988 on the death of the 10th Duke, knowledge of the early Clintons enabled a distant Australian cousin, Edward Fiennes Clinton, to succeed to the family title of Earl of Lincoln.

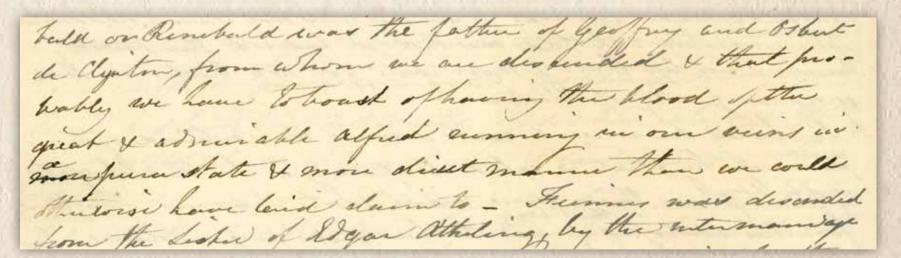


Letter from Henry Pelham-Clinton to his father the 4th Duke of Newcastle under Lyne, referring to going 'Clintonizing', 1833

University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections, Ne C 14836



Extract from the diary of Henry Pelham-Clinton, 4th Duke of Newcastle under Lyne, regarding descent from Rosamund Clifford, mistress of Henry II, March 1826 *University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections, Ne 2F 2/1*

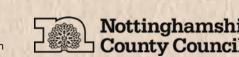


Extract from the diary of Henry Pelham-Clinton, 4th Duke of Newcastle under Lyne, regarding descent from King Alfred the Great

University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections, Ne 2F 1/1









Beyond the Internet



There is a wealth of information available for family historians to explore online. Many websites provide access to indices and to digitised documents. Online resources and indices, such as census data, can be invaluable starting points in tracing your ancestry.

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Pedigree showing the problems tracing descendants of Joseph Brightmore of Mansfield Woodhouse, c. 1841

University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections, PI E12/6/20/26/7

Originally the indices were compiled and made available through the efforts of volunteers, but increasingly partnerships with private companies are making full transcriptions and digital images available.

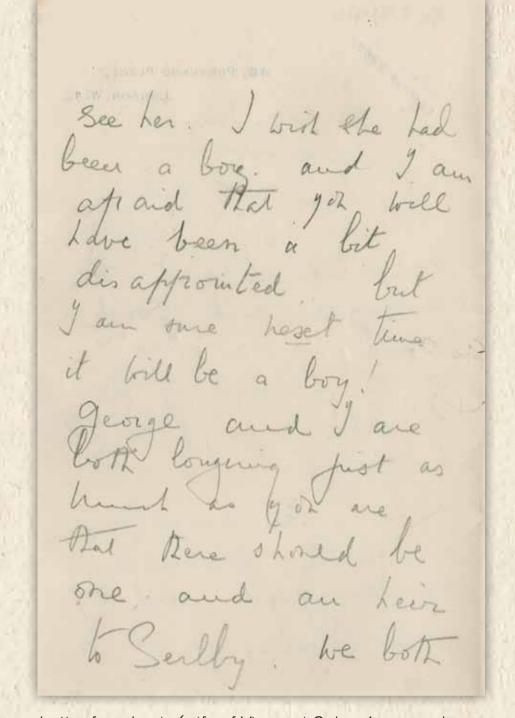
However, many documents are not yet available on the internet, and the keen researcher will want to go further. Some may wish to check that the online record is correct; others to explore different kinds of resources, to create a fuller picture of past times. Their searches will ultimately lead them to a record office or library.

Staff can guide visitors as they navigate from the obvious series of parish registers and wills to investigate more specialist sources. Individuals in hardship may be found, for example, in records of settlement and removal or in the evidence of civil courts and poor law administration. Church court records and maintenance orders can help disentangle relationships when divorce or illegitimacy creates a 'brick wall'. Any transaction that leaves a legal or financial record can provide valuable additional evidence.

Archives of institutions such as hospitals or schools, or places of employment provide rich evidence about individuals, if you know where to look.

Private papers reveal the personal insights and emotions of a correspondent or diarist, or add the visual impact of a photograph.

Whether your ancestors were agricultural labourers, parish officers or members of the peerage, these records will help to establish family links and bring the past to life. Visit Nottinghamshire Archives and The University of Nottingham's Manuscripts and Special Collections department to discover how their collections can help you.

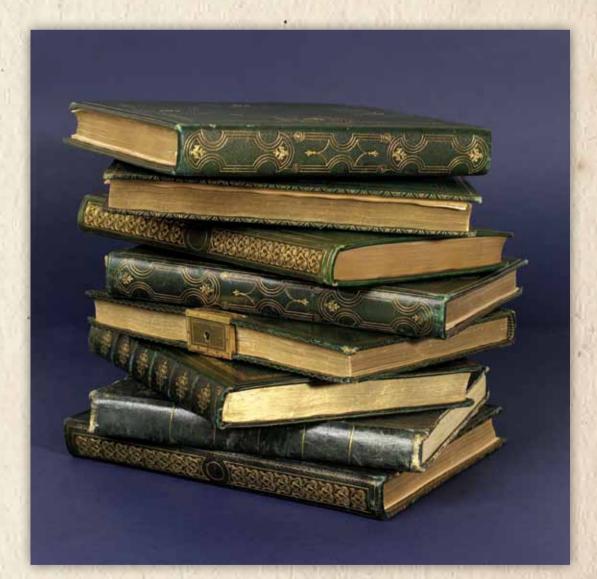


Letter from Lucia (wife of Viscount Galway's son and heir, George Monckton Arundell) to her father-in-law, announcing the birth of her first child and expressing hope that a girl isn't too disappointing, 1924 University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections, Ga C 9/144

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Maintenance order adjudging John Wood, a wheelwright of Ordsall, as the putative father of the illegitimate child of Elizabeth Richards, of West Markham, compelling him to pay towards the upkeep of the child, 12 January 1816

Nottinghamshire Archives, C/QSM/1/37



Collection of personal diaries of the 4th Duke of Newcastle under Lyne, 1822-1850 University of Nottingham Manuscripts and Special Collections, Ne 2F 1-8





