

The Newsletter

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE HORNCASTLE HISTORY & HERITAGE SOCIETY

Spring 2026

Free to members

We celebrate our diamond jubilee



**Bravery on
Foundry St:
four men
were heroes**

**Future
perfect: our
development
plan**

**How to help
us research
Horncastle's
history**

HH&HS is 60!



As you know our Society is 60 years old this year, writes ***Gillian Mauger***. To kick off our celebrations we held our popular Archive Days at Horncastle Community Centre on 24th January.

Around 200 people attended the event and they had the opportunity to look at over 15 stalls, all with a different theme, covering the town's rich history. There were also several films to watch which showed key events from the past.

It was wonderful to have Pearl Wheatley, our very first Secretary, able to join us on the day (*see our photo on the front cover*). Pearl was at the meeting in January 1966 when the Society was founded. She went on to play a crucial part in our development, which included holding the post of Secretary for nearly 20 years.

Pearl spoke of the Society's earliest days. It was formed as Horncastle Civic Society to "find ways of improving the town and to protect its heritage."

Back then, historic buildings were under threat and the town had a traffic problem – showing that things haven't changed all that much. The construction of Jubilee Way was controversial, as Pearl explained.

Fast forward to 2026, and the Society's aims are still very similar – but we do so much more now, including walks, talks, exhibitions, maintaining the town's archives, running a local history museum and book publishing.

The aim of the Archive Day is all about sharing what we know and what we have, and learning from our visitors. However, we were also able to add just over £700 to Society funds through admission fees, refreshments, donations, the tombola and book sales. We also signed up a new member and several other visitors left clutching membership forms.

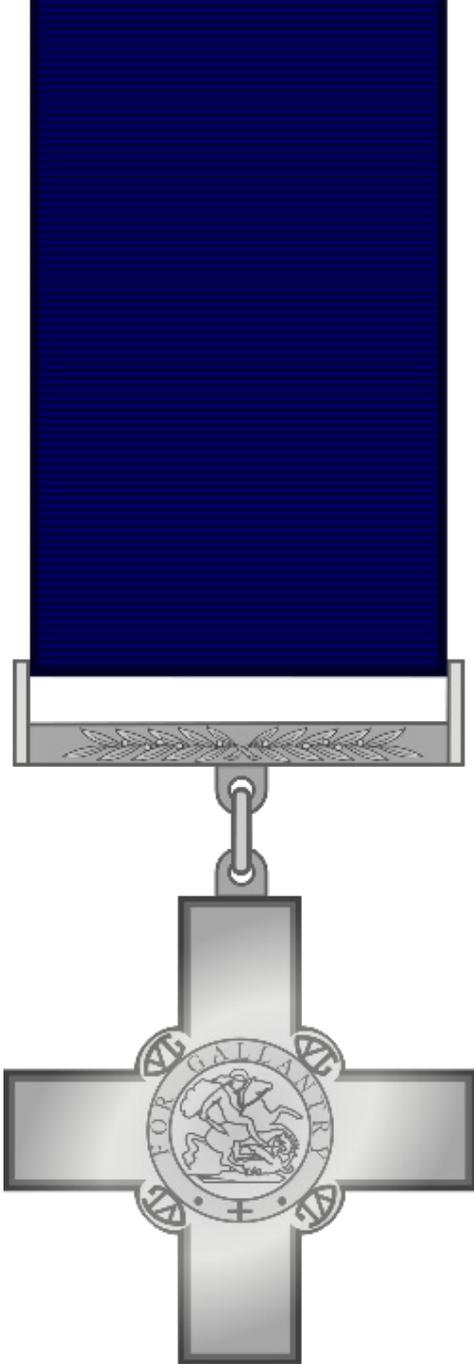
Chris Bates was there to sign his new book, "The Railway that Horncastle Built", published by the Society. We have now sold over three quarters of the print run, which is remarkable.

We have been asked if we can repeat this event. The last time we ran an Archive Day of this scope was two years ago. As you can imagine, the amount of work involved in planning and organising, and moving material into and back out of the Community Centre is significant, and of course volunteer time is also very important. We will definitely run another Archive Day, but perhaps not for a little while!



Heroism on Foundry Street

KEV WOODWARD tells the tale
of a shocking incident which so
nearly ended in tragedy



Wednesday May 21st 1952 was like most other days in the market town of Horn-castle, with the inhabitants going about their business, whether at work or making use of the many shops and trades within easy walking distance. One such inhabitant was 33 year old Wilfred Tailford, a labourer and painter who took on work as and when it was on offer. On this particular afternoon he had taken his three children to his allotment to tend to what they had planted there.

Whilst there he was joined by his wife, Alice Mary, the mother of his children. A short time later, at about 6pm, Tailford received a message that his mother wished to see him on an urgent matter but did not say what it was. His wife decided to

Above: The George Cross

take the children back to their home at 32, St Lawrence Street, whilst Tailford walked to his mother's house nearby.

About an hour later Alice was carrying out some sewing and the children were in the back yard playing games. She heard Tailford come in and although he didn't say anything she noticed he was in an 'excited' state. He walked over to where he kept his .22 rifle, with which he had won the Horncastle Rifle Club's annual league competition only a few weeks beforehand, and picked it up. He then fetched some ammunition from a drawer, loaded the rifle and then informed his wife that "he had better shoot himself and better still, he was going to shoot her!" After a short exchange of words and a brief struggle Alice discovered that Tailford's mother had informed him of a rumour that was all over the town that his wife was having an affair and he was the last to know about it! She tried to remonstrate with him further and denied the charge but Tailford was so enraged that he raised the gun to his hip and prepared to fire. Alice ran out of the house into the back yard and towards a low wall. Tailford followed her into the yard, took aim at her (presumably in full view of his children) and fired. The shot narrowly missed and as she reached and hid behind the wall, another shot whistled past her and embedded in a door on the opposite side of the street. She then made her escape, firstly up Louth Road and then to 30, Foundry Street, the home of Mrs Esmeralda Blanchard, her sister-in-law. It's thought that she chose this house as it was her sister-in-law's home, in the hope that Esmeralda could defuse the situation; she was incorrect.

Back at St. Lawrence Street at around 7.30pm Tailford told his children "You are going to bed, your mother does not want you, I found that out tonight". Once the children were inside he closed all the doors and windows, blocked the chimney with some sacks, wrote a short note on a pad of paper and switched the gas on and sat waiting for it to poison him and his children. After

No 30 Foundry Street (the house on the left)



an hour, he decided that this was not going to work as it had only made him go yellow in colour and given him a 'fuzzy' head. He went upstairs and opened all the windows to let the gas out of his children's room. He then asked a neighbour to inform the police that he had attempted to murder his wife and commit suicide. Grabbing his rifle and more ammunition he started walking towards Foundry Street, with the rifle clearly in his hand. He was seen by, or met, several people he knew along the way and exchanged polite pleasantries with them; they later stated that nothing seemed odd about him.

On arrival at his sister's house he found it locked. His sister was waiting for him on the street. She tried to reason with him, pleading with him not to go in. He did not listen, so she considered walking on to find assistance. At the front door he demanded entry, and being refused he fired two shots at the door lock. Having no luck gaining entry he turned the gun on his sister demanding that she hand over the key. She denied having it, so he threatened to shoot through the windows. He again demanded the key and pointed the gun at Esmeralda once more. She was so scared that she fainted, falling against some nearby railings. He then decided to go around to the rear of the house and started shooting at the rear door lock. Still unable to gain entry he returned to the front of the house. His wife took the opportunity of escaping out of the back door and ran to the neighbouring house at number 28, the home of Mr and Mrs Leonard Isles. Tailford followed and

fired six times at their back door lock, gaining entry. He pointed the rifle at Mr Isles' chest and asked where Alice was. Getting no reply, Tailford left the house via the front door.

The shots and commotion had been heard by residents and the police were informed. Sgt Walter Savage and PC Jack Arthur Mayes responded. As they arrived, Tailford threatened them saying that the gun was loaded and to stay away or he would shoot them. He also stated that he was "prepared to shoot up half of the town to keep people at bay in order to shoot his wife". Both policemen continued

The British Empire Medal, with the oak leaf motif for bravery



to try and talk Tailford around, so he fired several shots in the air and at the ground. One of these bullets ricocheted and hit PC Mayes' ankle. He was later treated in Lincoln hospital and had nine days off work. Tailford continued threatening to shoot them, but saying at the same time, "I don't want to hurt you, it's her I want." He went back to the rear door of the house and was followed by Sgt Savage. Tailford twice fired towards him "from a loose arm position"; one of the bullets ricocheted and grazed the front of the Sergeant's left thigh.

Tailford started walking up Foundry Street away from the police but continued firing random shots in the air and raging about his wife. One shot was aimed at the Gas Works. As he approached Laundry Lane, PC Anthony Hart Piercy, who was also responding to the report, was just parking his cycle against a wall. He confronted Tailford who threatened to shoot him pointing the rifle at him from his hip. PC Piercy did not back away and continued advancing, then at only ten yards Tailford fired a shot from the hip that passed over Piercy's right shoulder. Whilst Tailford reloaded the gun PC Piercy lunged forward and



Sergeant Savage and PC Mayes reunited with Ted Allison outside Horncastle Police Station. PC Piercy was not able to be there as he was away on a swimming life-saving course!

tackled Tailford to the ground, holding him there until the other two policemen reached them. The rifle was thrown into the road and then taken to the Gas Works house where it was found to have a bullet in the chamber ready to be fired.

Tailford was arrested and taken to Louth Police Station. There he was interviewed by Inspector Cassell who asked Tailford what he had done and his reply was “It is my wife. If I could have got at her I would have shot her. I tried to gas myself but turned yellow.” He also stated that he did not aim from the shoulder, only shooting from the hip. “I shot into the air. They tried to appease me, but I could not see sense then.”

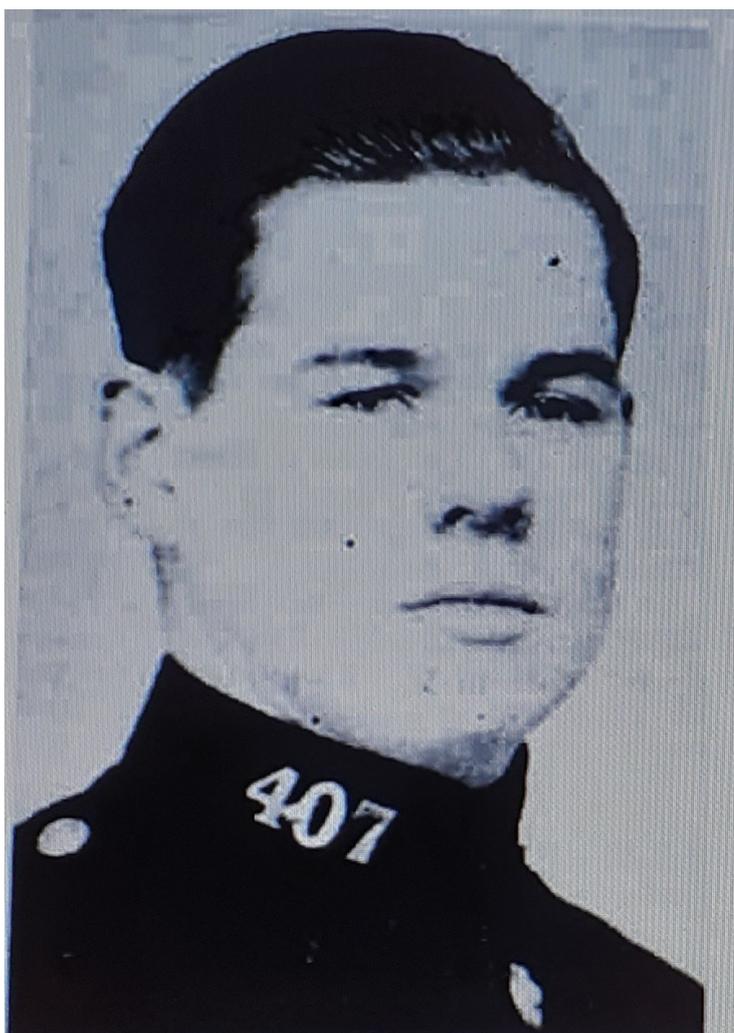
During the ensuing trial at Nottingham several witnesses testified that Wilfred and Alice Tailford seemed to love each other and their children were well loved and looked after. Alice also gave evidence but was so distressed giving it she sobbed bitterly, so much so that the judge allowed her to give her statement sitting down. She recalled what had happened and then stated that she had returned home around 9pm, where the house still smelt of gas. She found and removed the potato sacks blocking the chimney and checked on the children. She did not reveal the state she found them in. The following morning she noticed the writing pad on the table and saw Tailford’s note he had made shortly before trying to commit suicide. It read “Sorry it happened like this. You forced my hand. I still love you, Wilf.” She also stated that he had never threatened violence before. Alice said that she had visited Wilfred in prison before the trial and they had become reconciled.

“Be a wise man and see you keep no firearms in your house again”

Wilfred was charged with attempting to murder his wife and maliciously wounding the two Policemen. At his trial the charge of attempted murder was withdrawn after the prosecution accepted his not guilty plea. He pleaded guilty to wounding the policemen. Medical evidence was given stating that Tailford would probably have been under the influence of coal-gas poisoning when the shots were fired at the policemen. By extension this would also apply to all the shots fired in Foundry Street but strangely this wasn’t included in the evidence.

The Judge, Mr Justice Finnemore, told Tailford that in these circumstances the court would take an exceptional course and treat him with the greatest leniency. He told Tailford, "Don't believe everything people tell you, and don't act on impulse. It would be wiser to talk things over with your wife, like sensible people." He acknowledged that the couple were now reconciled as there never had been any affair, adding "You should be a wise man and see that you keep no firearms in your house again." He then bound Tailford over to keep the peace for two years.

Wilfred seems to have taken the judge's advice, and stayed out of trouble. It appears that he had also given up his rifle as he doesn't appear in future newspaper reports for the Horncastle Rifle Club. Hopefully the whole family went on to live a full and happy life together. They later lived in Tennyson Road, where Alice sadly died aged only 45 in 1968; she had been working as a cook at Manor House Road school (now the Community Centre). Wilf, who worked at Bardney sugar factory, survived his wife by another 21 years.



For the policemen, their heroism was recognised by the award of bravery medals. PC Piercy was awarded the George Cross, the highest civilian award for gallantry, equal to the military Victoria Cross. This award was the first for any Lincolnshire Police Officer. Sgt Savage and PC Mayes both received the British Empire Medal. Although the newspapers do not mention it, the British Empire Medals would also have had a metal crossed oak leaf emblem on the ribbons to denote that it was awarded for an act of bravery.

PC Piercy went on to be promoted to Sergeant and was chosen to

PC Piercy

serve in Cyprus, a couple of years after leaving Horncastle, as part of a British police detachment that was tasked with policing the Island during the troubles of the 1950s. A letter he sent home from there states that the Cypriots respected the British police highly, but hated the local force. He had enjoyed his time in Cyprus, especially the warm weather and swimming in the sea during his time off.

A strange addition to this tale is that a fourth bravery award was given to 30 year old Edward (Ted) Gray Allison, the son of the landlady of the Lord Raglan pub in Foundry Street. Ted had served in the Royal Navy during the Second World War on the Atlantic convoys, crossing that ocean over forty times in very hazardous conditions. His part in the shooting was not recorded in any of the newspapers of the time, presumably at his request. However, the reports of the trial also do not mention him or his actions, which is strange; he wasn't even called to give evidence at Tailford's trial. However, his actions and award were published in the London Gazette which is the official way awards are announced. The entry reads:

London Gazette 23rd September 1952

QUEEN'S COMMENDATION FOR BRAVE CONDUCT.

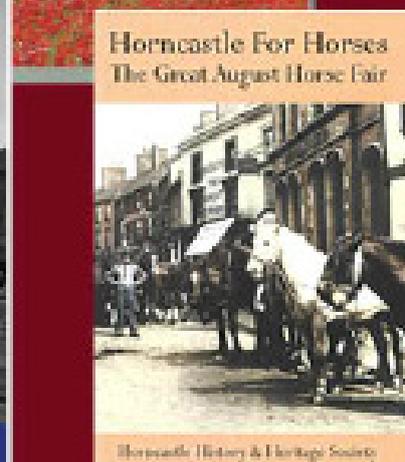
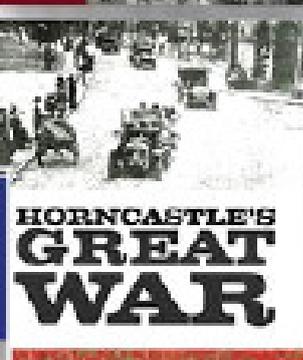
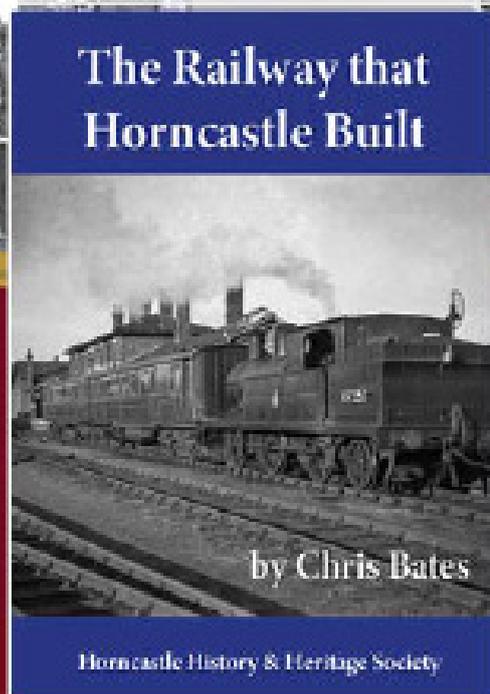
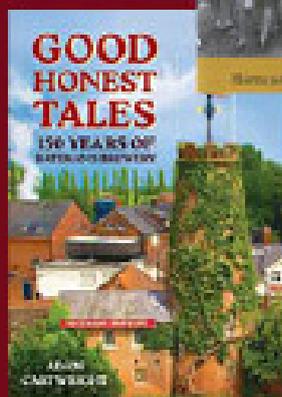
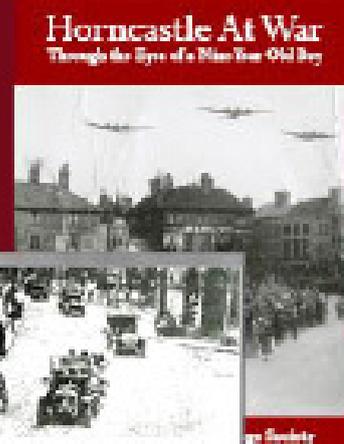
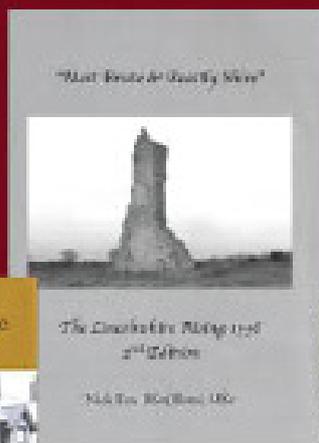
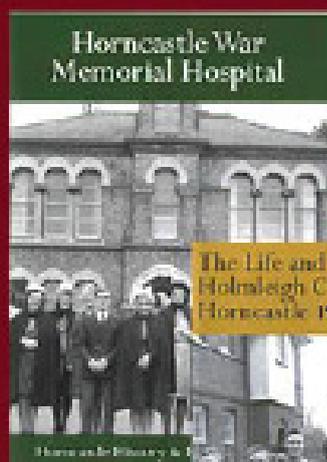
Edward Gray ALLISON, Licensee, Lord Raglan Inn, Horncastle.

For services when helping the police to arrest a man armed with a rifle.

The most likely assistance he gave to the police would have been to assist in holding Tailford on the ground once he had been tackled by PC Piercy and was awaiting further assistance from his colleagues. It is also probable that he removed the rifle from Tailford and took it to the Gas Works house and unloaded it, his military training undoubtedly helping in the task.

So next time you find yourself in Foundry Street take a little time to look around and think about what happened there in 1952.

- **The Society, together with Lincolnshire Police, would like to erect a blue plaque to PC Piercy in the town in the near future.**



**Pick up one of our books
and discover more about Horncastle**

Available at

HORNCASTLE Perkins; Sir Joseph Banks Centre

WOODHALL SPA Bookfayre

LINCOLN Steep Hill Books

ONLINE horncastlehistory.co.uk

YOUR CHANCE TO VOLUNTEER

**Fancy
helping
out?**

**We need your help with our
William Marwood exhibition, which
starts on June 25.**

**If you can spare just a few hours of
your time to greet visitors and show
them round, we'll be very grateful.**

**Please contact Nick or Kev to have a
chat about getting involved.**

**Email: horncastlecivic@gmail.com
or call 07340 870853**

OUR DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Society Chair ADAM CARTWRIGHT sets out what this is all about

You may be wondering why the Society like ours needs a development plan. Well, having a clear view of the challenges that may be coming over the hill - for example, the heritage sector may be sailing into choppy waters, so we might need to consider new ways of funding some of our activities. Having a good grasp of potential issues before they arise, and a strategy for what we could do about them is always a good idea for any community group like ours. That's why your Executive Committee has started the work to come up with a five year plan of how we might overcome challenges whilst still growing our Society.

One of the things we often say is that we do many things as a Society. As well as our history and heritage roles, we are a civic society as well, all of which means we are involved in a range of programmes. We'd love to carry on doing all of those things really well, and perhaps other things too. But we need to stop and think if we really can deliver everything. There are many other questions as well.



Led by Mike Martin, we've already identified what are our strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats. We will take that work further and we hope soon to be able to publish our development plan - and seek your views too, of course.



Building our future, protecting our past

**MICHEAL HEATT explains the work
of the Society's planning committee**

As many members will be aware, Horncastle History and Heritage Society was originally called the Horncastle Civic Society before the name was changed in 2015. Despite the name change, the Society still acts in the role of the local Civic Society. As the local Civic Society we are official Consultees on planning matters relating to the Horncastle Conservation Area. The Society receive notification of applications for Planning Approvals and Listed Building Consents for properties within the Conservation Area (or bordering onto it) and have the opportunity to comment. In addition, weekly lists of all applications are received from East Lindsey District Council (ELDC) Planning Department so that the Society is aware of all applications in Horncastle and has the opportunity to comment when appropriate. It is worth noting that a single application can vary from changing a window on a property in the Conservation Area to a new development comprising over 300 dwellings complete with access roads, drainage systems, landscaping, archaeological investigations and the like, and anything in between.

A few years ago, paper copies of the application documents were received by the Society by post but now in this digital age all the information is made available electronically on what is known as the Planning Portal. The Society is advised of each application in the Conservation Area by e-mail with an electronic link to the details of the application. Details of other applications can be accessed on the Planning Portal using the application reference number.

As well as the potential range of applications, the number and scale of documents making up a single submission can be significant, from an Application Form, a few words and a single drawing on one extreme to well over 100 drawings and tens of detailed documents some with more than 50 pages each. Fortunately the larger applications are relatively few but for such large projects the planning process can become drawn out as developers submit amendments and respond to requests for further information or modifications. It can be many years before the construction phase is finally completed.

A sub-committee drawn from members of the Executive Committee meets about once a month to consider the applications which have been submitted to ELDC. Comments are then formulated and submitted electronically via the Planning Portal. Once an application has been successful, the members of the sub-committee then keep an eye of progress on the ground until the scheme is completed.

A summary of current applications and progress on consequent construction is prepared and issued every six weeks or so to members alongside the Notes of the Executive Committee meetings. If any members are interested in getting involved with the assessment and commenting of planning applications, please either send an e-mail to horncastlecivic@gmail.com or speak to one of the committee members (Michael Heatt, Mike Martin, Helena Burman or Adam Cartwright) at one of the monthly meetings.

Full steam ahead for our new railway book



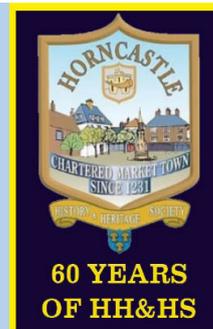
We launched our member Chris Bates' new book *The Railway that Horncastle Built* at our January meeting, when Tim Leffler, the Chairman of the Great Northern Railway Society, spoke about the history of railways in and around Horncastle. We also had a short slide show of photographs from the days of the old branch railway line.

Here's Chris signing yet another book (he got through a lot of ink that evening) for a well-known Society figure. At one point, the queue for books was back to the door of the Community Centre!

If you've not got your copy yet, have a look at our advert in this issue for details of where you can buy all of our books.

- **If you're interested in the history of our local railways, why not join the Great Northern Railway Society? Visit www.gnrsociety.com/ to find out more.**

FORTHCOMING EVENTS



March 18 Talk: Torrington's Tour of Lincolnshire, 1791

Community Centre, 7.30pm

April 15 Talk: W K Morton, Media Baron of Horncastle

Community Centre, 7.30pm

May 16 Local History Event Horncastle Library, 10am - 1pm

May 17 Woodhall Spa Country Show Society stall attending

May 20 Society AGM Community Centre, 7.30pm

May 23 Walk: 50 Years of the Viking Way Horncastle Library, 10am

June 17 Talk: William Marwood: Cobbler, Preacher, Hangman

Community Centre, 7.30pm

June 25 William Marwood exhibition starts

Sir Joseph Banks Centre, 10am - 4pm: *Thursdays - Saturdays until Sept*

July 15 Talk: Lincolnshire Links with New Zealand C Centre, 7.30pm

OUR CONTACT DETAILS

Need to ask us something? Is there something you'd like to tell us about? Have you some feedback for us?

The best way of getting in contact is via our email address
horncastlecivic@gmail.com

Or visit us at our Archive Room at the Joseph Banks Centre,
7-13 Bridge Street, Horncastle LN9 5HZ (side entrance)

We are open Tuesdays and Wednesdays between 10 and 12

Editorial Team: Adam Cartwright, Gillian Mauger
Design and layout: Adam Cartwright

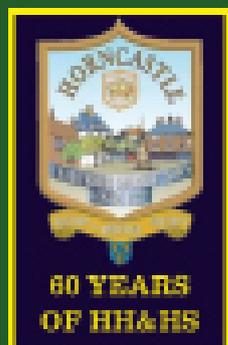


Calling all volunteers ...

*Help us research
Horncastle's history!*

Would you like to find out more about how you can research local history? Maybe you'd like to help us find out more about William Marwood - the subject of our next exhibition in June (see opposite).

There's a lot you can do from home, at our archives or at Horncastle library - but it may feel a bit daunting. We're thinking of setting up some training about how to use some easily available resources - like the online British Newspaper Archive. If you'd like to find out more, give Adam a call on 07986 487168 or email us at horncastlecivic@gmail.com.



Horncastle History &
Heritage Society

**WILLIAM
MARWOOD:
COBBLER
PREACHER
HANGMAN**

EXHIBITION

**Sir Joseph Banks Centre
Horncastle - from 25 June**