



Leicestershire & Rutland Group

Newsletter No. 34 (July 2022)

NEXT GROUP MEETING

The next Group Meeting will be held on Thursday 11 August 2022 at The Royal British Legion Club, 4A Wigston Road, Oadby, Leicester, LE2 5QA, commencing at 2.00 p.m. (tea and coffee will be available from 1.30 p.m.) The club has its own (free) carpark. There is a regular bus service from Leicester.

AGENDA

- **WELCOME and APOLOGIES**
- **GUEST SPEAKER – Ian Stevenson (Family History)**
- **SECRETARY'S REPORT (Alan Tuck)**
- **TREASURER'S REPORT (Liz Ellis)**
- **REGIONAL COMMITTEE MEETING**
- **AOB**

Members are welcome to bring their spouses, partners or friends with them to the meeting.

LAST MEETING

GUEST SPEAKER

Our Guest Speaker was Dr. Leon Holden, a former lecturer at the University of Cranfield. His talk was on the Peterloo Massacre of 1819.

The Peterloo Massacre took its name from the Battle of Waterloo four years previously, as a consequence of troops attacking a peaceful meeting at St. Peter's Field in Manchester in January 1819. At the time of the massacre, the British Government, under Prime Minister Lord Liverpool and Secretary of State Lord Castlereagh, was paranoid about revolutionary

influences in Britain following the French Revolution. At the time Britain was an undemocratic country where only the Aristocracy and big land holders had the right to vote parliamentary elections. Because of these arrangements a hill in Wiltshire was able to send two MPs to Parliament whilst Manchester, with a population of around 500,000 had none. The English Romantic Poets such as Shelley and Byron expressed sympathy for the ideals of the French Revolution whilst the writer Tom Paine, who had participated in the American and French Revolutions wrote 'The Rights of Man'. He expressed the view that the right to vote should not be based upon owning property, although he was against the reign of terror that took place in France after the Revolution.

The UK Government overreacted to a fear of insurrection by bringing in oppressive measures that did not distinguish between peaceful reformers and revolutionary Jacobins. The Government's problems were exacerbated by a fall in Trade and Commerce following the Napoleonic Wars and soldiers returning from wars and swelling the ranks of the unemployed. Further problems arose from the Luddite riots and the poor harvests between 1816 and 1819 which made food expensive. In response the Government brought in Gagging Acts such as the Treason Act and the Seditious Meetings Act. In 1818 the Tories under Lord Liverpool won the general election and responded in 1819 by introducing a tax on newspapers to make them too expensive for ordinary people to buy. In 1816 there had been riots by workers in London and Derbyshire over low pay and unemployment.

Workers' groups decided to hold a mass meeting in St. Peter's Fields in Manchester to decide whether the way forward was reform or revolution. The meeting took place in January 1819 and was addressed by Henry 'Orator' Hunt. He called for the Government to repeal the Corn Laws to allow cheap foreign wheat to be imported and make bread cheaper for working people.

On that day local Magistrates met and arranged for a substantial number of militia and yeomanry to control the crowds and issued warrants for arrest of the speakers. General Sir John Byng, who oversaw the military operation, delegated the management of the operation to his second in command, Colonel Guy L'Estrange who had no idea how to manage peaceful crowds and promptly ordered the troops to charge into the crowd. Some 50 to 60 thousand people attended the mass meeting so when the troops charged into the crowd, there was a mass panic as people tried to escape. The exact numbers of people killed and injured is difficult to assess as many who died later from their wounds were not counted. It is believed 18 died on the day and over 400 were injured.

Following the charge of the Yeomanry, the speakers were arrested. Henry Hunt was imprisoned for 30 months and Samuel Bamford and Joseph Johnson for one year. Reaction was extreme with the Government closing down newspapers and radicals planning to assassinate the whole of the Cabinet in the Cato Street Conspiracy. However, the Peterloo Massacre was recognised as a great injustice that triggered democratic reforms. In 1832 the Great Reform Act extended voting rights to more men. Later all working men were given the vote. After the First World War some women were given the vote and in 1928 all women over the age of 21 were given the vote.

Dr. Holden closed his talk with a reflection on how the early 21st Century is mirroring the early 19th. What Carl Benedikt termed 'The Technology Trap', where increased use of technology is making a few people very wealthy whilst causing a loss of status, security and trust in institutions for the majority.

GROUP BANK ACCOUNT

The NatWest Bank offers an account for clubs and charities and do not charge fees. The meeting agreed to authorise the Treasurer to close the Leicestershire & Rutland Group Bank Accounts and open new ones with the NatWest. This has now been done.

REGIONAL COMMITTEE

Our Group (Leicestershire & Rutland) has been transferred into a newly formed Midlands Region. This does not affect our membership or Group Boundary. We still locally represent all CSPA members whose addresses are in the counties of Leicestershire and Rutland.

There was a Regional Committee meeting held in Birmingham on 13 June 2022 and our Group was represented by our Treasurer **Liz Ellis**. Groups were updated on all the issues currently affecting us including Civil Service Pensions; the State Pension; Delays to payment of Widows Pensions; the cost-of-living increases; petrol and diesel price increases; Gas and Electricity increases; the Social Care Crisis; Digital and Financial Exclusion; Attracting New Members (our Group Membership has decreased from 420 to 370 over the last two years) and Members Benefits, including Legal Advice for members and Travel Insurance.

The last two years have been difficult for everyone including CSPA HQ who have, however, managed to remain open and hold meetings with like-minded organisations such as Age UK and also with Members of Parliament. At the time of writing, the Prime Minister has just resigned and become the Caretaker Prime Minister still situated in 10 Downing Street! There is to be an election for a new leader of the Conservative Party with, at the last count, eleven MPs standing for the job. Whether, or by how much, the Government's policies will change is unknown but hopefully by time of our meeting everything should be a lot clearer.

Updated list of Committee Members:

Chairman: Rob Jameson, 19, Stretton Road, Great Glen, Leicester, LE8 9GN Tel: 0116 259 2680 robert.jameson@tiscali.co.uk

Vice Chairman: Simon Connolly, 17, Sutton Close, Oadby, Leicester, LE2 5WT Tel: 0116 271 8641 simon1connolly@yahoo.co.uk

Secretary: Alan Tuck, 14 Blenheim Way, Market Harborough, Leicester, LE16 7LQ Tel: 01858 440034 friarshouse@gmail.com

Minute Secretary: Haydn Starkie, 2, Hillcroft Close, Thurmaston, Leicester, LE4 8FW Tel: 0116 269 3072 haydn.starkie@btinternet.com

Treasurer: Liz Ellis, 7, The Hall, Queniborough Hall Drive, Queniborough, Leicester, LE7 3DZ Tel: 0116 269 2399 lizellis450@icloud.com

Committee Members:

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Philip Coomes, 38 Victoria Court, Leicester Road, Oadby, Leicester, LE2 4AG Tel: 0116 271 8030 philip.coomes@outlook.com

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Ziggy Robb, 2C, Upperton Rise, Leicester, LE3 OHA Tel: 0116 233 1681 Z.Robb@ntlworld.com

Auditors: Margaret Bagur and Caroline Stark

We hope to see as many members as possible at the next meeting.

REINSTATE FREE LATERAL FLOW TESTS