

# MARKET BOSWORTH SOCIETY

May 2018

**Dear Member**

## **Lady Florence Dixie 1855 to 1905**



You will be able to read a report of the recent Green Plaque unveiling elsewhere (in this month's Aspect and Graphic). Several people have asked me to share with them some of Lady Florence's achievements and experiences. and so here they are. I must say, before I start that this list is not complete. She was a woman of immense intelligence, foresight, and courage. Born during the Victorian period to a titled family, Lady Florence could easily have spent her life enjoying the trappings of an affluent lifestyle. Instead she worked hard, rare in Victorian times for a lady.

Lady Florence (nee Douglas) was born in 1855 to the 8<sup>th</sup> Marquis of Queensbury. She developed her love of sport competing with her twin brother and three elder brothers. She came to Bosworth Hall, the then home of Sir Alexander Beaumont Churchill Dixie, when they married on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1885 at just 19 years of age. To give an example, of her character, she took issue with Darwin's description of the Tuco-tuco (a rat like creature) in his *Journal of Researches* (1839). While Darwin had suggested that the Tuco-tuco were nocturnal creatures that lived entirely underground, Lady Dixie had seen the Tuco-tuco out during the daytime and could not, therefore be nocturnal. She was also outspoken and had amazing foresight. Some examples of her attributes are as follows:

President of British Ladies Football Club arranging tours to Scotland stipulating that the girls should "enter into the spirit of the game with heart and soul".

Aged 23 explored Patagonia Wrote "Across Patagonia" (southernmost tip of South America shared by Argentina and Chile) available on-line.

In 1890 she wrote "Gloriana or the Revolution of 1900" In a novel setting out emancipation arguments and predicting a woman prime minister before 1999 (Margaret Thatcher) The book is also available on-line

Predicted that Scotland, Wales and Ireland would be devolved from England Also predicted a Common Wealth of Nations from the British Empire with an assembly in London. Predicted London would be a smoke free zone. Predicted travel by air. Not by airplanes but by airships. Reported on the Boer War for the Morning Post. She also reported on the aftermath of the Zulu war and was instrumental in restoring Cetshwayo as king of the Zulus, although she remained an imperialist. Criticized the Fenians (Sin Fein) and

the Irish land league. For not doing more for the Irish peasants even accusing fraud. Wrote a Vanity Fair article on Home Rule for Ireland. An attempt was made on her life whilst walking her dog in Windsor Park.

Lady Caroline told us a lovely story of how, after the Zulu war the Zulu King, Cetshwayo, was a guest at Bosworth Hall and he gave to her a black panther as a pet. Lady Caroline went on to say that the panther often escaped and was regularly seen prowling around Bosworth. A truly amazing woman well worthy of a Green Plaque.

## **Lady Florence Dixie and the Land League Funds**

Lady Florence Dixie has written an outspoken letter to the Freeman's Journal which has caused a sensation. It is with reference to the efforts she is making to raise a fund to relieve the distress among the small farmers and cottiers of the western coast of Ireland. She expresses thanks for the large amount she has received. "Many have applied to me", she says "for relief who have been evicted from their farms for non-payment of rent, and who, I find, are perfectly competent to avail themselves of the benefits of the Arrears Bill. To these people I extend no assistance. If they prefer to be dishonest, I can only recommend them to apply for support to that source which first taught them the ignoble, unmanly, pernicious principle of 'Pay no rent'. I can only inform them that the vast sum - something very near, if not over, £100,000 - was subscribed to the Land League Fund by the poor Irish of America and elsewhere, ostensibly for the relief of evicted tenants, and as it has up till now afforded them but poor relief, and an enormous surplus is as yet totally unaccounted for, to that surplus I would advise them to have recourse". The writer also points out that the Fair Trial Fund, started in 1880 for the defence of Parnell and others in the Queen's Bench, amounted to £29,000. The defence did not cost one-third of that sum, and she asks where is the balance. In another part of the letter she says, "When in 1881 the Land League was suppressed, and its place taken by the Ladies Land League, a fresh fund was started. What became of the immense Land League sum must have remained in the coffers of the suppressed organisation and in what manner was the Ladies' Land League Fund disposed of, seeing that the relief of evicted tenants was very small? The arrests of the suspects brought forth a new fund - termed, I think, the Sustentation Fund - which rose to £24,000. I believe it was handed over to Miss Parnell. Did it all go in delicacies for the suspects, or is there a surplus remaining? It seems strange, too, that while so much distress existed all along the western coast this sum should have been appropriated for such a purpose, and that the suspects should have made use of it while hundreds of their fellow creatures were suffering so much; and it remains stranger still that in the face of so much continued suffering the immense surplus remaining out of these funds is not at once applied to its relief, while if there is no surplus forthcoming, where and how has it been spent. That is what thousands are inquiring who are asked to subscribe afresh to the Relief Eviction Fund."

Edinburgh Evening News - Tuesday 12 September 1882.

Lady Florence Dixie has issued an appeal for assistance in raising a fund for the assistance of destitute farmers and cottiers of the western coast of Ireland. The object of the fund is, firstly, to give assistance to destitute farmers who are under the threat of eviction for non-payment of rent, and are unable to take advantage of the Arrears Act owing to their inability to produce a year's rent; secondly, to assist those who have been evicted for the non-payment of arrears of rent which misfortune has rendered them unable to discharge; and thirdly, to tender help to the destitute cottiers, and enable them, as in the case of the small tenant farmers similarly situated to come within the radius of the Arrears Act.

Lady Florence Dixie says in her appeal: - "Winter is fast approaching, and these poor sufferers have in prospect nothing but misery and deprivation. To the public I make this appeal, begging them to assist me to ward off and alleviate so much distress." She also begs all those who are desirous of contributing to the fund to do so with as little delay as possible, as according to the provisions of the Arrears Act the time is fast approaching when it will cease to be applicable to the distress in question. All cheques should be crossed on Messrs. Smith, Payne and Smith, London, and made out to Lady Florence Dixie; Post Office orders on the Market Bosworth Post-office, and all letters should be addressed :- To be forwarded. To Lady Florence Dixie, Bosworth Park, Market Bosworth, Leicestershire."

## **The End of an era**

"For some time past I have been fighting against the terrible consequences of my husband's immense losses on the Turf and at gambling. It was a great blow to me to find that the last remnant of a once splendid fortune must at once go to pay this debt. Ruin ... Beau ... has been so accustomed to have heaps of money at his command that he cannot understand that it is all gone .... By selling Bosworth and the property these (debts) could be met." – Lady Florence Dixie

In other versions, I have read, the word poor had been inserted between ruin and Beau. I rather think that it should be there as Lady Florence would have felt some sympathy for her Beau. This is in line with her other actions and the work she did elsewhere for those less fortunate.

## **Final Irony**

Beaumont or Beau, which was how he was usually known by his peers, gave his name to the lake in what is now the Bosworth Country Park. It was known when created as the Beau Pool. When a map was drawn the cartographer thought the name Beau was a mistake and so named the lake Bow Pool as it is known today. The error was pointed out, but it was considered too expensive to amend for such a small detail I think it sad that even this was taken from him, when fate is not your friend...

## **Assassination Attempt Lady Florence's own account**

"I was out walking near the Fishery last evening, about 4:30, when two very tall women came up and asked me the time. I replied that I had not got my watch with me, and, turning, left them. Opening a small gate which led into the private grounds of Capt. Brocklehurst, of the Blues, I made toward a stile, and was just going to get over, when I heard the gate open behind, and the two women followed me in. Somehow or other all was not right, so I stopped and leaned against the rails, and then, as they came on, went to meet them. One on the right came forward and seized me by the neck, when by the strength of the clutch it was no woman's power that pulled me down to the ground. In another second, I saw the other would-be woman over me, and remember seeing the steel of the knife come right down upon me, driven by this person's hand. It struck through my clothes and against the whalebone of my stays, which turned the point, merely grazing the skin. The knife was quickly withdrawn and plunged at me again. I seized it with both hands and shouted as loud as I could, when the person who first pulled me down pushed a large handful of earth into my mouth and nearly choked me. Just as the knife was wrenched from my hands, a very big and powerful St. Bernard dog I had with me broke through the wood, and the last thing I remember was seeing the person with the knife pulled backward by him. Then I heard a confused sound of rumbling of wheels, and I remember no more. When I came to myself I was quite alone. From what I saw of the knife I believe it to be a dagger, and the persons were undoubtedly men. They were dressed in long clothes and were unnaturally tall for women; the one who stabbed me had on a thick veil, reaching below the mouth; the other was unveiled, but his face I did not notice much. This is all the information I can give. My head is very confused and painful, and I expect they must have stunned me. This is a wretched scrawl, but my hands are very much cut, and it pains me so much to write."

Thanks to Glynis for searching the Archive for me.

## **Town Trail Guides**

I have appealed before for Town Trail Guides and am doing again! There are currently four of us, but we could really do with at least two more. We need some cover for holidays and sickness. It is not going to be an onerous task. We do not do that many guided tours, but we would like to do more. The guided tours are

designed to be a “light touch” showing visitors (and locals) some of the interesting features of our beautiful town. Walks last about 90 minutes (depending on the weather and the time meals might be booked).

The tours are not all about dates and statistics, there a few dates and a few statistics but most is pointing out some of the less obvious features and a little history of some of our notable buildings. Full training will be given together with a referral folder and pictures to show as the tour progresses. I have led four tours now and still refer to my notes.

My experiences have been nothing but positive. I did have a group of historians who knew far more about Bosworth than I, but they enjoyed the walk and having some of the less obvious scenes pointed out to them. My contact details at the bottom of this page, please give me a call for a chat about it.

## **Next Month, Two Meetings to look forward to on the 14<sup>th</sup> June.**

Both of next month’s meetings are in St. Peter’s Parish Church,

The Community Meeting begins at 6:30pm, 14<sup>th</sup> June 2018. Mathew Morris & Gemma Tallis will set out this year’s dig, together with a reflection on last year’s dig. Come along and see what we are planning especially the Market Bosworth Festival of Archaeology! There will be refreshments available.

The Market Bosworth Society Meeting will also be in St. Peter’s Parish Church and will follow on from the community meeting at 7:30pm Dr Julie Attard will address the audience with her lecture, entitled “Stories of the Stone Wood: Investigating Charnwood’s Medieval Past”

I hope you will be able to come to both meetings. Certainly, if you are taking part in this year’s dig please do your best to come along. Any guests who would like to join in with members for the MBS lecture are welcome to join in. Julie is a very entertaining speaker and her subject will prove just as entertaining.

## **Master Class with Peter Liddle MBE**

This meeting will be held in the Dixie Grammar School Hall on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2018 between 2:00pm and 4:00pm.

Last year Peter held a very popular and successful masterclass in pottery shard identification, from pre-historic to 20<sup>th</sup> Century. This is exactly what we found in the digs last year and we have no reason to doubt we will find even more this year. If you have volunteered in any role for Bosworth Links this will be really useful and interesting in making the finds more understandable. Even if you are not taking part (why not?) then come along and find out what that dull grey pottery, or those blue pottery shards are. More importantly who made them and when. See you there.

## **Meeting Report**

### **Jo Connell “Roman and Medieval Pottery”**

Jo introduced herself not as an archaeologist or a historian, but as a teacher and a potter. The talk was designed to help diggers recognise and appreciate what they are hopefully going to unearth in their gardens in July, when Bosworth embarks on its second community dig. This evening was about the pots themselves – the way they were made, decorated and used. To Jo, examining an ancient pot is like “shaking hands with a potter of the past” because so many techniques are still in use today and the maker’s marks are left imprinted in clay. She feels that pots acquire a personality through use – we talk about the lip, the neck, belly, the shoulder, and the foot of a vessel. We



get to know the vessels we use - using a familiar vessel fit for a particular purpose is comforting and satisfying, it can evoke memories of meals and conversations, such pots become family friends.

After an introduction to clay – what it is, and that it comes in different colours and textures – Jo showed slides and shards of Roman mortaria – mixing bowls used widely in Roman times. Many were made very close to here at Mancetter and Hartshill site near Atherstone in a successful industry at Manduessedum that lasted four centuries. Mortaria were made from a pale clay and lined with grit and broken-up fired clay to assist with grinding grain. They had a pouring spout, and a thick rim which was often impressed with the maker's name, using a stamping technique. Names like Sarrius, Iunius, Bonoxus and Minomelus conjure up personalities of the potters from the first century.

Next, we looked at Barbotine decoration – patterns applied with liquid clay slip - and Samianware, mostly made in France and using moulds impressed with patterns which showed up as raised motifs on the finished pots, coated in a layer of fine red slip giving the name “red gloss ware”. The moulded decoration and the calligraphic slip decoration have very different characters. Back in the UK, potters sometimes personalised their vessels by moulding faces onto the neck of flasks and jars – Jo had a shard dug from her own garden at Witherley in the 90s.

Last year's dig revealed a Saxon shard – so we looked at a Saxon burial vessel to help us recognise a complete one in the unlikely event that we may find one! Then we moved on to Medieval jugs – these are Jo's favourite pots and have had a profound influence on contemporary studio potters, many of whom make similarly shaped jugs today. The so-called baluster form mimics the shape of a balustrade – a narrow neck and wide belly, and a strong wide foot, highly functional and elegant too. Some Medieval potters would apply decoration to their work – often restrained patterns in slip, but sometimes quite elaborately modelled figures and faces also appear. Glaze was now widely used, in the form of Galena (lead) and colours were in the brown (iron) or green (copper) range, cobalt (blue) not yet having arrived on the scene. Slip was used widely to make quite complicated patterns using methods such as trailing, feathering and jewelling. Finally, we looked at “Toft ware” from 17thC – large platters decorated with heraldic designs such as King & Queens, Adam and Eve; also harvest jugs for cider and ale, decoration methods like sgraffito still in use today. Jo demonstrated some slip decoration techniques on flat sheets of clay and showed some reproductions she had made earlier, some part-finished so we could see how a handle would be applied.

A collection of shards was available, which members were invited to handle. Quite a gallop through the centuries and a very brief introduction to this enormous subject!

## **Famous Bosworthians**

I have enjoyed researching and reporting on Lady Florence Dixie. But there must be more famous Bosworthians worthy of recognition. I can think of several people who were connected with Bosworth, Thomas Hooker, Benoni Evans, Samuel Johnson for example. Can you think of others? Do let me know

By email [info@marketbosworthsociety.com](mailto:info@marketbosworthsociety.com) or by telephone 07930149408 or 01455290160

Nigel Palmer

Chairman

# BOSWORTH LINKS

Digging up the past



**Big Dig Weekend  
21st & 22nd July 2018**

**If you would like to get involved;  
[www.marketbosworthsociety.com/bosworth-links](http://www.marketbosworthsociety.com/bosworth-links)**

**email. [info@Marketbosworthsociety.com](mailto:info@Marketbosworthsociety.com)  
Tel: 01455 290160/07930 149408**



Bosworth Links is grateful to and supported by: The Heritage Lottery Fund, The Dixie Educational Foundation, The Market Bosworth Parish Council, The Richard III Legacy Fund, The Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council (PCIF) Heart of England Co-operative Society



Bosworth Links is a two-year project.

This is the final year. We have enough pits to complete this project but would like even more community involvement.

This is your last chance to take part in something amazing and travel across time for an entire weekend.

If you have not yet volunteered, why not? You need no experience. You do not need to be physically fit. There are roles for all ages and abilities.

**Last year we unearthed 8,534 finds! Come and help us beat that!**

<http://marketbosworthsociety.com/volunteer/>

**Come on, join in, and change the future! For ever!**