

VCH Leicestershire draft text

**LEIRE****Local Government**

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VICTORIA  
COUNTY  
HISTORY

Leicestershire

## Manor Courts

The earliest court rolls to survive are from 1462.<sup>1</sup> These recorded that the village stocks were to be repaired and that the lord had custody of a stray animal worth 2*d*. A court baron of 1585 determined that the smithy house, arable and meadow land were part of the lord's holding, as were two leys that had been held by the town constable.<sup>2</sup> Manor courts continued to be held until at least 1615, but no records survive after that date.<sup>3</sup>

## Constables

Originally a manorial office, constables' accounts between 1806 and 1843 have survived and show the usual range of responsibilities.<sup>4</sup> These include payments for the destruction of vermin, organising juries for coroners' inquests, maintaining the stocks, the pinfold and the wash-pit, giving money to sailors and others with a pass, who were travelling through the parish and ensuring the militia men were sworn in. The stocks were removed in 1813.<sup>5</sup> The constables also collected information for the censuses between 1801 and 1821.

## Churchwardens

The earliest named churchwardens were Peter Gallard and Thomas Ince in 1559.<sup>6</sup> Accounts survive from 1718 and show that, in addition to the maintenance and repair of the church and its bells, the churchwardens were responsible for meeting costs incurred during visitations, bell-ringers' fees, travel expenses to attend upon the patron or the bishop and payments for killing two hedgehogs.<sup>7</sup> In 1746 the churchwardens paid for a copy of the act to prevent the spread of distemper among horned cattle. Thanksgiving prayers for the safe delivery of the queen consort of George III, the defeat of rebels in Scotland and the escape of the king from assassination in 1786 were paid for by the churchwardens. They also collected the annual rent of 3*s*. 4*d*. from Bell Rope Piece.<sup>8</sup> When Hall Farm was auctioned in 1942 the Bell Rope Tithe was included in the annual outgoings.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Bedfordshire RO, L 26/1031, Draft court roll, 1462

<sup>2</sup> Beds RO, L 26/1047, 1585

<sup>3</sup> Beds RO, L 26/1051

<sup>4</sup> ROLLR, DE 1425/71

<sup>5</sup> ROLLR, DE 1425/71, 5 November 1813

<sup>6</sup> ROLLR, DE 1425/1, Leire Parish Register 1

<sup>7</sup> ROLLR, DE 1425/55, Churchwardens Accounts, 1718 - 1820

<sup>8</sup> ROLLR, DE 1425/160 Orders by referees of enclosure, 20 Dec 1698

<sup>9</sup> ROLLR, DE 4674/686

The vestry meetings continued to appoint churchwardens until 1971, when synodical government took over and vestry meetings ceased.<sup>10</sup>

### Overseers of the Poor

The overseers kept weekly accounts of recipients, amounts and the duration of poor relief. In the earliest remaining accounts, beginning in 1783, frequent payments for house-row men are recorded, where men were allotted to employers in rotation for a set number of days, their wages being paid in part by the parish.<sup>11</sup> In one week in 1783, three men worked for a total of 13 days at a cost of 5s. 8d. to the parish. The system continued to be used for the duration of the accounts, which end in 1802.<sup>12</sup>

Leire became part of the Lutterworth Poor Law Union, the first meeting of the Guardians being on 11 December 1835.<sup>13</sup> Two workhouses were used, one in Lutterworth and the other at Ullesthorpe. Out-relief continued, at least in the short term. William Ladkin, a baker of Leire, was contracted to supply second quality bread at 6½d. a quarter loaf and flour at 2s. a stone to those receiving out-relief in the villages of Leire, Dunton Bassett, Broughton Astley and, later, Bruntingthorpe.<sup>14</sup> In 1836, frames were rented at the Ullesthorpe workhouse, but after several months these were returned to their owners and the master instructed to buy stone for the inmates to break instead.<sup>15</sup> In 1836 it was noted that the inmates were leaving the workhouse during the day to go to work and returning at night to sleep.<sup>16</sup> It was resolved work must be provided inside the workhouse where practicable.

In December 1835 and again in April 1836 the overseers borrowed £50 to pay the costs of emigration of poor people with settlement rights in Leire, who were willing to emigrate.<sup>17</sup> In 1838 the churchwardens and overseers agreed to raise £31 10s for the same cause.<sup>18</sup> In 1843 the ratepayers of Leire consented to the village guardians of the poor selling seven cottages, which had been purchased in 1828. Further sales of parish houses in 1870 raised £64 6s.<sup>19</sup>

### Highways

In the early 19th century the parish roads were maintained by labourers whose wages were raised by the letting of the grazing in the lanes, by a levy and by a composition. In 1805 a levy of 3d. in the pound (£12 15s. 4d.) plus the composition, raised £22 10s. 8d. The letting of the lanes (in 1806) realised £10 4s. The labourers received between 1s. 4d. and 1s. 8d. per day, part of the expenses on the highways, which totalled £16 18s. 6d. in 1805. The costs rose steadily and by 1834 the levy was 1s. in the pound. In 1809 the rector, Revd. J. W. Pawsey, was the surveyor of the highways. The Easter lettings meeting generally included an expenditure of £2 to supply 16 dinners and ale, provided initially at the White Horse by Mr Ladkin. The letting of the lanes continued until 1934, the

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<sup>10</sup> ROLLR, DE 1425/68 Vestry Minute Book

<sup>11</sup> ROLLR, DE 1425/75 Overseers Accounts 1783-1802

<sup>12</sup> ROLLR, DE 1425/76-77 Overseers Accounts 1802-16, 1816-36

<sup>13</sup> ROLLR, G/8/8a/1 Lutterworth Poor Law Union Minutes Book 1

<sup>14</sup> ROLLR, G/8/8a/1 Lutterworth Poor Law Book 1, 29 Mar 1836, 17 May 1836

<sup>15</sup> ROLLR, G/8/8a/1 Lutterworth Poor Law Book 1, 26 Apr 1836, 28 Jun 1836

<sup>16</sup> ROLLR, G/8/8a/1 Lutterworth Poor Law Book 1, 31 May 1836

<sup>17</sup> ROLLR, DE 1425/78, Overseers Accounts Book

<sup>18</sup> *Report of the Poor Law Commissioners* (Parl. Papers 1837-8 (147) p. 219)

<sup>19</sup> ROLLR, DE 1425/68 Churchwardens Accounts

income having declined to 12s. 6d. from £8 2s. 6d. in 1871. The Sandhole was let for hay on condition that if a haycrop was taken off, two cartloads of manure were to be added to the ground.

### Parish Council

The first election was held on 27 March 1895, when 13 candidates stood for five posts. Those elected comprised two grocers, a tailor, a railway porter and the son of a farmer, who became the parish clerk. There is no evidence of votes being sought on party lines; at least two of those elected were Methodists.<sup>20</sup> The letting of the lanes was taken over by the parish council, with the income paid to the district council and credited to the parish for the reduction of rates.<sup>21</sup>

At the end of 1906 tension arose between the parish and the district and county councils over an increase in the rates. Letters were written by Major R.H.H. Jary of Bitteswell Hall, alderman of Leicester County Council, supporting the parish council's position.<sup>22</sup> However Lutterworth District Council and the board of guardians considered that expenditure had been properly supervised and was not excessive. The charge that the rates had risen due to increased officers' salaries was firmly refuted. A similar reply was received from Leicestershire County Council.

The decision to close the school in 1920 was reversed in 1921 in part due to the efforts of the local Member of Parliament urged on by the parish council, and it reopened in 1923.<sup>23</sup> Following a second and final closure of the school in 1947, the council were active in ensuring the only public building in the village survived.<sup>24</sup>

In 1927 the parish council entered into an agreement with Leicester fire brigade for the provision of either a motor or steam fire engine, the former being twice as expensive and additional charges to be made for each fireman.<sup>25</sup>

Electricity was available in 1941; the supply company is not named.<sup>26</sup> The water table is high,<sup>27</sup> and water was available from wells and also, by 1903, from 33 pumps around the village.<sup>28</sup> The provision of piped water was proposed in 1955 by the Lutterworth Rural District Council and the parish council was consulted about the route of the main supply pipe across the fields.<sup>29</sup>

The 2015 Parish Council has five members, assisted by a paid clerk, and the parish lies within the area administered by Harborough District Council, since the local government re-organisation of 1974. Parish concerns, mainly with planning applications, may be raised with either the district or county councillor.

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<sup>20</sup> Declaration of Results of Poll, 27 Mar 1895, Leire Parish Council Chest, *Wright's Dir Leics.* (1887-8), 447: (1896), 594, *Leicester Chronicle*, 16 Sep 1899, TNA, RG12/2489

<sup>21</sup> Leire Lanes and Sandhole Accounts, 1871- 1984, Leire Parish Council Chest

<sup>22</sup> Parish Council correspondence, Leire Parish Council Chest, 11 Dec 1906 – 4 Feb 1907

<sup>23</sup> ROLLR DE 5905/1

<sup>24</sup> Letters dated 25 May 1958 – 6 Nov 1958, Leire Parish Council Chest.

<sup>25</sup> Letter dated 1 Jul 1927, Leire Parish Council Chest

<sup>26</sup> Kelly's 1941, 1002

<sup>27</sup> Personal observation.

<sup>28</sup> OS Map 25", Leics XLIII.16 (1903 edition)

<sup>29</sup> Letters dated 22 Nov – 8 Dec 1955, Leire Parish Council Chest



*Figure 9: The playing field, formerly charity allotments, administered by the parish council*

VCH LEICESTERSHIRE