

Leicestershire

Photograph of flint tools

The three tools in this photograph were fashioned 14,500 years ago at the head of a gorge in the Charnwood uplands, where hunter-gatherers could intercept their prey. Tips and barbs for spears, piercers, scrapers, and debitage totalling over 4,600 pieces of flint were recovered from a small area. The flints originate from eastern England and the Salisbury Plain. This is one of only two open-air sites of this period that have been found in Britain.

Lent by Lyndon Cooper.

Jewry Wall excavation

Leicester's Jewry Wall is one of the largest surviving pieces of Roman architecture in Britain. Kathleen Kenyon led an excavation of the site in 1936-9, and found a 2nd-century Roman basilica and bath house, with a late Iron Age settlement beneath. During this excavation, she pioneered the use of pottery for dating, developed the 'Wheeler-Kenyon' method of stratigraphic excavation, and her findings developed knowledge of the relationship between pre-Roman and Roman settlements in Britain.

Potters Marston ware

A fragment of cooking pot rim, thousands of which were made in the Leicestershire village of Potters Marston. Production peaked in the 13th century, when the ware was used throughout the county. This piece is mostly oxidised to a red colour, with a grey core indicating the uneven temperature of the 'bonfire kiln' in which it was fired. The top of the rim is decorated, and there are impressions of grass on the outer surface.

Lent by Chris Dyer.

Order of Service for receipt of the body of King Richard III

After his death at the 'Battle of Bosworth' in 1485, the body of King Richard III was taken to Leicester and buried in the church of the Grey Friars. The discovery of his body in a car park attracted huge public and media attention. This is the order of service for the receipt of King Richard's body into Leicester Cathedral in 2015, to lay in repose ahead of burial in a new tomb.

Swithland Slate

Roman Leicester had buildings roofed with Swithland slate, possibly from outcrops. Quarries at Swithland are documented from the 14th century. A demand for carved gravestones created a new market in the late 17th century, and many thousands grace Leicestershire churchyards, with their lettering and imagery as clear as the day they were made. As the slate doesn't cleave easily, the development of the railways saw the local product replaced by lighter and thinner Welsh slate.

Cleave for osiers

A well-preserved basketry eel trap, made in the 9th or 10th century, was discovered by archaeologists in the paleochannels of the river Trent at Castle Donington. Osiers were cultivated here by at least the 14th century, and basket-making had become an important occupation by the 17th century. This cleave, owned by a Castle Donington basket-maker in the early 20th century, was used to split osier rods along their length.

Lent by Delia Richards.

Soot from Glenfield Tunnel

The Leicester & Swannington Railway opened in 1832, linking the coal mines in north-west Leicestershire with the county town. The route included a tunnel of 1,796 yards at Glenfield, the longest then built on a steam railway. The engineer was Robert Stephenson. The first engine's chimney hit the roof, showering its

important passengers with soot. The tunnel was also difficult to ventilate, causing heavy deposits on the brickwork.

Obtained by Chris Hossack.

Melton Mowbray pork pie box

The Melton Mowbray pork pie is distinguished by its use of uncured chopped pork in a hand-raised pastry case. The sides bow outwards as it is cooked, which gives the pie its distinctive and uneven curved form. The pie is believed to have developed to use the meat of pigs kept to be fed on whey, a by-product of cheese production in this area of pastoral farming. It gained Protective Geographical status in 2009.

Last for a child's shoe

Leicester's footwear industry hardly existed before the 1850s, but then began to grow following the decline of framework knitting. There were few manufacturers in the county until the 1870s. Yet by 1924, Leicestershire produced 25 per cent of the shoes manufactured in Britain. By 1939 the city and county supplied half the national output of children's shoes, using wooden lasts such as this.

Lent by David Holmes.

Griswold needles

Framework knitting began in Leicestershire in the 17th century. By 1844, there were said to be over 20,000 frames in the county. Most were producing hosiery, and it was hard, physical work. New types of machine introduced from the 1870s included the Griswold circular knitting machine, patented by Henry Griswold. Small, light and ideally suited to domestic production by women, the Griswold produced a tube of material which was simple to turn into socks.

Lent by Mary Hawkins.

Ladybird book

Ladybird books began life in 1915 as the imprint of Loughborough printers Wills & Hepworth. Wartime paper shortages in 1940 led to a redesign, and the introduction of the small hardback format. Children could learn to read through the Ladybird Key Words Reading Scheme, and progress to titles about history, nature, science and technology. *Loughborough Past and Present* was published by Ladybird in 1988 to mark the centenary of the incorporation of the borough.

Knitted fabric swatches

The extensive Leicestershire hosiery industry encouraged related businesses to locate in the county. G. Stibbe & Co Ltd was founded in 1886. Their Leicester factory produced hosiery machinery, the 'Ballard' electric cloth cutter 'suitable for female labour', knitted cloths, such as those contained in the sample of swatches, and by the 1970s, electronic knitting machines. The fabric business was sold in 1973 and the company ceased to trade in 1976.

Lent by Natalie Hayton.

Postage stamp showing a jet engine

Engine assembly bays and testing facilities were erected in great secrecy in 1938 within a disused iron foundry in Lutterworth, to receive a prototype jet engine developed by Frank Whittle at Rugby. The engine was refined here, accepted by the Air Ministry in 1939 and had a successful maiden flight in 1941. Whittle's invention was celebrated 50 years later within this issue of four postage stamps. The jet engine powered operational flights from 1944.

Sari fabric

Leicester's Asian community expanded substantially in 1972, when Idi Amin ejected Asian people from Uganda. Many settled in the Belgrave area of the city, where houses were affordable, as many of the hosiery and footwear factories in that area were closing. Belgrave Road is now renowned for its 'golden mile' of

Asian retailers, selling Indian food, fashion and jewellery, and hosts one of the largest Diwali celebrations outside India.