**Lincoln Record Society Spring Conference, 23 April 2016**

**Lincolnshire Agriculture, Rural Life and Labour**

**Conference Paper Abstracts**

**Session 1: Trade and Finance in Medieval and Early-Modern Rural Lincolnshire**

**Paul Dryburgh and Alan Kissane, ‘The Wool Trade and Merchants: the Evidence of Lincolnshire, 1279-1311’**

For much of the Middle Ages, wool played an enormous role in the economic fortunes of Lincolnshire. Throughout one of England’s largest counties, wool growers consistently produced and marketed a commodity that was highly prized in the cloth industries of northern Europe, and the county attracted diverse communities of traders to take advantage. Nonetheless, when compared to the counties of Yorkshire and Gloucestershire, which have seen extensive scholarship, the relative absence of work on Lincolnshire’s wool trade and merchant communities is striking. This paper will attempt to recover evidence of Lincolnshire's wool trade, particularly at its apex in the decades either side of the turn of the fourteenth century. By drawing upon surviving local evidence, the evidence of complaint (hundred rolls) and surviving central government accounts (credit transactions and duties on exports, recognisances of monastic houses with foreign merchants), this paper will offer an introduction to the complex and interdependent relationship between local and foreign merchants in transactions for wool. In so doing, it will chart their involvement in the county's infrastructure, their relationship with wool growers and the role of the towns of Lincoln and Boston in the distribution and control of wool during the formative years 1279-1311, years which saw the rapid rise of the English merchant class.

**Judith Spicksley, ‘Working and lending: the financial and occupational activities of single women in rural Lincolnshire in the seventeenth century’**

The proportion of never-married women expanded in Lincolnshire during much of the seventeenth century as it did elsewhere in England. While this was difficult for men, for women the ramifications could be more severe, as few received any significant occupational training outside housewifery. If they could find a job, single women often found themselves engaging in low paid, seasonal or marginal activities to support themselves. However, a relaxation of the usury laws, which began in the late sixteenth century and continued through the seventeenth, offered individuals with capital the opportunity to invest their cash for profit. Using wills and inventories, this paper will examine the working and lending practices of never-married women in rural Lincolnshire between c. 1600 and 1700.

**Session 2: Agricultural Innovation in Lincolnshire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries**

**Shirley Brook, ‘The social networks and information environment of nineteenth-century high farming in Lincolnshire’**

This paper will seek to identify those responsible forshaping and transmitting the culture of agricultural improvement in nineteenth-century Lincolnshire. It will examine the influence of agricultural literature and membership of agricultural societies, both local and national, on the farmers and landowners whose activities shaped the rural landscape and its buildings. The paper will review the information about agricultural improvement in Lincolnshire which appeared in the farming press and society journals and consider the significance of visits by Lincolnshire agriculturalists to J. J. Mechi's experimental farm at Tiptree in Essex.

**Ken Redmore, ‘A Lincolnshire Threshing Contractor’**

This paper will examine the day book of a threshing contractor (c.1900-1910) in the Lincoln area. The annual pattern of his activity, the variety of threshing and other operations undertaken and his geographical range will be considered. Some thought will also be given to local farming practices implied by the contactor’s record.

**Abi Hunt, ‘”My father wasn’t really interested in machinery”: New perspectives on the modernisation of agriculture in twentieth-century Lincolnshire‘**

This paper will examine the developments in, and application of, agricultural machinery between 1850 and 1980 to ascertain the extent to which, and when modernisation occurred in Lincolnshire. It intends to reflect and acknowledge that the term ‘mechanisation’ encompasses a range of innovations from horse and steam power to that of the internal combustion engine and the implements and machines they powered; from cake breakers to chaff cutters, to ploughs and harrows to reapers, and binders and threshing drums. It examines what Gale Johnson calls ‘the mechanical revolution’, particularly focusing on the widespread introduction of steam in the 1850s, of the motor tractor power during the two world wars and its impact on real horse power. The paper will examine the introduction of reapers and binders in the 1850s and combine harvesters from the 1930s onwards and their impact on labour required at harvest time. Consideration will also be given to the development of machinery associated with the production of root crops (sugar beet and potatoes in particular) and its impact on hand work.

**Session 3: Rural and Suburban Lincolnshire Life in the Later-Nineteenth and Early-Twentieth Centuries**

**Andrew Jackson with Maureen Sutton, ‘Farming life in Lincolnshire before the First World War: The Poetry of Bernard Samuel Gilbert’**

The writings of the Billinghay-born author, Bernard Samuel Gilbert (1882-1927), form a rich primary source for exploring early twentieth-century England. However, they lie relatively little known and neglected. This paper provides an overview of Gilbert’s works written while he was resident in his home county. Gilbert wrote political pamphlets, stage plays and novels, but a particular focus will be on his poetry in dialect verse published between 1911 and 1914. The paper will be accompanied by some illustrative readings of verses by Maureen Sutton. The research identifies a number of themes in his writing that will be of interest to historians of the Lincolnshire countryside and farming in the early-twentieth century: the state of the countryside, relations between country and city, the well-being of agriculture, government reform and improvement, work and leisure, class and gender relations, and the character of regional landscapes.

**Andrew Walker, ‘Highly-prized labour? Rewarding Lincolnshire rural workers on the agricultural showground, 1869-1939’**

This paper will consider the ways in which the Lincolnshire Agricultural Society at its annual shows sought to reward rural labour during a period of significant change and how this practice was informed by the Society’s founding principles.

The changing social, economic and cultural context in which agricultural labour was undertaken within the county during the period will be examined. The paper will explore the extent to which these transformations influenced the Lincolnshire Agricultural Society’s approach to rewarding rural labourers and their employers - and how the categories of premiums altered accordingly. The reception these contests were given in the local and national press will also be examined.

Key aspects relating to Lincolnshire rural life during the period that will feature in the paper will include the Agricultural Depression and the concomitant flight from the land, agricultural labourers’ emigration, annual hirings, and rural education.

**Rob Wheeler, ‘The Death of a Rural Parish: the suburbanisation of Boultham’**

Suburban development usually proceeded in a steady manner with the most eligible sites being the first ones sold to builders and development spreading outwards in an organic manner.  Boultham was different: the entire parish was sold to developers in 1913 and they sought to have as much as possible built, and as quickly as possible.  The process generated three plans of a Garden City type.  What happened was very different, and this paper will explore why.

**Biographies of the speakers**

**Dr Shirley Brook** teaches and writes about Lincolnshire history. She is currently a Visiting Tutor at Bishop Grosseteste University and a member of the Editorial Board of the History of Lincolnshire Committee. Her doctoral thesis ‘The Buildings of High Farming: Lincolnshire Farm Buildings 1840-1914’ (University of Hull, 2005) explored the cultural determinants of form in the county’s rural landscape and buildings.

**Dr Paul Dryburgh** is a principal records specialist at The National Archives, where he specialises in medieval records. Paul was previously archivist at the Borthwick Institute, York. He has also worked on the AHRC-funded Henry III Fine Rolls project as a project researcher. Paul is Honorary Secretary of the Lincoln Record Society.

**Dr Abigail Hunt** worked in museums and heritage tourism across the east of England for eight years, specialising in working in development projects within agricultural museums, and agricultural and horticultural related heritage and tourism before moving into higher education. She is Head of Department for Marketing, Enterprise, and Tourism in the Lord Ashcroft International Business School at Anglia Ruskin University. Abi’s doctorate ‘Public and Scholarly Histories: A Case Study of Agricultural History, Lincolnshire, and Museums’ was undertaken at the University of Lincoln.

**Dr Andrew Jackson** is Senior Lecturer in History and Head of School of Humanities at Bishop Grosseteste University. His research interests include modern urban and rural history, landscape and townscape change, and theory and practice in local and regional history. Dr Jackson is also a member of a number of local history and heritage committees.

**Dr Alan Kissane** completed his doctoral thesis entitled 'Lay Urban Identities in Late Medieval Lincoln, 1288-1400' at the University of Nottingham in 2013. Currently Alan works in academic support at Hallward Library at the University of Nottingham. He remains committed to research and publishing. Alan’s research interests (apart from those already listed above) lie primarily in the fourteenth-century town, with particular focus on lay piety, town-crown relations, urban space and trade during the fourteenth century. At present, alongside working as a librarian, Alan is translating and editing the surviving urban coroners' rolls for the city of Lincoln (1333-1397), which is due to be published by Lincoln Record Society in 2018.

**Ken Redmore** worked successively as a teacher, lecturer and local education authority administrator before retirement. He is an active member of the Society for Lincolnshire History and Archaeology and has written a number of articles on the buildings and machinery of Lincolnshire’s agricultural and industrial heritage.

**Dr Judith Spicksley** lectures in Economic History in the Department of Economics and Related Studies at the University of York. She works on the economic, social and cultural history of the early modern period, and has published articles on single women and credit and debt and slavery.

**Maureen Sutton** is a Lincolnshire poet and folklorist.

**Dr Andrew Walker** is Vice Principal at Rose Bruford College. He worked for many years at the University of Lincoln, where he taught history. His research interests continue to include Lincolnshire-based topics, particularly linked to rural/urban interactions in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

**Dr Rob Wheeler** has edited Lincoln Record Society volumes on the maps of Lincoln and the Witham valley.  He has also published articles on the early-nineteenth-century plans of Boultham.  The work that will be described was undertaken to clarify the status of two maps of 1914-16 showing development plans for the area.