

to buy one he decided to wait until Coleman's, the ironmongers had a sale.

The sale duly arrived but the price tag showed twenty one shillings crossed and the sale price nineteen and sixpence, which had been the price before the sale. Naturally, my father queried this, only to be told that they couldn't afford to reduce the original price. This would be a punishable offence today under the Trade Descriptions Act...

There was one man I knew who was the proud possessor of a wheelbarrow but he was very protective of it. If anyone called and asked if they could borrow it, he would reply "The barrow will tell you", whereupon the hapless individual would go to the shed wherein it was kept and there, on the front of it in large white paint, was the word "NO". Needless to say, word got around and so our proud possessor of a fine wheelbarrow kept it in pristine condition for his own use. I hasten to add that this was an isolated happening as most men were kind and generous, all being in the same position, financially, and ready to help in any way they could.

Today, there is much talk of damage to the atmosphere by the burning of fossil fuels. So not only was it hazardous, dirty and very hard work to dig coal as well as the additional hard work of getting in the concessionary coal but we were polluting the atmosphere by burning it. Ah well, we live and learn but still have a great deal more to learn about climate change.

1982. THAT WAS SWANNINGTON FESTIVAL - THAT WAS

Denis Baker. June 2007

In 1980 I was a member of Leicestershire Industrial History Society, which organised a conference in Coalville to commemorate the passing of an Act of Parliament in 1830, which authorised the construction of one of the world's earliest railways, namely the Leicester and Swannington

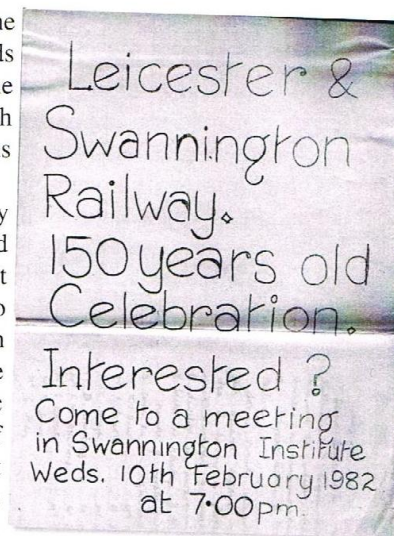
Railway. Subsequently by 1832, the earliest railway line in the Midlands was constructed to its terminus in the village via an inclined plane, up which coal from the village's mines was transported on its way to Leicester.

In February 1982, as a newly elected parish Councillor, I suggested to the Parish Council that they might consider having a village fete to commemorate the above event, which took place 150 years earlier. The Council asked me to call a public meeting to examine the prospect of doing this and, significant support having been obtained, the Swannington Festival Group was formed.

At the inaugural meeting a number of people indicated their willingness to form an organising committee: John Unwin, Peter Arnold, Richard Hough, Don and Mary Armstrong, Sue Garner, Colin May, John Wilkins, Geoff Hollier, Rob Jones (Village School master), Tony and Mary Skinner, Dick Gilbert, Michael Bird, my wife Gwenda and myself. Mrs. Parker (Station Inn) and Mr. and Mrs. Saddington indicated a willingness to give active support. Several others later brought their individual enthusiastic support to the Group.

We agreed that as much of the heritage of the village should be highlighted to include topics such as mining, transport, community, farming, buildings, personalities and religion. In order to contact all parts of our linear village we decided to hold weekly planning meetings at each of the village pubs in sequence viz. Station Inn, Robin Hood Inn, Fountain Inn and New Inn. It was decided to have the festival from 19 to 25th July, immediately after the British Rail Open day.

We were delighted to attract the keen interest of NUM Secretary, Jack Jones, who agreed to become our Chairman, Dick Gilbert served as



Treasurer, Peter Arnold as Social secretary and myself as Secretary. We were very fortunate that each of our members brought with them special skills, contacts and interests, which were to prove very valuable to our organisation. Additional support was offered by Leicestershire Industrial History Society, Coalville library, Coalville Model Engineering Society, the N.U.M, Swannington Ladybirds, Swannington Social group, the Village School and St. Georges Church.



I undertook to produce a Village Trail Walk, which would explain to walkers the significant heritage landscape features, including the village's 800-year connection with coal mining, the Incline and the ruins of a tower mill owned by the Hough Family. Mr David

Garner offered sponsorship for this publication.

A study of the significance of special buildings within the village was made and details of the influence of early nonconformist groups and later the Anglican Church noted. A start was made to collect an archive of Swannington photos and artifacts, which were to be displayed in a temporary exhibition during the week.

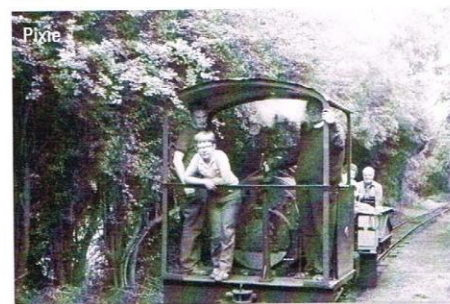
Plans were also laid for a Village family Treasure Trail, a series of talks on heritage themes related to the village, an exhibition of village memorabilia and geological artifacts and a grand barbecue to be held during the week.



We obtained permission from the owners of Swannington Incline and the Calcutta tramway, to clear a wide walkway along their lengths for walkers of the trail and to clear the Coleorton Railway as far as the entrance of Peggs Green tunnel. A working party met each week through that very wet Spring to clear the detritus of 30 years of neglect and to make foot steps over the mounds of mine shale, which blocked the incline. Thus the public was given freedom during the festival to walk this stretch for the first time.

Meanwhile a number of fundraising events were organised to enable us to be financially self sufficient for what we intended to do. A village Antiques auction, a Folk evening, a Disco and (the first) Strawberry Fayre were arranged and were to prove successful. It was later noted that we were sufficiently naive not to consider the consequences of making a loss!

As the weeks passed there was a growing sense of expectation and plans began to bear fruit. Themes for the exhibition were identified and plans were laid for a carnival parade and an old English fair, for which a suitable site was sought. Colin May undertook to organise a mini Steam and Vintage vehicle Rally. Mrs. Pauline Smith agreed to organise the selection of a Heritage Queen at the Disco. The week's celebration was to culminate in a Costume Ball on Saturday evening and an Open Air Sunday evening service.



Piano Row and to collect rail sets from Coalville Brickyard. The Incline and Tramroads had all been cleared by the end of June despite the inclement weather.

We began our publicity campaign early. The Leicester Advertiser carried the first notice on its pages on May 27 and later the Coalville Times gave us coverage. Peter Arnold and myself gave several Local Radio interviews. Posters and hand bills were widely distributed.

Swannington Festival Group

* **DISCO** *

Centre Radio D.J.

at Swannington Institute
on Saturday 19th June 1982.

8 ~ 12pm

Tickets £1.75. Judging of Carnival Queen.

Having contacted the Rev. Teddy Boston regarding his giving a talk, he offered to bring his famous "Pixie" if we could lay a length of narrow gauge railway in the village. Accordingly a working party was assembled to clear and level the embankment of the Coleorton Railway behind



Our Gala Queen and attendants were selected at a Disco on June 19th.

Our Strawberry Fair, held a week early owing to the heavy rain followed by a late sunny spell producing an early crop, was a huge success, with TV Personality, Ted Moulton dropping in to sample our wares. By the beginning of June we had raised some £400 towards meeting expenses.

The Festival month had arrived and we went into overdrive as we received the all clear on accessibility to the School and School House for the exhibition, booked portaloos and the Marquee and finalised arrangements for the parachute drop. Helen Arnold raised a sponsored £91 by running a marathon!

Offers of fifty-two prizes for our Grand Raffle and other competitions came from many sources. The list included an all expenses paid, weekend trip to Amsterdam, two pairs of tickets for flights abroad, a Bus Explorer ticket, a Railway excursion, bottles of wine and spirits, a Water-colour painting by a commercial artist and even a top-of-the-range replacement front door.



Festival Week 19 - 25th July. Waggon's Roll!

Our festival week began in superb Summer weather which lasted throughout the whole event.

Day One

Mrs. May Thurman, one of the village's oldest inhabitants, officially opened the Festival at 10.30 am on Monday at the Exhibition in the Village School.



Many people in attendance were able to examine -

- A display of photographs of the village as it used to be.
- A display of Photographs of the Leicester and Swannington Railway
- A display of mining artifacts and documents lent by Lounde Hall Museum
- A display of Model Steam engines.
- A display of Village maps and Documents from the County Record Office
- A display of Mining documents from NCB Coleorton Hall.
- A display of children's pictures and class work.



Several artifacts were available on sale.



Rooms in the schoolhouse were equipped with Victorian furniture and furnishings and staffed by volunteers in period costume. The exhibition was open each day from 10.30am to 7.45 pm

At 2.15 pm there was the first of a series of well supported Guided walks of the Trail.

At 8.00 pm Rev. Teddy Boston of Cadeby gave an illustrated talk "Enthusiasm for Steam" to a packed Village Hall.

Day Two

In the evening, following a walk of the Village Trail, a talk was given by Kate Thomson, County Archivist in the Village Hall. She spoke on the subject of "Studying Village records", raising many issues with the aid of local maps and documents and answering a variety of questions posed by the lively audience.



Day Three

By now the word was spreading widely and as people were attending the exhibition from afar many old acquaintances were renewed.

The attendance on the Guided walk continued to grow.

From 8 - 12.00 pm the Village Barbecue

and Barn Dance was held in the Marquee on the Grove Field. Music supplied by "Internal Combustion" and called by Geoff Thompson of Ashby. Packington Morris men gave special items, appreciated by a good attendance.

Day Four

Support continued to grow at the Exhibition. On the Guided walk extra volunteers were called in.

In the evening the Village Hall was again packed for my talk on "Swannington Village and its Coalfield, leading to the construction of the Leicester and Swannington Railway". Many ex-railway men attended and

several gave first hand accounts of their time and particularly of operating the incline engine.

Day Five

People, who had left the village years ago, were returning to make contact with friends and relations of old at the exhibition. It was wonderful to overhear conversations about old families and to see the delight when visitors met long lost pals and relations. Many related tales of their childhood at the school and in the village or of their jobs in the mines and the railways.

The guided walk was becoming a problem with large numbers taking so much extra time to negotiate the many stiles. Many expressed much appreciation of Mr. Toogood's permission to allow us to walk through from Spring Lane to Jeffcoats Lane.

Rob Foxon, a well-known Railway film historian, gave the last talk on the subject "The Leicester & Swannington Railway". This was well illustrated by slides and movie film. The village Hall was again full to capacity.

Day Six

By this time we were all feeling very tired, but the enthusiasm of visitors helped keep us going to meet the biggest day of the Festival which began early as the final touches were put in place for the arrival on a low loader of "Pixie". This had to be manhandled on to its track to enable Teddy Boston to ensure all was safe for running. With the exception of one slight derailment during the day this proved to be a great attraction. Special tickets were issued for the day.

Final touches were being put to the Festival Field as the Exhibition received the first of a horde of visitors. A Craft and Antiques fair opened at 11 am in the Village Hall and a preserved vehicle rally got up steam before traversing the village to its site on the Playground at Jeffcoats Lane. A preserved bus ran a shuttle service transporting visitors from Coalville to the village and all the Pubs had all day licences!






By 1.00 pm all was ready for the official opening of the Fayre by Sir Francis Beaumont and the sideshows began to operate. The crowds built up as the Grand Parade had passed through the village, starting at The Culvert and going around the Blacksmiths Shop island and back to the Fairground.

Many organisations had entered floats in the parade. Sir Francis and Mr. and Mrs. Angrave, of the County Council, selected the best float and the best fancy dress.

The programme for the Festival day can be seen opposite.

Everything went very well including the two Parachute drops, despite a breeze taking some of the parachutists to Califat Spinney and a very good time was had by all.

Then as we were in the process of clearing up we were hit by a bombshell! The landlord of the Fountain had omitted to get a licence for the Costume Ball. After much negotiation the landlord of the Robin Hood agreed to help out and a few of us spent a very busy time helping his daughter and son in law to transport booze and the necessary equipment to the Village Hall. It was a very tired and fraught number of us who eventually arrived in our costumes for the evening's entertainment, but we determined to really let our hair down. And we did!

150th Anniversary
 Leicester -  - Railway
 "Swannington"
Swannington Village Festival
 July 19th 25th 1982
Pre Festival Events
 please give us your support.
Festival Queen Disco 19th June 1982
 Come on Girls - enter the competition.
 Good Prizes for the Queen & two Attendants
Strawberry Fair - 10th July 1982
 Come and meet **TED MONTE** Star of Radio 4 & 5
Grand Festival Raffle - many magnificent prizes
 to be won - tickets now available from Local
 Public Houses, The Post Office or Committee Members
 Have you any articles of historical interest,
 photographs, postcards, etc. that could be borrowed
 for the display?
 Can you give practical help?

Day Seven

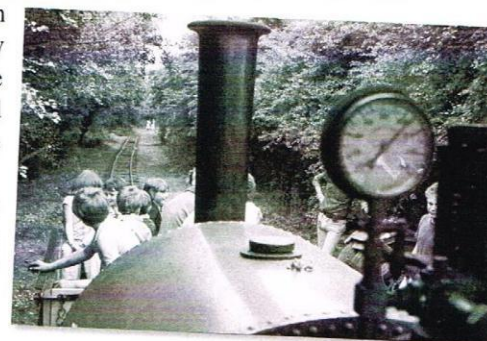
There was an even bigger crowd in attendance for the walk of the Trail on a wonderful Sunday morning prior to the Family Treasure Trail's start at 2 pm. Some thirty families still had the energy to compete.

The previous evening we had all agreed to put on our costumes and meet at the Robin Hood at 5.30pm to walk together to the "Open evening of Thanksgiving" led by the Vicar and the Methodist minister. The service, accompanied by South Leicester Welfare Band was held on the Grove Field in idyllic weather.

Old favourite hymns were sung heartily, the final one being "The day thou gavest Lord is ended" which seemed to be an appropriate finale to our event and we all then luxuriated in the wonderfully warm evening, listening to the band, watching the sunset and amply refreshed from the Fountain opposite.

At the end of a perfect week we were delighted to have raised over £1000 profit.

It is interesting to look back over twenty five years and see what we achieved then and what we have done since. Who would have thought it!



ROBIN HOOD

Bill Hale



The March 1999 edition of Now and Then had an article by Denis Baker headed, "Was Robin Hood a Son of Swannington?" Drawing on a piece published in the Journal of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society some twenty-five years earlier Denis, albeit with some scepticism,