

The good, the bad and the ugly

A most interesting and amusing talk was given to the Woodhouse and Woodhouse Eaves Local History Group by Blue Badge guide Robert Gregory on 10th November 2014 entitled 'The good, bad and sometimes ugly, naughty and nice Leicester people'.

The good

The first character Robert described was Edward Vaughan, a former vicar of St Martin's Cathedral. The cathedral porch was erected in 1896/7 and paid for by public subscription to honour the work of Edward and his three sons who were instrumental in providing education for working people (particularly framework knitters). In 1862 they established Vaughan College.

Frederick Goodyear was Chief Constable in 1836 and lived for many years in a cottage built next to the Mayor's Parlour in the Guildhall. His salary was £125 per year and he did much to stamp out corruption in local politics with cells built next to his cottage.

The bad

Albert Hattersley was the only man who escaped over the wall of Leicester Prison, which has the highest prison wall in the country (40-ft tall, 16-ft thick at the base and six-ft thick at the top). He managed to get onto a train to Nottingham later that day but was arrested on arrival because a passenger had left a copy of the Leicester Mercury on the train with his picture on the front and he was recognized immediately.

George Davenport who lived in Wigston was Leicester's most notorious highwayman. He started life as a framework knitter, but took to crime in the 1790s. With his athletic build he was able to escape detention – saying to his pursuers "catch me if you can". He was eventually caught, convicted and hanged at Redhill.

The ugly

Daniel Lambert was famous for his obesity, weighing 53 stone and having a waist measurement over nine ft. He worked in the county jail in Highcross where he saw the 4th Earl Ferrers of Staunton Harold, who murdered his servant with a pistol. The earl was held in the Tower of London and tried in the House of Lords. He pleaded insanity but was convicted and hanged at Tyburn before a large crowd in 1760.

Robert gave many interesting anecdotes about all these historical personalities and will be welcome to come back with further tales in the future.

Stuart Tyler