"More than just a market"

1869 - 2019
150 Years Commemoration of the Cattle Market on this site

Melton Mowbray Market 150 Years 1869 - 2019

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FOREWORD: Hugh Brown CEO

Melton Mowbray Market is the largest town centre livestock market in the country and has been in existence for 1,000 years, predating the Domesday Book. The main market has been held on a Tuesday since at least 1324 when it was granted a charter by King Edward II.

Thank you for joining us on our journey of discovery at the Market.

We still don't know exactly when the market in Melton Mowbray started, but we do know that it moved to its current site in between Scalford and Nottingham Roads in 1869 and 2019 is our 150th year here.

When the current market site was built it was on the edge of town and many markets over the last 20 years have moved again, further out of town.

We are lucky here to have bucked that trend, instead remaining as the largest town centre livestock market in the country and with thanks to investment from Melton Borough Council, the LLEP and Gillstream Markets Ltd, which took over the operation of the Market in 2016. This allows us to preserve the special sight every Tuesday of the countryside coming to town for the exchange of goods and news in a fair and transparent market environment with a high quality of service from our dedicated staff.

Having redeveloped the livestock market area in 2017, we now turn our attention to the stalls, units and events side of the business, with a drive to build a new food and drink hub for the Market, Melton Mowbray and the region. This has commenced already with the arrival of the world class Round Corner Brewing and we expect to deliver much more over the years ahead to ensure that the Market builds on its reputation as something that everyone can be proud of.

I would like to thank Derek Simmonds and John Milner for putting together with this commemoratory booklet, along with all the other contributors, our staff and customers who make it all possible.

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CHARTER RIGHTS

THE MELTON MOWBRAY CATTLE MARKET

Possibly there was a Market in the Town that predates the Anglo-Saxon Period going back to the Roman Period

Anglo-Saxon Period

Anglo-Saxon farming was widespread throughout Britain, and almost everybody worked on a farm. They raised chickens, goats, sheep, pigs and cattle and grew a range of crops and vegetables.

Sheep were farmed for their wool, milk and meat. cattle provided milk, meat and leather. Horses were mostly for pulling carts and riding. Pigs were farmed primarily as a source of meat.

There are very few towns in England with a market that is mentioned in the Domesday Book, Melton is one of these and the only one in Leicestershire. It has the third oldest known history of any market in the country.

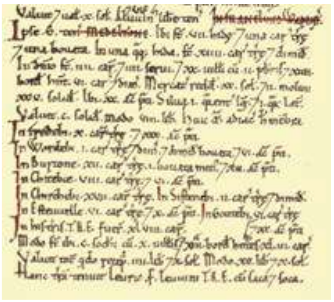
"The right to hold a Market was probably first granted in the reign of Edward the Confessor (1042-66) and there is a tradition that Leuric's son Lewin, the last known Saxon Lord of Melton, was granted a Market at Melton by the last but one Saxon Kings."

Norman Period

The Domesday Book is a manuscript record of the "Great Survey" of much of England and parts of Wales completed in 1086 by order of King William the Conqueror, to ensure that the correct taxes could be levied by the crown and its agents.

It is from this that the oldest documentary evidence of the market can be found recorded in the year 1077.

The first Norman Lord of the Manor of Melton was Godfredus or Geoffrey de Wirce. He was from the border of Anjou and Britany in France. He took a wife, a Saxon lady by the name of Alveva. She brought to him vast possessions in Warwickshire.



Domesday Book entry

In the year 1077 we find he gave all the tithes of the market at Melton to the Abbey of St. Nicholas of Anjou in Normandy. #

This is the earliest written evidence of Melton as a market town.

The Domesday Survey of 1086 mentions 42 markets, In feudal times, all markets were the King's property and could not be held without obtaining a Charter from the King

 # John Nichols, Vol.11 Part 1 Framland Hundreds, Appendix15 p.125, quoting Burton Lazars Register from Cotton Library, folio 113.

Philip E Hunt – Story of Melton Mowbray p.7

THE MELTON TOWN MARKET

MEDIEVAL PERIOD - THE MARKET CHARTER

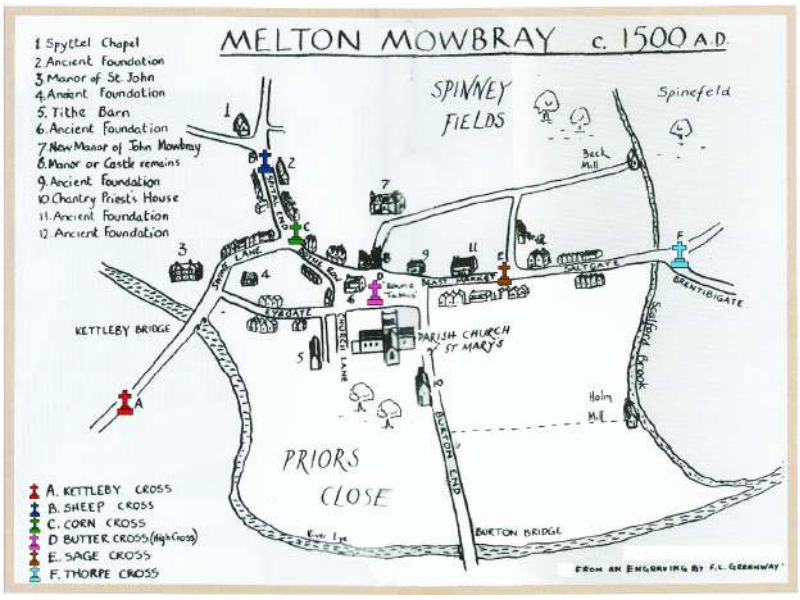
Melton Mowbray was granted a formal Market Charter by King Edward 11 in 1324, it has full Charter Rights to hold a weekly market.

The "Melton Market" has been held in the Town on a Tuesday since at least 1324.

From the map

B. Sheep Cross - Nottingham Street

In Spital End now called Nottingham Street stood the "Shepe Cross" or Sheep Cross where the sheep market was originally held. It extended the whole length of the street, (later removed to Thorpe End until 1867 when it was moved again to its present place). Between 50,000 and 60,000 sheep being sold annually in the street. The chief sales were in the Autumn. The numbers are now more than double this.



C. Corn Cross - Junction of High St. and Nottingham St.

On Corn Hill, which is situated at the junction of High Street and Nottingham Street stood the Corn Cross in the centre of the road and around it was the corn market. This market had a curious feature known as a Corn Wall, the exact function is unclear, it was probably a flat-topped low wall which would serve as a permanent stall upon which the corn merchants and farmers could show samples of corn. It was here where the corn market was held until the building of the Corn Exchange in 1854.

Reconstructed 1996

D. Butter Cross - Market Place

Further along towards the Market Place, where the butter and cheese thought to have been sold stood the Butter Cross as mention by Nichols in 1795. On this site for many years, until 1914, was held the Bi-annual Cheese Fair when pyramids of Stilton Cheese stood in the Market Place .

Reconstructed 1986

E. Sage Cross

At the East end of the town, stood Sage Cross in Sherard Street, according to a paper written by Vincent Wing in 1855 entitled the "The Priory of Melton" it stood opposite the house called the Elms - now the Telephone Exchange. In the days before refrigeration, meat would often need herbs to disguise the taste.

Wayfarers Crosses - A. Kettleby Cross & F. Thorpe Cross

There were Wayfarers' Crosses at the principal entrances to and from the Town. Here the traveller could give thanks for a safe journey or the outgoing traveller might arrive safely at their destination. There were at least two other crosses called Town Crosses on the then outskirts of the Town.

Philip Hunt – Story of Melton Mowbray p7

GEORGIAN PERIOD

The Beast Market, outside the Limes, Sherard Street, painting by John Ferneley

The Beast Market now called Sherard Street extended eastwards from the Market Place to Sage Cross.

Writing in the 1790's Nichols describes the cattle market as the most considerable in this part of England; large droves of cattle from Scotland and the North are bought up for Smithfield's; and graziers in this fine pasture get opulent at a pace. There were also Horse and cattle fairs that were very popular with farmers and dealers who came to buy and sell from a wide area. Livestock would usually be tethered or corralled in temporary pens and exchanged through "private treaty" haggling between buyers and sellers.

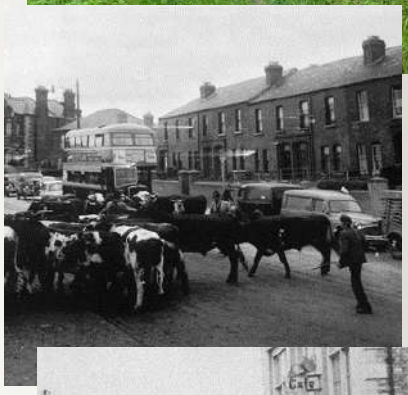
There are recordings that prior to the relocation of the Town Market the Beast Market had to extend down towards Thorpe End to cater for the quantity of cattle and sheep during the golden age of Droving from 1700-1850.

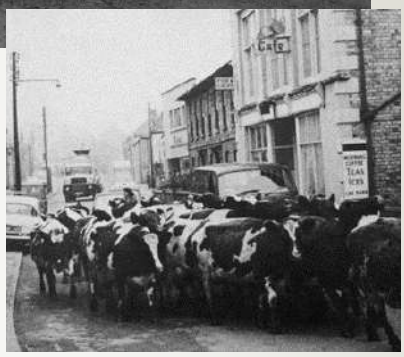
Source: Queen of the Shires. Jack Brownlow

DROVING BEASTS TO MARKET TO TRADE

The Golden Age of Droving (1700-1850)

Every spring and autumn the beasts were on the move - and had been since prehistory. Pliny the Elder, in AD 80, mentions geese being driven from (what is now) Belgium to Rome, their feet protected by tar and sand. Reason: the cheapest way to move livestock to market, before the age of steam, was by foot. Sheep seemed to thrive on being driven; pigs hated it and needed boots for their trotters on long journeys; cattle from Wales and Scotland tolerated it, even enjoyed it, because of the lush pasture of the Midland valleys en route. Turkeys were slower than geese, because they liked to perch in a tree at night, were hard to bring down in the morning, and didn't eat on the move as geese did. The droving seasons were short: mid February till the end of May, then late September to mid-November. In spring the beasts fed off the new grass; in Autumn off roots and the aftermath of the harvest.





As it was important that the stock ended the journey in good condition, beasts were ‘drifted’ southward at only 12-15 miles a day.

In the 20th Century droving had different problems . The journeys may have been around 5-10 miles but the hazards to contend with were certainly different .

ACCESS TO MELTON MARKET AND THE TURNPIKE ACTS

The Nottingham to Kettering Turnpike Road had included in its Act (1753-4 -1873) an exemption from toll charges, to all residents of certain villages, at the Melton Mowbray gate at the top of Nottingham Street. This was due to the fact that such people, going to Melton would, need not join the main Turnpike Road until nearly in the town and only used a few yards of it. Scalford Road was clear of any toll gates from the Vale, this also included the Loughborough Road .

1779 – 1780 Exempt Villages

Long Clawson, Hoby ,Cossington, Ragdale, Loughborough, Dalby on the Wold, Asfordby, Prestwold, Walton on the Wolds, Sileby , Mount Sorrel, Wymeswold, Grimston, Quorn, Wymeswold, Burton by Loughborough, Ratcliffe on the Wreak, Seagrave, Shoby, Willoughby, Thrussington, Barrow on Soar, Saxelby.

There was a reciprocal arrangements at the same gate while on journeys to and from any listed places.

Specimen Toll Schedules	**s**	***d***
Cattle, etc. per score		10
Sheep, etc. Per score		5
Coach, etc drawn by 4 horses	3	0

Source: The Turnpike Roads of Leicestershire & Rutland - Arthur Cossons

The Nottingham to Kettering Turnpike section in earlier times was a far more important route than it is today. It was the main Mail Coach route from Leeds to London. This section of the turnpike went from Nottingham via Melton and Oakham to Kettering and then on to London. Run by the Nottingham, Melton and Kettering Turnpike Trust from 1758. The turnpike trusts were abolished in 1880, the year after the railway line to Melton North opened. The trains would run until 1964.

VICTORIAN PERIOD - New Market Location 1869

The need to relocate the Cattle Market from the Town

Along with the regular Tuesday Market the Horse and Cattle Fairs were particularly popular with farmers and dealers who came to buy and sell from a wide area but were regarded with great displeasure by the majority of the inhabitants. And not without reason. During the Fairs all the centre of the town was congested with horses and cattle and complaints were numerous. In 1860 the *Leicester Journal* published this letter. "Why is Melton so dirty? Main streets crowded with cattle, anything more dirty and discreditable than the streets of Melton, I ever saw." So bad did the congestion become that normal shop business was impossible. The same paper reports in 1861, "Melton New Fair" (Cattle Fair started in 1859), "Another Closed Day, shops closed and barricaded, business suspended, streets filled with cattle, an amount of beastly filth brought into the town and deposited at our doors and under our windows of our houses. The Local Government Board are blind to this barbarous custom which they have grown up with, quick in their perception of malaria arising from the poor mans pigsty but callous to the sickening stench that fills the streets after a market and a fair day."

There were also the health issues relating to the open ditches that ran from the Beast Market to Thorpe End discharging into Scalford Brook. Open ditches that ran down Burton Street discharging into the Canal Basin. There were open slaughter pits which were emptied twice a year.

There was a severe outbreak of Typhus Fever and Small Pox, attributed to the poor sanitary conditions in the Town. The death rate was high .

By the late 1860's it had become evident that with the continually growing market something had to be done. In 1867 a crowded meeting requested the Town Wardens to find a site for a Cattle Market.

In 1869 the Town Meeting agreed: "That such portions of the Town Estate land called Spittal Leys as may deemed requisite and necessary be appropriated for a Cattle, Sheep and Pig Market and Fairs to be made and established by and under the direction of the Local Government Board, the Feoffees and Town Wardens are empowered to take such steps to lease the property."

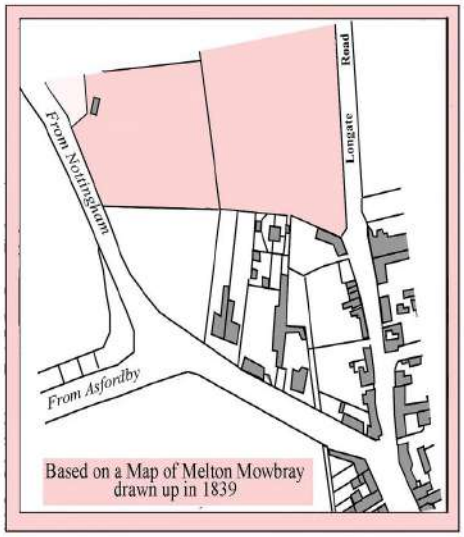
Source: Queen of the Shires. Jack Brownlow

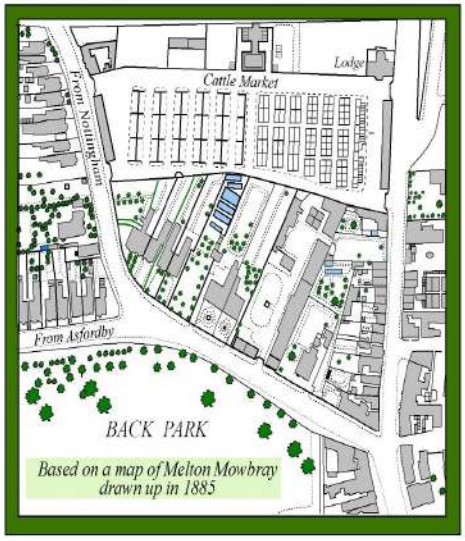
The Local Government Act of 1847 &1858, which empowered Local Boards to take land to construct Markets.

THE NEW CATTLE MARKET LOCATION IN 1869

Hand over Duties to the Local Government Board

In 1869 the land at Spittal Leys (Scalford Road) was leased to the Local Government Board for 999 years for £50.00 per annum;





The New Market Site

The Pink Area is the Town Estate land called Spittal Leys, between Nottingham Road and Longate Road – now called Scalford Road. Access is from the Nottingham Road and Scalford Road.

Work began on this site in 1869.

Formally opened in August 1870.

The Great Northern & London North West Joint Railway runs across the top of the 1885 map.

The Local Government Board was made up of a council of Aldermen - the Town "Elders" usually self-elected, new being co-opted on by existing members. A mayor was often elected by the council for a given period - forerunner to the Town Council.

QS - Leicestershire County Quarter Sessions Records

83 - Accounts of Public Undertakings – The Local Government Act of 1847 &1858, which empowered Local Boards to take land to construct Markets.

Sources - Markets And Fairs Clauses Act 1847 & 1858 -Leicestershire County Record Office - Wigston

TRANSPORT BY RAIL
Great Northern and London North West Joint Railway

Operating Model of Melton Mowbray North (Built by John Spence and Steve Weston and photographed by Steve Flint of Railway Modeller) overlooking the Cattle Market from Scalford Road in the late 1950's.

It is not by coincidence that the proposed Great Northern and London North West Joint Railway would be applying to build a railway linking the new Market with access to the North and the South.

With the opening of the new London Metropolitan Market in 1855 on the 30 acre site at Islington adjacent to the newly opened Great Northern goods yards just north of Kings Cross, livestock could be conveniently transported to London. London's Smithfield Market was itself closed at this point, to reopen in 1868 as a wholesale carcase market with its own train station joining to Kings Cross.

Melton Market had the same facilities when the railway arrived. Access to the herds of Cattle and Sheep from the North as in the Droving days and a rail access to the new London Markets.

Melton North Station also had holding pens for loading or discharging of animals that were due for the market with access straight across the road into the new Melton Mowbray Market. The line was authorized by an Act of 30 July 1874.

It opened between Saxondale Junction and Melton Mowbray on 1st September 1879, and was extended to Harby and Stathern and Newark and was extended to Welham and Drayton junctions on the 15th December 1879.

Through services were introduced between Northampton and Nottingham, Northampton and Newark and Melton and Grantham.

In 1911 it was reported, the railway caters especially for the hunting gentry who winter here for the season. In addition, special attention is devoted to the transit of prize stock to the London and Provincial shows, the daily conveyance of milk to London and also the famous Stilton Cheese.

The railway was also very important for the transport of cattle to the eastern counties for fattening, taking advantage of the cheaper feed and arable by-products there, an advantage that still exists today.

Transport of livestock by rail finally finished in 1963 with the Beeching report and the closing of the Northern Line in 1964.

MELTON MOWBRAY CATTLE MARKET IN THE 20th CENTURY

Towards the end of the 19th Century the auction method of exchange became established following the repeal of the Auction Tax in 1846. This was one of three main foundations for the development of the livestock action business during the latter part of the 19th Century. The second was the gradual expansion in and improvements to livestock production and the third, was the rapid improvement of transport facilities that was taking place at this time.

Organisation

The market site, between Scalford Road and Nottingham Road has been leased by Melton Council from Melton Town Estate since 1869. Initially, the Market was run by Council Committee, with licenses granted to individual firms of auctioneers. In 1963 the Council decided to modernise the Market with new covered pens, and the firms which had rights to sell livestock formed Melton Livestock Auctions.

In the early 1970s, Melton Farmers and Northamptonshire Farmers combined to form East Midland Farmers Ltd, but this failed and the Council put the operation of the market out to tender. After fierce competition, the licence was granted to a consortium, known as Melton Mowbray Market Partners.

In 2014 discussions began with Melton Borough Council to redevelop the Cattle building for the next 20 year lease. The Market Partners also contacted Gillstream Markets Ltd about bringing in external finance to take the business forward.

Road Transport

By the 1930's road transport was beginning to be developed, local livestock transport companies with specialist livestock lorries began to move more and more livestock to and from markets. These were supplemented by farmers gradually acquiring their own transport, which has since developed into the use of the 4x4 vehicle plus trailer that is a common method for farmers to bring livestock to market today.

Livestock movements by road transport both to and from the livestock market were increasing dramatically. The development of the motorway network in the 1970's was better suited for use by the larger articulated livestock transporters, and meant that road transport began to offer larger scale movement economies previously provided by railways.

Droving to Market continued locally up until the 1950's, distances of 5-10 miles then being common.

The market continued to develop, aside from the buying of farm animals, by the 1960s the market had an impressive number of smaller stalls selling everything from wire fencing, wellington boots, clothing, all requirements to meet the farmer's needs.

One of the first Farmers Markets in the country was also established here and was visited by HRH Prince Charles in 2000.

Horse sales were held on the first Saturday and third Thursday of the month and special sheep sales held on Fridays during September, October and November.

The annual fatstock show was held in December, organised by the Melton and Belvoir Agricultural Society. Prizes were awarded for the best examples of cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry and sausages, Stilton and pork pie classes ready for sale at Christmas, a tradition which continues today.

Brief summary of the 20th Century

The Market has had to manage many changes, events and threats including two World Wars, Foot and Mouth, BSE diseases. The many changes brought about by EU Legislation, Animal Welfare Regulations. etc. along with the changes in the market place brought about by the rise of the Supermarkets are just to name a few.

The 20th Century cannot close without mentioning the Market Tavern.
"The heart of the Market"

THE MARKET TAVERN

On market days The Market Tavern is where the cafe is a hive of activity, with farmers catching up on the day's trading,

The Market Tavern Team

The Market Tavern is where farmers and other customers go to have a hearty meal, made with quality local ingredients and to catch up on the market prices and all the news from fellow farmers in what can be an isolated business for the rest of the week The Tavern is run by Di Booth and her team, who have been finalists in The "Mart's the Heart" Awards for the best market café for three years running , winning it once. It is often a place to hear stories such as these:

These are some words from the users of the market

"The live market is much more vibrant than selling animals deadweight. Besides being a buying and selling place, it also serves as a communication centre. A place for socialising, catching up on the latest gossip and providing a good excuse for a day out. Farming can be a lonely occupation and a weekly visit to the market can be an antidote to this. Beside the social side of things, contact with characters of the farming community involved in day to day farming can be highly informative and beneficial and what an array of characters they are. The mystique in seeing an auctioneer at work, either in the ring, taking bids, seen or unseen to the unknowing, or moving almost without stopping along the boards above the pens selling lambs at breath taking speed, followed by an assistant recording all the deals."

One of the many characters

One of the characters who was a regular v*i*sitor to the market who farmed the Rotherby Field, Brooksby and, rumour had it, most of the land between there and

Melton! He always had some wonderful beef cattle. He also had a sense of humour, occasionally verging on the wicked.

On one occasion, on the day of a governor's meeting, he questioned a student re his farming pedigree and then the state of his hair, before advising him strongly to go and get it cut! (He was not a Governor but the student wasn't to know that..)

Stories abound about his tricks at the market, such as the day he put a For Sale notice on the unlocked Rover car of one of the auctioneers and farmers were climbing in and out to give it the once over! Also, if on leaving the Tea room you had been unfortunate enough to stand near him, you might find your pockets stuffed with canteen cutlery from the Market Tavern.

"Bull in a car shop"

"I was driving into Melton Market with some calves to be sold by auction when the traffic came to a halt outside Egerton Lodge. Down the road came a large bullock that had clearly escaped from the Market. When he got to the car in front of me he put his head down and began to charge at the car door. The driver accelerated forwards as fast as he could and I expected the animal would start on me instead, but no, he turned away ran across the road towards Sharman & Ladbury, the Ford dealers, which is where Iceland and Boyes are located now.

There were two large plate glass windows at the front of their showroom, the bullock saw his reflection in the glass and charged, the whole of the first window crashed to the floor; the receptionist sitting at the desk made a hasty retreat, the bullock then began to knock hell out of the new car in the showroom, it then spotted its reflection in the second showroom window, charging it causing another almighty crash. It was last seen crossing the Wilton Road Bridge heading towards Leicester being followed by numerous drovers from the Cattle Market."

Thankfully there is now a better layout, gates and cattle grids throughout the market designed to prevent a recurrence of such an escape.

Cattle and sheep droving until the 1970s

Sheep were driven by foot into the Market until the 1970s. Sheep traders would gather their sheep in fields in the four corners by the edge of town. These were by the old Greyhound track on Saxby Road (now the site of Asfordby Storage and Haulage), at the top of Sandy Lane, on the Leicester Road where the B&Q now sits and on the Nottingham Road before the Fairmead Estate was built.

Older members of the Market remember having great fun droving the animals, but commuters were less pleased about the disruption to their journeys and residents complained about the sheep trampling (and eating) their gardens. The process subsequently gave way to all animals coming in by road, with cattle grids now in place to stop any getting out on their own.

South Witham

Melton Mowbray Market held an annual market at South Witham by the A1. These offsite markets were always great occasions and this time it was a lovely sunny day; the sale went well and all enjoyed a few drinks afterwards, only to find out that when they returned to Melton, they had left all the sale records (and cash!) in the market square. The office boy was despatched on his bicycle and to everyone's relief it was all still where it had been left.

Other stories involved the sheep auctioneer who was also a bookmaker and took bets from the planks, the minister who was a calf dealer and sang hymns in Market and many other colourful characters that you find at markets, which as well as being the best place to buy and sell animals, are also the social hubs of the farming community.

To the present day and beyond

One of the key events of the 21st Century was the foot and mouth outbreak of 2001, which saw the closure of all livestock markets in the country and the slaughter of over six million animals to contain the disease. During this period, Melton was like a ghost town without the weekly influx of market participants – approximately 70p in the £ spent in the town centre on a Tuesday comes from visitors to the market and Tuesdays are much bigger trading days than Saturdays. The Market ran on a skeleton staff arranging direct sales for uninfected farms to abattoirs and survived on this and its ancillary businesses. Other markets in the region were not so lucky and whether directly down to foot and mouth or not being able to recover volumes in the aftermath, many of them shut in the region including Stamford, Uttoxeter, Grantham and Northampton.

Melton Mowbray Market survived these and when it was suggested that it might move out of town as many other large livestock markets had done, there was a resounding vote to keep in in the town centre, where the memory of what had happened to other market towns which had lost their livestock market was still fresh.

This led to plans to redevelop the old cattle facilities and bring them up to 21st century standards along with an upgrade of the Market's corporate structure from an old fashioned unlimited liability partnership to an independently financed limited company, Gillstream Markets Limited.

The £5.5m redevelopment was officially opened by HRH Princess Anne on 7 March 2018.

This is only the first phase of the regeneration of the Market and the second phase is designed to build a food and drink hub in the heart of the 'Rural Capital of Food', which is currently being planned with architects, developers, Melton Borough Council and Gillstream. The first stage of this is the new brewery, Round Corner Brewing, which has just arrived and will be the anchor for further food and drink businesses to come to the Market.

Compiled by Derek Simmonds
Melton Belvoir Rotary Club
Design & artwork by John Milner

On behalf of Gillstream Markets Ltd,
operators of Melton Mowbray Market

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Key Sources used:
Queen of the Shires : Jack Brownlow
The Story of Melton Mowbray: Philip E. Hunt
Turnpike Roads of Leicestershire & Rutland: Arthur Cossons

Additional sources are identified in the booklet

Melton Mowbray Market is operated by Gillstream Markets Ltd., and has a diverse business, running many other markets and events throughout the week including the region's largest Fur & Feather market, a farmers, antiques and general market as well as a thriving Weekend / Bank Holiday Monday Market & Car Boot and regular Saturday horse sales.

The award winning Market Tavern and Banqueting Suite holds weddings, conferences and other events.

The livestock market alone serves over 2,500 farming customers, with 350,000 visitors coming through the site annually.

All customers can expect Melton Mowbray Market to deliver them a fair, transparent and quality service.

Melton Mowbray Market is a trading name of Gillstream Markets Ltd, Registered in England & Wales number 09431176, VAT registration number 228 4256 0