



W F K M

WIGSTON HERITAGE

GREATER WIGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

And The

WIGSTON FRAMEWORK KNITTERS MUSEUM

42/44 Bushloe End, Wigston Magna



Wigston Magna Station, Evacuee Rehearsal 1939, see page 9

BULLETIN 126

1st July 2023

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

If you attended the 2023 AGM you will be aware that Mike Forryan stood down as Chairman after 14 years in the post, and his wife Linda also stood down from the Committee. At the AGM I was elected Chairman, and Mike has now become our President. Both Colin Towell, Treasurer and Ann Cousins, Secretary, intend to stand down in February 2024, after several years of service in their respective roles.

We are therefore in need of two very important replacements on our Committee:

Firstly, a Treasurer to take over from Colin Towell from February 2024.
Secondly, a Secretary to take over from Ann Cousins, again from February 2024, to deal with any correspondence, take minutes at meetings, and arrange speakers for the 8 monthly meetings. This position could be split into 2, i.e. Secretary and Speaker Arranger.

As well as the above we do need some new extra people to join the Committee. I would like to have a Publicity Officer, to take care of postings about our various activities on several Facebook pages, as well as general Committee Members to have valuable input, and help at meetings and events.

Being a Committee Member is not an onerous task, we only meet normally 4 times a year, usually in the afternoons at the Heritage Centre.

Why not come and join us and continue the successful running and expansion of the Society?

You can also attend a committee meeting as a guest, if you would prefer, to gain some insight into how the committee responsibilities are shared.

If you would like a chat about Committee duties, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Peter Cousins, Chairman. Email: chairman@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk
Phone: 0116 2884638 or 07702 127313

Society's website: www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk
All enquiries to: secretary@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk
The Bulletin is published three times a year on 1st March, July and November.
Articles etc., (which are always welcome) should be submitted to the Editor.
email: bulletineditor@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk
four clear weeks before publication date.

RECENT MEETINGS

February – AGM



Long Street in 1911

Peter took us on a walk along Long Street as it was in 1911 and showing some of the main buildings and mentioning a few of the key characters. Including the then impressive Co-operative Hall built in 1910. Many of the buildings have, of course, been replaced.

The Minutes for the AGM, on Tuesday 21 February, are available on the website.

March



Found As A Missing Person

Lynette Watson told a poignant story of her father, who she had been informed had died when she was a baby, but was, in fact, very much alive. Her father had been trying to trace her for 30 years and eventually did so with the help of the Salvation Army.

April



100 years of 'Auntie'

Dave Andrews (retired Radio Leicester journalist) reviewed the key developments of the BBC, both TV and radio, as well as remembering some of the most popular TV and radio programmes.

The original talk was to have been on 'Witchcraft in Leicestershire' but unfortunately the speaker, Len Holden, was taken ill. Dave Andrews kindly stepped in.

May



Flu Pandemic of 1918-19

Cynthia Brown gave a very interesting and informative talk on the Flu Pandemic as WW1 ended, killing over 200,000 people in the UK and perhaps as many as 50 million worldwide.

A very well received talk and enthusiastic response from the audience.

FUTURE MONTHLY MEETINGS

THE MENPHYS HUB, BASSETT STREET, SOUTH WIGSTON,

Parking is available on site via Timber Street or in the Countesthorpe Road car park. Doors will open from 6.45pm and the meeting starts at 7.15pm. Please remember that our meetings are on a **TUESDAY** evening.

We look forward to seeing you at our meetings.

TUESDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2023
William Brown – “Peppermint Billy”
Speaker: Jo Mungovin

TUESDAY 17 OCTOBER 2023
The Musical Venues of Leicester
Speaker: Neil Crutchley

TUESDAY 21 NOVEMBER 2023
Christmas Customs
Speaker: Virginia Wright

TUESDAY 12 DECEMBER 2023
Christmas Party Plus
“Pantomime at The Theatre”
Speaker: Mike Bull

*Our Christmas Party will be £3.00 per person for members and £4 per person for visitors on the night towards the refreshments.

OBITUARY

It is with sadness that we announce the passing away of Martin Webster in February 2023. Martin was a long standing member of the Society who attended most of our meetings, and spent a lot of his time at the Heritage Centre.

We send our condolences to his family and friends.



HERITAGE CENTRE NEWS

This is a new section which will provide members with recent news and happenings at the Centre, plus details of future events.

From the new Heritage Centre Librarian

My name is Elaine French and I am the librarian at the Heritage Centre, I have been asked to write a small article for the Bulletin, so each bulletin I will tell you a little about the Centre and any new items donated to us.

In March, Peter and I ran our second family history workshop, this was enjoyed by the 10 people who attended. Over the 4 weeks we showed them how to research their family using what is available to them at the Centre and elsewhere.

I am starting a new project at the Centre called RAILWAY CORNER. The railway was an important part of the growth of Wigston and still is very much part of Wigston, so I am putting together a collection of maps, books pictures and anything to do with the railways of Wigston. If you can help with donations or information I will be grateful.

The Centre is part of your society so please call in one Friday and have a cup of tea and a look round. I think you will be very surprised with what we have achieved in such a short time.

Elaine French

RECENT THURSDAY AFTERNOON TALKS

Laying the First Trans-Atlantic Telegraph Cables



SS Great Eastern

The trans-Atlantic telegraph cables laid the foundations for global communications and proved to be the forerunner of the technology that allows us to access the internet. Following the completion of successful telegraph links between the US and Europe, information between these two continents no longer took the 2 weeks or more required for ships to carry documents across the Atlantic.

Laying the first trans-Atlantic telegraph cables in the mid-19th century was a major challenge for science, engineering, manufacturing, logistics and the commercial world. However, it was the determination and seamanship of the

crews manning the cable laying ships that made this enticing adventure possible. This was set against a background of the change from sail to steam.

The first attempt to lay a trans-Atlantic cable in 1857 failed but a subsequent voyage the following year proved successful. However, it only worked for a few months but still attracted worldwide attention. Progress was then slowed while additional funds were raised, much essential research was undertaken to establish the conditions needed to pay out the cable and reduce the frequency of breakages. In 1865 the SS Great Eastern set sail with 2600 miles of cable on board. The cable laying voyage eventually came to a halt approximately 600 miles from its planned destination of Newfoundland. 1866 saw the ship and crew complete the laying of a new cable and also the recovery of the 1865 cable thus providing two working cables by September of that year.

There is a campaign to get the cable stations in Heart's Content (Newfoundland) and Valentia Island (Ireland) recognised as UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

For more on the trans-Atlantic cables: <https://atlantic-cable.com/>

Stuart Mucklejohn, 16 Feb 2023

Transit of Goods and Thing's That Go Wrong

The first half of the talk provided a PowerPoint presentation outlining how a supply chain works and what can and does go wrong. Examples of historic supply chains were covered, and we followed a shipment of apples from New Zealand to the supermarket shelves via multiple points where delays and processes take place.

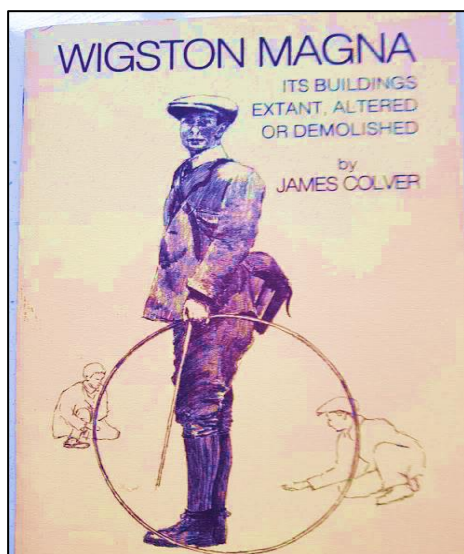


The second part was personal experiences that showed multiple examples of problems including the sinking of a vessel in Larnaca Bay Cyprus with a shipment of ice cream on board, the creation of a one-ton sugar lump, missing containers in Lagos, Nigeria, missing gold bullion at Heathrow Airport, cartons 'Tinkling' in Dublin, Cream Eggs to Africa, hazardous goods on

the London North Circular Road, blocking of the Suez Canal and cement shipments to Lagos Nigeria.

Mike Forryan, 16 March 2023

"A Wander About Wigston Magna"



Much of our heritage has been either destroyed, altered or demolished, so it makes it more important to record what has gone before.

Based on just some of the drawings from this 1994 book by James Colver, Judith took us on a round walk starting at All Saints Church; to Newgate End; Moat Street and then Bull Head Street.

Next to Spa Lane then Frederick Street; down Bell Street to Leicester Road and Long Street. Finally, to Bushloe End to arrive back at the start – and all from the comfort of the Heritage Centre!

Although some of these buildings still exist, many have been demolished (most notably on Bull Head Street) but Judith included both “before and after” drawings and photographs from the GWHS archive.

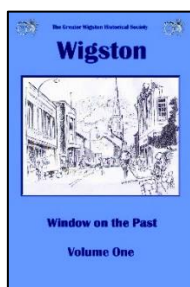
Judith Proctor, Thursday 13 April 2023.

Future Thursday Afternoon Talks at the Heritage Centre, starting at 2pm

Thursday 6 July	The Curse of The Elephant Man	Peter Cousins
Thursday 10 August	Mavericks Of the Great War	David Humberston Chairman Western Front Association.
Thursday 7 September	Elmdon Airport Development & Personal Experiences	Mike Forryan
Thursday 12 October	The Doctor, A Monk & 3 Widows	Sue Lobb
Thursday 9 November	The Wigston Witches	Steve Marquis

To book a place/s email: bookings@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk

Or phone: 0116 2884638



G.W.H.S. Books: *Wigston – Window on the Past*
5 Volumes all £5.00 per copy – All 5 for £20.00
Available at the Heritage Centre

HISTORY WALKS 2023

As part of the July Archaeological Festival 2023, the GWHS will take part again with walks of Wigston Magna, South Wigston and the Wigston Cemetery on the dates listed below. The walks, guided by Peter Cousins, will start at 7.00pm, and will cost £5 per person, split between the GWHS and the Leicester Fieldworkers.

11 July Wigston Cemetery Walk
13 July Wigston Magna History Walk
18 July Orson Wright Walk South Wigston
20 July Wigston Cemetery Walk
25 July Wigston Magna History Walk
27 July Orson Wright Walk South Wigston

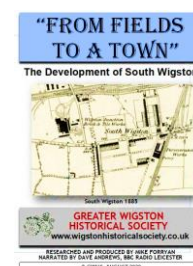
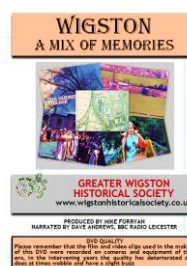
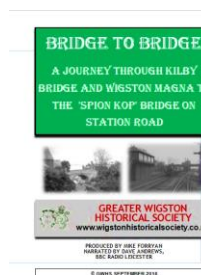
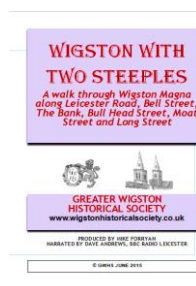
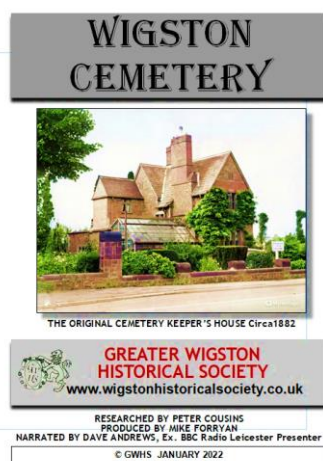
To book places email: bookings@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk
or call 07702 127313/0116 2884638.

GUIDED WALKING TOUR OF OAKHAM TUESDAY 15 AUGUST 2023

Starts At 1.30pm. Meet Outside the County Museum, Catmose Street
Oakham LE15 6HW. FINISHES APPROX. 3.00PM. £9.00 Per Person

TO BOOK YOUR PLACES E:mail:
bookings@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk
Or Tel: 0116 2884638

HISTORICAL DVD's AVAILABLE



ALL £10 per copy

Details at:

www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk/GWHS-ONLINE-STORE.html

Also available from The Heritage Centre

The Wartime Evacuation Scheme and How Wigston Prepared

The wartime evacuation scheme was originally drawn up by the Government in 1937 and was designed to safeguard London and other city children in the event of war. Areas of the country were designated as rural reception areas where large numbers of children could be quickly transported and distributed amongst the local population. Wigston was one such reception point being on the railway network and in those days regarded as a rural location.

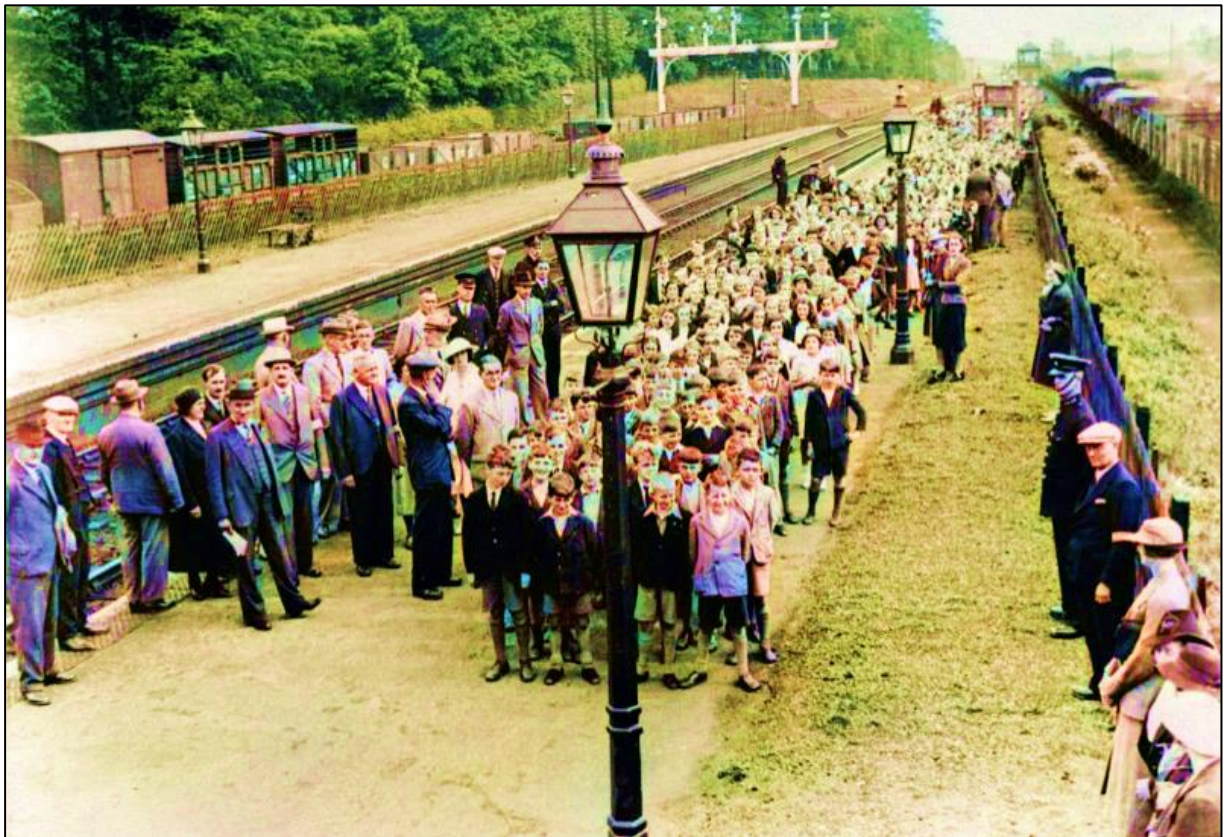
The scheme was described by the then Minister of Health, Mr Walter Elliott: -

“Potentially an exodus bigger than the time of Moses”

The voluntary evacuation from the cities and town of one and a half million women and children was first discussed by the Committee of Imperial Defence in 1937. It had been assumed that an air attack on London would be a continuous affair from the onset of war and that more than half a million people would be killed with double that number injured in the first two months.

Instructions were sent out to the reception points to make preparations and practice for implementation. In order to prepare the people of Wigston for this exodus a practice was held on the first of August 1939.

At the start of this rehearsal 800 children from five local schools assembled on the platform at Wigston Magna Station at 3.20pm.



Wigston Magna Station Evacuee Rehearsal in 1939

At the station the Chief Reception Officer and his two assistants were distinguishable by white armlets containing the words 'Reception Officer'. Their first job was to either telephone or send messengers to the reception depots at Long Street School in Wigston Magna and South Wigston Modern School, five minutes after the train carrying the children had arrived. Also present at the station were three or four uniformed police constables and a qualified nurse with an assistant ready to attend to any medical emergencies. Buses belonging to the Midland Red Bus Company would be waiting at the reception depots to ferry children to their final destinations. The children themselves would be accompanied by their own teachers, who would help to maintain order throughout the transfer.

When all the children were assembled on the platform and ready to move off, the Chief Reception Officer gave a blast on a whistle, which was the signal for them to leave the station and head off in procession to the reception depots. The first 150 children marched in an orderly fashion to Long Street School. These represented children who would be billeted in the area of Wigston Magna Urbane District Council and were met by the Chief Billeting Officer attached to them. The remainder proceeded to South Wigston Modern School, where there were Billeting Officers representing the areas to which they would be divided.

At the reception depots, three-quarters of an hour was allowed for the serving and consumption of a light meal and for the children to undergo a brief medical inspection. After that buses would ferry the children to their respective destinations, although it is not quite clear how they were allocated accommodation.



Stock Photos of children departing London in 1939

Following the benefits of such rehearsals, the arrival of real evacuees was dealt with smoothly and efficiently. At Wigston the first batch of genuine evacuees had left London on 1st September 1939, and an entry made by the Clerk to the Council on that day notes that, 'One train arrived. Approx 700 school children. None retained in Wigston, except one boy ill.' An entry on 2nd September reads, 'One train arrived. Approx 650 mothers and children. About 100 retained at Wigston.' On the 3rd of September itself, a further entry notes, 'One train arrived,

Approximately 650 mothers and children. 4 cases ill. All retained at Wigston.’ So presumably there were no major hick-ups or dramas, or these would surely have been duly recorded.



Evacuated school children arrive at Wigston Station

There is no doubt that many rural areas were ill equipped to deal with the influx of people. In fact, a shortage of suitable housing, schools and medical facilities were advanced but fell on the deaf ears of a government who had no alternative but to put their plan into operation. It was left to the regions to resolve any issues. Officially there were four groups of people evacuated – school children, accompanied only by their teachers; mothers with young children; expectant mothers and others with medical problems; and the blind, crippled and mentally ill. As with all things there were problems. Some people looked on evacuation as a chance for a free holiday, whilst others who had originally declined to take part, clambered aboard buses that contained their friends and neighbours because they suddenly felt they were missing out on an opportunity.

On arrival at the reception depots there could still be some issues. Potential foster parents called at the reception centres to take possession of those children with the most appeal, not unnaturally the cleanest, best dressed and best spoken, leaving the billeting officers with a problem with the unwanted, not easily dealt with individuals.

There were billeting allowances per child of eight shillings and sixpence a week, ten shillings and sixpence for those over sixteen years. For a mother and child, a lodging allowance of eight shillings was the modest compensation. Later parents were made to pay six shillings towards the upkeep of each child.

References:-

- J R Colver memories
- Material from the GWHS Archive Authors Unknown

Mike Forryan

THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME 'WIGSTON'

The place names of England are varied and problematical because of the overlay of different cultures and languages that from time to time have dominated the landscape.

Generally, there are five sub-sets of languages that determine the names of all things, whether geographical features, place names, animals and, of course, humans. These related sub-sets are pre-Roman British (including Scottish and Irish), Roman, Anglian/Germanic, Scandinavian and French. Equally the names of places, usually fall into one of the following groups: -

- Places named after topographical features i.e., Redhill, Blackwater.
- Places named after specific people, often the original settler or tribe i.e., Skeffington, Danbury.
- Places with a name identifying what that place was for i.e., ford, market, castle, town, village.

Of course, place names may often mix up these features or group them together i.e., Hengistbury Head, Stamford, Peterborough.

The name of Wigston, or to be more precise the name of a group of settlements in a small area bearing the name Wigston appears to be in its simplest form the 'settlement of Wig', whoever Wig was? The postfix is relatively obvious 'ton' was an Anglian word for settlement or village and this suggests that the totality of the name is also Anglian.

'Wig' is a Low Germanic word meaning battle, war or fight and it usually forms part of a two-part name (dithematic), the type that was popular in the early medieval Germany and Scandinavia i.e., Bedwig (War Leader), Hedwig (Battle Duel), Wigstan (Battle Stone), Wiglek (Battle Play); and later in Scandinavia e.g., Halfdan, Sigurd (Guardian of Victory), Thorstein (Thor's Stone) demonstrate similar pairings. It is therefore most likely that the eponymous 'Wig' was a nickname, a shortened form of a more formal name such as Wiglek or Wigstan. It was also quite common in early Germanic society for the names in royal families to alliterate; this naming system was adopted to assist in the folk memory of the tribe and enabled bards to construct poems with a built-in rhyming couplet. In the case of the 'Wigings' the 'Wig' element would run as a theme through most of the family.

In the Domesday Book Wigston Magna and Wigston Parva are referred to as *Wichingstone*, a term that suggests the settlement of the Vikings. This, however, should be treated with caution; disregarding the modern fascination with 'the Vikings' the appellation 'Viking' was not a noun but a verb. The Scandinavians, from earliest times, used the term to "go viking" or raiding and it may surprise modern readers of historical novels that the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle does not mention "Vikings". The inference from this is that *Wichingstone* was a misspelling by a chronicler of Wigingstone and that the current Wigston area has always been associated with the "Wigings".

The Old English and Scandinavian place names ending in “ing” and “ingas” imply the settlement of a given family whose founder was the first part of the place name e.g., Barking, family of Bjarki. Indeed, it was quite common in Germanic and Scandinavian society for eminent families to proudly declaim their illustrious forefather in this way.

Ruling family of the Ostrogoths called the Amalings.

Ruling family of the Visigoths called the Baltings.

Ruling family of the Danes called the Skioldings.

Ruling family of the Norwegians called the Ynglings.

Ruling family of the Lombards called the Scaefings.

and in Britain

Ruling family of the West Saxons called the Aescings.

Ruling family of the Bernicians called the Idaings.

Ruling family of the East Angles called the Wuffings.

Even the more modern ruling dynasties of England had their own appellations i.e., Plantagenet, Tudor.

So Wigingstone should be understood as the settlement of the family and descendants of Wig. So, we are back to the question who was Wig; the Wig from whom descended the Wigings?

Wigston and Wistow are closely associated with the legend of St Wistan, the martyred Prince of Mercia slain by a relative in 850CE. St Wistan is also referred to as Wigstan, which is his more formal name. It was quite common in the Anglo-Saxon period for formal names to be hypocoristic. e.g., King Edwig of the West Saxons was also called Edwy. I do not intend to relate the story of St Wistan’s life and death only to record that Wistan’s father was Wigmund, and his grandfather was Wiglaf and it is clear that these two forebears of the saint were also Wigings. Additionally, St. Wistan died young with no children so he could not be the name founder of the Wigings. Unfortunately, King Wiglaf of Mercia’s forebears are not known but he may have been descended from Penda, King of Mercia.

Intriguingly there is an earlier “Wig” who may be germane to the issue. The Mercian royal family has a verified genealogy way back into the 4th century CE, which is annotated in the early poem “Widsith” and Saxo Grammaticus’ “History of the Danes”. It is a bloodthirsty but quaint story, which I have simplified here:

There was once a king of Angeln named Wiglek, he was succeeded by his son Wermund whose reign was long and prosperous. He had a son late in life named Offa. When Offa was very young, he was betrothed to Thryth, the daughter of Freawine, the governor of Slesvig. The country around Slesvig was much disturbed by incursions of a warlike king of the Myrgings named Eadgils. Freawine the governor of Slesvig and Eadgils met in battle and Freawine was killed. Freawine's children, Thryth and his two sons Wig and Keto fled to Wermund's land and later with the help of their Anglian relatives fought a battle with the Myrgings and defeated them. Eadgils the king of the Myrgings escaped the battle but Wig and Keto caught him alone in a wood and killed him, two against one.



Wig and Keto kill Eadgils in the wood

This was considered a shameful act that brought dishonour to the Angles and from that time onwards the youthful Offa became dumb.

When King Wermund was in extreme old age the Saxons sent an embassy demanding the surrender of the Anglian kingdom challenging the old king to single combat. At this point Offa who had been dumb for many years spoke out and accepted the challenge and insisting he fought two of the Saxon champions in expiation of the dishonour laying on the Anglian people. Offa defeated the champions at the River Eider at Fiefeldor between Slesvig and Holstein. Offa became the greatest king of the Angeln.

Clearly this story refers to the Angles before they migrated to Britain, and it is telling that in the genealogy of the Kings of Mercia there is an Offa the son of Wermund eight generations above Penda. The Angle royal family were eventually pressurised out of their land at the base of the Jutland peninsula by the early Danish clans and migrated to Britain founding the kingdoms of East Anglia, Mid-Anglia, Mercia and the two kingdoms of Northumbria. What is more likely is that the ancestors of the brothers-in-law of the first Offa migrated to Britain also.

The spurious West-Saxon genealogy contains a Wig son of Freawine in the same generations as Wermund and Offa and this suggests a folk memory of the earlier Wig and Keto in the east of Britain.

The area around Wigston could well be the original English home of the “Wigings” descended from the brother-in-law of the early Mercian king and his brother Keto could well have established his followers in Kettering “the settlement of the descendants of Keto”?

Dennis Freeman-Wright



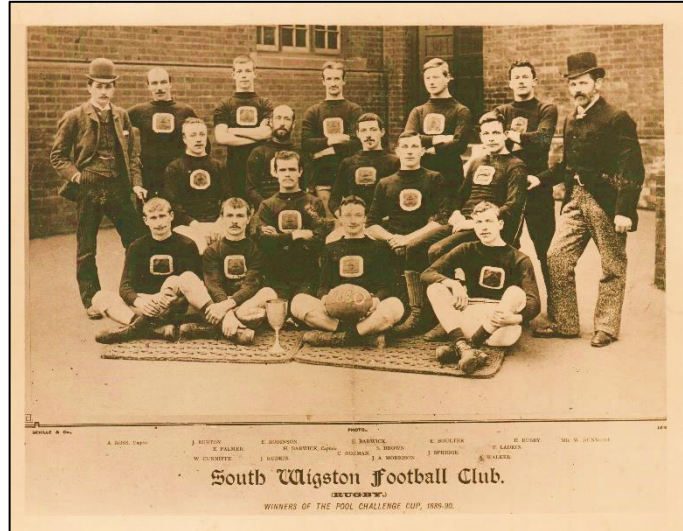
SOUTH WIGSTON R.F.C.

A Brief History

The origins of the South Wigston R.F.C. are fairly well known, but the actual date of its formation still remains a mystery.

The club was founded by Mr. Harry Barwick, who was the headmaster of the local secondary school in the 1880's. The date of formation was popularly believed to be 1888 and indeed this date appeared on the club badge during the 1960's.

However, research into local newspapers of the 1880's has shown that a game was played between South Wigston and Leicester Crusaders, which was reported on Friday 11th November 1887. The club was obviously well founded by the 1889-90 season when a photograph in the Club's possession shows them having won the Poole Challenge Cup. Harry Barwick was, at that time, the captain and some notable local businessmen are featured on the photograph including Mr. W. Dunmore of the Dunmore Biscuit Factory.

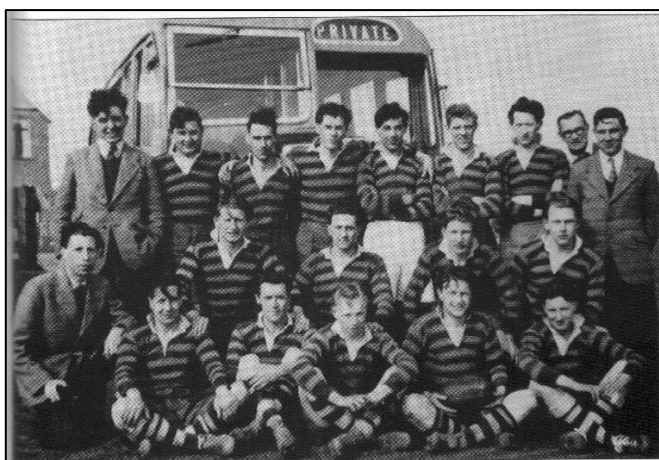


A glance at the fixture card for the 1948-49 season shows that on September 21st, 1948, the Club played a Diamond Jubilee match against Leicester Tigers. This would of course indicate that the Club was founded in 1888. However, if reference is made to the Leicestershire Rugby Union Handbook for the 1926-27 season, it will be noted that a 40th anniversary match was played against the Leicester Football Club on Wednesday 8th September. Reports of this match in the local newspaper for Thursday 9th September 1926, showed that the game was started by Mr. Harry Barwick who kicked off for South Wigston before retiring from the pitch. It would seem, therefore, that as he was the founder of the club, he really ought to know when the 40th anniversary was, and it is now believed that the Club was formed in 1886. This would tie in with the fact that South Wigston were one of the founder members of the Leicestershire Rugby Football Union and their Centenary is of course the 1986-87 season. In order to avoid clashing with this, South Wigston decided to celebrate their Centenary during the calendar year 1986.

In the early days of the Club, there were fewer teams around to play and in fact it would appear that almost every other week South Wigston played Belgrave with varying results. In those days, crowds were quite large for a local club, and

indeed some gate money was taken. The fortunes of the Club were varied, but during the first 20-30 years, South Wigston featured regularly amongst the cup winners. There were at that time of course, many various local cups, and competitions which were hotly contested. As the club carried on, it had a nomadic existence and looking at the Leicestershire Handbooks, it can be seen that changing facilities varied from the local pubs to the coffee shop nearby.

Games were played in varying locations, but one of the most popular would appear to have been next to the Spion Cop between South Wigston and Wigston Magna. Both the Grand Hotel and, what was then known as the Clarence Hotel in South Wigston, were favourite headquarters and many games were played on the local park. By 1894 the Club was fielding two teams and in 1928, three teams were put out for the first time.



South Wigston Old Boy's Rugby Football Club circa 1948

During the inter-war years, the Club's fortunes varied until the outset of the Second World War, when the Club had to be closed down temporarily.

Since the Second World War, the Club has again been nomadic and with varying fortunes until the beginning of the 1970's when a permanent home was found in Dorset Avenue. In 1966 when I first joined the Club, it was just possible to put out two teams, but by the mid 70's this had been increased to four teams, although over the last few seasons, the Club's fortunes have diminished, and it is now a struggle to put out three sides on a Saturday afternoon.

Over the years many duals have been held with Belgrave R.F.C. and at one time, the Owen Whittle Cup was hotly contested. A further cup was played on Boxing Day between South Wigston and Oadby Rugby Football Club, although upon the amalgamation of Oadby with the Old Wyggestonians Club, this annual match was dropped.

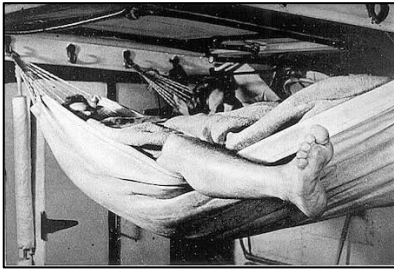
The lease on our present ground expires in 1993 and once again South Wigston will be looking for a new home. It is hoped by that time that our fortunes will be rising, and that a new 'permanent home' can be found along with the players to make the club once again great.

R. T. Green, Honorary Chairman

*Note:- This article and album of photographs were donated to the Heritage Centre.
This will be available for viewing shortly. Mike Forryan*

UNDERSTANDING WELL KNOWN SAYINGS

‘Show a leg’



Meaning: Get out of bed; get up.

Origin: “Show a leg” originated in the British Royal Navy around the turn of the 19th century.

Sailors were roused from their hammocks by the call "Show (or shew) a leg". The appearance of a leg indicated that the mariner was awake and ready to rise. The first use of it that is found in print is in Alfred Burton's poem *The Adventures of Johnny Newcome in the Navy*:

‘Hoy! shew a leg and save a clue! - ’ Rouse! rouse! - heave out!’

It is also said that just before the ships were about to leave port, sailors would try to sneak in a lady and hide them in their hammock. Before leaving, officers would ask anyone in a hammock to ‘show a leg.’ If a hairless leg appeared, the woman was asked to leave the ship quickly.

‘Put A Sock In It’



Meaning: Stop talking.

Origin: This is a colloquial British phrase that originated in the early 20th century. It is generally used when someone is being so noisy as to annoy others. The imagery behind the phrases is that putting a sock in whatever was causing the noise would quieten it down. What that thing was isn't known. There are suggestions that this may have been the horn of an early gramophone or, more straightforwardly, the raucous person's mouth.

The earliest example of it in print that I can find is a definition of the term in the weekly literary review *The Athenaeum*, 1919: "The expression ‘Put a sock in it’, meaning 'Leave off talking, singing or shouting'." The fact that an erudite publication saw fit to define the term suggests it was recently coined in 1919.

Mike Forryan

Extract # 5 from ‘The Household Guide of 1894’

How to make Children Healthy, Vigorous, and Beautiful.

1. The physical conditions and development of the child should be as carefully watched as its health, for the beauty, strength and health of a child depends largely upon the care and instruction of the parents.
2. Hereditary tendencies to disease must be carefully considered. If there is heart disease, consumption, or other constitutional diseases in the family, the children should be taught early to take regular and vigorous exercise every day, and as much of it outdoors as the weather and circumstances will permit. There is nothing that overcomes hereditary disease in children so successfully as vigorous exercise and well-ventilated sleeping rooms.
3. Give the children nourishing food, and until six years of age they should live mostly upon a milk diet.
4. From the earliest infancy, children must have an ample supply of pure air. Keep the bedroom well ventilated.
5. Children who play out-of-doors in cool and damp weather should wear good heavy shoes with thick soles.
6. Indulge children in all kinds of outdoor games, croquet, lawn tennis, etc., and your children will enjoy happiness and health.
7. Be sure and give children plenty of sleep. They should retire early and not be disturbed in the morning but be permitted to enjoy their full desire of sleep.
8. Children should never drink coffee, tea, cocoa, or chocolate, for it will make the skin thick and yellow and often produce other serious disorders. Milk and water should be the only drink of children.
9. Little girls playing out-of-doors should have their faces protected, as they are liable to become freckled, and freckles are sometimes very difficult to remove. They should wear good large sunbonnets or broad-brimmed hats.
10. Don't be afraid if your children scream and shout in their play and think them boisterous. Let them develop their lungs.

Extract by Mike Forryan



The main aim of this section is to encourage and provide the opportunity for members to directly engage with the Society's Bulletin. Letters or emails on the piece below or any other subject would be very welcome, especially personal memories on any topic regarding Wigston and District's past. General articles are also welcome.

Origins of the Name 'Wigston'

The article on page 14 on the origins of Wigston's name by Dennis Freeman-Wright raises some very interesting questions. I met Dennis at the recent Leicester Archaeological History Society Annual Fair held at Beaumanor Hall where we got into a conversation concerning the origins of the name 'Wigston Magna'. Dennis is a keen etymologist and has investigated the origin of Wigston Magna's appellation in great detail and his conclusions challenge all existing propositions. He kindly agreed to write an article for this bulletin. His findings in my view are fascinating and deserve further consideration. By way of contrast, I've added extracts from an article Duncan Lucas also wrote on this subject.

The Name of Wigston – How and Why

Often names that are identical in their spellings are totally different in origin. Wigston Magna and Wigston Parva, separated by only a few miles, are good illustrations of this. All the known early forms of both these places are given in order to show how the original difference in meaning became obscure over time.

In the Domesday Book Wigston Parva is recorded as 'Wicestan' and Wigston Magna as 'Wichingstone'. Wigston Magna is first recorded in its modern form in 1453 whilst Wigston Parva does not arrive in its modern spelling until 1610.

Wicestan	(Domesday Book)	Wichingstone
Wiggestan		Wichingstona
Wigestan		Winchingstun
Wichestain		Wikingeston
Wiggenston		Wykinggestonne
Wyggeston		Wigingeston
Wiggeston		Wykingstone
Wykeston		Wixton
Wikeston		Wigston (Magna) 1453
Wigston (Parva) 1610		

The meaning of **Wigston Parva** is not entirely straightforward. The second element is clear; it is the OE ‘stan’ which means ‘STONE’. As the settlement is only half a mile away from the Roman settlement of Venonae the ‘stone’ could be the milestone or perhaps gravestone. It is the meaning of the first element that is in some doubt’ it could be a personal name ‘Wicg’ or ‘Wicga’ giving ‘Wicga’s’stone... or it could be derived from the OE ‘wigga’ which has various subtleties or meanings, one of which is a ‘beetle’ the other being ‘something which wiggles’. If this latter is the case the ‘stone’ might have been a ‘logan stone’, that is a stone which is easily rocked or moved. Such an interpretation is fascinating; however, that the stone related to some Roman stone seems more probable. The discovery of a Roman fort at Venonae seems to add weight to this view.

The meaning of **Wigston Magna** is straightforward. It is a personal name ‘Vikingr’s-tun’ (settlement). This name is derived from the OE word Viking meaning a ‘pirate’

Duncan Lucas

Just a Thought

It seems to me that the widespread practice of applying a prefix derived from an individual Scandinavian warrior or chief, in this case ‘Wichings-tun’ (explained by Duncan as Vikingr’s-tun’) or ‘Wig’s-tun’ – both, incidentally, very close spellings to St. Wistan or Prince Wigstan – being applied to the Anglo-Saxon word ‘tun’ meaning a settlement, might just possibly be too casually applied in some cases. So, why didn’t Wigston become ‘Wigby’ like nearby Oadby and Blaby? The coincidence of a Mercian prince called St Wistan who was murdered shortly before the Danes arrived and now widely accepted to have also been referred to as Prince Wigstan (that’s how he was described in the TV series *Last Kingdom*, so it must be right) surely raises at least the possibility of Wigston being one of the few villages in the area to retain its full Anglo-Saxon name. Of course, I have no evidence for this apart from the coincidental closeness of the spellings – so I may well be talking complete tosh.

Steve Marquis

WIGSTON CIVIC SOCIETY
ANNUAL PUBLIC ILLUSTRATED LECTURE
Tuesday 26 September 2023
“Rutland Roman Villa & Trojan War Mosaic”
Speaker: John Thomas
At The Menphys Hub, Bassett Street, South Wigston, LE18 4PE
Full Details on The Website
www.wigstoncivicsociety.org.uk



FROM THE PAST

Wigston One Hundred and Two Hundred Years Ago

1923



24 May – the Irish Civil War came to an end. It began with the creation of the Irish Free State in 1922, which allowed Ulster to remain part of the UK. For many in the IRA this was a total betrayal, so they fought to prevent it – but lost. The Irish Free State was the first part of the British Empire to win its freedom.



13 July – The original Hollywood sign was erected in 1923 to advertise a new housing estate that was being built in the valley below. It, of course, went on to symbolise the area's eventually rise into becoming the centre of the world's film industry.

Wigston in 1923, From the Leicester Mercury

2 February – The Wigston Operatic Society put on a performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta *Iolanthe* at the Clarence Assembly Rooms, South Wigston. Some of the participants: Eustace Freckingham, Flossie Stevens as Iolanthe, Bert Hassell, Katherine Lucas, Elsie Brewin.

25 May – A meeting of Wigston Urban Council set the district rate at 4s 2d in the pound. A free *Guide to Wigston* to be issued every two years. Seven cases of diphtheria, 3 cases of scarlet fever and 6 cases of consumption were also reported.

2 October – Charlie Moore's Wigston Band won 2nd prize in a national band competition at the Crystal Palace. This was an improvement on the previous year when they had come 3rd.

1823



Elizabeth Fry, prison reformer, visiting Newgate Prison, to read them the Bible

Home Secretary Sir Robert Peel introduced a number of major reforms to the penal system. The **Gaols Act** meant that jailors would be paid by the state rather than the prisoners; men and women prisoners to be kept separate; prisoners to receive regular medical visits. **Judgment of Death Act** allowed judges to give lesser sentences other than hanging for 200 offences that still carried the death penalty, crimes of treason and murder exempted.



Memorial to the disaster at Chilton Moor

3 November – Major explosion at the Rainton Colliery in County Durham, 57 miners killed including 17 boys aged between 7 and 15.

The explosion was caused by the buildup of ‘foul air’ (methane gas) due to the lack of proper ventilation because of insufficient investment in order to save costs for the owners.

Wigston in 1823, From the Leicester Chronicle,

18 January – William Franklin found guilty of assaulting Constable Reynolds, sentenced to three months imprisonment.

6 July – Thieves broke into a house in Wigston and stole several loaves of bread. It was during this period that the plight of the village’s framework knitters was becoming desperate. Risking transportation for bread shows how desperate.

22 November – Mr. T. Wilson of Wigston whilst returning home from Leicester was assaulted by a man who grabbed the bridle of his horse. Mr Wilson struck him to the ground and rode off.

Steve Marquis

“Wiggy’s War” is the sequel to Wiggy’s Child”

Episode Two

MOTHER’S REMEDIES

On the adage “Prevention is better than Cure”, I had a tablespoonful of cod liver oil and malt spooned into me daily; followed by a spoonful of Parrish’s Food, and iron tonic - especially beneficial for growing girls. It was one of those vagaries in life that when I had a mouthful of gooey cod liver oil and malt that welded my teeth together, Mother thought fit to ask me a question.

I was suffering with chilblains.

“Dip your toes in the po,” said Father briskly, “That’ll cure them”

I tried Snowfire ointment instead.

Mother’s sure-fire remedy for a chesty cold was goose-grease spread thickly on a piece of flannel and pinned securely to my vest with four gold safety pins. Oh! those greasy flannels; easing them away from my skin, the grease penetrating through my vest and underskirt.

Holding my head, swathed in a towel over a basin of steaming Friars Balsam and inhaling the vapour. Coming up for air, only to be ordered sharply to “put your head down, don’t waste it!” Mother was very thorough in her battle with chests.

In the absence of goose-grease, camphorated oil was applied. That winter’s night when I was seven years old, Mother applied camphorated oil to my chest neck and back, slipped a warm vest over my head, and the vapour took my breath away. I couldn’t breathe! I turned from Mother to Father terror-stricken, unable to breathe. I was turning a nice shade of blue when Father dashed into the kitchen, came back and threw a cup of cold water in my face. I gasped with the shock and gulped great breaths of air, whilst Father blamed Mother for rubbing too much camphorated oil over me. Talk about kill or cure!



Snowfire Ointment



Camphorated Oil

Doreen C. Boulter, 1988



Brief History of Framework Knitting – Part Three

A Brief History of Framework Knitting

Chapter 3. Poverty & Degradation in Framework Knitting



Crowd of paupers trying to gain access to a workhouse

The destitution of the framework knitters and their families, and the appalling condition of their homes, was acknowledged on every hand. This was attributed by some to a variety of causes entirely beyond their control. On the other hand, there was evidence to prove that little or no attempt was made by the stockinger to improve his lot, and many had sunk into apathy.

Could a more distressful picture be painted of the conditions that were prevailing at the time than that conjured up by the evidence of Jabez Chaplain of Hinckley. He said that:-

“The general condition of the people at Hinckley was wretched in the extreme. There were hundreds of people here who had no bed to lie on and scarcely any furniture of any sort in their houses. The children were almost naked and without any shoes or stockings. There were many families who existed on 11d to 1s (5 new pence) per head per week.

The Relieving Officer also gave evidence and said that the homes of the people were in a deplorable state. There were very few of them with more than one sleeping room, where the parents and children of both sexes were all “huddled together”.

Somewhat typical of the evidence given by the masters was that of James Jarvis. His evidence showed a disposition to blame the stockinger himself for the poverty-stricken condition of his surroundings. Mr. Jarvis stated that he had made every effort to help his workmen by building a workshop and installing fifty-four improved frames there on the factory system. He then induced a number of men to leave their homes and work there, but after a short time he had to give it up as a failure. His frames were now being worked in the home.

When he employed the men in his workshop Mr. Jarvis said they made as much as 12s. to 24s. weekly, the only deduction being for winding. The average earnings included boys from ten years upwards. There was regular work at all times, the hours being from 7 o'clock in the summer and 8 o'clock in the winter to 8 o'clock at night. The sole reason of his giving up the factory, the witness stated, was on account of his not being able to keep the men to any hours at all. The habits of the stockingers were so singular that they would work all night sometimes and play all day.

They would come in and work a day, and then go away, although they could earn half as much again as in their own homes. When he remonstrated with them, they laughed and said they did not like being shut up, as they could not see what was going on. They preferred their liberty even if it meant less pay. He had then five frames in one shop in the town, some worked by youths under 14 who earned 17s to 18s a week clear, but these were steady, expert workmen who worked regularly and orderly, and strove to do their best.

In direct contrast Joshua Clarke, another hosiery manufacturer, who said he was a manufacturer in the making of wrought cotton hose only, employed 300 frames in Hinckley and four or five villages round it. He placed these out to masters of families. Some families worked between them as many as eight or ten frames. After a deduction of 1s. for frame rent, he paid on an average of 6/6p a week in wages. There were certain expenses the stockinger had to meet out of this. The frames were 21, 22, 24 and 26 gauge, but the average earnings were the same.

The witness said that he believed there were no sets of men in the country who had had to endure the privations that the stocking-workers of Hinckley and its neighbourhood were having to endure.

However, the Hinckley stockingers also received a bad mark from Nicholas Eales the pawnbroker, who stated that what he advanced on their goods frequently went in ale. They were improvident, and any little amusement would take them from their work for hours together. These charges against the moral character of the stockinger however were more than counteracted by the evidence of the Clerk to the Poor Law Union, who said that “too much credit could not be given to the men for their peaceable and orderly behaviour.”

The charge of improvidence was certainly not supported by the testimony of the Medical Officer. Whether they laid their money out to the best advantage he could not say, but their earnings were so scanty there was little scope for improvidence. Unfortunately the Medical Officer was not supported by the Vicar, who stated that there were forty public houses in Hinckley, and they were all full towards night. He therefore attributed the condition of the stockingers a good deal to their own improvident habits.

The following extract, written by Felkin in 1844, about a visit to a Leicester framework knitter highlights the intense suffering undergone by knitters at this time.

“A female was at work between nine and ten at night: her husband and two journeymen at work above her head up the step ladder over the kitchen she was occupying. Her age she stated to be fifty three: she had the appearance of being seventy: there were bones, sinews and skin, but no appearance of flesh. She had been the mother of fifteen children, ten of whom, male and female, her husband and herself had bred up to be stockingers. From sickness in the morning, she could not work before her breakfast of tea, but laboured at night till ten o’clock. She had worked the same machine for nineteen years and her earnings were 2s and 6 old pence (12 1/2 new pence).”

It was little wonder that Thomas Cooper characterised the Leicester-shire framework-knitter of the time as: “worn down, till you might have known him by his peculiar air of misery and dejection, if you had met him a hundred miles from Leicester.”

It was also common practice for families to stave off hunger by taking opium in a solid form by adults and in a mixture, called Godfrey’s Cordial, by children! It is against this background of intense privation that we have to assess the lives of our framework knitting ancestors. The suffering that some of our forebears underwent trying to scrape a living and feed their families is difficult to comprehend in our own era, cushioned as we are by the welfare state. We can only admire the courage and fortitude that they displayed, working all hours to try to keep body and soul together. It is little wonder that so many of their children died at an early age from sickness and malnutrition, testimony to the harsh times in which they lived.

Tony Danvers

THE WIGSTON FRAMEWORK KNITTERS MUSEUM

**42-44 Bushloe End, Wigston,
Leicestershire, LE18 2BA**

OPENING TIMES

Open 2pm to 5pm Every Sunday

Last Entry 4pm

Website: wigstonframeworkknitters.org.uk