

WIGSTON HERITAGE

**GREATER WIGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
AND
GREATER WIGSTON HERITAGE CENTRE**



Wigston Teachers Remembered – Mr. Goodman page 10

BULLETIN 127

1st November 2023

www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

The Society is in need of two very important replacements on our committee to take effect from the AGM in February 2024:

Firstly, a Treasurer/Bookkeeper to take over from Colin Towell from February 2024. Colin will be staying on the committee and is willing to help a new Treasurer ease into the position.

Secondly, a Secretary to take over from Ann Cousins, again from February 2024, to deal with any correspondence, arrange speakers for the 10 monthly meetings and one outing. Ann will also be staying on the committee and is willing to help a new Secretary to ease into the position.

Being a committee member is not an onerous task, we only meet 3 or 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. The next meeting is on TUESDAY 14 NOVEMBER at 2PM at the Heritage Centre.

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

Peter Cousins, Chairman

E-Mail: chairman@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk - or call 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.

OBITUARY

We sadly announce the recent passing of Janet Bryan, who was a member of the Society. We send our condolences to her family

BOOK LAUNCH

FRIDAY 17TH NOVEMBER 2023

WIGSTON LIBERAL CLUB, BULL HEAD STREET, WIGSTON. LE18 1PA

A unique and fascinating insight into a part of Wigston history revealing the lives of people between 1861 and 1939. Researched and written by Mark Startin.

Exhibitors Booked So Far

GWHS

Wigston Civic Society

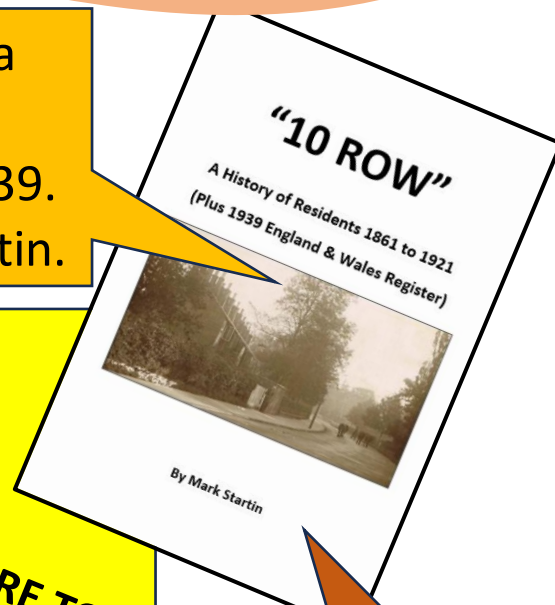
Aylestone Journeys Into The Past

Genealogy Research

Belgrave Heritage Trust

South Wigston Model Railway Club

**MORE TO
COME.....**



**£10 per
copy**

Timetable

6.45 pm General Admission

7.30 pm Presentation & Launch

8.15 pm Sales & Book signing

Time To Browse Exhibitors

9.15 pm CLOSE



**BAR - DRINKS
AVAILABLE
Free Admission
Donations**

Recent Greater Wigston History Society Meetings

September

WILLIAM BROWN – PEPPERMINT BILLY by JOANNE MUNGOVIN



For our first meeting after the summer trips, we welcomed Jo Vigor-Mungovin to talk about her research on a real, local and gruesome murder in 1856.

Firstly, Jo got our attention by describing the injuries received by the murdered people; the tollkeeper, Edward James Woodcock and his nine-year-old grandson, these included both gunshot and knife wounds (too gruesome to repeat here).

The murders took place in the toll gatehouse on the Melton Mowbray to Grantham Road not far from the birthplace of William Brown (Peppermint Billy) in Scalford, Melton in 1819.

He was known as a criminal locally having been previously found guilty and transported to Van Diemens Land (Tasmania).

There he made bricks (a similar one of which the speaker now has in her possession) but later developed mental illness and was sent to New Norfolk Lunatic Asylum for treatment for seven years, and was later discharged and returned to England, initially to Bedford Street in Belgrave.

He was working in the Melton area on the day of the murders. He was arrested and charged with the murders and the case came to court at Leicester Castle in the summer of 1856 with The Lord Chief Justice being the presiding judge.

The jury found him guilty and he was sentenced to death by hanging (he said he preferred this to deportation). The executioner was William Hopper, the country's most experienced hangman and the event was watched by 30,000 people outside Welford Road goal, he was buried inside the prison. This was the last public hanging in the county. A hanging drop like the one used on this occasion still exists at Oakham Museum.

Jo recently organised a retrial of the case where descendants of Peppermint Billy and the victims were present. On this occasion he was found not guilty, probably because much of the original evidence was circumstantial.

This was a fascinating talk given enthusiastically and showed that there had been considerable research by the speaker.

Colin Towell

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.

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

**TUESDAY 21 NOVEMBER
CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS by VIRGINIA WRIGHT**

**TUESDAY 12 DECEMBER
CHRISTMAS PARTY PLUS
“PANTOMINE AT THE THEATRE”
by MIKE BULL**

**Our Christmas Party will be £3.00 per person for members
and £4.00 per person for visitors on the night towards the refreshments.**

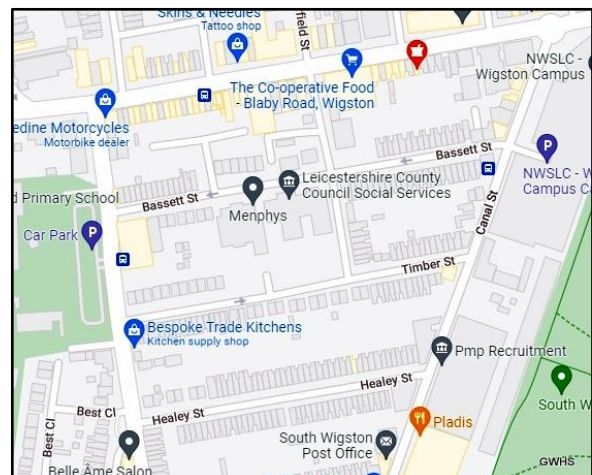
Most talks are illustrated with PowerPoint and pictures.

**PLEASE NOTE TIMES FOR ALL MEETINGS:
DOORS OPEN AT 6.45PM, MEETINGS START AT 7.15PM**

Admission to meetings free to members - **Non-Members £3 per person**

Any enquiries please contact
secretary@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk

**OUR MEETING VENUE IS
THE MENPHYS HUB, BASSETT STREET
SOUTH WIGSTON LE18 4PE**





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.

Heritage Centre Report

At the Centre we were pleased to receive 9 scrap books, these books are all about the Wigston Scouts in the 1960s and 1970s. As you look at them you will see how different life was then.

S. B. 039 Winter 1960 - 1972

S. B. 044 London Weekend 1972

S. B. 040 The Gang Show 1963 - 1964

S. B. 045 Easter 1972

S. B. 041 The Gangway 1966

S. B. 046 Winter Camp 1973

S. B. 042 Summer Camp 1967

S. B. 047 Summer Camp 1974

S. B. 043 Operation Dales Easter 1971

We were very proud to have been given the BOOK OF REMBRANCE. This book is all about the Lancaster bomber that crashed on 4/2/1946 in the grounds of All Saints Church of England School Wigston. All 6 of the Polish crew died in the crash and are buried in Newark Cemetery. The book is about the 6 crew, the aircraft, the houses damaged and much more. You will find this book very interesting and moving.

Book 249 Book of Remembrance.

We have 2 books full of old adverts for South Wigston, its lovely to see the old printing style and even the old phone numbers. It also shows that at one time you could get almost anything in South Wigston including false teeth, fish and millinery. Come and take a trip down memory lane.

These interesting items are only a very small part of our collection.

We are open on Fridays 10.00am – 2.00pm and the 2nd Saturday of each month.

Elaine French

Recent Heritage Centre Afternoon Talks

August – By Name and by Nature – the Life of Louis Strange



Louis Strange, 1914

Dorset-born Louis Strange first took to the air in 1911 in the early years of powered flight. A decorated pilot in both the Great War of 1914-18 and the subsequent conflict of 1939-1945, he survived a number of aerial exploits to become the only man to be awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in both Wars.

Best remembered in the annals of aviation for once regaining the seat of his biplane when hanging upside down from the upper wing whilst at a height of 8,500 feet, Strange had a belligerent attitude to aerial warfare which made him a formidable “warrior of the skies”.

His service to his country came at a heavy price. Suffering from depression and mood swings, his marriage collapsed when his wife committed him to hospital, believing him insane. Released, when examined, and classified only “decidedly odd” Strange resumed his life, offering frequent but unwelcome advice to his brother and nephews running the family farm, before his death in 1966.

Having studied the Great War for some thirty years, I have gained great pleasure in researching many personalities whose unorthodox approach to warfare allows me to safely label them “Mavericks”. Their stories are both inspiring and entertaining, providing perfect material for my series of presentations of the same title. Aviation pioneer and double War Hero, Louis Strange was the first of my subjects. If ever a man was aptly named, it surely must be him!

David Humberston
Chairman
Western Front Association
Leicestershire & Rutland

Find out more about the Western Front Association

www.westernfrontassociation.com

September – History of Elmdon Airport (now Birmingham)



The September talk was given by Mike Forryan and covered the history of Elmdon Airport (now Birmingham). The airport came into being in 1934 after a number of years planning. The first terminal building was completed and opened in 1939 shortly before WW11.

The air ministry built two concrete runways and 3 hangars. During the war period the airfield was used by The Elementary Flying School to evaluate potential pilots before sending them overseas for training. Lancaster bombers were built at Longbridge before being sent to Elmdon for assembly, testing and flights to operational squadrons.

With the growth of passengers and flights the old terminal became too small and was extended prior to a new terminal being built on the opposite side of the runway. In addition, the runway was extended to allow larger aircraft and long-haul flights. Having worked at the airport for a number of years Mike was able to relate a number of interesting personal experiences from his time there.

Mike Forryan

October - The Doctor, a Monk, and Three Widows



Sue Lobb gave a very fascinating talk on the history of champagne to a well-attended meeting. Clearly, Sue had an interesting job in the wine industry and her personal experiences added greatly to the enjoyment of the presentation.

Apparently, champagne is a protected brand within the EU and only wine produced within the champagne region of France can add 'champagne' to their bottles. Sue used the biographic details of the three figures mentioned in the title to tell the story of champagne.

Dr Christopher Merret, 1614-1695, perfected a process of making sparkling wine, he also introduced the use of stronger glass bottles and Spanish corks that could cope with the fizz. Unfortunately, he failed to patent his ideas which were essential to the eventual success of champagne as a brand.

Dom Pérignon, the monk, 1638-1715, developed the method of making white wine from red grapes (which were the dominate grape in the region originally) that was not darkened in colour by the red grapes black skins. He also devised a method that stopped the bubbles forming in red wine.

Madame Barbe – Nicole Clicquot, 1777-1866, established the concept of the ‘vintage wine’ which is the only brand of champagne to contain the year of its production on the bottle. She also introduced a way of getting dead yeast sediment out of the bottles when the fermentation had completed. Madame Clicquot introduced the first rosé wines by mixing black and white grapes from the champagne region.

Madame Louise Pommery, 1819-1890, came up with the idea of using the vast chalk caverns in the region as cellars for storing the wine. Madame Pommery is remembered as a renowned philanthropist and for the treatment of her workers. She was the first female to be granted a state funeral in France.

Madame Lily Bollinger, 1899-1972, the daughter of a Scottish father and French mother. She took over the brand in 1942 during the Nazi occupation and doubled production by the time of her death in 1972. She also started the practice of sorting and selecting only the best grapes, thus creating a prestige wine.

Steve Marquis.

Future Thursday Afternoon Talks at the Heritage Centre, starting at 3pm

Thursday 9 November The Wigston Witches by Steve Marquis

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

Or phone: 0116 2884638

TUESDAY 12 DECEMBER 2023

At The Menphys Hub, South Wigston

***CHRISTMAS PARTY PLUS**

“PANTOMINE AT THE THEATRE” by MIKE BULL

***Our Christmas Party will be £3.00 per person for members and £4.00 per person for visitors on the night towards the refreshments.**

To provide the catering and drinks we need members and guests to inform us that you will be attending.

If you wish to attend the event let us know by e-mailing secretary@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk or call 0116 2884638

Wigston Teachers Remembered

I'm hoping to start a series on Wigston Teachers Remembered. We all have teachers that either inspired us or terrified us. This first contribution by Martin Wain is definitely an example of the latter.

Members are invited to send in their own memories of any teachers who impacted their lives for better or worse.

Colin Stuart Goodman 1924-1999



Mr Goodman and Class, circa 1964

Colin Stuart Goodman was born 2 April 1924 in Wolverhampton Registration District. He was the only child of Joseph Smith Goodman 1896-1982 (born and died Walsall) and Hilda May Dudley 1898-1968, (born Cannock, died Conway, Wales).

In 1920, in Cannock Mr Goodman married Betty Patricia Childs 1929-2019 (born Wolverhampton, died Burbage). Two possible children: Lesley J Goodman born 1950, Bournemouth, Christopher D Goodman born 1952 Bournemouth. Did he initially teach in Hampshire?

For 6 years (c1960-1966) Mr Goodman taught chemistry and physics at Bushloe High School, Wigston Magna where he was very “physical” with the slipper and the cane. Around 1967 Goodman moved schools and taught Science and O-Level Astronomy at Hastings High School, Burbage. where he also became deputy head. He was for some time on the National Council for Astronomy Education. He would have retired from teaching and whacking boy’s bottoms circa 1989.

Around this time, he bought a new detached, double fronted, bungalow in the short cul-de-sac of Balliol Road in Burbage. In Burbage and especially in retirement he concentrated his interests in astronomy and gave lectures on the subject to the likes of the Women's Institute around the county. He was also the Parish Reader for the local Anglican Church. He could play the piano I recall. He drove a mid-1950's black Humber Hawk car.

Colin Stuart Goodman died 1 December 1999 at Burbage. 75 years old was not an old age to die, but then he was a smoker. From old school photos it was difficult to put an age to Mr Goodman. His shock of white hair made him look ancient, but at the same time his face and complexion seemed quite youthful for a man in his 40's. At parents events my father, who was 3 years younger, referred to Mr Goodman as "The Big White Chief".

I wrote about Mr Goodman in the article about my time at Bushloe High School for Volume Two of *Wigston – Window on the Past*: -

Mr Goodman, it seems, still possesses the almost supernatural power and ability to haunt me from his grave. I have been particularly, but I believe not unfairly, critical of Mr Goodman and his ilk, as I feel that such criticism is thoroughly and justly deserved. They, not me, were the authors of their overzealous, domineering and bullying practices and my comments are based upon my own personal experiences of them. Some people may consider Mr Goodman to have been an irreproachable pillar of the community, whereas countless former Bushloe schoolboys would testify to his unnecessarily overbearing manner, his unjustly excessive cruelty and his obvious personal pleasure in inflicting pain and misery.

Mr Goodman was actually a fine teacher of chemistry and he made chemistry even more interesting than it already was for me. I was in the Chemistry Club after school, which was the only after-school activity I ever participated in.

He was also a see-all, never miss a trick stickler for discipline. I called at Chris's house in Orson Drive on the way back to school on my bike after lunch at home. Halfway to school there was a heavy downpour and we both became soaked. It was Friday afternoon. We considered our plight and thought that the most important thing was to dry off to avoid sitting uncomfortably in wet clothes all afternoon with the possible consequence of catching a cold. The register had been taken in the morning so we thought that nobody would miss us if we didn't return to school at all that afternoon and we could remain at Chris's house to dry off, which we did. Over the weekend the terrible thought dawned on me that I had left my school satchel in my school locker, which was not allowed over the weekend. The lockers were emptied every Friday afternoon by the caretaker. On Monday I had to reclaim my satchel. Of course, Mr Goodman, as our Housemaster, became involved. "Why did you leave your satchel in the locker over the weekend?" I told him the truth as a lie would have led to certain crucifixion. So, two crimes: one, leaving a satchel in the locker over the weekend and two, evading school for an entire afternoon. A wicked smirk began to form over Mr. Goodman's fizzog, and I could imagine the thoughts circulating in his

brain: Victims! He kept us in his domain over both breaks and after school. We were allowed to go home for lunch.

My mother asked what was troubling me. I told her that there was the threat of the slipper. She said that I must have done something wrong and that I should face the music and take my medicine like a man (a man would have defended himself). I had no personal or parental defence and no sympathy from my mother, who was also fond of wielding the stick. Those were brutal unforgiving days. At the end of the day, after being kept on tenterhooks with the threat of physical assault hanging undecided over us for hours adding to our torment, Mr Goodman suddenly opened a prep room drawer full of slippers of various sizes and asked me to choose the instrument of my impending physical persecution. I then had to go through the bending over ritual and received three hefty whacks. Chris was next and received one less blow because he hadn't left his satchel in the locker over the weekend.

Martin Wain.

In my memoir, *Made in Wigston*, I also wrote of a painful encounter with Mr Goodman whilst on a school trip to Switzerland in 1964.

A school trip to Switzerland was the first time I'd been abroad. The trip leader, Mr Goodman, a religious zealot, with a penchant for attacking his students' backsides with an exceptionally large plimsole; its previous owner must have been the mythical Sasquatch (Bigfoot). He would soon be swinging it with his usual self-righteous enthusiasm in an attempt to salvage his sinning student's redemption. A strict prohibition on drinking alcohol, backed up by bloodcurdling threats, was never going to hold up and deter fifteen-year-old reprobates being presented with an easy first-time opportunity to openly buy booze. One poor lad who happened to have a Beatle style haircut (still quite rare at this stage) attracted quite a lot of attention from locals and because of this on one occasion they offered to buy him an alcoholic drink, which, of course, we all egged him on to accept. He too suffered the inevitable painful backside to take home as a holiday souvenir. Undeterred, a few of us sneaked out after lights-out, heading to the nearest bar. In a typical example of drink and young Brits abroad, and to our eternal shame, on leaving the bar after a couple of beers, we gratuitously vandalised the outside by throwing all the table and chairs into a nearby stream. We would soon be visited by Divine Retribution. The chewing gum, taken in a futile attempt to take the smell of alcohol from our breaths, failed to save us – the inevitable rendezvous with Bigfoot's footwear followed. On this occasion we probably deserved it!

NB Clearly, Mr Goodman was a dedicated teacher who made the effort to make his lessons interesting (which was not always the case at that time)), he also ran afterschool activities and organised school trips abroad (as an ex-teacher myself I'm fully aware of what this entailed). That said, like many of his generation he also used fairly brutal methods to impose an oppressive stultifying discipline. The Christian tenet "suffer the little children to come to me" comes to mind.

Whilst I'm sure Mr Goodman had good intentions, yet for many of his pupils (especially boys) he was a terrifying figure, who along with others made schooling for me at least a largely unpleasant, unrewarding experience.

Steve Marquis

Understanding Well Known Sayings

A Country Mile



I should say at the outset that no one knows the precise origin of the phrase 'a country mile'. As is usual in such circumstances many people have put forward guesses.

I won't attempt to rank these, after all, they are just guesses, but here's a, possibly incomplete, list:

- Roads are 'more windy' in the country than in the town and so a mile as the crow flies is much shorter than the actual journey by road.
- The English Statute Mile was established in 1593. Country folk took longer to adopt the new measurement than town folk and so a country mile differed from a town mile.
- A country mile refers to a mile that is arduous, not one that is long. Travel in the country is more arduous.
- Rural dwellers had no means of knowing precise distance so, if they were to say that a place was 'a mile' away, it may be much further.
- Travel in the country was normally by foot. A mile might seem a long way when having to walk it.

A Sight For Sore Eyes



Meaning

A welcome sight: someone or something you are glad to see.

Origin

Jonathan Swift, author of *Gulliver's Travels*, first used this phrase in 'A complete collection of genteel and ingenious conversation', 1738, with the line "*The Sight of you is good for sore Eyes.*"

Mike Forryan

GWHS – Guided Walk around OAKHAM

Tuesday 15th August 2023

The town of Oakham (which means “Much in Little”) is mentioned in the Domesday Book and lies in the Vale of Catmose. Our group of 21 members were met by our glamorous guide, Nicola, at Rutland County Museum, which was once the indoor riding school for Rutland Fencible Cavalry, a volunteer regiment formed in 1794. The building has spectacular roof trusses and houses many treasures relating to farming and rural life. There are still mobile long-drop gallows which can be used anywhere in the town, although Nicola didn’t say when it was last used, although she did tell us that in the 1800s the headmaster of the school took students to watch the hangings.

Opposite the Museum is Catmose, which was once the hunting lodge for the Noel family, and is now the Rutland County Council HQ, but the original icehouse can still be found in the grounds.

We crossed Catmose Street walking past Yule House where the Judge would stay when he visited Oakham for the Assizes, and down Mill Street saw the thatched cottage which was Matt Millers house, continuing past The Angler’s pub, which was a Home for unmarried women. Crossing The Malting’s yard Nicola pointed out the remaining “mud and stud” tiles at the base of the wall, and then the Crown Hotel, where Lord Byron stayed for a night – unfortunately in his coffin on the way to his burial. Another famous visitor was Titus Oates, who in the 1600s discovered the Popish Plot, although it was found he actually wrote this, and was brought to Oakham to be whipped for lying about the plot.

Walking along Market Place we found the Butter Cross, which was shown on a map of Oakham in 1611. Dairy products were once sold here, and since it was a cross, preaching would occur. Quite why there remains the Grade 1 five-hole stocks remains a mystery, although we had fun trying to decide how this might be used. The town pump, which has been restored in recent years, is opposite the Castle Gates, but we continued down Cutts Close towards the Old School which stands in All Saints Churchyard. There are inscriptions around the walls in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, and the school was founded in 1584 by Archdeacon Robert Johnson.

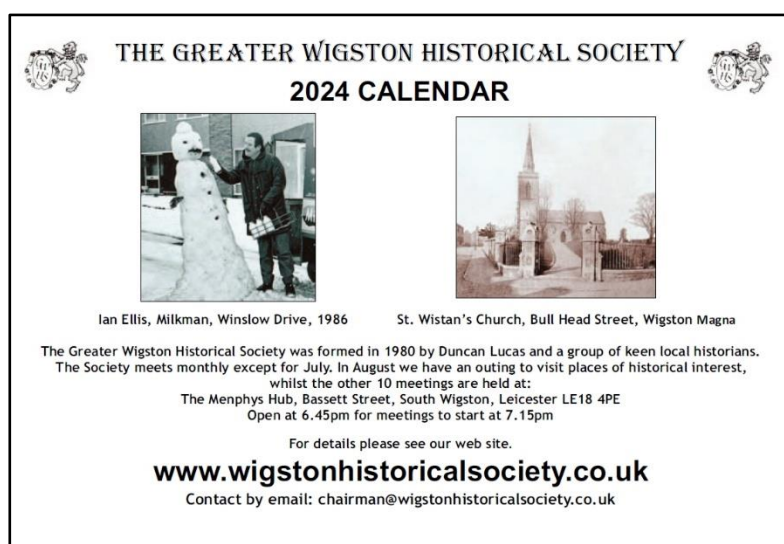
Crossing towards Church Street, we stopped at All Saint’s Church, which has a 14th Century spire crowned by Cock Peter, a local landmark. The church was also mentioned in the Domesday Book, although the south door is the oldest part of the building which was restored in 1857. One of the most valuable items in the church is a vellum bible which predates the Magna Carta. Nicola also pointed out some carved consecration crosses, which are higher in the walls to prevent people touching them. Opposite the church is the school chapel which was built in a style to match the church itself and commemorates students who died in the 1st World War.

We passed No. 5 Dean Street, which Nicola pointed out was where the baker for the town lived, and he cooked your meat for you on a Sunday whilst you were

in church, and then we continued to Oakham Castle, where the great hall of the fortified manor house was built for Wakelin de Ferrers in 1180. Originally a wooden castle, it is recognised as one the finest examples of domestic Norman architecture and is the earliest surviving example of an aisled stone hall in the county. It contains over 200 horseshoes which were given as forfeits to the Lord of the Manor by the peers of the Realm and Royalty passing through Oakham.

This is only a brief outline of a fascinating visit and walk, which was enjoyed by everyone. If you weren't able to join us but would like to visit you can obtain a copy of Oakham's Heritage Trail and Town Map which covers more interesting streets and buildings including a narrow lane, Dean's Street. Actually, named after the Dean of Westminster Abbey, originally the owner of this part of Oakham, it was once known as Dead Man's Lane because coffins were carried by this route to the church.

Judith Proctor



THE GWHS CALENDAR IS BACK FOR 2024! ***IDEAL CHRISTMAS PRESENT***

**EACH MONTH HAS HISTORICAL PICTURES WITH A THEME I.E.
CHURCHES, SPORT, AGRICULTURE, WINTER AND MORE.**

**There is also a description page detailing each photograph
The price is £6 per copy**

**Available at the Heritage Centre and at the GWHS
monthly meetings**

**Email: publications@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk or call
07702 127313 to arrange collection in Wigston Magna.**



From the Past

Wigston One Hundred and Two Hundred Years Ago

1923



16 October – Roy and Walt Disney create The Disney Company, at this time known as the Disney Brothers Studio.



8 November–The Beer Hall Putsch: Adolf Hitler leads the Nazis in an unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the Bavarian government; police and troops crush the attempt the next day. 20 people die as a result of associated violence.



15 November – Hyperinflation in the Weimar Republic: Hyperinflation in Germany reaches its height. One United States dollar is worth 4,200,000,000,000 Deutschmark.

These two events were the start of Hitler and the Nazis rise to power in Germany. The 1929 Great Depression being the final and most important factor.

Wigston in 1923

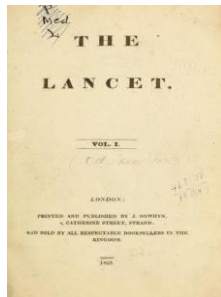
12 November — New war memorial unveiled for South Wigston and Glen Parva by Colonel E.M. Woodhouse of the Leicestershire Regiment. The procession of 6,000 was led by the Wigston Temperance Band under Mr Charlie Moore.

28 December – Raymond Burbage Hurst, labourer, of 38 Newgate End was charged with breaking and entering into the Wigston Gas Works. Police Sargeant T. Tooms had made an imprint of a boot mark left at the scene of the crime which seems to have provided the key evidence.

1823



22 September – Joseph Smith miraculously finds the golden plates near Manchester, New York, having been directed there by God through an angel (according to what he writes in 1838). Thus, founding The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints i.e., Mormons.



5 October – The medical journal *The Lancet* is founded by Thomas Wakley in London.



November – According to tradition, William Webb Ellis picks up a football and runs with it instead of kicking it and invents the sport of rugby football at Rugby School in England.

Wigston in 1823

To PUBLICANS and Others,
GREAT WIGSTON, near Leicester.

TO BE SOLD BY AUCTION,
 By DAVIS AND SON.
 On TUESDAY, WEDNESDAY, & THURSDAY next,
 Dec. 9th, 10th, and 11th instant,
ALL the very useful **HOUSEHOLD FURNITURE.** Linen, excellent Brewing Vessels, well seasoned Barrels, capital Coppers, two and a half pockets of prime Hops, of the growth of 1822, good porket Pig, and other numerous effects, on the premises of
Mr. Wm. BURBIDGE,
 Old Crown Inn, in Great Wigston aforesaid;
 Consisting of useful four-post and half-tester bedsteads, with furniture, feather and flock beds, blankets and coverlets, bed and table linen, drawers and linen chests, good oak dining, snap, dressing, and other tables, several sets of useful chairs, good 30-hour clock, capital dresser and shelves complete, pewter and other measures, cups and tankards, large quantity of jugs, mugs, and earthenware, glasses, two bench screens, corner cupboard, pots and pans, kitchen requisites, well seasoned 80, 70, 60, and 20 gallon barrels, good 15 strike mash tub, excellent working vat, brewing tubs, two good copper sieves, hop press, capital deal square cooler, valuable 80, 40, and 20 gallon coppers, with other well seasoned vessels, 12 pair of quoits, bowls and pins, farming tools, good porket pig, with a great variety of other articles.
 Also, two pockets and a half of prime hops, of the growth of 1822, in lots.
 Sale to begin each morning at Ten o'clock.
 N.B. The whole of the brewing vessels, barrels, coppers, hops, pigs, implements, &c. will be sold on Thursday, the 3d and last day's sale.

I found this very bizarre piece in the 27 December edition of the *Leicester Chronicle*.

27 December – “A certain Churchwarden of a village not one hundred miles from Great Wigston actually sent the bell-man round a few days ago, to proclaim as follows; ‘Stolen or strayed, a fat servant maid. Whoever has found her, may take her and drown her!’”

Not a very Christian attitude to say the least.

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

Episode Four ‘Hairy Goosegogs’

It was during a session of preparation when Mother was topping and tailing the red-currants ready to make more jam, and for a change I was poshing the peas. My pea-poshing days were fraught occasions. Apart from shooting anywhere but in the colander, some had little grubs inside, their minute black heads weaving about as they wriggled inside the peas. I regarded them with loathing and hastily consigned them to the pea pod pile on the newspaper. Mother’s enthusiasm knew no bounds, and she announced she was going to make pea-pod wine, nothing was going to be wasted. I stared dismally at the peapods. Why couldn’t she stick to Damson and Rhubarb?

Topping and tailing was usually allocated to me, so Mother could get on with making jam, bottling and ketchupping everything she could for the store-cupboard, and I was heartily fed up. All the soft fruits came my way; goosegogs in particular. Up the allotment, Father had gooseberry bushes galore. Apart from the green ones, we had those big yellow dessert gooseberries. These were even hairier than the others.

‘Why do goose-gogs have hairs on?’ I asked Mother.

Just you get on with your job my girl, and don’t ask silly questions, replied Mother, ‘there’s more fruit here that wants doing.’

Father said jocularly that he knew a chap who was a goosegog shaver in a fruit-pie factory. Mother told Father she had enough of my everlasting questions without him making daft remarks like that. Father grinned at me; I smiled back, hugely appreciative. Father and I often shared a joke. We understood each other, Father and I.

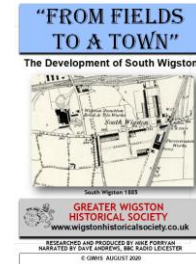
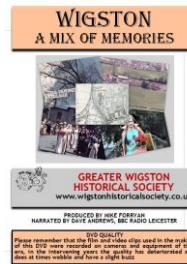
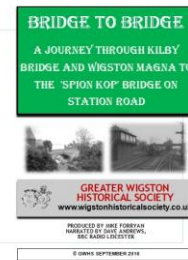
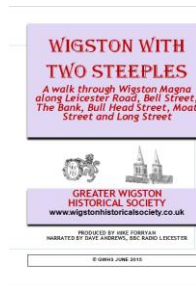
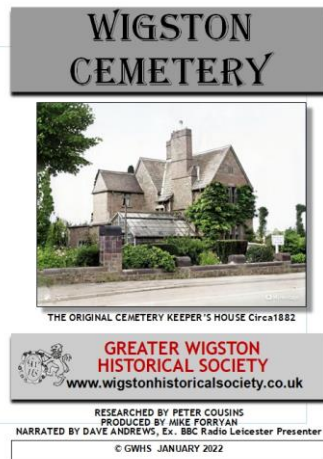
‘Don’t go mortaring all over my clean floor,’ said Mother, ‘keep on the newspaper I’ve put down and go and make some room in the pantry. When I’ve finished this lot, I want to put some more eggs down.’

We gazed at the array of bottles and jars on the pantry shelves. Father said there was hardly any room for anything else. All this hoarding. Mother exploded, metaphorically speaking. ‘Of course it wasn’t hoarding, we don’t know how long this war would last, unless, Father had specialised knowledge, which she doubted: anyone with any sense in their little finger would make preparations, she had always made wine and jam and such and while she had breath in her body she would continue to do so, war or no war.’

After this speech Mother had a restorative cup of tea which I had hastily mashed in the safety of the kitchen. From bitter experience, it didn’t do to upset Mother, especially where culinary and household matters were concerned.

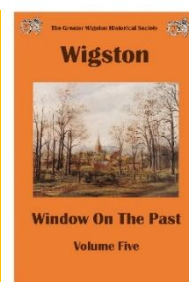
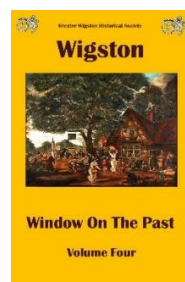
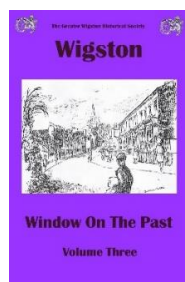
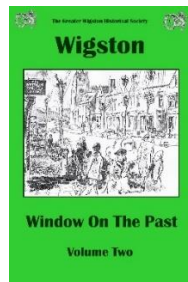
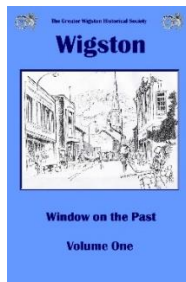
Doreen C. Boulter, 1988

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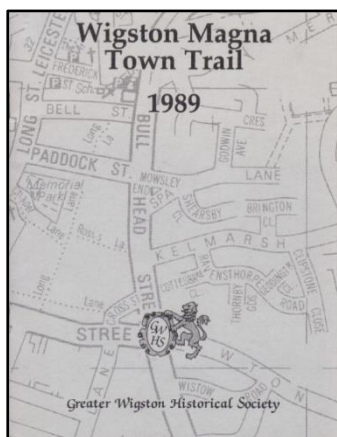


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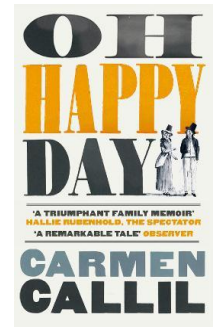
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Carmen Callil

‘Righting a Wrong’



The Story of Carmen Callil’s Great-Great-Grandmother, Sarah Allen, illegitimate framework knitter from Thurmaston

Dame Carmen Thérèse Callil was born in Melbourne, Australia, in 1938. She moved to England in 1964, along with the likes of other future famous antipodean writers and critics Germaine Greer and Clive James. Callil founded the feminist publishing house Virago Press in 1973. She is a recipient of the Benson Medal from the Royal Society of Literature in 2017, the same year she became a Dame. Carmen wrote about her English ancestors in her book ‘Oh Happy Day’, published in 2020. Callil died 18 October 2022.

In the winter of 1855 George Conquest returned to England for the first time in twenty-five years since he was transported to Australia in 1830. After being released from penal servitude seven years later, he eventually made good in the goldfields of Victoria and became a fairly wealthy man. Now with sufficient means, he was visiting his desperately poor relatives living in Leicester’s worse slum area around Wharf Street in order to ‘Moses-like’ organise their migration to better lives in the ‘Promised Land’ of Australia (he would eventually finance the move of twenty-one of his relatives). His brother Joseph and his family had already joined him in Melbourne, three years earlier.

During this visit he also reacquainted himself with Sarah (‘Sary’) Allen who he had made pregnant in 1827, and then abandoned her. Sary had coincidentally found herself living near to George’s kin after marrying stockinger William Grundy in 1843 and moving to Eaton Street (adjacent to Wharf Street). Grundy had died twelve months later leaving Sary and her son Alfred in dire poverty. After struggling for eleven years her reunion meeting with George transformed Sary’s life as she was soon sailing to Melbourne to officially become George’s housekeeper at the age of fifty. Twelve years later and fearing he might be approaching death, George married Sary in 1868. When he did eventually die in 1873, he left his entire estate to the woman he had wronged all those years before.

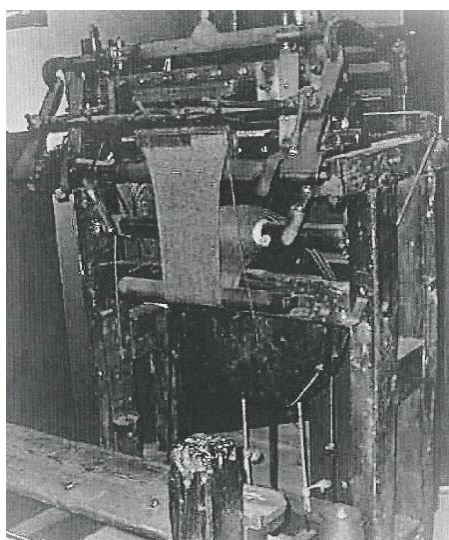
Sarah (Sary) Eaglesfield Lacey, the illegitimate daughter of Dorothy Lacey (the lack of mention in parish registers suggests Dorothy, and even her own mother, were probably also illegitimate), was born in 1808, in Rearsby, Leicestershire. A year later, Dorothy married recently widowed, Samuel Allen, a framework knitter in Thurmaston, and became stepmother to Samuel’s three young children, Ann, Thomas and Jane, aged from two to seven. Dorothy and Samuel would go onto have a further eight children, although not all survived into

adulthood. Sary would spend the next thirty-five years in Thurmaston as the village's stockingers sank further and further into abject poverty.¹

The Allens were a long-established family in Thurmaston, in fact, the local Lords of the Manor had been Allens for centuries. In 1822, Sary, then aged 14, would have witnessed perhaps Thurmaston's most scandalous event of the 19th century when Joseph Bishop Allen shot dead drummer boy William Lane. Lane was in the village recruiting for the army and the apparently deranged Allen simply shot him from his bedroom window, presumably annoyed by the noise. It was suggested that Allen was unhinged by the recent deaths of his brother, the then squire Thomas Allen, and his mother.

Samuel was clearly from a poorer branch of the Allen family. The first actual mention of framework knitting in Thurmaston dates back to 1719, when a Richard Allen, listed as a framework knitter, received the lease on a cottage, garden and outbuildings. One year later, Richard was left two frames in the will of his yeoman father, Robert.² Samuel's cottage was situated on Gardner Street behind St Michael's Church and not far from the House of Industry (workhouse). Sary, who as an adult could only ever just write her name with difficulty, would have had very little schooling (Sunday school at most), by the age of six or seven she was already working in her stepfather's workshop.

At the age of nineteen in 1827, she had that fateful meeting with George Conquest who left her with child. A baby daughter, Eliza, was born nine months later.



Narrow Style Frame used by Samuel Allen FWK's Cottage and added Workshop ³

George Conquest was born in 1806 in Market Harborough. His grandfather, John, had arrived there during the 1770s and in 1776 had married a local girl, Sarah Nichols. Originally small-time farmers or labourers they had moved into canal building in the 1790s and later became canal bargemen. George and all his brothers would also end up narrowboat navigators. What is clear from court records is that all three generations of Market Harborough 'Conquests' had a propensity for drunken brawling and petty theft; what 'polite society' would describe as members of the 'criminal classes'. Both George's father, Joseph, and

grandfather, John, served various periods of imprisonment and were lucky not to have been transported themselves. Bargemen in general had a similar reputation as drunkards and petty criminals, George and his siblings appeared in court on many occasions.

One fateful day in 1827, George and his boat docked at the Thurmaston wharf not far from where Sary lived. Sary was nineteen and George twenty-one and romance must have blossomed very quickly. When George left shortly after he is unlikely to have known that a pregnancy had resulted from their brief liaison. Sary did pursue George for maintenance towards the care of his daughter, Eliza, but the case failed in court a year later, probably because George had already been arrested for theft. Sary and her daughter were now in real danger of ending up in the nearby House of Industry, but it seems her parents were willing to support her.

George was found guilty in 1829 of stealing a quantity of hemp and sentenced to seven years transportation to Australia. He would spend the next twelve months incarcerated in a stinking disease infested drydock prison hulk before embarking on the journey south in 1830.

Their diet “consisted of wormy biscuits and bread, boiled ox cheek – often high – and salt pork once a week, peas or oatmeal cruel and a small beer.” Violence was endemic and disease rife, George did well to survive the twelve months whilst waiting to be transported.



Prison Hulk on the Thames



Below Deck

In 1831, Sary’s youngest half-brother Benjamin (born just a few months before Eliza) died of cholera and it is possible Eliza also died at this time because she disappears from the record. Sary and four others were found guilty of riotous behaviour in the village and fined (*Leicester Chronicle*, 28/6/1833). She became pregnant again in 1836 and had a son called John (Dick) Allen. Once again, her parents continued to allow her and her son to remain within the family home. Seven years later she was again with child and quickly married stockinger William Grundy, although he was not the father, and moved to Leicester. He was forty-five and she thirty-five. Alfred was born soon afterwards and for a while took ‘Grundy’ as his name. Later, when Alfred married in Melbourne in 1866, he stated on his marriage certificate that his father was, in fact, Joseph Allen, the much younger half-brother to his mother Sary. Why he chose his wedding to

highlight this long-buried family scandal of incest is unknown, although he would probably have been aware that Joseph had died back in Thurmaston in the previous year, aged forty-two.

When Samuel Allen died in 1847, his eldest son, Thomas (by his first wife), threw Dorothy and Sary's son, John, now aged eleven, out of the family home. Dorothy moved in with her sister, Ann, both of whom would remain dependent on parish relief for the rest of their lives. John (Dick) went to live in Leicester with William Allen, another of his mother's half-brothers. John now lived near to his mother and half-brother Alfred but remained behind in Leicester when Sary and Alfred moved to Australia.



Corner of Metcalf Street



Rear of houses on Eaton Street

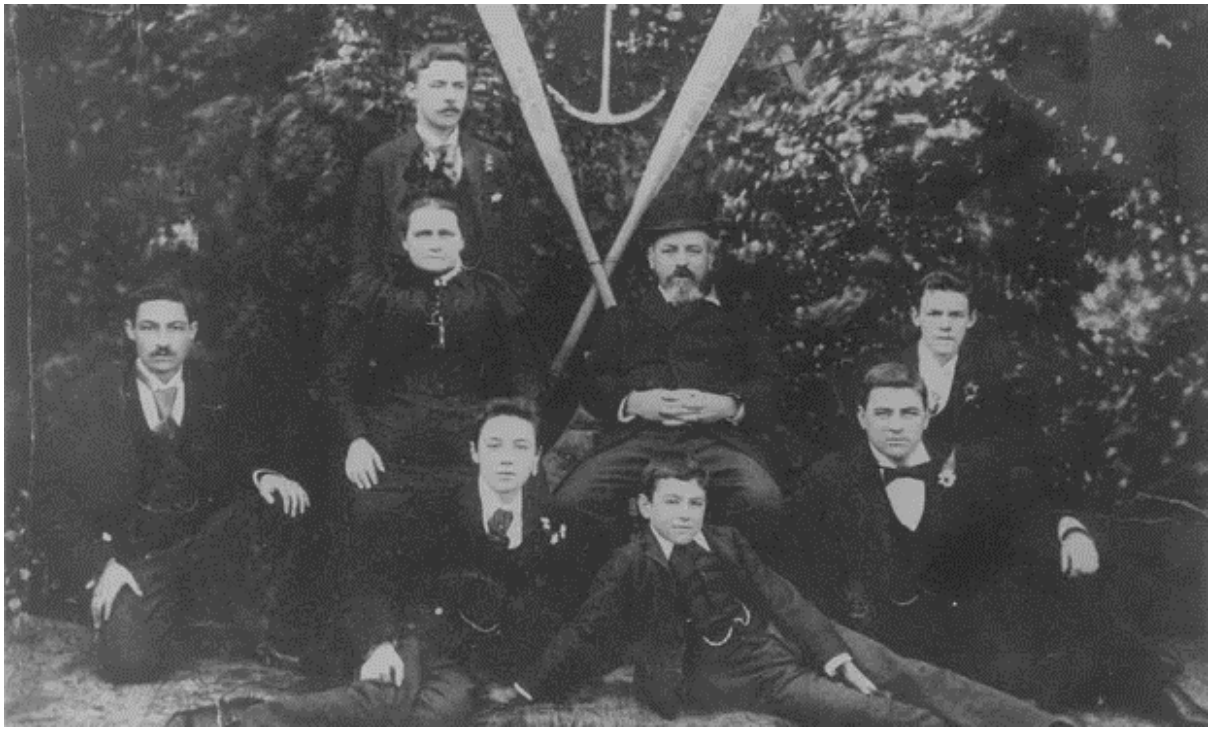
Even in the 1930s these streets close to Wharf Street still looked bleak and forbidding.



Photo from 'Oh Happy Day'

The house in Robinson Street, Prahran District, Melbourne, Sary and Alfred moved into with George in 1858.

Alfred married Mary Ann Brooks in 1866 and opened a boot and shoe shop (presumably financed by George). Sary died in 1882, a lady of property and a long way from her poverty-stricken roots in Thurmaston.



This photo from 1895 shows Alfred and Mary Ann (seating centre) and their surviving children. (from ‘Oh Happy Day’)

At first, Alfred did well in business opening two more shops, but his heavy drinking developed into a serious problem and eventually he became violent and mentally unstable. He died in an asylum in 1908.

1. Further details of the appalling conditions faced by Leicestershire framework knitters during this period can be found in my book *Luddism, Chartism and the Leicestershire Framework Knitters 1811-50 ‘A Descent Into Hell’*.
2. *The Hose Makers*, Jennifer Harris, Thurmaston Heritage Group, 2021, p 15-16.
3. These photos are taken from *The Hose Makers*.

Steve Marquis, 2022, written for the Thurmaston History Society