



# WIGSTON HERITAGE

**GREATER WIGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**AND**

**GREATER WIGSTON HERITAGE CENTRE**



**Wigston Teachers Remembered – Mr. Widdowson, page 14**

**BULLETIN 128**

**March 2024**

## FROM THE CHAIRMAN



I am pleased to report that, as announced at the AGM, we have a new Treasurer in place to take over from Colin Towell. Richard Darlaston will be taking on this role for the Society. Colin will be staying on the committee and is willing to help the new Treasurer ease into the position.

However, we are still in need of a secretary to take over from Ann Cousins to deal with a small amount of correspondence and to take meetings minutes, and also arrange speakers for the 10 monthly meetings and one outing. Ann will also be staying on the committee until 2025. This position could be split into 2, with one person taking care of any enquiries and minutes, and the other arranging speakers for meetings.

***Any member can attend a committee meeting as a guest, where you could 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.***

## HERITAGE CENTRE VOLUNTEERS

We are also in need of some extra volunteers to help at the Heritage Centre. The Centre currently opens from 10am till 2pm each Friday, and every 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month. Volunteers are on hand to greet visitors, show them around our facilities and archives, and help with any queries. Training will be given in our systems, archives and facilities.

If you feel that you would like to get involved, even for a few hours a month, please get in touch for a chat about the duties involved.

***Peter Cousins***, Chairman

E-Mail: [chairman@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk](mailto:chairman@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk) - or call 07702 127313.

## OBITUARY

“We sadly announce the recent passing of one of our members Doreen Hunting who, with her husband, had been members for several years. Our thoughts and condolences go out to her husband and family.”

Society's website: [www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk](http://www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk)

All enquiries to: [secretary@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk](mailto:secretary@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk)

The Bulletin is published three times a year in March, July and November.

Articles etc., (which are always welcome) should be submitted to the Editor.

email: [bulletineditor@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk](mailto:bulletineditor@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk)

at least four clear weeks before publication date.

**FUTURE MONTHLY MEETINGS**  
**AT THE MENPHYS HUB, BASSETT STREET,**  
**SOUTH WIGSTON, LE18 4PE**



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.

**TUESDAY 19 MARCH**

Quorn and Woodhouse: The Story of a Station by Jack Shaw

**TUESDAY 16 APRIL**

Leicester Cathedral Revealed by Mathew Morris

**TUESDAY 21 May**

The Life and Crimes of Agatha Christie by Mark Temple

**TUESDAY 18 JUNE**

The Journey of a Letter by John Noble

**JULY – NO MEETING**

**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**

# GREATER WIGSTON HERITAGE CENTRE MILITARY HISTORY & RESEARCH DAY

Saturday 9 March 2024  
10.00am till 2.00pm

Bring along any memorabilia you have such as medals, records, papers or photographs and see what our military researchers can tell you!

**Come along and see.....**

## The Western Front Association

The Western Front Association (The WFA) was formed with the purpose of furthering interest in the First World War of 1914-1918. They aim to perpetuate the memory, courage, and comradeship of all those who served their countries on all sides, across all theatres and fronts, on land, at sea and in the air and at home, during the Great War.



Jim Mills, a WW1 enthusiast, will be attending in uniform with a very rare WW1 Maxim machine gun, a Lewis gun, a SMLE rifle and a variety of other original items.



**Tea/Coffee & Biscuits Available**

# Recent Greater Wigston History Society Meetings

## November 2023



Virgina Wright gave a very informative talk on the stories behind Christmas Customs. Some, such as the Christmas Tree and Advent Calendar, came from Germany via Prince Albert and Queen Victoria. Christmas Cards also originate from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century with the introduction of the 1d Penny Black stamp in 1840.

Others like the Nativity Scene, Christmas Pudding, Mince Pies, Holly and Carols originate from the Middle Ages. The Nativity Scene is said to go back to Saint Francis of Assisi in 1220.

Christmas pudding should contain 13 ingredients, one for Christ and twelve for the apostles. Every member of a family was obliged to give the pudding a stir. Minced pies, of course, originally contained meat.

Santa Claus is, of course, based on Saint Nicholas a 4th-century Greek Bishop of Myra (now Demre) part of the Roman Empire, today in Turkey. Nicholas was known for his generous gifts to the poor, in particular presenting the three impoverished daughters (where the three Christmas stockings come from) of a pious Christian with dowries so that they would not have to become prostitutes.

## December Christmas Party 2023



Another very enjoyable and successful Christmas Party was held at the Menphys Centre with around 70 people in attendance. Unfortunately, the planned talk on 'Pantomime at the Theatre' had to be cancelled because the speaker, Mike Ball, was unavailable. Dave Andrews kindly stepped in with a very entertaining talk on amusing stories with a Christmas theme from his days at Radio Leicester.

## January 2024



Jed Jaggard started the *UP AN' AT 'EM! HISTORY* 13 years ago. The company has the capacity to portray more than 300 historical characters, ranging from Romans, Vikings and Medieval Knights to explorers, astronauts and Second World War pilots.

Jed treated members to an extremely entertaining talk about **BOMB DISPOSAL in the SECOND WORLD WAR**, which he explained was, not unexpectedly, a very dangerous profession.

He was in army uniform (including boots). Bombs were made of varying sizes, and he brought along examples to show us.

Fortunately, these were made of plastic, but provided Jed with the opportunity to demonstrate how these bombs needed to be de-fused, as not all bombs exploded. We learnt that as bombs were frequently at the bottom of a very muddy hole, wellington boots were essential for the men responsible for digging to find the bomb, although the equipment they were provided with to do so was very basic and it is of course a very dangerous occupation. Indeed, the life expectancy of a bomb disposal officer was only 49 days.

Jed handed round examples of some of the actual fuses, and explained how these functioned, and “learning on the job” was essential in order to defuse the bomb, using what appeared to be a very basic Crabtree tool. He also showed us an actual Butterfly Bomb, which had to be treated differently, as the only way to deal with these was to blow them up, and these frequently needed to be moved to a safer site.

Jed amused his audience by explaining what was issued to the Bomb Disposal units, including sand; a crowbar; a stethoscope; string; cotton wool and plasticine!

If you are intrigued about how these might have been used, and have any suggestions, why not contact the GWHS Newsletter Editor? We could then share your own comments with other members!

**JUDITH PROCTOR**  
GWHS Vice Chairman.

**MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME!!!!**  
**See Page 23**



# 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**

As you all know the Council moved their offices to Brocks Hill, and as part of the relocation, the Heritage Centre was asked if they wanted anything they were not taking, so two members of your committee went and selected some very nice computer chairs. They also chose a very useful glass fronted cupboard which will be used to display small items. We also had some very interesting books, maps, plans and pictures, as the things are sorted and catalogued, I will tell you about them.

We also acquired a large wooden plaque, varnished with gold lettering headed "Wigston Urban District Council", which lists the Chairman from 1894 -1973. Someone at the Heritage Centre has already found her grandfather listed on the plaque. The plaque is now on display at the Heritage Centre. Do come and see if you recognise or are related to anyone listed.

Also, from the Council Offices came a book from a bygone age, "Inspector's register Slaughter Houses". It lists ten premises in Wigston, giving the names and addresses of the Slaughterhouses. I know this is not to everyone's taste, but it is part of Wigston's history. You will find this book at "Book 369" at the Centre.

The next book I want to tell you about is titled "Peace Memorial Park, Master plan". This book shows the land as it was in 1923, and then goes on to the plans for the park, the planting plans and even the park furniture. It is a very detailed book prepared for Heritage Lottery Funding. The book has maps, plans, photographs, newspaper cuttings and includes a short history of Wigston. This is a very interesting addition to our archive and is well worth a look, you will find it at "Book 232" or get one of the volunteers to find it for you and make you a cup of coffee.

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

## **The Heritage Centre afternoon talks are back.....**

Talks start at 3pm at the Heritage Centre – access from 2.30pm - £4 per person.

See the website for a full list of the meetings.

**Elaine French, Heritage Centre Librarian**

## **The Ice Skates Story – What the Heritage Centre can do for you.**

Neil Hancock and Stuart Mucklejohn were on duty at the Heritage Centre on a cold and damp March morning when a distinguished-looking gentleman entered the premises wearing his sports kit. It transpired he had come to the Centre directly from his class at the adjacent sports centre.

The gentleman introduced himself as Mike Hollis and proceeded to relate a most interesting story and presented an intriguing challenge. Mike had met Mr. Molenveld from the Netherlands while on holiday the previous summer. Casual conversation revealed Mr. Molenveld collected ice skates and he had recently purchased a pair of skates with the marking 'W & A C Chamberlain, Wigston'. Mike commented he lived in nearby Kibworth and agreed to try to find out more about the manufacturers. Mike's early investigations proved rather disappointing and eventually thought he would try the Heritage Centre in the hope this would provide the best access to records of businesses in and around Wigston.

Further conversations with Mr. Molenveld revealed he has a collection of more than 1000 pairs of ice skates, these are held in a museum Twente Skate Museum, see: <https://uitinhengelo.nl/twents-schaatsmuseum>. The museum is in Hengelo which is a city in the eastern part of the Netherlands, in the province of Overijssel, it is situated between Almelo and Enschede. The website has an interesting introduction: -

'If you think that ice skating is 'just' skating, then we can tell you that you are quite wrong. There are typical Frisian and North Holland skates, double curl skates, skates with beautiful handmade forging, painted skates, metal skates and skates from far abroad.

Also in the museum is a Japanese flip-flop skate and women's boots placed on skate blades. Did you know that they already made clap skates in the 19th century? Also special: saw skating. These are skates where a bite has been taken out of the blades in two places. This way you could start faster, was once the idea.'

There is a You Tube video report about this museum, see:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H0OS6R7tw7M>

Further investigations revealed there are several skate museums in the Netherlands, see: <https://www.schaatshistorie.nl/schaatsmusea/> including Hindeloopen, Groningen, Gravenzande, Tienhoven, Nieuwkoop, Zuideinde and Ijst. There is also a virtual museum, see: <https://www.schaatsenmuseum.nl/>

Initially it was unclear if the ice skates were complete boots or skates that would be attached to boots or shoes. Subsequently Mike found the link to the auction where the skates were listed for sale at Gildings Auctioneers, June 2018, Market Harborough, 'Pair of Victorian steel and brass ice skates, marked Chamberlain Maker Wigston, 34 cm'.

The images below on page 13, taken from <https://www.the-saleroom.com/en-gb/auction-catalogues/gildings-auctioneers/catalogue-id-srgil10177/lot-1c6870b3-2ec1-43bb-9e92-a8fc00e40ee3>, confirms the skates would be attached to boots or shoes. The skates are of similar design to those in the famous painting of Reverend Robert Walker 'Skating on Duddingston Loch' by Sir Henry Raeburn held in the National Gallery of Scotland, see: <https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/5327>.

Shortly afterwards Mike Forryan contacted John Chamberlain who had recently visited the Centre, but he had no knowledge of the business W & A Chamberlain. However, Mike Forryan did find several entries for businesses with 'Chamberlain W...' in the Kelly's Directory for 1899.

Searching through the University of Leicester Historical Directories of Leicestershire website revealed further listings. These are summarised below in chronological order with the citation close to the original.

William Chamberlain first enters the historical record as a business in 1855 in the Post Office Directory of Leicestershire & Rutland, Record 1/47. He is listed as a frame smith. Further entries followed in 1870 and 1875 where he is still recorded as a frame smith but now also a 'hosiery manufacture'. The entry in the Post Office Directory for 1876 shows that William had also branched out into beer retail. A year later he is now described as a frame maker, bag hosier (a middleman who managed other framework knitters) and running a beerhouse on Bull's Head Street. In 1878, as well as a bag hosier and frame smith, he is also listed as publican of the Travellers' Rest on Bull Head Street. For the next ten years he is recorded as a frame smith and publican for the Travellers' Rest,

Wright's Directory of Leicestershire in 1887-88 now includes Arthur Chamberlain, William's son, and the business branched out again into wider machine making including corn reapers and mowers. They are still running the Travellers' Rest. This remains the extent of their business interests until 1895. Kelly's Directory of Leicestershire & Rutland in 1895, Record 3/47, reveals some significant changes. As well as William and Arthur, there are now two additional sons, James (Jas) Chamberlain, who is recorded as a boot and shoe machinist and William, who along with Arthur, are now described as cycle makers and machinists. Their business is still situated on Bull Head Street. The founder, William Chamberlain, died in January 1897.

In the 1901-02, Bennett's Business Directory for Leicestershire, Record 39/47, the same services are mentioned but the business address is given as Spa Lane Works and in 1908, at 86 Leicester Road. From the above it seems William and Arthur Chamberlain's business on Bull's Head Street, also known as Bull Head Street, was in operation from approximately 1887 to 1908. Arthur Chamberlain had died by 1911 and the business was now run by his two brothers William and

James. In listings from 1912 to 1916 the Chamberlain business records William Chamberlain as a cycle maker of Bull Head Street.

We now turn to the question ‘Who were William and Arthur Chamberlain?’ The answer is to be found in the census returns for Wigston Magna. This story involves more than one William Chamberlain, the relationships of the main characters are listed below in advance of the summary from various census returns.

Name	Born	Died
William Chamberlain [1]	1819	1897 Father of Arthur and William Chamberlain [2]
William Chamberlain [2]	1848	1921 Son of William Chamberlain [1]
Arthur Chamberlain	1859	1911 Son of William Chamberlain [1]
William Chamberlain [3]	1886	1942 Son of Arthur Chamberlain

From census returns for Wigston Magna

### **William Chamberlain [1]**

1851 census

William Chamberlain [1], born 1819 in Kibworth, living in Arnesby, Framesmith employing 1 man.

Of special interest: The England & Wales Criminal Records 1791-1892 show William Chamberlain [1] was convicted of larceny in 1840 and sentenced to transportation for 7 years. Thus, he does not appear in the 1841 census. Peter Cousins will be doing more research on this part of the story.

1861 census

William Chamberlain [1], Bull Head Street, Framesmith employing 2 men & 3 boys.

1871 census

William Chamberlain [1], Bull Head Street, Framesmith employing 2 men & 3 boys.

1881 census

William Chamberlain [1], 56 Bull Head Street, Travellers’ Rest, Framesmith, beerhouse keeper.

1891 census

William Chamberlain [1], 54 & 56 Bull Head Street, Travellers’ Rest, Beer seller

William Chamberlain [1] died January 1897

### **Arthur Chamberlain** - Son of William Chamberlain [1]

1861 census

Living with William & Mary Chamberlain (nee Smith)

1871 census

Living with William & Mary Chamberlain (nee Smith). Married Elizabeth Walker  
1879

1881 census

Arthur Chamberlain, 45 Bull Head Street, Framesmith

Arthur Chamberlain	Born 1859	Head
Elizabeth Chamberlain	Born 1855	Wife (nee Walker)
Anne E Chamberlain	Born 1880	Daughter

1891 census

Arthur Chamberlain, Oadby Road, Wigston Magna, Framesmith

Arthur Chamberlain	Born 1859	Head
Elizabeth Chamberlain	Born 1855	Wife (nee Walker)
Mary Chamberlain	Born 1882	Daughter
John Chamberlain	Born 1884	Son
William Chamberlain	Born 1886	Son
Nellie Chamberlain	Born 1888	Daughter

1901 census

Arthur Chamberlain, 14 Church Nook, Wigston Magna, Hosiery machine builder

Arthur Chamberlain	Born 1859	Head
Elizabeth Chamberlain	Born 1855	Wife (nee Walker)
Mary Born in 1882	Daughter	Hosiery sock mender.
John	Born 1884	Son
William	Born 1886	Son Hosiery packer
This is William Chamberlain [3]		
Nelly	Born 1888	Daughter
Margaret	Born 1892	Daughter
Elsie	Born 1894	Daughter

Note: Anne E Chamberlain, listed as 'Annie E Chamberlain' now living with maternal grandfather, John Walker, at 11 Long Street, Wigston Magna

Arthur Chamberlain died in 1911.

**William Chamberlain [2]** - Son of William Chamberlain [1]

1881 census

William Chamberlain [2], 72 Leicester Road, Framesmith

1891 census

William Chamberlain [2], 72 Leicester Road, Hosiery machinist

1901 census

William Chamberlain [2], 72 Leicester Road, Hosiery machine builder

William Chamberlain    Born 1848    Head

Sarah                      Born 1849    Wife

James W                  Born 1871    Son Shoemaker (See record 24/47)

1911 census

William Chamberlain [2], 86 Leicester Road, Widowed, Engineering

Born 1848    Head

James William, born 1871, Son, Boot & shoemaker (See record 24/47).

Thus, the William and Arthur Chamberlain business described above was run by two brothers, sons of William Chamberlain [1].

Our conclusion is the ice skates were made by William & Arthur Chamberlain in their works between 1887 and 1900. This assumes the description of Victorian in the auction catalogue is reliable, the Victorian age covered the period June 1837 to January 1901. To date we have not established where the premises were along Bull Head Street.

If any of our readers have more information about the William & Arthur Chamberlain enterprise, please do not hesitate to contact the authors.

This story illustrates perfectly not only what the Heritage Centre can do for visitors but also how it promotes fascinating research opportunities for our volunteers.



**From Twents Schaatsmuseum**



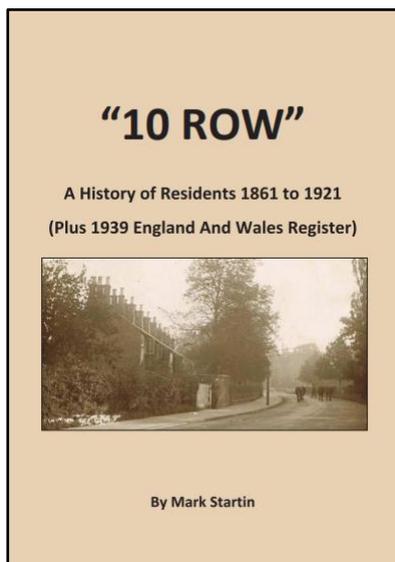
From: Gildings Auctioneers

From: <https://www.schaatshistorie.nl/schaatsmusea/>

DICTIONARY.]	WIGSTON MAGNA	549
Cartwright Wm, chimney sweeper, Moat street	Kirby Zina, haberdasher, Burgess st	Snowden John, hosiery needle manufacturer, Bull's Head street
Chamberlain William and Arthur, framesmiths, machinists, corn reapers and mowers, Bull's Head st	Lacey Timothy, hairdresser, Bell st	Southam Mrs. Ann, nurse at hospital, Long street
Colban Witr, comitvuir, Mowsleyend	Ladkin Ralph, M.R. engine driver, Clarke's road	Stevens Chs, M.R. guard, Station rd
Coltman Miss Sarah, Bull's Head st	Laundon Redfern, saddler and wine merchant, Bull's Head street	*Taylor Richard Arthur, cashier, Granville road, Wigston fields
	Laundon Samuel, beer retailer and	

From record 27/47

Sharon Hall, Neil Hancock and Stuart Mucklejohn



## New Publication

### “10 Row”

### A History of Residents 1861-1921

A unique and fascinating insight into a part of Wigston history revealing the lives of people who lived at 10 Row between 1861 and 1939.

Researched and written by Mark Startin.

**Price £10 per copy**

**Available from the Heritage Centre**

# Wigston Teachers Remembered

*These articles by John Marquis are the second in a series on Wigston Teachers Remembered. We all have teachers that either inspired us or terrified us. The last contribution by Martin Wain was definitely an example of the latter. These three teachers from the 1950's by contrast are examples of the former.*

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

## **Three Teachers from the 1950's –**

### **Bomber Richmond, Anton Bantock, Mr. Widdowson**

MOST of those unfortunates who passed through Abington Secondary Modern School in the mid-1950s will recall Bomber Richmond, the English teacher who could throw a wooden-backed blackboard duster with deadly accuracy.

Many a time have I drifted off in class to be awoken by the clatter of a duster on my desk-top, dropped there courtesy of affable Bomber, one of only three teachers I had any real regard for in my twelve years of formal education. 'Marquis, wake up boy - what do you think this is, a dormitory?' he bellowed from beneath his twitching moustache, which we always thought was a remnant of his wartime flying days. In fact, I never checked whether he was RAF aircrew, but he certainly looked the part.

Bomber and I clashed more than once. He chased me round the classroom, climbing over desks to get to me after I had called another boy 'scum' during a boyish altercation.

'He is NOT scum!' yelled Bomber as he pursued me round the room to deliver a howitzer to the head. 'Don't you dare call him scum,' he yelled, apoplectic with rage. In fact, the target of my contempt was not scum. He was a perfectly respectable boy whose mum tragically died when he was nine.

Ever since then, he had seemed a lost soul. I can't remember what our row was about, but I ended up in a rage, and he felt the lash of my tongue. If he's reading this now, a belated apology, pal. I didn't mean it.

Bomber evidently thought I had talent. But he also rated me an idle wretch. In my school report, he wrote: 'Without any apparent effort at all, he comes fifth in the class. I wonder what would happen if he really did try?'

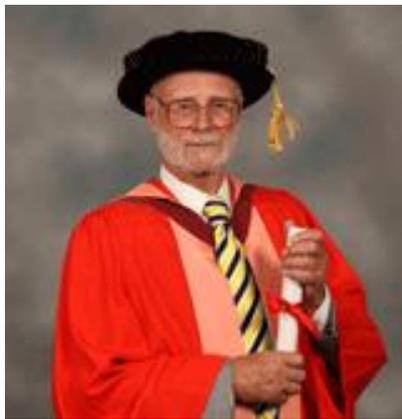
Sixteen years later, he received his reply. By then I was working in Fleet Street as a senior journalist for the Thomson Organisation.

I had won a British Press Award - the Oscars of British journalism - and I had to attend a ceremony at the Cafe Royal in London to receive my 'gong' from the then Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins.

The story appeared in the Leicester Mercury and, the following day, he asked my niece - then a pupil in his form - whether the 'star' newsman in the paper was

the same John Marquis he had cause to berate in 1958. ‘Yes, it is,’ she said. ‘Wow!’ he said, and that was it.

Bomber was a fine teacher who instilled the basics of sound spelling and good grammar. He took no nonsense and was, in truth, a force for good for all of us. Many an Eleven-plus failure like me profited from his wise words and - naturally - an occasional slap around the ear.



**Anton Bantock**

He and Anton Bantock, my eccentric history master at Guthlaxton School, were the best teachers I had during my secondary school years.

Mr Bantock eventually left for Bristol, where he set up his own ‘university’ for poor people who had been denied a proper education. He actually had a street named after him.

During long school holidays, he cycled around the Middle East to spread goodwill and help deprived communities. He was a remarkable man in many ways.

There was one other fine teacher I liked when I was at Long Street Primary. His name was Widdo. I’ll tell you about him on another occasion.

I’ll never forget the look on Widdo’s face the day he told me I had failed the Eleven-plus. Those watery eyes of his seemed to display genuine regret. After all, I had been in the A-stream since the age of seven. I wasn’t expected to be one of life’s failures. To compound the gut-busting humiliation I felt, all the Eleven-plus ‘winners’ were allowed to go home early to tell their parents the good news.

Those who failed were made to stay in school until the bell rang at four-o’clock. Some classmates received new bikes as reward for their success. I recall well the look of disappointment on my mum’s face. For her, it was another hard knock in a life of hard knocks. No doubt it reinforced the view she shared with many a working-class mum of the time. Life is tough - get on with it.

She had raised my four brothers through the 1920s and 1930s, when times were grindingly hard, and seen them grow up into fine family men with good jobs in the hosiery trade. I arrived late - in 1943 - just in time to catch a glimpse of the greater opportunities to come. But Widdo and the Eleven-plus were the vital links between the hardscrabble life at the bottom of the British economic pile, and the higher slopes in prospect for the new generation. I spent three ghastly years as a misfit at Abington Secondary Modern School before moving on to Guthlaxton to earn seven O levels. The scourge of the Eleven-plus never left me.



**Widdo's Class of 1954-55, John Marquis is standing fifth from the left on the backrow.**

In spite of that chastening experience, I always held Widdo - Mr Widdowson - in high regard and saw him as a force for good for all fifty-four - yes, FIFTY-FOUR - pupils in his care. He was an amusing, good natured chap who made us believe we could be something in life, even though class prejudice of the time would always seek to thwart us.

I seem to recall that he married a teacher, Miss Rolland, who taught first-year pupils at The National School - The Nashes - in Long Street. She was a lovely lady, and he was an all-round good bloke. I hope they lived a long and happy life together. As for his class at the old former Sec Mod in Long Street (now the Leicestershire archives office), it was a rich mixture of ashen-faced brainboxes and dishevelled louts like me. There was Elaine Chandler, who seemed to come top of the class in everything. There was a bubbly little character called Olive Grateley. There was my mate Michael Iliffe, who spent his life in Australia. There were chaps called Kirby, Tazzyman and Throop.

Though he was far from being a tyrant, Widdo occasionally kept order with Horace the Horror, the size twelve slipper he brought down with force on many a boy's backside. The girls were spared such indignity, of course, but errant lads had to bend over in front of the class to receive the customary three whacks across the butt.

I shared a four-seat Victorian oak desk at the front of the class with Michael Upjohn, Robert Dakin and Anthony Sutton. All three passed the Eleven-plus, so went home early that fateful day to leave me in splendid isolation. For good or bad, such seminal moments have a lasting psychological impact. They were destined for glory; I was the dope on his way to Sec Mod oblivion. Except it didn't quite work out that way.

The other three did okay for themselves. Upjohn became a Special Branch detective, Dakin became a GP, and Sutton - I think, but can't be sure - achieved his ambition of being an aircraft designer.

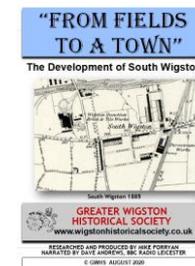
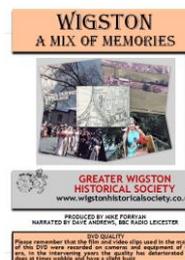
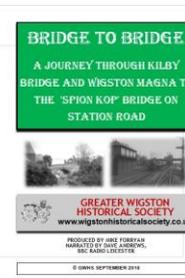
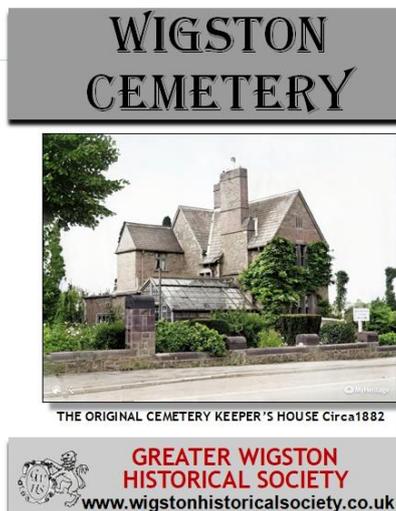
Meanwhile, old 'failure' Marquis spent fifty years as a journalist, worked for nearly a decade in Fleet Street, held two editorships at home and abroad, won one of the 'Oscars' of British journalism and wrote several books, including an Amazon bestseller.

I think Widdo would have been mighty proud. I can imagine those twinkling eyes of his, wide open in disbelief.

Good old Widdo. Lovely chap.

## John Marquis

# GWHS HISTORICAL DVD's



**DVD1 - Wigston With 2 Steeples**

**DVD2 - Bridge to Bridge**

**DVD3 - A Mix of Memories**

**DVD4 - From Fields to A Town**

**Wigston Cemetery**

**Available at the Heritage Centre**

**NORMALLY £10.00 PER COPY**

**NOW HALF PRICE £5.00 PER COPY**

## BRITAIN IN BLOOM 2023

2023 saw Oadby and Wigton gain some brilliant awards recognising the achievements for Pride of The Borough. Awards included **Gold** from East Midlands in Bloom and **Silver Gilt** from Britain in Bloom, as well as national recognition for the horticultural achievements at Nova Laboratories, Wigston and Aigburth Care Home, Manor Road, Oadby.

I have seen programmes on TV about this competition and so wondered how entries were submitted and was lucky enough to be able to see the document presented to the judges when they visited the Borough in July 2023. With the cold days and dark evenings of January I thought it might be interesting to re-visit the summer of 2023. What follows was originally included in Wigston Civic Society “Wigstons’ Voice” newsletter, and means I get to enjoy memories of warmer days. Spring isn’t too far away - honest!

Although I do have the full route which includes both Oadby and Wigton, I chose only to try and follow the Wigston parts of this entry, although I did include a visit to **Brocks Hill** too – largely because the apple trees in the orchard had fruit ready for picking, and so “bags in hand” we ventured around the orchard for a very successful half hour! We didn’t venture to the popular den-building area although perhaps we may on another visit, as you are NEVER too old to build a den!

As you have to be a key-holder to gain access to **Aylestone Lane Allotments** I “persuaded” my friend Rosemary Marshall to take part in my tour around Wigston. They help resource recycling on site, space for users to ‘dump’ unwanted items for recycling, collect donated wood and they have converted a waterlogged corner plot into this lovely communal garden which everyone can enjoy.



**Aylestone Lane Allotments**



**Community Garden Allotment Project**

There is also the **Community Garden Allotment Project**, which promotes sustainable methods of growing produce in two large poly-tunnels and six raised beds, as well as a pond; three vegetable plots and even a small orchard which is tended by the group every Tuesday throughout the year.

**Nova Laboratories** on Gloucester Crescent have an outdoor garden which includes benches for both visitors and workers to use throughout the year, as well

as a display of colourful flowerbeds, We could only “peer over the hedges” when we visited, but nevertheless, we did get a good idea of why this business was awarded “Best Retail/Commercial Premises” in the 2021 East Midlands in Bloom competition, and were recognised again in 2023.



**Nova Laboratories**



**The Peace Memorial Park**

**The Peace Memorial Park** will be well known to most members, and thanks to the hard work and support of both the Friends of Peace Park and Pride of the Borough, there have been various improvements made since 1997, and the park can now be enjoyed by all. This is the yellow rose bed in the Memorial Garden, which was replanted in conjunction with Wigston Lions.

We also visited **Blaby Road Park** identified by the railway wheels and original station sign, looking for the South Wigston Community Garden which is at the far end of the park (near Crow Mills) where an area was adopted by a group of local residents who meet weekly to tidy, prune and plant.



I know that preparations are already well in hand for the 2024 entry by Oadby & Wigston for the Britain in Bloom competition. Let me know if you are involved or have any suggestions about how the GWHS might be able to contribute.

**Judith Proctor GWHS Vice-Chairman**

## Understanding Well Known Sayings

### A Bird in the Hand is Worth Two in the Bush



#### Meaning

The proverb 'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush' means that it's better to hold onto something you have rather than take the risk of getting something better which may come to nothing.

#### Origin

'A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush' is one of the oldest and best-known proverbs

in English. It came into the language in the 15th century, probably imported from other cultures.

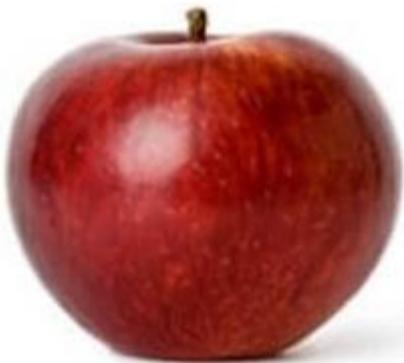
The proverb warns against taking unnecessary risks. It is better to keep what you have (a bird) than to risk getting more and ending up with nothing (two birds which are out of your reach).

The allusion may be to falconry where a bird in the hand (the falcon) was a valuable asset and certainly worth more than two in the bush (the prey).

This proverbial saying is first found in English in John Capgrave's *The Life of St Katharine of Alexandria*, 1450:

*"It is more sekyl [certain] a byrd in your fest, Than to haue three in the sky above."*

### An Apple A Day Keeps The Doctor Away



#### Meaning

The proverb 'An apple a day keeps the doctor away' has a straightforward literal, and very probably correct, meaning - that the eating of fruit maintains good health.

#### Origin

It isn't often that I get the opportunity to list Wales as the source of a commonplace English phrase. There's a fair chance that this little maxim originated there as the earliest known example of

its use in print makes that claim. The February 1866 edition of *Notes and Queries* magazine includes this:

A Pembrokeshire proverb: "Eat an apple on going to bed, and you'll keep the doctor from earning his bread."

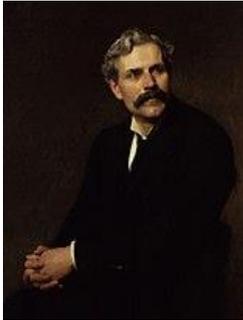
**Mike Forryan**



# From the Past

## Wigston One Hundred and Two Hundred Years Ago

### 1924



**22 January** – Ramsay MacDonald becomes the first Labour Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. MacDonald first stood as an MP for Leicester in 1900 but lost. He was, however, elected in 1906 as the first Labour MP for City.

He was only PM for a few months in 1924 but was returned as Labour PM in 1929. He resigned from the Labour Government in 1931 but was reinstated as the PM of a Tory-led coalition.



**25 January** – The opening of first ever Winter Olympics, at Chamonix, in the French Alps.

In February 1924, John Logie Baird, demonstrated to the *Radio Times* that a semi-mechanical analogue television system was able to transmit moving silhouette images over a short distance. Mechanical televisions proved a dead-end, in 1941, the United States implemented the electronic 525-line television system which became standard until 1985 in the UK.

### Wigston in 1924 – Leicester Mercury



**14 January** – the South Wigston and Glen Parva Amateur Dramatic Society put on a performance of HMS Pinafore. Elizabeth Bolton is on the left.

**5 March** – Wigston Council approves the building of 56 new houses, 12 with parlours on land called the Orchards on Station Road and 44 non-parlour houses behind “for the working-classes.”

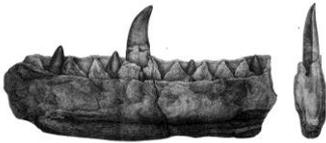
## 1824



**8 January** – Michael Faraday one of the UK's greatest scientists, mainly remembered for his pioneering work of electricity and electromagnetism, is elected as a member of the Royal Society.



**8 March** – The Royal National Lifeboat Institution is founded in the British Isles.



**In 1824**, William Buckland announced the discovery, of fossil bones of a giant reptile which he named *Megalosaurus* ('great lizard') and wrote the first full account of what would later be called a dinosaur.



**Statue of Mary Anning in Lyme Regis, 2022**

What is not recorded is that Buckland was one of many eminent male paleontologists who owed much of their fame to a remarkable working-class woman, Mary Anning, the 'Fossils Lady' - whose dramatic story was brought delightfully to life by Tracey Chevalier in her novel, *Remarkable Creatures*.

Anning was only twelve when she made her first major find, a complete five-metre-long Ichthyosaur, at a time before the science of paleontology had been established and even the awareness of species extinction was unknown. Over the next thirty-five years, she would unearth many more types of dinosaurs and became a world-renowned expert in skeletal structures,

helping male palaeontologists – who often did not deign to acknowledge Anning's contributions – establish celebrated careers by using her finds and reconstructions.

Even after achieving an international reputation, the Geological Society of London refused to admit her – in fact, they didn't admit women until half a century later in 1904. Her friend Anna Pinney wrote "the world has used her ill ... these men of learning have sucked her brains, and made a great deal of publishing works, of which she furnished the contents, while she derived none of the advantages."

## Wigston in 1824 – Leicester Chronicle

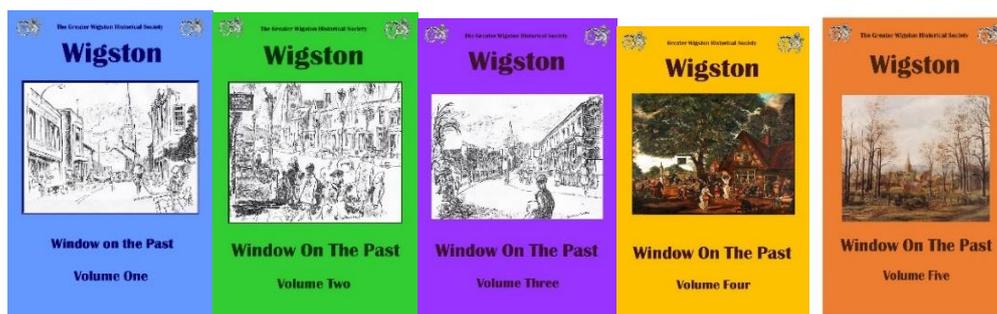
The following two obituary notices reveals the ever-present threat two centuries ago of sudden death of children and everyone else for that matter due to disease and reinforces just how fortunate we are today to have the benefits of the incredible advances in medical science over recent decades and, of course, a National Health Service despite its current troubles.

**14 February** – Sarah Vann aged 15, daughter of King Vann died after a long illness.

**7 March** – Thomas Phillips aged 14, youngest child of John Phillips (tailor) and his wife Alice, making this the **18<sup>th</sup> child** which they have buried.

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

## Episode Five

### UP THE CO-OP

Places of entertainment were closed down as soon as hostilities were announced. Mind you, after a short time they all re-opened again, when it was discovered, we were not all going to be blown to bits at once. Later on, when the bombers came, many people were blown to Kingdom Come, but this was the time of the ‘phoney war’ as the history books call it, and the Magna and the theatres and the dances were soon under way again.

I remember when Mother sewed my first long frock ready for the firm’s dance at the Co-op Hall on the corner of Central Avenue and Long Street. Mother also presented me with a little sequined evening bag and a pair of silver shoes in that material that looked like fine crinkly silver paper, to complete my outfit.



My First Long Frock; White, patterned with filigree silver threads and tiny flowers, over which, soft pale pink net flowed: fastened down the front with tiny silver bows from neck to hem. I was the cat’s whiskers, to be sure.

The effect was somewhat marred by having to wear my wool stockings holding up my frock meanwhile, as we walked through the Lanes to the Co-op Hall. Into the Ladies Cloakroom to change into my ankle socks and silver shoes, I could hear the band playing a quickstep.

Mother instructed me in the art of Ballroom Dancing. The Waltz, Barn Dance, Valeta, Maxina, Military Two Step, The Gay Gordons, all the old-time dances as they are now called, and woe betide me if I went wrong. We danced the Lambeth Walk, I remember we danced the Lambeth Walk all round The Marina at Gt. Yarmouth on our last holiday. I thought the band would never stop, right round the balcony we went. Great stuff!

We never stayed to the end of the Dance, however. Mother said it was too late for me. So, I would change back into my stockings and lace up shoes, and clutching my sequined bag and silver shoes, we would descend the stone stairs and out into Central Avenue, listening to the band as they played “I’ll See you in my Dreams”. Mother did not approve of quicksteps or tangos for some reason I could never fathom.

**Doreen C Boulter, 1988**