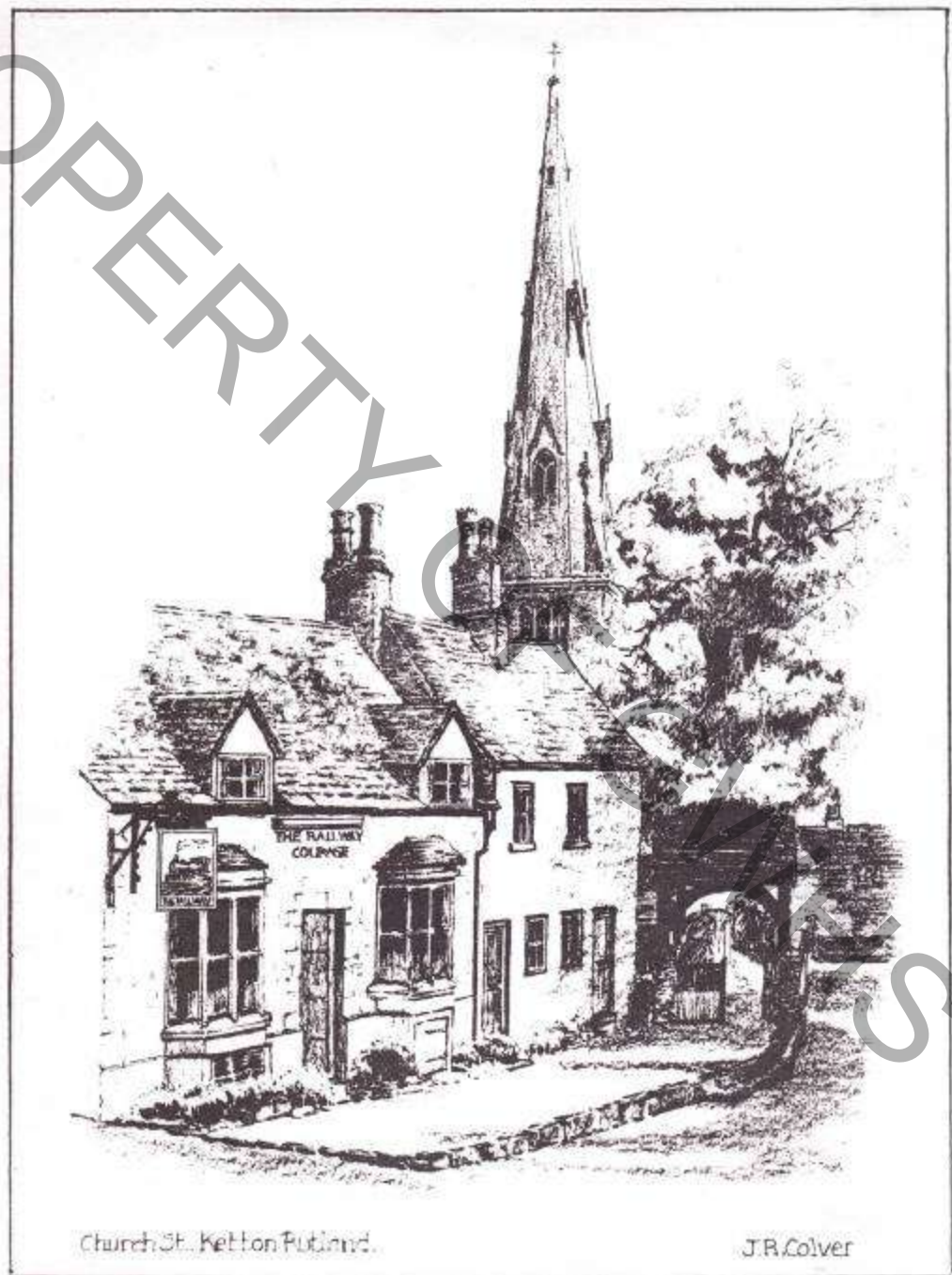




Greater Wigston Historical Society
White Gate Farm, Newton Lane, Wigston Magna Leicestershire

BULLETIN 45



PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS - SEPTEMBER 1996 to FEBRUARY 1997

Wednesday 18th September 1996

'Ancient Egypt' - John Royley
7.30p.m. Wigston Liberal Club.

Wednesday 16th October 1996

'History of Leicester Market' - Mr. L. Jarvis
7.30p.m. Wigston Liberal Club.

Wednesday 20th November 1996

'History of Wigston' - Text of a Lecture given to the Wigston Literary & Scientific Society by W.J.R. Pochin Esq. M.A., Barrister of Newgate End, in 1911 - read by Duncan Lucas
7.30p.m. Wigston Liberal Club.

Wednesday 18th December 1996

Christmas Party
7.30p.m. Wigston Liberal Club.

Wednesday 15th January 1997

'Sketching the Past' - Olwen Hughes
7.30p.m. Wigston Liberal Club.

Wednesday 19th February '1997

A.G.M. followed by slides on the growth of Wigston, 1950 's onwards -
Dennis & Edna Taylor
7.30p.m. Wigston Liberal Club.

FRONT COVER DRAWING

Jim Colver describes his drawing thus - It shows St. Mary's Church, Ketton, a Rutland village famous for several hundred years for its particular colour of limestone. Easily worked, being soft in the quarrying & hardening on exposure, the material was used for a great many important buildings including the grand house of Burley-on-the-Hill, & further afield, Beverley Minster. Oddly enough, this village church is built not of the local product but of Barnack stone. Described by Hoskins as one of the finest parish churches in the East Midlands with a tower & spire of superlative beauty, it also has an impressive Norman west front & doorway. The church was restored by Gilbert Scott in 1861-2 & later remodelling took place, happily with little detriment to its character.

The Bulletin is published three times a year on 1st February, June and October. Articles etc. (which are always welcome) should be submitted to either of the Joint Editors three clear weeks before the publication date please.

Joint Editors:

Mrs. Chris Smart, 197 Queens Road, Leicester.
Mrs. Tricia Berry, 7 Wensleydale Road, Wigston

FEBRUARY MEETING

The Society held its A.G.M. when approx. 45 members were present. The evening commenced with:-

- 1) The Secretary, Doris Chandler, reading the minutes of the last A.G.M. which were agreed & signed as correct.
- 2) The Treasurer, Brian Bilson, explaining the year end accounts. He reported a balance in hand of £748 07, which was somewhat less than last year, but was accounted for by the expenditure of clothes & equipment for the town crier & the donations to the two Wigston Museums. At this point it was noted with great disappointment that the present town crier, Stan Croxtall, had resigned due to the illness of his wife. It was agreed he was excellent in the job & would not be easy to replace. A meeting with the Borough Council is to be arranged in the hope of organising a replacement crier jointly with them. It was decided that the subscriptions should remain the same i.e. £5 or £3 concessionary. It was also agreed to again donate £100 each to the Wigston Folk Museum & the Framework Knitters Museum. Brian mentioned that the accounts had not yet been audited due to lack of time between year end & A.G.M. date but that they would be handed to the Auditor, Colin Towell, very shortly. Colin agreed to be reappointed for the coming year.
- 3) The Chairman, Edna Taylor, reporting a very successful year with meetings well attended & speakers enthusiastically received. The Civil War theme was followed throughout the year starting with Derek Lewin's excellent talk in March followed by Oliver Cromwell helping to choose the town crier & the 17th Cent. Market & re-enactment on Peace Memorial Park. This was rounded off with a visit to Naseby Battlefield Museum in June & lovely buffet supper afterwards, courtesy of Ann Key, at The Old Vicarage. Members also joined together to contribute to a special themed 'Civil War' Bulletin in May. The Bulletins continued to be published 3 times a year & many have kindly said how they enjoy these. During a busy year there was an excellent Heritage Fortnight organised by Tony Lawrance & Duncan Lucas at the United Reform Church in February, Peter Mastin & Stuart Follows' 111 Years of South Wigston in aid of the Methodist Church in March & Tony Lawrance's Gertie Gitana exhibition at the Folk Museum in November. Shirley Stewart arranged an extra item, an informal visit to Leicester Castle. Those who could attend were saddened to note its poor state of repair & a letter of complaint was sent. The reply was re-assuring, the building being due for re-furbishment soon & opening to the public.
- 4) The Membership Secretary, Stella Tweed, reporting 89 members currently on the books, she having removed a few names of people who had not attended for over a year & had not re-newed their subscription. Some however, in their enthusiasm had paid for the current year already! She asked that members try to let her know if they moved house or wished to resign etc. because this would save unnecessary effort to trace them. A letter of resignation had, sadly, been received from Jean Elliott who did not wish to come without Bernard. She would however be very pleased to see any of her friends who wished to call, but to telephone first to make sure she would be in.
- 5) The present officers & committee being re-elected unopposed. Peter Mastin having joined the committee at the beginning of the year in place of Peter Clowes. Colin Towell recorded the thanks of members for the work put in by the officers throughout the year, which was gratefully acknowledged. He thought the programme content had been outstanding. He also, on behalf of the F.W.Museum, thanked the Society for last years donation & the one agreed to be made this year. The money would be put to good use in the planned refurbishment of the inside & the external painting.

Tony Lawrance thanked everyone who had lent material & helped with his two exhibitions and for the donations to Folk Museum Funds which will contribute towards the costs of maintenance & display. Doris mentioned the new Park Watch Scheme the Council is introducing & passed round details with the hope that people would support it & help in any way they could. She has written a history of Wigston Bowling Club which included much detail of the formation of the Memorial Park. This is published as Transaction No: 73 by the Society. Anyone who would like a copy should see Doris who is selling them, the proceeds going to charity.

Members were reminded that renewal subscriptions were now due & should be paid tonight if possible. The second part of the evening was taken up with the showing of two films with special local interest. 'Vanishing Village' a documentary made in the 1960's explains some of the history of Wigston & itself now a piece of history, many of the scenes shown having gone for ever. Peter Clowes shows

this film at the F.W.Museum & people are very welcome to visit for a repeat performance. Each time it is viewed something new is noticed & the commentary from other viewers can be very enlightening! The other film 'The Reluctant Squire'¹ told the story of Mr. Goddard of Newton Harcourt Manor House, & how he adapted to the life he had inherited.

MARCH MEETING

For the March meeting the Society welcomed Drusilla Armitage who gave us the benefit of her detailed knowledge of the life of John of Gaunt, the last of the great Dukes of Lancaster & the last royal duke to live in Leicester.

John was born in 1340 in Ghent, Flanders, the youngest son of King Edward III & Queen Philippa. The name Gaunt being a corruption of Ghent. He married his cousin Blanche daughter of the 'Good Duke' of Lancaster in 1359 & the couple had 2 daughters & a son, Henry Bolingbroke. Blanche & her sister Maud were the only children of the duke & when he died in 1361 they & their husbands shared the inheritance & titles. Maud died soon after, in 1362 of poison it was rumoured, & when her husband, William Duke of Bavaria also died young & childless in 1377, John came into possession of all his father-in-law's property. He became 2nd Duke of Lancaster & Earl of Leicester.

He spent much of his early life fighting his father's wars with France & was away in 1369 when Blanche died of Pestilence & was buried in St. Paul's Cathedral. Two years later he married Constance heiress of the King of Spain, whereby he was later able to assume the title of King of Castille & Leon. He was not faithful to Constance & had an open liaison with Katherine Swynford a pretty widow, & governess to his 2 daughters. The couple had 4 children. When Constance died in 1394, she was buried in the Collegiate Church in the Newarke & John then married Katherine thus legitimising their 4 children under the name of Beaufort the castle of their birth in Anjou.

John became one of the 20 richest & most powerful men of his time. From 1377 he re-opened Leicester Castle & spent much time there bringing great benefit of trade & status to the town. It was said to be his favourite home though he also spent time at Kenilworth & had other important castles at Lincoln, Monmouth, Hertford, Pontefract & other places. When Edward III died the throne passed to his grandson Richard II (who was John's nephew aged only 10 at the time). John and his brother were appointed guardians of the boy. John played a major role in the coronation where he carried the Sword of State as High Steward of England. He was ever popular in Leicester but not always so in London. When a Poll Tax was introduced in 1381 by his ex-protege, John was blamed & his London home sacked & burned. When news of this reached Leicester the burgesses, fearing the mob might move north, held an emergency meeting & called all loyal citizens to arms the next day to protect Leicester Castle. Such was the local support that 1200 men mustered at Gallowtree Hill but fortunately were not required.

John was a patron of religion & the arts. He encouraged Wycliffe & was a life long friend of Chaucer who became his brother-in-law by marrying Philippa the sister of John's third wife Katherine.

John's son Henry Bolingbroke fell from favour with Richard II & was banished so John died a disappointed man in 1399 & was buried with Blanche. Their tombs were lost in the great fire. King Richard II who was supposed to administer John's estate began to abuse his position & Henry worried about his inheritance gathered an army of supporters & challenged & deposed his cousin to rule as Henry IV.

During his full life John had completed the Collegiate Church & Hospital of the Newarke & other architectural projects in Leicester begun by his predecessors. He made many grants & privileges to the town. He is thought to have had a summer house in a spinney of tall trees frequented by rooks & known as Birds Nest Farm in the New Parks area. The hamlet of John of Gaunt near Tilton is thought to have been the site of his hunting lodge. Because his son became king there were no further Earls of Leicester & all his titles & estates were absorbed by the crown.

After some discussion which inevitably got round to the subject of the T.V. programme 'Mastermind' the Chairman Edna Taylor thanked our speaker for a most interesting talk.

April meeting ...

On Wednesday the 17th of April the Society met to hear Jane May, Keeper of Decorative Arts, Leicester Museum Service talk on Victorian Underwear.

Specifically, the talk was to be about upper and middle class Victorian women's underwear. Poor people had less underwear, it would have had harder use and would have been of inferior quality. The middle class women, especially those with pretensions, had large quantities of underwear, and hence, it is those items that have survived. In general, Victorian middle class women had best and second best underwear that was either made or bought, in either cotton or silk.

Corsets were an essential part of the wardrobe. They were sometimes known as stays and came in pairs that were laced together. The corsets gave support, modesty, warmth and hygiene. The undergarment to the corset was the shift. Often this was made of either linen or wool. The basic shift shape remained unaltered for many years. Over the corset was worn the corset cover, or chemise.

Another important item in the underwear collection was the petticoat. Some fashions required as many as 6 or 7 petticoats to be worn and this could add up to 151bs. weight of under clothes. There were several types of petticoat. The 1850s saw the revival of the quilted petticoat. There was also the hooped petticoat, the French name for this being crinoline.

Stockings of various designs were also worn. Pockets were worn separately to the garment and accessed through slits in the outer garments. This explains how Lucy Locket was able to "lose her pocket".

Knickers or drawers were considered not respectable wear for a long time. This was because they were thought to resemble a man's garment. The drawers usually had flaps for convenience or might even have separate legs.

As time went by and fashion changed and a fullness was required at the back of a dress. This prompted the introduction of the bustle or dress improver. However towards the end of the century fashions became slimmer and the underwear changed accordingly.

Combinations combined drawers and tops. Other fashions came and departed; the princess line petticoat, longer corsets, hobble skirts. And finally the "liberty" bodice which we all remember.

Jane illustrated her talk with examples of all the different sorts of underwear. This was a most interesting talk with a good deal of light-hearted humour. Many thanks to Jane.

MAY MEETING

The Society welcomed Rob Foxon for a second time this month when he showed some more of his archive film treasures. He reminded members that 1996 is the centenary year of the movies. It was on 20/2/1896 that the French brothers, Louis & Auguste Lumiere, gave the first ever public showing of their new cinematograph moving picture show at the Grand Cafe, Paris, though pioneers such as Edison had invented a similar version the previous year. Rob showed this first Lumiere film which consisted of a series of 'home movie' type clips which had been edited onto continuous reel. The scenes featured the family & friends included feeding the baby, demolishing a wall, using a hosepipe, the launch of a life boat, people disembarking from a river boat & the train station. It was noticeable that the camera could not then 'follow' the action & when the subject strayed from view they had to be beckoned back again!

The first film show in Leicester was on 16/6/1896 believed to have been at the Tivolly Theatre, Belgrave Gate given by Robert Paul. To commemorate this anniversary a nostalgic film show is to be held in Leicester on the same date.

The rest of the programme featured the 1930's when of course sound had been added. "Rural England 1932-7" was a delightful series taken in Kent or Sussex of farm workers steam ploughing,

hay making & chicken feeding etc. Then followed shots of Brighton & Maidstone & the Dieppe boat leaving Newhaven, plus liners & the building of the ocean terminal in Southampton Water. Britain invented the idea of the documentary film & John Greerson was one of the pioneers. Next came the first ever made, in 1936, named "Night Mail". This showed the post being sorted en route as huge steam trains thundered through the night, picking up & depositing mail without stopping, by means of clever grabbing devices beside the track. There are still mail trains operating today though the trend is more to use aircraft for the longer distances.

Next came a 1934 Blackpool summer holiday film & a 1937 commercial for C.W.S. soaps & powders called "The Postman's Knock". This lasted some 10 minutes in contrast to today's advertisements of approx. 8 seconds duration.

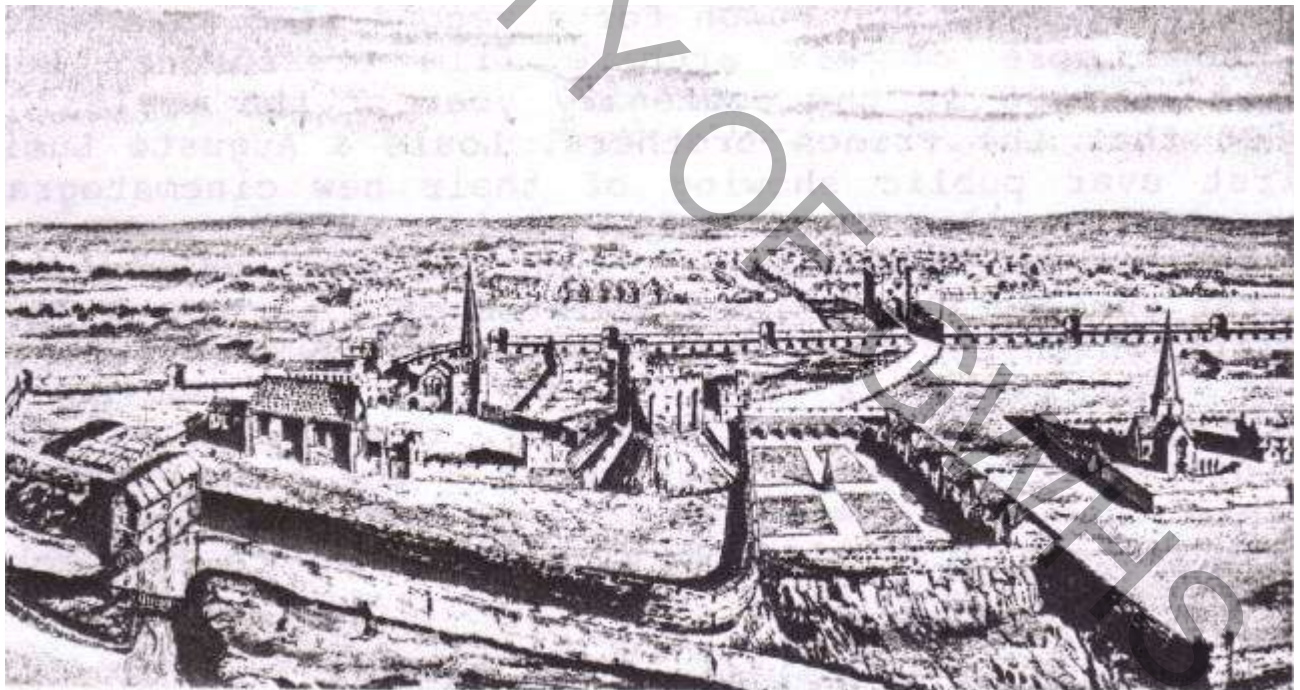
Finally some local subjects with Pat Collin's Steam Fair on Ross Walk & a 1937 Coronation Parade along London Road shot by Mike Forryan's father who was a Hinckley Road chemist at the time.

The Chairman Edna Taylor thanked Mr. Foxon & his two assistants for a thoroughly good evening. After some announcements concerning the summer trips there were two apologies for absence. Bill Ward because both Margaret & Elizabeth are very poorly & Peter Clowes who had that very day undergone knee replacement surgery. Everyone sends very best wishes to all three & their families & a speedy recovery to each one.

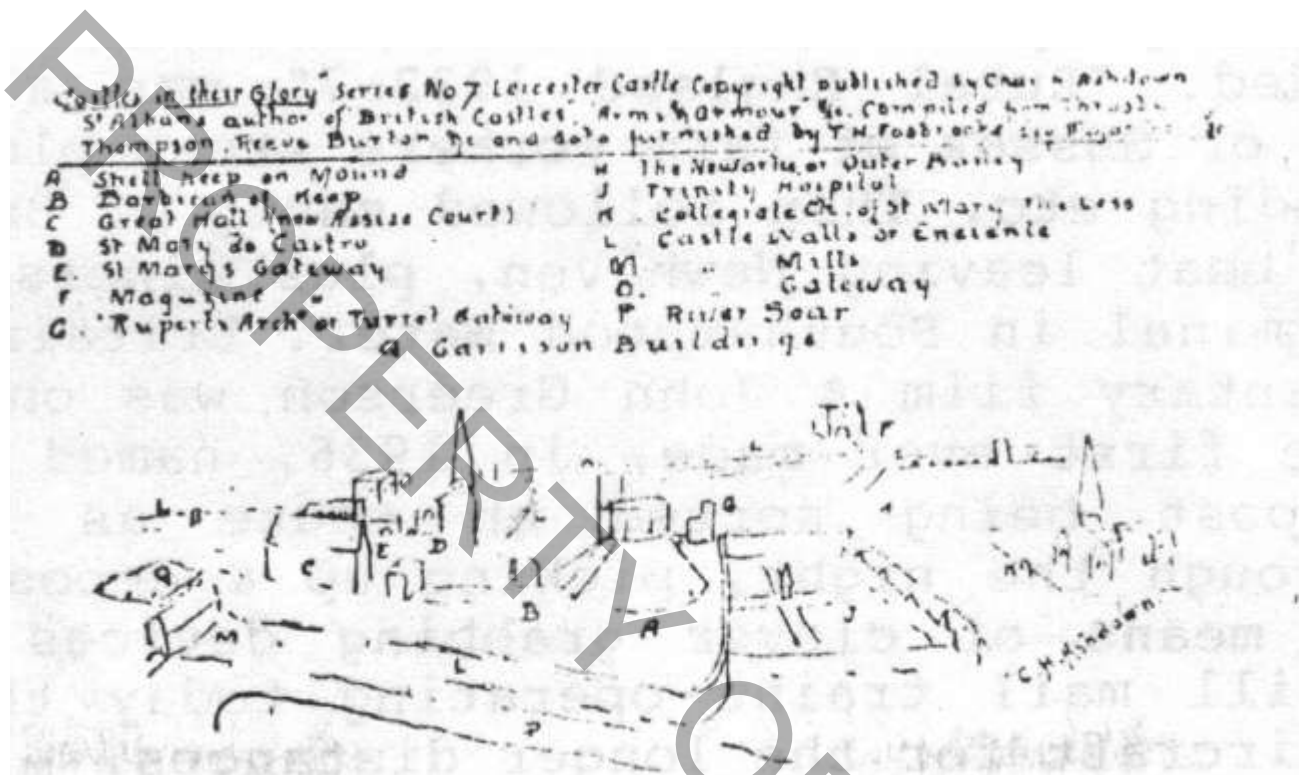
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JOHN OF GAUNT

Further to the March talk this postcard, probably produced in the 1920's, shows Leicester Castle in the time of John of Gaunt & the rural nature of the surrounding town.



LEICESTER CASTLE IN THE TIME OF JOHN OF GAUNT.



WIGSTON WHO'S WHO

NO: 14 ELIZABETH

CLARKE

Elizabeth Clarke was a member of the well known family of that name who lived at Wigston Hall in Long Street (though probably a previous building to the one which existed until 1961), & farmed a large area in the parish. Her father Henry was a son of John Walton Clarke. Henry's elder brother was given the same name, & the name John & inheritance of the Wigston estate was traditionally passed to the first born son of each generation. Henry being a second son had to make his own way in life. This he did with amazing success. According to Nichols "he came a F.W.K. from Wigston to acquire opulence here [in Leicester]."

He married Dorothy Chapman on 25/4/1723 at St. Mary de Castro. She was originally from Newbold Verdon where she had been baptised in September 1688 the daughter of Humphrey & Keturah Chapman. Henry like the rest of his family at that time was a Presbyterian but Dorothy was a Churchwoman so the couple agreed when they married that they would bring up any boys in their father's persuasion & any girls in their mother's. In the event they were to have only the one child, Elizabeth. Her baptism has proved hard to find, it could have taken place in London or even abroad, as it seems unlikely her father's business could have been so successful without travel & trade beyond his own locality.

No detail of Henry's life appears to survive but as a dissenter he would have been barred from public office. Members of his wife's family, though, served as Lord Mayor & Deputy. Elizabeth was brought up in Leicester but would have been sure to spend time in Wigston

with her cousins. When her father died he was returned to his roots & buried at All Saints' Church on 23/5/1755. Elizabeth acted as his sole executor suggesting her mother had already died by this time. Henry left his daughter, aged about 32, a very wealthy woman. Among his bequests was £20 for the poor of Wigston, & £100 to his brother J.W. Clarke who as a Trustee of the Meeting House in Long Street was charged to pay £1 per quarter for the maintenance of the Minister until he could buy some land & settle it for that purpose. The Meeting House had been built by a Presbyterian congregation 24 years previously on a plot of land which probably belonged to the Clarke family who owned the neighbouring Goal Close, now the Memorial Park. The chapel site looks likely to have once been part of a larger Goal Close. No suitable land became available for 11 years by which time Elizabeth's uncle had died & it fell to her cousin to purchase *k* yardland situated dispersedly within Tythorn Field. This purchase cost £115 10 0, the Chapel making up the difference.

Elizabeth never married though this was apparently not from lack of opportunity. In Nichols it is again quoted that "Dr. Charles Morton (late *secretary* of the Royal Society) was a successful suitor to her." She did however seem to dislike being known as Miss. Her Will describes her as "spinster" then "Mrs. Clarke" & Nichols as "Miss or rather Mrs. Clarke." So she had no immediate family but fortunately quite a quantity of cousins. She is believed to have been very independent & self reliant, to have travelled abroad (rare for a woman alone at that time) & to have disapproved of the dominance of men over their wives. When leaving a bequest to any female married relative her Will states in each case "I direct that the same shall not be liable to the debts, controul [sic] or engagements of her present or any future husband, but that the receipt of the said for the same shall be a good & sufficient discharge ... not withstanding her coverture."

She continued to live mainly in Leicester where she attended daily prayers with her friend Mrs. Carte *a* neighbouring clergyman's daughter. When Mrs. Carte was left ill provided for Elizabeth was generous to her friend. When Mrs. Carte died she left land at Gumley & Burton Overy & a cottage in St. Martin's churchyard to a Mrs. Catherine Palmer "with *a* letter intimating her wish that they should be appropriated to the living at Great Wigston; on condition that the vicar.... should reside in the parish." This was duly done, thus the parish church & dissenters' chapel were both generously funded by a father & his daughter.

Elizabeth died on Saturday 18/11/1780. The Leics. Journal reported her death rather cheekily thus: "On Saturday before died at Peatling Parva in this County, Mrs. Clarke a maiden lady, advanced in years - we hear she has bequeathed several considerable legacies to charitable uses, the particulars of which we have not been able to learn. Mr. Clarke a considerable farmer at Wigston, a near relation, is bequeathed estates & other property amounting to £40,000 & upwards." She was buried at All Saints' Church on 24/11/1780 & the Rev. Pigott, vicar noted in the margin of his Register "A great benefactor to the parish. In her time she gave a chandelier, a crimson communion cloth, the pulpit cushion & at her death £3000 to be expended for an hospital for 6 poor people." He forgot to mention the font which was another of her gifts!

Her Will as might be expected was a lengthy document. She bequeathed substantial legacies & annuities to various cousins & friends. £100 each personally to the vicar of Wigston, the ministers of St. Mary & St. Martin's in Leicester & Mr. Worthington, the dissenting minister of Great Meeting in Bond Street, then a Presbyterian Chapel. £350 between the poor of all 5 Leicester parishes plus Wigston. £20 to each of her servants living with her at her death & *a* further £10 for mourning.

She left an interest in an estate at Wigston to her Aunt Ann & afterwards to be divided between 2 cousins, an estate at Newbold Verdon to her cousin Sampson Chapman & his heirs. Her main beneficiary however was her Wigston cousin John Clarke who received all her personal effects & residue plus "my Manor messuages lands tenements & hereditaments at Little Peatling & Bruntingthorpe & my Lordship & estate called New Parks with all & singular the lands & grounds rights & privileges & appurtenances thereto belonging situate near the Borough of Leicester."

She appointed 4 of her cousins as executors, John Clarke, Richard Worthington, John Paine & John Fisher. In addition to administering this huge estate she directed them to erect the almshouses within one year of her decease if possible. If the project could not go ahead the

£3000 was to go instead to her good friend John Brogden of Clapham. However John Brogden was out of luck & the almshouses were built on the Long Street/Blunts Lane corner & endowed with the purchase of Pinder Close to the rear, 7 cottages in the village & 100 acre Fleckney Lodge Farm. The income from these to be used for repairs & an income for the residents & a nurse to care for them. A plaque was placed on the alm houses together with the family coat of arms.

Over the years the buildings were extended to house 13 residents. They continued in existence with descendants of the family acting as Trustees until 1962 when the buildings became uneconomic to repair & were taken over by the council who erected the present bungalows on the site. A replacement of the original plaque states:

Who built this structure? neat but without state: Where aged and want
sit smiling at the gate.

This Hospital
is founded for the maintenance of six indigent Persons by Mrs.
Elizabeth Clarke late of Little
Peatling in this County, erected by her
Executor John Clarke, Gent, of this place:
Anno Domini 1781

And underneath

This hospital was replaced by nine bungalows
erected by Wigston Urban District Council
Anno Domini 1964

Tricia Berry

Sources: Whites 1846 Directory, Various parish registers, Deed Leics. R.O. N/C/355/23-24/i+ii, Will Public R.O. B11/1075, History & Antiquities. ... John Nichols Vol IV Part I p382, Throsby's Leics. Vol III p!63/167. Leics. Journal 25/11/1780.

Note: In trying to compare the sums mentioned with today's values, a very approximate conversion might be to add half as much again & then add two noughts. Thus £100 would be £15000. This is based on \ yardland (roughly 7 acres) costing £115, therefore 1 acre = £16.43. Agricultural land today is about £2500 per acre.

*

WIGSTON IN BUSINESS No : 2

W.B. ROBERTS & SON

W.B. Roberts & Son, newsagent, stationer, tobacconist, bookseller & publisher of local view postcards, held a special place in the lives of many Wigston folk. In our family you did not get off the Oadby bus in Bell Street or on the Bank, but outside Roberts'. You then often went inside to buy a paper, magazine, greetings card, chocolate, ice cream or item of stationery.

Bell Street had something of a tradition for news. As early as 1855 John Newby & Thomas Coltman occupied a News Room, houses & shop there, & by the early 1870 's George Mallard was a newsagent in the street. The Roberts' family connection began about 1875 when Mrs. Elizabeth Ann Hargest came to Wigston from Cascob, in Radnorshire to live & trade as a newsagent, stationer & general dealer at 43 Bell Street, probably though not necessarily taking over the existing business. Elizabeth was aged 33 & had a baby son

named Richard. In the 1881 Census she is described as a widow. She may have arrived with her husband & lost him soon afterwards, or perhaps more likely found herself alone in rural Wales with a child to support & no prospects of work, & came alone to try her luck in Wigston. Other family members came to join her. Again in 1881 she was the head of a household which comprised Richard then aged 6, her brother James Roberts aged 22, & her sister-in-law Fanny Hargest aged 23. James & Fanny followed their own occupations, he as a farmworker & she as a seamstress. Elizabeth ran the shop for many years, her son did not follow her but trained instead for the shoe trade.

By 1891 another brother, John Roberts & his wife Jane, had arrived via Herefordshire & were living in Newgate End, where John worked on a farm. The couple had 6 sons, Arthur born in Eardisland & the other 5, Albert, Walter, George, Sidney & Willoughby in Wigston. It was one of these sons, Walter Bryan Roberts, who used to deliver newspapers for his aunt, who eventually took over the business in the early part of this century. Elizabeth retired to live at the Clarke Almshouses where she died 9/12/1925 aged 83 years. Two of the other brothers also had shops in Wigston. Arthur & his wife Betsy ran a fruit shop at 41 Bell Street, which premises were eventually taken over & combined with No. 43, & Willoughby Charles Roberts & his wife Mary had a shop at 130 Moat Street & a smallholding at the top of Horsewell Lane.

Walter Bryan Roberts & his wife moved to 43 Bell Street & continued to build up the business. They had 3 sons, Eric, Jack & Maurice. World War I was a difficult time when Mrs. Roberts had to cope alone while her husband served in the forces. She later told her family of getting up at 4a.m. each day to push a handcart to Wigston Station to pick up the papers. She consequently became very strong & was not a lady to be messed with! After the war things improved & the couple built 283, Leicester Road, Wigston Fields & opened a sub-Post Office. Walter became much involved in the Sub-Postmasters Federation & the Newsagents Federation. All 3 sons followed their father, Eric took over Bell Street, Jack ran a newsagency in Queens Road, Clarendon Park, & Maurice took over as sub-postmaster at Wigston Fields.

Eric James Roberts & his wife Marion operated Bell Street from about 1931. They had one son, James. Again war caused disruption & when all 3 brothers were called up their wives had to cope alone.

Jim's memories include his mother collecting their milk from small churns on the handle bars of Mrs. Knight's bicycle, which she used to trundle down the entry dividing their shop from Stentons. As a four year old riding his little home made tank ON THE ROAD round the corner past Ray's fish & chip shop to the Bull's Head Inn (but not inside!). His make shift comics of Rupert Bear cartoon strips cut from surplus copies of the Express & much moving between their house in Leicester Road, the Post Office in Wigston Fields & the Bell Street shop.

The war also caused trading difficulties. Sweets were rationed & could only be supplied by coupon & tobacco was scarce. A successful venture at this time was the lending library which took up the whole of the rear of the shop. Phyllis Palfreyman who worked in the business was much involved in renovating & repairing those precious books. The opening of the Magna Cinema provided a welcome boost to trade.

Eric Roberts sold his business to Moulden's in 1966. It subsequently became a County News & is now a Mercury News Shop. W.B. Roberts passed away in 1957 & his son Eric in 1985. Marion died aged 89 in 1994.

Tricia Berry

Many thanks to Jim Roberts, son of Eric, & Samuel, son of George, for their willing help with this article.

Other sources: Various directories, 1881 & 1891 Census returns for Wigston.

The Magic of Mackintosh

In a recent meeting of the Historical Society we had the pleasure of seeing the GPO film "Night Mail".

This is the Night Mail crossing the Border,
Bringing the cheque and the postal order,

Thousands are still asleep,
Dreaming of terrifying monsters
Or a friendly tea beside the band in Cranston's or Crawford's: ...

W.H. Auden

Cranston's were well known tearooms in Glasgow run by Miss Cranston.

The mind wandered on to think of Mackintosh. The computers ... ? The toffees ... ? The raincoat .. ? No, none of these, this Mackintosh is Charles Rennie Mackintosh, the architect.

Miss Cranston's tearooms in Glasgow were a response to the build up of population in Glasgow and in particular to the drinking of alcohol. The Coffee Houses, of which Leicester had several, were a similar response.

Miss Cranston commissioned Mackintosh to design the furniture and interiors of all her tearooms in Glasgow. In 1884 she opened the first Tearoom at 114 Argyle Street, Glasgow. In 1892 she married Major John Cochrane and he bought her the Argyle Street property which had previously been rented. In 1897 Mackintosh designed the furniture for the Argyle Street Tearooms. The furniture design here was quite radical, the chairs had high ladder backs, the verticals creating interesting sub-spaces. Further work in 1906, created the Dutch Kitchen.

In 1896 she acquired the Buchanan Street Tearoom. The original interior designer was George Walton assisted by Mackintosh. Mackintosh did some stencil decorations and eventually took the project over.

In 1901 the Ingram Street Tearoom was acquired. Mackintosh designed the interiors and furniture here. Further work, in 1906, created the Oak Room. The work at Ingram Street continued with the Cloister Room and the Chinese Room in 1911.

In 1904 the Willow Tearooms in Sachihall Street were opened. Sachihall means grave of the willow and this theme is picked up in the decorative work. The main work here was the Room de Luxe with a large gesso panel and paintings by Margaret Macdonald. The work at the Willow Tearooms was completed with the basement "Dugout" in 1917.

He also created the White Cockade Restaurant for Miss Cranston at the Glasgow Exhibition.

But what of his background? What and who influenced his work?

Charles Rennie Mackintosh was born in Glasgow in 1868. He was the second son of a family of eleven children. His father was a Superintendent in the Police Force. In 1878 the family moved to a pleasant Glasgow suburb. From here Charles, whose health had always been fragile, was able to explore the surrounding countryside, to observe and sketch, and to absorb nature and its influences. His habit of carrying a sketch book and using it to record plants and buildings that he had seen, stayed with him for most of his life.

In 1884 he was apprenticed to John Hutchinson, an architect. After five years, he joined John Honeyman and Keppie another firm of architects in Glasgow. In 1891 he won a travelling scholarship, which gave him the opportunity to travel to Italy. Although he produced many sketches on this trip, some of which were prize winners in the Annual Exhibition of the School of Art, there is little evidence that any of his later designs were influenced by this period abroad.

During Mackintosh's period of apprenticeship he studied at the Glasgow School of Art, where he was one of the top pupils. Here he met Margaret Macdonald (1865-1933), who was to become his wife, her sister Frances Macdonald (1874-1921) and Herbert MacNair. They often worked together to produce work that was very different; collectively they became known as the Glasgow Four.

... whose distinctive style of draughtsmanship and eerie symbolism permeated the School and influenced many other students.

Working in parallel with The Four were a group of painters known as the Glasgow Boys. They were also influenced by Japanese art and their paintings were exhibited in the Tearooms.

Mackintosh studied and recorded the Scottish vernacular architecture. The features would be incorporated into his designs; he wanted to show affinity with the past but not dependence on it. He could see that by the appropriate functional use of shape and materials, new styles could be found for modern buildings.

In the 1860s objet d'art were being imported from Japan wrapped in prints of Japanese wood-cuts. The wrappings were to create more interest than the objects. Hiroshige and Hokusai were two Japanese artists whose work was seen in Britain and the United States at this time. Their work was strongly two dimensional with very little sense of perspective. They had a high level of symbolism, for instance, stones or rocks could stand for mountains or strength. Seventeenth and eighteenth century domestic houses in Japan, illustrated in the prints, show strong stylistic and cultural links with the mood that penetrated Britain in 1860. Mackintosh took up the Japanese symbolism and these characteristics became important to The Four.

In his own flat in Mains Street, Glasgow, Mackintosh was able to give free range to his creative skills, and it was here that he developed his early ideas. Mackintosh often used highly stylized plant forms, with a high degree of verticality and a controlled angular structure. The flowers were often roses or tulips. The tulips, in particular, often had a strange - almost phallic - symbolism in their appearance. These stylized natural forms are most evident in his wrought iron work and his furniture. The rooms in the flat were sparse, plain and light with a minimal amount of furniture. These white rooms were the nearest that Mackintosh could get, within the confines of the Scottish climate, to the aesthetic feel of the open structure of Japanese houses. His aim was for a total integration of all elements. In these rooms Herman Muthesius, who was a friend of the Mackintoshes, recognised the power of Japan. Muthesius had a strong interest in Japanese art, and in the Main Street flat there were Japanese prints which he had given to them. The houses depicted in these prints would have had a profound influence on Mackintosh, particularly, in his interpretation of space and the effect of the careful positioning of furniture within the space. The relationship between the furniture and Japanese style arrangements of twigs and flowers was an important aspect of Japanese influence to be seen in his work.

The unerring skill of the Japanese in assembling a perfectly balanced composition from straight lines and simple forms combined with Mackintosh's own imagination to produce a totally new style.

These rooms were the genesis of all others.

The Glasgow School of Art is Charles Rennie Mackintosh's most famous building. Francis Newberry was the Director of the Art School and its prime visionary. He was the instigator of the competition to design a new building for the School of Art, which Honeyman and Keppie won with Mackintosh's design. For financial reasons it was built in two phases. The two distinct phases echo changes in Mackintosh's style. The exterior of the first phase (1897-9) reflects Mackintosh's love of the traditional Scottish architecture of tower houses. In the second phase the Japanese influence is more overt; the library with its exposed decorative timber sub-structure, in particular, shows very strong Japanese influence. In the main staircase Japanese twin beams project and grip the newels. The whole, however, is a unified exercise in the manipulation of space. The building anticipates the functionalism of the 1920s and 30s. The exteriors were evolved as a secondary process and reflect the functions of their respective interiors. For instance, the large windows on the front elevation give high quality north light to the studios within. This idea of developing an architectural style out of a functional need was innovative for the period.

Mackintosh was not structurally inventive. Within conventional structures he used Japanese internal systems. His aim in both his architecture and furniture was holistic to the extreme. He was only interested in the "total look" and this was often at the expense of craftsmanship. For instance, the metal work at the Glasgow School of Art, whilst visually stunning did not allow the drainage of rain water and eventually became badly corroded. The rendering at Hill House was finished off in an unconventional manner and water seeped between the harling and the stone structure underneath eventually causing staining and rot. His chairs for the Glasgow Tea Rooms were often shoddily made and poorly finished.

Mackintosh firmly believed that architecture was not just about facades but the interior spaces, particularly in relation to human activity. Mackintosh often spent time with his clients to find out about their life styles before commencing his building design, for example, at Hill House he spent time with the Blackie family.

Although, Charles Rennie Mackintosh used geometric shapes in his furniture design, he generally favoured delicacy in his furniture, reflecting again a Japanese influence, the structural members were often very slight contrasting strongly with the general robustness of furniture of the Edwardian period.

In 1927, after several years of exile in the South of France, Mackintosh returned to England. Where, in 1928, he died of cancer of the tongue.

Charles Rennie Mackintosh recorded natural plant life and used these forms, in a stylized fashion, to ornament his building and furniture designs. He used his own house as a means to develop ideas. He was profoundly influenced by the culture and architecture of Japan, particularly the artist's representation of Japan. He was receptive to new ideas and innovative in his design concepts. Mackintosh was always the artist - architect, both in temperament and his practical approach. He had been trained in all of the arts and crafts and he used those skills throughout his working life. Charles Rennie Mackintosh's talent never reached its full potential and was not recognised in his lifetime or for many years after his death. He had a truly creative talent.

Chris Smart Bibliography

available on request.

NOTICE- 1809

THE PARTICULARS OF ANN MOORE OF TITBURY IN STAFFORDSHIRE WHO HAS EXISTED NEARLY TWO YEARS WITHOUT FOOD, AND IS NOW LIVING IN THE SAME STATE

Ann Moore was born near Ashbourne in Derbyshire but now lives at Titbury, in Staffordshire, he has never tasted any sort of food whatsoever for two years past the fifth of next March, She has been visited by people from different parts of England, she lost her appetite the fifth day of March 1807; and the first 4 months she took two ounces of water per day. Doctor Allen of the same place visited her every day, although he gave no credit to it, as last he told her if she could live fourteen days without anything, he should be much surprised

The next day she desired them to take her to any house and keep watch over her, which they did, she was removed to the house of one Mr Jackson, a grocer in the town; the landlord belonging to the house she

lived in and two women watch over her by turns, four hours each for fourteen days and the expense of the surgeons that visited her, and at the expiration of fourteen days, every one made an oath that she never swallowed any thing during that time, she then left off the water and only wet a small bit of rag in a drop of water in a tea cup, and wet her tongue with it twice a day She has done that even for twelve months, until last October, when she was almost spent with draught, she then took about one ounce of water out of a small glass which almost killed her, she could not swallow it, her passage being dried up, all surgeons that come to see her desired her never to attempt any thing more while she lives She has a desire to live till next March, till the two years expire, she looks remarkably well in the face although the body is dried up, her backbone and stomach are contracted together.

There has been a painter down from London three different times to take her likenesses and is to attend at Christmas again, her case has appeared in most Newspapers twelve months since. She was married when she was about twenty, but never had any child by her husband, which occasioned much unhappiness between them, they parted about fifteen years ago, and he allowed her five shillings a week, which he continued till she lost her appetite, and ever since he allows her half a crown for a person to attend her, she has had a child since by chance, a fine girl now about twelve years of age

The house is crowded with people from all parts every day, from whom she receives many presents, even Mr Jackson attends every evening, and receives the money which is presented to her, and which will be applied to rear and educate the child after her mother's death, except so much per week that is allowed to the woman who looks after her and the child.

She is now 46 years of age and though so reduced, appears likely to live some years. Her faculties are all good, she keeps her bed constantly but sits up and converses with any body.

This account was received from her own mouth by William Davis She has no pain or sore about her.

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CONFESSION OF ANN MOORE 1813

The Committee who have conducted the Investigation of the Case of Ann Moore, after an unremitting and assiduous course of examination, have discovered the imposture which she has practiced on the Public, and think it their Duty to publish this, her own Declaration and Confession thereof: -

"I, ANN MOORE, of tutbury, humbly asking Pardon of all persons whom I attempted to deceive and impose upon, and above all with the most unfeigned sorrow and contrition imploring the Divine Mercy and Forgiveness of that God whom I have so greatly offended, do most solemnly declare, that I have occasionally taken sustenance for the last six years."

Witness my hand this Fourth day of May 1813
ANN MOORE X Her mark

The above Declaration of Ann Moore was made before me, one of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the County of Stafford
THOMAS LISTER

Witness to the above Declaration and Signature of my Mother, Ann Moore
MARY MOORE

Signed by order and in the name of the Committee

JOS. B.H. BENNETT, Secretary

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UNION STREET, LEICESTER

JR. Colver. (LRO

11D56/12)

This very sad case highlighted by Jim Colver shows that eating disorders are not modern maladies after all, but conditions that could also affect previous generations.

PROPERTY OF GWHTS