



Greater Wigston Historical Society

White Gate Farm, Newion Lane. Wigton Magna, Leicester.

BULLETIN 68



St Giles Church Great Stretton

J.R.Colver

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS - FEBRUARY TO SEPTEMBER 2004

Wednesday 18th February 2004

A.G.M. followed by History of Brocks Hill Millennium Park - Duncan Lucas
7.30p.m. U.K. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

Wednesday 17th March 2004

Looking for a Black Sheep - Linda Hotchkiss (Lines. R O). To be confirmed
7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

Wednesday 21st April 2004

Calke Abbey - Mrs. Gillespie from National Trust
7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

Wednesday 19th May 2004

Visit to Barrowden, tour of church & village, with Graham & Linda Worrell. Stop for
a drink on way home.
Coach from Paddock Street 6.30p.m.

Wednesday 16th June 2004

Visit to Market Harborough, tour of the town, with Colin Crosby. To be followed by
meal to be arranged.
Meet Paddock Street 7.00p.m. to share transport.

Wednesday 18th August 2004

Old Wigston in slides & film - Peter Clowes
7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

Wednesday 15th September 2004

Visit to Unitarian Church, East Bond Street, Leicester
Meet Paddock Street 7.15p.m. to share transport.

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

Editor: Tricia Berry, 7 Wensleydale Road, Wigston. Leics. LE18 3RX.

FRONT COVER

Jim Colver's drawing for the cover this time features St. Giles Church, Great Stretton. Standing all alone in a field, tiny and remote, it has a very low west tower of unknown date and a Norman doorway. The rest of the building was reconstructed in 1838 from old materials. Inside there is an octagonal, Decorated font, with panels displaying flowing tracery.

Clear earthwork remains of the streets, property boundaries, and a moat from the manor house of its deserted village, can be seen round the church.

OCTOBER MEETING

In October we welcomed back Mick Rawle who spoke this time on the effects on the village labourer of Enclosure of the open fields during the period 1760-1832. He warned us in advance that this would be a very sad tale and so it proved to be.

From the time of the Conquest England had been run on a Feudal system. It was headed by the king, who theoretically owned all the land, some of which he retained for his own use (Crown Land), some he gave to the Monasteries (Church or Glebe Land) and the rest was divided into estates (manors) and granted to his Lords as reward for their allegiance. The Lords sub-let farms on their estates to tenant farmers and smaller plots to cottagers. Squatters were allowed to erect basic mud houses on the common land, also owned by the Lord, and worked so many days per year on his land in lieu of rent. Finally there were the farm servants who had no rights.

The land was largely arable and divided usually into three huge open fields with crops rotated annually. Each field was sub-divided into many small strips giving the ridge and furrow effect which can still be plainly seen today. There was some common land, and some pasture and meadow, but only enough to support a very few animals. Things remained much the same for some 500 years until limited enclosure took place by some Lords to accommodate sheep and take advantage of the lucrative wool trade. By the middle 1700s the dissolution of the monasteries and the sale of some manors for inheritance reasons had enabled the more enterprising tenant farmers to purchase and increase their holdings. But this was still scattered 'dispersedly' in the three fields and was inefficient to farm and not suitable for stock production.

The population increased and there was a movement to emerging towns to work in the many new trades created as a result of the industrial revolution. These people did not grow their own food but still needed to be fed. There was pressure on farmers to produce more food and especially to raise cattle for meat and milk. There was also of course the prospect of increasing their income. To achieve this the many scattered strips had to be consolidated into compact workable units which could be divided into small fields and some laid to permanent pasture. So arrived the farms we still have

today.

Enclosure of a Parish had to be authorised by an Act of Parliament which was granted by the wishes of the owners of the majority of the land; not the majority of the owners. Thus the biggest landowners with the most to gain but often under a quarter of the total number of people affected could push this through while the majority with the most to lose could do nothing about it. The latter's share often not being large enough to be viable without the right to use of the common land). As to those who owned nothing their homes and subsistence existence disappeared and whole families were displaced to take their chance elsewhere.

In some parts of the country civil unrest occurred, notably the swing Riots in 1830 near Canterbury, when threshing machines were destroyed and hay ricks fired. Some attempts were made to help the poor when parishes supplemented low wages with an allowance related to the prevailing price of bread. This became known as the Speenhamland System after the place of that name in Berkshire where it was first introduced.

Mick was warmly thanked by the Chairman, Edna Taylor, for a most interesting talk.

NOVEMBER MEETING

This month we welcomed Stewart Warburton and Tony Pickering who gave a joint presentation on the history of the bicycle. They explained there is no actual invention date or person, more a gradual development over time.

The earliest attempt was the dandy or hobby horse demonstrated by a German inventor in 1818. The rider sat astride a two wheeled vehicle similar in appearance to the modern cycle and propelled himself forward by pushing first one foot, then the other, along the ground. A young Scottish blacksmith then fitted cranks to the axle of the rear wheel and operated them with his feet by means of two long levers. This enabled him to ride without putting his feet on the ground. A German mechanic fitted pedals to the front wheel and a Frenchman made the front wheel larger than the rear to increase speed. This became known as the 'Boneshaker' which later developed into the 'Penny Farthing'.

Around 1885 a Coventry engineer James K Starkey invented the safety bicycle which was approximately what we know today with cranks and pedals in the centre and the transmission of the leg power by chain to the back wheel. A Frenchman put the axles of the wheels on tiny steel balls to reduce friction which made free-wheeling possible and two Englishmen invented the variable gear, while a Scottish veterinary surgeon, John Boyd Dunlop, added the pneumatic tyre.

In England, Coventry became a huge cycle manufacturing centre with many factories. The above James Starkey and his friend and business partner William Ffillman (who later progressed to motor cars) were great developers of the 'Boneshaker' and patented the first 'Penny Farthing' in 1875. They also manufactured nuts & bolts,

bearings, roller skates and sewing machines. Another partner was Leicester born William Henry Herbert whose younger brother Alfred also moved to Coventry and started his massive machine tool company making spanners etc. for bicycles. In Leicester, Henry Curry of Belgrave Gate was a local cycle maker whose company evolved into the Curries Electrical Stores we have today.

Tony and Stewart are both leading members of the Desford Land Pedallers. A large group of enthusiasts who dress in period costume and have great fun in the summer riding their vintage cycles both here and abroad. Two other members of this group joined the audience and showed a really wide photograph of a 'Penny Farthing' stack they joined which qualified for the Guinness Book of Records.

The Pedallers were given a warm vote of thanks by the Chairman, Edna Taylor.

DECEMBER MEETING

The Christmas Social followed a tried and tested format which still seems to work well.

Edna's picture quiz again proved a good way to start the evening off, with Ruth Granger emerging as the winner. We then divided into groups to tackle some rather taxing questions on the history of Market Harborough. Edna's team came out as worthy winners of this, but not without having to suffer some light hearted comments about their perceived advantage in sitting nearest the table with the questions on!

There followed an excellent supper by Annie's Patisserie, our usual caterer not being available this year. After this there was a basketful of wrapped presents to raffle before the evening came to an end at approx. 9.45p.m.

JANUARY MEETING

The booked speaker, Linda Hotchkiss, was forced to cancel at short notice, but Blue Badge Guide, Virginia Wright, due to visit us in March very kindly agreed to come this month instead. Her talk with slides on Leicester's Oddities was truly fascinating. Naturally we were already aware of some things but it is very doubtful if anyone present knew of all the unusual, quirky things she explained to us.

There were many examples, notably, on the ground: a cross to mark the site of the old High Cross in Highcross Street, an engraved plaque at the top of Cank Street for the Cank Well, Parish boundary signs for Knighton opposite Homebase on Welford Road and St. Margarets at the top of Evington Footpath, and a milepost near Belgrave Island to the right of the former Parr's shop.

On buildings: a bust of Jesus on the Secular Hall, emblems of Empire on the former Singer Building, friezes depicting the original use of a fur shop, Morley's Drapers, Butler's Chemists and an 'all comers welcome' lodging house.

Pubs with strange associations such as: the Damask Rose and 4d. annual rent due for the Crown & Thistle (O.Neills), name of Durham Ox after a celebrated 27 cwt beast and evidence of the avoidance of Window Tax at the Globe.

Also included was Lord's Place, built 1569 in High Street by the Earl of Huntingdon, and the connection to his descendant in Australia who some say should be our rightful sovereign. This led on to mention of the unhappy fate which befell a surprising number of royal people who had stayed overnight in Leicester.

Much research has been carried out by Virginia but two of her oddities at present elude her. The stone carving of a Wyvern on the wall of a building in Northampton Street and an owl perched atop a gable in Market Street.

Edna Taylor thanked the speaker for a really interesting evening, adding that she feared we should all now be more liable to accidents as we searched here and there for these interesting remnants of the past.

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FOLLOW-UP FROM THE LAST BULLETIN

LANCASTER CRASH

A search at the National Archives (PRO) Kew, by a researcher who specialises in RAF records has failed to find anything relating to an investigation into this accident. Unfortunately, therefore, it seems unlikely we shall find out anymore about the cause.

An interesting letter has been received from Duncan Lucas with a sequel to the story. He says:-

"Whilst working at Greens Norton near Towcester in 1960s a man came up to me, pointed to my lorry with its Wigston Magna address and in broken Polish/English asked, "Is there a pub called the Bell Inn there?" I replied "Yes, why." and his tale flowed.

"I am Polish and was part of an air crew due to take off one morning, I was ill and another took my place. My name is common in Poland like your Smith."

"Midday I felt better and on walking out of the billet men shouted that I was dead, my name had just been posted up as killed! So in the back of a lorry we rushed off to this place called Wigston Magna. There I saw bits and pieces of my friends and realised I was nearly one of them."

"We went into the Bell Inn. My friends had to put we into the lorry for the trip back, I don't remember it."

"I could have died there." he repeated.

"So could I." was my response. "I was ill that day too."

'Usually I biked down with Mr. Allsop who lived in Northfield Avenue. I worked at

Goldhill Lodge by the Railway Bridge. Mr. Allsop was thrown against the wall and died of a heart attack some months later.

'When my company felled a dead Beech tree some years ago we recovered a part of the Lancaster from the upper branches. When the Wigston Folk Museum moved to Hallaton it was presented to the Bell Cote School. I still have a small gear wheel from the crash. It was given to me by Mrs. John Handley.'

THE STAND UP BENEFIT CLUB

Duncan's letter also remarked on the allotment land this society owned. He has seen the deeds and confirms Stanhope Road was built on these allotments. The name Stanhope would probably have been taken from the deeds. This is a common practice with developers to choose street names based on the names of previous owners of the land. Or it could be based on oral tradition. It seems though there has been a misunderstanding! Both when written or spoken it is easy to see how Stand Up has been mistaken for Stanhope. Especially as Stand Up is not an obvious option.

It is unlikely, though, that the residents of Stanhope Road would be too keen on the idea of changing back to the 'correct' version!

WIGSTON GRANGE

It is 50 years since we came to live in Wigston. Dennis and I, Yorkshire born and bred, moved here to take up teaching posts in Wigston schools. We had both taught for a few years in Yorkshire, but in those days Leicestershire was thought to be in the forefront of educational development, building schools such as Abington and Guthlaxton to work out new educational theories. We would stay for 2 or 3 years to try them out, so we thought.

Wigston was expanding and it was easy enough to get a new house. We went to live on the Grange estate. There was a Grange Road and a Grangeway Road, and the building firm of Drury occupied the Grange as its headquarters.

I thought it a handsome building with its buff coloured bricks and large bay windows and porch, a touch of Regency perhaps. It stands in its own grounds at the top of the hill that marks the island of sand and gravel, brought by ice sheets, on which Wigston stands. I have a map dated 1959 and drawn at 6 inches to the mile, that shows the Grange in an orchard with a well marked nearby, and sand pits are shown to either side of the main road to Leicester. Anne Brown who has lived for most of her life in a house opposite the Grange, remembers how she and her brothers used to play in these sand pits and in the fields near the Grange, but doesn't recall anything about the people who lived there. Similarly, Richard Carter remembered the sand hills, and how

his uncle used to pasture cattle and farm fields where Penney Close is, down towards the Grange, but does not remember who lived there.

Very little has been written about this house, and it almost seems that Wigston did not recognise it as belonging to the village at all, though it is within the parish boundary. Perhaps it was felt that it looked towards Leicester more than Wigston and it seems this was the case.

When I asked Brian Bilson if he knew anything of the house, he helpfully produced maps and directories of commercial information, and what follows has been a collaborative effort.

The earliest sight of the Grange is on Greenwood's map, drawn at a scale of 1 inch to the mile, actually surveyed in 1825 and corrected to 1830. It would have been very new then as according to Malcolm Elliott in *Leicester - A Pictorial History* it was built in 1823. A document at Leics R O dated 1825 concerns a John Burgess who is described as formerly of Groby Lodge now of Wigston Grange, so he is likely to have been the builder. In *Pigot's Directory of 1838*, a Thomas Burgess is recorded as living at Wigston Grange. Thus began a long connection between the house and the Burgess family that was to go on until about 1877. There is not space here to write about every member of the family, but one or two can be picked out, and what is noticeable is that they nearly all were connected with the Leicester wool trade.

The most famous Burgess was Edward, described by Malcolm Elliott as civic architect of Victorian Leicester. He was the fourth son of Alfred and Elizabeth Burgess, who had lived at the Grange up to a few years before Edward's birth in 1847. Alfred was a woolstapler, a dealer in wool for the hosiery trade which was Leicester's most important industry. He and his family belonged to the Quaker Meeting, together with the Ellis family to whom they were closely related. Edward, the architect, drew up plans for a new Meeting House. He went on to design Charnwood Street Board School and became the official architect to the Leicester School Board. Thereafter he designed 5 more board schools, Desford Industrial School, Albert Coffee House and the hall of residence which had been the home of G H Ellis on Ratcliffe Road.

It is interesting to see from the different directories how the Burgess family moved on from being wool traders to worsted spinners, then the hosiery trade itself by the 1870s, but they all lived at the Grange, "a mansion of considerably beauty with extensive grounds and commanding a view of the surrounding scenery", says the *Hagar & Co Directory of 1849*. Their factories were in various places, but usually Belvoir Street, Bath Lane and Friars Causeway.

By 1877, *Whites Directory* notes Hannah and Mary Ann Burgess in connection with the Belvoir Street factory, but their private address in now New Walk. Someone called A E Tyler now lives at the Grange, and he has a boot and shoe factory on Belvoir Street. The Burgess connection with the Grange is at an end, but we have Burgess Street to remind us of it.

By 1891, A E Tyler has moved to Cossington Hall, and there is no mention of who lived at the Grange, until the *1895/6 Wright's Directories* list a Miss Harriet Johnson as residing there. The *1976 Kelly's Directory* has an entry that Albert Edward Hill lives there and has a factory in Bell Street, Wigston, where Sainsbury's shop is now. This turns out to be the grandfather of Shirley Muggleton, one of our members, and she has been kind enough to tell me a little about him.

He is known as A E in the family and was born in 1870, married Kathleen Clara from Spilsby in Lincolnshire in 1892, and owned a framework knitting factory in 1916. In 1924 he went to live in Market Harborough and he died in 1934. Shirley's mother was born in Granville Road in 1907 and remembered living in the Grange. When Shirley's husband installed telephones in the Grange in 1984, she had the opportunity to look round again, but simply could not bring herself to enter the house.

Shirley and her sister Joan are researching their family history, and would be grateful to hear from anyone who has any knowledge of the Grange at that time. They have given me the photograph shown with this article of the front of the Grange in 1920, with A E near the porch, Shirley's mother near the car and A E's second wife. After Shirley's family left the Grange, the next resident, according to *Kelly's Directory of 1928*, is James George Escott, Manager of the Phoenix Assurance Co., followed by Francis Greenwood of the London Guarantee & Accident Co., noted in the same *Directories in 1936 and 1941*. Wealth appeared to be passing from the manufacturers to the service sector, in tune with the times. It also could be that the development of Wigston after the war years, with its Drury and Jelson housing estates on the north side, might have made the area seem less exclusive to the older families.

Since Drury the builder moved from the Grange it has had several firms using it as their main offices, such as P D Design Corporation Ltd. Although this has led to extra brick built premises being built at the back of the house, at least it has saved the building from being demolished. If only something like that could have saved Wigston Hall, which used to stand where Elizabeth Court flats are. Perhaps we are learning at last to preserve our building heritage.

A last sentence has to be added. I said at the beginning that we thought we would stay in Wigston for a few years. Well, we stayed a good deal longer than that, and thank you to the people of Wigston for making us so welcome that we wanted to stay and bring up our family here.

Edna Taylor

Sources: Brian Bilson's commercial directories and maps, *In the Steps of Edward Burgess* and *Leicester - A Pictorial History* both by Malcolm Elliott, members of the society's reminiscences, Leics R O DE/3115/30/32.

As Edna has said this is a collaborative effort can I add a bit too!

There is a sale catalogue for the Grange Estate at Leics. R O (3D42/M33/3) dated June 1875. This would presumably be when the Burgess family sold it following the death of Thomas Burgess in 1874. The Grange and 94.25 acres of land were offered in two lots. The entire estate was situated on the east side of Leicester Road, the house and the 40.5 acres surrounding it, and up towards the present traffic island, forming Lot 1, and the 54 acres further towards Leicester forming Lot 2. All continued as agricultural land for many years with Lot 1 eventually be laid out to form the Eastway Road area while Lot 2 formed the Grange and Grangeway Road parts. By August 1929 a builder, C W Hartshorn Ltd, was conveying the first group of houses within Grangeway Road to their new owners. One of the covenants was that the purchasers should maintain good and substantial cattle proof fences along the boundaries!

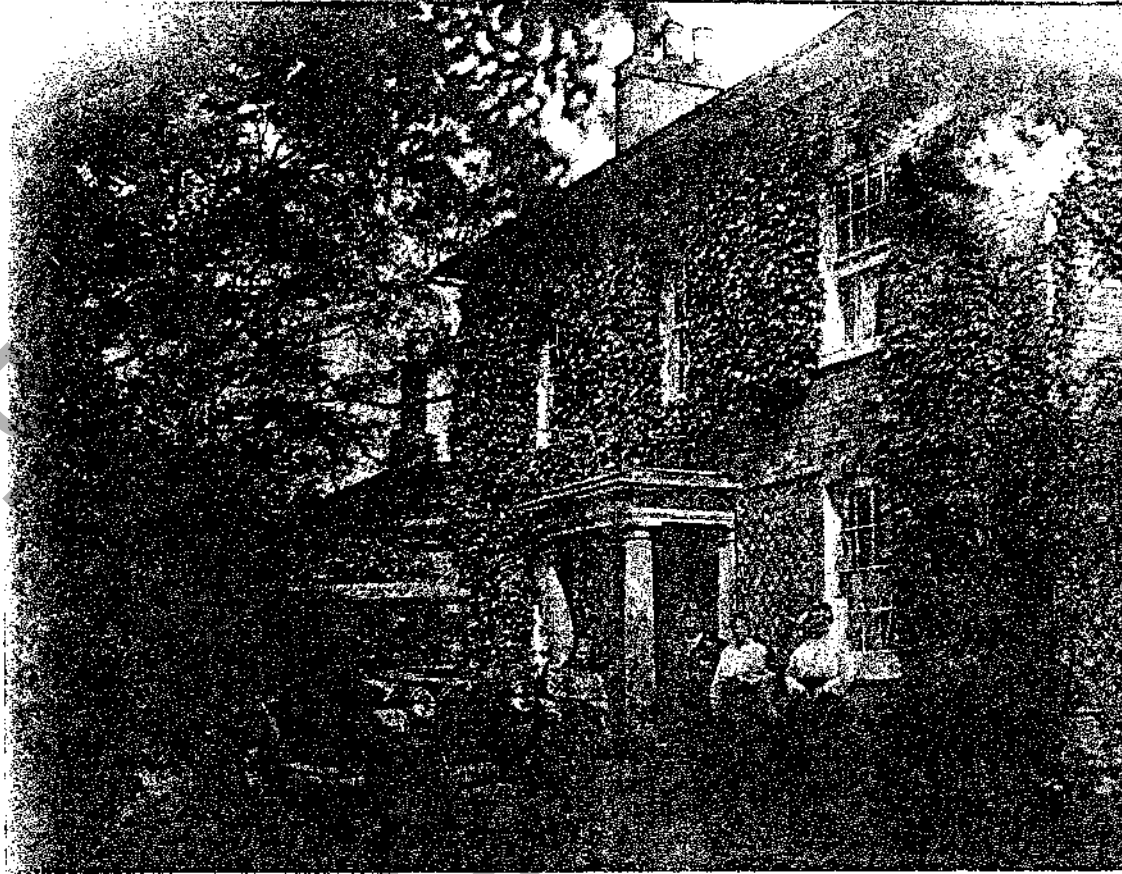
During the early part of WWI the Grange was used as a home for Belgian refugees. It is presently the H O of the Institute of Occupational Safety & Health.

Tricia Berry

Sources: Sale Catalogue - LRO 3D42/M33/3, Grangeway Road deeds in private hands, Belgian Refugees ?? Cannot recall the source at time of writing!



The Grange in 1990s - photo by Katherine Taylor



Albert Edward Hill & family outside the Grange in 1920

WIGSTON CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY

The Co-op movement has its roots in the North of England where in 1844, during the 'Hungry Forties,' a group of people opened the first co-operative shop in Rochdale. They became known, appropriately, as the Rochdale pioneers. Prior to this, by 1829, there had been other similar, but less well documented, groups centred around Liverpool, Manchester and London.

A revolt against the 'truck' system of payment of wages was one of the great driving forces of these early endeavours. This shocking practice was where earnings were paid in kind, or tokens which could only be redeemed at certain shops, often owned by the same employer! This resulted in people being denied choice and forced to make their purchases at inflated prices. After the passing of the Truck Act in 1831, which made this illegal, the revolt grew even stronger because the Act was difficult to enforce.

The co-operative idea soon spread round the larger towns in the country, the Leicester one being founded in 1860. In 1863 an umbrella organisation the Co-operative Wholesale Society Ltd. was founded, but named at that time, the North of England Co-operative Wholesale Industrial Provident Society Ltd. Initially it operated from

rented premises but by 1869 was in a position to build its own head quarters at Balloon Street, Manchester. This is still the Head Quarters of the C W S today.

The society, nationally, developed into a huge organisation. As well as the familiar shops, there was progress into manufacturing, farming and the service industries. Businesses were opened for the supply of hosiery, boots & shoes, pottery, soap, clothing, printing, farming, tea plantation, flour mills, banking, insurance, land & buildings societies, travel, education and laundry. All appeared to prosper except for some reason the flour mills some of which failed and caused a drain on the assets of all member societies.

The Wigston Co-operative Society was started on 9/9/1867 when the Parish Crier announced there was to be a meeting in Brick Kiln Close (on the corner of Welford Road & Moat Street) to discuss ways and means of raising the money to bring co-operation to the area. Twenty nine members were enrolled and a deputation appointed to seek advice from Leicester, Fleckney and Great Glen Societies. One of these 29 people was John Wignall the great grandfather of our member Bob Wignall. Small sums of money were collected weekly until four months later £20 had been contributed and a small shop on Leicester Road was rented and stocked chiefly with main food commodities such as sugar, flour, lard etc. It opened for business 4/1/1868 and was staffed by committee men in their spare time during evenings. So successful was this fledgling enterprise that stocks were sold out in the first three evenings, but were speedily replaced. During the first quarter £330 5s Od was taken and a dividend paid of 1s 2d in the pound. As the business expanded full time staff were engaged and the time had come to look for larger premises. This came about in 1873 with a move to a purpose built shop and bakery in Bell Street. *Whites Directory 1877* describes it as a grocers, drapers, shoe & hardware dealers with Henry William Ball as storekeeper.

By 1892 a butchers shop with offices and committee room over had been built in Long Street with John Bramley as the manager. The Bell Street shop was now managed by James Parsons and a further branch had been opened in Moat Street, managed by James Whyatt. While in South Wigston a grocers shop was opened in Blaby Road managed by William Broughton and Tom Johnson was agent of the Coal Wharf at the Station.

One of the biggest ventures came in 1896 with the purchase of Fullwell Farm, and the development of Central Avenue. The road was laid out and 10 houses built on each side for the Society as an investment, the remaining plots being sold to members for their own housing needs. The farm house survives on Long Street/Central Avenue corner and is used as a surgery by a veterinary practice. In 1910 the prestigious building on the other Long Street/Central Avenue corner was erected. This was the greatest capital commitment to date and was only allowed to go forward after a Special Members' Meeting and a hard fight by the progressive committeemen. It was more a department store and sold drapery & soft furnishings, shoes, ladies outfits & mantles & children's clothes. Above were offices and the Co-operative Hall, scene of many concerts, dances and lectures etc.

Rectory Farm with farmhouse to the rear of All Saints Church was purchased in 1919 and the retail milk business expanded. By 1925 an additional branch had been opened at 25 Bull Head Street.

In 1936 Wilson Walker was the general manager of the Wigston area. More branches had been added at Wigston Fields and Dunton Street, South Wigston, and also at Arnesby. The group were then described as grocers, bakers, butchers, drapers, hairdressers, boot & shoe makers, dealers & repairers, hardware & coal & coke merchants, fish mongers, greengrocers, & dairy & general fanners. In 1939 the first model dairy was built in Bushloe End and pasteurized milk supplied to members.

Another very important part of the Co-op locally but possibly not run as part of the Wigston Society was Wigston Hosiers in Paddock Street. This was started in 1899 and William Broughton was appointed secretary. Mr. Fred Boulter father of W E Boulter VC was general manager for many years.

Progress meetings of the Wigston Society were held quarterly and often the proceedings were reported in the press. The fourth meeting when the Society had been trading for one year appeared in the 30/1/1869 issue of the Leicester Chronicle & Leicestershire Mercury:-

The fourth quarterly financial statement of accounts of the Great Wigston Industrial Provident Society (Ltd)...has recently been printed & circulated. We learn that the committee in reviewing the affairs....ending 4/1/1869 are glad to state that the society is satisfactorily progressing, leaving no doubt.... that the Society is firmly established. It commenced in January 1868 with 29 members & a capital of £20, during the years the members have increased to 77, the capital to £191 Os Od, and the business transacted to £1639 3s Od. & the profits paid as dividends to members & non members, interest on capital etc, amount to £94 15s 21/4d. The benefits from members purchasing their goods at the stores cannot be more forcibly illustrated than by citing a few of the dividends to members for the year, as much as £3 4s 6d, £2 11s 7d, £2 10s 10 1/2d....& similar sums, have been paid to many....By allowing these dividends to remain in the society at 5% interest (the committee suggest) members may find great benefit by withdrawing them in cases of sudden distress. This is true co-operation which it is in the interest & duty of every working man to forward.

In the same paper on 22/1/1887 after 19 years trading the report said:-

The quarterly meeting of this society was held at the committee room, Long Street....Mr J Wignall, secretary, read the committee's report, which stated that the sales for the quarter amounted to £3207 4s 4d, being an increase over the previous quarter of £176 7s 11/2d....the present number [of members] is 488. The net profits would allow a dividend of 1/10d in the £ on grocery & also 1s 10d on meat checks, with £30 for reduction of property, £10 for reduction of fixed stock, & £10 for reserved fund. The amount of share capital during the quarter deposited was £264

18s 7d & the withdrawals £113 2s 11/2d. The balance sheet & report were unanimously adopted & the election of officers resulted in Mr. R Broughton being adopted chairman for the present year, Mr. J Wignall secretary, Mr. T Gilford treasurer, Messrs. A Sampson & W Oakley auditors, & Messrs. A Wignall, M Tomlin, W Franklin & A Hackett to serve on the committee. It was unanimously resolved to increase the contribution from the society to the Leicester Infirmary from £2 2s Od to £4 4s Od per year.

On 9/2/1889 the LC&LM reported a celebration:-

On Monday to celebrate the 21^s anniversary of the society, a public tea was held in the village hall [Frederick Street], to which upwards of 400 people sat down. This being the largest number ever met under the auspices of the society, it taxed the energy of the committee, who were the caterers, & to whom credit is due for the satisfactory manner in which the affair passed off. After tea, there was a public meeting, over which Mr. R Broughton, the chairman presided. Having opened the meeting, the chairman called upon Mr. J Wignall, the secretary, who read a paper, giving the history & rise & progress of the society & pointed to the mutual benefits to be derived by a combination of interests.... Twenty one years ago the society was started with 20 members, who raised amongst them a capital of £20, but its present membership was 562 with a share capital of £5018 (applause). The usual votes of thanks having been passed, the remainder of the evening was devoted to dancing to the strains of Wignall's brass band, an enjoyable time being spent.

It would surely be a source of great pride to those early co-operators to know that their society, now incorporated into a larger group serving the Midlands, continues to thrive and give value and service to its customers.

Tricia Berry

Sources: 1953 advert with history of the Wigston Co-op, reproduced in Bulletin 18 of Friends of Wigston FWK museum, Newspaper reports transcribed by Bob Wignall, various directories, lecture of recent speaker Malcolm Hornsby.