



Greater Wigston Historical Society

White Gate Farm, Newton Lane, Wigston Magna, Leicester.

BULLETIN 92



Grocery shop on the corner of Bassett Street and Countesthorpe Road South Wigston

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS – MARCH TO SEPTEMBER 2012

Wednesday 21st March 2012

The Life of Orson Wright – Peter Cousins
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age Concern, Paddock Street.

Wednesday 18th April 2012

Recording Oral History – Colin Hyde
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age Concern, Paddock Street.

***Wednesday 16th May 2012**

Guided walk Kirby Muxloe village & Castle followed by supper at the Castle Hotel
Meet 6.45p.m. Paddock Street Car Park to share transport

***Wednesday 20th June 2012**

Visit to Leics. County Council Collections Resource Centre, Barrow-upon-Soar
Meet 6.45p.m. Paddock Street Car Park to share transport

Wednesday 15th August 2012

Jet Propulsion in Leicestershire – Max Daetwyler
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age Concern, Paddock Street.

Wednesday 19th September 2012

St. John Ambulance Brigade from its Knights Templar origins – Gary Musson
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age Concern, Paddock Street.

***Please note** – people need to book and pay in advance for the May and June outings. There will be a list and money collected at the March and April meetings. Directions, suggestions on parking and where we are to meet, will be available at Paddock Street on each evening. If drivers have already arranged passengers and are planning to travel direct, please telephone Tricia (2880156) the week before the event for this information.

****Extra to Programme:-**

Skittles Evening Friday 27th April 2012 at 7.30p.m. The Old Crown, Moat Street. Wigston, includes Hot Buffet Pub Supper, Cost £7.50. Organiser Paul Knight, please book with him at the March or April meetings if possible. For queries phone, (2885360).

Mystery Coach Trip, Wednesday 11th July 2012, leaving Paddock Street at **6.30p.m.** arrive back between 10.00p.m.-10.30p.m. Commentary by Duncan Lucas, half hour stop at a pub for a drink if you wish. Draw for Lucky Ticket. Cost £8.00. Organiser Ann Cousins, please book with her at the March or April meetings if possible. For queries phone, (2884638)

The Bulletin is published three times a year on 1st March, July and November. Articles etc., (which are always welcome) should be submitted to the Editor, Tricia Berry, three clear weeks before publication date please.

The Society's website is: www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk
Chairman Mike Forryan's e-mail is: chairman@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk

FRONT COVER

The front cover photograph was originally produced as a postcard c.1910. It shows Thomas Holmes' grocery shop on the corner of Bassett Street and Countesthorpe Road, South Wigston. The lady in the doorway is either his second wife Florence Annie or his daughter Lizzie. The premises were later taken over by Thomas's son Eric for his cycle business.

NOVEMBER MEETING

This month Dr Wendy Freer of Ashby de la Zouch gave an illustrated lecture on 'Goings on Below Stairs'. Wendy had gained her doctorate in Social and Economic History which included a study of the life of servants in big houses. The lecture was at a most appropriate time following the last episode in the latest series of Downton Abbey which she considered was a good reflection of the times. Reference to the census returns showed that the number of servants at Highclere House (the location for Downton) went down from 22 in 1851 to 11 in 1911, although in 1911 the master of the house is not listed and so possibly some servants were away with him.

Wendy had studied servants' diaries and memoirs, of which there are numerous examples, to find out about their lifestyles. She was able to quote several extracts, in dialect, from memory, to illustrate her talk. She also used a data projector to show photographs and contemporary pictures to bring her talk to life.

The main occasion for social interaction by servants was at meal times and even then there was a strict order of seniority at the table when lesser servants were not allowed to speak and were served last. After the main course the seniors retired to the housekeeper's parlour and were served puddings and wine by the junior servants.

The quality of food for servants varied from house to house but the best was thought to be at Longleat where a roast dinner was served to the servants daily. There was a need to ensure that meals were consumed by employees only as sometimes tradesman and even the postman were fed, so they called secretively.

Time off varied a lot and so did actual holiday which could not be requested unless the master of the house was away himself and then those left at home were not well fed.

Uniforms were provided for the men but women had to provide their own which they often made and frequently repaired. A Christmas present for women from the house could be a dress length of material. But if servants went out into the town they were expected to dress well.

Christmas parties were held for the staff sometimes in the ballroom or in the servants' kitchen, paid for by the servants themselves.

Drink, betting and inappropriate relationships with women were some of the bad habits that servants indulged in. Criminal acts included minor theft or misuse of household equipment with occasionally more serious injury or even murder, usually of a master or mistress by a servant. All in all, a fascinating insight into Goings on Below Stairs delivered in a very professional way.

Colin Towell

DECEMBER MEETING

This year the Christmas Meeting again took the form of a social event. About 47 members and guests gathered to enjoy a drink with crisps and nibbles brought by Mike and Linda Forryan, with delicious mincepies made by Pam Woolley.

Settled around tables of four to six, members and friends had a go at the quite challenging quiz set by Mike Forryan - the eventual worthy winners being Duncan Lucas's group. This was followed by yesteryear pictures of Long Street which brought back the memories and invoked quite a bit of discussion.

Finally the Chairman, Mike Forryan, wished everyone a very Happy Christmas and Seasonal Greetings for the New Year.

Tricia Berry

JANUARY MEETING

For the first meeting of the New Year we welcomed Richard McKinder who came, highly recommended, to talk about the finding of a new site on which the Battle of Bosworth Field took place in August 1485. Richard has been involved in the Battlefield for 20 years and works as the County Council's Operations Manager and Archaeology Co-ordinator at the Battlefield Centre. Not only does he work on the site but lives in the key nearby village of Dadlington, we could tell by his enthusiasm and knowledge that he truly lives and breaths Bosworth.

Using an excellent power point presentation, Richard began by outlining the history of pinpointing the battle site. There was an 1850 picture of King Dick's well and farm and in 1974 the County Council became involved when they acquired land to allow access. Most people have some knowledge of the story from Shakespeare's play but in 1974 Danny Williams published his research identifying the site as we have known it until recently. There were others: Peter Foss in 1985, Jones in 2001 and Ken Wright in 2002 all of whom had their own ideas but the 1974 identification held sway. But as Richard pointed out there was no Kate Adie or Peter Snow around in 1485 to report on what happened and so far no one has found any detailed records.

But it is known that Richard III challenged Henry Tudor to a fight to the death for the crown of England. We also know that both sides asked the Stanleys to join them but crucially Lord Stanley who was related by marriage to Henry did not commit himself until the last minute.

Vergil said that lead and iron balls were fired from guns and we know that there was a marsh near the site. There were no maps at the time and most of those involved did not speak English.

There were archers present. In an aside Richard pointed out that there is still a law on the statute books that we should be doing long bow practice every week. Apparently the pull on a long bow was 151 lbs but an Olympic bow today has a pull of only 15 lbs. But archers were firing 3 ft long arrows every six seconds. Various arrow heads were described but at Bosworth a bodkin type arrow head was used a bit like a 6 inch nail which could pierce armour. Bowmen were used at first aiming high so that the arrows dropped from the sky and then more accurate archers were used.

Richard brought along a very fierce looking sword similar to those used at the battle. These could cut a man in half, both ends were used and the cross piece could be used like a crook to unseat a rider.

Having described the battle, Richard went on to talk about the lottery funded search for an alternative site. Very little was left after the battle with bodies being robbed of valuables and weapons broken or being taken away. Wealthy knights' bodies were removed for burial at their homes while ordinary men were buried locally. Any metal objects left had long since rusted away. But more recent maps of the area, soil samples, carbon dating, field walking and metal detecting were all methods used to try to identify the exact site, the latter starting at 20 metre widths and later being narrowed to 5 metre widths. There were concentrations of finds, some even Roman. Three belt buckles were found belonging to a non local family, why were they in the area? Other non military items were found but generally most finds were not related to the battle.

However after a nine day drought when nothing turned up there was a star find, the silver boar. Richard brought along a same size replica, so tiny it being found was incredible. Another key find was a high quality sword cross piece and handle. There were also various sorts of gun shot. The latest site for the battle is not yet fully accessible but a visit to the recently laid out 7.5 metre circular war memorial in the form of a sundial gives a panoramic view of the whole area.

The Battle of Bosworth 1485 – ‘2 kings, 1 day’

Colin Towell

FEBRUARY MEETING

This meeting, the AGM was attended by a record number of 75 members and guests. The Agenda was as follows:

1) Apologies for absence – None

2) Minutes of February 2011 AGM – read by the Secretary, Tricia Berry, were signed as correct.

3) Matters Arising – None

4) Chairman's Report – Mike Forryan welcomed everyone and reported another successful year with meetings well attended and excellent speakers covering a wide variety of topics. Our trips out proved popular, with a walk round Kibworth Harcourt followed by a first class meal at the Coach & Horses, and a tour of the amazing Bell Foundry Museum at Loughborough. The Christmas Quiz and pictures of Long Street also proved popular with about 47 in attendance. Promotion of the society is to continue, but has proved very worthwhile with a good rise in members and guests throughout the year. The website continues to grow and an application for funding to improve the display of Society archives is being prepared. The Committee is also in talks with possible partners in a web hosting arrangement. For this reason the Society's existing verbal constitution has been updated to cover current legislation and formalised in writing. Copies are available to members upon request. Several current and past residents of Wigston have agreed to record their memories and this will start soon. He thanked all the Committee for their support and hard work, particularly the officers Tricia Berry, Linda Forryan and Colin Towell, and welcomed two new Committee members Ann Cousins and Paul Knight. He also thanked Edna Taylor and Ruth Granger who had stepped down during 2011.

5) Treasurer's Report – Colin Towell explained the Income & Expenditure account for the year to 31/12/2011 which this time was displayed on the screen rather than handed out in hard copy.

6) Membership Secretary's Report – Mike Forryan read Linda's prepared report. She wrote that 21 new members had joined, 9 had resigned and 5 were on the new suspended list. This resulted in the total being 86 at the start of the year and 98 at the end. This breaks down as 80 concessionary, 11 full, 2 complementary and 5 suspended. During the year we welcomed 38 visitors to meetings some of whom have now joined the society.

7) Election of Officers – As no nominations had been received it was proposed by Maurice James and seconded by Gill Standley that the present officers should all be re-elected. Namely:
Chairman: Mike Forryan, **Vice Chairman:** Tony Lawrance, **Secretary/Bulletin Editor:** Tricia Berry, **Treasurer:** Colin Towell, **Membership Secretary:** Linda Forryan, **Auditor:** Gary Davies.
Committee Members: Sue Woolley, Ann Cousins and Paul Knight.

8) Any Other Business: - It was proposed by Mike Forryan and seconded by Marion Daetwyler that the donation to the Framework Knitters Museum should be £100. It was agreed that the subscriptions for 2013 should remain the same as 2012 namely £11 full and £8 concessionary. Members were reminded that subscriptions were now due and should be paid that evening if possible.

There followed a showing of the 1972 film of Wigston called *Vanishing Village* which brought back the memories for members who lived in Wigston then, and amazement from more recent arrivals. Many of the fields have been built on, the railway engine sheds gone, the framework knitting factories gone, the traffic so light and vehicles so quaint and the shopping centre altered beyond recognition with one notable exception, Cox's Fruit & Vegetable Shop. Happily enough of the past survives to still give Wigston character and make it a very popular place to live. There was much discussion about the film before Mike Forryan had to close the meeting.

Tricia Berry

GREATER WIGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

Receipts and Payments for the year ending 31st December 2011

Receipts

Opening Balances as at 1/1/11:		
Current A/c	943.37	
Unpresented Chq	-185.02	
Deposit A/c	996.77	1755.12
Subscriptions	755.00	
Visitor fees/Donations	82.00	
Summer visits	527.00	
Christmas meeting	96.00	
Bank Interest	.68	
Sale of books	8.00	

Payments

Lecturer Fees	195.00
Bulletin & Programme	127.58
Christmas meeting	42.86
Room hire (2011)	250.00
Secretary's expenses	58.80
Summer visits	591.00
Coach Deposit (2012)	65.00
Recording equip & mike	372.69
Donation O & WBP Trust	150.00

Closing Balances as at 31/12/11:

Current A/c	351.08	
Unpresented credit	22.34	
Deposit A/c	997.45	1370.87

3223.80

3223.80

GEORGE DAVENPORT STORY

Further to the excerpt from the historical novel on the notorious Wigston Highwayman featured in Bulletin 91 we have the following updates:-

The novel is being released as an e-book on the Amazon website.

The title has been changed to 'The Other Robin Hood'

It will appear under the pseudonym 'Anthony Anglorus'

The excerpt quoted was the opening to Chapter 22.

The author's name is Tony Cordwell not Caldwell as previous stated.

THE QUEEN'S DIAMOND JUBLIEE EXHIBITION

Further to mention of ideas for celebrating the Jubilee in Bulletin 91, the Civic Society are leading this and have established a Project Group which includes members of our Society and the Framework Knitters Museum. It has been decided to create an exhibition of photos and memorabilia with a connection to the Royal Family, either past or present and with or without any links to Wigston. A separate part could include photos and press cuttings of Wigston in 1952/3 or earlier coronation years. It will be held in the Yarn Room at the Museum, be opened on 27th May and will remain open on Saturdays & Sundays until 12th August. It should tie in with other local events such as the Flower Festival at All Saints Church, a garden concert and Rent Day at the Museum, and the proposed Jubilee Plaque in Bell Street. Any suitable items for display would be welcome, (closing date 30th April), please ring Colin Towell on 07813 782899. Offers of help with organising or stewarding would also be much appreciated.

POSSIBLE CHANGES TO WEBSITE ARRANGEMENTS

The Society's present website is proving inadequate to hold and display properly all the photographs, articles and recordings we have and hope to produce in the future. So our Chairman, Mike Forryan, is researching the possibility of us joining one of several appropriate large organisations who offer web hosting facilities, an option already being used by some other local history and similar groups. We will report further on this, when more information is available.

ELECTRONIC BULLETIN & PROGRAMME DELIVERY

It was suggested at the AGM that it would be more economic to deliver Bulletins by e-mail. If anyone would like to receive their Bulletin and also Programme this way please could they e-mail Mike Forryan to this effect on chairman@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk.

PUBLIC ART

In Bulletin 91 there was mention of a public art project being planned by Wigston Civic Society. Colin Towell has asked that the following be added to the last paragraph:

"If you have ideas or wish to take part in the consultation please e-mail Colin at cftowell@aol.com

or you can download the Consultation Documents from the Civic Society website at www.wigstoncivicsociety.org.uk”.

FIRST STEPS IN FAMILY HISTORY – PART II

Birth, Marriage and Death Certificates

Last time I covered getting started in your family history by talking to your family, looking out any documents and deciding which direction your research will take. This time we take the next step – Birth, Marriage and Death (BMD) Certificates and Census Returns – so be prepared for a journey to places you never ever imagined your family originating from.

Civil Registration, or the recording of BMD's, began in 1837 in England and Wales, 1855 in Scotland and 1864 in Ireland. It became compulsory in England in 1875, so before that there may be some records you will not be able to find, especially births.

BMD's are indexed in quarters for each year, ending 31st March, 30th June, 30th September and 31st December. After 1983 they are for the full year in alphabetical order. *Do remember when consulting these indexes that they show when the event was registered and not when it actually took place. An ancestor may be born in the middle of June, but the registration may not take place until the September quarter.*

Birth Certificates will show you the date and place of birth, Christian name/s and surname, father's name and occupation, and, most importantly, the mother's maiden name, adding another branch to your growing family tree. The name of the informant is also shown, usually the father or mother, but sometimes another relative can be found as the informant – perhaps a relative you never knew existed. Also notice if there is a time of birth shown on the document, which is an indicator of a twin or multiple birth.

Marriage Certificates will give you the place and date of the marriage, usually the ages of the couple, their status i.e. bachelor, spinster, widower or widow, the rank or profession of the groom, their residence at the time of the marriage, both parties fathers' names and professions (and whether deceased at the time of the marriage) and the names/signatures of the witnesses.

Death Certificates will show you when and where the person died, the Christian name/s and surname, sex, age, occupation, cause of death, the signature, description and residence of the informant, and when registered. Take very careful notice of the informant's name which can prove very useful. One certificate I have shows the informant as “sister-in-law”, and as I always thought the person concerned was an only child, this led me to a whole extra family of brothers and sisters. In order to obtain a certificate you have to consult the “indexes” to the registers, because the actual registers cannot be seen by the public.

The indexes can be consulted freely at the National Archives at Kew, as well as at the Record Office for Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland in Wigston. They can also be viewed at the Leicestershire & Rutland Family History Society Research Centre in Leicester (see www.lrfhs.org.uk) and on the Internet at Freebmd www.freebmd.org.uk and Ancestry at www.ancestry.co.uk, which is a subscription site.

The index entry for the person you are looking for will give you the place of registration, the volume number and the page number – i.e. Leicester 3A 1057 – this is the index entry for my own birth. With this information you can order the full certificates either by post or on-line at www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content/certificates. The certificates will cost you £9.25 each.

Census Returns

A Census has been taken in Britain every 10 years since 1801, except for 1941. The records are closed to public view for 100 years, so the last one available to view is 1911. The most detailed census start from 1841, as before this they are really just a list of names. Census returns are arranged by address and household, and, except for 1841, will show you the relationship of everyone to the head of the household and where they were born. They will tell you the names, ages and occupations of each person enumerated. You can also find out if your ancestors were blind or deaf, and from 1851, mentally ill.

Census returns are available for free public viewing at the National Archives at Kew, and at most local archives and record offices. Some libraries have free access to some sites such as Ancestry containing Census returns. There are many pay-to-view internet sites including Ancestry and the National Archives 1901 Census at www.1901censusonline.com.

The 1881 Census is available free on-line on the Mormon site www.familysearch.org. This has been completely transcribed and is searchable, producing very good clear extracts of the information.

With BMDs and Census returns, you can cover the 170 year period back to 1837 and this will set you up well for the next step – parish registers.

Peter Cousins

ERIC HOLMES' CYCLE SHOP AT SOUTH WIGSTON

Many people from the Wigston area and beyond will remember Eric Holmes' shop at its prominent location on the corner of Blaby Road and Countesthorpe Road. Recently Ann Stringer the wife of Brian Stringer who is a nephew of Eric Holmes made contact. She had attended a talk which featured a photograph from c.1910 of a grocery shop on the corner of Bassett Street and Countesthorpe Road with a lady standing in the doorway, (the picture is reproduced on the front cover). She sought a copy of the book it had come from, *Wigston Magna and South*, published in 1977. The grocery shop was established by Eric Holmes' father Thomas and later taken over by Eric as the first outlet for the bicycle business.

Brian has kindly written the following for the Bulletin about the Holmes family and Cycle business:-

Our first knowledge of the shop's history goes back to the 1901 Census (we have had a very minimal attempt at a family history!) when Thomas Holmes aged 51 was living there with his (new) wife Florence Annie aged 27 (our Grandmother) and his children, Elizabeth (Lizzie) aged 24 and two sons, James (13) and Albert (7).

By the 1911 Census, Florence Annie was a widow and she was living with Lizzie (her step-

daughter) and, by now, her own children, Laura (our mother), David, Eric and Leonard, the latter must have died as a very young child as we had no knowledge of him.

The family is somewhat divided over the photograph in your book, some think that is Grandma, whilst some think it is Lizzie, I guess we will never know that one.

As far as living memory goes, when my brother (who now lives in Kent) was here last year we went to look around Wigston reminiscing and he seemed to be looking at the wall of the shop garden, when I asked what for, he replied that there used to be a hole in the wall and Grandma's chickens came out onto Countesthorpe Road. When we saw the photo in the book – lo and behold, Chickens! Right up by the wall, just as my brother remembered, back in the 1930's.

In the 1930's we lived there with Grandma and her two elder sons, in a three bed roomed shop, Grandma in the small bedroom, Mum (Laura) and Dad along with my sister and myself in the second bedroom, the third housed Grandma's two sons Eric and David, by now grown up, along with my two elder brothers! During the day my mother helped out in the shop, apparently, according to an old friend of my mother, as a baby, I could often be found outside the shop in my pram. My mother and father moved our family to Richmond Drive in 1935.

By the late 1920's Eric, who was at that time employed in the hosiery trade, started buying second hand bikes from Halfords (the ones that people had traded in part exchange), these he took home and renovated to sell. At this time Grandma let him have the shop window in Bassett Street to display these bikes whilst she continued with the rest of the shop selling general groceries etc.

Round about 1934/5, as the bicycle business grew, Eric took over the whole shop, he then bought the shop on the corner of Countesthorpe Road and Blaby Road in 1940, previously owned by Pretty's (already a cycle shop) which even before that was an Ironmongers – McKeckie's. Then, after the war, he purchased the house next door to that, owned by a family called Nunn, subsequently, in approx 1980, he bought what was then Worthington's, finally after that he bought the house next door, No.11 Blaby Road, which was Whitehead's wet fish shop.

In 1975 he branched out from bicycles and started to sell Honda motorcycles as well.

On leaving the original shop, around 1940 it was rented out to a gentleman's barber who had come down from London during the war and I remember, as a small boy, him putting a piece of wood across the chair and lifting me up onto that for a hair cut.

Brian Stringer

This set the editor doing some searches on the computer and hopefully society members and the Holmes family will find the following interesting:-

When the 1851 census was taken Eric Holmes' grandfather also named Thomas Holmes (like his father) was a 56 year old Chelsea Pensioner who had been born at Hill Green, Berkshire. His grandmother Charlotte Holmes was 41 and born at Kintbury, also Berkshire. They lived at East Woodhay, Hampshire with three little sons, Isaac aged 6, Henry aged 3 and Thomas aged 1 year.

None of the family have been found in the 1861 and 1871 censuses, but in view of the age of the parents it is likely they had died, and the children been brought up elsewhere. More detailed research would probably uncover more on this. Some of the three children may also have died, but happily little Thomas aged 1 in 1851, whose birth was registered in 1849 did not die. In 1875 he got married in the Berkhamsted Registration District of Hertfordshire to Ellen Johnson. Ellen had been born about 1853 in Aldbury, Herts. In the 1881 census Thomas and Ellen were living at Railway Cottages in Aldbury, he was a Railway Foreman/Porter and they have two children, Elizabeth Ann aged 4 and Henry aged 2, both born in Aldbury or sometimes recorded as at Tring.

Ten years later in 1891 they were living in South Wigston at 6, Countesthorpe Road on the corner with Bassett Street (the property in the photograph), and had another son James then aged 3 and born in South Wigston. Thomas's occupation was now a grocer and shoe laster. His daughter Lizzy) by then aged 14, was his assistant. It is very probable that the family initially moved to South Wigston because of Thomas's employment with the railway. Wigston was of course a railway hub, with three stations, engine maintenance sheds and warehouses. There were many job opportunities and families moved there from all over the country. Why he then left the railway is unknown, but he may have had an illness or accident and needed a lighter job, or perhaps, as South Wigston was a busy vital place, he saw shopkeeping as an opportunity to make a better living.

Another child, a son Albert Thomas was born c.1894, but in 1898, tragedy struck when Ellen died. Two years later Thomas remarried to Florence Annie Henshaw. Florence was much younger than Thomas, having been born in 1874 in Dalton, London. However, she seems to have been brought up by her grandmother Ann Henshaw at Evington Street, Leicester. The couple had four children as described by Brian Stringer.

Thomas died in the Sept Q 1909 aged 61 years, leaving Florence a very young widow of only about 35 with three children aged between seven and three and expecting a fourth, Leonard, who was born in early 1910 posthumously, only to die the following year aged about 18 months as Brian had surmised. She must have leaned heavily upon her step-daughter Lizzie at this terrible time. Her three step sons had left home by then.

Tricia Berry

TELEPHONES – *Then and Now*

The 49B bus from Fleckney to Leicester was well filled on the upper deck. At Clarendon Park a grandfather received a call from his son, and it was decided that young Jack's Christmas present was going to be a football shirt. At University Road it changed to a play station and by Newarke Street he was to have the money. So it is since the telephone was liberated from two copper wires, it has become as ubiquitous as the wrist watch.

How could Alexander Graham Bell have dreamed in 1875 that his invention for an electric current to transmit speech would replace the speaking tube? Of course there had been fire on hill tops, waving flags, shining lights and the 1872 invention Morse code to communicate in some way or other. Even as children we joined two tins together with a tight piece of string to talk the length of the garden.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s small scale telephone systems from switch boards were

springing up. In this country they were all collected together to become the National Telephone Company. This company was taken over in 1912 by the General Post Office.

It was therefore that the first telephone exchange in Wigston was thought to be in the South Wigston Post Office on the corner of Fairfield Street and Blaby Road. It was usual for the Post Office to have this dual role. Poles carrying strings of cadmium copper wires would radiate to Blaby, Countesthorpe, Wigston Magna and on to Kilby Bridge.

These open wires were very vulnerable to weather conditions, particularly snow. The switchboard operator would know personally who was calling her and greet them accordingly. The service would depend upon keeping a good relationship with the operator. There was little local gossip that the operator didn't know! Every telephone would have a jar tucked away somewhere to power the telephone transmitter. This was an early type of battery which had to be topped up regularly. Due to the favouritism by some operators to some business customers the automatic exchange was invented.

Leicester, which included Wigston, was early to have an automatic telephone system. A purpose built building in Albion Street housed the equipment. This was around 1930, (Oadby still had a manual switchboard until the 1950s). All telephones were changed to have dials. Few had telephones, people were afraid to use them. In an emergency they would either use a friendly neighbour's or pluck up courage to use a kiosk. The friendly neighbour had a prominent box near the telephone for contributions. At the corner of Bell Street and Long Street stood one of the older kiosks made partly of concrete. The familiar red kiosk was developed in 1935/6 and was known as the Jubilee kiosk in honour of the Royal Jubilee. As time went on and people came to use telephones more, long queues were often seen waiting at kiosks. Long usage would often promote very direct remarks from those patiently waiting.

By the 1940s demand for telephones outstripped the exchange equipment and the external line plant. The party line was introduced. Early party lines shared the one meter which recorded the calls. Both parties had to negotiate their proportion of the bill!!!

Soon party lines had separate metering. Of course only one could use the telephone at a time and if they were so inclined they could listen to the other's conversation. For signalling purposes a button on the telephone was pressed to tell the exchange which of the two telephones was making the call. For this an earth was required from a spike in the garden. Failure to get a dial tone could often be cured by watering the earth spike.

And so today. Has it all become too easy? I wonder what Jack did get for Christmas?

Colin Hames

Colin is a retired telephone engineer – he looks upon the above as an ongoing piece of research and would be very pleased to receive any comments or further information members may have.

The editor has been digging in records again, this time online telephone directories:-

Alexander Graham Bell (1847-1922) was born in Edinburgh and became a teacher of the deaf and dumb in Boston, USA. He married one of his pupils and in order to help her with her speech he experimented with instruments that would make voice vibrations visible to deaf people, and then turned to the problem of voice transmission by electricity.

The invention spread rapidly worldwide and a telephone service started in England in 1879, within specific areas, the first not surprisingly being the metropolitan district of London. A telephone directory was published the following year. The network quickly expanded with the industrial north, Liverpool and the West Midlands being next. These were followed by Nottingham by 1885 and Leicester by 1891/2. If the Fire Brigade was needed in Leicester, which was based in Bowling Green Street at this time, the number to call was Leicester 1.

By 1895 the Wigston Exchange was open and these were the first twelve numbers and the subscribers they were allocated to:

- No: 1001 - Bruce & Sons – Elastic Web Manufacturers – Garden Street, S.W.
- No: 1002 - Lee & Glenn – Hosiery Manufacturers, Gladstone Street, W.M. [Later Two Steeples Ltd].
- No: 1003 - Toone & Black – Boot & Shoe Manufacturers – Eagle Works, Saffron Road, S.W.
- No: 1004 - Wright & Corkett – Boot Manufacturers – Canal Street, S.W. [Orson Wright & partner].
- No: 1005 - Wigston Foundry Co – Stove/Grate Manufacturers - Canal Street, S.W. [Also O. Wright's]
- No: 1006 - Orson Wright – Contractor & Timber Merchant – Canal Street, S.W.
- No: 1006a - Orson Wright – Blaby Road [Home address]
- No: 1007 - Henry Bates – Hosiery Manufacturer – Station Street, S.W.
- No: 1008 - J.F.L. Rolleston – Glen Parva Grange.
- No: 1009 - National Telephone Co.
- No: 1010 - Not allocated
- No: 1011 - J. Johnson – The Grange, W.M.
- No: 1012 - Enderby & Stoney Stanton Granite Co. – Narborough.

By 1896/7 two new subscribers:

- No: 1013 - Burgess & Co – Elastic Web Manufacturers – Narborough.
- No: 1014 - Toller & Lankester – Hosiery Manufacturers – Bell Street, W.M. [Branch of Leic. Factory]

By 1897/8 four new subscribers:

- No: 1015 - Dunmore Son Ltd. – Biscuit Manufacturers – Canal Street, S.W.
- No: 1017 - L. & N.W. Railway Company. – Goods Station – Glen Parva.
- No: 1018 - Midland Railway Company – Passenger Station – S.W.
- No: 1020 - Kirkdale Leather Company – Leather Merchants – Station Street, S.W.

By 1903 there were fourteen new subscribers, and the numbering system had changed in that the first two or three digits were dropped, thus making Bruce & Sons number 1 instead of 1001 and Kirkdale Leather number 20 instead of 1020.

Also a different type of number was introduced running alongside the other.

- No: 8 - now Knighton Junction Brick Co. Ltd. – Brick Manufacturers - Glen Parva.
- No: 19 - Alfred Suart – Burton Overly
- No: 21 - Francis T. West – Wholesale Silk Merchant – Blaby.
- No: 22 - H.T. Hincks – Wigston Hall, W.M.
- No: 23 - Wigston Sanitary Steam Laundry – W.M.
- No: 0200 - H. Simpson – Solicitor – Blaby Road, S.W.
- No: 0201 - George Weston - Blaby Road, S.W.
- No: 0202 - J. Gamble & Co. – Boot & Shoe Manufacturers – Canal Street, S.W.
- No: 0287 - Leics. Dairy Co. – S.W.
- No: 0288 - Charles Redshaw – Wholesale Woodworker – Canal Street, S.W.
- No: 0289 - Wigston Urban District Council – Council Offices, W.M.
- No: 0293 - H. Clough Taylor – Land Surveyor – Blaby.

No: 0294 - Sir J.F.L. Rolleston – Glen Parva Grange.
 No: 0297 - A.W. Barnley – Doctor – Kingswood Lodge, W.M.

By 1921 there were 87 subscribers, 26 were from South Wigston, 25 from Wigston Magna, 22 from Blaby, 9 from Glen Parva, 2 from Wigston Fields, 1 from Countesthorpe and 2 from Whetstone. Most of Whetstone was served by the more recently established Narborough exchange. The two with Wigston numbers were outlying areas such as Whetstone Pastures.

The hosiery factories listed were:-

- No: 7 - Henry Bates & Co. Ltd., Station Street.
- No: 26 - A.H. Broughton & Co. Ltd., Bull's Head Street.
- No: 10 - J.D. Broughton & Sons Ltd., Bell Street.
- No: 44 - R.Broughton & Co., Central Avenue.
- No: 9 - Cook & Hurst Ltd., 9 Long Street.
- No: 87 - Devas Routledge & Co. Ltd., Canal Street.
- No: 55 - E. Foulston & Sons, Blounts [sic] Lane.
- No: 23 - J.G. Glover & Co., Canal Street.
- No: 11 - A.E. Hill, Frederick Street. [Lived at The Grange after Johnson & took over his number].
- No: 32 - W. Holmes & Son, Newton Lane.
- No: 56 - Charles Lewin, Spa Lane.
- No: 2 - Two Steeples Ltd., Gladstone Street.
- No: 95 - Wigston Hosiers Ltd., Paddock Street.

Over time numbers were changed to accommodate expansion. This can be shown by tracking Two Steeples, one of the first and longest surviving subscribers. They started with Wigston 2 and this continued until beyond 1925, but by 1928 it had changed to Wigston 89122. This continued to beyond 1945 but by 1955 it had changed to Wigston 2322. This continued beyond 1964 but by 1967 had changed to Leicester 881141. It was the same in 1970 but by 1973 there is no entry and the company had presumably closed.

Telephone subscribers from Wigston Magna changed to a Leicester exchange about 1967, but areas such South Wigston, Glenhills, Blaby and Countesthorpe still remained on the Wigston exchange until beyond 1973.

Tricia Berry

WIGSTON.		
Wigston ...	1007	BATES, Hy.....Hosiery Manufacturer...Station street.
Wigston ...	1001	BRUCE & Sons ...Elastic Web Manufacturers...Garden street.
Wigston ...	1013	BURGESS & Co., Elastic Web Manufacturers...Narborough.
Wigston ...	1015	DUNMORE & Son, Ld., Biscuit Manufactur....Canal street.
Wigston ...	1012	ENDERBY and Stoney Stanton Granite Co.....Narborough.
Wigston ...	1011	JOHNSON, J.The Grange.
Wigston ...	1020	KIRKDALE Leather Co., Leather Merchants...Station street.
Wigston ...	1017	L & N. W. Railway Co.Goods Station...Glen Parva.
Wigston ...	1002	LEE & GlennHosiery Manufacturers...Gladstone street.
Wigston ...	1018	MIDLAND Railway Co.Goods Station...South Wigston.
Wigston ...	1008	ROLLESTON, J. F. L.Glen Parva grange.
Wigston ...	1014	TOLLER & Lankester, Hosiery Manufacturers...Bell street.
Wigston ...	1003	TOONE & Black ...Boot, Shoe Manufacturers...Eagle works.
Wigston ...	1005	WIGSTON Foundry Co., Ld., Stove Grate Mkr....Canal street.
Wigston ...	1004	WRIGHT & Corkett.....Boot Manufacturers...Canal street.
Wigston ...	1006	WRIGHT, Orson ...Contractor, Timber Mchnt...Canal street.
Wigston ...	1006a	WRIGHT, Orson Blaby road.

Wigston and District subscribers from the 1897/8 telephone directory

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