



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

Bulletin 19

OCT '87

THE VICTORIANS



NOTICES ... NOTICES ... NOTICES ... NOTICES ... NOTICES

PROGRAMME

Please note the various changes of date!

Wednesday 21st October 1987

“The Story and History of Fans”

Talk by Miss Julie Slawson, illustrated with examples of fans from her very large collection.

Wednesday 23rd October 1987

Public Meeting to Launch the “Friends of Bushloe End”

Please note the venue..... Council Chambers, Station Road Wigston at 7.30pm

Friday 16th December 1987

“Magic Lantern Show”

Old Glass Slides of Leicestershire, religious and other themes. This meeting will be open to the general public. There will be an admission charge, proceeds towards the Bushloe Appeal.

Wednesday 16th December 1987

The 4th Christmas Party

An evening of entertainment and a splendid buffet. Cost to be announced. Numbers needed in November.

Wednesday 20th January 1988

Workshop Session ... Wigston Post 1945

Led by Ian Varey

Wednesday 17th February 1988

A.G.M.

Wednesday 16th March 1988

Joint meeting with the Civic Soliety

Guthlaxton Community Lounge 7.30pm

ATTENTION

Venue unless stated is the Liberal Club on Bull Head Street. The time is 7.30pm

Membership / Subscriptions

The Subscription is £3.00 per year and £2.00 per year for OAP's and people under 18 years of age. They can be paid to the Hon. Treasurer at one of the monthly meetings or sent to.....

Mr B Bilson Hon Treasurer 23 Thirlemere Road Wigston Leicester

Editor's Note

The publishing dates for the Bulletin are the 1st Feb, 1st June and 1st Oct. Please let the Editor have articles three clear weeks before those dates.

New Address .. 2 Paget Court, Paget Street, Kibworth, Leics.

Bushloe End

It is quite incredible how much happens between the printing of one Bulletin and the next. The frustrations and delays over the actual legal transaction seemed at one point to be legion. But by the tremendous effort of the champions of this worthy cause the Appeal was launched on the set date in June.

You should certainly have read about it in the local press and may even have seen the small TV item about Bushloe End.

Over the summer months more legal documents had to be drawn up, agreed and signed... namely the lease agreement between the Council and the Trustees. By the last week in August the Trustees finally had the key and with it the property known as 42/44 Bushloe End.

It was decided that for a few weeks and in a controlled way people should see the treasures in their midst. Without fail everyone who has seen the house and workshop has fallen in love with it and has enthused at length to anyone who would listen.

Those of us who have been privileged to go on several occasions are amazed again and again that each time we discover something new, a feature of the building, a piece of equipment, the significance of a certain arrangement etc etc. We are in fact still discovering what it is we have.

In the past few weeks it would be fair to say that some of the euphoria has been tempered with reality. The immediate and urgent priority is the restoration of the roof of the main building. This work is vital before the worst of the winter weather sets in. The provisional estimate is £12,000. So it is very clear what our first priority is!

Fund raising has now got to move into top gear. All Grant making bodies are being canvassed... Appeal money has slowed to a trickle and needs revitalising... a second support structure is to be launched ie. A "Friends of Bushloe End Framework Knitting Museum". Through this organisation we hope to attract local people and involve people from the County and indeed from the whole community.

It is the local people who must be actively involved as evangelists for the cause and as the initiators of fund raising events both great and small. This cannot just be a short term one off effort, in order to succeed it will have to be a long term commitment. There will undoubtedly be disappointments but the goal is a noble one and I am sure Wigston will get the Museum it deserves.

Ian Varey.

A Public Meeting to form a...

**FRIENDS OF BUSHLOE END
FRAMEWORK KNITTING MUSEUM**

Date..... Friday 23rd Oct 1987
Time.... 7.30 pm
Venue.... Council Chambers, Station Road, Wigston

As well as the formal business
And the election of a committee
The meeting will be addressed by.....

Mr Alan CHINNERY
Chairman of the "Friends of the County Records Office"

Mr Tim SCHADLA-HALL
Deputy Director of the Museum Services

Meeting Called by the Trustees

Information Kibworth 2587

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WANT A JOB?

The heightened awareness of the significance of Framework Knitting in the story of Wigston, brought about by the Saga of 42/44 Bushloe End, has raised a proble.

Many people are recalling bits and pieces of information about framework shops, relatives who were knitters, friends of friends who must know something about it ... etc etc.

Now this is all vital information. It is the stuff of Local History and will be invaluable when it comes to organising displays in the new museum.

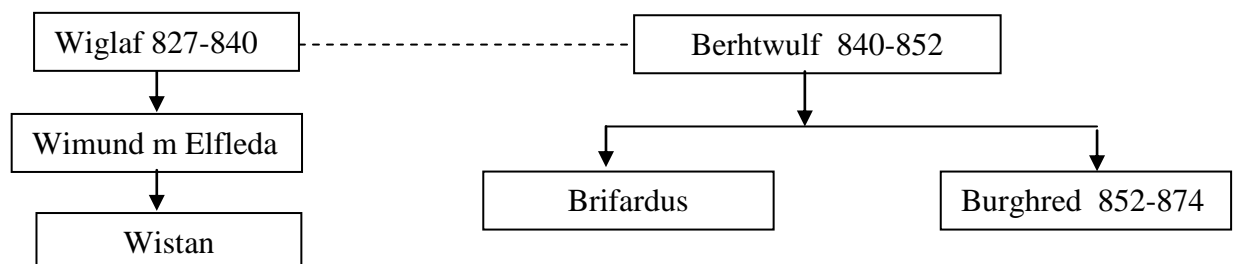
This oral evidence needs collecting now and in a systematic way. I think this is a job for the Greater Wigston Historical Society. If a set of core questions could be drawn up to help structure a "Talk Session" information could then be collated into a valuable resource.

The old people who have this information should be seen as soon as possible.

Have you some time to help with this job. Is it worth doing?

Over to you

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WISTAN IN CONTEXT



Version 1

Wimund died before Wiglaf and Wistan was too young to take the throne so it passed to Wiglaf's brother ... Berhtwulf. Brifardus thought he should succeed his father, first tried to marry Elfreda and when this failed conspired to kill Wistan.

Version 2

Upon the death of Wiglaf, Wistan a pious and holy man did not want to take the throne but did not give up his right to take it. Rest of story as above.

Certainly on June 1st 849 on the spot where Wistow Church stands today, Prince Brifardus killed Prince Wistan his second Cousin, over the rights to accession to the declining Kingdom of Mercia. The body was brought to rest at Wigston and then transported to Repton one of the Kingdom's administrative centres.

Brifardus did not live long after the event, but it is not clear whether he committed suicide or was himself murdered.

ROYAL HOUSE OF MERCIA

The East Midlands was settled by the Middle Ages but by 650AD they had been absorbed into the dominant Kingdom of Mercia.

Peada (Penda)	626 to 657	Consolidated the Kingdom
?		
Wulfhere	659 to 675	St. Guthlac, A prince 673 to 714
?		
Ethalbald	716 to 757	
Offa	757 to 795	Mightiest King Dyke Fame
Cenwulf	769 to 823	
Ceolwulf	? to 823	
?		
?		Decline
Wiglaf	827 to 829	Deposed
Egbert of Wessex	829 to 831	Assumed Kingship
Wiglaf	831 to 840	Regained Kingdom
Berhtwulf	840 to 852	
Burghred	852 to 874	Surrendered Kingdom to Danes

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SOME RECOLLECTIONS OF THE WIGSTON NATIONAL SCHOOL

'Nashy Bugs and Fleas!' In such elegant words did the pupils of Wigston's Board School address the pupils of the National School. These in turn would call back.. "Boardy Bugs and Fleas!" There was great rivalry between these schools, aggravated by the Nashy's claim to be the superior school. Some of the Nashy Bugs have been kind enough to talk about their memories of school days and these are what follows.

Mr Douglas Sibson now living in Norwich, was born at 43 Long Street, one of a pair of houses located in a corner of the site occupied by the National School. (now the car park for the Working Men's Club) When he was born, in 1916, and during his youth, the other house of the pair, now a hairdresser's, was occupied by Mr Samuel Alfred Ross, headmaster of the school for 33 years until his death in 1926.

He taught the scholarship class from which Mr Sibson won a place at the Wyggeston School. The other options, funded by the County Council were Alderman Newton's and City Boys. The Urban District granted supplementary scholarships of £5 per annum for 3 years to these scholarship holders, to help with uniforms and books.

Another honour won by Mr Sibson was a book prize for an essay contest promoted by Mr Dodsley, the music teacher, in connection with the Beethoven Centenary Celebrations in 1926. Mary Scotcher won for the school a handsome cabinet gramophone. Pretty good in a national competition. Out of school Mr Dodsley accompanied the silent films at the South Wigston Cinema.

Douglas Sibson recalls that when Mr Ross died, there are so many wreaths that every pupil in the school carried one from All Saint's Church to the cemetery. Kind but firm as a head, Mr Ross was respected by the whole community. A beautiful memorial to him, made by J H Morcom of the Leicester Art School, and unveiled by a W A Brockington, Leicestershire's Director of Education, hung in the school for many years. It can still be seen in Duncan's museum at White Gate Farm.

At this time there were about nine members of staff, and all were remembered with affection by past pupils I have met. They recall that Mr Broughton (Kipper) taught the senior boys who did not take up scholarships and Mrs Ross taught the senior girls. Mrs Renee Lee remembered that Mrs Ross was apt to hit you on the head, which hurt when your hair-slides were jammed into your scalp! Miss Marshall and Miss Chamberline (Poll) the sewing mistress were other members of the staff clearly remembered. The latter for lifting up her dress to warm her backside at the roaring fire that was in a corner of one of the rooms.

Mrs Edna Tebbutt, now nearly 80, recalls that at the end of term Mr Ross' son, Don rehearsed dances with them at the bottom of the Ross's garden for various musical productions. Though his father wanted Don to continue into higher education. Don liked show business and went on to make his career in London. There he met and married Gertie Gitana, a nationally famous Music Hall star, often bringing her to his home when they were doing shows in Leicester. When she died, Wigston was visited by dozens of celebrities who came to her funeral. She and Don have the only vaulted tombs in Wigston cemetery.

"Manners and Behaviour", says Mrs tebbutt "were a lot better then even though they were 40 to 50 in a class. You got the cane for bad behaviour at the National School." The punishments at the Board School were rather more inventive! Mrs Tebbutt and her brother started at this school, but when a teacher stuck up her brother's mouth with sticky tape, the incensed mother had both children transferred to the National School, even though they were not church goers. In Wigston there was a full parental choice and little sectarianism.

Religious instruction was important, though and Renee Lee recalls that scripture took up the first hour of each day, after a hymn, a prayer and a talk. The Vicar came and took a service once a week and took a close interest in the progress of the school. The children went to the church for services a few times during the term, but especially at Easter and Christmas.

The three R's, needlework, music and games were taught and the senior girls went to the Board School for domestic science. In her delightful account of her childhood, Mrs Doreen Boulter describes how hazardous it was getting your stew home in a basket with the boys nudging our elbow!

Douglas Sibson reminisces ...” The school had a good football team in the 20's and I remember my mother taking me as a very small boy to see them play at Leicester City ground. Players I recall from that time were Bob Bell and Beaumont Grant. The Cricket XI also carried off Dr Bigg's Challenge Cup and beat South Wigston by 25 runs in the final. J Doyle heading the bowling averages for the season...” “We always had a Sports day, at school in the 40's and played netball in the school yard” says Dorothy Clowes.

Playtime games went with the seasons, hopscotch and snowballing in winter, battledore and shuttlecock and a long skipping rope in the spring. On Pancake Day recalls Renee Lee, they always had a day's holiday and out would come the whips and tops, spinning colourfully in the frosty sunshine. She did not like her time at school much but this was a happy memory of the National School.

Why was it called the National School?

To answer this we must go back nearly 200 years, remembering that until 1870 there was no system of Rate Assisted School in this County. The upper classes were educated in fee paying Public Schools such as Eton. Merchants' and shopkeepers' sons went to Endowment Grammar School. When they were not working children were taught in the village schools such as St Wistan's in Wigston, paid for by charities or the parish fund. Others went to Sunday Schools which were springing up since Robert Raikes had founded them in 1780.

The Sunday Schools were the roots from which our system of Day Schools, for some reading and writing were taught there as well as religious instruction. The numbers of people in the new industrial cities was rising fast and increasing child poverty and crime were causing great alarm. These factors together with the need for the churches to keep their congregations in the face of the spread of non-conformist Chapels and their Sunday Schools, caused the Church of England to act. In 1811, they set up the National Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church. What a mouthful!! It came to be known as the National Society and by 1830 it had opened 3,670 National Schools all over the Country. Wigston was opened in 1839.

The Nonconformists, such as the Methodists did not let them have it all their own way. In opposition they set up the British and Foreign School's Society, in 1814, which opened 1500 schools by 1851. Wigston's first British School was set up in the Mechanic's Institute, a large chapel like building on the Bank. Later it moved to a site in Bell Street, where a Mr Burgess was the Head.

In Leicestershire Chronicles and Mercury for 1867/8 has a note that the children of the poor in Wigston are educated at the British School for 2d per head per week, two children for 3d in some cases, while the children of the artisans were charged 6d. Beyond which payments the better to do classes subscribe something like £30 per annum.

The National School kept going on money from the Sunday Collections in church, voluntary subscriptions and small grants from the National Society. Both Edna Tebbutt and Renee Lee remember paying 2d a week to begin with but not in later times. One charity as late as 1862 gave £8 a year for 16 free scholars, and £5/10/0 for the schooling of 12 poor girls.

Some people then thought that England should copy France and set up State Schools to help the very poor children. In 1833, to meet this demand and to avoid becoming directly involved, the Government gave £10,000 each to the National Society and the British and Foreign Society.

Wigston probably received a small grant from this fund, but there are constant pleas in the Church Magazines for money at fund raising events such as the Day and Sunday School Festivals, concerts and bazaars. These were held to pay for prayer books and bibles, for the piano, for repairs to the stove and boiler etc. The balance sheet was in credit again to the tune of £20, but the Vicar makes it clear that the County Council (who took over some of the expense in 1902) pays for everything now. Managers have to keep the buildings in good repair, so when schoolrooms are hired out a fee must be charged.

They were hired out frequently. A random selection of hiring produces an interesting list... The County Council Meeting of the Sanitary and Gas Committee in 1869... A Rate Payers meeting... The Annual Meeting of the Floral and Horticultural Society... An Ambulance Class... A committee to discuss the celebrations for Queen Victoria's 50th Jubilee in 1887... A Conservative Club Concert to raise money for the County Council Elections... The very first meeting of the Wigston Urban District Council.

Possibly the reason for the popularity as a meeting hall was that it provided the largest hall in Wigston until the Co-op Hall was built. The original 1839 School room was 40' x 20'. This building reflected the system of schooling that prevailed at the time all over the country. Both the National and the British Schools at this time made use of the Monitorial System of Education. This system was invented by two men, the Rev. Andrew Bell, who had used a similar system in his mission school in Madras, India and Joseph Lancaster a Quaker, who opened a school in London in 1798.

With the Monitorial System, the teacher taught older, brighter pupils aged about 10 or 11, and they taught the younger ones. There would be little prizes or money to encourage effort and some very harsh punishments for slacking. This method allowed schools to 'teach' hundreds of children at the same time and quite cheaply. It appealed to the early 19th century public, who were just beginning to see how the factory system could mass produce large quantities of goods, and who felt the same system of mass production could be applied to educating children. Here was a factory classroom and all for the price of one teacher's salary and a schoolroom.

Today we can see many faults in such a system, not least the lack of training teachers. However some schooling was better than none, and the church schools had virtually shouldered the whole responsibility for the National education of the poor at a time when the people with money did not like the Government telling them how they had to spend it. A bit like Mrs Thatcher today!

The Monitorial System dominated education for half a century until Forester's great Education Act of 1870 introducing the Board Schools and Government money was used to raise educational standards. Then the large schoolrooms of the church schools were gradually divided into several smaller classrooms, coming off a central hall. At Wigston, after the large extension and the building of a Master's House, in 1869, the National School with its domestic, gothic architecture came to look more as we remember it.

From 1934, Wigston's Schools we organised as that Bell Street took the infants, The National School, the juniors and the Board School in Long Street the 11+ seniors, except those who won scholarships to Kibworth Grammar School.

In 1953, when Abington School was built to take over 11's, Long Street Board School became a C of E Junior School. This was after the Parochial Church Council decided that the National School should not be state controlled, but should remain a C of E school. The Church took over the Board School buildings and the old National School became an annexe: 'the other end'. Here my son began his junior school days. I seem to recall that he enjoyed the cosy atmosphere in the old school back in 1968.

Ten years later, the National School was demolished. New schools were being built on the new Wigston estates and the school catchment areas were re-drawn. Our National School like others up and down the country had played its part in educating the non-privileged classes.

All the contributors to this article seemed well pleased with the education they had received at the 'Nashy'. Mrs Hilda Eckstall, mother of Dorothy Clowes, sent four children there. 'If they had anything in them' she claims, 'that school would bring it out'.

Mrs Edna Tebbutt, "Oh! Yes. It was better than the Board School we could all read and write"

Douglas Sibson has the last word. "Yes the National School considered itself superior, but then I'm Prejudiced."

Edna Taylor
Sept 1987

