

The Following is a precis of an article written by Alan Kind in 2011 and amended in 2012.

SOUTH WIGSTON

A VICTORIAN TOWN

South Wigston was built during the later years of the 19th century as a new town, principally to meet the needs of accommodation for railway workmen.

Expanding industrial and commercial enterprise laid the foundations, and people moved to South Wigston from the surrounding villages and from further afield, my wife's family came from West Yorkshire.

The centre of the town is fixed by the junction of the lane from Leicester to Countesthorpe at its main street, Blaby Road, named as the route from Wigston Magna to Blaby.

Following the road to Countesthorpe at its crossing of the river Sence is Crow Mill. The Mill has its foundations in the 12th century, close by and of a later date was a post-mill, now long gone. The road at this point crosses the Grand Union Canal, opened in 1792.

There was a Trestle timber bridge which supported the Leicester to Rugby railway line over the canal and the river. This was replaced in 1913 by a construction of brick and steel, subsequently demolished in the 1970s.

The town had three railway stations. In 1840 the Leicester to Rugby line was constructed with a level crossing on the Blaby Road. In 1857, came the Leicester to London line. There was a level crossing on the road to Wigston Magna, later a bridge was built over the line, known locally as Spion Cop. In 1864 the line between Leicester and Birmingham was developed.

The story of the town is also linked with development off Saffron Road of the "barracks," constructed between 1877 and 1880 as the home of the Leicestershire regiment.

Just north of the Barracks was Glen Parva Grange, standing back from Saffron Road, and built around 1857, this was the home of Sir John and Lady Rolleston. All that remains of the Grange today are the two Lodges, originally at either entrance of the road to the Grange. A large semi-detached residence, known as Cumberland House, stood where Moores Close is today.

The area on both sides of Saffron Road formed a part of what was the Eyres Monsell Estate This name has been retained as a South Leicester suburb.

South of the Leicester to Birmingham railway line and to the west side of Saffron Road was Wigston Junction Bricks Works. The "Bricky Pit" was worked out in the 1930s and was filled in in 1946, All that remains is the house occupied by the brickyard manager, this fronts on to Saffron Road and is now occupied by R E Bowers and Freeman

A small terrace, opposite to the brickyard had a railway siding which passed under the terrace through a tunnel, which although filled in is still there. The terrace was demolished and replaced by a row of terraced houses.

A further terrace of housing, known as "Apostles Row," was built to the West side of Countesthorpe Road, now replaced by the carpark. The name came from the 12 Apostles whose names were cut into stone blocks built into each cottage and set at high level.

Station Street, close by Wigston South level crossing was also built with terraced housing originally for railway employees, along with Glengate.

The importance of South Wigston to the Midland Railway Company was evident with the construction of large wagon repair shops and sidings.

The developer Orson Wright (1853- 1913) saw the opening for development by setting out the street plan for South Wigston and he built 600 terraced houses by 1890.

The street names reflect both Orson Wrights origin, Dunton and Bassett and his name, Orange, Water (now Park Road), Railway, Irlam, Garden, Healey and Timber.

The town attracted businesses and drew on the abundance of female labour. Factories included footwear, hosiery, and biscuit making, there was also a dyeworks, a dairy and a foundry, bread was baked at the Mill,

Shopping was well catered for with the "corner shops," and with the shops on Blaby Road, where you could buy anything and everything.

Christian worship was provided by the following churches and chapels, Wesleyan Methodist, Primitive Methodist, Congregational, the Church of Christ, and Saint Thomas's, the Anglian Church. The vicarage opposite to St. Thomas's is a grade 2 listed building. These were all built before 1900. The Catholic church of Saint Mary held services in the barracks until the Catholic Church was opened in 1905. There was also a Mission Hut in Leopold Street. In 1949 an annex to St. Thomas's was built on Lansdowne Grove using an old Army Hut.

Council schools were built in Bassett Street, the school for all children was built in 1886 on the south side, Next door the girls' school was built in 1904 and a school for the boys on the north side. The 1886 building became the Infant School. A new school was built in 1936 on St Thomas' Road, this was South Wigston Secondary Modern School, with separate wings for Boys and Girls. The former Girls' School continued as the Junior Girls School and later became the Bassett Centre.

Both Parklands County Primary School and the Fairfield County Primary School were built during the 1960s.

An Adult School was built in Bassett Street. The prime mover in this project was Mr J B Main.

President of the school for many years was Mr Robert Kind, my grandfather.

Two public houses catered for the social life of the town. The Duke of Clarence on Blaby Road- Fairfield Street corner and The Grand Hotel in Canal Street, both hotels were built by Orson Wright.

The Clarence has a Blue Plaque commemorating local Wigston girl, Gertie Gitana of Music Hall fame, who appeared on stage in the ballroom. The first picture house was established in the Clarence Ballroom when it was silent films. The purpose built picture house was opened in the 1920s. This building was substantially rebuilt in 1938 and named The Ritz.

. Ashbourne House, on the north side of Blaby Road, was built by Orson Wright for himself and his family. The house later provided home for medical practitioners, until 1967, when it was replaced with an unsympathetic block of shops,

Another large house on Blaby Road was The Limes, home to the Gamble family, owners of a footwear factory in the town. Today the Limes is much altered as the Conservative Club. The Working Men's Club was built on the south side of Blaby Road.

Another man who left a legacy was H W Bates who had a hosiery factory in Station Street, he is commemorated with a Blue Plaque fixed to the building, which is now houses. Bates own house was "Bryngog" now Jaffa House on Countesthorpe Road. Henry Bates was an artist; his paintings were mainly water-colours of the local River Sence. His painting gear would be mounted on his bicycle and off he went, local children followed him and receive hand-coloured cards with biblical texts. Mr Bates owned a row of terraced houses in Orange Street, these were left in trust to local churches, 3 to the Congregational Church, and 2 each to the Wesleyan Methodist and to the Primitive Methodist.

Another well remembered character was Charles Moore, the Choirmaster at St. Thomas's Church. He formed the Wesleyan Temperance Band. On Summer Sunday evenings the Band played in the band stand on Blaby Road Park. Later his son Ted continued to conduct the band. Moores music shop on the corner of Blaby Road and Canal Street was a highly specialist business and known far and wide.

Charles Moore represented South Wigston on the Wigston Urban District Council. There is a Blue Plaque to him on his home, opposite to the shop.

The Town had Amateur Theatrical Groups based at the churches, the Wesleyan Chapel had a Male Voice Choir of considerable merit. Cricket and soccer were played on Blaby Road Park, and rugby on the Secondary Modern School playing field.

A Carnival, a Wigston Magna town event, was held each year with a dress parade and decorated floats. The Carnival started from the barracks parade ground and wended its way down the Saffron Road, along Blaby Road on to Wigston Magna. Proceeds from the Carnival were in support of the Leicester Royal Infirmary.

The terraced properties south of Blaby Road were among the first to be built in the new town. Slightly larger terraced houses were built on the north side. This created a "class divide" The 1920s saw the development of council housing on the remaining plots of land both north and south of Blaby Road. The 1930s saw the development of semi-detached and detached housing on Saffron Road and the terrace and semi-detached properties on Lansdown Grove. The latter development also attracted a "social distinction" in the town, which lasted well after the Second World War. This development housed many evacuee families from London's East End.

The Fairfield Estate was built in the 1960s, on farmland to the East of Saffron Road, many families from South Wigston relocated there, proving that South Wigston was a good place to live.

Changes have been brought about due to economic measures. The railways no longer employ the number of workers once required and the "Beeching Axe" accounted for the loss of all three stations. However, after a long campaign, a new station was opened on the Birmingham line in 1986.

The coal yards off Blaby Road had already closed, replaced by Forsell's Dyeworks, which was later demolished to make way for the Tesco supermarket in 2004. Although more factories appeared over the years most have closed, and many have been adapted for housing, the footwear factory on Saffron Road has been replaced by "Jasmine Court" a sheltered housing development. Properties on Blaby Road and Canal Street have given way to South Leicestershire College. The main banking facilities have been lost, leaving one building society.

During the early years transport was provided by horse drawn carts and most personal transport was on foot. There were few motor vehicles before WW1, this created a self-sufficiency as everything needed was on the doorstep, and this continued until well after WW2.

With the advent of the motor car and a regular bus service, workers began to travel further afield for employment and shops in the city were now easily reached.

It is inevitable that this Victorian Town will change in future years, but to try to keep it Victorian is neither desirable nor sensible.

A O Kind MBE

March 2011 amended July 2012

Precis by Brenda Kind

A Victorian Town
Profile of
South Wigston
Leicestershire

Alan Orson Kind



SOUTH WIGSTON

‘A VICTORIAN TOWN’

Built during the latter years of the 19th century as a new town, principally to meet the need for accommodation of Railway workmen, South Wigston would not present visitors with an urge to stop and explore. Indeed it was thought by some, including the historian Hoskins, "that especially on a wet Sunday afternoon", it was not the place to be. Those whose names appear on the War Memorial, close by St. Thomas' Church, acknowledging the ultimate sacrifice made in two World Wars might disagree.

Within the 128 years of its existence, the development of the town from its Victorian infancy to the present day provides the researcher with as much of interest as that found in much older settlements. The industrial revolution reached the area with the advent of canal and railway. Expanding industrial and commercial enterprise laid the foundations for the new town. But without people there would be no new town. Who were they and why did they migrate from their homes elsewhere to an unknown future?

From the original 2,500 inhabitants the population grew through Edwardian times and especially through the inter-war years. How was the influx of new comers received? These are the questions arising from any settlement, and of any age.

Lying some 3 miles South of Leicester and 1.5 miles to the West of Wigston Magna, South Wigston developed either side of what is now the B582 into a thriving town, that is, until the mid twentieth century. The years to follow brought about detrimental changes due to economic pressures.

The history of South Wigston pales into insignificance against that of its neighbour Wigston Magna which pre-dates the Saxon Era. The track between Wigston Magna, Glen Parva and Blaby to the West which now forms the main street of South Wigston would once have been traversed by those very early settlers. The centre of this new town is fixed by the junction of the lane from Leicester to Countesthorpe at its main street, Blaby Road.

Following the road to Countesthorpe from South Wigston at its crossing of the River Sence is Crow Mill. The Mill has its foundation back in the 12th century. Close by and of later date was a Post-Mill, now long gone. The road at this point also crosses the Grand Union Canal opened

in 1792, formerly *The Leicestershire and Northamptonshire Canal*. The hump-backed bridge and 'S' bend to the road provided a challenge to traffic of every description, more so when flooding of the river Sence occurred. The background to this feature of Wigston was the *Trestle Bridge of Timber construction which supported the Leicester to Rugby railway line over the canal and the river*. This was replaced in 1913 by a permanent construction of blue brick and steel, subsequently demolished in the 1970s.

Few towns can boast three Railway Stations. In 1840 the Leicester to Rugby line (*Midland Counties Railway Co.*) was constructed with a level crossing and gates on the Blaby Road (B582). The Junction was known as Wigston South. In 1857 the Leicester to Hitchin Line was opened by *The Midland Railway Co.* This lies between the two Wigstons and eventually provided direct access to London and was known as Wigston Station. In its early days it was provided with a crossing gate at its meeting with the B582, Station Road. The year 1864 saw the line developed between Leicester and Birmingham (*London and North Western Co.*) At its crossing of the Saffron Road was located Glen Parva Station (1884). The three lines joined to the Leicester approach. The Birmingham line was provided with a loop line to the main London to Leicester route. The area between the lines forming what has become known as the 'Railway Triangle'.

A potential industrial development for the land enclosed by the Railway Triangle was the subject of Public Enquiry in the 1990s'. A detailed ecological survey was undertaken by the County Council revealing amongst other things the presence of ancient field working, Ridge and Furrow. No doubt this would have been a part of the West Wigston Field. This area was known as West Wigston within the former Wigston Urban District Council, which begs the question why the new town was called South and not West. The answer may lie in the fact that it is South of Leicester or most probably that the railway junction was called Wigston South.

The story of the development of the new town is also linked with development off Saffron Road of the 'Barracks'. Constructed between 1877 and 1880, as home for The Leicestershire Regiment, it was at that time within the Parish of Glen Parva until c1930. Glen Parva Station, referred to previously, was constructed initially to serve the Barracks

Just North of the Barracks was Glen Parva Grange. Standing back from Saffron Road, built circa 1857, this was home to Sir John and Lady Rolleston. All that remains of the estate today are the two Lodges originally at either entrance into the Grange. A large semi-detached

residence known as Cumberland House and Marstown House stood where Moore's Close is today. Sir Stanhope Rolleston occupied one of the two. The whole area here about, on both sides of the Saffron Road formed a part of what was The Eyres Monsell Estate, which name is retained to a part of the South Leicester suburb.

South of the Leicester to Birmingham railway line and to the West side of Saffron Road was Wigston Junction Brick Works. The 'Brickyard Pit' was one of two. The smaller pit further to the South was worked out and filled in early in the twentieth century. The larger pit also became worked out in the 1930's and was eventually filled in after WW II. All that remains is the house occupied by the brickyard manager which fronts to Saffron Road, now occupied by R E Bowers & Freeman.

The first housing was provided for employees of the brickworks. A small terrace now demolished and replaced with a row of terraced houses, opposite to the works to the East side of Saffron Road. The rail siding to the Brickyard actually passed under the terrace through a tunnel, which though filled in, is still there. A further terrace of housing, known as 'Apostles Row' was built to the West side of Countesthorpe Road replaced by the present car park. The name emanated from the 12 Apostles whose names were cut into stone blocks built into each cottage and set at high level. (A number of these are in the possession of local people.)

Station Street, close by Wigston South level crossing, was also developed with Terrace housing built initially for railway employees, along with Glengate and Midland Cottages lying to the East of the main line railway. Reference to the Ordnance Survey Map of 1885 shows the town in its early form.

The importance of Wigston to the Midland Railway Co. was evident with the construction of large Wagon repair shops and sidings. The entrepreneurial developer Orson Wright (b.1853 d.1913) saw the opening for development by setting out the street plan for South Wigston around 1880. Building work started upon some 600 Terrace houses by 1883 and was largely completed by 1890. Reference to the Ordnance Survey map of 1914 shows the extent of construction in what might be termed a 'Triangular Development'; bounded by Kirkdale Road to the North, Canal Street and Countesthorpe Road meeting at a point to the South.

The Street names reflect both Orson Wright's origin ie Dunton and Bassett and his name; Orange, Water (Park Road), Railway, Irlam, Garden, Healey and Timber.

The new town attracted businesses to locate and draw upon the abundance of Female labour available. Footwear was represented by Toone & Black in Saffron Road and J. Gamble in Canal Street. Devas & Routledge Hosiery in Canal Street with Atkinsons Dyeworks as neighbours. H. Bates set up a hosiery works in Station Street. Dunmore set up Biscuit making in Canal Street and unsurprisingly bearing in mind the construction work in progress and railway carriage repair shops nearby, a Castings Works (Wigston Foundary) was located at the Southern end of Canal Street.

Shopping was well catered for in those days. Not only by the 'corner shops' but also by the shops established fronting Blaby Road. The opportunities for employment presented by the development brought in a wide-spread migrant population. Iron Founding attracted people from Rotherham, Hosiery and Footwear brought in workers from the surrounding villages and Leicester.

That non-conformist chapels were well represented should be no surprise in view of the strong tradition of non-conformity in Wigston Magna and indeed the county. In June 1884 the Wesleyan Mission commenced in a room over Orson Wright's factory in Canal Street. 23rd September 1886 was the date of the 'Stone Laying' for the first Methodist Church, probably built by Wright to a design of Clement Ogden and to the rear of its present site to the South side of Blaby Road opened on the 16th December. Thursday 10th July 1902 saw the opening of the enlarged church fronting Blaby Road, by the Leicester architects A E Sawday.

St Thomas' Church first appeared as a 'Mission' in 1886 with the construction of a corrugated iron building on the site of the present schoolrooms to the North side of Blaby Road opposite to Countesthorpe Road. The Foundation Stone for the present St. Thomas' was laid in 1892 and was completed and consecrated on the 2nd February 1893. The new Ecclesiastical Parish was known as 'Glen Parva with South Wigston'. In 1900 the Church Tower was erected and dedicated on the Sunday 27th October of the following year. Both the church and the vicarage opposite were by the architects Stockdale Harrison. The vicarage being a Grade II listed building.

In 1949, an annex to St. Thomas' Church was opened in Lansdowne Grove, using a former Army hut.

The year 1887 saw the opening of The Church of Christ in Canal Street which opened on Easter Tuesday as a single storey building. A fire in the adjacent factory badly damaged the church and it was rebuilt into its two storey form in 1892. The building has subsequently been demolished with

the site being taken into that for South Leicestershire College opened in September 2010.

The Stone Laying ceremony for The Congregational Church Blaby Road was laid on 20th June 1896, The elevation fronting the main street is of interest in that it reflects a Dutch Reformed style. The opening ceremony was held on the 4th February 1897.

Saturday 4th November 1899 saw the foundation stone laid for the Primitive Methodist Church in Countesthorpe Road. However this church has also been lost to progress, replaced by Best Close.

Land for the Catholic Church of St. Mary's was purchased on Countesthorpe Road in 1901. Until the church was erected in 1905, services were held within the Barracks. It was first opened 6th July of that year.

It would be an incomplete record of places of worship to forget to mention the 'Mission Hut' in Leopold Street. This was of corrugated iron construction and was provided by Wigston philanthropist, Walter Henry Bates of whom more later. The Mission, built after WW1, is long since gone.

Council schools were erected in Bassett Street, first commencing in 1886 for all pupils to the South side of the street and in 1892-3 to the North side which became the Boys School. When the Girl's school was built in 1904 the 1886 building became the Infant School. The Girl's School building was retained, and is now 'The Bassett Centre' the two older buildings were replaced by a new school in 1936 located on St. Thomas' Road. This was South Wigston Secondary Modern built with separate wings for Boys and Girls.

During the period between the two world wars and probably up to the late 1950s there was a great deal of stability in the teaching staff in years served. High standards of learning were achieved and ex-pupils remembered with much fondness (and genuine thankfulness in later life) the teachers of this period. My own father, Mr Orson James Kind, being one of them.

(Both Parklands County Infants and Fairfield County Infants Schools were constructed during the mid 1960's.)

An Adult School was also erected in Bassett Street, first as a corrugated iron building, later replaced with a permanent structure. The prime movers in this project were a group of men lead by Mr JB Main, a local

hosiery manufacturer with adjacent premises. President of the school for many years was Mr. Robert Kind, my grandfather.

Two very substantial public houses catered for the social life of the town, one 'The Duke of Clarence' on Blaby Road-Fairfield Street corner, the other 'The Grand Hotel' in Canal Street. Whilst both hotels were built by Orson Wright, the 'Grand' was designed by architect Clement Ogden. Distinctive brick facings were used both to buildings and boundary walls. The houses built at the junction of Canal Street and Countesthorpe Road reflect the same detail. Clement Ogden was also architect to the Grand Hotel in Leicester, with Orson Wright as builder.

Reverting to 'The Clarence', it is interesting to note that a 'Blue' plaque has been fixed to the building commemorating the fact that local Wigston girl, Gertie Gitana of Music Hall fame, appeared on stage in the Ballroom. The premises have been renamed, firstly as 'The Gaitty' and its present name The Marques of Queensbury. The town's first picture house was established in the ballroom over the 'Clarence' when silent films were the order of the day.

'Ashbourne House' to Blaby Road, located between Albion Street and Glen Gate was a substantial house built by Wright for himself. Again the design reflects the work of Ogden. The property subsequently provided home for medical practioners until late 1960s when it was replaced with an unsympathetic block of shops. Had Ashbourne House been standing today it would almost certainly have received 'listed status'.

Another large house was that to the opposite corner of Albion Street and fronting Blaby Road known as 'The Limes'. This was home to the Gamble family, owners of the Footwear Factory in their name in Canal Street. The Limes today is home to the Conservative Club and is much altered.

The Working Men's Club, originally sited in Kirkdale Road, was re-established; some may think inappropriately, in the terrace property next to the Wesleyan Methodist Church, Blaby Road. Certainly both represented different ends of the spectrum as far as Teetotalism was concerned.

Another individual who left a legacy behind was HW Bates (b.1854 d.1948). Bates built a hosiery factory in Station Street and his name is recorded on a 'Blue' plaque fixed to the building which is now houses Bates' own house was 'Bryngog' (Jaffa House) Countesthorpe Road. Henry Walter Bates was an artist in his own right. Quite a number of his water-colour paintings are still to be found with local families. His paintings were almost entirely of the River Sence between Kilby Bridge and Blaby Mill. His easel and paint gear would be mounted on his push

bike and off he would go. Many local children followed and received hand coloured cards from him with biblical texts appended. His local studio was at the bottom of his garden, now converted into a small dwelling. He loved to visit Wales and had a studio at Arthog, (Bryngog) where he was buried following a funeral service held in Wigston at St. Thomas' Church. It was whilst he was at Arthog that he painted in oils, none of which appear to have survived.

Mention of H W Bates would not be complete without mentioning 'The Bates Trusts' which he set up. Three Trusts in all, one was of 3 terrace houses in Orange Street in the name of The Primitive Methodist Church, one of 2 terrace houses in the name of The Wesleyan Methodist Church, and the third of 2 terrace houses to the Congregational Church. The disposal of income was governed by Deed.

Henry Walter Bates had an illustrious relative, who as an eminent entomologist, ranked alongside Darwin and whom he knew.

Another well remembered character was Charles Moore. He was an institution in himself. Choir-master at St. Thomas' Church, Charles formed the Wesleyan Temperance Band, followed by the Wigston Town Band. Sunday evenings in the Summer months would find the band playing in the Band Stand on Blaby Road Park. His music shop, at the corner of Blaby Road / Canal Street was a highly regarded specialist business with wide connections. When Charles laid down the 'Baton' his son Ted took it up and continued to conduct the Band. Charles also represented South Wigston on the Wigston Urban District Council for a number of years. The Moore family lived on Blaby Road, opposite to the shop. There were two daughters, Norah and Millie both would be found helping in the music shop.

What of the social aspects of this Victorian Town? Two public houses and two social clubs met the needs for some. The churches also played a significant role. Amateur Theatrical Groups centred on the churches provided a wide range of entertainment. The Wesleyan Chapel was home to a Male Voice Choir of considerable merit. Sport was also provided for, through Cricket, Soccer and Clubs whose home games were held on the Blaby Road Park. Rugby was played at The Secondary Modern School, their old boys team achieved many honours.

A corporate event held each year and for many years was the Fancy Dress Parade and Decorated Floats. This was a Wigston Town event, the proceeds being applied in support of The Leicester Royal Infirmary. Starting on the Barracks Parade Ground it would wend its way down Saffron Road along Blaby Road to Station Road and Wigston Magna

Earlier mention was made of silent films being screened in the ballroom over the the 'Clarence'. George Smith, 'Picture House Smith', as he was known, was behind this venture. Eventually he built The Picture House (followed by The Ritz) on Blaby Road opposite to the Clarence. Many youngsters would be found at the 'Twopenny Rush' on a Saturday afternoon when Tom Mix and many other cowboy characters would entertain for a couple of hours.

The foregoing provides a synopsis around which aspects of life in South Wigston may be extended. Each person will have his or her own version of events and of characters of the day. Development of any settlement is organic in that it transcends periods of history. South Wigston is no different in that the Victorian and Edwardian periods merge followed quickly by post World War development.

The terrace properties south of the Blaby road were, largely, the first to be built in the new town. Development of more commodious terrace houses in Clifford, Leopold, Fairfield and Albion Streets along with others to the North side of Blaby Road followed (OS for 1914). This in itself created a 'class divide'. The nineteen twenties saw the development of Council housing on the remaining plots of land, both North and South of Blaby Road (OS 1930). The nineteen thirties saw development of semi-detached and detached houses to Saffron Road and also the terrace and semi-detached properties to the 'Grove' known as the 'Hooley Estate'. The latter development also attracted a 'social distinction' in the town which lasted until well after the second World War. This development housed many evacuee families from London's East End.

Just as a social divide existed between the residents of Wigston Magna and South, (the railway and Spion Cop being partly to blame) so it did between the different developments to South Wigston. When in the 1960s The Fairfield Estate was developed, many families from South Wigston located there. It was looked upon as " South Wigston made good." These family ties still exist now in 2011 so to some degree supporting the view that this place is worth living in. Those who may pass through without a thought that it is a place worth stopping for could just be wrong, including, the eminent local historian.

In more recent years changes have been brought about due to economic pressures. The railways no longer employ the number of workers once required and the 'Beeching' Axe reduced the network which also accounted for the loss of all three Wigston Stations c1962 with closure of the Rugby line. Following a prolonged campaign a new station was opened in 1986 to serve South Wigston. The two platforms provided were either side of Hassell's Bridge.

Interestingly, but frustrating at the same time whilst work continued, is the renewal of two road bridges, Hassell's and Saffron Road over the Leicester to Birmingham Rail Lines. This is to allow passage to freight traffic en route to Felixstowe.

The coal yards of H. Marshall and A Shipp off Blaby Road had already closed to be replaced by Forsell's Dyeworks which was demolished to make way for TESCO in 2004.

The end of the twentieth century saw the wind down of the Hosiery and Knitwear businesses and apart from one, Commando Knitwear, all have disappeared. Not surprisingly all the main banking facilities were also lost

JW Blacks Footwear works on Saffron Road has given way to 'Jasmine Court' a sheltered housing development. The site formerly occupied by JA Atkinson Dyeworks in Canal Street, along with the adjacent Devas factory and the United Reformed Church has been developed as South Leicestershire College. This latter development, completed in 2010, along with the TESCO supermarket, referred to earlier, present the regenerated face of South Wigston.

In recent years re-development of the former site of the Brunswick Elastic Web Mills in Garden Street, occupied by Morrison Electric between 1934 to c1964, then by MK Refrigerators has been transformed into a housing development. This reflects the terrace housing of Garden and Irlam Street and maintains the integrity of its surroundings.

Presently, the economic situation is working against further regeneration. There are still several empty premises which could be re-developed to meet housing needs, two factory premises in Canal Street and the vacant Grand Hotel site. The former Kwik-Save shop on Blaby Road has been vacant for a number of years and the former Shoe-Fayre factory on Kirkdale Road is also ripe for re-development.

During the early years, of the new town, transport was provided in the main by horse drawn carts, floats and vans. Hand barrows were also in use. Personal transport was provided by foot or bicycle. Few motor vehicles were on the roads prior to WWI. This created self sufficiency, literally everything needed was on the doorstep and this situation was retained until well after WWII.

The advent of the motor car and a regular bus service began to change habits. The worker travelled further away from home for employment. The Market and Shops in the city were easily reached and local suppliers found themselves in competition for trade. It will be interesting to see

whether in forth coming years the ' wheel will turn ' with the Increasing cost of fuel and parking charges forcing a re-think in attitude to travel.

Another re-think of attitude will be in respect of how this town with its strong Victorian legacy will be allowed to redevelop to meet changing needs. The new college, referred to earlier, is by its scale and design, an abrupt contrast to its surroundings. Its location, with one elevation towards the open park, and the other being set back from its Canal Street frontage achieves a satisfactory 'marriage' which initially may not have appeared possible.

Some years ago, Conservation Areas were set up both North and South of the Blaby Road with a view to controlling change.. However, a walk through the streets reveal unsympathetic personalisation of house fronts. The introduction of upc windows and doors of every design adds to the disunity. There are examples of change to roofing materials, concrete roof tiles for slate, The Limes, Blaby Road stands out incongruously.

Perhaps the worst example is that of the building cornering Canal Street/Blaby Road where not only has the interesting stone detailing to the gable cornices been lost to blue brick but also the former shop front opposite to the college is made up of broken brick tiles.

Brave decisions will be required when faced with the task of how regeneration of the built environment may be managed. It is inevitable that this Victorian Town will change in future years and to try to replicate its period is neither desirable or is it sensible.

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Several writers of local history have given time and space to South Wigston setting down its history both in word and picture. An Exhibition was mounted in 1984 by Peter Mastin and Stuart Follows depicting the town's 111 years. It was descriptive of its industry, commerce, education, places of worship, local characters, social and sporting life. Interestingly it set out the occupiers of most properties fronting the main street, Blaby Road. Nostalgia oozed from every panel and it proved to be one of the most successful exhibitions held locally.

The exhibition was repeated 10 years later when it was brought up to date by the author of this narrative, following which, it was deposited at The County Record Office.

A O Kind MBE

March 2011

In setting down foregoing I am indebted to a number of writers who have recorded their history of this Town of South Wigston. The following Bibliography is recommended to readers for further reading:-

Wigston Magna and South. Duncan Lucas, Tricia Berry and Peter Mastin

South Wigston. 'The Early Years' Peter Mastin

South Wigston. 'Between the Wars' Peter Mastin

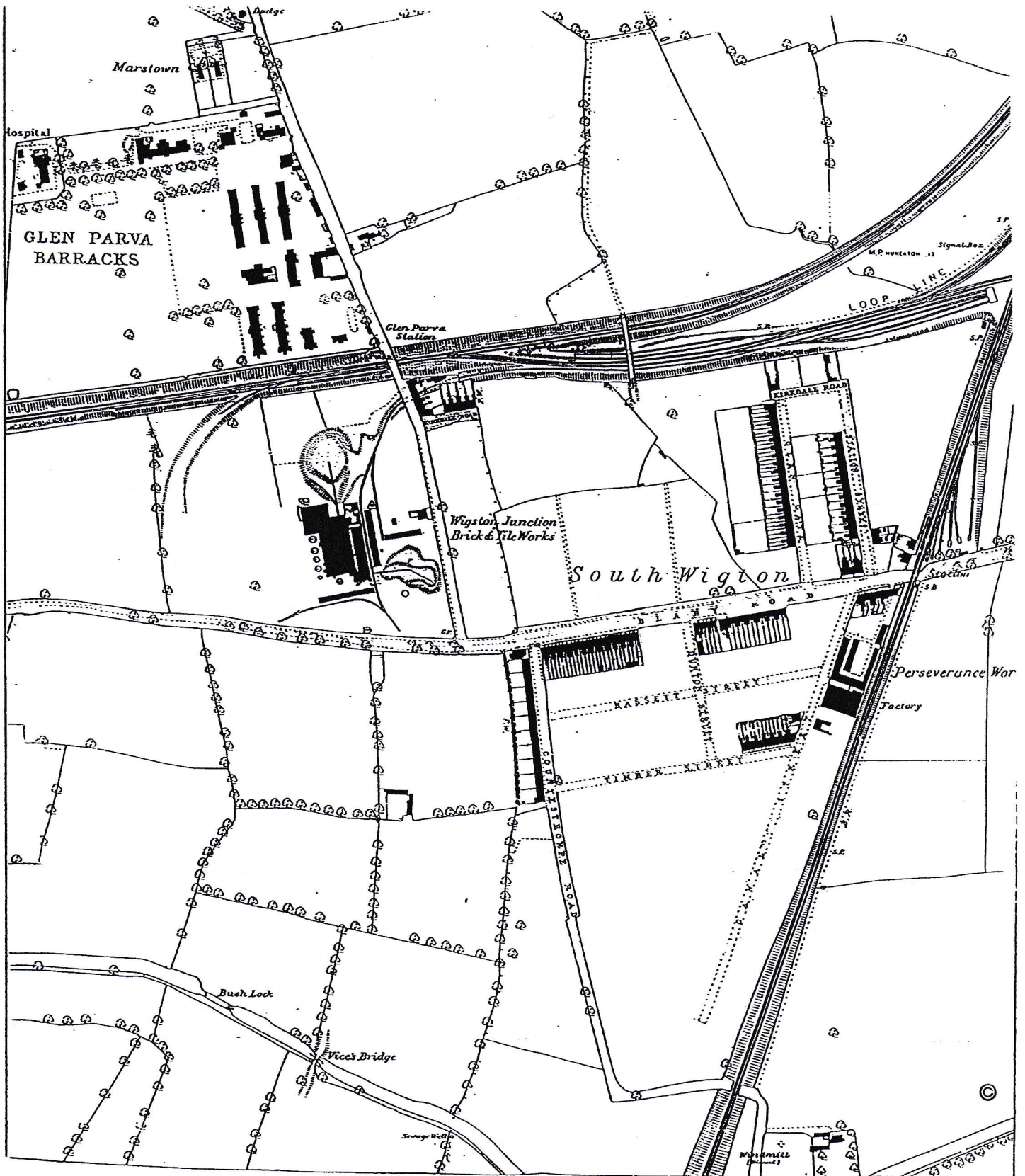
111 years of South Wigston. Peter Mastin and Stuart Follows

South Wigston and its Parish Church. Peter G Holmes, Pamela Ward and Margaret E Nobbs

History of South Wigston. F Noble

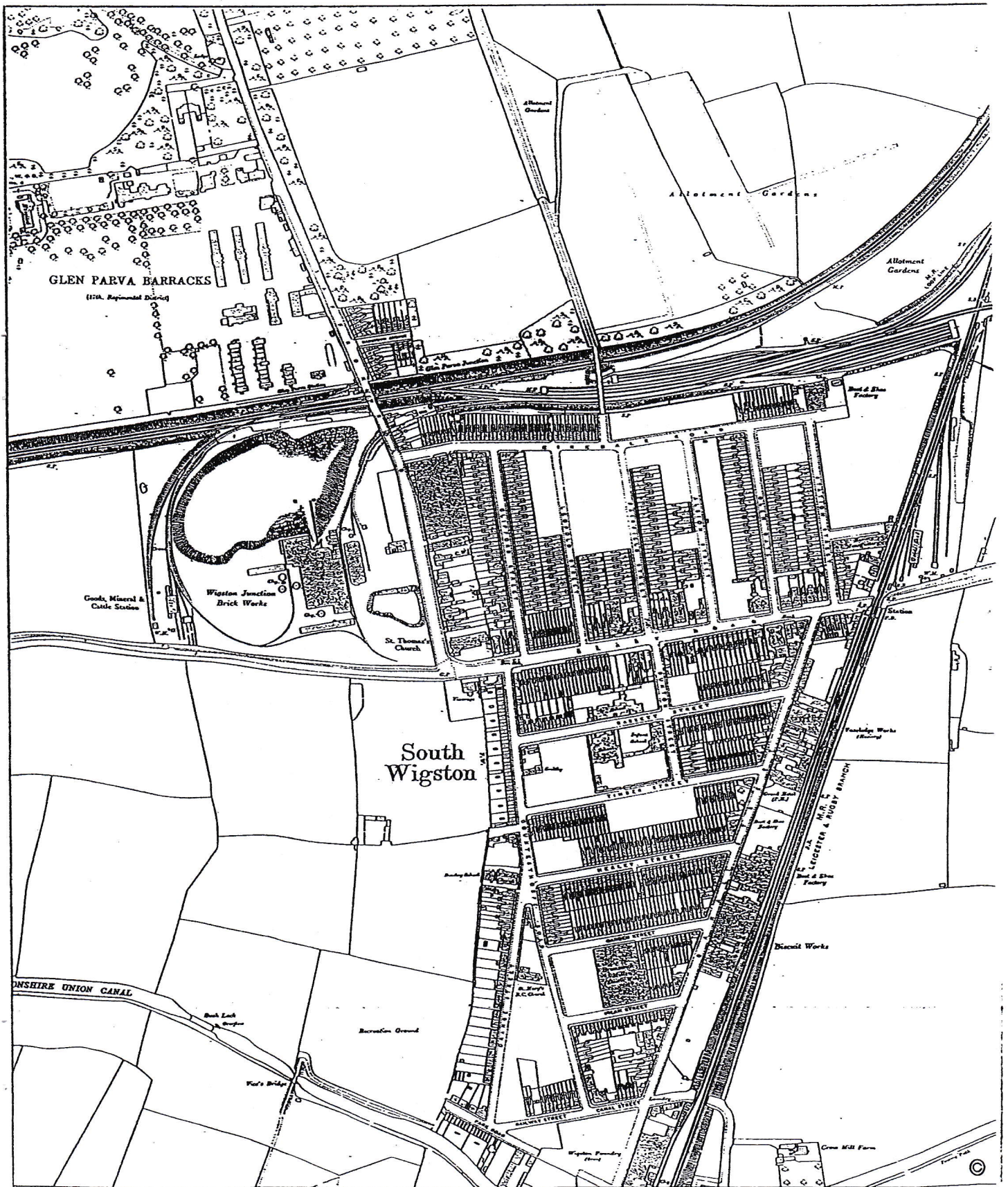
The above publications also refer to further reading.

It was not the writers intention to provide a photographic record with this Profile since it is amply provided for in the foregoing publications.



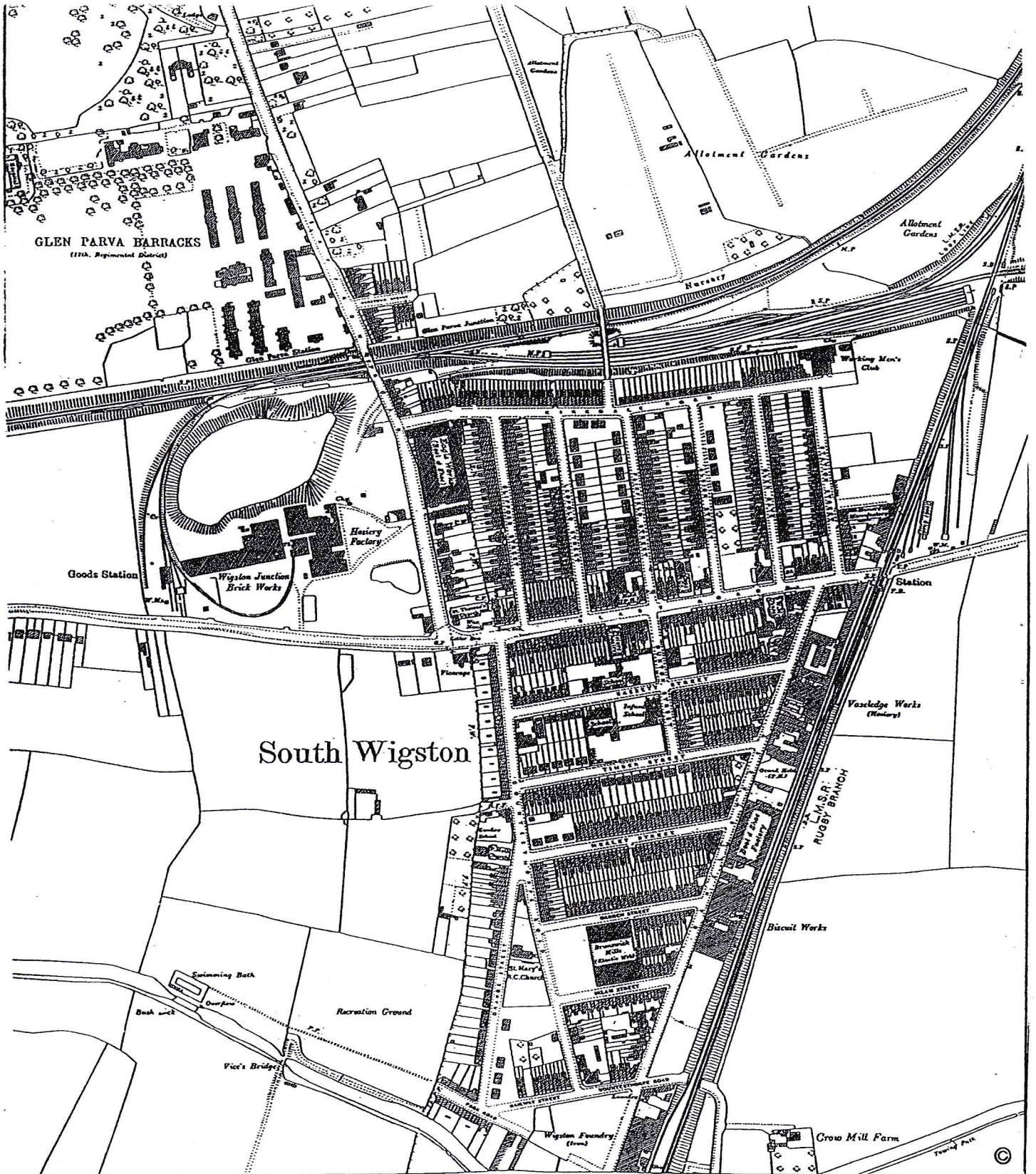
SOUTH WIGSTON 1885

Two years after Orson Wright began the construction of modern South Wigston there are already almost one hundred and seventy terraced houses and shops on both sides of Blaby Road. The only buildings which existed in this area before 1885 were the Grange, its two lodges and Marstown on Saffron Road; the Barracks, the Wigston South station and house, three signal boxes, the Brick and Tile Works, Crow Mill and the cottage opposite, the nearby farms and other farm buildings scattered around the fields. Glen Parva station was opened in 1884. The first terraced properties completed are believed to be those between Canal Street and the railway crossing, the houses in Station Street and the factories in Canal Street. The two claypits at the Brick Works are still fairly small, while the beginnings of a siding have been laid from Glen Parva station to supplement the original access line from Blaby Sidings with its short tunnel under Saffron Road. The misspelling of "South Wigton" is as it appeared on the original Ordnance Survey map of the area.



SOUTH WIGSTON 1914

By this date Orson Wright's South Wigston has been completed for almost twenty years, and there are over six hundred terraced houses as well as numerous shops, factories, churches and two schools. There are still vacant lots in most of the streets; these were popularly known as 'greens' and as well as providing play-areas for local children they would occasionally be put to use by travelling fairs and theatre companies. One of the claypits at the Brick Works has been greatly enlarged, to provide bricks for all these buildings as well as some of Mr. Wright's other developments around Leicester. A railway goods depot has been established next to the brickyard, to supplement the one already existing next to Wigston South station; at this time the two stations belonged to different railway companies. Large areas of land adjacent to the London & North Western Railway line have been given over to allotment gardens, with



SOUTH WIGSTON 1930

The original streets of South Wigston are now almost completely developed following a period of mainly council house building in the 1920s. Apart from small blocks of terraced houses in Kirkdale Road, Station Street, Glengate and Leopold Street, these were all semi-detached residences with modest front gardens. Private houses have begun to appear along Saffron Road and the road to Blaby, although the latter were actually in the parish of Glen Parva. Although not appearing on this map, the first houses on the Lansdowne Grove estate were also being built at about this time. Ashbourne House on the corner of Blaby Road and Glengate, originally the residence of Orson Wright, still has a large garden and orchard attached; some of this will shortly be given over to several new houses in Albion Street. Since the amalgamation of the railways in 1925 both of South Wigston's stations have belonged to the London Midland & Scottish Railway. By this date too the claypit and brickworks had virtually ceased production, and the original access line from Blaby Sidings has been removed, with the tunnel under Saffron Road filled in.