



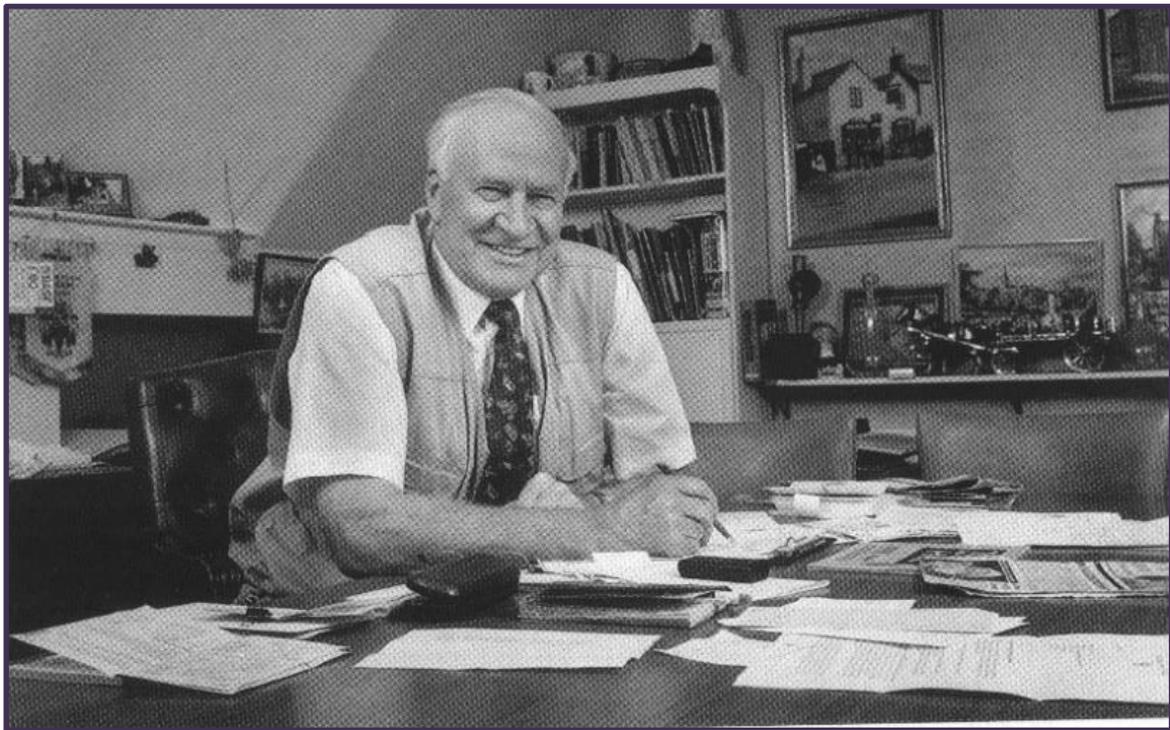
W F K M

WIGSTON HERITAGE

GREATER WIGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
21 Blakesley Road, Wigston Magna, Leicester LE18 3WD

And

WIGSTON FRAMEWORK KNITTERS MUSEUM
42/44 Bushloe End, Wigston Magna, Leicester LE18 2BA



‘Mr Wigston’

**Duncan Lucas in his loft at home in Newton Lane, Wigston Magna
Obituary, page 8**

BULLETIN 123

1st July 2022

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Local Histories Help You Understand Your Ancestors in Context.

When we learn history in school, we often hear about the large, dramatic events that affected a nation or the world on a large scale. Occurrences such as industrialisation, world wars, and economic depressions are examples of such things. This information is important to understand, but again, it's just an overview.

A seasoned genealogist applies these events to a specific area by asking, "How did these events affect small English villages and the lives of ancestors who lived there?"

"Instead of thinking about World War I as a great big topic, what if we think instead about Leicestershire in World War I and what if we take it even smaller and think about Wigston, during the war?"

We need to think about the people who went to war and those who stayed at home. Consider what their lives were like and how they managed the hardships. What was life like after the war when the troops returned to civilian life?

The Wigston Heritage Centre holds many of the answers in books, photographs and documents. The volunteers will help you research your family and the best thing of all it is free.

Mike Farryan

OBITUARIES

Marian Daetwyler

We sadly announce that one of our members, Marian Daetwyler has recently passed away. Marian was a long-standing member of the Society and attended many of our meetings.

We send our thoughts and condolences to Marian's family.

Society's website: www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk

All enquiries to: secretary@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk

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

email: bulletineditor@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk

four clear weeks before publication date

IMPORTANT - PLEASE NOTE
CHANGE OF MEETING VENUE AND CHANGE OF DAY

As from September 2022 the Greater Wigston Historical Society meetings will be held at:

**THE MENPHYS HUB, BASSETT STREET,
SOUTH WIGSTON, LEICESTER, LE18 4PE**

Parking is available on site via Timber Street or in the Countesthorpe Road car park. Doors will open from 6.45pm and the meeting starts at 7.15pm. Please remember that our meetings will now be on a **TUESDAY** evening.

We look forward to seeing you at our meetings.

TUESDAY 20 SEPTEMBER 2022
IN SEARCH OF DANIEL LAMBERT
(POWERPOINT & PICTURES)
PHILIPPA MASSEY

TUESDAY 18 OCTOBER 2022
THE MAGIC OF RADIO
(POWERPOINT & PICTURES)
BRIDGET BLAIR

TUESDAY 15 NOVEMBER 2022
FOXTON LOCKS AND INCLINED
PLANE (POWERPOINT & PICTURES)
MARY MATTS

TUESDAY 13 DECEMBER 2022
MARKET HARBOROUGH
SINGING GROUP
"OLD FRIENDS"
WITH NIBBLES & DRINKS

MEETING REPORTS – BOTH REPORTS BY COLIN TOWELL

FEBRUARY 2022 MEETING

**AGM and TALK: SIGNIFICANT BUILDINGS AND BLUE PLAQUES
OF WIGSTON Part II**

After a break of two months for another lockdown we met in person for our AGM in February (the correct month) followed by the second part of Peter Cousins' illustrated talk on the Significant Buildings and Blue Plaques of Wigston. 69 people were present. The full minutes of the AGM have been circulated but it cannot be omitted from this report that the Chairman announced with much sadness that Duncan Lucas, our President and a founder member, had passed

away. His local knowledge was unbounded and he had contributed so much to the Society and its archives.

A further major announcement was that as from the September meeting the Society would move from Wigston Academy to the Menphys Hub on Bassett Street in South Wigston, meetings will be on the 3rd Tuesday (not Wednesday) and start at 7.15pm as at present.

Peter had presented part one of his talk on the Significant Buildings and Blue Plaques of Wigston at the AGM in 2021 (by Zoom) and took up his talk this time at Sandy Rise off the Oadby Road. Here there is a Blue Plaque to Professor William George Hoskins who lived there in the 1930s when he worked at Leicester University where he founded the Department of Local History. Of his many books on the subject, 'The Midland Peasant' is well known to historians and is about the development over the centuries of Wigston Magna. The walk then moved down to the Grade II listed "The Grange" on Leicester Road which also displays a blue plaque to Thomas Burgess founder of the Wigston Gas Co and keen educationalist.

Number 26 Gladstone Street, former Weavers Cottage, and the 4 cottages on Spring Lane where old outside privies are still visible were pinpointed. The tour passed the Star and Garter pub and the nearby row of terraced cottages on the old Leicester Road into Wigston Magna. The two and a half storey houses with prominent front gables on Aylestone Lane were highlighted as was Candlelight Row, a terrace of houses near the Horse and Trumpet pub on Leicester Road so called because they were built on an evening shift using candles.

Wandering out to Kilby Bridge we diverted up Cooks Lane to see Ivy Cottage, the lane is changing because of new development but is still a peaceful walk. On reaching Kilby Bridge, The Navigation pub and most of the canal side buildings are noticeable and on returning to Wigston Magna the old mortuary at the cemetery is significant. Several buildings on Station Road are listed or significant including the 1852 Brewery Co pub and Twenty Row, the terrace alongside the railway which together with the pub is in its own conservation area.

Moving down to South Wigston, Peter firstly highlighted the Henry Walter Bates factory in Station Street built in 1890 for Bates by Orson Wright, a name to come up many times when discussing the development of South Wigston. W H Bates was not only a factory owner, but a prolific artist thought to have produced over 15,000 paintings in his lifetime many of which were given away to local people. There is a blue plaque in his memory on the building which is now apartments.

What is now known as the Bobbin Factory in Canal Street is part of the college but was owned by textile manufacturers Devas Routledge and known as the Vaseledge Works. The next call was the Bassett Street schools, again built by Orson Wright and which will become our meeting place later this year. On the outskirts of South Wigston is Crow Mill, originally a water mill before being

converted to wind and steam and then in 1982 to a domestic dwelling. Finally, we visited what is now named the Marquis of Queensberry and in previous existences the Duke of Clarence and The Gaiety but now apartments. Here there is a blue Plaque to Gertie Gitana of 'There's an Old Mill by the Stream' fame. The talk was an altogether detailed catalogue of local buildings and people of interest with Peter giving many examples of family history research that he has done on Wigston residents of the past.

A booklet on the 14 Blue Plaques may be obtained, price £3, from:
cftowell@aol.com

APRIL 2022 MEETING

A STORM IN A TEASHOP: THE WAITRESSES STRIKE OF 1908

For our first meeting of the lighter evenings, we welcomed Dr Ann Featherstone, a retired lecturer, who gave us a fascinating and very well delivered talk on a subject that very few, if any, of us knew anything about although the event was an interesting and powerful 'moment in time'.

The 4 April 1908 was Boat Race Day, London was crowded and 2 hours before the "off" tension was high. The Cabin restaurant, part of the Slater Group, in a tall narrow building of three floors in Piccadilly was full. It had a grand staircase going both up to a mezzanine floor and down to the basement smoking room. Waitresses at top London Hotels were attractive and had stylish uniforms, at the Cabin, in black and yellow. Suddenly a waitress drops her tray onto the marble floor with a great clatter. This clearly was a signal as all waitresses either dropped their trays or placed them on a table. They all made their way, with male staff, to the bottom of the grand staircase. Mr Toller, the manager emerges from his office to see what was going on and after a discussion, the staff suddenly return to work. It turns out that a waitress had been sacked that morning but as a result of the discussion she was reinstated.

Next day the waitresses met with Gertrude Tuckwell who was the President of the Women's Trade Union. She advised that a letter be sent to the Chairman of the Slater Group saying that Mr Toller had acted unreasonably and demanded that the manager of the Cabin be dismissed. He did not respond by a second deadline and staff stopped work again. Mr Toller called for his boss to come to the Cabin. He demanded that the staff return to work but they refused, and the restaurant was closed. The waitress speaking for the staff was Emily "Ken" Ware aged 26 and who was the head waitress with six years of service. She addressed the customers as they left and then the staff also walked out.

As is often the case there was a lot going on behind the scenes. Waitressing, although paying only 6/9 a week and with draconian rules for staff, was attractive to young women as there was potential for a high level of tips and for finding a

partner if they were prepared to respond to the attentions of wealthy male customers and to be flirtatious. In fact, at least one restaurant chain, ABC Depots, required their waitresses to tone down their jewellery and hair styles so as not to be so attractive to male customers. The attraction also extended to male staff and some restaurants employed only male staff so as to avoid the problem.

The walkout escalated into a strike supported by staff from other restaurants and there was some unrest in the streets resulting in one man being arrested. In court Emily Ware said that she had been kissed by a customer but there was suspicion that this was a Mr Pollock, a member of staff who kissed Miss Ware who was the dismissed member of staff. A strike committee was formed and was supported by a Mrs Holland who offered a property she owned on Brompton Road as a teashop although the strikers themselves also found a more suitable property near Leicester Square which they opened as Ken's Kabin and ran it on co-operative lines with an 8-hour day. It was very successful and profits were used to open the Brompton Road restaurant.

Mrs. Holland was not happy with the running arrangements and closed Brompton Road down. Then, when the strikers tried to register the name Ken's Kabin, they found that Mrs Holland had beaten them to it. So, the strikers changed the name to Ken's Cabin for their own café at Leicester Square which was very successful. The whole issue was well covered in the press and mentioned in Parliament. The strike lasted about one month.



10/4/1908



20/4/1908

BITS AND BOBS FROM WIGSTON PAST – NUMBER 2

by *Mike Forryan*

Picture from *Leicester Mercury* Friday 31st July 2009

1976 - The Memorable Summer our Canal Dried Up

With all our worries about global warming, here is a reminder of a memorable heat wave of 33 years ago. It was in the summer of 1976 that Leicestershire dried up, with scorching temperatures and no rain for weeks on end.



The scene says it all, but the caption in the *Mercury* for July 23, 1976, reads:

"This is the time of year when the Grand Union Canal is busy with pleasure craft as holiday makers enjoy a taste of life afloat."

"But this year is different. The prolonged lack of rain has left whole sections of canal with scarcely enough water to sail a paper boat, as this picture, taken this week between South Wigston and Kilby Bridge, shows all too dramatically."

"Instead of a placid ribbon of water there is only mud, cracking in the sun."

"Nowhere to sail, nowhere to fish, until the rains come."



Extract # 1 from 'The Household Guide of 1894'

A VERY SIMPLE CURE FOR ROUND SHOULDERS.

Round shoulders are almost unavoidably accompanied by weak lungs but may be cured by the simple and easily performed exercise of raising oneself upon the toes, leisurely, in a perpendicular position, several times daily. Take a perfectly upright position, with the heels together and the toes at an angle of forty-five degrees. Drop the arms lifeless at the sides, animating and raising the chest to its full capacity muscularly, the chin well drawn in. Slowly rise up on the balls of the feet to the greatest possible height, thereby exercising all the muscles of the legs and body; come again into a standing position without swaying the body backward out of the perfect line. Repeat the exercise first on one foot and then on the other.

Extract by Mike Forryan

OBITUARY – ORSON DUNCAN LUCAS 1929 – 2022

Over the past few years, I have spent many hours with Duncan, my cousin, working on his family tree and transferring his historical archive to the Heritage Centre. During these conversations Duncan asked me to record his life for a record he was keeping for his family. Initially I asked Duncan to jot down memories and I would consolidate them into a formal record. The following is a summary of the information provided by Duncan in his own words.

Mike Forryan 2022

Orson Duncan Lucas “My Life in Wigston”

Born in Wigston on 13th March 1929, I was the first son following 3 girls and followed by 2 younger brothers. My first memory was the eventful Sunday in 1939 when, missing Sunday School, the family listened to the radio as Neville Chamberlain announced that as Mr Hitler had not replied to the governments ‘note’, a state of war now existed between Great Britain and Germany. As a 10-year-old the true significance of this did not sink in although mother was crying. We 6 children, ma and pa, lived at 10 Bell Street rear of a draper’s shop in one room and a small pantry, two bedrooms and an attic, how we crammed in I can’t now imagine.



My eldest sister Marion went to South Wigston Intermediates School while my next sister Audrey went to Wyggeston Girls School (she used to bike home with a lad called David Attenborough), but she died of meningitis at 17 years old. Josie, my third sister, also went to Wyggeston Girls School while I failed my 11 plus examination.

Mother was determined that we should have a top education even though we were poor. Father at that time had a small van hawking clothing and shoe repairs around Leicestershire villages. A poor existence. I often went with him to open the gates (many roads were still gated then).

An uncle, a butcher, served on the Urban Council and also on the local charity. I duly got a grant for a Grammar School education. £5 guineas a term. Ironically as a Councillor many years later I was elected as a trustee on that same committee and I’m still serving on its successor.

So, in fathers little van we, mother and myself, went to an interview at the City Boys School on Humberstone Gate. We were shown around by a tall, lean and mean master with cape a flow. My name is Mr Carter he intoned. I was accepted. At home I had my own veg garden and one day I dug up a carrot which had a ring grow into its middle. It was my mother's long lost wedding ring. I kept rabbits and hens; I was inquisitive to learn but not school lessons. School mates included, at Wigston National School, a certain Walter Williams who was also a non-academic and changed his name to Bill Maynard. I along with my mate Maurice Cattermole were the last in class wearing short trousers and as clothes were rationed the issue of coupons for our clothes were withheld from us two shorties.

We scouts were going on a long trek and met outside the Star & Garter when a plane flew over very low. It's a Hampden lads exclaimed, 'It's not, it has a rear gunner'. It was a Dornier with swastikas and crosses on it. It is a jerry, we experts shouted. The Crump, Crump and the cheeky Jerry returned! Sometime later the sirens sounded out and as we were shunted into an air raid shelter, Jerry had returned and we screamed abuse at him. He was after the Gas and Electric works and thank God he missed. Then we went down to see the damage but a soldier with a rifle shooed us off, so we went round a back alley and saw a complete roof sitting in the road and a shop keeper (lady) dusting fruit covered in dust and debris.

My education was suffering, no wonder I left at 15.

After I left school at 15, I went directly into farming with my own allotment and helping on other farms. One incident that was very memorable was when I was kicked in the stomach by an Aberdeen Angus cow I was milking. I was near death and was rushed to the Leicester Royal Infirmary for surgery. They opened me up with a cut from one side of my stomach to the other and made the required repairs. I was in hospital for 70 days which included VE Day and all the village celebrations.

A critical moment in my life was when I joined the Kibworth Young Farmers Club. I was a rather shy and timid youth and would not say boo to a goose at one time. I was conscripted into their public speaking team and told to get on with it. I was extremely worried, but fortune was on my side and I met a Mr Fred Lee of Wigston Two Steeples, who lived at a house called 'The Blot' in Kibworth Harcourt who was a renowned public speaker. He took me under his wing and also worked with the rest of our team to coach us in the art of Public Speaking. He must have been good as our team won the County Championship. The public speaking training gave me an interest in Politics especially the Liberal Association.

At 21 years old I was dabbling with farming with a 650 sq. yard allotment on Horsewell Lane where I taught myself to keep pigs and hatch chickens. The start of my farming life was when I rented 12½ acres from Uncle Ernie Forryan at £4 per acre per annum. With the new land I was able to expand production of the pigs and chickens to give me something to sell. Then I was able to collect kitchen waste to feed the animals and sell eggs and meat.

Times were hard but I finally bought a tractor from Nichols of Oadby for £100. This was the start of another income source as I was able to plough a garden for Mr Roberts, Gartree Road, Oadby. Soon after more work materialised, and I continued to grow the business. White Gate Farm came next which was about 60 acres in Newton Lane.

I met Jean at the Wigston Wakes Fair, and we married at St Peter's Church, Oadby, Monday August 11th, 1952, at 12.15pm. We lived in rooms with mother at 78 Bell Street for a short time and then moved into rooms opposite in Bell Street until we could afford to buy a house. Having told lots of fibs to the mortgage company we bought number 43 Newton Lane for the princely sum of £2,400. Many years later we sold 43 Newton Lane and ploughed the profits into building White Gate Farmhouse a little further up Newton Lane.

This was followed by Lucas Landscaping which really developed from my helping ploughing on other farms. It started by me ploughing a garden for Tailor Gordon Roberts, a golf pal of Les Forryan. A tricky job with a Fordham Tractor and trailing plough. It brought me more jobs. Then an old friend John Copson, a County Council Foreman who was fed up with his job, suggested we join up. This we did with John working with me as senior partner.

Trade in the early 1950's was good and in the late 1950's John left to work on his own accounts. I took some chances and most came off. Built playing fields for the City Boys School on Downing Drive. Ironically as Landscaping jobs spread around the county and beyond, I gained a store of County knowledge which stood me in good stead when I became County Chairman. At the same time, we were rearing Simon and Anne. Simon went off to Bangor University whilst Anne, a home bird like Jean and myself, made inroads into my farming by letting land for horses. Then she opened a farm shop and the Forryan blood in butchering came out swinging the meat chopper.

Over a period of time, I had purchased 7½ acres of land in Newton Lane from my cousin Brenda, to add to the 13½ acres I had already bought opposite Wigston Cemetery for £100 per acre. It was Uncle Les that lent me the deposit. Knowledge is a great thing, and I proposed a joint development of land, now Wigston Harcourt, with my cousin Willy Forryan and Fred Gee. After several appeals later it was successful and between us, we managed to have the new building project given a sensible name. After the sale of the land, and the extortionate Tax demand, I had enough left to buy Brocks Hill Farm at Oadby.



I finally became a Politician in 1962 after standing for election three times, having lost the first two. Over time I became Chairman of the Wigston UDC, being the first working farmer and Liberal as such in over 100 years. Following this I was Chairman of Leicestershire County Council.

Other interests and achievements included becoming a Rotarian in 1962, Freeman of the City of London, Alderman of the Borough of Oadby & Wigston.

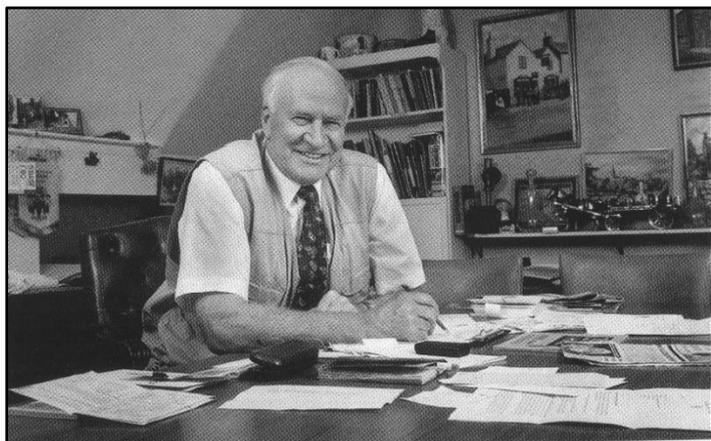
My other interest was the history of the area. Prof. Hoskins said, 'write it down'. Doreen Boulter did with her three books, so I reckoned I could do it as well. I learned the tales from threshing gangs, road menders, dustbin men, relatives and from anyone I talked to. Then I wrote it all down.

My Books in no particular order:

Duncan's Ditties of Leicestershire, One Man's Wigston, The Streets of Wigston 1930's by Hoskins updated 2012 by ODL, Strange Happenings in Wichingstone (Collection of Talks), The Brockshill Story Oadby, Duncan's Ditties, The Kilby Bridge Story, I Learned Yer – Disappearing Leicestershire Dialects, The Exhibition of Drawings and Paintings by local artists of Wigston, Wigston Harcourt, The Poppy & the Shamrock and Lucas Marsh Oadby. In addition, I worked with other talented authors on - The Wigston's, Bye Gone Wigston volumes 1 and 2, Wigston Magna, Wigston Wander and Another Wigston Wander.

I was very active with diverse projects and organisations including, working tirelessly to save the **Master Hosiers Cottage** to become the **Framework Knitters Museum**, **Leicester Castle** champion, Chairman **Bradgate Park Trust**, Founder **County Museums Forum**, Founder of the **Wigston Folk Museum** latterly closed, and all gifted to **Hallaton Museum**, Governor of **Wyggestons Hospital**, founder member of the **Wigston Civic Society** and for 40 years chairman of its Anniversary Committee and President of **Wigston Liberal Club**.

In 1980 I was chatting to Jim Colver about Wigston, and he suggested that we set up an Historical Society. We held the first meeting in the summer of 1980, and it has continued to the present day.



Membership is now around 180 which shows how popular memories of Wigston and the surrounding areas are.

‘The Loft’ at White Gate Farmhouse with much of my collection around me.

Retirement never really happened, but Jean and I did build White Gate Lodge. A bungalow. What a battle!! A great struggle at 80 years old but we won out in the end.

Over the years I had collected a library of historical information about Wigston and the local area. I had concerns as to the safety of this collection and how it would be available to the public. Through the Greater Wigston Historical Society and the drive of Mike Forryan, the Wigston Heritage Centre was formed, and I was very pleased to donate my own precious archive to the Heritage Centre.

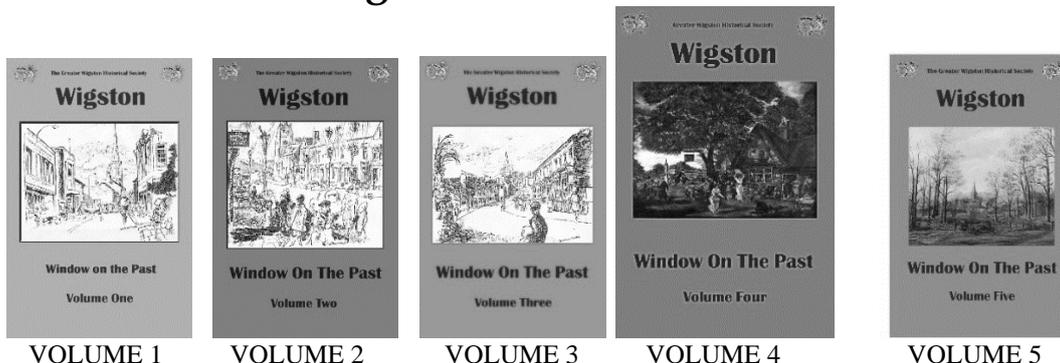
ODL - R.I.P

G.W.H.S. Books: *Wigston – Window on the Past Series*

Available at the Heritage Centre

NEW

Out Soon



Details at: www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk/GWHS-ONLINE-STORE.htm



Brettell Road, 1953

EYRES MONSELL –WHAT’S IN A NAME?

Connection between a Cotswold Estate
and a Housing Estate Close to Wigston

The Eyres Monsell area was previously part of the Estate owned by the Eyres family who lived at Dumbleton Hall in Worcestershire, and who had purchased the Hall from the Holland family in 1875. Samuel Eyres was a very wealthy Yorkshire Wool Merchant. By 1880 his son Henry William Eyres had married Caroline Sharp and their daughter Sybil married Bolton Monsell, who then changed the family name to Eyres-Monsell.



**Sir Bolton Eyres-Monsell (right),
Lady Eyres-Monsell and Colonel
Wilfred**

He was MP for Evesham from 1910 – 1935. Dumbleton Hall was a very popular Country House in the Cotswolds with many social events and activities. In 1936 Sir Bolton Eyres-Monsell became Lord Eyres-Monsell of Evesham. In 1940 the Women’s Land Army were billeted on the top floor of Dumbleton Hall and worked locally on the farms.

By the late 1940’s there was a desperate need for new housing in Leicester, and the land owned by Bolton Eyres-Monsell was purchased for £40,500 and consisted of about 400,000 acres.

Viscount Monsell died in 1969, but his name lives on in the Estate as do other connections of his; former admirals and captains, such as John Tovey and Sir Frederick Sturdee who was a WW1 Admiral of the Fleet. He was responsible for the restoration of Nelson’s HMS Victory.

The Eyres Monsell Housing Estate was to become the 2nd largest estate built in Leicester after the war. The land was purchased from Mrs Sybil Eyres-Monsell. She had previously sold land to Leicester Council to build the Saffron Lane Estate in 1923.

Plans for the Eyres Monsell Estate were to build 2,300 homes including 3 and 4 bedroom houses, flats and bungalows. The new estate would have schools, playing fields and a health centre. Materials and skilled workers were scarce after the war and a mixture of brick and concrete houses were built by John Laing. The Easiform construction method was fast and efficient, the grey concrete walls were

painted cream and tenants could chose a brown or green front door. The first houses were completed in 1951 and another 470 in 1952.



Glenhills Boulevard, Eyres Monsell Estate, May 1959



St Hugh's Church

The area was previously rural land and was used for agricultural purposes. There was no Grand House, but the estate was built with wide green spaces and mature trees and also a new Church. The firm of Basil Spence who designed the new Coventry Cathedral were selected for this but the full plans for St Hugh's on Sturdee Road were not carried out, only for the Church Hall, which opened in 1958 and then served as the Church.

In 1962 a Community Centre and playing area was built on Hillsborough Road, and in 1964 a Boys Club was opened on Whitteney Drive, as well as

St John Bosco Catholic Church. In 1966 a Working Men's Club opened and The Invincible Pub was built on Sturdee Road. The Invincible Pub was named after Admiral Sturdee's flagship from 1914 but also had the aircraft carrier's sign on the Pub Sign. The pub was built in the early 1960's and eventually closed in 2005 and then was subject to vandalism and arson and was finally demolished in 2011.

In 2013 the Eyres Monsell Estate was given a £2m regeneration award scheme which would provide new shops on the site and a Co-op Store to be built. More recently a new Health Centre has been built close to these shops. Sadly the Eyres Monsell Estate in Leicester became one of the top 10% deprived areas in the UK and in 2013 the health in the area was worse than the rest of England, and

educationally was ranked among the top 10% worst in the Country in 2001. The 2011 Census reported that many of the residents over 16 years old had no qualifications.

However, things are changing – in 2018 the Primary School earned a good rating from Ofsted and received the Princess Royal Training award for its work in improving the mental health of staff and pupils and also won this award in 2021.

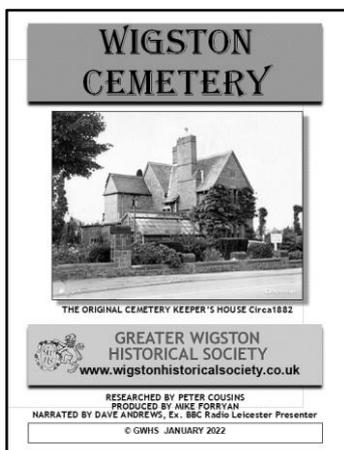
The Eyres Monsell Club for Young People was awarded the Queen’s Award for Voluntary Service in 2021 and provides informal education to youth in the area. The area is served by the 2 churches - St Hugh’s on Sturdee Road and St John Bosco Church in Pasley Road and have regular services etc. There are football clubs based around Sturdee Road.

When the Estate was first built the residents who moved from the Leicester slums felt they had now had real luxury – a bathroom and a brand-new home. There were no paths, or roads built up and no fencing in the gardens, but they were pleased to have running hot water which came from the back boiler when the fire was lit. Things improved a lot when the roads and paths were made up and the gardens fenced off. The houses were allocated to families with children, so it was a very friendly and family orientated estate and people looked after each other and were happy.

So a large contrast between the two estates – the connection of the Eyres-Monsell family home in Evesham at Dumbleton Hall and the Eyres Monsell Housing Estate in Leicester as it is today. It is an interesting history that many are not aware of and pass through this area just to get to Fosse Park shopping area or to the M1 Motorway.

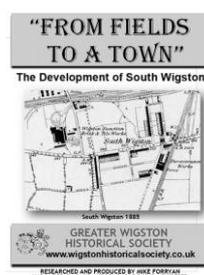
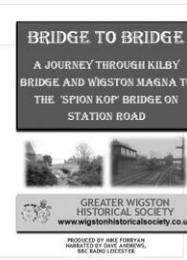
Ailsa Whalley

NEW DVD AVAILABLE



ALL £10 per copy
Available at The Heritage Centre

OTHER DVDs FOR SALE





EPISODE 14 – WIGGY’S CHILD

‘POOR MAN’S DINNER’

On Friday night, I was allowed two-pennorth of chips from Mauby's [Mawby's] Fish and Chip Shop near the 'Crosscross-roads', for my supper. Waiting my turn, I would watch Mr. Mauby as he pulled down the handle of his 'chipper' with such force, the counter shook, rattling the saltshakers and the vinegar bottles. Turning round, he would tip the newly cut chips into the hot oil fryer at the back. Little bottles of pop stood on a shelf on the side wall near the window.

In the summer, I would eat my supper sitting on the seat up the back garden, assisted by the dog. Mauby's chips, eaten straight from the newspaper with, of course, a slice of bread and butter, made a welcome change from bread and milk. "You'll get as fat as a 'Tunky-Pig' if you eat too many chips," said Mother. Her suet puddings didn't come into this category, only chips!

Fish and Chips were regarded by Mother as 'The Poor Man's Dinner,' she enlarged on her theme, "there were some children who lived on chips, the poor mites didn't know what a good-cooked dinner looked like; therefore, I should be grateful for the good food put before me." I was, but it still didn't make me like my 'greens'. "Perhaps, the 'poor mites' would like them," I ventured. "Going without your 'greens' will neither help you, or them as knows no better," was her uncompromising reply.

When I asked how it was that those 'poor mites' didn't get fat, despite living on a diet of chips. Mother replied darkly, "Whatever they ate, no doubt went straight through them!" One thing, those 'poor mites' wouldn't have to take syrup of figs' every Friday night. That was, at least, some compensation to my mind!

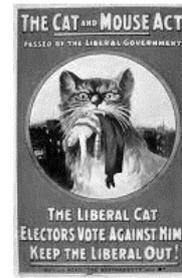


The first fishmonger appeared in Wigston around 1881, curtesy of the railways. By the 1891 Census the number had increased to seven. SM

Mawby's Fish-n-Chip Shop, Bull Head Street, circa 1910?



WOMEN ON THE MARCH



We had a very interesting presentation at our April Historical Society meeting on the 1908 ‘Tea-shop’ waitresses’ strike at the Cabin Restaurant, London (see Colin Towell’s report on page 5). This talk reminded me of another significant event involving women workers in Leicester which occurred in September 1911, when the female members of NUBSO (National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives), led by suffragette and shoe workers Alice Hawkins (for whom a statue was recently erected in the New Market Square) and Elizabeth Wilson, broke away to form their own independent women shoe workers’ union. Two weeks later, female employees at the Wheatsheaf Co-operative boot and shoe factory in Canal Street, South Wigston, initiated an industrial dispute, backed by the new breakaway union.

However, neither the ‘Tea-shop’ waitresses’ strike nor the events in Leicester were isolated incidents, they reflected a period of intense social strife centered on unprecedented levels of industrial conflict – often extremely violent – that shook the very foundations of urban Britain in the years immediately preceding the outbreak of WW1 in August 1914. Other sections of British Society also took to the streets in protest during those years, including ever larger numbers of suffragettes whose increasingly militant campaign would culminate in broken windows, arson, hunger-strikes, force-feeding and ultimately, of course, the death of Emily Davison under the King’s horse at the 1913 Derby. While in Ireland, the conflict between Catholic Irish Nationalism and Protestant British Nationalism was bringing the country to the brink of civil war. Such was the atmosphere of rebellion at this time, in September 1911 even thousands of school children across the whole country came out on strike, including in Leicester.



By 1910, the failure of the Liberal Government to deliver on promises to extend the vote to women resulted in the Women’s Social and Political Union launching a more militant campaign, beginning with a protest meeting in London on 18 November 1910. Later referred to as ‘Black Friday’, when women attendees were brutally attacked, some even sexually assaulted, by handpicked ‘Neanderthal’ policemen, deliberately organised by Home Secretary, Winston Churchill, in order to teach them a lesson.

Ada Wright lying unconscious after being beaten by police.

Amongst those beaten and arrested were women from Leicester, including Alice Hawkins, one of two of the most prominent working-class suffragettes in Leicester, along with Lizzie Wilson, who were also both active in the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives.



Suffragette Alice Hawkins



Alice Hawkins Statue

The suffragette campaign, although dominated by middle-class women, was clearly having an impact on many working women which was leading to increasingly independent action on the shopfloor. The Tea-shop waitresses' strike was only one of many industrial disputes independently organised and led by women during this period. Resentment amongst female workers had been simmering for years in reaction to both their conditions and lack of representation and support from male-exclusive or dominated unions. In 1906, the National Federation of Women Workers had been formed and was actively involved in supporting several strikes by female employees, the most notable was the victory of 800 Cradley Heath women chain makers in Birmingham over the issue of differentiated minimum wage levels in 1910.

At the same time in Neilston, Scotland, a group of girls working in the Copwinding Dept. of the local textile factory, which employed thousands of girls and young women, demanded higher wages. When these demands were refused, a march of the women – with N.F.W.W. support – was organised and “with a great banging of tin cans and shouting and singing” descended on the manager’s house in a posh suburb of Glasgow, their “wage demands were quickly won”.

In Bermondsey during August 1911, around 15,000 women, including large numbers of very young girls, closed down numerous factories producing such products as glue, jam, biscuits, and other confectionaries. Again, with the help of the N.F.W.W., wage increases and improved conditions were quickly won.

This then was the background to the actions of the Leicester women boot and shoe workers in 1911.



Two Suffragette Marches in Leicester, 1910 and 1911

For seven years the National Union of Boot and Shoe Operatives had been negotiating minimum pay rates for men only, with women members objections being constantly ignored. In 1910, the union had again agreed to a new minimum rate exclusively for men, disregarding all the protests of their female colleagues that followed. Wilson and Hawkins now tried to organise separate negotiations on behalf of the women independent of the official union. This action led to calls from the male NUBSO leaders for their suspension from the union. The decision to increase union subscriptions in 1911, with both men and women paying the same, only added to the bitterness the women felt towards their union ‘brothers’. After an acrimonious meeting of the Union on 1 September which resolved nothing, the women’s No. 3 Branch, led by Lizzie Wilson and Alice Hawkins, announced that they were breaking away to form their own separate union, the Independent National Union of Women Boot and Shoe Operatives.



**‘Every picture is worth a thousand words’
Elizabeth ‘Lizzie’ Wilson at the 1908 NUBSO conference**

The establishment of a breakaway union in September occurred only a month after the first ever national transport strike had brought the country to its knees. Major unrest broke out with troops being sent to all the larger industrial conurbations including Liverpool where two men were killed and five others wounded when the Hussars fired into the crowd. Four days later when pickets in Llanelli managed to prevent a train leaving the station, the army officer in charge of preventing such happenings, ordered his men to shoot five pickets – “down like dogs”, wrote Keir Hardie – in retaliation. Again, two strikers were shot and killed. In Hull, violent clashes between strikers and police quickly developed, creating a situation described by George Askwith (the Board of Trade’s chief mediator) that if the strikes weren’t settled quickly “the city tomorrow night may see such a revolution as it has never seen before ...”

Six hundred soldiers arrived at Wigston Station and were stationed in the nearby Glen Parva barracks. That it was thought necessary to send such a force to relatively peaceful Leicester shows how desperate the authorities thought the situation had become. This growing panic was reflected in an article on the front page of the 19 August edition of the *Leicester Daily Post*, in a column under the heading “Talk About Martial Law” – which, in effect, was already being gradually introduced across the country. After a general discussion about the ‘Constitutional’ and ‘legal’ implications associated with the introduction of martial law, the piece concluded with the following observations: -

“... order would necessarily have to be maintained by the agency of military commanders. Those persons who are sighing for a week or two of Lord Kitchener as ‘Dictator’ during the present trouble in the labour world will be the only persons like to regret the illegality of ‘martial law’ here.”

Not since the time of Oliver Cromwell’s Protectorate had the country been divided up into regions ruled over by military ‘Dictators’, as was being recommended here.



Troops arrive in Leicester, August 1911



Troops guarding a Leicester signal box, 1911

Even in Buckingham Palace, where the new King, having grown increasingly concerned about the welfare of ‘all’ his subjects, apparently wanted some of them shot. George V wrote to Churchill in frustration at “the half-hearted employment of troops ... they should be given a free hand and the mob [which, of course, included many who in the previous year had been waving flags and cheering in celebration at his coronation] should be made to fear them.”

On 14 September 1911, the women employees at the Wheatsheaf Co-operative boot and shoe factory in Canal Street, South Wigston, supported by the new union, went on an unofficial strike – despite much hostility from most fellow male workers – in protest at the management’s decision to impose new lower pay rates on their female employees, whilst leaving the men’s rates unaffected; perhaps with the connivance of the NUBSO leadership. This action was bitterly opposed by the NUBSO and both sides held meetings in the village. The women’s meeting was a very well-attended open-air gathering which was addressed by Lizzie Wilson and attracted workers from a wide area, including many supportive male shoe workers (meetings reported in the *Daily Post*, 15 and 16 September 1911).

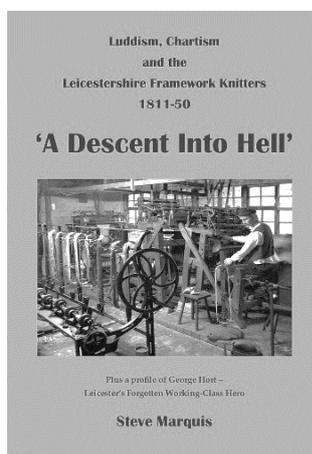
Other strikes by women in Leicester followed, for example, at the Gillette factory in November 1911 and a year later, 117 female workers from the Thomas Brown’s shoe company in Humberstone Gate, walked out, both led by the new union. The schism now became permanent, with the official union’s male leaders surprised and dumbfounded by the scale of the defections of their female members: -

“The extent of the defections indicates that resentment among the women was not confined to a few fanatics.”

(Alan Fox, in his official union backed 1958 history of the NUBSO).

The Independent National Union of Women Boot and Shoe Operatives would last until 1936 when it was dissolved, and remaining members re-joined the NUBSO.

Steve Marquis



NEW BOOK AVAILABLE AT THE HERITAGE CENTRE

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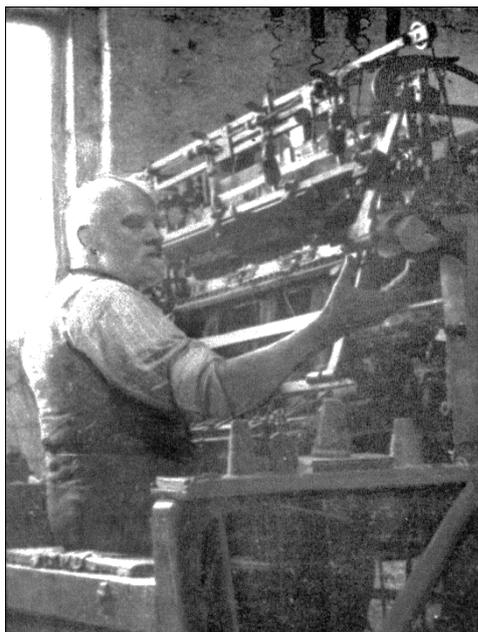
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WIGSTON FRAMEWORK KNITTERS MUSEUM



W F K M

Leicestershire's Hosiery Industry started with Framework Knitting



**William Holmes founder of
W. Holmes & Son Ltd. on
Newton Lane, Wigston**

Framework knitting was one of Leicestershire's first industries. Knitting manufacturers came to the county from London, where the local breed of sheep grew wool most suitable for worsted spinning and knitting.

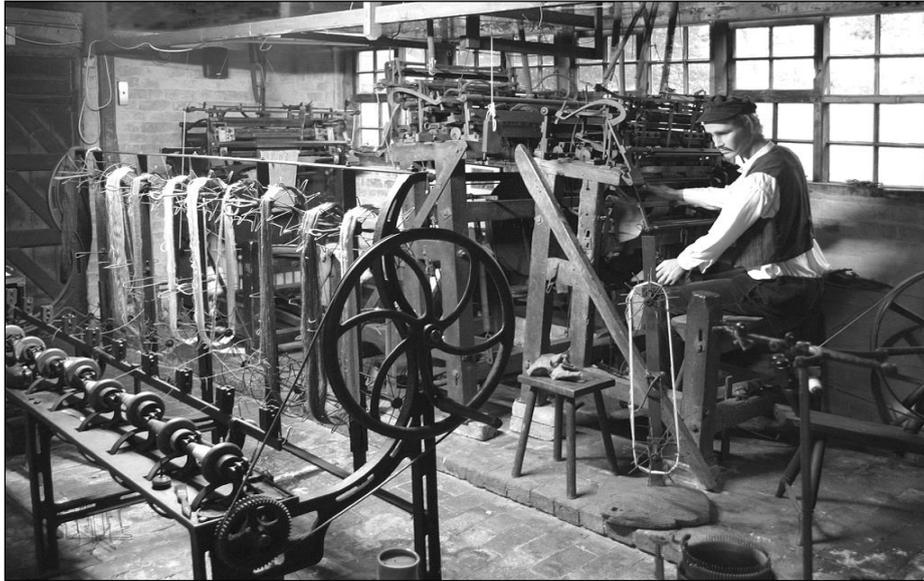
The first knitting frame arrived in Hinckley in 1640 and slowly made it to Leicester about 30 years later. It quickly became so successful it was, for a time, the county's only industry employing whole families, from the youngest hosiers, who started work at about 12, when they could reach the foot pedals of the frame, to the oldest in the family.

Fashion and war broke the stranglehold of the local cottage industry. First, men switched from knee breeches to long trousers

and did not want fashioned stockings any longer. The war with America dealt a further blow, as a third of Leicestershire's hosiery produce had been sold across the Atlantic.

Although machines may have been invented to knit stockings, they also created other items, such as woolen gloves, knitted shirts and socks. This helped to create a climate of industry which later allowed Leicestershire's hosiery trade to flourish.

At Wigston's Framework Knitting Museum, in Bushloe End, the 19th century knitting frames exhibited are the last of more than 550 hand-frames that once worked in Wigston making gloves, mitts, and fancy hose tops. Hinckley, too, has a framework knitting museum, housed in the only remaining framework knitters' cottages in town, in Lower Bond Street. It commemorates the lifestyles of generations of men and women who earned their living in Hinckley's hosiery industry.



The workshop in the Framework Knitters Museum in Bushloe End, Wigston

Tony Danvers

The History of N. Corah & Sons, St Margaret's Works Leicester.

The ground floor living room at the Wigston Framework Knitting Museum is dedicated to Corah's and a stocking frame donated by the family together with a number of portraits are on display.

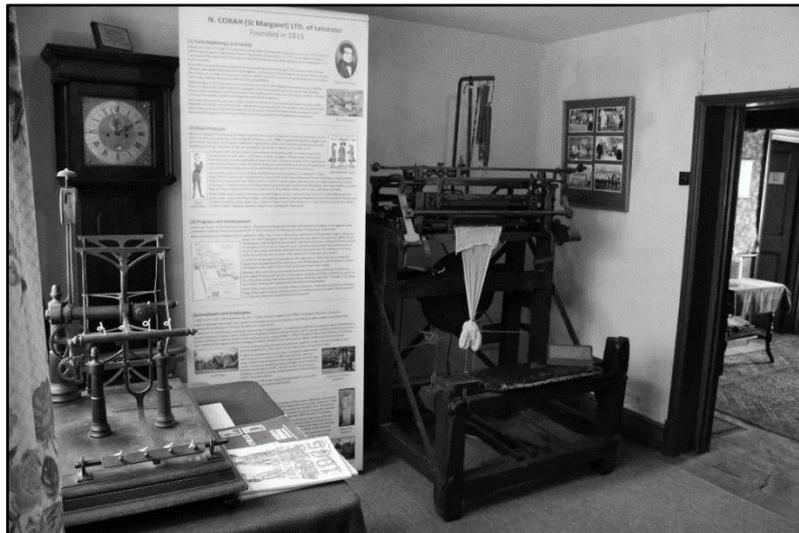
1) WILLIAM CORAH (1747-1817)

William Corah was a farmer living in Shepshed who combined his farming with framework knitting. He had a frameshop of knitting machines at his property, with frames rented out to other knitters. William was the seventh generation of his family to live in Shepshed, which in the early nineteenth century was the most intensively industrialised village in Leicestershire. In 1812 Shepshed had 900 knitting frames, third in the county after Leicester (1,650) and Hinckley (1,500). From 1748-1759 there were 62 stockings in Shepshed as well as combers and framesmiths, with women and children winding wool and seaming stockings.

2) NATHANIEL CORAH (1777-1832) The Founder

Williams second son, Nathaniel become apprenticed to the trade. Around 1804/05 Nathaniel started his own framework knitting business at Barlestone, then in 1813/14 moved to St Nicholas Street, Leicester. Each Saturday he went to the Globe Inn in Silver Street where goods made by stockings in their own homes were sold and, after inspecting their quality, made a bid for them. Preferring small profits and quick returns, Nathaniel believed that "a nimble ninepence is better than a slow shilling"

After his death, his sons carried on the business, as did five further generations of the Corah family and from these small beginnings, developed the internationally renowned hosiery firm of N. Corah & Sons, which at its height had 6,800 employees and was the largest of its kind in Europe. William's great-grandson, Edwin, laid the foundation stone for the St Margaret's Works in 1865; its trademark St. Margaret was registered in 1876; its unique relationship with Marks & Spencer began in 1926; the Works were visited by two monarchs; and it made huge quantities of goods for the military of both World Wars. In 1989 Corahs was sold and a decade later ceased trading.



Nathaniel Corah Room and original knitting frame, Wigston FWK Museum

3) THOMAS CORAH (1807-1870)

For nearly fifty years Thomas Corah was actively involved with the Corah hosiery business and it was mainly owing to his enterprise and far-seeing judgment that the wider foundations of the business were laid. He took a keen interest in politics, was a member of the Town Council for several years and was largely instrumental in the erection of the Temperance Hall where most of the public gatherings, and concerts in Leicester were held for many years.

Thomas witnessed the transfer of the business from its limited sphere in Union Street to Granby Street and then to its present site. It must have been a great day when he saw the new St Margaret's Works. For the last four years of his life, he suffered from paralysis which severely restricted his activities. He died at Scraftoft Hall on 28 February 1870, aged 63 years, and was buried in the family vault at Scraftoft Church.

Everyone respected him, especially his employees, some of whom wrote to his widow: "We have so many memories of the deceased - of his regular business habits, of his word which was ever to be relied on, which we cherish with the greatest respect. Since the time when he was more actively connected with us, we remember that whenever we had met with him, he always expressed great pleasure at the sight of old faces and we never found him kind and friendly".

There are two fine stained-glass windows dedicated to Thomas in Scraptoft Church, one from his wife, Elizabeth, and the other to Thomas and Elizabeth from their children.

4) JOHN ARTHUR CORAH (1846-1916)

John Arthur Corah was born in Leicester in 1846 and as a young man was indentured to Copestake, Crampton & Co, the largest drapery warehouse in London. He left there in 1871 to travel for N. Corah & Sons and in 1875 took over the management of the Liverpool warehouse. In 1881 he became a partner in the firm and moved to Leicester, becoming senior partner in 1906. John never took a prominent part in politics but did advocate Tariff Reform. He was a member of Joseph Chamberlain's Tariff Commission and did a good deal of work in representing the hosiery industry. In 1901 Corahs became affiliated to the Private Fire Brigades' Association and John was appointed its Vice President. The Fire Brigade's performance was outstanding and from 1912-1946 it won many prestigious trophies.

In 1906, when he was Master of the Worshipful Company of Framework Knitters, John initiated and managed the move of its almshouses from London to Oadby, Leicester. With his usual energy and enthusiasm, he raised the required sum of money and oversaw the building of eighteen almshouses with 40 acres of land attached, although this took a considerable toll on his health.

John Arthur was keenly interested in music. He sang very well and in his younger days was in the choir of St John the Baptist Church, Leicester, whilst in 1916 he met all the expenses for Taylors of Leicester to rebuild their very fine organ at Oadby Church. He was a Justice of the Peace and a Governor of Leicester Royal Infirmary, playing a prominent part in a bazaar organised in the Infirmary in 1907 when H.R.H. Princess Louise opened the south wing. In 1916 he funded a recreation room at the Infirmary for soldiers wounded in WWI but died on Christmas Eve that year.

5) ALFRED CORAH (1850-1924)

Alfred was born at Scraptoft Hall in 1850. Joining Corah's travelling staff in 1871, he ran their warehouses in Birmingham and then in Manchester, returning to Leicester in 1896. He immediately introduced the manufacture of the perfect fitting 'St Margaret Blouse' that met with great nationwide success. In 1917 he became senior partner and in 1919 the first Chairman of N. Corah & Sons Ltd.

Alfred was a prominent musician, being only eighteen years old when he was appointed organist at Holy Trinity Church, Leicester. In 1910 he funded a new organ for Scraptoft Church to commemorate the coronation of King George V, and in 1912 gave the high-quality concert organ for the new De Montfort Hall to celebrate the marriage of his son, John Harold Corah.

In 1916 he served as High Sheriff of Leicestershire, when he jointly funded a Massage Room for Leicester's military hospital. He also became Treasurer of Leicester Royal Infirmary and personally visited many businesses, requesting annual subscriptions with considerable success. He was a life member of the Infirmary

Board of Governors and was instrumental in raising it to become a Chartered Body, meeting all the costs involved himself. In 1919 he hosted the visit of King George V and Queen Mary to St Margaret's Works.

Alfred was a Justice of the Peace, Chairman of the Peterborough Diocese Church Extension Board and a Master of the Worshipful Company of Framework Knitters. His son, Leslie, was killed on active service in WW1 and in 1923 Alfred paid to rebuild and enlarge the organ at St Margaret's Church in his son's memory.

6) SIR JOHN HAROLD CORAH (1885-1978)

John Harold was born in 1885 at Scraftoft Hall, joined the family firm and was made a partner in 1909. He served as its Vice-Chairman for thirty years from 1924-1954 and as Chairman from 1954-1964. He was also a Justice of the Peace and in 1933 High Sheriff of Leicestershire and had by then made his home at Queniborough Hall.



In 1910 John Harold (known as Jack) was admitted to the Worshipful Company of Framework Knitters and in 1924 served as its Master. That same year the famous New Zealand Rugby team, the All Blacks, chose Corah's jerseys for their matches and two years later the famous link between Corah and Marks & Spencer began.

John Corah became a Freemason in 1914, joining Leicester's Albert Edward Lodge. From 1939-1959 he was the Provincial Grand Master and - in his honour - in 1960 the Sir John Corah Lodge no. 7736 was founded. He also took an interest in providing holidays for less privileged children and was President of the Leicester Children's Homes.

Sir John Corah in Freemason livery

He was very proactive at Corahs during WWII and was himself an Air Raid Warden and his wife, Vivienne, was an ambulance driver. At Corahs he raised an excellent Home Guard, entitled the No. 6 Platoon, B Company, 4th Bt. Leicestershire Home Guard, that gained Battalion honours, awards for marksmanship and the Guard-Mounting shield.

Post-war, Corahs opened seven branch factories further afield. In Leicester a surgery, training, personnel and quality control departments were formed and in 1946 it became a Public Limited Company. In 1952 Sir John received a knighthood and in 1964, after retirement, he had the honour of laying the foundation stone for a large new Corah building in Leicester.

With grateful thanks to Caroline Wessel a descendant of the Corah family for submitting this article. The full version of which may be seen at the Wigston Framework Knitting Museum.