

GREATER WIGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
White Gate Lodge, Newton lane, Wigston Magna, Leics.

BULLETIN 107

1st MARCH 2017



Leicester Corporation Tramways - Car 76

Built by Dicks, Kerr & Co Limited in 1904 as an open-topper. It was totally enclosed in 1923. Car 76 was restored to its 1923 condition in 1969 and can now be viewed in the main gallery at Crich Tramway Museum, Derbyshire.

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS – MARCH TO DECEMBER 2017

Wednesday 15th March 2017

Belgrave Churchyard, living memories – Sandra Moore (in costume)
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age UK, Paddock Street, Wigston

Wednesday 19th April 2017

The Victorian Army, the men & campaigns – Jed Jaggard (in costume)
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age UK, Paddock Street, Wigston

***Wednesday 17th May 2017**

Day outing by coach to Newark, Notts – Visit National Civil War Centre, free time afterwards
Booking essential, leave Paddock Street 9.15a.m., bring a packed lunch or eat out as you prefer

***Wednesday 21st June 2017**

Evening guided walk around Uppingham, followed by a meal at The Vaults
Booking essential, meet at Market Place Car Park in the town 6.45p.m.

Wednesday 16th August 2017

Pictures of Wigston & area – Mike Forryan
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age UK, Paddock Street, Wigston

Wednesday 20th September 2017

Happy BBC anniversaries 2017 – Dave Andrews at Radio Leicester
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age UK, Paddock Street, Wigston

Wednesday 18th October 2017

St. Pancras Station, gateway to London from the East Midlands including Wigston – John Stevenson
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age UK, Paddock Street, Wigston

Wednesday 15th November 2017

Norman & Underwood, restorers of cathedrals & other historic buildings – John Castleman
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age UK, Paddock Street, Wigston

****Wednesday 20th December 2017**

Singalonga Christmas – Lizzy Rushby (in costume) plus picture quiz, nibbles and drinks etc – Mike Forryan and the committee.

7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age UK, Paddock Street, Wigston

* Our Secretary, Ann Cousins, will take bookings, note menu choices, collect payments & arrange if people would like a lift to Uppingham at the February, March & April meetings.

**Please bring £2 on the night towards the cost of refreshments, guests will be charged £3.

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

Society's website: www.wigstonhistorical.society.co.uk

Chairman, Mike Forryan's e-mail: chairman@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk

NOVEMBER 2006 MEETING LEICESTER IN WW2 - HIDDEN HISTORIES

There was a good turnout of 75 members and guests to welcome 'local lad' Vince Holyoak to our meeting. He has written two books on WW2 matters: 'On The wings of the Morning' about RAF Bottesford and 'But for these Things, Leicester and its People in WW2'.

The first aspect discussed by Vince was policing and crime in Leicester during the War. He pointed out that very few records survived and what there is, mainly Watch Committee files, remains closed until 2029 and stored at the Record Office. Some major events in the City were not recorded because the Defence Act of 1939 made many actions an offence, and as lots of serving policemen were called up, there were fewer officers to deal with more crime, some of which wasn't a crime before the outbreak of hostilities.

The first building to burn down in the blitz on Leicester was next door to the Charles Street police station. But a perceived more serious threat in the early days of the War was the IRA which planted a bomb at the railway station in 1939. At the same time because of the newly enforced blackout not only did burglaries quadruple but juvenile crime increased by 50% and gangs of youths were a problem. Some constables were found to be taking advantage of the black out and were fined for not keeping to their duties while out on the beat which was done in 12 hour shifts (they were on call for the other 12 hours!). Commendations were recorded for stopping runaway horses. The Chief Constable at the time, Oswald Cole, was commended for his war service and at this time women constables began to take up vacancies left by men joining the forces, even serving in the police canteens as part of their duties. Until 1944 they operated in plain clothes except that they were issued with police great coats for the cold weather. Two approved schools for girls were evacuated to Leicester in the war and this caused much work for the police.

The subject was then turned to the Royal Army Pay Corps which moved to the city after the war started. It was the largest pay office in the country. Men were billeted in private houses all over the city but housewives did not like having these men as they were considered not 'proper soldiers' as they worked in offices, but the saying was coined 'there'll always be an **inkland**'. However the Pay Corps contributed to social life in the city and started a drama group one of whose members, Lieut. M.E. Clifton James, was considered to greatly resemble General Montgomery. He was whisked into a world of 'cloak and dagger' imitating the General on numerous occasions so that the real 'Monty' could make secret plans for D-Day. Hitler and his Generals were hoodwinked, as were the British Army and the public. In 1954 Mr. James wrote about this amazing and dangerous experience in the highly successful book 'I was Monty's Double'.

The third area of interest was the situation caused by so many American troops being stationed around Leicester while preparing for D Day. There had been about 200-300 Americans in the area since 1942 but in 1944 a further 12,000 arrived with the 82nd Airborne Division and most of these were coloured men. They had been in Italy and then Ireland before coming to Leicester. The American army was at that time segregated and coloured soldiers were banned from front line service. Although there was some antagonism between local people and these particular GIs, most trouble was caused between them and the white GIs. There are in fact Leicester Police reports in the American Archives. The 82nd Division HQ was based at Braunstone Hall although the senior officer a General Ridgway lived at Glebe Mount, Glebe Road, Oadby where much planning for D-Day was carried out. General Eisenhower visited the house after D-Day.

There were so many American servicemen around that they had shipped in over 20 donut and coffee mobile vans. Part of the shop on the corner of Charles Street and Granby Street built for the Harris furniture company and now Blunts Shoes was used as the American Red Cross Club and on one occasion when white GIs found their coloured comrades in the club a fight broke out. Records of the event including the resultant death of an American Military Policeman are very incomplete. In another incident when there was a fight at the Dixie Arms on Humberstone Road the white soldiers had found coloured soldiers drinking there, two MPs died and the brief records state one of the men died from wounds which were 'self inflicted' and that he 'died in the line of duty'. In fact he was stabbed in the back meaning that he did not kill himself.

Vince concluded his very interesting talk with some Wigston connections:

- Illegal poker games were held at the Bell Inn with GIs.
- There was a disturbance at the Queen's Head when the Military Police knocked out all the soldiers and removed them on lorries.
- In the Constitutional Hall a dance was held attended by 200 ATS girls, and where donuts were served, could this have been Wigston's original McDonalds?
- The 82nd Airborne Division used factories in Sandhurst Street, Oadby and the Lansdowne Road park.

Vince invited members to purchase copies of his book, containing details backing up his talk, at a discounted rate and there was a good take-up.

DECEMBER 2016 MEETING CHRISTMAS PARTY NIGHT

As usual we are saying that the year has flown by and it's Christmas before we know where we are. The party evening for 2016 was planned along the same lines as the previous year. An opening quiz, a speaker, a picture quiz on old Wigston and a raffle.

Members and guests began to arrive quite early but the Committee members had set up the room well in advance to look lovely with tables for six with cloths, nibbles, crisps, mince pies and of course a drink of wine, or non-alcoholic drink, from a bar ably staffed by Peter Cousins in full barman uniform!

Members and guests were greeted by a quiz consisting of 5 groups of 10 questions each on such subjects as: the swinging sixties; canals (postponed from the summer trip to Foxton); December dates; TV and famous statues and buildings. The latter question paper was on the tables but the others were displayed on the walls so that members could wander from one to the other (and back) and discuss answers. Out of 50 questions the best results were in the 20s, but good fun was had and something learned by all.

Next was the speaker. This year we welcomed Cynthia Brown, the well known Leicester City Blue Badge Guide, talking about Victorian Christmases in Leicester. As appropriate for the time of year Cynthia gave us a full miscellany of seasonal detail, ranging from the origins of Christmas from the heathen Saturnalia and greenery and yule logs to the early 20C tradition of Leicester Tigers Rugby Club's fixture with the Barbarians on Boxing Day.

In between we heard about Tom Smiths crackers, the impact of electricity on the lighting up of Christmas trees, the coming of stamps and the modern way of posting letters, and the growth of the

card industry. We heard about press adverts in mid to late Victorian times by well known local retailers and cautions against the commercialisation of Christmas in Ada Jackson's diary. The term 'Christmas box' may have come from collecting boxes in churches which were emptied at Christmas to provide cash gifts for the poor. Adverts referred to sensible gifts such as a baker's box and a meat hamper.

In 1838 the original pantomime was created, often a historical drama or a stage version of a book, before this theatres had closed at Christmas because of lack of custom. In 1860 the first 'modern' panto of Sleeping Beauty was produced, there was even a circus in Belvoir Street (was this indoor or outdoor?). Alice in Wonderland and Robin Hood followed in 1872. But even in the mid to late 1800s there were complaints about brass bands, carol singing and the Town Waites causing a nuisance with their performances. Excursions by train to nearby towns were organised and the holiday was extended to two days in 1872. A whole section of the talk covered health issues over Christmas and cures for them. Cynthia was duly thanked for a very 'illuminating' talk.

After a break for refreshments and to top up our glasses we proceeded with the usual, 'unusual pictures of Wigston quiz' which were answered on a table by table basis. As in previous years our Chairman managed to fox us with his many photos and the traditional anagram of Wigston street names. The winners were presented with prizes of confectionary. After thanking the Committee and all involved, the evening concluded with drawing the raffle, after which five members went home clutching useful seasonal prizes.

JANUARY 2017 MEETING THE RISE AND FALL OF LEICESTER'S TRAMS

The New Year is often a time for reflection on the last twelve months and planning for the next year. At our first meeting in 2017 we looked back much further than the last twelve months and definitely did not look forward.

In fact it was an evening of real pure nostalgia with Malcolm Riddle telling us about the history of the trams in Leicester using some excellent photos to illustrate his talk. For me it was not just the trams, which I could barely remember, but also the names of the shops and the architecture of the buildings in the town and its suburbs in the background of the photographs.

The talk was very much in date order of events, far too many to record in detail and so here are some of the most important facts. Malcolm reminded us that back in the mid 18C people and goods could not easily be transported around the town as the horse and carriage, or a cart was the only method available.

In December 1793 a licence was issued for a hackney coach pulled by two horses carrying six people. Then in 1835 the hansom cab arrived, invented by Joseph Hansom in Hinckley. The cabbies needed a shelter which was erected for them in Every Street (I've been down every street in Leicester!). At this time licensed stage omnibuses were introduced very much on an ad hoc route basis. In June 1862 the first licensed horse drawn services started to carry passengers on a fixed route from the town to the White Horse pub in Oadby, the cost was 4d outside and 6d inside. In 1872 Thomas Cook began to run a city centre service.

Then after two years of preparation, in 1874 the Leicester Tram Company was formed with a provision that the Corporation could buy out the company after twelve years and in the meantime share profits 50/50. The first service was operated on 24 December 1874 on a gauge of 4ft 8½ins

(the same as the railways) from the Clock Tower to a terminus at Loughborough Road/Belgrave Road junction, the fare was 2d and there were 16 passengers on an inside single decker. The employees were mostly former agricultural workers, used to horses, and worked a 15 hour/7day week. Overcrowding with 30 to 40 passengers in a 16 seater was common and new bye-laws were introduced to cope with the problem.

In 1876 Leicester was the first town to propose the use of steam power at a cost of £600 per engine, but despite an Act of Parliament in 1877 to permit the public use of steam, it never happened in Leicester. Double decker trams were introduced in the mid 1880s but they needed three horses to pull them up London Road hill. Horses were purchased at 5 to 6 years old at a cost of £35 to £40 each. They were expensive to feed and some people mixed sawdust with their food to bulk it out!

In 1887 the Company bought out a rival which had started up in the town for £8,000, and then by 1901 the Corporation bought out the Tram Company for £134,110 in accordance with the clause written into the original licence in 1874. Employees were smartly dressed but not in uniforms except for hats (bowlers for the drivers). The standard fare was 2d. In 1902 there were plans in hand to replace the horses with electric power. There was discussion about using overhead wires or an electrified central rail. This latter method was too expensive to install and so overhead wires were used. In addition, the existing track was not good enough for electric trams and so this was replaced at the same time as the wires were installed at a total cost of £650,000 and a lot of disruption. The tracks around the Clock Tower were said to be the most complicated in the world and were replaced in 10 days!! (What would it take today with modern kit but health and safety in place and minimal labour?).

With the new electric power, new tram cars were needed and these were supplied by Dick, Kerr & Co of Kilmarnock and Preston at £510 each (how did they get to Leicester?). Abbey Park Road garage was constructed and could house 99 trams but the whole fleet eventually grew to 178 and the cars were painted in that well loved colour scheme of cream and crimson. The opening ceremony for the electric trams was on 18th May 1904. Any important occasion was used to decorate the trams and have processions and dinners for the directors and staff. A power station was built on Belgrave Road and this later became part of Charles Keene College.

In 1904 the last of the 390 horses were sold and 40 more tram cars were ordered. Additional depots were built such as the one at Stonegate. Top decks were originally covered by canopies but by 1919 all of the cars were fully enclosed. In 1913 there were experiments with pay-as-you-enter arrangements but these were not successful. In the early days there were some spectacular crashes but there was no information on injuries or fatalities. The war meant that women had to work on the trams, these were again decorated to welcome the men home when peace was declared. Lack of maintenance meant the whole system was in a poor state of repair so in 1920 there was a major update to the infrastructure with new cars being ordered to bring the total number back up to 178.

The mid 1920s saw trials with trolley buses with solid tyres but these were not successful. Motor omnibuses were being introduced by private companies, only single deckers at first but by 1927 there were double deckers too. In 1939 the first bus stands were brought into use outside the new Lewis's building in Humberstone Gate and 16 new motor buses were ordered but then cancelled because WWII broke out. In 1941 there was a fatal accident during the blackout and traffic jams occurred during power cuts.

The final tram, again decorated, ran on 9th November 1949 and the cars were sold off for £5 each. The occasional one is now re-discovered in a farmer's field and is bought back for renovation at a

much higher cost. The old tram rails were often buried beneath modern tarmac surfaces which causes problems today when road layouts are changed.

To those who could recall the trams the talk brought back many old memories and for the younger ones among the members or those who did not live in Leicester at the time, a really fascinating insight into Old Leicester and its transport systems.

First three reports by Colin Towell

FEBRUARY 2017 MEETING AGM FOLLOWED BY PICTURE QUIZ WITH VIRGINA WRIGHT

This meeting, the AGM was again well attended. The Chairman, Mike Forryan, opened the proceedings by welcoming everyone. The agenda was as follows:

1) Apologies for Absence – Caroline Wademan

2) Minutes of February 2016 AGM – read by the Treasurer, Colin Towell, & signed as correct.

3) Matters Arising – None

4) Chairman's Report – Mike reported another successful year with meetings very well attended & an enjoyable programme of speakers on many topics. Two successful, though very wet, summer outings & a friendly and lighthearted Christmas social. He thanked the committee for doing a sterling job in managing the society, organising meetings & outings, keeping the finances in order & generating the bulletins. He reported that Sue Woolley & Paul Knight were taking a sabbatical from the committee but may well rejoin sometime in the future. He was pleased to report that his second DVD 'Bridge to Bridge' was also proving a success & thanked Tricia Berry, Duncan Lucas & James Freckingham for editing the draft, and Peter & Ann Cousins for doing the recording & packing. Promotion of the society continues though on a reduced scale, as some evenings we have been close to exceeding the capacity of the room. The web site continues to generate interest but discussions will need to take place as the space limit has been reached for the present price band. A new Facebook 'closed group' called 'Wigston – Remembering the past' was set up in November by Mike & by Christmas had over 200 members, with over 500 by the end of January, & 634 to date. A number of this group are expats from around the world. Mike also thanked members who had searched out historical documents and photographs which have now been added to the archive. Fifteen specific requests to search the archive have been received & in each case help with a raft of information & some photographs were forwarded. The 'Adopt a Photo' launched during the year & managed by Margaret Gee & Tricia Berry is slowly moving forward. He asked for members to assist by looking at the 35 chosen photographs to see if they can add further background. Each of these will eventually be made into a detailed transaction. Mike concluded by thanking our President, Duncan Lucas, and the committee for all their hard work over the year. Thanked members for turning out on some awful nights to support meetings & also those who have supported the request for items to be copied for our archives.

5) Treasurer's Report – Colin Towell took us through the accounts (printed on the last page of this bulletin) noting Income: a slight increase in subscriptions, & Expenditure: rather more paid for speakers this year. A further substantial sum of £947.23 was generated by the sale of Mike's new highly successful 'Bridge to Bridge' DVD, with the previous 'Wigston with Two Steeples' still showing a modest demand too. £1 to AgeUK & £1 to Rainbows for each sale has resulted in each

charity receiving £378 which is a great result. In total the profit for the year was another amazing figure of £1,510.20.

6) Membership Secretary's Report – Linda's report was read by Mike. 2016 was another very good year with 17 new members joining, 7 resigning & sadly one who passed away. The membership is now made up of:

121 concessionary members, 17 full members, 1 student member & 1 complimentary member. There were 42 visitors throughout the year, several of whom have now become members.

7) Election of Officers – As previously mentioned in the Chairman's report Paul Knight & Sue Woolley have taken a sabbatical from the committee. The remaining members being willing to stand it was agreed they be re-elected. The Committee therefore now comprises:

Chairman: Mike Forryan, **Vice Chairman:** Vacant, **Secretary:** Ann Cousins, **Treasurer:** Colin Towell, **Membership Secretary:** Linda Forryan, **Bulletin Editor:** Tricia Berry, **Auditor** Gary Davies, **Committee Members:** Jane Callis, Margaret Gee, Tony Lawrence, Roger Whalley.

8) Any Other Business – It was confirmed that Gary Davies was willing to audit the accounts again for 2017. It was also agreed to hold the subscriptions for 2017 at the present rate of £12 full membership, £9 concessionary & a student membership for youngsters of £5.

Unfortunately Virginia Wright, our booked speaker, was unwell & could not come with her picture quiz of Leicester so Mike grabbed an armful of his vintage news DVD's to offer instead. By a show of hands we selected the one for 1945. This of course covered the last days of the war, with amazing footage of a dreadful, but also joyous time. You could have heard a pin drop.

THE SOCIETY'S COMMITTEE, BEHIND THE SCENES

At a recent Committee meeting the Chairman produced a list of sub groups that are master-minding the Society's activities. This was quite revealing, even when some sub-groups consisted of one committee member only. Surprisingly, there were 13 different groups and 4 potential new groups not yet formally in existence. Those 13 groups consisted of 38 different elements. They include: the website and Facebook management; bulletins; DVDs and book sales; the picture archive and adopt a picture projects; exhibitions and events; the library and publicity as well as backroom activities such as outings, programme and membership management and finance.

Some activities such as the Bulletins, DVD creation and sales and book sales, outings and programme creation and management involve several or all committee members (especially for ideas for programmes and outings) whilst others such as the website, membership and publicity are managed by one committee member only.

It is quite amazing when looked at in written list form just what does go on in running a successful local group with 140 members and an active website which attracts worldwide attention. Those activities which have not yet been formalised but which the Committee would like to pay more attention to in the future include: an alzheimers working group, a Wigston pictures presentation, schools/PTA and governors liaison, history of local street names project and improved contact with other local interest groups.

So there is plenty to do and plenty to get to grips with in the future. The Committee meets in the evenings on three or four occasions in the year and works on quite an informal basis, the reason perhaps why the list of tasks and groups has only just been put together. We need more of the membership to come forward to take on the leadership of these new projects and help with existing tasks.

Make yourself known to the Chairman if you feel that you could help.

Colin Towell

MAX DAETWYLER (1921-2016)

Max Daetwyler passed away on 18th November 2016 aged 95 years, and his funeral was held at the United Reformed Church in Long Street, Wigston. Max had been born in Birmingham in 1921 to Swiss parents. He leaves his wife Marian (a loyal member of our society) two children, Maxine and Neil, and several grandchildren. Among his wider family is his brother-in-law, our President Duncan Lucas.

Many members will remember his talk to the society in 2012 called “Jet Propulsion in Leicestershire & Germany” an account of his experiences in the RAF during WWII. It was a full house indeed with a number of visitors as well as members present. Max had been persuaded to write an account of his experiences by his eldest grandson, Benjamin, a captain in the Australian Army, who was probably more aware than most of the importance and significance of the work he was involved in all those years ago.

Max trained in the RAF as an engineer/fitter and worked on Spitfires and Hurricanes both of which had Rolls Royce Merlin engines installed. In April 1943, when in his third year of service, he was stationed at RAF Hornchurch, East of London and was responsible for working on the engines of aircraft which had returned damaged after sorties overseas. One morning the Flight Sergeant came out of his office into their hanger and requested him to stop work at once and report to Station HQ and contact the Sergeant in charge who would give him details of his immediate posting away from the squadron. This was very unusual, as individual postings were rare. When moves were made generally it was as an entity, pilots and ground crew being kept together.

The Sergeant in the orderly room showed him a signal which had arrived that morning which read “Cpl. Daetwyler 964277 to be posted immediately to Power Jets Ltd., Leicestershire. He asked “where in Leics. is Power Jets? What is it? What will I be doing?” To which the reply was “no idea mate, anyway here is your travel warrant and its one way to RAF Honily in Warwickshire. From there you will be picked up and taken to Power Jets whatever that is.” At Honily the next day the guard commander seemed to be expecting him. He made a phone call, then told him to wait as transport had been arranged to take him to Lutterworth. It soon arrived and was the nearest thing to a limousine; “a car, not a military vehicle. In those days in the middle of the war you didn’t see posh cars, and there was I, a junior NCO swanning around in a vehicle with a chauffeur, usually reserved for the RAF top brass.”

He arrived at Ladywood Works, Lutterworth to find “a dump, an old requisitioned foundry” and was led into a factory and introduced to Warrant Officer King, his new boss, who explained he would be there some time along with a small number of other RAF personnel and that the nature of the work was secret. The Director of Works then explained that a new type of aero engine was

being developed and that the top man was Wing Commander Frank Whittle. The engine was “a jet engine and provided power to propel an aircraft by pure thrust – no propeller!”

His work colleagues consisted of a small group of RAF technical personnel some of whom were officers who were graduate engineers, and they were responsible for the design and highly technical work. The rest were given the practical work of assembling and stripping the trial engines, prior to and after they were involved in test running. The manufacture of the components was done in the workshops by civilian workers. The officers were accommodated at the Lutterworth Hotel, while other ranks were billeted with local residents.

Frank Whittle had his office at this time at Brownsover Hall near Rugby, but was a frequent visitor to the workshops, being much concerned with the progress and development of his engine and the welfare of his personnel. “He always had time to talk to us on a personal level. He was a man greatly admired and respected.”

The engines they were developing were the Whittle W2/500 and the updated version Whittle W2/700. Both of these were derivatives of the W/1 engine which was made for the Gloster E/28 aircraft which had flown from RAF Cranwell in 1941. It is a model of the E/28 which is situated at the traffic island on the outskirts of Lutterworth. Later when a new purpose built factory in Whetstone was completed all work was transferred there and a new W2/700 engine was developed and tested. This latest engine could produce approx. 2,000lbs of thrust and by comparison now, 60 years later, the Rolls Royce Trent engine, used in most of the large passenger aircraft can produce over 100,000lbs of thrust.

At the beginning of 1945 Max was transferred to the test beds, in charge of several airmen who came with him. The rest of the RAF contingent were posted to RAF Bruntingthorpe. In September 1945 he and Marian were married. They had met at the Whetstone works where Marian was employed as a secretary. They arrived back from a brief honeymoon to a storm of trouble. Max had over stayed his leave and was therefore AWOL. If he had been part of an operational squadron the consequences would have been very serious. As it was they were most displeased, especially as unknowingly he had been selected to be part of a test team which had already departed for Munich in Germany. The commanding officer was put to a lot of trouble organizing a flight for him to join them. The war had ended by this time, and the district around Munich was in the American Sector of the Allied Army of Occupation. The team were there to test British aircraft engines in a high altitude test plant, the only one in the world, which the Germans had built at a BMW Factory in Oberwiesefeld. They were there about two months, after which the test plant was to be dismantled and shipped to America.

This test plant consisted of a large capsule with a steel chamber very similar to the decompression chamber used by the Royal Navy for deep sea divers with the bends. A jet engine could be installed inside and the two hinged ends clamped so the chamber was sealed. The engine could then be run from idling to full throttle under simulated conditions up to 40,000ft altitude, a forward speed in excess of 600mph and an air intake temperature of 40 degrees Celsius. A huge supply of compressed air had to be introduced at the forward end and the exhaust gasses were discharged at the other end. The whole operation was carried out using remote controls from an adjoining room. Such was the complexity and size of the plant that it had to be run at night because the demand on the electric power supply was so great that the local tram network could not operate properly.

After two months the testing was completed and the team returned home. Max continued working on the test beds at Whetstone until being demobilised in April 1946 after almost exactly six years in

the RAF. Power Jets offered him employment as a civilian aircraft fitter at the experimental flight at Bitteswell. However the urgency for further development was no longer the first priority, and the Country was short of money. Jet engine development was passed to other aero engine manufacturers therefore Power Jets became defunct, was nationalised, renamed National Gas Turbine Establishment and moved to Farnborough. An exasperated and frustrated Frank Whittle moved to the USA where he was invited to continue his work and the rest of the engineers, designers and key personnel left individually to join other companies engaged in similar work. Max went to Rolls Royce as a Technical Author in the product supply department for 27 years. They produced all the necessary manuals and technical instructions which were required by home and overseas customers, civilian and military.

Those who wanted to continue with the comararderie that had developed formed a group named 'The Reactionaries' (from the reaction of hot gasses against the atmosphere outside). They met annually until 2002 when the years took their toll and membership began to fall. When Sir Frank Whittle died in September 1996 Max and Marian with the remaining Reactionary members were invited to attend his commemoration service in Westminster Abbey. It was absolutely packed. His son Ian, a Boeing 747 pilot, paid tribute to his father and it was a very moving occasion.

Max Daetwyler

This is an abbreviated version of Max's talk to the Society in 2012

DUNCAN'S MUSINGS

Two Steeples was always there! My Aunt Ella Lucas was a forelady and my father before he left to start his own Draper and Outfitters business was a representative for them in Glasgow. My name originated from that fact as my sister Marion was born in Glasgow and I was born 'over the shop' at 10 Bell Street. On my arrival I was given my father's name Orson and the Duncan was after a close Scottish friend of father, Dunky Wright.

I remember Mrs. Hartopp from Aylestone Lane boasting that her husband had been made a director there and was therefore above all the others. But Two Steeples was the crème de la crème of factories. In the Framework Knitters Museum is an enamel sign from the company and a similar one is in the Black Country Museum.

One of the owners Frederic William Lee was a gay man (the old fashioned meaning) who was always well dressed, in brown bowler, cane or umbrella and he certainly wowed the ladies. I made mention in my book 'One Man's Wigston' of Two Steeples and photos abound. I was taught public speaking by Mr. Lee who lived at Kibworth Harcourt on the Wistow Road in a house called Low Ash, later changed to The Blot. This was for the Young Farmers Public Speaking competitions and look where that got me.

I am trying to remember the time of Two Steeples hooter, it blew later than the Laundry one. When the Two Steeples fire took hold the Leicester Engine (horse drawn) was fighting it. The Wigston Engine from South Wigston arrived and the Leicester crew tipped it over in disgust. The Sunday parades and demonstrations of the Wigston Engine, then finished. Captain Shaw was in charge and a Mr. Tebbutt.

The front more recent building was the Secret Factory called Coventry Guage and Tool Co., and no one knew of its critical role in the development of the Jet Engine. One of the Mould family was the last stoker therein. Some wool cards are in the Framework Knitters Museum.

There must be lots more tales and history of the firm, various tennis and cricket teams used the Two Steeples name.

Duncan Lucas

BELL STREET AND THE POCKET PARK

The refurbishment of Bell Street and the creation of the pocket park in an area known as The Bank is now complete and the road fully pedestrianised, making the whole area so much more pleasant, a real asset for the district. The work has been quite a collaborative effort with several different authorities and groups making a contribution.

The Civic Society had been planning a Golden Jubilee Plaque set in a granite stone since before 2012 at the suggestion of Duncan Lucas, but it was put on hold when the upgrading of Bell Street was announced. This was a Leicestershire County Council project and their architect Wendy designed the pocket park as part of the whole scheme, incorporating the granite stone with plaque into the design. The stone had very kindly been donated by a Coalville quarry. The choice of dates around the plinth marking important events was suggested by Jimmie Carr of Oadby & Wigston Borough Council in association with members of our society. The information board describing the history of The Bank area was put together by Mike Forryan.

Separate from all of this the government announced a campaign to honour all Victoria Cross recipients from the first world war with a memorial stone, to be placed in the district where they were born. This of course included Wigston's own VC holder Lieut. William Ewart Boulter, of the Northamptonshire Regiment. The guidelines were that the stone should be in an accessible place, perhaps near their birthplace or school, or other place which that person would have been familiar with. The unveiling should take place on the 100th anniversary of the day of the action for which the award was given, or as near to that date as possible. The memorial was to: *"Honour their bravery, provide a lasting legacy of local heroes within their communities, and enable residents to gather a greater understanding of how their area fitted into the WWI story."* Identical paving stones for each person with their own details added would be created and delivered to the relevant local authority at least a month before the anniversary. In total 628 recipients were identified. 482 who were born in the UK, 145 who fought for Britain but were born overseas and 1 person who was awarded the VC twice.

Oadby & Wigston Borough Council organised an excellent unveiling event on the exact day, 14th July 2016, when about 50 people gathered to witness a short service of dedication and remembrance. The Mayor, Cllr Rob Eaton welcomed everyone, read the prayer 'They shall not grow old' and also the Kohima Epitaph 'When you go Home'. There were prayers led by The Rector, Revd Trevor Thurston-Smith and Revd Richard Eastman, and a reading by Colour Sgt Thomas of the citation accompanying the award which had also been read at the presentation by the King at Buckingham Palace in 1917. Sam Boulter from Frome, Somerset, a student, and great, great nephew of 'Billie' Boulter laid a wreath of poppies. Bugle calls were sounded by Steve Warden, the last post was preceded by one minutes silence after which the Reveille was sounded. A very moving service which 'Billie' would surely have approved of.

There followed a reception at the council offices, which gave an opportunity to mix and talk to guests. There were a number of representatives of Billie's and his wife Rene's families present, some of whom had travelled from as far as Hertfordshire, Derbyshire and Somerset. They had brought photographs and souvenirs including the original citation, but not his medals which according to his wishes had been presented to the Abington Park Museum, Northampton, which houses the history of the town and is also the Regimental Museum.

Tricia Berry

UNFORTUNATELY

Behind a ten foot brick wall along Long Street once stood Wigston Hall where now stands Elizabeth Court flats. From the road little could be seen of the Hall. It was, in the 1960s, the residence of Madam Parroy where she ran a 'Finishing School' for young ladies. These ladies came from all over the world, Iceland, Scandinavia and the USA for example. Except for Sunday morning service at All Saints' Church the ladies (today they would be called girls) were rarely seen. Madam Parroy was friendly with the Vicar Rev Basil Tudor Davies. At that time many events were held for the benefit of the Church and Madam Parroy threw herself into these occasions with much enthusiasm.

One of her ladies came from California where her father was well up in the film industry. As a gesture of goodwill he sent his daughter a new film for it to have its preview to support the church in Wigston. Now Madam Parroy had many contacts across the county and beyond. So an evening was arranged for this film to be shown in the church room. Dignitaries were invited and came in their numbers. The room was full to overflowing.

Unfortunately the projector was not compatible with the film. No problem, or in today's language, a challenge. One of the audience had a suitable projector at home so went to fetch it. After some time, yes it was some time, he came back with the appropriate projector.

Alas, the projector produced a picture far too big for the size of the screen. But all was not lost, in spite of the wall having been recently painted lilac and the room not darkened, the film was projected onto the wall.

Unfortunately as soon as was started it was then realised that it needed rewinding. In the hall there was no means of rewinding.

So the distinguished audience sat through the film shown back-wards on to a lilac coloured wall in daylight.

Of course the film was now rewound and could have been shown forward. But no one had the courage to make such a suggestion. The room emptied very quickly.

To say the least, yes it was most unfortunate!

Colin Hames

GREATER WIGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

Receipts and Payments for the year ending 31st December 2016

Receipts

Opening Balances as at 1/1/2016:		
Current A/c	2574.58	
Unpresented chq	-297.63	
“ credit	289.50	
DVD non cash adj	-41.75	
Deposit a/c	1000.20	3524.90
Subscriptions	1175.00	
Visitor fees	102.00	
Donations	22.00	
Christmas Social	195.00	
Visits (2016)	1124.00	
Sale of books	3.00	
DVD sales	3381.50	
Bank interest	.68	

Payments

Lecture fees	260.00	
Bulletins & Programme	137.44	
Room Hire	330.00	
Secretary's exes	104.37	
Christmas Social	141.50	
Visist (2016)	1085.40	
DVDs	2462.27	
Less unsold	- 243.00	
Commission due	215.00	2434.27
Closing Balances at 31/12/2016:		
Current A/c	3823.77	
Unpres. credit	382.00	
Unpres. cheque	-157.80	
Deposit A/c	1000.88	5048.85
DVD non cash adj	-13.75	

9528.08

9528.08

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Please note that subscriptions for 2017 are now due. If you have already renewed, thank you very much. Your receipt should be attached to this bulletin.

If you have not yet done so, we would be grateful if you could renew as soon as possible using this cut off slip if you like. The rates are £12 Full and £9 Concessionary. Cheques should be made payable to GWHS. We hope you will continue your membership but if you are not doing so, it would be very helpful if you could let the Membership Secretary know.

Member(s) Name &

Address.....

Please send to the Membership Secretary: Mrs. Linda Forryan, 21 Blakesley Road, Wigston, Leicester. LE18 3WD.