

GREATER WIGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

White Gate Lodge, 97 Newton Lane, Wigston Magna, Leicester LE18 3SH



BULLETIN 118

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PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS JANUARY 2021 – DECEMBER 2021

20 JANUARY

WITCHCRAFT IN THE 17TH CENTURY
LEICESTERSHIRE
(POWERPOINT & PICTURES)

DR LEN HOLDEN

17 FEBRUARY

AGM
FOLLOWED BY SIGNIFICANT BUILDINGS
AND BLUE PLAQUES PART 2
(POWERPOINT & PICTURES)

PETER COUSINS

17 MARCH

WILLIAM FLINT –
LEICESTER ARCHITECT
(POWERPOINT & PICTURES)

MARK MITCHLEY

21 APRIL

A STORM IN A TEASHOP: THE
WAITRESSES' STRIKE OF 1908
(POWERPOINT & PICTURES)

DR ANN FEATHERSTONE

19 MAY

MEDIEVAL PAINTINGS
(POWERPOINT & PICTURES)

DR MIRIAM GILL

16 JUNE

GUIDED TOUR OF LUTTERWORTH
CHURCH FOLLOWED BY A WALKING TOUR
OF HISTORIC LUTTERWORTH

24 JULY "SPECIAL EVENT"

40TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS
TO BE HELD AT THE WIGSTON COLLEGE

18 AUGUST

MEDIEVAL TOUR BY DE MONTFORT
UNIVERSITY, GATEWAY STREET,
LEICESTER FOLLOWED BY
AFTERNOON TEA

15 SEPTEMBER

BLACKSMITHS? THEY SHOE
HORSES DON'T THEY?
(POWERPOINT & PICTURES)

DAVID JAMES

20 OCTOBER

THE COUNTRY RAILWAY STATION
BRIAN JOHNSON

17 NOVEMBER

LIFE IN THE SIGNAL BOXES
OF WIGSTON JUNCTION
(POWERPOINT & PICTURES)

JOHN STEVENSON

15 DECEMBER

*CHRISTMAS PARTY & QUIZ
WITH NIBBLES & DRINKS
CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS
(POWERPOINT & PICTURES)

VIRGINIA WRIGHT

*OUR CHRISTMAS PARTY FOR MEMBERS WILL BE £2.00 ON THE NIGHT
TOWARDS REFRESHMENTS, GUESTS WILL BE CHARGED £3.00.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENT

Well, Covid19 has not gone away and it is perhaps a new way of life for us all. As someone recently said, 'I never thought I would go into a bank wearing a mask and ask for money'. Very strange times.

Being in 'lockdown' for so long gave our committee an opportunity to work on one or two projects. One of these was to plan and implement a new series of books called 'Wigston – Window on the Past'. The first book has been collated by Steve Marquis and went to print in July. The first 100 were sold within a few weeks which shows the popularity of this type of publication. I also had some spare time so decided to bring forward my plan for the new DVD. This time the subject is the development of South Wigston, and it is called 'From Fields to a Town'.

Neil Hancock has worked tirelessly on developing the plan to open the Heritage Centre again in early September. There have been some additional costs but having made an application to the Leicestershire County Council Communities Fund, we were awarded a £750 grant to cover our costs.

I don't think things will ever return to what we call normal and we may all feel worried about going out and attending functions, but your committee has placed your safety at the top of the list and hope that when we do re-open our meetings that you will feel safe to attend. Life must go on.

Mike Forryan

FEBRUARY 2020 MEETING

THE SIGNIFICANT BUILDINGS, BLUE PLAQUES AND CONSERVATION AREAS IN WIGSTON

Although the Chairman, Mike Forryan, had steered members through the AGM he had decided that to give his planned presentation on 'Pictures of Wigston' would be a step too far for his voice and so handed over to Peter Cousins, the Vice Chairman, who 'had one he had prepared earlier' and gave his presentation on the 'Significant Buildings, Blue Plaques and Conservation Areas in Wigston'.

The PowerPoint presentation is based on two guided walks that Peter had devised and led in 2017 and 2018 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Conservation Areas. In addition, 2017 saw the handover of the schedule of Significant Buildings (also called Locally Listed buildings) in Wigston to the Borough Council for inclusion in its new local plan. The GWHS and the Wigston Civic Society had taken a lead role in updating the existing list with many new entries. The list covers properties in Wigston Magna and South Wigston as well as Kilby Bridge.

In 2007 the two Societies had joined together to produce a series of 14 Blue Plaques, with National Lottery funding, which are placed over the two Wigstons. A booklet was on sale after the meeting giving details of each plaque.

The Borough Council has designated five areas in the two Wigstons as conservation areas which give some added protection to these areas from unreasonable change. The areas are:

The Lanes; Spa Lane; All Saints; Midland Cottages and (central) South Wigston. There is an additional linear conservation area along the Grand Union Canal including Kilby Bridge designated more recently by the County Council.

Peter showed photographs of some examples in these areas of listed and Significant Buildings and those on which a Plaque had been fixed together with descriptions of the building or the person commemorated on the plaque. His presentation included maps of the conservation areas. The following are examples from each conservation area:

Spa Lane: the most prominent building in this area is the Grade II listed St Wistan's Church. This is in fact a daughter church to All Saints which is the parish church for Wigston. Sadly, St Wistan's is currently closed because it is in a dangerous state. Next to the church is St Wolstons House (an earlier pronunciation of St Wistan) formerly a farmhouse where Mr William Egglestone lived in the mid C19. Further down Bull Head Street other prominent buildings in the area include numbers 121/122 and Spoutwell Cottage which is reputed to be the oldest house in Wigston. In Spa Lane itself, numbers 6/6A and 7-9 are interesting with the latter being grade II listed. Both the Europa Factory on the corner of Newton Lane and A H Broughton's factory (The Kings Centre) are significant.

The Lanes: the garage to the rear of 116 Moat Street actually seen from Blunts Lane is a former framework knitting workshop and is locally listed as is Cross Street Methodist church. Clearly most of this conservation area is the allotments but one member was pleased to say that her own father sold the land for Peace Memorial Park to the Council.

All Saints: there are numerous significant buildings but the most obvious is the only grade I listed building in the whole Borough and that is All Saints Church. Other listed buildings are the Framework Knitters Museum (grade II*), Avenue House on corner of Central Avenue (grade II) and numbers 2, 3, 10 and the Manor House in Newgate End (all grade II). The former British Legion now the Elms Social and Serviceman's Club is on the Significant List. This was the home of the old-time highway man George Davenport. Marked with a Blue plaque is 9 Central Avenue, the early home of William Ewart Boulter who was awarded a Victoria Cross in WWI, this is also marked by a memorial stone in the small park at the top end of Bell Street.

Midland Cottages: this conservation area consists of the row of twenty cottages facing the railway below the bridge together with the 1852 public house.

This leads the tour nicely over the 'Kop' railway bridge to South Wigston. Here, St Thomas Church is grade II* listed and the former vicarage opposite is grade II. However, there are four blue plaques and numerous Significant Listed buildings. The plaques are for 'the man himself' Orson Wright on 2 Orange Street now a hairdressers.

Gertie Gitana, the music hall singer of the former Marquis of Queensbury pub on Blaby Road and Charles Moore, the bandleader on 56 Blaby Road. Significant Buildings include the former Grand Hotel on Canal Street, now apartments and Warwick House on the corner of Canal Street and Blaby Road, now J Hoots the chemist, this was built by Orson Wright as a coffee house during the temperance movement days as was what is known as 'the Pidgeon Factory' at 41 and 43 Canal Street. This building has been derelict for many years hence its nick name

but was originally built as a factory for making hats and caps, there are currently proposals to turn it into apartments and studio flats.

This was a fascinating pictorial tour which revealed to us just how much the Wigstons have got in terms of the built and historical environment. Peter donated his fee to the Heritage Centre funds.

Colin Towell

PEACE MEMORIAL PARK - 75TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR OF VE AND VJ DAYS AT THE END OF WORLD WAR II

In these difficult days of Covid-19 lockdown and social distancing it is also important to reflect on other events. The Peace Memorial Park in the historic centre of Wigston Magna is something of a green oasis. In recent months there seems to have been an increase in the number of people strolling through the park or sitting for a “socially distant” chat. This, despite the fact that one of the usual major activities, bowling has been absent due to the lockdown.

The current park was open ground for centuries, once a paddock within the grounds of Wigston Hall. During the Civil War and the siege of Leicester in 1645 this area was used as a temporary prison leading to the local name of Gaol Close.

The park is home to Wigston’s War Memorial (along with memorials at All Saints Church and Saint Thomas’s Church – South Wigston and Glen Parva). Following a public subscription after World War I, including a United Peace Service at the Parish Church in July 1919 that included all local churches, the park was founded in 1921. The land was bought for a sum of £471.50 from Albert Hill on behalf of the Council by A H Broughton and C E Hurst, both local hosiery manufacturers and J E Rawson a Council Secretary. Albert Hill was an uncle to the Boulter family. Ida Boulter helped local people lay a mile of pennies as part of the public subscription.

A condition of the sale was to be the inclusion of tennis courts and a bowling green and associated pavilion, facilities which continue as major features of the park to this day. Additionally, it was agreed that a toilet block was to be sited near the road (Long Street) for public use. Creation of the park was undertaken by Alexander Pawley, landscape gardener, of Junction Road with ex-servicemen undertaking some of the planting. The park was officially opened on 9th April 1921.

Wigston Bowling Club first played on the new green in 1922 but the first pavilion was not built by the Bowling Club under licence from the Council until 1928. This was a room with polished wooden walls with some lockers and little else. The Wigston Ladies Bowling Club was founded in 1937. This, and increased use by amenity groups, meant that the pavilion facilities became increasingly inadequate. The building was subsequently bought by the Council for £100. It was then extended by two-thirds to include a canopy with some seating. The pavilion was further extended in 1955 and eventually demolished and replaced by a larger building in 1978.

In 1981 the proposal was made to designate The Lanes and park as a conservation area. In 1996 a park project team was organised to liaise with the Council leading to the formation of

Friends of Peace Memorial Park. This led to a proposal to restore and enhance the park as a focus for the community on its 75th anniversary. In the following year consultants, Parklife, were appointed to draw up a plan and a National Lottery bid in conjunction with the Friends.

In 1998 the Heritage Lottery Fund approved a grant of 75% of the £786,000 cost of restoration and improvement over a 4-year period. By 2002 restoration of the park was completed with a new pavilion to replace the 1978 building. The new building is named in honour of Sheila Mitchell who had been a Borough Councillor and also a Parliamentary candidate. In 2007 the park was awarded Green Flag status.

There are a number of special features in the park, many of which were introduced as part of the major upgrade from 1998 – 2002. Of particular note are: -

Main Entrance Gates – decorated with stylised birds on the gateposts with banding across the gates showing the park name along with stylised barbed wire, poppies and doves.

The Carpet Badge Bed – a long standing feature of the park, facing Long Street with the flagpole behind. In 2020 this commemorates the 75th anniversary of VE Day in May and VJ Day in August. The bed is laid out with small hardy annual plants and succulents depicting these important dates in our history. In previous years the display has featured designs to commemorate 200 years of Methodism in Wigston and such things as Pride of the Borough logo as well as many others.

The Oak Sculpture – known locally as the “Totem Pole”. This resulted from the collaboration between a local youth club and a wood sculptor from Rutland. The design developed by the youth group is based on the history of the park. Depicted at its base is twisted barbed wire with the word “Peace” leading to poppies and eventually evolving into flying doves.

The Sensory/Memorial Garden – this contains raised beds with scented and tactile plants. There are descriptive plaques in Braille as well as English. There are also a number of benches in order that people can sit and reflect on the garden and the nearby Memorial Wall.

The Memorial Wall – as the name indicates, this is probably the most significant feature in the whole park. This is the focal point of the annual Service of Remembrance in Wigston in November each year. The plaques record the names of the fallen in the two World Wars and also more recent conflicts. Poppy wreaths and other floral tributes adorn the wall.

World War 1 Memorial Bench – near to the Memorial Wall a bench (plus a litter bin) was installed in 2018 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the end of the Great War and as a lasting memorial to those who lost their lives in 1914-18. The design of these benches shows black silhouette representations of soldiers plus some stylised poppies in red.

Similar benches are also located at the South Wigston War Memorial and Ellis Park, Oadby.

The Curved Bench – this unusual bench has five back supports and records the history of the area from pre-history through to the present day.

In addition to these special features, the park has attractive green spaces and in excess of 120 significant trees. A large number of these are labelled with both the common and botanical names. Additionally, there are a number of commemorative plaques to individuals as well as local organisations.

The rear of the park leads into Long Lane, part of the historic lanes of Wigston. At the junction of Long and Chapel Lanes is the Time Plate with the inscription "You are now standing in the geographical centre of medieval Wigston Magna".

Roger Whalley

DUNMORE'S BISCUIT FACTORY – CANAL STREET, SOUTH WIGSTON

This was founded by William Dunmore who was born in Great Bowden, Leicestershire in 1848. His father John Dunmore was an Ironmonger who had a shop in Church Square, Market Harborough.

In 1867 William married Caroline Ashby and in 1877 he is listed as a Confectioner and Wine Dealer and had premises at 10 Humberstone Gate in Leicester. He was also a small Pork Pie manufacturer and had premises in Charnwood Street.

He became successful and in 1880 was still listed as a confectioner with a Refreshment House in Humberstone Gate and also in partnership with Viccars Collyer a Wholesale Provisions Merchant in Silver Street, Leicester. They became Pork Pie manufacturers based in Sussex Street.

In 1885 factories and houses were being built in Canal Street, South Wigston and William and family moved to The Limes on Blaby Road. Today the premises is occupied by the Conservative Club HQ. In 1886 the Dunmore Biscuit and Cake Factory was founded and opened. William was an important local businessman by now and in 1890 he was president of the South Wigston Rugby Football Club.

In 1891, 60 people were now employed at the Biscuit Factory and in 1894 William was elected Councillor for the Fairfield Ward of Wigston and the Wigston Magna Urban District Council was formed.

In 1897 William became a Freemason and was initiated at the Commercial Lodge in Leicester on 26th November and in 1898 he was elected as Chairman of the Wigston Magna Urban District Council.

By 1901 William and family had moved to The Cedars on London Road, now Cedars Court.

On 26th November 1903, the factory on Canal Street suffered a catastrophic fire and part of the building was gutted. Later in 1904 private railway sidings were built and served the Factory and helped the progress and growth of the business.

William passed away on 12th August 1914 aged 66 years. By then he had moved to Springfield Road in Stoneygate and left over £41,000.

During WW1 hooters were placed on the factory roof for air raid warnings.

By 1920's Dunmore's were manufacturing many more specialty biscuit tins and boxes. These items today are now valued collector's items and found on e-bay etc.

In the 1920's Dunmore's built an Open Air Swimming pool for the village and it was next to the Grand Union Canal and the recreational ground at the end of Park Road, as a tribute to their employees lost in WW1. A tablet recording their names stood in the entrance. This pool was very popular in the summers of the 1920's and 30's. Sadly following a nationwide typhoid scare, it fell into disuse and was filled in and demolished in the 1960's.

In 1947 the Factory was extended to the corner of Canal Street and Countesthorpe Road and in 1954 Dunmore's ceased trading and was taken over by Nabisco and in 1965 the Company was liquidated and taken over by United Biscuits and traded as Jacob Bakers.

In 1968 another fire took place at the Factory.

Today Pladis trades on the same site – it was formed in 2016 and includes the McVitie's Company. Pladis is a fast-growing global snacking company today.

Ailsa Whalley
July 2020

GRITTAR CLOSE, WIGSTON

Named after GRITTAR the horse who won the Grand National Race in April 1982.

Grittar Close is part of the extended Cleveland Road development that was built by Jelson Builders in the early 2000's on what was previously part of the Leicester Racecourse Straight Mile based in Oadby. It was marketed as The Furlongs by Jelson – this name was never retained.

The original Leicester Racecourse was based at Victoria Park from 1773 and moved to Oadby in 1883.

On 3rd April 1982 nine-year-old Grittar won the Grand National at Aintree Racecourse and was ridden by 48-year-old Dick Saunders who was the oldest jockey to have won the race. Saunders retired after the Race and became the Chairman of the Aintree Stewards.

Grittar was bred and owned by Frank Gilman, a Leicestershire farmer from Morcott. He was bred from Tarama and Grisaille, hence the name Grittar and had racing connections at the Leicester Racecourse. In 1983 Grittar came 5th in the Grand National Race and was retired to his owner's base in Leicestershire and died aged 25 years old in 1998.

The houses on this development in Cleveland Road were built around 2003 and fully occupied by 2005.

Roger Whalley

CONSTITUTIONAL HALL CROSS STREET, WIGSTON MAGNA

This was set up on 18th July 1927 by a Trust Deed – the Trustees were:-

Ethel Barnley – wife of Dr Arthur Barnley of Bushloe End

Arthur Lee – Hosiery Manufacturer, Spa Lane

Phillip Samson – Solicitor's Clerk, Assage House

Ernest Broughton – Hosiery Manufacturer, Bull Head Street

The Hall was to be used for the propagation of Conservative and Constitutional principles and for social entertainment and amusement.

The land was given by Lord Castle Stewart and the building was erected by Boulton and Paul who were a major producer of prefabricated buildings at a cost of £1,284 2s 6d and raised by subscriptions and had interest free loans and an advance from a Building Society.

The Hall was a single storey building with mock Tudor framed walls and was surrounded by white painted railings. It was built on land at the bottom of Blunts Lane where Cross Street joined it, and originally there were a number of small cottages on the site. They were there before WW1. The Hall was opened officially on 2nd December 1927 and a Grand Bazaar was held for this.

The Hall was a popular venue for Hire for Whist Drives, Concerts, Receptions and Socials and included the use of all the Rooms and covered lighting, crockery and services of a Caretaker. Dances were allowed to be booked from 8pm – midnight for 30 shillings but after midnight it was an extra 10 shillings per hour – these details were from one poster.

Another later poster gives more details of the amenities including the large hall and stage, footlights, ante room and cloakroom plus a well equipped kitchen. Clubs like the local Young Farmers met there and held dances and dinners in the Hall.

The Hall was used by local pop groups as a regular venue for their concerts. One being held by The (New) Opposition who performed there on 5th March 1966. John Deacon, of Queen fame was a member of this group and played Bass Guitar. He grew up in Oadby and then went on to study electronics at Chelsea College in London and joined Queen in 1971. Deacon was the Opposition's archivist and kept clippings of their concerts. He spent 4 years with the local Band and joined Queen while in London – the members being impressed with his musical talent and electronic skills.

In the 1970's the Hall was used as a pre Nursery school and run by a Mrs Randle – but this had to close as the building failed to meet Health and Safety Regulations and there was no money to upgrade this.

It would seem the area around the former Constitutional Hall was totally redeveloped in the early 2000's and The Lanes Court development was built – comprising of 15 privately owned flats and occupied from 2009.

Ailsa Whalley
July 2020

MILDRED INFO

A connection between a family business of Funeral Directors and a local Wigston Park.

Frederick Loveless Mildred was born in Sept 1896. Before he was drafted into the First World War he worked as a carpenter, joiner and funeral furnisher in South Wigston for the family firm of Oldershaw Brothers in Canal Street. This site has now been recently redeveloped and is now called Isabella Court with a small selection of housing there.

In Dec 1915 he married Phoebe Louisa Wormleighton from Blaby. She was born in 1891.

In 1919 and on his return from the War he decided to start his own business from his home in Leopold Street in South Wigston. His knowledge and skills with wood allowed him to make windows, doors, furniture and coffins easily and he also undertook cart repairs etc.

Over the years his family and business expanded, and he built several houses on Saffron Road in South Wigston. He turned one into his family home and another into an office and work area.

In the late 1930's Frederick's 3 sons joined the business. Ron as a joiner, Dennis as a bricklayer and Fred (Freddy) as the plumber. The company continued to grow throughout World War 2, even when Ron and Dennis were away at War.

After World War 2, Frederick and his sons formed F. L. Mildred and Sons Ltd. Co and the name continues today .

In 1958 Frederick passed away aged 62 and the company was left to his sons. Soon afterwards Ron, Dennis and Freddy purchased the small funeral directors and joiners in Wigston Magna called Garratt Brothers and based in Victoria Street. They refurbished the property and renamed it F.L. Mildred and Sons Ltd.

Along with the opening of their second funeral home they also expanded the property on the Saffron Road, called Westview and included a dedicated Chapel of Rest so families could visit their loved ones in peace.

Today this property is now known as Westview Care Home on the Saffron Road.

In the late 1960's the third generation of the Mildred family joined the family business – Keith, Edward, Alan and Trevor. The company really expanded and grew in reputation in the funeral business.

By this time Frederick's wife, Phoebe had passed away in Feb 1969 and was a resident in the Lawn Nursing Home, 312 London Road, Leicester. She left £4,570.

The Mildred family purchased Joseph Swift (Funeral Directors) Ltd in the early 1970's, West End Funeral Company in 1984 and W. Heighton and Sons in 1988.

They needed to purchase larger premises and the former home of William Gunning, Chief Clerk to the Wigston Urban District Council in the 1950's and 60's. William Gunning passed away in January 1985.

This is where there is the link to the local park in Wigston – the park is on the Fairfield Estate in South Wigston and was named The William Gunning Park when the Estate was built in the early 1960's and situated just off and behind Gloucester Crescent and the small parade of shops.

William Gunning's former home on 129 Leicester Road, Wigston Magna needed work doing to it to provide all the facilities required to make it into a warm and welcoming funeral home. It was opened in the late 1980's where it is today.

By the 1990's Ron had passed away and only 5 members of the Mildred family were left to take care of the family business. There were no members of the 4th generation to join the business, so they turned to Dignity Funerals who now provide the same quality funeral services and continue with the Mildred name and legacy today.

References - F.L. Mildred Website, Kelly's Directories, Find a Will, FreeBMD, Internet searches.

Undertaker and Star and Garter Pub connections.

There have been rumours that there was an Undertaker who worked and resided behind the Star and Garter Pub. It has been mentioned that it might have been one of the Garratt family members. There was a small outbuilding where the horse drawn hearse was kept and pre burial bodies were kept in the cellar of the Pub where it is said there are still Mortuary slabs.

There are several recorded inquests held at the Star and Garter through to the late 1800's and the Coroner would expect the Jury to be able to examine the deceased, so possibly a Mortuary House existed on the premises. Apparently, many inns used cold stores for this purpose. It is possible that the Star and Garter pub was used for this funeral side of their business as Henry Garratt lived close by at No 12 Victoria Street – Kelly's Directory 1908. There are no positive references to clarify this connection.

Ailsa Whalley

MEMORY SNIPPETS OF WIGSTON

My sister Margaret was in the Land army during the Second World War. At the end of the war she had been working on a farm near to Melton Mowbray and sent her bike home by rail. Her boyfriend took me up to Wigston South Station late one evening to collect it. After nearly 6 years of blackout I found it really wonderful to see South Wigston all lit up – albeit by Gas Light.

Brenda Kind

My earliest recollections of Wigston were after my Grandad died and I went to stay for weekends, on a regular basis, with my Grandma. She lived on Stonesby Avenue near to Goldhill and the railway bridge which 'divided' Wigston from Leicester. Sometimes we would walk over the bridge (no footbridge!) to buy sweets from Forryan's shop and then cross the road to Bailey's farm to feed the ducks, waving to the train drivers as we made our way back across the bridge. When I was older, I would go for bike rides with my Uncle through Wigston and the surrounding countryside to Wistow.

Years later when I met my future husband I remember going with my Grandma to Shipps, in Bell Street, to buy him a dressing-gown for Christmas!

I was married in 1968 and moved to Mansfield shortly after. I came back to Leicester in 1971 before moving, with my husband and three young children, to the Meadows estate in Wigston in 1977. At the time the estate, as I recollect, only extended up Kelmars Avenue as far as Sywell Drive but over the years became the estate we see today.

It was a thriving estate with lots of young families and a good community spirit. There was the Meadows Tuesday Club, a group for ladies of all ages, with speakers and organised outings. One such outing was to the Museum that Duncan Lucas had set up on his farm on Newton Lane, forerunner of the Greater Wigston Historical Society which was founded in 1980.

Friendships formed through the Tuesday Club resulted in a baby-sitting circle being created. Based on earning points rather than payment it meant mums and dads could enjoy a well-deserved night out without it proving too costly.

Parents also proved to be enthusiastic members of the Parent - Teacher Group raising much needed money for school funds, organizing annual summer fetes/fairs, discos for both children and parents alike and other events.

Brownie Packs were very popular at this time and waiting lists to join were very long. Girls were eligible to join Brownies at the age of seven and stayed until age ten before going on to Girl Guides. Due to the long waiting list some girls would miss out, being too old by the time they reached the top of the list. Myself and two friends decided that the Meadows needed its own Brownie Pack and so with the help of a wonderful lady called Joyce Crawshaw, who I think was the Division Commissioner for Wigston at the time, we started the 7th Wigston Brownies. I was Brown Owl, Sonia Shepherd was Tawny Owl and Jill Creasey was Snowy Owl. I had led the pack for over fifteen years when I left to pursue other things and another friend, Linda Daniel, took on the role of Brown Owl. Over the years I have kept in touch with Joyce who is now well into her nineties and lives in Australia. Sadly, the 7th Wigston Brownies is no longer in existence.

We as a family considered ourselves fortunate to live in Wigston with its variety of shops and local amenities especially as they were within walking distance.

Who remembers the delicious smell coming from the Oven Door, the Aladdin's cave that was Forryan's toy shop, Roy's Sports, the Three Sisters, shoes and repairs from Holyoaks and the Indoor Market with its 'pick and mix' sweet selection?

My children well remember the Friday night dash to the local library to get books to help with homework before they all went out on loan! They also remember that some weekends, as a special treat, we would go swimming at Wigston Pool or join the queue to see the latest blockbuster at the Magna Cinema.

Fast forward forty years and Wigston has expanded and changed beyond anything we could have imagined all those years ago, but I still consider myself fortunate to be a resident of Wigston.

Margaret Gee

WIGGY'S CHILD - BROMLEY'S BUS

The "navigation" pub at Kilby bridge, known to local people simply as "the bridge" was a favourite venue for a summer evening walk from Wigston. Walking over the fields with father, into Cooks lane where the dog roses grew in profusion in the hedgerows, we would turn right into the little lane, hedges high on both sides, down to the railway gates. Climbing over the gates, keeping a watchful eye on the signals, we crossed the railway lines into the field beyond, over the canal bridge, climbed the stile onto the towpath and along to Kilby bridge. There to await Bromley's 'bus for the journey back to Wigston. Summer and winter, Freddie Bromley's bus plied between Fleckney and Wigston, turning round on the "Horse and Trumpet" car park on Sundays; on weekdays he continued into Leicester. Mrs. Bromley, leather bag slung over her shoulder, collected the fares.

Starting from Fleckney through to Kilby, opening the field gates and shifting the odd cow from the road (on dark nights, one of the more agile passengers would perform this service) into Kilby village to pause outside "the Dog and Gun", "the Black Swan" stood on the opposite side, down the road a bit. There were no bus stops as such, folk stood on the path, at farm gates or wherever and were picked up. Regular passengers were greeted by name, strangers wished "a good evening" as they boarded the bus.

On arrival at "the navigation", the swing doors into the passage would fly open and a stentorian shout of "Bromley's 'ere" echoed round the pub, and there would be an exodus from the "snug" and the "smoking room" for the trip back to Wigston. Many a tale can be told about fog-bound nights when passengers walked in front of the bus to guide it along the route. Despite icy roads and snowdrifts, Bromley's bus usually turned up.

In the early 'thirties, visiting a country pub was not without its hazards; ladies wishing to use the facilities were provided with a flashlight to find their way through the garden or down the yard. It was usual to go in a group, only the brave or foolhardy ventured alone. There were no lights or flush toilets, just a long boxed in construction with a central aperture and newspaper thoughtfully provided alongside. (the ink didn't rub off like it does today). Sometimes you were confronted with a "double-header" where you could sit companionably side by side if you so wished!

One memorable night, as we waited our turn, a strangled shriek came from within. "what's up?" we yelled. Aunty appeared, pink silk directoire's gleaming in the flashlight's beam. Something had suddenly shot past her as she was about to sit down! We all decided there and

then we could wait until we got home, after all, Bromley's bus was due. Back indoors, our predicament was the cause of much hilarity among the company. "are they do gerrin at night, they're more frit at you, yer know," said one old chap sitting in the corner. Maybe so, when some 'thing' erupts out of the darkness, scratching and scuffling, and you are in a vulnerable position, you don't feel inclined to debate the point!

Doreen Boulter

NOTES ON WIGSTON'S LUNATIC ASYLUMS **By Jean Dann 2018**

Blunts Asylum 1810 (John Blunt) J B Surgeon proprietor.

Advert - John Blunt Wigston House 25.5.1818 Leicester Chronicle (similar advert 10.4.1815 Leicester Journal).

John Blunt Surgeon (at some point later in life he became a member of the Society of Friends (Quaker) died Wigston 1826 (born 1782) established the asylum. Death duties £447 Ann Blunt. Marriage licence to Ann Tebbutt 7.10.1818 He was 36.

Changed to Burgess' Insane Asylum Feb 1827 (previously established by John Blunt 20 years ago) Joshua Burgess.

Marriage between the only daughter of Mr Blunt to Mr Bowmar surgeon at Wigston 28.5.1829.

December 1834 the late John Blunt's daughter died in Wigston but the local clergyman refused to bury her as she had not been baptised in accordance with the C of E she had to be taken to a 'Friends' burying ground at Castle Donnington.

Thomas Edward Blunt surgeon (nephew of John Blunt) granted a license to run the Asylum March 1837 and 1848 appears to be a land agent too. Married to Martha Ward (member of Wigston's Ward family). Martha died 14.10.1879 following a short illness.

Wigston Grove Lunatic Asylum Joshua Burgess 1837.

Joshua Burgess candidate for churchwarden 1839 with Capt. Badderley from Wigston Hall.

Wigston Sanatorium run by Joshua Burgess 1840.

1841 census Joshua Burgess Lunatic Asylum Wigston resident surgeon (born 1795 age 48) just says Lunatic Asylum Wigston (nearest on the register Mill Hill cottages).

Advert by Thomas Robinson who says he has been Assistant to Mr Blunt and Superintendent at his Lunatic Asylum for the past 15 months 28.1.1848 (Also a pupil of Mr Bowmar).

Advert 1847/48 Lunatic Asylum more patients required Mr Blunt.

Census - Thomas Edward Blunt 1841 Moat Street near to the corner of Newgate End 1851 Moat Street. Died 1858.

Thomas Edward Blunt executor to the will of William Pochin 17.5.1850.

Census -1851 the Asylum Charles Smith Bompos Superintendent (house name Mr T Blunts Surgeon Asylum) Newgate End also on the census a yard called Mr Blunts Surgeons Yard Newgate End. (I am unable to find the Asylum in the 1841 census Newgate End).

Census 1851 - Mrs Ann Blunt widow of John Blunt with servant in a separate house Newgate End. Died in her 74th year Mrs Blunt widow of Mr John Blunt of Wigston at Husband Bosworth Grange 6.10.1859 (Leicester Mercury).

1845 an application was received from a Mr Benefield of Wigston keeper of a private asylum in Wigston. He states that his house is newly fitted out for patients his application was refused.

License granted to John Ewins Bennett of Wigston for his private asylum 1845 (married to Rebecca Blunt 1842 - Thomas Edward Blunt's daughter). In the 1851 census the couple are living Farm Lodge Husbands Bosworth (John is a farmer).

Yearly renewal of license Blunt's asylum Oct 1850 and (Oct 1851 15 female 3 males).

9.11.1852 part selling up of the Wigston Asylum (present occupier leaving) including household furniture, phaeton, gig and harness, beds and bedding, furniture, cart, tables, chairs etc Leicester Mercury.

14.11.1853 Thomas Edward Blunt medical officer of the Wigston District Blaby Union. Leicester Chronicle.

A part of the 'Lanes' system in Wigston has the name of Blunts Lane.

NB the above information taken from newspaper articles/adverts either The Leicester Mercury or Leicester Journal between 1800-1900. Census and marriage information from 'Find My Past'.

Jean Dann

OLD WIGSTON NAMES

I was wondering if anyone could help with a bit of research into two old Wigston Names. The two names are VANN and PAWLEY. These names were an integral part of old Wigston life but have since disappeared from the Village. Does anyone know of family or friends who are related to either of these names and can supply us with background information?

If so, please let me know so I can have a chat with them.

Thanks, Mike Forryan

WIGSTON FRAMEWORK KNITTERS MUSEUM-UPDATE

Following the Prime Minister's announcement on the evening of Monday 16th March 2020, that due to Covid 19 people should stay at home, avoid social contact, stop nonessential travel and avoid pubs, clubs and bars, the Framework Knitters Museum closed. This announcement which was guidance at the time became law after a further announcement on Monday 23rd March which placed the Country in lockdown.

Our intention to reopen the Museum after Saturday 4th July when most of the Country's lockdown was eased was thwarted when Leicester City and its conurbations entered an extended period of restrictions. We were finally able to reopen on Sunday 9th August with Covid Secure measures in place.

During the enforced period of closure when the Museum was closed to the public, a limited number of volunteer staff who were fortunately not shielding or isolating continued to visit for essential maintenance. To better enhance the experience for visitors several items on the site have been repaired or replaced. Amongst the parts of the building to receive attention were the wooden garden bench seats which have been retreated. The sign at the front east side of the building which was rotten has now been replaced and the troublesome rear door to the laundry and toilet now opens and closes properly.

The gardeners have been remarkably busy with reduced numbers and have done a splendid job. It is such a pity that visitors were unable to see the fruits of their labours during spring and early summer when the Victorian Garden was at its best. Personally, I believe that a walk around the garden is essential when visiting the Museum. In 2021 we hope to be on the list for the National Garden Scheme (NGS). For those not aware the NGS encourage the opening of private gardens to the public for a nominal admission fee with proceeds going to charity. To qualify for the scheme and to maintain access for the disabled, the hedges around the garden received drastic pruning in July. The gardens now continue to be wheelchair friendly.

The Museum needs to be future proofed and for this reason volunteers who have the aptitude are learning to operate the frames. This takes time to be competent and to be able to demonstrate to the public takes several months.

The five months of closure has had a detrimental impact on the finances of the Museum. Visitors are essential to provide the cash flow which is much needed. Unfortunately, we were unable to secure any government or local authority community grants. This was not for the lack of trying. So, we do need visitors to get the Museum back on its feet.

Visitor numbers are down since reopening. This is not unexpected. Anyone who was planning to visit and didn't miss jam scones with their tea and coffee on the last three Sunday afternoons. A real treat!

We still have a quantity of genuine Royal Sandringham picture cards for sale together with other publications. These are very reasonably priced and available in the Yarn Room reception area.

The Museum still needs more volunteers to assist with a variety of tasks. This includes visitor reception, guiding, dusting, basic maintenance, refreshments and gardening. Anyone interested should contact the Museum. Details are on the website: <http://wigstonframeworkknitters.org.uk> Please visit us and support your local Museum.

Neil Hancock

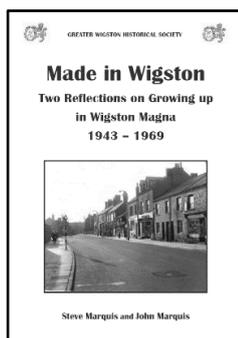
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BY THE TIME YOU READ THIS THE SECOND EDITION OF
“WINDOW ON THE PAST” SHOULD BE AVAILABLE – CHECK THE WEBSITE
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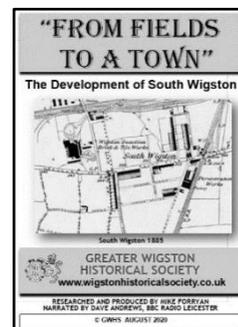
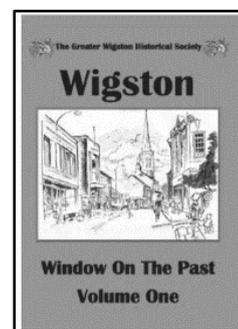
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TWO STEEPLES HOSIERY FACTORY – Connections with Ambrose Lee and family.

1824 Ambrose was born in Wigston on 24th May – son of Edward Lee a hosier.

1827 Ambrose married Fanny Tabberer at All Saints Church in Wigston on 23rd December. Her father, William was a grazier and landlord of the Bell Inn in Bell Street.

1851 Ambrose and family are living in 19 Bell Street and he is listed as a trimmer and dyer and Fanny is a streamstress and they had a daughter, Ann. Next to the Lees lived Edward Holyoak a 48 year old Hosiery Manufacturer and dyer who employed 120 people.

1861 Ambrose and Fanny have 3 more children, a son Edward and 2 more daughters, Rhoda Elizabeth and Mary Helen. Rhoda being named after Edward Holyoake's wife who was related to Ambrose. Ambrose is listed as a manufacturer of children's socks.

At this time Edward Holyoak retired from his Hosiery business and becomes a farmer and grazier and moves to Bushloe End and lives next door to the Owston family of Bushloe House – now the Oadby and Wigston Council Offices.

1871 sees Ambrose as a Master Manufacturer employing 56 people and living in Bell Street, but also of Leicester Road suggesting a factory was now established there.

1877 Edward Lee, Ambrose's son has married Sarah and working for his father as a warehouseman.

1879 The Star and Garter Pub was built – very close to the Factory site on the Leicester Road.

1881 Edward and family are living in Gladstone Street and he is described as a Sock Manufacturer and his father is living in Bell Street and employs 87 people.

Between 1881 and 1891 Ambrose retired and moved to his home in Aylestone Lane called Homefield – this site is now occupied by the Curtis Weston Retirement Home. His wife fanny died on 2nd April 1887 and by 1891 Census, Ambrose was 66 and was living there with his 2 daughters, Ann and Augusta.

The family business expanded with Edward in charge and Thomas Henry Glenn, son of a local grocer and Tallow chandler joined him in a partnership and traded as Lee and Glenn and now moved into the family home in Bell Street which was then used for offices and storage. They later moved to the factory premises on Leicester Road and sold the Bell Street site to John Daykin Broughton.

The 2 partners moved their family homes out of Wigston, Edward to Kibworth and to various houses, The Paddock, Merton House and The Lodge and Thomas Glenn to 60 New Walk in Leicester.

1903 sees the formation of the Two Steeples Ltd Company by E.W. Lee and T.H. Glenn and directors were E.W. Lee and his sons Arthur T.A. Lee and George F. Lee.

Their claim was to be the first to make an underwear of pure wool which was unshrinkable, which they developed after careful experimenting in 1895.

Their trademark was 'Two Steeples' and registered and then well-known and regarded.

The factory on the Leicester Road /Gladstone Street covered several acres on this site with a Warehouse and buildings on 3 floors.

1914 – Ambrose the founder of the family business died aged 90 on 30th August 1914. He left £8,706 -10 – 3d.

By the First World War the factory had a large workforce and Edward Lee, the Managing Director held a patriotic recruiting campaign at the factory and 22 men came forward. They were given a great send off and joined the ranks of the 8th and 9th Battalions of the Leicestershire Regiment in Sept 1914.

1920's – The Two Steeples Factory was well established and manufacturing a full range of jersey clothes as well as the socks and underwear. They had sales representatives all over the UK and with shops selling the Two Steeples clothes. The factory had a telephone installed - Wigston 2

1924 – Edward Lee passed away on 8th July 1924. He was 73 and left £16,552 – 3- 11d . His will lists him as living in the family home of Homefield, Aylestone Lane .

He is buried in Wigston Cemetery and succeeded by his sons, Arthur, Frederick and George and they continued throughout the years until the company was sold to the Mansfield Hosiery Mills in the 1970's.

1941 – Arthur Lee, grandson to Ambrose was recorded as the Managing Director of Two Steeples Ltd and lived at The Chestnuts on Spa Lane in Wigston.

1984/5 – Mansfield Hosiery Mills had closed their Wigston Site and Cromwell Tools purchased the factory site and traded there until it moved to its present site on Chartwell Drive in Wigston in the early 2000's .

2004 – The Two Steeples/ Cromwell Tools site was completely demolished and Jelson the Builders built the Two Steeples Square development of houses and apartments and occupied from 2009 with a central green area and Play Park for children .

Refs – GWHS – Wigston's Who's Who – Tricia Berry
Grace's Guide
Various Directories
Cromwell Tools website
Internet searches

Ailsa Whalley.
Aug 2020

We sadly announce the passing of one of our members John Standley. John and his wife Gill have been members of the Society for many years and attended our meetings and trips regularly. Our thoughts and condolences go to Gill and family.

www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk **LATEST WEBSITE ADDITIONS**

“Before and After” Animations by Rachel Atkinson Video animations of places in Wigston, using modern pictures and our archive photographs to take you back in time.



Sound now available on some pages. The text on some pages has been digitised so that you can listen to the information. Look out for the sound icon on the pages.

A SPECIAL DATE FOR SOCIETY MEMBERS

The Greater Wigston Historical Society is 40 years old this year. To celebrate this achievement, the Committee have arranged a special event which will take place on:

SATURDAY 24TH JULY 2021

The event will be a concert which will take place at:

The Hall, Wigston College, Station Road, Wigston LE18 2DS starting at 7pm.

The concert is in the planning stage at the moment, and the Committee would like you to keep the date free so that you can join us for this celebration event.

For Society members it will be a “**FREE**” event, and a nominal charge of £5 will be made for any guests you would like to take. Further details will be published as soon as possible.

To book your ticket/s please email tickets@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk

Tell us how many FREE members tickets you require and how many guest tickets you require

Or telephone Ann Cousins on 0116 2884638 with your details.

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: Hannah Evans email:

bulletineditor@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk three clear weeks before publication date.