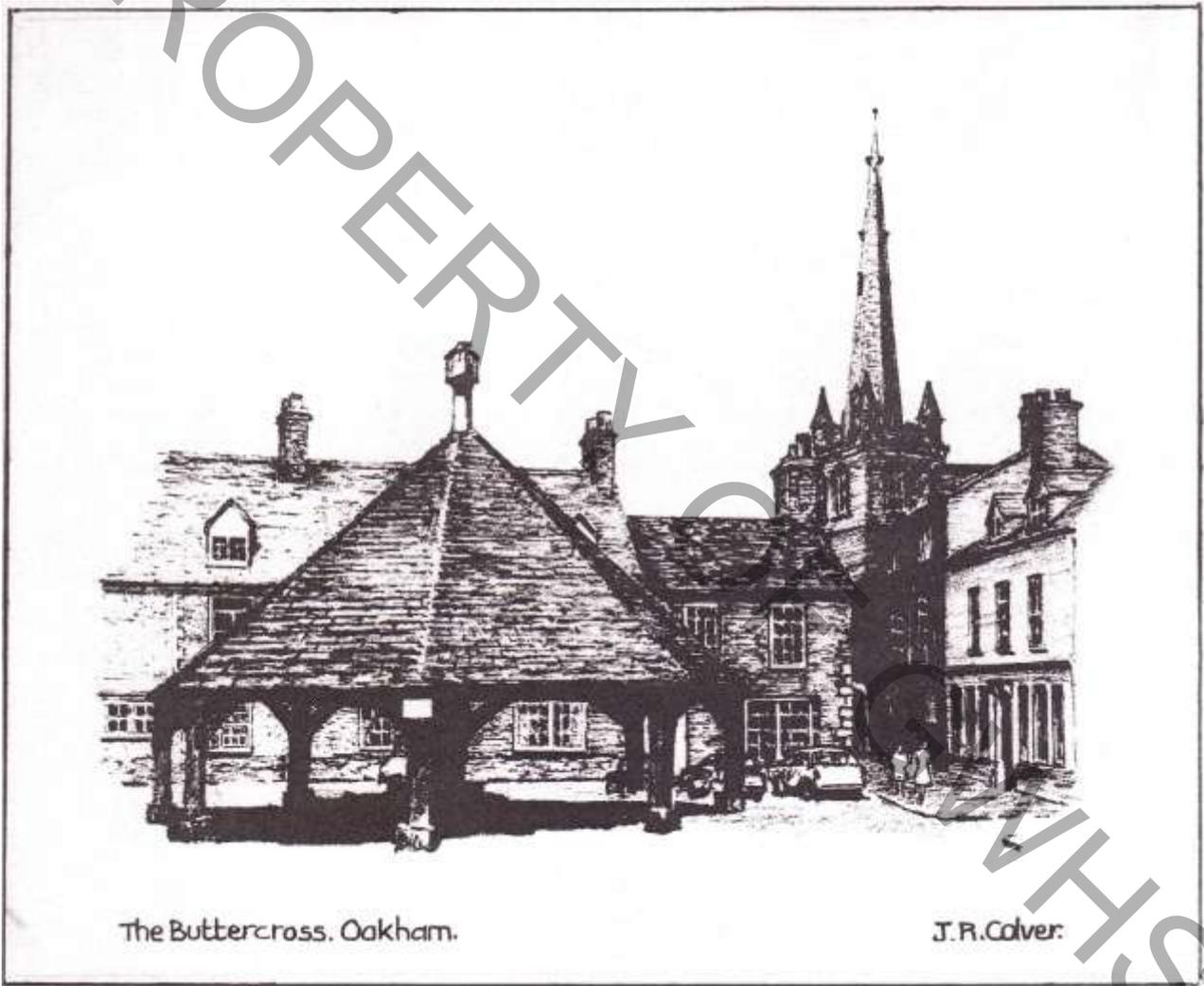




Greater Wigston Historical Society  
White Gate Farm, Newton Lane, Wigston Magna Leicestershire

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## BULLETIN 47



## PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS - FEBRUARY TO AUGUST 1997

### Thursday 20th February 1997

A.G.M. followed by slides on the growth of Wigston, 1950's onwards, Dennis & Edna Taylor.  
7.30p.m. Wigston Liberal Club.

### Thursday 20th March 1997

'Follies & Curiosities of Leicester'<sup>1</sup> - Diana Courtney - City Blue Badge Guide.  
7.30p.m. Wigston Liberal Club.

### Thursday 17th April 1997

'History of England on Inn Signs' - Mr. K.F. Day.  
7.30p.m. Wigston Liberal Club.

### Wednesday 21st May 1997

Visit to Foxton Locks Museum - Mike Beech. Meal at local pub (venue to be advised later).  
Meet 7.00p.m. Paddock Street Car Park to share transport.

### Wednesday 18th June 1997

Guided tour of St. Mary de Castro & St. Nicholas Churches - Rev. David Cawley.  
Meet 7.00p.m. Paddock Street Car Park to share transport.

### Wednesday 20th August 1997

Guided tour of Bushloe House, Station Road by O. & W. B.C. Assistant Chief Executive, Mr. Walker, with tea & biscuits afterwards.  
Meet 7.30p.m. at Bushloe House.

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### FRONT COVER DRAWING

The subject of Jim Colver's front cover drawing for this issue is the Butter Cross, Market Place, Oakham. This interesting feature is described in Pevsner's 'Buildings of Leicestershire & Rutland' thus - "a large polygonal timber structure round a stone pillar: probably late 17th Century. Pyramid roof sheltering the stocks."

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The Bulletin is published three times a year on 1st February, June & October. Articles etc. (which are always welcome) should be submitted to either of the Joint Editors three clear weeks before the publication date please.

Joint Editors:

Mrs. Chris Smart, 197 Queens Road, Leicester.

Mrs. Tricia Berry, 7 Wensleydale Road, Wigston.

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### OCTOBER MEETING

The speaker for October was Mr. Larry Jarvis who bravely turned out in spite of still suffering from the effects of flu. He is a retired Market Inspector & provided us with a most interesting account of the running of Leicester Market as well as its history.

There has been a market in the town since c50AD when the Romans established one at the junction of the four Leicester 'Gates' at the point where High Street crosses Highcross Street. A stone in the road marks this spot today. It was known as the Wednesday market. This was the site of the 'Highcross' a portion of which now stands in Cheapside. A Friday market was established c1500, both of these were subsequently absorbed into the Saturday market. This Saturday market has been on the present site for 700 years & 2 days as at the meeting date! There were other more specialised markets in Leicester. In Domesday 1086 markets were situated in Welford Road, Woodgate & the Horsefair in the present Horsefair Street. Corn was sold at the Corn Exchange previously the Gainsborough & a cattle market stood on the present Town Hall site, which was later moved to Aylestone Road.

Markets generate other trade besides the buying & selling on site. Public houses for refreshment, accommodation & stabling were a vital service. No less than 27 Inns existed around the city centre, the oldest being the Red Lion in Highcross Street.

The present market site was once used to bury the dead at the plague. Because of its importance it was the first place in town to benefit from a piped water supply, carried by conduit, hence Conduit Street, from a spring in the Highfields area. It was open until the 1920s & meetings & proclamations took place there. In 1882 there was a festival when the Prince & Princess of Wales arrived to open Abbey Park. It is the largest covered market in Europe. The first covers were canvas sheets, then corrugated iron which made a deafening noise when it rained. Then came the infamous 'egg box' roof which leaked from day one, & finally the much more satisfactory present structure. The first market inspector was appointed in 1829 at a salary of £80. There are now six inspectors who are responsible for rent collection from the 321 stall holders, allow cating stalls which are let by tender, some for life & some on a casual basis, receiving & following up customer complaints, seeing to incidents of crime, illness, lost children etc. The market has always been a very important economic feature for Leicester City Council. It is governed by a Royal Charter granted in 1298 & could not be sold without an act of Parliament.

After some questions & discussion Edna Taylor thanked Mr. Jarvis for a most interesting evening. During announcements members were told of the recent death of founder member Maurice Bingley. The Chairman had sent members' condolences to Mavis Bingley & a donation in his memory to her nominated charity. Mavis sent her thanks for this & for thinking of her & family at this sad time. Members were also notified of the position regarding the ex-Town Crier, Stan Croxtall's uniform, part of which he provided & part was bought by the Society. When he resigned the Society's pieces were returned but later borrowed back when he was invited by the new Town Crier to act as his deputy.

As the Society is no longer involved in the role, it having been taken over by Oadby & Wigston B.C. doubt was expressed as to the way forward. It was agreed the Committee should write to Stan explaining the situation & asking him to return the pieces or purchase them for a nominal sum.

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### **November meeting ...**

On Wednesday the 20th November the Society met to hear Duncan Lucas read a lecture. The lecture, The history of Wigston, was originally delivered by W.J.R. Pochin in 1911.

The Pochin family originated in Barkby, William John Reynolds Pochin was a member of the Wigston branch of the family. Their wealth came when two sons of the family married two sisters, both wealthy heiresses, of the Frear (Fryer) family.

The Pochins (pronounced 'pu-chin') were a well known and respected Wigston family. They lived in the Manor House, Newgate End. W. J. R. Pochin, known as John (our lecturer), was a lawyer and he and his sister Katherine were both unmarried. They were the benefactors of the church clock in 1930.

The original lecture was delivered on Candlemass Day (2nd February) 1911.

Pochin's history refers to Nichols and Leland as sources of information. John Nichols 'History and antiquities of the County of Leicester' published 1795-1811 includes practically all that was known about Leicester and Leicestershire at that time. John Leland was a traveller in the late Middle Ages who recorded his observations.

Pochin's history begins in 700 A.D. this being the date of skeletons and artefacts found in Long Street in c.1700. At the time of Domesday Wigston was one of the more populous places in the County. Pochin discusses why there are two churches in Wigston. His argument is that there were two manors or parishes i.e. two distinct places. Around 1400 St. Wolstan's ceased to function as a distinct parish and All Saints became the church of the two parishes. He mentions the 1764 Act of Enclosure for Wigston, the change to sole ownership from ownership in common. The results of this Act changed the appearance of the parish more than anything else. The turnpike road of 1765 from Welford Bridge to Leicester meant that Wigston was on the London to Leicester mail coach route via Northampton and therefore an important staging post. He mentions George Davenport who died

in 1797, almost as famous as Dick Turpin. In 1801 the population was 1658. In 1836 Wigston became part of the Blaby Union for the Poor Law. All sorts of topics were touched upon in the lecture. In 1840 the Leicester to Rugby railway line came; Wigston was one of the first villages to have gas lights; beating the bounds to mark the parish boundaries; interesting snippets from the churchwarden's accounts.

Taking it all into consideration it must have been a very interesting lecture at the time. However, many new facts have been uncovered in the last 80-90 years and some aspects are now seen to be inaccurate. In particular the work of W.G. Hoskins has done much to develop the understanding of the history of Wigston. Pochin's lecture was a potted history of Wigston delivered in those days when people had a different perspective on life.

Our thanks are extended to Duncan for presenting this lecture and for offering us the benefit of his own interpretation based on his extensive knowledge of the area.

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### **DECEMBER MEETING**

About 60 members gathered on 18th December for the annual Christmas Party. This commenced with a general knowledge picture quiz devised by Edna Taylor & a 'what is that?'<sup>1</sup> puzzle (photographs of artefacts from the Folk Museum taken from odd angles) by Tony Lawrance. The first was won by Chris Smart, the second after a tie-break by Ruth Harper. We then tackled a Leics. History quiz set by Stella Tweed for teams of 3 or 4. This was won by Colin Towell, Chris Smart & Tricia Berry, again after a close result involving a tie-break.

After all this we were ready for supper which was prepared by Cynthia Axford, Shirley Muggleton & Mary Freestone. It was really good & a warm thank you & presentations of small gifts followed. A raffle for 8 prizes beautifully wrapped in seasonal paper concluded the evening.

The Chairman, Edna Taylor, then thanked everyone for their attendance. She explained that Secretary, Doris Chandler, was unable to be present due to illness & good wishes were expressed for her speedy recovery. Edna then announced that serious consideration was being given to changing our meeting place. This has been discussed from time to time before at Committee meetings because our present upstairs room at the Liberal Club is too crowded, especially on popular nights. The problem has been compounded by several members now finding it difficult to climb the stairs. It is generally thought that any future venue should be in central Wigston. Schools have been ruled out on the grounds that meetings would have to end by 9 or 9.30p.m. & pubs only have upstairs rooms available. The concert room on the ground floor at the Liberal Club is a possibility, though it is far too large for our requirements & also Age Concern in Paddock Street, but both these places would not be available on Wednesdays. It would mean changing our meeting evening to Thursdays. Another suggestion was the Meadows Evangelical Church who have just bought the former A.H. Broughton factory & are going to convert it into a church with various rooms for community use. Enquiries are continuing & members were asked to give consideration to this question over Christmas, tell any members they see who are not present, & invite anyone with any views to speak to a Committee member. The matter will be discussed again at the January meeting.

The evening closed at about 10.15p.m.

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### **JANUARY MEETING**

It was a damp foggy evening, but a room full of members were present to hear the very warm, friendly & humorous Olwen Hughes give a talk about her life & work. She was born in Rhymney, 26 miles north of Cardiff, one of the 6 daughters of a Welsh hill farmer. At school like all pupils she had to abandon her native language & be taught in English. She trained as a teacher at Cardiff University, but because she did not excel at Rugby or singing couldn't get a job in Wales & so started to teach English to the English as she put it. Wales was famous for its exports of teachers, preachers, coal & Welsh Iambi She married an archaeologist hoping that he would get more interested in her as she got older! but did not let on as to whether he had!! She came to Leicester when he obtained a job in this area.

She did not take up drawing & painting until she was older & then attended college one day a week where she was lucky enough to be taught by Graham Sutherland. She has been doing the Sketchbook series in the Leicester Mercury for 14 years & produced a long computer list of all the drawings featured. She also works for the Western Mail in Cardiff & 2 American newspapers. She was commissioned by the National Museum of Wales to produce sketches of 130 coal mines (of which only one now survives, & that in private hands) & the slate quarries. She regularly gets asked to draw buildings due for demolition & became especially aware of the need for this after being asked to make & sketch of her local village library only to arrive & find it had been reduced to a pile of rubble to day before.

Intensely proud of her native land she mentioned several famous Welsh people including Richard Burton, Anthony Hopkins & Tom Jones (not the singer) who was secretary to Baldwin & reputed to have written all his speeches. She showed us a Hollywood Oscar Award which had been left to her by the late Jack Howells & which she intends to donate to a museum.

Her knowledge of Leicester history is extensive & she mentioned that the Bag Stores, who regularly supplied the Royal family, came into existence as a by-product of Thomas Cook's travel business & that the Fox's Glacier Mint Polar Bear logo was designed by Reg Darby (who later illustrated the first 15 Thomas the Tank Engine books), for which he was paid 7/6d when a student at Leicester College of Art.

Olwen travels abroad quite often & attends peace conferences & Welsh Society meetings all over the world. She was even invited by the President to lecture in Russia but unfortunately could not accept as she was in hospital at the time.

She ended by inviting us all for tea! Mentioning she is opening part of her house as a museum of the work of Thomas Birch, the woodcarver, & serving teas for parties of up to 30 people. She concluded as she had begun with a few lines of poetry from one of her favourite writers, Dylan Thomas.

After some questions & discussion, the Chairman, Edna Taylor thanked Olwen for a really fascinating evening. She then announced that Get Well greetings had been sent to Jim Colver who has recently been in hospital suffering from pneumonia, & to Doris Chandler who is still not too well. She then told members of the changes of meeting date to the 3rd Thursday for our indoor meetings for the rest of this winter, with the outdoor summer meetings still being on the usual 3rd Wednesday.

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### **TOWN CRIER'S COSTUME**

The future of this costume has now been settled. Stan Croxtall decided to purchase the items bought by the Society & we thank him very much for this.

(This refers to the discussion mentioned in the October Meeting summary on Page 2).

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### **WIGSTON WHO'S WHO NO: 16**

#### **HENRY DAVIS POCHIN JP**

Henry Davis Pochin was born on 25/5/1824, the eldest son of William Pochin of Wigston & his wife Elizabeth nee Hurst of Leicester. Eight more children were to follow, namely, Samuel Davenport, George Edwin, Sarah Jane, Clara, Alfred, John, William & Edward Davis. His father had previously been married to Eleanor nee Spencer of Ansty, who had died prematurely after producing two daughters, Mary Ann & Eleanor. Thus Henry came from a family of eleven children, the eldest two being half sisters to the rest. The family were directly descended from George Pochin of Barkby & his first wife Elizabeth nee Dove of Wigston, & Henry was the 13th generation in descent from Richard Pochin of Barkby, the earliest of the name on record. Henry's line had been settled in Wigston for some six generations & his immediate family were dissenters probably through the influence of his paternal grandmother Mary Pochin nee

Davenport who had lived at Moat House, Wigston before her marriage & who was a member of the non-conformist branch of her family.

William and his large family lived at the Bull's Head Inn in Bull Head Street, which a manager, who either lived in part of the property or next door, actually ran for him. He also owned a grocers & butchers business & 20 acres of land, & rented a further 40 acres. During the severe recession in the 1830's he & others who owned property had to pay so much in Poor Law Rates that he told an Assistant Commissioner sent to investigate that "I can't get a living by all put together & am losing my little property fast." Things however must have improved because he managed to educate his talented children. Henry attended the Proprietary School in New Walk, Leicester. This is the building which later became, and still remains, our Museum & Art Gallery. He then studied Chemistry at the Pharmaceutical Society's Laboratory in London. He discovered a process of decomposing silicate of alumina which produced aluminous cake useful in the manufacture of paper & a method of distilling resin with steam at a high temperature which was used for making yellow & fancy soaps. He founded his own manufacturing chemist business, H.D. Pochin & Co., at Salford. In time this expanded & other branches were opened at Miles Pallia, Warrington, Newcastle-upon-Tyne & Bristol.

On 20/4/1852 Henry married Agnes Heap the daughter of George Gretton Heap of Timperley, Cheshire. Agnes was a forward thinking young woman. She wrote 'The Right of Women to Exercise the Elective Franchise' in 1855, with a second edition in 1873. This was of course long before the Suffragette movement finally achieved this milestone. Henry & Agnes lived in Salford but later moved to Bodnant Hall, Conway, Denbighshire. They had six children - Walter Henry, Laura Elizabeth, Cecil Emerson, Beatrice Emily, Bertha Mabel & Percival Gerard. Laura was to marry at the Friends Meeting House, St. Martins Lane, London, Sir Charles B.B. McLaren who became M.P. for Bosworth, Leics, 1892-1910.

Henry served as Mayor of Salford 1866-8 & was elected a member of Stafford School Board in March 1871. He became a J.P. D.L. & F.C.S. & was M.P. for Stafford for a brief period in 1869. He was High Sheriff of Denbighshire in 1887 & also served as Deputy Lieutenant of that county.

His business career was even more impressive. He bought coal, iron & steel businesses & converted them into limited liability companies. He held large shareholdings & was a director of Bolckow Vaughan & Co., John Brown & Co., the Armour-plate makers of Sheffield, the Tredegar Iron & Steel Co., Palmer's Shipbuilding & Iron Co., Corton Wood Coal & Iron Co., Sheepbridge Coal & Iron Co. & the Stavely Iron & Coal Co. Jointly with Sir Edward Watkin he redeemed the Metropolitan Railway Co., from insolvency & served as its Vice Chairman. He was also a director of the Manchester, Sheffield & Lincolnshire Railway Co.

Henry's father William Pochin died in 1850 when some of the younger children were still dependent. His Will stated that his assets should be sold up & the proceeds invested to give his widow an income, but Elizabeth decided instead to continue running the businesses herself, helped by her second son, Samuel Davenport Pochin. To these were added the role of postmistress by 1851. She would have been advised by family friends & trustees - Thomas Edward Blunt the local surgeon & Thomas Nunneley a Leicester grocer who was most likely the man of that name who had been Lord Mayor of Leicester in 1849. Some 30 years later when all the children had grown up & become established in life, the surviving eight joined together to erect a fitting memorial to their father. This is the imposing monument which stands on the front of the United Reformed Church in Long Street.

Henry's brother Samuel Davenport Pochin remained in Wigston & farmed his father's land. His brother John Pochin moved to Leicester & was associated with Pollard & Pochin, fancy hosiers, of Wellington Street. He lived at Ivybourne, New Walk. Another brother, Alfred, became a Leicester councillor.

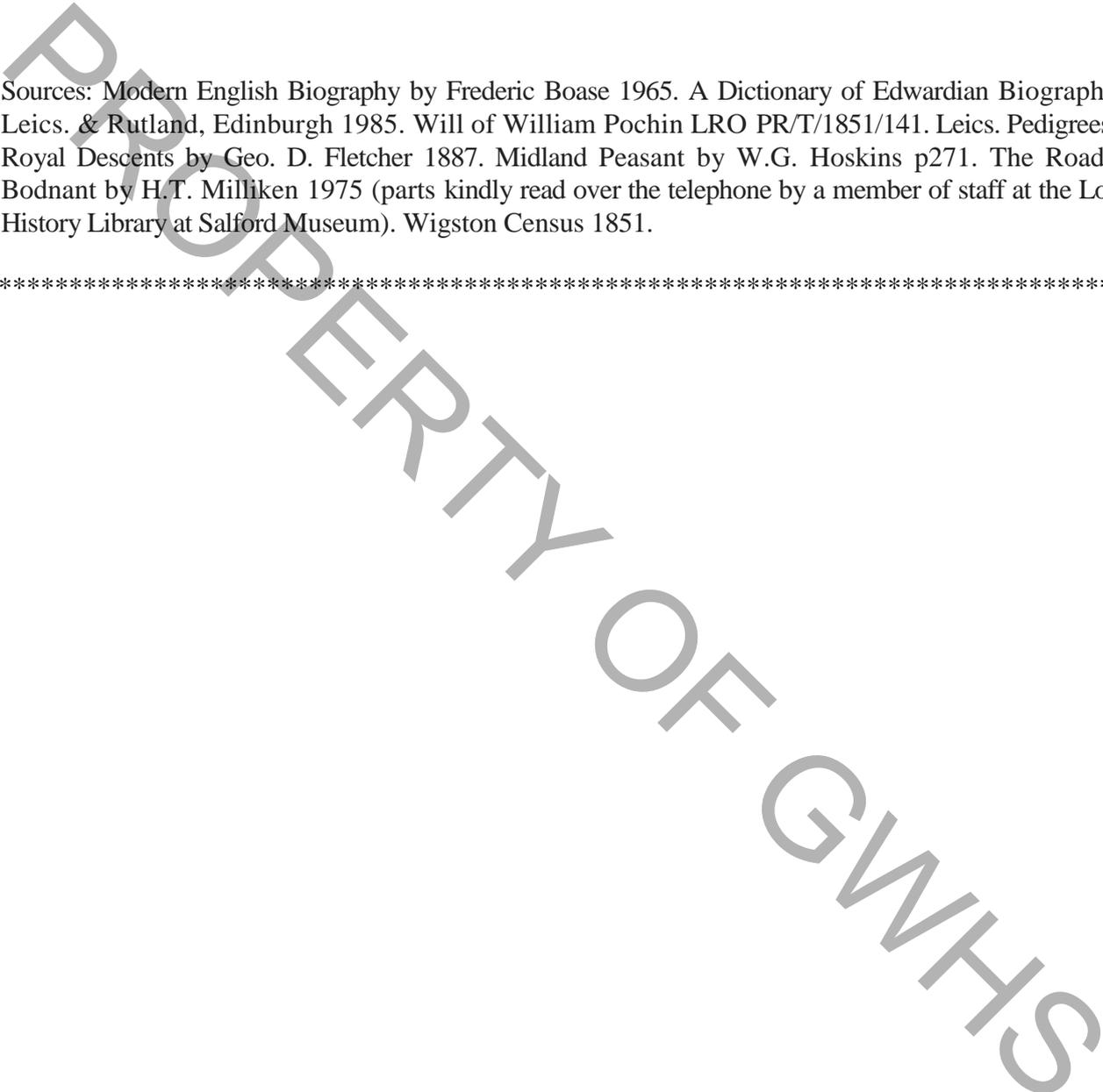
Henry died at Bodnant Hall on 28/10/1895 aged 71 years. Agnes survived him by 13 years & died on 12/2/1908 aged 82.

Part of the gardens at Bodnant are now National Trust property which they describe as "one of the finest in the world, situated above the River Conwy & looking across the valley towards the Snowden range." The Hall remains in the same family & is the home of one of Henry's great grandsons, Lord Aberconway. The main company in Salford also remains, though in an altered form. Parts have been purchased by Glaxo & Boots the Chemist, the remainder is now named English China Clays, Loverings & Pochin or ECLP.

Tricia Berry

Sources: Modern English Biography by Frederic Boase 1965. A Dictionary of Edwardian Biography - Leics. & Rutland, Edinburgh 1985. Will of William Pochin LRO PR/T/1851/141. Leics. Pedigrees & Royal Descents by Geo. D. Fletcher 1887. Midland Peasant by W.G. Hoskins p271. The Road to Bodnant by H.T. Milliken 1975 (parts kindly read over the telephone by a member of staff at the Local History Library at Salford Museum). Wigston Census 1851.

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## NOTICE

### CHINA HOUSE, MARKET PLACE, LEICESTER JOHN HARVEY'S LIST OF PRICES - SEP 1850

Teas are dearer to buy but J.H. having had a large stock purchased before the rise, he is enabled to offer them on as good terms as ever,

#### COFFEES

Ceylon Coffee. This is good, try it.	10d per lb
Fine Ceylon & Plantation. Rich flavour, not earthy.	1s 4d per lb
Genuine Mocha & Jamaica	1s 8d per lb
Cocoa, in packets	6d per lb
Taylor's Dietetic Cocoa	1s 2d per lb
Flake Cocoa	8d per lb
Fine flavoured Continental Coffee, in 1/2lb and 1lb canisters, at 1s 4d and 1s 8d per lb.	

#### SUGARS

Bright Lump	5 1/2d and 6d per lb
Good Brown Sugar, suitable for Elder-berry Wine.	3 1/2d per lb
Prime Raw Sugar	4d per lb
Finest Crushed Lump	5d per lb

#### EXAMINE THE FRUIT LIST

Raisins	3d per lb
Good Ditto	4d per lb
Fine New Valentia Raisins. Just arrived.	5d per lb
Good Currants	4d per lb
Fine Ditto	5d per lb
Fine Large Greek Figs	4d per lb

Good Common Soap	3 1/2d to 4d per lb
Best Pale Ditto	5d per lb
Best Mottled Ditto	5d per lb
Best White Curd	6d per lb
Best Dip Candles	4 1/2d per lb
Best London Moulds	6d per lb
Best Decimal Candles, which require no snuffing	6d per lb
Best London Starch	6d per lb
Best Blue	2oz for 2 1/2d 1s 8d per lb
Black Pepper	1s per lb
Jamaican Ditto	1s per lb
Caraway Seeds	8d per lb
Candied Peel	2oz for 1 1/2d 1s per lb
Fine Large Sago	4d per lb

Good Mustard	6d and 8d per lb
Superfine Ditto	1s -0d and 1s-4d per lb
Good Ginger	6d and 8d per lb
Fine Ditto	1s -0d and 1s-4d per lb
Good Long Cut Tobacco	2 1/2d per oz
Best Black Ditto, Birds Eye and Cuba	2 3/4d per oz
Best Mild Returns	3d per oz

W.H. BURTON PRINTER, NORTHAMPTON ST. LONDON ROAD LEICESTER.

(Decimal conversion: 3d - 1p; 6d - 2 1/2p; 1s - 5p.)

J.R. Colver.

(LRO 11D56/9)

Thanks to Jim for reminding us how prices have increased since 1850.

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

**Framework Knitters' Museum**

**Fund-raising Group**

**Coach trips -1997**

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**Trip to Chester**

Saturday 7th June 1997

Full day trip, with approx. 5-6 hours in Chester. Coach will leave Paddock Street car park at 8.30 a.m. to arrive in

Chester just before lunch. The coach will leave Chester at 5 p.m.

£10 per ticket, for further details and booking, contact:-

Shirley  
Muggleton 8  
Grange Ave.,  
Wigston Fields  
01162883614

**Evening coach trip**

Tuesday 24th June 1997

This is an evening coach tour, guided by Duncan Lucas. Coach will leave the Liberal Club car park, Kelmarsh

Avenue at 7 p.m. and return there at about 9.30-10.30 p.m.

£4 per ticket, for further details and booking, contact:-

Tricia Berry 7  
Wensleydale,  
Wigston  
01162880156

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WIGSTON IN BUSINESS - No: 3  
TOONE & BLACK  
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This large business had its origins in Leicester, when by 1877 Benjamin Toone (Senior) a native of Earl Shilton, was trading from 235 Belgrave Gate as a boot & shoe manufacturer & leather & elastic webb factor. Later, taking advantage of the space & good transport facilities offered by the emerging South Wigston he moved his company to the Eagle Works, Canal Street & himself & family to Cambridge House, Blaby Road, (which later became the National Westminster Bank).

By 1891 he had been joined in the business by his 3 sons, William, Benjamin (Junior), & George & also by John Wycliffe Black a native of Knightsbridge, London. John Black lived at Ivy Dene, Countesthorpe Road & next to his house was a fancy box making room (probably for the shoes).

Both men were committed Christians, Ben Toone (Senior) founded the Christian's Mission Meeting House, next to the factory, in 1887, which later became a Church of Christ. John Black was also associated with the same church & was a lay preacher.

Meanwhile George Birkett whose family had been farmers in the Furness area of Cumbria for several generations became a superintendent for the Prudential Assurance & moved to America. He & his family lived in Philadelphia, but his wife Betsy did not settle & eventually brought her 4 children, Alfred, John, Thomas & Bessie back to England. She had been a member of the Disciples, an American non-conformist church, which was a parallel organisation to the Christian Mission & it was because she heard from them of the new church being founded by Ben Toone (Senior) that she decided to come to South Wigston. Her husband continued his work in America for a time, returning to England on leave, before eventually joining his wife permanently & opening a hardware & general shop in London House, Blaby Road, (the building more recently occupied by Freemans the furnisiers). This shop was a partnership with another member of the church & traded as Birkett & Elwes.

Ben Toone (Junior) married a young widow from Oadby Lane named Sarah Pegg, who had a daughter. This daughter, Edith I believe, married Thomas Birkett (one of the children brought from America). They had 3 children Dorothy Joyce, Bob & Peter who were brought up at Wigston Hall where the family lived during 1920/1940's. Dorothy Joyce Birkett married John Black's son Cyril. Thus the Toones, Blacks & Birketts were all connected. Cyril & Joyce Black moved to Wimbledon, where Cyril (later Sir Cyril), served as Lord Mayor & became an MP.

Returning to the company, by 1900 Toone & Black had moved to Saffron Road, to a new factory they also named Eagle Works. They retained the Canal Street building for a time for making boxes. The new premises were designed for efficiency with production being all on one level. The work was arranged so that the leather entered at one point & progressed through the various stages of manufacture, ending at the packing & despatch room. The management had an office with a large

bay window which overlooked the factory floor so that progress could be monitored. It is remembered as a strict but happy place to work, employing perhaps 150/200 people at its peak.

A few years later Ben Toone (Junior) started a separate company B. Toone & Co., makers of boys boots & shoes in the 'Little Duke'<sup>1</sup> factory in Desborough. Thomas Birkett & his brother Alfred were concerned in this company & so, later on, was Bob Birkett.

The Saffron Road company thereafter became J.W. Black & Co., & continued to be owned by the Black family. John Black was active locally, he served on Wigston Council & Leics. C.C. became a JP & Liberal MP for the Harborough Division. He gave all the trees on Saffron Road & Blaby Road. He went to live in Leicester & after several changes of address ended in 1936 at the beautiful Knighton Hayes, in Ratcliffe Road.

The company was bought by a Hungarian Jewish gentleman, Mr. Frank Nueman, during the 1930's but continued to be known as Blacks. When WWII was declared the poor man was arrested as an Alien, & interned under armed guard for a time on the Isle of Man. The manager, Mr. Philip Sharpe, had to travel over there to discuss business & receive instructions. During the war the premises were taken over by a Coventry engineering company & Blacks relocated to Bede Street, Leicester, where they made 'workhouse'<sup>1</sup> i.e. non-fashion ladies' shoes for the services.

After the war they returned to their own premises & Mr. Nueman introduced the manufacture of high class fashion shoes. A new section of the company was created for this named de Nero (of Black). As a promotional exercise they supplied shoes for some of the competitors in the 'Miss World' beauty contests. During this time Mr. Walker was in charge of the finishing room & Mr. Bill Elliott was foreman.

New inventions which streamlined production caused redundancies in the 1960's & the firm eventually had to close. The building was used for storage by other firms, notably Invicta Plastics, for a time but then fell into disrepair & was demolished. Jasmine Court now stands on the site.

Tricia Berry

I would like to thank Mr. Peter Birkett, who lives in the Bristol area, for supplying most of the information for this article. Also Mary Freestone, Harry Slaney & Margaret Nobbs & her mother for sharing their memories of when they worked at Blacks. This was supplemented by reference to various directories & the 1891 Census for Wigston.

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### **LAST MINUTE REMINDER**

The annual skittle match between the Society & the Friends of the FWK Museum will take place at the Old Crown, Moat Street, on 28th February at 7.30p.m. Do come along, this is a pleasant & informal evening. Tickets which include supper from Peter Clowes, Tel: 2883396.