

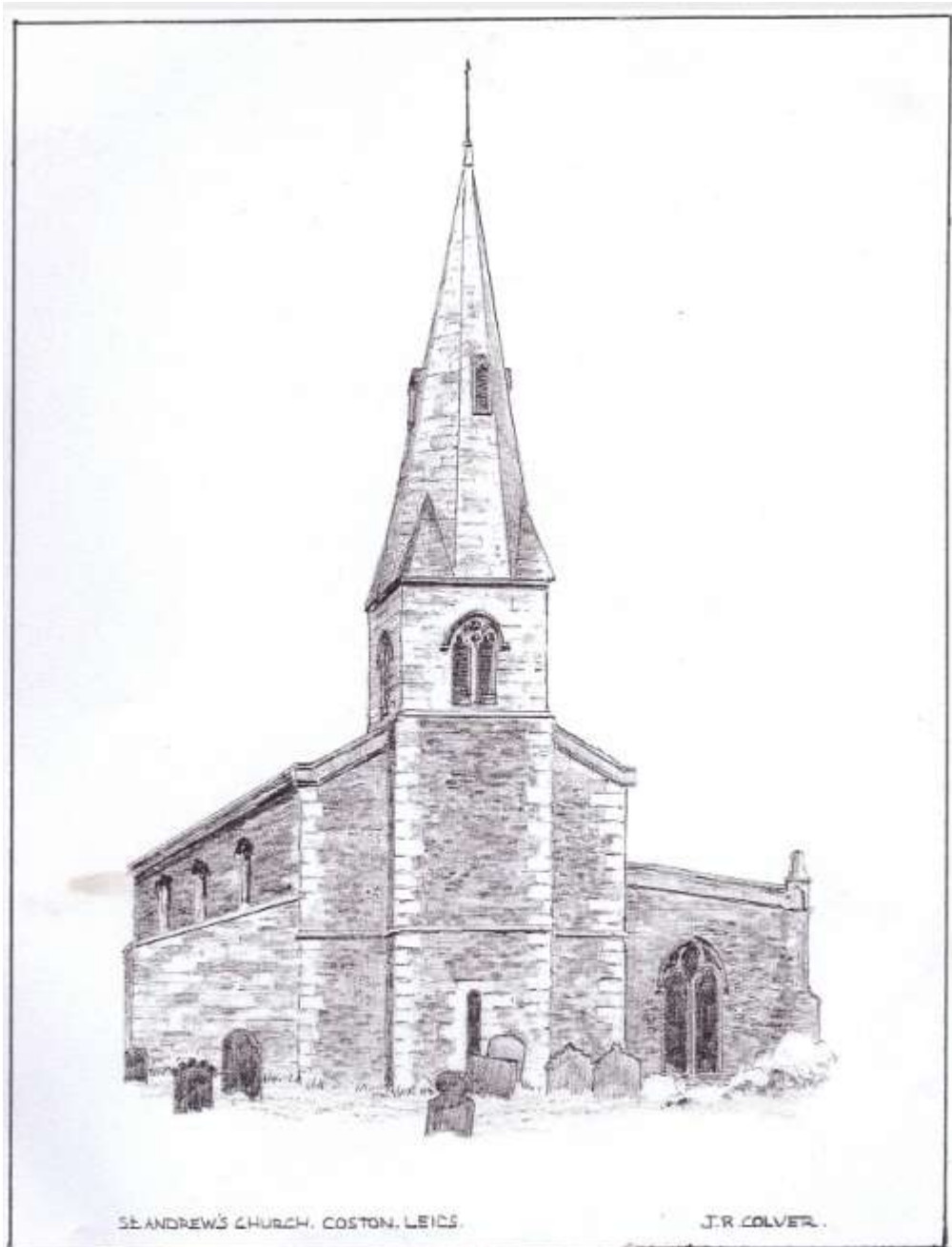
# Greater Wigston Historical Society

White Gate Farm, Newton Lane, Wigston Magna  
Leicestershire



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## BULLETIN 60



St. ANDREW'S CHURCH, COSTON, LEICS.

J.R. COLVER.

**PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS - JUNE 2001 TO FEBRUARY 2002**

**Wednesday 20th June 2001**

Visit to Donington Manor House with finger buffet & tea/coffee included  
Licensed bar will also be open (not included in price)  
Coach from Paddock Street 6.30p.m.  
Please notify the Secretary by 31st May to reserve a place.

**Wednesday 15th August 2001**

Visit to St. Margaret's Church with cup of tea afterwards  
Meet at Paddock Street 7.15p.m. to share transport  
Parking permitted in churchyard, approach via Burleys Way/Grafton Place/Canning Place/St. Margarets Street. (Sadly we have been advised to lock cars well & not to leave anything visible inside).

**Wednesday 19th September 2001**

Crime and Punishment in Leicester before 1914 - R. J.Gregory  
7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

**Wednesday 17th October 2001**

History & Development of Wallpaper - R. Maes  
7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

**Wednesday 21st November 2001**

Queen Victoria - (A look back in this centenary year of her death) - D. Lewin  
7.30p.m. U.R.Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

**Wednesday 19th December 2001**

Christmas Social with supper, quizzes & raffle  
7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

**Wednesday 16th January 2002**

King Richard III - Diane Courtney 7.30p.m.  
U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

**Wednesday 20th February 2002**

A.G.M. followed by members' contributions  
7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

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The Bulletin is published three times a year on 1st February, June and 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.

## FRONT COVER

Jim Colver's drawing for this bulletin features St. Andrew's Church, Coston, Leics. He describes it as "built mainly of ironstone, with a small 12th century turret and a 15th century limestone broach spire added. A stone frieze of foliage runs like a cornice on the south wall, inside and out.

It has some notable stained glass in the south aisle east window dating from the 14th century featuring the Crucifixion and the Virgin."

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## FEBRUARY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

1. 29 members were present with apologies from Shirley Muggleton.
2. Tricia Berry read the minutes of last year's AGM and it was agreed that they were a correct record of the proceedings.
3. Matters arising from the last AGM  
Peter Clowes reported that there was no further progress on the purchase of a slide projector. He had been advised to wait as new technology would soon be available.
4. Brian Bilson presented the Treasurer's report and accounts. Subscriptions are to remain the same as last year.
5. Chairman's report.  
Edna Taylor presented a report of the last year's activities. We have had a varied programme of talks with excellent speakers. The History of Privies and the Tower of London talks being of particular merit. We had summer outings to Melton Mowbray, Earls Barton and Cross Street Methodist Church. The Christmas party was successful. The Bulletins are appreciated and in particular, for the delivery, clear printing and illustrated covers (provided by Jim Colver). Duncan Lucas's book One Man's Wigston is now available again. Several new transactions have been produced and the total now number more than 80. Thanks were given to all the committee members, the members who come early to set out the room and to everyone who turns up and supports the programme of events and talks. All together a very satisfactory year.
6. Stella Tweed presented the membership report. During the year there have been 4 resignations, and 3 people not attended and out of contact. We have 7 new members making a current total of 82. One of the new members is Mrs. Gordon of Scotland, who is the grand-daughter of Hiram Owston the solicitor who used to own Bushloe House. She had written an interesting letter to Stella which included memories of staying at Bushloe House as a child and part of this was read out to us. The average attendance to meetings was 42. Stella reminded us that subscriptions are due and that notification of changes of address or telephone would be appreciated.
7. Officers were re-elected unopposed.
8. AOB  
Colin Towell thanked the bulletin editors and Edna Taylor, whose speciality is the intelligent questions at the end of our talks. He then raised the issue of donations for this year. A vote was taken and £50 will be given to the Framework Knitters Museum and £25 to the South Wigston War Memorial Appeal.

He also suggested the idea of creating a time capsule to commemorate the Millennium. Possibly jointly with the Civic Society and the Framework Knitting Museum, and to be buried, subject to the consent of their respective management committees, in the Museum garden or within the Peace Memorial Park. This was generally thought a very good idea and further enquiries are to be made.

The second part of the meeting was an audio tape recording of Ruth Horlock (nee Sibson) on the History of the Girl Guides in Wigston; Anne Brown presented this part. Anne made the tape about 10 years ago when Ruth was 78 years old. It was nice that Ruth's daughter Jane Pitches who lives near Manchester, one of our postal members, was able to be present to hear it.

Ruth Horlock was a founder member of the Wigston Guide Company. Dr. Barnley's daughters May and Wynne started the company during the period 1916-1918. The meetings were held on Thursdays in the Long Street School. Later, a plot of land in Welford Road was bought. Wynne Barnley trained as a doctor and took a practice in Countesthorpe where she founded another group who met in her loft.

One of the main targets during this period was to raise money to build a Guide hut on the plot of land. Eventually in 1932 enough money was raised and the hut was built by Mr. Southam. The design was similar to the All Saints Church Rooms, which Mr. Southam also built. The garden at the back was used to practise putting up tents and to grow flowers. The Brownies, Guides and Rangers became the 1st Wigston, South Leicestershire Division.

During her time in the Guides Ruth was involved in a World Camp in Switzerland. Ten Guides went from the UK and Ruth was chosen as one of the two Guides to go from Leicestershire. Ruth and the other Guide, May Thornton from St. Hilda's, were in the charge of a Miss Weston, a Guider from Scotland. They travelled by train to London, then on to Dover and Eidelbergen in the Bernese Oberland and finally to the chalet in the mountains. Here the guides exchanged views on activities and guiding.

Camping formed an important part of Guide life. The Guides usually camped on farms, mainly in Leicestershire, the first near Bitteswell, and then further afield. Snatches from Arnesby provided the transport. Large ex-army type bell tents were used and the gadgets made from wood and string were a vital part of camp life. The cook patrol cooked for 30-35 people using heavy iron pots over open fires.

Ruth's account of her time in the Guides in Wigston was vividly described and her account struck a chord with many members of the society who had had their own similar experiences and memories.

## **MARCH MEETING**

In March the Society welcomed Brian Johnson who gave us the benefit of his considerable research on the cinemas of Leicester with the Wigston ones added for our benefit. A former manager/projectionist he began to make a record of the cinemas some ten or twelve years ago when so many were being closed down.

The first moving pictures were made in 1895 by the Lumiere Brothers in Paris. The first showing of such a film in Leicester was at the Old Pavilion Theatre, Belgrave Gate the following year. The popularity of these was instant and dramatic but the French lost their market lead when 'talkies' were invented because they made their films only in their own language which gave limited scope for expansion. It was when America, Britain and Australia began to make films that cinema really took off because of the much larger English speaking market. Most of the cinemas in Leicester were built about 1910 continuing the expansion in the suburbs and provinces until 1930's. At this peak time there were 31 in the town alone. There have been as many as 36 but not all were open at the same time. The largest was the City Cinema which could seat 2,000. It was so named because Leicester had just been granted city status. Typically the programme consisted of a cartoon, the news, main film, a second film and then the National Anthem.

The decline started in the 1950's with the advent of television and also cars which gave people the freedom to travel further for their entertainment. A minor revival occurred in 1970's with the arrival of immigrants who could not understand TV and Radio. They did and still do support the cinema, and later the video industry, enjoying productions in their native languages.

Today Leicester's cinemas are experiencing an upturn in trade but only because they have made radical changes. They are owned by big international companies and have moved to edge or out of town sites with plenty of free safe parking space. They are of the multi-plex variety with a number of smaller screens within the same building so enabling a range of films to be shown at the same time. They are also non-smoking and generally much cleaner and pleasanter places to be.

The redundant sites in the town have been put to many different uses. Because of their central prominent locations they were in demand. Some have been flattened and are now petrol filling stations. Others have been converted into Bingo or Snooker halls, supermarkets, a library or business premises such as G.E. Motor Factors.

More locally the Magna at Wigston, the Lawn at Birstall and the Oadby were all owned by the Cockroft family. The Magna was built in 1934 and the first film shown was *Sing As We Go* starring Gracie Fields. The most popular film was *Grease* which netted £23,000 and the last one shown in 1986 was *Rocky 4* with Sylvester Stallone. After this it was used as a Snooker hall for a time and was the last urban cinema to be demolished in 1992. Just prior to this when it was empty Brian told of finding a door open and going inside to take some nostalgic last photographs. He then climbed a ladder and entered an external door high in the building which led into the Projection Room where all the equipment was still intact. The Magna Nursing Home built in a complementary style now stands on the site.

The cinema at South Wigston was known originally as the Picture House and was owned by the Smith family. In 1938 it was rebuilt with a balcony. It was later renamed the Ritz and closed in 1980 when it was used for Bingo.

After some questions and discussion the Chairman, Edna Taylor, thanked Brian very much for a most interesting evening.

## **APRIL MEETING**

The April meeting had been keenly anticipated by many members and they were not to be disappointed. Dr. Jennifer Alexander's talk on Constructing a Medieval Cathedral proved a hit with everyone, the content and presentation being of great relevance to both the seriously and the more casually interested in the audience. We had expected our speaker who lives in Nottinghamshire to have a fair journey to reach us but in actual fact she had returned the same day from Carlisle Cathedral where she had been busy on one of her site visits. However she showed no signs of tiredness as she took us through the evening with scholarly knowledge and wit.

She explained that as well as being a lecturer (and acknowledging she learnt much from her students) she was taking part in a large project which spanned the whole country. As most cathedrals have been standing since 1300/1400 it might be assumed that not much more could be discovered about them, but this is not the case. Archaeologists are becoming involved and are introducing some of the skills used in their research to help make new discoveries about methods of construction and sources of material. Also, recently discovered techniques such as dendrochronology (tree ring dating) enables the age of timbers to be ascertained and in some cases the actual area where the trees grew can be identified from growth variations caused by unseasonal weather patterns. Using Salisbury Cathedral as an example it has been discovered that the stone came from Chippenham and the Isle of Purbeck and the timber from near Hereford.

There has also been a change in attitude to the past. Developers now have to demonstrate the potential of any site they wish to build on. Each cathedral has been assigned its own archaeologist and any work is overseen from London. This restrains the madder Deans (of which there have been a few!) from making radical alterations out of keeping with a building's style and history.

Often building plans do not survive though there are plenty of masons' marks if you know where to look. The best sources for documentary evidence are the accounts, as money had to be raised to finance the works and accurate records kept of how it was spent. Also raw materials often came from Royal forests and quarries which gives a much higher chance that records have survived. Most often trees, usually oaks, were grown especially for construction and were planted close together so that they would grow tall and straight to seek the light. This resulted in the long straight timbers needed for huge roof spans and beams.

Lead was used extensively for roofs and tracery because it was soft and pliable and waterproof. It was also melted and used for bonding, making very strong yet flexible joints, in the days before glue.

Dr. Alexander does not really go along with the usually held belief that masons worked away on different sites all their working lives. She thinks it unlikely as they would have had no family life. She says these huge cathedral projects anyway took

years to complete (usually about three working lives) and believes it more likely that masons within a smaller local region were employed in rotation, working for a few months at a time, then taking a break.

A number of questions followed before the Chairman, Edna Taylor, thanked Dr. Alexander for coming such a distance to talk to us and providing such an enlightening evening.

## MAY MEETING

On a chilly, unsettled, but thankfully fine evening the Society started its summer season with a visit to Deene Park, Nr. Corby. Upon arrival we were welcomed by the housekeeper and divided into two manageable sized groups to be shown round this most interesting mansion.

Before the Norman Conquest and for 150 years afterwards the Manor of Deene had belonged to the Abbey of Westminster. It was then let for several centuries before being acquired in 1514 by Sir Robert Brudenell a judge and later Chief Justice of the Common Pleas. It remains in the same family to this day and is currently the home of Mr. Edmund Brudenell. The house is built round a courtyard and Sir Robert reconstructed the east wing incorporating some of the medieval remains of the old manor house. The only piece visible is part of a stone doorway of c!300 in the Billiard Room.

On 13/8/1566 Sir Robert's grandson Sir Edmund entertained Queen Elizabeth I here. She had intended to stay at Burghley but the plan was changed when one of her intended host's children became ill with small pox. In 1572 Sir Edmund wrote in his diary "laid the foundation of my haule at Deene". This huge extension created the house more or less to its present size and appearance, though most subsequent generations have made some additions and improvements during their time. Particularly noteworthy is the Great Hall with its Sweet Chestnut hammerbeam roof. Inside is a very long refectory table with matching bench c!560 which have always been there and are very rare as it is unusual to find both items together.

Sir Edmund was succeeded in 1606 by his nephew Thomas who had married Mary Tresham a local heiress and daughter of Sir Thomas Tresham builder of Lyveden and the Triangular Lodge at Rushton. He was a Roman Catholic and Royalist and suffered much in the Civil War being imprisoned in the Tower of London and at Northampton . His library was confiscated when the house was sacked in 1643. He was able to get most of his books back later when peace was restored but was furious at having to pay for them. He was responsible for the handsome stained glass window in the Great Hall showing the arms of the Brudenells and the families of their various wives. It was badly damaged in 1943 when an American bomber crashed nearby, removed for safety, and restored in 1959. Sir Edmund was created 1st Earl of Cardigan after the restoration by a grateful Charles II because he had leant £1,000 to Charles I when he was a prisoner in Carisbrooke Castle.

Sir Thomas's son Robert succeeded him in 1663 as the 2nd Earl of Cardigan. He died in 1703 aged 96, by which time his son had already died and so the title of 3rd Earl

went to his 18 year old grandson George. Each generation left their mark both on the house and their life and times but perhaps the best known subsequent Brudenell was James who became the 7th Earl of Cardigan in 1837. He was the controversial but brave and handsome hero of Balaklava who led the charge of the Light Brigade. The head and tail of his charger 'Ronald' who came home to live a further 18 years after the battle are preserved in the White Hall along with other memorabilia relating to the Crimean War. The 7th Earl married his mistress the beautiful Adeline de Horsey after the death of his first wife. Their love affair had scandalised high society for years beforehand and she was never accepted because of this. She was 27 years younger than her husband and continued to live at Deene for many years after his death. Her blue bedroom named Lady Cardigan's Room is still feminine and dainty to this day.

We came away with pleasant memories of a warm and lived in house with rich tapestries, oak panelling, fabulous plaster ceilings, beautiful china and paintings of the family, Royalty and much loved hunting horses by John Ferneley. Of a wonderful collection of Pardons with Royal seals, an impressive family tree and fascinating old estate plans with named fields.

After thanking the guides for a memorable evening we headed back with a number of us planning return visits for another look and to explore the gardens.

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## GREATER WIGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### Receipts and Payments for the year ending 31st December 2000

<b>Receipts</b>		<b>Payments</b>
Opening Balances as at 1/1/00:		Lecturers' Fees & Expenses 135.00
Cash in Hand 4.83		Donations (£50 FWK Museum, rest for speakers & visits where no charge made) 145.00
Current A/c 35.62		Christmas Party 260.94
Deposit A/c 711.85	752.30	Visits 303.31
Subscriptions 450.00		Bulletin Printing 76.59
Collections at Meetings 76.94		Room Hire 112.00
Donations 14.00		Secretary's Expenses (includes some Bulletin production & Programme printing) 83.90
Visits 410.00		
Christmas Party 230.00		Closing Balances as at 31/12/00.
Sale of Publications 30.00		
Bank Interest 22.38		
Raffle 46.50		



## 2032.12

Cash in Hand	4.83	
Current A/c	177.87	
Deposit A/c	732.68	915.38
		2032.12

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## A BIT OF OLD HEDGE

At this time of year, the hawthorn hedge in the back garden looks bright, with fresh green leaves and white blossom. Each year I admire it and speculate about whether it could be a remnant of one of Wigston's old enclosure hedges near the border of Thythorn and Goldhill open fields.

In 1968, when we moved into a house on the newly built Little Hill estate, the hedge, already mature, was there, dividing our back garden from our neighbours' property. Fortunately, they were as keen to keep the hedge as we were, and indeed got quite excited when they began digging and uncovered an old track and some ruins of what seemed like a little stone shed. There were two ash trees in the hedge, the one near the houses being very tall with a large trunk. Two years ago we had it pruned and asked the tree surgeon who did it whether it was safe so near the houses. He said it was in fine condition and safe, and about a hundred years old. So, a very old hedge.

This year, instead of speculating about the age of the hedge, I got out some 1885 maps of Wigston that Peter Mastin gave me some years ago. They are drawn at 25 inches to the mile (40 cms. to the km.) and it took three sheets pinned together at such a large scale to have enough buildings and tracks to enable us to identify what we think is our hedge. My daughter got interested and drew some intersecting lines between the parish church and the Wigston Mortuary Chapel, Horsewell Lane and the railway. She also marked the two fields which have become the recreation ground near Little Hill shops. Along the hedge that we think is ours is marked a lone tree. Could it be the ash tree in our garden?

Later surveys by the O.S. in 1914 and 1930 do not show trees, but they do show a track running between the old Gas Works and the railway bridge on Britford Avenue. The track is parallel to our hedge and on the west side. It would be the one our neighbours dug up, and a further identification of the location of our hedge.

But was it just an old bit of hedge planted long ago, or was it part of a network of quickset hedges put in place in 1766 after the Wigston Enclosure Award? At least I ought to walk along the line of it to see if it fitted in with the map.

A projection of the hedge to the south forms the western boundary of the recreation ground near Little Hill shops - still a good bit of hedge there. To continue the line meant going round the back of Amesbury Court to their car park. There, among the cars and lorries and bins was the hedge again looking quite strong and backing the houses in Wellhouse Close. On to Pitton Close, using the ash trees as a guide, all in line, down to Britford Avenue. The avenue crosses the hedge at right angles, so I would need to go into a back garden here to follow the line. Perhaps the citizens of Britford Avenue wouldn't take kindly to being asked if I could go on to their land to follow a line of hedge into the distance. I thought I'd lost it here, but no, the gate to the railway bridge was open (it is usually closed) and from the bridge, I could see the line of the hedge, picked out by ash trees, marching southwards to the River Sence, the old parish boundary.

All right, so your hedge is probably part of a longer one which was there in 1885. Does that prove it was an enclosure hedge? Alas no. Dr. Hoskins says that a copy of the Enclosure Award for Wigston exists but without its map. But what was shown on the 1885 map must have been there for some time, and even after the fields were enclosed, it would take



## WIGSTON WHO'S WHO NO: 29

### JOHN CLARKE (1781-1858)

John Clarke (1781-1858) was baptised on 10/1/1781 at All Saints Church, Wigston. He was the only son of John Clarke (c1730-1793) and his wife Sarah nee Worthington daughter of Richard Worthington a yeoman farmer from Norton Juxta Twycross. The couple lived at Wigston Hall, Long Street (sadly demolished in 1960's and now the site of Elizabeth Court flats). They already had a daughter Elizabeth born some three years before John and were to have another daughter Ann about three years afterwards. The name John was traditionally given to the first born son of each generation and seven of them have so far been identified, there could well be more! John senior (c 1730-1793) was described as a gentleman and landowner and had been High Sheriff of Leicestershire in 1788/9. He was extremely wealthy having not only inherited most of the family assets as the first born son of his father but also been the main beneficiary of his unmarried cousin Elizabeth Clarke, the founder of Wigston Aknshouses. When John senior, who was a good bit older than his wife, died in 1793 his three children were still dependent and he appointed his wife Sarah and two of her brothers as Trustees and Guardians.

On 9/8/1810 in Newport Shropshire John (1781-1858) married Catherine Martha Baddeley the daughter of Thomas Baddeley a surgeon of that town. She brought with her a dowry of some land in Mowsley. The couple went to live first at Claybrooke Hall where a daughter Sarah Catherine was born in 1811 followed by a son John in 1812. The family then moved to Elizabeth Clarke's old home at Peatling Hall, Peatling Parva where three further children were born. Ann and Elizabeth in 1814 (probably twins) and Henry in 1815. On 13/12/1818 Catherine died aged only 39, she is buried within St. Andrew's Church opposite the Hall and commemorated by a floor slab and touchingly worded plaque on the wall. She was to be joined a few years later by her daughter Ann who died aged 11 on 16/3/1826. The following year, on 23/6/1827 after nine years a widower, John remarried at Holy Trinity, Stratford upon Avon, his new wife named Elizabeth Sarah Granshaw.

John did not need to do anything in the way of work apart from oversee the management of his considerable property but unfortunately, almost certainly because of his wealth, he was persuaded in 1818 to enter into a partnership with Joseph Phillips, a bank clerk of Leicester, who had ambitions to start his own bank. The venture met with initial success, the head office was in Gallowtree Gate and branches were opened in Melton, Oakham and Uppingham. A further one was added in 1831 when they took over the ailing Goodacre and Buszard Bank in Lutterworth. However the road was far from smooth and John was called upon to mortgage more and more of his property to bale it out. They survived a panic in 1825/6 and in 1839 took over the rival Mansfields Bank upon the death of the owner John Mansfield. At the same time they admitted two extra partners, Thomas Smith who was already a confidential clerk at the bank and Robert Mitchell a hosiery manufacturer who lived at Enderby Hall and also appears to have been recruited for his money. The much enlarged bank moved into Mansfields' premises on the east side of Gallowtree Gate near the present Halford Street. It was now an important concern with customers both among the

agricultural population of the county and the manufacturers in Leicester. It had also acquired from Mansfields the Treasuryship of the county and of the Leicester Infirmary.

However, in 1843, a serious recession in the hosiery trade which also ruined the Market Harborough Bank, forced it to cease trading. Frantic efforts were made by leading personalities in the area to arrange either a merger or convert to a joint stock company but further examination of the books revealed the situation to be hopeless. Messrs. Clarke, Phillips, Mitchell and Smith were declared bankrupt at Birmingham Court on 2/6/1843. During the examination the other three partners especially Phillips and Smith were severely criticised and it emerged that Smith had been keeping inaccurate records to hide the true situation. John Clarke was treated very differently. It was revealed that he had taken no part in the business at all except provide the finance and indeed this was the only criticism made of him that he should have made it his business to know what was going on. He suffered greatly for this lapse of duty. His home at Peatling with sundry farmhouses, cottages, public houses, [work] shops and 1,000 acres of land in the two Peatlings, Bruntingthorpe, Willoughby, Arnesby, Shearsby, Fleckney, North Kilworth, Countesthorpe, Mowsley, Walton, Broughton Astley and Gilmorton were auctioned at the Three Crowns Hotel on 13/12/1843. Also his New Parks Estate in Leicester had to go and Wigston Hall, his sister Ann's home, and various parcels of land, some 300 acres, in Wigston. However, John was allowed jointly with Barwell Bennett in their capacity as Ann's trustees to buy the Hall back using her money, so she was not forced to move. His son John (1812-?) who lived at the recently built Blaby Hall was possibly the most affected. He did have to go and took up practical farming at Whetstone Pastures before eventually moving to Great Yarmouth. An additional sadness here is that his wife Elizabeth whom he had married in 1837 was Joseph Phillip's daughter.

John (1781-1858) by this time aged 62 went to live quietly at Bruntingthorpe Manor House. He had, like his father, been High Sheriff (in 1820) and continued long after the bankruptcy to serve as Deputy Lieutenant of the County. Another measure of the high regard in which he was held is demonstrated by the fact that his friends bought all his household contents at the sale and presented them back to him. He died 1/4/1858 and is buried with both his wives (Elizabeth pre-deceased him in 1853) at Peatling Parva. His memorial plaque is adorned with the family arms: Argent, on a bend Gules, between three pellets, three swans of the first. And motto: Ubi amor ibi fides - where there is love there is faith.

John's oldest daughter Sarah had married a respected Lutterworth surgeon, Marston Buszard, and raised a family there. The other two children Elizabeth and Henry lived and farmed in Bruntingthorpe, and are buried in the churchyard. Elizabeth married in later life but had no children, Henry remained a bachelor. Wigston Hall and the paddock opposite (now Peace Memorial Park) remained in Clarke ownership, let to tenants, until finally being sold in 1890's.

Tricia Berry

Sources: Various directories & parish records, Abstract of Title LRO Misc. 934 & Sale Particulars DE365/272, *Paynes Leicester & Midland Counties Advertiser*,

various dates June/Dec 1843, *Leicester Memoirs* by C. J. Billson. (Various others too numerous to mention, but please ask if you wish to know anything particular).

## **THE LEWIN FAMILY AND THEIR HOSIERY COMPANY**

Last December a Mr. Charles Crane from Berkshire wrote to Duncan Lucas asking for any information held locally on his grandfather Arthur Edwin Crane a boot & shoe manufacturer, and his great grandfather Charles Lewin a hosiery manufacturer, both located in Wigston. A copy of this request was passed to me for any ideas. While information found on A. E. Crane is limited, Charles Lewin's hosiery business has yielded much more detail. I was particularly interested in the latter subject for two reasons. First because I grew up living opposite the factory premises in Spa Lane and secondly because I knew one of my great-great grandmothers was a Lewin before she married, so was there a family link here? The answer was yes and also to quite a number of other Wigston families too.

The hosiery business was started by Thomas Lewin in about 1843 when he would have been around 26 years old. At that time and for the next 8 years he lived with his parents and younger siblings in Moat Street. His father John, a framework knitter, had been born in Belgrave Gate, Leicester and his mother Hannah in Anstey. They had moved to Wigston sometime around 1820 via Aylestone where Thomas himself and his older sister Mary were born. Thomas married Caroline in the spring of 1851 and ten years later when the 1861 census was taken they were living in Leicester Road with their four children, Charles aged 8, Louisa 5, Agnes 3, and Alick 1. Thomas at this time was described as a Master Framework Knitter.

The wage calculations for a week in 1865 which accompany this article show a total paid out of £22 12 5. They form part of a series of business records thoughtfully deposited at Leics. Record Office, by Ernest Lewin, the fourth generation to run the business. These calculations show the old system within the trade where framework knitters were employed in their own homes and were paid on piece rate (so much for each item worked) and with a deduction for the rent of the master's frame. It is very interesting to note the employees' names. Of the 24 mentioned no less than one third can be identified as members of the family. This figure could well be higher if a complete family tree was researched. When referring to the tree so far produced, which also accompanies this article, it can be seen that either William or Wm. Boulter was Thomas's brother in law, Henry Smith was married to his niece (he later changed his occupation to that of dairy farmer with premises in Bull Head Street, about where the police station is now). Joseph Truman, another brother in law later started his own company at 42/44 Bushloe End, his premises are now preserved as our Framework Knitting Museum. Hannah Lewin was his mother, M. Boulter was probably his sister, Maria Roe was a niece and George and John Powell were nephews. A real family business and surely suggesting that the system of frame rents, especially in good times, was not always the great evil it undoubtedly was in bad times.

The period between these wages book entries in 1865 and the year 1871 probably mark the change from the employees working in their own homes and going to work

in a factory environment. This is apparent because by the latter date Thomas and family had moved to Mowsley End where he is described as a Master Hosiery Manufacturer employing 27 men, 5 boys and 4 women. These premises, which in later years had their address changed to Spa Lane following the opening up and extension of the far end of the lane, consisted of a detached house and traditional two storey framework knitting workshop alongside. They were most likely built especially for him. At this time the previously mentioned children were still all living at home and two more had arrived, 5 year old Adelaide, and 3 year old Ernest. The eldest son Charles aged 18 was a worsted framework knitter probably working for his father though this is not stated.

On 28/8/1879 Thomas died age 62 at Wigston. In his will which was written 3 days previously he was described as a shirt manufacturer. He appointed his wife Caroline, eldest son Charles, and friend George Shipp, coal merchant, as executors and trustees. He initially stated he wanted his "stock-in-trade, machinery, horse & van, house and messuages and lands" sold within 3 months of his death to pay any debts and certain bequests to his family some of which were for £500 each, a considerable sum at the time. A codicil shows a change of mind allowing them to keep the business if they wished. The will is signed with Thomas's mark X, which could mean he was too ill to write his name but more likely that he was illiterate, as nearly everyone was at the time. This would of course be a great handicap to running a business today but was not such a problem in those less regulated days. Such business people devised their own 'shorthand' style of note keeping, which they could understand, and their children whom they could afford to have educated used to write official letters etc. for them.

Happily the family did decide to retain the business and in 1881 it was being run by his widow Caroline, who also had four of her children living at home, the two youngest still dependent. Charles by then aged 28 lived elsewhere in Wigston with his new wife Selina nee Carter, whom he had married on 31/8/1880, and 4 month old daughter Edith.

By 1891 Charles and Selina had moved to the family home and business premises now known as 20, Spa Lane and were running the business. They had two more children, Charles aged 7 and 3 year old Lilian. Caroline had moved elsewhere. She died in 1917.

The business continued into the third generation in the hands of the second Charles who by 1936 had turned the house into part of the business premises and gone to live at Oak House, 107, Leicester Road. In 1953 he made the business a limited company, C. Lewin Ltd. He died in 1968.

The fourth generation, Charles's son Ernest, continued the family tradition and all seemed to going well in 1973 when a 'Highlights of Industry' article appeared in the Oadby and Wigston Advertiser. At this time the company made mens and womens pullovers and cardigans, many supplied by mail order. Between 2,000 and 3,000 parcels a week leaving the Wigston works and the management were looking for prospects of new business within the Common Market. However changes in the hosiery trade which has seen the demise of nearly all the traditional companies and possibly the lack of a successor, as Ernest's son had chosen another occupation, were the probable reasons for its eventual closure.

The buildings still survive, now re-numbered 6 and 6A, Spa Lane they are occupied by the Alpha Studio, a kitchen and bedroom showroom and Trade Fit Windows.

My great-great grandmother Sarah Roe (Thomas's sister) was widowed when her children were still very young. She worked hard to keep them all at her job as a shirt stitcher. Later she became the village mid-wife and usually stayed a few nights at the home of a new mother until she was satisfied the family was able to cope. She died in 1907 at the home of her son in law John Daykin Broughton, Elm House, Bull Head Street, the site of the present Liberal Club.

Tricia Berry

Sources: 1841-1891 Wigston Censuses, various directories, *Oadby & Wigston Advertiser* 2/3/1973, Will of Thomas Lewin LRO 1879 R.p.760, Lewin Business Records LRO 3D 63/1.



A view of Lewin's hosiery premises taken from within the garden opposite probably late 1960's early 1970's.

THOMAS LEWIN & CO. OF WIGSTON MAGNA

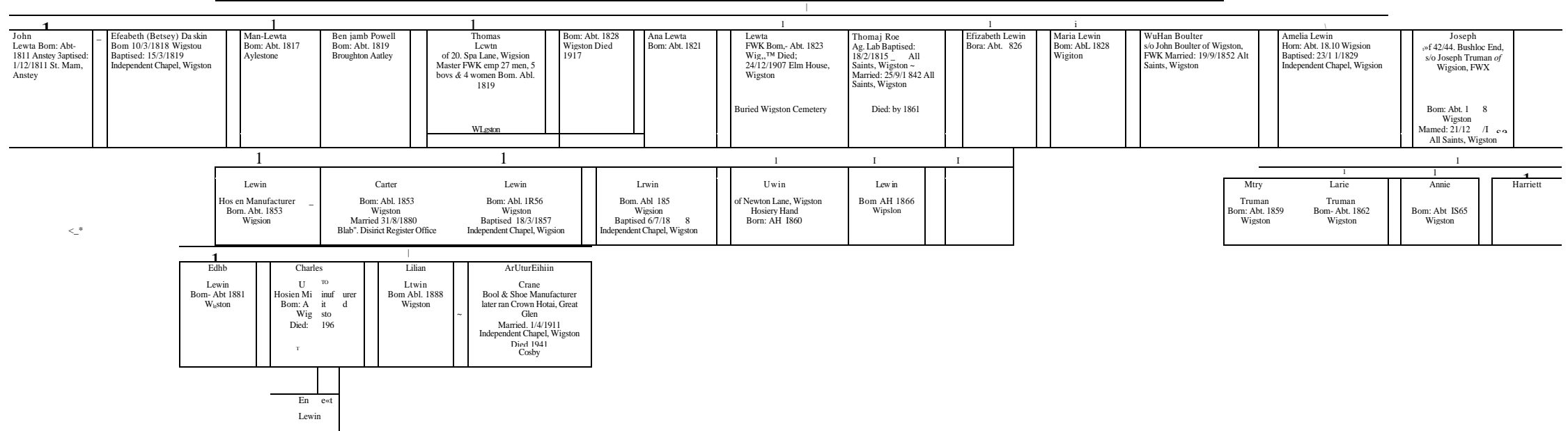
WAGE CALCULATIONS FOR A WEEK IN 1865

Framework Knitter	Work Produced	£ s d	Total Earned £ s d	Frame Rent s d	Net Wage £ s d
Edward Smith	20doz @ 1/4%	<b>176</b>			
	1 " @ 4/2	4 2	1 11 8	6 0	<b>158</b>
Rosetta Carter	2%doz @ 4/6	11 3			
	% " @ 4/-	2 0	13 3	3 0	10 3
Mary Ann Bull	4doz @ 3/9	15 0			
	1 " @ 2/-	2 0	17 0	2 6	14 6
William Boulter	10doz @ 3/11%	1 19 5	1 19 5	6 0	1 13 5
Henry Dann	5doz @ 4/3	1 1 3			
	2k " @ 4/6	10 1%	1 11 4^	6 6	1 4 10%
George Powell	4doz @ 4/3	17 0			
	1% " @ 4/6	6 9	1 3 9	6 6	17 3
Edward Dann	2doz @ 6/-	12 0			
	3 " @ 5/6	16 6	1 8 6	6 6	1 2 0
William Leonard	1doz @ 3/5%	3 5%			
	8 " @ 3/7%	<b>190</b>	1 12 5h	6 0	1 6 5 %
John Powell	2doz @ 5/-	10 0			
	2 " @ 4/6	9 0			
	2 " @ 10d	1 8	<b>108</b>	5 2	15 6
J. Holmes	3%gr <§ 4/3	14 10%	14 10%	9	14 1%
John Pawley	5doz @ 1/1%	5 7%			
	10 " <§ 1/2	11 8			
	7 " @ 1/2%	8 5%	<b>159</b>	5 9	<b>100</b>
Henry Smith	4/JfTdoz shirts @ 5/3	1 5 5	<b>155</b>	5 9	19 8
John Shipley	5gr.4doz @ 3/9gr	1 0 0 %	1 0 0J-	1 4	18 8%
Wm Cawthorn	2doz @ 5/-	10 0			
	5 " @ 4/6	<b>126</b>	1 12 6	10 2	<b>124</b>
Wm Marlow	5gr.4doz @ 4/3gr	<b>128</b>	<b>128</b>	1 3	<b>115</b>
Wm Boulter	21doz @ 1/4%	1 8 10%			
	% " @ 2/7	1 3%	1 10 2	5 2	<b>150</b>
Wm Vann	1%doz @ 6/-	9 0			
	7 " @ 3/7%	1 5 4%	1 14 4%	6 0	1 8 4%
Joseph Truman	3doz @ 3/11%	11 10%	11 10%	1 6	10 4%
Hannah Lewin	1doz @ 2/1%	2 1%			
	2% " @ 4/-	10 0	12 1%	2 6	9 7%
M. Boulter	11doz @ 1/1	11 11	11 11	6	11 5
J. Haylett	5doz @ 1/1k	5 6			
	6 " @ 1/1%	6 10%			
	13 " @ 8%JL	9 6			
	2 " @ 1/0%	2 1	1 13 11%	47 1 9	4 %
Maria Roe	2%doz % 4/-	10 0	10 0	1 9	8 3
Emma Harding	2%doz @ 4/6	11 3 i			
	1 " @ 2/-	2 0			
	1. " shirts @ 8d	8	<b>Till</b>	2 6	11 5
J. Cawthorne	1doz @ 3/11%	3 11%			
	4 " @ 3/7%	14 6	18 5%	6 0	12 5%



## Descendants of John Lewin

John Uwin of Wigston, FWK born: Aht 1791 Belgrave Gate, Leicester	Hannah Born Aht 1791 Anstey
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OTHER DESCENDANTS OF JOHN AND HANNAH LEWIN ON NEXT PAGE

Jahn Lewin Bora Abt. 1311 Anstey Baptised: 1/12/1311 St Marys, Anstey	Efaabeth (Betsy) Daykin Bom- 10/3/1818 Wigston Baptised: 15/3/1819 Independent Chapel, Wigston
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Hannah Uwta Baptised: 7/7/1341 Independent Chapel, Wigston	Lewin Wigston Baptised: 25/3/1845 Independent Chapel, Wigston	Mary Jane Uwin Born: Abt. 1845 Baptised- 25/3/1845* Independent Chapel, Wigston	Efaabeth Uwin Born: Abt. 1846 Wiasion Baptised: 17/6/1850 Independent Chapel, Wigston	Edwin Littro Born: Abt. 1850 Baptised 17/6/1850 Independent Chapel, Wigston	Thomas Lewin Bora: Abt. 1854 Wigston Baptised: 18/3/1857 Independent Chapel, Wigston	Man-Jane Lewta Born: Abt. 1854 Baptised: 18/3/1857 Independent Chapel, Wigston	Clara Uwin Born: Abt. 1854 Wigston Baptised: 18/3/1857 Independent Chapel, Wigston
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George Powell	Thomai Powell Born: Abt. 1843 Wigston	Johel Powell Born: Abt. 1845 Wigston	Efa Powell Born: Abt. 1846 Wigston	Hannah Powell Born: Abt. 1848 Wigston	Powell Born: Abt. 1849 Wigston
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Sarah Lewin FWK Born: AW- 1823 Wigston Died: 24/12/1907 Elm House, Wigston Buried: Wigston Cemetery	Thomas Roe Ag. Lab Baptised: 18/1/1815 All Saints, Wigston Married: 25/9/1842 All Saints, Wigston Died by 1861
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Elizabeth Roe Born: Abt. 1843 Wigston	Henry Smith FWK, later Dairy Farmer Born: Abt. 1844 Wigston	Jamei Roe Born: Abt. 1845 Wigston	Mam Roe Born: Abt. 1348 Wigston Baptised: 11/4/1855 Independent Chapel, Wigston	George Roe Born: Abt. 1850 Wigston Baptised: 11/4/1855 Independent Chapel, Wigston	Ann Roe Born: Abt. 1850 Wigston Baptised: 11/4/1855 Independent Chapel, Wigston Died: 27/11/1904 Buried: Wigston Cemetery	John Davtdn Broughton A. Sons Ltd of Wigston Hosiery Manufacturers Born: 15/4/1853 Wigston Married: 25/12/1871 All Saints, Wigston Died: 18/10/1917 Wigston Buried: Wigston Cemetery	Richard Rne FWK, later had senior position JOB A Sons Ltd Born: Abt. 1854 Wigston Baptised: 11/4/1855 Independent Chapel, Wigston Died: 23/2/1946 Buried: Wigston Cemetery
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