

# *Greater Wigston Historical Society*

White Gate Farm, Newton Lane, Wigston Magna, Leicester.

## **BULLETIN 77**



**PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS - MARCH TO SEPTEMBER 2007**

**Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2007**

AGM followed by 1950/60s photographs from the Bill Ward collection - Elizabeth Ward & John Gillam

7.30p.m. U.K. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

**Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> March 2007**

Gents of Leicester, electrical engineers, clockmakers & much more - Colin Reynolds

7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2007**

Stoneygate Spooks, Scandal & Society - Virginia Wright

7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

**Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2007**

Visit to Yew Tree Grange Farm, Sheepy Magna to view Tythe Barn, dovecote etc. with supper in local pub - Mr. & Mrs. Poulson

Meet 6.30p.m. Paddock Street Car Park to share transport.

**Please note 7.15p.m. start** to this evening, see top of page 2.

**Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2007**

Guided walk around Broughton Astley with coffee/tea & homemade cakes in the church - Dr. C. Thomas

Meet 6.45p.m. Paddock Street Car Park to share transport.

**Please note 7.15p.m. start** for this evening, see top of page 2.

**Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2007**

Some Famous Leicestershire Ladies - David Bell

7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

**Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2007**

William Morris & the Arts & Crafts Movement - Rowan Roenisch

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 the editor three clear weeks before the publication date please.

Editor: Tricia Berry, 7 Wensleydale Road, Wigston. Leics. LE1 8 3RX.

## NOTE REGARDING SUMMER TRIPS

Members will need to register and pay a charge for the May and June evenings. A list will be compiled and money collected for these at the March and April meetings.

## FRONT COVER

The front cover this time features Jim Colver's drawing of bygone shopping. It is a scene at the greengrocers, probably in the 1930s judging by the clothes worn. It reminds us of a time when housewives needed to shop several times a week, restricted by the quantity they could carry home and the length of time items would remain fresh. For convenience most people now buy everything from the supermarket, but here in Wigston we are lucky in having Cox's shop which still trades as it always has done.

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## OCTOBER MEETING

For this month the society welcomed Barbara Hewitt, from the National Trust local group, who gave a most interesting talk on the 200 parks and gardens in the Trust's collection. These are specially protected and cannot be taken for war without the permission of Parliament. They are the most heavily implanted in the world, extend to 36,000 acres in total, and are maintained by a team of 450 skilled gardeners and many volunteers. 370,000 plants are propagated annually and the running costs are £10,000,000 a year.

Barbara selected various examples to represent the different styles and periods, illustrating these with slides, some 'before and after' showing the transformation to their former glory of gardens that had come to the Trust in a neglected, sometimes derelict state.

These included the knot garden of Little Morton Hall, Cheshire which came to the Trust in 1938. Knot garden meaning a severe geometric design without any flowers. Westbury Court, Gloucs, which has a Dutch water garden originally laid out in 1696/1705. It was the first restoration the Trust undertook, in 1971, and is planted with species dating from before 1700. Later the water table was found to be rising and extensive drainage had to be incorporated.

The Stowe Landscape Gardens in Bucks, are an 18<sup>th</sup> century place of space and tranquility with more than 40 monuments and temples. Biddulph Grange Garden, Staffs, designed in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, is set in a series of connected compartments, themed as Chinese garden, Egyptian Court and formal Italian garden, all densely planted. Hidcote Manor Garden, Gloucs, designed in the Arts and Crafts style and arranged in a series of outdoor 'rooms' which are separated by walls and hedges. It is famous for its rare shrubs and unusual plant species from all over the world.

Our local Calke Abbey ceded to the Trust in 1984 and containing the unusual gardeners' tunnel. Sissinghurst Castle Garden, Kent which was created by Vita Sackville-West, a member of the Trust Council in 1948, and her husband. The huge 98 acre garden (65 acres of mowing!) at Anglesey Abbey, Cambs, which includes a winter garden and working water mill, with flour available for purchase. And lastly Lyme Park Cheshire, a Victorian garden with impressive flower beds and sunken parterre surrounded by a medieval deer park. Lyme became Pemberley for the BBC adaptation of Jane Austin's *Pride and Prejudice* and contains the lake from which Darcy memorably emerged to that embarrassing encounter with Elizabeth Bennet.

There were plenty of ideas here for trips when the better weather arrives. After some questions and discussion, the Chairman, Edna Taylor thanked Barbara for a really most enjoyable evening.

## **NOVEMBER MEETING**

David Baldwin came to our November meeting to tell us about that very notable man with local connections, Thomas Wolsey. Wolsey was born in 1471, in fairly modest circumstances, the son of an Ipswich butcher and innkeeper. Nothing is known of his early life, but he must have had influential support because he was accepted to train for the priesthood at Oxford. It was while there he met the Marquis of Dorset who became his patron and recommended him to the Dean and Archbishop of Canterbury. His first job was as secretary to the Governor of Calais. In 1507 he became Henry VIF's chaplain and confidential servant. In 1509 when the king died, Wolsey was on hand to help, befriend and guide the young Henry VIII.

By 1514 he had been appointed Archbishop of York and the following year Lord Chancellor. His power and influence was immense, because as England's only Cardinal he controlled the church and as Lord Chancellor he controlled the state. He re-invigorated the legal system and created the present system of income tax. He drew large incomes from many Bishoprics such as St. Albans, Winchester and Durham, and was to create 13 dioceses, one of which was Leicester whose cathedral was to be St. Mary in the Newarke. This wealth enabled him to build the fine Hampton Court for himself.

He liked foreign policy and sought to exploit the rivalry between France and Spain, but when France was defeated by England and Spain, Charles of Spain made peace, with the French leaving England isolated.

By the 1520s the monasteries were in trouble, being too wealthy and with too few monks, but he failed to do anything about it, which later, gave Henry VIII the idea of abolishing them and acquiring their property. When the Pope died in 1521 he even entertained hopes of election to the Holy See but failed to gain sufficient votes.

His downfall had several causes. He upset the aristocracy who were offended by his arrogant ways and lavish lifestyle. The clergy and monks saw him as a dangerous

reformer. His foreign policy came at a huge cost and little benefit. But mainly it was his failure to persuade the Pope that Henry's marriage was illegal and to authorise a divorce from Catherine of Aragon. Ann Boleyn became very bitter with her unsatisfactory situation and in 1528 it was largely through her influence that Wolsey was forced to surrender the Great Seal and cede his possessions to Henry. On 22/11/1530 he was arrested in York for treason. It was while he was travelling south to stand trial, that he became ill with, it is believed, a bowel infection. He died while staying overnight at Leicester Abbey and is buried somewhere in the grounds.

Thomas did not marry but had at least one illegitimate son, Thomas Winter, who rose in the church.

Colin Towell stood in for the chairman who was absent celebrating a milestone birthday. He thanked Mr. Baldwin very much for sharing his fascinating and detailed research on this remarkable man. Colin also announced that Edna Taylor wished to step down as Chairman and that thought should be given as to who might fill this vacancy.

### **DECEMBER MEETING**

This month it was time to celebrate Christmas with a social evening.

Edna Taylor put on a tantalizing picture quiz for us to tackle on arrival. We then sat in groups for one of Stella Tweed's excellent Leicestershire quizzes. The latter was won by Bob Wignall's group by just half a mark. Well done to them.

It was then time to sample the buffet meal from Annie's Patisserie which was as usual very good. The evening was rounded off with a raffle before we all departed about 10.00p.m.

### **JANUARY MEETING**

For this month the society welcomed Mike Beech, Foxton Locks Trust Director and Museum Curator, who gave us a talk on the this unique site's past, present and future. He explained that the canal network was mostly constructed in the 1790s, in order to speed up the delivery of raw materials and finished products for industry. The desire of Leicestershire Coal Mine owners to move their coal to London was the motivation for building our local Grand Junction Canal.

Fifty ton cargoes could be moved by a pair of canal boats both pulled by a single horse. A steady progress could be maintained throughout the year, so long as the horse was cared for and any ice promptly dealt with, unlike the roads which often became impassable during winter.

A boatman would typically own his own horse but the boat would belong to a company. He was paid when the goods were delivered but given an allowance for food in advance. Often whole families of as many as two adults and up to seven

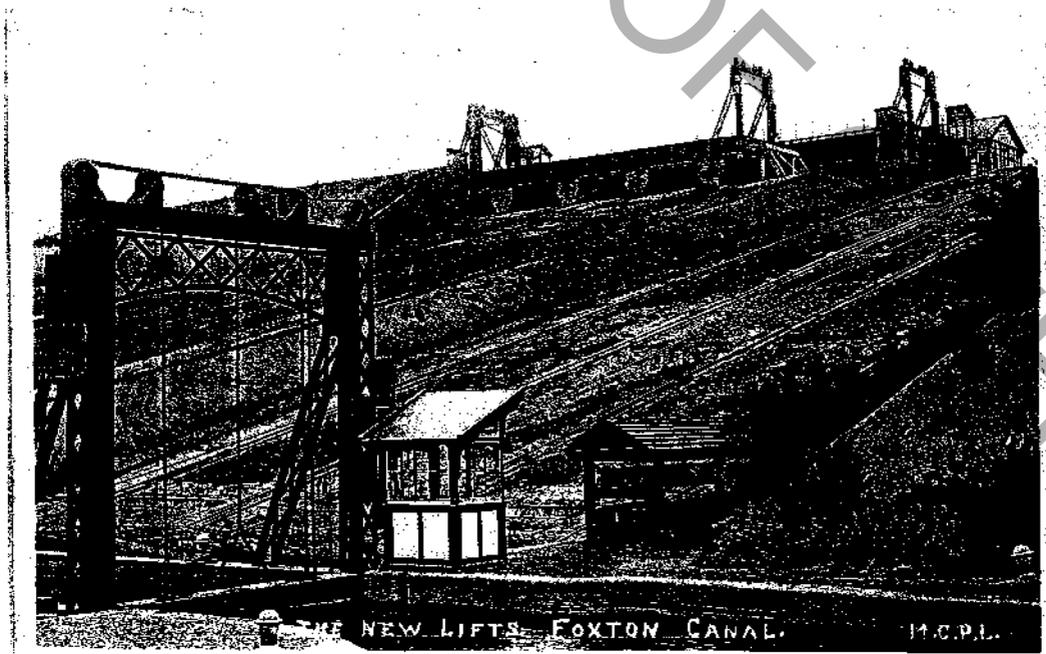
children lived aboard, crammed within a cabin 10ft x 6ft with just room to stand up.

Foxton Locks being just 7ft wide, could only take one boat at a time. It took three quarters of an hour to pass through and serious bottlenecks often occurred. It was decided to construct an inclined plane whereby two boats at a time would be floated into a giant tank of water and hauled up the hill by wire ropes. The whole powered by a steam engine and counterbalanced by another water tank travelling in the opposite direction. The designer was Gordon Thomas and the canal engineer and surveyor was Thomas Holt. These men were pioneers as there was no other inclined plane anywhere in the world, though France built one later based on the Foxton design.

It opened on 10/6/1900 with much celebration and after some early problems worked very well, but was to have a short life. The railways were expanding and taking over much of the work and although the postage boats could actually beat the trains the inclined plane was uneconomic to operate at night for just two boats. Decline was rapid and it was mothballed in 1909, not demolished.

In 1980 the Foxton Incline Plane Trust was formed with the aim of restoring the site. A staggering £11,000,000 will be needed to complete the whole project. So far £2,800,000 is being spent, about two thirds of which is a Lottery Grant. The engine house has been restored and now houses the museum. The very overgrown site is being cleared and various businesses relocated. Together with other partners a new access road and car park have been constructed and the original pub enlarged and updated.

After some questions and discussion the Chairman, Edna Taylor, thanked Mr. Beech for a very interesting talk.



Post Card View showing the Inclined Plane with tanks for transporting the boats

## BLUE PLAQUE SCHEME

Back in September., too late for inclusion in Bulletin 76, came news that this joint venture between our Society and the Civic Society has been successful in securing a Lottery Grant of just short of £5000 00. It is to be used for attaching Blue Plaques to certain buildings to commemorate their association with notable people from Wigston's past. Also to produce a booklet giving more information on the subjects and a map showing the location of the properties.

The money must be used within a year so fourteen candidates have been selected and researched and it is hoped the plaques will be put in place during the summer.

### MR LEICESTER'S PAGE IN LEICESTER MERCURY

'Mr. Leicester' receives copies of our bulletins and pieces from them occasionally appear on his page, issue 76 resulted in several. From Thomas Burgess's diary for 1855 came the comment about so much "contention and opposition" between members of the Vestry Committee, which has a familiar ring with parallels to today's council meetings. Again from the diary the sad account of the sudden death of a baby girl, daughter of William Franklin. The Coroner's Verdict recording that she "died by the Visitation of God". This last item was seen by a local man who recognised the story as relating to his own family. He telephoned and then called round for a copy of the bulletin.

Another item on icecream and Italian manufacturers in particular resulted in several follow up pieces by readers who could add to the story.

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### OLD PARISH DIARY

Here is the final instalment of Thomas Burgess's diary:

1857

On Saturday the 14<sup>th</sup> inst. [October] John Gregory Esq. held an inquest at the [public]house of Mr. J. G. ? King Wfilliam] IV touching the death of Henry Brewin aged 14 yrs, son of Mr. James Brewin, Bell St. The jury having gone from the above named house to view the body, on their return the following evidence was given. Mr. Brewin was on ? morning setting up a knittingframe in the bottom [work] shop, & sent this youth up into the top shop to fetch a bit of wood which he wanted to level the frame. Just as the lad got at the top of the ladder and while he was putting the key into the lock, another boy asked him what he was going for, he replied he was going for a bit of wood and at the same time turned towards the boy, and it is thought he supposed he had put the key into the door, but had not, and was going to open it at

the same time turned towards the boy and immediately fell head foremost off the landing to the ground, the height was not more than about 10 feet, but he did not survive more than 40 minutes. Mr. J. Hulme later gave it as his opinion that he died from concussion of the brain. The landing had no rail or fence round it and the jury returned a verdict of accidental death and the coroner ordered the landing to be properly guarded.

On the following Tuesday at the same house the coroner held another inquest on the body of a child 18 mths old of Mr. Hollands of Shackerdale Lodge in the same Lordship. Mrs. Hollands was going to wash her children on Saturday night & had poured a quantity of boiling water into a pancheon which stood on the floor and went to fetch some cold water to put into it. While she was gone this child which was sitting in a chair close to it, fell out of the chair into the pancheon, and was so scolded that it died on Monday.

1858

Joseph Heard died Jan'y 23<sup>rd</sup> aged 84 years.

Mr. T. E. Blunt died Jan'y 27<sup>th</sup> aged 51 years. [Mr. Blunt was one of the local doctors. He lived at The Cedars in Moat Street and Blunts Lane was named after him. Villagers would walk down this lane to access his surgery held at the rear of the house].

Wigston Magna: the inhabitants of the village had long felt the inconvenience arising from the necessity of being obliged to go to Leicester to obtain a Post Office order, or when they had received one of having to go there to get it cashed, and this was more especially the case among the poor, whose husbands have frequently to go to a distance from home to obtain employment, owing to the depressed state of those branches of the hosiery business that is made at Wigston, and when they have obtained work, and got a few shilling to send to their families, the poor wife had to leave her family and travel to Lester [sic] to get the order paid and sometimes through not being known to the post office officials had some difficulty even when there, to furnish the required information. In future this difficulty will be obviated, as the postmaster of the village Mr. S. D. Pochin [Samuel Davenport Pochin was a son of William who had been, among his other occupations, also postmaster, and whose tomb is in the front of the U.R. Church] is now furnished with the means, and invested with the power to give these orders, and to pay them which are presented to him. This desirable object was accomplished by John Newby, schoolmaster, who drew up a memorial, and when he had gotten it signed by a number of the inhabitants sent it to the Postmaster General, on the 5<sup>th</sup> May last, between that time and the present, all the enquiries with the giving of bond etc. which are usual on such occasions being satisfactory, our postmaster has now entered on his new duty.

S.D. Pochin married July 12<sup>th</sup> 1858. [He had a busy year!]

August 5<sup>th</sup> Mr. J. A. Pochin finished his corn harvest on this day, the earliest he had ever known.

1861

Mr. Wm. Hurst died on 20<sup>th</sup> of February aged 72 years. His wife died 11 weeks before aged 58 years.

Wm. Coltman died Feby. 20\* aged 50 years.

Ann Johnson died Feby. 25<sup>th</sup> after 40 years of suffering born with most Christiana patience aged 56 years.

Thos. Tebbutt's wife died on the 24<sup>th</sup> of Feby. Aged ?

Mary Grant died March 1<sup>st</sup> aged 82. Josh. Langham

died March 1<sup>st</sup> aged 34.

Catherine the wife of Mr. Ebr. Hurst died March 3 aged 40. Leaving 8 children the youngest only one month old.

Feby. 18<sup>th</sup> 1861, Wigston

Distressing occurrence - Mrs. Sophia Willey widow of Mr. John Willey who for a number of years carried on the business of miller and baker at Wigston [he ran a windmill which was situated on the east side of Welford Road, at Windmill Hill] and after the death of her husband, removed with her family to Leicester, having died last week, her children desirous to have her interred at Wigston, arranged with the clergyman, the Rev. T.G. Gallwey, to have the funeral obsequies performed at half-past eleven o'clock on Monday last. In order to secure the punctual attendance of Mr. Ginns the undertaker, Mr. Mallett son-in-law of the deceased, went to him on Monday morning and urged him to be on time, but Mr. Ginns was an hour behind the appointed time, which caused their arrival at Wigston to be proportionately late. The clergyman went to the church at the time fixed upon, when he had waited about an hour, and the funeral procession did not arrive, he went home leaving word with the sexton that they might leave the corpse in the church, and come again on Tuesday morning, for he would not inter it on that day. On the arrival of the funeral procession, this was told to the mourning children, but hoping that when the cause of the delay was told to the Rev. Gentleman he would alter his decision, some of the party went to his house, and elicited an interview, but he would not be seen by them, and sent word out that he would not perform the service then, and they might leave the corpse until next day. After the sorrowing children had been in this distressing situation nearly two hours, the son-in-law Mr. Mallett, proceeded in the mourning coach to Oadby to solicit the Rev. Oakley to come and perform the ceremony. As soon as the circumstances were made known to him, he with the greatest promptitude and kindness complied with their request; when he had performed the service, he openly expressed his astonishment at the conduct of the Rev. T.G. Gallwey, and in no measured terms his disapprobation of such unchristian conduct. During the three hours this disgraceful tragedy lasted, numbers of the inhabitants were assembled in groups

reprobating the conduct of the Rev. T.G. Gallwey.

Wm. Day died March 11<sup>th</sup> aged 70 years. Mary Racket

died March 16<sup>th</sup> aged 66 years. Robt. Davenport died

March 17<sup>th</sup> aged 74 years.

This brings to an end the diary entries. They are a great source of social history and serve to remind us that crime, vandalism, accidents, illness & sudden death, extreme weather patterns and uncharitable officialdom, were and always will be a part of life. But so too, hopefully, will be kindness, consideration and generosity to fellow humans.

The diary also contains a page recording the details of pupils enrolled into the village school, and of all things, some gas meter readings. Thomas Burgess was instrumental in founding both of these which explains his interest and reason for recording this information. It is hoped to include this information in the next bulletin.

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### **CROMFORD MILL AND A LOCAL CONNECTION**

Last November my husband and I decided to go out for the day. We settled on Richard Arkwright's cotton spinning mill in Cromford, Derbyshire, which had been recommended to us some years ago by Dorothy Gurr (I think).

Richard Arkwright (1732-1792) was of course one of the great inventors who shaped the Industrial Revolution. His water powered frame for spinning cotton revolutionised the textile industry and created huge wealth for himself and others involved in that business. It also created a whole new industry, that of machine made lace.

Richard was born in Preston, the youngest of the eight children of Thomas Arkwright, a tailor, and his wife Ellen. He had little formal education, as can be seen from surviving correspondence, but plenty of inventive ability. At age 18 he was described as indefatigably industrious in spite of suffering from serious asthma. He trained as a barber and then worked for a Bolton wigmaker.

As a tailor's son he would have known the problems involved in buying good quality fabrics at affordable prices. Inventions such as the 'flying shuttle' (John Kay 1733) had speeded up the process of weaving and increased the demand for yarn. But the hand operated spinning wheel was still the only reliable method of twisting (to give strength to) wool, cotton or linen thread.

In March 1755 Richard married Patience Holt, daughter of a prosperous schoolmaster, who was willing to lend his son-in-law money. In December their son, also named

Richard, was born but sadly his wife died the following year and in 1761 Richard married again to Margaret Biggins, and they had one surviving daughter, Susanna. This second marriage turned out to be unhappy and Margaret eventually left her husband, said to have resented what she saw as his time wasting activities and working models everywhere.

By 1762 Richard was a successful self employed barber/surgeon, who also offered hair dying, wig making and tooth drawing services. In addition he owned a public house. He could afford to pay others to run his businesses freeing up time for more experiments. At this time there was no cotton thread strong enough to bear the lengthwise strain on a loom (the warp). Linen and woollen warps were supplied to weavers and cotton could only be used for the weft. By 1768 a prototype of the machine that was to revolutionise the textile industry was completed.

He moved to Nottingham which was then the centre of the hosiery industry. Having won the backing of wealthy manufacturers he set up his first cotton spinning mill in the town, powered by horses. However, even before production started, Richard decided to rent another site about 25 miles away in Cromford, Derbyshire, where he planned to build a water powered mill. Cromford was chosen because it had a regular fast supply of water into which more water drained from the nearby lead mines, thus ensuring it never froze. There was also a ready supply of labour from the families of the lead miners. The site was isolated, which meant his inventions were less likely to be copied, but it was on the pack horse routes, so raw cotton imported via Liverpool could still be delivered. Work started on a small five storey mill which can still be seen today. The mill prospered and in 1755 he took out a new patent to cover every stage of the spinning process. More mill buildings followed and Cromford was enlarged to include good housing for work people, a market, church and hotel. He built nearby Rock House, a solid mansion, for himself, and expanded his business interests with more mills in Lancashire, Staffordshire and Scotland as well as Derbyshire. Some later ones being operated by steam. He was regarded as a national benefactor bringing prosperity to Britain and was knighted in 1786 and appointed High Sheriff of Derbyshire the following year.

After his death aged 59 his son Richard junior inherited the businesses but times were changing. Rivals had established their own spinning mills and delivery of raw cotton was much disrupted by the American Civil War. Even the Cromford water supply was threatened by new drainage schemes. Richard junior realised that Government Stock was a safer investment than cotton mills and he increased his holdings until he owned more than any other private individual in Britain. By 1850 the mills were closed to spinning though ownership was retained by the family for some time. The buildings were used variously as a brewery, laundry, textile warehouse and paint works.

In 1979 the Arkwright Society bought the site and are in the process of restoring the Grade I listed buildings. The site has been granted World Heritage Status reflecting its importance not only to this country but globally.

So where does the local connection come in? In Pigots 1835 directory under Lace

Manufacturers is listed William and Richard Seddon trading in Charles Street, Leicester. On another page the same pair at the same address are also listed as agents (to Messrs Arkwrights' cotton spinners).

In Wigston in 1806, Samuel Davenport, who lived at The Elms in Bushloe End, decided to sell up and move to Swanland, Yorkshire, the native place of his wife. As well as the house and grounds he owned 50 acres of land on the opposite side of Bushloe End stretching down to what is now the railway and 112 acres at Tythorn Farm. The purchaser of everything was William Seddon, senior, born c!747 who was moving from Birstall. Later census returns show all William's children, including William, junior, and Richard who were the two who traded in Charles Street, were born in Cromford, Derbyshire. Another son Samuel, spent his working life in several different areas of England and some time in Lisbon. He is described as a merchant, probably also in the lace trade.

It seems almost certain this Seddon family knew the Arkwrights. William, senior, may even have followed Sir Richard Arkwright from Lancashire as the name Seddon was very local to that county, and to Cheshire, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, but almost unknown in other places. William, senior, could have worked for Sir Richard while living and bringing up his family in Cromford, before moving to Birstall, then Wigston to take up farming in retirement.

The Seddons owned The Elms for nearly 100 years. During that time it was inhabited successively by William, senior, (bc!747-1816), who bought it, his son Richard (c 1790-1847), who was one of the Arkwright agents, Richard's youngest brother Samuel (1796-1876), the Lisbon Merchant, who spent over 20 years there in retirement, and Samuel's son Peter (cl 836-1897), who had a military career but was resident there in 1891, later moving to Gloucester. A number of family members are buried in All Saints Church and commemorated with plaques, memorial windows and floor slabs. These include William Seddon, junior, (c!786-1845), Arkwright agent, who actually lived in Stoneygate House, Knighton.

Sources: Wigston Parish Records, census returns, BMD indexes, Wigston M.I's, trade directories, Tythorn Deeds (in ODL collection).

The Arkwright story is from *The Arkwrights and Harlow* by Hazel Lake bought while at Cromford.

Tricia Berry