



Greater Wigston Historical Society

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

## BULLETIN 91



**William Wyggeston (1472 – 1536)**

**PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS – NOVEMBER 2011 TO AUGUST 2012**

**Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2011**

Goings on below Stairs – Wendy Freer  
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age Concern, Paddock Street.

**Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> December 2011**

Christmas Social with quiz & street views (Long Street) – Mike Forryan  
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age Concern, Paddock Street.  
(There will be a £2 00 charge payable on the evening, to cover the cost of refreshments).

**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> January 2012**

The Battle of Bosworth, discovering the new site – Richard McKinder  
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age Concern, Paddock Street.

**Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2012**

AGM followed by Wigston Film *Vanishing Village* with discussion – Mike Forryan  
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age Concern, Paddock Street.

**Wednesday March 21<sup>st</sup> 2012**

The Life of Orson Wright – Peter Cousins  
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age Concern, Paddock Street.

**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2012**

Recording Oral History – Colin Hyde  
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age Concern, Paddock Street.

**Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2012**

Guided walk Kirby Muxloe village & Castle followed by supper at Castle Hotel (to be confirmed)  
Meet 6.45p.m. Paddock Street Car Park to share transport

**Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2012**

Visit to Leics. County Council Collections Resource Centre, Barrow-upon-Soar  
Meet 6.45p.m. Paddock Street Car Park to share transport

**Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> August 2012**

Jet Propulsion in Leicestershire – Max Daetwyler  
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age Concern, Paddock Street.

**Extra to Programme** – Please see Page 5 for details of Coach Trip, 11<sup>th</sup> July 2012

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

The Society's website is: [www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk](http://www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk)  
Chairman Mike Forryan's e-mail is: [chairman@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk](mailto:chairman@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk)

## FRONT COVER

We have finally come to the end of the collection of drawings which the late Jim Colver so kindly supplied for the Bulletin covers. It is sad, they will be missed, as indeed is Jim. Featured this time is a photograph of the statue of William Wyggeston, one of the four notable people commemorated on the Clock Tower in Leicester. This ties in with the article within, about this generous benefactor, as preparations are made to celebrate the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his charitable foundation in 2013.

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## JULY MEETING

On 20<sup>th</sup> July the society organised an extra event, a walk led by Councillor Bill Boulter. We met at Bushloe House on what turned out to be a council meeting evening. Bill had decided to take advantage of the fact the property was open (except for the Council Chamber) to take us inside which was a particular treat.

He explained the house was designed in 1850 by Leicester architect Stephen Fry for his own occupation. Stephen tragically died the same year and the house was retained by the family and let out to various tenants before being sold in 1866 to Hiram Abiff Owston, a Leicester solicitor. He extended the original house and employed the renowned interior designer Christopher Dresser to refurbish and redecorate the interior in the Arts and Crafts style. The council bought the property in 1942 following the death of Mr. Owston's unmarried daughter Evelyn who had lived there her entire life. At an auction of the contents at this time much of the furniture, also by Dresser, was acquired by the Victoria and Albert Museum, some other pieces were bought by locals.

Inevitably changes have been made to accommodate its new use as offices, but much still remains, and Bill explained the house interior is regarded as the best example of the Arts and Crafts movement in the Midlands. There are black marble fireplaces, beautiful stained and painted glass windows and panels, floor tiles, hand painted wallpaper, carved newel posts and brass supports for curtain drapes etc. Also a huge complicated lock for the front door. Outside many specimen trees survive, including a line of pines, planted in 1891, by member Ian Richardson's father, who was a gardener there at the time.

Following this there was only time for a short walk along Bushloe End noting on the way the Framework Knitters Museum with rubble plinth, small bricks and visible beam from another since demolished house, the British Legion, built in 1792 by the Davenport family, later sympathetically rebuilt but retaining the original façade. The old vicarage, seven bedrooms, for sale, and looking very sad at present following a fire. All Saints' Church, the only Grade I listed building in Wigston. The graves moved to the churchyard boundary in 1960/70s. Bill wants to get an old gravestone to the Salisbury family, lying flat at present, framed for protection. Into Newgate End on the left the Freckingham home, a gentleman's residence, probably late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the old farmhouse next door, built 1691, and the Manor House opposite, built 50 years later with added Georgian front, both built for members of the Pochin family. Yew Tree House on the corner of the unadopted Gas Lane, which was once a farmhouse.

The evening ended back at Bushloe House with many thanks to our guide who promised to supply copies of a leaflet on the house, which he duly did, thanks very much indeed Bill.

## **AUGUST MEETING**

This month we welcomed Neil Finn from the Archaeological Services Department at Leicester University, who spoke on the life of the well known local artist, John Flower. John was born in Leicester in 1793 to John and Mary Flower. His father was a woolcomber and Freeman of Leicester, but was not well off and following his early death, young John was apprenticed at the age of 13 to a framework knitter. However, his artistic talent was noticed by Dr. Alexander of Danett's Hall who gave him much encouragement. In 1815, Mary Linwood the famous embroiderer, arranged for him to study in London under her friend's husband, the painter Peter de Wint, who waived his usual fee.

He returned to Leicester and established himself as a landscape artist and drawing teacher. He also engraved portraits by other artists. In 1817 he advertised his Drawing School from his home in Marble Street. In 1826 he published, in parts, *Views of Ancient Buildings in the Town and County of Leicester*. In 1827 he had a home and studio in Southgate Street, but by 1843 had moved to New Walk. In 1851 he moved to what is now 100, Regent Road which he designed himself with the architect Henry Goddard. There is a Blue Plaque on this building in his memory.

Today it is Flower's topographical pictures which are best known. He travelled to North Wales, Devon and on the Continent, but most of his output was of subjects much closer to home, in Leicester and the county. They are particularly valued as often the only surviving images of how an area looked in the pre-camera days of the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. He made a special point of recording ruins and buildings just prior to demolition, and would also sometimes choose simple subjects such as a signpost, a shed, haystack or well. There are examples of his work at the New Walk Museum, (and a portrait of him on the stairs), at the Record Office and also at the County Council Resource Centre at Barrow-upon-Soar. (We will be able to see the latter's examples during our visit to the centre in June 2012).

Flower married Frances Clark at St. Mary de Castro Church in 1813 and had a daughter Elizabeth in 1816. She was the third of his three children, but the only one to survive infancy. She inherited his talent and some of her work is also in the above collections. It was a very pleasant surprise to welcome a group of descendants, who had travelled some distance to hear this talk. After questions and discussion the Chairman, Mike Forryan, thanked Neil for a really interesting evening.

## **SEPTEMBER MEETING**

In September art teacher, band leader, local historian and author, Ned Newitt, came to talk to us on The Slums of Leicester. Slums were built between 1820 and 1870, to accommodate the influx of people moving from the countryside to work following the Industrial Revolution, and later population increase. In 1820 there was no planning, and there were no building regulations until 1859. So earlier homes were often put up in haste as cheaply as possible (with inadequate foundations and single brick walls), and often near the river, because the land was cheaper as it flooded. They were small, two or even one up and one down, and crammed into courts, often back to back without adequate light, making them cold and damp. There were no bathrooms, and no drainage, no proper water supply and the toilet (with pit or

cess pool) was across the road that would be shared by more than one household. Not surprisingly fever and diarrhoea type illnesses were rife especially among the young.

In 1849 a Public Health Act made it compulsory for all properties to have drains, and lodging houses and all noxious trades (such as butchery and leather tanning) had to register with the council. By 1850s all properties were connected to the main water supply. By 1870 one in four children still died before their first birthday. During this decade there was much flood prevention work, and the introduction of sweeps and scavengers to remove waste. In 1890s large amounts of sewage could be handled with the Gimson pump and flush toilets could be used. By 1902 all pail toilets had been replaced.

Council house building began in 1900 and by 1932 starting with the bus station area, people were moved out to North Braunstone. Inhabitants were of course delighted to have the new space and facilities but there was a downside in that communities were broken up. Building stopped during the war and slum clearance was not finally completed until the late 1960s. Cramant Cottages behind 52/54 King Street are the only surviving slum houses in Leicester, nicely restored they are currently occupied by a wine bar.

After some discussion the Chairman, Mike Forryan, thanked Ned for a most interesting talk, which left us all pretty shocked to be reminded how some people had to live.

## **OCTOBER MEETING**

Felicity Austin gave us a really enjoyable evening with her talk on Life on the Home Front during WWII. Dressed in 1940s style, she brought heaps of props and memorabilia along, and even got us singing songs such as Run Rabbit...which really helped get us into the spirit of things.

The main concern during this terrible time was to feed the country. Surprisingly at the start of the war Britain only produced one third of the food consumed, by the end this had increased to 75%. This was achieved by the Dig for Victory campaign launched by Lord Woolton, the Minister of Food. Everyone was encouraged to grow their own, Victoria Park was converted into allotments and Western Park became sheep pasture. People also kept chickens and a pig if they had room; if you had any excess you bartered it for something else. Eating more vegetables and less grain was encouraged, because of the risk to the Atlantic convoys. Virtually all food was rationed and the amounts allowed per person (one fresh egg every two weeks!) seemed very meagre. You had to queue for everything. WI ladies made jam in factories to utilise home grown fruit, there was no foreign fruit except a strict ration of bananas for children. The dreaded whale meat was available for those who could manage it. Marguerite Patten created recipes and gave cookery demonstrations. Haybox cooking was encouraged to save fuel.

Make do and Mend was another big effort as clothes were rationed and patching and darning became a way of life. Fuel was scarce so walking and cycling was the usual way of getting around. No holidays, beaches were covered in barbed wire, and only authorised people were allowed within so many miles of the coast.

Many children and some mothers were evacuated from areas of heavy bombing, and those with spare rooms were required to take them in. Leicestershire being considered relatively safe took in more than any other county. Hosts noticed how badly nourished some of these children were, having eaten only fish and chip type meals and had never tasted puddings or fresh fruit.

Radio was vital for news and entertainment, programmes such as ITMA, Forces Radio, Glen Miller and his big band being ever popular.

After some questions and reminiscences from members, the Chairman, Mike Forryan, thanked Felicity very much for a very interesting talk.

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### **MYSTERY COACH TRIP**

On Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2012 the society are organising another evening coach trip led by Duncan Lucas. This will leave from outside Age Concern, Paddock Street at 6.30p.m. We will follow a mystery route round the Leicestershire countryside with Duncan giving a commentary about the history, agriculture, buildings and people associated with the area, and a few anecdotes and jokes thrown in. We end up at a pub for approx. three quarters of an hour with time for a drink if you like and arrive back at Paddock Street 10.00p.m.-10.30p.m. Tickets cost £8 00 each and will be on sale at meetings from November. The trip is for friends and family as well as members, so do bring others along if you wish. They will be sold on a first come first served basis and on past experience sell out quite quickly.

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### **SKITTLES EVENING**

We have also arranged a skittles evening for Friday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2012 at The Old Crown, Moat Street, 7.30p.m. This will include a hot pub buffet supper. Members of the Civic Society and Friends of the Framework Knitters Museum are also being invited. Tickets costs £7.50p.m. and again will be available at meetings.

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### **PHOTOGRAPHY PROJECT**

This was mentioned in the last Bulletin and it has been decided to extend the dead line to the end of February 2012 in case more members wish to contribute. We are looking for photos of any feature of historical interest within the boundaries of Wigston and South Wigston. They should be outside and assessable to the public. Most of the notable building have already been recorded so perhaps concentrate on smaller properties or architectural features, street furniture, advertising signs, memorials or landscape features. Anything really which is old and interesting. Contributions, prints or on disc, should be given to Mike or Tricia with your name, location and date taken. A modest prize will be awarded for the photo judged to be the best, taking into account subject choice and quality of image.

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### **FAMILY HISTORY FAIR**

The Society was invited to take a stand at the Leicestershire & Rutland Family History Society Fair on 25<sup>th</sup> September at Age Concern, Paddock Street. It was decided to take advantage of this and Mike, Linda and Tricia duly set up stall. We took along a lap top

showing continuously running old photographs of Wigston and some spare copies of the books that members have produced.

There were some interesting tables - The Record Office, Black Cat antiquarian books, Mark Bown with his early picture postcards, advice points where visitors could ask experts from the LRFHS for advice, FIBRIS the Friends in British India Society, stalls selling family history stationery and charts etc., and several other local history societies. There were also a couple of talks for visitors to attend if they wished.

It was very well attended, the car park opposite being full for most of the day. Radio Leicester did a series of live interviews, did anyone hear Mike? We thought it was a very successful day. We had a steady stream of visitors to our table and were able to chat and offer advice or take down details and look things up later. Also quite a number of local people expressed an interest in joining the Society so we may have gained a few new members....we shall see?

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### **COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Two members have recently joined the Committee. A warm welcome to Ann Cousins and Paul Knight, thank you for joining us. We do hope you get some pleasure and satisfaction from contributing towards the Society's future. Two have also resigned, Edna Taylor after twenty five years has now stepped down for a very well earned retirement. We thank her so very much for her hard work and loyalty. Ruth Granger joined more recently but now feels other commitments make it difficult for her to continue. Many thanks to her too, for her past interest. Happily both Edna and Ruth are continuing as members.

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### **PROPOSED DIAMOND JUBILEE CELEBRATION IN 2012**

At September's Committee meeting there was some discussion as to what the Society might do to celebrate this special event. Such ideas as a street party in Bell Street were mentioned, but rather ruled out due to the organisation required, inclement weather and people being away etc. Another suggestion is to create a collection of 60 photographs, one for each year of the Queen's reign, featuring something that happened in Wigston. If anyone has any thoughts on this or any other ideas do please speak to a Committee member.

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### **RECORDING EQUIPMENT**

This equipment has now been purchased and we should be interested to hear any suggestions members may have on suitable subjects to be interviewed, or indeed anyone who would like to conduct such an interview. Our April speaker, Colin Hyde, is an expert on this and will be giving guidance on how to conduct an interview and how important it is to record oral history before it is too late.

## **EAST MIDLANDS IN BLOOM 2011**

For the last two years our member, Evelyn Brooker, has won first prize in the Oadby & Wigston Borough Council's Pride of the Borough Floral Display Competition for the best front garden. This year she has won a gold award, one of only three that were awarded, for her front garden, as part of the Borough's entry into the East Midlands in Bloom 2011. This is amazing news, with such a difficult dry summer too, very many congratulations!!

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### **PUBLIC ART**

Members of Wigston Civic Society are working on a project to establish a piece of open air public art in Wigston Magna. The thinking behind the idea is that the feel of the town will be enhanced and that there will be a focal point that will attract the attention of residents and visitors, provide a talking point and be something that residents can identify themselves and Wigston Magna with.

These aims fit well with the overall aim of the Civic Society to make Wigston a better place in which to live and work.

There is, of course, already the well established 'totem pole' in the Peace Memorial Park and the abstract sculpture in Oadby. There are also plans to erect a railway wheel in South Wigston. Other Districts in the County already have their own pieces of public art such as the 'sock' in Loughborough, the lock gates near Market Harborough and several statues in Leicester City, notably: Thomas Cook, the Three Sportsman, the Sewing Lady and Ghandi as well as the New Walk shoe industry pieces.

As yet there are no firm ideas as to where the piece should be erected or what it should consist of but of course there are many possibilities. In the near future a consultation will take place involving appropriate local groups including the Historical Society and Framework Knitters Museum (Wigston local interest groups) and individuals.

It would have been a good idea to unveil the artwork during the Queen's Jubilee year but this may be too short a time scale, especially as funding needs to be secured.

If you have ideas or wish to take part in the consultation please email Colin at [cftowell@aol.com](mailto:cftowell@aol.com)

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### **OADBY AND WIGSTON CIVIC ORCHESTRA**

The Oadby and Wigston Civic Orchestra is now in its 46<sup>th</sup> season. During the whole of that time its conductor has been Keith Smith who was brought up in Wigston and has led a distinguished musical career.

Initially the orchestra was subsidised by the local council (hence the name) but now, although it receives a grant from the Council, the main source of income is from ticket sales.

There are five concerts in the season which are usually held at Guthlaxton College although the next concert on Saturday 26 November at 7.30p.m. will be at St Thomas's Church, South Wigston.



You don't have to be a classical music expert to enjoy the concert, no one will say anything if you clap in the wrong place, so why not try it, you may become a convert. And if its definitely not your scene, please tell your relations, friends and colleagues anyway, tickets are £10 (£8), parking is free and you don't have to go into Leicester.

Please support your local orchestra.

Colin Towell

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Peter Cousins has very kindly agreed to write a series of articles for the Bulletin on researching your family tree, and this is the first one. Peter is Chairman of Leicestershire and Rutland Family History Society, he is also the husband of our member Ann Cousins. Thank you Peter, this will be very helpful, we know of a number of members who would like to do this but are unsure how to go about it.

### **FIRST STEPS IN FAMILY HISTORY**

Researching your family history is like embarking on a fantastic journey - a journey on which you will sometimes be amazed and sometimes will be disappointed - but a journey that everyone should take, whatever your age. The journey will take you to places that you never knew existed, and will introduce you to many aspects of local and social history. As you add the "flesh to the bones" in your researches, you will find out how your ancestors lived and worked, and how they survived and coped with such things as wars, famine, and diseases and the many other hardships they had to endure.

Many people think that in this "on-line" computer age we live in that all you need is a computer and the Internet and you can find out everything about your family history. True there is a lot of information out there that you can access, but it does not match up to doing the detective work yourself, and the thrill you get when you find that elusive record you have been searching to fill in a missing piece of the puzzle, and can actually see your ancestors' handwriting and signature.

Family history research, once you get started, can become addictive. You will probably put it aside for a while, but you will always go back to it and pick up where you left off.

#### **So How Do You Start On This Journey Of Discovery?**

The first step is to compile everything you know about yourself, your parents, brother, sisters, cousins, and your grandparents. Record dates of birth, marriages, deaths, – everything you can find out. Get yourself a notebook and write down everything.

#### **Ask The Family**

Next speak to your living relatives, especially the older ones like grandparents and aunt and uncles, and if you have them great grandparents and great uncles and aunts. The more relatives you can speak to the better. Write down or record everything that they tell you, however insignificant you may think it is as it may well fit in later, and always note "who told you what".

Make yourself a family questionnaire form – ask the same questions of different relatives and cross-check their answers – they will vary as memories of family events will differ and fade with time.

Never discount any family tales or legends – they may turn out to be true! One lady was told when she was 8 that she was related to the famous Elephant Man which she dismissed as just a story. In her seventies she found out it was true!

When you have had time to digest everything you have been told, go back and see them again, you will be amazed to find that once you set the seed in their minds, especially your older relatives, they will start to remember all sorts of things they had long forgotten or put to the back of their minds. A story about their parents, a wartime memory, distant relatives you have never even heard of – it will all fit in somewhere.

### **Family Documents & Memorabilia.**

Search around your family members for any old documents, diaries, newspaper cuttings, letters (always noting the postmarks), birth, marriage or death certificates, school certificates, business records, wills, in fact anything which may be of use in your future researches. Particularly ask if they have any medals, especially for WW1, as you can glean details such as names, rank, serial numbers and regiments which will prove very useful to you later on.

Photographs are of particular value, especially family groups, as these can be dated fairly accurately by the clothes. Any photographs of men in military uniforms can glean lots of information as there are many reference books detailing uniforms, cap badges and medals. Many photographers used to stamp their name and addresses on the photograph, which will give you a valuable clue to the whereabouts of the family or person in the picture.

Family bibles, if they survive, can sometimes give several generations of family details which will get you off to a flying start, but remember that some details would have been entered from hearsay, and so may not be too accurate.

Wills can be a great source of family material. Many wills mention sons, daughters and grandchildren's names, sometimes adding children you have not come across before. Inventories of the goods and chattels someone left and bequeathed are sometimes included – invaluable in learning how they lived and prospered – or how poor they were. You may have a family heirloom at home that you have always wondered about and where it came from - a will may well tell you.

### **Has it been done before?**

Try to ascertain if anyone in the family has ever started on researching your ancestry. They may have started it years before and put it away and forgotten about it. Firstly it will save you time on your research, and secondly it may well rekindle their interest in restarting their researches. It is always good to check any information you do find just to make sure of the accuracy. Family history societies have archived family trees of some of their members which you should be able to consult as well. There are also some publications available detailing family names being researched.

**Decide which direction you want to go?**

When you have gathered all the above information, you should decide what form your research will take. Whether you want to undertake a complete study of your ancestry, just follow your mother (maternal) or father’s (paternal) line, or a one name study on your own surname.

The choice is yours. Whichever path you take you will be just stepping out on the start of this amazing journey into your past to find out where you come from.....something that you should do for future generations of your family and for yourself now.

**Next Time .....Births, Deaths, Marriages & Census Returns**

Peter Cousins

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**WYGGESTON HOSPITAL 500<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY**

In 2013 it will be 500 years since William Wigston/Wyggeston founded the Wyggeston Hospital and the Trustees of this remarkable charity are planning a number of ways to celebrate the significant milestone. One project is already underway with the purchase of some land just off the A5199 past Kilby turn, which is being planted with native broadleaf species of trees to create a wood.

William Wyggeston (1472-1536) was the eldest son of John Wyggeston, a merchant of Coventry and Leicester. John had two other sons, Thomas, who became a canon of the Collegiate Church of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary in the Newarke, and Roger who was a merchant and landowner in Warwickshire and Leicestershire. There were also two daughters, Margaret and Agnes. The family has been described thus:-

*“The Wigston family, probably at one time natives of the village of that name, had for some generations lived in Leicester, actively engaged in the wool trade. Enterprising and industrious, they had amassed great wealth, and were esteemed and respected among the community on account of their useful services as citizens.....”*

All three sons led very successful lives but William was undoubtedly the most important. He made a huge fortune exporting wool to Flemish weavers through the staple port of Calais which was then a British possession. He was four times appointed Mayor of Calais, three times Mayor of Leicester and in 1503/4 was elected parliamentary burgess for the Borough. He married twice, first to Isobel and then to Agnes, but had no children. Reaching middle age he established, in association with his brothers, three foundations in quick succession.

Firstly in 1511/12 a Chantry House in the Newarke, to accommodate and support two priests, who were, in succession for ever, to officiate at the altar of the Collegiate Church, and pray for his soul and look after his tomb after his death. This house still survives and is now part of the Newarke Houses Museum. It once displayed the Wyggeston Arms over the front entrance, but this has now been moved inside.

Secondly in 1512/13 a Chantry Chapel to our Lady, Saint Ursula and Saint Katherine inside the Collegiate Church in order that masses might be said for his soul.

Thirdly in 1513 the Wyggeston Hospital (the word hospital should be taken in its older meaning of hospitality) which was to house twelve poor men and twelve poor women who were over 60 years old and too disabled to live independently. The foundation deed states:-

*“considering and calling to mind that the flower of my youth is past in earthly employment and cares; and desiring to offer an evening sacrifice to the Most High....”*

Letters patent were obtained from Henry VIII on 13/6/1513 to carry out his charitable design and on 1/3/1519 various manors, lands and tenements were transferred to the hospital foundation to provide for its maintenance and the support of the residents, together with a master who had to be a clergyman, and a confrater (a second cleric). Statutes of the institution were confirmed by further letters patent on 30/9/1522. William drew up a code of regulations for the management of the hospital. The endowed property was situated mainly in Leicestershire but with some in other Midland counties too. It included several large farms and smaller areas of land and buildings in Wigston.

The original hospital buildings were situated on the west of St. Martins (the Cathedral) churchyard. They were completed in 1520 and consisted of a great hall with beautifully furnished chapel dedicated to St. Ursula at the end. There was a separate almshouse for the residents and dwellings for the master and for the confrater. In letters patent in 1572 it was stated that the hospital should always be called Wyggeston’s Hospital, and that the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster should appoint the master and be a visitor. The master was empowered to grant leases and manage the rents for the hospital.

By 1857 the buildings were considered beyond repair and the income was modest though the capital value of the endowment had increased hugely. The Court of Chancery ordered that the management should in future be vested in twenty trustees and also approved the sale of some of the estates, so that the money raised could be used to rebuild the hospital complex

Land was purchased at the junction of Hinckley Road and Fosse Road and new buildings and chapel, also dedicated to St. Ursula, were erected. The residents moved in 1869 and then had a decent sized living room and separate bedroom each, and the benefit of large kitchens, sculleries and bathrooms and spacious grounds for recreation. The old buildings were demolished in 1875 and a canopied stone niche enclosing two statues, the woodwork of the chapel porch and a carved oak pulpit were moved to St. Nicholas’ Church.

The original foundation allowed for some educational use and this enabled some of the capital released in 1857 to be used to build Wyggeston Boys Grammar School and Wyggeston Girls’ Grammar School. The boys’ school was built on the site of the first hospital and when it later moved to University Road the original building continued to house various schools until being bought recently by the Cathedral for offices etc. The girls’ school was built in Humberstone Gate and when that moved to Regent Road, their original building likewise continued in use as a school until it was acquired by the Leicestershire branch of Age U.K. These schools are now co-educational sixth form colleges named Wyggeston & Queen Elizabeth I College and Regent College respectively. Wyggeston Hospital still makes an annual grant to the Wyggeston Schools Foundation which combined with other income makes grants to students at these colleges.

When the 1869 accommodation became dated the present Hospital was erected in 1966 within the grounds. It consists of fifty four warden assisted flats suitable for married couples, and is named William House. In 1992 a residential home known as Agnes House was added for those who needed more care. The Duchy of Lancaster's connection remains strong. The Chancellor still appoints the master, the most senior member of staff, who is an Anglican clergyman who lives on site and looks after the residents' pastoral care.

William Wyggeston was buried in 1536 as he had wished within the Church of the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary in the Newarke but changes would soon occur. Because it was a Collegiate Church it suffered the same fate as the monasteries and was destroyed under the Chantries Act of 1547. William's tomb disappeared along with those of many other notable people. De Montfort University's Hawthorne Building was erected on the site and some foundations of the old church still survive within its cellars.

Tricia Berry

Sources: *Glimpses of Ancient Leicester* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 1906) by Mrs. T. Fielding Johnson. *Modern Leicester* (1881). by Robert Read, jnr. *The Chapel of William Wyggeston's Hospital* Leics. A.H.S. Vol: XLVIII (1972/3) by Alice Hamilton & Alan Broadfield. *Discovering Leicester* (1991) by John W Banner. <http://www.wyggestonhospital.org.uk/aboutus.htm>  
<http://www.duchyoflancaster.com/duties-of-the-duchy/further-key-appointments/wyggeston..>  
Both viewed on 5/10/2011



This 1911 postcard photograph of Bull Head Street shows (right) the White House which survives on the corner of Kelmarsh Avenue and the farmhouse (centre) now demolished. Both were once Wyggeston Hospital properties. The thatched cottage on the left, also demolished, probably didn't belong to the Hospital.

**THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXCERPT FROM AN HISTORICAL NOVEL  
WRITTEN BY TONY CALDWELL  
IT IS BASED ON THE TRUE STORY OF GEORGE DAVENPORT THE NOTORIOUS  
WIGSTON HIGHWAYMAN**

**SIXTEEN DAYS IN AUGUST – by Cheneniah Sampson**

**13<sup>th</sup> August 1797: Leicester Crown Court, England**

I held my breath as the foreman of the Jury stood to announce the verdict – though in truth, I knew what it must be.

“Guilty!”

“Is this the verdict of you all?” asked the Judge.

“It is, My Lord.”

The Courtroom stilled as the Judge gathered his thoughts. I knew I was guilty, so it was less shocking for me, but others could not be so certain, and I know – I hope – there were many hoping for an acquittal.

The Judge addressed me “Does the Prisoner have anything to say before I pass sentence?”

I was actually quite calm as I rose. For this day, I was wearing my finest embroidered waistcoat, and I knew I was unusually well dressed for a man in the dock. I am well known for my strength and agility, as well as a willingness to use my abilities in whatever way would retain my freedom, and for this reason there were several Peace Officers stationed nearby. I could see that they were nervous, alert and ready to subdue me if I showed any signs of trying to escape. Some were watching me; several were fidgeting with their nightsticks as they watched the gallery, alert for any rescue attempt.

I’d had many years to prepare for this moment, so I knew what I was going to say.

“I do, My Lord, if it pleases the Court.” I paused here for maximum effect, looking first at the Judge on his podium, then around at the packed Courthouse. Several of my friends and acquaintances were arrayed in the gallery, and it heartened me to see their shocked expressions. Behind them, the riff-raff were buzzing with excitement, and I waited for them to still before I continued.

“I am, as the Jury so rightly concluded, guilty of the crime of which I am accused. I know what the sentence must be, and I wish to join my Maker with a clean heart.

“I tell you, I go to join the Lord Jesus with joy, knowing He will forgive me my crimes and trespasses. I have been faithful to my beloved wife Elizabeth since we were wed, but I have committed many crimes and many sins, and I have not been punished for most of them.

“For almost twenty years, I have been preying upon the good people of this and other counties, especially the few occasions when I sank to robbing those who had little.

“I have joined almost forty regiments of his Majesty’s Forces, and deserted from all but one of them. I have drunk to excess, I have caroused to excess. I have deflowered many virgins, and lain down with many other women in my time.

“I have escaped from justice several times, and spent most of the past eighteen years as a fugitive from the law.” I paused again and looked directly at the Judge before I continued.

“I can say without fear of subsequent rebuke from my Lord Jesus that I have never killed a man, though I did once protect my own life by allowing a man to kill himself. But at that, the man was awaiting execution, so he was robbed of little save more agonizing hours in the condemned cell. . .

The Society has not yet been notified of any publication date.