



GREATER WIGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
White Gate Farm House, Newton Lane, Wigston Magna, Leics.

BULLETIN 93



Her Majesty The Queen

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS – JULY 2012 TO FEBRUARY 2013

Wednesday 11th July 2012

Mystery Coach Trip with commentary – Duncan Lucas
Now fully booked

Wednesday 15th August 2012

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

Wednesday 19th September 2012

St. John Ambulance Brigade from its Knights Templar origins to today – Gary Musson
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age Concern, Paddock Street.

Wednesday 17th October 2012

Houses in the West End of Leicester – Brian Johnson
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age Concern, Paddock Street.

Wednesday 21st November 2012

Lost Houses of Stonegate – Neil Crutchley
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age Concern, Paddock Street.

Wednesday 19th December 2012

Christmas Social with quiz & street views (Long Street) – Mike Forryan
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age Concern, Paddock Street.

Wednesday 16th January 2013

A Victorian Gentleman – Gareth King
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age Concern, Paddock Street.

Wednesday 20th February 2013

AGM followed by members' Bring and Tell
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age Concern, Paddock Street.

Wednesday 20th March 2013

The Morrison Story (Electric Vehicles made in South Wigston) – Ernest Miller
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age Concern, Paddock Street.

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

The Society's website is: www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk
Chairman Mike Forryan's e-mail is: chairman@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk

FRONT COVER

As this is Diamond Jubilee Year we thought it would be appropriate to feature a picture of Her Majesty The Queen. The lovely cover drawing was created some years ago as an art class project by our talented membership secretary Linda Forryan.

MARCH MEETING

For our first meeting after the AGM we welcomed Peter Cousins, Chairman of the Leicestershire and Rutland Family History Society, to talk about local man made good, Orson Wright. Peter had originally given the talk to the Wigston Civic Society in 2011 after it had been suggested by them that as Orson was so important locally, particularly in South Wigston, he would make a good project for investigating his family and his work and other interests of which there were many. Over the last nine months many more details had come to light.

Peter confessed that the project had become something of an obsession and that there were domestic complaints of two men in his wife Ann (our committee member's) life! As well as family history Peter has a particular interest in WW1 history and he is a computer and office equipment specialist.

Orson was born in 1853 in Dunton Bassett (clues to South Wigston street names), to Joseph and Maria, nee Greenwell. The Wright name has been traced back only to 1756 but the Greenwell's tree right back to the 14th century. Orson was by the age of 8 employed by a local farmer as a crow scarer, he later became an apprentice wheelwright in Leire, but when his employer's business failed Orson moved to Leicester to train as a carpenter. In 1874 he married Ada Harris and the next year set up in business with his brother Charles as builders in the All Saints area of Leicester. This firm soon failed and by 1881 he was living in Onslow Villas, Milligan Road and employed 20 men and 3 boys, with a turnover of £50k. His father was a grocer in nearby Vernon Road.

In 1883 he bought land in South Wigston and by 1890 there were 600 houses on streets with names beginning with the letters of Orson's name (Orange, Water etc). He acquired the Wigston Junction Brick and Tile Works, the Knighton Junction Brick Works and Wigston Iron Foundry. He built the two pubs The Grand and The Clarence (now The Marquis of Queensbury) as well as several pubs and hotels in other parts of Leicester including the former Grand Hotel.

Orson originally built Venetia House next to the Grand for himself and then Ashbourne House on Blaby Road where there is now a row of modern shops, in all they had 10 children of whom only 6 survived to adulthood.

He represented Fairfield Ward on the local Council and then Abbey Ward in Leicester. He was Chairman of many companies, a magistrate, Vice President of the County Cricket club and a Governor of the Royal Infirmary.

Orson died in 1913. On the day of his funeral at St Thomas' Church, all the businesses closed as a mark of respect and there were 15 horse drawn carriages in the procession to Wigston cemetery where he is buried in a plot marked by a plain cross on a plinth near the entrance. His Will was 10 pages long and his estate was worth £7.2m at present day values.

APRIL MEETING

For our April meeting we welcomed an old friend, Colin Hyde of the East Midlands Oral History Unit. The work of the unit is to manage digital recordings of people's memories, stories, opinions and even recipes.

Earlier recordings had been made onto tapes and many of us recalled the large 6 inch tape to tape recording units, I had one myself for my 21st birthday. These are now being digitised so that they can be listened to on modern equipment.

Colin reminded us that Thomas Eddison invented the 'phonograph' in 1875 and he played a very poor 1890 recording of Florence Nightingale speaking. He followed this with a 1920 BBC studio recording about the Titanic, this was of much improved quality but the equipment was not easily portable. In 1945, kit became more portable and in 1950 the Leicester Tape Club was recording events on reel to reel kit. Their archives still exist. In 2000 Radio Leicester went digital.

Colin had looked after Radio Leicester archives since it started broadcasting in 1967. The best recordings are off the cuff although sounds often need editing out. He finds that issues raised in the 1960s are still relevant today and are still talked about in interviews. The longest interview he has conducted was 35 hours over 2 years, an hour at a time. There are no rules for carrying out an interview, just go for it and see what happens.

In 1982, Ned Newitt started the Industrial History Unit and this later became the Leicester Oral Archive. Several other projects were started around the county but by 2000 these had largely come to a halt and so a lottery grant was obtained to bring them all together in the East Midlands Oral Archive, Colin is the only employee and is based at the University of Leicester.

Anyone can make a recording but it helps to be a good listener, be interested in what is being talked about and be able to resist the urge to interrupt. However memories do get contaminated by other reports at the time and many people are not good at dates, but work practices and war stories are often the most accurately recalled. These days, migration memories are increasingly being recorded but there is a gap with little on post war toys (is there a project for us here?).

Practically, Colin advised that everything should be backed up and all recordings must be digital. He revealed that our own recently purchased equipment was some of the best.

All in all this was a very interesting talk with some good practical hints and ideas delivered by a complete professional.

MAY MEETING

The May meeting was the first of our two visits this year. We gathered at the Castle Hotel and were met by our guides from Kirby Muxloe History Group. The evening was dry and quite bright but cool.

We walked along Main Street and up the footpath to the parish church of St Bartholomew where we were given an introductory talk before wandering round both inside and outside. The church is not large for what is now a well populated village, (this may be a blessing in disguise in these days of falling congregations and rising running costs). It was originally a 'Chapel of Ease' under

Glenfield parish. This also applied to neighbouring Braunstone, again a small building. The parish was not legally formed until as recently as 1930.

There are no records of when the Church was originally built, but the south side was probably built at the same time as the Castle in the 1480s. There is a piscina in the nave near the chancel arch, so possibly the nave is very old and the chancel of a later date. The north aisle was rebuilt in the 1850s and this can be seen outside with the use of slate, whereas elsewhere granite stone had been used. The oldest identifiable material is a beam of wood in the vestry which came from the castle, the vestry being added in 1901.

The hatchment within has caused recent discussion about whether a crown or bonnet is on Queen Victoria's head. A stray bomb fell on the village some way from the church during WW II but it blew in the east window. The tower holds 6 bells, the last being added in 1974, when a turret clock had to be removed, and is now in the City Museums. The clock did not have a face but a bell chimed the times. There is a bright gilded weather vane.

We then walked back along Main Street towards the Castle with members of the host group giving details of buildings to small groups of us as we walked. A row of cottages was built in 1859 by the Winstanley family of Braunstone Hall for bailiff and farm workers. The castle was viewed from a footpath round the outside of the moat, with snippets of detail given by the guides. This wetted our appetites for individuals to make a return visit when it is open.

We then walked to the roundabout to view the former school building which for a while was used as a gift shop but has since been turned into a large family house.

We ended the evening with a meal which, after a delay, was served rather late for many of us.

Colin Towell

JUNE MEETING - Sadly had to be cancelled at short notice.

MAY AND JUNE OUTINGS

I can only say how sorry I am that both summer outings turned out to be such a complete mess this year. The meal and service after our walk in May fell well short of an acceptable standard. Apparently the main reason for this was that the time of our arrival had been incorrectly recorded as 7.30p.m. instead of 8.40p.m, even though this and other requirements had been clearly stated in e-mail correspondence at the time of booking. The venue have sincerely apologised and refunded half the cost which has now been passed on to those who attended.

The June visit to Barrow was cancelled because with just a week to go the venue was notified that 23 people were coming, only to respond that they could not accommodate more than 15 at a time. Once again it was clearly stated in the booking correspondence that about 30 would attend, and nothing was said about any restrictions on numbers. More sincere apologies and offers to run two tours, one starting at 6p.m. the other at 7.30p.m. With so little time to telephone everyone and try to divide members into two groups and ensure there was enough transport for everyone, it seemed too fraught and we decided to cancel. People were however disappointed so it is hoped to re-arrange this in the future, which should be quite possible now we know the terms. Again refunds are being made.

Tricia Berry

FUTURE SUMMER OUTINGS

The committee have been considering whether to make one of our summer outings a day or afternoon event rather than just an evening one. It would probably be held on the third Saturday in May and we would hire a coach. Suggested destinations with an idea of the cost per seat on a **39 seater** coach are as follows: (smaller coaches cost a little more per person, larger coaches a little less).

Sandringham House £12. 06, Belvoir Castle £7. 82, Ironbridge £11. 54, Windsor Castle £14. 11, Workhouse & Minster, Southwell £8. 98, Black Country Museum £10. 00, York £10. 00

Entrance Fees: Sandringham £11. 50 Adult £9. 50 Concession, Belvoir £12. 00/£10. 00 Ironbridge £23. 25/£18. 75 (These prices are for a passport ticket for all ten Museums for one year, day & group tickets would be less), Windsor £17. 00/£15. 50, Workhouse £6.35 (N.T members free), Black Country Museum £14. 95/£11. 95

(Please note these are 2012 prices).

Before taking this idea any further we really do need to know what members think and whether they would like to go on such a trip. Please would you contact our Chairman Mike Forryan with your views (e-mail: chairman@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk or phone: 07711 083227).

NEW SECRETARY

Some members will already know that I have stepped down as Secretary and that Ann Cousins has very kindly agreed to take over. She has already booked the next season's meetings, but I am continuing to oversee the ones that I had arranged until the end of August. I have enjoyed the job very much as it gives the opportunity to meet and correspond with some really interesting people and also to get to know the members much better. I have been very fortunate in having two extremely supportive and helpful Chairmen in the present Mike Forryan and before that Edna Taylor. I would like to wish Ann the very best and hope she enjoys in too.

Mike Forryan told me he had a short piece he wished to go into this Bulletin. When it arrived I was somewhat embarrassed at having to insert it, but he did say it should go in so here goes:

Bulletin Editor and Secretary Tricia Berry

When our last Secretary, Doris Chandler, gave up the job of Secretary for the Society, Tricia Berry kindly agreed to take this over on a temporary basis. Now thirteen years later and having completed both jobs to an exceptional standard we have a new Secretary, Mrs. Ann Cousins.

I would like to thank Tricia, on behalf of the Committee and Members, for her tireless efforts over the thirteen years in completing the Secretarial duties in a most efficient manner. Tricia will continue as Bulletin Editor and we are very grateful for the excellent and very interesting content.

Thank you Tricia, your hard work has been appreciated by all.

Mike Forryan – Chairman.

Congratulations to Peter Clowes who has been awarded the MBE for services to the Framework Knitters Museum. Well done Peter.

DIAMOND JUBILEE EXHIBITION

This exhibition of Royal memorabilia was opened on 2nd June by the Mayor of Oadby and Wigston Borough Council, Councillor Linda Eaton. It has been organised by the Wigston Civic Society in association with Framework Knitters Museum and our own society. It is in the Yarn Room to the rear of the Museum and is open each Saturday 11 – 4.30 and each Sunday 2 – 4.30 until 12th August. It is beautifully set out and contains many very fascinating items. Well worth a visit.

BOOK CORNER by STELLA TWEED

I have always enjoyed reading and have been reading more since purchasing my Kindle last year. My favourite books are thrillers like those of Ian Rankin, Stieg Larsson, P.D. James etc., but recently I have been engrossed by History Fiction which contains real researched historical facts. I had the idea that others might be interested to hear and wish to add their own reviews and comments.

Hilary Mantel's new book *Bring Up The Bodies* charting the period in which Anne Boleyn was executed is due to be published in May this year. It is a sequel to her Man Booker Prize novel of 2009 *Wolf Hall* which I have just finished. It took some time to read because it is a long book, 650 pages long. Reserving judgement I decided to find out what other readers had thought about it. Many raved about it giving it five stars but others only one or two so it will not appeal to everyone.

It is a biography of Thomas Cromwell. Both he and Cardinal Wolsey rose to great heights from very humble beginnings. It covers the rise of Thomas Cromwell and the downfall of both Cardinal Wolsey and Sir Thomas More.

King Henry is a very complex character and Cromwell and Wolsey work towards achieving his marriage to Anne. I felt sorry for Mary who had been the King's mistress and then was shabbily treated by her sister.

Cromwell is a brilliant and charismatic clever schemer throughout, while Sir Thomas More is cruel. He seems to enjoy the torture he inflicts. He idolizes his daughter because she is clever and is learning Greek but despises his wife because of her lack of learning.

I enjoyed this book but found towards the middle that I needed to be alert or I sometimes missed reactions and so read for short periods. The author's words paint in detail scenes and events. Most of the book is written in imagined conversations. There are several people with the same name which can be confusing and often Cromwell is referred to as "he". Some people found it a hard slog. I found it overlong but am looking forward to reading the sequel.

For my second book I have chosen *The Pillars Of The Earth* by Ken Follett. This book was first published in 1989 and a film has been made of it with Ian McShane as Waleran Bigod. Now it can be purchased as a set of DVDs.

When Henry I died he had no male heir as he had been drowned in the White Ship Disaster so his daughter Maud became Queen. The barons refused to accept her and chose her cousin

Stephen who was a very weak king. Civil war ensued until Henry II, Maud's son became king. This period of the 12th Century is the setting for this book. It is the story of the building of a cathedral. Again it is historical fiction, not a text book. It contains real and fictional characters. I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book and found it difficult to put down. It is a long book but so much happens and the vivid descriptions took me into the scenes so that I empathized with the characters.

Tom Builder has a dream to build a cathedral. He is a master builder and is building a stone house when we first encounter the evil William Hamleigh, son of Sir Percy. William believes the only way to command respect from his tenants is to create fear.

Tom and his family travel to Cathedral Cities looking for work. They become destitute. His wife dies in childbirth. Tom, his son Alfred and daughter Martha leave the baby as they cannot buy milk for him. The baby is found and taken to a small remote religious sanctuary, home of Brother Philip who later becomes Prior of Kingsbridge. Tom meets Ellen and her son who are outlaws living in the forest. They travel together. He gets a job with Prior Philip and trains his son to be a mason. Alfred has a surly spiteful disposition.

Waleran Bigod is an unscrupulous self-seeking cleric who rises to power by devious means. He holds a state secret from the past. The Earl of Shiring is accused of treason and is put in prison and his son Richard and daughter Aliena are turned out of their castle by William. The lives of these characters are entwined telling a gripping tale of Middle Ages England. The murder of Thomas a Becket impinges on their story. There are so many twists and turns. Good does not always overcome evil, often evil prevails. It is a time when towns had walls to keep out invaders. There are some very disturbing, violent happenings with brutal behaviour and some of the sex is very graphic but don't let this put you off reading this very popular book.

Thanks to Stella for bringing these interesting books to our attention, they do indeed sound fascinating.

FIRST STEPS IN FAMILY HISTORY – PART III

Parish Registers

Last time we covered Birth, Marriage and Death (BMD) Certificates and Census Returns – taking you back to the 1830s – going back beyond that will take you into 300 years of Parish Registers. Parish Registers began to be kept from 1538 when Thomas Cromwell ordered that every parish should keep a record of baptisms, marriages and burials, with all entries in the registers being made after services on Sundays.

So Parish records could extend your research back to the time of King Henry VIII. Be aware that mistakes could be made in the entries, as for example if a burial took place on a Monday it was nearly a week until it could be recorded. This system continued until 1598 when a change was made, ordered by the hierarchy of the Church from Canterbury, that the registers should be kept on parchment instead of on paper because of damp and decay, and all previous records had to be copied from the start of Queen Elizabeth's reign in 1558, which accounts for the lack of records

before that year.

In 1653 the Government took over the custody of registers and appointed officers called “Parish Registrars” – these became known as Civil Registers – not many have survived. Up to the 1730s it was quite common for register entries to be made in Latin, so you may need some help in reading them. Many changes were made to the system along the way.

In 1645 dates of birth were added when a child was baptised, and dates of death were also supposed to be added, although this was not always carried out. In 1694 a levy of 2/- for a birth, 2/6 for a marriage and 4/- for a burial was introduced. Also births were to be notified to the incumbent within 5 days, and he was to receive 6d for recording them. These taxes were very short lived. In 1711 an Act was passed stating that proper Register Books with ruled lines and numbered pages were to be used – but this was largely ignored.

On 1st October 1783 the Stamp Act was passed for a duty of 3d for every entry of a birth, marriage or death. The duty was collected by the incumbent, and he was allowed to keep 10%. There was a great surge in the registration of baptisms in September 1783, many of the children being registered were several years old. No one on parish poor relief or in the workhouse had to pay this duty. It was repealed in 1793 when again there was another surge in registrations.

Throughout the centuries many registers were either badly kept, damaged in fires and floods and even lost or stolen, so there may well be gaps in the records you are looking for. To trace an ancestor through the Parish Records, you will need to know where they lived and the church they went to - Parishes correspond quite closely to villages of the same name. Whereas a rural parish may include a small village and two or three hamlets, there will be many parishes in the city, so you would need to determine in which your family lived.

Phillimore Marriage Registers

Phillimore, born William Phillimore Watts Stiff, was the son of Dr Stiff, a Nottingham Doctor. He later took the name Phillimore from the family of his grandmother. He became an Oxford-educated lawyer, and founded a British and Scottish Record Society along with the Canterbury and York Society. After he resigned from these societies, he turned his attention to his native country, and began the transcription and printing of marriage registers. When he died in 1914, he had covered 1200 parishes from different counties in 200 volumes.

Phillimore Marriage Registers is a series of books published in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by Phillimore & Co. Ltd. However, these registers do not cover all the parishes or complete dates - this depends on the surviving registers and the ones Phillimore collected, so there may be some omissions. In some counties, the coverage of parishes is very good, whereas in other counties just a few parishes were transcribed - most counties do not have every parish transcribed.

So What Can You Find In These Registers?

Baptism records from the sixteenth century until the 1800s normally show the name of the child and the Father with his occupation, and in most cases the name of the Mother. Occasionally the date of birth is shown, but generally just the date of baptism. Don't assume that it is always a child being baptised, as many older children and adults were baptised, particularly after the Restoration period in 1660 when people not baptised in the Cromwell era were later baptised. After an Act of Parliament in 1812, registers have been kept in a uniform way on printed forms, unlike the previous system.

Marriage records from the outset usually record the names of both parties, and may record if one of the couple was from outside the parish. Most marriages were either by licence or the publishing of banns on the three Sundays before the event. Where banns survive these can be very useful, as they had to be called in the parish church of both parties. Before 1753 marriages could take place by common law, and many were conducted by clergymen without banns or licences. After 1753 an Act of Parliament decreed that marriages should take place in the home parish church of one of the couple, and banns were to be called or a licence produced before the ceremony could take place. Licences were usually issued by the Bishop of the Diocese, but not many of these have survived.

Marriage Banns: After Hardwicke's Marriage Act of 1753, all marriages from March 1754 had to be by Banns or Licence and a Banns Register had to be kept. Usually the records are for the Bride's parish. If you are unable to find a marriage register find out if a Banns register survives.

Burial registers until 1812, often only show the name of the deceased, unless it is an infant death where sometimes the name of the Father is shown. After 1812 when a printed form was introduced, the information contains the date of burial, the full name of the deceased, where they were living and the age at death – useful for working out the approximate year of birth. In 1667 legislation was passed requiring all burials to take place in a woollen shroud. This lasted until 1814, and was designed to help the wool trade.

Bishop's Transcripts: From 1597 Canterbury ordered that copies of the registers, known as the Bishop's Transcripts (BT's), were to be sent to the Bishop each year. This continued, with a few missing years, until 1837 when Civil Registration started. These BT's can be very useful if the original registers have not survived.

Where Can You See The Registers?

When the Registers are full, they are normally deposited at a County Record Office, and microfilmed for public viewing. The Leicestershire & Rutland records that have been deposited are available at the Record Office for Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland in Wigston. (Contact them on 0116 257 1080). A summary of all parish registers is contained in Phillimore's Parish Register Atlas, which you should find in your local library or the county Record Office.

International Genealogical Index

The Church of the Latter Day Saints (Mormons) have also undertaken a large project of indexing registers and these are available freely on the Internet at www.familysearch.org. This index is not a complete record, as some church authorities would not allow the Mormons access to the registers, nevertheless it is a useful index, especially for baptisms. Some registers, especially if it is a small parish, are still in use. The register containing the baptism of my Grandfather in 1890 and his 12 brothers and sisters is still in use today in Felsham in Suffolk. In these cases you will have to make arrangements with the current Vicar of the Parish to view them.

Irish Parish Registers

About two thirds of Irish Registers were destroyed in the Civil War of 1922, but Catholic Registers from 1820 have been deposited and survive. They can be consulted at the General Register Office in Dublin.

Scotland Parish Registers

Registers of the Church of Scotland commenced in 1558, the earliest surviving being 1560. They

can be consulted at New Register House in Edinburgh.

Next Time.....Using The Internet For Family History

Peter Cousins

ROYAL DIAMOND JUBILEES

In this Diamond Jubilee year of our present Queen it is interesting to look back to the other Diamond Jubilee, that of Queen Victoria in 1897.

On that occasion an entire week from Monday 21th June to Friday 25th June was set aside for the celebrations. Planning started early, the following announcement in the Leicester Daily Post of 12/1/1897 stated that:

“In consequence of numerous applications which have been received by the Prince of Wales for guidance as to the selection of the most fitting scheme by which the 60th anniversary of the Queen’s accession might be celebrated, his Royal Highness desires to intimate that Her Majesty still adheres to the decision already announced, to refrain from expressing an opinion upon any proposals for doing honour to herself. His Royal Highness is however confident that the Queen will readily appreciate any undertakings to celebrate this event which may be the outcome of the wish of her people, whether generally or locally expressed. He feels assured that in considering the various suggestions, due support will be given to works of mercy among the sick and suffering, and to anything, which may tend to brighten the lives, and ameliorate the condition of her Majesty’s subjects”.

In London commemorative medals were struck and various events took place throughout the week culminating on 24th June with a one hour church service at St. Paul’s followed by a huge parade through the streets. In early June troops began arriving from all parts of the Empire to take part in the parade. Occasional licences were agreed at the Guildhall for the sale of wine, beer and spirits on stands erected along the route. Very early on the morning of 22nd June businesses and roads were closed in the capital so that a rehearsal could take place. On the day the parade consisted of twelve landaus each drawn by two bays, five semi-state landaus each with four horses and postilions, there were 50 mounted princes riding three abreast, then the Queen’s own carriage drawn by eight creams. All the landaus were upholstered in gold and vermilion. British and Commonwealth Troops and other participants followed behind.

The Princess of Wales organised a Jubilee Dinner Fund for which 20,000 sheep were sent from Australia. These dinners were also held on 24th June when, up and down the country, 300,000 poor people enjoyed the treat.

In Leicester, the Mayor J. Herbert Marshall, following a suggestion by the Prince of Wales, called on people to subscribe to an endowment fund for the Leicester Royal Infirmary. The aim was to raise £10,000. Decorations were to be left to individual residents and private enterprise. Except that the Commemoration Committee proposed to decorate and illuminate the front of the Municipality Buildings and the Municipality Square.

The celebrations spread over Jubilee week were as follows:

- (1) Infirmary sports on Aylestone Road grounds.
- (2) An open air service in the Market Place followed by a procession of magistrates, town

councillors and other public bodies and societies plus 300 members of the 3rd (Militia) Battalion of the Leicestershire Regiment, 400 of the 1st (Volunteer) Battalion of the Regiment and a small detachment of Regulars from the Depot at Glen Parva. They marched to Victoria Park where there was a review of the troops and a commemorative Oak Tree was planted by the Mayor using a special silver spade.

(3) A big fete in Abbey Park consisting of swimming and sports, gym displays, an amateur regatta on the Soar and Open Air Concerts. Refreshments were laid on and marquees available if wet. At dusk the park was illuminated and there was a bonfire and fireworks.

(4) 8,000 old people and widows were treated to a meat tea in the Floral Hall and schools were given money so they could organise a similar treat for 33,000 children.

There was a Jubilee Bonfire at Bradgate Park. On instructions from the Countess of Stamford and Warrington a bonfire 30 feet high and 108 feet in circumference was constructed near Old John. The site was 825 feet above sea level and one of the most conspicuous points in the county. It was lighted at 10p.m.

In Wigston the following account has been taken directly from the Leicestershire Mercury for Wednesday 23rd June 1897.

“Wigston – en fete on Tuesday 22nd, decorated with a liberal supply of bunting. Older residents saying they had never seen the old village looking so nice. The programme commenced with a merry peal of bells at All Saints’ Church from 9.00-10.15a.m. Then Wigston United Brass Band played a selection at the residence of Mr. T. Ingram who had kindly placed his grounds at the disposal of the Celebration Committee for the day and also his gardens from 7.00 – 9.00p.m.

At 10.45a.m. a procession was formed near Mr. Owston’s house consisting of 700 children, members of the Oddfellows and other Friendly Societies, members of the Urban Council and Celebration Committee. Headed by the band the procession marched to the Market Place where the most important and interesting part of the day’s proceedings took place, viz., the opening of the drinking fountain by Mr. S.D. Pochin of Croft, which he had presented to the parish. A platform had been erected for the speakers. Mr. J. Walker JP, Chairman of the Urban District, presided, and was accompanied on the platform by Mrs. Pochin, Mr. B.D Pochin, Mr. S. Mather, The Revs. Mason (vicar), Deeming and Barron, Mr. T. Ingram, Mr. H.A. Owston and Mr. J. Wignall. The following were also present: Councillors Cooper, Johnson, Forryan, Loveday and Freckingham.

The Chairman in a brief speech introduced Mr. Pochin who on rising received a most enthusiastic reception and was frequently applauded during his speech, which was of a very interesting character. He reminded his hearers that his ancestors settled in Wigston over 200 years ago and he felt it to be both a pleasure and a privilege to do something to benefit his native town. He thanked the large assembly for the kind way in which they had received him on the present occasion. He incidentally mentioned that he was the first post boy Wigston had; and at that time letters cost 8d. and 10d. each. So he thought they would agree that times had improved since then. He also had the honour of lighting the first lamp in Wigston and now he had the privilege of opening the first drinking fountain. He then proceeded to turn on the water, drank to the health of her Majesty the Queen and declared the fountain open. Cheers were raised and the band played “He’s a Jolly Good Fellow”.

Mr. Walker then moved the following resolution: “This meeting cordially thanks Mr. S.D. Pochin for his generosity in presenting to the Parish of Wigston Magna the handsome drinking fountain which he has this day dedicated to the use of the public”. Mr. Owston seconded with the greatest

pleasure and gratitude. As a former inhabitant of Wigston, Mr. Pochin had not been unmindful of his early connection and associations with this place, and by this gracious and generous act he had formed a permanent and endearing link between himself and family and the parish of Wigston.

It was many years since he resided among them, and he must have been struck by the progress they had made in the interval. Not only had they increased in population and prosperity but in all those intellectual, social and material elements which contributed to the happiness and contentment of a community. Speaking as a resident in Wigston for more than a quarter of a century, it was pleasing to him to refer to the increase of sympathy and kindly and considerate feeling among the various classes in the parish. They had acquired within a very recent period a system of self-government, which he might be excused if he referred to with pride and satisfaction. They had now in their Urban Council a local Parliament which effectually provided for them health, comfort and enjoyment. Mr. Owston concluded by expressing the thanks of all present for the gift Mr. Pochin had conferred upon the parish. The Revs. H.J. Mason, T.C. Deeming, Barron and Mr. Ingram, Mr. Mather and Mr. J. Wignall spoke in support of the resolution and this part of the day's proceedings were brought to a close by the band playing Auld Lang Syne.

The Old People were provided by a dinner in the Village Hall to the number of about 270, and the children had tea in their respective schools to the number of about 700, after which accompanied by the band, they marched to the grounds of Mr. T. Ingram where games etc., were provided, followed by a display of fireworks. At 10.30p.m. the large bonfire which Mr. T. Ingram had had constructed, was lighted. The whole of the day's proceedings passed off satisfactorily and the day was generally acknowledged to have been a red-letter one in Wigston. The following ladies and gentlemen rendered good service in carrying out the arrangements and waiting on the old people: Mrs. Shields, Mrs. Walker, Mrs. Wilde, Mrs. Ekins, Mrs. Ladkin, Messrs. T. Goodin, Loveday, Ladkin, H. Smith, W.G. Forryan, J.G. Forryan, Revs. Deeming, Mason and Mr. Johnson of The Grange and others. Great credit is due to the Honorary Secretaries, Messrs. Edgar Boulter and W. Sharp."

The Leicester Daily Post of 23rd June adds that "the day continued with a dinner in the Village Hall for the old people and a tea for the children in their schools. Afterwards the band assembled at the Market Place and preceded the procession of school children to Mr. T. Ingram's where sports and other amusements were provided. On arriving at the field the children sang the National Anthem and during the evening they disported themselves to their liking till nearly 10 o'clock when the National Anthem was again sung by the assembly. The large bonfire was then lighted, accompanied by a discharge of rockets and other illuminations bringing an enjoyable day to a close.

The following days Post also reports that on the Wednesday in South Wigston 50 old people were treated to a Meat Tea at the Congregational Chapel and 1,100 children had tea at their schools. In the afternoon and evening the latter "indulged in games and sports in a field belonging to Mr. W. Dunmore, and were given sweets, an orange and a medal. Through the instrumentality of Mr. Rollinson 30 old people were taken on a drive into the country. The Jubilee Committee in South Wigston consisted of W. Dunmore, J. Gamble, W. Parker, W. Gamble, R. Leach and Messrs. Rollinson, Thornton, Squires, Rudkin, Peck, E. Dunmore, F. Dunmore, Rev. F.E. Perry. Mr. Herbert Simpson was the Hon. Secretary. On the Monday Mr. Dunmore entertained his work people (250) to a substantial dinner and tea. Back in Wigston Magna on Wednesday Mr. J.D. Broughton gave his workpeople a treat". Pity it does not say what this was.

The account of the opening of the drinking fountain is of particular interest for a number of reasons. It was erected on The Bank (known as the Market Place then), in Bell Street actually in

the road. This is because it was intended for use by both humans and animals. The very generous donor, Mr. S.D. Pochin was Samuel Davenport Pochin the second son of William Pochin, who is commemorated on the tomb on the front of the United Reformed Church. Samuel's elder brother was Henry Davis Pochin, an industrial chemist and businessman of note, who had moved to Salford and then to Bodnant Hall in North Wales. The gardens he established there are now managed by the National Trust. Samuel Davenport Pochin ran the family owned quarry at Croft with another brother. He was accompanied to this presentation by his wife and probably his son Charles Davis Pochin (there does not appear to be a B.D. Pochin in the family pedigree, so perhaps the newspaper account contained an error). Mr. S. Mather would also have been a relative as people of this name do occur on the pedigree.

In his speech Mr. Pochin who was born in 1826 mentioned that he was Wigston's first post boy. This happened because his father William, a farmer and butcher, owned the Bull's Head in Bull Head Street which was situated about opposite the turn to Mowsley End. This public house was used in the early days as a posthouse for receiving the mail. Post was delivered to the main towns by special extra fast Mail Coaches. Wigston's would be collected and delivered from Leicester on horseback or perhaps even on foot. It would be a natural thing for William to get his son to deliver the mail and collect the charge which, before the introduction postage stamps in 1840, was levied on the receiver, not the sender. This would be why he remembered the charges of 8d. and 10d. so clearly. No wonder he said things had improved when the penny black etc. was introduced!

Nothing lasts for ever but it is very sad that no-one seems to know what happened to the drinking fountain. There is a 1935 photo of it which is exhibit 38 in the Jubilee Exhibition. This shows it on a smallish traffic island at the junction of Bell Street, Bull Head Street and Oadby Lane where it appears to be in a slightly different place from its original location nearer the kerb. It may well have had to be moved again and been damaged during subsequent work to first enlarge the island and later remove it.

It should not be forgotten that on the boundary wall at All Saint's Church there is a plaque to the effect that it was erected on the occasion of this Jubilee by a Parishioner. It is generally believed that Thomas Ingram of Hawthorn House (now Abington House) in Station Road, where the festivities took place, was the anonymous donor. This house survives in the grounds of Abington School.

Tricia Berry

New members not familiar with Wigston's history may find the following helpful:

- 1) Thomas Ingram was a noted Leicester solicitor (Harvey Ingram, New Walk). He lived at Hawthorn House, Station Road. His grounds where everyone gathered for the games, bonfire and rockets etc. is the area now covered by the three schools.
- 2) Mr. H.A. Owston was also a noted Leicester solicitor whose practice has now become part of Harvey Ingram. His home, Bushloe House, is the present Council Offices. He was instrumental in establishing Urban District status for Wigston which had happened recently in 1894, which is why he refers to it in his speech.
- 3) Wigston's Village Hall in those days was situated in Frederick Street, it has since been demolished.

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