



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

Bulletin 22

OCT '88



NOTICES ... NOTICES ... NOTICES ... NOTICES ... NOTICES

Programme for 1988 /89

Wednesday October 19th 1988

Slides of Wigston
By Bill Ward
7.30pm Wigston Liberal Club

Wednesday November 16th 1988

Talk Women in History
By Shirley Aucott of Leicester University
7.30pm Wigston Liberal Club

Wednesday December 14th 1988

Christmas Party and Quiz
7.30pm Wigston Liberal Club

Wednesday January 18th 1989

Your Family Tree
Mr G S House of Oadby
7.30pm Wigston Liberal Club

Wednesday February 15th 1989

AGM and Report on how the Town Trail is progressing
7.30pm Wigston Liberal Club

Why not invite a friend along to the next meeting? New members are always welcome, Suggestions for the Summer programme would be appreciated. We might even get some fine weather next summer.

It has not been possible to arrange a joint fund raising venture for the Bushloe End Framework Knitting Museum. However raffle tickets are on sale from October 1st for a Grand Prize Draw. all proceeds to the Museum appeal. Your help in selling these would be greatly appreciated. Tickets can be obtained from Ian Varey There are some 12,000 to sell before the draw on November 10th.

The Bulletin is published three times per year. 1st February, June and October.
Articles etc. to the Editor three clear weeks before please.
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Latest News About Wigston FWK Museum

Plans have been drawn up for restoration phase II
Unfortunately cash is not to hand!

The fabric of the building plus window frames, second floor brackets and tie-bars, rebuilding the outhouse (which is about to fall down), similarly the outside privies, etc etc. has been quoted at something in excess of 26,000.

40 to 50% of this should come from Grants but that still leave some £13,000 plus for the Trust to find, preferably before New Year 1989.

There is little point of moving on to furnishing and decorating the house or equipping to cater for visitors until the basic restoration by the outside contractors is finished.

Be assured, that those who are keen to join a working party at Bushloe End, your time will come.

Something that the friends can get on with is the Garden. Anyone who would like to turn up with a folk, sickle, machete and jungle survival kit might like to note the following dates.

Garden Working Parties: Saturday Oct 8th, Nov 12th, Nov 19th, weather permitting 1.30pm to 4 pm. We can provide tea and coffee but anything stronger and you will have to nip round to the Plough which is open all day.

The Friends have been busy spreading the word and converting the unconverted. After the Borough show in Wigston on August 14th who has not heard of us? The display provoked great interest and thousands of leaflets were given out, some resulting in new members. Membership now stands at 248. The test will of course come when renewal of subscriptions are called for in Jan 1989.

The committee thought it only right that those who join at the end of the year should get a few months of 1988 free and all of 1989 for the one subscription.

As an organisation we have shown well over 1000 people around Bushloe End since January.

We have also got 5 Griswold knitting machines working, enough for a school of knitters. I am waiting for a time when I don't have to buy another pair of sock! Perhaps of more interest is that one or two members have been taking a few tentative steps towards learning Framework knitting, thanks to Martin Green and the Museum of Technology.

Whilst none of our frames are actually knitting yet we have got the very wide frame (set up for twelve fingers) loose and moving. This means we are able to demonstrate some of the nine movements involved in knitting a course.

Please try and make the AGM on Nov 10th not only to hear what promises to be an interesting talk by Bernard Elliott our Chairman, or to see if you have won a prize in

the Grand Draw, but to witness the friends handing over a sizeable cheque to the Trust which will help to raise the small matter of £13,000 that we need for Phase II.

AGM Nov 10th at 7.30pm Guthlaxton Community Lounge, next door to Wigston Swimming Baths.

Ian Varey

Trailing About

One of the best ways to get to know a town or to introduce it to visitors is to follow a town trail... a leaflet which describes the most interesting buildings, old and new, as you walk about / along a prescribed route shown on a map. Most towns think they have a few buildings to show off / publish these now a days. Why Not Wigston?

At the last committee meeting, the members suggested some buildings that might be included in such a Trail for Wigston.

It went like this:-

The Parish Church	Dr Longford's House
St. Wistan's Church	Abington House
The United Reformed Church	Busloe House
Buildings in Newgate End	The School Base
FWK Museum	The Old Crown Pub
The Library	Frame Shop in Barrack Yard
The Lanes	Spa Lane Houses and Workshops
Twenty Row	Spion Cop and the Railway Hotel

Quite a respectable list! Perhaps you don't agree with every building on it, or perhaps you think we have missed something such as the Drinksmart? If so let us know.

Some Town Trails are published by the Local County Council Planning Department, or the Museum or the Library, but where there is a flourishing Local History Society in the district, it usually undertakes to prepare a Trail. We as a Society could make a good joint effort at producing a Trail. We as a Society could make a good joint effort at producing a Trail for Wigston, if all members offer to write a short piece about a favourite building.

The Council will help with the cost of printing and illustrations if we produce a suitable leaflet. Our name will go on the leaflet and this will provide welcome publicity. The price of these Trails is usually about 10p to 20p and it could be on sale at the information Bureau, Libraries and also at the Framework Knitting Museum.

There is no need to write a lot of detail about each building. A town Trail is not meant to be a comprehensive guide book. Short reference to local people adds a touch of colour. I include a few notes about the British Legion Building as an example to get you going.

The British Legion Building

This three storey house was built by Samuel Davenport in 1752 and used to be called the Elms. Made of brick and roofed in Swithland Slate, it represents the type of urban sophisticated dwelling which was being built in the second half of the 18th century by the half dozen or so upwardly mobile peasant gentry families of Wigston. This building represents the Georgian style of architecture. The most famous or infamous member of the family was George Davenport, the Highwayman, grandson of the builder Samuel. Although he robbed often with violence, he was known to help the poor and became something of a romantic hero, being compared with Dick Turpin. He was eventually caught and hanged and was buried in All Saint's Church Yard.

Useful books for information are:-

W G Hoskins	The Midland Peasant
N Pevsner	The Building of England, Leicestershire and Rutland
Arthur Mee	Leicestershire and Rutland
Barry Lount	George Davenport
Duncan Lucas	Bygone Wigston

The Transactions of the Society available from the Secretary.

These, plus others, can be obtained from the library either from the Local History Shelves or from the Local History Room. You have only to ask for the key at the desk.

If you fancy having a go let me know which house / building you have chosen, so that a check can be made to ensure that work is not duplicated. This would be a waste of effort.

Already we have three pieces, the Chestnuts on Spa Lane, Abington House, the School Campus and the British Legion. So we are well begun!

In 1989, when the Framework Knitting Museum opens, it would be nice to have a town Trail to hand for the hundreds of visitors who will doubtless be attracted to the town. Its short notice but it can be done if we all have a go! Besides I've been told that Oadby have spent some years on preparing such a trail. I would like us to beat them to it.

Edna Taylor

A Short History of Abington House

Built during the last century Abington House once stood in its own extensive grounds. Several other such houses stood on the road to Blaby (once known as Hawthorn or Blaby Lane), including Bushloe House, home of the Leicester solicitor Hiram Abiff Owston. His house is now the site of the Wigston College of Further Education.

Abington House was originally known as Hawthorn Field and was the home of another well known Leicester 'Solicitor', Thomas Ingram, known to have the "well to

do” as his clients. It is said that he once sent a bill to someone for 7/6d just for passing the time of day with him in the street.

Thomas Ingram probably had the house built for his own occupation. It was built of stone with a Swithland slate roof to the main house and the adjoining coach house. The Swithland Slate roof suggests a date of no later than 1870, however, the house incorporates some Staffordshire blue bricks that were not introduced until the 1850’s.

The earliest Directory reference found for Thomas Ingram in Wigston is in Whites 1862 Directory. Under Wigston it lists “T Ingram of Bushloe End”. Neither Thomas Ingram nor the house ‘Hawthorn House’ appear in the 1861 census. All evidence therefore suggests a date of about 1862.

The house is basically square with entrances on the South and West fronts. Evidence of a porch remains on the West front with steps leading up to the doorway. The coach house, former stables and other outbuildings are on the East side. The North side which faces the road is screened by trees. It appears to have three storeys, the upper one having dormer type windows on the North side only. The stone used in its construction is similar to that found in other buildings in the area, slabs of slate also appear to have been incorporated.

The West and South fronts both have two storied bay windows. Other windows have rounded heads as does the West front door and the main coach house entrance. The windows do not appear to be original. The coach house with its attractive finial seems to have been built at the same time, the roof, stonework and brick built chimneys being similar to the main building.

At the same time of Ingram’s occupation of Hawthorn Field, there would have been extensive views to the South and West across the Midland Railway line and Wigston Magna Station of 1857 to the open country beyond.

An interesting story surrounds the brick built conduit, which was originally a prominent feature in nearby Leicester. About 1870 it was due to be demolished, (the Water Committee of the Leicester Corporation acquired the undertaking to supply water in 1878), so Thomas Ingram had it taken down brick by brick to grace his new estate in Wigston. There it remained for many years until it was finally demolished shortly after the Abington School was built.

A glance at the 1871 census reveals that Thomas Ingram was living in Blaby Lane aged 61 and his occupation was solicitor, Registrar of Leicester County Court and Clerk to Billesdon Union. Living with him was his wife Frances Dowley Ingram also aged 61, a visitor and four servants to attend to their needs. The 1881 census mentions Hawthorn Field. Thomas and Frances Ingram were still alive and there was a cook, parlour maid, house maid, kitchen maid and a dairymaid in service.

Thomas Ingram was a well known local benefactor, presenting two stained glass windows to All Saint’s Church. He also provided for the church wall to be built. He was evidently a fairly modest man as the stone tablet built into the N.E. corner just states:-

“This Church Wall was built AD 1897 Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee Year by a Parishioner”

Newspaper reports of the period show him to have been a well respected man with a sense of humour. With his fellow solicitor Mr Owston they donated articles of warm clothing and soup to the needy in the community at Christmas time. When members of the village gathered for meetings he was frequently elected to the chair. He served on the Burial Board and the Queens Diamond Jubilee Committee. During the Jubilee celebrations the grounds of Hawthorn Field were used for amusements, children’s races and a firework display.

When the red brick church of St Thomas in South Wigston was erected in 1893he gave £1,000 towards the cost of building. He also made gifts of a Pulpit, Organ and peal of eight bells in the tower. On December 27th 1904 changes were rung without rest on the peal of bells for a period of 10 hours and 35 minutes. The choice of dedication for the church is said to have reflected Thomas Ingram’s patronage.

Mr Ingram lived into his nineties and is thought to have died in 1908. He is listed in Kelly’s 1908 Directory when he would have been 98 years old. In fact Mr Ken Roe’s mother was Mr Ingram’s housekeeper until her marriage.

Although Mr Ingram was married he appears to have died without issue. Hawthorn Field passed into the hands of his nephew the Rev. Mortlock of Abington in Oxfordshire. It may have been at this time that the name was changed to Abington House. In Kelly’s Directory for 1916 the Rev. Charles Frederick Mortlock MA of Station Road is listed as one of the principle land owners in Wigston. In Kelly’s 1928 Directory the name Abington House first appeared as the residence of Mrs. Lucy Mortlock, presumably Charles’ widow. In 1932 she is given as one of the main landowners together with Ernest Broughton Esq. of Bull Head Street.

The Mortlock family may have had an interest in racing as the good quality pasture land surrounding the house was often used to keep race horses.

The house continued to be occupied by Mrs Mortlock through the 1940’s and in the 1950’s it was taken over for the development of the schools complex that we know today.

Its extensive grounds are now the school campus and the house itself is used both as a crèche and by the County Council’s Technical Services Department. In spite of loosing fine old elm trees to Dutch Elm Disease in 1981, its mature environment remains and makes it almost invisible from the road. It presents a pleasing contrast to the modern buildings that surround it.

Chris Smart.

What’s in a Name

Whilst doing some research into Greater Wigston School Board, established just over one hundred years ago, I have become interested in the name of the teachers, pupils and all connected with the Board at all times.

Many of the surnames are the traditional Wigston names

Abbott, Forryan, Ward, Burgess, Coltman, Pawley, Boulter, Clark, Cox, Gilford, Vann, Wignall, Herrick, Lewin.

The first seven of these names appear in the Field Reeve's Account Book, 1752 – 1765 for Wigston, which used to be kept in the church parish chest, but which is now in the Records Office.

The names, however, go back many years before this account book. Dr Hoskins records that Pawleys were peasant proprietors in the village in the 1440's and the Boulters first appear in the village in Elizabethan days, Vanns farmed here a hundred years before that.

The Herricks certainly bore a Scandinavian name and the first written occurrence of the name is in 1250. Henry Eyrig, Dr Hoskins believes that this family can trace its name back to the original Danish settlers in Wigston in the last quarter of the 9th century.

Dr P A Reaney, author of 'The Origin of English Surnames', feels this pushes the evidence too far. It is quite certain he writes that the surname in Wigston and elsewhere, suggests that Eric who gave his name to the family probably lived about the end of the 12th century. That's probably early enough for most people!

Names like Gilford and Wignall probably denote where the family originated, Guilford in Surrey and Wiggshall in Norfolk.

As the School Board began to recruit teachers from farther afield, non local names start to make their appearance. Examples are Yerbury ... Somerset ... Leinster ... Derbyshire ... Parry ... Wales ... Andrews ... Oxfordshire

Christian names show a big swing in fashion. Where we have Sharon, Karen, Sandra, Ann, Diana ... They and Florence, Ada, Eva, Jessie, Ethel, Alice, Lizzie and Annie.

Boys were frequently christened George, Percy, Ernest, Oswald, Thomas, Stanley, Frederick, but the Michaels, Peters, Ians, Davids and Christophers of today were rarely in evidence.

Biblical names were common boys, Samuel, Josiah, Isaac, Eli and even Meshak. Pity the poor girl of today called Hepzibah.

Some names which were popular a hundred years ago have come back into fashion. Three of them used by the present Royal Family... They are Harry, William and Beatrice. Also popular again are James, Joseph and Adam for boys and Emily, Jane, Sarah for girls. Perhaps there will be Arthurs and Gertrudes with us again.

There are one or two really strange names on the registers and staff lists of the board schools in Wigston, especially amongst the girls Thirza, Rasina, Blanche, Laetitia and Lilly with two L's. The strangest one for the boys name was Alonzo and we find Boulters, Colvers, Parsons, Masons and Moulds all give one of their boys this name. Now that name sounds Spanish to me did any Latin families come to settle in Wigston. If anyone knows the origin of Alonzo I would love to know!

Edna Taylor

Acknowledgement is due to Bob Wignall for his list of teachers employed by the Wigston Board School in Transaction 38 and his transcript of the minutes of the Wigston Board School.