

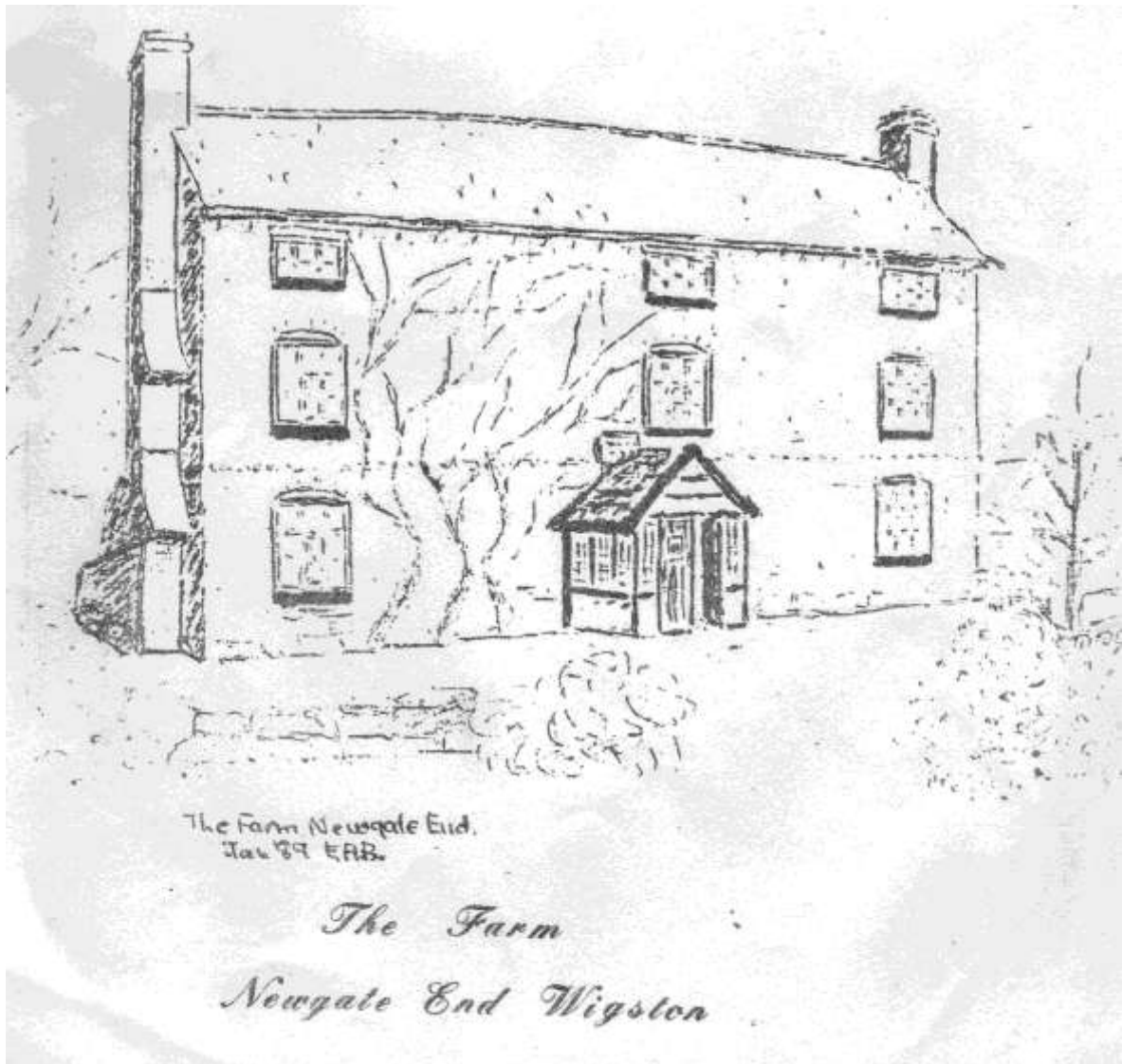


Greater Wigston Historical Society  
White Gate Farm, Newton Lane, Wigston Magna Leicestershire

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*Bulletin 23*

*February 1989*



## Programme of Meeting February to August 1989

### **Wednesday February 15<sup>th</sup> 1989**

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

### **Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> March 1989**

Members Evening. Your turn to talk or show slides for 5 to 10 mins.  
7.30pm Wigston Liberal Club

### **Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> April 1989**

Maps – an illustrated lecture by Brian Bilson  
7.30pm Wigston Liberal Club

### **\*\* Monday 8<sup>th</sup> May 1989**

A G M of the Leics. Local History Council. This is instead of the usual 3<sup>rd</sup>  
Wednesday. Small exhibitions + refreshments.  
In the large room at the Wigston Liberal Club.

### **Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> June 1989**

Coach Outing to Borough Hill  
Names for this at the February meeting

### **Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> August 1989**

Barbecue at White Gate Farm, Wigston  
Joint meeting with the Civic Society. Details Later

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### **A G M**

Please come to this if you can. The business discussed concerns all members of the Society and it is your opportunity to become involved and put forward any ideas you have about Programme content. Subscription Rates etc. Speaking of which, the 1989 subscriptions become due this February and the Treasurer will be hoping to collect these at the meeting after the rate for the year has been decided upon. We shall also be having a report on how the Town Trail is progressing.

### **Editor of Bulletin**

There has been a change since the last Bulletin was published. Chris Smart & Tricia Berry have offered? Been asked? To take over the position jointly. This will leave Ian Varey with a little more time to concentrate on his other commitments. He is however still involved and will be available to offer us advice and to do the duplicating. Thank you Ian.

As before the Bulletin will be published three times a year on 1<sup>st</sup> February, June and October. Articles etc. should be given to either of the joint Editors three clear weeks before publication date please.

Joint Editors:-

Mrs Chris Smart 16 Maidwell Close Wigston

Mrs Tricia Berry 11 Hayes Road Wigston

### **September Meeting 1988**

Siobana Karrane from the Leicester Oral History Archive gave us a very interesting talk on her work with the Archive. She and her colleagues make cassette recordings of conversations they have had with various citizens from Leicester and County towns. These people had memories going back to quite early in the century. With a little encouragement they reminisced on such subjects as home life, school, work and outside events they remembered like political meetings, demonstrations and of course the two world wars.

It was accepted that sometimes the memory can play tricks and that not all the statements made might be totally accurate in every detail. Nevertheless the Oral Archives are valuable as they cover more everyday subjects not usually featured in History Books, and also they are a contribution from people who would not otherwise make any record of our past.

The cassettes on Domestic Service describing life below stairs and Home Remedies perhaps particularly illustrate this. We all now know when to use the goose grease.

The Leicester Oral History Archive issue a Catalogue of available cassettes which cost £1.25 plus P & P and can be obtained from: 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor 80 Granby Street Leicester.

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### **October Meeting**

On Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> of October the Society was entertained by Mr Bill Ward and his "Slides of Wigston". This was a most enjoyable evening enhanced by Mr Ward's knowledgeable commentary; his unique set of slides and the amusing anecdotes contributed by members. After a vote of thanks by the chairman, Mrs Edna Taylor, the meeting closed about 10.30 pm.

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### **November Meeting**

On Wednesday the 16<sup>th</sup> of November the Society met to hear Mrs Shirley Aucott of the University of Leicester give a talk on "Women in History". Mrs Aucott told the Society how women have been represented in history and how the importance of women's work has been underestimated. Presented from a slightly feminist point of view the talk provoked much discussion amongst members. After a vote of thanks the meeting closed at about 9.30pm.

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### **December Meeting**

The December meeting was held on Wednesday the 14<sup>th</sup> of the month and was the Society's Annual Christmas Party and Quiz. The evening commenced with a testing picture quiz devised by Edna; a splendid buffet supper provided by Mavis and Maureen followed. The party then split into four teams for "Ian's Full House" a sort

of bingo, with questions covering a wide range of subjects. After the raffle and distribution of prizes the evening closed about 10:15pm.

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Thomas Love Peacock 1785 – 1866 wrote “A book that furnishes no quotations is, me justice, no book – it is a plaything”.

So we quote ...

“History is Prophecy backward”                      L.L.L.

“What experience and history teach is this – that people and governments never have learned anything from history, or acted on principles deduced from it”.

Introduction.    Philosophy of History  
                          G W F Hegel 1770 - 1831

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The Town Trail project is not dead! We are waiting for people to write paragraphs similar to these. Have you done one yet? Please send completed ones to Edna Taylor, 3 Wimborne Close Wigston Leicester 10 minutes work that’s all.

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**Midland Terrance Wigston (Twenty Row)**

A row of twenty identical railway cottages facing the main London line and built by the Midland Railway Company between 1871 and 1881. At this time the railway was gaining in importance in Wigston. This row of cottages with their typical brick faced pointed windows were built to fulfil the need for houses as the number of railway workers began to increase. Within ten years the Wagon Shops and Engine Sheds were employing over 300 men and the private, speculative development known as South Wigston had been completed.

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**Wigston Public Library – Bull Head Street**

Designed by Thomas Locke, the County Architect, and built in 1972/4, it is a two storey design of grey cladding and tinted glass. The main library is on the first floor and reached by a ramp or steps. A children’s library, Citizens advice bureau and stores are in the lower storey.

To the north is Spring Lane (once known as Little Frederick Street) an asymmetrical row of four cottages built in 1874 and called Burton Cottages (note chimneys). They are a relic of “Old Wigston” – all that remains of a street pattern that no longer exists.

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## **42/44 Bushloe End – Wigston**

This building is now the home of the Wigston Framework Knitting Museum. However the building started life as a small farmhouse. The ground floor shows red and black chequer work, while the first floor has a bold diaper (diamond) pattern. The bricks are narrow and very early for this county. The building probably dates from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. In the nineteenth century the cobbled yard at the back, still with its water pump, saw the building of workshops to house hand knitting frames used in the production of worsted wear, initially hose and then gloves and mittens. In 1986 the local Council bought the property and leased it to a Trust who was charged with the restoration and renovation of the building and 19<sup>th</sup> century knitting machines which miraculously were still in situ in the garden workshop. WELL WORTH A VISIT.

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## **1589 and all that .....**

We seem to have been talking about 1989 for ages and how important it is to the Knitting Industry and to the Wigston Framework Knitting Museum. Well 1989 has arrived!

Just when the Rev. William Lee invented the knitting frame, or should one say managed to get it working, is not known. This date of 1589 comes down through history because it was in that year that he applied for a Royal Patent. In those days the closed societies of the various Guilds would have snuffed out new fangled inventions that might damage their trade. Without royal approval up and coming good ideas were likely to be still born.

As it happens Wm. Lee's invention was not approved. It is a good thing that he and his brother were made of the stuff of inventors. That is to say, they did not take NO for an answer they just went elsewhere to look for sponsorship.

It is no wonder that the court down in London was unimpressed by the new mechanised marvel. Think of the costumes of the period. Think of the various Elizabethan portraits, legs usually only gentlemen's were visible and invariably dressed in fine hose. Silk was certainly the fabric if you could afford it. Consider what Wm.'s machine could do! It could produce flat plain knitting in a continuous piece, some 12 inches wide. There were 8 stitches to the inch and the heavy worsted would probably be somewhere between 3 ply and double knitting on the quality of the hand spun yarn.

The Queen and courtiers had probably never worn anything as coarse and as rough in their lives. If they had noticed such materials it was probably on the back of some country peasant or town menial! While they possibly marvelled at the mechanics even the ingenuity they just could not see the use of such a machine. "Replace the hand knitters! What would the Hand knitters do then? Yes! Very interesting Rev. Lee but no! Patent not approved. Next Please!

So the Lee brothers packed their gear and left for France. There they had a more sympatric reception and were allowed to work, develop and improve the Hand frame Knitting Machine. Eventually returned to England and settling up workshops in London. Incidentally with a machine that could now work in silk. From London the skills and knowledge slowly spread to Hinckley and the East Midlands .... The rest is well known.

With 'hind sight', 400 years later we are no so dismissive of the good William's invention as the regal Tudors.

The development of such a machine at such a date, even if it was eight stitches to the inch., is remarkable.

The next time you are in Wigston Framework Knitting Museum, SOON I HOPE, just spend a moment looking at the complexities of a hand frame. Although the Bushloe End frames are 250 later than Lee's original they remain much the same with the same kind of movements and operations.

Imagine the patience and the vision needed to try and recreate the action of hand knitting. Think of the technology, tools, craftsman available in 1589 to make that which Lee envisaged in his mind. Just think of the one action of sinkers dropping between needles and the accuracy and uniformity needed to achieve the movement.

As with all inventions the mind behind the invention is given the credit, rightly so, but unless the Rev. Lee was a skilled Blacksmith or metalworker, credit must also go to the craftsmen, the names of whom have not survived, who made William's design a reality! How many attempts and failures must have preceded the final success, months or even years of trying?

The Rev. William Lee might not have received the acclimation that he deserved in his lifetime but surely he will get his fair share this year! Acclimation which I for one think he deserves.

Ian Varey

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WATCH OUT IN THE LOCAL PRESS FOR DETAILS OF VARIOUS EVENTS, DISPLAYS AND EXHIBITIONS TO MARK THE 400<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY.

A considerable programme is being arranged by the representative of the Knitting Industry and the Museum Services, Polytechnic College etc.

The Wigston Framework Knitters Museum is of course determined to open in May of this year, as our way of marking the 400<sup>th</sup>.

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Friends of Wigston FWK Museum have asked to have this notice included.

RUMMAGE SALE

All Saint's Church Rooms  
February 18<sup>th</sup> 1989 Saturday.  
Tine 2pm. Admission 5p. Refreshments available.

IF YOU HAVE ANY RUMMAGE PLEASE TAKE TO PETER CLOWES, 2  
BUSHLOE END OR GIVE HIM A RING 883396

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### **The Farm, Newgate End. Wigston**

The farm is the oldest surviving brick built house in Wigston. There is a plan and description of the house by W G Hoskins in "The Midland Peasant". Apart from a porch over the front door and a modern kitchen extension at the rear, the external structure of the house, the perimeter of the farmyard in front and the orchard at the rear are all thought to have remained unchanged since it was built.

The house was built in 1691 on a stone foundation, probably the site of an earlier dwelling. It is rectangular in shape, on three floors, with chimneys at either end and built mainly in 2" red bricks. The chimney on the all facing North shows the shape of the deep inle nook fireplace of the room originally the kitchen. There is a brick string course along the front of the house above the level of the above the levels of the floor windows and extending almost to the eaves, the bricks change to the standard size. (Bricklayers increased the size of bricks following the introduction of the brick tax in 1784, which at that time was 2/6d per 1000 bricks). Directly below the eaves is a dentil course also in brick. The change in brick size occurred in 1800 when the wells were raised and a new roof made to accommodate the second floor bedrooms. There is no sign of a former roof pitch on the end walls and chimneys or the rear wall and here the extension was completed with narrow bricks. The present roof is covered with Welsh slates but earlier the house may have been thatched.

The windows have changed considerably since the 17<sup>th</sup> Century. At the rear, windows have been added on the first floor while at the front, on the ground floor and first floor a number of windows have obviously been blocked. The situation of the remaining windows is much as the original plan. Over the central front door is a stone tablet bearing initials and the date AD 1691. According to W G Hoskins this was the yeoman farmhouse of John Pochin. A tradition, however, handed down to the present occupiers is that the house was built by Issac Pochin and the stone tablet shows the clearly incised initials "I.P."

The outbuildings on the north and south sides of the farmyard are built of standard bricks and roofed at the front with Welsh slates, while the rears are covered with modern tiles. In front of the house stands a lead covered pump, no longer working, over a well. The ground base of the farmyard, which opens directly on to the street, is now a combination of garden, cobbles and concrete. The surrounding walls of the yard and the orchard are part brick and part stone. Prior to the Enclosure Acts which began in the 1750's, most farm houses were built in the villages. Following this, strip cultivation of the fields ceased and specific allotments were made to individual farmers often some distance from the village. It then became more economic for the farmsteads to be placed in the fields.

The house gives the appearance of a traditional flat-fronted farmhouse, the style of which was followed for the next approx. 150 years. It remained an active farm until it was converted to a private dwelling in 1961. It is now a listed building.

Anne Brown

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## BATHING

If to preserve health be to save medical expenses, without even reckoning upon time and comfort, there is no part of the household arrangement so important as cheap convenience for personal ablution. For this purpose baths and upon a large and expensive scale are by no means necessary; but through temporary or tin baths may be extremely useful upon pressing occasions, it will be found to be finally as cheap, and much more readily convenient, to have a permanent both constructed, which may be done in any dwelling-house of modern size, without interfering with other general purpose.

There is no necessity to notice the salubrious effects resulting from the bath, beyond the two points of its being so conducive to both health and cleanliness, in keeping up a free circulation of the blood, without any violent muscular exertion, thereby really affording a saving either to the body or to the purse.

Whoever fits up a both on a house already built must be guided by circumstances; but it will always be better to place it as near the kitchen fireplace as possible, because from thence it may be heated, through tubes, or by steam prepared by the culinary fireplace without interfering with its ordinary use.

A small boiler may be erected at very little expense in the bathroom, where circumstances do not permit these arrangements. When ever a bath is wanted at short warning, to boil the water necessary will always be the shortest mode; but where it is in general daily use, the heating the water by steam will be found the cheapest and most convenient method.

**Cleanliness** – The want of cleanliness is a fault which admits of no excuse. Where water can be had for nothing, it is surely in the power of every person to be clean. One common cause of putrid and malignant fevers is the want of cleanliness. If dirty people cannot be removed as a common nuisance, they ought at least to be avoided as infectious. All who regard their health should keep at a distance, even from their habitations. In places where great numbers of people are collected, cleanliness becomes of the utmost importance.

### **Medicines (Aperients)**

In the spring time of the year, the judicious use of aperients medicines is much to be recommended.

#### **Spring Aperients for Children**

Brimstone and Treacle, prepared by mixing one ounce and a half of sulphur, and half an ounce of cream of tartar, with eight ounces of treacle; and, according to the age of

the child, giving from a small teaspoon to a dessert spoon full, early in the morning, two or three times per week.

Who Needs A Doctor?

Extracts from a household guide dated 1898.

More another time if you find them interesting.