



Greater Wigston Historical Society

White Gate Farm, Newton Lane, Wigston Magna Leicestershire

Bulletin 25 October 1989



Programme of Meeting June 1989 to February 1990

Wednesday 18th October 1989

Local Scenes on Old Picture Postcodes – Tricia Berry (Might be changed to November, See Below)

**** Wednesday 22nd November 1989**

Leicester Ghosts and their Haunts – Norman Pilgrim
7.30pm Wigston Liberal Club

Wednesday 20th December 1989

Christmas Party
7.30 pm Wigston Liberal Club

Wednesday 17th January 1990

Canals Mr Stephen Howse
7.30pm Wigston Liberal Club

Wednesday 21st February 1990

AGM & Members Evening. Your chance to show slides and talk for 10 minutes or so.
7.30 Wigston Liberal Club

**** Please note**

This date has been changed owing to the unavailability of the Liberal Club on 15th November

At the back of this Bulletin is a list of the Transactions which have been prepared since the Society was formed. Copies of these can be obtained. Please contact the Secretary, Doris Chandler

The Bulletin is published three times a year on 1st 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

June Meeting

On Wednesday the 21st of June at 7.00pm the Society met in the car park of the Liberal Club for an outing to Burrough on the Hill near Melton Mowbray.

The coach left Wigston and travelled to Burrough via Kibworth, Three Gates, Tilton on the Hill and Twyford. Duncan Lucas kindly gave us a commentary during the journey and was able to point out many places of interest.

Burrough of the Hill is a natural promontory crowned with a single bank and ditch with an interned entrance. Small excavations have shown this to be an Iron Age hill fort with traces of Roman occupation. It has however never been fully excavated.

The evening of June the 21st proved to be one of the coolest of the month and Burrough Hill, with its exposed position was very windy. In spite of threatening clouds it did not rain and most of the Society were able to walk at least some of the way around the bank. Ian Varey acted as guide and was able to explain the significance of the various banks and ditches.

We then returned to the warmth of the coach and made our way to the Rose and Crown Pub, at Tilton where bar snacks had been ordered.

We returned to Wigston at about 10pm and the 30 or so members who made the trip all agreed it had been a most enjoyable evening.

Many thanks go to our secretary Doris Chandler for the organisation.

August 1989 Meeting

This took the form of a joint meeting with the Civic Society. Members of both groups assembled at White Gate Farm, where all enjoyed a barbeque beautifully prepared by Duncan Lucas and Jean Lucas and their team of helpers.

We admired their lovely garden and large selection of plants which included a Passion Fruit Tree growing outside against a sheltered wall.

Duncan's latest booklet, "Another Wigston Wander" designed to be suitable for wheelchair users was on sale.

Several people noticed our Host's variety of headgear, donned during the evening. Every few minutes he seemed to appear wearing something different.

The evening closed about 9 pm when the cool breeze made us think of home. A vote of thanks to all concerned for their hard work was ably given by Bill Ward, on behalf of both Societies.

September 1989 Meeting

Speaker for the evening was, member, Bernard Elliott who spoke about Wigston's History. Bernard referred to a long ago meeting with Prof; W G Hoskins who told him of the history of Wigston could best be studied by reference to the population figures. He follows this advice and explained the variations from the Domesday Survey to the 1881 Census with reasons for the large fluctuations.

He then analysed family and employment details extracted from various Census Returns to give a picture of the social history of the village. We also learned why the Midland Railway was routed through Wigston instead of Oadby!

After Edna Taylor had thanked Bernard very much, there followed various announcements and then a discussion was held concerning how to use the profit so far

made on the sale of the Town Trails. It was decided to donate £150 at once to the FWK Museum with the possibility of more after the accounts have been prepared and presented at the AGM.

Trail Sales

Now that the main publicity is over, sales of the Wigston Town Trail are slackening off. We can, however, be pleased that in 3 months we have cleared the expenses of printing and publishing (which, thanks to Maurice Bingley, were kept to the very low figure of £200), sold over 700 copies and made a profit of £340, which has been banked by our Treasurers, Brian Bilson.

We are grateful to the Framework Knitting Museum Friends who gave us a flying start at their May opening, buying 75 Town Trails and paying us the full price of £1.00 each for them. The Oadby and Wigston Mail have also treated us well by giving good publicity and letting us have the full price for the books they sold for us. Duncan Lucas has also done this at his Garden Centre.

Other agents have asked for a discount, usually somewhere in the region of 33 1/3. These include Oadby and Wigston Libraries, John Burton, newsagents, W H Smith and Sherratt & Hughes in Leicester. A discount was given willingly for educational purposes when Abington High School purchased 30 Town Trails for their local studies classes. I have yet to hear from Bushloe High School, to whom a similar letter was addressed.

The star of all salesmen, however, has been Ralph Wignall, who, has single-handed, has sold nearly 200 Town Trails. Whether Ralf employs the soft sell or threatens his victims I don't know, but he has surprised even himself. Only one person he offered a book to refused, on the grounds that the Author has not included the Great Wigston Working Men's Club. Of course that club has historical significance as being the second oldest in England but the Trail concentrated more on buildings of visual quality.

A nice example of bureaucratic thinking turned up at the Leicester Information & Tourist Centre. I sent them a complimentary copy and called in soon after to follow this up.. There was no sign of my copy on display.

Me:- “Do you like our book, and if so, would you like some for your stand?”

Person:- “ It's a nice book, very well got up, but we'd better wait to see if there is any demand for them?”

Me:- How can there be a demand if you don't display it?

Person:- Sorry we can't afford to stock them until we know there is a demand!

Me:- You could display the complimentary copy free of charge.

Person:- Oh Yes! We got that. It's upstairs in a box. We have your address and will let you know!

I retired, defeated. There's something rather Russian about that encounter. Fortunately, others had heard of the enterprise economy, and were more than helpful.

Much comment on the book has been favourable, especially about Ralph's appealing drawings and Maurice's excellent type-face, lay-out and cover. Also valuable was the latter's advice to order 1000 copies, which cost very little more to print 500. We are glad as we quickly sold 500. Hopefully the last 200 / 300 will eventually be sold over a longer period, and if you want any to send to relatives in Australia, Canada, Spain, South Africa. As Ralph's customers did, you know where you can buy them.

The profits from the Trail are for you, the members of the Society, to decide how to spend. It might be a good idea to use some to fund the publishing of members' books or to embark on another venture such as the Town Trail. For example, it has been said there ought to be a South Wigston Trail. Anybody willing?

Edna Taylor

N.B. Sing this article was written, it has been decided to make an interim payment to the Framework Knitters Museum, see the note of the proceedings' of the September meeting.

Editor

A Brief History of Wigston Temperance Band.

In the 1800's several families existed in Wigston who played brass instruments, fathers teaching their children to play, the art of playing being passed on. The family bands provided music for the village; they were in great demand and sometimes combined for an important engagement. Wigston's musical families became:-

1. The United Band (using the Working Men's Club for its headquarters)
2. The Wesleyan Mission Band
3. The Wigston Magna Adult School Band.

In 1902 the Wesleyan Mission Band divided as the result of an argument. The Band had been asked to play at a dance, but some of the members would not consent as it was against the Wesleyan Band principles. The twelve men who left the Band formed the Wigston's Temperance Band. By 1914 the Wigstons' Temperance Band was the only band in Wigston.

The men of the band under the conductor Mr Charles Moore (who also conducted the Adult School Band until 1914) decided to model the Band on successful bands from the north. The Band first practiced in an old ambulance hut in Clarkes Road, Wigston Magna before it moved to "Charles Moore's shop" on the corner of Canal Street and Blaby Road, South Wigston. (it was a coffee shop until Charles Moore acquired it in 1920).

In 1910 the Band won the fourth prize in the lowest section at the Chrystal Palace contest, (first prize – Blackdyke Mills Juniors, second prize – Rowntree Cocoa Works, this small recognition gave the band confidence; but the first world war stopped progress until 1922, when prizes were again won, and by successive wins the Band reached the championship section in 1930. The Band competed for three years, by this time the name of the Band was Wigston Temperance Silver Prize Band.

As often happens with brass bands, “Wigston lost several good players and were forced to withdraw from contests to try to rebuild the Band. The outbreak of the Second World War did not stop the Band from playing although times were often strained for the members.

In 1950 Mr Moore’s son, Edward Coltman Moore (known as Ted) became conductor, he had been principle solo cornet player of the Band since 1912 (at the age of 17). Charles Moore was honorary musical director from 1953 until his death in 1962 (aged 83).

In 1963 the Midland Bank Ltd next to Charles Moore’s shop (The County Music Depot) extended its premises. Alterations were made to the music shop which made it necessary for the Band to find another practice room. The Wigston Urban District Council offered the Band part of the Crowe Mills pumping station. A wooden floor was laid, an interior wall built and heating and lighting installed, and the rooms has been used by the Band ever since.

Ted Moore died suddenly on 10th of August 1972, and David Hughes, a member of the Band became the third conductor. David Hughes, an ex-army bandsman joined the Band in 1970 playing the baritone. Under the baton of David Hughes the Band entered a number of contests; he also started a junior class for beginners. He left the Band in the summer of 1977.

1978 found the Band in the third section, Mr Keith Smith, conductor of the Civic Orchestra, conducted the Band temporarily until the appointment of Mr Robert Gallacher in 1978. He successfully conducted the Band in contests held at Milton Keynes, Bedworth, Royal Leamington Spa, Leicester and Kirkby-in-Ashfield, until Mat 1982, when due to other commitments Mr Gallacher left the Band, but he still maintained a keen interest of the Band. During the time the Band were promoted to the second section.

Mr Peter Pollard conducted the Band for a short period until December 1982 when due to ill health he was forced to resign.

The Band then auditioned potential conductors and appointed Mr Ralph Blackett in 1983, but he was only with the Band for a short period.. During this time the Band was relegated to the third section. In 1985 Mr Gordon Boyce was appointed as musical director and introduced the Band to the ‘Pontins’ contest which is held at Easter time each year.

The Band continues to enter 4 – 6 contests a year and some success has been attained. Galas and garden fetes are still the main engagements during summer. In 1987 a

special fund was started for a new band room, and in 1989 it was agreed to change the Bands name to “The Village Band”.

Editor’s comments

This history of Wigston’s Band has been kindly given to the editor by a member of the Band. The Band has seen many changes over the years as its fortunes have gone up and down. It has had at least five name changes, although to many locals it is still known as ‘Charles Moore of Wigston’

Charles Moore also had connections with Bands in Oadby. He had married the daughter of Edward Matthews of Oadby. The Matthews family, many of whom were framework knitters, were involved over the years with many of the bands formed in Oadby. Edward Matthews played in the Leicester Opera House orchestra for many years. He was helpful to young players and had much to do in shaping the career of his son in law, Charles Moore of Wigston.

The Band would be pleased to hear from any members of the Society who have any recollections of the Band, all information gathered will be used in the Band’s forthcoming centenary. These can be passed to the Band via the Bulletin Editors.

We Quote ..

“It has been said that though God cannot alter the past, historians can; it is perhaps because they can be useful to Him in this respect that He tolerates their existence”.
Sanuel Butler 1835 – 1902 (Erewhom Revisited ch. 14)

42 / 44 Bushloe End The House

The question most often asked by visitors to the Framework Knitting Museum is

How Old is the house?

It’s a good question and unfortunately there is no easy answer. Oh for a reliable date stone or a document giving the building date, both of these probabilities are very remote. To “Guestimate” the date we must become detective, that is search for clues, consider all relating aspects, compare and contrast, weigh the evidence and from all this deduce a possible answer. No ... probable date for the building of the house.

Consider the social class of those who had it built, their probable financial status for this has major effect on the style and type of building. Next consider the building style and the materials used. Then how the house fits into the Leicestershire scene, and into the local Wigston Scene.

In the 17th and 18th centuries up to Enclosure (1766) Wigston was “Entirely a Peasant village, without a lord, a community which consisted mostly of middling and small peasant landowners”. Farming a small acreage scattered throughout the three

great fields. Wigston practiced a peasant economy which enabled the village to live almost entirely off its own resources.

In the 1670 Hearth Tax returns (42 / 44 was not yet built) lists 5 families of substance, i.e. 5 hearths each, Then 2 lists 5 families with 4 hearths, 9 families with 3 hearths, 25 with 2 hearths and the rest some 120 families either 1 hearth or exempted. With the exception of the five most important families land holdings ranged from 5 to 30 acres.

This gives a picture of the social standing of Wigston families. In National or indeed in county terms even the most substantial families were of the land owning middle class.

It is almost certain that the original builders of 42/44 came from the 5 to 30 acre families and probably towards the top of that range. A more wealthy family would probably have had a larger house, more up market features such as sash windows, a slate roof, porch or mock pilasters around the front door, in short a house more of the period i.e. Queen Ann / Early Georgian. These features did not percolate down to the lower classes until the late 18th and in some cases the 19th century.

The building material, its construction and various architectural features can provide significant clues to help postulate a date.

First one has to consider what is “the original house”

The original part of the house we have today is that part nearest the road. It was built as two downstairs rooms (present shop and parlour) with a central front staircase and small north facing pantry, the front door slightly off centre, two upstairs rooms with a small walk in closet between and two attic rooms under the original steep pitched roof which would have been thatched.

Close inspection reveals that this structure was built on an existing rubble plinth, possibly the foundations of the preceding house. The front door known as no. 42, that leads into the parlour and the west side of the house are on brick footings. Was this built at the same time as the main house or is it a later edition? I suggest that the bricks used in both are the same, meaning that the new building was somewhat larger than the preceding house. The original house may well have had a single story rear wing giving the house an “L” shape characteristic. The evidence for this was lost when the present rear two storey extension was added.

The bricks are laid in a Flemish bond with some headers being coloured. They are the burnt bricks from the centre of the clamp. Lose inspection reveals that bubbling associated with vetrification or intense heat. The pattern of the ground floor bricks is a chequered whilst the first floor is an interlaced diaper pattern.

The original roof line is at an angle of about 70 degrees with distinct steps at the eaves, indicating a thatched roof.

Remember a feature of the peasant economy was self sufficiency ... (Wigston) has its own clay used for a long lasting mud walls, boulders in the fields for footings, wheat, straw and selected reeds for thatching materials ... and when the general use of bricks

for domestic building in the last quarter of the 17th century came in, brick earth was found right in the village. Local materials which produce the endless local variations in domestic architecture, collectively known as vernacular architecture.

The spread of bricks for building is not uniform in England a comparison is only valid within a small area such as a county. The first house made completely of bricks in Leicestershire and dated is in Syston, date 1686. Other early all brick houses seem to belong to people of higher social class e.g., Kibworth 1704 with its sash windows, Barsby 1691 and 1707, Willoughby Waterleys 1693, etc. Non standard bricks, i.e. other than nine by four inches are the norm in these buildings. Not to mention the infinite variety of colour and texture which set apart old handmade bricks.

In Wigston, after two generations of falling incomes and general hardship largely following on from the Civil War, the last few years of the 17th century and the dawn of the 18th century saw an upturn in living standards. This is identified throughout the country not just in Leicestershire. One of its manifestations was a building boom. There was a slight hiccup nationally to this boom in 1715 with the threat of the Jacobite Rebellion, but that was short lived.

Building a new house (even when much second hand material is used, such as at 42/44), is an expensive business. It is not unreasonable to assume that the small peasant landowning family that built 42/44 took perhaps another generation to feel secure financial to take the plunge.

Sifting through the evidence a probable date for the building of 42/44 begins to emerge. The house does not fit easily into the first generation of all brick Leicestershire houses, nor does it fit into the plainer early Georgian houses. This narrows down the date to the 1720 / 30's and that is probably as close as one can get!

At that time 42/44 would have been one of the few brick houses in the village the majority mud walled houses with thatch. In the context of Wigston the new farmhouse would have been much admired and indeed envied ... A modern brick house instead of a mud cott.

Ian Varey

Wigston Framework Knitting Museum

Forthcoming Events

Saturday 7th October 1989

Open Afternoon. Coffee and Biscuits' Stalls .. cake .. white elephant... raffles etc 1pm onwards.

*** Featuring a special stall of homemade jams, preserves, chutneys and relishes
ALL AT BARGAIN PRICES

Contributions for the stalls gratefully received by Peter Clowes at 2 Bushloe End or on the day. Until 5pm Admission Free.

Saturday 28th 1989

Jumble Sale. All Saint's Church Rooms 2pm

Admission 5pm

Jumble to either Chris Smart 16 Maidwell Close, Meadows or Peter Clowes. Thank You in advance.

Saturday 4th November 1989

Special Opening of Museum Shop 10:30 until 4:pm to buy your souvenir Christmas presents. Museum open 1 pm to 4 pm.

Saturday 2nd December 1989

Pre Christmas Coffee Morning all the usuals plus Father Christmas for the children and the young of heart, and a company of Hand bell Ringers to get in the Xmas mood!