



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

BULLETIN 30



No. 2 Newgate End, Wigston Magna

J. R. Colver

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS JUNE 1991 TO FEBRUARY 1992

Wednesday 19th June 1991.

Visit to Gaddesby. Conducted tour of Church with supper afterwards at The Carington Arms, Ashby Folville.
Coach from Wigston Liberal Club Carpark, 6.45p.m.

Wednesday 21st August 1991.

Visit to Kibworth. Conducted walk led by Ian Varey (Member).
Meet at Liberal Club Carpark. 7p.m. to arrange car sharing.**

Wednesday 18th September 1991

Talk on the 3 Indian Cultures, Inca, Aztec & Maya - Mr. G. Jackson.
7.30p.m. Wigston Liberal Club.

Wednesday 16th October 1991.

Talk on Thomas Cook, this year being the 150th Anniversary of his first excursion - Bernard Elliott (Member)
7.30p.m. Wigston Liberal Club.

***Wednesday 20th November 1991.**

Humerous talk on Ireland & the Irish - Mr. N. Danahar.
7.30p.m. Wigston Liberal Club.

Wednesday 18th December 1991.

Christmas Party & Quiz. 7.30p.m. Wigston Liberal Club.

Wednesday 15th January 1992.

History of the Fire Fighting Service - John Warden (Member)

Wednesday 19th February 1992.

A.G.M. & Members Evening.
Your chance to talk for approx. 10 minutes, show slides etc.

* To be confirmed.

** Walk starts at Windmill Farm, Tur Langton Road at 7.30p.m.

N.B. No venue has been given for meetings in the New Year. This is because a welcome increase in membership has made the Liberal Club Room rather crowded on popular evenings. The Committee is considering other options and will advise later if any change is to be made.

The Bulletin is published three times a year. 1st February, June and October. Articles etc. to either of the Joint Editors three clear weeks before publication please.

Joint Editors

Mrs. Chris Smart, Firtree House, Broad Lane, Markfield.

Mrs. Tricia Berry, 7 Wensleydale Road, Wigston.

February meeting

On Wednesday the 20th of February the Society met for its Annual General Meeting and Members Evening, 38 members were present. The meeting proceeded as follows -

1. Minutes of the last AGM were read and agreed as a correct record.
2. Treasurer's report.

The Treasurer- reported a good year. A donation of £100 to the Oadby and Winston Buildings Preservation Trust was agreed. Subscriptions are to remain the same.

3. Chairman's Report.

The Chairman reported that this year the Society had celebrated its tenth anniversary. Membership has grown and the Committee had produced a varied programme. She thanked the secretary for her work and Ian continues to print the programmes. She then proceeded to review the past year.

A book on Long Street School is to be published this year. Bulletin covers are now produced by Jim Colver from his drawings. The Museum brought back from Stoughton Farm Park still does not have a home. The tape recorder is underused at the moment, otherwise a most successful year.

4. Election of Officers.

These are as follows-

Chairman - Edna Taylor

Vice Chairman - Bob Wignall

Secretary - Doris Chandler

Members Secretary - Stella Tweed

Treasurer - Brian Bilson

Bulletin Editors - Tricia Berry & Chris Smart

Mike Ward

Jim Colver

Peter Clowes

5. AOB

The second part of the evening consisted of members contributions.

Bob Wignall told us about a veteran Roman soldier, SP Lignatius, who had appealed against the decision to demote him from Chief Centurion to ordinary centurion. He fought in the war against Macedonia and was eventually appointed Chief Centurion of the first Legion.

Mike Forryan talked about genealogy, and the one name study of the surname Forryan that he is undertaking. He told us the story of one individual Abraham Forryan. He also talked in general terms about the study of Family History.

Ann Brown had made a tape of a 92 year old Wigston person talking about her experiences of farming in Kilby after the First World War. Edith Grant of Wigston had married Alfred William Johnson of Kilby. Her reminiscences were both interesting and amusing.

John Warden talked about the history of the Fire Service in England. After the Fire of London the insurance companies decided that fire fighting should be sorted out. Edinburgh had the first fire brigade, set up by Mr. Braidwood the others developed from there.

After a vote of thanks to all the speakers the evening finished at about 9.45p.m.

MARCH 1991 Meeting

About 40 members enjoyed Brian Bilson's illustrated talk on the 'New' St. Paul's Cathedral, London. This was the sequel to last year's meeting, also in March, when Brian told us about 'Old' St. Paul's, the building on the site which was destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666.

The fire destroyed four fifths of the City of London and afterwards Sir Christopher Wren with other architects was asked to submit plans for the new city and particularly it's churches. Attempts were made to repair St. Paul's, but the damage was found to be too great and Wren was commissioned to design a new Cathedral. Several versions were rejected before a design was finally chosen. The foundation stone was laid in 1675. The original plans were however much altered as construction proceeded.

Wren is thought to have got his inspiration for the design, particularly the huge dome supported by eight pillars, from various continental churches. The ground plan is in the form of a Latin Cross. The finest facade is the West with it's pairs of Portland stone columns approached by a broad flight of steps.

Original features of the interior are the ceiling of the dome which is decorated with almost monochrome paintings by Sir James Thornhill, (though Wren's choice was for mosaic), the choir stalls carved by Grinling Gibbons and Tijou's beautiful wrought iron screen.

One of the towers houses a bell, Great Tom, which was made in Loughborough. The surviving statue of John Donne is in the south choir aisle.

The Cathedral was finished in 1708 and Sir Christopher Wren lived to see his greatest project completed. He died, aged 91, and is appropriately buried at St. Paul's. There are tombs and memorials to many other famous people notable Lord Nelson and the Duke of Wellington.

Edna Taylor thanked Brian very much for a most interesting evening. The future programme was discussed and a list started for those wishing to go to Gaddesby in June. It is hoped to get together a large party to fill the 55 seat coach. The meeting closed at 9.30p.m.

April meeting

On Wednesday the 17th of April, 41 members of the Society met to hear Mike Forryan speak on "Genealogy on computer".

The Chairman gave out notices and Colin Towell reported on a visit to the Ashby Historical Society, to hear about Dolly Sheppard the first woman parachutist and to see the new museum at Ashby.

Mike then began his talk. He started by telling us the history of the computer. It had started with the abacus widely used from 450 B.C. In 1614 John Nopie developed logarithmic tables (in the days before the pocket calculator every schoolchild knew how to use "logs"). In 1642 the first calculating machine was developed. In 1875 F.J. Baldwin designed a calculator that remained in use up to the 1960s, but calculators only calculate and a computer has four functions! input, storage, calculation, output.

A man called Babbage designed a computer but it could not be manufactured. A Lady Lovelace designed punch cards for the input media. In 1937 any computer was a mechanical "monster", but from then on progress was rapid. Mechanical to electronic, valves to transistors to microchips, the latest development is the "lap-top" computer.

Mike then continued to describe the systems available to the genealogist and to explain why the computer is a valuable tool for the family historian. He showed us an example of a conventional record card used by genealogists, and described how a computer could search through large amounts of data very quickly and how a similar manual search through cards could take hours. Mike gave an example of this using a Database program and invited members to have a surname searched.

He then detailed some of the commercial programs available to the family historian. These were –

Personal Ancestral File (which he uses himself) produced by the Church of the Latter Day Saints for their members but available commercially for about £50, in black and white only.

Pedigree a U.K. program, using colour for about £50. Gentry from Amstrad was another.

Mike uses P.A.F. and he spent some time showing us examples from his own family tree to illustrate the flexibility of approach available on computer.

To illustrate his talk Mike had brought both hardware and software, and other items such as photograph albums, memorabilia etc. to be used in conjunction with the information stored on computer.

This interesting and informative evening ended about 9.30 p.m. Our thanks to Mike for his detailed preparation and hard work.

May 1991 Meeting

We wandered round admiring the displays. These included sections on the previously mentioned corset factory showing the famous 'Liberty Bodice' and some grim looking stays. The other well known Symington Company was represented with a show case of soups and table creams etc. A history of the mail coaches showed how Harborough

was an important staging post in the network. When trains replaced coaches in the early 19th Century the town suffered economically and the local bank went bankrupt.

The current temporary display was of baskets and basket-making through the ages. It also contained modern work using re-cycled materials.

After coffee and biscuits, Mr. Mastoris gave a short talk with slides on another display of local industry, the Falkner Shoe Workshop. This was acquired in the 1970's when the present William Falkner (the 4th generation in the business) retired. The whole workshop including the floorboards was carefully labelled and then moved and re-assembled in its present location. One reason why the Company survived so long was the prosperity generated in the 1920's when it supplied local huntsmen with riding boots. These cost £9 per pair when the average agricultural wage was £1.30 a week.

Edna Taylor thanked Mr. Mastoris and his assistant very much for a most enjoyable evening. We arrived back in Wigston at about 9.45p.m.

(Edna Taylor had several amusing experiences on this trip some at least of which would not have been known to the other members present - She tells what happened further on in this Bulletin under the heading "Bad at Faces").

We quote ...

If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer.

Henry David Thoreau

We shall not cease from exploration And the end of all our exploring Will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time.

T.S. Eliot

The one strong hint that is given to us by Domesday Book and later documents is that our generalities should be few and that, were this possible, each borough should be separately studied.

F.W. Maltland. Domesday Book and beyond (1897) P.197

Still on it creeps,
Each little moment at anothers heels
Till Hours, Days, Years, and Ages are made up
Of such small parts as these, and men look back.
Worn and bewildered, wond'ring how it is. -
Thou trav'llest like a ship in the wide ocean.
Which hath no bounding shore to mark its progress.

Joanna Baillie

The Editors have received a letter in response to an article in Bulletin No: 29.

Dear Editors,

I read with interest Bernard Elliott's article on "Newcomers to Wigston Magna and I feel I would like to amend the statement concerning my great-grandfather John Wignall.

It is correct that John Wignall was born in Leicester (at a house in Lutterworth Road in the Parish of St. Mary's), but I feel it is incorrect to classify him as a hosiery manufacturer who left Leicester to establish a factory in Wigston.

John Wignall's grandfather William Wignall arrived in Wigston in 1792 and settled there. Three of his four sons were born in Wigston (the odd one out being his second son, Thomas, who was actually born in Braunstone c.1795/6 when William moved back there for a time. Thomas was however baptised in Wigston in March 1796).

John Wignall's father Benjamin Wignall (the youngest son of William) was born in Wigston and baptised there on 21st March 1804. On 6th November 1826 he married Sarah Forryan of Wigston. Children were born to the couple in the following years: Eliza 1827, William 1830, Joseph 1833, Mary Ann 1837, all born at Wigston. Soon afterwards Benjamin and his family moved to Leicester. They had a house in Lutterworth Road and Benjamin worked as a shoemaker in Oxford Street.

John Wignall was born on 17th August 1839 and his brother Benjamin was born in 1842 both in Leicester. Soon afterwards the family returned to Wigston where their next son Arthur was born in 1843. On 7th December 1845 Mary Ann, John, Benjamin and Arthur were all baptised at All Saints Church, Wigston. John then being in his 7th year.

John Wignall lived for the rest of his life in Wigston playing a prominent part in the life of Late Victorian and Edwardian Wigston. He died in 1915.

John was not therefore really a newcomer to Wigston but was the son of a native of Wigston who had left there for a short time to try his luck in the big city.

Incidentally the youngest daughter Mary (full name Mary Ellen) mentioned in the 1881 census as aged one year died on 17th April 1881 soon after the census was taken. Three other daughters were born later in 1881, 1883 and 1887. The last being Mary Ann Wignall (Mrs Beesley) who was present at the opening of the Bushloe End Framework Knitters Museum in 1989.

J.R. Wignall.

Editor's Note:

In Bygone Wigston Vol. II by Duncan Lucas there is a photograph of John Wignall in a wedding group outside his home, Avenue House, Long Street, taken in 1901.

BAD AT FACES

"You didn't know me" said Margaret, a fairly new member. "I shouted and waved at you at the check-out, and you didn't recognise me at all".

I apologised of course. I didn't mean to be rude, but I've never been good at remembering faces unless I see people a lot. Good at names, bad at faces. It's always happening. But there are others who are just as bad.

We were visiting Market Harborough Museum and the coach driver wanted to know where to park after setting the members down. I ran ahead to seek advice. At the top of the stairs, to the right was a kitchen from which sounded voices in lively conversation. They drew me along. In the kitchen was Muriel, a new member, putting coffee powder into cups as though she had been doing it all her life. How had she got there and taken her coat off and settled in so much earlier than the rest?

"Hello, Muriel. How.....?"

"I know you, said her companion, a museum attendant, with absolute conviction.

"Oh, er. Hello, Muriel. Why.....?"

"You've been here before" said Sue, the attendant, a trifle accusingly.

"No, er, it must be someone else. Actually, our coach is blocking the road and the driver would like to know where to park"

Several of the men in our party had by now reached the top of the stairs and came along to the kitchen.

"This is a strange W.I. party" said Sue, looking us up and down. Thinking she was making a little joke, I smiled good naturedly. The coach was on my mind.

"I'll come with you downstairs and show you where he can park". More men came up stairs, Stefan Mastoris the Curator, among them. More muttering about the W.I.

"There you are, Stefan, I'm just saying what a strange W.I. Party this is"

Stefan's smile froze.

He said, "This isn't the W.I.?" Goodness, she really meant it, I thought.

"No. We're the Greater Wigston Historical Society" said I, grandly.

"And these aren't your husbands?"

"No. Yes. Well, some of them are"

Fortunately Stefan saw the mistake and guffawed loudly - a big man with a big laugh. The rest of us laughed, Sue stopped looking abashed, the coach driver was seen to, and the evening went off like a bomb.

We returned to the coach.

"You're Margaret, and I haven't forgotten you". A big smile. Intoxicated by this success at recognition, I went on. "And you are Kathleen Carter".

"No, I'm not. I'm another Margaret".

Oh dear. Well, you can't expect two right in one day. After all, recently I asked Jack Robinson if he was the caretaker of the Liberal Club, and he's been with us a year!
Edna Taylor

(Editor's Note - Muriel went by car and arrived before the rest of the party)

SAFETY ON THE STREETS OF WIGSTOW MAGNA

Witnessing as we do, the wanton damage and disregard for the law that pervades our streets and public places, may make one think of the more peaceful days when Wigston Magna was a much smaller place surrounded by its fields and their footpaths. The following extracts taken from the "Leicestershire Mercury, 120 years ago suggest otherwise.

PUBLICANS AND THE PUBLIC

'A word to the wise' is said to be sufficient. It will be seen in a recent statement of the Home Secretary that measures will most likely be introduced at the next session of Parliament for bringing public houses under more stringent oversight. All houses which disgorge their nightly crew of debauches will be the first to feel the law, the Government being resolved to teach all whom it may concern that public-houses are places of refreshment, and not to resorts where men may be allowed to reduce themselves to a state of drunken imbecility, and afterwards disturb the quiet of Wigston and other towns.

VELOCIPEDES

These things are nuisances wherever they may be but they are intolerable and dangerous when ridden on public footpaths. So impudent are some of the riders that they claim a right and even assert precedence on the side ways in the county. This is the case on the road from this place to Leicester, one fellow in particular, who, without warning of any kind, without a friendly "hi" or a whistle, blunders along heedless of the foot passengers, who have nimbly to step into the road to avoid being run over. The grievance is so great that several frequenters of the road have promised to upset the man the next time he trespasses on the path, but that would be unadvisable, as summons being the better course to stop the practice.

SABBATH PASTIMES

The two police officers, now stationed at Wigston, and who during the short time since their appointment to the district, have proved themselves energetic, useful and civil men, are requested in the interests of the inhabitants to 'give an eye' to the crowd of young roughs, who assemble in the centre of the village on a Sunday, and profane

the sacred day by uproarious horseplay, and using coarse and disgusting language, to the annoyance of every well disposed person.

LOCAL INTELLIGENCE

A public meeting was held on the evening of the 18th instant, to consult upon and find a remedy for a growing grievance in this village, viz. the wanton destruction of hedges and fences. The occupiers of land, thus brought together, made great complaints of the injury done to property by persons of all ages who trespass upon the ground, break down hedgerows, and leave gaps for cattle to stray through into the road or other fields. Timber rails, laid to fill up these vacancies, or to protect the quick, have been carried off piece meal, and enclosed trees destroyed. The meeting was unanimously of opinion that parents could have no excuse for allowing young people to amuse themselves by destroying their neighbour's property, inasmuch as a proper recreation ground has been provided for the parish at the cost of a very liberal public subscription. – After some deliberation it was finally resolved to take joint action, and that a notice be circulated - "That anyone found doing damage to the fences, etc., on land occupied by the undersigned will be prosecuted by them" - This announcement will be numerously signed.

CATAPULTS

A lad in the village received serious injury from one of these reprehensible instruments in the beginning of the week. The number of boys that use them is very great, so much so that it is dangerous to walk about the village. Were one or two of the offenders made an example of, as they should be, the nuisance would be greatly abated to the great relief of the lieges of Wigston.

STATE OF THE STREETS

Some months ago, one of the paths running through the main street of Wigston, was levelled and laid with granite, superseding those antediluvian "kidneys" that were originally put down by men who had not the fear for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals before their eyes. Thus the paths have been improved; but after dusk they are practically impassable to the inhabitants - that is the ratepayers - owing to their being infested at certain points, especially where an alley debouches upon the main street, by gangs of unmitigated young scoundrels, who, in addition to the usual boyish games and horseplay, superadd language and conduct utterly un-Christian. To shopkeepers they are a terror, and to all a nuisance. One poor old woman, over eighty years of age, was the other day dragged backwards from her door, where she had gone to remonstrate with them, and treated in a most barbarous manner. Attention has been called to this matter in these columns before, and for a time the annoyance was, to a certain degree, mitigated. It has now, however become so utterly unbearable, that steps must be taken to remedy it, either by a sort of committee or an accession to the civil force, which at present appears wholly inadequate to repress this lawlessness.

J.R. COLVER.

We quote ...

"Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past".

T.S. Eliot 1888-1965, Four Quartets. Burnt Norton.1

Man my brothers, men the workers, ever reaping something new!
That which they have done, but earnest of the things that they shall do.
Tennyson

The cover drawing of this issue of the Bulletin is by Jim Colver and features No 2, Newgate End. Mrs. N. Freckingham, whose home it is, has kindly supplied the following description.

2, NEWGATE END

A brick and slate Georgian House situated in one of the mediaeval 'Ends' of the village close by the Parish Church. Evidence in the brickwork suggests the front was rebuilt in two stages using bricks of different dimensions in the late Georgian period to cover parts of an earlier dwelling. The slates on the front of the roof come from Portmadoc. The sashes and the first floor arched window in the end of the house date from the rebuilding. The ground floor plan is typical of the date, having a central hallway with a room on either side, facing the street.

At the rear are the usual domestic rooms; and in the outbuildings on the north end, signs to suggest separate living quarters being there at some date.

Records show that John Wood, a framesmith, bought the property in 1778 and it remained in his family for about 110 years, indicating they were probably responsible for the appearance of the house as it is today. Two cottages, built in the same style, stood to the south of the house and at one time belonged to the Wood family, They were demolished along with so much of older Wigston in the 'enlightened ' 1960's, to many people's sadness and regret, Opposite, the church yard, enclosed by the granite wall given by Thomas Ingram in Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee 'year, has changed greatly over the years. The iron railings on top of the wall were removed along with others in the village in 1940 as part of the war effort, and the grave stones were re-arranged to their present position, bordering the side pathos, in the mid 1950's. More recently, the front gates to the churchyard were taken down when the Long Street/Bushloe End widening took place in 1966.