



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

BULLETIN 32



PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS FEBRUARY TO AUGUST 1992

Wednesday 19th February 1992

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

7.30p.ra. Wigston Liberal Club.

Wednesday 18th March 1992

Agriculture in the Welland Valley - Stephan Mastoris.

7.30p.m. Wigston Liberal Club.

Wednesday 15th April 1992

The Irish Community in Leicester - Nesson Danahar.

7.30p.m. Wigston Liberal Club.

Wednesday 2Qth May 1992

Visit to Ashby Museum. Supper afterwards at venue to be arranged. Coach from Wigston Liberal Club Carpark, 6.45p.m.

***Wednesday 17th June 1992**

Visit to Brixworth Church. Conducted Tour.

Coach from Wigston Liberal Club Carpark, 6.45p.m.

***Wednesday 19th August 1992**

Visit to Record Office Premises.

Meet at Record Office, Long Street, Wigston. 7.30p.m.

* These two meetings to be confirmed.

SKITTLES MATCH

A friendly skittles match has been arranged against The Friends of Wigston Framework Knitting Museum. This will take place at The Star and Garter, Leicester Road, Wigston on Friday 14th February 1992 at 7.30p.m. There will be a typical pub supper and the cost is £3 00 per head. Numbers are limited, if you have not put your name down for this and would like to go please telephone 880156 to see if there are any spare places.

AUCTION SALE

A fund raising auction has been arranged jointly with the Friends of Wigston Framework Knitting Museum on Friday evening, 6th March 1992, at Age Concern, Paddock Street, Wigston. All contributions for this would be most welcome. Have you got anything at home that you no longer require which might be useful to someone else? Goods may be donated or sold on a commission basis as you wish. For collection please contact 888173, 880156 or 884483. Viewing 7.00p.m. Sale 8.00p.m.

Joint Editors

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

Mrs. Tricia Berry, 7 Wensleydale Road, Wigston.

OCTOBER MEETING

37 members assembled to hear Bernard Elliott give a talk on Leicestershire's most famous man, Thomas Cook. He was born on 22/11/1808 at Quick Close, Melbourne, Derbys into a Baptist household. His father died when he was young & his mother re-married. His first job was as a gardener's lad at Melbourne Hall. Later he trained as a woodturner & then became a printer. He was for a time a Baptist missionary but lack of funds forced him back to his trade. On 2/3/1834 he married Marianne Mason & they settled in Market Harborough having two surviving children, John Mason & Annie.

Thomas was very active in the Temperance Movement & wanted as many people as possible to attend a rally to be held in Loughborough. It was while walking to Leicester via Kibworth that he suddenly hit on the idea of hiring a special train & selling cheap affordable tickets. He approached John Fox Bell, manager of the Midland Counties Railway, who agreed to provide a train with tickets at 1/- per head. 570 passengers made the trip in July 1841, in open carriages without seats. They were seen off from Campbell St. Station by a brass band & about 2000 spectators. The era of organised travel had arrived.

Many other trips followed & Cook moved to Leicester because then there was no railway link to Market Harborough. Not all were successful-a series of disasters on a train & steamer holiday to Scotland was scathingly reported in the Leicester Chronicle.

A milestone was his chance meeting with Joseph Paxton, architect of the Crystal Palace & John Ellis, owner of the Midland Counties Railway who wanted to arrange transport to the Great Exhibition in 1851.

Cook built the Temperance Hall in Granby St. & the Temperance Hotel next door, which his wife ran. However, some of the tours lost money during the 1850's & this prompted Thomas to bring his son John Mason into partnership. Father & son never really got on. Thomas had more social conscience & wanted to organise cheaper trips that the poor could afford, whereas, John was a business man & realised there was much more money to be made by attracting the rich with more ambitious & expensive excursions. John opened & ran an office in London which in effect became the head office & put him in charge of the business.

The business continued to expand & in 1872 they undertook a world tour departing from Liverpool. In 1883 Cooks transported 18,000 British Troops & their stores in connection with the relief of Gordon at Khartoum.

In 1878 Father & Son quarrelled & John took over completely. Thomas retired on £1,000 per year to Thorncroft, the house he had built on London Rd, (now the Red Cross H.Q. In 1880 his daughter, Annie, drowned in her bath & Thomas built a memorial hall in Archdeacon Lane in her memory. By 1891 he was in poor health & nearly blind but went back to Melbourne to visit some almshouses he had endowed. He died on 18/7/1892 & is buried in Welford Road Cemetery. In his will he only left a very modest amount whereas John who died only a few years later left an enormous fortune. This has never really been explained.

The Company continued to be run by the 3rd generation but was eventually sold , ending up a subsidiary of the Midland Bank.

After a number of questions & some discussion Edna Taylor thanked Bernard very much for an enjoyable evening.

November meeting ...

On Wednesday the 20th of November the Society met to hear Peter Liddle speak on, Recent work in Leicestershire archaeology, unfortunately Peter Liddle was not able to attend because of illness and we were most fortunate to have Jean Mellor, senior field archaeologist in his place.

Ms. Mellor gave us a very interesting talk and slide show entitled Ratae revisited. Jean took us through two major excavations - the Shires and Causeway Lane. First decision to be made is - where to excavate? The two sites were chosen because they were within the old Roman/Medieval town walls, in an area known to have probable archaeological remains. The Shires excavation was divided into two sites -Little Lane (which formed part of the old Medieval street plan) and St. Peter's Lane. Nineteenth century building plans were studied to find out where deep foundations and cellars had been proposed and as a result any archaeological remains may have been destroyed. In fact the two proposed sites were the ones where the nineteenth century buildings had shallow foundations only.

We were then taken through 2000 years of history by means of slides of the excavations and drawn plans. Various levels of occupation from the Iron Age onwards were found. Jean had also brought slides of some of the many artefacts found, some in a remarkable state of preservation.

The Causeway Lane dig is the most recent one undertaken by the Museums Service and the results are still being discussed.

The meeting closed at about 9.45p.m. after a vote of thanks by the Chairman to Ms. Mellor for standing in at short notice. About 40 members attended this meeting which was enjoyed by all. Ms. Mellor also told us that many of the artefacts found and more information about the digs can be found at the Jewry Wall Museum.

DECEMBER MEETING

About 40 members enjoyed the annual Christmas Party which this year took the form of a games evening. This was organised by Jim Colver but as he was unfortunately stuck down by flu on the night Colin Towell took over and acted very capably as M.C.

Ludo, Snakes & Ladders, Draughts, Beetle & Noughts & Crosses were tackled with zest. Points were scored for victory and when everyone had played every game a check of the scores resulted in Jack Robinson being the winner with Bill Ward second, and a tie for third place between Peter Mastin & Kath Carter. As there were

only three prizes this was decided by a toss of the coin and Kath Carter was declared the third prize winner.

A raffle was held and after this we began the lovely buffet put on for us by Mavis and Maureen and helpers who were afterwards thanked by the Chairman, Edna Taylor.

The evening ended about 10.15p.m.

January meeting ...

On Wednesday the 15th of January the society met to hear John Warden, one of our members, talk on the history of the Fire Service and fire fighting.

He began by telling us that fire is very much part of everyday life and under control it gives us light and warmth; but out of control its effects can be devastating.

The Roman Empire had had organised fire fighting but when the Roman Empire ended so did the organisation. Between the Romans and the start of properly organised fire brigades in the early 19th century, fire fighting was both primitive and disorganised. Open fires and timber and thatch buildings meant that fire, out of control, was an everyday occurrence and long drag hooks were used to bring down the burning thatch and church bells used for warning people. The word curfew comes from the French 'couvre feu' i.e. put out fires at night as a preventative measure. In Leicester leather buckets were kept by the town gates and manual pumps at the Guildhall (these were operated by members of the public). It was not until 1890 that the Borough Brigade was formed.

Meanwhile Jimmy Braidwood had formed the first Brigade in Edinburgh. Access to water was initially a problem and fire fighting rather than rescue was the priority. Wheeled escapes being introduced about 1850. Massie Shaw was another leading fire fighter.

John had illustrated his talk so far with many interesting slides of old prints etc. he now continued on the theme to bring us up to the present day with many photographic slides of old appliances and their history and development.

The Second World War brought about uniformity of appliance and working methods. In 1941 the National Fire Service was formed. The war saw the service of Fire women too. After the war the National Fire Service was disbanded and the pre war authorities were reformed but with standard appliances and methods.

John finished his talk with some safety tips; fire develops and spreads very quickly so get a fire alarm!

After notices the meeting ended at about 9.30p.m., 29 members were present at this most interesting talk.

THE DURHAM OX PUB, LONG STREET

Further to the mention of this Inn in the last Bulletin (No:31) the Editors have been contacted by Ralph Wignall who has recently been studying some old deeds of the site in Long Street. These date back to the 17th century and relate the area now occupied by Johnson's Fruit Shop.

Until 1817 the Inn was known as the Woolpack. The Dann Family were owners for many years.

It seems likely that the name Durham Ox was transferred from another inn which was in existence in 1798, in the Church Nook/Oadby Lane area near St. Wistan's Church. This Inn is the subject of a painting in Duncan Lucas's collection. The name on the sign is indecipherable but a large ox is clearly visible.

WILLIAM EWART BOULTER V.C.

Still on the subject of last Bulletin (No:31), Mr. Wignall has kindly allowed me to read and note down an entry from his book The V.C. & D.S.O. Vol I. This gives biographical and service details of all holders of these decorations. From it I have extracted the following details.

William Ewart Boulter was born 14/10/1892 the son of Frederick and Mary Ann Boulter. He was educated at Wigston Council Schools and joined the army in September 1914. He was promoted to Sergeant in May 1915 and embarked for France in July of that year.

He was awarded the V.C. for great bravery on 14/7/1916 at Trones Wood , France. At the time he was aged 24, his number was 14603, and he was a Sergeant in the 6th Battalion, Northamptonshire Regiment. One Company and part of another were held up in an attack in the wood by an enemy machine gun, causing heavy casualties. Sgt. Boulter in spite of a bad shoulder wound advanced alone under fire and bombed the gun team from their position. This not only halted further loss of life but was very valuable strategically as well.

Because of the injury he was transferred back to hospital in England 18/7/1916. He was sufficiently recovered by December 1916 to attend the celebration in Wigston in his honour. He was actually presented with his V.C. on St. Patrick's Day 1917.

Later when in the 7th Battalion, Northamptonshire Regiment, in October 1917, he got Trench Fever and was not fit enough for active service afterwards. He was promoted to Lieutenant on 27/12/1918 and finally demobilized on 24/4/1919.

Knowledge of his later life is scant, but he was known to be a modest man, and keen on all sport. He married but did not have any children. He is thought to have moved to the London area. He died in 1957.leaving a brother.

Tricia Berry

WIGSTON HALL

The drawing on the cover of this Bulletin is of Wigston Hall which was situated in Long Street where the Elizabeth Court flats are now built.

In 1826 this site was part of a large estate which extended from Bushloe End to Aylestone Lane and was owned by John Clark, one of the largest landowners in the Parish.

In 1830 the Land Tax Assessments list the property as a house and land owned by John Clark and occupied by Miss Clark (probably his daughter). The tax due was £7. 10. 1½d. The following year Miss Clark, a mature lady in her early 40's, married Captain Charles Holland Baddeley of the East India Company. The Hall was built by the Captain in 1834 whether on the same spot as the original house or nearby, is not possible to say.

The Hall was large enough to be described as "a neat mansion" and was designed in the "gothick" style. The grounds were extensive with lawns, orchard, glass houses, spinney, pond, stables, a gardener's cottage and paddock. There was a further paddock on the opposite side of the road where the memorial park is now situated.

The Baddeleys lived there about 20 years. By 1877 Alfred Cooper J.P. and Alfred Allen Cooper, farmer (probably father and son) were living there. Mr. A.A. Cooper farmed 430 acres, 1 perch though this was not necessarily all part of Wigston Hall estate.

In 1908 Henry Thorp Hincks, farmer and land agent, was the owner. Mr. Hincks was connected to the legal family of that name. His land agency practice, Hincks, Horton & Eady was in Leicester at 35, Friar Lane.

Gradually over the years the estate reduced in size as various parts were sold off. A big area going to the Wigston Co-operative Society for their Building Estate (Central Avenue area).

By 1923 Thomas Birkett lived at Wigston Hall. It now had a number, 30 Long Street, and a telephone number 72. Mr. Birkett was a boot manufacturer. His Company was Toone & Black Limited in Saffron Lane, South Wigston. Mr. Birkett was Mr. Toone's son-in-law. The Toones and the Birketts lived together in the house for a time.

At some stage The Hall was divided into two parts, possibly in 1939 because of the war. The North/East side was known as Hallcroft and then later The Old Hall. The South/West side was always Wigston Hall. Mr. Birkett let The Old Hall part to Glyndur and Brynmor Picton-Bayton and their sister Madame Elizabeth Parroy. The three operated a court dressmaking business there.

In 1946 Mr. Birkett sold both parts of the house together with what remained of the grounds to the three partners for £4250 00. It was afterwards used by Madame Parroy as a finishing school.

The house became dilapidated and consent was given to Wheatcroft Homes to demolish it and build the flats in 1960. The demolition actually occurred c1961.

Sources - Various Directories, Hoskin's -Midland' Peasant, Land Tax Assessments (LRO) , Deeds (O & W BC), GWHS Tran 23, Wigston Parish Register.

N.B. The above is not necessarily, a complete record of the owners of Wigston Hall. The deeds I have to date examined do not go back far and there is a sizeable gap between the dates of the directories consulted.

Tricia Berry

Getting into print ...

On Saturday the 23rd of November the bulletin editors attended the Autumn seminar of the Leicestershire Local History Council in the Lord Mayor's Room at the New Walk Museum.

Welcoming and concluding remarks were made by Mary Mason, the Chairman, followed by five speakers.

Caroline Wessel - How grand or modest a publication

- Financing your publication

- Pitfalls and handy hints on publishing Dr. Alan McWhirr -

Writing articles for commercial magazines

Denys Baker - Taking the plunge

Steph Masteris - Searching out snaps: compiling a book of historic photographs for a national publisher

Bob Trubshaw - Getting into print at an affordable price

This was a most interesting seminar and the information given would be of interest to many of our members. If any of our members would like to discuss any of the topics with the Bulletin editors they are most welcome to do so.

NEW LOCAL HISTORY BOOK

Donald S. Hunt, a retired senior partner at Owston & Co. Solicitors, has written "The Master Builder, A History of Hiram Abiff Owston".

Mr. H.A. Owston founded the practice over 120 years ago in Leicester. He later opened a Wigston Branch and lived for many years at Bushloe House (the present Council Offices). The book is full of interest and contains much information on the Owston Family and also Wigston Magna where he was active in local affairs and Chairman of the Council in 1895.

Amongst the illustrations are some early photographs of both the interior and the exterior of Bushloe House.

Not cheap at £8. 00 but beautifully produced in a numbered and signed limited edition. Copies can be obtained at the offices in Long Street.

MASTERMIND T.V. PROGRAMME

Members may like to make a note to watch a particular episode of this well known T.V. Programme for two reasons:

Firstly one of the contestants is to be Druscilla Armitage, author of the series "Heraldry in Leicestershire Churches". She is the sister of Mr. M. Armitage, St. Wolstan's House, Church Nook.

Secondly because her chosen specialist subject is Leicester History.

The programme is the 7th in the present series and was recorded at Kings Hall, Worcester. It is scheduled to be broadcast on 29th March 1992. B.B.C.I.

Some aspects of Wigston in 1851

In 1851, according to the census held in that year, Wigston Magna contained 2,441 people, plus another eleven in the lunatic asylum. For the purpose of the census Wigston was divided into four areas called Enumeration Districts. The census of 1851 asked for details of occupations and so we find that in Wigston there were 184 framework knitters, 18 agricultural labourers, 17 graziers, 14 carpenters and 11 day labourers. In addition, there were 6 hosiery manufacturers, 6 framesmiths, 9 shoemakers, 8 inn-keepers, 7 gardeners, 5 grocers, 2 blacksmiths, 4 bakers, 4 carriers and 2 tailors. Thus, every aspect of life was covered in Wigston.

With regard to religion, there was the Vicar of Wigston, an Independent minister, and a Methodist local preacher (who was also a framework knitter). Then there were 2 doctors, 2 schoolmasters, a station master, a railway police constable, a lock keeper, 2 hawkers, a barber, a paperhanger, a painter and engraver, a coalcarrier, and a letter carrier. There were also 2 lawyers, an auctioneer, a relieving officer, and a police officer.

There was also a number of retired people living in Wigston. These included a Captain of the East India Company, a toll gate keeper, an Inland Revenue officer, and an Excise Officer. Thirteen described themselves as paupers while there were 11 Chelsea Pensioners i.e. old soldiers. Only 3 were described as servants.

As for women, 113 were described as framework knitters while 93 were described as seamstress, sock-stitcher, pantaloons maker, stocking maker, and shirt stitcher. Then there were 16 dressmakers, 5 washer-women, 8 charwomen, 4 schoolmistresses, a midwife, and 4 old age pensioners, known as annuitants.

As for children under 16, 117 were said to be employed, of which 53 were winders and 30 framework knitters and these no doubt assisted their parents at home. In addition, 11 were agricultural workers, and 2 ploughboys. Then there were 3 general servants. As for girls under 16, 124 were entered as employed, of which 17 were framework knitters and 95 seamstresses. One girl aged 15 was said to be a warper.

Not all children worked, however. One hundred and fifty two boys and 129 girls were definitely put down as scholars. Presumably, some children such as the doctors' and vicars' children were taught at home by tutors; so more children were at school than at work in 1851. But when we examine the sizes of the age-groups this fact needs qualification. The largest age-groups for both boys and girls was 5 years old and the second largest for boys was 6 and for girls 7. For each successive year there was a steady decline in numbers, though a few boys stayed longer at school. There was 3 boys of 14, one of 15 and 2 of 16. For girls there were only 2 of 15. At the other end of the scale there were 10 girls and 5 boys aged 3, and 5 girls and 14 boys aged 4, all designated as scholars. So, though most children went to school, most stayed for only a few years: not that this is greatly surprising, when education in 1851 was neither free nor compulsory. Moreover, Wigston children could find plenty of work both inside, and outside the home.

Turning to the old people of Wigston, there were 12 persons aged 80 and over, one aged 87 and one 86, but no-one was aged 90 or over. In the 70-79 group, there were 68 people and in the 60-69 group, 133 people. By-and-large Wigston must have been a place for young people in 1851, for the largest age-group was the 20-29 group which had 28.7% of the total population. Indeed, the under 40s provided just over 50% of the adult population.

Bernard Elliott

PROF. W.G. HOSKINS

Members learned with great sadness of the death of Prof. Hoskins recently in his native Devonshire at the age of 83.

Until his retirement in 1968 he was Professor of English History at Leicester University. He wrote numerous books, often illustrated with photographs taken by a former Principal of the, then, University College, F.L. Attenborough (father of Sir Richard and Sir David). He presented the B.B.C.2 series "Landscapes of Britain".

Amongst his many awards was the CBE for services to local history. He made a particular study of Wigston Magna and wrote a book "The Midland Peasant" on its history. This became an official text book in U.S.A. which is one reason why copies are so hard to obtain today. He also wrote several papers on Wigston Magna, these include: The Population of an English Village 1086-1801 - A Study of Wigston Magna, Wigston Magna Lay Subsidies 1327-1599, The Streets of Wigston Magna and The Fields of Wigston Magna.

We quote ...

The kingdom of plants and animals is near at hand,
though Man forgets his Maker, plants and animals are very near the light. And, Poet,
tell men that love is born with the same exaltation in all planes of life - that the
rhythm of the leaf swaying in the wind is the same as that of a distant star and that the
very words spoken by the fountain in the shade are repeated by the sea, and in the
same tone. Tell Man to be humble. In nature all things are equal.

Frederico Garcia Lorca - Prologue to "The Butterfly's Evil Spell"

Greater Wigston Historical Society

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- We quote ...

If I have seen further it is by standing on the shoulders of Giants.

Isaac Newton in a letter to Robert Hooke 5 February 1675/76

The causes of events are always more interesting than the events themselves.

Cicero, "Ad Atticum", Bk.ix,epis.S (49 B.C.)

PUBLICATIONS LIST

*13)

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- No. 1. Evidence taken from witnesses in the case of BOLLTER v NOGNE (Wigston Magna) 1637. 8pp.
- No. 2. Examples of Wigston company and shop advertising 1908-1915. 10pp.
- No. 3. Lecture delivered before the Wigston Literary and Scientific Society by M.J.R. Pochin 1911, 'The History of Wigston'. 8pp.
- No. 4. Extracts from the Leicester Chronicle and Leicester Mercury 1888-1889. 11pp.
- No. 5. As No. 4. 1867-1868. 19pp.
- No. 6. " 1869 19pp.
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- No. 15. Wigston Magna, Official Guide 1923. 8pp.
- No. 16. The Fields of Wigston. 22pp.
- No. 17. A History of Wigston Town Cricket Club by J. Colver 1904-1980. 44pp.
- No. 18. Items Taken from the Wigston Urban District Engineers Notebook 1926. 7pp.
- No. 19. The Wigston Junction Brickworks Mystery. 5pp.
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- No. 21. Extracts relating to Wigston Hospital Records. 91pp.
- No. 22. Notes on the History of Wigston. 16pp.
- No. 23. A Complete Record of Footpath Changes in Great Wigston during the 19th Century. 51pp.
- No. 24. The Building of the Church of St. Thomas of Glen Parva and S. Wigston. 21pp.
- No. 25. Extracts from All Saints' Church Parish Magazine 1914-1918. 33pp.
- No. 26. As No. 25. 1924-28. 33pp.
- No. 27. Minutes of Wigston Magna Vestry Meetings. 1821-1830 Complete. 1831-1842 parts.
- No. 28. A Study of the Established Church in Wigston Magna & It's Historical & Contemporary Position in Society. 31pp.
- No. 29. Minutes of the Great Wigston School Board. March 1872 - April 1873 Complete. May 1873 - Feb 1884 parts. 53pp.
- No. 30. Seven Months There and Back. An account of a business and pleasure trip round the world in 1920 made by the proprietor of 'Two Steeples' Manufacturers of Wigston. 38pp.

TRANSACTION

- No. 31. The Meanings of the Names Given To The New Roads in Wigston. 22pp.
- No. 32. Phenomenal Occurances at Wigston Magna. 5pp.
- No. 33. The Name of Wigston Magna, How and Why. 4pp.
- No. 34. Leicestershire Place Names. (Philological Society Trans. 1920) 7pp.
- No. 35. The Hamlet of Kilby Bridge by I Varrey. 7pp.
- No. 36. Beil Street, Wigston 1886, One Hundred Years Ago. 13pp.
- No. 37. Wiggy's Child by Doreen Boulter. 54pp.
- No. 38. A Record of the Wigston Magna Board Schools 1872-1904.
- No. 39. A Selection from the researches of Ernest Baker & William Coleman of Dadby. 63pp.
- No. 40. The Great Wigston Gas-Light and Coko Company. 18pp.
- No. 41. Tythorn Farm, The Langham Estate in Great Wigston 1806-1865. 27pp.
- No. 42. Bulls Head Street, Wigston 1886, One Hundred Years Ago by J. Colver. 12pp.
- No. 43. Extracts from the Wigston & District Free Churchman Magazine 1905-1912 by J. Colver. 26pp.
- No. 44. The Midland Railway and It's Influence on the Development of Wigston by Suzanne Elsham. 33pp.
- No. 45. Notes on Tythorn Hill by Duncan Lucas. 5pp.
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