



Greater Wigston Historical Society

White Gate Farm, Newton Lane, Wigston Magna Leicestershire

BULLETIN 44



PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS - FEBRUARY TO AUGUST 1996

Wednesday 21st February 1996

A.G.M. followed by film 'The Reluctant Squire'
7.30p.m. Wigston Liberal Club.

Wednesday 20th March 1996

"John of Gaunt" - Drusilla Armitage.
7.30p.m. Wigston Liberal Club.

Wednesday 17th April 1996

'Victorian Underwear' - Jane May, Leics. Costume Museum.
7.30p.m. Wigston Liberal Club.

Wednesday 15th May 1996

'Britain in the 1930's shown on Archive Film' - Rob Foxon.
7.30p.m. Wigston Liberal Club.

Wednesday 19th June 1996

Visit to Cadeby Church for brass rubbing demonstration (bring own materials if you wish to try this), then Cadeby Light Railway followed by Ploughman's Supper - Mrs. Audrey Boston. Coach 6.45p.m. from Paddock Street Car Park.

Wednesday 21st August 1996

Visit to Leicester Town Hall.
Meet 7.00p.m. Paddock Street Car Park to share transport.

FRONT COVER DRAWING

Jim Colver's drawing for this issue shows the Vicarage & Church Room in Bushloe End. The present dwelling was built in 1909 & its first inhabitant would have been the Rev. R.C. Palmer & his family. It replaced an earlier double fronted brick house which stood on the site of the Church Room. The Room was erected by public subscription in 1929.

The Bulletin is published three times a year on 1st February, June and October. Articles etc. (which are always welcome) should be submitted to either of the Joint Editors three clear weeks before the publication date please.

Joint Editors: Mrs. Chris Smart, 197 Queens Road, Leicester.
Mrs. Tricia Berry, 7 Wensleydale Road, Wigston.

OCTOBER MEETING

Society meetings are often fairly serious occasions but this one was so amusing that several members in the very full room were seen to be beside themselves with laughter. Our speaker, Mrs. Wilhelmina Carton, is a Leicester Tour Guide, & regular speaker who has been on radio & T.V. The incidents described were not actually that funny. Some at least must have seemed like disasters at the time, but, well fortified with a glass of sherry, she told in a most hilarious way how capably she coped with the difficulties of domestic life during the war.

Mrs. Garton was a young married girl with 2 small daughters living in Leicester when her husband was called to serve in the navy at the start of W.W.II. Not knowing many people locally she decided to sell up & return to her native Cleethorpes to be near her parents. Her husband had given her Power of Attorney so "I used it." She wrote to tell him "C/o Chatham Dockyard" but drew a veil over his helpless horror at the loss of his home.

She discovered all suitable accommodation had been requisitioned but eventually fell for an 8 bedroom house & decided to open it as a guest house. With a mixture of charm & persuasion she managed to get the Midland Bank ("not a listening bank then") to lend her the shortfall. She bought extra furniture, a visitors book & advertised in the papers of neighbouring towns.

Things soon took off & she spoke of all the home baking often with improvised ingredients. Of persuading people to eat fish (which was plentiful) for tea when they disliked it. And of the Christmas goose which turned out to be all skin & bone & which she replaced with a nice plump capon her neighbour had acquired "off the back of a lorry." In the hope people would not notice she carved in the kitchen & was generous with her Algerian wine. When someone commented on the paleness of the 'goose's' flesh she said it had been milk fed!

Most of her guests were young women, both married & single & taxi journeys to the local maternity home were not uncommon occurrences. She became Godmother to no less than 30 babies who are now scattered all over the world. There was Betty who announced she had had an immaculate conception & took to her bed after the birth. As a thank you after she left she sent a 'diamond ring' which turned out to be a fake. Then there was the ex Tiller Girl who decided to dye her hair with black coffee. She had her baby next day still with the resultant bright maroon hair. Then there was the girl who begged Mrs. Garton to tell her young man 'Chuck' from Kentucky of her condition because she dare not. He agreed to marry her & was able to obtain all the extra food for a wedding reception at the guest house.

Unruly children were also a problem and Nigel was the worst of all. He would kick the furniture & on the evening when Hull was bombed was playing in the bay window & managed to pull the blackout curtain down, resulting in a very near miss & many broken windows. He was no further trouble after being 'spoken to' behind the closed kitchen door.

One breakfast time she shared her 2oz. weekly bacon ration with a gypsy who came to the door. This lady later returned with the gift of a genuine Romany crystal ball. She foretold that Mrs. Garton would live in another town, have a third child, change her career & become good at talking. All these predictions came true.

Edna Taylor thanked Mrs. Carton very much for a really entertaining talk. After a few announcements the meeting closed at about 9.30p.m.

November meeting ...

On Wednesday the 15th of November forty six members of the society met to hear Mr. Derek Seaton's Tales of Leicestershire Lad.

The talk was amply illustrated with slides of buildings and statues. It commenced with the Jewry Wall and finished with the De Montfort Hall.

It would be tedious to detail all the buildings described and seen, so here are a few of the threads that seemed to draw the talk together.

The churches

- St. Nicholas, the Anglo Saxon nave is the oldest church architecture in Leicester.
- St. Stephens, originally situated on London Road, the church was moved stone by stone to DeMontfort Street.
- St. Martins, the Cathedral.
- St. James the Greater, by the local architect Henry Goddard, the huge tower that was part of the original design, has never been completed.
- St. John the Divine, by Sir George Gilbert Scott, now attractively converted to flats.

The architects

- Joseph Hansom, the Belvoir Street Baptist Chapel (the Pork Pie Chapel) now the Leicester College of Adult Education. He also designed the museum building in New Walk (originally a Nonconformist Proprietary School).
- Arthur Wakerley, the Wyvern hotel, built for Thomas Cook, on the original St. Stephens site.
- Goddard & Paget, Brookfield on London Road, now the Charles Frears School of Nursing
- Tate, Burgess, Barradale ... and many more.

This fascinating slide show and talk finished at about 9.30p.m. Our thanks are extended to Derek for standing *in* at short notice.

December meeting ...

On Wednesday the 13th of December the Society met for our Christmas party. The evening commenced with a picture quiz devised by Edna. The quiz was an entertaining mixture of current affairs, local history and historical figures.

The evening then continued with a team quiz devised by Stella. Each team had to answer twenty questions on Leicestershire history.

After this the refreshments were served. This year the Secretary's room adjoining the usual meeting room was used for the refreshments. This was a definite improvement and as a result there was no shortage of space.

Mary, Cynthia and their helpers had put on a magnificent spread which was enjoyed by all present. After votes of thanks and notices the party ended at about 10p.m.

JANUARY MEETING

For our January meeting members gathered to hear a very interesting talk on the history of entertainment in Leicester given by Mr. Herbert Mason of the Little Theatre Company. After remarking he was pleased to see a full house he went on to say the first purpose built theatre was the Coal Hill Assembly Room in 1750. Located very close to the Clock Tower it took its name from the area which was once known as Coal Hill because it was where coal was brought for distribution from the Leics. coalfields. The Sadler's Wells company are known to have performed there. This building was later used for shops & the sale of hay. This led to the area then becoming known as the Haymarket & giving its name to the present Haymarket Theatre.

A replacement was built in 1799 in Market Place South within the grounds of the County Rooms. In between the plays, concerts & lectures were featured. Madame Tussaud brought her waxwork exhibition there in 1830. In 1836 this was demolished & the Theatre Royal built on part of the same site with the entrance in Horsefair Street. This new theatre had the latest gas lighting & water for fountains etc. It was later to have a fly tower constructed so that scenery could be raised & lowered instead of moved sideways as previously. Many national figures performed there including Ellen Terry.

In 1877 the need for a building more suitable for musical events led to the opening of the Royal Opera House in Silver Street. Gracie Fields, Lily Langtry & Vesta Tilley were among the many stars to appear there.

The huge Floral Hall, said to accommodate 10,000 people, was built in 1876 in Belgrave Gate. It was used for skating, bazaars & exhibitions. It later gave way to the Palace Theatre on the same site.

Huge amphitheatres with circular arenas for circus etc. were popular for a time & several were constructed around the town but these soon became uneconomic. The most notable was in Humberstone Gate where Thomas Cook is known to have held a Temperance meeting. He later went on to build his own Temperance Hall in Granby Street where Charles Dickens was to give some of his readings.

There were many smaller places of entertainment. Public houses often converted upstairs rooms for concert & plays. A second music hall, the Gaiety Palace of Varieties, was erected on the corner of Wharf & Gladstone Streets. This building still survives & it is believed the sad Elephant Man was exhibited there.

As live entertainment became less popular the theatres were mostly demolished & not replaced. A small need still existed, however, & this gave impetus to the amateur theatre. The present Little Theatre in Dover Street, which was originally a Baptist Chapel, was first used in 1919. There were 2 conditions, no wine on the premises & the graves were not to be disturbed. The Company eventually managed to get round the first condition! The Little Theatre which was an early inspiration to Sir Richard Attenborough & provided the "double" for Monty's double during W.W.II continues to flourish & plays to average 90% houses. There are usually 3 separate productions in rehearsal at any one time.

After some questions & discussion Edna Taylor thanked Mr. Mason for a most enjoyable evening & the meeting closed at approx 9.30p.m.

CORRECTION TO WHO'S WHO NO: 10 in Bulletin 41

I have to admit to the cardinal sin of making an assumption! I stated in my article on Dr. Briggs that his wife Catherine Rosa Cooper was the widow of Alfred Allen Cooper. This is not so, she was in fact the widow of Alfred Allen's brother James Thomas Cooper. Further research adds to the story.

The father of the two brothers was Alfred Cooper, who came from a landowning Whetstone family. He trained as a surgeon & lived in Welford Place, Leicester. He & his wife Ann had four children. He owned land in Aylestone, Glen Parva, Willoughby Waterless, Whetstone & Countesthorpe as well as a substantial holding in Wigston. *In* his Will written in 1876 he mentioned he is in the process of selling his Welford Place home & moving to Wigston Hall. He left two of his sons, Charles William, who like his father was a doctor (at 39, King Street) & Alfred Allen who farmed most of the Wigston land, equally provided for, as also his daughter, Annie Letitia Woodward, the wife of a merchant in Liverpool. The other son, James Thomas, who was a cotton broker living in Oxtun, Birkenhead, was left £2000 more as he "is suffering defective vision." As a medical man, Mr. Cooper would appreciate the condition was incurable & likely to necessitate early retirement.

Alfred Allen, who did not marry, lived at Wigston Hall with his parents & continued there alone after their death. They were both buried in St. Wistan's churchyard. When the lease expired he moved to 38, Bell Street. In December 1899 he made his Will, a simple document, leaving everything to his sister-in-law Catherine Rosa Cooper. It was witnessed by his neighbour Mr. E.G. Shipp, draper, & his house-keeper Mrs. Manton. He died shortly afterwards on 10/2/1900. The Will was drafted without legal help & did not name any executor so Catherine Rosa had to apply to the Court as the "universal legatee & devisee named" to act as Personal Representative.

Catherine & her by then nearly blind husband moved to the house she had inherited at 38, Bell Street. After her husband's death she lived for a time alone & then married Dr. Briggs. As the beneficiary of her brother-in-law & presumably her first husband as well, Catherine would have inherited more than half of her father-in-law's substantial assets & would have been a wealthy woman.

When she herself died, a newspaper announcement read: "On 26/10/1932 Catherine Rosa, wife of Christopher Briggs, surgeon, Wigston Magna -loved & mourned by all who knew her." A news item in the same paper read "....Mrs. Briggs, who was taken ill on Saturday while presenting prizes at a sale of work & exhibition by the local girl guides, was a popular personality in Wigston & took a prominent part in public affairs."

Sources: Wills of Alfred Cooper & Alfred Allen Cooper. Leicester Evening Mail 27/10/1932, all at Leics. Record Office.

STENTONS OF BELL STREET

The article in Bulletin 43 on Stentons brought back memories of her youth for Doreen Boulter who sent us the following letter & appointment card. Thank you Wiggy Maggy

Reading about Stenton's Chemist and Hairdressing Establishment in the Wigston Historical Society Bulletin brought memories of childhood days in Wigston.

When visiting the chemist, Mr. Stenton always addressed me as "Curly Top". Since my hair was as straight as a yard of pumpwater, with my fringe & basin-cut, I could never understand why he called me "Curly Top". I could only assume he needed his glasses changing.

However, Mother had every confidence in his ability to provide pills and potions for poorly people, so, for me, it remained one of life's many mysteries.

The Hairdressing Salon, needed wooden cubicles in those days, since permanent waving machines resembled instruments of torture. Sitting there strung up to all those wires, listening with increasing anxiety to the sizzling noises around your head, hoping the curling papers were not going to burst into flames.

When finally released from the contraption, further torture was in store when the hair clippers were run up the back of your neck, a refined form of torture that Hairdressers had perfected. We emerged into Bell Street, resplendent in corrugated waves and tight sausage curls. Sometimes, while shut away in our cubicle we would listen to the cries of small children as they were lifted into the wooden high chair for a hair cutting session. That's where I had my curls cut off Father never forgave Mother, and one long curl was retrieved and placed in the Family Bible, Amen.

My curls never came back, hence the basin-cut, and in later years, the permanent wave. Dhl what we endured to be beautiful.

“See" Wiggy's Child"

W. A. STENTON

REGISTERED
LADIES' HAIRDRESSER
47 BELL STREET, WIGSTON MAGNA
LEICESTER
Phone **Leicester** 883874

Your Appointment is booked for

BRIDAL MEMORIES FLOWER FESTIVAL

Many of us visited this excellent festival at All Saints' Church in August which generated a useful sum towards the restoration. Member, Jane Pitches from near Manchester came down to help & was so captivated by the whole occasion she felt inspired to write about it. She has kindly sent a copy to the Society "so that in future years if anyone is interested, they can read how it affected a person living away from Wigston but returning "home."

The original will be handed to the Folk Museum but it was thought all members might like the opportunity to read it, so it is reproduced here with her permission. Thank you Jane.

This is my personal tribute to all those who made the flower festival such a sparkling success and my recollection of a glorious occasion.

A big thank you to everyone was so excited when I first heard of plans for the flower festival about 18 months ago and now it is just a memory - but what a truly wonderful time it has been and for that reason I have decided to record my thoughts. everything seemed perfect; we had Icrious sunshine which added to the happy holiday atmosphere which this festival seemed to inspire. what an inspiration to have "bridal memories" as the theme for the festival for surely everyone has their own bridal memories, either of their own wedding or as a guest at a wedding so it strikes a chord with us all. A wedding is a happy occasion shared with family and friends and this festival certainly became a wonderful time for renewal of old friendships and to surround visitors by so much love, re-creating a happy wedding atmosphere.

I was impressed by how much talent there is amongst the Church congregation and how these different talents had been used to create such a splendid event giving pleasure to many hundreds of people. IMO one could fail to be uplifted by the sheer beauty of the flowers in their fabulous arrangements and the skill in putting together the various wedding exhibitions - bringing old wedding dresses back to life and looking as fresh as the day they had been worn, arranging the wedding photographs in a magnificent display, preparing such delicious food to feed so many people over four days, being able to sit out in the well kept Vicarage garden, looking at the interesting collection of old wedding memorabilia, the clever demonstration of sugar craft flower making, listening to the organ or the handbells or the bells ringing from the belfry. All this talent was brought together out of one local group and covering so many different aspects and it was an extraordinary achievement by those who organised the festival. They deserve our highest praise.

How lovely to see the pretty bridesmaid waiting to greet us as we arrived in the beautifully decorated Church porch - reviving memories for those of us who have stood and waited for the bride in that same place. Each time I entered "the Church, I caught my breath at the sheer beauty of it all - a sumptuous/feast of flowers and bridal finery. I have never seen it look so gorgeous; there were flowers, flowers, flowers everywhere and all so carefully arranged to a clever, well thought out theme; flowers arranged in copper for the Copper Wedding Anniversary. Similarly the Pearl, Diamond, emerald, Silver, Ruby, Golden, China, Milk and Sapphire Anniversaries were commemorated with appropriate accompaniments. I was particularly impressed with the Golden colour wedding dress and veil (and the sweet bride, now aged 90, who was still walking around at the festival, which had been so well linked to the ending of the second World War 50 years ago, the celebrations of which also coincided with this festival.

It amazed me what heirlooms people had in their possession and "were now willing to bring out and share with the rest of us to highlight a particular aspect of this bridal theme.

It was' interesting to see how the fashions had changed over the years both in style (for bouquets also) and materials used (parachute silk for one bridal gown on display). I liked the idea of putting the bridal photograph near its own wedding: dress so that we could see how it looked at the time. I took a photograph of dear Eileen Mawby, now aged 89, standing beside her bridal gown worn at her marriage in the Church in 1942. It was also a great joy to take a

photograph of my own parents, Ruth and Bill Horlock, standing at those same Chancel steps where they had been married over 58 years ago, surely one of the longest surviving couples who had been married at the Church to return for the festival, what memories it all must have evoked.

Sunday provided us with the opportunity to sing several greatly loved wedding hymns at the "Songs of Praise" service and we listened to the handbells playing "Jesu, joy of man's desiring" and "O perfect love" and the service ended when Kr. Gillies played a marvellous organ voluntary in full. When I looked around at the very large congregation, I was struck by the innate rudeness in people. Perhaps they had returned to the Church that evening because they wished to re-capture something of their own wedding especially those people who had been married there. For whatever reason they came, they seemed to be full of joy and thankfulness.

How grateful visitors were throughout the festival for the opportunity of going into the Church Room to have a choice of delicious homemade refreshments and to sit in the pretty vicarage garden. The marquee was a lovely idea and people appreciated being able to sit inside it, or under the shade of the trees, to escape the heat of the sun. Lovely floral arrangements were out here too - not a corner forgotten. What a marvellous idea to display Catherine Green's beautiful wedding dress in the Vicarage porch - it was so eye catching that I am sure it must have attracted passers-by to come and look at the festival.

I loved the display of wedding photographs, beautifully arranged and neatly labelled so that it was easy to identify the bridal couples. I enjoyed seeing the various generations of family weddings which had taken place at the Church and they evoked memories for me as I had attended many of those weddings, either as bridesmaid, guest or onlooker. When I looked at some of those photographs, I was very conscious of the phrase in the book of common Prayer Marriage service "till death us do part" because some of these loving couples pictured here have now been separated by death but the deceased partner remains as dearly loved and remembered now as during their lifetime. They really are "waiting for an interval somewhere very near just around the corner".

When the festival was being planned, I am sure that no one could have foreseen what the huge bonus would be for people. Nothing could have prepared me for the sense of joy that it inspired in people. Apart from raising much needed money, it had a knock-on effect of giving so many people a boost by providing the means of renewing old friendships and reviving old memories. There was an enormous fund of goodwill, joy, love, friendship, fun, laughter - which seemed to spill out from every part of that dear corner of old Wigston. I have loved Wigston all my life and have attended many events there but never have I been so aware of anything like this surge of excitement which was found amongst the people, meeting again for the first time since long ago school days, familiar faces from a far distant past yet being instantly at ease and comfortable with each other through sharing so many memories of a simple life set around Church and school. Our common background meant we all recognised each other's part in our lives as we grew up - each of them had helped to make us the person we have become.

I feel so fortunate to have been born and brought up in Wigston at a time when it was still a relatively small place and we all knew each other. A great strength of Wigston is that although it is no longer a village, it has still retained a very large nucleus of old Wigston families so that when those of us living elsewhere return occasionally - even after very many years away - we can fit back easily into each other's conversation, pick up the threads of each other's lives so readily that we feel instantly at home and welcome because of these familiar faces from our past. They provide that continuity which links our past to our present and now the festival has given us our link to the future with these recent memories. We shall be able to look back and have the warm glow of festival memories, when we recall the laughter and the delight in being together again, just as we used to be and this will inspire us and cheer us for a long time yet.

During the four days of the festival, it seemed as if time stood whilst a parade of people from our past life came before us and reminded us of who we were and how we came to be the person we are today. They may now pass from our lives and we may never all meet again like this for the rest of our time on earth but the presence of these people who had been part of our childhood and early adulthood provided a wonderful sense of reunion - it was sufficient time for us to acknowledge the part the past has played in our lives.

This pause in our lives as we came together at the festival and which reminded us of our roots also meant we remembered the people connected with Wigston who have been dead for very many years but still live in our memories and returned so vividly at the festival when we spoke of them. It is very comforting and reassuring to think that we are not forgotten long years after our death. The Church seems full of the presence of the souls who have worshipped there over many centuries. A visitor remarked to me on the atmosphere inside the building and I said I thought it was because it had been the scene of so much joy and sorrow in people's lives over so many centuries and also the great love that people felt for the building had helped to preserve it over those centuries and so this love is felt very strongly by those entering the Church today. There is so much love surrounding us

inside the Church. We can sit quietly and think of all those we knew there who worked so hard during their lifetime for the greater glory of the Church and who taught us and guided us. I sat in the Church and remembered where so many of them used to sit and I feel sure they were smiling down on us during the festival. Dear Canon West, Connie Southam, Annie Looms, Lou Wale - to name but four - how they would have loved it all but I believe they were sharing it with us.

Now that the festival is over, we who have come from afar slide back into our own little slot but take with us the memories of so many delightful people and happy reunions together with that feast of beauty to keep in our mind's eye. Such memories give us a huge spiritual up-lift and the courage to face the future. Thank you everyone.

KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

During one of my sorties to the Record Office I came across the following item which I thought sufficiently interesting & amusing to copy down. It is to be found under Ref: DE226 (DG17). Perhaps Mike Forryan would like to try a one name study!! T.B.

Sidelights on Colonisation in the 16th Century

Extract from an account book 1754-1784 of the estate of William Hurst of Hinckley & Higham.

"In 1569 a vessel of 450 tons with merchants going to establish a settlement in East Indies was cast away - all perished except one, Mr. Pines, book-keeper to the Captain; the Captain's daughter, 2 maids and a negro girl which got safe into an uninhabited island, very pleasant having a continual vendure never colder than our September.

After being there 16 years he had 13 children by one wife, 7 by another, 15 by ...? and 12 by the negro girl. At 60 years old and being 40 years his family was increased to 567; at 80 years old increased to 1789 and in the year 1657 Cornelius Van Stoetten, a Dutch Captain, found the Island inhabited by their descendants of the amount of more than 10,000 persons.

Plenty of birds and shell fish and tame animals about the size of a goat which brought forth 2 at a time twice in the year; very good food also plenty of fruit and trees which bore nuts as large as an apple which they used instead of bread."

GERTIE GITANA EXHIBITION

This excellent exhibition, put together by Tony Lawrance, was held in November at the Folk Museum, where it was much enjoyed by many people. It was later transferred to the Record Office & now comes news that it is to be on show at the Edinburgh Festival in August. This comes about through Ann Oughton, the author of Gertie's biography 'Thanks for the Memory,' who lives in that town.

If anyone plans a trip to Scotland & wishes to visit, Tony (telephone 2880917) will be able to supply more detail nearer the time. Gertie & her local connection has perhaps been under-rated in the past. She is believed to have held a similar place in British hearts during 1914-18 to that of Vera Lynn during 1939-45.

EXHIBITION AT SOUTH WIGSTON

A local history exhibition is to be held at the Bassett Street Library, South Wigston from 12th February for 2 weeks, at 2.30p.m. each day. Some of the material for this has been lent by Peter Mastin & formed part of the extremely successful event last March at South Wigston Methodist Church. A welcome opportunity for another look. On the afternoon of 20th February Alan Kind will give a talk on the area.

It is believed the exhibition will subsequently be on display at Wigston Library but dates are not yet announced.

BILL WARD

Members were delighted to hear that Bill Ward, who recently went into hospital for a hip replacement operation, is making good progress. We all send our very best wishes & hope to have the new "Bionic Bill" back with us again very soon.

WIGSTON WHO'S WHO NO; 13

AMBROSE LEE

Ambrose Lee was born in Wigston in 24/5/1824, the son of Edward Lee a hosier. He grew up to follow his father into the same trade.

On 23/12/1847, when aged 23, he married 21 year old Fanny Tabberer at All Saints Church. Fanny was also a Wigston girl, the daughter of William Tabberer, a grazier who was also landlord of the Bell Inn, the original Inn of that name in Bell Street. Fanny's brother was Osmond Tabberer who went on to jointly found the well known Leicester hosiery company of Pool, Lorrimer and Tabberer.

Ambrose and Fanny settled at 19, Bell Street where in 1851, he is described as a trimmer and dyer, and she a seamstress. The couple had a three year old daughter Ann. Next door lived Edward Holyoak a 48 year old hosiery manufacturer and dyer who employed 120 people. By 1861 three more children had been born to the couple - a son Edward William, and two more daughters, Rhoda Elizabeth and Mary Helen and Ambrose is then described as a manufacturer of childrens¹ socks. About this time Edward Holyoak retired from hosiery and became a farmer & grazier who lived in Bushloe End next door to the Owstons of Bushloe House. These circumstances together with the fact that the Lees named one of their daughters 'Rhoda'¹, an unusual choice, which was also the name of Edward Holyoak¹'s wife, makes it seem very likely that there was a connection between these families and that Ambrose's large business was actually built on the foundations laid down by Edward Holyoak.

By the time of the 1871 census the family was complete with the arrival of two more daughters, Fanny Emma and Augusta. A second son, Arthur Ambrose, had been born but died in infancy and is buried in St. Wistan's Churchyard. Ambrose is by this time a master manufacturer employing 56 people. They still lived in Bell Street though directories of the time describe Ambrose as of Leicester Road, suggesting that he had already established a factory there. By 1877 Edward Lee was married to Sarah and lived in Leicester Road while working for his father as a warehouseman. In 1881 Edward is living in Gladstone Street with a young family and is described as a sock manufacturer. His father in Bell Street is similarly described but also as employing 87 hands.

Sometime between 1881 & 1891 Ambrose retired and moved to Homefield, a large house he had built in what was then the country lane to Aylestone. This site is now occupied by the Curtis Weston Retirement Home. His wife died on 2/4/1887 so she did not have long, if any time at all, to enjoy the new house. At the time of the 1891 census Ambrose was aged 66 and lived in the house with Ann & Augusta, also present was a visitor and one indoor servant.

Meanwhile the business continued to expand with Edward in charge. He found he could not manage alone and took Thomas Henry Glenn, son of a local grocer & tallow chandler, into partnership. They traded as Lee & Glenn and expanded into the old family house in Bell Street which was used for offices & storage. Towards the end of the century they moved premises to Leicester Road selling the entire Bell Street site to another hosiery manufacturer, John Daykin Broughton. The two partners moved out of Wigston and became outers. Edward went to Kibworth and occupied various houses, namely, The Paddock, Merton House & The Lodge. Thomas Glenn lived at 60, New Walk, Leicester.

By 1908 the business had been incorporated as a limited company, with Edward Lee as Managing Director. The very appropriate name of Two Steeples (representative of Wigston's two churches) was chosen. By 1925 keeping abreast of modern trends they had installed a telephone with the wonderfully easy to remember number, Wigston 2. It became a large concern with sales representatives living in

different areas and covering the entire country. They manufactured a full range of jersey clothes in addition to socks.

Edward Lee died on 8/7/1924 and is buried in Wigston Cemetery. He was succeeded by his three sons Arthur, Frederick and George. The company went through various peaks and troughs over the years but survived into the hands of another generation before being sold to Mansfield Hosiery Mills in the 1970's. It continued to trade under that name until the 1980's when it was closed down as part of a rationalisation programme. The site is now occupied by Cromwell Tools.

Ambrose lived to be 90 and died on 30/8/1914. He is buried in Wigston Cemetery. He and Fanny are commemorated on a plaque on the North Wall of All Saints' Church erected "by their four surviving daughters." All five daughters are named on the same gravestone as their parents suggesting perhaps that none of them married. Most of them survived well into old age, Rhoda Lee was the last to die on 8/3/1956 aged 101 years.

Tricia Berry

Sources: Baptism & Marriage Registers of All Saints' Church. Wigston Census Returns, Various Directories, Gravestones at Wigston Cemetery & St. Wistan's Churchyard.

DIAMOND COTTAGES, MOAT STREET

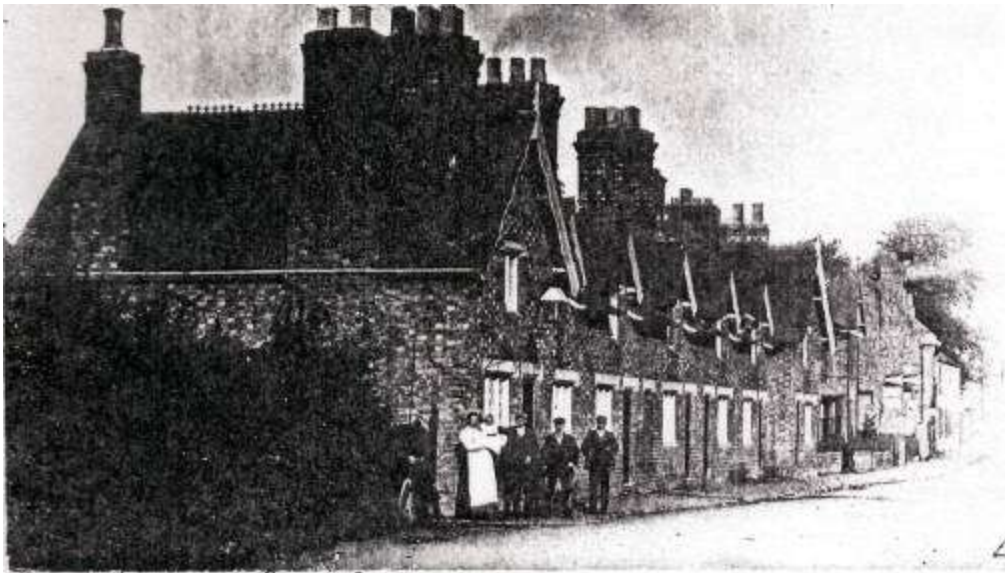
In Leics. Record Office - Ref: 3D42/M37/3 are plans of Wigston prepared for the laying of sewer pipes in 1884/6. These indicate the owner of a field to the west of Moat Street, behind & to the side of the now demolished Diamond Cottages was Mr. H.D. Davenport. The cottages stood where the group of industrial premises formerly Heating Elements are now situated & were popularly known as Diamond Cottages on account of the shape of their window panes, but were more properly named London or Moat Houses. A stone plaque "HDD 1855" was built into the brickwork, & this happily survives at the Folk Museum. With the help of the information kindly written on the back of the illustrated postcard by someone, sometime, we now know a little more.

According to the Davenport family pedigree in the O.D.L. collection Henry Devereux Davenport was the youngest of the 12 children of "Banker" George Davenport of Oxford & his wife Jane Devereux nee Davies. He was born in 1822 in Oxford, married Margaret Alice Clarke of Bath in 1853 & died in Eastbourne in 1909. He had 7 children all born in the London area.

It is most unlikely he ever lived in Wigston but nice to know he cared sufficiently about the village of his ancestors to design such an attractive row of houses on what would have been part of his land. Davenport Road perpetuates the name & appears to follow the far boundary of the field.

Tricia Berry

Front & Back views of an undated postcard (most likely 1914-1918)



Moat Houses Wigston

POST CARD

FOR COMMUNICATION.

FOR ADDRESS ONLY.

INLAND
½d.

FOREIGN
1d.

Built 1850. by H.D.D.
7. & cottages - to H.D.D.
design!

On the site of
part of the moat
of moat House
St. Wigston.