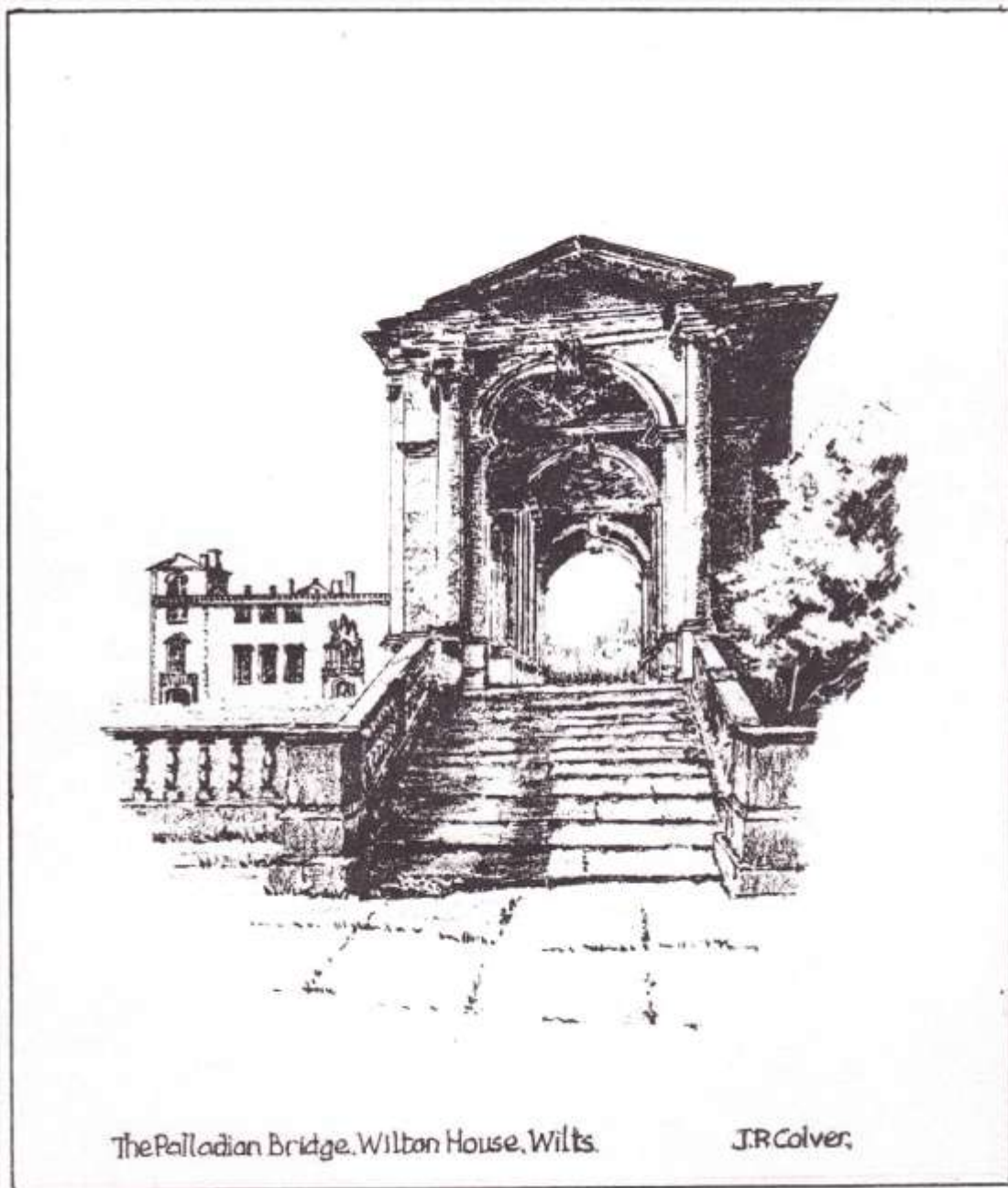




Greater Wigston Historical Society
White Gate Farm, Newton Lane, Wigston Magna Leicestershire

BULLETIN 50



The Palladian Bridge, Wilton House, Wilts.

J.R. Colver.

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS - FEBRUARY TO AUGUST 1998

Thursday 19th February 1998

A.G.M. plus 'Firewatching during the War' - Stella Tweed. 7.30p.m. Wigston Liberal Club.

March 1998

¹Beaumanor Hall & the Herrick Family¹ - Caroline Wessel. 7.30p.m. U.K. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

Wednesday 15th April 1998

'Splendours of Victorian London'¹ - Derek Seaton. 7.30p.m. U.K. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

Wednesday 20th May 1998

Visit to Lutterworth Church & Museum.

Meet 6.45p.m. Paddock Street Car Park to share transport.

Wednesday 17th June 1998

Visit to Beaumanor Hall with Caroline Wessel, follow-up to March talk. Tea & Biscuits will be served. Please note there is an entrance charge as well as the coach to pay for this trip. Coach 6.45p.m. from Paddock Street Car Park.

Wednesday 19th August 1998

Visit to All Saints' Church with Rev. Green.

Meet 7.32p.m. outside the church. (The church will be in use until 7.30p.m.)

FRONT COVER

Jim Colver's drawing this time is of the Palladian Bridge, Wilton House, Nr. Salisbury. The house has been the home of the Earls of Pembroke, the Herberts, since the reign of Henry VIII. The present dwelling was designed by Inigo Jones & is famous for its Double Cube Room designed to hold the family portraits painted by Van Dyck. During the latter part of WWII, planning of the invasion of Europe by Generals Eisenhower & Montgomery was carried out in this magnificent room.

The Bridge, a later addition, spanning the River Nadder, is based on the architecture of Palladio. Great collections of painting, sculpture & books were made by Thomas the 8th Earl, & much of this still remains at Wilton. The Earl also imported French weavers to start the carpet manufactory which still strives today.

The Bulletin is published three times a year on 1st February, June & 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 - Wharf Street revisited

On Thursday the 16th of October the Society met for a slide show on 'Wharf Street revisited' by Cynthia Brown. Cynthia is a member of the Leicester Living History Unit and her interest in Wharf Street started as a result of her research for the Unit. Originally Wharf Street linked Humberstone Gate with Belgrave Road. The Three Cranes public house marked the top end and the public wharf on the opposite side of Belgrave Gate, the bottom end.

The Belgrave Road end was laid out first in the 1820s. The properties here were very small, just two up and two down. They were to provide housing for the increasing numbers of people working in Leicester as a result of industrial expansion.

Some of the properties were lodging houses with dubious reputations. The Victoria Model Lodging House is now a factory with interesting terracotta panels to its front elevation. A cricket ground was laid out in 1825 to provide an open space in the centre of the growing town. By 1907 the whole street had been built up including the cricket ground which had been sold in 1860. The North end was always considered to be the rougher end. The houses at the Humberstone Road end were larger and of slightly better quality.

The Leicester Brewing & Malting Co. were responsible for promotional photographs of its public houses some of which were in Wharf Street and this has been a valuable source for local historians.

The houses were typical of the period with an outside W.C. and no running water, it was mainly but not exclusively a working class area. There were some small workshops, for instance, Sparkenhoe works in Grafton Street and some larger factories, for instance, William Raven between Wharf Street and Grafton Street. These factories and workshops provided work for local women. Two businesses are still in existence on the same sites. The Art, Knife and Pattern, now Art Pattern, which has been established for over 100 years, and British Steam Specialities (BSS) on the Lee Circle/Fleet Street corner. Murphy Metals started in Brunswick Street and the Murphy brothers became rich when they diversified into property in the 1930s. Cemels waste merchants is another old established firm in that area.

Religious organisations concerned with the spiritual and physical welfare of the poor had an interest in the area, e.g. the Carley Chapel, the Zion Chapel on the roundabout by St. Matthews Way, the Primitive Methodist Chapel in Curzon Street, all had thriving congregations. The Christchurch in Bow Street was in the Parish of St. Margarets, the area was divided between St. Margarets and St. Matthews. There were also church schools in the area. St. Matthews School on the corner of Brunswick Street with the junior school in Chester Street. St. Luke's Church School was on Humberstone Road on the corner of Bruin Street. There were also several Board Schools in the area from the 1870s. These were Willow Street, Syston Street and Taylor Street (originally built as a factory building). On the corner of Bedford Street and George Street was the Leicester Ragged School Mission, now the site of a car park, a place that held many happy memories for the former residents of the area.

Pawn shops were an important part of working class communities. Any thing could be pawned, furniture, bedding, clothes. In the Wharf Street area were Leaf's and Palfreyman's. A few shops have survived in Wharf Street which was once one of the main shopping areas in Leicester.

Public houses were an attractive environment to people living in poor conditions. The Rifle Butts, the Odd Fellows Arms and the Bakers Arms still exist and represent just a few of the many that were in the area.

The area also had its characters. Larry Gains was a black Canadian boxer who was well known in the area, he trained in the Jolly Angler. He was the Heavyweight Champion of the British Empire.

The area was cleared of some housing in the 1930s and again in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The condition of the housing had deteriorated and the inhabitants were living in 'slum' conditions. Some rebuilding of council houses took place in the Bedford Street/George Street area. Some people moved out to the new estates at Braunstone and Northfields which were paradise by comparison and offered space and gardens. War and shortages interrupted the re-housing and redevelopment, and it was recommenced in the late 1950s. A large telephone exchange, Lee Street car park, one of the first multi-storey car parks in the country, and St. Matthews Estate were built on the cleared land.

Many of the people interviewed by Cynthia for this research spoke of the sense of community in the area. They had happy memories in spite of the poverty often experienced. Many also spoke of the area's bad reputation. Many felt that it was unwarranted and that most of the trouble was down to one or two families only.

The evening ended with a lively discussion. Many of our Members had their own memories of Wharf Street and many had questions which Cynthia answered enthusiastically. Edna drew the meeting to a close around 9 p.m. with thanks to the speaker and notices. Approximately 36 members were present.

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NOVEMBER MEETING

In November we welcomed Mick & Joyce Billings from the Leics. & Rutland Family History Society who took turns to give a most interesting talk on Family History Research. Mick commenced with the warning that if you mind finding the odd ' skeleton in the cupboard¹ amongst your ancestors it is best to leave well alone because "all families have one¹ & 'if you haven't found yours yet its because they have been rather clever & concealed it!' Having said that it is a most enjoyable hobby which has seen huge growth in recent years. Membership of their society having increased from about 500 ten years ago to over 2000 worldwide today, & this trend is mirrored by the other societies around the country.

As a start we were reminded of the importance of getting copies made of our old photographs when originals show signs of deterioration & to label them so that future generations know who, when & where? It is also very worthwhile to make a scrapbook record of aspects of our own life. We should talk to relations, particularly older ones, & investigate family legends. Even if inaccurate they very often have a basis of truth. Try to trace distant relations who have emigrated. They will have often prized & lovingly kept mementoes of the folks back home which have not survived over here. Also to understand that surname variants are not important. Spelling was not standardised until the 1877 Education Act & the local Registrar, Vicar or Census Enumerator would write down what he heard & the average citizen, who was likely to be illiterate, would not be able to say how his name should be written.

The PRO at Kew was described which is particularly strong on military & shipping records. Joyce described how she traced some of her ancestors who were East Coast trawlermen & an uncle who died as a 17 year old at the Battle of Jutland.

Increased income from subscriptions has enabled the LRFHS to purchase the Civil Registration indexes from commencement in 1837 to 1932, with the next 15 years on order. These contain a reference number by which the relevant certificate can be ordered. Among very many other items they have the surname index for the 1881 census for the whole country & similar for Leics. for 1851. Their strays index list people who were baptised, married or buried outside their own parish - all three marvellous finding aids in tracing 'missing¹ ancestors. Pre 1837 the search centres more on Parish Registers & here the Leics. RO comes into its own with its almost complete sets of these together with many non conformist records. We were reminded how lucky we were to have this facility on the doorstep.

After quite a few questions & discussion, the Chairman, Edna Taylor, thanked our speakers for a most interesting & informative evening. Some announcements followed, namely: Peter Mastin has for sale limited edition prints at £30, or framed pictures at £60, of an original painting from a 1905 photograph of South Wigston station, by his brother Ian, a skilled professional artist. These are really special & would make a lovely gift. Tony Lawrance repeated the sad news that the Folk Museum has closed due to the imminent redevelopment of the site. Happily Oadby & Wigston BC have agreed to store the collection until an alternative venue can be found. Jim Colver asked for a show of hands to gauge support for a special visit to the FWK museum. Judging by the positive response he will no doubt be arranging this in due course.

December meeting - Christmas party

On Thursday the 18th of December the society met for its annual Christmas Party.

The first of the evening's activities was an excellent quiz devised by Stella. This consisted of questions about recent local, national and international news items, television programmes and well known characters and personalities. The clues took the form of newspaper and magazine cuttings.

Secondly we had a slide presentation by Norman Pilgrim. The slides were all of local buildings taken from unusual angles so that just the roof line or the top of the building was visible. Everyone was encouraged to shout out the answers. However, as the slide show progressed, it became increasingly more difficult to hear because of the amount of noise coming from the adjoining room. Eventually the music stopped but by this time much of the pleasure of the slides had gone. Many thanks are due to Mr. Pilgrim who gallantly carried on as if nothing was amiss. The reason for the problem was a double booking of the room. A group of lively teenagers from a local sports club had arrived for a disco and had had to be contained in the adjoining room until our party was over.

After the slides we had supper. Once again a magnificent spread was laid out by Cynthia and her helpers, with wine or fruit juice to accompany the meal and gorgeous desserts to follow. Stella announced the answers to the quiz and the raffle was drawn. Once again we had a large turn out of members and the evening was successful in spite of the problems and was enjoyed by everyone.

Many thanks to all those people who helped to organise the party, the entertainment, the quiz, the raffle and the food.

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JANUARY MEETING

The outlook for this meeting looked doubtful when early in the new year it was found the booked speaker would be unable to attend. However a lot of hard work by Doris finally paid off when she made contact with a replacement who was available at such short notice. Barry Kendall is a fan of early cinema & started by giving us a short history of the subject.

The first moving film was shown in the U.S.A. in 1893, & in Britian, in Lower Regent Street,in 1896. Prior to that, by 1830 experiments had been made with cards, & by the mid 1850's there were the Magic Lantern Shows with added sound effects from behind the scenes. In the 1870's 24 cameras were set up along a race track which a horse then triggered as it ran. This gave 24 pictures per second & was in effect the basis of a cartoon. It showed for the first time the actual motion of a galloping horse, which artists had failed to understand before. In 1927 sound was introduced with 'The Jazz Singer.'¹ The speaker then moved to his main topic 'The Life & Times of Laurel & Hardy.'

Stan Laurel (1890-1965) was born Arthur Stanley Jefferson at Alveston in the Lake District, of show business parents. By the age of 10 he was putting on his own shows & observing peoples' mannerisms. He joined Fred Carnoe's Troup & in 1910 went to America where he became understudy to Charlie Chaplin.

It was there he met Orville Hardy (1892-1957) who had been born in the Deep South. In 1919 the two starred in their first film together & Orville changed his name to Oliver. In 1926 the first 'bowler hat'¹ film was made. They worked together on numerous occasions until 1950 bringing laughter & pleasure to millions. Stan earned the most from their partnership because he put the most in, being responsible for many of the ideas & sometimes doing the directing too.

We then watched an original Laurel & Hardy film which involved the pair trying to put a wireless aerial on the roof of a house. They have not been on TV since the 1970's but there is an active appreciation society named 'Sons of the Desert' with a membership of 5000 some of whom meet regularly to exchange memorabilia & enjoy the films. Soon fourteen countries are to take part in an international convention in Birmingham.

After a number of questions including "did they use stuntmen (answer yes, & trick photography sometimes), Edna Taylor thanked Mr. Kendall for a really enjoyable & different evening.

* * * * *

FOLK MUSEUM

After much hard work over recent weeks the extensive collection of artefacts comprising the Folk Museum has now been moved from Duncan Lucas's property into storage at several different locations locally. It is greatly to be hoped that soon some permanent arrangements can be made for the proper keeping & display of this priceless collection. The Oadby & Wigston Buildings Preservation Trust is doing its best to bring this about.

MEETINGS - CHANGE OF VENUE & DAY

Our move to the downstairs concert room at the Liberal Club has not really been very successful, & this, combined with the fact that some of our members are unable to attend on Thursdays has led to a renewed search for another venue.

Therefore with effect from March all our meetings will revert to the 3rd Wednesday of each month. The indoor ones are to be held at the United Reformed Church Boys' Brigade Rooms, in Long Street. This is a separate building situated behind the Gooseberry Bush Nursery, formerly The Manse. You approach down a drive to the right of the nursery. There is parking for 3 cars to the side of this building & for about another 12 cars further down the drive at the back of the Brigade Rooms. For additional parking we

have permission to use the Lawson West solicitors/dentists car park which is at the end of the adjacent drive.

Please note the A.G.M. remains on Thursday 19th February at the Liberal Club.

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EXTRA MEETINGS

The Society traditionally does not meet in July, but for the last two years has added these extra meetings both of which have proved very enjoyable. We intend to do the same this year & have arranged a return visit to Leicester Mercury artist Olwen Hughes on Wednesday 15th July 1998. Olwen will give us supper & a talk on the woodcarver Thomas Birch, in whose former house she now lives. She will also show examples of his work on bannisters, picture rails etc.

We shall meet at 7.00p.m. at Paddock Street Car Park to share transport. As numbers are restricted to 36 early booking is advisable. See Doris or telephone (2881978) for the cost & to reserve a place.

On Wednesday 2nd September 1998 Jim Colver invites members to visit the Framework Knitters Museum. This is mainly for people who are not at present involved with the Museum. For a £1 entrance charge, refundable for those who would like to join the 'Friends Group'¹, there will be a conducted tour of the house & workshop & a showing of the video films 'Vanishing Village'¹ & 'The Infirmary Parade'¹. The visit starts a 7.30p.m. at the Museum in Bushloe End.

* * * * *

BEREAVEMENTS

It is with great sadness that we have to report the loss of three members since the last issue. Ralph Wignall of Aylestone Lane, father of our Vice Chairman Bob, passed away on 3rd November. Jack Robinson of Alport Way, on 24th November, & Dennis Taylor of Wimborne Close, the husband of our Chairman Edna, on 29th November. On behalf of the Society we send our sincere condolences to the respective families at this very difficult time.

LEGACY

The late Ralph Wignall, to mark his long & happy association as a member, & his love of old Wigston, which he captured on many a painting, has left the Society £250 in his Will. A cheque from his estate was handed to the treasurer at the Christmas Party.

This very generous gesture is greatly appreciated & consideration will be given at a future Committee Meeting as to the most appropriate way to use it.

WIGSTON WATERLOO VETERANS

During her talk to the Society in November Joyce Billings told of her visits to the Kew Record Office & the many varied items to be found there. She handed over the following information on three Wigston men who fought at Waterloo in case it might prove useful in compiling someones family tree.

- W0166/33 4/6/1823 Robt. Burbridge Rifle Brigade Aged 37 Served 14yrs
- W0116/32 30/10/1822 Thos . Langham 30th Foot Sgt. Aged 39 Served 21yrs 3mths
- W0116/28 20/12/1818 Alexr. Metcalf 2nd Foot Gds. Aged 38 Served 15yrs 9mths.

RECORD OFFICE ANNIVERSARY

On 15th November 1997 the Record Office held an Open Day to mark the 50th Anniversary of its foundation. It was opened by Mr. Alan Kind, Chairman of Leics. C.C.

There was a display of photographs & documents showing the history of the office from its 19th century origins in the Leicester Castle monument room, to the subsequent appointment of Dr. C.H. Thompson as the first archivist in 1947, when the Record Office was formerly established within the County offices at Greyfriars. The move to 57 New Walk in 1956, the amalgamation with the city archives in 1974, the continued growth requiring additional outstores, & the final move to Wigston in 1992/3 when the county local studies library was incorporated.

There was also a display of other events in 1947 such as the Royal wedding & great winter freeze, a competition & refreshments. The staff, many in period costume, took visitors round the building including the strong room & to see a demonstration of conservation work. Dr Kate Thompson the previous archivist had travelled from Hertfordshire to be present.

In the early days the service had an annual average of 300 visitors, now they can help that number in a couple of busy days 1 Thanks, keep it up!!

WIGSTON WHO'S WHO NO; 19

PROF. WILLIAM GEORGE HOSKINS C.B.E., D.Litt., F.B.A., F.R.Hist.S.

William George Hoskins was born on 22/5/1908 in Exeter, Devon, the son of William Hoskins, a confectioner, & his wife Alice nee Dymond. He was educated at Heles School & University College, Exeter. At the age of 23 he moved to Leicester to take up a post as assistant lecturer at the University College, where he taught students preparing for London external degrees in economics & commerce, public administration, statistics & economics, & economic history. It was at Vaughan College that he taught his beloved local history & could explore related themes with his students. He continued his own studies gaining an M.Sc. in 1929 & Ph.D in 1938, both on the history of Devon. His first publication was a single sheet 'Devon & Cornwall Notes & Queries'. His first book was 'Industry, Trade & People in Exeter (1935). He joined the Leics. Archaeological Society & from 1935 wrote many papers for their Transactions, many later being published as collections of essays. Several of these were on Wigston topics such as 'The Population of an English Village,' 'Wigston Magna Lay Subsidies,' 'The Streets of Wigston Magna' & 'The Fields of Wigston Magna.'

On 4/2/1933 while living at 28, Stoughton Road, Stoneygate, he married Frances Ethel Jackson, of 78, Upper Kent Street, Leicester, a clerk, & the daughter of Henry Jackson who was retired. The couple set up home at 12, Sandy Rise, Wigston. They had a son William & a daughter Susie. By 1938 the family had moved to 23, Shanklin Avenue, Knighton. During that same year he founded the Department of English Local History at Leicester University.

During the war he moved to Stamford where a cousin lived, & from there to London where from 1941-45 he was engaged in war work for the Board of Trade, serving as a member of the Central Regulating Committee for Price Control.

He returned to the university after the war & was promoted to a full lectureship. He did not apply for a history post because he knew little of political history which was then part of the curriculum. A solution was found by the principal, Mr. F.L. Attenborough (father of Sir Richard & Sir David), on whose initiative he was appointed Reader in English Local History in 1948 with his own specially created department. At this time he wrote 'The Heritage of Leicestershire' (1946) & 'Midland England' (1949). Many of his books including these, are illustrated with photographs taken by Mr. Attenborough, the two becoming good friends.

In 1951 he accepted an appointment as Reader in Economic History at Oxford University & moved into Steeple Barton Vicarage in Steeple Aston. More books followed: 'East Midlands & the Peak' (1951), 'Devon' (1954), 'The Making of the English Landscape' (1955), regarded as his most widely influential work, 'The Midland Peasant' (1957), the detailed study of Wigston Magna, still on library shelves all over the country, & 'Local History in England' (1959). Between 1955-58 he was a member of the Royal Commission on Common Land & recommended that the remaining 1.5 million acres of common in England & Wales

be preserved in the public interest & open as of right, subject to the conditions that applied to National Parks. In this connection he jointly published 'The Common Lands of England & Wales' (1958).

He was invited to return to the new Leicester University in 1965 as Hatton Professor of English History & moved to 5 Hamilton Drive, Melton Mowbray. At this time 'Tieldwork in Local History' (1967) appeared. He established the first M.A. in English Local History in 1966, the longest running course of its kind & still going strong today. In 1968 he was accorded the rank of Emeritus Professor. It was however not a very happy time in his life. The university had changed in the fourteen years he had been away, the people he remembered had mostly gone, & worse it was the 1960's. a time of change & unrest, & when so much of the past was being swept away for insensitive redevelopment. He became irascible at times, apparently destroyed some of his correspondence, & at one time refused to do any more local history. After three years he retired "in despair" back to Exeter where he lived at 2, Lynhurst Road. From there he continued his writing: 'History from the Farm' appeared (1970) as did 'The Shell Guide to Leics.' followed by 'English Landscapes' (1973) & 'The Age of Plunder' (1976). He was also responsible for editing two volumes of the 'Victoria County History'. He made a couple of series for B.B.C. television 'English Landscapes' (1973) & 'One Man's England' (1976) both of which resulted in same titled books. His achievements were recognised widely. He was awarded an honorary M.A. (Oxon), D.Litt by various universities, Fellow of the British Academy 1969, C.B.E. 1971, Hon. F.R.I.B.A. 1973, & the Marchison Prize from the Royal Geographical Society 1976.

In International Who's Who he gave his leisure interests as remembering & reading. He was also known to be fond of wine. He owned a book 'Wine as Medicine' & inscribed inside it "W.G. Hoskins - His New Testament!" He died on 11/1/1992 having spent his last few years in a nursing home in Cullompton.

His memory is kept very much alive at the Dept. of English Local History at Leicester University where there is an annual Hoskins Lecture, & special events are planned for this year to mark the Golden Jubilee of his founding of the department.

Tricia Berry

Sources: Birth & Marriage Certificates, International Who's Who, Obituaries in Daily Telegraph & L.A.H.S. Trans, Exhibition at Dept. of English Local History held in March 1997.

With the support of the Department of English Local History, Oadby & Wigston Borough Council have been approached with the suggestion that a Blue Plaque be placed on 12, Sandy Rise in recognition of Prof. Hoskins' pioneering work & close links with the parish of Wigston Magna. The Council have agreed & subject to obtaining the permission of the present owner & identifying a fund to pay for it this should go ahead.



YOUR COURAGE
YOUR CHEERFULNESS
YOUR RESOLUTION
WILL BRING
US VICTORY

You and Us—the poster which set cynics talking

City of Westminster

A.R.P.

GAS HELMETS FOR INFANTS UNDER 2 YEARS

Parents and Guardians residing in Westminster are asked to bring their infants up to two years of age to one of the below - mentioned Centres during the week commencing on Thursday, the 24th August, 1939 — including Saturday and Sunday — between the hours of 10 a.m. and 6 p.m., to be fitted with helmets for protection against the effects of gas :

1. Ebury Bridge Maternity and Child Welfare Centre, S.W.1
2. Bessborough Street Maternity and Child Welfare Centre, S.W.1
3. Marshall Street Maternity and Child Welfare Centre, W.1
4. City of Westminster Health Centre, 121, Marsham Street, S.W.1
5. South Audley Street, Public Library, W.1

Women Wardens, who are able to assist at the Centres, are specially requested to notify their district offices at once of the hours during which they will attend.

Westminster City Hall,
W.C.2. 28th August, 1939.

PARKER MORRIS,
Town Clerk.

What do

I do...

if I hear news
that Germans are
trying to land,
or have landed?

I remember that this is the moment to act like a soldier. I do *not* get panicky. I stay *put*. I say to myself: Our chaps will deal with them. I do *not* say: "I must get out of here." I remember that fighting men must have clear roads. I do *not* go on to the road on bicycle, in car or on foot. Whether I am at work or at home, I just stay *put*.

Cut this out—and keep it!

Issued by The Ministry of Information.
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Course copyright

What do

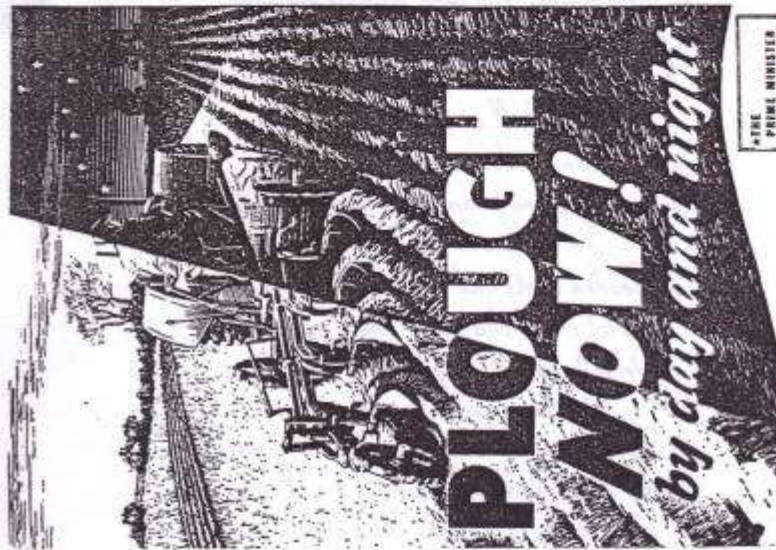
I do...

if I come across
German or Italian
broadcasts when
tuning my wireless?

I say to myself: "Now this blighter wants me to listen to him. Am I going to do what he wants?" I remember that German lies over the air are like parachute troops dropping on Britain — they are all part of the plan to get us down — *which* they *won't*. I remember nobody can trust a word the Haw-Haws say. So, just to make them waste their time, I switch 'em off or tune 'em out!

Cut this out—and keep it!

Issued by the Ministry of Information
Specs permitted to the Nation
by The Brewer's Society



PLOW!

by day and night

***THE
PRIME MINISTER
TO FARMERS AND
WORKERS—**

**GROW FOOD FOR THE NATION
FEEDING STUFFS FOR YOUR FARMS
KEEP OUR SHIPS AND MONEY FREE
FOR BUYING VITAL ARMS**

A Ministry of Agriculture appeal

What is a Chindit

What is a Chindit, the young ones say?
When we are on parade, with badges on display
Well! What else can an old soldier say
Except that long ago, we had our day.
We were yomping before yomping was invented
In Burma, a country which never relented
Up that hill and down that plain
Then up that cussed hill again.
Fearing for one's sanity, nearly losing faith
In God and in Humanity.
Sodden boots and rain soaked clothes
Not much chance of sweet repose
Or salty sweat, dripping off one's nose
And no-one smelling like a rose.
Still, there were men who's spirits rose!
On top of this there were the Japs,
Crafty, persistent little chaps,
Who didn't believe in giving slaps
But socked one almost to collapse.
And no matter what we gave
They came back as from the grave.
Every night a silent prayer
Please God let us be back where
Friends and loved ones wait to share
A life that's always free from care.
Some prayers were answered
And they came back
To stand and think of Bert and Jack
Who shared comradeship, joy and tears
But stayed behind in those grim years.

Harry Slaney

Written to Commemorate Armistice Day

This poem is in the Stars Anthology and The Imperial Museum