



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

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# BULLETIN 57



**PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS - JUNE 2000 TO FEBRUARY 2001**

**Wednesday 21st June 2000**

Visit to Earls Barton Museum and Church with optional refreshments in the tea shop (members to order and pay for anything they want at the time).  
Coach from Paddock Street 6.30p.m.  
Please notify the secretary (2880156) to reserve a place.

**Wednesday 16th August 2000**

Visit to Wigston Methodist Church, Cross Street with talk on 'History of Methodism in Wigston' - Rev. Kenneth Wilson Meet 7.30p.m. outside the church.

**20th September 2000**

The River Sence - Billesdon to the Soar' - Gerry Broughton  
7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

**18th October 2000**

'Down the Garden Path - Tales of Leicestershire Privies' - David Bell  
7.30p.m. U.R Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

**15th November 2000**

'Christmas Customs & Traditions' - Leicester Living History Unit  
7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

**20th December 2000**

Christmas Social with quizzes & supper  
7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

**17th January 2001**

The Tower Within - Tower of London, its prisoners and institutions over 900 years'-  
Joe David, former Yeoman Warder and Wigston's Town Crier 7.30p.m. U.R. Church  
Boy's Brigade Rooms.

**21st February 2001**

A.G.M. followed by member's contributions.  
7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

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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.

## **FEBRUARY MEETING**

The Society held its Annual General Meeting when approximately 45 members were present. The evening commenced with:

- 1) The Acting Secretary, Tricia Berry, reading the minutes of the February 1999 A.G.M. which were agreed and signed as correct.
- 2) The Treasurer, Brian Bilson, explaining the year end accounts. These covered 11 months only, due to the change of year end date, from 31 st January to 31 st December. He noted there was a small surplus of £35 which became £90 when a deposit payment of £55 for coach hire for the summer trips was removed. It was agreed to leave the subscriptions unchanged at £7 (full) and £5 (concessionary).
- 3) The Chairman, Edna Taylor, reporting another very satisfactory year with meetings well attended. Twice disaster had been averted when Peter Clowes stepped in to show some of his wonderful slide collection of old Wigston due to the booked speakers cancelling through illness with just 2 hours notice. The Christmas Social as a happy occasion with attendance increased and excellent refreshments by Caroline Bodman. The Bulletins were much appreciated, especially perhaps, by those unable to attend meetings. The Secretary's post remained unfilled and Tricia Berry continued on a temporary basis. An appeal was made for anyone who felt they could help with this.
- 4) The Membership Secretary, Stella Tweed, reported that the membership currently stood at 83, 15 full and 68 concessionary. Two had resigned and four passed away and there was some natural wastage but new additions had kept the total within eight of last year. However she drew attention to the high and increasing number of concessionary subscriptions and said attempts should be made to attract younger members to ensure the long term future of the society. Average attendance at meetings was 39.
- 5) Election of Officers: It was proposed by Bob Wignall and seconded by Elsie Gibbons that the present officers be re-elected and this was carried unanimously.
- 6) Other Business: It was queried whether a new slide projector had yet been purchased with Ralph Wignall's legacy and Peter Clowes explained that he had been advised to wait because more advanced products would soon be available.

Members were reminded that renewal subscriptions were then due and should be paid that evening if possible.

The second part of the evening was taken up with a very interesting talk by David Toseland on the huge improvements underway at the Peace Memorial Park. How it all started, how the Lottery bid was put together and awarded, and who would benefit in future from the new facilities.

## GREATER WIGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### Receipts and Payments for the 11 months to 31st December 1999

Receipts		Payments	
Opening balances at 31/1/99:		Lecturers Fees & Expenses	110.00
Cash in Hand	5.82	Donations	135.00
Current A/c	239.77	Room Hire	84.00
Deposit A/c	471.80	Bulletin Printing	62.96
	717.39	Printing	5.00
Subscriptions	449.00	Secretarial Expenses	61.42
Collections	73.25	Stanford Hall Visit	172.80
Stanford Hall Visit	198.00	Christmas Social	269.01
Christmas Social	235.00	Retirement Gift (D Chandler)	20.99
Raffle	38.00	Deposit for coaches	55.00
Bank Interest	17.84		
		Closing balances at 31/12/99:	
		Cash in Hand	4.83
		Current A/c	35.62
		Deposit A/c	711.85
			752.30
	1728.48		1728.48

Checked and in accordance with vouchers presented.

Colin Towell  
13/2/2000

### MARCH MEETING

The Society met in March to hear Mr. R.T. Gregory, a Blue Badge Guide, talk on Leicester's historic waterside development from West Bridge to Frog Island. The talk was based on a walk between these two points and was illustrated with slides of the landmarks passed along the way.

The first landmark is the terracotta "archway" by West Bridge. This was taken from the entrance to the old fruit market (formerly the fish market) in Yeoman Street and re-erected on the West Bridge site.

West Bridge has always had economic and military significance and had strategic importance in both Roman and Norman times. The current bridge is the fourth on the site and is late nineteenth century. It had an elegant design, decorated with Leicester's cinquefoil and wyvern and is best viewed from the canal towpath. In the 1970s a second bridge was built alongside to cope with the increased traffic. Here the River Soar has been altered. In its former natural state it was a marsh and impassable in many places. The canal work was carried out in the late nineteenth century as part of a flood relief scheme. This part of the canal is known as the "mile straight".

Since 1992 many improvements have been made to this part of the city, including the nearby Pex building which has been sensitively converted to student accommodation for De Montfort University. There is a new footbridge to the Castle Gardens providing a pleasant walk for pedestrians away from the busy road.

The nearby Bow Bridge, with Richard III's coat of arms, crosses the old Soar. The castellated building that was the old Archibald Turner elasticated webbing factory was adjacent to Bow Bridge, unfortunately it was devastated by fire.

Just a little way along the canal is the terminus of the Leicester to Swannington Railway and a blue brick wall is all that is left of the platform where coal from north Leicestershire would have been loaded on to narrow boats. Still evident are the railway lines which protrude from the bank by the old Robert Stephenson swing bridge site (the actual bridge is now at Snibston).

On the opposite bank, Donithorpe's is Leicester's oldest factory building. It is built of narrow bricks which were made in the brickyard that was in the vicinity of Welford Place. Its distinctive lantern originally housed a bell which was used as a flood warning in the then densely populated area.

Weirs were built to help take the flood water away, namely Evans Weir, Hitchcock's Weir and Swan's Nest Weir. Towards Frog Island there were several buildings devoted to framework knitting. Mr. Gregory's talk finished at North Bridge. He was thanked for a most interesting talk and the meeting finished at about 9.p.m.

## **APRIL MEETING**

This month the society warmly welcomed Peter Liddle the Keeper of Donington Manor House and Keeper of Archaeology at Leicestershire County Council. His talk with slides on the Medieval Manor Houses of the county was most interesting and informative.

Concentrating mainly on Donington he told us what was currently known (research is ongoing) about the property. The house is 13th century with major 17th century additions. The manor was owned by a local priory until about 1400 when it was transferred to Ulverscroft. The earliest recorded people to live at the Manor House were the de Seis family in 1100 who also owned Brooksby. In 1290 the de Herle family became tenants and upgraded it. Tree ring dating puts the timber from a door to this time and a lancet window is also typical of the period. The living accommodation was on the first floor where, on an exterior wall, there is evidence of a doorway which would have been served by an outside staircase. The ground floor was used for storage and the keeping of farm animals. It is believed there was also a great hall and servants quarters now gone.

A big modernisation took place in 1617/18 when it was occupied by Everard Digby. He had the ground floor altered to provide living space, adding the kitchen hearth and mullioned windows. He also had the huge timber roof over the great chamber constructed. In the mid 17th century it was owned by Thomas Harley of Osgarthorpe

who left it to the Harley School and Hospital. It was then let to a succession of farmer tenants and eventually sold by the charity to a farmer who found it too expensive to maintain and used it for keeping pigs! In 1963 it was scheduled an ancient monument and two years later bought by Leicestershire County Council who restored it gradually through the 1960/70s. Of particular relevance to us here in Wigston is the staircase which was rescued and relocated from our Rectory Farm House in Newgate End at the time of its demolition.

Other Medieval buildings in the counties of Leicestershire and Rutland were noted:- Leicester Castle the 1150 home of Robert le Bossu, the second most important man in the country. Oakham Castle built by the Ferrers family, Earls of Derby. Ashby Castle built by Robert Beaumont, main home of William Lord Hastings (King Edward IV's treasurer), which was sacked by Oliver Cromwell. Lyddington Bede House originally a Palace of the Bishop of Lincoln and later converted into almshouses. The 13th century Old Rectory at Loughborough. Neville Holt Hall dating from 1280. Home in the 15th century of the Palmers, then the Kirbys and added to by the Nevilles. In the late 19th century bought by the Cunards (shipping family), then a public school, and very recently purchased by one of the modern technology success stories, the joint founder of The Carphone Warehouse. The Moat House and Gate House, Appleby Magna. A much modified manor house built in 1490 by Hugh de Wyville at Stonton Wyville. Kirby Muxloe Castle started but never finished by the Hastings family on the site of an old manor. The Old Hall, Groby, an old Ferrers mansion, the earliest brick building in the county. Bradgate House ruined home of Lady Jane Grey in Bradgate Park. Brooksby Hall seat of the Villiers family and now an Agricultural College. Plus earthworks at Evington and Old Keythorpe, Nr. Tugby.

After this thorough examination of the subject there was only a short time left for, and little need of, questions and discussion, before the chairman, Edna Taylor, thanked Mr. Liddle very much for a most informative talk very entertainingly given.

## **MAY MEETING**

On Wednesday 17th May the Society met in Paddock Street to travel by coach to Melton Mowbray. We were to visit the Melton Carnegie Museum and to have a talk entitled "At Taste of Melton" by Jenny Dancie the curator.

Before the talk there was time to look at some of the displays and to make purchases from the Museum shop.

Since being curator of the Melton Museum Jenny has developed an interest in Melton products, principally Stilton Cheese and Pork Pies, the talk is the result of her researches.

Leicestershire, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire are the only places where Stilton could be made and there are seven dairies where it is actually made and the name is now protected. The cheese got its name from the village of Stilton in Huntingdonshire where the Bell Inn was a coaching stop on the Great North Road. The cheese making process meant that it matured around Christmas time and was therefore associated

with that time of year. It is still made using traditional methods. Rennet is added to the milk, the curd is then separated and drained and then mixed by hand with some salt and this gives Stilton its unique texture. The mixed curds are then tipped into moulds and allowed to drain further. Unlike other cheeses it is never pressed. It is allowed to ripen in controlled conditions and by six weeks has got its distinctive crust. It is then pierced by stainless steel wires allowing oxygen to the bacteria and the blue veins develop.

The connection between Stilton and pork pies is evident when we learn that the discarded whey is fed to pigs. Websters is the only private company still making the cheese that is not part of the Stilton Cheese Makers Association. There are three local stories as to how the cheese originated. The first attributes it to the wife of Francis Paulet of the Bell Inn, the second suggests that it originated at Quenby Hall, the third that it was introduced by French monks, the bacteria being the same as that in Roquefort cheese.

The other product of Melton is the pork pie. Traditionally the pastry is made with the rendered lard of the pig and hand raised. It is then filled with chopped dairy fed pork. The gelatine is made from the bones and added after cooking.

Jenny illustrated her talk with overhead slides and a video. The talk was followed by a glass of wine and the chance to sample Melton Mowbray pork pie and either blue veined Stilton or a white Stilton with apricots. This provided a most enjoyable end to an interesting evening and Jenny was thanked for making us so welcome.

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## FRONT COVER

Jim Colver's drawing for this bulletin features the very prominent building at the junction of Wellington Street and King Street, Leicester, opposite Fenwicks store. In the 1984 edition of Pevsner it is described as "the former General Accident Building of 1930 by G P K Young & Son". More controversially it then goes on to quote an unidentified source referring to it as "'a vile impertinent lump' of neo Tudor"! I beg to differ. I have always considered it a handsome building that makes very clever use of a small and awkward shaped piece of land.

T.B.

## WIGSTON WHO'S WHO NO: 26

### FRANCIS PAUL ARMITAGE C.B.E., M.A.

Francis Paul Armitage was born on 21/4/1875 the son of the Rev. William Armitage, vicar of Scotforth, Lancashire and his wife Margaret nee Robinson. He was educated at the Royal Grammar School, Lancaster and Magdalen College, Oxford, where in 1898 he graduated with a first class honours degree in Science, taking the M.A. degree some years later. While at Oxford he won the Science Essay Prize and Medal, and other awards, and earned the college colours for Rugby Football. He also spent some time at the universities of Heidelberg and Bonn in Germany.

In 1898 he was appointed Science Master at St. Paul's School, London and was subsequently promoted to head of the Modern Side in 1910. He was successively House Master of the two largest houses attached to the school and President of the Swimming, Gymnastic and Boxing Clubs. During this time he was also elected a Fellow of the Chemical Society and of the Royal Anthropological Institute.

In 1907 he married Louise the daughter of Lieut. Col. J Shine Wilson J.P. of Trinidad. They had a daughter named Cecil Mary Louise and two sons, Frank Wolsley and John William. In 1919 the family moved to Leicestershire following his appointment as the first Director of Education for Leicester. His new home, Wyndham House, Granville Road. Wigston unfortunately no longer exists having been demolished in 1960/70s to make way for Granville Crescent. Old maps show it to have been a substantial property set in large grounds. It was one of the original houses in the road and probably constructed in 1870s.

During his 21 years at the head of education in Leicester he implemented many changes and improvements. He quickly became active in the movement for a local university college and was Honorary Secretary of the founding committee until incorporation in 1921. The number of Secondary School places increased from 1,920 to 3,500 and the Elementary Schools were divided and reorganised into Junior, Intermediate and Senior levels. Playing field accommodation was provided for all Elementary pupils aged between 11 and 14. For the students of the Evening Schools, Open Air Classes and two Recreation Centres in connection with the Evening Institutes were started. The Domestic Science College premises were enlarged and 12 beds for surgical operations set up at the School Clinic. Separate new schools were established for the deaf, the blind and the mentally ill. A new Wyggeston Girls' School building was erected and the western wing of the Colleges of Art and Technology completed.

Francis Armitage was author of a number of publications. *A History of Chemistry* in 1906, a volume of essays, *Diet and Race* in 1922, two text books *Chemistry Part I* in 1915 and *Part II* in 1916, and *Leicester 1914-18* in 1933. He also submitted articles and reports to various Educational bodies and after his retirement edited *A Torchbearer*, a collection of biographical memoirs of Emily Fortey, in 1947. He was awarded the C.B.E. in 1933 for services to education, the Jubilee Medal in 1935 and the Coronation Medal in 1937. He was chairman of the Local Education Study Society

and a member of the Education Committee of the Association of Municipal Corporations, representing them on the Secondary Schools Examination Council and giving evidence on their behalf before Special Committees appointed to consider Education and Industry, Post Primary Education, and other matters. He was a member of the Departmental Committee on Private Schools and of the B.B.C. Education Committees.

During the whole of his time as director, Sir Jonathan North was Chairman of the Education Committee, and he retired immediately following the latter's death in 1940. He moved to 'Red Roses', Barton Court Road, New Milton, Hampshire and listed his recreations as gardening and writing and in later life tapestry work. He lost his wife in 1950. He died on 27/6/1953 at Sherborne, Dorset having been taken ill while visiting his daughter Cecil who was housemistress at Sherborne School. He was cremated at Weymouth. The Lord Mayor of Leicester Alderman C.R. Keene paid tribute saying "I remember Mr. Armitage as a man of outstanding personality and great administrative ability".

Sources: *Leicester - Civic, Industrial, Institutional, Social Life 1927. Who's Who . Who Was Who. Who's Who in Leicestershire, 1935. Leicester Mercury 29/6/1953.*

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## OLD FASHIONED EXPRESSIONS

Here are a few more for our occasional series. We might:

- 1) Be offered 'Hobson's Choice' i.e. no choice at all.
- 2) If misled say we had swallowed some tale 'Hook, Line and Sinker'.
- 3) If returning to England from abroad speak of going back to 'Blighty'.
- 4) Be told someone who understands their job 'Knows the Ropes'.
- 5) Be roused from bed by being told to 'Show a Leg'.

Origins:

- 1) Refers to Hobson, a carrier in Cambridge in the early 17th century, who would not allow clients their choice of horse from his stable insisting on hiring them out in strict rotation.
- 2) All these are parts of a fisherman's rod and could be gulped down by a greedy fish.
- 3) From the Hindu word 'Bellattee' meaning from where the troops come from and used in India prior to Independence.
- 4) Old nautical expression referring to sailors knowing how to manage the ropes which raised and lowered the sails of their ship.
- 5) Another nautical one from the days of long voyages when women were allowed on board to entertain the sailors during a spell in port. To ensure they had all left when the ship was due to sail anyone in bed was requested to show a leg to prove they were male!

## THE BLETCHLEY PARK CODEBREAKERS - A LOCAL CONNECTION

During our trip to Beaumanor Hall in 1998 we were shown the cellars and reminded that this very area was used as a listening post for intercepting enemy radio communications during WWII. This prompted member, Peggy Taylor, to mention that she was herself involved in that vital work. This interesting revelation and the recent television programme drawing attention to the amazing work done at Bletchley Park prompted this article.

The need to pass on confidential information privately, mainly for military or commercial reasons, goes back a long way. Secret writing being mentioned by Homer in the Iliad. Arabs during the Middle Ages developed cryptography, the word cipher coming from Sifr, which is Arabic for zero. The Venetians used codes and ciphers extensively but the invention of the telegraphic code by Samuel Morse in 1844 and reliable long distance wireless telegraphy in the early 20th century was really the beginning of mass communication and codebreaking on any scale. Military messages were sent this way by both sides in WW I and it was assumed would be intercepted and therefore sent in code. So the codebreakers - cryptanalysts - arrived. In 1915 an American Edward Hebern devised a machine generated code based on the lately invented electric typewriter. The letter keys were simply rewired so that if you pressed say 'A' the letter say 'K' would print out. With the addition of complementary switching circuits on the intended recipients machine, the coded message could be typed in and plain text would emerge. This simple system while secure from a casual observer was soon deciphered by a codebreaker using the letter frequency method. In all Western languages some letters occur more often than others, in English the most common being 'E' followed by 'A, O & I'. These could therefore be identified and as any three letter word ending in 'E' is likely to be 'the' therefore T & H are known and so on until enough is deciphered to enable the gaps to be filled.

To avoid this give away Hebern developed a more complex machine using rotors which switched the connections each time a key was pressed. Thus one rotor would provide 26 completely different cipher alphabets. Hebern's machine had five rotors which could generate 11,881,376 different cipher alphabets (26 to power of 5). This proved very successful because the time taken to solve the code made the resulting information so out of date as to be of little use especially in wartime.

At the same time but independently Jugo Koch of Delph took out a patent for a Geheimschrijfinachine (secret writing machine) with 3 rotors but the third 'reflected' the circuit back through the other two giving the equivalent of 6 rotors. A German engineer Arthur Scherbius bought the rights and manufactured it renaming it 'Enigma' i.e. a puzzle. By 1923 Enigma was displayed at a trade fair aimed at the commercial market but the small German army permitted under the Treaty of Versailles noted its potential and it was speedily withdrawn. The messages from these Enigma machines were preceded by an agreed arrangement of letters which the intended recipient would recognise and then use a complementary machine and a codebook to convert the text.

Well before WW II Poland, surrounded by powerful potential enemies, developed one of the most efficient intelligence services in the world. By sheer hard work and some luck (having been able to intercept an early Enigma machine in transit, note its construction and repack it without detection) they managed to make their own version and an electro-mechanical device known as a bomba after the ice cream. The bomba did not decrypt messages as such, its function was to re-create the state of the enciphering Enigma by going through all the different possible settings at high speed to

a set programme. When this was completed the results could be tried on their own Enigma machine.

However, their efforts came to a halt in 1938 when the Germans added two additional rotors to their Enigmas which would require many, and more complex, bombas to decode. With the Munich crisis there was some collaboration between them and the British and French intelligence services, and when Poland was overrun their codebreakers fled with their machines to a villa just outside Paris. With the fall of France most again managed to escape with their secret equipment over the Pyrenees into Spain where clandestine organisations conveyed them to Britain via Gibraltar. A few of the Poles were captured and interrogated by the Gestapo but gave no hint that Enigma had been penetrated.

Meanwhile in England early in 1939 the Government Code & Cipher School had evacuated from London to Bletchley Park, Bucks. Code named Station X it was headed by a Naval Commander, Edward Travis, and work began on deciphering the latest Enigma machines. Buildings were constructed in the grounds known as 'huts' and talented mathematicians and German language experts recruited mainly from Cambridge university. They were allocated a hut according to whether their work was to be with navy, army or airforce intelligence as each used different Enigma codes as did the police etc. Early recruits were Gordon Welshman and Alan Turing, the latter regarded as particularly brilliant and who in 1936 had published a classic paper on 'computable numbers' now recognised as the theoretical basis of the modern computer. By the outbreak of war he was at Bletchley working on a British version of the bomba, the bombe, probably based on the Polish idea but far more complex. It was 10 feet high and consisted of 25/30 sets of three rotors each of which were wired in the same way as an Enigma machine and had the 26 letters of the alphabet engraved on their circumference. Each set was colour coded and changed by the Wren operators on instructions from their chiefs in the various huts. Some bombes were installed at outstations scattered around the countryside in other isolated mansions in case Bletchley should be bombed.

With genius can come eccentricity and some at Bletchley were notably so in their behaviour and dress. On a later visit Winston Churchill described them as the "geese that laid the golden egg, but never cackled" but when he looked round he was reportedly startled by what he saw and turning to Stewart Menzies (the head of MI6 and said to be the model for 'M' in the James Bond stories) remarked "I know I told you to leave no stone unturned to get staff, but I didn't expect you to take me literally".

Radio interception, code named the Y service, took place at several stations as far apart as Northern Scotland, Dorset, the Midlands and East coast. Beaumanor was one of these with an array of directional rhombic aerials hidden in a spinney. Here during the war 900 girls of the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) worked with 300 civilians in shifts round the clock taking down with the utmost care faint morse signals from Germany and occupied Europe. The sets used were mainly American RCA AR88 communication receivers with highly selective crystal 'gates' to enable the operators to cut out interfering signals. A tedious but vital job lightened considerably when in urgent circumstances messages might be sent in plain text giving the staff more understanding of what was going on. The messages were sent by despatch rider or secure land lines to Bletchley for decoding. As the war progressed mobile Special Signals Units were set up abroad to create a link so that intelligence could be passed quickly to commanders in the field. However, it was not always possible to make use of the information gathered as this might have given away that the codes had been

penetrated. Instructions were issued that no intelligence could be acted upon unless another possible source i.e. a spy or reconnaissance aircraft could be attributed with providing the information. Even so the Germans refined their Enigma machines often and then it became necessary to acquire a current one for examination. A certain Naval Lieutenant named Ian Fleming was sometimes involved in planning these daring 'pinches' to obtain one or the latest code book.

Enigma was not the only cipher machine used by the Germans. Another code named 'fish' by the British was an enciphered teleprinter system using a binary code which was only used for transmission between Hitler and his generals. To tackle this problem the Telecommunications Research Establishment were approached and came up with a machine which came to be known as 'Heath Robinson'. Messages were typed on a keyboard to produce a perforated tape and this was run through 'Robinson' over pulleys and wheels in conjunction with another tape using settings of patterns discovered by the codebreakers. One of whom working in this area at the time being Roy Jenkins later Chancellor of the Exchequer. However, the spiked wheels caused frequent tape breakages and the high speed of operation caused them to fly off and become seriously tangled. A telephone engineer at Dollis Hill, Tommy Flowers, was approached to see if he could improve it. He became convinced this was not possible. He had been developing telephone exchanges using valves instead of the old fashioned relays used in 'Robinson' and believed this was the way to solve the problem. He estimated it would take a year to construct what he had in mind and as the codebreakers wanted more immediate results nothing was arranged. Tommy with the help of a dedicated team working night and day independently built his machine. Ten months later he demonstrated 'Colossus' to the amazed codebreakers. This mighty machine could read 5000 characters per second. When tested with problems already solved it consistently produced the correct answer, it was in effect the worlds first electronic program-controlled computer.

Into this strange and secret world stepped 19 year old Peggy Kirby a Wigston girl who had lately moved to London because of her father's promotion on the railway. Peggy also worked for the railway as an office clerk. She saw first hand the results of the bombing and used to visit hospitals and homes to help the wounded come to terms with their injuries. She remembers one man who had lost both legs and an arm. She joined the ATS in Lingfield, Sussex as recruit No: 267753 in 'D' Company of the Home Counties District Group. She was sent to Newcastle for health checks, injections and aptitude tests, and together with only 3 or 4 others she was selected for wireless work. The next 10 months were spent in Douglas, Isle of Man training as a Radio Operator learning many skills including Morse code.

She was then posted to Forest Moor, to the west of Harrogate. She was a member of the first group to arrive at this newly opened station and having signed the Official Secrets Act she set to work for 35/- per week. Initially the girls were billeted in a school building moving into huts on the camp later. They were transported the 7 miles onto the moor by lorry. They worked 4 shifts in 3 days, then had a day off. There was a 40 minute break during each shift. The Radio Operators were given set frequencies which they searched for a call sign, then they found the answering call, then took down the message, usually in Morse in 5 letter groups. When it was complete they noted the time of the transmission. The German SS communications were the most often picked up because they were easier to find not being on the move as were the army and navy. If a plain text message was picked up a supervisor had to be called. One she particularly remembers which was received on her shift was the news that Italy had surrendered.

From time to time a Brigadier from the War Office would come to give a 'pep talk' to encourage morale. As well as Radio Operators there was Intelligence Corps and Teleprinter Operators at Harrogate.

There were lots of other personnel in the area particularly Canadian Air Force. There was also an American Camp which invited the girls over at Christmas and to dances and the cinema. After approx. 4 years service the girls were declared redundant because service personnel returning from Italy were given their jobs.

When the war ended Bletchley Park was closed and the GC&CS adopted its war time cover name of Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) and moved to Pinner in Middlesex. Two 'Colossus' computers and 50 bombs were taken with them, but because of the Cold War everything else was destroyed and all staff both those remaining and those leaving were sworn still never to divulge anything of their war work. The 'Colossus' computers were again taken on to Cheltenham when GCHQ moved there in 1952 and at least one was still working in the early 1960's.

At its height there were about 10,000 personnel working at Bletchley alone and it is quite impossible to calculate the extent to which their contribution influenced the outcome of the war, but best estimates suggest that it shortened the duration by at least three years and certainly saved countless thousands of Allied lives.

Tricia Berry

Sources: As well as Peggy's memories the following have been consulted: *The Secret War*, BBC (1978) by Brian Johnson & *Station X*, Channel Four Books (1998) by Michael Smith.

Bletchley Park was used for other purposes after the war, one of which rather appropriately was as a Post Office Training School. It is now a Museum dedicated to the war work done there and is open every alternate weekend.

## SOCIETY TRANSACTIONS

It is a long while since a note of our Transactions was published, and new titles are being added from time to time, so we include here a complete up to date list. If members would like a copy of one they should contact the Secretary. Prices vary according to size, but are based on 5p per page.

NUMBER	TITLE	PAGES
1	Court Case - Boulter v Noone 1637 (Evidence)	9
2	Wigston & District Free Churchman 1908/15 (Adverts from)	1
3	History of Wigston by W J R Pochin (Lecture in 191 1)	9
4	Leic Chron & Merc 1888/89 by Colver/Wignall (Wigston extracts)	1
5	Do 1867/68 " Do	2
6	Do 1869 Do	2
7	Do 1870 Do	1
8	Do 1871 Do	1
9	Do 1884/1887 Do	1
10	Do 1890 Do	1
11	Do 1891 Do	1
12	Do 1892 Do	1
13	Do 1893 Do	1
14	Do 1894 Do	1
15	Wigston Official Guide 1923	9
16	The Fields of Wigston Magna by W G Ho skins	2
17	Wigston Town Cricket Club by J Colver	4
18	Wigston U D C Engineer's Notebook (Extracts)	8
19	Wigston Junction Brickworks by H A Gamble	6
20	Murder/Sudden Dth. in Medvl. Wigston by W G Hoskins (8 studies)	9
21	Wygeston Hosp Records Pt 1 by Colver/Wignall (Wigston Extrts)	4
21	Do Pt2	4
22	Notes on Wigston's History by Colver/Wignall (Various Sources)	1
23	Footpath Changes in Gt. Wigston in 19th Cent, by R Essinger	5
24	Building St. Thomas's Church (Wig & South Parish Mag Extracts)	2
25	All Saints Parish Magazine 1914/18 (Extracts)	3
26	Do 1924/28	3
27	Minutes of W M Vestry Minutes 1821/30 & Extracts 1831/1842	4
28	Study of Established Church & its Position in Society	?
29	Minutes of G W Board School 1872/73 & Part 1873/1874	?
30	Account of a Voyage round the World in 1920 by A T A Lee	3
31	Origins of Road names at Wigston Harcourt by B Ward & D Lucas	2
32	Phenominal Occurrences at Wigston Magna by D Lucas	1
33	The Name Wigston Magna - How & Why by D Lucas	5
34	Leics. Place Names by A C Wood (Written 1917/20 meanings of)	8
35	History of Kilby Bridge by I Varey	8
36	Bell Street 100 yrs ago by I Varey (Based on 1881 Census)	1
37	Wiggy's Child 1926/39 by D Boulter (Childhood Memories)	5
38	Wigston Board Schools 1872/1904 by R Wignall (Records of)	4

39	Some Research of Oadby by E Baker & W Coleman	64
40	Wigston Gas-Light & Coke Co (Mins of Initial Mtg/Act of Parl)	19
41	Tythorn Farm 1806/65 (Plans & Copy Docs)	31
42	Bulls Head Street 100 yrs ago by J Colver (Based on 1881 Census)	14
43	Wigston & District Free Churchman 1905/12 (Extracts)	27
44	Midland Railway & its Influence on Develop of Wigston by S Elsham	53
45	Notes on Tythorn Hill by D Lucas	6
46	George Davenport, Highwayman by W Moore (Written 1797)	17
47	Diary of Edwin Smart, Fleckney Lodge (1875 Farmer's Diary)	15
48	MA Biddies Receipt (Recipe) Book 1886	38
49	South Wigston War Memorial 1923 (Programme for Unveiling)	5
50	Stage Productions Wigston & South 1918/39 (Programmes)	34
51	A History of South Wigston by F Noble	31
52	Urban Contrasts in South Wigston by M McNeil	29
53	Wiggy's War 1938/45 by D Boulter (Memories of Life at Home)	32
54	Wigston Magna a Local History by J Rayfield (School Project))	12
55	Bushloe End 100 yrs ago by J Colver (Based on 1881 Census)	8
56	Brass Bands in Wigston by D Boulter	11
57	Moat Street 100 yrs ago by J Colver (Based on 1881 Census)	13
58	Some Notes of Bulls Head Inn by J Colver	17
59	Illustrated Leicester Chronicle 18/8/1961 (With Wigston Supplmt)	25
60	Illustrated Chronicle 1961 (Adverts from)	16
61	Picture Post 1941 (National Adverts from)	12
62	Urban Contrasts in South Wigston by C Crocker (School Project)	104
63	Recollections of South Wigston by F Noble	10
64	Transportation of James Mario w of Wigston 183 8 by J L Marlow	18
65	Study of Place Names of Wigston by V Holyoak	41
66	Life of J J Hill (With Recollections of South Wigston 1920/30s)	17
67	Long Street 100 yrs ago by J Colver (Based on 1881 Census)	11
68	Long St 10 Yrs of Chg by Colver/Whyment(Conip 1881/91 Cens)	9
69	Wigston's Two Churches by E S Boulter (From Parish Mags 1903)	27
70	Restoration of St. Wolstan's 1873/7 by J Colver (Plans/letters/accts)	31
71	A E Morrison & S, Electric Vehicles (History from old brochures)	26
72	School Cookery & Household Man. Book 1914/15 by S Lewin	15
73	Wigston Bowling Club 1922/95 by D Chandler	24
74	Wigston Prisoner of War Fund 1918 (Committee Proceedings)	7
75	Conditions of FWK's 1820/54 by J Colver (Enquiry Evidence)	?
76	Infirmary Parades 1932/46 (Programmes)	10
77	Govt. Evacuation Scheme 1937 (Wigston Council Preparations)	9
78	Case for Embez. & Neglect of Work by FWK (Evidence etc)	6
79	Wigston Parish Allotment Committee Minutes 1848/65 (Extracts)	7
80	History of Wigston U R Church (Various Sources)	17
81	Accounts of Huit Farm, E. Shilton Jan/Nov 1878 & Pt 1879/87	11
82	Recollections of Magna Sunbeams by RKirby (Dance Troupe)	7
83	Grand Hotel, Leicester by P Tarrant	9

**THE WILL & TESTAMENT OF SUSANNA CLARKE OF  
WIGSTON MAGNA 1697**

In the name of God, Amen, the twentieth day of August in the year of our Lord Christ, according to the computation of the Church of England 1697 and in the thirty first year of the Reigne of Our Most Gracious Majesty, Charles the Second, over England, Scotland, Holland, France and Ireland, King Defender of the Faith, I Susanna Clarke of Wigston Magna in the County of Leic. Widdow, being at this time weak and decaying in body, but of perfect and good memory, Blessed be to God for it, do ordain and make this my last Will and Testam in manner and forme following.—I commit my Soul to God who created it. Trusting to be saved by the Merritorious Death and Passion of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, and my body to be Interred in the earth at the discretion of my Executor, hereafter nominated and appointed by me, and as for the Worldly Goods that God hath lent me I do bequeath as follows. *Impris.* I do give and bequeath to Richard Finder, my brother's son, if living, and he himself come to demand it, the sume often pounds of Lawfull money of England, to be paid him within one year next after my disease. *Item.* I do give and bequeath unto Mary Goodman, my Kinswoman, living at Glen Magna the sume of five pounds of like Lawfull money of England. *Item.* I do give and bequeath unto Ann, now wife of George Glover, my Kinswoman of Glen aforesaid, the like sume of five pounds. *Item.* I do give and bequeath unto the five children of my late Kinswoman, late wife of Will'm Lickerish of Glen aforesaid, twenty shillings apiece, these legacies to be paid within one year next after my disease. *Item.* I do give and bequeath unto the poorest sort of people at Wigston Magna, the sume often shillings to be distributed to poor Widdows every one four pence and a twopenny loaf. *Item.* I do give unto four men that shall bear my Corps to the Grave, twelve pence apiece to buy them Mourning Gloves, namely Rich'd Finder and William Goodman and Will'm Lickorish and Rich'd Browen of Wigston. *Item.* I do give and bequeath unto Mr. Sampson Hopkins, Viccar, six shillings, eight pence upon condition that he do preach my Funeral Sermon if it be possible. *Item.* I do give unto the Ringers, ten shillings to be spent at every alehouse in the town equally. *Item.* I do give and bequeath unto my Kinsman Rich'd Finder of Great Glen and to his heirs forever, all that my dwelling house and homestead in Wigston Magna with its appurts. And that halfe Quartern of Land thereto belonging. And also that halfe Quartern of which I purchased of Robert Squire lyeing within the fields of Wigston afores. And also all and every my lands tenanted and .....in Wigston Magna afores. or elsewhere in the County of Leicester. Also I give unto the said Richard Finder of Great Glenn all my Goods and Chatties, except my wearing apparell, both linen and woollen which I give to his Mother and I do nominate and appoint the said Rich'd Finder of Great Glenn my sole executor of this my last Will and Testam, he paying my debts and funerall expenses and legacies afores. And I do revoak all former Wills and Testams heretofore made. In witness whereof, I the said Susanna Clarke do sett my hand and seal the day and year first written above.

The Marks of Susanna Clarke, signed, sealed and published in the presence od us. viz. the marks of Bridgett Noone, Jane Dawkins. Tho. Johnson.

Thos. Pochin. Jos.  
WafTorne.

We thank Jim Colver for transcribing this Will which is to be found under reference 9/D38/12 in Leics. Record Office. He adds the following comments:

The date mentioned in this Will is at considerable variance with historical fact:- The Will gives the date as having been written in 1697 in the 31st year of the reign of King Charles II. In fact the monarch occupied the throne only 25 years, 1660-1685. In 1697, William III and Mary II ruled the land. William had been King for 8 years. He was crowned in 1689 and remained until 1702.

This is a copy of a Will wrongly dated 1697. It is an error for 1679. For the purpose of these legal documents, the Commonwealth Period 1649 to 1660 has been ignored and the given reign of Charles II prefixes his Coronation by 12 years.

\* \* \* \*

We do not currently know if Susanna Clarke was a member of the family who went on in the future to live at Wigston Hall. She would probably not have been a direct ancestor anyway as she appears to have left no descendants. Her Will suggests she was a Miss Finder of Great Glen before her marriage to a Mr. Clarke of Wigston. I wonder if she wanted the bell ringers to enjoy their legacy before or after they rang the bells?! Susanna was buried at All Saints 17th January 1679/80.

T.B.