Greater Wigston Historical Society

White Gate Farm, Newton Lane, Wigston Magna
Leicestershire

BULLETIN 63

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS - JUNE 2002 TO FEBRUARY 2003

Wednesday 19th June 2002
Visit to Old Brewery Inn, Somerby, Nr. Melton
Tour of Brewery & Buffet (included in price), drinks extra on the day
Bus from Paddock Street 6.30p.m.
Please notify the Secretary by 31st May to reserve a place.

Wednesday 21st August 2002
Visit to All Saints' Church, Leicester - Rev. David Cawley
Meet at Paddock Street 7.15p.m. to share transport.

Wednesday 18th September 2002
Serving in the Womens' Land Army in WWII - Joan Poultney
7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

Wednesday 16th October 2002
Origins of the Names of Villages around Wigston - Gareth King
7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

Wednesday 20th November 2002
Recording the Heritage on your Doorstep - Carolyn Holmes of Leics. Museums Heritage Watch Project, Holly Hayes, Birstall 7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

WednesdaylSth December 2002
Christmas Social with supper, quizzes & raffle
7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

Wednesday 15th January 2003
The Sinking of the John - Mick Rawle. The speaker's ancestor Captain Rawle was charged with manslaughter over this maritime disaster in 1855. Was he guilty? We hear the evidence and then decide. 7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

Wednesday 19th February 2003
A.G.M. followed by members' 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.

FRONT COVER

Jim Colver's drawing this time portrays a craftsman making cricket balls in the traditional way, as practised for the last 150 years. He has the ball firmly secured in a vice while he hand laces the seam.

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FEBRUARY MEETING

On Wednesday the 20th of February 36 members of the Society met for our Annual General Meeting. There were no apologies.

1. The minutes of the last AGM and matters arising were read by Tricia and accepted as a true record.
2. Brian presented the treasurer's report. Two trips had made slight losses due to the coaches not being full. The subscriptions are to remain the same i.e. £7 full, £5 concession.
3. Edna presented the Chairman's report of the year's activities. She commented that it is the 21st year of the Society's existence as it was founded in 1980. Three outings had taken place during the year to Deene Park, Donnington-le-Heath and St. Margarets.
4. Stella reported a total membership of 85 and encouraged members to inform her of changes of address and telephone numbers.
5. All Officers were re-elected unopposed.
6. Victoria County History. Brian elaborated on a subscription scheme to raise money to employ a part-time researcher to add to the existing four volumes for Leicestershire.
7. AOB. Tony informed us the Southwell Workhouse (the subject of a previous meeting) is now open.
8. Colin gave a vote of thanks to the committee and bulletin workers for their work during the year.

Following the AGM Tony Lawrance gave us a talk on his home town which is Potter's Bar, 14 miles north of London. The Potter's Bar Historical society are very active and Tony has relied on their members for his information.

The talk was based on comparisons between Potter's Bar and Wigston, both have clay soil and both are on a railway line from London. The Potter's Bar railway line was built to move coal from the growing coal fields of Yorkshire to London. It is similar to Wigston in size. As in Wigston many of the old buildings have been removed and replaced by new. Potter's Bar has no major industry and there has not been a lot of new building whereas Wigston has.The Al used to go through the small town of South Mimms nearby and it was here that the people of Potter's Bar would have gone to church before their first church was built in 1835. At one time Potter's Bar was very busy place because of the Great North Road, but over the years shops have closed and large supermarkets have taken their place.

In 1916 Potter's Bar was attacked by Zeppelins and the L31 Zeppelin was shot down over the town and crashed on an oak tree in the grounds of Oakmere House which was the home of the local landowners. The Vicar at South Mimms refused to bury the victims so the Vicar at Potter's Bar agreed to bury them but in unconsecrated ground. People went souvenir hunting for debris after the crash and Tony's grandfather

managed to collect some and later had them framed.Cinemas also produced some interesting parallels. The one in Potter's Bar had 1500 seats with 400 in the balcony, no doubles though unlike Wigston. The Ritz in Potter's Bar went through various sets of owners and managers, with a variety of programmes and prices. It was eventually taken over by Tescos.Unfortunately lack of time meant that the talk was concluded before it was properly finished. Tony was thanked for this absorbing talk and the evening ended at about 9 p.m.

MARCH MEETING

For this month members gathered for a most interesting talk by Peter Clowes on the Welford Road, that part of the A5199 (formerly A50) which starts in Leicester and continues to just over the county boundary at Welford, hence the name. The accompanying slides were a mixture of his own and some taken a number of years ago by {Catherine Taylor (Edna's daughter).

The road dates from the earliest times and is but the local section of a route which stretches from Merseyside to Northampton where it then merges with the Market Harborough road to become the A508 and passes south to meet the A5 and so to London. It was once the main route to the capital and this must have made Wigston a widely known place and its inns host to many travellers. In particular the Bull's Head and the Bell Inn, when situated in Bell Street, were known to play a major part. Later on the present A6 through Oadby and Market Harborough became the preferred way, but Welford Road was still important enough to be upgraded to a turnpike road in 1764.

The old road would have linked the villages along its route, but increased traffic led to congestion and inconvenience and so most were bypassed. Wigston, Husbands Bosworth and Welford itself being notable exceptions. The road originally started from Southfields and so our slides took in Oxford Street, the Magazine, Newarke Houses and the Chantry House, the old colleges of Art & Technology, the Infirmary and Prison before moving on to the Granby Halls, an old weighbridge nearby, the cemetery, Freemen's cottages, Domestic Science College, gatehouse to Knighton Fields House (opposite Chapel Lane), Washbrook and a medieval cottage near Knighton church, before arriving at Wigston.

Here we saw Horlocks house and nursery which Mr. Horlock, who was welcomed as a guest for the evening, told us his family purchased in 1912. It is now the site of the Stage Motel. We moved on to the Grange, long the home of the Burgess family, Bell Street, the Bank (where a tree was planted to celebrate Queen Victoria's Jubilee), St. Wistans Church, the old Quaker House, Windmill Cottage (once the site of a windmill), and Woodward's farm where Sir Oswald Moseley is said to have buried a revolver in a ditch by a hovel. Past the 100 acre Foston Big Close, the 10th Century Foston Church, Kilby, Arnesby with its windmill and associations with Rev. Robert Hall. The yeoman house at Shearsby, ruins at Knaptoft, the John and Jane Ball hill up to Husbands Bosworth, Naseby battlefield and so into Welford. This village has some impressive old buildings notably the Wharf Inn and the former Talbot Inn, now a private house, which has a priest hole and old ostlery at the rear still surviving.

With Peter and Edna's extensive knowledge of this route and various contributions from members much of great interest was covered. A very successful DIY evening for which Peter was warmly thanked.

APRIL MEETING

On the 17th April approximately 40 members met to hear Malcolm Hornsby speak on the History of the Co-operative Movement. The talk was to describe the development of the movement both nationally and locally in Wigston and nearby villages. The Co-operative movement in Wigston was initiated on the 9th of September 1867 when a meeting was held on the recreation ground on the corner of Welford Road. Sufficient interest was generated at this meeting to create a Wigston Co-op. From the dozen or so interested parties 3 or 4 were chosen as a delegation to go to the Leicester Co-op, which had been running for 7 years. Fleckney and Great Glen were also chosen to give advice on setting up a Co-operative store even though they had only 12 years experience between them.

Only very recently had the framework knitters had enough money to invest in a small venture. In the 1860s Leicester and Wigston, in general, were very poor areas resulting from the Enclosure. This was to the extent that a Parliamentary Commission was set up to inquire into poverty in the area. The poverty, in part, was to do with a change of method in the manufacture of hosiery. Cut and sew methods had replaced fully fashioned with the resulting loss of skill base. Consequently the wages and conditions of employment were reduced after the 1820s. Because of the methods of payment families very often had to borrow from their employer and sometimes were paid in essential foodstuffs. Therefore the employer had a monopoly of supply of groceries and the employer as a result could control the workers. After the 1850s hosiery ceased to be the only industry in the area as there was some migration of the boot and shoe industry from Northamptonshire which had also been a home based industry prior to mechanisation.

Village friendly or benefit societies developed at the same time as the Co-operative movement. People needed the societies to help them during lean times. Many people saved and deposited money into the society and when members fell ill the society or club supported them. They were the first organisations for working people that were run by themselves and who made their own rules.

So based on these experiences the 12 interested parties formed a Co-operative Society and in the first four months they collectively saved £20. On the 4th of January 1868 they opened in Leicester Road. Often the first shops were opened in the front rooms of member's houses so there were no lease problems. First they only had limited opening hours as members ran the shops and only sold to members. But as time went by the early ventures became businesses with the associated responsibilities of being employers themselves.

Additional skills were required by the committee members such as butchery and knowledge of staples such as tea, tobacco and butter. As people became better off financially they ate better and as a result became healthier.One of the most important aspects of belonging to a Co-operative Society was the dividend or 'Diwie', I'm sure most people can remember their family's Co-op number (mine was 14467, ed.). The society was run for women but not by women. It was the woman who managed the home finances and collected the 'Diwie', and some women managed to save considerable sums.

The Co-op, set out to become a universal provider. They were often responsible for workers education and in some areas bought houses and rented them to their members.Their objectives were threefold, to provide decent quality goods at competitive prices, to give people the possibility of saving, to give people the chance of a decent place to live.
They enabled the third objective to be accomplished in three ways either by being a landlord, or by lending money to members, or by enabling people to create their own housing co-operatives, such as the Humberstone Garden suburb built by the Anchor Boot & Shoe Factory workers. Equity Shoes another boot and shoe company was a successful co-operative.
So in conclusion, the Co-operative movement was characteristic of Victorian times as a way for people to fulfil their own economic needs. It is a form of business organisation created by members, the members are the owners using their own money so the capital is their own. The profit is dispersed to the members as a dividend. It is a form of enterprise which offers an alternative to state or capitalist economy.
Unfortunately the evening had to close as time was running out before Malcolm had finished the slides or talk. He was sincerely thanked for an informative and well researched talk and we hope he can return to finish it on another occasion.

MAY MEETING

In May the society travelled by coach to H.M. Prison Museum at Newbold Revel, Nr. Rugby. This is housed in the converted stable block of an old mansion which now serves as a training establishment for prison officers. The Museum, which is the main one for the whole country, came about in 1978 when to mark the centenary of the Prison Department an exhibition was put on at the Training Officers College, at Leyhill, Nr. Bristol. It consisted of the private collection of items of historical interest relating to prisons and punishment collected over many years by Col. James Haywood. It is said the Queen suggested the exhibits warranted a permanent dispay and a museum based on this collection was opened at Leyhill in 1982. When the college was closed in 1986 and a new site established at Newbold Revel the museum moved to its present location.

It was a rather sombre subject for a warm spring evening but very interesting never-the-less. Our guide gave a detailed account of punishment through the ages which was based on the four themes of fine, mutilation, humiliation and execution. Later transportation was added. Early prisons were often owned by the church or private individuals who ran them for profit. It was Robert Peel, as Home Secretary, in 1822 who got acts passed requiring gaolers to be paid instead of making their living by selling favours to the inmates, sufficient sanitary accommodation to be provided, and men and women to be housed separately. In 1878 the Prison Service was founded and charged to public funds. In 1900 the Borstal! system was introduced so young offenders aged 16-21 were kept in separate establishments. In 1860s public executions were stopped mainly due to injuries among the vast crowds who attended. 1965 saw the end of the death penalty.

We saw many exhibits such as hand-sewn mail bags, carved items from bone and an embroidery worked by a female inmate with her own hair. There were stocks, cranks, shackles, treadmills and the last gibbet irons used in England and made for James

Cook whose body was displayed following his execution at Leicester in 1832, a flogging block from Newgate, door from the cell once occupied by Oscar Wilde and a balastrade from Strangeways removed following the riots in 1990.

We were guided round the building by the familiar broad arrowhead symbol used on prison outfits from 1850-1921. Originally used in battle by King Henry no one knows how or why it was adopted for prison use.

An abiding memory of the evening will be Mike Forryan sitting very upright and still on a vicious looking chair with a raised strip attached down the middle from back to front. This was intended to prevent male prisoners from moving about when being photographed with slow exposure cameras for the 'mug' shot records.

Following a refreshing drink in their cafe/bar, thankfully no one was detained, so we all arrived safely back in Wigston for approx. 10.15p.m!

GREATER WIGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Receipts and Payments for the year ending 31st December 2001

Receipts			**Payments**		
Opening Balances as at 1/1/01			Lecture Fees		135.00
Cash in Hand		4.83	Donations:		
Current A/c		177. 87	War Memorial		25. 00
Deposit A/c	732.68	915.38	O & W BPT (FWK Museum)		50. 00
Subscriptions		451. 00	St. Margaret's Church		40. 00
Donations		5.00	Bulletins		85.70
Collections		97.63	Room Hire		112.00
Visits:			Secretarial Expenses		63.90
Deene Parke		276. 00	Visits:		
Donington Manor House		264. 00	Deene Park		316.00
Party		258.50	Donington Manor House		280. 00
Raffle		62.70	Party		307.24
Bank Interest		24. 89	Closing Balances as at 31/12/01		
			Cash in Hand	4. 83	
			Current A/c	178.40	
			Deposit A/c	757. 03	940.26
		2355.10			2355.10

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TOM AGAR'S LETTER

Due to pressure of space we are holding back the second instalment of Tom's letter from America until the next Bulletin.

PETER MASTIN'S RAILWAY BOOK

Members who belonged to the Society in 1997 will almost certainly remember the late Peter Mastin whose very sudden death caused such shock and distress. At the time Peter had nearly finished writing a book on the history of Wigston's Railways. It would be very desirable if this could be completed and published for the benefit of all who are interested - either from a local history or a railway history point of view, and as a tribute to Peter and all the hard work he had put into this project. However nothing has no far been done about this because it is believed Peter was actually working jointly with someone else, but sadly no one knows who. His Uncle and Aunt, Alan and Brenda Kind, are trying to establish who this might be but with almost nothing to go on it is no easy task. Does anyone is our Society have any knowledge about this? Did he ever discuss his book with anyone?

He had asked Edna Taylor to write a forward for the book and this was featured in Bulletin 62 under the title 'Just in Time'. To assist with the task he had given her a copy of the first few pages which we reproduce here to give a flavour of what it is like. The editors acknowledge with thanks the permission of Alan and Brenda Kind and also Peter's friend Shirley Stuart (who possess draft copies) to the reproduction of this piece.

CHAPTER I

Wigston's association with railways began towards the end of 1837 when construction gangs commenced carving out the route of the Midland Counties Railway from Leicester to Rugby. The line entered the parish in a deep cutting, bridged by the road from Wigston to Aylestone. Heading almost due south, it crossed the open fields to the west of the village before reaching the road to Blaby, which it crossed on the level. Gradually rising above the surrounding fields now on an embankment, the spoil for which almost certainly came from the cutting less than a mile to the north, the line bridged the Countesthorpe road near the old windmill and then a few yards further on the Leicestershire and Northamptonshire Union Canel and the River Sence. These two water-courses were spanned by substantial timber viaducts, separated by a short embankment. Still high above the surrounding fields the track-bed left the boundaries of Wigston, cutting its swathe through Countesthorpe and on to Rugby.

For over two years the men toiled, slowly creating an almost level path for steel rails. No doubt the works were critically observed by the residents of the nearby village, for this indeed was a sign of changing times. Perhaps there were even some local men recruited to swell the work force, for there were no mechanical aids to assist construction in those days. Muscle and horse power achieved the task, as it had done with the building of the canals over the previous fifty years. These were the men known as 'navvies' derived from the term 'navigators'. They were often a rough and lawless band, who worked hard and played hard. In years to come as the railway network spread to almost every corner of the kingdom, communities would fear the coming of these work-gangs and breathe sighs of relief when their task was done and they moved on. But before 1840 railways were still few and far between, and Wigston was probably little affected by the passing of the railway builders.

By the summer of 1840 the work was complete. The Midland Counties Railway had achieved its goal, Unking the towns of Derby and Nottingham with Leicester and on to Rugby, where a junction was made with the London and Birmingham Railway, completed in 1837.

The Midland Counties Railway had its genesis in a meeting of Nottinghamshire coal owners in August 1832. Concerned by the recent completion of the Leicester and Swannington Railway and the subsequent loss of their lucrative coal market in Leicester, they sought ways of expanding their market while at the same time cutting out the more expensive transport of coal by canal. Initially they proposed a line of railway from the pits in the Erewash valley to Derby and on to Leicester. Subscriptions were called for, and money soon began to come in rapidly. However, powerful interests in Manchester and Liverpool, as well as subscribing much of the capital, began to press for the proposed railway to carry on past Leicester and on to Rugby, where it would join the forthcoming London and Birmingham Railway and give access to the huge London market. For several years negotiations went on, until the Act of Parliament to build the railway was finally passed in June 1836. In the event, the original Erewash Valley line was omitted from the Act, and a line from Derby to Nottingham with a junction at Long Eaton to Leicester and Rugby was planned. Construction of the whole line was under way by the end of 1837, and the first section from Derby to Nottingham was opened for traffic on 4 June 1839. The line from Trent Junction (Long Eaton) through Loughborough to Leicester opened on 5 May 1840, and the final section from Leicester through Wigston to Rugby on 30 June 1840, with public opening the following day.

At the time of the opening of the section between Leicester and Rugby there were only three intermediate stations - Wigston, Broughton and Ullesthorpe. A station at Countesthorpe was opened shortly afterwards. Wigston station was situated where the line crossed the Blaby road, with a substantial single storey building on the western side of the tracks, adjacent to the roadway. This building was both the station master's house and the station office and waiting room. The accompanying diagram is based on the original drawings, which are still in existence. Although heavily rebuilt in later years, a part of the original building survived until the station's demise.

It is an interesting exercise today, more than one hundred and fifty years later, to speculate on the impact that the coming of the railway had on the inhabitants of the village a mile away. Wigston at that time was a village of just over two thousand souls, a population which had increased by only one hundred in the previous twenty years. Almost all of these people lived either within or adjacent to the four principal streets which formed a square, with the two parish churches at diagonally opposite corners. The times were not prosperous ones for most residents. The enclosures of the eighteenth century had turned the village's economy from a rural to an industrial one. The principal trades at this time were framework knitting and footwear manufacture. Small workshops and factories had sprung up here and there, although much of the frame-knitting was done at home on rented machinery. To eke out a living meant long hours at low rates of pay. A number of the residents were not native to Wigston but had come to the village in the hope of employment; the demand for jobs exceeded the work available, leading to high unemployment and many families dependent on the parish's Poor Rates. To some extent Wigston was a microcosm of the whole country

at a time of transition from a rural based economy to one based on the new manufacturing industries. The new and rapidly expanding railway system would

eventually play a major part in this transition by providing cheap and quick transport for both the raw materials and the finished goods. But in 1840 the benefits were still in the future for most places, and Wigston was no exception.

However, the appearance of the trains must surely have had a profound effect on people who had previously known only horse-drawn carts and the occasional stage coach. No doubt in the first few weeks of the line's opening practically the whole population would have walked along the road to the station, there to gaze in awe at this wonderful new vehicle. To our modern eyes the first locomotives and the rolling stock look primitive indeed; yet to the people of Wigston at that time, most of whom had probably never travelled more than a few miles away in their entire life, the iron steed wreathed in smoke and steam must have seemed the last word in sophisticated travel. Of course, some would have seen these early trains before, perhaps at Leicester's West Bridge station which had been in use by the Leicester and Swannington Railway since 1832. Yet for most of the population the sight would have been an entirely new experience, and a precursor of the changing face of England.

The entire locomotive stock of the Midland Counties Railway consisted of engines of the Bury type, named after the design of Edward Bury and manufactured by the Bury company and six other makers. Most had only four wheels, a few six. These were times of experimentation, in design, materials and methods of operation. Breakdowns and mishaps were frequent, and serious accidents only avoided by the relatively low speeds and light weight of these early trains. Nevertheless the railway was now running, and it is recorded that over 7,500 passengers travelled on the Leicester to Rugby line in its first week of operation. Many of these would have been residents of Wigston enjoying the novelty of a trip to Leicester for the day, or perhaps for a few a journey to London.

At the time of the line's opening there were six passenger trains in each direction daily between Rugby and Derby. Three each of these did not stop at the smaller stations such as Wigston, so services to and from the village were sparse indeed. No details have yet been unearthed of goods traffic, nor whether any sidings were installed at Wigston for the loading and unloading of freight. It is fairly certain that some facilities would have been provided, and would have contributed to the lowering of the prices of some commodities, especially coal. General freight and coal would certainly have rumbled southwards through the station on its way to London. Not perhaps for the first seven weeks of the line's existence, for at the time of opening the viaduct over the Avon at Rugby was still incomplete, and passengers disembarked on the north side of the viaduct and made their way by other means to the London and Birmingham Railway Station. By the end of August the work was complete, and a double line of rails stretched from Wigston to London.

Although the first section of the railway between Derby and Nottingham had been laid on stone blocks, from Trent Junction to Rugby the iron rails weighing 771bs to the yard were fixed to kyanized larch sleepers. Over this track ran three classes of passenger coach, and various simple types of goods wagon. All were four wheeled vehicles. The First Class coaches were virtually stage coach bodies on railway wagons,

with their passengers on plush upholstery and protected from the elements (although no form of heating was provided). Second Class gave carriages with waist high sides and a roof, but no windows. For the wretched passengers forced to travel Third Class there were open coaches without even seats. Fares were far higher in relative terms than they are today. For example, between Nottingham and Derby the fare was 3s.6d (17.5p) in First Class, 2s. in Second and Is. in Third. At a time when the average weekly wage of a manual worker would have been about 25s. even the Third Class fare represented 4% of his pay. Today's equivalent is approximately 1%. No details of fares from Wigston are known to the writer, but a return ticket to Leicester even in Third Class would probably have cost at least four old pence. Nevertheless, it became viable now for Wigston folk to travel to work in Leicester each day, and of course vice-versa.

The coming of this first railway to Wigston did not significantly add to the employment opportunities of the village. In the 1841 census six men of the village were listed as railwaymen. Four were labourers, one was a platelayer and one combined the jobs of station master, clerk, safety officer and policeman (in those days the only form of signalman). This last would, of course be the resident of the station house. For the next four years the railway settled down to a prosperous existence. In its first year the railway company paid a dividend of 4% on its ordinary shares, and traffic passing through Wigston was increasing steadily. The line formed a part of the shortest route between London and the industrial centres of the East Midlands and Yorkshire. Several interesting events marked these early years. At about mid-day on 24 November 1840 a part of the viaduct over the canal at Wigston collapsed. While a temporary replacement was erected, passengers detrained on one side of the gap and made their way on foot down steps cut into the embankment, over the adjacent road bridge and up more steps to another train waiting on the far side of the breach. It is believed that an omnibus was also made available to convey luggage and perhaps more affluent passengers. The temporary replacement bridge was opened on 10 December, and a permanent structure after the winter. This, too, fell some years later. Meanwhile the unwelcome break of journey for the luckless passengers doubtless provided an interesting spectacle for local inhabitants as well as the residents of Crow Mill, situated opposite the scene of the mishap.

Although not directly involving Wigston, an event on 5 July 1841 was of some significance to railways in particular and all forms of travel in general. On this day a cabinet-maker and lay-preacher from Market Harborough named Thomas Cook chartered a train from Leicester to Loughborough and back. This was to enable 570 people to attend a temperance meeting, and they were conveyed in nine Third class carriages at a fare of Is. per head. At Loughborough a band led the procession into a park where refreshments were provided by Cook. After the meeting, games and dancing, the return excursion was met by a large crowd in Leicester. Perhaps there were Wigston folk among these first excursionists. The success of this first trip led to the formation of the now world-wide travel organisation bearing Thomas Cook's name, as well as alerting the railway companies to the potential of specail outings.

Another occasion of note was the passage of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert through Wigston in early December 1843. The royal couple had been staying at Belvoir Castle, and had joined the royal train at Leicester to travel to Watford where

the royal coach was waiting to convey them to Windsor. As was usual at this time, a pilot engine preceded the royal train at a distance of a mile, and surely many residents of the village made their way to the lineside to wave and cheer as their monarch passed by.

CHAPTER II

By an Act of Parliament of 10 May 1844 the Midland Counties Railway was amalgamated with the Birmingham and Derby Junction Railway and the North Midland Railway to form the Midland Railway. This new company was to have far reaching effects on the future of Wigston, as well as growing to become one of the principal railways of Britain. For the first few years of its existence, however, there were few changes to the railway at Wigston. These were years of expansion to the north, especially York where the line met the route to Newcastle and Edinburgh. Wigston now lay on the only railway route from London to Scotland and witnessed a growing traffic in both passengers and goods. As well as different types of locomotives from the other two constituents of the new company, larger and improved new designs began to appear. The main lines of the three railways had all met at Derby, and as well as a fine new station in that town, a site nearby was also selected as a suitable place for the building of the new railway's locomotive, carriage and wagon works. For a few years the company suffered the predatory attentions of speculators and those involved in railway politics. George Hudson, the "Railway King" became the Midland's first chairman, and during the Railway Mania of the late 1840s the company came close to bankruptcy. The mania led to Hudson's downfall, and he was succeeded as chairman by the former Leicester Quaker and industrialist John Ellis. This wise and prudent man had been instrumental in the building of the Leicester and Swannington Railway some seventeen years earlier, and now began to establish the Midland as one of the foremost railway companies in the country. One of his first tasks was to appoint Matthew Kirtley as the Mechanical Engineer, responsible for both locomotives and rolling stock .....

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PAYING WAGES IN THE NINETEEN FORTIES

A few weeks ago I joined a small group on a Wigston Walk. We ended our evening at Bushloe House, offices of the former Wigston Urban District Council, where I had worked for six years on leaving school. Of course this brought back many memories. Realising how long this was ago, and how all offices are now computerised I thought I should record how things were done in the distant past. I worked in the Finance Department which dealt with recording all financial transactions for Wigston, South Wigston and Kilby Bridge.

There were three of us in the department. We had two typewriters, one with a long carriage which enabled us to type monthly cheques, a very heavy adding machine and a machine used only by Mr. Parker which could multiply and divide.

Apart from recording, our department was responsible for paying wages to all the Council employees. This took place every Friday afternoon. At four o'clock a taxi would arrive driven by Mr. Bishop. Mr. Boulter, foreman of the works and I, carrying

a small suitcase containing the wage packets left to pay the workmen. We went to pay Mr. Dalby at the South Wigston Pumping Station. We paid the park keepers and their helpers at Blaby Road, The Memorial Park and Aylestone Lane Park. We paid Mr. Jones and other workmen at the Cemetery. Sometimes we paid the road maintenance men where they were working. We finished at about five o'clock at Newgate End to pay the refuse department under the watchful eye of the 'refuse cart' driver Mr. Bacon.

All wage packets were sealed but were designed with a window and slits so that the notes could be counted through the slits and the coins could be counted without the packet being opened. Details of how the amount had been made up were written on the envelope. The men knew exactly how much they should receive. A normal working week was 47 hours but different work was paid at different rates. Remember we were dealing with £ s d and often the rate would only vary by a halfpenny an hour.

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I used to enjoy my jaunt on Fridays, I often received a buttonhole from the workmen and they were always very well mannered. If I had made a mistake, which was rare, they would come to the department on Saturday when we would sort it out.

During the time I paid wages, we paid the Fire Service at Eland's Garage, near the Royal Oak and the British Restaurant in Canal Street.

Paying wages began with the Time Sheet - a large sheet, larger than foolscap, usually white, filled in by the workmen, or blue if they were superannuated. This was divided into days so each day's work was recorded, e.g. B582 Tarspraying etc. On Thursday, these sheets were collected and the work recorded and checked by the Surveyor's Office (Mr. Stacey) and the Sanitary Inspector (Mr. Ashbridge), I have used the titles of that era. On Friday morning I received them, filling in the appropriate amounts in columns at the bottom of the sheets. The gross amount was entered. From this would be deducted firstly the Tax. For this the Inland Revenue provided us with booklets, one for each week, numbered so that we could deduct PA YE tax. There was a white card for each man on which was his code reference. Each week his Gross Pay was entered and a running total taken from which, consulting the booklet we were able to deduct the correct tax for the week. Then followed deductions for the National Health Stamp and the Unemployment Stamp and usually a voluntary amount for the Saturday Hospital Scheme which enabled the men, after an operation, to stay at a convalescent home free of charge. These particulars were entered on the wage packet. All this information was entered in the Wages Book - a very large ledger. I think there was room for about 60 names to each page. There were columns for each type of work and if there was not one then a new heading was made. These went across two pages and had to be filled in carefully. These columns had to add up to the total of the Gross Wages and Net Wages. It just had to balance, if it didn't then you worked on it till it did. Remember this was done either on the antiquated adding machine where a handle had to be pulled for each item or in my head. It also was in £ s d (little did I know that later, when I was at college, all this adding would result in me being far ahead of anyone in the Maths Specialist Group in adding up tests).

At last the book balanced so I could make out the cheque for the amount required. This then had to be signed by Mr. Gunning, Chief Financial Officer, Clerk to the Council etc. I would count up the number often shilling notes I would require and

then set off for the Midland Bank at the corner of Paddock Street. Often Mr. King, the rent collector would go with me. When we returned I had to count the money in case the bank had made a mistake. This did happen and the whole lot had to be returned and the bank had to do a quick audit. When the money agreed with the cheque I could make up the packets. Typing this out I have realised what a time consuming operation it was each week which today is all completed in a few minutes with a piece of software. After all this there were still some ledgers to post (post means enter). All work on the County roads had to be itemised in a separate ledger as the money was then claimed back from the County Council.

The workmens' Unemployment and Health Cards were kept in the department and they had to be stamped with stamps fetched from the Post Office. This was done each week because if a workman wanted to leave or was fired he had to take them along with his income tax P45 to his next employment.

I always feel I was lucky to have the office experience I received in that department. There was so much variety and I was able to learn so much which has been helpful in later years. We even printed all the Rate Demands and had the horrible job of putting them in their envelopes before posting at the G.P.O.

Whilst reading this you probably wondered why I needed a taxi to pay the wages. At the time there were only two cars at the office, one belonged to Mr. Stacey and the other to Mr. Ashbridge, everyone else used the bus, cycled or walked. Mr. Boulter (Arnold) accompanied me as he had to sign the Wages Book on our return to prove that I had handed over the money.

I found my visit to my old work place very interesting as we were allowed to go to the first floor where I had actually worked. It is a sign of the times that the security doors are now necessary so freedom of access is restricted.

Stella Tweed.

Entering this article for the bulletin brought back many memories for me too. I used to work at the Midland Bank in Paddock Street and remember cashing the Council's wages cheque many times. Mr. Gunning came occasionally, but it was usually Mr. Rixon. This would be after Stella had left for college and a change of career. Otherwise we would not have had to wait for our interest in history to bring us together so many years later.

This account also made me think how much more monotonous clerical work is these days. Wages clerks these days do not visit the bank, Post Office and round and about paying staff these days. They would be desk bound all day inputting data into their computers and making electronic transfers. I doubt if they have even met most of their non-office colleagues.

Tricia Berry.

THE ANCIENT ROAD TO WELFORD

At the March meeting, Peter Clowes gave us a most entaining slide talk about the Welford Road, a turnpike road established in 1764 to speed up coach travel between Leicester and Northampton. The local Turnpike Trust's responsibility for the road ceased at Welford, just over the Northamptonshire border, hence the name.

We all chipped in with information and questions and enjoyed some very colourful anecdotes from Peter. I mentioned that there had been an ancient road long before the turnpike, and afterwards Colin asked me if I could get any details about it. Se here goes.

There are two questions to ask: how do we know there was an old road, and which route did it take? In the absence of early maps (and none showed roads even later on), we have to look at other evidence. Professor Hoskins writes about 'the pre-historic road', now the Welford road, and he would be thinking of evidence such as two neolithic axe heads found on Tythorn Hill and a Bronze Age urn found when the Wigston Harcourt Estate was being built. Our ancient ancestors evidently came this way.

Once the Romans left Britain, Anglo-Saxon invaders landed in the late 5th Century on the shores of the Wash and followed the river Welland into the Midlands (as well as other rivers leading elsewhere). They made their way over the watershed into the Soar valley, beating footpaths to the Roman town of Leicester. Many routes would be used at first, but the one most used would be on well-drained ground above valley swamps. Where there was a good water supply, settlements were founded, as at Wigston. Much later, it is likely that the Danes used the same routes as the Anglo-Saxons, and settled again in Wigston and in Kilby, Shearsby and Arnesby.

After the Norman Conquest, routes from Leicester were extended beyond Northampton to London, but for some time the route via Welford was more important than that through Market Harborough. There are records that in 1307 Edward II lodged on his way north at Guilsborough, just off the old A50 north of Northampton. Queen Isabella similarly lodged at Sulby Abbey near Welford. One of our earliest maps, John Speed's in 1610, marks the Welford road as the "London Waye'. So does the 1645 plan of the Operations against the Town of Leicester during the Siege, in the Civil War.

There is evidence, then for an ancient road between Leicester and Welford. It would not be a road in any sense that we understand it, but a series of local tracks linking hill-top settlements. So where did it go?

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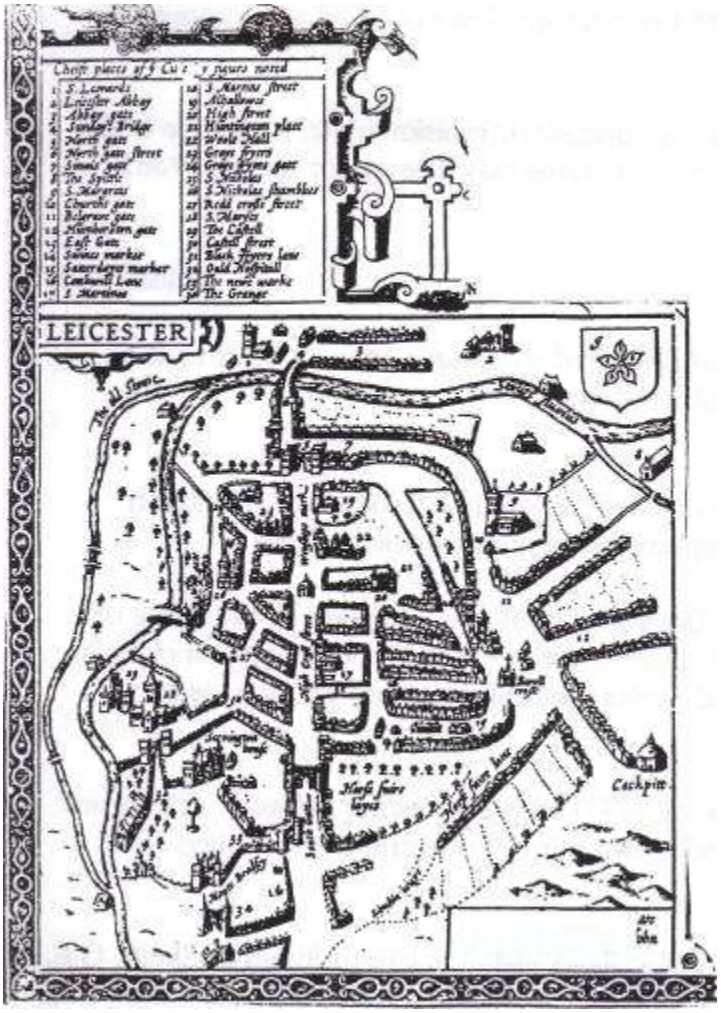
John Speed in 1610 'performed', as he put it, the first printed plan of the town of Leicester, and it shows High Cross Street running from North Gate to the South Gate, where the Welford road goes off the bottom of the map, using present-day Oxford Street as its route. Today, of course, Welford Road starts from Welford Place further east, and meets the old road somewhere between the Infirmary and the Prison.

Street jitty, the Lanes, School, Welford Road (Stanbrig)?Then began the climb up Knighton Hill to where Victoria Park Road now takes off. Here, according to Philip Thornton, a modern local historian, the ancient road followed the line of Lome Road up to Knighton village. There, men, wagons and beasts all had to wade through the Washbrook ford near St. Mary's church. We have to remember that ancient roads aimed to connect villages, not by-pass them, as the turnpike road did. Church lane was formerly called Wigston Way.

John Speed's map, 1610



Between Knighton and Wigston, the old road crossed Knighton Fields, probably near Knighton Spinney, and Wigston Fields. How it got through Wigston in the times before the Danish settlers had built the hollow square shape of the ring fenced village is not known. So here is a bit of speculation. Could the ancient way have followed a line represented by North Street, Junction Road, Bell Horsewell Lane, the track that runs alongside Thythorn Primary and so to the crossing of the River Sence, later a stone bridge

South of Kilby Bridge, there is a good network of paths to Kilby, Arnesby and Shearsby, then on to Knaptoft, Husbands Bosworth and Welford. I have walked them all and can vouch for them as being possibilities as our ancient route. The turnpike route between Husbands Bosworth and Welford is so direct that it is possible it follows the line of the much older track.

The supremacy of the old road to London via Welford did not last. By the time it was turnpiked in 1764, the road to London via Harborough, turnpiked in 1726, was the more important. The narrow town gates would no longer allow the bigger coaches to get through them, but the new Harborough turnpike allowed coaches to pull up at the town without going through the gates and narrow streets. New coaching inns

developed along Gallowtree Gate and Granby Street and the old centre of the town at High Cross was pulled across towards the East Gate where the Clock Tower is. In 1774 the gates were taken down and Leicester was free to expand in the coming age of canals and railways.

The Welford Road, however, based on a prehistoric invasion route, is still one of the quietest and most scenic roads to the south. Long may it be so, for it is Wigston's road.

Edna Taylor

Sources: *Victoria County History ofLeics, Vol. 3, Antique Maps ofLeics* by R.K. Baurn, *The Road to Welford* by Philip Thornton.

The following list of villages along the Welford Road with notes was very kindly supplied by Elizabeth Ward. It complements the above article by Edna.

Welford	Wellesford in 1086 Domesday Book - village. Ford by the spring or over the stream. Old English Wella + ford. In Domesday - brick built manor house. Alfred (under tenant) held it from Geoffrey de la Guorche.
Arnesby	Erendesberie or Erendesbi in D.B. Farmstead or village of man larund or Erendi. Old Scandinavian name + by. Birthplace of Robert Hall (1764-1811)
Shearsby	Svevesbi in D.B. Possibly farmstead or village of Swaef or Skeifr. O.E. or O. Scand. + by. Quentin's wife, Norman + Howard held it from king.
Knaptoft	Cnapetof: King's land in D.B. Depopulated by 17th century change from arable to sheep. Hall farm, moated site of earlier hall, fishponds.
Husbands Bosworth	Baresworde in D.B. Probably enclosure of man called Bar. O.E. name + worth. 'Husbands' probably means "of farmers or husbandmen". Mill.
Kilby	Cilebi in D.B. Farmstead or village of the young men. O.E. Cild + O. Scand. by. Mill, hamlet, medieval manor house.
Laughton	Lachestone in D.B. Usually "leek or garlic enclosure, herb garden". O.E. Leac-tun.
Mowsley	Muselai in D.B. Wood or clearing infested with mice. O.E. Mus + leah.

Sources: *Oxford Dictionary of English Place Names* by A.D. Milk (1991), *Domesday Book - England's Heritage Then & Now* by T. Hinds (1985).

DONATION TO FRAMEWORK KNITTERS MUSEUM

It was realised after the AGM that the making of donations had been omitted from the agenda. Edna Taylor raised the subject at the March meeting and it was unanimously agreed by those present that £50 should be given to the F.W.K. Museum as in previous years.

THE SOCIETY TAPE RECORDER

In the last bulletin we asked if anyone could suggest what had become of the tape recorder purchased by the society in 1992. Happily this is now to hand, it was never lost as such, just no-one could recall who had custody of it. It is presently with the Secretary, kept with the minute books and correspondence etc. belonging to the society, and available to be borrowed by any member who wishes to record any oral history interviews. Please just ask.