

Greater Wigston Historical Society

White Gate Farm, Newton Lane, Wigston Magna, Leicester

BULLETIN 73



PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS - OCTOBER 2005 TO FEBRUARY 2006

Wednesday 19th October 2005

History of Bruntingthorpe Airfield - Geoffrey Pool
7.30p.m. U.K. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

Wednesday 16th November 2005

Development of Walnut Street & Infirmary area in slides - Colin Hyde of EMOHA
7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

Wednesday 21st December 2005

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

Wednesday 18th January 2006

South Wigston 'Then and Now', a visual presentation - Peter Clowes
7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

Wednesday 15th February 2006

A.G.M. followed by Forryan family research on & off the internet - Mike Forryan
7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

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

Editor: Tricia Berry, 7 Wensleydale Road, Wigston. Leics. LE1 8 3RX.

FRONT COVER

The front cover this time features Jim Colver's drawing of a typical old fashioned tea
shop, complete with home-made ice cream on offer.

JUNE MEETING

After a thoroughly wet day the rain cleared to enable us to enjoy a very pleasant guided walk around Medbourne. We met at the Nevill Arms and were split into two groups, which set off in opposite directions, inevitably meeting up about halfway round, with the expected banter. Our guides Mick Cooper and Keith Sandars both share a keen interest and due pride in their village which enhanced the information they gave us.

We learned that the village dates back to Roman times with many coins and other material discovered, including a mosaic pavement. It was once a market town and held its own fair having been granted a charter for these in Henry III's reign. The area was much influenced by the Nevill Family who were principal landowners in the 18th century and lived at the nearby Nevill Holt Hall. The pub is of course named after them and the old Fernie Hunt kennels have the initials of Mary and George Nevill displayed on the building. These have now been converted to a private house, following the hunt's removal to Great Bowden in 1924. The Cunard shipping family owned the hall from 1876 to 1912 and they also influenced the village, and kept hunters at the kennels. These days it is a much quieter place except on Easter Monday when the Bottle Kicking contest with Hallaton, takes place. This is a wild free for all game which can be dated back at least 500 years.

There were once two railway lines, the first opening in 1883 to 1916, the second lasting until more recent times. There are also three rectories; the first two built in 1830s and 1960s respectively are now private residences, while the present vicar lives in a modern house erected in 2000. The school built in 1869, closed in 1980, and that now serves as the village hall. The oldest house is the Manor, parts of which date to the late 13th and early 14th centuries. A former pub, The Queen's Head, built in 1733, is now a private home named Queen's House and the Horse and Trumpet (familiar name) is now a restaurant.

The village is very picturesque with a brook running through the middle, spanned by a medieval pack horse bridge leading to the church. Inside St. Giles' we admired a stained glass memorial window to Dr. William Watts, a former vicar, and also a medical man, who founded the Leicester Infirmary. Present residents are very active and involved, they maintain the war memorial, tidy and plant the open areas and organise fund raising dances. A notable result of these efforts is the children's play area, which cost £25,000 to equip, about half coming from a Lottery grant.

We met up back at the pub for a welcome drink, thanked our guides, and returned to Wigston after a most enjoyable evening.

AUGUST MEETING

This month a group of us visited the medical museum at Leicester Royal Infirmary, which is situated adjacent to the old nurses' living quarters in Knighton Street within the complex. In former times nurses had to be single and live on the premises. The

museum is housed in their recreation room which still has the stage, lighting equipment and dome within the roof clearly visible. Here films could be watched and dances and entertainments put on. Our guide was the curator, Dr. Aubrey Stewart, a retired anaesthetist. His huge subject knowledge combined with easy style of presentation made for a most fascinating evening.

The hospital was founded by the Rev. William Watts, a Northamptonshire doctor, as well as vicar of Medbourne (see account of our June meeting). In 1766 he started a campaign by writing to newspapers etc. to gather support for his idea. £2,000 was collected and by 1771 the original building was completed and furnished with 40 beds. Patients were charged 12/6d when admitted and this was returned if they recovered, but if they did not it was retained to bury them! During construction a number of skeletons were discovered as the area had previously been used as the gallows. Like all hospitals of the time it had its own brewery (because of impure water) and a herb garden for making medicines. The wrought iron gates came from Quenby Hall and remained in place until 1950s. They still exist, but in poor condition and too expensive to restore, in the grounds of Newarke Houses Museum

Dr. Watts obtained his MD in 1753 at Kings College, Aberdeen. He died 17/12/1786 age 61. He was quite a pioneer as Leicester was among the first 12 to 15 provincial towns to have a hospital. He was also incidentally an uncle of Susannah Watts, the author, in 1804, of Leicester's first guide book/ *I Walk through Leicester*.

In 1782 an asylum for lunatics was added and in 1820 a fever hospital was built on Freakes Ground opposite the present LOROS. In 1889 a children's hospital was built on site, with continuing expansion thereafter. In 1912 permission was granted for the use of 'Royal' in the title.

The museum has many early photographs and the expected grim instruments. It is surprising most do not differ greatly from those in use today, except modern ones are often smaller and are made of different materials. For instance a cased amputation set with good sized saw is very similar to that used today which surgeons use to cut through bone. Glass medicine bottles came in different colours according to contents, green for linaments, purple for dangerous substances and clear for normal remedies. Acid was stored in stone pots. The containers came with different grooves on to assist the blind.

Our guide believes the three greatest medical advances have been the 3 A's, anaesthetics, antiseptics and antibiotics.

Anaesthetics: the first operation under anaesthetic was performed by Robert Liston in Boston, USA in 1846, using ether. This meant that for the first time the surgeon could take his time, instead of rushing to complete the task in about three minutes, the maximum time most patients could stand the pain.

Antiseptics: the discovery that the fermentation of milk and alcohol was caused by bacteria which could be killed by moderate heat was made by Louis Pasteur, (Pasteurisation). Joseph Lister a friend of Pasteur then demonstrated in 1865 that

antiseptics, mainly carbolic acid initially, were effective during surgery to prevent bacteria entering wounds and patients dying of septicaemia.

Antibiotics: These were first used in 1935 though Alexander Fleming had noticed as early as 1928 that bacteria could be destroyed by mould and realised this could be capable of destroying infection within the body. However the real breakthrough came in 1940s when others took up Fleming's discovery, isolated the ingredient and developed it in a powdery form for medicine known as Penicillin.

The Chairman, Edna Taylor, thanked Dr. Stewart for a very interesting evening.

SEPTEMBER MEETING

For our first indoor meeting of the season the society welcomed Fred Hartley of Leics. Museums Service to talk on the building of the Great Central Railway. The talk revolved around slides made from a unique collection of photographs taken on glass plate negatives of the actual construction.

The photographer, Sydney W A Newton, had his own studio in Leicester, but his work involved much travelling as he specialised in taking images for guide books. His railway project which lasted from 1895 to 1899 was purely a hobby, his interest in the subject very likely having been kindled in childhood, when he lived in Argyle Street, Belgrave, close to the Great North Station, then under construction. When Mr. Newton retired to live in Groby he retained the collection and eventually offered it to the Museum Service where Fred subsequently had the job of cataloging it. Albums of the images are at the Record Office and they are also now available on the web.

The railway was first started in the early 1890s and that part was known as the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway. It was then decided to continue it south through the Midlands to transport coal to London and on to the south coast and through a channel tunnel to the continent. The tunnel idea was not pursued due to fears of invasion. A Mr. Watkin was in charge of the project and the route was split into 15 mile contracts, depots often being sited where another rail line crossed the proposed route for easier access. A track running close to and parallel with the proposed railway was first of all cleared and laid with rails to allow ongoing access of materials, plant and labour as work proceeded. The ground had to be levelled to create a surface free of steep gradients and huge steam powered excavators were used to cut through hills and to bore tunnels. Spare soil was used for embankments. The only relevant business records believed to survive are a collection at Nottingham Record Office of the cutting company Hemmings and Logan. Owner Paddy Logan lived at West Langton Hall and was MP for the Harborough Division.

The track ran right through the centre of Nottingham necessitating large scale demolition but there was less in Leicester as much of the route was raised above ground level. It had a short life being the last to be built and the first, in early 1960s, to close. We still have remaining part of the station in Great Central Street, the Great Central Way, now a cycle track and walkway into town and the handsome Bowstring Bridge whose future is sadly looking very uncertain.

After some questions and discussion the Chairman, Edna Taylor, thanked Mr. Hartley for a really interesting evening.

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OBITUARIES

It is very sad to relate that two members of the society have died over the summer, both very regular attenders at meetings who will be much missed.

Mary Mason died on 23rd August at Leicester Royal Infirmary. She had only been a member a fairly short while but in characteristic way got 'stuck in' and helped out. She ran the collection after each meeting and made out lists and collected the money for the summer trips. Our condolences to her children Beverley, Caroline and Douglas.

Margaret Rice died on 29th August at Nightingale Nursing Home. She had been a loyal and regular member for many years, often coming up with ideas for meetings and being kind and constructive in her comments to committee members. Our condolences to her children Martin and Gail.

It is believed both ladies succumbed to cancer.

NEW WIGSTON BOOK

"The Wigstons" a new book of bygone photographs by Duncan Lucas and Tricia Berry, published by Tempus Publishing Ltd., is to be launched at the Record Office in Long Street at 12.30p.m. on 18th October. Light refreshments will be available. All proceeds in aid of the restoration and development of the Framework Knitters Museum. A warm welcome is extended to all members and friends who would like to attend. Please telephone Duncan (2885546) or Tricia (2880156) if you will be coming. We need numbers for the catering.

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TRAFALGAR BICENTENARY

On 21st October this year the nation celebrates the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar, Britain's greatest naval triumph. It seems appropriate to look back over the events of that time and the life of that inspirational sea captain Horatio Nelson.

Nelson (1758-1805) was born on 29th September in Burnham Thorpe, Norfolk, the sixth of the eleven children of his father the rector. Although not physically strong he joined the Royal Navy at the age of twelve, on a ship commanded by his uncle, Maurice Suckling. He became a captain at the age of 20 and saw service in the West

Indies, Baltic and Canada, though for part of the time he was invalided home through ill-health. He was also to suffer all his life from sea-sickness. He married a young widow, Frances Nisbet, in 1787 in Nevis and brought her home to England. Frances already had a son, Joshua, who was often to go to sea with his step-father, but she never had any further children.

In 1793 the great struggle with France began and for the next seven years Nelson was on almost continual active service. He was given command of the *Agamemnon* and served in the Mediterranean, helping to capture Corsica where he lost the sight in his right eye during the Siege of Calvi in 1794, and his right arm at the Battle of Santa Cruz, de Tenerife in 1797.

At the Battle of the Nile in 1798 he successfully destroyed Napoleon's fleet and bid for an overland trade route to India. This important victory made Nelson a national hero, and he was created Baron Nelson of the Nile. In 1799 his next posting took him to Naples, where he fell in love with Emma, Lady Hamilton, the wife of the British Consul. She bore him a daughter, Horatia, in 1801.

In 1801, by now a vice-admiral, he ignored orders during the Battle of Copenhagen, to cease action, by famously putting his telescope to his blind eye and claiming he couldn't see the signal.

The Battle of Trafalgar, fought on 21st October 1805, was the most significant naval engagement of the Napoleonic Wars. The battle's name comes from the nearest land, Cape Trafalgar, on the southern Spanish coast between Cadiz and Gibraltar. The British fleet had 27 ships under the command of Nelson, and had formed a blockade of Cadiz. The combined French/Spanish fleet had 33 ships under the command of Admiral Charles de Villeneuve, and formed into a single battle line. The battle began shortly before noon, after Nelson had sent his message of encouragement to his fleet "England expects that every man will do his duty". He surprised his adversary by ordering his ships into two groups, each of which sliced through the enemy fleet at right angles, demolishing the line and giving the British fleet an advantage. By late afternoon 20 French and Spanish ships had been destroyed or captured, while not a single British vessel was lost. French casualties and prisoners totalled 14,000 while the British lost just 1,500. This victory removed what was the imminent threat of invasion of Britain and ensured our naval supremacy for the next 100 years.

National celebrations took place but these were tinged with genuine sadness for the loss of the charismatic, brave and talented Lord Nelson who was shot through the spine by an enemy sniper, but survived long enough to learn of the great victory. His body, preserved in a cask of brandy, was brought back to England for a hero's burial in St. Paul's Cathedral.

During the early part of August this year a flower festival was held in St. Wistan's Church at Wistow to commemorate this great sea battle. Each of the 15 most beautiful

arrangements depicted a different aspect of Nelson's life or the battle. One was a tribute to Thomas Fremantle an ancestor of Lady Ann Brooks of Wistow. Thomas was a personal friend of Nelson, and served under him as a Captain in the Mediterranean. In May 1805 he was appointed Captain of the frigate Neptune. In the Trafalgar battle formation the Neptune was placed directly behind the Victory, a position of great importance and responsibility.

Captain Fremantle survived the conflict and continued his naval career becoming Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean. He died at Naples 19/2/1819. His widow Betsy lived until 1857. Of their many children, Thomas became a politician and was created Lord Cottesloe of Wistow Hall. Another son, Admiral Sir Charles Fremantle, served in the Crimean War and founded Fremantle in Australia.

This and much more fascinating information is within a recently published book *Trafalgar- the men, the battle, the storm* by Tim Clayton & Phil Craig.

Parish registers sometimes include interesting snippets of information in addition to the baptisms, marriages and burials. One such is the following which was written up by the vicar, J. Pigott, between the 1804 burials and the 1805 baptisms.

"A general subscription having taken place throughout the Kingdom for the benefit of the widows and orphans of those who fell in the Battle of Trafalgar on 21st October 1805, as well as those who were sufferers in that never-to-be-forgotten victory. The contributions of the parish were as follows:

Mrs. Clarke, John Clarke Esq, John Ragg & the vicar gave £5 5s. Od each. Mrs. Dobson & Mrs. Wood f 1 Is Od each. Messrs. Ingram & Freer 10/6d each. Mr. Earp, Mrs. Gilbert & Messrs. Goode, Hurst, Langham, Vann & John Ingram 5/- each. Mr. Warner 3/-. A Friend, Mrs. Foster & Messrs. Gee, Gillam, Jackson & Phipps 2/6d each. Mrs. Dobson's children & the vicar's servants 5/- each. Mrs. Dobson's servants, Messrs. Branson, Burrows, Hurst, Johnson, Pallet, T. Phipps, Wm. Phipps, Isaac Ward, Wilson and Sml. Phipps 2/- each. Bennett & K Vann 1/6d each. Messrs. Asser, Bayley, Bennet, Branson, Clarson, Coltman, Goodwin, Grant, Munton, Neale, Mrs. Parsons, & Robinson, Messrs. John Phipps, Reynolds, Sharpe & S. Ward 1/- each. Total £29 7s Od."

Rev. Pigott continues with the following comments:

"Tfighly respectable as the sum here subscribed must always appear, it would have received no small addition from the humanity of the dissenters, but that they were at the same time engaged in making a collection for those truly unhappy sufferers in Germany, through whose countries the French armies having passed in their way to Vienna, had made a general ruin, destroying or plundering all before them. Such ravage was but too well authenticated and induced many to direct their benevolence to that quarter among whom were the major part of the dissenters in this Place, whose contribution amounting to £7 5s Od was forwarded by the Rev. Mr. Davis

[Independent Chapel Minister] to Messrs. Smith & Holt, bankers in Old Broad Street, London; from whom Mr. Davis received a proper acknowledgement."

"I cannot help remarking that the sum of £7 5s Od mentioned above, being added to £29 7s Od on the other side [of the page], would yield a total that would set the contributions of the Parish above that of any other in the county except Hinckley."

I have included this in its entirety because as well as being topical it gives a good indication of which families, (who were church members and sufficiently well off to be able to afford to contribute), lived in Wigston at this time. It also illustrates the frustration that church officials felt with the highly successful dissenters at this time.

Tricia Berry

ALL ABOVE BOARD

Introduction to her article by Edna Taylor:

Our President, Duncan, called us the Greater Wigston Historical Society. This is so that we can welcome members from a larger area than Wigston township, and write about a wider region. South Wigston is often neglected in our articles, but we now have two South Wigston members (and would like to have more) and Peter Clowes will give a slide lecture on South Wigston next January.

I wrote an account of the South Wigston Schools some time ago and hoped to make it into a book alongside *For the Record*. It never got done, but I recently gave it to Tricia for the Bulletin, and hope it will provide some interest for readers of both Wigstons.

CHAPTER I - BEGINNINGS

Two buildings remain standing today as evidence of the work of the Wigston Magna School Board that existed between 1872 and 1903. One of them, Long Street School in Wigston Magna has been transformed into the Leicestershire Record Office, and its story has been told in the book *For the Record*. The other building is the Bassett Street Community Centre in South Wigston. It was once part of the three South Wigston Board Schools and has a story of its own.

Today, as South Wigston's first Community Centre, it offers a whole range of services, having been refurbished in 1990 with a £200,000 grant from the Council. A committee of twelve people steered its development, and although they pay only a peppercorn rent to Leicestershire County Council and Oadby & Wigston Borough Council, they are responsible for the upkeep of the building and the running costs.

These are met by lettings for such activities as playgroups, dances, band concerts and coffee mornings. Twice a week Age Concern serve lunches and it is hoped to make this five days a week. A very good library is housed there, and once the Council held a Health and Housing committee meeting in the large and beautifully floored hall.

On the wall in this hall is a plaque which says "This building was erected by the Wigston Magna School Board. Mr. J. Wignall, Chairman 1887 to 1903", and this gives us the clue to the building's origins.

All over the country, in the last quarter of the 19th century, School Boards were set up following the passing of E. W. Forster's Education Act of 1870. This provided for elementary education, to be paid for out of the rates, for working-class children. Each School Board was controlled by managers elected every three years by the ratepayers, including women.

Up to that time, church schools had met the demand for elementary education. In Wigston Magna, the Church of England had built a National School in Long Street, the non-conformists a British School in Bell Street. As the village grew, however, these schools could no longer cope with the numbers, and in 1872 a School Board was created with five managers, whose job it was to supply suitable and efficient education. Bell Street Board School was erected in 1873 and Long Street Board School in 1881, both separate buildings from the church schools.

When Forster's Act was first passed, schooling was not compulsory, but ten years later, in 1880, it was made so by another Act framed by A.J. Mundella. All children then in Wigston parish, which included all the area now known as South Wigston, had to go to either church or Board school, from five to ten years of age.

The census of 1881 shows Wigston parish as having 4229 people, about 63% more than in 1871, Families had moved into the village during the agricultural depression of the times, taking jobs in hosiery, the boot and shoe industry and on the railways, which provided much work since Wigston had three main lines: one to Rugby, one to London and one to Birmingham.

Not all these new workers lived in Wigston Magna village however. Streets of houses had begun to appear near the London railway line, in Clarkes Road, Cherry Street, Midland Terrace ('Twenty Row' as it was called), and over the level crossings, Station Street. Apart from Midland Terrace, built by the Midland Railway Company for its workers, these houses were built by local builders and speculators for renting. As the demand for houses increased, so brick-makers, bricklayers, plumbers and carpenters moved into Wigston to take advantage of the building boom and some of them lived with their families in this expanding part of the parish. From the 1881 census, we see that in Station Street dwelt William Smith, a brick-maker from Loughborough, Richard Meeting from Northampton, Nathaniel Collins from Pembroke, and Joshua Miller from Worcester, all carpenters. Thomas Burford, a painter and plumber from Leicester, had also moved into this street.

The children of these workers had to go to school from the age of five, as did the children from outlying farms such as Crow Mills, where Peter Nicholls, who farmed 100 acres, lived with his wife and four children. It was a long walk to the Wigston Magna schools, but of more serious importance was the safety problem, for the children had to go over the level crossing of the London railway line: Spion Cop bridge not being completed until 1901. If they lived west of the Rugby railway line, they had two level crossings to negotiate, with no modern safety measures.

Her Majesty's Inspector for the schools of the area was aware of these problems and had suggested that a new Board school should be built near the old railway station. Nothing was done since ratepayers were not eager to have their money spent on yet another school after the building of Long Street Board School in 1881.

However, at a regular fortnightly meeting of the Wigston Magna School Boards in early December 1882, the correspondence from the Education Department in London included a letter written to them by a Mr. J.B. Haxby of The Hollies, Blaby. He was a churchwarden of Blaby church and a Trustee of the church schools there, and his letter got things going.

CHAPTER H - BEYOND THE LINE OF RAILWAY

Mr. Haxby's letter was about a different parish. About a mile to the west of the Rugby railway, just outside Wigston parish, was Glen Parva, a quiet hamlet in Aylestone parish, which had hitherto few inhabitants. Some of these worked on farms, others at Blaby canal wharf, near the old County Arms, or on the railway. At the beautiful 16th century Manor House resided Captain Knight, the principal landowner. The children of Glen Parva went to Blaby National (Church schools) since Aylestone was too far away for them to walk.

This state of affairs was all very well so far, but changes had been taking place. According to Wright's Leicestershire 1884 Directory, between 1877 and 1880 the Barracks were erected on Glen Parva Grange property for the 17th Regimental Depot to accommodate 600 men, though only 100-130 would be stationed there. In addition there were seven officers, twelve sergeants, two drummers and a surgeon, all under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel John Fryer.

Another Wright's Directory of 1880 lists a Mr. Messenger and a Mr. Healy as owners of the Wigston Junction Brick and Tile Works at Glen Parva. It is easy to imagine that with all the building here and at Wigston Magna these brick works would be very busy, thus attracting more workers, with their families, to Glen Parva.

Mr. Haxby knew about this influx of people into the area between the old railway station and Glen Parva, and his letter made the point that the schools at Blaby could no longer cope with the Barracks children and those of the brick makers, and that the principal land-owner would not help towards a new school. He therefore suggested that a new Board School should be built by the Wigston Magna School Board, with Glen Parva ratepayers paying in proportion to numbers.

A year later, after lengthy correspondence, this suggestion was adopted by the Education Department, which also put forward the idea that if the Wigston School Board and the Glen Parva ratepayers wished it, a United District under one School Board could be created. This was duly agreed, as was the resolution that the number of members should rise to seven in the next School Board election.

The way was now clear for a census to be taken of the child population "beyond the Rugby line of railway". It revealed that there were 243 children below the age of 14, so promptly a search for a site for the new school began. Much land had been bought up by a speculator, Orson Wright, who planned a new township west of the old railway, and he was willing to sell to the Board a piece of land "situate near to Blaby Road having a frontage of 100 feet to Dunton Street, with a depth of 24 feet to Bassett Street, at 2/6d per yard exclusive of the roads".

'Their Lordships', as the Department Civil Servants were always called, approved the deal, and a competition was held for plans for a school at Wigston South (no mention of South Wigston yet), providing for 300 in the Mixed Department and 150 infants. The unanimous choice was for Arthur Wakerley's plans. He was a Leicester architect.

Already, however, it seemed that the School Education Department was not satisfied that the provision was adequate, for a letter was sent by them asking if the population of the area was expected to increase and how many infants there was likely to be. A census showed a total of 762 people living west of the old railway, with 42 houses in course of construction and a shoe factory to be opened to employ 200 people. It was resolved to purchase a further piece of land to allow for expansion.

That autumn of 1884 must have been an exiting time as a new township began to grow up in all directions. The School Board met more frequently in an effort to deal with the incoming tide of children who had by law to be educated. Overcrowding was acute, and temporary accommodation was sought for the under sevens in the Wesleyan Mission Hall, but the Department would not sanction this on safety grounds.

This rapid expansion must have caused many social problems, but there were beneficial spin-off effects in the increased number of jobs and greater prosperity. For instance, the construction and brick making industries were doing well, and Mr. Charles Sharp was successful in tendering for the building of the new school. The local firms and shopkeepers would in their turn be called upon to provide furniture, boilers, stoves, wool fabric and sewing materials.

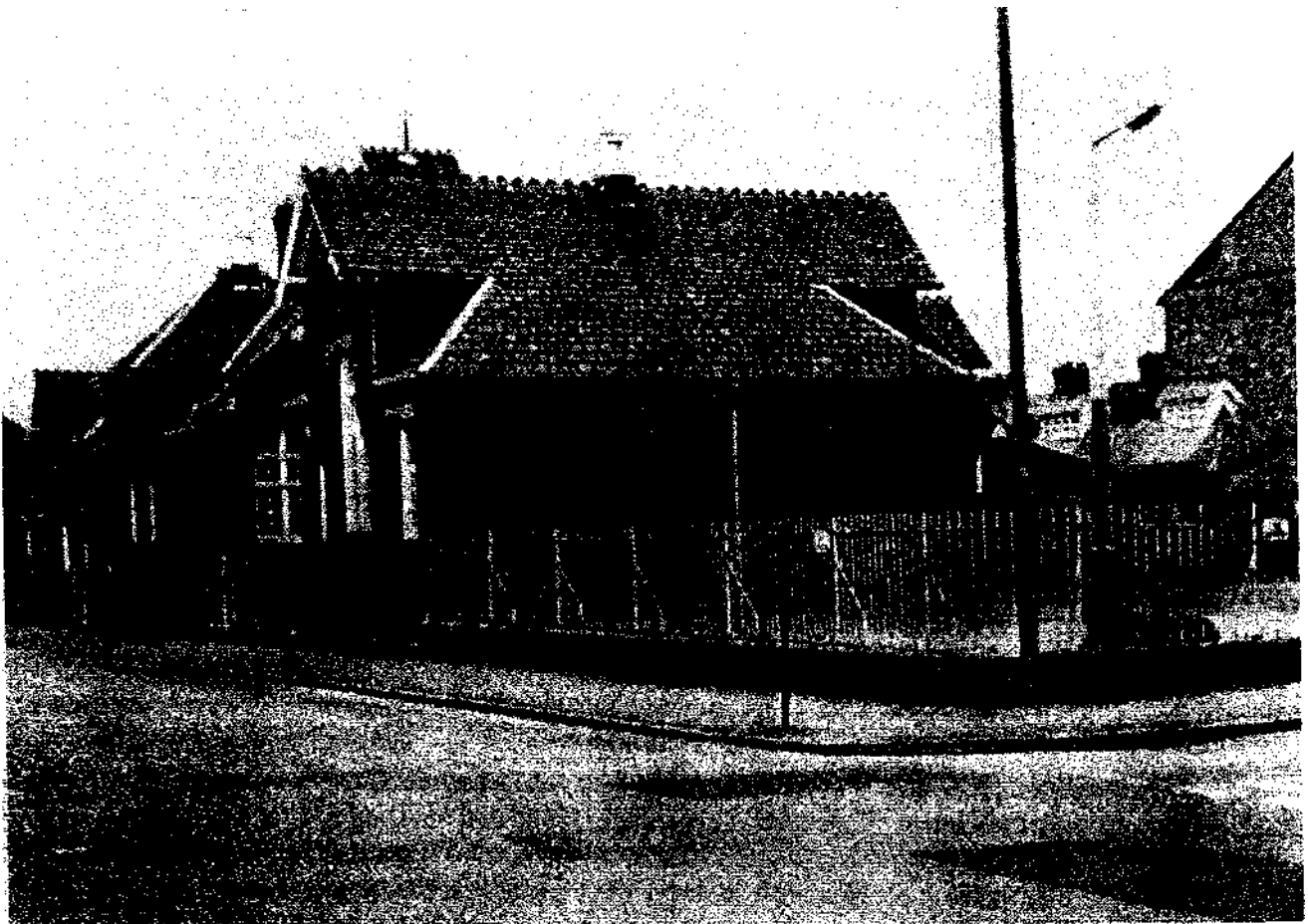
In February of 1886, after further negotiating with the Department and rate-payers, who thought the cost of the new school too high, the Board received a letter approving the plans, specifications and tender for the South Wigston Board School. Note the first mention of the name of this new township. The Board now had to borrow £5,551 at 4% from the Prudential Assurance Company, on security of the local rate and the School Fund. Building could begin.

The newspaper report of the opening of the school on 29th July 1886, describes it as "handsome and commodious, built in red brick of local manufacture, covered with Swithland slates, portions of it hung with Brosely tiles. It is treated with gable projections with a bellcot rising in the centre, surmounted by a fleche. Every attention has been paid by lighting, warming and ventilating, and the sanitary arrangements are of the most approved description".

Ample room was now provided for 505 children, made up of 296 in the Mixed Department (what we call the Junior School) and 209 infants. The Board of the United District of Wigston Magna and Glen Parva had done a splendid job, and in answer to a query from the Department about expansion stated that it was "most decidedly of the opinion that no enlargement will be needed for many years to come, if ever".

Edna Taylor

This most interesting account of the building of the South Wigston schools, will be continued in Bulletins 74 and 75.



The first South Wigston Board School (1886) situated on north side of Bassett Street.



Both show rear views of the 1886 school. Below on the right are the bicycle sheds & the back of the Picture House in Blaby Road. All photos by Peter Mastin taken in late 1970s.



OLD PARISH DIARY

A friend (who wishes to remain anonymous, so don't ask!) has recently lent me an old exercise book written up as a parish diary for Wigston. It contains details of a number of births, marriages and deaths. There are also accounts of burglaries, accidents, sudden deaths and unusual occurrences, as well as more every day happenings, the sort of things which would never be recorded elsewhere. The dates covered are 1854 to 1861, though there is much more written of the earlier years, suggesting the author lost a certain amount of motivation towards the end of the period.

Who wrote it? The book is un-named but the author certainly possessed a close knowledge of events and people in Wigston at the time. He/she was also well educated which rules out the majority of residents who would still have been illiterate. Comparing the handwriting of various leading residents who wrote up the minutes of the Vestry Meetings of the time, and signed them, makes us 99% certain that the author is Thomas Burgess of The Grange. An additional clue is that the book had an earlier use. Some of these used pages have been ripped out, others glued together, but there is enough remaining to see that these earlier entries dated 1844 and in table format, were in fact a school entrance register. The children, boys and girls, were aged from five to eleven and came from both church and independent backgrounds. Other clues are: 1) Thomas Burgess is recorded in church rate books as paying rates on a school in Wigston. 2) Another page dated 1858 and also in table format records gas meter readings for different properties in Bull Head Street. Thomas Burgess was the main instigator of a Gas Works for Wigston, so would naturally have had an interest in consumption.

Thomas Burgess was a Quaker, but this did not prove an obstacle to his being a member, and often acting as chairman of the Vestry Meetings. He did not appear to play any other active role in either the church or chapel, but may have attended their services from time to time as there appears not to have been any Quaker meetings held in Wigston during this time.

The following few issues of the Bulletin will feature items from the diary.

1854 [Written on] 22/6/1854 - On Saturday last as Joseph Broughton was painting the wooden bridge at the Crow Mills, which was erected in the place of the brick one which was thrown down by the flood in November 1852, his foot slipped and he fell from the top of the bridge and broke one of the splinter bones of his foot, but is doing well, and it is hoped he will in a few weeks be enabled to resume his employment.

Died at Great Wigston June 20th Wm. Laundon, labourer in his 87th year. He was a stout hale [sic] old man, and prosecuted his employment till within a few days of his death. His master, H. Ralphs (to whom he was much attached, and of whom he spoke in the most respectful terms) allowed him to do such jobs as best suited him. His memory was very good for his age, and he very correctly related events which occurred 70 or 80 years ago.

On Sunday June 25th two sermons were preached in the Parish Church of Great Wigston for the benefit of the day and Sunday schools connected therewith; that in the afternoon, by Rev. T. G. Gallwey, curate, in the evening by the Rev. W. Freer, curate of Knighton. The collections amounted £24 13s 9d.

On 22nd at Great Wigston [died] Ann the wife of John Smith aged 45 years. At the same place on 23rd Mr. Thomas Harrison in his 66th year.

Power of endurance of animals - On Monday June 19th a lamb belonging to Mr. Hy. Ralphs of Great Wigston fell into a hole in the field about 3 feet deep but not sufficiently large for it to be able to turn or in any way move itself about. Frequent search was made for the missing animal but without effect, until on Saturday July 1st, when it was accidentally discovered by a lad, it was taken out of its perilous situation, and altho' it had been in that situation for 12 days without anything to eat or drink it was still alive, means were instantly used for its recovery and it is now on a fair way for getting well.

Died on Monday July 8th at Great Wigston, Mr. James Vann, farmer and grazier, aged 47 years.

Married on Saturday July 8th at the Office of the Superintendent Registrar of the Blaby Union, John Brooks of Blaby to Mary Mawby of Whetstone.

[Married] on Thursday July 13th at the Independent Chapel Great Wigston, by the Rev. Thos. Mays, Isaac Langham to Catherine Harrison.

Sunday July 16th married at the Church, Great Wigston by the Rev. T.G. Gallwey, curate, Mr. William Wignall to Harriet Noble.

On Sabbath day July 16th two very appropriate sermons were preached in the Independent Chapel, Great Wigston by the Rev. Wood of Leicester for the benefit of the Sabbath School belonging to that place of worship, the day was fine and the attendance very good, as were also the collections which amounted to £20 Os 9 ¹/_{Ad}.

Died at Wigston Magna on 18th inst. Mrs. Jane Grant wife of Joseph Grant in the 75th year of her age. She has been a very useful woman in her day as a nurse especially in cases of Typhus Fever, in several instances her services have been obtained when the disease has been of that malignant character that no other nurse could be prevailed upon to attend, and grateful recollections are entertained by those who would, but for her assistance, have been entirely neglected.

Married at the Baptist Chapel, Blaby on 20th inst. by the Rev. John Barnett, Mr. Isaac Rudkin, bricklayer, to Miss Jane Freer.

Married at Great Wigston on the 2nd inst, by the Rev. T. G. Gallwey, curate, Mr. Jas. Tabberer, farmer, to Miss Coleman of Church Langton in this county.