

WIGSTON MAGNA

This village can be traced back to the 5th century and in the early days was centred on what we now call the Lanes area bounded by Long Street, Moat Street, Bull Head Street and Bell Street. One of the plaques commemorates Professor Hoskins who wrote *The Midland Peasant* which describes the changes from the self sufficient agricultural village of medieval times, entirely separate from Leicester, to the 20th century town, which through industrial and housing growth has become virtually a suburb of that city.

It was once often known as Wigston Two Steeples, because of its two churches of All Saints' and St. Wistan's. There were also a number of non conformist chapels but some of these have been demolished or are now used by other congregations. The United Reformed Church in Long Street and the Methodist Church in Cross Street happily remain, and also some new churches have been established more recently.

Wigston became a centre for framework knitting in the 18th century. The knitting 'frames' were initially operated at home but later in special 'shops'; small purpose built workshops with long rows of windows to maximise available light. A few of these still survive, notably at the museum in Bushloe End. The hosiery industry dominated the area until the 1980s when it went into sharp decline. The other traditional industry was the manufacture of boots and shoes, but this too, has now disappeared leaving many central brownfield sites ripe for redevelopment. The population of Wigston Magna at the 2001 census was over 25,600.