

# GREATER WIGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

White Gate Lodge, 97 Newton Lane, Wigston Magna, Leics.



## BULLETIN 117

1st July 2020



**At this difficult time, we commemorate the anniversary of the foundation of the NHS in July 1948. The pictures are of the original NHS launch leaflet and a photo of the dedication of a hospital bed at the LRI in 1937 funded by the Wigston Magna Summer Parade in pre NHS days. Unfortunately, we cannot identify anybody in the photograph. All we know is that Canon George West was the incumbent at All Saints that year, so maybe one of the clergy at the ceremony.**



## **CANCELLATION OF MEETINGS/OUTINGS 2020**

Unfortunately, due to the Coronavirus and Government guidelines we had to cancel our March, April and May 2020 meetings at the Wigston College. We have also decided to cancel our two outings to: Lamport Hall (Tuesday 16 June 2020) and Guided tour of Oakham and optional meal (Wednesday 19 August 2020).

I am well into organising our meetings for next year, however I will try and re book the speakers we have had to cancel, if not for next year then hopefully 2022!

At the time of going to press with this bulletin, we are awaiting Government guidance before we make our decisions on our meetings for September, October, November and December 2020, and as soon as a decision has been made, we will advise you.

We have also had to postpone our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration on Saturday 25 July 2020, however, we are pleased to advise you that we have re-scheduled our celebration night for Saturday 24 July 2021, and we look forward to seeing you there.

We will, of course, keep all members fully advised on our actions either by email or telephone contact and full details will be on our website.

We would recommend that you check our web site: [www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk](http://www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk) or contact myself by email for any updates.

Best wishes to you and your families and keep safe.

Ann Cousins  
Secretary  
Email: [ann.cousins@ntlworld.com](mailto:ann.cousins@ntlworld.com)

### **Remaining meetings for 2020:**

Wednesday 16 September 2020 The Magic of Radio, Bridget Blair  
Wednesday 21 October 2020 The Country Railway Station, Brian Johnson  
Wednesday 18 November 2020 Foxton Locks and Inclined Plane, Mary Matts  
Wednesday 16 December 2020 Christmas Party and Quiz with nibbles and drink and music with Banjo Des



## Competition to name our new DVD

The next DVD in our series is being worked on at present. It will be all about South Wigston, starting at the old level crossing by the station on Blaby Road, following Canal Street, Countesthorpe Road, and back along Blaby Road to the station. Along the way it will tell the history of South Wigston, it's businesses, churches and people.

We need a title for the DVD and we would like you to let us know what your choice of title would be. The winner of the competition will receive a free copy of the DVD. Please send your names to [chairman@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk](mailto:chairman@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk) or let Mike Forryan know directly. GOOD LUCK

## Chairman's Comment

Well, we certainly never expected this situation, it has been quite a shock and worry for us all. In the first few days it was very surreal and still being in a shocked state we probably all wondered "what the hell was happening".

Most of our membership is of the "experienced older age group" and has been asked by the powers that be to self-isolate for a period of time. Linda and I very quickly followed the rules and our only outing is once a week to the supermarket (no not for toilet rolls).

The weather has been particularly good to us and has helped us through this strange and trying period. I thought that being in lockdown would be restful and in some ways this is true, but Society work must go on and so the Committee have been meeting on the Zoom platform and an amazing number of things have been achieved. I will not go into details, but they will be announced over the next few months.

This Bulletin has been expanded somewhat and more articles added to give our members something to read in between the gardening and all the little jobs that got missed in the past few years.

Please stay safe and "We'll meet again, don't know where don't know when ....."

Mike Forryan

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## The NHS – founded 5<sup>th</sup> July 1948

At a time when the NHS is seemingly universally admired and acclaimed for the dedication, caring treatment and skill of doctors, nurses and other healthcare personnel during the severe challenge of the Covid-19 Pandemic, it is perhaps worth remembering the anniversary of the NHS foundation this month in 1948.

Before the NHS, healthcare was unevenly distributed throughout the country. Payment for medical treatment depended on occupational status, class, gender and age. Many working men possessed health coverage under the 1911 National Insurance Act which provided access to a "panel" doctor for a contribution from their weekly wages. Dependents however were not covered and had to



pay to see a doctor (typically 3s. 6d. in the 1930s). Also as National Insurance depended on job status, the long term unemployed and also many members of the middle class struggled to pay the necessary private fees as they were disqualified for coverage under the 1911 Act. However, there were changes to the income limit which meant that by 1936 half the adult population was included and by 1938 19,060 doctors were included in the National Insurance "panel".

The system still had significant weaknesses. Fees for GP's were increasing for the middle class who were outside the system. Wives and children were also still excluded as was hospital treatment meaning many had to pay additional fees or rely on friendly society insurance schemes or charitable institutions.

One local GP practice was based at the Manor House in Long Street. Dr. John Longford purchased the practice from Dr. Croucher's widow in 1908. He seems to have been largely known for his passion for cars and when he died in 1938 he left very little money. His widow inherited the goodwill of the practice and ran it successfully, employing locum doctors. His son, Patrick Longford who had been born at the house qualified in medicine in 1940 at Trinity College, Dublin and then shortly afterwards joined the Navy as a ship's surgeon on Atlantic convoys. He was subsequently in practice for 3 years at the Manor House before the NHS took over all health care.

Throughout the life of the practice a patient had easy access to Dr. Longford or his partner Dr. Liddell. The partnership operated 365 days, Christmas included. A night bell was wired from the front door to the main bedroom. This replaced a speaking tube installed before electricity when Dr. John Longford was in practice.

Dr. Patrick Longford continued working as a GP until 1983 when the practice closed.

Changes also occurred in hospital services. In 1900 acute and general treatment was largely provided by voluntary hospitals paid for by upper and middle-class philanthropists, staffed by doctors who treated patients free of charge. Infectious diseases such as typhoid and diphtheria were the responsibility of local councils while the chronic and infirm had to rely on the workhouse. There was also a small group of nursing homes where doctors treated private patients for a fee. This changed after World War 1 as the population "acquired the hospital habit". Although hospital treatment was not covered by National Insurance, access was made possible by working class contributory schemes that collected around 3d. Per week from workers. At the same time, state hospitals were changing. In 1929 the Poor Law was abolished and a growing number of workhouse infirmaries became general hospitals.

In addition people supported local hospitals by donation or money raising events. One of the major ways of raising funds was via the Summer Parades. Over the years most English villages developed its own format. Villagers would plan and build floats, initially on horse drawn carts but in later years local businesses joined in and floats were created on tractor trailers and lorries. Wigston Magna and South Wigston were no exception.

By 1939 in Wigston Magna a well-formed process had developed. Floats that year depicted: - Farming, The Blue Bells, Cinderella, Uncle Tom's Cabin, The Leicester Royal Infirmary, The British Legion, The Army, The Fire Brigade, The Wigston Brass Band and The Wigston Co-operative Hosiers



float named “Integrity”, their brand name. Proceeds raised were then donated to The Leicester Royal Infirmary, a total of £655 that year.

This annual event required weeks of meetings and discussions covering all aspects including choice of Carnival Queen and attendants. On the day itself, the floats, decorated bikes and prams assembled in Central Avenue for judging before the parade set off around Wigston.

The Parades from 1933 to 1946 were solely dedicated to fund raising for the LRI. The photograph on the Bulletin front cover shows the dedication of the Wigston Magna bed at the LRI in 1937 (Photo archive 30-419). Unfortunately, it has not been possible to identify anybody in the photograph. Canon George West was the incumbent at All Saints, Wigston that year. So, maybe he is one of the participants?

### **The NHS**

Despite the patchiness of healthcare, sizeable numbers of British people had affection for the pre-NHS system. Many liked the charitable spirit of voluntary hospitals and their place in local communities and expressed fears about losing the ‘personal touch’ in medicine if the government nationalised the hospitals.

Nevertheless, the Labour Government introduced the NHS under the stewardship of Aneurin Bevan as Minister of Health.

The official NHS information leaflet introduction read: -

*“Your new National Health Service begins on July 5<sup>th</sup> (1948). it will provide you with all the medical, dental and nursing care. Everyone – rich, poor, man, woman and child – can use it or any part of it. There are no charges, except for a few special items.*

*There are no insurance qualifications. But it is not a ‘charity’. You are all paying for it, mainly as taxpayers and it will relieve your money worries in time of illness.”*

So, the old system of health and welfare provision was swept away. How did it affect people in Leicestershire?

On the 5<sup>th</sup> July 1948 people still went to their family doctor or to the LRI, City General and Groby Road Hospitals if very ill or needed surgery. They still went to Hillcrest if too old or too poor to look after themselves. Expectant mothers still went to Bond Street, Westcotes Maternity home or the City General to give birth. The buildings looked the same as the day before – many were Victorian edifices. The doctors and nurses looked and behaved in the same way.

However things had changed. You had an automatic right to health provision for your entire family. As evidence of this you had a National Health Card, numbered as your wartime Identity Card (an administrative convenience!). Charity and voluntary organisations were effectively ended – the



Victorian legacy was finally removed. The NHS has evolved and changed over the years to the organisation that we have today.

By Roger Whalley

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## Historic Confusion in Wigston

We live in confusing times with all the rules and regulations that we live with on a day to day basis. It gets worse when place names are not where they were historically.

**Did you know** that the Wigston Harcourt Estate is not situated in the area that was once called Wigston Harcourt. It is recorded that the area we now call Bushloe End was called Wigston Harcourt, in the 1300's.



**Did you know** that the Little Hill Estate was not built on "Little Hill". The 1885 OS Map clearly shows that Little Hill was Newton Lane.

**Did you know** that the Wigston Meadows Estate was being built in the late 1960's to the east of Bull Head Street. Wyggeston Farm was demolished to make way for the entrance to the estate and was named Kelmars Avenue. One of the main roads on the estate was called Meadow Way with other roads being named in association with the Meadows theme.

**In 2018 a new housing estate was started**, at the top of Newton Lane, which has been given the name, you guessed it, "The Meadows". Confusing is it not! Perhaps, to mitigate the confusion, it could be called "East Wigston Meadows" as the area where it is situated was in fact once called the Parish of East Wigston.

**Did you know** that Wigston was founded on the three field system which in Wigston's case were called: Tythorn Hill Field; Mucklow Field and Goldhill Field. At the centre of Tythorn Hill Field, on high ground, was an old farm called Tythorn Hill Farm traditionally the centre of the area. Tythorn Hill Field Community Primary School is on Bideford Close at the back of the Little Hill Estate which is arguably in Goldhill Field. On Medieval Maps Tythorn Hill is marked on the eastern side of Welford



road over a mile away. Perhaps the school name could have reflected the historic name in a clearer manner.

**Similarly**, the new sports pavilion on Horsewell Lane, which is called Tythorn Hill Community & Sports Centre, is about a mile from the centre of Tythorn Hill Field.

**And another** new development on the west side of Welford Road (A5199) towards Kilby Bridge has been named Clarence Fields by the developer who says that this reflects the original name of the Clarence public house on Blaby Road, South Wigston (now apartments) over a mile away.

It is a shame that more care was not taken by the developers to research the name of their developments and its history. Perhaps this was because there was no focal point for Heritage matters in Wigston. Well, there is no excuse now as Wigston has its own Heritage Centre covering both local history and family history. It might be worth developers including, as external advisors, the Greater Wigston Heritage Centre in naming decisions for new developments.

**by Mike Forryan Chairman**

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### **A brief biography of Marriott Edgar, the man who wrote many unforgettable monologues for Stanley Holloway with whom he toured the UK and America.**

Lancastrian writer and poet Marriott Edgar was born in Kirkcudbright, Scotland, in 1880 and was most noted for the monologues he wrote for comic actor Stanley Holloway. Whilst little is known of his early life in Scotland and then Lancashire in England, it is generally perceived that he was a very talented comedian as well as being a respected writer.

His name was originally Edgar Marriott but he swapped them around when he went to work on the stage, something that his father had done for his acting career.

Because of an illicit and slightly drunken brief affair between his father and a widowed actress, Marriott Edgar had a half-brother, Edgar Wallace, who would grow up to be a stalwart of the movie scene writing scripts for *The Terrible People* and *The Crimson Circle* as well as the famous *Edgar Wallace Mysteries*.

Born 5 years after Wallace, Edgar only came into prominence when he teamed up with actor and comedian Stanley Holloway following their appearance in the play *The Co-Optimists*. Buoyed with success, they went to Hollywood in 1930 and there is some evidence that Marriott and his half brother Edgar Wallace met up there. Holloway was already reasonably well-known but it was when Marriott Edgar began writing monologues for Stanley that things began to take off. Written to be spoken in rhythm with an accompanying piano, perhaps the most memorable and successful of Edgar's work is the Albert Series, in particular *The Lion and Albert*. In all he wrote 16 unforgettable monologues for Stanley Holloway. Another one of his wonderful monologues was *The Battle of*



*Hastings'* a copy of which I have put on the following page.

If any 'Friends' of the Museum would like to hear the original monologue spoken by Marriott Edgar it is on the following web page:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4pDPSH8U0Gc>

### **The Battle of Hastings by Marriott Edgar. Born in 1880, he toured with Stanley Holloway**

I'll tell of the Battle of Hastings  
That happened in days long gone by,  
When Duke William became King of England  
And Harold got shot in the eye,

T'were this way; one day in October  
The Duke, who were always a toff,  
Having no battles on at the moment  
Had given his lads the day off,

They'd all taken boats and gone fishing  
When some chap in t'conqueror's ear  
Said "Let's go put wind up t'Saxons"  
Said Bill "By gum, that's an idea!"

Then, turning around to his soldiers  
He lifted his big Norman voice  
Shouting "Hands up, who's coming to  
England?"  
Which were swank, 'cos they hadn't no  
choice!

They started away about teatime,  
The sea was so calm and so still,  
And at quarter to ten the next morning  
They arrived at a place called Bexhill.

King Harold came up as they landed'  
His face full of venom and hate  
And said "If you've come for regatta  
You've got here just six weeks too late".

At this William rose, cool and haughty,  
And said "I'll have none of your cheek.

You'd best get your throne re-upholstered  
I'll be wanting to use it next week."

When Harold heard this 'ere defiance  
With rage he turned purple and blue.-  
And uttered some rude words in Saxon  
To which William answered "And you:"

T'were a beautiful day for a battle  
The Normans set to with a will  
And when both sides were duly assembled  
They tossed for the top of the hill,  
King Harold he won the advantage  
On the hilltop he took up his stand  
With his naves and his cads all around him  
On his horse, with his hawk in his hand,

The Normans had nought in their favour-  
Their chance of a victory seemed small  
For the slope of the pitch were against them  
And the wind in their faces, and all.

The kick-off were sharp at two-thirty  
And soon as the whistle had went  
Both sides started banging each other  
Till the swineherds could hear them in Kent.

The Saxons had best line of forwards  
Well armed both with buckler and sword  
But the Normans had best combination  
And when half-time came neither had scored.

Then Bill called his cohorts together  
And said "Let's pretend that we're beat.





When we get Saxons down on the level  
We'll cut off their means of retreat"

So they ran and the Saxons ran after,  
Just exactly as William had planned  
Leaving Harold alone on the hilltop  
On his horse with his hawk in his hand.

When William, saw what had happened  
A bow and an arrow he drew.  
He went right up to Harold and shot him.

He were offside, but what could they do?

The Normans turned round with a fury  
And gave forth with both parry and thrust  
Till the battle were over bar shouting  
And you couldn't see Saxons for dust.

And after the battle were over  
They found Harold so stately and grand  
Sitting there, with an eyeful of arrow  
On his horse, with his hawk in his hand.

**Reproduced from the Framework Knitters Magazine**

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## **WIGSTON ADULT SCHOOL**



### **Wigston Adult School**

It would be very difficult to envisage from the neglected and dilapidated building seen in this photograph that it was once a very vibrant and extremely popular community centre for the



people of Wigston. My grandmother was a member and a regular attender of events there during the 1940s and '50s. My Uncle John remembers visiting the school with her: -

“Yes, I have clear recollections of The Adult School in Bull Head Street. I disgraced myself there one evening at a film show. I placed a piece of chewed bubble-gum on the stove in the middle of the room. It began sizzling loudly, blowing bubbles all over the stove. They had to call the show to a halt and I was forced to admit responsibility. I was ordered out by one George Broughton, a leading Wigston figure of the time. I recall my intense humiliation at being led out by George Broughton because the place was packed out. The film shows were a big draw at the Adult School.

The building was also used by school dentists. I recall being in a state of distress there after having a tooth pulled when I was about seven or eight.”

It was situated on Bull Head Street towards the junction with Moat Street on the side of the road that was demolished to make way for the new dual carriageway. All that remains today of this once thriving Adult School are the three photos included in this piece. There are no written records in the Greater Wigston Historical Society’s extensive archive, so we are in danger of losing all memory of what was once such an important local institution.



**Wigston Adult School Football Team, 1920s**



**Wigston Adult School waiting to be demolished in the 1970s**

### **Leicestershire Adult School Movement**

After years of national decline during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Adult School Movement suddenly experienced an incredible revival that was mainly centred in Leicestershire. The county saw an extraordinarily rapid increase in the number of adult schools during the 1890s and early 1900s. Adult schools had emerged from children's Sunday schools (established to teach the children of the poor to read) at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, reflecting many poor parents yearning to also learn to read and occasionally, even to write. The Adult School Movement evolved from these early, often Quaker in origin, efforts. With the economic success of the Quaker Rowntree, Cadbury and Fry 'chocolate' families, the Movement received a major financial boost in the middle of the century. However, twenty years after the introduction of compulsory schooling for all children in 1870, the numbers of traditional adult schools were continually falling. Events in Leicestershire would transform that situation.

The Leicestershire Adult School Union was formed in 1889 by the nine various and disparate county adult schools that had emerged over the previous century, and then experienced an extraordinary level of growth and popularity over the following two decades. In 1889, there were around 500 members in the nine schools. Eventually, the number of schools, mostly newly built, reached a maximum of 149 in 1910 and membership peaked at 10,117 in 1905. This success in Leicestershire encouraged a national resurgence of the Adult School Movement, but nowhere else at the same level.



Essentially now nonconformist rather than Quaker-led, though becoming increasingly non-sectarian, even secular in certain aspects. The initial purpose of teaching people to read so they could access the Bible was no-longer really relevant after the introduction of the 1870 Education Act, which would supposedly eventually eradicate any widespread illiteracy. As religion played a lesser, though still very important part, there was a significant broadening to a more general curriculum. Many schools introduced weekly debates or lectures on mainly secular topics. But, the real reason behind this highly successful rejuvenation was a fundamental change in the nature and activities of these schools. More social events, sports clubs, countywide social gatherings, outside activities like rambling and cycling, even trips to the seaside.

Adult Schools still mainly appealed to the more religious and 'worthy' sections of the working and lower middle classes.

"Mr Garner spoke of things which some of the members of the [adult school] classes did on Sundays and gave two examples of gambling and playing football. They ought to do all they could to stop that kind of thing."

L.A.S.U. Spring Conference, *Leicester Mercury*, 26 April 1894

*Sky Sports* must have him spinning in his grave.

As we have seen, the Edwardian period was the most successful for the Adult School Movement, but storm clouds were gathering. In the four years prior to the outbreak of WW1 records show mounting problems within the adult schools as the generally more religious leading figures increasingly complained about growing secularism and escalating political division amongst the ordinary membership.

During those years immediately preceding the outbreak of WW1 in August 1914, intense social strife centred on unprecedented levels of industrial conflict, often extremely violent, shook the very foundations of urban Britain. Other sections of British Society also hit the streets in protest. Continuous, patronisingly dismissive rejection of female suffrage drew ever larger numbers of women into an increasingly militant campaign that would culminate in broken windows, arson, hunger-strikes, force-feeding and ultimately, of course, the death of Emily Davison under the King's horse at the 1913 Derby. In September 1911, even thousands of school children went on strike in all the major industrial conurbations, including Leicester. Whilst in Ireland, the conflict between Catholic Irish Nationalism and Protestant British Nationalism was bringing the whole country to the brink of civil war.

With the rise of socialism and a growing tendency for most trade unions and the emerging Labour Party to take a more independent path, the Lib-Lab coalition began to fracture, along with the dominance of liberalism and hence the Liberal Party's hold over this particular constituency that largely made-up the membership of adult schools; bitter industrial confrontations at the time only made matters worse.

"His [James Hackett] greatest wish was that the [Adult School] movement might extend to every town and village of the country. They would then have no lock-outs or strikes as nothing conduced more to create a proper feeling between master and man than those schools."



James Hackett, speaking at the Leicestershire Adult Schools Union meeting in 1893.  
(*Leicester Mercury*, 11 December 1893).

Such sentiments struggled to survive during the extremely contentious and transformative 1906 and 1910 (two that year) general elections which greatly heightened political tensions and clearly had a major impact on many members, with requests from leaders to keep politics out of schools becoming ever more desperate.

In 1910, the national governing council of the Adult School Movement felt it necessary to send a strong letter to all schools explicitly demanding that schools remain 'politics free', with specific instructions that there should be no meetings with any Party candidates on school premises.

"At the last weekly meeting of the Shepshed Adult School debating society, a resolution was passed in favour of municipalisation of all industries to be used for the benefit of the community. I notice that friends walk from Shepshed School to the I.L.P. [Independent Labour Party] meetings every Sunday."

Written in 1910 by W. B. Oram of the Wycliffe Adult School in his regular column for the *Leicester Pioneer* (a Socialist paper) entitled 'Adult School Notes'. If the above comments were in any way typical, then their efforts had clearly failed.

After WW1, *The Strange Death of Liberal England* (title of the well-known book by George Dangerfield) resulted in a steady but inevitable decline in the numbers attending adult schools as the slower paced Victorian and Edwardian mindset and worldview gave way to the more dynamic forces that would shape the twentieth century. Rapid technological change, economic depression, another World War, growing secularism and a less deferential population all combined to create a new Zeitgeist that rendered the adult schools' ethos increasingly obsolete.

By the 1950s, where they survived, their main function was essentially as community centres. A few schools tried to maintain the non-conformist, liberal culture and in 1989 those that remained celebrated the centenary of the Leicestershire Adult School Union. I had just completed my thesis on the L.A.S.U. while on secondment at Birmingham University and helped them produce a centenary booklet. The rather elaborate celebratory dinner was really their last fling. In 2018, the Charity Commission removed the Adult School Union from its list of charity organisations on the grounds that they had ceased to exist.

**By Steve Marquis, 2020.**

**If any members have memories of attending the Wigston Adult School or any other information, perhaps even written material, I'd love to hear from you. It would be nice to rediscover and record this important history, if possible. [Stephen.marquis@ntlworld.com](mailto:Stephen.marquis@ntlworld.com)**

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## SHOPPING IN SOUTH WIGSTON

I remember taking shoes to Mr. Smith on Countesthorpe Road. He worked in a shed at the bottom of his garden, I was fascinated to watch him as he held the tacks in his mouth.



When Freeman's Furniture shop ceased trading in January 1994 after 86 years, Prim Wray's stationery shop was then the longest lived in family business in South Wigston, having been established by her father in 1921. The shop closed in 2002.

In the booklet "**111 YEARS OF SOUTH WIGSTON 1883-1994**" by Peter Mastin and Stuart Follows, there is an interesting advertisement for a Ford van from G H Huddleston's garage on Blaby Road

"The businessman's means of conveying goods – cheaper than Horse Flesh, quicker than trains. £150,- with canvass top £115

If you are interested, we shall be pleased to give you a practical demonstration of the van. We are prepared to keep same in running order including tyres, petrol, oil etc. for 3d a mile."

### **WRAY'S SHOP**

My grandfather, William Hall was a Home Office prison photographer, he came to Leicester prison, where he met my grandmother, Mary Jane, who was a wardress there, Leicester prison had female inmates as well as male, in those days. William served in the forces during the First World War and he returned to Leicester prison at the end of the war.

He left the prison service in 1921 and he and Mary Jane moved to Porter's photographic shop on Blaby Road where he continued with photography. Sadly, my grandfather died of a heart attack in 1928 aged 39. My grandmother was left with 3 children and a photographic business to run. She used to go out taking photographs with her daughter Primrose, (my mother) They had a studio and dark room in the garden at the back of the shop and did all their own processing. My grandmother left the shop in 1933 and moved with her daughter Nancy and son Billie to a flat over Worthington's cash stores. My parents, Primrose and Cyril Wray, took over the business, which then became a photographers and a stationers.

One half of Worthington's store was for provisions and the other half was where the male assistants weighed out flour, sugar and other goods. My grandmother shopped there. My aunt Nancy said they had many special offers, which included broken biscuits and cracked eggs, all at "bargain prices". Once when my grandmother went in for some bargains, the manager told her that he had sold out, but he would crack a few eggs for her.

**By Mary Herbert, nee Wray**

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### **HARGEST'S – NEWSAGENTS IN BELL STREET WIGSTON**

**BY ROY MCKEOWN**

A new article has been submitted to the Society which covers the history of Hargest's, 41 – 43 Bell Street in Wigston. It was originally to be used as an article in one of our Bulletins but due to



the size it was decided to add it to our Articles on line. The article has been numbered AR0373 and is available to all members through the Members Section of the web site. We hope you all enjoy it.

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## **WIGGY'S CHILD**

### **THE DAY AUNT CLARA'S PARSNIP WINE BLEW UP**

#### **(PART NINE OF DOREEN BOULTER'S CHILDHOOD MEMORIES)**

The day Aunt Clara's Parsnip Wine blew up and the dog became legless caused quite a stir. Potent stuff was Aunty's Wine. It was made each year, poured into brown stone jars, stoppered with huge corks, labelled, and stored in the pantry under the thrawl and alongside the pantry wall in neat rows.

Only after it had matured for at least three years did Aunty consider it fit to drink, and the family always treated the brew with the respect it deserved.

On this particular day, Aunty was cutting slices of bread from her cottage loaf, I was doing the buttering, when there was an almighty bang. We opened the pantry door to find the walls and ceiling streaming with the stuff, collecting in pools on the floor.

As we set about the task of cleaning up, the dog, never one to miss an opportunity, enthusiastically lapped up this bounty. He developed a decided list to starboard and returned shakily to his basket, there to fall asleep, snoring heavily.

Some hours later, heaving himself into a sitting position, front legs supporting his rear which remained firmly anchored to his basket, he gazed bleary-eyed across the room, only to slide slowly down again, and with a heavy sigh sank back into oblivion.

The next morning, still legless, We carried him outside, basket and all. He must have had an out size dog ache as he 'spent the best part of the day curled up, eyes shut tight. We offered him "the hair of the dog" - he didn't want to know!

Thereafter, come Christmas, Easter or Feast Sunday, whenever visitors called; out came the Parsnip Wine and straight under the dresser bolted the dog!

I suppose you could say it was his party piece.

## **THE INFIRMARY PARADE**

#### **(PART TEN OF DOREEN BOULTER'S CHILDHOOD MEMORIES)**

The Annual Parade held in Wigston Magna in the summer for the Leicester Royal Infirmary was another great event. For weeks beforehand, meetings and discussions took place to determine the exact nature of the tableaux, decorating the drays, costumes and Fancy Dress, and most important, the choosing of the Carnival Queen and her Attendants. This was accomplished during



a dance held at the Co-op Hall in Long Street, or the Constitutional Hall in Cross Street, known to all as the "Consti".

There followed a period of intense activity. Most of the factories entered drays and many hours were spent in their decoration. The Draymen took great pride in their turn-out, highly polished horse brasses, bells and harness gleaming against the glossy coats of the horses. Coloured ribbons were interwoven in manes and tails, and the cart wheels whitened and painted. When all was ready, with our Driver resplendent in his best suit and bowler hat, we rattled out of the cobbled factory yard, teeth rattling in our heads as we hung on desperately to prevent ourselves falling off!

The drays, The Carnival Queen and her Attendants, decorated bikes, trikes, prams and tandems, the "Walkers" in every kind of fancy dress from chimney sweeps to Old Mother Riley, all congregated in Central Avenue, reaching right up to the "recce", there to await the judging. Prizes were awarded for the best dray and the "Walkers" were judged separately. The band, as always, assembled at the front of the parade.

This particular year, our contribution was "Wash Day". How they ever got that cast iron mangle up on the cart I'll never know. Combinations, liberty bodices and bloomers hung on a washing line, a cardboard "brick copper", a zinc dolly tub and puncher occupied one corner, a lady toiled over the ironing on a table complete with two large flat irons, nearby was a large "flasket" full of clothes, and front and centre, on a three legged stool I sat, dressed as "Dolly blue" in blue crepe paper, holding a collecting box.

The cart in front of us was "A Garden Bower". The ladies had certainly put their all into its creation, with realistic trees, and flowery archways, banks of flowers, rustic seats, with the ladies sitting or standing about in graceful pose. Unfortunately, our horse took a liking to the luscious green stuff in front of his nose and started to munch his way steadily through the artistic creation. Anguished cries came from the ladies. "Hehup, your'orse is eating our greenery." Hastily, our Driver went forward and held his 'orses 'ead until the judges had completed their task.

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## **GREATER WIGSTON HERITAGE CENTRE FREE RESEARCH SERVICE**

During the Coronavirus the Heritage Centre FREE research service is alive and well. We have had several family history queries through the website, ranging from fairly recent history to The Great War and one enquiry back to 1580!

One of our members knew his Grandfather served in the Great War 1914-1918 but knew nothing about his service. As some of you may know the service records for that conflict were damaged by fire during World War 2, and this was the case with this soldier.

However, we were able to find that he was a private in the Royal Army Medical Corps and was actually discharged from the Army on 18 March 1919. He may have been one of those who stayed





on in France and Belgium after the War to help clear casualties from the battlefields. He was awarded the Victory Medal and the British War Medal as well as the 1914-15 Star, which shows he was in action during those years, meaning he served from 1914 until 1919.

One Friday at the Centre a couple came in to look at the photograph archive which they had spotted reference to on our website. They were particularly interested in Canal Street. We were able to show the couple a photograph of the husband in the Fire Service at the time of the biscuit fire factory. Following on from this in conversation they mentioned that they knew nothing about their family history of the name of Silverwood, a Wigston family, so we decided to do some research for them. We are currently back to 6 generations in the 1760s, with branches of the family coming from Wigston, Evington, Rothley, Glen Parva and Buckinghamshire.

If you want any help with your research or want to start on your journey of discovery, we are here to help you. You can contact us through the website at:

[www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk/Search-Service.php](http://www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk/Search-Service.php)

If you do not use the internet and wish to use our services, you can call Peter Cousins on 0116 2884638 or 07702 127313 for a discussion or to get you started.

## WEBSITE VISITS

	5/10/17	5/11/17	12/11/17	28/12/17	22/1/18	14/5/18	30/7/18	24/10/18	25/11/18	22-Jan	13-Apr	27-Jun	30-Nov	23-Jan	03-May	✓/!
HOME PAGE	583	750	1044	2236	2784	4570	5607	6957	7689	8376	9584	10906	12784	14708	15320	1612
PHOTO ARCHIVE	418	589	1070	1550	1817	2812	2837	3580	3763	4051	4584	5050	5556	5867	6138	671
RAILWAYS PICS							102	553	612	672	0	52	97	122	155	23
GALLERY	91	106	144	319	509	797	1039	1339	1444	1579	1797	2021	2307	2524	2851	327
PREMIER DRUM		867	909	2037	1109	1428	1599	1841	1928	2069	2349	2521	2768	2912	3126	424
VISIONS OF WIGSTON				357	395	564	668	864	962	1098	1320	1514	1735	1835	2038	203
MEETINGS	84	93	136	200	284	533	642	837	929	1041	1238	1443	1829	1996	2273	277
STREET NAMES	56	59	80	199	244	101	278	464	536	671	772	941	1146	1231	1413	182
IDENTIFY	524	536	553	695	753	939	1045	1209	1305	1436	1595	1783	2049	2169	2390	221
FREE DANVERS BOOKS	17	23	28	102	140	260	333	471	534	627	765	918	1154	1251	1390	134
ABOUT THE OWHS	16	24	29	103	141	261	334	472	535	628	768	919	1155	1252	1391	134
RESEARCH PROJECTS					309	534	654	782	823	911	1013	1114	1274	1345	1472	127
LETTERBOX						535	655	783	824	912	1014	1115	1275	1346	1473	127
MEMBERS AREA	97	106	154	228	299	529	602	723	795	871	1035	1096	1233	1296	1443	147
DOCUMENTS	52	61	109	198	273	498	608	720	780	849	957	1075	1227	1296	1424	128
WIGSTON HISTORY	19	21	24	61	86	233	349	453	520	610	789	1051	1418	1581	1958	577
MEMBERSHIP	8	156	216	282	333	480	545	641	700	779	891	1005	1173	1262	1373	111
CONTACT US	37	46	67	98	136	249	305	395	436	488	568	659	774	872	910	88
BOOKS	11	62	88	206	238	318	401	488	543	619	705	811	959	1025	1134	100
OUTINGS/TALKS	21	25	35	58	75	151	194	268	293	336	385	453	546	594	677	83
HELP US	27	34	47	83	105	179	233	305	334	375	430	502	595	638	705	67
BULLETINS					91	153	192	259	284	337	390	473	556	598	648	50
SITE SEARCH						95	218	283	310	369	443	535	670	730	837	107
BRIDGE TO BRIDGE	18	42	75	183	204	268	307	365	416	558	760	951	1149	1276	1378	152
WIS OF MEMORIES											157	214	252	268	281	33
AUCTIONS			35	184	205	269	303	366	435	559	799	953	1150	1224	1379	155
GENE SOCIETY					67	121	155	208	234	267	298	350	426	455	496	43
LOCAL LINKS	21	23	31	54	80	140	172	221	240	271	304	348	423	450	495	45
SOUND ARCHIVE	17	24	42	74	99	154	187	233	257	301	382	435	495	530	580	50
2 STEEPLES	16	46	60	181	191	250	269	311	343	379	517	613	719	751	800	40
BUSINESS INDEX						527	580	619	658	698	788	864	955	997	1079	82
SIGNIFICANT BUILDINGS						70	115	154	218	314	450	591	763	849	1025	176
OVERSEAS MEMBERSHIP	14	18	24	27	29	49	64	84	98	118	142	158	179	192	205	13
Wigston Harcourt Book								140	176	210	242	278	308	337	357	25
HERITAGE CENTRE																670
	2167	3711	4984	8715	10946	17707	21584	27808	29964	33329	38081	43716	52284	56126	63338	



## Wigston Calendar - Greater Wigston Historical Society

### GWHS 2021 CALENDAR – PRICE HELD AGAIN AT £5 EACH!

The Society is pleased to announce that we have compiled a new calendar for 2021 with each month's page showing a "then and now" view of local scenes, with a description page giving historical details of each picture. They will again be supplied within an A4 card backed envelope ideal for posting them to friends and relatives. They will be available at the Heritage Centre when we reopen, at meetings later in the year, or you can order one to collect locally in Wigston by calling **0116 288 4638**.

They are also available by post from the Society's website at

[www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk/Wigston\\_Calendar.html](http://www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk/Wigston_Calendar.html)





## A Special Date for Society Members

The Greater Wigston Historical Society is 40 years old this year. To celebrate this achievement, the Committee have arranged a special event which will now take place on:

**Saturday 24th July 2021**

**The event will be a concert which will take place at:**

**The Hall, Wigston College, Station Road, Wigston LE18 2DS starting at 7pm.**

The concert is in the planning stage at the moment, and we would like you to keep the date free so that you can join us for this celebration event.

For Society members it will be a **"FREE"** event, and a nominal charge of £5 will be made for any guests you would like to bring. We will let you have further details of the concert as soon as possible.

To book your ticket/s please email [tickets@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk](mailto:tickets@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk)

Tell us how many FREE members tickets you require and how many guest tickets you require or telephone Ann Cousins on 0116 2884638 with your details.

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### OBITUARY

Dear Greater Wigston Historical Society,

We are writing to pass on the sad news that our aunt Stella Tweed passed away on Saturday 30th May, at the age of 95, following a short illness. We know that she was an active member of the Greater Wigston Historical Society for some time and we wanted to contact you to let you know of her passing.

Stella was Senior Mistress at Langmoor School in Oadby and took early retirement in the 1980s. She was an advocate of life-long learning and busied herself with a good many projects and activities upon retirement. She was a volunteer for the Wigston Framework Knitters Museum and also studied for an 'A' Level in Art at Beauchamp College.

We are sending this in the hope that there are some people involved in the activities of the Historical Society who may remember her name and might like to know of her passing. We also noticed the name 'Forryan' appears a number of times on the contacts list for the Society and both of us have fond memories of being taken to Forryan's toy shop in the 1970s by Stella (and our dad) for that special treat... we assume that there is a connection?



Stella was an inspiration to both of us, a determined woman with a twinkle in her eye and an enthusiastic approach to life and we will miss her greatly.

Kind regards,  
Fiona and Chris Tweed

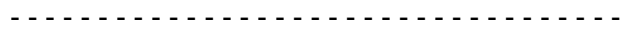
To The Greater Wigston Historical Society.

Dear Mike,

Many thanks for your kind message. We are so glad that we got in touch with the Historical Society. We have had a nice email from Joan Rowbottom referring to the friendship between her sister Shirley and Stella, which is really good to hear. Your words regarding the photos that she prepared for exhibitions are of comfort to us, as the work that she did 'lives on' and the photo that you kindly sent through really made us smile! She certainly liked her cars!

It is lovely that many people remember Stella and would like to pay their respects. Given that funerals under current circumstances are very limited affairs because of social distancing and virus risk, we plan to hold a proper celebration of Stella's life at some future point when we are able to invite a decent number of people, mingle, and have refreshments in a relaxed setting. We would love it if some of her friends and acquaintances from the Historical Society were able to come along, so we will keep contact details and give you advanced notice of when we are planning such an event. It seems only fitting after such a long life that touched so many people.

With kind regards,  
Fiona and Chris



### SUBSCRIPTIONS

Please note that subscriptions for 2020 are now due. If you have already renewed, thank you very much. The Society does need your help, especially in these lock-down conditions. Many of our members have already paid, but we do need assistance to maintain the society and Heritage Centre by paying subscriptions.

If you have not yet done so, we would be grateful if you could renew as soon as possible using this cut off slip if you like. The rates are £12 Full and £9 Concessionary (60 or over). Cheques should be made payable to GWHS. We hope you will continue your membership but if you are not doing so, it would be very helpful if you could let the Membership Secretary know.

Member(s) Name .....

Address.....

.....

Please send to the Membership Secretary: Mrs. Linda Forryan, 21 Blakesley Road, Wigston, Leicestershire. LE18 3WD