

GREATER WIGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

BULLETIN 113

1st March 2019



As two of the last four talks have been on aspects of WWI, namely the Unknown Warrior and the Royal Mail's overseas postal service, it seemed appropriate to choose for this page another key service of that time, looking after the many wounded soldiers. The 5th Northern General Hospital site was originally a lunatic asylum, but was standing empty at the start of the war and quickly converted for this new purpose. The postcard shows six young patients seated in deck chairs with another two lying on the grass. There are two able-bodied men with an ambulance car in the distance. The sight is now of course the University of Leicester, the building in the background has served all three purposes, but was named the Fielding Johnson Building in 1919 after Thomas Fielding Johnson a successful worsted manufacturer who bought the whole site and gave it to the City to house the proposed university.

The card was written by a young patient named Herbert to Miss Lily Birkinshaw of Bournemouth. "Hope you are enjoying yourself as I am getting on fine, but I don't know many people here and there's not many nice girls. Gert Wells is over here quite close to us but I never see her".

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS – MARCH TO DECEMBER 2019

Wednesday 20th March 2019

The Little Theatre, Past and Present – Mike Bull
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age UK, Paddock Street, Wigston

Wednesday 17th April 2019

Leicestershire in the 1940s and 1950s – David Bell
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age UK, Paddock Street, Wigston

Wednesday 15th May 2019

Cathedrals, Rooftops and More, restoration of old buildings – John Castleman
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age UK, Paddock Street, Wigston

***Wednesday 19th June 2019**

Afternoon Visit to Leicestershire Aero Club and Airport, Stoughton – Anne French
With refreshments, own or shared transport.

***Wednesday 21st August 2019**

Afternoon Guided Walk round Ancient Leicester – to be advised
Optional afternoon tea at Wygston's House, own or shared transport, more details nearer the time.

Wednesday 18th September 2019

The Rise & Demise of the Country House – Glenys Janes
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age UK, Paddock Street, Wigston

Wednesday 16th October 2019

Thomas Cook and The Temperance Movement – Neil Crutchley
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age UK, Paddock Street, Wigston

Wednesday 20th November 2019

Gunpowder Plot - Sally Henshaw
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age UK, Paddock Street, Wigston

Wednesday 18th December 2019

Christmas Social and talk on Edith Piaf – Julie Ede
7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age UK, Paddock Street, Wigston

*Our Secretary, Ann Cousins, will take bookings, note menu choices, collect payments and arrange if people would like a lift to Stoughton Airport and/or Wygston's House at the March, April and May meetings.

The Bulletin is published three times a year on 1st March, July and November. Articles etc., (which are always welcome) should be submitted to the Editor, Tricia Berry, three clear weeks before publication date please.

Society's website: www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk

Chairman: Mike Forryan's email: chairman@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk

NOVEMBER 2018 MEETING THE STORY OF THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR

John Sutton's detailed research resulted in a fascinating talk on the history behind the creation of the tomb of the Unknown Warrior in Westminster Abbey. He started by mentioning that George Edwin Ellison was the first man to be killed in the war and that George Nicolas Gunter was the last one. 10,000 were actually killed on Armistice Day, presumably felled by those who were unaware the war had ended.

It was initially the Rev. David Railton MA. MC. (1884-1955) a Church of England clergyman who came up with the idea. He was a curate at Folkstone, Kent before becoming a Chaplain to the 2nd Battalion of the Honourable Artillery Company on the Western Front during WWI. In 1916 having just buried a casualty in a back garden at Erkingham near Armentières in France, he noticed a grave with a rough cross, on which was pencilled the words "An Unknown British Soldier".

After the war, in 1920, when Vicar of Margate he decided to pursue his vision of selecting one unknown soldier to represent all the casualties of the Great War who had no known grave. It would be a constant reminder of their sacrifice and also act as a place where people could go and mourn their lost relatives. He wrote to the Dean of Westminster, Herbert Edward Ryle KCVO. DD. (1856-1925) who supported the idea. Others consulted included the Prime Minister David Lloyd George, Field Marshall Sir Douglas Haig, Commander of the British Army and of course King George V.

Brigadier General Louis John Wyatt DSO. (1874-1955) was the person selected to travel to France accompanied by two undertakers and with an escort of six battle ships. Four unknown soldiers had been exhumed, one each from the main battle areas of Aisne, the Somme, Arras and Ypres. They had to be from unmarked graves and to have died in the early part of the war, so only the skeleton was left, ensuring the bodies were completely unrecognisable. In a makeshift chapel in Pol Brigadier Wyatt selected his soldier, the other three being reburied. The coffin laid on a gun carriage, pulled by six black horses proceeded to Boulogne and boarded the destroyer HMS Verdun bound for Dover. From there it was taken by train to Victoria Station where it rested overnight.

The following morning on 11th November 1920 the coffin was placed once more on the gun carriage and drawn by another six horses, this time of the Royal Horse Artillery, they began their journey through the crowded streets to Whitehall where the newly completed Cenotaph was unveiled by George V. The procession then proceeded to Westminster Abbey to a service planned by Lord Curzon of Kedleston. 100 holders of the Victoria Cross provided a guard of honour. At the end of the service the King stepped forward and scattered some French soil, brought back the previous day, into the coffin as it was lowered into the grave. In due course the grave was covered with a slab of black Belgian marble from a quarry near Namur. The beautiful inscription was composed by the Dean, Herbert Ryle.

Lady Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon married the future King George VI in the Abbey in 1923 and she laid her wedding bouquet on the grave as a mark of respect. All royal brides who have married in the abbey since have also sent back or laid their bouquets too.

Herbert Ryle was knighted for his work as Dean of Westminster between 1911 and 1925, but clergymen do not take the title Sir. He took part in the 1911 Coronation, and the wedding in 1923 of the future George VI, launched the Dean Ryle fund for the repair of the Abbey stonework and pushed forward the idea of the burial of the Unknown Warrior.

Report by Tricia Berry

DECEMBER 2018 MEETING CHRISTMAS PARTY WITH UNIKULELE BAND AND QUIZ

Members and guests were greeted by a new room layout on arrival for the Christmas meeting. On this occasion the tables were end to end in three lines along the length of the room and very welcoming they were too with gold table cloths and flower arrangements all courtesy of Age UK Oadby and Wigston.

Furthermore the food, for the first time including pork pie, was laid out buffet style in the coffee lounge for members to help themselves at the same time as ordering a drink from the bar. This arrangement proved popular with very few leftovers this year.

The evening commenced with the traditional quiz arranged by Mike in the usual way using the projector to display the questions. Members worked in fours which was helped by the seating arrangements. There were the usual anagrams and picture clues as well as some pretty tricky 'who is this' questions. A short break followed which allowed those present to top up their plates and glasses as well as to buy raffle tickets.

Then we had the highlight of the evening, the Unikulele Band (yes this is how it is spelt!) from Leicester University. There were about fourteen ukulele players drawn from many countries as well as locally. They had been together as a band for about seven years after their leader Jean Baxter had wanted to learn the instrument but found it difficult to do this on her own, so encouraged others at the University to join her for weekly practices. They played a selection of catchy tunes finishing with a singalong of 'I wanna be like you' - 'Ob-La-Di Ob-La-Da' - 'New Star Rising' - 'Santa Clause is coming to town' - 'Will you still love me tomorrow' and finally 'White Christmas'.

The band very generously donated their fee to LOROS.

Finally the quiz was marked, which was almost as much fun as doing it in the first place, and the raffle was drawn. The winners achieved a score of 19/30, not very good considering they were all questions on local topics and people. There were twelve raffle prizes with many being generously donated.

It was a very good turnout for a very successful evening which sent us home in the Christmas spirit after thanks were given to all those involved in the organisation.

JANUARY 2019 MEETING TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF METHODISM IN WIGSTON MAGNA

For our first meeting of the new calendar year a full house, with many visitors, several of whom were from the congregation of Cross Street Methodist Church. We welcomed two of their members, Bill Boulter and Liz Ward to talk about the foundation of the Methodist movement in Wigston Magna 200 years ago. Bill Boulter is known to many as a Borough and County Councillor and Liz Ward is a member of the Society.

Liz reminded us that there had been a Heritage Day at Cross Street Church in 2017 which was supported by our Society (and many others) and which was very successful. At that event a little seed had been sown that as it was the 200th anniversary of the start of Methodism in Wigston in 2019, then there should be a suitable exhibition to mark the event. Of course small ideas tend to

become big ones and hence she and Bill would not only outline the history but also let us know what was planned for the year ahead.

We were reminded of the background and long history of unrest leading to various dissenting religious groups being formed. They did not agree with the teachings and hierarchy of the Catholic Church which controlled religion in England before the reformation. John Wycliffe in 1382 (he died 1384 in Lutterworth) and William Tyndale in 1526 (with further revisions in 1534 and 1536) had translated the Bible from Latin into English. The 1526 translation had to be printed in Europe rather than in England otherwise it would have been stopped, but of course, the English version soon reached the shores of England anyway. This had the effect that many more people could now read it. In 1517 Martin Luther had nailed to his church door in Germany his '95 theses' disputing the power of the Catholic Church's teachings.

In 1689 the English parliament approved the Toleration Act which allowed freedom of worship to dissenters. This was after, in 1687, ten people in Wigston had been discharged from paying fines because they had not attended church.

The Enclosure Award for Wigston came about in 1766 and the effect was to dispossess poor people from ownership of their strip of land because they could not afford the cost of hedging their new allocation, as required under the Award. They entered a downwards spiral of poverty and, of course, blamed the established church. The Industrial Revolution also had the effect of increasing poverty and thus discontent with the establishment.

The discontents and dissenters began to form themselves into breakaway religious groups to meet their needs and beliefs. The Quakers were formed in 1677 by George Fox, a local man born in Fenny Drayton. They had a meeting house in The Quaker Cottage in Bull Head Street, Wigston. The Independents were established in Wigston in 1661, and for some years met in St. Wistan's Church. By this time it is believed there were over 200 dissenters in Wigston. The Baptists were founded nationally as early as 1600 but there are no records of their presence in Wigston until 1850.

By 1791 John Wesley had died but the Methodist movement was gathering pace. In 1800 Hugh Bourne began open air meetings of Methodists. In 1812 the **Primitive** Methodists were formed in Wigston and in 1815 the first 'Camp Meeting' was held. In 1819 William Kirby, of Great Glen, a regional centre for Methodism, came to Wigston to preach and founded **Wesleyan** Methodists in Wigston.

Originally the Primitives met in two houses made into one in Mowsley End, then they moved into what is now a kitchen showroom on the corner of Cedar Avenue and Moat Street (formerly a Co-op shop). There were morning and evening services. By 1846 a building had been constructed on the present site on the corner of Moat Street and Cross Street. This building was soon extended to hold 160 people. A Sunday School taught children to read and write as well as bible stories. In 1886 there was a need for a further extension and chestnut trees had to be cut down to provide extra space. In 1900 the building was enlarged again and an organ was purchased by John D Broughton, a successful hosiery manufacturer, and committed member of the church. Land was also purchased in Central Avenue to build a house for the minister at a cost of £60.

After William Kirby's visit in 1819 the Wesleyans flourished and were quite a large social organisation with football and cricket teams and a brass band later to become the Wigston Temperance Band and now the Wigston Band. In 1838 land was purchased on the corner of Mill Lane (now Frederick Street) and Occupation Road (now Junction Road) from the Davenport family.

Expansion was rapid and there were soon 200 children in the Sunday school. An extension was built by our old friend Orson Wright who engaged local bricklayer Thomas Brown for the work. Mr Brown's yard was at the rear of what is today Billy Cox's shop on Leicester Road and his name can still be seen in the iron work of the gate leading into his yard. The Wesleyans at Frederick Street continued to thrive and their list of associated clubs expanded with the likes of a Clothing Club, a women only group and youth and drama clubs plus scouts and guides. During WW2 the church was used as a canteen for the troops.

Both Methodist churches were very much financially aided by the arrival back in Wigston in early 1881 of two couples, James and Betsy Hodges and John and Martha Goodin. They were local people who had moved to Cape Town, South Africa about 20 years before on an assisted passage to use their woodworking/sawyer skills to help modernise the country. While there, diamonds were discovered at Kimberley so they headed north and soon discovered that 'diamond getting' was more profitable than running a timber business. On their return the Hodges rejoined the Primitives, and the Goodins the Wesleyan Chapel, and both were able to give generous financial support for the enlargement of the two churches. James & Betsy Hodges and John Goodin both have named stones within the brickwork of their respective churches.

The two branches of Methodism continued to get along, with in some cases tradition meaning that a husband and wife might attend different churches, but in 1983 the two elements joined together and worship continued in Cross Street with Frederick Street being sold to another independent church. Liz Ward then went on to describe the various exhibitions and services that will take place during the bi-centenary year.

FEBRUARY 2019 MEETING

AGM FOLLOWED BY TOMMY'S MAIL, THE POSTAL SERVICE DURING WWI

This meeting, the AGM was again very well attended. The Chairman, Mike Forryan, opened the proceedings by welcoming everyone. The agenda was as follows:

- 1) Apologies for Absence** – Three members sent their apologies
- 2) Minutes of February 2018 AGM** – read by the Treasurer, Colin Towell, & signed as correct
- 3) Matters arising** – Mike referred to a suggestion at last year's AGM that future bulletins for non local members could be sent by email or collected at meetings to reduce the ever increasing cost of postage. This was discussed at committee but it was decided it would be just too time consuming to manage.
- 4) Chairman's Report** – Mike reported another very successful year with meetings consistently well attended & appreciated, and two very interesting outings, a guided walk round Melbourne and visit to Cooke's Motor Museum, both followed by a meal. The lighthearted Christmas social was altered slightly this time with only one quiz, & no speaker, but entertainment by a ukulele band which was excellent with everyone singing along. There were also some slight changes to the food offering & a different layout with all the tables joined together, making it seem more sociable. During the year Tony Lawrance stepped down from the committee after many years of stalwart service for which he was very gratefully thanked. The committee of ten had over the year run the Society with great efficiency and on behalf of the membership and himself Mike thanked them all for their hard work and support. The committee decided to create a calendar for 2019, 150 were printed and all were sold at £5 each. This was very close to cost but a small profit was added to the

funds. Following the success of the two DVD's – 'Wigston with Two Steeples' & 'Bridge to Bridge'. A new one has just been launched, this is called 'Wigston – A Mix of Memories'. It costs £10 and is available from Mike or Peter and at the Age UK Shop in Paddock Street. From this year members will receive a card when they pay their subscription instead of a receipt. In view of the healthy finances it was decided there was no need for any increase this year. The committee continue to promote the society through borough notice boards, libraries, trade magazines, our web site and the press. They also attended several open days/exhibitions & Mike thanked those who had given their time to support these functions and manage the Society's table. Our Wigston Remembering the Past Facebook Group continues to prosper and the membership is now well past 3,200. The Society Archive since being on line is attracting much more interest from the general public. Next year marks the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Society and plans are being made to celebrate this milestone. Mike ended by thanking our President, Duncan Lucas, and the committee for all their hard work over the year, and the members who have supported the request to provide items to be copied for the Archive. Lastly thanking all members who turn out to support meetings whatever the weather.

5) Membership Secretary's Report – Linda's report was read by Mike. 2018 was yet another good year with a growing membership. We had 15 new members but lost 9 for various reasons. Sadly Pam Woolley & Beryl Tomkins, both long standing members, passed away during the year. We started with 150 members and ended the year with 147. This now includes 3 from overseas. The membership is made up of 140 concessionary, 5 full and 2 complimentary. We had 43 visitors.

6) Treasurer's Report – Colin talked us through the accounts (printed on the last page of this bulletin) noting all 3 ongoing sources of income: subscriptions, visitors' fees & donations combined were £104.00 more than last year. This increase largely due to & a welcome £90.50 in donations. Lecture fees were almost doubled due to more speakers & increases in individual fees. Miscellaneous expenses were high due to £100 each given towards the Pinfold & Peacock Place information boards & £81.50 for purchase of a new pop-up banner. Total sales of the first two DVD's have been very successful with 431 'Wigston with Two Steeples' being sold & 291 'Bridge to Bridge'. We continue to donate £1 for each DVD sold to Age UK & to Rainbows through Dave Andrews, so these charities have each received £722.00 in total. The Christmas social made a small surplus as did the two summer trips & the calendars. All this resulted in a profit of £394.88 for the year. The accounts have again been examined & approved by Gary Davies who has very kindly agreed to stand again for next year.

7) Webmaster's Report – Peter recounted that visits to the new website launched on 5/10/2017 has now reached 8,764, an average of 122 per week. Simply googling 'Wigston History' brings our website up in second place out of a possible 482,000 sites. Analysis of the figures show that the photo archive, visions of Wigston, the railway pictures, & pictures of the demise of the old Premier Drum factory are being visited regularly, meaning that people are book-marking the pages to revisit. The site is also having an impact internationally attracting new members and DVD sales from Spain, Australia and Canada. The historical articles section of the member's area has recently been overhauled with new & updated articles, a total now of 343 articles covering many aspects of Wigston history.

8) Election of Officers – **Chairman:** Mike Forryan, **Vice Chairman:** Peter Cousins. **Treasurer:** Colin Towell, **Membership Secretary:** Linda Forryan. **Webmaster:** Peter Cousins, **Bulletin Editor:** Tricia Berry, **Committee Members:** Jane Callis, Margaret Gee & Roger Whalley.

9) Any Other Business – None this year.

TOMMY'S MAIL – THE OVERSEAS POSTAL SERVICE DURING WWI

The army postal service had been formed as early as 1799 handling mail mostly for the army's involvement in European theatres of war. Post was sent from Falmouth to Holland for onward transmission to the front lines. The Post Office Rifles was formed in 1868. By the time of WWI the Royal Engineers were operating the Army Postal Service under the direction of Lt. Col. William Price. In the first year of the war, 28,000 men over 35 had signed up to this postal service out of a total workforce in the Post Office of 250,000 people; revenue at that time was £32m a year and the Post Office was the largest single employer in the world. Prior to the war only men could work actually delivering the post and women were confined to internal operations, but they were sent out on the rounds from 1914. Postal Service workers were deployed throughout the Western Front and 50% of these people were injured or killed during the war, four postal service men being awarded the V.C.

Mobilisation orders had been issued in late July, that is, before war was declared, and six days after the declaration, the Army Postal Service crossed the channel and a week later were set up and operational. There were some early setbacks and they then moved to Le Havre for the whole of the war. It was very well organised and dealt with post being sent back home and received for the soldiers on the front lines. There was a series of intermediate post offices between Le Havre and field boxes on the front lines, which could be in a trench or in underground dug outs.

In England the base was in Regents Park in London where there was a temporary building covering five acres (4 times the size of the King Power Stadium) despatching 2,000 bags a day to the front. Weekly throughput was 12m letters and 1m parcels all crossing the channel in Royal Mail Ships (RMS) some of which were badly damaged with many post items being lost. Outgoing letters were often addressed merely with initials, for example OCP was finally devised as 'Officer Commanding Pigeons'. In fact 100,000 pigeons were used during the war with 32 of them being awarded the Dicken medal. It was reckoned that 95% of messages sent in this way were delivered.

On the front, both horses and trains were used to move the post around. In all 8m horses were killed during WWI, one effect of this (pre tractors of course) was that other animals were used on farms at home including elephants from local zoos for ploughing etc. There were few railways in France prior to the war and the British Army installed many miles of lines, often narrow gauge and on very inadequate track beds. During the war 311 trains were taken over to France and at times 1.5m shells were being moved each week. In the latter years of the war aeroplanes were used to deliver post.

The levels of post items were enormous with 250,000 parcels a day in 1916. There was no charge for letters. 'Return to sender' letters caused difficulties and some were moved several times before finally reaching their destinations because of troop movements and fatalities. Letters had to be censored; one person could deal with 1,600 letters a day deleting sensitive information. To help with this problem a Field Service Post Card was developed consisting of several standard pre-printed phrases which a soldier could choose from by deleting unwanted lines, he was not allowed to add anything manually.

Some soldiers suffered mentally when they did not receive post and so they advertised for people to write to them, one then received 3,000 letters and 7 bags of parcels! Great distress was suffered by relatives at home when their letters were returned marked 'killed in action' often before the official notification was received. Soldiers on the front line sometimes were unable to obtain writing paper and even took to sending messages written on hard biscuits, dubbed the Biscuit Post. Eventually the YMCA provided paper and pencils.

The ability for soldiers serving in the war to both send and receive letters was of course an important morale booster and it was essential that an efficient postal service was operated. Peter's talk certainly provided us with proof that this was the case with a service delivered under great difficulties.

Peter was inspired to carry out his research when looking into the family history of his wife Ann (the Society's Secretary) whose Uncle, Robert Henry Bradshaw joined the Royal Engineers Postal Service, aged 41. The opening and closing slides were of him, after the war, holding Ann as a small girl, which when we all realised this, led to many 'aahs'!!

Last three reports by Colin Towell

HILLCREST, 2 SWAIN STREET, LEICESTER

“A NEAT, HOMELY, ENGLISH APPEARANCE AND NOTHING OF THE CHARACTER OF A BASTILLE”

So went a description of Hillcrest – the Leicester Workhouse – when it was built in 1837. As a child in the 1940s the mention of Hillcrest always made me feel uneasy as adults made it sound so sinister. I suppose I imagined all sorts of horrors for the poor unfortunate people who had to live there. Later I recall its closure to much muttering of “about time too” and “good riddance”.

I think it barely entered my head again until recently when a relative mentioned that she had a ledger taken (with permission) from the building at the time of its demolition. As I am now interested in family history research my brain immediately went into alert! What was the date of this ledger and would there be inmate's names mentioned in it of interest to researchers? She promised to let me have the ledger and left me to ponder the fact that when it was taken, the recipient was told to choose quickly as “the rest are going to be scrapped!”

Days later I had the book in my hands only to find that it was dated 1947 – nobody's long lost relatives going to be found here then, but anyway I settled down to browse and of course was soon fascinated. More of that later.

A short session at the Record Office showed that although Leicester had three workhouses already, it was decided to house the paupers all under one roof and Hillcrest was built. It was designed by architect William Flint and the final cost was £8,569. The first paupers were moved in on 6th February 1839, in the nick of time it seems as the winter had seen a large increase in numbers due to a trade depression. I list below some of the first staff: -

William & Mary Clarke	Master & Matron. Joint salary £100 plus food & lodging
George Waring Cartwright	Schoolmaster at £15 all found
His wife Selina	Schoolmistress at £10 all found
Rev. Anthony R Harrison	Chaplain at £50 per annum
Samuel Stenson	Porter at £10 per annum
Margaret Roberts	was the Head Nurse in the mid 1880s

Although originally built to house the city's destitute, Hillcrest was soon to provide an extensive care range of services and a standard of nursing and medical care well beyond that envisaged when the first paupers passed through its doors. Unlike many workhouses, Hillcrest provided married quarters but in 1884 all children were moved to Countesthorpe Cottage Homes as the building became overcrowded. When conditions again became overcrowded the North Evington Poor Law Hospital was built to house the sick. It was referred to as the "Palace on the Hill" and is now the General Hospital. In 1905 the patients were moved in only to be moved back again to Hillcrest to make way for casualties from WWI.

From 1900 it appears that everyone wanted Hillcrest closed but it was not to be. The Jarrow Marchers were given hospitality on their way to London in 1936 and during WWII it was a main centre for emergency services. Matron had to be a midwife owing to the "type of girl who is accommodated here". In 1947 a training school for nurses was set up in a terraced house opposite the hospital.

Back to the ledger – a purchase ledger covering everything bought in the September quarter of 1847. Bearing in mind that the war was not long over and provisions were in short supply (they were where I lived) not to mention rationing, I was surprised at the variety of goods delivered. A large selection of sweets and chocolates, fresh and tinned fruits and vegetables (the last grown on the city farm) beer, stout, cigarettes and tobacco, magazines and newspapers were purchased on a regular basis as well as basics. Among the many things bought for the hospital were 100 cartridges, 12 bore 5 shot (for shooting what?), padlocks (for locking up what or whom?), sinus forceps (ugh) mouth gags (oh no!) and 200 shrouds (no explanation needed). Perhaps some of my childhood fears were valid after all!

An invoice showed that during this quarter the following people had new glasses or repairs from T.B. Heath, St. Martins, Leicester.

C Bland	Mrs. L. Read	B. Haynes	Mrs. E. Matts
Mrs. Gibson	Mrs. Campbell	Mrs. Herbert	G. Waddington
Mr. J. Smith	George Reynolds	J. Dimmock	Mrs. Mills

Another listed the following as having partial or full sets of dentures, a full set costing £7. 15. 0 at E.G.W. Bowerman's dental surgery.

Mrs. Cooke	Mrs. Perry	Miss Makepeace
Mr. G. Reynolds	Mr. Fiske	Mrs. Bradshaw
Miss Thompson	Mr. Taylor	Miss Harrison

At the same time Aylestone Funeral Co. Ltd., provided their services for John Lee (59 yrs) Alfred Moore (56 yrs), and Joseph Bennett (71 yrs), the total cost for coffins, cemetery fees, hearses and cabs being £25.19. 6d.

Men's suits from J. Grice Ltd., averaged £3 and 72 pairs of women's lace up shoes cost £53.15.0d. plus 360 clothing coupons. Frears Ltd., supplied biscuits needing 314 'points' (I well remember calling at our local shop one Monday morning for my customary bun for break time at junior school only to be told to go home and fetch the 'points' from my mother!). When one sees the amount and variety of food available to everyone nowadays it's hard to believe flour was once rationed. Mrs.

D.M. Handford, a chiropodist, was paid £4. 12. 0d for physiotherapy at 4/- an hour – 20p to our younger researchers! Petrol was bought for approx. 1/8d per gallon.

The list could go on and on, there are many local company names – some still in business today and some pages are marked Swain Street Institution referring to the address of the Hospital. The pages are all signed by the Public Assistance Officer, A. Shilton and examined and entered by R.W. Manning.

In 1955 a mobile meals service was started at the hospital and soon 1,000 meals a day were being taken to Leicester residents by the WRVS and in the same year a laundry service was also started. Finally the hospital was to become a geriatric unit before being closed, the remaining patients being moved to the General Hospital or the Glenfield Community Hospital outside the city.

For my research, in addition to the borrowed ledger, I used an article in the Nursing Times dated 14th April 1977 which had as its heading the words: -
“From the Victorian conscience to provide shelter for the unfortunate has risen an institute giving a great deal more than basic care.”

There are also admission registers held at the Record Office.

Sheila Bolton

WIGSTON WORKHOUSE

The origins of the workhouse can be traced back to Tudor times, and it was not just larger towns like Leicester but smaller county towns and even large villages which also had their own. A place where those who had fallen on hard times could at least have a roof over their head and food to eat. While the more able bodied who were capable of working were expected to earn their keep, helping round the workhouse or breaking stones etc.

Wigston was no exception, in 1777 a Parliamentary report recorded workhouses in use at Knighton (for 12 inmates), Narborough (for eight), Oadby (for 30) and for Wigston Magna (for 32). At this time they were operated by the parish Vestry who appointed one of their number to act as Overseer, whose duty was to appoint a Master and collect the poor rate from inhabitants. At this time poor relief was also often given to the needy at home.

Very little information about the Wigston Workhouse exists, just brief references in the Leicester Journal of 3/4/1801 when a Vestry meeting discussed care and maintenance of the poor in the workhouse. On 23/3/1802 when a new Master was required and 8/11/1822 when Thomas Vann, Assistant Overseer of the poor house advertises for “a man and wife to manage it, the man must be a stocking maker or understand rib and plain work”.

It is difficult to work out exactly where Wigston Workhouse was situated. It could have been on Mowsley End, at Apple Pie Corner (the junction of the present Mowsley End with Spa Lane), or further up the present Spa Lane which in those times was just a track leading to fields. The census helps to some extent. In 1851 there were 31 households in Mowsley End and two in Spa Lane. In 1861 there were only 7 households in Mowsley End, 7 in Spa Lane and 18 in Old Workhouse Lane which latter name was not even mentioned 10 years before! No less than 11 households are the same

people but living in 1851 in Mowsley End and in 1861 in Old Workhouse Lane. Clearly a change of name, all this seems to indicate that the Workhouse was situated in the top part of Mowsley End which was once known as Old Workhouse Lane.

In 1834 a new poor law was brought in. Parishes were then grouped together into Poor Law Unions with much larger, purpose built workhouses. They were to be run by a board of guardians which represented all the parishes involved. Wigston along with 21 other nearby villages became part of the Blaby Poor Law Union with a board of 32 Poor Law Guardians. The villages in the group were: Aylestone, Blaby, Braunstone, Cosby, Countesthorpe, Croft, Enderby, Foston, Glenfield, Glen Parva, Huncote, Kilby, Kirby Muxloe, Knighton, Leicester Forest, Lubbesthorpe, Narborough, Oadby, Potters Marston, Thurlaston and Whetstone, Their new Workhouse was designed by William Parsons, and was built on the east side of Leicester Road in Enderby, cost £4,400, with 4 acres of garden and could accommodate 350 inmates. While it was being built the existing Wigston parish Workhouse was rented. When it was opened in 1837, there was one particular change, no outside relief was available. You had to be admitted.

Those Wigston residents liable to serve as an Overseer of the Poor in 1851 were – Charles Holland Baddeley, John Hobson, Samuel Phipps, Augustine Fry, Edward Holyoak, John Wright, George Loveday, William Eggleston, Joseph Cooper and James John Pochin.

Other districts were added later: Braunstone Frith (from 1861), East Wigston (from 1894), Freakes Ground (1862-91), Glenfield Frith (from 1861) Kilby Frith (from 1861) Knoll and Bassett House (1861-1909), New Found Pool (1862-91), New Parks (from 1862).

After the abolition of the Poor Law Unions in 1930 the former workhouse became a home for the elderly. It was demolished in the late 1960s and replaced with modern accommodation for the elderly.

Tricia Berry

WIGGY'S CHILD 1926-1939

(Part five of Doreen Boulter's childhood memories)

OUTDOOR PURSUITS (CONTINUED)

In our house, a visit to the Doctor entailed a bath beforehand; this was a major undertaking. After lighting the fire under the copper, which was then filled up with water, Father would carry in the zinc bath from the yard, place it before the living room fire, then walking to and fro with buckets of hot water, ladled out from the copper, he filled the bath. A bar of "Vinolia" toilet soap was allowed instead of the usual cake of Red Carbolic. "Seeing as how you are going up Doctor's" said Mother. I'd got a 'bad' knee through falling off a five barred gate onto a newly gritted road, and despite Father's ministrations with the iodine, it had "gone funny".

Why I'd got to have a bath, when the Doctor was only going to look at my knee, mystified me. Mother said "she wasn't going to be showed up in front of the Doctor, and I could soak off that lint while I was in the bath." The lint dressing was firmly stuck to my poor knee; as I pulled gingerly, my mouth went all salty, the lint wouldn't budge. Mother took over, "it's no use 'piping your eye',"

she said, tugging away, “it’s got to come off, the Doctor won’t stand any nonsense from you, my gel,” she asserted, giving a final tug and ripping away the soggy piece of lint.

I dried my tears and the rest of me, while Father had the job of ladling the water out of the bath, bucketful after bucketful, before heaving the bath outside to its resting place, hanging on a nail on the wall. All this fuss and palaver, just to visit the Doctor, anyone would think we were off to see The King and Buckingham Palace, like that girl ‘Alice’ who took Christopher Robin to see the Changing of the Guard!

BOARDIES

After we left “Nashies” at eleven years of age, we went up to “Boardies”. WIGSTON BOARD SCHOOL, for the uninitiated. Children who were already in their second year delighted in telling newcomers tales of difficult lessons to come, and punishments in the offing. “It’s not like Nashes ‘ere, you know” they warned, smirking.

We stood in line and our names were called for each class, accompanied by whispering asides of cor blimey, you ain’t ‘arf in far it wi ‘im, which struck terror in our hearts. After morning assembly with prayers and a hymn, teacher would thump out a rousing march on the piano (which always shook alarmingly) and we all marched smartly to our respective classrooms.

“Miss” would take us for singing lessons in the school hall, our ‘piece de resistance’ being “Sweet Lass of Richmond Hill”. We were continually exhorted to “open your mouths, gels, remember your vowels,” which sent the back row into hysterics, the rest of us, not daring to laugh, quavered on, fervently wishing “the Lass” was well and truly under the blessed hill!

We were taken out for “drill” in the school yard and the knees bend, arms stretch, running on the spot routine commenced. Our navy school knickers were a scaled down version of Ladies’ Directoires. There seemed to be some malevolence about them whereby the elastic in the legs became saggy without warning and slid down. Always, it seemed, in the school yard in front of everybody. The boys’ shouts of “droopy drawers” as we tried desperately to hitch them up only increased our discomfiture.

As playtime we ate our newspaper wrapped lunch and drank our milk. The bottles had small cardboard tops with a perforated hole in the middle, care had to be taken when you stuck your finger in, as the milk spurted and you had an eyeful. In the winter, we made lengthy icy slides, to the detriment of unwary school staff. Another favourite pastime was the long cloths-line skipping rope stretched across the playground, turned by a girl at each end so that five or six girls could skip together. We spent hours spinning wooden yo-yo’s up and down, while the boys played “faggies”. Almost as popular was “Johnny-Mop”, we bent down in a line, and the others jumped along our backs, Often with a boot in your ‘ear, before we all collapsed in a heap, great fun.

On the way to school, if we had a farthing or a halfpenny, we would patronise Mrs. Proctor’s sweet shop, the good lady in her long black frock kept a cane handy so that busy fingers, reaching out of turn into the boxes on the counter, were moved sharpish when the cane came down. There, we would buy tiger nuts, Ruby Lips, orchard fruit or a conical shaped bag bulging with rainbow kali. Her ‘best’ chocolate was kept in a glass fronted cupboard at the side of the counter; we would gaze at the display and wonder who was rich enough to afford such luxuries.

GREATER WIGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

Receipts and Payments for the year ending 31st December 2018

Receipts		Payments	
Opening Balances as at 1/1/2018:		Lecture fees	432.10
Current A/c	4941.82	Bulletins print & post	145.66
Unpresented chqs	-427.30	Room Hire	360.00
" credits	116.76	Officer's exes	118.35
	4631.28	Christmas Social	143.05
Deposit a/c	1001.37	Website fees	71.00
Subscriptions	1246.50	Visits (2018)	993.75
Visitor Fees	114.00	Sundry	351.50
Donations	90.50	DVDs	252.85
Christmas Social	193.00	Less adjusts	-139.50
Sale of books	153.25	Plus adjusts	90.00
Visits (2018)	1118.00	Calendars	612.76
DVD sales	227.90	Closing Balances at 31/12/2018:	
Bank interest	1.25	Current A/c	5194.04
Calendar sales	731.50	Unpres. credit	152.00
		Unpres. cheques	-321.13
		Deposit A/c	1002.62
		DVD non cash adj	49.50
	9,508.55		9,508.55

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Please note that subscriptions for 2019 are now due. If you have already renewed, thank you very much. You should have had your membership card instead of the receipt given in previous years.

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. 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, Leicester. LE18 3WD.

