# Greater Wigston Historical Society.



"Wigston Two Steeples."

# Bulletin 12. June '85

**NOTICES...      NOTICES...      NOTICES...      NOTICES...      NOTICES...      NOTICES...**

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**PROGRAMME**

19th June Wednesday  7.30pm

      Wigston Walk About

      Meet at the Liberal Club Car Park

July & August

      No Meetings

      Holiday Months

September   (Date to be fixed)

      Visit to Wistow

      Please check Wigston Library Notice Board and Oadby and Wigston Advertiser for details

16th October Wednesday 7.30 pm

      'The Age of the Horse'

      An Illustrated talk

      Wigston Liberal Club Committee Room


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**SUBSCRIPTIONS**

At the A G M in February it was decided to keep the same subscription as the previous two years. That is £2.00 or £1.00 for OAP's and members under 18 years of age. As well as membership of the Society, the subscription entitles one to free admission to the Wigston Museum, and to receive the Society's Bulletin which is published three times a year. 1985/86 subscriptions were due in February 85. Will those people who have not yet paid please send them to Mr B Bilson, 23 Thirlmere Road, Wigston Leicester.

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**EDITOR'S NOTE**

Notices or Articles for the Bulletin should be sent to the Editor three weeks before the publishing dates, which are 1st February, 1st June and 1st October of each year.

Editor….. Ian Varey, 150, Welford Road, Wigston, Leicester.

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**REPORT ON THE 1985 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The Annual General Meeting of the Society took place on Feb 20th at Wigston Liberal Club. Some 15 members attended the AGM.

The formal business of reading the minutes, passing the accounts and reviewing the past year (which are to be found in the minutes) was followed by the election of officers.

The outgoing chairman, Mr M Bingley was first thanked for his year in office.


The officers for 1985/86 are as follows …..

President      Duncan Lucas

Chairman      Ian Varey

Vice Chairman   Peter Clow
Secretary        Mrs Doris Chandler
Treasurer        Brian Bilson

The formal part of the meeting over, the Members at Home meeting commenced.

Two aspects of how modern technology can help in Local History were of particular interest. Peter brought in a video camera / recorder / monitor. With this equipment he has been putting on to video film as many old slides and photographs as he can find of Bull Head Street. Using this equipment has enabled large close ups, slow panning and freezing of details one would normally miss. This technique, it was agreed, certainly brought a new dimension to discovering the Old Bull Head Street. Peter hopes to move on to other Wigston Streets in the future and he is always on the lookout for additional slides.

Ian brought in a computer / monitor / disc drive. On a data file he has all the 1881 Census material relating to Bell Street Wigston. Computers are extremely efficient at sorting large amounts of information for specific details. In seconds it was possible to list on the monitor all the 'female framework knitters' or all the 'domestic servants' or all the 'male children under 13 years of age not born in Wigston' …. etc etc.

Hopefully such tools as these will enhance research into Local History and stimulate in more people an interest in the past.

The meeting closed at 10pm.

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**REPORT ON THE SOCIETY'S MARCH MEETING**

After a short business session 14 members listened to a short talk from Ian Varey about Brass Rubbing. He had many examples to show us and these illustrated the development of the engraver's art from the thirteenth to the seventeenth century. Many of the rubbings we of armoured Knights and their ladies and the development and subsequent demise of plate armour could clearly be followed.

The last section of rubbings, were examples of Leicestershire Brasses. Despite this being a famous stone county, (and consequently many of our fines church monuments are in this medium) a good number of fine brasses are to be found……….

| Bottesford | 1404 | Hon. De Codyngtoun, rector, in cope lrg. |
| Castle Donnington | 1458 | Robt. Staunton, arm, wife Agnus, etc. |
| Little Casterton | c1410 | Sir Thos. Burton arm wife Margery. Etc. |
| Lutterworth | 1418 | John Fildyng, civilian, wife Joan |
| | C1470 | poss. John Renolds and wife |

| Thurcaston | 1425 | John Mershden, rector, canon in cope |
| Wanlip | 1393 | Sir Thos. Walsh, arm. Wife Dame Katherine. |

These are just a selection of the finer Leicestershire Brasses. If you are a Summer Drive and happen to be in any of these villages, why not pop into the local Church and see the Brasses for yourself.
*** If you wish to make a rubbing you must first see the Vicar to get permission. He usually makes a small charge.

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**REPORT ON THE SOCIETY'S APRIL MEETING**

At 7.30pm on 17<sup>th</sup> April some 25 members and friends were met at All Saints Church, Wigston by the Vicar. After introductions and welcome, we started our visit in the churchyard, while the daylight held.

We noted the Brewin gravestone of 1718, as noted in the Nichols County History. The explanation of the great age given on the stone … 152 years is that it is probably the combined age of husband and wife who died on the same day. The oldest stone was pointed out to us, 1606, as was an unusual stone to Thomas Horner died 1782, who is described as an 'Honest Publican'. We looked over the church yard wall to the West, which was the site of Rectory Farm, and Duncan reminded us that it was probable there that Oliver Cromwell stopped for refreshment and to sign State Papers, on his way to Leicester, the day after the Battle of Naseby.

Inside the Church we sat quietly and took in the architectural splendour of this beautiful medieval building. I thought how underrated and undiscovered are our Leicestershire Parish Churches. We then had our attention drawn to the roof and the altered roof lines, the clerestory, the arcading with their carved capitols and the windows with their fine decorated stone tracery. The fifteenth century screen led one's gaze to the high alter and its backdrop, the East Window.

The Vicar then told us many stories of Wigston folk past. He showed us the Marriage register with 'X' instead of signatures, from the time when most people were illiterate. He told us of the Davenports, both the black sheep of the family who was hung for highway robbery; and of the Good Geo. Davenport. There for us to see, the Vicar had the chalice and Patten of solid silver, given to the Church by Geo. Davenport in 1661 to mark the restoration of King Charles II.
We were then able to wander around the church to make a closer inspection of things that caught our eye … the piscinas, the Sedalia and the other church furniture and monuments.
Before taking our leave we made a collection which was donated to the church, and thanked the Vicar most sincerely for such a splendid evening.

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**TRANSACTION 31 – The Meaning of the Names Given to the New Roads of Wigston**

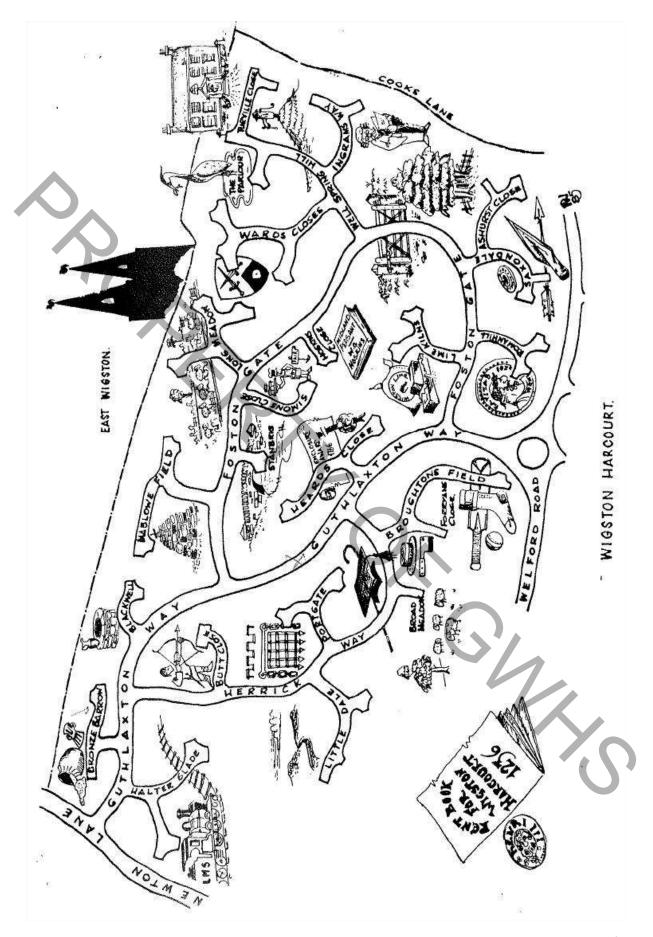This is now complete and copies can be purchased.

The puzzle page that follows requires one to unscramble the letters to make names of the new roads on the Wigston Harcourt Estate …….. If you get stuck and want some help, turn over the page and Peter Wilfords excellent illustrated street plan should help you. Good Luck.

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????????? **PUZZLE PAGE** ?????????     ????????? **PUZZLE PAGE** ?????????

Unscramble the letters to make the street names of Wigston Harcourt.

e.g.     acghinoorrsttuw          Wigston Harcourt

1.  ACEKLNOOS          _ _ _ _ _  _ _ _ _
2.  AEELNNNOTW          _ _ _ _ _ _  _ _ _ _
3.  ADDEFLOORRRW          _ _ _ _ _ _ _  _ _ _ _
4.  ABBENOORRRWZ          _ _ _ _ _ _  _ _ _ _ _ _
5.  AEHLOPRRTU          _ _ _  _ _ _ _ _ _ _
6.  AADEEHLLRST          _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
7.  ABGGINRST          _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
8.  AAGHLNOTTUWXY          _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _  _ _ _
9.  ACEHIKRRWY          _ _ _ _ _ _  _ _ _
10. AEGOPRTT          _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
11. ACEFLNOORRSSY          _ _ _ _ _ _ _  _ _ _ _
12. BCELOSTTU          _ _ _ _  _ _ _ _ _
13. ABCEKLLLW          _ _ _ _  _ _ _ _ _
14. ADEEILLTT          _ _ _ _ _ _  _ _ _
15. ACEHLORSSSTU          _ _ _ _ _ _ _  _ _ _ _
16. AADELNOSX          _ _ _ _ _  _ _ _ _
17. AABDDEMOORW          _ _ _ _ _  _ _ _ _ _ _
18. ABDEEFILLMOW          _ _ _ _ _ _ _  _ _ _ _ _
19. AEFGNOOSTT          _ _ _ _ _ _  _ _ _ _
20. AHILLMNOR          _ _ _ _ _  _ _ _ _
21. ACDEEHLORSS          _ _ _ _ _ _  _ _ _ _ _
22. CEHIKLNOOSSS          _ _ _ _ _ _ _  _ _ _ _ _
23. EIIKLIMNS          _ _ _ _  _ _ _ _ _
24. EGHIILLLLNPRSW          _ _ _ _  _ _ _ _ _ _  _ _ _ _
25. BDEFGHILNOORSTU          _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _  _ _ _ _
26. ACDELORSSSW          _ _ _ _ _ _  _ _ _ _ _ _
27. ADEGLMNOOW          _ _ _ _  _ _ _ _ _ _
28. AAGIMNRSWY          _ _ _ _ _ _ _  _ _ _
29. CEILMNOOSSS          _ _ _ _ _ _  _ _ _ _ _
30. CEEILLLORSTUV          _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _  _ _ _ _ _

If any members have any quizzes or puzzles, or even suggestions please see the editor.

# The Name of Wigston – How and Why

May I first quote Jill Browne in her publication 'Place Names of Leicestershire and Rutland'.

The understanding of place names depends upon the interpretation and comparison of early spellings. In a few cases names are recorded in documents of the Anglo-Saxon period, although they rarely appear more than once or twice. For most places the name is first recorded in Domesday Book, 1086. When looking at these Domesday forms it is important to keep in mind that the scribes that compiled the book were Norman-French, and one can see the struggle they had to render the name they were given for a place into a form that had an equivalent in their own language. We can imagine these Norman-French royal clerks, cultured and literate, riding around this foreign land trying to make sense of the guttural utterances of the rough Anglo-Saxon and Viking peasantry they would have encountered.

Because of this problem with the language any Domesday spelling needs support of latter forms (or earlier if they exist) before one can say with certainty what the name means. Some of the more important sources of early place names are:-
The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles; old wills; legal writs; land charters; market charters; Pipe Rolls; Patent Rolls; Assize Rolls; ecclesiastical and manorial records; private archives (such as the Duke of Rutland's papers) and the Leicestershire Survey to name a few.

Many people believe that place names are easily interpreted. This is seldom the case. If we want to be sure of the meaning the name had when it was first given, all the early spellings need to be examined as both the spelling and the pronunciation of a name have usually changed so much over the centuries that the modern form may, at best, bear only a slight resemblance to the original and, at worst, be completely misleading.

Often names that that are identical in their spellings are totally different in origin. Wigston Magna and Wigston Parva, separated by only a few miles, are good illustrations of this. All the known early forms of both these places are given in order to show how the original difference in meaning became obscure over time.

In Domesday Book Wigston Parva is recorded as 'Wicestan' and Wigston Magna as 'Wichingstone'.

Wigston Magna is first recorded in its modern form in 1453 whist Wigston Parva does not arrive in its modern spelling until 1610.

| Wicestan | (Domesday Book) | Wichingstone |
|---|---|---|
| Wiggestan | | Wichingstona |
| Wigestan | | Winchingstun |
| Wichestain | | Wikingeston |
| Wiggenston | | Wykinggestonne |
| Wyggeston | | Wigingeston |
| Wiggeston | | Wykingstone |

Wykeston                                    Wixton
Wikeston                                    Wigston (Magna) 1453
Wigston (Parva) 1610


The meaning of Wigston Parva is not entirely straightforward. The second element is clear; it is the OE 'stan' which means 'STONE'. As the settlement is only half a mile away from the Roman settlement of Venonae the 'stone' could be the mile stone or perhaps gravestone. It is the meaning of the first element that is in some doubt' it could be a personal name 'Wicg' or 'Wicga' giving 'Wicga's'stone… or it could be derived from the OE 'wigga' which has various subtleties or meaning, one of which is a 'beetle' the other being 'something which wiggles'. If this latter is the case the 'stone' might have been a 'logan stone', that is a stone which is easily rocked or moved. Such an interpretation is fascinating; however, that the stone related to some Roman stone seems more probable. The discovery of a Roman fort at Venonae seems to add weight to this view.

The meaning of Wigston Magna is straightforward. It is a personal name 'Vikingr's-tun' (settlement). This name is derived from the OE word Viking meaning a 'pirate'

By the 16th century, the difference in meaning of the two Wigstons' was no longer obvious in either spelling or pronunciation, (we assume), this led to the suffixes Magna and Parva coming into use.

The list of place names gives a clear indication how the modern name of Wigston Magna came into being, however there were other variant spellings for it is important to remember that Wigston Magna was in fact two villages into one. A Danish settlement was superimposed upon an older Saxon settlement. Whist the modern name derives from one of these Scandinavian settlers…. 'Vikingr' the later differences in the Anglo-Saxon and Danish dialects led to different spellings and we assume different pronunciations.

Of the two settlements that made up historical Wigston, one 'Old Wigston' was clustered around St Wiston's nee Wolstan's church and the other around All Saints. When I was a boy the old folks always called St. Wistans the 'old church' and that area 'old Wigston'. There were in Medieval times two Manors and two manor houses. One manor was named Turville and one named Oxford, in 1140 King Stephen confirmed gifts of the churches. (Note the plural) of Wickingeston and Wiggeston to the priory of Lenton. This confirmed the recognition that Wigston was two villages in one.

Other spellings were the name Simon de Wykyngeston who in 1344 was an "ernemongere" and also went under the name Simon le Baylif, showing how confusion in names occurred. Other names include Henry Wygston in 1432, William Wigston of 1512, Wigston with Two Steeples in 1529. Use of the name has poignant phase as in 1590 on February 30th, a beggar was delivered of a baby and Parishioners named him Wigston.

One of the actual names of Wigston was sanctified for all times by the Wigston Hospital Charters. The earliest Charter dated 1170 – 80 still exists. The Hospital for twelve poor people of Leicester, still flourishes today. It was started by William Wigston of Leicester a descendant of the Wykyngeston

family who left Wigston about 1340. In 1516 land was purchased in Wigston and was added to other holdings to make a large estate… the rents of which went to maintain his charitable Hospital.

Much more could be said about the name Wigston, but I will conclude with something from more modern times. A nick name was granted letters patent … "Tangle Town"… this is in no way connected with the drift and variations of Wigston through the ages and Hoskins did not mention it, so it may slip back into oblivion and in any case I'll not write down its true origin as nick names can be cruel.

However, be proud you Wigstonian's, adopted or native, of your town's history and by your own efforts make posterity proud of what we've achieved……

Duncan Lucas

** Ed. Note… I wonder what the Anglo-Saxons called their settlement before that Danish fellow 'Vikingr' arrived and gave his name to the place?