

GREATER WIGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

White Gate Lodge, 97 Newton Lane, Wigston Magna, Leicester



BULLETIN 121

1st November 2021



SAMUEL BROUGHTON MATTHEWS 1847 – 1927

(See article on page 5)

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS JANUARY 2022 – DECEMBER 2022

19 JANUARY

WITCHCRAFT IN 17TH CENTURY
LEICESTERSHIRE
(POWERPOINT & PICTURES)

DR LEN HOLDEN

23 FEBRUARY

AGM
FOLLOWED BY SIGNIFICANT BUILDINGS
AND BLUE PLAQUES PART 2
(POWERPOINT & PICTURES)

PETER COUSINS

16 MARCH

WILLIAM FLINT –
LEICESTER ARCHITECT
(POWERPOINT & PICTURES)

MARK MITCHLEY

27 APRIL

A STORM IN A TEASHOP: THE
WAITRESSES' STRIKE OF 1908
(POWERPOINT & PICTURES)

DR ANN FEATHERSTONE

18 MAY

THE HISTORY OF MILESTONES
(POWERPOINT & PICTURES)

HELEN CRABTREE

15 JUNE

GUIDED TOUR OF LUTTERWORTH
CHURCH FOLLOWED BY A WALKING TOUR
OF HISTORIC LUTTERWORTH

JULY

NO MEETING

17 AUGUST

GUIDED TOUR OF LAMPORT HALL
AND VISIT TO THE GARDENS
FOLLOWED BY AFTERNOON TEA

21 SEPTEMBER

IN SEARCH OF DANIEL LAMBERT
(POWERPOINT & PICTURES)

PHILIPPA MASSEY

26 OCTOBER

THE MAGIC OF RADIO
(POWERPOINT & PICTURES)

BRIDGET BLAIR

16 NOVEMBER

FOXTON LOCKS AND INCLINED PLANE
(POWERPOINT & PICTURES)

MARY MATTS

14 DECEMBER *

CHRISTMAS EXTRAVAGANZA
"CHRISTMAS CRACKERS"
BY THE MARKET HARBOROUGH
SINGING GROUP
WITH NIBBLES & DRINKS

*Our Christmas Party for members and visitors will be £3 per person on the night towards refreshments.

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

All enquiries to: secretary@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk

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

email: bulletineditor@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk

four clear weeks before publication date.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Covid 19 has caused us all to look closely at how we do things and has changed our lives in many ways. Our meetings have started again with extra controls in place. Many of those who attended our first meeting in September were pleased with our efforts and the way in which our team coped. Thanks to all involved.

You will all have seen the alterations that we have had to make to our meeting programme and timings due to changes within the school and also changes to the way the school is managed during Half Term. I do hope you will all bear with us as we continue to bring you the monthly meetings with varied and interesting subjects.

Another change happening is with our Bulletin. Hannah Evans has provided an excellent service as Bulletin Editor. However, a change in her circumstances has meant that she can no longer continue in this role. I would like to thank Hannah for editing the Bulletin and wish her well for the future. The role of editor will be filled by Steve Marquis.

As our membership grows, now 180, we have had to make some operational changes in the way we distribute the Bulletin. I would like to thank all those who have agreed to receive their copy via e-mail.

I would like to thank the Committee for all the hard work in managing the changes with the least disruption to our normal operation. I look forward to seeing you at our Christmas meeting when there will be drinks and nibbles.

Mike Forryan

OBITUARY

We sadly announce the recent passing of one of our members - Brian Woodward who was a longstanding member of the Society and attended our monthly meetings regularly.

Our thoughts and condolences go out to his family.

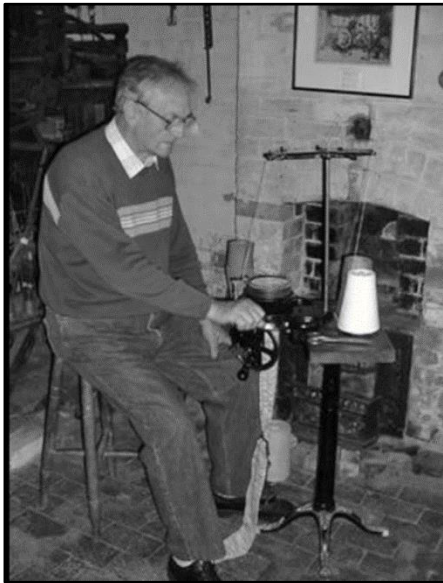
PLEASE NOTE:

Due to space restrictions in this issue, the serialisation of "Wiggy's Child" will continue in the next Bulletin.

HAVE YOU ANY STORIES TO TELL?
Please get writing and send your articles to:
bulletineditor@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk

In the first of an occasional article on local personalities we highlight the life of:

PETER CLOWES



Peter was born in Wigston Magna in 1928 and lived with his parents at the family home in Station Road. His brothers were Roy and Ivan. It is thought that he attended Bell Street School and then South Wigston Boys School where he became head boy.

His first job was as a projectionist during the war at the Magna Cinema where he slept on the red carpet whilst on fire watching duty. He returned to work there in 1948 after his National Service which was in the Grenadier Guards. During his time as a soldier he was a street liner outside Westminster Abbey for the wedding of the then Princess Elizabeth and he manned the telephone switchboard at Buckingham Palace as well as doing guard duty at the Bank of England.

He eventually joined his father and grandfather in the family carting business of Eli Bailey who was his great grandfather. The firm had hauled coal by horse and cart from South Wigston railway sidings to the gas works on Gas Lane in Wigston Magna since 1868. When the gas works closed in the 1950s he built up the retail side of the solid fuel business and became well known in Wigston and rural South Leicestershire.

On his marriage to Shirley in 1959 they took over, and lived above, the Magnet Stores shop in Bushloe End, just along the road from his family home. This shop was previously run by Len Burdett, it sold groceries and had a well-stocked sweet counter which tempted generations of children on their way to and from the schools further along Station Road. Shirley, who as a young woman was given the title by her mother of 'the unknown British beauty' had worked, since leaving school, at the Co-op store at the corner of Long Street and Central Avenue. When, newly married and keeping their own shop, they became local stars as the handsome former Grenadier Guardsman and his beautiful young wife.

Peter's uncle owned a farm on what we now know as Stonesby Avenue near the railway and he spent a lot of time helping out which increased his knowledge of rural matters and it was through this interest that he came to know local farmer and landowner Duncan Lucas.

Amongst his friends were the Freckingham family who lived in Newgate End and through their connection with the Master Hosiers house on Bushloe End he became a founding trustee on the establishment of the Wigston Framework Knitters Museum in 1989. He was also appointed the Honorary Curator, a position he enthusiastically retained until a few months before his death. Always interested in local history he had many tales to tell visitors to the museum and spent many hours learning how to operate one of the hand knitting frames preserved in the museum

workshop. He gave demonstrations of the skilled work involved in several films and TV documentaries. Also, he gave lessons to an interested teenager as part of her Duke of Edinburgh's award project.

Apart from his interest in local history, Peter had a large collection of Cranberry glass and was a photographer, he built up an extensive collection of slides showing the ever changing local scene which he used to give talks to raise much needed money for the museum. The collection is retained by the family. He was the Borough Council's Citizen of the Year in 2010. In recognition of his contribution to local heritage conservation he was awarded the MBE in 2012. Peter passed away on 28 September 2014 aged 86.

Article by Colin Towell with help from Shirley and input from an article in the FWK Bulletin number 55.

SAMUEL BROUGHTON MATTHEWS (SAMUEL 4) 1847 – 1927 HIS FAMILY THROUGH FIVE GENERATIONS

Samuel Broughton Matthews' family can be traced back to his great grandparents Samuel (1) and Hannah Matthews whose son Samuel (2) was born on 21/4/1791. The family lived in the St. Margaret's area of Leicester. Samuel (2) at some point moved to Oadby where on 6/6/1814 he married Dorothy Bettoney, also of Oadby, at the parish church. Samuel (2) was a woollen hosier and the couple lived in Black Dog Lane. They were to have eight children. The eldest child Samuel (3) was born on 7/12/1816 in Oadby but actually baptised on 15/5/1817 at Wigston Independent Church in Long Street, now renamed The United Reformed Church.

The 1841 census shows Samuel (3) still living at the family home in Oadby and working as a painter. By 1846 he had moved to Wigston where he was both a painter and an engraver mainly of burial headstones. On 14/4/1846 at Kilby Church he married Sarah Broughton. Sarah had been baptised on 26/8/1827 and was the daughter of Joshua Broughton a carpenter and his first wife Mary nee Asher. Sarah was only 19 years old at the time while Samuel (3) was aged 29, so quite an age difference. The couple lived in Leicester Road, and by 1851 had a son Samuel Broughton Matthews, (Samuel 4) aged 4, and a daughter Sarah Ann Matthews under 12 months old. Also living with them was a nephew Thomas Matthews described as an apprentice, who was being trained by Samuel (3). Ten years later in 1861 Samuel (3) and Sarah had a family of seven children, two sons (Samuel 4) by then aged 14 and already working as a painter and Walter H. Matthews aged 8 together with five daughters. As well as painting buildings Samuel (3) was a very talented artist and produced an impressive self-portrait still in the possession of the family.

Samuel (3) very sadly died on 15/12/1866 aged only 50. He is buried at Welford Road Cemetery, Wigston. Five years on and the 1871 census lists Sarah as a widow aged 44 working as a painter. Her son Samuel (4) aged 24 was still a painter and the family also employed a boy to assist them. Samuel (4's) brother Walter by then 18 was also a painter, and the five daughters were all still at home and had jobs, except the youngest who at 10 years old was still a scholar.

Samuel (4) had been born in Wigston in 1847. The family lived at 38/40, Leicester Road and in 1875 he married Elizabeth Loveday, a dressmaker, who lived next door at 42, Leicester Road. Elizabeth had been born in 1841 to George and Mary Loveday. Her father was a prominent businessman described as a grazier of 85 acres and also a manufacturer of woollen jackets. The couple were to have three daughters, Helen, Margaret and Kathleen.

Their father Samuel (4) was plainly a very hard working and public-spirited man. He continued to run his late father's business which as well as the painting and engraving also came to include plumbing and gas fitting. He did a lot of work for the board schools being built at the time, and painted the newly built Lee & Glen hosiery factory in 1885 (later known as Two Steeples), and was also responsible for repairs to the Blaby Isolation Hospital in 1897. He had customers in Oadby too, and occupied a building on London Road, presumably to store tools and equipment.

Away from his work he built a Village Hall in Frederick Street, with caretakers' house adjoining. This was situated near the top of the street on the right. He was the one and only secretary until putting it up for sale in 1891. In the days before there was any kind of official help and advice for expectant and new mothers, he set up a welfare clinic for them. This was run by an experienced group of local ladies under the guidance of midwives and doctors. In 1904 he was elected chairman of the Wigston Magna Evening Schools Committee which met at Bell Street Infant School. The curriculum for the classes including reading, writing, shorthand, needlework, cookery, book-keeping and domestic economy. Perhaps his biggest commitment was to the United Reformed Church where he was a lifelong member. When he retired in 1905 after over 40 years of active involvement, mostly working with the children, he was presented with an illuminated address by the teachers in recognition of his valuable and willing service.

His wife Elizabeth died on 15/1/1908 which must have been a great blow. He died on 11/5/1927, it seems he was taken ill quite suddenly as he had signed his Will only the previous day. They are both buried in Welford Road Cemetery, Wigston. There is a window at the back of the United Reformed Church which reads: "Samuel Broughton Matthews, Teacher, Superintendent, Deacon and Treasurer for 60 years, and Elizabeth his wife who from a child worshipped here".

Helen Matthews was the eldest daughter of Samuel and Elizabeth Matthews and was born on 14/3/1876 in Wigston. She was a talented photographer and music teacher. On 4/3/1903 at the United Reformed Church she married Bertrand Hassall son of Henry and Ellen Hassall. Bertrand was born on 7/1/1879 and worked as a commercial traveller for a flour company. Bertrand and Helen were both much involved with the Wigston Operatic Society, which put on many performances and events at the Co-operative Rooms at the time. Helen played the piano accompaniment and Bertrand often took an acting role too.

The couple had the one child, a daughter named Dorothy born in 1904, but she very tragically died aged only 24 on 15/10/1928 of Sleeping Sickness, an uncommon illness more officially named Encephalitis Lethargica. At the time the 1939 Register was compiled (a population survey in the early days of WW11) Bertrand and Helen were living at Uplands, 162, Mere Road, Wigston. Also resident with them was Kathleen Peck nee Matthews, Helen's youngest sister by then a widow. By 1952 the trio had moved to 55, Mere Road and had moved again to 33, Mere Road by

the time of Bertrand's death on 3/2/1960. Helen and Kathleen continued to live together in Mere Road for many years, eventually moving to the Grange Nursing Home in Saddington where Helen died on 17/4/1972.

Margaret Matthews was the second daughter of Samuel and Elizabeth Matthews and was born on 3/5/1880. She was a teacher of cookery and ran technical classes before her marriage. On 11/12/1907 at the United Reformed Church, Wigston she married John Alfred Broughton, a son of John Daykin Broughton and his wife Ann. J D Broughton had established a hosiery factory in Bell Street and John Alfred worked there. The couple set up home locally before moving to the newly built Beech House, 56 Aylestone Lane, demolished in 1974 and a care home now on the site.

Margaret Broughton took over the role of leading the Wigston District Nursing Association from her father and continued until the NHS was founded. She was actually hosting a meeting of the group at her home on 4th February 1946, when the ill-fated Lancaster plane on fire and completely out of control made a final turn and careered overhead setting the roof on fire, shattering many windows, and dropping a tyre off one of the landing wheels in the garden, before crashing on open ground, now the site of All Saints C of E Primary School. Dr. Longford who lived at the Manor House in Long Street vaulted over his garden wall (which adjoined Beech House garden at that time) to see if the ladies were all right. Fortunately they were, apart from shock. By this time Margaret was a widow, her husband having died on 22/12/1943 and her three daughters Margaret Elizabeth Broughton, Jean Loveday Broughton and Hazel Matthews Broughton having all left home. Margaret Broughton died on 25/6/1960 in Manchester at the home of her 2nd daughter Jean Loveday Friedlander, she was buried with her husband at Welford Road Cemetery, Wigston.

Kathleen Matthews was the youngest daughter of Samuel and Elizabeth Matthews and was born on 27/10/1884. As she grew up she became attached to Walter Peck, a young man born on 19/7/1876 in Kibworth, the family later moving to Wigston where his father ran a greengrocery business. Walter himself was an upholsterer and cabinet maker. In about 1912 he decided to emigrate to Australia. Kathleen went out to join him and they married in 1913 in Sydney. She returned to England to visit her family sailing from Sydney and arriving in London on 7/7/1920. The passenger list describes her as aged 31, a wife but travelling alone. Another journey was more final, when she arrived in Southampton on 18/4/1938, she was by then a widow, though when Walter died is uncertain. She does not appear to have had any children. Kathleen started what was to be a long residence with her brother in law Bertrand and sister Helen. She died at the Grange Nursing Home, Saddington on 28/12/1974.

Tricia Berry

A photograph on the February page of this year's GWHS calendar shows the scale of the damage caused to Beech House when the Lancaster flew over on 4th February 1946 (75 years ago). About 100 properties were damaged on that fateful day.

JUST IN TIME
WRITTEN BY PETER MASTIN C 1995

A traveller journeying through Wigston at the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign would have found it a depressed and depressing village. It had passed, like the rest of the country in the 1830's, through troubled times.

The main street pattern, a rectangle of four main roads, was much as today. There were some elegant buildings of the 18th century such as the Manor House and the Elms, while Dr Longford's house and Wigston Hall had been recently built. Fronting the streets were some timber-framed and brick-built farmhouses of the 17th and 18th centuries, now abandoned as such and divided up into two or three parts as homes for separate families, while here and there in yards and ends were short terraces of red brick cottages built by speculators to house those who had come to seek work as framework knitters.

The two churches, an independent chapel of 1731 and a row of Georgian alms-houses lent an air of solidity to the village, though St Wolstan's Church was in a bad state of repair with a barn and stable built into its nave and its spire leaning dangerously over the cottages that surrounded the churchyard.

Our traveller would have a choice of fifteen public houses and beer shops in which to quench his thirst, and if he had entered one of them, he would have overheard the views and exchanged the news of the day.

Undoubtedly this would have been a tale of woe from most of those present, for they had much to complain of, and times were hard. Unemployment was widespread, and with it poverty and disease, especially consumption, and high infant mortality. Of the 483 families in the village, 208 were in regular receipt of Poor Rate relief and 150 of occasional relief.

Some blamed the Enclosures which, in their grandfathers' days, had taken much common grazing and woodland from the peasants forcing them to sell out to new men who enlarged their farms and in place of grain put down grass for the more profitable sheep. That started the unemployment, for 40 labourers could cultivate Wigston's 3,000 acres, whereas 3 times as many were needed for the old open field, with both grain and grass.

In order to support the unemployed, landowners had to pay poor rates at roughly £1 per acre to the Poor Rate Board, as well as other taxes. They were then so impoverished that they could not afford to hire labourers to keep their land in order. Who would want to buy or rent land so heavily rated?

The whole parish, despite its land of excellent quality, was going out of cultivation. There was not even enough corn to feed the village.

Others would tell the traveller that it had all been made worse by large numbers of people with their big families coming in from other parishes to get work in the framework knitting industry, the main occupation in the village. Not that you could get a living wage at that, even if you worked 12 hours a day. It had been all right during the war with the French when knitted garments were in demand for the army and the navy, but now that market had collapsed and fashions had begun to change to long trousers, the only alternative was poor relief.

You could do fairly well out of the magistrates at one time, 5 shillings for men and women, 1/6d for each child, but a new Act had said that in future you could only get relief by going into a workhouse and anything would be better than that. Husbands, wives and children were separated, strict discipline enforced, and the poorest food provided.

The traveller must have been glad to get away from such human misery, common throughout the land among working people. Yet there were signs of change, and his keen eye might have noticed the beginning of buildings in 1839 that expressed a desire for a better life: a Mechanics institute on The Bank, a single storey Wesleyan chapel at the top of Mill Lane and a National (Church) school in Long Street. All reflected national movements towards change.

If he had gone off to the west, an even more startling change might have met the traveller's eye: a glimpse of the extension from the town of Leicester of the Midland Counties railway which was to open the following year with a station at Wigston. Neither he, nor the companions he had drunk with could possibly have imagined what benefits were to emerge over the next 40 years from that and other similar constructions. Changes were coming to Wigston, and to all England.

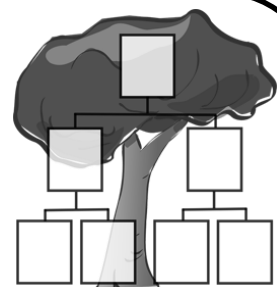
Just in Time!

FAMILY HISTORY COURSE 2021

IN JANUARY 2022 WE ARE STARTING A SIX WEEK FAMILY HISTORY RESEARCH "STARTER" COURSE AT THE HERITAGE CENTRE ON TUESDAY MORNINGS. IT WILL BE A "MODULAR" COURSE, AND EACH WEEK WILL COVER A DIFFERENT ASPECT OF RESEARCH FROM HOW TO START, THROUGH BIRTH MARRIAGE AND DEATH REGISTRATION, CENSUS RETURNS, MILITARY HISTORY AND BEYOND.

YOU ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND THE COMPLETE COURSE OR JUST THE COMPONENT YOU WISH TO LEARN ABOUT. FOR DETAILS GO THE WEBSITE PAGE AS BELOW OR CALL 07702 127313

wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk/Family-History-Course.html



ADMIRAL SPORTSWEAR

BERT PATRICK 26/2/1934 – 13/12/2020

Bert was the owner of Admiral Sportswear from 1958, and he recently passed away. The company was originally founded by Christopher Cook and Harold Hurst in 1903 as a hosiery company, based in Long Street. Harold had been an apprentice with the Two Steeples textile firm in Wigston.

Once set up, Cook and Hurst began operating from a small building where 12 local employees worked 8 machines to manufacture high quality wool underwear for men, women and children for summer and winter wear.

1914 – The Admiral brand was formed. Due to their growing reputation, Cook and Hurst built a larger factory next to the original one and manufactured underwear for the military in support of the First World War effort. They started producing exercise clothing for the Royal Navy, and the 'Admiral' brand came into being and the trademark of the admiral's head signified superiority and high quality British manufacturing.

1922 – The 'Admiral' trademark was registered and by the 1930's they were manufacturing a wide range of interlock sportswear and bathing costumes for adults and children. The Company continued to supply the Royal Navy for their sporting activities and supplied them with white and blue rugby shirts.

1939 – The Company continued to supply the military for both British and American forces and manufactured sportswear for the forces until the 1970's.

1956 - Bert Patrick joined the Company. He was born in Newcastle in 1934 and attended Loughborough College school from 1944 – 49. He was a journalist on the Leicester Evening Mail from 1949 – 52, and from 1952 – 54 he was an Army Public Relations Observer during the Suez Campaign.

1958– Bert Patrick purchased the Cook and Hurst Company for £34,000. He decided to reinvent it and make changes. He replaced the Admiral head artwork with a new modern logo, and Oakley Young Associates designed it, based on the stripe-laden insignia of the admiral navy rank, as worn on the sleeve cuffs of an admiral's uniform. This is now the classic Admiral logo that we all know.

1960– Admiral became a sportswear brand and Bert Patrick decided it was necessary to move into the Sportswear market. The machinery and sportswear manufacturing expertise was already there in the factory and they could adapt to the modern market and expand the product range. In the early 1960's the Cheshire-based brand 'Bukta' was short on production capability and Admiral was approached to help with the production of rugby shirts.

1966 – Admiral designed a new style of lightweight interlock football jersey for the World Cup England team. It had built-in elasticsation in the neck and cuffs for comfort and to help retain its shape. It was produced in Wigston and unbranded. Gordon Banks, the Leicester City goalkeeper, chose to wear the new shirt during the 1965-66 season as well as for the World Cup matches. He received no payment for this, but wore it for its quality.

1971 And onwards – Admiral expanded into rugby sportswear and other sports clothing. They were the outfitters for the British Lions Tour of New Zealand.

1972 Factory No. 2 opened in Market Harborough and this coincided with the advent of the visibly branded copyright football kits.

1973 Don Revie from Leeds United Football Club enlisted Admiral to design a new away kit and tracksuit for his club. These were very popular and replica versions were put on sale for the general public and this kick-started the replica kit market. At that time colour TV offered a new way to market football clubs by wearing radically designed kits on the pitch and then selling these to fans supporting their clubs, and especially to children.

1974 Admiral supplied the England kit for the World Cup and it featured the Admiral logo. This was controversial at the time.

1975 More football clubs were now supplied by Admiral for their shirts and bolder designs were used, also on shorts, socks and tracksuits. These were all very popular with children and other manufacturers began to follow Admiral's lead. Wigston children used to go around wearing some of the kits their mums made in the factory. They were highly skilled women who worked there and it was a very family-orientated workforce. Young girls would work alongside their mums and even grandmothers. Bert Patrick introduced the concept of workers initiatives and best performing staff would be rewarded in some way.

1980 and 1982 Football and other sportswear were now very popular, especially abroad and in the US. Admiral supplied the Tour de France Cycle winners in 1980 and also the 1982 World Cup kit for England which was very popular in the adult size.

From 1989 Admiral had contracts to supply the England Cricket Team (2000 – 08) and other teams in those years.

2003 Admiral supplied cricket kits for England, West Indies, Canada and South Africa for the World Cup series and in 2005 the England Cricket Team won the Ashes and the Admiral kits were seen by millions of cricket fans.

Competition from the SE Asia areas was now making things difficult for Admiral – they could produce similar clothing and kits much cheaper but Bert Patrick was reluctant to make his workforce redundant. He managed to get contracts with Corah in Leicester who worked with Marks and Spencer, but that did not work out and Corah folded.

The 'Admiral' trademark was acquired by Hay and Robertson and the ownership was transferred to International Brand Licencing plc and in 2011 Admiral Sportswear Ltd acquired the rights of the 'Admiral' trademark.

2020 The Admiral Sporting Goods Company was launched.

Today vintage replicas of football shirts and kit are part of an ever-growing collectors' market – many of these being produced by the Admiral Company over the years.

After Admiral, Bert Patrick continued to work on new ventures including sports and leisure clothing. He was a member of the City of London Olympic bid committee in 1985.

In 1984 Bert and his son Shaun Patrick founded Notts Sports – a specialist company in the design and supply of synthetic surface systems for sport, play and leisure and based in Ashby Magna.

2014 Bert Patrick published his book – ‘Admiral: Kit man: All for the shirt’ (ISBN: 9781783063864). This gave an insight into Bert and his involvement with Admiral over the years.

2016 A documentary film was made about Admiral Sportswear called ‘Get Shirty’ (The Story of Admiral: the world famous English football kit manufacturer). The cast included Bert and his team, and also past footballers who wore the kit over the years, including Peter Shilton, etc. Sadly, there was a huge fire at the empty factory premises the day after the programme was shown on the television on 23rd September 2016.

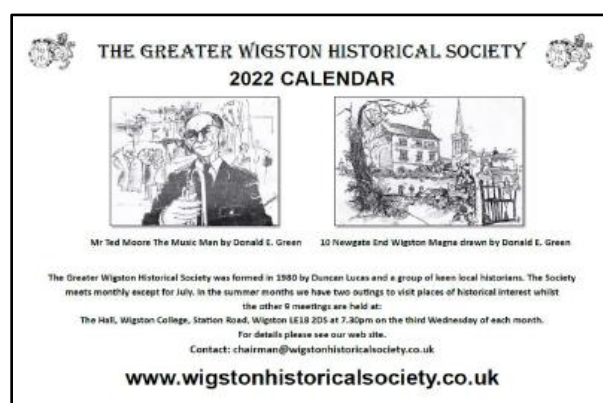
2016 Planning permission was granted to build flats on the Admiral Factory site using part of the old building. This project is still underway in Jan 2021.

Bert Patrick lived in Burton Overy with his wife, Elizabeth (known affectionately as Betty) and had many connections with the village and church activities. He was a season ticket holder at Leicester City Football Club and attended matches with his friends. Bert also enjoyed playing tennis.

Research – Admiral Sportswear website and various ‘Google’ searches for Bert Patrick and Admiral Sportswear. (Limited research due to the ‘COVID 19’ Coronavirus situation and no access to the Library or Record Office while researching this article).

Ailsa Whalley Jan 2021

**DON'T FORGET TO GET
YOUR GWHS
2022 CALENDAR
AT ONLY £5 PER COPY**



**Available at the Heritage Centre and at our monthly meetings.
Or call 0116 2884638 for collection in Wigston.**

JOE WYNALL - A LOCAL CHARACTER

Joe Wynall was indeed a character with his own brand of humour. He worked in the trim-shop of J. D. Broughtons and in a period of short time working arrived home early to find his wife out, the fire out and his meal not ready. The third time this happened, having a good idea where his spouse might be spending her time, rushed out of the house shouting Fire!! Fire!! Fire!! His wife came dashing out of a neighbour's house crying Where!! Where!! Where!!. Joe calmly replied "In any silly b_gg_rs house but ours"

A WARTIME WEDDING STORY

Brenda Garner has kindly allowed us to reproduce a short story written by her mother Peggy Russell about the preparations and wedding to Harry Slaney. Setting the background, Brenda has given us a short overview to the family: -

My late Mum Peggy nee Russell was born at 9 Cherry St Wigston in 1922, she was the second daughter to Annie nee Bolton born in Manor Street and George Charles Russell born at no 4 Mowsley End. The house in Cherry Street was a 3-bed terraced house where they grew vegetables, flowers and raised chickens, when Peggy was about 5 years old, they moved to 23 Cedar Avenue, an end of terrace council house which had 2 bedrooms, but had an inside bathroom! It overlooked the fields where Horsewell Lane estate was built.

Peggy's paternal line goes back to Thomas Russell who died in Wigston in 1796 her line includes many familiar Wigston names Boulter, Vann, Findley, Walker, her maternal line goes back to Richard Dand/Dann 1595 in Wigston. She went to the Long Street National School where she said the teachers used to stand with their backs to the fire warming their bottoms and if they didn't like you, you were made to sit on the front row. Her best friend at school was Nancy Painter, she started work at Wigston Laundry at the of 14. She had applied for a job in the office but Betty Warnby got in first, so she ended up in the packing department she was paid 10s and 3d a week. She left in 1936 to join the Woman's Land Army.

My Dad's link to Wigston started at his birth in 1918 at 77 Countesthorpe Road, the house was opposite Timber Street. After he was born the family moved on to a rented house at 51 Station Street, he attended Bassett St. School and he loved sport and played Rugby for the school. He left school at 14 to work at Blacks Shoe Factory on Saffron Road South Wigston, he was paid 10s and 6d per week, he left Blacks Shoe Company when he was called up to serve in the Leicestershire Regiment in 1939 - 1946 he served with the 2nd Battalion during World War Two in Palestine, Egypt, Crete, Ceylon, India and Burma where he was part of the special forces The Chindits. His paternal family Slaney's came from Checketts Road, Belgrave, Leicester and his maternal line came from Blaby the Spicer Family.

The story below describes my Mum's recollection of their meeting and marriage during wartime. There were 93 guests from Mum's family and 5 from my Dad's! The group photograph shows left to right, Bridesmaid Cousin Doreen Cundy nee Bolton, unknown Bridesmaid, Grooms Sister Millie Wordsworth, Grooms Mother Elizabeth (Lizzie) Slaney nee Spicer, Grooms Father, the Bride and Groom, George Russell Brides Father, Annie Russell nee Bolton, Bridesmaid Doris Statham nee Kane, Brides sister Mary Edwards nee Russell, Bridesmaid Cousin Iris Dunkley, nee Bolton, Brides brother Jack Russell. The two small bridesmaids 2nd Cousin Gillian Dallas nee Freestone and Niece Christine Edwards.



They started married life in a rented house in Station Street South Wigston, which they eventually bought, they then moved to Richmond Drive and then Alderleigh Road, Glen Parva where they brought up their 2 children Brian and Brenda, and later in life they moved to sheltered accommodation in Jasmine Court, where spookily their flat was situated where my Dad's work bench had been when he worked for Black's Shoes.

Their final years were spent together at Amberwood Residential Home on Aylestone Lane. They were married for 58 years.

35-337 Wedding of Harry Slaney & Peggy Russell
Armistice Day 1944 - Wedding Reception was at the
Constitutional Hall Wigston Magna

It was 1931 in the summer at a cricket match when I met my future lady. Soon after was rooming in the next few months and was Harry was 20. He had to register either as a Beaver Boy in the Mines or join the Forces in the October. He passed his medical A1 so he was called up and had to report for duty. He was posted to an Infantry Battalion. The distance about 600 yards up the Road - Glen Parva Barracks. 6 weeks training to defend yourself and kill the enemy. He was posted overseas place unknown. So an engagement ring was to be bought although I was only 17. My dad said O.K. then with only 3 days notice I developed tonsillitis and lost my voice. So Harry had to approach to Richards the jeweller in High Street to get the ring. We cut a hole in a piece of cardboard that fitted my finger. For the size I described what sort of ring I wanted a solitaire. Four 1/2 years later he came back from abroad 3 weeks leave before he went away for 2 more years in Germany. So I in about 10 days I had to arrange the wedding, going to Warwick for a special license not 7/6 £3 or £4. See the Post Warham relative at the Wigston Cones LONG STREET to arrange the Wedding Service. First I had to collect clothing coupons from relatives and friends for my wedding dress. Had adult bridesmaids and 2 young bridesmaids Mrs Bellina of B. Wood North and St. Westons Road who the dress maker she had to work hard to get them done.

When again like the engagement ring, I did not try my wedding ring on as Harry bought mine in Bangalore Southern India 22 carats. It was difficult to get 22 carats in England in war time a lot of 18 carat rings were made. My wedding reception was held at the Constitutional Hall. The group did the catering food was not plentiful. Said I believe probably SPAN was being the meat. I had a wedding cake but it was not iced being war time the sugar not available white paper or cardboard was the substitute with the wedding decoration on top. Everything went well until guests tried to find their seats. I had made name cards and set them out on the tables in the right order for the top table and also trying to sit relations and friends will care. This was the marriage, wedding 1944. Unfortunately a few of my young cousins were there with their mothers doing games on the tables and a set of two boys in particular apparently had enjoyed a lovely game of snook the name cards after I had left. Slight chaos for a few minutes when the guests noticed. The wedding was on Nov 11th Armistice Day. As all my relations lived at Wigston I went to my friends mother cousin at Alderleigh Road South Wigston Birmingham for a few days honeymoon. Travel was not encouraged and Birmingham Rail Station had been bombed also as we passed along in the bus we could not help but see the H.P. Saviour Society at Birmingham had been devastated by bombs. Wedding Present included 6 WATERS sets (class 1946 - 62 YEARS LATER. Harry was demobbed March 1946 - 62 YEARS LATER. I DID NOT SEE HARRY UNTIL 2004 - BRIGHTON AIRPORT METEOR CAMP.

The above pages are reproduced below for easy reading:-



It was 1939 in the summer at a cricket match when I met my better half. Soon after war was looming in the next few months and as Harry was 20 he had to register either as a Bevin Boy in the mines or join the forces in the October. He passed his medical A1 so he was called up and had to report for duty and he was posted to an Infantry Battalion. The Leicester's about 600 yards up the Road – Glen Parva Barracks. 6 weeks training learning to defend yourself and kill the enemy, he was to be posted overseas, place unknown. So, an engagement ring was to be bought although I was only 17. My dad said O.K. then with only 3 days notice I developed tonsillitis and lost my voice. So, Harry had to go on his own to Richardson the Jewellers in High Street to get the ring. We cut a hole in a piece of cardboard that fitted my finger, for the size, and I decided what sort of ring, I wanted a solitaire. 4½ years later he came back from abroad 3 weeks leave before he went away for 2 more years in Germany.

So, in about 10 days I had to arrange the wedding, going to Narborough for a special licence not 7/6d but £3 or £4. See the Rev. Welham Clarke at the Wigston Congs in Long Street to arrange the Wedding Service. First, I had to collect clothing coupons from relatives and friends for my wedding dress, 4 adult bridesmaids and 2 young bridesmaids. Mrs Belliss of Church Nook near St Wistan's Church was the dressmaker. She had to work hard to get them done.

Then again like the engagement ring, I did not try my wedding ring on as Harry bought mine in Bangalore India 22 carats, it was difficult to get 22 carats in England in war time. A lot of 18 carat rings were on sale.

My wedding reception was held at the Constitutional Hall. The Co-op did the catering – food was not plentiful. Salad I believe probably Spam being the meat. I had a wedding cake but it was not iced being war time the sugar not available – white paper and cardboard was the substitute with the wedding decorations on top.

Everything went well until the guests tried to find their seats. I had made name cards and set them out on the tables in the right order for the top table and also trying to sit relations and friends with care, this was in the morning. Wedding 2-30. Unfortunately, a few of my young cousins were there with their mothers doing flowers on the tables and a set of twin boys in particular apparently had enjoyed a lovely game of swap the name cards after I had left. Slight chaos for a few minutes when the guests arrived. The wedding was on Nov. 11th Armistice Day.

As all my relatives lived in Wigston I went to my friend's mothers at Alum Rock Saltley Birmingham for a few days honeymoon. Travelling was not encouraged, and Birmingham Railway Station had been bombed also as we passed along on the bus we could not help but see the H. P. Sauce factory at Birmingham had been devastated by bombs. Wedding presents included 6 Water sets (Glass Jug and 6 Tumblers). Harry was demobbed March 8th, 1946 - 6½ years later. I did visit him by Racing Cycle – Leics to Rugby – Daventry Moreton Camp.

MEETING REPORTS - ALL REPORTS BY COLIN TOWELL

MAY 2021: AN INTRODUCTION TO WALL PAINTINGS IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

Meetings with large attendances remained banned during May 2021 and so another lecture by Zoom was arranged, this time by Dr Miriam Gill who is a local expert on medieval paintings. Miriam commenced by telling us that, encouraged by her father, another well-known local historian, she has been interested in medieval art since the age of 10 and was now teaching adult learners.

Although there are only a few examples of medieval wall paintings in Leicestershire (see later) one of the nearest is at Longthorpe Tower near Peterborough. This example, circa 1330, is currently undergoing restoration by English Heritage but is the most important set of medieval domestic wall paintings in northern Europe. A scene in a curved alcove seat shows a woman teaching a boy in front of her.

There are different types of wall paintings. Fresco is a technique whereby colours are applied to wet plaster and tend to be of an 'egg and bacon' palette with mixtures of red and yellow mixed to create other colours. As the plaster itself has to be wet, only a small section of the wall can be painted at a time and this is often very clear to see such as at Clayton, Sussex dated to 1100-1120.

The other type of wall painting is called Secco where paint is applied to dry plaster, this allows a wider variety of colours to be used. Boiled oil and egg yolk were added to secure the colour. A good example is at Kempsey in Gloucester, a remote Norman church. Here there is a 'wheel of life' dating from the 13th century and in the barrel vaulted chancel roof a picture of Christ seated on a rainbow. This was discovered only in 1872 when Reformation whitewash was removed.

Local examples are at Cold Overton where there is a Eucharistic nativity dated c1300 and at Lutterworth where an interpretation of the 'three living and the three dead' may be seen. Here half or more of the original was covered over by the Victorians who considered the subject matter too extreme such as dead bodies, hell, demons, naked souls or of a catholic nature. However, the Victorian church restorer George Gilbert Scott wanted to establish, in his 1869 project, the link with John Wycliffe and he restored this painting but left out the questionable parts of the original.

Many medieval paintings were destroyed as a result of an injunction by King Edward VI in 1547 that Deans and Archdeacons MUST remove all wall paintings and items of idolatry and superstition. So, the inside walls of churches were whitewashed over. However, eventually the paintings showed through the whitewash and this attracted William Morris who, in 1877, founded the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB). Original conservationists were not successful often causing more damage when they used varnish or even beeswax to protect paintings but this usually sealed in moisture instead of allowing it to be released and attracted dust. St Christopher, the patron saint of travellers is a popular wall painting subject, usually placed on the wall opposite to the main entrance so it was the first thing a visitor witnessed. Inglesham in Wiltshire is a good example.

Another local example, but in Rutland, is at Stoke Dry, a church associated with the Gunpowder plot but also with amazing examples of wall paintings. One shows the martyrdom of St Edmond when he was killed by arrows shot at him by what looks like a man with a feathered headdress similar to those worn by native North American Indians. This clearly could not be so and in medieval times such figures were often used to portray people who were evil and needed to be shown in a bad light. Another wall painting at the church shows St Andrew holding his heart.

Who painted these works? Often not recorded or the records have been lost, but Hugh of St Albans is a known expert. They were often paid for by the local priest or Lord of the Manor, often in repentance of some wrongful act. Many more examples were given and this was an altogether fascinating lecture, professionally delivered by an expert.

JUNE 2021: THE MOUNTSORREL QUARRY AND RAILWAY

Our original plan for a summer visit to Lutterworth for this meeting was cancelled because of the pandemic lockdown regulations but fortunately Mark Temple's talk on the Mountsorrel Quarry and Railway came to our notice, he willingly agreed to present it on Zoom. The meeting was attended by well over 25 members and four visitors.

The site is based on a visitor centre at Mountsorrel consisting of refurbished old quarry buildings which have been extended to consist of a café and information room. There are also two nature trails, engine sheds, workshops, a model railway and crazy golf as well as a new platform on the complex. (including ample parking).

Mark's talk was split into two sections dealing firstly with the history of the quarry and secondly the story of the original railway serving the quarry and how it was brought back into use.

There is evidence that the local granite was worked in 500BC possibly making milling stones or querns. The granite in this area contains pink hues and was in great demand. It was used in the construction of Mountsorrel Castle in 1080 (demolished in 1217) and then in local domestic buildings. It is known that there were about 40 such dwellings in the area in Tudor times incorporating the traditional half timbering. Many of these were demolished in 1959 to enable the widening of the main A6 through the village (now bypassed). The 18th century surge in road building created new demand although the quality of the road surfaces was very poor, possibly worse than Roman roads but the onset of the use of tar macadam again increased demand in the 19th century.

In 1803 the Earl of Lanesborough bought the area from Sir John Danvers and developed various quarries with Hawcliffe and Buddon Wood opening in 1821. Subsequently the Martin family of the Brand, in Woodhouse, joined the organisation and used their business skills to expand the quarry. Nunckley Hill (the base for the Visitor Centre and railway) opened in 1854 with 200 men being employed. A lasting legacy of those early days is the 12.30pm blast which is still used today.

In the second half of the 19th century the quarry expanded as did the internal railways of many gauges depending on their use. In the 1870s a hospital was built especially for the employees who grew bushy moustaches to help prevent them breathing in the terrible dust. They drank

great quantities of beer as well. The quarried stone was dressed by experts working in rows of open fronted sheds but machinery was used to crush the stone and later to add tar for road purposes.

Many quarry men joined up in WWI and 73 employees were killed. A war memorial designed by Shirley Harrison (male) who also designed the De Montfort Hall was built using local stone. After being affected by the 1920's depression demand picked up again during WWII, the stone being used to create airfield runways.

Mountsorrel Quarries were absorbed into Redland in 1960 and at a peak of production in 1989 by Lafarge and then Tarmac. Today only 150 men are employed to produce 4m tonnes a year (but there are 160m tonnes still to be quarried). The massive holes are some 20 metres below sea level!

Having used the canals to get the stone out to customers in the early days the development of the national railway infrastructure opened up new opportunities. Firstly a north eastern link to the nearby Midland Mainline at Barrow was approved by Act of Parliament. Later a south western link was proposed to join the newly constructed Great Central Line. The engineer for this extension was the local and still practising firm of Pick Everard. The entire length of the quarry line then became 3.5 miles.

In 1964 the Mountsorrel railway closed and the track was removed. The track and the Nunckley quarry site became derelict and overgrown. A local proposal to re-establish the south western link to the GCR was initially turned down but, when the GCR itself saw this as an opportunity to expand its operation, they supported the idea and in 2007 work commenced using volunteer labour. With the help of Lafarge, which supplied and laid 3500 tonnes of stone for the track bed and other materials and equipment, free of charge, and many other donations of money and materials, the line and new station were formally opened in 2015. Meanwhile engines and rolling stock had been acquired and restored.

Work on the Heritage Centre started in April 2015 incorporating three historic quarry buildings. It was opened in April 2016 and visited by Prince Charles early the following year.

I have previously visited the site and it is well worth it even if the actual trains are not running. The exhibition is very informative and the café is brilliant. A booklet about the project gives an enormous amount of detail about the work involved and shows what can be done by a determined group of volunteers. This was a fascinating talk with a wealth of old quarry and train photographs.

AUGUST 2021: AFTERNOON CONDUCTED TOUR OF HOBY VILLAGE

It was a cool, blustery but dry afternoon when just under thirty members and friends met at All Saints Church in Hoby in the Wreake Valley for a conducted tour of the village to be followed by tea and cakes in a private garden. The weather was a slight improvement on the traditional Society summer visit conditions but it was absolutely brilliant for us to be together again after

the 18 months of Covid restrictions on meetings. The event was led by members of Hoby and District Local History Society incorporating the villages of Rotherby, Ragdale and Brooksby.

We gathered in the church itself for an introductory talk when we learned of the work that the Society had undertaken to celebrate the centenary of WWI which culminated in the production of an illustrated leaflet, which we were each given, identifying the location of the homes around the village of those who did not return from the war. We were then split into two groups for the tour which, despite the comparatively peaceful village surroundings, benefited from the portable loudspeaker systems used by the guides. Hoby is not on the main road but it was surprising how much traffic used the main street including speeding cyclists and big agricultural machinery not to mention contract gardeners.

Nearly 80 men from the village went to war and sadly 12 did not return. One of the most poignant parts of the project was to ring a half muffled peal on the church bells on the anniversary of each man's death. Quite an achievement and it must have had a massive effect on villagers and local farmworkers 100 years after the event. There are 5 bells in the tower with the latest renovation work taking place in 2006 supported by the Heritage Lottery and village fund raising. Many other works have been carried out in the church including the recent addition of a kitchen and toilet (very useful for some members on the day).

The 90 minute tour led us along the back lanes of Hoby where we saw some amazing architecture covering all periods from Medieval to Queen Anne and Georgian to Victorian, modernised and modern. There were many farms in the village which still exist as major domestic dwellings even if the farmyards themselves are not operative. There is a pub, The Blue Bell, and a former pub, the Rutland Arms, a former Victorian school at which one of our guides spent his formative years, a chapel, still used as such and a former smithy. Sadly the shop and post office no longer exist and so the village is officially 'unsustainable' because it has no shop or bus service. The fact that it is a short walk from a passenger railway line with a closed station (at Brooksby) does not count!!

The walk ended in a lovely well-kept garden with views down to the river where we were served scones and tea and of course had a good chat. Thanks were offered to the members of the host Society for organising the afternoon.

SEPTEMBER 2021: BLACKSMITHS? THEY SHOE HORSES DON'T THEY?

For our first, in person, indoor, meeting after the pandemic about 60 members and visitors were very pleased, not only to see each other, but also to welcome our speaker David James who had spent his whole life in his family business of blacksmiths and metalworkers. He was born in the house adjoining the forge in Broughton in Northamptonshire where the family firm of George James and Son had been established in 1841. David showed several typical Victorian style family photos of his relations standing outside the premises and pointed out that the adjoining cottages had been incorporated into that forge in the 1950s.

In his childhood he helped with various tasks including fitting wheel "tyres" to cartwheels, a job involving fire, hot iron and water and some quick action. He then explained the meaning of the

title to his talk. The traditional village blacksmith fitted iron shoes to horses as well as making and repairing tools both for household and agricultural use. However, in 1976 the Blacksmiths Registration Act came into force and in order to be able to shoe horses, blacksmiths had to register and were then called farriers. The traditional blacksmith carried on making and repairing not only tools but also taking on commissions for new works such as sculptures, as well as renovation and conservation work. Such work is now the mainstay of the business which has also ceased repairing church clocks.

The slow bucolic image many townspeople might have of village blacksmiths doesn't apply these days with craftsmen having to be efficient, use modern tools and produce high quality work to a price and on time. Although there is the traditional anvil and many hammers and other basic tools still in the workshop, there are, nowadays, two forges and a hydraulic hammer delivering 160 strokes per minute. Although he did not expressly say so, much of the design work and calculations must be done on a computer. He is also a member of The Worshipful Company of Blacksmiths. Although there are several shapes of anvil and hammers, many craftsmen soon find the best for the work they do and hammer shafts have got shorter over the years.

Despite carrying out many small repair jobs the mainstay of the business is in public art, major conservation and restoration and such decorative objects as fire irons and sundials. David then went on to show pictures of some of the firm's work starting with public art. Examples are of gates to a park in Burgh le Marsh, Lincolnshire and railings to St Ives Methodist Church. He showed a series of village signs including the one many of us know at Great Glen.

Restoration and conservation work was often to long lengths of railings or gates to parks and country houses, these included gates at Kimbolton Castle and at Hampton Court Palace. Many of the originals were in wrought iron but these days low carbon mild steel is used. Each different type of raw material needs different techniques, some very old, to join and weld pieces together. In particular the often seen scroll work in gates is exceedingly difficult to weld. Many old pieces of iron work have got the maker's stamp impressed on them in the same way as masons and carpenters also marked their work. The 'paint' in which old gates and railings were finished is hard to replicate, firstly because it is lead based (a big no-no these days) and a five gallon can of appropriate modern paint can cost over £950.

Other work involves churches, such as St Peters, Northampton, Southwell Minster and St. Chads RC Cathedral in Birmingham. These works usually involve the screen which separates the nave from the chancel, often in timber but also in many cases iron is used and they are usually very decorative. Local examples were at Kings Norton and Great Bowden. The latter also contains a major wall painting titled 'The Doom'. Gate piers are often made of complicated iron work that needs repair. Some examples that the firm has worked on include those at Kew Palace, moved there from Hampton Court, and at Trinity College, Oxford where the piers supported so called gates but were really there to frame the view of the parkland outside the boundary.

This was altogether a fascinating talk, (if a little too long) well illustrated, on a subject not touched upon by the Society in its programme before.