Greater Wigston Historical Society
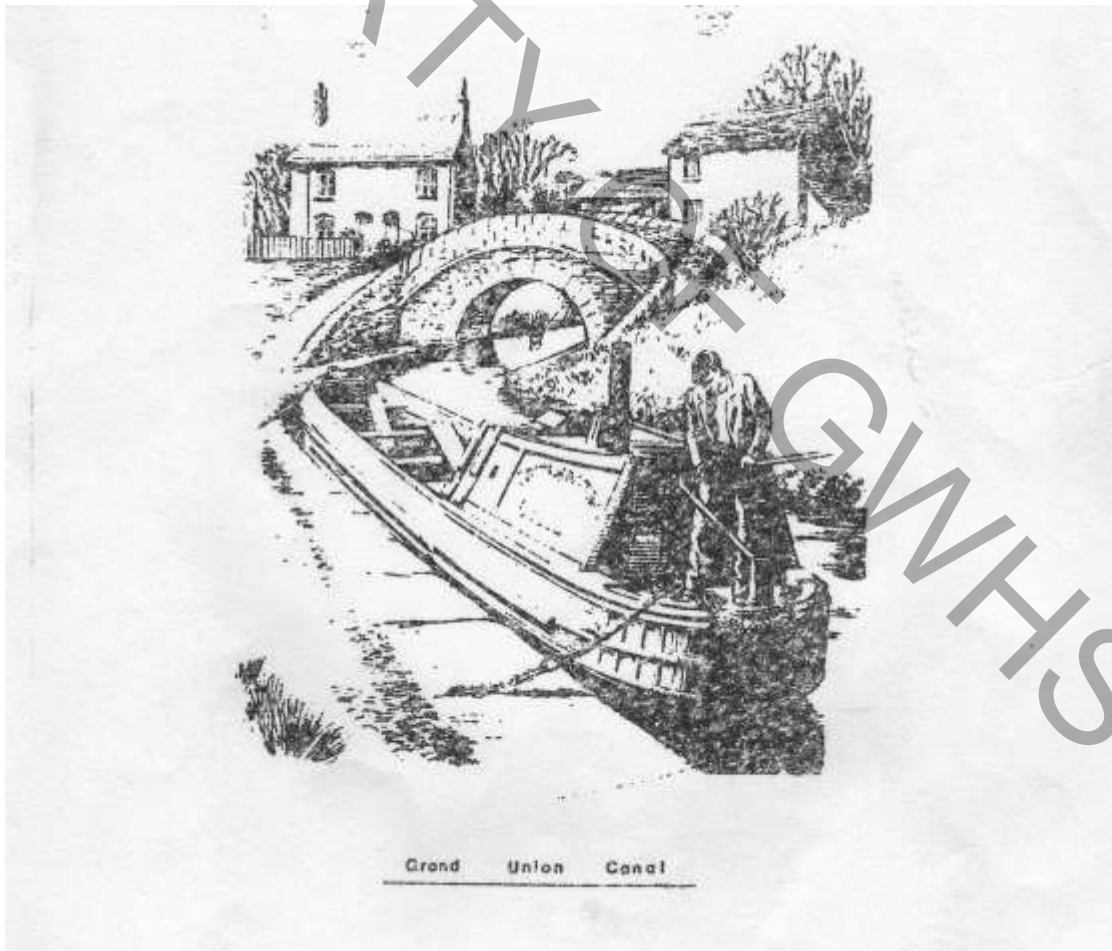
White Gate Farm, Newton Lane, Wigston Magna Leicestershire

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Bulletin 14 February 1986

Grand Union Canal

PROGRAMME

January.,,. 15th 1986. Wednesday,
  Talk by Ian Vaery on Monumental Brass Rubbing
   7.30pm Liberal Club Wigston.
February,,, 19th 1986, Wednesday,
  Study of Place Names.
  Talk by Jill Bourne, a visiting guest Speaker and expert in the field
March 9th 1986 Wednesday
  Annual General Meeting
  Followed by a members evening. Please bring along anything of interest

  ***Fe-b, and March meeting in the Wigs ton Liberal Club 7.30pnu
April 16th 1986 Wednesday
  Visit to Leicestershire County Record Office,
  Meet at the Record Office car park, 57 New Walk, visit 7.00pm prompt to
  9,00pm.
May 20th 1986 Wednesday
  Visit to Foxton Locks - not finalized but probably canal boat trip and look at
  restoration,
  Meet 7.30pm. Foxton Locks TOP car park.
June 18th 1986 Wednesday.
  Treasure Hunt on foot around Shearsby.
  More information next Bulletin.

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SUBSCRIPTIONS
Subscriptions are due in February 1986, but as this is one of the items for discussion
on the A.G.M. agenda they will not be called for until the end of the meeting in
March.

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Editor's
Any articles or bits for the Bulletin please send to Hon. Editor 5 weeks before
publishing dates, 1st, Feb. 1st June, 1st Oct each year.
Address,,,.,. Ian R. Varey, 150 Welford Read, Wigston, Leicester, LES 1SN.

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REPORT OCTOBER MEETING

On Wednesday October the 16th 1985, in the Liberal Club, Wigston, some 20
members, after a short business meeting, heard Ian Varey give an Illustrated talk 'The
Age of the Horse '.

The interdependence between man and horse was traced from pre-history when the
horse was first domesticated and its role as a means of power and transportation was
examined. A colourful series of slides showed us the use that man has made of the

horse from pulling carts and carriages to working on the farm and driving simple engines such as horse ginns.

A close look was then made of the different breeds of hoses and ponies and how the breeds of today developed. This was followed by a discussion about horse vocabulary and sayings. The frequency of which especially in English indicate the importance of the animal in everyday life.

Of course those days have now gone but Leicestershire is still comparatively well endowed with horses because of its long association with hunting. Some illustrative sheets on vocabulary and on the different bits of harness and tack, were available to members to take away with them at the end of the talk.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm after Ian had been thanked for a most interesting talk.

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REPORT ON NOVEMBER MEETING.

On Wednesday November 20th, in the Liberal Club, Wigston, some 25 members took part in a workshop session on Leicestershire Place names. The endings of place names in the county were studied and classified -ton being Anglo-Saxon, -by being Danish etc. Before members used a county map showing the villages Ian gave a quick resume of the historical events which led to waves of settlements and so villages founded by different peoples.

From the county maps of villages it was possible to see the distribution of Anglo-Saxon settlements and how subsequent peoples settled in the vacant pieces of countryside.

As well as being informative in its own right the evening was also meant to give members some background information for the February meeting, which is by Jill Bourne on Place name Entomology.

PLACE NAMES
R = ROMAN
OE = OLD ENGLISH SAXON
ON = OLD NORSE
N = NORMAN

- Bage	*becc	ON	a stream
- Bach	*bekkr	ON	stream
- Bold		OE	building
- Borough (1)	*boerg	OE	hill
- Borough (2)	*burg	OE	fortified place
- Bourne	*clif	OE	cliff
- By		ON	village
- Cliffe	*clif	OE	cliff

- Chley	?		
- Cote		OE	cot or cottage

- Cot .. strong neuter,
- Cote .. weak feminine
- Cotes .. plural

- Crosft	*craeft	OE	a machine or craft
- Cross		OE	cross
- Dale	*doel	OE	valley or dale
- Don	British River name		
- Don	*dun	OE	a hill
- Ey	*eg	OE	island
- Fasten		OE	a fortress
- Feld		OE	open land
- Ford		OE	ford
- Gate (1)	*goet(e)	OE	gate
- Gate (2)	*gata	OE	gate or street leading to…
- Grave	*groef (e)	OE	trench or pit
- Ham	*ham or hamm	OE	home or meadow
- Head	*heafod	OE	head (shepshed)
- Hill	*hyll	OE	hill
- Hoe	*hoh	OE	heel or ridge of land
- House			medieval house
- Hurst	*hyrst	OE	wooded hillock
- Lay	*leah	OE	open place in a wood
- Land	*lund	ON	grove or clearing
- Minster	*mynster	OE	a monastery
- Stock	*stoc(c)	OE	place
- Stoke			
- Ston (e)	*stan	OE	stone
- Stow		OE	holy place
- Thern	*pyrne	OE	a thorn bush (p sounds th)
- Thorpe	*porp	OE	a dependent farm or hamlet
- Toft		ON	farm
- Ton	*tun	OE	enclosure (around a farm / village)

- Came to mean village

- Tree	*treo	OE	tree
- Wick	*wic	OE	dwelling (sometimes a dairy farm)
- Well		OE	a spring
- Worth	*weoro	OE	enclosed homestead

REFERENCE BOOKS

Oxford Dictionary of English Place Names	Eilert Ekwall
Leicestershire Placenames	A C Wood
Leicestershire Placenames	Jonathan Wilshire

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REPORT ON DECEMBER MEETING.

On December 18th 1885. 25 members attended the Society's Second Christmas Party. The format followed that of last year's party which had been so successful. We had a most enjoyable evening with good company and most of us learned a great deal about the customs and traditions of Christmas.

The evening- started with one or two party games, prizes for the winners and points for ones team towards the grand total at the end. Half way through the evening we stopped for refreshments and those not wishing to miss the action, were invited to do a seasonal cross-word while eats and drinks continued.

The latter part of the evening was a Christmas Team Quiz, questions all based on the customs and traditions of Christmases past and presenet. Do you know when Stir Up Sunday is? Or Who set forth on St. Stephen's Day?

The evening came to an end at about 10.00pm. A good time having been had by all present. Grateful thanks must go to Mrs. Eingley and Mrs Lanston for organizing and preparing an excellent buffet meal and to Ian for organizing the quiz and games.

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FOR THE LEICESTERSHIRE LOCAL HISTORY COUNCIL

Monday February 10th,, 1986
 Vintage Leicestershire (archive film to "be shown") R. Foxon
 County Record Office New Walk. 7.30pm.
Monday 10th March i9860
 Early Railway Architecture (illustrated) R.P. Hartley Leics, Museums,
 Venue County Record officer New Walk, 7.30pm.
Monday 14th April 1986a
 The Writers of Leicestershire M, Raftety, Leics. L.I.Sc.
 Venue County Record Office, New Walk. 7.30.pm
Monday 19th May 1986.
 A.G.M. 7.30pm Rutland County Museum Oakham

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The Story of Kilby Bridge

Two hundred years ago Kilby Bridge did not exist. To the South of Wigston the fields dipped down to the River Sence and an uninterrupted view of South Leicestershire stretched before one, A rutted road crossed the valley to Welford and eventually Northampton. This road would occasionally be repaired by Wigston folk, up to the Parish boundary. Repairs would be little more than filling in the potholes with gravel dug from the neighboring fields. The main feature of this muddy route-way was the 'Stanbrig', clearly visible across the fields from All Saint's Church. The wide muddy road narrowed at this point and the little stone bridge took the travelers over the River Sence dry shod. Across the fields to the South East was the small neighboring village of Kilby. The road made its way south to Arnesby and other foreign parts.

How different the scene is today. The view South is bounded and confined by the great embankment built for the Midland Railway. An artificial waterway cuts its way along the valley-side, and the road is straight, metalled and of uniformed width, A small hamlet nestles between the railway and canal. The valley side shows signs of quarrying. Furthermore a name has come into being to define the area, 'Kilby Bridge'.

The origins of this hamlet go back to the last decade of the eighteenth century. Two different strands in the development of transport met and gave birth to this settlement, the development of the Leicester to Northampton Turnpike Trust, and the Canal Mania of the late eighteenth century.

After the success of the Soar Navigation in the 1770's and 80's an Act was obtained from Parliament in 1792/3 to continue the canal from Leicester via Northampton to the Grand Junction Canal and so link the East Midlands with London. The driving force and the finance came from the Derbyshire coal owners and the Leicester businessmen.

Gangs of Navies started digging the 'Cut' about 1794. The route went South out of Leicester down the Soar Valley and then South East along the valley of the River Sence before tunneling through the hills near Saddington. The difficulties of building this tunnel and the spiraling costs due to the Napoleonic War, led to the financial collapse of the company and in 1835 the Grand Design was stuck at Debdale Wharf near Gumley.

In 1814 a new company with finance from London Merchants, resumed the work but to save money altered the original route. A Market Harborough arm was built but the main canal climbed the Foxton hills by a staircase of locks, the Northampton link up was abandoned and a direct route was cut to Braunston in Northamptonshire. Braunston was on the Grand Junction Canal and so a direct link to London was finally achieved.
At about the same time the New Turnpike Road was being cut from Leicester to Northampton.

The new Turnpike went south from Leicester to Wigston and South again across the new canal and the River Sence, and so to Welford, a day's journey away for a horse and cart, (N.E. In 1795 while digging for this new road Anglo-Saxon burial ornaments were discovered near to the new roundabout,)

Both companies, canal and road were keen to benefit from this crossing- of route-ways. Coal and other goods could come down this canal to Wigston, and Wigston's goods notably Hosiery could be shipped directly to London or other parts of the Midlands. Travelling either by road or canal, tolls had to be paid so both companies were happy to see trade develop.

This junction of route ways became a transshipment point. The canal company built a small maintenance yard and stabling next to the wharf. A number of houses for employees followed the most imposing being the engineer's house. Bargees waiting to load or unload looked for some liquid refreshments, so two Public House were built to meet their needs. The Navigation is still in existence but the Black Swan has long since gone. (Was the Black Swan a local joke. i.e. Swans covered in coal dust from

the wharfs,) The local farmer had a new farm house built here together with his barns and out buildings. So by 1800 the hamlet was well and truly on the map. But where actually did all these people live in the hamlet by the bridge going towards Kilby, so I believe Kilby Bridge got its name.

The impact of the canal to Wigston in economic terns was great. The price of coal fell sharply and the transportation of goods became reliable and at a relatively modest cost. The impact of the canal on the landscape, after the actual construction, was less dramatic. The view South from the village remained much the same, in fact the addition of the new Hamlet probably enhanced the view. The situation remained so for some 60 years.

The coming of the Midland Railway, opened in 1857, had a great influence on Wigston, but proportionately the influence on Kilby Bridge was far greater. In economic terms, the railway captured much of the trade carried originally on the canal. Goods could be carried in greater quantities, much faster and delivered closer to the centre of Wigston. Surprisingly/ the canal did retain considerable trade in low cost bulky goods where time was not very important. The canal wharf was retained, possibly because of the existence of the maintenance yard, which was still needed.

Throughout this time the census returns show the Kilby Bridge farmer, John Ellis as a coal and lime merchant at Kilby Bridge Wharf, So despite the railway many boats still used the canal but only a very few now stopped at the wharf. It is probably at about this time that the Black Swan closed. The coming of the railway also brought in iron ore people to the Hamlet. A row of six railway cottages were built on land where the Cedar Garage is now. At various times these railway employees worked in the Wagon Shops in Wigston or were track maintenance men. One house was for the signal man, for that splendid Victorian signal box, that is shortly to be removed.

The impact of the railway on the landscape was dramatic. Tons of material taken from the cuttings around Shakerdale road and probably from around Newton Harcourt, were used to construct a great embankment, from what is now the Little Hill Estate, across the A50, and on to Wollspring Hill and Tythorn Hill. This embankment cut off the view to the South for a large part of Wigston. Kilby bridge Hamlet could no longer be seen. It also cut off Kilby Bridge from Wigston, and gives the impression that the hamlet was intended to nestle in between the canal and railway. Life there while the construction work was being done must have been noisy, dusty, dirty and quite unpleasant. But within a few years nature had covered up the scars and the scene had a look of permanency about it.

For a short time Kilby Bridge became the capital of East Wigston, In the 1840's there was very serious unemployment and under employment among the Frame Knitters' in Wigston. The Poor Estate Levy to support them rose to over £t per acre and this fell very heavily on the landowners and farmers. Most of the farmers lived in the Eastern part of the Parish and after much dissension and bitter argument over the Poor Rates, they broke away from Wigston and established they own parish of East Wigston. Parish meetings were held in Kilby Bridge, It was not until the Urban District Council was formed in 1898 that they came back into the fold.

The last major industrial activity in Kilby Bridge came in the 1880's. This period saw a great building boom in Leicester and more locally in South Wigston. The demand for building lime was tremendous and the small limestone quarry at Kilby Bridge, dating from the 1840's was greatly extended.

A layer of Jurassic Limestone, known as Hydraulic Limestone from the fact that the lime-mortar sets under water, winds its way through the East Midlands occasionally coming clear to the surface. At such sites as Normanton on Soar in Notts, Barrow on Soar in Leics, Spinney Hill Evington, Kilby Bridge and Rugby in Warwicks. The latter giving rise to the present day Rugby Cement Works. The limestone at Barrow has been quarried since Roman times and used in both building and agriculture.

Quarrying is thought to have started in Kilby Bridge at about 1640. The stone may have been burnt into lime on the spot but it seems more likely that it was taken by canal to the kilns in Leicester or Barrow. By 1890 however the situation had changed. The kilns of Barrow and Leicester could not meet the demand from the building trade, Ellis and Co, the owners of the Kilby Bridge quarry decided, to build a bank of six kilns next to the canal at Kilby Bridge and to greatly extend the quarrying to keep the kilns in production 24 hours a day.

The lime works was working in 1902 and was connected to the railway as well as the canal. Lime from this quarry was used in many local and national building projects, perhaps the most famous one being the tunnels of the London Underground. On the 1914 map the kilns are shown as disused, the building boom was over. Some small area of track is still shown for the stone continued to be quarried and shipped out by rail to the Barrow works. Quarrying ceased altogether at about the time of the Second World War.

All that remains today is an exposed, line of rock, immediately south of the railway line, best viewed from the bridge over the river Sence. There is also a water filled pit North of the railway, behind the Cedar Garage, and a flash of water next to the canal, the Western end of which marks the site of the Lime Kilns.

The quarrying activity lasted in total about 100 years and the lime kilns some 25 years around the date 1901.

By the mid 20th century the commercial traffic on the canal was all but over and the pleasure boats and weekend sailors had become a feature on the canal. Maintenance, however, had to go on and the life of the Yard with its few canal employees was assured. A sign of the changing times was the building of the two motor garages, perhaps Kilby Bridges most common feature today. The Cedar Garage is on the site of the old demolished Railway Cottages, and the Kilby Bridge motors on the site of the access to the old Quarries and lime works. Today 1986 the signal box is to go under the modernization scheme and so the little path up the side of the railway bridge and along the track to the signal box will also be made redundant. This is just one more small but significant change in Kilby Bridge's story, but as we have seen the place was born out of change and in only two hundred years it has witnessed, many changes, I wonder what the future has in store for this small rural hamlet with such a proud industrial past. Only time will tell.
Ian E, Varey.

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REVIEW.

The Folklore of Leicestershire and Rutland,., By Roy Palmer. Published by Sycamore Press Ltd

Here is an excellent book by a master on Folklore. Roy Palmer has woven together hundreds of stories tales and unusual incidents into a meaningful catalogue of ancient Leicestershire lore. This Lore was well known and understood by our ancestors and was accepted without question.

I was particularly interested in the chapter on Sickness and Health. Charms and old remedies abound and in these days with a fresh look at the old cures many are now accepted as sensible and effective. Of course some are just incredulous, eg touching the neck of a hang man to ensure good health.

Sports and pastimes show how the dull monotony of country life was regularly livened up. The chapters on crime and Punishment show us how more humane we have become today.

Many people have contributed to the book including Duncan Lucas and so Wigston people will find much to interest then for the customs and tales of old Wigston are well represented.

This is a book well worth buying, it can be read all in one go or dipped into occasionally for the reader will almost certainly learn something new every time that cover is opened.

Kilby Bridge

1914 O.S. Map 25"