



# Greater Wigston Historical Society

White Gate Farm, Newton Lane, Wigston Magna, Leicester.

## BULLETIN 85



The Triangular Lodge, Rushton, Northants. J.R. Colver

**PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS - NOVEMBER 2009 TO APRIL 2010**

**Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2009**

Naseby Battlefield Project - Patrick Crecraft  
7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

**\*Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> December 2009**

Social evening with Quiz & Local Picture Library identification session  
(accompanied by a seasonal drink & mince pie) 7.30p.m. U.R. Church  
Boys' Brigade Rooms.

**Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2010**

The Leicester Line Canal - Mary Marts  
7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

**\*\*Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> February 2010**

A.G.M. followed by 'Where I worked' contributions from members  
7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

**Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2010**

Along the Gartree Road - Gerry Broughton  
7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

**Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2010**

Working with the 'Time Team' - Peter Liddle  
7.30p.m. U.R. Church Boys' Brigade Rooms.

\* Please note there will be a £2 00 charge to cover the cost of refreshments for the  
December meeting. This will be collected on the night.

\*\* We still need a couple more contributors to make this a full and balanced evening. If  
anyone can help please have a word with Mike or Tricia.

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The Bulletin is published three times a year on 1<sup>st</sup> 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.

## FRONT COVER

Jim Colver's drawing this time features the Triangular Lodge at Rushton, Nr. Rothwell, Northamptonshire. This highly unusual structure was built by Sir Thomas Tresham (1545-1605). The Treshams were a prosperous land owning family, who, by the 16<sup>th</sup> century had built nearby Rushton Hall and also owned the Manor at Lyveden, Nr. Oundle. The family were Roman Catholics and Thomas's grandfather was a prominent supporter of Mary Tudor.

Sir Thomas was born a Protestant but converted to the Catholicism which led to a total of fifteen years in prison and fines of almost £8,000. While in prison he planned the building of the lodge, which is based on the number three, which symbolises the Trinity, and from his nickname of Tres (three) and his 3x3 children (three sons and six daughters). It was built between 1593 and 1597. It has three floors, each with three walls of 33 feet. Each wall contains three windows decorated with triangles and trefoils. Surmounting each wall are three gargoyles below three pinnacled gables, and an apparently unsupported triangular central chimney. A Latin text of 33 letters per wall runs round the building. Over the front is the inscription "Tres Testimonium Dant" (there are three that give witness), a Biblical quotation from St. John's Gospel referring to the Trinity.

Inside, the rooms are hexagonal with small closets in two of the corners and a newel staircase in the third. The entrance is to the middle floor, the upper floor has a fireplace and the dimly lit basement was probably a store. It was used as the Warrener's Lodge (rabbit keeper) and one wonders how the furniture fitted!!

Sir Thomas was succeeded by his unstable son Francis, who became involved in the Gunpowder Plot in 1605 and died a traitor in the Tower of London the same year. Rushton Hall is now a luxury hotel and the Triangular Lodge is in the care of English Heritage. The Lyveden New Bield which Sir Thomas started is built in the shape of a cross and also has religious symbolism but was never finished because of his death and that of his son. It stands as a roofless shell much as it looked when the builders walked away and is in the care of the National Trust.

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## AUGUST MEETING

For our August meeting members welcomed Alison Coates who gave a most interesting account of life on a Tudor manor. Alison attends an annual re-enactment at Kentwell Hall, Nr. Long Melford in Suffolk, where between 200 and 400 people gather for three weeks each June/July to live and work as people did in the period. Each participant represents a real person and dresses in the appropriate costume - working, acting and speaking, as their counterpart would have done. The house and grounds are open over these weekends for the public to watch and learn about the various tools and crafts. The weekdays are reserved for school parties.

Alison becomes Jenny Grooby, a poor widow, who works in the kitchen. She describes the hierarchy, with the Steward being the most important person after the Gentry and their visitors, followed by the house servants, estate craftsmen, other villagers and the poor.

The Gentry wore expensive wool or silk clothes, sometimes died red, a colour which was expensive to achieve, while workers wore cheaper more basic clothes often topped by a linen smock. Shoes were leather and hose not knitted until 1550s. Children were dressed in miniature versions of adult clothes. Sleeves were made detachable and were either pinned or tied in place. Instead of pockets a privy purse was worn round the waist.

The family ate meat, fish, white bread, pies, tarts and vegetables and fruit in season. Servants had a more basic diet of brown bread, cheese, vegetable pottage, with perhaps dried or salted fish. Most food was grown or reared on the estate farm but as yet there were no potatoes, tomatoes or peppers. However, salt, spices and other condiments were being imported from India. Food was cooked over the fire or in side ovens usually in copper utensils and eaten on trenchers (plates made of wood or pewter) with knife and spoon or fingers, forks were a later invention.

Cleanliness was understood and the dairy and brewhouse kept very clean. Various remedies were also used, Rosewater was highly prized and kept under the control of the mistress or steward. A broken limb would be set in a Comfrey caste and starch from Holland was available for the laundry.

Alison used a PowerPoint presentation and brought many objects from the period to illustrate her talk. After some questions and discussion, the Chairman Mike Forryan, thanked her very much for an entertaining evening.

## **SEPTEMBER MEETING**

This month our speaker was Peter Daisley who gave a talk on a subject very close to his heart, The Leicester Children's Holiday Centre at Mablethorpe. He began by reminding us that this year the City of Leicester celebrates its 800<sup>th</sup> year of having a Mayor. It is therefore even more special that the current Lord Mayor, Roger Blackmore, has selected the Centre to be the charity to benefit during his year in office.

The Centre has its origins in the early 1890s when Lady Rolleston of Glen Parva Grange, was walking through Leicester and noticed that many of the newsvendors were children. She then discovered that in many cases they were the sole breadwinners in their family, so she set up a club for their use in Newarke Street. This led to the idea of providing holidays for poor children to give them a healthy break from their daily lives, and in most cases their first view of the sea. The Poor Boy's Holiday Camp was established at Mablethorpe and later expanded to include a pavilion to accommodate girls. The venture was registered as a charity in 1897 with Lady Rolleston as Honorary Treasurer and her husband, Sir John F L Rolleston, a surveyor and land agent, as President. A number of

local dignitaries and businessmen were recruited as Vice Presidents, and these encouraged their employees to donate weekly contributions which were deducted from their wages.

Land was purchased close to the sand dunes and a timber building constructed, but by the 1930s there were enough resources to build a more permanent centre which opened in 1936. The Children's Holiday Centre has provided a fun holiday for well over 50,000 needy children over the years, and still continues to do so. Mr. Daisley emphasizing that there is still a vital need today, though the young visitors are now more likely to come from a troubled family background than suffer the poverty of previous generations.

The Centre faces challenges which include a shorter season, as children are no longer able to attend during the school term. There are also Health and Safety and minimum wage rules which increase costs and problems with who is allowed to administer medication to unwell children. However, the determined administrators are finding ways to deal with these necessary issues.

During questions and discussion it transpired that two members of the audience had themselves been to the centre in their youth. The Chairman, Mike Forryan, then thanked our speaker for a very interesting evening.

## **OCTOBER MEETING**

October's speaker for this well attended meeting was Fred Hartley from Leics. County Council's reserve collections centre at Barrow on Soar. His subject was 'The First Railway through Wigston'. The talk was illustrated with lovely photographs of stations, bridges, viaducts and houses. This first railway was the Midland Counties Railway which was initially promoted by a group of coal owners from Derbyshire and the Erewash Valley, Nottinghamshire. They sought a more efficient way of transporting their coal to Leicester, than by canal, or via the only other railway at the time, the Leicester and Swannington. They engaged the surveyor/ engineer William Jessop of Butterley Hall, Derbyshire and a committee of seven met in August 1832 at the Sun Inn, Eastwood, when it was agreed to proceed. However, they couldn't raise sufficient capital and applied to some Liverpool investors for extra funds. These investors wanted a more ambitious scheme which would join Derby, Nottingham and Leicester together, and continue to the south of Rugby to form a junction with the London and Birmingham Railway's line to London (Euston). Representatives of the three towns formed a management committee, one member being Matthew Babington of Leicester whose bank Messrs. Mansfield and Babington was one of the six banking companies involved.

Delays caused by problems, disagreements, changes to the route and two changes of engineer (George Rennie and then Charles Vignoles), meant the project did not come to Parliament and gain Royal Assent until 1836. Formal opening of the first section from Nottingham to Derby occurred on in May 1839 followed by the second section from Trent Junction to Leicester in May 1840. The third section from Leicester to Rugby opened the following month on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1840 with the Directors and many invited

guests travelling along the line from Leicester, through Knighton Tunnel, over Knighton Viaduct, past Wigston and over Crow Mill Viaduct, then to near Ullesthorpe and Rugby over the Avon Viaduct. The Wigston station for this line was close to Station Street on the site of the present Health Centre.

The total length of this main line from Derby Junction to Rugby with spurs off from Trent Junction to Nottingham and from Long Eaton to Sawley was  $57\frac{3}{4}$  miles. It was initially a twin track but was soon increased to four. The engine sheds and workshops were built at Derby and the administrative headquarters were in Leicester on the upper floors of the Campbell Street Station.

As well as the carriage of goods the potential to carry passengers was quickly utilized. In July 1840 the Nottingham Mechanics Institute hired a train to carry their members to Leicester to an exhibition. The following week the Leicester Institute did the same, taking their members to an exhibition in Nottingham. Then in August the railway company ran its own excursion train from Leicester to Nottingham, and two weeks later a similar one from Nottingham to Leicester. This latter train was much delayed due to overcrowding, pulling 70 carriages containing 2,400 people. These four trips were the first ever railway excursions anywhere in the world. They came to the notice of Thomas Cook, the travel pioneer, who is well known as the first individual to hire a train at his own expense. His trip from Leicester to Loughborough on this same line took place the following year.

These early days of the railways became known as railway mania, with little regulation and different schemes going ahead regardless of damage caused to other companies. Investors stood to lose huge sums of money, and companies faced bankruptcy. Midland Counties had many quarrels with the Birmingham and Derby and the North Midland Railways which threatened to bankrupt all three. In the end they agreed to amalgamate and in 1844 became the Midland Railway Company, thus making huge savings on administration and becoming the largest company with greatest length of track anywhere.

Railway traffic increased at a pace and the Midland's shared route from Rugby to London experienced delays. It was felt the only solution was to build their own direct line. In May 1857 the Leicester to Kitchen line was opened, its route from Leicester going through Wigston, Market Harborough, Kettering, Wellingborough, Bedford to Hitchin, where passengers had to change on to Great Northern trains for King's Cross. In 1858 arrangements were made to use the Great Northern line thus giving a direct route to King's Cross. The Wigston station for this line, (which was initially a level crossing until the road was raised), was close to the Railway Hotel now re-named the 1852 public house. Following the development of this new mainline to London the Wigston to Rugby line which had been a main passenger route now became merely a branch line.

During questions and discussion Duncan Lucas reminded the audience that the Crow Mills Viaduct was swept away by floods five months after the railway opened. A terrible accident being averted by the quick thinking miller, who ran up the line to alert an approaching train. Chairman Mike Forryan then thanked Mr. Hartley for a very interesting talk.

## GRAVESTONE MYSTERY

The mystery of the unusual inscription on a gravestone in All Saints' Churchyard is solved. Just to recap; the stone was to Mary Bingley who died on 9<sup>th</sup> December 1759. And the wording was: "My Father poison'd me to Death/My Mother's hand will stop my breath/Her Womb, that once my substance gave/Will very quickly be my grave".

Our member, Jo Richardson, got in touch to say that she had identified the verse as coming from a book by Rev. Ralph Erskine (1685-1752), a Scottish clergyman. The book is called *The Gospel Sonnets, Part III, The Believer's Riddle or The Mystery of the Faith*, and can be found on the internet at <http://books.google.com>.

A few verses including the one on the gravestone are as follows:

*My life's a maze of seeming traps/A scene of mercies and mishaps/A heap of jarring to  
and froes/A field of joys, a flood of woes.*

*I'm in mine own and others eyes/A labyrinth of mysteries/I'm something that from  
nothing came/Yet sure it is, I nothing am.*

*Once I was dead, and blind, and lame/Yea, I continue still the same/Yet what I was, I am  
no more/Nor ever shall be as before.*

*My Father lives, my father's gone/My vital head both lost and won/My Parents cruel are  
and kind/Of one, and of a different mind.*

*My father poison 'd me to death/My mother's hand will stop my breath/Her womb, that  
once my substance gave/Will very quickly be my grave.*

*My sisters all my flesh will eat/My brethren tread me under feet/My nearest friends are  
most unkind/My greatest foe's my greatest friend.*

The mystery also featured on 'Mr. Leicester's page of the Leicester Mercury and a reader Alan Nicholls responded thus: "Father Time poisons us all as we grow old, and Mother Earth, or Mother Nature, takes us to herself from whence we came."

Thanks to both for helping solve the mystery.

## CONGRATULATIONS

**To Liz Ward**, who is a volunteer at the Record Office. Liz has spent many hours sorting and compiling a catalogue of the large collection of building plans the office holds. Her work enabled the Record Office to put on their recent exhibition 'Planning Leicester'. The exhibits included plans of: factories, a lime kiln, warehouse, steam bakery, bank, church and Floral Hall Skating Rink. Liz was acknowledged in the credits for putting the plans in order and for the research she undertook for the exhibition.

To Evelyn Brooker, who won first prize with her front garden in the Oadby and Wigston garden competition this year. Simon Lucas, chairman of 'Pride of the Borough', which arranges the competition said "the standard was extremely high" "her garden was outstanding... a great mix of shrubs and seasonal bedding and it was very clean and tidy."

Well done to both.

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## A VISIT TO KIRBY HALL, NORTHAMTONSHIRE - MAY 2009

This spring I went to Kirby Hall again. It was 30 years or so since my last visit and I knew, since then, that partial restoration had taken place. As we walked up the long drive on that dull morning we heard the raucous cry of peacocks that gave a melancholic feeling to our surroundings. Reaching the end of the drive we came to a small gift shop/ticket office where we could borrow a guided tour tape. This I declined as I much prefer to 'look and feel' without distracting chatter, perhaps next time!

A peacock and peahen greeted us as we left the shop and more came towards us as we approached the magnificent ruin. This had once been a large mansion, though not as large as Burghley House. It was built by Sir Humphrey Stafford, Sheriff of Nottingham, with the idea of attracting Queen Elizabeth I to stay on one of her progresses, as she had done previously at nearby Deene Park, home of the Brudenells. The rebuilding of a smaller house which had previously stood on the site, and which Sir Humphrey had inherited, began in 1570. The foundation stone was laid by a seven year old boy, John Thorpe, whose father was the stonemason. Stafford's Knot Badge can be seen above the doorway of the inner courtyard.

By 1575 Sir Christopher Hatton had bought the house. Hatton's crest was the Hind. He financed the voyages of Sir Francis Drake, hence The Golden Hind. Sir Christopher Hatton was a flamboyant character at Queen Elizabeth's Court who became Lord Chancellor and a Knight of the Garter. He also hoped that the Queen would visit and kept the rooms ready for her but she did not come to Kirby. He died, childless and in debt, in 1591 when the house came into the possession of his nephew who was also childless.

In 1605 Queen Anne of Denmark stayed for three nights and King James of Denmark visited in 1612, 1616 and 1624.

The third Sir Christopher Hatton ordered improvements to be made by Nicholas Stone. Sir Christopher was created Baron Hatton for his support of the Royalist cause but he fled to France at their defeat and remained there leaving his wife to manage the accounts and deal with disputes.

In 1670 Elizabeth, wife of Sir Christopher IV together with her daughter-in-law went to Guernsey as her husband had been appointed the Governor. They were both killed when the gunpowder magazine at the castle was struck by lightning. He married twice more,



the latter wife complaining that she had no money to pay the workmen. Much had been spent on creating the gardens which then fell into decay. Thanks to garden archaeology a 1690s parterre has now been recreated.

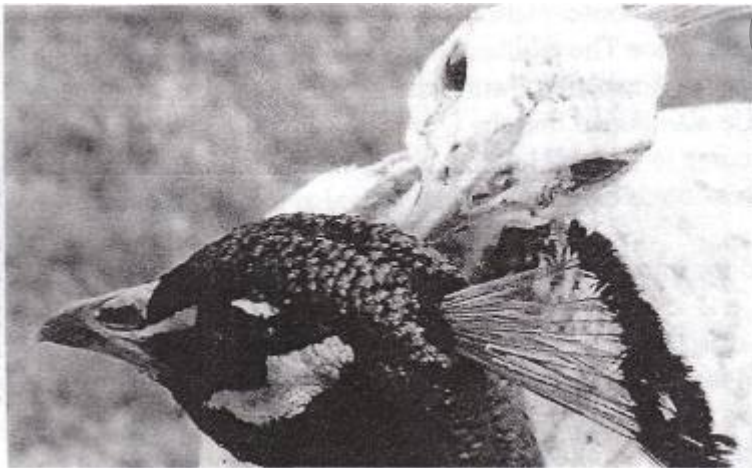
After the death of Sir Christopher IV in 1706 the house began to decline as the owners had other properties to maintain. Furnishings and fittings were sold off and by 1836 it was occupied by the 9<sup>th</sup> Earl's agent. Later it decayed further with sheep roaming in the forecourt.

In 1930 it was taken over by the Office of Works who installed a shepherd and his wife. They remained custodians until 1952. The house became little more than a shell but is now in the hands of English Heritage and is being worked on as time and money allow. The part that was built between 1580 and 1620 has been restored and re-roofed. It has recently been used in the filming of Jane Austen's 'Mansfield Park'.

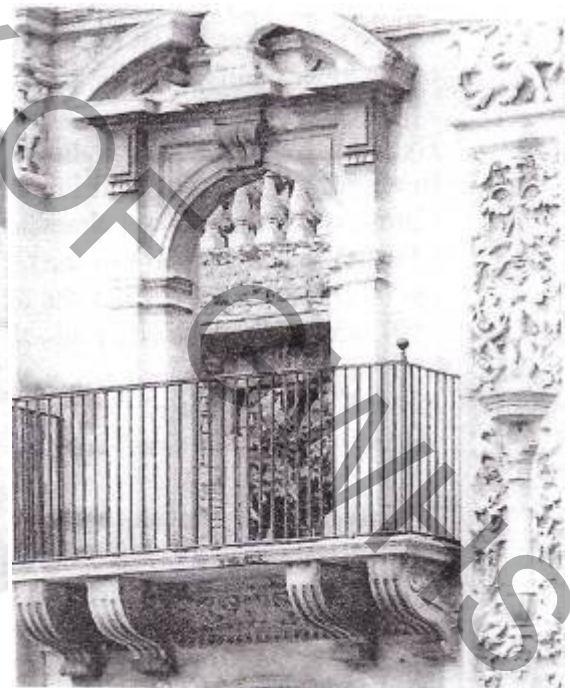
Walking through the inner courtyard I was surprised at the many doors. Behind them were the lodgings of people who once lived at the house. Now it's a very peaceful place and it is difficult to realise that it was once a very busy household with numerous servants and rich men and women in Elizabethan dress. They walked where I was walking. It is sad that this large house deteriorated just through neglect. As we left peacocks continued their nostalgic cry and waited to welcome the next visitors.

Stella Tweed

Source: *Kirby Hall* by Lucy Worsley



Grooming - Peacock & Peahen



1638 Pergola balcony. Designs copied from books by Italian, Sebastiano-Serlio (1537) & Englishman John Shute (1563)

## WHITE GATE FARM HOUSE, NEWTON LANE

The land on which White Gate Farm House came to be built was of course once in open countryside, some way from the centre of the village, and situated in Tythorn Hill Field, one of the three great medieval fields of the parish of Wigston Magna. At the time of enclosure in 1766 this land belonged to Elizabeth Booth, spinster, and had been acquired by inheritance. It adjoined the Newton Road (Lane) and consisted of two small closes (fields) with a total measurement of 8a Or 30p. Elizabeth's sister Sarah Booth and the girls' mother Mary Brewin, were also owners of land nearby, suggesting that Elizabeth's property had previously been part of a larger holding.

Elizabeth later married John Palmer of Leicester, a woolstapler, and in accordance with the practice of the times the land was transferred into his name. It was let to a tenant named John Tailby. By 1804 John and Elizabeth Palmer had moved to Oxford where he was described as an inn holder, and then on to Hammersmith, London, where he was referred to as a gentleman. On 5/4/1804 he sold the two closes to Joseph Branson of Great Wigston, a woolcomber for £510. When Joseph died, his will, which was proved on 20/4/1808, stated that the closes be held in Trust by his executors Eli Bailey, FWK of Wigston (his brother-in-law) and Thomas Phipps, for the benefit of his three children Joseph, the younger, Henry and Ann. When all three had attained the age of 21 years the two sons were to inherit equally, but charged with obtaining a valuation and giving their sister one third of that valuation as a cash settlement.

By June 1818 Joseph, the younger, a worsted maker, had moved to Leicester. Henry was a butcher in Wigston and Ann lived with Henry. The siblings came to an arrangement whereby Joseph, the younger, sold his half share to Ann who used her cash settlement plus some extra to pay him. Next month Henry and Ann as joint owners borrowed £240 at 5% per annum interest from Joseph Harris, putting the two closes, now divided into three, up as security. Ann signs the agreement with her mark X, while Henry could write but spells his name Henery. The land is at this time let to a tenant William Goodrich.

Moving on to 1830 and Henry and Ann Branson decide to split their properties between them, probably because of Henry's impending marriage. The deeds refer to three other properties the couple owned jointly as well as the Newton Lane closes:

- 1) The two closes, later divided into three containing 8a Or 30p already mentioned.
- 2) A house lately occupied by Eli Bailey, framework knitter (who had died in 1824) leaving it to his nephew and niece Henry and Ann Branson.
- 3) A small piece of land formerly used as a homestead but now used as an orchard and garden, bounded to the south by the Turnpike (Welford Road), to the north by an occupation road, to the east by a homestead now or late occupied by John Ringrose, and which contains 2r 6p and was late in the occupation of Joseph Branson dec'd and now of Henry and Ann Branson. Also a butcher's shop and fasting house thereto adjoining, lately erected on part of this land and now occupied by Samuel Russell.

- 4) A close on the west side of the turnpike containing three acres late occupied by Eli Bailey and now by Henry and Ann Branson. And on the east of the Turnpike a close of one acre late occupied by Thomas Hurst and now by Henry and Ann Branson.

On 2/10/1830 a Deed of Partition was drawn up whereby Henry became the sole owner of numbers one and two but subject to the mortgage of £240 on number one, and Ann became the sole owner of numbers three and four clear of all debt.

In 1832 Henry had need of further money and arranged a second mortgage of £240 from John Clarke of Little Peatling, Leics. The following year it was arranged that John Clarke should pay £240 to Joseph Harris so now the mortgage of £480 was all held by John Clarke.

On 5/2/1842 Henry agrees to sell his 8a Or 3Op to John Clarke for £680, John paying Henry £200 the remaining £480 being owed to John through the outstanding mortgage. Henry's wife Elizabeth had to be a party to this transaction because it could ultimately have affected her rights to Dower (the rights in law a widow could have to the income of one third of her husband's real estate). Elizabeth was examined away from her husband as to her "full age and competent understanding" to make sure she had freely agreed to this.

On 2/6/1843 John Clarke and three others, who were described as Bankers and co-partners, dealers and chapmen, were declared bankrupt. This very sad occurrence had huge implications locally, with large amounts of property coming to market within a short time. A great loss for some and an opportunity for others. The three closes went up for auction at The Three Crowns Hotel in Leicester on 28/11/1843 and Thomas Birkley, a farmer of Knighton, was the highest bidder paying to the Official Receivers through the Bank of England £560 plus £8 1 s 8d for the timber.

Following the death of Thomas Birkley, his widow Eleanor and fellow Trustees of his will sold the three closes to William Forryan of Great Wigston, butcher, on 12/10/1858. The land formerly 8a Or 3 Op now having been re-measured and considered to be 8a Or.1Op. Joseph Hassall was in occupation as a tenant.

In 1864 William Forryan bought from members of the Clarke family, Squires Knob Farm in Newgate End, which was at the time occupied by Abraham Forryan. This transaction is recorded in the Newton Lane close's deeds because William put them up as partial security for a mortgage to fund this substantial purchase.

William Forryan owned the Newton Lane closes for thirty three years before repaying the outstanding mortgage and then selling the closes to his son William Goodwin Forryan of Great Wigston, butcher, in June 1891.

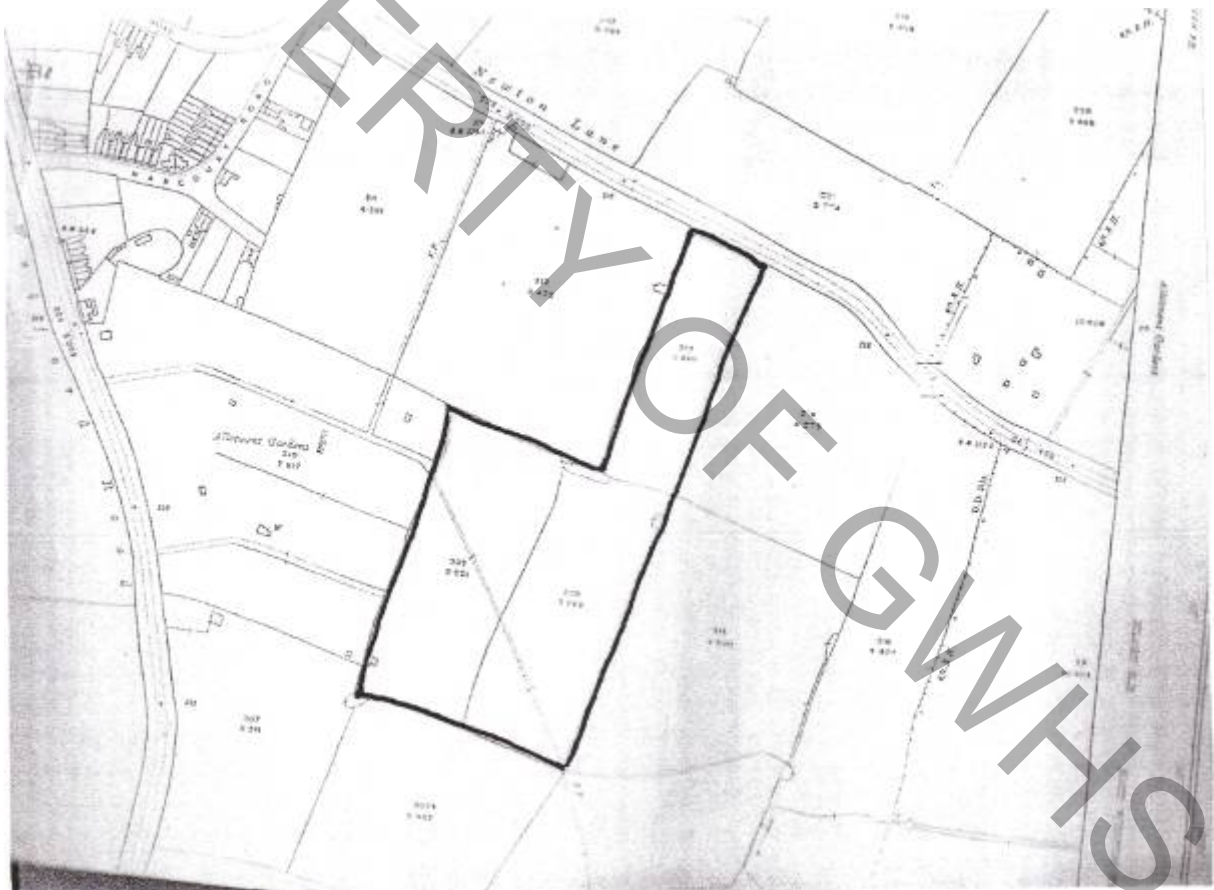
William Goodwin Forryan died 30/11/1924, the executors being his widow Louisa, and sons Ernest William Forryan of 8, Bell Street, butcher and Cecil Andrew Forryan of 75, Hinckley Road, chemist. Louisa died in 1946 and the following year the two remaining executors signed a deed of assent to convey the Newton Lane closes to Herbert Goodwin Forryan of

5, Hawkesworth Road, West Bridgford, grocer. Herbert Goodwin Forryan died in 1958 leaving two daughters, Brenda Margaret and Emily. Emily died the following year so it was Brenda Margaret Lilley nee Forryan who inherited the closes which were at this time let to a tenant Orson Duncan Lucas.

In 1971 Brenda Margaret Lilley sold the closes now measured as 8.13 acres to Orson Duncan Lucas, and plans for White Gate Farm House were drawn up the following year. Duncan continued to farm the land until joining with neighbouring landowners in the early 1980s, to sell part to Bruce Fletcher, housebuilders, for the Harcourt Estate. Further land was sold in 1998 to David Wilson Homes for the Whitegate development.

Tricia Berry

Sources: Grateful thanks to Duncan & Jean Lucas for lending their old deeds, so that the interesting history of these three closes could be explored.



1914 map with the three closes outlined