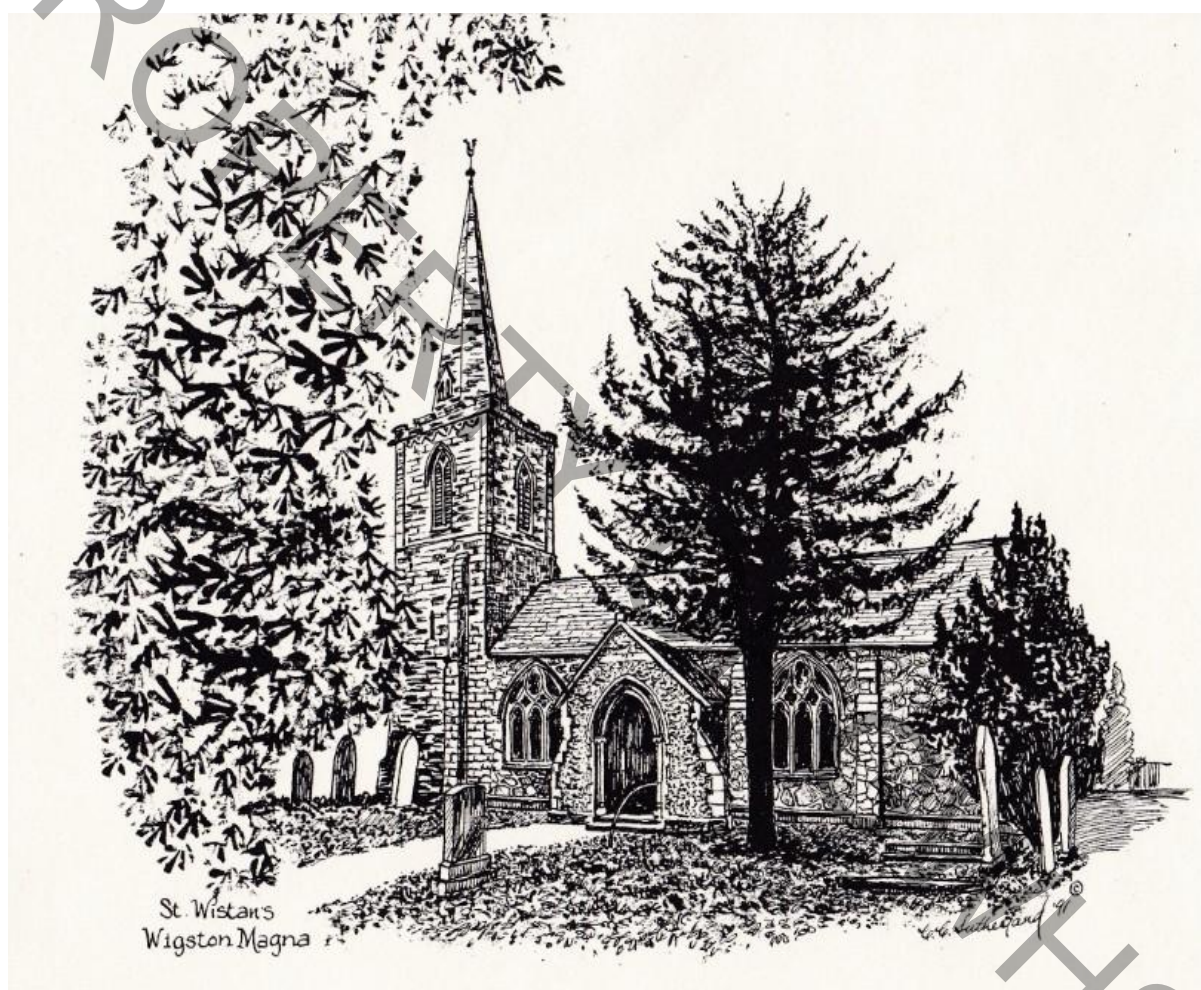


GREATER WIGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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

BULLETIN 99



A copy of an original drawing of St. Wistan's Church, Bull Head Street, Wigston Magna,
by C.C. Sutherland (1991)

PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS – AUGUST 2014 TO MARCH 2015

Wednesday 20th August 2014

A Walk through Victorian Leicester – Derek Seaton

7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age UK, Paddock Street, Wigston

***Wednesday 17th September 2014**

Anglo Saxon Wigston & Leicestershire – Peter Liddle

7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age UK, Paddock Street, Wigston

Wednesday 15th October 2014

The Medieval Village – Gareth King (in costume)

7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age UK, Paddock Street, Wigston

Wednesday 19th November 2014

Groby Old Hall – Peter Liddle

7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age UK, Paddock Street, Wigston

***Wednesday 17th December 2014**

Christmas Social with nibbles, drinks, quiz & pictures – Mike Forryan & Colin Towell

Plus ‘A Christmas Cracker with readings, monologues & potpourri for Christmas’ – Marion Morley

7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age UK, Paddock Street, Wigston

Wednesday 21st January 2015

Boys & Girls of WWI (underage soldiers & nurses, some with local connections – Peter Cousins

7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age UK, Paddock Street, Wigston

Wednesday 18th February 2015

AGM followed by video footage from the 1930s – Mike Forryan

7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age UK, Paddock Street, Wigston

Wednesday 18th March 2015

30 Years with Leicestershire Constabulary – Richard Pollard

7.30p.m. The Dining Room, Age UK, Paddock Street, Wigston

***Please note:** There are a couple of amendments to the previously published programme. In September we are very pleased to welcome at short notice, Peter Liddle with a talk on Anglo Saxon Wigston & Leicestershire, and in December we have the addition of Marion Morley with A Christmas Cracker.

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

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

Chairman, Mike Forryan's e-mail: chairman@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk

MARCH 2014 MEETING

With 66 members and visitors present, we gathered to hear about the Royal National Lifeboat Institution from Derek Young who has been a member of the Institution for 50 years, and so was well qualified to talk on the subject. For myself, I recall doing a junior school project more than 50 years ago on the Lifeboats and so I had a particular interest and remain fascinated to this day. Derek sees the sea from the other side, as you may say, in his capacity as a sailing and navigation instructor even in Leicester where you cannot be much further from the coast.

Derek commenced his talk by unveiling a huge RNLI flag which led into his making it quite clear that the N in RNLI stands for 'national' and not 'naval'. The RNLI is a registered charity founded in 1824 by Sir William Hillary to assist ships likely to be wrecked off the coast of the Isle of Man which is very dangerous. Today the Institution has 346 lifeboats and another 70 in the relief fleet. There are 237 lifeboat stations along the 19,000 mile coastline of the UK including the Irish Republic. Clearly some stations have more than one boat and some are linked to certain towns with Leicester having links with Skegness and Redcar.

Since 1824 over 140,000 people have been saved and in 2013 there were 8,346 launches and 9,764 people rescued (an average of 28 per day). Of the total launches 1,489 (the highest individual reason) were to boats with mechanical failure.

As well as the original purpose of saving lives from vessels in distress the Institution has, in the last few years, introduced a lifeguard service which holiday makers will see more and more on our more popular beaches. The organisation also has an education department which visits schools to talk about water safety. Furthermore, assistance is also given in flood emergencies both on the coast and inland. There were 12 callouts for this work in 2013. August is the busiest month of the year when 20% of calls are made and in 2013, 68% of these launches were to aid pleasure craft. Another area in which the Institution operates is on the river Thames where there are four stations covering 25 miles through the capital. These stations are busier than the coastal stations and have paid crews supported by volunteers, and open twin engine boats are used with the aim of reaching an incident within 15 minutes of a call out. One of the most frequent call out reasons is for suicide cases on the Thames bridges.

Crews are volunteers but receive an allowance of £9.60 for the first hour and £2.60 for each following hour. The overall annual running costs are £140,000,000 with only 1% of this coming from Government. A new full size boat can cost £2,800,000 such as the recently completed Soloman Brown at Cromer. A new inshore 'rib' type boat can cost £205,000. Should a boat on station need to be repaired it can be replaced by a boat from the relief fleet within 24 hours. There is a modern Lifeboat College at the head quarters in Poole, Dorset where there is a 15 foot deep pool in which all sorts of weather conditions can be replicated for trainees to gain experience.

The facts continued to pour out, 4 out of 10 launches are at night; the busiest coastal station is Southend; last year there were 124 launches in winds of force 4-7; the range for a boat is 100 miles out to sea; it costs £1300 to purchase the kit for a crew member.

A new lifeboat design uses the hovercraft principle as these boats can operate on sandbanks whereas the traditional propeller driven boats cannot. Modern boats can self-right within 4 seconds such is the standard of water tightness. After the current £10 million order for 10 boats

being made by Devonport Dockyard is completed, boats will be made by the Institution itself at its own works at HQ. Lifeboats can tow stricken ships back to port but there are salvage claim implications and the crew could be charged for using a lifeboat, so more often, a ship is held in position at sea until a proper tug can take over. All the crew are strapped into their seats which are sprung to counter the bumpy ride on rough seas, the boat is steered by the helmsman who takes his instructions from the coxswain sitting behind him. The age limits for the crew are 17-45 inshore and 17-55 offshore but these people can continue to the age of 60.

Derek asked if members could recall an incident when the Service received national publicity. There was little response but the last high profile case was that of the loss of the entire crew and four rescued people in the Penlee lifeboat disaster in 1981. In this case, the lifeboat, weighing 20 tons, was tossed over the ship it was trying to save, by the huge waves and hurricane strength winds. The Institution gives out few bravery medals and the last Gold Medal was awarded to the Cox of the Guernsey boat in 1981 when 29 people were rescued and put ashore in Brixham.

Members then viewed a short film about the work that the Institution does involving lifeguards rescuing swimmers caught by unexpected rip tides and recreational sailors caught by big waves.

Following many questions with answers detailed in this report members had the opportunity to purchase items from the RNLI travelling shop thereby helping to raise funds for the Institution.

Colin Towell

APRIL 2014 MEETING

Our booked speaker was sadly unable to attend due to illness, so Peter Cousins & Mike Hutchinson very kindly agreed to fill in at short notice with a truly fascinating presentation on their trip to Salt Lake City in America. Family historians will know, but others may not, that Salt Lake City is the headquarters of the Mormon faith, and one of the aims of all its members is to trace their ancestors. The Mormons were pioneers in modern electronic research with their familysearch.org website and the IGI (International Genealogical Index). The following is Peter's account of their memorable visit in autumn 2013.

GO WEST YOUNG MEN!

Following my several years of research into the life and times of Orson Wright, I turned my attention to the family of his Mother, Maria Greenwell from Dunton Bassett. Several branches of the Greenwell family were converted to Mormonism, in fact some of them became missionaries in Leicestershire and set about converting others. Most of the Greenwells who became Mormons travelled to the USA and took part in the trek across America to settle in Salt Lake City.

I made contact with several of them in and around Salt Lake City in Utah USA, helped along by having some free international Skype call time, enabling me to speak to them directly.

At around the same time I was contacted by a great niece of Orson Wright who lives in California who was planning a trip to see friends in Salt Lake City. So with this in mind and the contacts already, I mentioned to my wife that I would love to visit Salt Lake – her reaction was – why don't you go! I got in touch with a historian friend and we set about thinking about a trip – one week later all booked!

We set off for 10 days in October 2013, flying from Birmingham to Paris, and then an 11 hour flight to Salt Lake City, arriving mid-afternoon local time. Next morning after a strange night's sleep because of the time difference – wide awake at 2am – we set about exploring the city.

We were amazed at the cleanliness of the whole city and soon realised why. No fast food outlets, cafes or bars hence no litter, a bit different to walking through Leicester City on a Saturday morning! Walking through the city streets and chatting about what we were seeing we were stopped several times when locals heard our English accents, everyone was so welcoming and interested in our visit. The centre of the city contains Temple Square with the truly magnificent Temple built by the early Mormon pioneers.

During the next 10 days we were amazed at the friendliness and hospitality shown to us by everyone we met. We travelled north to Ogden City with John Greenwell, a direct descendant of the Greenwells from Dunton Bassett, to see the graveyard containing 42 Greenwells from Leicestershire, the Golden Spike where the intercontinental railway was completed in the 1840s, and south to Provo the home of Ancestry.com. Most of the rest of the time was spent in the city, visiting the amazing Family History Centre and its facilities. The building covers 5 floors with 800 volunteer staff. Its resources are vast, with a complete floor dedicated to UK research data. We were given a full tour including all of the back room areas where a lot of the conservation and cataloguing takes place.

The two highlights of our tour were a visit to Antelope Island in the Salt Lake on the day that they held the yearly buffalo round-up and the final visit on Sunday morning before leaving to see a live performance of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir – a truly stunning experience.

Peter Cousins



The Mormon Temple at Salt Lake City

MAY 2014 MEETING

For the first of our two annual evening visits we met in Market Harborough for a stroll (what a lovely word for a summers evening walk) conducted by Rosalind Willatts who was, until recently, the Conservation Officer at Market Harborough District Council, a post that she had held for some years during which time she had been involved in many changes to the town.

Our tour started at the Old Grammar School. This would have been a good opportunity for those who usually motored through or around the town to look at this ancient building on stilts more closely, but it is being renovated and is shrouded in scaffolding. Rosalind managed to climb onto a three foot high plinth, usually used as a base for the floodlights, to introduce her talk. (At the end of this introduction I missed seeing how she dismounted.)

One of the earliest records of the town shows that dues were paid to King John in 1203 for the right to hold a market. A bridge was built over the River Welland (the river itself forming the county boundary with Northamptonshire at the time), on the line of what is now St Mary's Road so called because it leads to the church dedicated to St Mary in Arden in Great Bowden. In fact this was the parish church and Harborough church was a chapel of ease to Great Bowden until 1890 when Harborough became a parish in its own right. This lasted until 1906 when Great Bowden and Market Harborough formed a single parish. It is noticeable that there is no graveyard surrounding St Dionysius' church in Harborough, this is because all burials took place at the parish church in Great Bowden.

St Mary's Road looks narrow today but in fact was widened by the council whose surveyor, Herbert Cole, designed many of the older buildings lining this street. The Peacock Hotel at the entrance to the road is a prominent building on land now owned by the Deutsche Bank and originally had a brewery at the rear where there is now a sundial which has been set wrongly so never tells the time accurately.

Market Harborough's market was held in the very wide High Street with cattle and goods being brought into the town for sale. After the Council was created in the 1890s it constructed a Market Hall for dry goods and food sales, this has recently undergone a further refurbishment.

We moved to the Memorial Gardens near the river which were originally the garden attached to Welland House, the large property fronting the square now occupied by Market Harborough Building Society. The memorial gates, to men of the town who gave their lives in WWII, came from Garendon Park near Loughborough. The garden contains another sundial and at the rear of the nearby Union pub (returned to its original name after a period under the sign of the Six Pack) is yet another sundial with the arm in the form of a plank of wood. Opposite on the south bank of the river is the former cinema now being converted into retirement flats. Rosalind commented favourably on the design of a safety barrier near to the river and on such an everyday installation as an electricity substation which sat suitably in its park environment.

Moving back to the square, Rosalind emphasised that in redesigning the square a few years ago after the bypass was opened the principle of giving the area back to the pedestrian rather than the motorist had been adopted. This meant a large open space was created to provide a market area as well as performance space and to enhance the pillar style war memorial and the surrounding buildings such as the frontage to the building society and the former Old Rectory (1878) turned Lloyds Bank which is now a Café Nero. The latter was built high up from pavement level to cope with flooding and had once entertained a Nobel Prize winner. Lloyds had painted the outside

stonework in their corporate green much to the speaker's annoyance, but it has not yet been returned to its natural colour. The war memorial has figures of local personalities carved around the top, much like miniatures of the statues on Leicester's clock tower. A further war memorial designed by Herbert Cole names the 1,657 men who gave their lives in WWI. It is situated in the old hospital which has been listed by English Heritage at the last moment much to the annoyance of the National Health Service which wanted to replace the hospital.

Proceeding to the area behind the parish church, we could see the Harborough Theatre built in warm honey coloured stone, originally with a Collyweston stone roof but now roofed in concrete tiles. Harborough does of course boast the huge former Symington's factory in the town centre, now the council's own office and also containing the local museum, library and other occupants. There is some notable stained glass on the lower office windows of this building. The next port of call was the entrance to Millers Yard, one of many passageways leading to rear developments, these are sometimes gated but a walk inside would often reveal architectural gems. Others were Aldwinkle Yard, Corts Yard and Joules Yard. The speaker pointed out the butchers and fishmongers shops still operated with their front windows open during trading.

Moving further up High Street the former Town Hall of 1788, now a ladies fashion shop was noticeable with its large ground floor windows, originally open arches and assembly rooms over with Venetian style windows. Going north the street narrows probably to prevent straying animals fleeing their fate from the old cattle market. Again the street has been pedestrianised in such a way that cars can still use it. Among the many highlights in High Street is the Three Swans, probably the oldest pub in the town, with the 18C timber frame now held together with steel beams. Most of the buildings are listed except for the modern former Golden Wonder Crisps offices which are modern. Rosalind pointed out many features which would lead those interested in architecture to look more thoroughly and often find much older structures behind the facades. Such features include the depth of the original building, signs of timber framing, old fireplaces, width of floorboards and window styles.

Rosalind gave many fascinating anecdotes of her personal involvement, as the council's conservation officer, in the unacceptable alteration of buildings to suit modern purposes and the undesirable changes which owners often wished to carry out.

After offering our thanks for a very interesting and informing stroll on a warm but threateningly overcast evening we decamped to a local pub for a drink and some food.

JUNE 2014 MEETING

Unusually for our summer outings the night of 18 June was beautifully sunny and warm, a perfect summer's evening for a visit to a village so close to Wigston that many may not really know it. Our destination was the church of St. Luke and the Manor House at Newton Harcourt often seen from the outside as we pass by walking or in the car but rarely is there an opportunity to see inside.

The church was left open for us to wander around, the inside is simple in design with plain furnishings and virtually no memorials, a simple font and a small organ which originally came from Wistow Hall in 1899. There are no distinct architectural features in the church which was largely rebuilt in a major restoration in 1834. Nevertheless much of the original church survives, the lower part of the tower is 13C with round stones taken from the riverbed of the Sence (not the canal!!). The upper part of the tower is of squared ironstone and built in the 15C as was the main

door leading into the church through the tower. Inside there was once a pulpit and a gallery in the tower although we had difficulty in imagining this as there was so little height to work with.

Moving into the church yard there were three graves of note: the tramp who died in the canal in 1936 while using it for a mirror to shave in, the aeroplane pilot who crashed nearby when showing off his acrobatic skills (or lack of them) to a girlfriend on the ground, and the 8 year old child who died in 1926 of scarlet fever and whose father was a stone mason and created a model church in stone for the child's grave. Finally we noted the weathervane which was riddled with bullet holes from when it became jammed in the 19C and the then owner of the Manor House asked Sir Henry Halford from Wistow Hall, a notable shot, to free it for him.

We then wandered across the road and through the archway into the Manor courtyard, noting a further gateway to our left which led to the gardens containing a swimming pool and two buildings opposite each other and looking similar at roof level with fake old time flags, but in fact one, was an old garage and the other a modern studio.

We were then welcomed into the house by Mr. Anthony Goddard and his wife Annette who were our very genial and generous hosts for the evening. The family moved to the Manor House in 1893 from their previous home, Knighton Spinneys, Knighton. Mr. Goddard is the sixth generation of his family to carry on the family firm of architects started by Joseph Goddard in 1780 in Leicester. The ground floor rooms of the house contain an amazing mix of paintings, architectural drawings and collector's items complemented by the lovely period rooms, fireplaces and ceilings. There were further displays in the cellar rooms and corridor where items ranged from more architectural drawings, to an art deco mannequin lounging by a modern fire place, to an old style record player, to a suit of armour and war time helmets. In fact there were examples of many unexpected facets of life. One section was about the Beatles and there were many musical items reflecting Mr. Goddard's youthful interests and connections.

An early painting of 'The Wigston Feast' was of particular interest and some time was taken by members in trying to identify the scene. There was a reference to the skull found by one of the Goddard architects when carrying out repair work to the West Bridge in Leicester which was thought at the time could be that of King Richard III. We now, of course, know otherwise but the note jokingly said that the absent skull was on loan to the University of Leicester. In fact many of the printed notes about the articles on display were a little tongue in cheek and very amusing.

Another item was a suitcase which had belonged to Henry Langton Goddard and was labelled up as a piece of luggage for the Titanic. Fortunately Henry and the case missed the sailing because his train was delayed by a derailment at Luton. (Note to tell Derek Seaton about this for his Titanic and the local connections talk).

The Goddard family designed many well known Leicester buildings most notably the Clock Tower, but also the former Midland bank on Granby Street/Bishop Street corner, The Grand Hotel, St. James the Greater Church, the Thomas Cook building on Gallowtree Gate and many other churches, schools, houses and factories in the city and county.

One very modern item on display was a model (and plans) of the house designed by Anthony which he is to build in the grounds of the Manor. This is extremely modern in design but based on Elizabethan themes with carbon neutral energy systems. The building of the house will be filmed by Channel 4's Grand Designs.

This part of the evening concluded with a glass of wine taken in the delightful gardens. Our hosts were thanked for allowing us access to their home and amazing collections. We could not allow the evening to close without a mention that it was ‘our own’ Orson Wright who actually constructed the Grand Hotel in Leicester to the Goddard design, and so that this fact became a permanent record in the archive we decided to donate a copy of Peter Cousins’ book Champion of the People – The Life and Times of Orson Wright to Mr. Goddard.

We then made our way to the Dog and Gun in nearby Kilby for our meal. There were 36 members present.

Colin Towell

OBITUARY

Sadly we have to report the loss of a member. Glenys Shuter died very suddenly, at home on 31st May. It was a great shock to everyone, not least to members of the society as she had been walking round Market Harborough with us only ten days before. Her funeral was held at All Saints’ Church on 19th June. She was the widow of Roy Shuter and had been a member of the society since 1998. Our sincere condolences to her sons Bryn and Andrew, and her five grandchildren.

DONATION TO THE SOCIETY

In April, Iain and Neil Morley visited Wigston to see the village where their family came from. I met with them and spent a very enjoyable day walking around Wigston showing them the family grave stones (Abraham and Elizabeth Forryan in All Saints’ Churchyard and Jane Goodwin in St. Wistan’s Churchyard) and telling them about the village and village life in the 1800s and 1900s. As a thank you a donation of £50 was made to the Society. We would like to thank them for this donation and wish them both well for the future.

Mike Forryan

URGENT MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Sometime ago a person borrowed from me a Neolithic axe head with relevant documentation to show at some society meeting. OK, I have loaned items on many occasions before with an entry made in my ‘borrow’ book. This time I omitted to make such an entry.

Recently Ray Pierce, whose brother found the axe head whilst ploughing on Tythorn Hill and who loaned it to my collection, asked to see it. To my shame I had to admit to its disappearance. Please, please, if you borrowed it or know where it is, please advise me. It is the earliest record of man in Wigston and invaluable to Wigston’s society. So again please, if you know where it is advise me. Its only some 7,000 years old!

Duncan Lucas

This is a heartfelt plea from Duncan who is always so generous in sharing his considerable collection of items on Wigston's history. Lots of us are tardy about returning borrowed items (ask any librarian) not because we intend to keep them, just that we are slow in making the effort to return them. If anyone can help, please do get in touch, there will be no recriminations, he will just be so happy and relieved to have it back.

ST. WISTAN'S CHURCH, WIGSTON

Our cover illustration features St Wistan's Church, Wigston which has a most interesting and unusual history. The building is believed to have originated following the martyrdom of St. Wistan who was the son of King Wigmund, ruler of the Kingdom of Mercia. When the king died, Wistan was confirmed as the chosen successor but a close relative, Beorthfrith, also wished for the throne and murdered Wistan on 1st June 849. St. Wistan's Church, Wistow is believed to have been built at the place of the murder.

Wistan's body was taken to be buried at the family mausoleum at Repton, Derbyshire. The procession rested at several places on the way, including Wigston. At the spot where the body was placed, a small shrine and chapel was built to commemorate the occasion.

In 1086 the Domesday Book records a priest residing at Wichingestone (Wigston) and a cleric. This suggests there was a small chapel, as distinct from the parish church, served by a separate cleric. It is likely that about this time the little wattle and daub chapel was replaced by a more solid structure in the Norman style.

By 12th century the manor of Wigston which belonged to the Earls of Leicester was divided from c.1170 onwards into two parts. The larger, in which the parish church was situated became known as the Winchester Fee (later the Oxford Fee) and the smaller, which was about one quarter the size, and contained St. Wistan's was known as the Champayne manor. When Robert de Bellomont, Earl of Mellent and also of Leicester died in 1118, he left both churches to Lenton Priory, Nottinghamshire.

By the 14th century it is known that the little church had been rebuilt in stone. It had a tower and spire, two bells, a nave and north aisle. There was a jewelled statue of St. Wistan within and an annual pilgrimage was held each 1st June to commemorate the martyrdom. The pilgrimage, rent from land the church owned, a chantry from a benefactor and the services of its own two churchwardens provided good income and management.

In 1534 the reformation began and after Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy which confirmed the king as head of the Church of England many changes occurred. In 1540 the dissolution of the monasteries meant there were no religious houses left and ownership of St. Wistan's passed from Lenton Priory to the Crown. In 1547 Edward VI's suppression of the chantries made illegal all shrines, images, pilgrimages and idolatry which put an end to activities at St. Wistan's and the chalice, vestments and ornaments were sold off. For a short time during the reign of Catholic, Mary Tudor between 1577-1561 it was brought back into use, but by 1577 St Wistan's lost its status as a church and was closed. Its manor shed its Lordship which in 1586/7 was sold off by its last Lord, Henry Turvile, whose family had inherited the Champayne manor. 711 acres of land were bought mainly by men from the village who had been his tenant farmers on the 14 farms of the manor.

From 1580 the church building was used as a schoolroom, money for the children's education coming from benefactors whose gifts were used to buy land to rent out. Unusually it was co-educational, with rich and poor being educated together, free.

In 1633/4 the churchwardens were taken to the Archdeacon's Court for allowing the building to become neglected. It was disputed and for years nothing was done. It had a leaning steeple and was used for occasional burials. Eventually one of the aisles was pulled down and the lead, timber etc. sold and the proceeds used to repair the remaining aisle and the steeple. One of the bells was re-cast and moved to All Saints', the other one sold.

From 1682 while still housing the school, the old church building was let as a meeting house for the congregation of Independents, now the United Reformed Church. They paid three guineas per year and continued there until 1731 when the powerful High Church at All Saints' took exception to their presence in an Anglican Church and gave them abrupt notice to leave. However, some were not happy, and one prominent church member, Samuel Davenport, moved to the Independents, donating a large sum of money for the building the first independent chapel in Long Street, Wigston.

It is not clear when the dedication of the church was altered, with the name of St. Wolstan's being used instead. Records generally refer to 'The Old Church' and do not explain how or why this change happened. It is assumed that the name was confused with Wulfstan, an influential reformer and pastor who became Bishop of Worcester in 1062.

In 1790 the school received a damning report by John Nichols who wrote that the children were much neglected in "writing, reading and going to church" He described the building as "decaying hastily, and serves as a mortor [mortuary] house, a fewel house, a school, a barn and a stable". At this time a couple of almshouses had also been built into the nave at the opposite end to that occupied by the school. In the early 19th century the spire was reported to be in a very dangerous position, leaning over cottages surrounding the churchyard. Despite this it remained a school until 1839 when the Church of England National School was built in Long Street to accommodate the increasing numbers of children in the village.

In 1853 work was finally begun to make it safe and to restore the tower and nave. At this time the church was being used as a mortuary chapel, and the graveyard had been opened up due to All Saints' Churchyard being full. Thomas Ingram, the churchwarden, acquired an acre of land adjoining St. Wolstan's to enlarge the graveyard. In 1874 the churchyard was extended further when four cottages near Church Nook were demolished. Later, in 1880 both churchyards were closed when the new municipal cemetery was opened in Welford Road, Wigston.

By 1874 it was agreed that the church was in need of further extensive restoration. Messrs. Goddard, architects produced plans for major work, but this was not taken up, probably due to the cost. A more modest restoration was adopted which included new windows, a large east window with cathedral glass and further windows in the south wall plus a new porch added to the south door. Inside the floor tiles were removed, the floor was excavated to a depth of eighteen inches, then retiled. Finally the end of the church was elevated to a height of six inches above the nave. Damp plaster was removed from the walls, before re-plastering and tinting. The interior was completed with many gifts from parishioners such as new communion table, hassocks, alms bags, cloths, napkins, bible and prayer book, blue tapestry curtains plus cushions and coverings for the vestry and choir seats. A new bell was cast by John Taylor's bell foundry and hung on 26th May 1877.

The old church re-opened for Divine Worship on 30th September 1877, with seating for 120 people.

The churchyard was walled in granite stone and given two handsome wrought iron gates. Also the ground was levelled and planted with young lime trees around the perimeter all by Thomas Ingram, lawyer, of The Hawthorns (later Abington House) and Alfred Cooper, surgeon, of Wigston Hall.

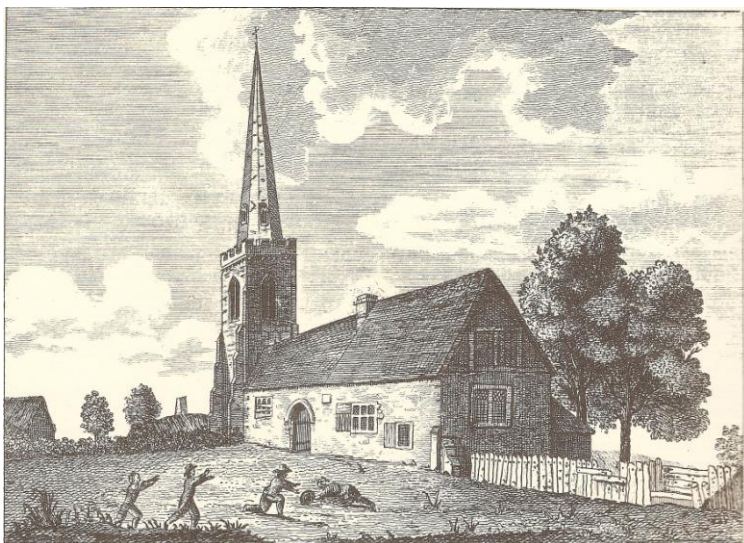
In 1956 the building was again in need of repair. A Restoration Fund was started by Canon George West but following his death in the December it was continued by his successor, Rev. Basil Tudor Davies. The work included re-plastering, new roof, re-wiring, new heating system, paving, two new windows, re-building the top of the spire, re-gilding the weather-cock, stone-work to the tower walls & buttresses, new drainpipes and guttering, interior decoration, replacing floors, new lectern, joinery and altar rail, 50 hassocks and 48 prayer books. The whole refurbishment costing £2,285. At this time historical research revealed that the dedication should really be to St. Wistan and it was decided the name should be changed back. At this time it was stated that the name St. Wolstan's had been in use 300 years. The church was re-opened and re-dedicated by the Archdeacon of Leicester on the feast of Candlemass, 2nd February 1960. It has been open regularly for services ever since. These are 'low' church in nature providing an alternative to the 'high' church services at All Saints', a complete opposite to its very Catholic origins.

Generally the reversion of the dedication was accepted by most people but there was a huge groundswell of opposition when it was suggested in certain quarters that St. Wolstan's Close, St. Wolstan's House, St. Wolstan's electoral ward and St. Wolstan's Farm should have their names changed to correspond with the re-named church. People were having none of it!

The Wigston Feast painting mentioned in the account of our June outing has a known provenance and features Wigston people commemorating St. Wistan on the anniversary of his death on 1st June.

Tricia Berry

Sources: *The History and Antiquities of the County of Leicester Vol IV, Pt I* (Wigston Magna section) by John Nichols, *The Old Church, A History of St. Wistan's Church, Wigston Magna* by Janice Broughton.



St. Wolstan's showing cottage windows inserted in the walls - from Nichols c.1790

HARRY HARDY PEACH (1874 – 1936) AND THE DRYAD COMPANY

Members may like to read again the report on our meeting in September 2013 when we heard that excellent talk by Derek Seaton on the local connections with the sinking of the Titanic. One of those connections was Harry Hardy Peach who had founded the Dryad Company in Leicester which had supplied the cane furniture for the ship. This had assisted in the rescue of some people who had clung on to it as it floated in the sea after the collision and the subsequent sinking.

On hearing the name Dryad my ears pricked up and following some more enquiries about the connection with Derek and with our Bulletin editor Tricia Berry, I was surprised to find that Harry Hardy Peach was such an active and influential man that a book had been written about him by Pat Kirkham.

The reason that I was interested in the Dryad Company was that my Uncle Bert (my Dad's brother) had worked for the Dryad Metal Works all his working life from 1928 to 1979 (except for war service in the army). The works were in St. Nicholas Street until about 1930 when a move was made to Sanvey Gate. As a child at home we had several pieces of work that Uncle Bert had made, most prominently, a pair of brass candle sticks and a bronze fruit bowl as well as a fireside coal box and companion set. Some of these and a few other items are now in our home.

As far as I was aware the company made architectural metal work such as door furniture and other metal items which were essential on and in buildings, both commercial and domestic. My first job as a 16 year old was at the then Leicester Temperance Building Society in their new offices on the corner of Charles Street and Halford Street. In the impressive banking hall were some large light fittings, which my Dad told me were made by Dryad.

What I didn't realise was that Dryad Metal Works was a very famous business using designs that reflected the work of the Arts and Crafts movement, in particular that of local man Ernest Gimson.

In fact Harry Peach having set up the company in 1912 with William Pick, who ran the Leicester art metal work firm of Collins and Co., then left him to it and concentrated on the Dryad Company which made the cane furniture and craft items. Peach had known Pick for some years through a mutual friend Benjamin Fletcher who was assisting local firms with their designs. There was a strong connection with the local College of Art as employees at both parts of the Dryad organisation attended the college where they were taught by Fletcher and Reeve on a part time basis often after they had completed full time courses there.

The firm produced a whole range of products ranging from jewellery, presentation pieces, table and household wares as well as decorative items and architectural hardware for both the domestic and corporate market. Some items were specifically commissioned, for example, a necklace of gold and opals made and probably designed by William Pick for Muriel Gimson in 1913. They also produced war memorials such as the one in cast bronze for the Leicester Tramways and Electricity Department c.1918.

Harry Peach took little part in the design and daily operations at the metal works but was the business genius behind both companies. He had built up an international reputation by attending trade fairs, exhibitions and colleges in Europe. He became aware that the concept of an exhibition was not well appreciated in the UK despite the fact that it was popular abroad and led to increased marketing opportunities and improvements in design.

Peach was so keen on design that he was a founder of the Design Industries Association which was established in 1915 out of a Design Club which started in 1908. He knew more about German design and Germany itself than any other founder member of the DIA and spoke the language well. He was familiar with the work of German furniture designers through his Dryad company. Peach was highly involved in the organisation of the DIA and set up and ran many exhibitions. His interest in print design and quality led him to be a monitor of advertising standards. A suggestion that the frontage of London Road station and the bridge parapets be adorned with advertising caused uproar and a campaign was waged against the ideas of the Midland Railway Company by the Kyrle Society with the Rotary Club, the Literary and Philosophical Society and the Footpaths Association in support. Regrettably the argument was lost although in the process Peach wrote to the Spectator magazine to rally support.

The Kyrle Society campaign led to a swelling of public pride which in turn led to the foundation of Leicester Civic Society although the organisation subsequently folded to start up again in its present form in 1979. Indeed Harry Peach was also highly involved in the preservation of the countryside decrying blatant roadside advertising (which also occurred alongside railways, remember the two men carrying a ladder) especially on village shops and petrol stations/garages. He was instrumental in arranging a national conference in Leicester in 1928 for the Footpaths Preservation Society. No other than Clough Williams-Ellis (of Portmeirion fame) who was a member of the CPRE stated that the movement that would spring from the conference might well be known as the Leicester Movement, so strong were the convictions of Peach and his local supporters. Typically Peach noted in 1929/30 'the existence of indiscriminate development [farmhouses] at Stonehenge, our oldest and grandest national monument'.

So what an unknown (well at least to many, I would think) body of influential men existed in Leicester in the late 1800s and the first 30 years of the 20th century. Leicester should be proud of these thinking activists who have had such an influence on our environment locally and nationally and were in at the beginning of some of our treasured 'protection' organisations.

Information in this article was obtained, with thanks, from a book on Harry Peach by Pat Kirkham published in 1986.

I hope to write a further article in a future issue on the houses in which Harry Hardy Peach lived in.

Colin Towell

PS: there is a further Titanic local connection mentioned in the report on our visit to the Manor House in Newton Harcourt in June 2014.