

# GREATER WIGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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



## **BULLETIN 120**

**1<sup>st</sup> July 2021**



Old Cemetery Lodge, Welford Road, Wigston

# REMINDER

Hello everyone,

I list below, fingers crossed, the remaining meetings we have for this year. I will advise you nearer the time if there are any cancellations.

Best wishes and keep safe.

**Ann Cousins**

## PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS – AUGUST 2021 – DECEMBER 20

### 15 SEPTEMBER

BLACKSMITHS? THEY SHOE

HORSES DON'T THEY?

(POWERPOINT & PICTURES)

**DAVID JAMES**

### 17 NOVEMBER

LIFE IN THE SIGNAL BOXES

OF WIGSTON JUNCTION

(POWERPOINT & PICTURES)

**JOHN STEVENSON**

### 20 OCTOBER

THE COUNTRY RAILWAY STATION

(POWERPOINT & PICTURES)

**BRIAN JOHNSON**

### 15 DECEMBER

\*CHRISTMAS PARTY & QUIZ

WITH NIBBLES & DRINKS

CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS

(POWERPOINT & PICTURES)

**VIRGINIA WRIGHT**

\*Our Christmas Party for members will be £2.00 on the night towards refreshments, guests will be charged £3.00.

Society's website: [www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk](http://www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk)  
All enquiries to: [secretary@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk](mailto:secretary@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk)

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: Hannah Evans email: [bulletineditor@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk](mailto:bulletineditor@wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk) four clear weeks before publication date.

## **ZOOM TALK - "A WALK AROUND WIGSTON CEMETERY" ON WEDNESDAY 21 APRIL 2021**

Our planned meeting at the Wigston College for Wednesday 21 April 2021 was cancelled due to the current Covid-19 restrictions, so to replace this for our members Peter Cousins organised a new talk online using Zoom.

The talk was entitled "A Walk Around Wigston Cemetery". After speaking to Mark Sealey, one of the Cemetery staff, Peter had the idea of putting together a talk of the interesting people at rest in the Cemetery.

The talk included the history of the opening of the Cemetery in 1882, details of military casualties from both World Wars aged from only 16, local business entrepreneurs, entertainers, musicians and even a famous footballer.

To augment each person or family Peter had delved into their family background and history, to give a complete picture of their family lives.

The talk was very well attended, and thanks go to Peter for a well researched, moving and informative presentation.

**Ann Cousins**

## **ZOOM TALK - "AN INTRODUCTION TO WALL PAINTINGS IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND" ON THURSDAY 20 MAY 2021**

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. Because 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 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.

**Colin Towell**

## **“WELCOME TO WILLOW PARK”**

This is currently on the Information Boards in the Park.

The history of Willow Park is an interesting one. The reason we now have a park here at all is that in 1926 the Co-op wanted to buy the land on which the old Greater Wigston Recreation Ground, at the end of Central Avenue, stood and the only way the Ministry of Health would agree to this was if Wigston Urban District Council provided new land for a recreational area.

The ground on which Willow Park stands was once called ‘Crow Willows’ and was originally bought by the council for £1600

The Chairman of the Council, Mr J. B. Main opened the park on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1929

There was a small newspaper article on the opening with the headline -

School children take part in formal opening.

Wigston’s new park covering an area of 8.5 acres and with three quarters of a mile of footpaths was opened this afternoon in the presence of a large gathering of townfolk and representative assemblies of school children from each of the six local schools.

The park is beautifully laid out and situated in a delightful open position in Aylestone Lane, Wigston. In addition to a sand pit there are 2 hard tennis courts and grass courts are to be laid later in the year.

When the whole scheme is completed it will cost about £3,000.00. The opening ceremony was performed by the Chairman of the Wigston Urban District Council, Mr J. B. Main. The Wigston Temperance Prize Band played selections during the afternoon.

Plans for the New Park.

These were discussed at a Meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> August 1922 on the proposed Recreation Ground and Park on Aylestone Lane. The items raised were: -

1. The field to be levelled.
2. An Asphalt path to be constructed all around the ground 6ft wide and an 18” margin planted with shrubs.
3. Wrought iron fencing with a field gate and 3 quadrant gates to be constructed on the side of Aylestone Lane.
4. A fourth quadrant gate to be constructed at the NW Corner, near the public footpath to be constructed.
5. Trees to be left where standing with the exception of the WILLOW TREE in the centre. (A Reference to the origin of the Park).
6. Brick and tiled Sanitary Conveniences to be constructed near Aylestone Lane with a Caretaker’s Room and Shelter.
7. A Paddling Pool and Sandpit to be constructed.

There were plans for a Housing Estate to be developed on the old Recreation Ground at the end of Central Avenue.

Tenders were invited for the layout of the new Recreation Ground and an application had been made to the National Playing Fields Association for some financial assistance for the scheme.

Twelve tenders were received and the one from Messrs. Bradshaw Ltd of £3126-15-4d was accepted by the Wigston Urban District Council. The contractors then requested a revised specification regarding the cost of the footpaths and also estimates were needed to lay a drain across the land adjoining the new Recreation Ground to avoid flooding.

Mr F. Bradshaw from Messrs Bradshaw Ltd attended a Council Meeting on the Aylestone Lane Recreation Ground and requested the Council to accept the amended specification on the construction of the footpaths and this would be £400 in excess of their original price.

The Clerk informed the Council that the Ministry of Health Inspector had pointed out the price of the footpaths construction was very low and advised them to alter the specification. This was approved by the Council members and a clause was inserted that the footpaths to be maintained for 3 years.

14<sup>th</sup> July 1928.

The Long Street Council School had been granted the use of the old Wigston Recreation Ground for holding their Annual Sports Day.

1928.

The Recreation Grounds and Parks Committee recommended that the new Recreation Ground should not be opened until Spring 1929 and the Surveyor to be instructed to make arrangements for the upkeep of the Tennis Courts and a water supply for the Paddling Pool. Messrs Bradshaw Ltd submitted an estimate for £133-15-0d for the planting of shrubs in the new Aylestone Lane Recreation Ground.

The Opening of the new Aylestone Lane Recreation Ground.

To be officially opened on Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 1929 by Mr J.B. Main, Chairman of the Wigston Urban District Council and assisted by Mr T. Beeston, Chairman of the Parks Committee.

Invitations would be sent to the representatives of the Leicestershire National Playing Fields Association and Wigston Urban District Councillors.

The Wigston Temperance Prize Band would be in attendance and arrangements were to be made with Head Teachers for sports and other events for the school children.

The following prices were fixed for the hire of the Tennis Courts -

Grass Courts – 12/6d per annum

Hourly tickets – Grass Courts - 6d/hour

Hard Courts – 20/- per annum

Hard Courts - 9d/hour

Any Court – 25/- per annum

Appointment of a Groundsman.

42 applications were received, and 6 men were interviewed.

The wages were £3.5.0d a week for the summer months and £2.15.0d for the winter months.

William Payne was appointed who lived at 4 Highgate, Saffron Estate, Leicester.

It was recommended that a 36" Motor Mower and roller be purchased from Messrs Ransomes, Sims and Jefferies and this was accepted by the Council Committee.

May /June 1929.

It was decided to enlarge the sandpit and make it twice the size, 25'x 30' to 50' x 60' and enclosing it with concrete surrounds. Messrs Bradshaw Ltd submitted a tender which was accepted at £137.6.5d.

#### Flower Beds

An estimate of planting 4 Flower Beds was submitted by Messrs Bradshaw Ltd for £24.0.0d but this was awarded to Mr H. Penney of Wigston to do this for £17-12-00d (a connection with Penney the Florists in Wigston).

#### Water Supply

An additional water hydrant was installed in 1929 and the tender being accepted by Mr H. Markham for £4-10-00d.

#### General view of the Park in the 1930's

The Crow Willow/ Aylestone Lane Recreation Ground opened in March 1929 and was greatly appreciated and well patronised. The Sandpit was enlarged, and 5 Cricket Pitches constructed. The Wigston Temperance Prize Band had given a number of Band Concerts in the summer which were well attended.

The Tennis Courts needed some repairs to their surfaces and fencing was required around the Sandpit and the Paddling Pool for the children's safety. Messrs Corts Ltd received the tender for this work at £29-10-00d.

An additional entrance was to be constructed from the Recreation Ground near the Children's play corner.

#### Cricket Clubs using the new Recreation Ground

Various cricket Clubs applied to use the Cricket pitches in the 1930's including -

Wigston Magna Choir Boys and Servers Cricket Club

Wigston Magna Working Men's Club and Institute

Craddock Park Estate Cricket Club

Wigston Congregational Cricket Club

The clubs would have to draw lots with the Groundsman for the pitch on which they would play, and they would have to send a fixture list to him for their matches.

At that time the old Recreation Ground would be shared with the Long Street and Church School for their football matches.

#### Naming the Park

There was a query about the name of the Park. The Committee raised this issue on the official name of the Park - Aylestone Lane Recreation Ground/ Crow Willow Park / Willow Park. This was causing confusion. The Clerk stated there was no need for a resolution as the official name of the Park was Aylestone Lane Park.

Yet today it is known as Willow Park and the present-day Information Boards have - 'WELCOME TO WILLOW PARK' on them.

## Memories of the Paddling Pool in Willow Park in the 1930's

One Wigston resident recalls Willow Park as being forbidden territory to her and her friends in the 1930's as it was quite a way from where she lived. She was able to go to 'Pawley's Park' - which is Peace Memorial Park. Mr. Pawley was the Park Keeper at that time. To get to Willow Park the children would walk down Central Avenue, walk through the old Recreation Ground and then into Willow Park, past the swings, wooden seesaw and down to the bottom of the Park where the Sandpit and Paddling Pool were situated near to Aylestone Lane. There were steps into the pool and the children often fell in, as did her friend, and they never attempted a visit again.

## After World War 2

In 1947 post war development took place at the end of Central Avenue and there was a demand for housing and the Council began the construction of a large estate on the fields there and the old Recreation Ground was built on.

Willow Park continued to be used by the local residents and children and in September 1966 a photograph appeared in the Leicester Mercury newspaper of the opening of the new playground slide in the Park. It showed the children on the slide and also Timmy the terrier dog who loved to use the slide.

A BMX Bike Track was also included in the 1980/90's - it seems to have been filled in as there is still an outline of it in the park - near to the Skateboard area which was installed in recent years.

## Wigston Willow

This Football Club was formed in 1996 as Wigston United and named Wigston Willow in 2015 in recognition of their long-term home at Willow Park. Since 2019 a youth team has been established and now become part of the Wigston Willow Football Club. (Sadly no fixtures have taken place since the Covid 19 Restrictions etc. from March 2020).

The Park is still a very popular one for local residents and children and dog walking. Today there is 1 Tennis Court, 2 Football pitches, 2 Play areas, a Skateboard area and a multi activity Gym area. We are fortunate to have this Park in our collection of Wigston Parks in our Borough.

## References

Grateful thanks to Margaret Kind, Corporate Assistant Manager at Oadby & Wigston Borough Council for passing on the very early documents and information.

- GWHS Web pages
- D.C. Boulter - Wiggy's Child
- Internet searches

(Unable to access further information from the Leicestershire Record Office or the Local History Section of the Library due to Covid 19 Restrictions).

**Ailsa Whalley**  
**January 2021**

## **MEMORIES**

### **LIFE IN WIGSTON 1941/42 TO PRESENT 2021**

During 1941 my parents were living on Saffron Lane in South Wigston, they had two sons and another on the way.

On 8th February 1941, my father was commuting home from work in Coventry on his motorcycle. He was involved in a road traffic accident on the old A46 road to Coventry between Smockington Hollow and Sharnford and was hit by a drunk driver. The driver fled the scene and disappeared for 24 hours, however there were two people who had witnessed the event. This gave police a strong lead, along with the driver being known locally and the fact that there were so few cars on the road at the time due to the war.

When the driver was interviewed by the police, he claimed that he thought he had hit a cow. Meanwhile, my father was admitted to the Leicester Royal Infirmary. My mother had gone into shock and was staying with her in-laws in Fleckney when she went into labour with me on 11th February, and I was born at their house. My father died on 18th February of injuries that would be easily treated nowadays.

My mother and her three sons lived in Fleckney for a few months then moved into a little semi in Kingston Avenue, Wigston Fields. In 1942, a court ordered the driver to pay a sum of money which he promised to do a bit at a time, whilst not admitting any guilt, and he got off almost scot free. At this time in 1941, Britain was losing a World War and people were dying in their thousands in the Blitz.

The money had to be picked up at a Leicester solicitors office and sometimes it wasn't there. This meant that my mother always had to work to keep a roof over our heads. I went to nursery in Central Avenue and was there when the Lancaster bomber crash happened in February 1946, my two brothers were in school at Bell Street Infants and Long Street Junior. Bell Street Infants was quite unremarkable. One memory was a teacher in 1948 excitedly telling us how she had stood at the side of the road to watch Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip go by in their carriage after they were married.

In 1949 I went on to Long Street Junior school (or Nashy Bugs and Fleas known to all kids in Wigston). I was always in the B stream! I have fond memories of walking by the Memorial Park and seeing the flower arrangement in the shape of the Festival of Britain logo in 1951. I can remember being caned by the headmaster for being caught having a piggyback fight for the third time in a cloakroom. Another memory from this time would be the daily walk down to the Constitutional Hall for lunch.

After lunch we were given free rein to do as we liked until afternoon classes. We would go to the local parks, trying to knock the conkers off the trees in Church Nook. The trees were in St Wistans church yard of course. We always knew it was time to get back to school when a siren on the Wigston Laundry would sound, signalling the end or start of a shift, this could be heard all over Wigston.

It was about this time that I became aware of casual religious persecution. Being Roman Catholics, a small group of us were excused from attending the morning assemblies. We were made to feel different, something our teachers were aware of but at the time they did nothing.

When it was time to have a haircut Sid Wells was the place to go to in Bull Head St. None of the lads would tell him what style they wanted so we all had the same, (short back and sides). I was always fascinated whilst waiting my turn when a gentleman was given a shave with an open razor, and at the end he would receive a small packet (something for the weekend).

As others have previously noted, Saturday afternoon was always a trip to the Magna cinema for the children's matinee.

During 1952-1953, I moved to the first secondary modern school, which is now the records office. I then moved to the new building which had a new name of Abington. I too remember the incident that John Marquis mentioned in his book, when a certain teacher (Jones) assaulted that poor lad. Although I was never in that school year, it was known all round the school.

Another memory I have is of the little shop on the corner of Leicester Rd and Frederick St (where the Greggs is now). The old gentleman behind the counter, who had a prosthetic leg, would have no problem selling packets of five Woodbine cigarettes to us underage kids. If he didn't have five then that was ok, as he would split ten knowing that some other kid would come in for the other five.

In the Easter of 1956, I left school with three others and we landed an apprenticeship at English Electric Co Whetstone.

In 1958, we lads discovered girls, but we had to ask ourselves: how do you actually meet them? The answer was to learn to dance! Usually on a Tuesday night, we would attend one of the several dance studios in the city. Then on the following Saturday night we would put into practice what we had just learnt. Strictly it wasn't but it gave us the courage to ask someone to dance. The venue we went to was the Oadby St Peters church hall where there was a dance/hop. When asking for a dance, sometimes there was a blunt no, but usually there was a shy yes.

After about 3 weeks of this, on one memorable night, the guy in charge of the little four-piece band announced that the next dance would be a ladies choice. I sat down because no one ever asked me to dance. Then out of the blue a girl actually asked me, and we danced and carried on dancing all night. I offered to see her home, which was in Oadby, and it turned out she had only been in England for 3 weeks having come over from Ireland. She was lodging with her married sister, and she was a Catholic like me, her name was Evelyn, so we started what was to be a 4-year long courtship.

During that 4 years we would do a lot of dancing and for a change we would go to the De Montfort Hall on Saturday nights. It had a resident orchestra by the name of the Danny Rogers orchestra which was an old-style big band.

We were finally married in July 1962 at St Thomas More RC church and set up home in a new Jelson build in Blaby to be near my job. It was after our family came along that it was time for me to find a higher paid job. English Electric had short-sightedly kept all of us ex-apprentices

on a wage that was somewhere between an apprentice and a skilled man, so we all left to work in Leicester as you could in those days. Unfortunately for them this meant that all of our training had been for the benefit of another company.

In 1964 I worked at Parker Plant for the next five years. We moved back to Wigston in 1968 and we lived in Mere Road. Back then it was less frowned upon to move to be in a different catchment area, but we moved so that our children could get into the new St John Fisher school.

In 1969 it was time to go to work where every engineer with ambition wanted to go, and it was in Coventry that there was money to be earned. Rolls Royce was the place to go, I remember being interviewed by an ex-English Electric man who just happened to be from Wigston. His only interview question was: have you got an apprenticeship?, I said yes and straight away he asked me when did I want to start? The only drawback with working anywhere in Coventry was the appalling industrial relations, where strikes were the norm, but if you could put up with that then you were made.

By 1983, after all those years at Rolls Royce, the company got tired of all the strikes and pulled the plug on the plant, and so I took voluntary redundancy. So it was back to Leicester and straight away I got a job at Caterpillar in Desford, where I worked until I retired in 2005.

In 1989 after the last of our now grownup children had left home, Evelyn and I moved to our bungalow in Thirlmere Rd. We had four children, three girls and a boy. Sadly for us, Marion our 2nd daughter was to die of cancer aged 49 in 2013. We now spend most of our time in the garden with Evelyn in charge, she has been outright winner of the Borough Front Garden competition no less than 4 times.

I can recall one small incident from around twenty years ago, where a friend phoned to say that the Danny Rogers orchestra were appearing at Parklands, and did we want to go? Of course we would. When we got there the big band was reduced to a quintet, and during the break I approached Danny Rogers in the bar. I told him how we used to dance to his music back in the day. I asked if he was actually him? No, was the reply, I'm Danny, Roger and I spilt up years before, I just kept up the name.

Every year on New Year's Day we meet with our extended family for a family meal at the Shires Inn in Peatling Parva and up to 30 of us attend.

Evelyn and I look at each other now and say, had it not been for that fatal accident back in 1941, none of our family would be here. The plan had been, after I was born, that the family would move to Coventry and then we never would have met.

P.S: I found all the details of my father's accident in the County Records Office here in Wigston.

**Rupert Brooker**

## **MEMORIES OF BEING BUSSED TO GUTHLAXTON SCHOOL FROM BRAUNSTONE – 1967 to 1970**

I lived the first 12 years of my life in a terraced house in the West End of Leicester attending King Richard's Road Nursery School for 18 months then the Infant School followed by Shaftesbury Road Junior School. Having failed the 11+, I went to Westcotes Senior School for eight months before my family moved in April 1965 to a newly built house in Braunstone inside the county boundary.

In Leicestershire at that time you went to a high school from 11-14 and then had the choice of either staying on for another year and leaving at 15 or moving to an upper school where you could take GCEs/CSEs and leave at 16 or continue to 18 and take A levels. I spent two years at Winstanley High School (1965-67) which I found very different to my previous inner-city schools, both in what was taught and how, and also the green space around the school.

Deciding I wanted to take exams meant a move to Guthlaxton as there was no upper school in our area (this was before Bosworth College was built). We were collected by contract coaches every day and bussed to Wigston. I caught the bus at the top of Braunstone Lane, and pupils already onboard had come from Kirby Muxloe and Leicester Forest East. We picked up more pupils along Braunstone Lane with the last ones getting on just before the junction with Narborough Road. At that time there was still a farm on Braunstone Lane near to Shakespeare Drive. We then continued down Braunstone Lane East (Coalpit Lane) under the Great Central Railway bridge and past the Riverside Bingo in Aylestone where after heavy rain the car park would flood, and then on to Wigston usually via Stonesby Avenue and Pullman Road past the police station, but sometimes via Glenhills Boulevard (long before the outer ring road was constructed) and Sturdee Road. Arriving from this direction we passed the Premier Drum factory on Blaby Road with the drum-kit on display in the round tower on the front.

I enjoyed my three years at Guthlaxton (1967-70); with the pupils being older it felt more grown-up. The headmaster was Mr Harris, and the deputy head was Miss Blaxill who put the fear of God into the girls. With travelling so far to school, I now had to stay for school dinners which I'd avoided previously but, luckily, not long after I started, a new cafeteria system was introduced and I can still remember the lovely cheese pie and also the chocolate tart, plus there were chips!

We went into school via a side entrance. At the back of the building were several temporary classrooms. Assembly was every morning in the hall, with the staff and headmaster on the stage, and the Sixth Form sitting in the balcony.

As far as teachers are concerned, I've forgotten most of the names but the ones I do recall are Mr Argyle for Maths but only for my first year because he then retired which was a great shame, Mrs Brooks for English and Mr Gofton for History. I was never keen on games but recall playing netball and hockey. The playing fields seemed huge, and I think stretched down to the railway line. We had a swimming lesson every week at the adjacent baths.

There was an old building in the grounds, and it was here that I learnt to type on an ancient manual Imperial typewriter. It was hard going pushing those keys down and painful if your

fingers slipped between them. Sometimes the class would have to type along in unison to the William Tell Overture!

Happy days!

**CMB January 2021 - (c/o Ailsa Whalley)**

**MY NAME IS DAVID HARRIMAN AND HAVING SEEN A REQUEST IN SOCIAL MEDIA FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE ROYAL OAK PUBLIC HOUSE I THOUGHT I WOULD PEN A FEW LINES ABOUT MY EXPERIENCES.**

I'm not sure if I can add a great deal to your vast sum of knowledge about The Royal Oak public house in Wigston Fields, but I first went in there in the late 1960s as a 9 or 10-year-old with a lad called Nicky Lockwood whose family ran the pub for a couple of years around 1968/70ish until another family called Sayers took over. Nicky was slightly younger than me and showed me around the bar and smoke room and everything one day whilst the pub was closed.

The Sayers had a daughter whose name escapes me (Lynne or Anne?), but she never really seemed to have much to do with any of the local kids, and they didn't seem to be there for very long anyway and moved out fairly soon afterwards.

I used to live at 6 Kingston Avenue, and on warm summer evenings in the 1960's, with the window open I would lay in bed and listen to The Mint who were a popular local band at the time and seemed to play fairly regular gigs at The Royal Oak. My Dad always used to moan about "that bloody noise - call that music?", but I quite enjoyed their music which I could hear remarkably clearly sometimes when the conditions were right.

As The Royal Oak was my local, when I was of age (artistic licence used here!), I used to drink there a couple of times a week for about three years until one evening I went to go in there and they had bouncers on the door refusing entry to anyone in jeans (me!), so I never bothered going back, and never set foot inside the place again; it was 1978 and I was 19 at the time, I had found much better pubs by then anyway and thought that The Royal Oak was only average at best, so no great loss.

Have you ever wondered or even noticed how the odd-number houses in Kingston Avenue Nos 9 - 19 are built in a curve away from the road, coming back to a more conventional straight-line from No. 21 onwards?

The reason for this strange anomaly is that when building work first started in 1934 there used to be a pond there, and those houses were built around it. The pond was later filled in to allow the road to continue over where it had been, and for the house there to have front gardens.

At No. 6, our rear garden backed onto No. 13 Burleigh Avenue, where Mrs Bacon had lived with her husband since their house was new, although she was a widow when I knew her in the 1960's and 70's. Her granddaughter Julie Bacon was in my class at Water Leys School.

One day in 1934 when only the first few houses had been built in each street, Mr Bacon was in his kitchen at the rear of the house and heard a commotion going-on. He looked out of his kitchen window and saw that a boy had fallen into the pond, couldn't swim, and his friends were panicking trying to get him out. Mr Bacon ran out of his backdoor, down his garden and

across the ground now occupied by 22/24 Kingston Avenue, dived into the pond and saved the boy.

Mrs Bacon died several years ago (late 1970's or early 1980's) and I don't really think that many people even know about the pond now. So, this is just a little bit of local knowledge, and piece of historic interest which should not be forgotten.

Kingston Avenue still had gas-lamps lighting the street until around 1963/64 and they stood on the kerbside of the pavement, one of them standing directly outside No. 8 next door to me. As a child I used to look out for the Lamplighter coming around at dusk to light the lamp using his lighting pole, before moving up the street to the next one. Sometimes I would talk to him from our front gate.

Browett's used to own the garage on the corner. It was a filling-station back then, they did repairs, MOT's, and sold second-hand cars. They also owned - or rented from the Co-op (now Webster's Cycles) - a rough piece of land opposite the garage, where 2a and 2b Kingston Avenue now stand. The land was fronted by a row of trees and had a couple of tired old wooden gates at the Leicester Road end.

In the early 1960's they used to store old tractors (Massey-Fergusons and Fordsons etc) and combine-harvesters in there. As a young child (4 or 5) I used to be able to get in and out really easily through an "A" shaped gap where the two old wooden gates didn't meet properly in the middle and leaned in different directions. I climbed all over the things inside there, sitting on the seats and pretending to drive them. I couldn't even reach the pedals, but I had countless hours of pure uninterrupted fun in there.

Eventually Browett's got rid of everything, and the land was just left as rough grass, brambles and some elder bushes etc. As an older lad with my mates, we always knew it as "The Green", and used to make dens in there, climb the trees, eat the berries, and used it as our playground for years. We weren't far from home and had never heard of 'health & safety' until many years later!

Many thanks for your time and attention, I hope this has been of some interest.

Kind regards

**David Harriman**

## **MY MEMORIES OF WORKING IN WIGSTON**

I have been recollecting my working life in Wigston in the 1970's, and perhaps some of you will have memories of the many businesses we had then, unlike now, where Wigston just seems to be barber shops, charity shops and coffee shops. Before coming to work in Wigston I worked at Sainsbury's in Humberstone Gate in Leicester, getting a good grounding in retail sales, especially in the fruit and vegetable department. Spotting a vacancy in Wigston I applied and got the job as Manager at G.H. Ratcliffe in Bell Street. This was before 1970, and I was working there when Ann and I married in 1970 – over 50 years ago!!

When we got married we were able to rent a 2-bedroom flat above the G.H. Ratcliffe shop in Chestnut Avenue in Oadby, for the princely sum of £2.10.00 shillings per week, in those pre

decimal currency days. The flat came complete with a resident mouse which used to like sitting by the boiler in the kitchen!

The staff at the shop were mainly local part-time ladies. One I particularly remember was Edna Knibb (she kept us all in our place!) Her husband ran a wholesale potato supply business in Leicester's Wholesale Market. I had a lot of school age Saturday staff, as this was always the busiest day of the week, with queues out of the door most of the day, especially during the strawberry season. One particular memory I have is the making of "soaked peas". These were sold by measuring with a jug. These were prepared for the next day by leaving them to soak overnight in buckets, in the kitchen area, near the toilet! No health and safety in those days!

The busiest day of the year was always the Saturday before Mother's Day, the shop was packed with flowers and plants, and usually empty by the end of the day. All of the staff were usually drafted in, including Ann who would sell flowers on the front outside the shop.

We had a varied range of shops in Wigston at this time, and here are a few I can remember. Looking at Ratcliffe's from outside, next door to the right of Ratcliffe's was Harper's DIY, run by Colin Harper and his assistant John. Colin's Father ran the wallpaper shop on Leicester Road next to Penny's Florist. Next to Harper's in Bell Street was the Gas Board showroom where you could pay your bills, then an entrance to the yard of Davis the printers. Amongst the next shops were La Croix hairdressers, and Heards Butchers.

Across on Leicester Road there was Deep Purple where Ann used to buy her "evening frocks", and of course Cox's Fruiterers, still there today, and the oldest business still surviving in Wigston established in 1888, and Barclays Bank and Wilkinson's before it moved to the Arcade further along Leicester Road, and later rebranded Wilko's.

Opposite to Ratcliffe's there was John Rains on the corner next to Bishops Supermarket, the Three Sisters and Holyoak's shoe shop. Mrs. Holyoak could often be seen dashing around Wigston to the various shops, always wearing the same hat! Further along the street was the Bell Street School, long gone now with Sainsbury's in its place.

Next door to the left of Ratcliffe's was the Co-op, and further along the Oven Door bakery. I can still smell the crusty cobs we had every day at break time, and who remembers the oozing jam doughnuts?

I also seem to remember at some point the area, which is now Boots and the Pound Shop, there was firstly an indoor market and later an outdoor market behind the shops. At the top of the street was Moulden's Newsagents. I particularly remember Mary from there who used to come in to Ratcliffe's weekly and purchase a shopping trolley full of cauliflowers! Goodness knows what she did with them all!

Some of these memories seem like just yesterday, which I think a lot of us wish it was, with the wonderful range of shops we had then. I may have missed some popular shops or got some details wrong - it's an age thing! If this has prompted any of your long-forgotten memories, or you worked in any of the businesses, please write an article for future issues of the bulletin.

**Peter Cousins**

**E-Mail: [petercousins@ntlworld.com](mailto:petercousins@ntlworld.com)**

**CHECK OUT THE EVENTS**

**ORSON WRIGHT SOUTH WIGSTON WALK**

**WEDNESDAY 14 JULY 2021 AT 2.00pm**

**OPEN DAY AT THE GREATER WIGSTON HERITAGE CENTRE**

**SATURDAY 17 JULY 2021 10.00AM TILL 2.00PM**

**For Details Contact Peter Cousins**

**petercousins@ntlworld.com or 07702 127313**

A promotional poster for the Festival of Archaeology 2021. The background features a mosaic pattern at the top and a photograph of an archaeological excavation site with workers. The text is arranged as follows:

*Festival of*  
**ARCHAEOLOGY**

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Saturday 3rd July – Sunday 1st August

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FESTIVAL OF  
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[festival.archaeologyuk.org](http://festival.archaeologyuk.org)



## CHARLES FREER – MEMORIAL IN WIGSTON CEMETERY



During lockdown I've been taking more walks through Wigston cemetery and often stop to read the inscriptions on the memorials. A rather worn one caught my eye:

**In Loving memory of Charles Freer  
Who met his death by accident  
at Hitchen**

**29th January 1883 Aged 34 years  
In the midst of life we are in death  
(Probable transcription of the last  
two lines which are very worn)**

The memorial is situated half-way along the western edge of Section A.

**So who was Charles Freer, how did he die, and what was his link with Wigston?**

Desk research was carried out using Find my Past and my first search was in the newspapers. In the Leicester Chronicle I found a death notice, (i) and a report of the inquest. (ii)

The notice read "FREER – On the 26th [sic] ult., at Hitchen Infirmary (result of railway accident), Charles Freer, of London, eldest son of William Freer, of Wigston, aged 34."

The report of the inquest is worth including in its entirety:

**FATAL ACCIDENT TO A WIGSTON MAN AT HITCHEN.** – On Saturday, January 27th, as already stated in our columns, Charles Freer, a native of Wigston, met with an accident on the Great Northern Railway which caused his death on the following Monday. An inquest was held at Hitchen Infirmary on Tuesday, when the following information was given:— William Buck, an engine-driver in the service of the Great Northern Railway, said: Charles Freer worked for me as fireman, and was with me on Saturday last. On that day we were working the express train timed to leave Peterborough at 4.50pm and to arrive at King's Cross at 5.40 pm we were seven minutes late at starting. There was a slip carriage for Hitchen at the end of the train. All went well until near Hitchen, when I found the Cambridge Junction signal on, and I applied the brake. The train had nearly stopped when the home signal was lowered, indicating that I was to go on to Hitchen yard-box. When I got there the signal was lowered for me to the south end of the yard. Just then I was signalled to go right away. As we neared the water crane I said to the fireman, who was looking back, "Charlie, is the slip right?" While looking to see if the slip was right his head caught the column of the water crane, and he fell on the foot plate with his head hanging out. I ran and caught his right hand and tried to pull him back on the engine, but I could not, and he fell just at the bottom of the signal post. I stopped the engine in about 100 yards, told the guard, and went back to look for him. I found him crawling towards me. I

waited with him until assistance arrived from Hitchen station, when another fireman was sent to me and I continued the journey to London — By Mr Timms: He had been with me as fireman 15 months. When he leaned out to look after the slip he had one hand on the engine and one on the tender. He had to lean out to see that the slip was right. — Charles Fisher, station inspector at Hitchen, said: I watched the express pass on the night in question, and noticed the driver shut off steam a few yards after passing the water crane a guard told me that either the fireman or the driver had been run over. I at once got help and ran towards where Freer was lying, and found the driver holding up his head. Freer recognised me and mentioned my name and asked what had happened. He also asked if he had got his feet, and made several attempts to look at them, we got a stretcher and conveyed him to the infirmary. — Dr O.H. Foster said: I was in the infirmary between five and six o'clock when deceased was brought here. I found both legs very much damaged, and that an operation was necessary, but he was so exhausted. I appointed a later hour for a consultation with a view to performing the operation. At the time appointed he was found so very prostrate that it could not be performed. On making an examination I found a scalp wound three or four inches long over the right ear, but no fracture of the skull, also a contused wound over the eyebrow. Both feet were extensively crushed; the right one, with the exception of one or two tendons, was detached from the leg. The left foot was entirely crushed. The operation was deferred from time to time till Monday afternoon. He stood it fairly well and expressed himself as feeling more comfortable after it was over. The operation was necessary in order that he might have a chance of surviving. I saw him again at half-past six in the evening; he died about an hour after. The cause of death was exhaustion from the shock of the accident combined with the necessary operation. At the request of the jury, rule 256 in the book of instructions issued by the company was read. It set forth that when a train was starting the fireman must look back on the platform side till the last vehicle had cleared the platform. The jury returned a verdict:- "That Charles Freer, whilst in the discharge of his duty, accidentally received injuries which caused his death." The coroner read out to the jury that he had taken their verdict. This was to the effect that Charles Freer, a fireman, the employ of the Great Northern Railway, met his death by accident. One of the jurors objected that this was not their verdict. The coroner said it was substantially the same. Several of the jurors then said, unless the coroner amended what he had written and made it conform to their verdict, they should refuse to sign it, and the verdict was thereupon altered in accordance to the wishes of the jury. (iii)

In 1881, two years before his death, Freer was living at 65 Frederick Street, London (near the GNR's Kings Cross station) with his wife Rebecca, who was born in Wigston. There were no children. Charles and Rebecca (née Screamton) were married, in Islington, in 1872. (iv)

Charles Freer was born in 1848 to William and Sophia (née Measures).v In the 1851 census William was described as "Farmer, 50 acres, 1 lab." The address was given as "Welford roadside House" Wigston Magna (near Kilby Bridge). As well as Charles there were Sophia aged 6, and George aged 1.

In 1861 William Freer had increased his holding to 74 acres and employed 2 labourers. There were five more children: Alfred (8), Frederick (6), William (4), Elizabeth (3) and Frank (10 months).

Charles Freer has not been found in the 1871 census. (vi)

By the 1881 census William Freer had moved to Newgate End; he farmed 40 acres and had 1 labourer. His son Frederick was a railway clerk, as was his 15-year-old grandson who lived with the family.

What about Rebecca?

She was born in 1845 to Robert and Eliza Scream; her baptism took place at All Saints, Wigston on 7th September 1845. (vii) In 1851 the family lived on Long Street and Robert was a Schoolmaster and Registrar. Her mother was a dressmaker — the profession which her Rebecca took up later.

In 1861 17-year-old Rebecca was working as a house servant to a widow with three children; they lived in De Montfort Street, Leicester. By 1871 Rebecca was working as a tailoress and lodged at 37 Brunswick Street, Leicester.

After Charles' death 39-year-old Rebecca married George Horton, a 30-year-old labourer. They were both resident in Burton Overy and were married at the parish church on 24th March 1885. (viii)

In 1891 the couple were recorded at 16 Harrington Street, Leicester. George was working as a builder, and Rebecca had resumed her occupation as a tailoress.

What happened to George? In both the 1901 and 1911 censuses Rebecca was living with her sister Ellen Eliza Barrow, and her husband Bob, a bricklayer's labourer, in Leicester. Rebecca was recorded as married (not a widow) and worked as a tailoress. A possible death for George occurred in Leicester in 1898, although the age given was 50; George would have been 43. (ix)

Why was Rebecca not recorded in subsequent censuses as a widow? The probable death for Rebecca was recorded in the June quarter of 1917. (x)

If anyone can add any information, please let me know.

### **Mary Bryceland, 15 February 2021**

i Leicester Chronicle, 3 February 1883, p. 8.

ii Ibid. 10 February 1883, p. 5.

iii Note: would the words "while in the discharge of his duty" have made his employers responsible for compensation? Was it brave of the jurors to stand up to the coroner?

iv England & Wales marriages 1837-2005, December quarter 1872, Islington 1b, p 437.

v England & Wales births 1837-2006, September quarter Vol. XV, p. 60.

vi Various search strategies used – maybe you can do better!

vii Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester & Rutland, DE644/12.

viii ROLLR, DE3988/1,

ix England & Wales deaths 1837-2007, Leicester, Vol &A, p. 141.

x England & Wales deaths 1837-2007 Leicester, Vol. 7A, p. 255.

## WIGGY'S CHILD

### WASH DAY

Wash day was a 6 a.m. start. The copper was filled with bucketsful of water and yellow soap was grated in from the block beside the sink. The fire was lit underneath and kept well stoked up. The galvanised dolly tub was carried in from the yard and placed against the cast iron mangle. As the water heated up, it was ladled out into the dolly tub to wash clothes "that couldn't be boiled". Many a bad temper was worked off punching the clothes in the dolly tub!

More water was added in the copper and the heavy linen sheets left to boil and the wooden copper lid placed firmly on the top. Starch was made and stirred briskly in the bowl until it 'turned'. Sliding the copper lid cautiously to one side, and enveloped in clouds of steam, the sheets were hooked out with a thick copper stick. Great care had to be taken during this manoeuvre; if the sheets slipped off, like as not you clouted yourself with the copper stick!

Rinsing was carried out in the dolly tub and the sheets and clothes were wound through the wooden rollers of the mangle. Turning that mangle wheel was akin to opening lock gates! This laborious process went on throughout the whole wash, culminating with the last rinse with "dolly blue". Lugging the flasket up the garden, the clothes were pegged out to dry. Meanwhile, back in the kitchen, the water was ladled out of the copper into the dolly tub, this was rolled on its bottom rim into the yard and emptied down the drain, a bucketful was saved for washing the floor, and a dry cloth wound through the wooden rollers of the mangle.

Wash day as on sweep day, the dinner menu comprised stew and rice pudding. There was no time to waste on wash days with culinary art.

Depending on the weather, ironing commenced after dinner. An old sheet was folded and placed on the table and a three-legged trivet stood to one side to rest the iron between times. Two flat irons were used, placed on a bar fixed in front of the fire and used consecutively. A cup of water stood ready for sprinkling on the clothes if they were too dry for ironing. Testing the heat of the iron was simple. when you spat on it, and it shot off, then it was ready for ironing the sheets! Here again, care had to be taken during ironing. If the knitted iron holder slipped, then a burnt hand would result.

The clothes were placed on string lines across the living room for airing. We spent the evening "bobbing up and down like that" beneath the dangling legs of short long 'uns and long short 'uns! It's a wonder we didn't have muscles on our goose-pimples, and they called it women's work.

I could never understand Mother's obsession with clean underwear, considering the trials and tribulations of each wash day. Whether it was shopping trips, Sunday School, or visiting relatives, the prospect of being knocked down on any of these outings necessitated a complete change of underwear.

On the rare occasions I was invited out to tea, I was also reminded not to forget my P's and Q's. Since these had been dinned into me from the time, I was old enough to speak, I was unlikely to forget my manners. Nevertheless, I had to recite "Behave properly, ask politely, and say thank you" before I set foot out of doors.

In the summer I "went into" brown leather sandals with crepe soles. My black patent ankle strap shoes were kept for Sunday. A week before our August holiday, Mother would buy me a pair of white plimsolls to wear at the seaside. Afterwards, I was allowed to wear them for playing about in. "Plimsolls were not good for your feet," declared Mother. At times, there was so much "whitening" rubbed into those plimsolls, cracks appeared, and powdery whitening puffed out at every step.

**Doreen Boulter**



**HAS ANYONE STILL  
GOT A "DOLLY TUB"  
OR A MANGLE?**



## AN INTRODUCTION TO BROCKSHILL

Within the Brockshill site is an area of land, about 4 acres, now known as Lucas's Marsh. This swamp was originally created when the field was dug out "at the turn of the century" to provide sand and gravel for two big houses on the old country estate nearby. This area was very wet and overgrown and also contained a bomb crater from the 2nd World War. A lease for this area was granted to Leicestershire Nature Trust for them to maintain it. Following the creation of the Reserve in 1983, a condition of the lease of the land to the Trust was that a peppercorn rent be charged annually. This consists of an undertaking to plant ten trees in the Borough each year.

Despite having few of the characteristics of a traditional wild reserve as it adjoins a housing estate and a football pitch lies close by, there is an extensive range of flora and fauna to be seen at Lucas's Marsh, as well as a great variety of bird life. This has been well documented both by Clive Bagshaw and Duncan Lucas in his "Story of Brockshill" from which this summary is taken. There were originally two very traditional farms, Grange Farm and Brockshill Farm (also known as Brocks Hill Grange) but over time and after areas of land had been sold, some 102 acres remained, which eventually became derelict. Duncan Lucas purchased this land sometime in the late 1970's and began to improve the site. When Duncan moved there it is interesting to note that no badgers were ever seen, but then he was told about 3 badger cubs seen on the site (it is illegal to touch or move them) and so they were left to stray – which is how Brocks Hill got back its badgers!

Following various proposals by Duncan Lucas for recreation facilities on this land between Oadby and Wigston, in January 1982 a case was presented to the planners at Oadby & Wigston Borough Council. However, despite a well-attended public meeting, the initial ambitious scheme was rejected. Ironically, pressure from the Government to provide leisure facilities meant that Oadby & Wigston Borough Council agreed to purchase some 80 acres of the land (probably in 1992), and although Duncan and his family continued to farm what remained of his land for another 5 years, that's not quite the end of the story!

Since opening in 1999, what is now known as Brocks Hill Country Park has received increasing interest as a place for informal recreation and now attracts over 150,000 visitors per year. It is also an extremely important greenspace for wildlife in Oadby and Wigston Borough. The woodlands which were planted between 1998 and 2001 have grown and developed a lot over the years, and cover around half the area of the country park. Amongst the woods and in hedgerows, are a few magnificent mature oak and ash trees that are over a hundred years old. Hedges are managed in the traditional way by a volunteer team, and these also benefits wildlife. By maintaining a wide, bushy hedge structure, there are more spaces for small mammals to shelter at the base of the hedge and opportunities for birds to build well-hidden nests in the branches. The hedge and the long vegetation growing adjacent also provides extra food for lots of species in the form of nectar, berries and seeds. In addition, there are a variety of different meadows at Brocks Hill, as well as a range of different ponds.

Any errors and omissions are my own!

**Judith Proctor May 2021**

## VOLUME 2 OF WINDOW OF THE PAST

In Volume 2 of Window of the Past, there was a chapter about the Wigston Co-operative Hosiers. My father, Harry Boulter was Manager from 1937 to 1954. I remember Stella Lewin and her husband. I also remember my Father crowning the Carnival Queen one year. The next Chapter refers to Playing Cards in a black leather case - my sister still has one of these.

Harry Boulter served in the First World War and returned to Wigston in 1919. Soon after he married Millicent Adams of 59 Long Street. Sadly she died in 1934, they had no children. In 1937 he married Elsie Watson from Littlethorpe, and I arrived the following year. My Father was wonderful, and we were all devastated when he died in 1954 aged 65. I had just left school (Kibworth Grammar) and my sister, aged 11, was about to begin secondary education,

My Father didn't tell us anything about what happened to him during the war but when we were sorting things out ready for my Mother to move to Woodbridge, we found a notebook which told us a great deal, including time spent in a Prisoner of War Camp in Germany.

My sister has spent a great deal of time on Ancestry tracing our family and has found that we are distantly related to many of the other Boulders in Wigston. One distant cousin we found lives about two miles from Woodbridge in Martlesham. We are now in regular contact and although she didn't live in Wigston herself her Father was born in Clarkes Road, My sister (Jenny) has lived in France for 55 years, but she is still interested in what is happening in Wigston. She hasn't been to England for a few years but when she is here we go to Wigston to the Cemetery and also drive by our family home in Station Road.

**Margaret Lowe**

### THE NAME OF WIGSTON – HOW AND WHY

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

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

Because of this problem with the language any Domesday spelling needs support of latter forms (or earlier if they exist) before one can say with certainty what the name means. Some of the more important sources of early place names are:-

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles; old wills; legal writs; land charters; market charters; Pipe Rolls; Patent Rolls; Assize Rolls; ecclesiastical and manorial records; private archives (such as the Duke of Rutland's papers) and the Leicestershire Survey to name a few.

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

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

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

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

Wicestan	(Domesday Book)	Wichingstone
Wiggestan		Wichingstona
Wigestan		Winchingstun
Wichestain		Wikingeston
Wiggenston		Wykinggestonne
Wyggeston		Wigingeston
Wiggeston		Wykingstone
Wykeston		Wixton
Wikeston		Wigston (Magna) 1453

Wigston (Parva) 1610

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

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

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

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

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

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

One of the actual names of Wigston was sanctified for all times by the Wigston Hospital Charters. The earliest Charter dated 1170 – 80 still exists. The Hospital for twelve poor people of Leicester, still flourishes today. It was started by William Wigston of Leicester a descendant of the Wykyngeston family who left Wigston about 1340. In 1516 land was purchased in Wigston and was added to other holdings to make a large estate... the rents of which went to maintain his charitable Hospital.

**Duncan Lucas**

## **OBITUARIES**

**We sadly announce the recent passing of one of our members, Maurice James from a Covid-19 infection. Maurice and his late wife had been members of the Society for many years, and they both attended our monthly meetings regularly. Our thoughts and condolences go out to his family.**

**We also sadly announce the passing of one of our members, Keith Grindall who passed away in December 2020. We send our thoughts and condolences to his family.**

## **DONATION TO THE MACULAR SOCIETY FROM OUR SALES OF DVD'S**

I am writing to thank you for your donation of £69, which was made in lieu of payment to the commentator (Dave Andrews) on your DVDs. It is very kind of you to support our work in this way.

As you may know, macular disease is the biggest cause of sight loss in the UK today, and yet we are not as well-known as we would like to be; in order to reach the many more people who need our services. Macular disease is cruel and isolating. It steals your sight, your confidence and your ability to do the things you love. Although we offer the best advice and support, we have had to pause our face-to-face services during lockdown. However, all our telephone and online services are even more in demand right now. We also maintain our ambition to fund the research that will lead to better treatments and, ultimately, a cure for this devastating condition. As I am sure you are aware, charities like ours have taken a big hit recently, and therefore your donation is even more appreciated. Please thank your members when you get a chance.

Kind regards

**Susie McCallum**

Community & Events Fundraising Manager, Macular Society

## **SUBSCRIPTIONS**

**PLEASE NOTE THAT SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2021 ARE NOW DUE.  
IF YOU HAVE ALREADY RENEWED, THANK YOU VERY MUCH. IF YOU HAVE NOT  
YET DONE SO, WE WOULD BE GRATEFUL IF YOU COULD RENEW AS SOON AS  
POSSIBLE USING THIS CUT OFF SLIP IF YOU LIKE.  
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**CHEQUES SHOULD BE MADE PAYABLE TO GWHS. WE HOPE YOU WILL  
CONTINUE YOUR MEMBERSHIP BUT IF YOU ARE NOT DOING SO, IT WOULD BE  
VERY HELPFUL IF YOU COULD LET THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY KNOW.**

**MEMBER(S) NAME**

**ADDRESS.....**

.....

**PLEASE SEND TO THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY  
ROGER WHALLEY, 85 CLEVELAND ROAD, WIGSTON, LE18 1NF**