

SOUTH WIGSTON BUSINESSES



PAST & PRESENT

Cover Photo: Buy-Cycles, Countesthorpe Road. See page 18.

SOUTH WIGSTON BUSINESSES PAST AND PRESENT

Based on an exhibition of photographs by Tony Danvers
at the South Wigston Library, Basset Street, South Wigston.



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Foreword

The late Professor Hoskins repeatedly told us to "write it down" and it is very gratifying that Tony Danvers has done just that. His book of Businesses Past & Present draws attention to the dramatic changes that have occurred in South Wigston, changes which a younger generation may be totally unaware of.

His clever use of the camera, for example, to show the present owners of Castledine's showroom alongside the wonderful figure of Eric Holmes, the previous owner of the property. It also shows the vitality of South Wigston with shops surviving in this economic turmoil. What I find is so good about the book is that the photographs show the present owners as well as their businesses.

The late Horace Langley in his shoe shop said, "you don't see surging masses of people in South Wigston, just a steady stream of a vibrant and close knit community."

It is my privilege to salute this book as a native of Top Wigston, which the ancients of South Wigston called Wigston Magna. Old photographs from my collection together with those of the late Peter Mastin have been used to complement the modern colour photos taken by Tony Danvers and I trust that others will continue to use and enjoy this book as much as I have.

Duncan Lucas, November 2011.

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Tony Danvers

Blaby Road 1903



Blaby Road, South Wigston, December 2011. Compare the number of shops with those on the previous page.

Introduction

I began this project to try to preserve for future generations the variety of shops that South Wigston has at this moment in time. It is a project that I wished I had done when I first moved to South Wigston in 1967 as it becomes increasingly harder to remember the shops that were trading at that time such as greengrocers Phil Smith and Jack Hill, Eagles the Chemists and all the other businesses now long gone. All are treasured memories for the older members of our Community.

At the turn of the last century it was common for photographers to take pictures of shops with their owners standing proudly outside displaying their goods. It was these old photos which inspired me to attempt a modern version of this format, and I would like to thank all the owners of the shops involved for their unfailing generosity in giving up their time to allow me to photograph them standing outside their businesses. It is a project that is still ongoing with many more shops to record.

From there it was a natural step to try to find old photographs of South Wigston that would match the modern ones, or at least show the street where the shops stood many years ago. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank Duncan Lucas for not only writing a foreword to this book but also for his generosity in giving me permission to use many of his photographs of old South Wigston. My thanks also go to Alan Kind MBE, Mary Herbert and Stuart Fellows for their encouragement and enthusiasm in helping me with this project.

South Wigston has a fascinating and unique history. Built by Orson Wright in seven years from 1883 to 1890, it is a truly Victorian village at its heart and although modern development has altered the shop fronts you have only to stop and look above the shops to see the richness of the old Victorian buildings.

Tony Danvers, November 2011.

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Fitchetts Shop, 19 Blaby Road, South Wigston now Heating and Bathroom studio with owners Rob & Ruth Elliott



South Wigston Cycle Centre, 60 Blaby Road, South Wigston, with owner Graham Bishop. August 2011.



Birkett & Elwes, London House, 60 Blaby Road, South Wigston. Circa 1910. Now the Cycle Centre opposite



P.M. Wray's shop, 13 Blaby Road South Wigston. Now Magic Moments with owner Mary Turner. September 2011.



Gaynors Café, 15 Canal Street, South Wigston, with owner Gaynor Hill and Tim Gibbons, August 2011



Body Bliss, 50 D Blaby Road, South Wigston, with owner Nicky Glover. September 2011.



The row of shops on the site of Ashbourne House, circa 1970. A.F.Morris is now Body Bliss see opposite.



Warwick House, on the corner of Canal Street and Blaby Road, has been variously a clothing store, then a hotel and a dining room and later a gents clothiers. Then in 1922 it became a music store, as seen in the photo above. It traded as Charles Moore and Son for the next fifty years selling musical instruments. It is now Jhoots Pharmacy as seen in the photo on the left and shows Dhiraj Mody, Oksha Shah, Jaswinder Battu, Leanne Gallagher and Megan Donnes standing on the corner outside. August 2011.

Notice the changes to the building in the later picture.



Charles Moore & Son, 115 / 117 Blaby Road, South Wigston, circa 1940. Now Jhoots Pharmacy, see opposite.



Hensons PVC Suppliers, 17-19 Canal Street, South Wigston, with owner Dave Henson. August 2011.



Mr. Higgs standing proudly outside his butcher's shop on the corner of Canal St and Bassett St. c.1910. See opposite.



Buy-Cycles, 6 Countesthorpe Road, South Wigston, with owners Peter & Deb Goodger. August 2011.



Eric Holmes Cycle Dealer, 6 Countesthorpe Road, South Wigston, circa 1934. Now Buy-Cycles, see opposite.



Moments Card Shop, 2 Fairfield St, South Wigston, with owner Mrs. M. Thakrar & Mrs. B. Thakrar. July 2011.



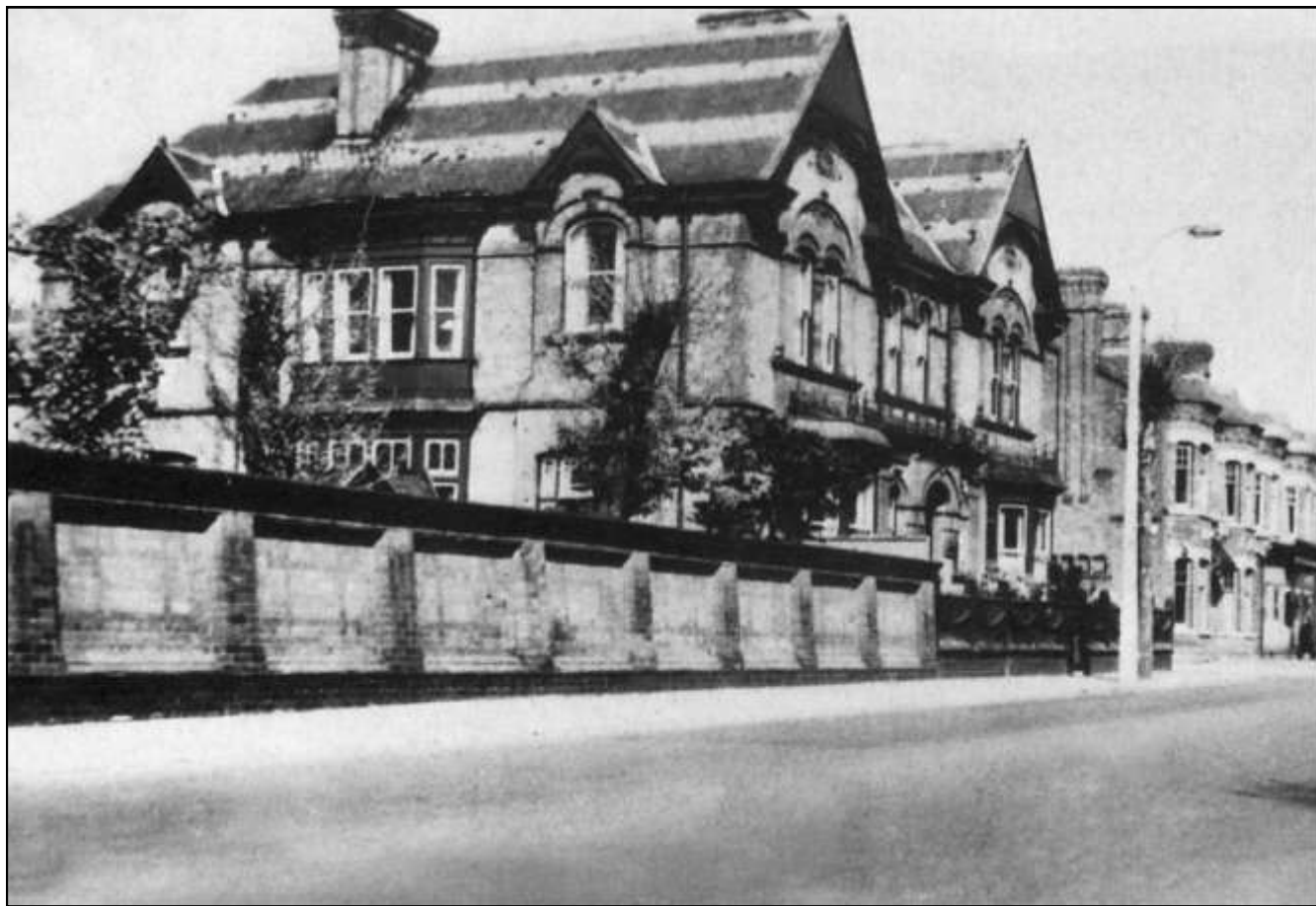
W. A. Deeming, South Wigston Post Office, 2 Fairfield St, circa 1930. Now Moments see opposite.



Blaby Road, circa 1911. On the right is the South Wigston CO-OP and the house next door is now Elite Chique



Elite Chique, 81 Blaby Road, South Wigston, with owner Ruth Cooke. August 2011. See opposite.



Ashbourne House, 50 Blaby Road, South Wigston, sadly demolished in 1962 to make room for shops, see opposite.



Chip Stop, 50B Blaby Road, South Wigston, with owner Ranjit Singh. August 2011.



Looking down Countesthorpe Road towards Orange Tree House built by Orson Wright for his sister, see opposite.



Orange Tree House.

Chris Norman, Hair and Beauty Salon, 2 Orange Street, South Wigston, with owner Chris Norman and her assistants, Carrieann, Paige and Beth, photo taken July 2011.

This property, called Orange Tree House, was originally built for the sister of Orson Wright. Orson Wright JP, was a man of many talents - brickmaker, builder, contractor, iron founder, stonemason, blacksmith, wheelwright, joiner; boot and shoe, hosiery and elastic web manufacturer to mention just a few.

Orson realised the great commercial possibilities of the area served by three railway stations and two main lines and set about encouraging manufacturers to establish their works amidst country surroundings yet within easy distance of Leicester.

He purchased the South Wigston estate in 1883 and within a few years 600 houses and many factories had been completed, together with the Grand and the Clarence Hotels. He named two of the streets Dunton and Bassett after his home village and named others Orange, Water (later renamed Park), Railway, Irlam, Garden, Healey and Timber, to spell out his name. More details of this unusual man may be found in the Blue Plaque Guide available at the South Wigston library in Bassett Street.

To honour his memory this property has been given a blue plaque by the Wigston Civic Society.



Blaby Road with Clifford Street on the left. Three shops down from Worthington's is now Head to Tail, see opposite.



Head To Tail, 15 Blaby Road, South Wigston, Leicester, with owner Dee Milligan. September 2011.



Eric Wright Carpets, 12-14 Blaby Road, South Wigston, with owner Chris Wright. September 2011.



Leon's Mens Hairdressing, 2 Leopold Street, South Wigston, with owner Leon Ellias, July 2011.



Eric Holmes Cycle Shop, 3 Blaby Road, South Wigston, circa 1960, now Castledines, see opposite.



Castledine Motorcycles, 3 Blaby Road, South Wigston, with owners Clive, Linda, Adam & Vanessa Castledine. Aug. 2011.



S. W. Wines, 2 Clifford Street, South Wigston, with owner Sailesh Pattni & Nephew Rahul Lakhani. August 2011.



Blaby Road with Eagles Chemist Shop on the left and on the next corner Harding's store now S W Wines, circa 1960



The photo on the left is Mick's Barbers Shop at No 42 Blaby Road, South Wigston, with owner Mick Phipps. August 2011. Many will remember his father Jack, seen above, who used to have the hairdressers shop next door at No 44 Blaby Road for many years.



Mick Phipps Hairdressing Salon recently occupied the house with the sign for Jack Lester on it.



Sapphire & Steel, 8 Blaby Road, South Wigston with owners Tony & Kay Bingham, July 2011.



Blaby Road in South Wigston c.1910, with Holmes Chemist shop on the left and H. Smith's cycle shop on the right corner.
Note the lack of any shops on the stretch of road on the left past Clifford Street where Sapphire & Steel are now trading



Stones Bathroom Studio, 38 Countesthorpe Road, South Wigston, with owners Al & Paul Stone & son Dan. August 2011.



Voyles Shoes, 5 / 7 Canal Street, South Wigston, Leicester, with owners Jack & Jean Voyle. July 2011.



Skins & Needles, 32 Blaby Road South Wigston, with owner Beverley Ardley. August 2011.



Rear Cover: Mary Holmes grocery shop on the corner of Countesthorpe Road and Bassett Street. Her son Eric Holmes took over the business and turned it into his first cycle shop moving later to the corner of Blaby Road and Countesthorpe Road. It is now trading under the name of Buy-Cycles see the front cover and page 18.

Final Thoughts

The shops in South Wigston have served our community for over one hundred years through many difficult times including two World Wars and the depression in the 1930's. Today they have had to cope with equally challenging problems. The almost constant road works, that have seem to have been going on for year after year, and more recently interruptions caused by the building of the South Leicestershire College and not least the looming presence of Tesco have all had a detrimental effect on their businesses.

In spite of all this they continue to provide a valuable service with a friendly helpful courtesy that is most welcome and refreshing in this day and age. We should all be proud of our unique village and it's shops and give them all the support they so richly deserve. There is an old saying that if you don't use it you will lose it and this applies equally to our local businesses.



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Rear Cover: Mary Holmes grocery shop on the corner of Countesthorpe Road and Bassett Street, see page 43

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