

# WIGSTON STREETS PAST & PRESENT

Compiled by  
Tony Danvers



Wigston Streets Past & Present  
Compiled & Presented by Tony Danvers

October 2015

Front Cover Illustration: Leicester Road & Long Street, Wigston Magna.  
Photo Tony Danvers, May 2012. See Page 107.

# WIGSTON STREETS PAST AND PRESENT

Based on an exhibition of photographs by Tony Danvers  
at the South Wigston Library, Basset Street, South Wigston, October 2015.



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## Foreword

As custodian of the Greater Wigston Society “Photographic and Document Digital Archive” I have seen many hundreds of photographs covering Wigston Magna and the local area. However, I must compliment Tony Danvers on the quality of this book and the work that he has undertaken to enhance the old photographs and prepare the new up to date matching scenes.

History is an emotive subject with some people shying away believing it to be all Kings, Queens and Dates. This book has, without doubt, proved this to be wrong. There are very few dates and no Kings and Queens contained between the covers but there is a vast amount of information directly relating to the history of the village and the way it has developed.

Most people look back in time and compare it to the present and often say “*it’s not like it used to be*” and they are right. We move forward and develop as a village, but we should remember the old times, buildings and people with fondness. This book helps us to do just that.

Mike Forryan  
Chairman  
Greater Wigston Historical Society  
August 2015

## Introduction

This book is a follow-up to my previous book on the 'Streets of South Wigston Past & Present.' It was a natural progression for me to present a similar book on the streets of Wigston Magna. As in my previous book I have compared old photographs taken of Wigston Magna with photographs I have taken recently to show the inevitable changes, or not, that have occurred over the past 100 years or so down to the present day.

I have tried as far as is possible to take the photographs from the same position that they were originally taken, bearing in mind that modern day traffic makes taking photos in the middle of the road a slightly different proposition than it was when the original pictures were taken. In most cases the old and new photographs are pictured side by side for an immediate comparison but in a few cases where images are very similar and taken from almost the same viewpoint I have doubled up the old photos and put them as close as possible to the other similar pictures.

Unlike South Wigston which was built in a very short space of time. Wigston Magna has a long history going back to the Viking and Saxon periods. Also Wigston Magna has seen quite dramatic changes over the past 100 years, particularly in the area of Leicester Road, Bull Head Street and Bell Street, which has left few of the original buildings standing; either for better or worse.

I have begun this book with a short history of the development of Wigston Magna with extracts taken from the 1967 Official Guide. This book is not intended to be a history of Wigston Magna but a visual record of what has changed and a record of what changes might be made in the future. The book is presented in the form of a tour of Wigston, starting on Leicester Road heading towards Bell Street. Continuing down Bell Street onto Bull Head Street then turning into Moat Street up to Long Street. Then continuing down Long Street until it meets up again with Leicester Road. On the way there are photos of the various side streets that adjoin the main roads. See map of tour on page 108.

Tony Danvers October 2015

## A Brief History of Wigston using extracts from the 1967 Official Wigston Guide

About the year A.D. 500, the invading Angles reached Leicestershire, and in the first half of the sixth century “the People of Peotla” occupied the large and commanding ridge of good land now called Wigston. There are evidences of a Pagan cemetery here. Wigston’s history, therefore, begins some fourteen hundred years back, certainly older than the Romans and probably dates from the Iron Age. Some Roman remains have been found at South Wigston. In its present form “Wigston” is an Anglo-Scandinavian name of the ninth or early tenth century - “Viking’s Tun”, so called after some Danish overlord. In the Domesday Book, it was recorded as Winchingestone and in 1191, it was spelt Wikingeston. Other versions have included Wiggeston, Wykyngestone and Wyginston.

After the Conquest, William I granted the Lordship of Wigston to Hugh de Grantemaisnil. At the time of the Domesday survey (A.D. 1086) he, together with the Countess Judith, William’s niece, owned all the land in Wigston. At this time there were two knights, thirty one yeoman farmers and forty four serfs, in addition to a cleric and a priest - thus confirming the long establishment of Christianity within the district, and identifying it as one of the largest places in the county at this period.

In 1300, Wigston was visited by Edward I on his way to stay at Leicester Castle, when a number of men were recruited to help in fighting the Scottish Wars. That Wigston has never been lacking in loyalty is confirmed by the fact that in 1416, to help toward the cost of the wars with France under Henry V, the sum of eight guineas, levied on the inhabitants, was raised. This amount was the most in the county, giving evidence of its size and importance.

For centuries Wigston was divided into three open arable fields, and from the early thirteenth century they were known as Mucklowe Field, Thythornhill Field and Twobrokes Field. This last

name was later changed to Gold Hill Field, and these names remained until the Enclosure Award of 1766 put a formal end to their existence, though they still live on in various forms.

The Lordship of Wigston's principal Manor, having been held since the Conquest by the Earls of Leicester; went by marriage to the de Veres, who were the Earls of Oxford, to whom it belonged until 1475. The then Earl of Oxford forfeited the Manor and Lordship through treason and it was granted by Edward IV to Walter Devereux, later becoming the property of Henry, Lord Danvers. He sold it to four of the inhabitants of Wigston in the year 1608, when it is possible that the Manor was acquired by the Pochins, a family of royal descent, who have resided in Wigston for several hundred years, as have another family who can claim royal connections, the Freers.

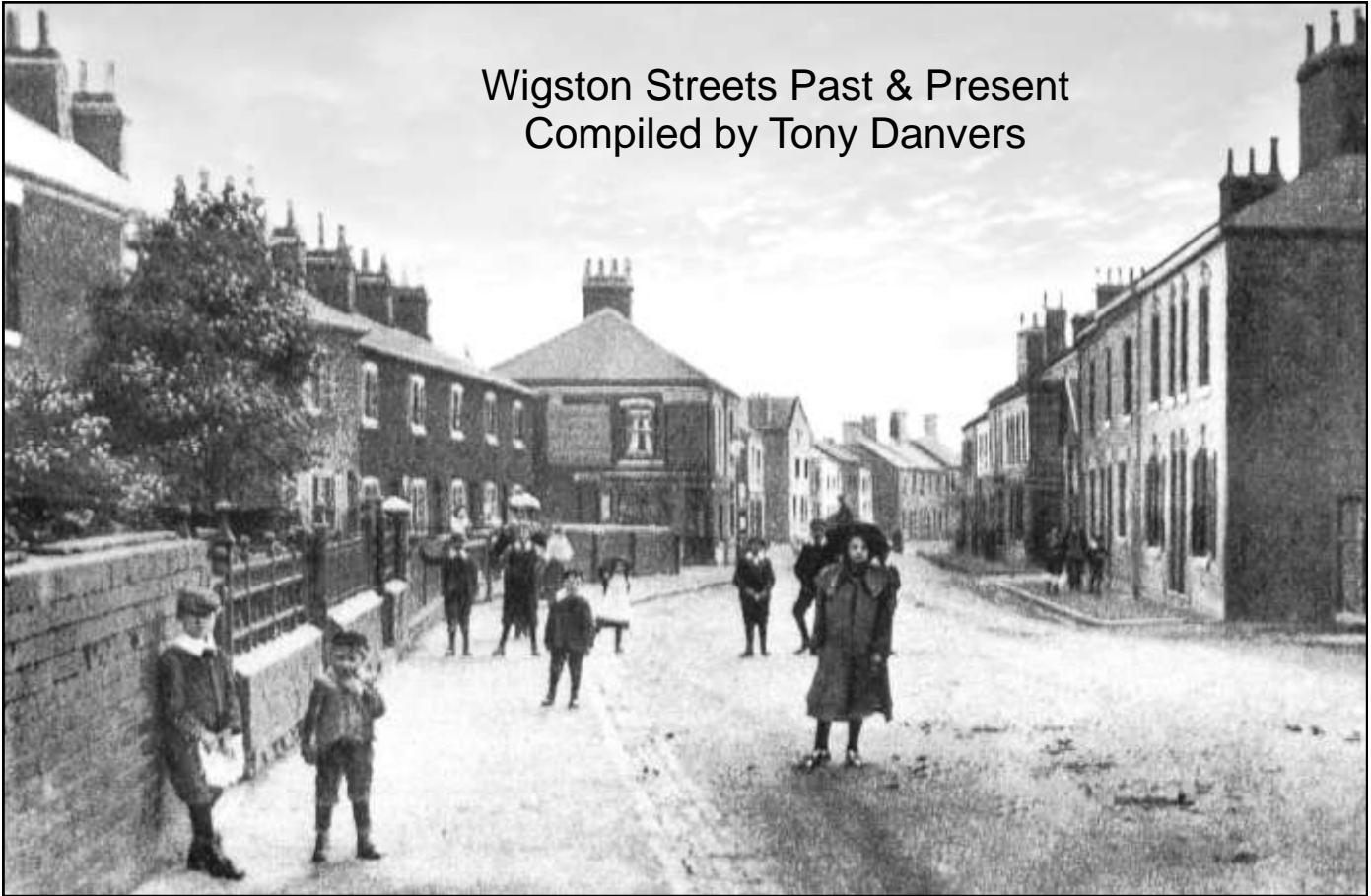
The two parish churches, the Congregational Church and one or two Georgian and earlier houses and farms are worthy of note. The Rectory Farm may even occupy the site of a pre-Saxon holding, but the present building is eighteenth century work. It would appear that the oldest known medieval house in Wigston was a large moated mansion which stood to the south of All Saints' Church in Newgate End, near the stream. In 1630 the house was the home of the Davenport family, who gave much to the church, and some of whom are buried therein.

They later provided one of Wigston's most famous characters in the person of George Davenport, a highwayman for eighteen years. He was finally caught, tried and hanged in 1797 and was buried in All Saints' churchyard. It is recorded, early in the eighteenth century, that this old house was in total ruin, except for the Chapel and no trace is now to be seen of it.

With the advent of the knitting frames, the first signs of industry other than agriculture began to appear in Wigston. Then followed the opening of the Grand Union canal in 1798, and the coming of the railway, the Leicester to Rugby line being opened in 1840 and the line to Market Harborough was opened in 1857.

## Wigston Streets Past & Present

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Leicester Road, Wigston Magna, circa 1910. Not one of the buildings in this photo is in existence today. The road seen on the right in the middle distance is Victoria Street.



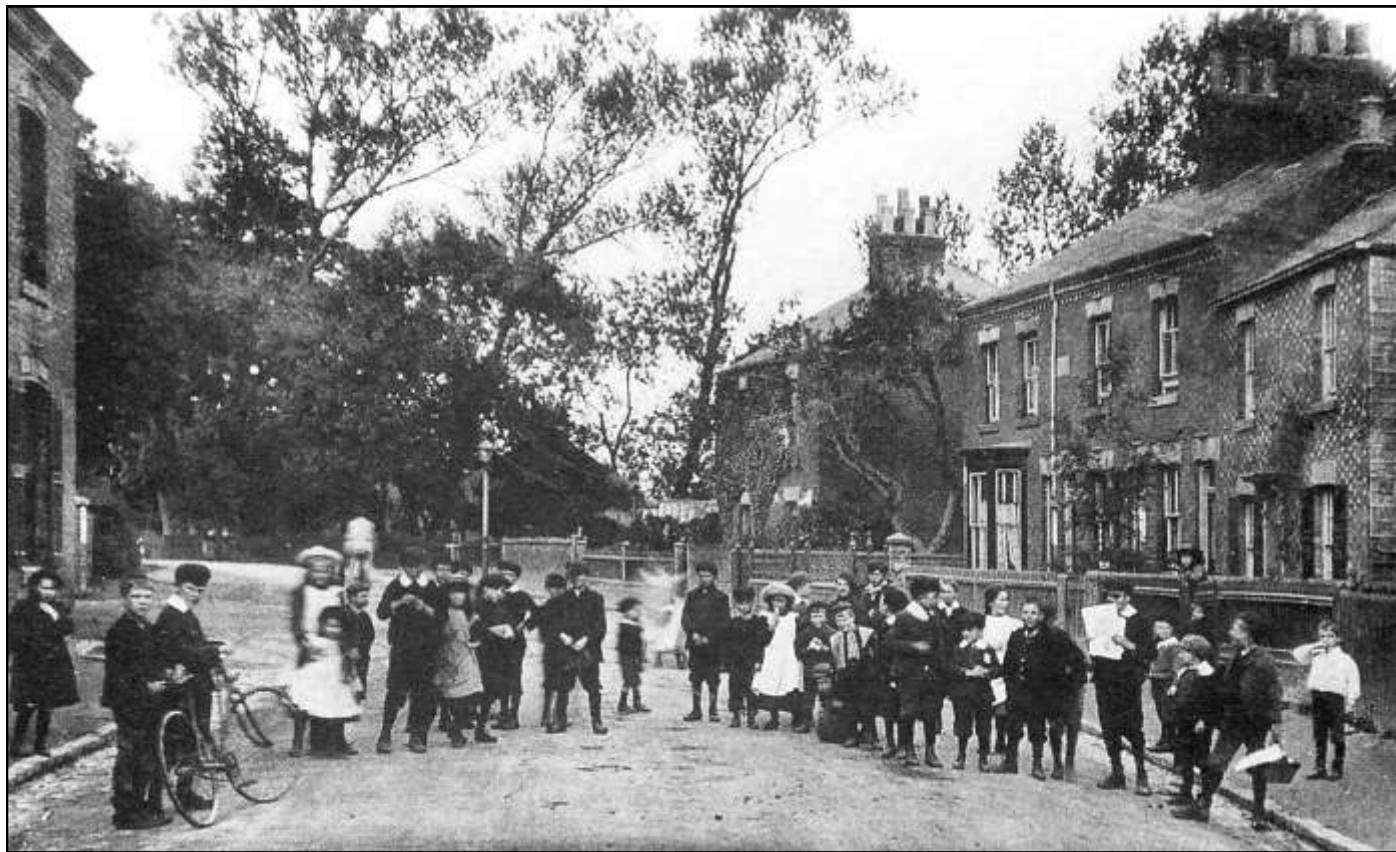
Leicester Road, Wigston Magna, clearly showing the dramatic changes that have taken place in this area of Wigston. *Photo Tony Danvers May 2015.*



A hand tinted photograph of Leicester Road in 1914. The Star & Garter is the only building that remains standing today.



The Star & Garter Public House today, it is interesting to compare this view with the scene opposite and the changes that have taken place. *Photograph Tony Danvers, May 2012.*



Children attracted by the photographer stand and pose on Leicester Road, Wigston Magna, circa 1904. The photo was taken just beyond the corner of Burgess Street and the Star & Garter public house stands just after the house on the immediate left.



Leicester Road showing a completely different view from the one opposite, all the old houses have been replaced by new buildings . *Photo Tony Danvers May 2015.*



A photograph of Victoria Street, taken from Burgess Street looking across Leicester Road, circa 1930. Many of the buildings in the middle distance and the background are still standing.



Victoria Street. taken from Wakes Road looking across Leicester Road. Most of the buildings are still standing today except for the nearest on the two corners. *Photo Tony Danvers, July 2014.*



A photograph of Burgess Street looking towards Oadby Road taken around 1913.  
The houses on the left remain but those on the right hand side have been pulled down.



In this photo of Burgess Street an extension has been put on the house on the near left and there are new buildings on the right to replace the old ones. Interestingly the houses in the background are unchanged

*Photograph Tony Danvers, April 2015.*



An early photo of Burgess Street, looking down towards Leicester Road. The railings at the front of these houses would have been removed in 1939 and melted down to help with the war effort.



Another view of Burgess Street, Wigston Magna looking down towards Leicester Road, thankfully many of the houses on the right are still standing today. *Photograph Tony Danvers, July 2014.*



Leadley's Drapery Store on Leicester Road, followed by Hilton's bakery and Shipstones off licence, circa 1920. The next road on the left is Frederick Street with Forryan's Orchard on the next corner.



A totally different scene from the one opposite, all the buildings have been demolished and re-built, and the road widened. *Photograph Tony Danvers, May 2015.*



Leicester Road, Wigston, circa 1904 at the corner of Frederick Street which was once called Mill Lane. All the houses on both sides of the road have been demolished and are now shops.



Leicester Road, Wigston Magna, another view which shows the huge changes that have taken place in Wigston over the past 100 years or so. *Photograph Tony Danvers, May 2015.*



Frederick Street, Wigston Magna in 1925. The Wesleyan Chapel, at the end of the road on the left, is the only building left standing today.



Frederick Street, Wigston Magna, apart from the Chapel it is almost unrecognisable from the picture opposite. *Photo Tony Danvers, September 2011.*



Frederick Street in Wigston Magna, circa 1910, as may be seen on the page opposite not one of these buildings remains standing today.



Frederick Street, Wigston Magna has changed dramatically, the only building in the street to remain is the Wesleyan Chapel, all the rest have been demolished to make a car park. *Photo Tony Danvers, July 2014.*



The corner of Leicester Road and Aylestone Lane, Wigston Magna, around 1919.  
The wall on the left belongs to Forryan's Farm and has an orchard behind it.



The corner of Leicester Road and Aylestone Lane, showing the developments that have taken place due to the demolition of all the old buildings in the picture opposite. *Photo Tony Danvers, May 2015.*



J. Oliver's shop which once stood on the corner of Aylestone Lane & Leicester Road, Wigston, c 1905.



The corner of Aylestone Lane and Leicester Road and the row of shops that replaced the old houses.  
*Photograph Tony Danvers, May 2012.*



Another interesting view of the corner of Aylestone Lane & Leicester Road in Wigston Magna. The last shop to trade on this site was W A Johnson, a butcher, who sold “only the best quality beef” according to the posters in the windows on the left. The next shop down was Wiggingtons and the business on the opposite corner on the right was a Shipstone’s off-licence, kept for some time by Oliver Sibson. See also the photograph on page 28.



Two youngsters and a baby in a pram at the top of Bell Street stop to pose for the camera, The street is heading down towards Bull Head Street and the Bank, Wigston Magna, circa 1910. See also page 38.



Aylestone Lane, Wigston Magna, circa 1912, showing the houses situated opposite Kings Drive which are still standing today.



Aylestone Lane, Wigston Magna which apart from the keep left bollards shows little or no change compared to the picture opposite. *Photo Tony Danvers, May 2015.*





Leicester Road, Wigston Magna, showing the brash modern buildings that have replaced the rather lovely old shops on the near right of the picture on the opposite page. *Photograph Tony Danvers, July 2014.*



Another photo of Bell Street where it meets Long Street and Leicester Road in Wigston Magna, circa 1930. Long Street begins just after where the first lamppost is situated.



The corner of Bell Street where it meets Long Street is totally different from the opposite picture. Apart from the buildings on the immediate right the change is quite dramatic. *Photo Tony Danvers May 2015.*



Bell Street, Wigston Magna, circa 1930, down on the right is the King William IV public house which was demolished in the late 1960's.



A view looking down Bell Street showing the huge changes that have taken place since the photograph on the opposite page was taken. *Photo Tony Danvers, May 2015.*



A rare view of Bell Street in Wigston Magna, circa 1910.  
As may be seen on the page opposite not one building remains standing today



Bell Street has completely changed from the previous picture only the buildings in the background remain; all the rest in Bell Street have been demolished. *Photograph Tony Danvers, July 2014.*



A group of children emerge from the Bell jetty at the end of Bell Street, circa 1904.  
This path still exists and runs alongside Sainsbury's to the top of Frederick Street.



Bell Street, Wigston Magna has changed considerably from the previous picture, of the buildings on the left hand side only the one on the near left with the arched windows still remains.



Looking towards the Bank at the end of Bell Street, Wigston Magna. On the near left is Samuel Shipp & Sons drapery business, which was demolished in the 1970's. In the middle distance is the fountain that was erected in 1897 to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee.



The old Fountain at the end of Bell Street has now been replaced by a plaque on a stone slab erected in 2012 to commemorate both Queen Victoria's and Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee's. *Photo Tony Danvers, April 2015.*



The Bank at the end of Bell Street where it joins Bull Head Street, Wigston Magna, circa 1907. The 'Queen's Head' public house is behind the tree and next to it is the fish, rabbit and poultry market. The last remaining thatched cottage in Wigston, on the left of the picture, was demolished in the late 1940's.



The view couldn't be more different from that opposite with the modern buildings in the background replacing the old cottages and the 'Queen's Head' public house. *Photo Tony Danvers, April 2015.*



Shipp's Outfitters shop in Bell Street, Wigston Magna, with "Thacnashee" the name of the white house next to it on the right, circa 1914, both of these fine buildings have since been demolished.



The building on the left is the only one left standing the other buildings have been replaced by shops. in this instance Specsavers. *Photo Tony Danvers April 2015.*



The Queens Head public house looking from the corner of Bell Street and Bull Head Street.

*Photograph Dave Lowe, July 1986.*



The corner of Bell Street and Bull Head Street looking towards the new block of flats which have replaced the Queen's Head public house. *Photo Tony Danvers, May 2015.*



The Bank Fish Bar the day before being demolished, now the site of the Bell Fountain Inn on the corner of Bell Street and Bull Head Street. *Photo: Dave Lowe, July 1986*



The Bell Fountain Inn, recently renamed The Two Steeples Inn.  
*Photograph Tony Danvers, May 2015.*



The old Oadby Road in Wigston Magna, circa 1930, looking down towards Bull Head Street.  
See map on page 108 for further details of where this road used to be.



The old Oadby Road now renamed Glebe Close since the construction of the new Oadby Road which bypasses what once was part of the main road to Oadby. *Photograph Tony Danvers, July 2014.*



A hand tinted photograph of the corner of Bull Head Street and Bell Street, Wigston Magna, taken around 1906. Most of the buildings in this picture have now gone to make way for the creation of the present dual carriageway. The sign for the Queen's Head inn may be seen on the near left of the picture, this building was later demolished and rebuilt in a mock Tudor style (see page 50).



A very different view of Bull Head Street since the creation of the dual carriageway with the Bell Fountain Inn now on the corner of Bell Street. *Photograph Tony Danvers, July 2014.*



An undated photo of two 'cruck' cottages on Bull Head Street. On the left is the Quaker Cottage which was originally a farmhouse and the cottage on the right once belonged to Samuel Laundon, a saddler. Both cottages have since been demolished and the site is now the Bell Fountain car park.



The Bell Fountain Inn now renamed the Two Steeples Inn, which was built on the site of the two 'cruck' cottages which once stood on Bull Head Street. *Photo Tony Danvers, April 2015.*



Another view of the Quaker Cottage on Bull Head Street, taken circa 1960.



Looking up Bull Head Street towards Bell Street and another view of the Two Steeples Inn which stands on the site of the old Quaker Cottage. *Photo Tony Danvers, April 2015.*



The cottages and ladies of Mowsley End, Wigston Magna, circa 1899.



A totally different picture of Mowsley End in Wigston Magna today, all the old cottages have disappeared to be replaced with modern developments. *Photograph Tony Danvers, July 2014.*



Looking up Bull Head Street towards the top end. In the far distance the three storey building is on the Bank at the bottom of Bell Street. All the buildings on the left were demolished to make room for the dual carriageway, as were most on the right hand side. Wigston Magna, circa 1930.



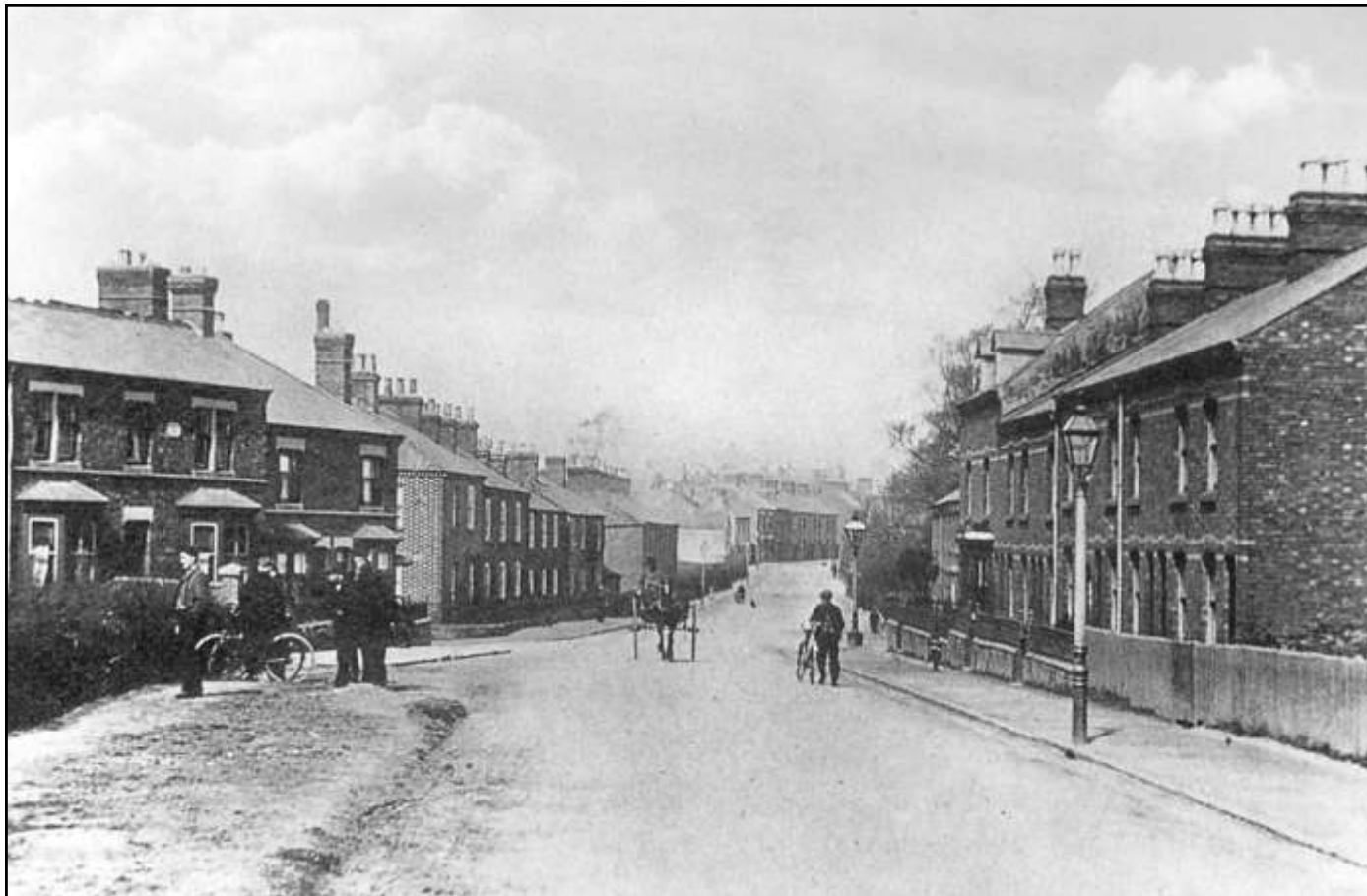
Bull Head Street, Wigston Magna today, a very different picture from the one opposite.  
*Photograph Tony Danvers, July 2014.*



Bull Head Street, Wigston Magna at the corner of Moat Street & Newton Lane in 1905.



A very different view of the corner of Moat Street, Bull Head Street & Newton Lane, compared to the picture opposite. *Photograph Tony Danvers, July 2014.*



Welford Road looking towards Bull Head Street, Wigston Magna, circa 1906. The horse & cart have just passed the junction of Moat Street and Newton Lane. The men on the left are probably watching a game of football.



Welford Road looking towards Bullhead Street, apart from the house on the left little else appears to have been left standing when compared to the picture opposite. *Photo Tony Danvers July 2014.*



The row of London cottages on the left on Moat Street in Wigston Magna were known locally as the 'diamond cottages' due to the shape of their window panes, this photo was taken circa 1903.



A wintry scene taken slightly further up towards the top end of Moat Street; photo circa 1911.



Another view of Moat Street circa 1911. Taken even further up Moat Street with the Wigston Co-operative Store on the immediate left of the picture. The boys with the barrow on the front right of the picture look as though they have been collecting horse manure for a bit of extra pocket money.



Compared to the picture opposite there has been a huge change in this recent photograph. Most of the buildings have been replaced or renovated apart from the few nearer the church.  
*Photo Tony Danvers April 2015*



A fourth view of Moat Street in Wigston Magna taken in 1920, several years later than the previous three photographs. The 'diamond' cottages are still standing on the left in the middle distance of the picture. So too is the framework knitting workshop in the garden behind them on the extreme left of the picture, instantly recognisable due to its large window frames which let in the much needed light which was essential for framework knitting to be carried out successfully.



The 'diamond' cottages in Moat Street have been demolished and the area on the left of the picture has been developed and now has a Sainsbury store. *Photograph Tony Danvers July 2014.*



An early photograph taken in Moat Street, Wigston Magna, circa 1911, on the left is the sign for the Crown Inn. As may be seen in the photo opposite several of the cottages on the right are still standing today.



Apart from the white building on the left and a few on the right, many of the cottages and houses have been replaced since the previous two photos were taken in Moat Street. *Photograph Tony Danvers, July 2014.*



Another early, and interesting photo of Moat Street in Wigston Magna, circa 1907, looking down towards Bull Head Street. It is interesting to compare this photograph to the photographs on the two previous pages.



Bushloe End, circa 1910. The single story building on the right hand side was once the site of a framework knitting workshop and later became the Gas Board showrooms. Although a few of the houses on the left remain, this scene is very different today. All the buildings on the right have disappeared and where the two boys are leaning on the wall of the cottage is where Launceston Road now begins. Compare this photo to the one on page 81.



Another view of Bushloe End, Wigston Magna circa 1920. The houses on the right hand side of the picture have all gone as have several on the left in the far distance near the carts.



Bushloe End, Wigston Magna. Interestingly the photo shows the late Peter Clowes, curator of the Framework Knitters Museum, and his wife Shirley walking along on the left. *Photograph Tony Danvers, July 2014.*



Another view of Long Street in Wigston Magna, circa 1908. In the right foreground is Mr Freckingham's butcher's shop. The figures are on the corner of Central Avenue, the farm buildings on the next corner were soon to be demolished to make way for the Co-operative Society building. On the near left is the Great Wigston Working Men's Club which was opened in 1862 and reputed to be the second oldest in the country.



Long Street, Wigston Magna has changed a little from the previous picture. The major difference is the white building on the right which once belonged to the Co-operative Society. *Photograph Tony Danvers, July 2015.*



Long Street in Wigston Magna, circa 1914, in the distance on the right at the corner of Central Avenue is The Wigston Co-operative Society.



Long Street Wigston Magna. Many of these old buildings may still be seen today  
*Photograph Tony Danvers 2014.*



A photo of the procession which took place to celebrate the Coronation of George V in 1911. Stopping to pose for the photographer outside the Co-operative Society on the corner of Long Street and Central Avenue



The old Co-operative Store has had many owners over the years and is presently now 'Her Gym'.  
*Photograph Tony Danvers, September 2014.*



A photograph taken in 1918 of Central Avenue, Wigston Magna, looking towards Long Street,  
The only traffic on the road appears to be a hen!



Central Avenue, Wigston Magna. As may be seen from the photo opposite little has changed apart from the large number of cars, *Photo Tony Danvers, September 2014.*



A procession on Central Avenue, Wigston Magna and although the photo isn't dated it could well be to celebrate the Coronation of King Edward VII in 1902. At that time the street ended in open fields.



Apart from the buildings on the near right and the road continuing into the distance the view is not very different from the one on the previous page. *Photograph Tony Danvers, April 2015.*



Another photograph of Central avenue, taken circa 1918. Once again looking towards the top end of Central Avenue, where the road ends in open fields.



Once again there is little change in this view of Central Avenue in Wigston Magna.  
*Photograph Tony Danvers April, 2015.*



A photo of Long Street, Wigston Magna circa 1912. The three men are standing by the gates of the Hall and on the other side of the road is the paddock where the horses belonging to the Hall would graze. Also on the left is the Congregational Chapel, built in 1841 and just beyond that is the Manse.



The gates on the right hand side have now gone and the paddock on the left is now the Peace Memorial Park.  
*Photograph Tony Danvers, May 2015.*



Long Street, Wigston Magna circa 1912, looking towards Paddock Street which is in the middle distance on the right of the picture.



Although the houses on the right of the picture are still there the buildings beyond have gone, as well as the building on the immediate near left. *Photograph Tony Danvers September 2014.*



Paddock Street, Wigston Magna circa 1938 looking towards the end of the road which, as can be seen, once ended on Long Lane, but which now continues on to Bull Head Street.

See map on page 108 to see where Paddock Street ended.



Paddock Street, Wigston Magna which now continues past Long Lane onto Bull Head Street. The houses are virtually the same as those on the opposite page. *Photograph Tony Danvers, July, 2014.*



Long Street, Wigston Magna, circa 1959. On the left is the Junior School which is now the Leicestershire Record Office. The shop on the immediate right used to be known as the Joke Shop and naturally was very popular with the children from the school.



Long Street, Wigston Magna, apart from the shops on the right and those in the distance much of the picture is still the same as the one opposite. *Photograph Tony Danvers, July 20124.*



Looking towards the derelict buildings belonging to Forryan's farm on the corner of Bell Street and Leicester Road, Wigston Magna. The photo was taken circa 1945. The stripes on the lampposts are a legacy of the war.



Long Street, Wigston Magna, taken from a similar spot to the picture opposite very little remains of the old buildings apart from those on the very near left. *Photograph Tony Danvers, May 2015.*



Alfred King's chemist's shop at 50 Long Street & William Cox, Fruiterer, at 2 Leicester Road, Wigston Magna, circa 1916.



Long Street & Leicester Road, Wigston Magna. Remarkably the Cox family shop, the one with the blind down, is still trading just as it was in the picture opposite. *Photograph Tony Danvers, July 2014.*



Long Street, from left to right the three nearest shops are as follows, the Wigston Post Office, then F. A. Brittain, a tailor, followed by Alfred King the chemist. The photo was taken in the 1920s.



The present row of shops where Leicester Road & Long Street conjoin at the top of Bell Street in Wigan Magna showing only small changes in the facades of the buildings. *Photograph Tony Danvers, May 2012.*



## Acknowledgments

Firstly I have to thank Mike Forryan most sincerely for not only writing the foreword to this book and thereby giving it his authoritative stamp of approval, but also for taking the time to go through the book and correcting my mistakes.

I am doubly grateful to Mike as he has already produced an excellent DVD called “Wigston With Two Steeples” which takes us on a similar tour of Wigston Magna using old photographs, which I can heartily recommend.

Secondly I must thank Duncan Lucas, as usual, for allowing me to use both his and the late Peter Mastin’s precious collections of old photographs of Wigston Magna, without which this book would never have been produced

Finally I must also mention my good friend Dave Lowe who has graciously given me his kind permission to use two of his photographs in my book, the picture of the old “Queen’s Head” public house and the “Bank Fish Bar” a fish & chip shop that once stood at the bottom of Bell Street where the Two Steeples Inn now stands.

I hope that those reading this book will get the same amount of pleasure from it that I did when I was putting this book together. If there are any queries regarding the content of the book please get in touch with me at the following email address:-

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## Notes

Rear cover illustration.  
Long Street, Wigston Magna.  
See page 106.

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