

# *Wigstons' Voice*

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WIGSTON CIVIC SOCIETY  
REPRESENTING WIGSTON MAGNA, SOUTH WIGSTON &  
KILBY BRIDGE  
**SPRING 2019**



**KING STREET/MARLBOROUGH STREET  
ONE OF THE BUILDINGS DESIGNED BY ARCHITECT  
WILLIAM FLINT WHO WILL BE THE SUBJECT OF THE TALK  
AT THE AGM 1 MAY 2019**

[www.wigstoncivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.wigstoncivicsociety.org.uk)

Founded in 1978

*“we strive to make the  
Wigstons a better  
place in which to live  
work and shop”*



## **WIGSTON CIVIC SOCIETY COMMITTEE AS ELECTED AT THE AGM MAY 2018**

|   |                         |   |
|---|-------------------------|---|
| <b>Chairman</b>   | <b>Peter Cousins</b>    | <b>chairman@wigstoncivicsociety.org.uk</b>                    |
| <b>Vice Chair</b>   | <b>Maureen Waugh</b>    | <b>vicechair@wigstoncivicsociety.org.uk</b>                   |
| <b>Secretary</b>  | <b>Colin Towell</b>     | <b>secretary@wigstoncivicsociety.org.uk<br/>07813 782 899</b> |
| <b>Treasurer</b>  | <b>Val Beesley</b>      | <b>treasurer@wigstoncivicsociety.org.uk</b>                   |
| <b>Membership Secretary</b>   | <b>Val Beesley</b>      | <b>membership@wigstoncivicsociety.org.uk</b>                  |
| <b>Website Administrator</b>  | <b>Peter Cousins</b>    | <b>webadmin@wigstoncivicsociety.org.uk</b>                    |
| <b>Publicity/Events</b>   | <b>Nicola Alexander</b> | <b>publicity@ wigstoncivicsociety.org.uk</b>                  |
| <b>Newsletter Editor</b>  | <b>Peter Cousins</b>    | <b>news@wigstoncivicsociety.org.uk</b>                        |
| <b>Other Committee Members: Roy Hughes, Peter Holmes, Colin Hames, Yvonne and John Woodward</b> |                         |   |

**Committee meetings are held on the first Wednesday of each month at Age UK, Paddock Street, Wigston Magna, starting at 7.15pm. All Members Welcome**

**AT THE AGM 2019 VAL BEESLEY WILL BE  
STANDING DOWN AS  
TREASURER/MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY.**

**WE ARE THEREFORE LOOKING FOR A  
REPLACEMENT FROM THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE  
WIGSTON CIVIC SOCIETY.**

**INTERESTED? PLEASE CONTACT THE  
SECRETARY COLIN TOWELL (07813 782 899) FOR A  
CHAT ABOUT THE POSITION AND  
WHAT IS INVOLVED.**

# **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2019**

**INCLUDING A PRESENTATION OF  
COMMENDATIONS WILL BE HELD ON**

**WEDNESDAY 1 MAY 2019  
AT 7PM**

**VENUE: THE MAPLE ROOM,  
AGE UK PADDOCK STREET  
(REAR ENTRANCE)  
WIGSTON LE18 2AN**

**Followed By:  
A Talk By:  
Mark Mitchley  
Executive Head Teacher,  
Wigston Academy**

**The Subject Will Be:  
William Flint  
Leicester Architect**

**ALL MEMBERS AND THE PUBLIC ARE WELCOME  
ADMISSION FREE (NO BOOKING NEEDED)**

**LIGHT REFRESHMENTS SERVED**

## **SHOPS IN WIGSTON MAGNA**

In the last edition there was an article on shops recalling the old family businesses many of which have disappeared after their trade was absorbed by the early supermarkets many of which have now also gone. Presently, some small shops continue in business but have to trade against rising rents and rates and declining customer numbers.

However, new small businesses are starting up but some of these do not last long meaning that there is a continuous turnover of shop owners in the town. Some examples are:

Chic Hair and Beauty in Leicester Road became a nail bar in April 2018, then a tattooist and since January this year has been closed and to let.

Kids and Totz closed in August last year and is now a Turkish barber.

Barclays Bank closed in November last year and remains empty, the property is looking in a mess and is hardly a good advert for Wigston town centre, clearly Barclays feels it owes Wigston nothing for many years of loyal customers contributing to its profits.

Rocky's Deserts closed late last year when the owner returned to America.

Spanish Sun tanning lasted less than a year closing in January.

The former pet shop closed last August and since October 2018 has been Man Cave barbers.

Istanbul Turkish restaurant closed late last year and is due to re-open under the new name of Marmaris.

In Bell Street, Affordable Foods closed in October 2018 after fourteen months and is currently empty.

Tubs and Tiles behind the Martanne hairdressers on Bell Street closed early in 2018 and relocated to Long Street. It has now reopened as a gym.

Heath's fish and fruit shops in the Parade are now closed and so far, The Hemp Shack opened in September 2018 and a café and takeaway opened in January this year.

There are some long-term empty properties which do nothing to enhance the shopping experience in Wigston, these include: Harrison Murray's old office on Leicester Road which closed in December 2015, it now has a "sold" board on it but no sign of action. The Post and Packing shop closed in early 2018 and remains empty and shuttered. Lords Electrical shop on the corner of Bell Street and Leicester Road closed in June 2016 and despite an application for change of use to a café nothing has materialised. Heard's butchers on the opposite corner closed in August 2015 and one of the Heaths shops on the Parade remains shuttered. The Nat West bank in Bell Street has been empty since July 2016, so what chance for re-letting Barclays?.

Despite all the changes, one business continues to trade and that is Billy Cox's fruit and vegetable shop at 2 Leicester Road. It is like entering a time warp inside, but the produce is very fresh. The shop must be preserved for future generations and the people of Wigston.

The question remains, why are some shops empty for such long periods? Surely the landlord would rather have rents coming in but there is a view that they rely on increasing property values, however these can only be realised if the shop is sold. Are landlords required to pay business rates on empty shops in the same way as domestic property owners where most local authorities are increasing the percentage of the basic council tax to be paid the longer a house is empty. Come on landlords play the game

## **40<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY RECEPTION AND TEA**

On 13 October 2018 over 40 members and guests gathered at Age UK in Paddock Street to celebrate the founding of the Society in 1978. We were honoured to have the Mayor and Mayoress of Oadby and Wigston, Councillor and Mrs David Carter and the Chief Executive of the Council Mrs Ann Court. We were also pleased to see former Chairmen Mary Essinger and Alan Kind.

The current Chairman, Peter Cousins extended a warm welcome to everyone present and we immediately launched into an illustrated talk with Peter and Colin Towell, the Secretary, taking a decade at a time to describe the development of the Society and the highlights of its activities over the 40 years. It had been quite an exhaustive project to research the minutes and annual reports to identify the main officers over the years, meeting places and achievements. Some of the earlier minutes are in the Record Office and it was due to the diligence of Helen Hay and Peter Cousins in researching these records, and to Colin Towell for the more recent times, that we were able to give a full picture of the people involved and events affecting the Society since 1978.

Subjects such as parking, traffic, housing, new developments and shops were all topics under discussion at early meetings and they still are today. However, it is noticeable that in recent years the Society has undertaken several projects in the public realm but in the early years similar projects were not evident.

It was interesting to note that Alan Kind, Colin Hames and Pam Ward attended the first meetings and are still involved today. Roger Garratt was also an early member but was unable to attend, he was involved in an event in Kibworth where he now lives.

A buffet tea was then served, ably prepared with the help of Morrisons by a group of members with Ann Cousins in the lead.

The highlight of the afternoon was an illustrated talk by Neil Crutchley on the work of the Leicester Civic Society and the Leicester Branch of the Victorian Society. Neil is an excellent speaker and his knowledge of Leicester buildings is extensive. The afternoon concluded with a toast to 'Wigston Civic Society' and big thank you to all those involved in the event and to the members and guests for attending.

In the background to the event was a quiz compiled by Brenda Kind for the Society which made £180 for the funds.

### **THE 3<sup>RD</sup> DVD FROM THE GREATER WIGSTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY IS NOW AVAILABLE.**

**“WIGSTON – A MIX OF MEMORIES” is a look back at events in history in film.**

**The DVD consists of 5 sections: -**

- **The Vanishing Village**
- **The Wigston Folk Museum**
- **1939 Wigston Magna Carnival and the crowning of the Village Queen**
- **1939 South Wigston and Glen Parva Carnival and the crowning of the Village Queen**
- **Wigston South Railway Sidings**

**£10.00 Per Copy - Available at:**

**AGE UK, 51 PADDOCK STREET, WIGSTON LE18  
2AN**

**Full Details on The Website**

**[www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk](http://www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk)**

## **DO YOU REALISE THAT YOU MAY LIVE IN A CONSERVATION AREA?**

The first Conservation Area in England was first designated in 1967 and according to English Heritage, there are now over 8000. A conservation area can be defined as a tract of land that has been awarded a protected status, due to either its natural features, its cultural heritage or its ecological value, to ensure that it is protected for years to come.

Wigston has five locally designated conservation areas. The areas designated for protection within the Borough are deemed to be particularly good examples of special architectural and historic interest, which are not only to be protected but enhanced also.

The legislation on Conservation Areas is contained in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The Act does define a conservation area as an “area of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve and enhance”.

### **The 5 Conservation Areas within the borough are:**

- **The Lanes Conservation Area designated in 1981**
- **All Saints Conservation Area designated in 1977**
- **Midland Cottages Conservation Area designated in 1989**
- **South Wigston Conservation Area designated in 1989**
- **Spa Lane Conservation Area designated in 1989**

There are, however, some limitations to living in one. These properties can have restrictions and related maintenance costs, but most people find that these are outweighed by the benefits of owning your own piece of history.

Once an area has been given Conservation Area status, the local authority develops and enforces policies as to how the desirable features of the area should be preserved or enhanced. Thus, the policies will vary from one such area to another, and indeed can vary over time as new guidelines or restrictions are introduced (in consultation with local residents).

If your home falls into a conservation area, there will be restrictions as to what you can do to it, as far as it affects the appearance of the outside of your property. These restrictions will be particular to your individual zone, which will have its own character. In view of the restrictions, any improvements, extensions or repairs you make are likely to take more time, involve more paperwork, and cost more money.

Most of the guidelines are open to interpretation, especially since they often concern matters of taste. If you are planning something it pays to check in advance:

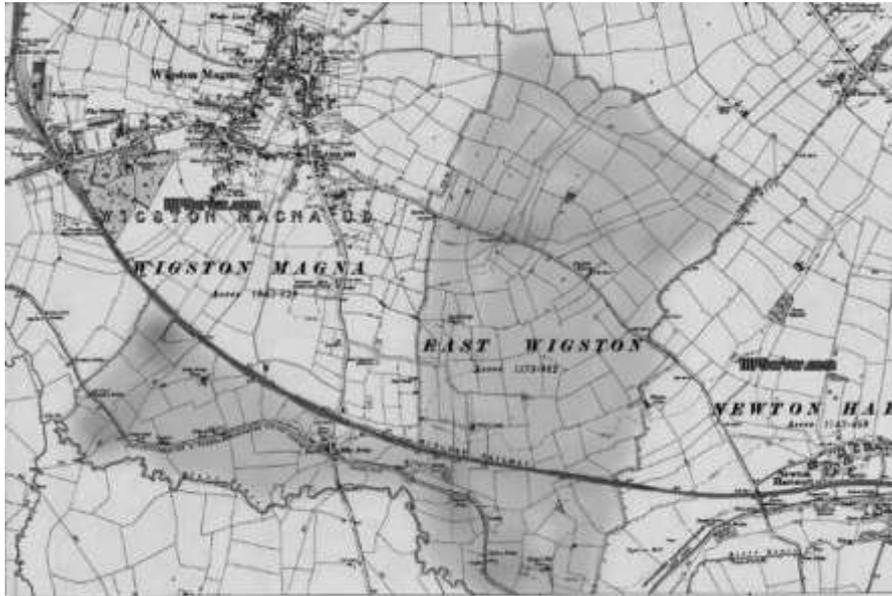
Details of all conservation areas in the Borough can be viewed at:

[www.oadby-wigston.gov.uk/pages/conservation\\_areas](http://www.oadby-wigston.gov.uk/pages/conservation_areas)

**Peter Cousins**

# EAST WIGSTON – NEVER HEARD OF IT!

By Mike Forryan



Well there was once an East Wigston which came into being due to the influence of the railway. In 1894 Wigston's urbanised and industrialised status was formerly recognised as it was elevated from a rural parish into an urban district.

This urban district consisted of Wigston Magna, South Wigston and Glen Parva, and by 1901 it had a population of 8,404, of which 4,020 were employed. However, upon this elevation in 1894, the old ecclesiastical parish of Wigston was split. Farmers in the agricultural half of the parish feared higher rates to pay for urban services they did not want, so nearly 1,200 acres on the eastern side broke away to form the Parish of East Wigston, with the Parish Council meetings being held at Kilby Bridge. The boundary of the newly formed East Wigston was the hedge line to the east of what we now know as Wigston Harcourt. East Wigston became a part of the Wigston Urban District Council in 1936.

## PLANNING BRIEFS

The current planning position on sites in which the Society has taken an interest is described below.

**Horse and Trumpet decking and footpath:** regrettably there has been no further progress by the County on the diversion of the footpath around the new decking to the front of the pub. The Society strongly objected to the diversion. Ironically the pub won its section in the Pride of the Borough floral awards.

**Newton Lane:** It is reported that the first residents will soon be moving into the new houses fronting the site. It is further reported that there is confusion about the name that the developers have given to the estate, Wigston Meadows. Despite a multitude of direction signs people are still driving into the existing Meadows estate on Kelmarsh Avenue. The new site ties in well with the area which was once known as East Wigston which had its own parish council. (See previous page). Perhaps East Wigston does not have that 'marketing' sound to it so beloved of developer's sales departments. The application for the additional 32 units mentioned in the last edition was approved making 482 houses on this part of the site in total. There has been a further application for 36 units on a new road off the A5199 on the Wigston side of the railway bridge and this has been recommended for approval at the March Development Control Committee. This application includes a new roundabout to service this part of the estate which will eventually join up with the Newton Lane element. The roundabout was envisaged in the outline application with the road off it also serving the commercial and industrial part of the site near the railway. Plans have not yet been submitted for this element of the development.

**Meadow Hill/Cooks Lane:** this site is now complete.

**Land west of Welford Road near Kilby Bridge:** There has been no further action on this site with no indication of a reserved matters application being submitted. However, with the new roundabout proposed near to the railway bridge as reported above, which means that there will be five junctions between, and including, the cemetery roundabout and the new railway bridge roundabout.

**Long Street WMC and Admiral Sportswear sites:** In recent weeks all has gone very quiet on these sites which are more or less opposite each other. The WMC was demolished late last year and the site levelled. No work has been carried out on the new build flats and houses for which this site has approval. Perhaps the developer is waiting for the site to settle as there must have been cellars under the building. Across the road there was some activity, but this was brought to a halt by another fire in the disused factory building. The only work since has been to erect a sturdy boundary fence to keep out unwanted intruders.

**The Winchester Club, Central Avenue/Long Street:** An application to convert this corner site to 12 residential units has been considered and approved by the Development Control Committee. The site's owners who are not the same as the owners of the Snooker Club are the same developers as at Willow Place (opposite) for which the Society awarded a certificate of commendation a few years ago.

**Sundry schemes:** No action appears to be taking place on the land to the rear of the Elms Social Club which has approval for three houses. Likewise, there is no sign of the Nautical William pub on Aylestone Lane being closed ready for demolition but the Hat and Cap factory on Canal Street has been sold to a developer by the Council after it was compulsorily purchased; an application is awaited. There continues to be a number of small applications in the Wigston conservation areas and in South Wigston, particularly on Blaby Road. The four new houses tucked away off Central Avenue are progressing well.

<https://www.facebook.com/WigstonCivic>



**DO YOU USE FACEBOOK? WE ARE  
LOOKING FOR AN ADMINISTRATOR TO LOOK AFTER  
AND PROMOTE OUR FACEBOOK PAGE  
Interested? Please contact the Secretary  
Colin Towell 07813 782 899**

## **THE COMMUNITY**

What makes a community? Community must be the most overworked word. It can be large or small. A town may be a mining community, or a monastic community, community policing or a community orchard. So, when it comes to “community spirit” where does Wigston stand? We will perhaps find out. The Borough hopes to have a Community Week from June 17-23, 2019 in Bell Street. Organisations are asked to open their doors to host pocket events. Our doors are always open!

Do Wigston people have a sense of identity? Or is it just a place where the Council Tax is collected? When a town expands with more houses being built and increased population, the old community is overwhelmed. Our Society has initiated or supported projects to create a distinctive town such as Peacock Place in Moat Street, the Jubilee Plaque in Bell Street, the Pinfold on the corner of Newgate End and the 14 blue plaques around Wigston and South Wigston.

A town needs to be a defined area not a mishmash with a larger place. Hence the green wedges, now almost forgotten. Our green wedge is between Wigston and Oadby which does little to make one community across the Borough. Perhaps when Oadby and Wigston were joined to make the Borough it should have been given a name! Oadby, Wigston and South Wigston could be communities within the Borough

In towns and villages there is a close relationship between Communities and Neighbourliness. Walking along Wigston streets a greeting, smile or just a nod could make someone’s day. This is the difference with days gone by. The smart phone has something to answer for! “Community” in Wigston may have become obscured but look hard enough and you will find it.

**Colin Hames**

**7th Annual Public Illustrated Lecture**  
**Thursday 26 September 2019 @ 7.30pm**  
***“Square Bashing and Kicking our Heels”***  
**The Royal Leicestershire Regiment and**  
**the Glen Parva Depot**



**AN ILLUSTRATED PRESENTATION BY**  
**ROBIN JENKINS**

**Senior Archivist (Collections),**  
**Record Office for Leicestershire, Leicester and**  
**Rutland**

**Venue:**

**Age UK 51 Paddock Street,**  
**Wigston LE18 2AN**

**Admission £4.00 Per Person**  
**Including Refreshments**

**BOOKING ADVISABLE**

**Contact: Colin Towell – 0116 288 9638**  
**Or 07813 782 899**

## **GARDEN BIRD SURVEY**

During the winter months of December to March 1979-80, we at the Wigston Civic Society organised a survey of garden birds. It was just to record which birds were seen, either frequently or occasionally. We had a good response from many people including schoolchildren.

Wigston was divided into five areas which included South Wigston. Overall 37 different birds were recorded with the house sparrow, starling and blackbird in all gardens. Most birds, in both variety and number, were recorded on the Little Hill Estate. Prior to the Little Hill Estate there were a lot of very old allotments, with many hedges and fruit trees, fields with high hedges and at a higher-level open allotments where skylarks were seen. When all this was uprooted for building purposes, birds would be around in the nearby countryside, still not far from their previous garden habitat.

Not all people welcome birds. They can make a mess, particularly wood pigeons and house martins' nests have been seen being knocked down for the same reason. Now there are no house martins in Wigston. Or are there?

In spite of Wigston teeming with cats and the concentration of squirrels, birds are attracted to the urban or city food and cover. Today garden bird varieties have changed so much! Sparrows and starlings have been replaced by gold finches and the tit family. Woodpeckers and nuthatches are not uncommon and even a raven may be seen. The faithful blackbird is ever present; not forgetting the robin. Our winters may be more benign than in 1979 but birds still appreciate some food during these months. It would be a sterile place without them!

**Colin Hames**

REVIVE  
NEIGHBOURLINESS  
IN  
WIGSTON

A Greeting, Smile or Nod to someone may make their day.



Wigston Civic Society aims to make Wigston a neighbourly town



**Reports by Colin Towell unless otherwise stated.**

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