

# *Wigstons' Voice*

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

**AUTUMN 2019**



**THE GLEN PARVA BARRACKS, WHICH IS FEATURED IN OUR  
ANNUAL PUBLIC ILLUSTRATED LECTURE  
ON THURSDAY 26 SEPTEMBER 2019  
(Details inside this newsletter)**

[www.wigstonscivicsociety.org.uk](http://www.wigstonscivicsociety.org.uk)  
Founded in 1978

*“we strive to  
make the  
Wigstons a better  
place in which to*



**WIGSTON CIVIC SOCIETY COMMITTEE  
AS ELECTED AT THE AGM MAY 2019**

<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 07813 782 899</b>
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Joy Heskins</b>	<b>treasurer@wigstoncivicsociety.org.uk</b>
<b>Membership Secretary</b>	<b>Joy Heskins</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 now held every 3 months on  
the first Wednesday of the month.**

**The next meeting will be on Wednesday 6 November in the Community Room at The Fire Station, Wigston Magna, starting at 7.15pm. All Members Welcome**

**NEWSLETTER ARTICLES**

**We would like interesting and informative articles  
for the Voice newsletter.**

**Have you any concerns about the Borough that you would like to  
bring to the attention of the Membership and the public?**

**Articles for the newsletter can be sent directly to the  
Editor by e-mail at: news@wigstoncivicsociety.org.uk**

**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**

**80 Seats Only Available**

**BOOKING ADVISABLE**

**Contact: Colin Towell – 0116 288 9638**

**Or 07813 782 899**

## **A FOOTPATH versus THE SCHOOL RUN**

Children living on the proposed Clarence Fields development\* could walk along a former farm-track to Thythorn Field Primary School – a hundred yards or so; or they could join the school run via Welford Road, Moat Street, Horsewell Lane and Durnford Road to the twice daily gridlock in front of the school in Bideford Close. A pleasant five-minute walk, listening to the birds in the mature boundary hawthorn hedge, or a fraught stop-start journey of at least a mile (even if you take the short-cut through Homestead Drive) ending in the exhaust fumes and hazards of turning cars in a narrow cul de sac.

A no-brainer, surely.

The original cart track from the A5199, Welford Road, served Lodge Farm, now under houses on the Little Hill Estate, and crossed the railway line to Kilby Bridge Farm. Currently, the remaining track is blocked by high corrugated iron gates at the Bideford Close end and the owner has been disinclined to make it available for public use or sell it.

The school has objected to the establishment of a footpath on the grounds of “security”. Like Thythorn, the Meadows CP School also has a large school field, bounded on one side by Meres Walk and on another side by a metalled footpath. Both paths are well-used, safe and have not created security problems for the school, so I suggest this is not a valid objection by Thythorn School.

The track beside the school is wide enough to provide separate lanes for safe pedestrian and cycle use. Foot and cycle access from Clarence Fields would not only provide a short walk to school for the children in the new development, it would have much wider benefits to the residents of Clarence Fields and Thornhill Field estates (across Welford Road on the corner of Cooks Lane) and even further afield by providing access to:

- Little Hill shops, Post Office and church
- Nos. 47 & 48 bus routes from Horsewell Lane, into Leicester, either via the Infirmary or the railway station
- Little Hill Primary School, the Wigston Academies, and to the Further Education College
- Two Steeples Medical Centre, South Wigston station
- New Pavilion being built on Horsewell Lane.

A combined foot and cycle path would also provide a pleasant route for dog-walkers and wheelchair users.

Climate change, with its increasingly dramatic extremes in weather – torrential cloudbursts and flash floods alternating with intense heatwaves, even in our temperate climate – is upon us. Childhood asthma, exacerbated by air pollution, and childhood obesity are serious conditions which clean air and walking to school would help to ameliorate.

One option, as the farm path is an ancient trackway, would be to encourage the owner to make it a permissive path. Failing this, a potential access point from Clarence Field to the track could be established to allow the link to be open at some future date.

\*Clarence Fields is the name for a new development of 43 houses on the A5199, Welford Road, on the right-hand side approaching Kilby Bridge from Wigston.

## **Maureen Waugh**

The matter was also raised at a recent Residents' Forum but was dismissed because there had been efforts over many years to buy the necessary land which had come to nothing.

## PLANNING BRIEFS

As described elsewhere in this issue of Wigstons' Voice, a Planning Working Group (PWG) has been set up to deal with commenting and/or objecting to planning applications which are either notified to the Society by letter or that are picked up through the 'weekly lists' issued by the Planning Department and circulated to the Society by email.

The group has been very busy in the first few weeks establishing a way of working and the parameters under which it will operate, the formal procedures were agreed at the Executive Committee on 1 August 2019. In addition, there have been a number of applications involving existing individual properties as well as the 45-unit Clarence Fields development on the west side of the A5199 just before Kilby Bridge. The current position on the sites in which the Society is interested is as follows:

**Horse and Trumpet decking and footpath:** As already reported to Committee members, the application for the diversion of the footpath finally came before the appropriate County Council committee on 11 July 2019. The Secretary attended but did not speak. Also, in attendance were Duncan Lucas and Bill Boulter who both objected to the diversion. There was a representative of Everards present at the meeting who also spoke. There was a reference to the past handling of the case by the Borough and County Councils in the terms of 'we are where we are'. Despite the Society's written objections and to the two speakers' objections the recommendation was to approve the diversion. This was carried but a condition was imposed that Everards erect a substantial boundary marking the limits of the car parking area and the new footpath route and Everards agreed to erect a plaque explaining the ancient right of way in front of the pub.

**Newton Lane:** The application for 36 units off a new road and roundabout on the A5199 at Kilby Bridge was approved at the March Development Control Committee, this means that the scheme currently consists of 518 units in total. The Society was asked to submit road names and suggested the following: Waldens Way; Simpsons....; Grays....; and Wrays.... All the names were connected with the site. It is not yet known which names have been agreed.

**Land west of Welford Road, A5199 near Kilby Bridge (Clarence Fields):** The Society queried the naming of the site with the Developer (Redrow Homes) and was informed that the name derives from the former 'Duke of Clarence Public House, which was said to be at the heart of the social scene in South Wigston. A reserved matters application was made for up to 43 dwellings in May to which substantial comments were made regarding access and circulation, housing types and the Section 106 agreement. This application was approved but it was a delegated decision and did not come to committee and so the Society was not able to see the normal report to ensure that its comments had been considered. This has caused concern and the issue is being followed up. There has been no start on site at present, but no request has been made for street names. There are signs of activity on the site as at 15 August.

Comments have been made on the following applications:

- 19/00183 1 Launceston Road, demolish garage and erect two-story flats, granted 1 July 2019
- 19/00232 1 Launceston Road, house extension, refused 23/7/19
- 19/00186 53 Falmouth Drive, outline demolish garage and erect additional house, refused, 27 June 2019 and now gone to appeal.
- 19/00176 1 Church Nook, COU annex to residential, refused 12 June 2019

- 19/00068 33A Central Avenue, COU from design office to dwelling plus solar panels: refused and resubmitted on application number 19/00287.
- 19/00293 44 Central Avenue, demolish existing garage & erect two storey side and single storey rear extension
- 19/00277 Apple House single storey side extension & lift shaft
- 19/00205 281 Leicester Road, convert garage to café
- 19/00316 18 Saffron Road, convert dwelling to 3 flats

## **DID YOU KNOW THAT THE MAIN ROAD FROM MERSEYSIDE TO LONDON ONCE RAN THROUGH WIGSTON MAGNA?**



By John Frederick Herring

The road dates from the earliest times and is but the local section of a route which stretched from Merseyside to Northampton where it then merged with the Market Harborough road to become the A508 and passed south to meet the A5 and so to London. It was once the main route to the capital, and this must have made Wigston a widely known place and its inns host to many travellers.

From Leicester the route entered Wigston and turned left into Bell Street, then right at the Bank and along Bulls Head Street and south along what we call today Welford Road.

Later, the present A6 through Oadby and Market Harborough became the preferred way, but Welford Road was still important enough to be upgraded to a turnpike road in 1764.



Bell Street Wigston Magna with Shipp's on the left circa 1910

The main Coaching Inn was the Bell Inn or Blue Bell Inn located near the top end of Bell Street and after the decline of the stagecoaches to London became Shipp's Shop a well-known draper which was the "Harrods" of Wigston until the late 1970's.

A second and much older Inn was the Bulls Head Inn on Bulls Head Street. This Inn lasted much longer than the Blue Bell and only closed as part of the redevelopment of Bull Head Street in the 1970's.

**Mike Forryan**

## **EAST WIGSTON MEADOWS**

In the last edition of Wigstons' Voice there was an article by Mike Forryan on East Wigston, and reference was also made in the Planning Briefs article on the confusion being caused by the naming of the new development on Newton lane as 'Wigston Meadows'.

A very knowledgeable member of the community in Wigston has suggested that the new development be named 'East Wigston Meadows'. It is also suggested that a booklet be prepared explaining the area and the origins of the road names and that it be handed to the occupiers of the new houses. Work on this idea is progressing. The developer has offered to pay for the cost of production.

## **TOWN CENTRE SURVEY FOR WIGSTON AND SOUTH WIGSTON**

At the AGM in May this year, a survey of members was launched to gauge their use of town centre shops and services. This was clearly a small sample with 18 responses, but it did show that the Wigston Magna town centre is a social centre as well as being used for shopping. Comments made were very interesting and informative.

The Council will soon be reviewing the old Town Centre Action plans which are contained in the newly approved Local Plan. The Society is one step ahead and will be able to make positive responses when the review comes out.

The winner of the draw was Brenda Kind who will receive her prize at the Annual Lecture on 26 September.

## SHOPS UPDATE

The Society continues to monitor the shops situation in Wigston Magna and is also currently establishing a database of shops in South Wigston in order to similarly track the position there.

The long-term empty units remain largely unchanged in Wigston Magna with the old Harrison Murray, Post and Packing, Lords Electrical, Heard's Butchers, Nat West and Barclays units still not relet. An approved application for a café in Lords Electrical has come to nothing and it is thought that the applicant has taken on the café at the new Everards development opposite Fosse Park. In response to a question at the recent Wigston Residents' Forum we were advised of the difficulty in contacting landlords in order that the Council can exert some pressure on them to reduce rents, one landlord apparently is Winchester Cathedral! There was a 'sharp intake of breath' negative response to the suggestion that the local authority may be able to give business rates relief to new shop owners for a limited time.

However, it does seem that small units can reopen quite quickly, the former Gameworld shop on the corner of Leicester Road with Aylestone Lane reopened in July as Spot and Sew after only about a month of closure and round the corner on Leicester Road itself the former Rockies Deserts having closed late last year reopened on 10 August as a Nail Bar. Further along Leicester Road the former tanning shop, Spanish Sun, which closed in January this year has reopened as 'Sophia's Hairdressers'. A barber has recently opened just inside Frederick Street in the former phone accessories shop.

The former Fusion hair salon in Bell Street closed in June.

C&R Kitchens on Leicester Road closed recently.

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2019**

There were 35 members and guests in attendance at the AGM on 1 May. This was our final monthly meeting at Age UK Oadby and Wigston prior to our move, for the time being, to the community room at the fire station. The chairman, Peter Cousins, reported on another busy and successful year with the highlight being our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in October 2018.

The treasurer reported that, as in each year, our regular income did not cover our running costs, but fundraising enabled the Society to end the year with an excess on income over expenditure.

Val Beesley retired as treasurer but remained on the committee. Joy Heskins coming onto the committee to take on the treasurer's role. Peter Holmes retired as examiner with Val Beesley taking over this task. All other committee members and officers remained as before (details are on the inside front cover).

The Chairman reported on the committee's decision to propose that the Society changes its meeting pattern to four meetings a year instead of monthly meetings. This, along with the move to the fire station was to cut the workload of the officers and to save money. As a result, the Chairman indicated that he would remain in post for a further year and that he would step down at the 2020 AGM. The other major change was to set up a planning working group which is reported on in a separate item in this issue.

A Town Centre survey was introduced.

Following the business meeting the annual award of Certificates of Commendation were made, this year to: The Bethel Free Church for its refurbishment of its hall on the Crescent, Wigston Fields; Mr P Bhojhani for the conversion of the former factory to flats at Belvoir House in Paddock Street and to Messrs S&T Thornton for the refurbishment of the flats on Dunton Street, South Wigston.

The third part of the evening consisted of an excellent illustrated presentation by Mark Mitchley on the Leicester Architect, William Flint, who is the subject of his book, now available priced £12.99 by emailing Mark on: [markmitchley@yahoo.com](mailto:markmitchley@yahoo.com)

## **VOLUNTEERS WANTED**

**Interested? Please contact the Secretary  
Colin Towell 07813 782 899**

There are four positions for which volunteers are needed, they are:

**A Chairman:** as reported elsewhere in this issue, Peter Cousins has agreed to remain as Chairman for a further year until the AGM in May 2020. We need a person to take over from Peter. Someone who is not already a member would be welcome and if that person could join the Society now there would be a period in which they could work alongside Peter to get to know the ropes.

**A Listing Officer:** An appeal has previously been made for someone to take responsibility for applying for the listing of a building. This is done online but a considerable amount of research is needed as well as documentary evidence. Clearly the need for this work does not arise very often but there is at least one and possibly three buildings that the Society should be taking forward and making applications for.

**A Minute Secretary:** this role has been vacant for several years, but it is vital to record decisions and minutes for each meeting, currently four per year which could increase depending on several factors. Advice and training will be available.

**A Facebook Administrator:** do you use Facebook?. We are looking for an Administrator to look after and promote our Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/WigstonCivic>

## **OADBY AND WIGSTON CIVIC ORCHESTRA**

Many members will at some time have attended a concert by the Orchestra under its long serving conductor, Keith Smith. In fact, the orchestra is about to commence its 54<sup>th</sup> season having been founded in 1966 by Keith himself who has conducted nearly every concert (five per season) in that time. The first concert will be on:

**Saturday, 14 September at 7.30pm at Oadby Trinity Methodist Church. The programme will consist of Baroque music with a small ensemble probably led by Keith himself playing his violin**

The highlight event this year will be on:

**Saturday, 26 October at 7.30pm at Wigston College (formerly Guthlaxton). The programme will include Elgar's Enigma Variations and his Violin Concerto**

This concert is in celebration of Keith's 80th birthday and will be in the presence of the Borough's Deputy Mayor and her consort.

Tickets for both events are £14.00, £10.50 or £5 for students and may be obtained by phoning **0116 2889674** or **01295 670540** or on the door



## **CHANGES TO COMMITTEE PROCEDURES**

At the AGM last May members took a decision to re-organise the way your Executive Committee works to make Wigston, South Wigston and Kilby Bridge a better place in which to live work and shop.

Members agreed to meet every three months rather than monthly and not to involve themselves in organising projects and events and attending exhibitions. However, there will be a concentration on investigating planning applications, especially those in conservation areas, as indeed, this is our main objective. This task will be carried out by a newly established working group of three members. The group will circulate all Executive Committee members and others attending regularly asking for comments on appropriate applications. A report on cases dealt with will be made to the quarterly meeting.

For the time being the Executive Committee will meet at the Community Room at the Fire Station. The first meeting was successfully held there on 7 August. The newsletter, Wigstons' Voice, will continue to be published twice a year in April and September and Peter Cousins will continue to edit it. You can see all previous editions on our website:

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

The Executive Committee is of the view that it should involve itself in developments outside the conservation areas as these can have a major impact on their immediate locality as well as on the Wigstons as a whole. The Planning Working Group will also continue to examine applications for multi-unit sites.

# THE GREATER WIGSTON HERITAGE CENTRE

COVERING THE HERITAGE & HISTORY OF WIGSTON, SOUTH WIGSTON,  
GLEN PARVA AND KILBY BRIDGE



The Greater Wigston Historical Society are pleased to announce the creation of a Heritage Centre and Library for the Greater Wigston area in partnership with the Wigston Academy Trust. This has been in the planning for a number of years and has finally come to fruition. The Centre will contain books, documents, maps, memorabilia, audio recordings, scrap books, newspapers, cds and dvds, and their own archive of over 10,000 photographs of Wigston and surrounding areas.

The Society took possession of the premises on 1 May 2019, and since then a team of volunteers have been busy sorting, indexing and getting ready to display their archive material, which will be added to by other local collections they have been offered. There will be a facility at the Centre to search archive indexes for any information members and visitors are looking for. They also have computers with internet access and a wealth of records for genealogical research for Wigston, as well as national and international data. Full details about the Society and the Heritage Centre can be found on the website:

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

The Centre is on the Academy campus, situated off Station Road, LE18 2DS, through the gate at the side of the Swimming Baths. The archive will be open for viewing by Society members and the general public on Friday each week, starting from:

**Friday 27 September 2019 from 10.00am till 4.00pm**

**Reports by Colin Towell unless otherwise stated.  
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