

# *Wigstons' Voice*

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

**AUTUMN 2020**

EDITION 14

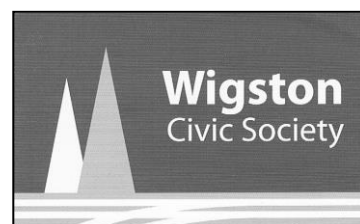


THE SOUTH WIGSTON WAR MEMORIAL  
(SEE ARTICLE IN THE NEWSLETTER)

[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 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>
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<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.**

**For further details also keep an eye on the website:**

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

## **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](mailto:news@wigstoncivicsociety.org.uk)**

# **THE AGM AND THE ANNUAL LECTURE**

The AGM was planned for Thursday 7 May but was postponed because of the Covid 19 lockdown. In the meantime, all officers, committee members and the Planning Working Group have continued to operate when needed. The Annual Lecture was planned for 1 October, both events were due to take place at Age UK.

Recently we have been thinking that we could hold the AGM prior to the Annual Lecture on the originally planned date of Thursday 1 October and hold it at Wigston College (formerly Guthlaxton) which would be more suitable for socially distanced seating than Age UK.

However, we are now advised that the College has not confirmed its plans for making the hall available for public hire and we cannot realistically wait any longer for a decision. We are also aware that Age UK Oadby and Wigston is not open and neither is the Council taking bookings for the Peace Memorial Park pavilion or the former Poplars Community Centre. The Elms (formerly British Legion) is also not taking bookings until after Christmas at the earliest.

Consequently, the Chairman and the Secretary have taken the decision to take no further action on arranging an AGM or the annual lecture until later this year or early next year unless the general situation improves dramatically, and restrictions are relaxed.

It is hoped that Officers, Committee members and the Planning Working Group will accept that there is no realistic alternative concerning the AGM and that they will be willing to continue in their existing roles until an AGM can be held. In addition, it is also hoped that all members will accept the situation. Please contact the Secretary if you wish to discuss your position further.

## LOCKDOWN WANDERINGS

I expect that many of us started off with great enthusiasm in March to take our allotted daily exercise by walking round the block near our homes. Some I know are still doing this, well done and may we be all the fitter for doing so. Some are finding things out about their locality which they never knew existed and some are noticing planning issues that need attention. For myself, several general things came to mind during my wanderings.

**Pavements:** these are in generally poor condition on the older estates. They slope dangerously where there is a dropped curb. They have been dug up on many occasions for local services and badly repaired; manhole, telephone and other covers protrude above the surface level and sometimes the surface has collapsed around them. They have previously been covered in tarred slag and this is breaking up. All these hazards make life difficult and dangerous for the elderly, young children on bikes and scooters and the disabled in wheelchairs as well as mums with buggies.

**Front gardens:** some are excellent and lift the spirits but there is a current trend for smart new block paving to cover the whole of the area and leave no small boarder for planting, however, some occupiers have placed planters to break up the surface. Some gardens are dreadfully neglected and overgrown, this may of course be because owners are elderly and cannot physically manage the garden maintenance, but really in these days with modern tools and many contract gardeners there is no excuse, the condition of rear gardens in these cases is unimaginable.

**Front doors:** there is a fashion for some very attractive new front doors, often being fitted after the front garden has been repaved. Did we know that there are so many shades of grey? (Or perhaps we did if we read the book).

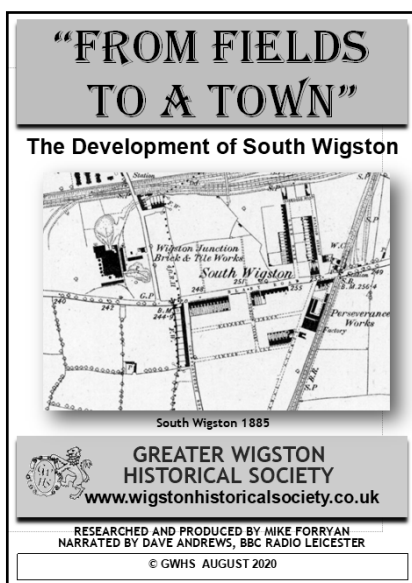
**Overhanging hedges:** this problem still exists although some have been cut back, probably after a complaint. In some instances, the hedge restricts vision on a corner.

**External side entrances:** The Society has had a mini campaign recently (probably not very effective) against the abolishment of external side entrances to rear gardens. This usually happens when a side extension is

built tight up to the side boundary. It occurs to me that owners of these properties would have had difficulty with inviting visitors into their rear gardens without passing through the house itself during lockdown restrictions.

Conversion of garages to habitable rooms: in my locality there has been a rash of conversions. This led to a query about the need for planning permission. Apparently, this is not usually required in such cases. The need for building regulation approval is far less clear and the ability for this approval to be checked by the public is not, apparently, available. Another issue is the extension of garages to create habitable space and the building of annexes which are not linked to the main dwelling, all apparently grey areas in planning terms.

**Colin Towell**



## **WIGSTON HISTORICAL DVD 4 “FROM FIELDS TO A TOWN” THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOUTH WIGSTON**

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## **THE BOROUGH OF OADBY AND WIGSTON**

Our Borough recently came to national attention when it was included in the first local lockdown announced by the Government at the end of June. I suspect many in the UK and perhaps locally had not heard of it or did not know it existed or where it was.

During the period of local lockdown along, with Leicester City and originally some other areas of the County, there was much comment in the local press from politicians and senior officers of the Councils. However, there was more or less total silence from those in positions of responsibility in the Borough, despite a brave effort by some Borough Councillors on the letters page of the Mercury.

Perhaps there was a view that now was not the time to draw attention to the Borough but it seems to me that an opportunity was missed to raise the Borough's profile in the eyes of the public, we might have expected to hear more from our local leaders about what the Borough has done to assist its residents in these times of difficulty and to point out the voluntary effort that local people are putting in to help in these unprecedented times.

It appears that the Borough's newsletter, Letterbox, has been suspended during the pandemic but were regular contributors advised, no. Was there an announcement on the Council's website, no. Was there an article in the press, no.

We see many reports in the press of happenings in other Districts and Boroughs in the County, but anything from Oadby and Wigston is sadly lacking.

It may appear that there needs to be an improvement in both the communications with residents and in terms of raising the Borough's profile.

**Colin Towell**

## **SOUTH WIGSTON WAR MEMORIAL**

It is believed that there was no publicity in July 2019 when South Wigston war memorial was given Grade II listing by Historic England, the entry number is 1464815. The memorial is situated on St Thomas Road in front of the church. It was originally built in 1923 and there were additions after the second world war. One of the reasons for its listing is given as 'a good example of a war memorial designed and later altered by the well-known Leicester firm of Pick, Everard and Keay, featuring good quality carved panels depicting cricketing and military equipment, and using high quality materials'.

The memorial was commissioned by a local war memorial committee and was unveiled by Major General Sir E M Woodward on Sunday 11 November 1923, it was dedicated by the Archdeacon of Leicester, the Venerable F B Macnutt. It records the names of 106 members of the parishes of South Wigston and Glen Parva who died in WWI and 51 men killed in WWII, the two ecclesiastical parishes are linked, there is no church in Glen Parva.

Tens of thousands of war memorials were constructed after WWI partly as a result of the devastating impact of the loss of 750,000 British lives and the fact that it was official policy not to repatriate the dead. Although the HQ of the Leicestershire Regiment was in South Wigston, the memorial records only those local men who lost their lives irrespective of which regiment or service they served in.

The newly listed war memorial adds to the only other listed buildings in South Wigston which are the nearby church of St Thomas The Apostle, (grade II\*) and the former St Thomas Vicarage, opposite (grade II).

## **THE PLANNING WORKING GROUP**

It was the intention for the Planning Working Group (PWG) to disband at the AGM and for all members to be asked to comment on relevant planning applications and send comments to the newly appointed co-ordinator for onward transmission to the planning officer. It should be noted that all executive committee members and those who attend regularly are invited to comment in any case. In practice it has usually been only members of the PWG who have done so.

Because it has not been possible to hold an AGM, the PWG has agreed to carry on in its current form for the time being with the assistance of the co-ordinator to carry out the admin work relating to asking for comments, co-ordinating responses and sending letters to the relevant planning officer.

This has worked well and the role of the Society in commenting on planning applications has continued during lockdown due to the pandemic despite that the fact it has not been possible to hold meetings. In fact, it appears that the number of planning applications, especially for domestic alterations, has hardly lessened during the last few months since March 2020.

One fairly common theme has been apparent in this period and that has been the number of applications for side extensions of one or two storeys built up to the boundary. These usually consist of a room at ground floor level instead of a garage which may or may not already exist. The PWG and Secretary took something of a stand against this practice because it denied external access to the rear of the property. This seems to be particularly important when an annex is proposed in the rear garden or when the garden backs onto open space such as Meres Walk where residents then gain access to their gardens by way of a gate inserted into the rear boundary. This, in itself, is not necessarily undesirable, but when the gate is



used for access by building contractors or for disposing of rubbish onto the Walk which is not then removed, it does become a problem.

Another issue with there being no side access or garage is that a resident has nowhere to store wheelie bins and so these are left in full view in the front garden detracting from the street scene.

Consequently, there have been a higher number of applications which required looking into and comments being made, thereby increasing the average from the estimated one per week. Sadly, this has caused more work for the co-ordinator who feels unable to carry on. After discussions, part of the procedure has been returned to the Secretary thereby relieving the Co-ordinator of some of the work and the Co-ordinator has agreed to carry on for the time being to see if the reduced workload is acceptable.

When the Society resumes its meetings, it will need to look again at its policy on which applications should be looked at in detail in addition to applications in a conservation area, developments of more than one dwelling and town centre changes.

### **“CHAMPION OF THE PEOPLE”**

#### **UPDATED EDITION 2 OF THE BIOGRAPHY OF ORSON WRIGHT, THE BUILDER OF SOUTH WIGSTON AND MUCH MORE.....**



Since the publication of the first edition in 2013 research has continued, and this second updated edition contains much more information on Orson and his businesses, his children, as well as previously unseen house and family photographs. **Now A5 size, 150 pages, dozens of local pictures and illustrations. Limited print run only 100 copies.**

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## **SHOPS UPDATE**

The pandemic lockdown has, perhaps, been the calm before the storm as far as the empty shops situation in Wigston Magna is concerned. Very few visits into Wigston town centre over the last few months have resulted in little observation as far as shops are concerned but at the same time the general closedown of all activity has meant that owners and agents have made little progress in both closing down or opening new shops.

As predicted in the last edition of Wigstons' Voice, Shoezone closed in May and the pop-up sales shop in Leicester Road for the Redrow development at Clarence Fields also closed in May with the sales centre transferring onto site. As far as can be noticed there are no other closures, but one does wonder if the results of the lockdown will have brought more businesses to their knees.

There have been no new openings, BUT slightly off the main shopping streets, in Aylestone Lane, the former Willow Hair Fashions has reopened as Bo Ho Hair, having undergone a much-needed face lift. There has clearly been a trend in use of shops from selling goods to selling services and if this trend continues it may bring about a survival for Wigston Magna town centre in the future.

There has been no change in long term empties which are: Fusion Hair; Nat West and Heards Butchers in Bell Street and Lords, Harrison Murray (despite signs of activity previously), C&R Kitchens and Barclays in Leicester Road. To these must now be added Thorntons which has been empty since February this year.

Unfortunately, it has not been possible to update the very complete list of shops prepared last year by a member for South Wigston, please let the Secretary know of any recent changes here.

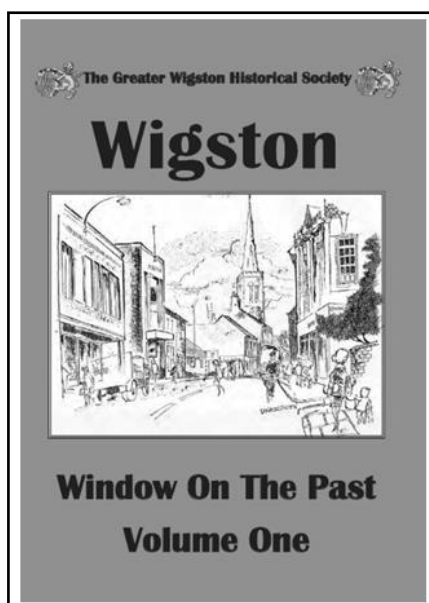
## **THE LEN PHILLIPS MEMORIAL GARDEN**

The Len Phillips Memorial Garden was one of the first projects undertaken by the Society in the early 1980s. It is situated on the corner of Station Road and Launceston Road opposite the Elms Sports and Social Club (formerly Wigston British Legion). A high-ranking officer of the now defunct Civic Trust performed the opening ceremony.

Len was the Manager at the former TSB (now Lloyds Bank) in Wigston and was a well-known supporter of community and voluntary organisations. He was a member of Wigston town Cricket Club and its archive bears his name.

The garden features several trees with a group of seats on a paved area. A stone bears a carved badge for a now unknown organisation but there is no plaque giving names or dates.

If any members have any further information, please contact the Secretary.



### **WIGSTON – WINDOW ON THE PAST**

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## PLANNING BRIEFS

**Newton Lane (*East Wigston Meadows*):** The site closed during the lockdown and a recent visit indicated that only houses in the course of construction when the site closed were being worked on, no new units had started.

The roundabout to feed the south west part of the site at Kilby Bridge has been completed (are there any comments about its positioning in relation to the A5199?).

The booklet, about East Wigston and the origins of road names, which will be given to all purchasers has been approved by the developer who will also fund it. It is currently at the designer for the final amendments prior to printing.

**Land west of Welford Road (*Clarence Fields*):** Here again there seems to be little activity following lockdown. It must be reasonably assumed that developers are waiting for purchasers to make a move and take advantage of the stamp duty holiday.

**Horse and Trumpet:** The application for external redecorations and lighting was granted and the work appears to have been carried out during the closure. There has been no sign of the footpath diversion and bollard markers being put into place although the Society's wording for the plaque concerning the history of the area has been submitted.

**20/00203 32 Bell Street:** In the last edition mention was made of the Society's strong objections to a pre-application for three flats next to Long Lane adjacent to Sainsburys. However, a formal application was then made in very similar design and strong objections were again submitted. This formal application was also refused.

**20/00064 Hat and Cap factory:** An amended application was submitted under the same reference number which reduced the total number of flats from 17 to 13 by omitting the proposed attic

conversion. This resulted in no alterations to the elevations. A decision is awaited.

**20/00181 216 Leicester Road:** This was the final of several similar applications for the same site, at least one of which had been granted under delegated powers. The officer's internal report was obtained which appeared to contain some inaccuracies and contradictions. The PWG spent a considerable amount of time on this application and strong objections were submitted. However, the final application was granted and approved. Demolition works commenced the same day. One of the comments submitted by the Society suggested that there should be a condition relating to working hours. Such a condition was not imposed and there were subsequent local complaints about noisy demolition work being done at unreasonable hours.

**20/00187 79 Mere Road:** This application was for an all-round extension with the side element being two storeys and up to the side boundary. The application site bounded Meres Walk at the rear. The Society objected on, amongst other matters, the basis that external side access would not be available. Consequently, contractors would in all likelihood gain access from the Meres footpath. The application was granted but with a condition that work must be carried out from the road frontage to the house and NOT from the rear boundary.

**20/00230 10 Carlton Drive:** This application was for a roof extension to form two additional bedrooms to a semi-detached house which had already been extended from three to four bedrooms with no external side access. Strong objections were submitted. This application was refused with the refusal notice strongly stating that it would constitute a significant over development and be unduly prominent in the street scene. The proposal included rear facing juliet balconies to the new roof bedrooms and the refusal was also on the basis that there would be potential for significant overlooking of neighbour's gardens.

This refusal was entirely correct and well explained and should give the Society encouragement in making objections in similar cases. It will help to back up objections with appropriate quotes from the Local Plan.

**20/00265 7 Blackwell Close:** this application is for the demolition of a large 4 bed detached house on the Harcourt Estate and the building of an even larger 5 bed house with elevations in complete contrast to the predominant design on the estate. Although the site is in a cul de sac the new house would dominate the area. A previous similar application had been refused. The Society has again strongly objected. No decision has yet been made.

**20/00300 Alpha House:** this is a prior notification of change of use from offices to 20 apartments, comments will be submitted.

**20/00078 Apple House, Bushloe End:** this application, for an external lift shaft was granted. The finished work to the east side elevation is hardly noticeable and shows what can be done with good design.

The foregoing are examples of just some of the work undertaken by the Society and the OWG over the last few months.

**GREATER WIGSTON HERITAGE CENTRE**

**Hopefully by the time you read this newsletter the Heritage Centre, which has been closed since March 2020 due to the Pandemic will have reopened.**

**We hope to resume normal openings from  
FRIDAY 4 SEPTEMBER 2020.**

**However, initially you will need to make an appointment to visit the Centre.**

**You can book a time slot online at:**

**[www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk/Heritage-Centre-Bookings.php](http://www.wigstonhistoricalsociety.co.uk/Heritage-Centre-Bookings.php)**

## ANOTHER NEW TRAFFIC ISLAND

The new traffic island on the A5199 mentioned in the last edition of Wigstons' Voice is now complete and is shown in the cover photograph approaching from the north. As we could see from the plans, and now the photograph, the island is well set to the left of the main road when approaching from Wigston which means that when travelling in the opposite direction it is more or less straight on after coming under the railway bridge.

As reported previously, the new road names are Walden's Way, Black Swan Road and Lime Delph Road. Walden is the name of an earlier landowner and the other two names reflect a former Kilby Bridge pub and the pool left by a lime pit to the rear of the new site adjacent to the railway embankment.

The hamlet of Kilby Bridge is located within the Borough of Oadby and Wigston but did not exist, of course, until the canal was dug, it opened in the 1790s. The hamlet became even more established when the railway opened in 1857, both forms of transport were used to carry lime excavated in the area to London and other parts of the country, in return coal was brought in for the Wigston area.



The A5199, previously numbered the A50 was the main toll road to London until what we now know as the A6 became better established. The original bridge was over the river Sence then known as the Stanbrig. It is established that the rich Leicester wool merchant, William Wigston/Wygggeston owned land in the Wigston area with which he endowed his new Wygggeston hospital. He also gave money for a new bridge over the river at what we now call Kilby Bridge. The canal bridge was improved and widened in 1937.

# INEXPENSIVE PROGRESS

By John Betjeman

This poem, 'Inexpensive Progress', was first published in 1955 and expresses Sir John's dislike for the way, at that time, the old was being swept away and replaced with ugly modern glass and concrete in buildings and roads. I first heard it earlier this year at a meeting of the Shires Branch of the John Betjeman Society. It was accompanied by appropriate film of the time. It has some bearing on the work of the Civic Society movement.

## Colin Towell

Encase your legs in nylons,  
Bestride your hills with pylons  
O age without a soul;  
Away with gentle willows  
And all the elmy billows  
That through your valleys roll.

Let's say goodbye to hedges  
And roads with grassy edges  
And winding country lanes;  
Let all things travel faster  
Where motor car is master  
Till only Speed remains.

Destroy the ancient inn-signs  
But strew the roads with tin signs  
'Keep Left,' 'M4,' 'Keep Out!'  
Command, instruction, warning,  
Repetitive adorning  
The rockered roundabout;

For every raw obscenity  
Must have its small 'amenity,'  
Its patch of shaven green,  
And hoardings look a wonder  
In banks of floribunda  
With floodlights in between.

Leave no old village standing  
Which could provide a landing  
For aeroplanes to roar,  
But spare such cheap defacements  
As huts with shattered casements  
Unlived-in since the war.

Let no provincial High Street  
Which might be your or my street  
Look as it used to do,  
But let the chain stores place here  
Their miles of black glass facia  
And traffic thunder through.

And if there is some scenery,  
Some unpretentious greenery,  
Surviving anywhere,  
It does not need protecting  
For soon we'll be erecting  
A Power Station there.

When all our roads are lighted  
By concrete monsters sited  
Like gallows overhead,  
Bathed in the yellow vomit  
Each monster belches from it,  
We'll know that we are dead.