

Wigstons' Voice

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE WIGSTON CIVIC SOCIETY
REPRESENTING WIGSTON MAGNA, SOUTH WIGSTON & KILBY BRIDGE
WINTER 2014/15



THE JUBILEE STONE & PLAQUE BEING LOWERED IN TO PLACE IN BELL STREET

www.wigstoncivicsociety.org.uk
Founded In 1978

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



EDITORIAL

Another autumn, another walk down our beautiful lanes through leaves of brown and gold and, in the rain, sometimes black. With the fascinating allotments behind the hedges on either side you can be walking where others have walked over the last 1500 years. This scene must be preserved and any change of use resisted.

Local people are often heard to admit that they have never realised that such and such a gem existed so close to where they live. Wigston's churches and chapels, the Framework Knitters Cottage and the Lanes are good examples of our heritage, let us hope we all realise what we have got on our doorstep.

Have you noticed how people chat on the local buses in a very friendly way, there is more about bus routes in the Borough in this edition, let us keep the pressure on to see if changes can be made.

We often complain, with justification, about graffiti. Just lately there has been a renewal of formal notices stencilled onto the footpath to remind people about cleaning up after their dog. Is this a form of graffiti perpetrated by our own council? Apparently some residents actually ask for these notices as the footpath near to their houses is frequently fouled. Surely there is a more permanent form of notice that could be used, after all we now have notices on most lamp standards about switching off lights at night, and they would be less intrusive. Anyway, can dogs read what is written on the ground telling their owners what to do?

The works on Bell Street are nearly finished as this piece is written. They certainly give a more open feel about the place but I hope that the street does not become a windswept litter strewn space at times. The Society's Jubilee Plaque will also be finally fixed in place on the stone in the new pocket park at the end of the Street, the culmination of a two year project to mark the link between what was the Market Place on this site and the fountain erected at the time of Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee in 1897 and the recently celebrated diamond Jubilee for our present Queen in 2012.

Mary Essinger and Colin Towell

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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

WEBSITE, FACEBOOK AND EMAIL

Our website www.wigstoncivicsociety.org and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/WigstonCivic) continue to be managed by our webmaster Peter Cousins, who was also appointed Vice Chair of the Society after the AGM. The site contains up to date minutes and adverts for events as well as links to other local organisations, so please keep up to date with what is going on by visiting regularly.

Very few members have provided us with their email addresses. It would be really helpful if we could have these as it would assist with communication on urgent matters which it is felt would benefit from input by you, the members. Your address will be kept confidential and only used for Society matters.

Please send it to the secretary at secretary@wigstoncivicsociety.org.uk

CONNECTING THE BOROUGH

It is now 40 years since the urban districts of Oadby and Wigston merged to form the Borough of Oadby & Wigston. Until recently they have kept, to a large extent, their separate identities. Only now, due no doubt to economic pressures, facilities are either in one or the other. Brocks Hill and Parklands are proving to be ever more popular but people in South Wigston who rely on public transport are at a disadvantage.

With this in mind the Civic Societies in Wigston and Oadby have been seeking ways as to how a bus service could operate the length of the Borough. After much correspondence a meeting was held recently with the Arriva's management.

It is very doubtful if a stand alone bus service between Oadby and Wigston would have enough passengers to justify the service. To combine it with an existing service may need much timetable alteration.

At least we have floated the idea and we hope the bus companies will keep it upper most in their minds.

Perhaps a solution will be found, at least before the Borough celebrates its Golden Jubilee.

Colin Hames

A stylized logo for 'Merry Christmas'. The word 'MERRY' is written in a bold, serif font with a decorative outline. Below it, the word 'CHRISTMAS' is written in a similar font, with the 'C' being significantly larger and more ornate, featuring a large loop that extends upwards and to the left, partially overlapping the 'MERRY' text.

PLANNING MATTERS

LAND OFF POCHIN'S BRIDGE ROAD: The issue of room sizes had been raised at the residents' meetings but were not a planning matter once permission had been given, being a marketing and supply and demand issue. The developer would not be constructing the pavilion as per the original plans and the location of the playing field within the site had changed. There was a need to clarify the position of the footpath to Magna Wood which could be made more accessible. Construction traffic along Lansdowne Grove had been an issue but was now approaching via Canal Street after the developers were pressurised to get this matter under control.

NEWTON LANE: Although this site has outline approval an application has not yet been made for reserved matters. In the meantime the Society has pointed out to the County Council, which has responsibility for roads, that the Newton Lane/Bullhead Street / Moat Street/ Welford Road junction continues to cause queuing problems and danger for right turning traffic from Newton Lane and Moat Street. A straight forward four way traffic light phase is suggested but the Council has not yet given a satisfactory response to this idea.

FORMER HEATING ELEMENTS SITE, MOAT STREET: This is a new development of houses and a branch of Sainsbury's. Work has proceeded slowly but the shell of the store is nearly complete as this edition goes to press.

TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT AND SHOPS REVIEW

There continued to be a positive relationship with the Town Centre Manager and the Wigston and South Wigston Traders associations, the latter having given a short introductory talk at the AGM earlier this year.

A schedule of shops in central Wigston Magna, prepared by the secretary, is a useful tool to monitor closures and openings. It shows that our vacancy rate is below the national average. However, Members were concerned about the shops that did not exist in Wigston such as for haberdashery and photocopying. It was reported that Stead and Simpson in the Co-op was closing as it was already represented by Shoe Zone in the town.

Improved parking and more road disruption was reported in South Wigston and it was expected that the Spion Kop Railway Bridge will be closed in the New Year for it to be raised to allow higher trains to pass underneath and that traffic lights will be replacing the mini roundabout outside the College on Blaby Road.

THE DEMISE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES?

A guiding principal of local authorities has been progress towards a fairer and more just society, and the provision of the infra-structure to support this more equitable society with good quality services as of right. As citizens we had some say, via the ballot box, in how well the council carried out its duties, and councillors were answerable to their constituents in various ways. But **local authorities are losing their funds and losing their powers** across all areas, from housing to planning to education. Worst of all, cutbacks force the loss of their most precious resource, their loyal, professional and skilled staff, with all their experience and local knowledge.

We are offered three options to replace the infra-structure we have previously enjoyed. One is to privatise services, so that money-making and profiteering are the main motivating factors. Alternatively, services are passed to a patchwork of charities, trusts, community partnerships and so on. The third option is that services cease. The local infra-structure is being demolished and, as a result, citizens receive less and less as of right: instead they must resort to a post-code lottery of private businesses, charities and other organisations, each with their own selection criteria and boundaries, as to whom they can help, and when and how.

It grieves me to see this wanton destruction of services, rights and responsibilities which once underpinned a civilised society. We need to face reality, and speak up and campaign for our rights before it is too late.

Maureen Waugh. Chair, Wigston Civic Society.

BLABY ROAD PARK RAILWAY WHEELS

The long awaited 'railway wheels' have recently been installed along the boundary of the park with Blaby Road itself. Subsequently, three display boards were also put in place although they are hard to see from the road. There continues to be adverse comments about the wheels which are solid modern wheels and not of the spoked type which many purists and enthusiasts would have liked to see. Society member Pamela Ward was thanked for her work in getting the wheels and displays erected.

2nd ANNUAL LECTURE EVENING

For our second annual lecture at Age UK on 30 September, we welcomed Dr John Florance to talk about John Betjeman and his involvement in architecture and the conservation movement, it was very successful. The room was nearly full with about 55 people attending, a number of whom were visitors. The lecture contained much fascinating information about a man so many had heard of, mainly as a poet, but not so many of whom knew of his many other interests. The lecture concluded with the showing of two short films made by Betjeman. (See photo on back page)

The treasurer later reported that after expenses the profit on the night was £51 and it was suggested that in future the event be called a 'Public Lecture'.

MINUTES SECRETARY

The Society is still rather desperate for a minute secretary. Do you have a relation or friend that could help out, qualifications are not needed, just the ability to scribble down the main business of the evening and type it up later. Our meetings are always interesting with amazing people.

Please contact Colin Towell on 0116 2889638 with any offers.

TWO STEEPLES MEDICAL CENTRE

The centre is now open including the pedestrian access from Holmden Avenue. The vehicular exit from Abington Close onto Station Road is dangerous for right turning traffic and so extreme care is needed. The new centre is spacious but a little bleak. Rows of patients on green chairs not daring to take their eyes off the TV screen in case their name comes up. Everybody's name came up, ground floor and first floor on the same screen. No flowers, no magazines, no coffee machine and difficult to find one's way about. I had to ask where the stairs were and fire escape routes are not clear. The Co- op chemist in Bell Street is now closed as the business has moved to this new medical centre.

BELL STREET

Bell Street is beginning to look attractive, although at the time of writing the trees and modern stainless steel street furniture are still to be installed. Grey block paving is a great deterrent against litter because it shows up. The Society's Jubilee plaque on its stone in the pocket park at the end of Bell Street remains under its covers until it is complete with its plinth with prominent dates in Wigston's history carved into it. An opening ceremony for the revamped Street is planned.

BUS SHELTERS AND SEATING

More seating is desperately required at the bus stop in the Nook. The existing seat is a few yards from the bus stop. Older people have to stand with nowhere to sit or put down their shopping. The condition of some bus shelters in the Borough is poor as they have not been maintained. This compares with the excellent very modern shelters in the City and these have comfortable seats built into them as well. Some bus stops also lack timetables, is this the responsibility of the bus operator or the Borough Council?

WORLD WAR 1 COMMEMORATION

In the last newsletter readers were invited to name their lost relatives in this war.

Maureen Waugh writes;

My grandfather, Sergeant Cecil Robert NEWMAN, 2nd Bn, The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regt), killed in action on Wednesday 21st October 1914, at the first Battle of Ypres, age 26. No known grave, commemorated on the Menin Gate, Ypres, Belgium.

My great-uncle, Sergeant Ernest Ewen NEWMAN, 2ND Bn, The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regt), killed in action on Saturday 25th September 1915, at the Battle of Loos, aged 22. No known grave, commemorated on the Loos Memorial Pas de, Calais France.

My great-uncle, Sergeant Arthur James NORMAN, 1st Bn, The Queen's (Royal West Surrey Regt), killed in action on Friday 12th April 1918, at the Battle of Lys, age 29. No known grave, commemorated on the Ploegsteert Memorial, Hainaut, Belgium.

Please let us have details of your family members to add to this record of relatives of Wigston residents killed in the conflict even if they did not live in Wigston at the time they signed up.

STREET ART

The council had confirmed that it would not be creating the base for the artwork project as previously indicated but space would be left for it in the location agreed on the corner of Bell Street with Long Street. After the meeting the artist confirmed that he would create a model and 3D drawing. He felt that there was no danger in the points on the artwork being broken off. Discussions on how to fund the piece are ongoing.

FARMERS MARKETS

Members asked if the Farmers Market would continue as there were very few stalls.

The Traders Association, which organises the market, had stated that the stall holders liked coming to Wigston, we shall have to wait and see if the Markets will continue in the redesigned Bell Street which could accommodate them so much better than previously.

2nd Annual Lecture Evening

30th September 2014

John Betjeman And The Conservation Movement

By Dr. John Florance

