

SOUTH WIGSTON STREETS



PAST & PRESENT

Cover Photo: Blaby Road, South Wigston, Photo Tony Danvers December 2011.

SOUTH WIGSTON STREETS PAST AND PRESENT

Based on an exhibition of photographs by
Tony Danvers, Sophie Danvers & Kieran Smillie.
at the Basset Street Library, South Wigston.



Printed by Central Print Services, Pen Lloyd Building, County Hall, Glenfield, Leicester. LE3

Introduction

This book is a natural progression from my two previous publications on “Businesses Past and Present” in South Wigston and Wigston Magna. It was whilst collecting old photos of South Wigston to go with the photographs of the shops and their owners, that I realised that there were a lot of old photographs showing the streets of South Wigston.

Once again I thought it would be interesting to compare these old pictures with modern photographs and 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 possible to take the photographs from the same spot that they were originally taken and this time I have been ably assisted by my two grandchildren Sophie Danvers and Kieran Smillie. Inevitably there were many more photographs taken in the past of Saffron Road and Blaby Road than there were of the side streets in South Wigston but I hope there are enough to be of interest to local people and future historians.

As before, in my previous projects, I am indebted to Duncan Lucas who has again given his generous permission for me to use as many of his and the late Peter Mastin’s old photos of South Wigston as I needed to make an interesting exhibition at the South Wigston Library and also to produce this book. South Wigston is unique in that the main bulk of it was built within seven years by Orson Wright between 1883 and 1890 and is therefore truly Victorian in its style and design. Although the present shop fronts have replaced much of the old architecture one only has to look above these modern facades to see the original features of the Victorian brick and stonework.

I hope that the exhibition and this accompanying book will stimulate local people to take a closer look at their inheritance and take a new found pride in their environment and make sure that what remains of Orson Wright’s legacy is preserved before being lost to future generations.

Copyright Tony Danvers 2013

A Brief History of Orson Wright the builder of South Wigston

South Wigston originated through the enterprise of Orson Wright JP, who realised the potential commercial possibilities of the area served by three railway stations and two main lines. He also encouraged manufacturers to establish their works amidst pleasant country surroundings yet within easy distance of Leicester.

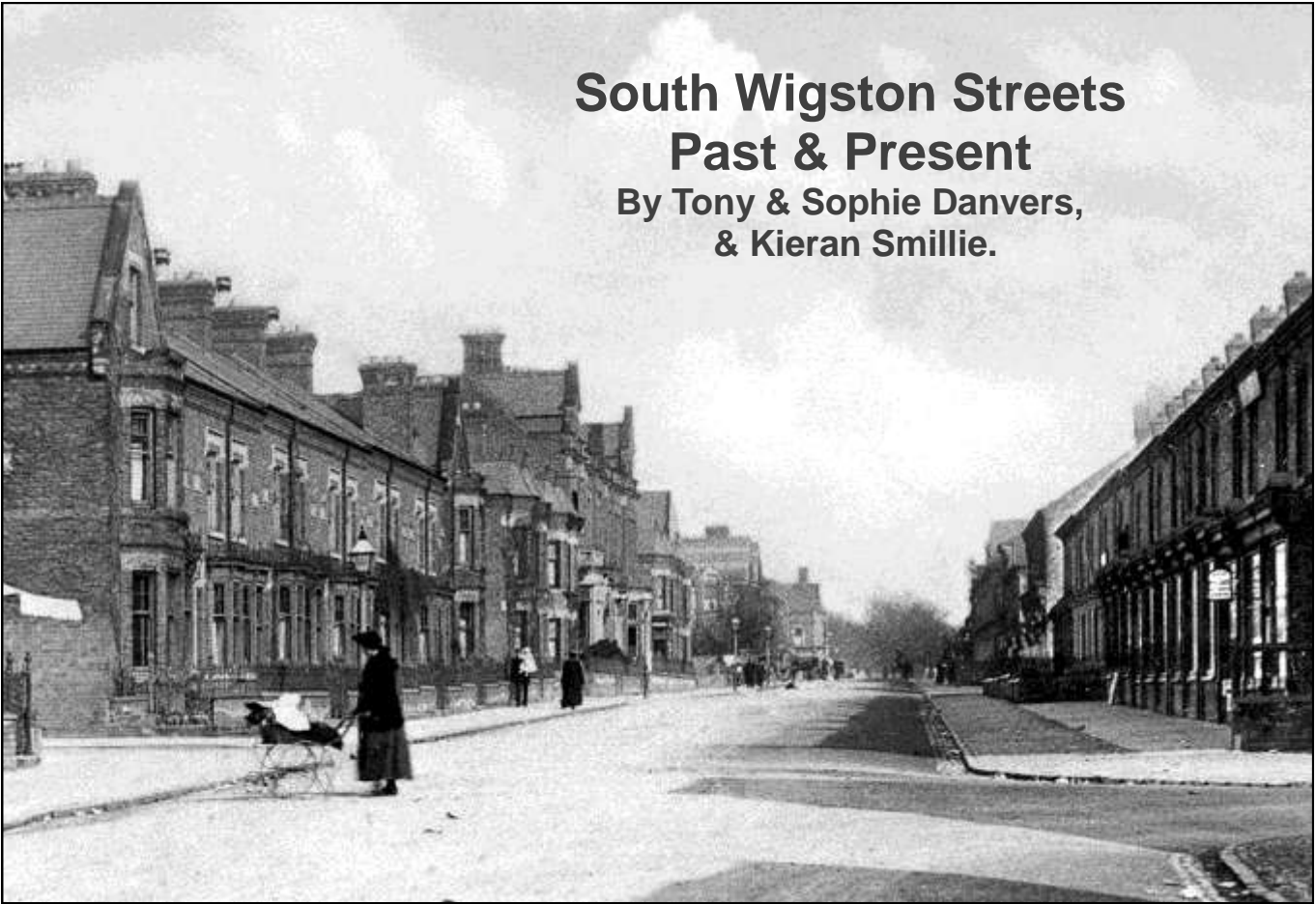
Orson Wright was born in Dunton Bassett on the 23rd of July 1853 to Joseph Wright and his wife Maria, nee Greenwell. When he was eight years old he scared crows and led plough horses before entering into an apprenticeship with a Leicester carpenter and joiner. In 1874 he married Ada Harris the daughter of Thomas Harris, who was a wheelwright. The couple later went on to have six children.

He purchased the South Wigston estate in 1883 and within the space of seven years 600 houses and many factories had been completed, together with the Grand and The Duke of Clarence Hotels. He named two of the streets Dunton and Bassett after his home village and other streets he named Orange, Water (which was later renamed Park), Railway, Irlam, Garden, Healey and Timber, to spell out his name. He soon established his own premises, the Perseverance Works, and his home, Venetia House, in Canal Street (the house is now part of the Grand Hotel), before finally moving to Ashbourne House in Blaby Road (sadly demolished in 1962).

He died on the 10th of April 1913 and many glowing tributes were paid to him. All the businesses in Wigston closed and hundreds of people attended his funeral at St. Thomas's Church or lined the route to the Wigston Cemetery. His children presented two stained glass windows to the church in memory of their parents.

South Wigston Streets Past & Present

By Tony & Sophie Danvers,
& Kieran Smillie.



A very peaceful Blaby Road in South Wigston, circa 1903.



Blaby Road, South Wigston. Compare the number of shops with those on the opposite page.
Photo Tony Danvers December 2011..



Albion Street, South Wigston, circa 1910. At the end of the street on the right hand side is the house known as the Limes, which presently serves as the Conservative Club.



Albion Street, South Wigston. The houses on Blaby Road in the distance are now either shops or offices.
Photo Tony Danvers May 2013.



Countesthorpe Road, South Wigston. On the far left is the row of houses which were known as Apostles Row. They were demolished in 1975 to make way for the present car park.



Countesthorpe Road showing the Car Park that replaced the row of Cottages opposite.
Photo Kieran Smillie May 2013.



Blaby Road, South Wigston, on the near right hand side is the Congregational Church, see also page 74.
The photograph was taken in the early 1950's.



A leafy Blaby Road, South Wigston, Photo Tony Danvers July 2013



Blaby Road, South Wigston, circa 1930. On the immediate left is the entrance to Huddleston's garage which closed in the 1960's.



Blaby Road, South Wigston, at the corner of Canal Street and Station Street.
Photo Sophie Danvers. July 2013.



Blaby Road, South Wigston, at the corner of Fairfield Street, circa 1955.
Note the walls on the right in front of the Duke of Clarence Hotel, as it was then known,



Blaby Road, South Wigston, at the corner of Fairfield Street. Photo Sophie Danvers, July 2013.



A procession led by the Boy Scouts in Clifford Street, South Wigston.
Celebrating King George the Vth's Coronation Day in 1911.



Clifford Street, South Wigston, showing only a few changes from the picture opposite.
Photo Sophie Danvers, July 2013.





Blaby Road at the corner of Fairfield Street, South Wigston, the telephone box is no longer on the corner.
Photo Kieran Smillie, May 2013.



Blaby Road, South Wigston, circa 1960, with Diggles Grocery Store & Timothy Whites Chemist Shop. Note the bus stop behind the Minivan.



The South Wigston Cycle Centre, The Bar & the Co-operative Pharmacy on Blaby Road, South Wigston.
Photo Tony Danvers May 2013.



A snow covered Blaby Road, South Wigston, circa 1911.
On the right is the South Wigston Co-operative Store.



The Co-operative Store, Blaby Road, South Wigston, a very different scene to the one opposite.
Photo Tony Danvers May 2013.



Blaby Road, South Wigston, with St. Thomas's Church in the background and the Chemist shop on the near right of the picture, circa 1940.



The corner of Blaby Road and Clifford Street, South Wigston, with St. Thomas in the background.
Photo Kieran Smillie May 2013.



Countesthorpe Road, South Wigston, looking towards Orange Tree House built by Orson Wright for his sister.



Countesthorpe Road, South Wigston, at the junction of Orange Street.
Photo Tony Danvers May 2013.



A quiet sunny day in Leopold Street, South Wigston, circa 1910



Leopold Street, South Wigston, apart from the number of cars little seems to have changed since 1910.
Photo Tony Danvers May 2013.



The corner of Railway Street and Countesthorpe Road, South Wigston, circa 1908, with Water Street, now Park Street, in the far distance. The houses in Park Street have since been pulled down.



The corner of Countesthorpe Road and Railway Street, South Wigston, showing little change from the photo opposite, apart from the factory units in Park Street. Photo Kieran Smillie May 2013.



The corner of Canal Street and Railway Street, South Wigston in 1912,
with Park Street in the far distance.



The corner of Canal Street and Railway Street, South Wigston, the distinctive diamond brickwork pattern is still visible on the houses today. Photo Kieran Smillie May 2013.



Saffron Road, South Wigston, with St. Thomas's Church on the near right and in the distance the twin towers of Toon and Black's Shoe Factory. Circa 1906.



A quiet Sunday morning on Saffron Road, South Wigston near St. Thomas's Church,
Photo Tony Danvers May 2013.



Saffron Road, South Wigston, in the distance the towers of Toon and Black's Boot & Shoe Factory, now Jasmine Court. Circa 1930.



Saffron Road, South Wigston, Jasmine Court is in the far distance.
Photo Tony Danvers May 2013.



A very quiet Saffron Road in South Wigston around 1906. Before the advent of the motor car the only transport in view is by horse power.



Saffron Road, South Wigston. Photo Tony Danvers May 2013.



Another view of Saffron Road, South Wigston, reflecting more elegant times in 1910.



Saffron Road, May 2013. Although the old street lamp and the telephone pole have gone, not much else has changed. Photo Tony Danvers May 2013.



A photograph taken in 1900 at the corner of Marstown Avenue and Saffron Road in South Wigston,



Saffron Road, South Wigston at the corner of Marstown Avenue. The most obvious changes compared to the previous picture are the missing railings in the near right of the picture and the smaller telegraph pole.
Photo Tony Danvers May 2013.



Ashbourne House, 50 Blaby Road, South Wigston, the home of Orson Wright, circa 1912. The iron railings on the immediate left belonged to the Wesleyan Methodist Chapel before being removed for scrap metal during the Second World War.



Blaby Road, South Wigston, showing the row of shops that replaced Ashbourne House.
Photo Sophie Danvers. July 2013.



Blaby Road, South Wigston, near the corner of Glengate with the front of Ashbourne House on the near left, circa 1925. See also photo of Ashbourne House on page 44



A very different Blaby Road at the corner of Glengate, with South Leicestershire College in the background.
Photo Tony Danvers May 2013.



Blaby Road, South Wigston, circa 1970, showing the row of shops which were built on the site of Ashbourne House.



Blaby Road, South Wigston, a later photo of the same row of shops but many having different names above the shop windows. Photo Kieran Smillie May 2013.



Toon & Black's Shoe Factory on Saffron Road, in the background is the old corner shop on Kirkdale Road.



Jasmine Court built on the site of the old Toon & Black's Boot & Shoe factory.
Photo Tony Danvers May 2013.



Blaby Road in South Wigston c.1910, with Holmes Chemist shop on the left and H. Smith's cycle shop on the right corner.
Note the lack of any shops on the stretch of road on the left past Clifford Street.



Blaby Road in South Wigston with 'R Go Bed' at the corner of Clifford Street and Castledine's Motor Cycle shop on the corner of Countesthorpe Road. Photo Tony Danvers May 2013.



Blaby Road in South Wigston, circa 1940, note the complete lack of traffic lights at that time.



The corner of Blaby Road & Saffron Road, South Wigston with its many traffic lights.
Photo Tony Danvers May 2013.



The South Wigston Post Office, proprietor W. A. Deeming, at the corner of Fairfield Street and Blaby Road circa 1930.



The corner of Blaby Road & Fairfield Street, South Wigston, showing the Marquis of Queensbury and Moments Card Shop, Photo Tony Danvers May 2013.



Huddleston's Garage & Bicycle Centre on Blaby Road, South Wigston, circa 1933. The garage ceased trading in the 1960's and is now the site of South Leicestershire College. See also page 70.



South Leicestershire College on the corner of Canal Street and Blaby Road, South Wigston.
Photo Tony Danvers May 2013.



Bassett Street, South Wigston in the 1920's, showing the schools and several of the pupils. These schools have since been demolished. The houses on the far right are still there but the houses in the far distance, known as Apostles Row, on Countesthorpe Road have also been demolished



Bassett Street, South Wigston, showing the new houses built on the site of the old schools.
Photo Sophie Danvers July 2013.



Mary Holmes grocery shop on the corner of Countesthorpe Road and Bassett Street circa 1910. Her son Eric Holmes took over the business and turned it into his first cycle shop moving later to the corner of Blaby Road and Countesthorpe Road. It is now trading under the name of Buy-Cycles.



Buy-Cycles on the corner of Countesthorpe Road and Bassett Street, Photo Sophie Danvers July 2013.



Orange Tree House, in business as an Off Licence, Countesthorpe Road, South Wigston.



Orange Tree House, now in business as a Hair Salon, Countesthorpe Road, South Wigston.
Photo Tony Danvers July 2013



A Military Parade on Blaby Road, South Wigston, circa 1909. The ivy clad building on the near left is now the Hinckley & Rugby Building Society.



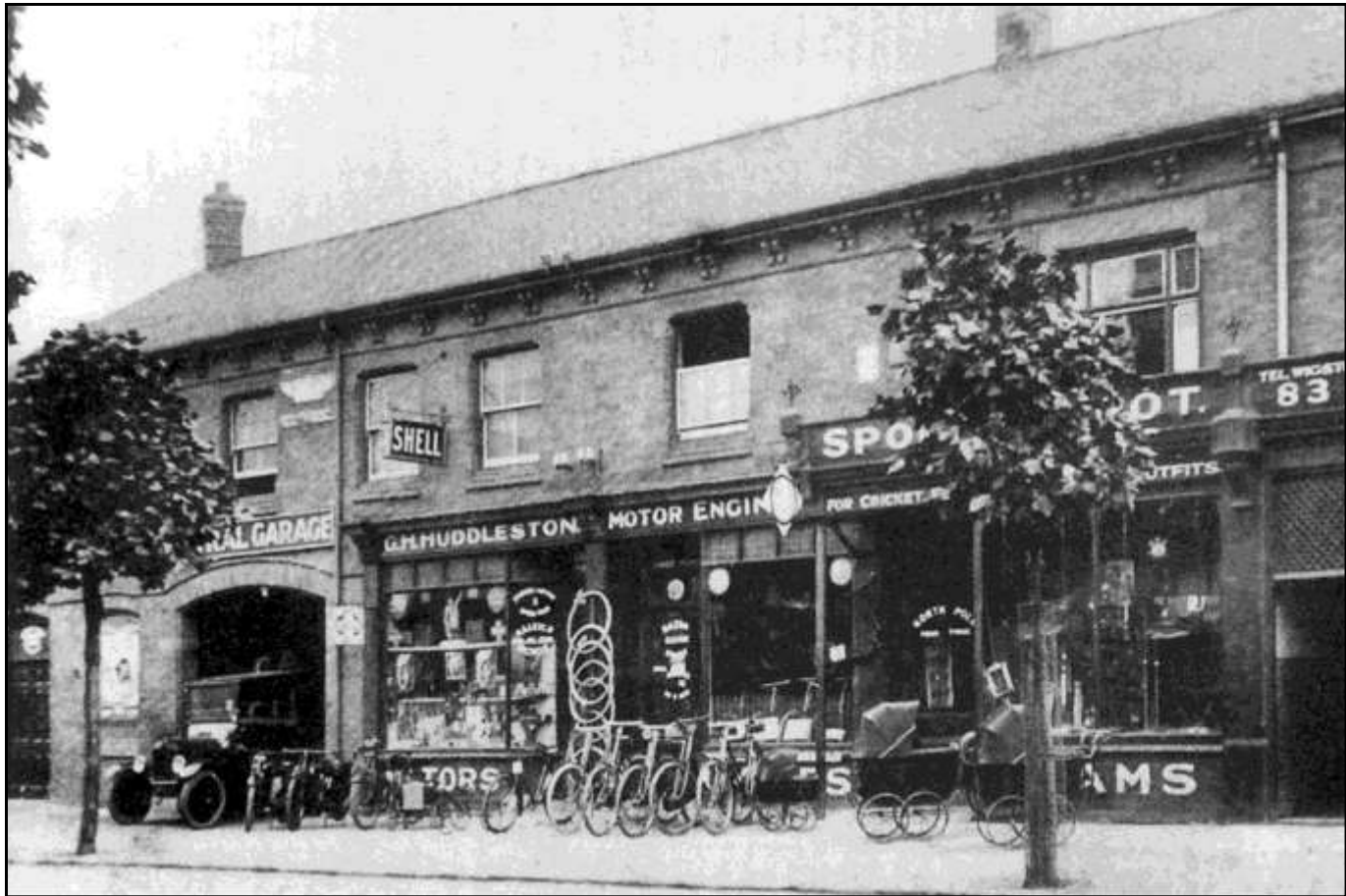
Blaby Road, South Wigston, near the corner of Leopold Street. Photo Tony Danvers July 2013.



A queue outside The Picture House on Blaby Road on the 21st April 1930.
A new façade was added in 1938 and the cinema was renamed the Ritz.



The old Ritz Cinema on Blaby Road, South Wigston, now transformed, refurbished and renamed the 'Retro Suite' a smart venue for shows and weddings. Photo Tony Danvers July 2013.



Another view of Huddleston's Garage & Shop on Blaby Road, South Wigston, circa 1927.
They also owned the Midland Café across the road, now the Helping Hands Centre.



Another view of South Leicestershire College built on the site once occupied by Huddleston's Garage.
Photo Tony Danvers July 2013.

Index to South Wigston Streets Past & Present

Blaby Road, 1903	page 4	Leopold Street, 1928	page 28
Blaby Road, 2011	page 5	Leopold Street, May 2013	page 29
Albion Street, 1910	page 6	Railway Street, 1908	page 30
Albion Street, May 2013	page 7	Railway Street, May 2013	page 31
Countesthorpe Road	page 8	Canal Street, 1912	page 32
The Car Park on Countesthorpe Road	page 9	Canal Street, May 2013	page 33
Blaby Road, 1950	page 10	Saffron Road, 1906	page 34
Blaby Road, 2013	page 11	St. Thomas's Church, May 2013	page 35
Blaby Road, 1930	page 12	Saffron Road	page 36
Blaby Road, 2013	page 13	Saffron Road, May 2013	page 37
Blaby Road, 1955	page 14	Saffron Road, 1906	page 38
Blaby Road, 2013	page 15	Saffron Road, May 2013	page 39
Clifford Street, 1911	page 16	Saffron Road, 1910	page 40
Clifford Street, July 2013	page 17	Saffron Road, May 2013	page 41
Blaby Road, 1950	page 18	Marstown Avenue, 1900	page 42
Blaby Road, May 2013	page 19	Marstown Avenue, May 2013	page 43
Blaby Road, 1960	page 20	Ashbourne House, 1912	page 44
Blaby Road, 2013	page 21	Row of shops on Blaby Road, 2013	page 45
Blaby Road 1911	page 22	Corner of Glengate, 1925	page 46
The Co-op, May 2013	page 23	Corner of Glengate, May 2013	page 47
St Thomas Church, Blaby Road	page 24	Row of shops on Blaby Road, 1970	page 48
R Go Bed, Blaby Road, May 2013	page 25	Shops on Blaby Road, May 2013	page 49
Orange Tree House, Countesthorpe Rd.	page 26	Toon & Blacks Factory	page 50
Countesthorpe Road, May 2013	page 27	Jasmine Court, May 2013	page 51

Index to South Wigston Streets Past & Present

Blaby Road, 1910	page 52
Blaby Road, May 2013	page 53
Blaby Road, 1940	page 54
Blaby Road / Saffron Road, May 2013	page 55
Deemings Post Office, 1930	page 56
Fairfield Street, May 2013	page 57
Huddleston's Garage	page 58
South Leicestershire College, May 2013	page 59
Bassett Street Schools, 1920	page 60
Bassett Street, 2013	page 61
Bassett Street / Countesthorpe Road, 1910	page 62
Bassett Street Corner, July 2013	page 63
Countesthorpe Road	page 64
Countesthorpe Road, July 2013	page 65
Blaby Road Parade 1910	page 66
Blaby Road, July 2013	page 67
The Picture House 1930	page 68
The Old Ritz Cinema 2013	page 69
Huddleston's Garage	page 70
South Leicestershire College	page 71
The Wigston Co-op on Blaby Road	page 73
The Congregational Church	page 74





Another view of the Congregational Church on Blaby Road, South Wigston, circa 1912. Note the railings on the front of the Church. The house on the immediate right is the “Limes”, home of the Gamble family who owned the Footwear Factory in Canal Street. It now serves as the South Wigston Conservative Club,

Rear Cover: Blaby Road, South Wigston, circa 1903

SOUTH WIGSTON STREETS



PAST & PRESENT