

**THE MINER'S WELFARE INSTITUTE –
PEGGS GREEN
(NOW KNOWN AS THE BEAUMONT CENTRE)
FIRST OPENED 10TH SEPTEMBER 1927**



The Original Sandstone Plaque



**BY SAMUEL T STEWART – OCTOBER 2021
DRAFT LIVE DOCUMENT**

INTRODUCTION

Nottingham Journal – Sept 12th 1927

Built from funds voted by the “Leicestershire Miners Welfare Committee”, a miner’s new institute was opened at Pegg’s Green, near Coalville on Saturday the 10th of September by Mr. W. Windley, M.B.E., J.P., of Coalville.

In a speech at a subsequent meeting, Mr. Windley said he hoped the institute would be a centre of learning as well as of Games and a help in promoting a good feeling among the villagers.

Mr. G. J. Brooks, J.P., said that the welfare committee had allocated £1,100 to the parish of Thringstone, of which Pegg’s Green formed a part, and a recreation ground had been provided for the Thringstone portion. The Leicester committee had under consideration a scheme for the benefit of aged miners.

The importance of the “Miner’s Welfare Institute” to this working class area at that time cannot be over emphasized. People came from the immediate and wider locality to be entertained here, and memorable evenings were regularly experienced which can still be recalled by those old enough to remember, including the author. The following is an attempt to record and describe some of the activities and entertainment that took place there.

The building was later re-named the Beaumont Centre. and is also described as Coleorton Parish Hall also.

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PEGGS GREEN "DARBY & JOAN CLUB"



From an old postcard



Darby & Joan Club "Women's (Royal) Voluntary Service" emblem

The name Darby & Joan originally came from a poem generally attributed to Henry Woodfall which describes the lives of a happily married devoted couple, leading a quiet uneventful life.

In 1735, Henry Woodfall, a printer's apprentice, wrote a ballad entitled "The Happy Old Couple" about a happily married elderly couple which was printed in the "Gentleman's Magazine, v.153 (March,1735)

His inspiration for those characters was apparently his own boss John Darby and his wife Joan. The third stanza reads :-

*"Old Darby, with Joan by his side,
You've often regarded with wonder:
He's drowsical, she is sore-eyed,
Yet they're never happy asunder ..."*

Henry Woodfall served his apprenticeship under John Darby and admired him very much. He wrote of his wife Joan: *"As chaste as a picture cut in alabaster. You might sooner move a Scythian rock than shoot fire into her bosom."*

As can be imagined, he wrote his poem after John Darby's death. This poem in turn became an inspiration for follow-up poems and eventually Darby and Joan became a metaphor. As a result of Henry Woodfall's ballad, there are now Darby and Joan Clubs all across the UK. Apparently, the only prerequisite for couples to become members was that they must have been in the same marriage for at least 40 years but the author is rather sceptical about that.

THE WVS

The eagle eyed will have noted the letters **WVS** on the Darby & Joan badge on the preceding page. This stands for "Women's (Royal) Voluntary Service".

The following is taken from www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk website© WRVS 2008:-

W.V.S. members gave every care in their power to the welfare of old people during the war years and many of them made it a regular duty to look after those who were alone during air attack, either taking them to the shelter or staying with them in their own homes. In addition to this form of neighbourly aid, warm blankets and comforting hot water bottles were provided ... for many who were ailing or infirm, shopping was undertaken ... and any who were confused or worried by the intricacies of pension books, form filling and rationing were assured of ready and kindly help and advice at the nearest W.V.S. Centre.

Released by the end of the war from the constant over-riding importance of its Civil Defence duties W.V.S. gladly turned its attention to the means of increasing its work for the welfare of old people, a cause which it had much at heart.

In 1946 WVS enacted two major initiatives to improve welfare for old people. The first was the creation of residential clubs, which aimed to house the growing number of old people who had nowhere else to go after the end of the war, which were funded by the Lord Mayor of London's Air-Raid Distress Fund.

The second were **Darby & Joan clubs** where people could meet in pleasant surroundings for a friendly chat and a cup of tea and perhaps a quiet game of cards or half an hour with the wireless. In some cases, too, a hot midday meal cooked by W.V.S. members was available. The first of these clubs to open, for which we have a firm date recorded in the WRVS Archive and Heritage Collection, was at Lincoln which opened on 26 July 1946.

Pegg's Green Darby and Joan club was formed during the first week in April 1953 when Mrs. L. Morley was elected president with Mrs. Ambrose Barkby secretary and Mrs. B. A. Hutchinson, treasurer. Members mainly came from Griffydam and Peggs Green and judging from the following photographs it was well supported from the beginning.

The first outing of the club was in July when members were taken for a bus tour through Leicester and the Soar Valley. The photograph below was thought to have been taken at the first anniversary of the club in 1954 when Mrs. Annie Harvey (3rd from the left on the front row), who was born in 1870, presented a cake she had made for the occasion with money raised from selling home made toffee. Her grandson, Peter Harvey, a former resident of Pegg's Green who features later on page 10 recalled his Grandma being a good cook and making toffee and cakes. He especially remembers still, the trays of short cake she made, all baked on a huge range, and that she used to push a pram to Cloud Hill Wood to collect sticks.



FRONT ROW L TO R

Christine Allcoat's Grandma, Mrs. Hill, Mrs. Wilton, Mrs. Brooks, Mrs. Reed, Mrs. Harvey, Mrs. Flo Morley, Mr. Wilton

MIDDLE ROW L TO R

Mrs. O' Reilly, Mrs. Dimmock, Mrs. Richardson, Mrs. Morley, Sarah Barkby, Mrs. Barkby, Mrs. Fern, Mrs. Fairbrother, Mrs. Watkins, Mrs. Morley, Mrs. Howkins, Mr. Barker ?, Mr. Morley.

TOP ROW L TO R

Mrs. Williamson, Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Hutchinson, Mrs. Rowell, Mrs. Morley, Mrs. Morley, Mrs. Bradley, Mr. Harrison, Mrs. Harrison (the first five ladies were thought to be the helpers)

GOLDEN WEDDING CELEBRATIONS FOR GRIFFYDAM COUPLE

Mr & Mrs Harrison are both on the top row in the preceding photograph

Transcribed from the Leicester Evening Mail - Friday 03 December 1954

The village postman took anniversary cards to the house of Mr. and Mrs. E. Harrison, Edward Cottages, Griffydam, near Coleorton, today. The couple are celebrating their golden wedding. Married at Thringstone Church, Mr. Harrison and his wife Ada, have spent all their married life in the district. He worked for a number of years as a miner at Whitwick Colliery and New Lount Colliery, but in his youth Mr. Harrison was a farmer boy. He recalls that when he first started work on the land, his pay for a year was a pair of corduroy trousers, a smock, a cup and a pair of boots. He was given his keep, but no money. Mrs. Harrison, a farm labourer's daughter learned to seam stockings at the age of five.



THOUGHT TO BE THE FIRST OUTING IN 1954



FROM L TO R ON BENCH

Janet Draycott (Grandmother of Sheila Fisher), Albert Draycott (grandad), Mary Williamson (Sheila Fisher's Mum), Lillian Platts

BACK ROW L TO R

Mrs. Morley, Sarah Barkby, Liza Waterfield, Mrs. Dimmock, Mrs. Leeson, Louie Hutchinson, Mrs. Marshall

ENTERTAINMENT AT THE INSTITUTE WITH VERNON SMITH AFTER THE WAR YEARS

One of the stalwarts of the community and a natural entertainer was Vernon Smith who lived in "New Row", Peggs Green. He was chairman of the management committee at one time and worked tirelessly to keep the Welfare Centre (Beaumont Social Centre) open. He produced and took part in entertainment events like pantomimes etc. at the centre, and the fact that it still survives today as the Coleorton Parish Hall owed much to Vernon's efforts.

Vernon was a natural comedian and a good man, and will be remembered also for the pantomimes at Coalville Adult School where he partnered Roy Johnson in comedy roles. Vernon sadly passed away in 2012 at the age of 87.

He apparently conducted the Sunday School choir at the Wesleyan Methodist Church, Griffydham and prepared them for the Anniversary.



Mr. Vernon Smith (second left), chairman of the Beaumont Social Centre management committee, receives a cheque for £100 from Mr. Reg Burton on behalf of customers of the New Inn, Peggs Green. The money was raised from a sale of harvest produce at the inn. With them are the landlord and landlady of the pub, Mr. and Mrs. E. Bradford.

Photograph taken in 1972

**“OUT AND ABOUT” – A MUSICAL SHOW PRESENTED BY
PEGG’S GREEN VARIETY COMPANY**

Leicester Evening Mail – October 10th 1951

VILLAGE REVUE AT PEGGS GREEN

Villagers at Peggs Green, near Coalville, were entertained with a revue in the Miners’ Institute.

It was devised and produced by Roy Johnson of Coalville, assisted in the arrangement of dances by Brenda Clithero, of Coalville. Also taking part were Fred Richards, Bill North, George Morris, Beryl Norton, Peter Norton, Ken Hutchinson, Vernon Smith and Bill Bowley.



Some of the members of the dancing team

Leicester Evening Mail – December 4th 1953

WHITWICK SUPPER

The first parochial supper organized by Whitwick Parish Church in the Vicarage street Methodist schoolroom, was attended by over 100. The Vicar, Canon F. G. Hogarth presided.

Entertainment was given by Pegg’s Green Variety Company. It is anticipated that about £10 will be realized for church funds.

PANTO'S AT THE WELFARE CENTRE



IBSTOCK'S David Beniston has identified all the adults from the panto picture featured in the December 30 edition of the Times.

From left to right, the picture sees Roy Johnson as the first person on the back row.

Next is David's wife Janet, while Vernon Smith and Gerald Callagan complete the row.

David added that he didn't recognise any of the children in the photo but that the photo did bring back wonderful memories.

The date of the above photograph is not known or whether it was at Coalville or Peggs Green

Sheila Fisher of Griffydam relates.....*I don't think I have any photos of the pantos that Vernon did, all I know is that they were great fun and I helped my cousin, Alan Williamson, learn his lines as he always played a comedy part, and I used to be in the dance group doing stuff like 'tiptoe through the tulips'. The whole production was a laugh a minute.*

Alan Williamson was the gentleman that kept the hairdressers in a shed on the piece of land next to the Cross Keys, Newbold where the author remembers going to have his hair cut. At the age of about 14 in 1956 it cost two shillings in old money to have a hair cut there.

THE "RED ROSES" ENTERTAINERS

Around 1982/83 another local entertainment venture held at "Newbold Working Men's Club" was shows organised by Vernon Smith to raise money for Newbold School and other local good causes. An important part of the shows were "The Red Roses Entertainers" dancing troupe which performed during the shows. The author understands from a past member Sue Smith (nee Dimmock) that dance practice took place in the old Griffydam Wesleyan Methodist Chapel Sunday School room.

They performed around the locality to raise money for deserving causes and to entertain the elderly and school children etc.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

MEMORIES OF PETER HARVEY, A FORMER RESIDENT OF PEGGS GREEN SUBMITTED BY HIS DAUGHTER LINDA GRIFFITHS

Peter Harvey lived in the cottages opposite School Lane on Nottingham Road, Peggs Green and now lives in Hugglescote. The Kidgers' lived in the large house next door. At the age of 91, he has great memories of his younger days in Peggs Green and has provided the following information about the Welfare Institute:-

Peter recalls a billiard table being in the Welfare Institute (possibly a Youth Club was held there?) and because there was no chalk for the cues they would use the snowcem paint on the ceiling as an alternative.

Bernard Hutchinson who lived in the cottage at the Zion Hill end of School Lane was the caretaker who would come and light the coal fire. Bernard was also an ARP (air raid warden) and school attendance officer.

Apparently men from the RAF base at Castle Donington would come over to the institute for dances and the ENSA type entertainment. ENSA was an organisation set up in 1939 by Basil Dean and Leslie Henson to provide entertainment for British armed forces personnel during World War II.

He recalled the outside toilets where he and his mates fled to when being chased by a swarm of wasps which they had disturbed!

VE DAY CELEBRATION MEMORIES BY GWENDA LEESON (NEE. BIRD)

I remember there was a parade, everyone in fancy dress. I was dressed as a gypsy. We walked round the village.

Games were played in Mr. Blakey's field (Mr. Blakey was the licensee at the New Engine Inn). Tea was served in The Miner's Welfare Institute (now the Beaumont Centre), everyone contributed. I took a mixing bowl filled with orange jelly which was flavoured with concentrated orange juice, which was issued to babies and small children during the war, my sister Margaret would have been three.

In the evening there was dancing and I think this was repeated on VJ Day.

NEWSPAPER REPORTS

Nottingham Journal – Sept 12th 1927

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In a speech at a subsequent meeting, Mr. Windley said he hoped the institute would be a centre of learning as well as of Games and a help in promoting a good feeling among the villagers.

Mr. G. J. Brooks, J.P., said that the welfare committee had allocated £1,100 to the parish of Thringstone, of which Pegg's Green formed a part, and a recreation ground had been provided for the Thringstone portion. The Leicester committee had under consideration a scheme for the benefit of aged miners.

Leicester Evening Mail – March 3rd 1930

HOSPITAL DANCE

A carnival dance was held in the Miners' Institute at Pegg's Green on Saturday. The Utopians' band provided a good programme, and Messrs. Clark and Barlow were the M.C.s. The proceeds were for the Loughborough Hospital.

Leicester Evening Mail – July 29th 1930

COALVILLE EXCHANGE

A Branch to be Opened at Pegg's Green

Following a request by Mr. Ernest Winterton, M.P. that accommodation should be provided in the Coleorton area for the payment of unemployment money in the district, Miss Bondfield has intimated that temporary accommodation for such payment has been made at the Miners' Institute at Pegg's Green. This means that many men in the area will be saved the long journey to the Coalville Exchange.

I understand that Mr. Winterton is endeavoring to obtain similar facilities for the men in the South Derbyshire coalfield, many of whom have to travel to Ashby to draw their unemployment.

Leicester Evening Mail – Monday November 2nd 1931

A whist drive was held on Saturday night at the Miner's Welfare Institute, Pegg's Green. Messrs. George Martin and F. Martin acted as M.C.s.

Leicester Evening Mail – Monday February 22nd 1932

EFFORT FOR INFIRMARY

A vaudeville concert by the Coleorton Primitive Methodist players was given in the Miners' Welfare Institute, Pegg's green, on Saturday night. Mr. J. Hughes, of Donisthorpe, presided and the proceeds were for the Leicester Royal Infirmary.

Leicester Evening Mail – Monday April 25th 1932

INSTITUTE DANCE

A dance was held in the Miners' Institute at Pegg's Green on Saturday evening. The Orpheus Players played the music.

Leicester Evening Mail – November 25th 1935

Pegg's Green Whist. – A whist drive was held in the Miner's Institute at Pegg's Green on Saturday by the Golden Fleece Lodge of the Nottingham Imperial Order of Odd Fellows in aid of their juvenile outing fund.

Leicester Evening Mail – July 2nd 1943

PEGG'S GREEN EFFORT

A whist drive and dance in the Miners' Institute, Pegg's Green, realized £11 11s. 0d. For Leicester Royal Infirmary

From the Leicester Evening Mail - Thursday March 13th 1941

GRIFFYDAM HOME GUARD EFFORT

As a result of a successful whist drive and dance organised by the Griffydam members of the "Home Guard", the sum of £7 - 3s. has been handed to the Griffydam and Pegg's Green soldiers "Comfort Fund".

Leicester Evening Mail – January 25th 1943

PUBLIC NOTICE

WAR CHARITIES ACT – 1940

PEGG'S GREEN & GRIFFYDAM COMFORTS FUND

NOTICE is hereby given that it is proposed to apply to the Leicestershire County Council for the registration under the above mentioned Act, to raise funds for men and women of H. M. Forces of Pegg's Green and Griffydam, and the administrative centre of which is situate at the "Traveller's Rest", Griffydam. Any objection to the proposed registration should be sent in writing to the above named Council within 14 days from the date of this notice.

Dated 23rd January 1943

p.25 J. R. Hill, Secretary.

Leicester Evening mail – December 28th 1943

PEGG'S GREEN DANCE – MINER'S INSTITUTE

A carnival dance was held at the miner's institute, Pegg's Green, in aid of the Coleorton, Pegg's Green and Griffydam comforts fund.

Leicester Evening Mail – October 10th 1951

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Leicester Evening Mail – April 9th 1953

NEW OFFICERS

Mrs. L. Morley was elected president of the newly-formed Darby and Joan Club at Pegg's Green, with Mrs. Ambrose Barkby secretary and Mrs. B. A. Hutchinson, treasurer.

Leicester Evening Mail – July 16th 1953

PEGG'S GREEN OUTING

For their first outing, members of Pegg's Green "Darby and Joan" club were taken for a bus tour, through Leicester and the Soar Valley.

Leicester Evening Mail – December 4th 1953

WHITWICK SUPPER

The first parochial supper organized by Whitwick Parish Church in the Vicarage street Methodist schoolroom, was attended by over 100. The Vicar, Canon F. G. Hogarth presided.

Entertainment was given by Pegg's Green Variety Company. It is anticipated that about £10 will be realized for church funds.

Leicester Evening Mail – April 7th 1954

MADE BIRTHDAY CAKE

With money raised from selling home-made toffee, 84 year old Mrs. G. Harvey, cooked and presented a cake to Pegg's Green "Darby and Joan Club" for its members first birthday celebrations.