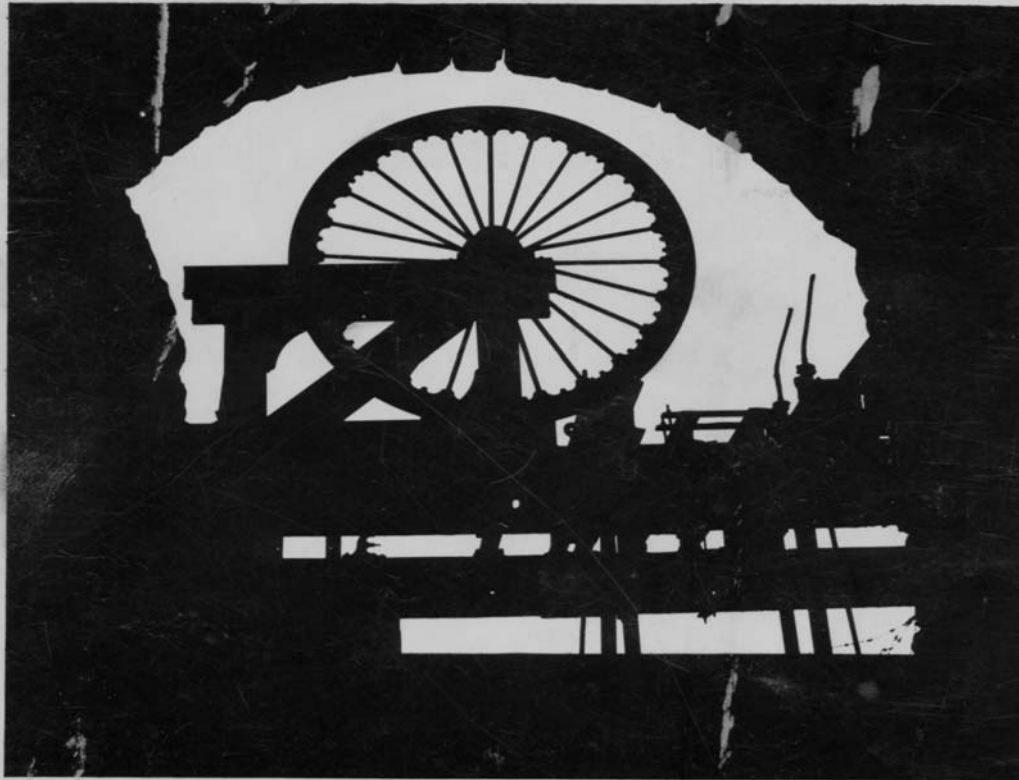


# FOUNDED ON COAL



by

RAY WINSTANLEY  
and  
DEREK WINSTANLEY

*Ray Winstanley  
Derek Winstanley*

**FOUNDED ON COAL**

**A HISTORY OF A COAL MINING  
COMMUNITY:  
THE PARISH OF ST. MATTHEW  
HIGHFIELD AND WINSTANLEY**

**by  
RAY WINSTANLEY  
and  
DEREK WINSTANLEY**

**with a foreword by Rev. W. Bynon**

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## FOREWORD

When walking or driving along Pemberton Road and Billinge Road, you are aware of the new housing estates and the rush of traffic. It is not difficult to imagine that the Parish of Highfield is one of the new suburbs created to absorb the workers of Lancashire and Merseyside. The truth is very different as you will discover in the pages of this book.

The history of this area can be traced back to the Domesday Book of 1086 A. D. and by far the most historic building is Winstanley Hall. As a legal parish we can only go back to 1910, but as a church we go back to 1867 when the Pemberton Colliery Church School was built. The name of Pemberton Colliery gives us a clue to the origin of a church on this site. The link between the Blundell family and the Church has given to this parish the schools, the cricket field, the graveyard and the vicarage.

The present church, completed in 1894, was the gift of Col. Blundell in memory of his wife, Lady Blundell. The Blundell family were generous benefactors to the parish.

Although the physical area referred to in this book is that of the parish of St Matthew, this is the history not just of a church, but of a whole community. People of all denominations have played their part, and continue to do so. I hope that, having read this book, as you go about the area you will find some of the places mentioned and reflect on the events which have made this parish what it is today.

W. Bynon (Vicar).  
Autumn 1981

Highfield Vicarage,  
Wigan.

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(DW, January 2005)

## 1. Introduction

We all have memories of past events, pleasant or otherwise, which to us as individuals are important. How many times have we said, "do you remember when. . . ." It might have been a match at Central Park, a goal at Anfield, or an accident down the pit, or in the mill. It is the combination of these events over a period of time that provides us with our history, folklore and heritage. If a record is made as things happen, or change, then this can be passed on to be the history for future generations; but if the record resides only in the mind, then even though this might be passed on orally, eventually it will be diluted, corrupted, or forgotten.

It is perhaps appropriate, therefore, that as the Parish of St Matthew has just passed the Biblical age of three score years and ten, we should record its history to this point in time.

The Parish should not, and indeed cannot, be considered in isolation, since a great many external factors and events, both natural and man-made, have been interwoven with happenings within the Parish during the course of its evolution. Much has changed during these seventy years. Those relatively new to the Parish, and those born after World War II, will probably be little aware of the magnitude of the changes that have occurred, especially those associated with the decline of the once-great coal and cotton industries. Some of the senior citizens can reminisce back to about the beginning of the century, but the area had an interesting history even before their time.

The area which now forms the Parish has a rich and diverse heritage, which today is manifest in the buildings, the landscape, and especially in the character of the people.

Unfortunately, a great number of buildings and features have been obliterated all too readily: Pony Dick Inn; Ryland's Mill; the Twenty Steps; Holmes House; Highfield House; and the bridge, booking office, waiting rooms and shops at Pemberton Station, to mention just a few.

Over the past few hundred years the area has gone through three distinct phases. Prior to the Industrial Revolution, it was a rural area with only scattered agricultural settlements between Lamberhead Green, Goose Green, Billinge and Wigan. For about one hundred and fifty years from the early 19th Century the human and physical resources of the area fueled the Industrial Revolution and in this, its second phase, it became one of the most important coal and cotton districts in England. The landscape, however, was defiled, the population mushroomed, and working class people were herded into labyrinths of little brick houses. For more than half a century now the coal and cotton

industries have declined, and in this third and most recent phase employment has become more diversified, and new housing estates have devoured agricultural land at an alarming rate.

One constant element in these quite distinct rural, industrial and suburban stages has been the presence of Winstanley Hall. The Hall, built originally by the Winstanleys of Winstanley, has for almost four centuries been the home of the Bankes Family.

It is perhaps at Pony Dick, on the boundary between Winstanley and Wigan, where these different worlds have traditionally met; where landowners, farmers, craftsmen and miners have supped their ale together in "th' owd Pony Dick Inn". Even today. Pony Dick is still where town meets country.

Of course, in a brief history such as this, much has to be condensed, and only a limited amount of information and a small number of many old photographs can be included. We hope, however, that it will bring back memories for some, and be a source of information for future generations.

## **II. PHYSICAL RESOURCES**

With increasing technological progress, man tends to exert more control over his environment, and to be less subject to the whims of nature and the dictates of his immediate surroundings. However, much of the character of the Parish of St Matthew has been determined by the physical resources of the area..

About 300 million years ago England was much nearer to the equator and had a tropical climate. During this era there were successive cycles of vegetative growth and decay in huge swamp deltas, followed by periods of subsidence and deposition of overlying sediments. The action of heat and pressure caused the decayed tropical vegetation to be firstly converted into peat and then into coal, and the intervening sediments into rock strata. It is these Carboniferous sediments that form the solid geology of the area—the Lancashire Coalfield.

Going down through these rocks for nearly 3,000 feet we find a typical profile of alternating bands of fireclay, coal, mudstone, shale and sandstone. The coal seams themselves vary in thickness from a few inches to about nine feet, and are separated from each other by up to several hundred feet of rock. The coal also varies in quality. Of course, it is not economical to work the very thin seams, but seams of good quality as thin as fourteen inches have been worked and there are some miners who actually prefer to work under these difficult conditions.

In the Wigan area, these coal measures were downfolded into a basin, with the oldest rocks outcropping along the Billinge Ridge to the west and at Haigh to the east (Figure 1). It is on the land rising from the River Douglas to Billinge Hill, drained by the Smithy Brook, that the Parish of St Matthew lies (Figures 2 and 3). Within this area, the horizontal beds of rock strata have been severely faulted and fragmented, with the result that coal seams crop out very frequently at the surface. It is at these points that they are easily reached and worked. From the outcrop, many seams dip steeply underground. At fault lines they are thrown down hundreds of feet: at the Pemberton Fault, for example, the throw is 1,500 feet.

It was the existence of these easily worked coal reserves that permitted coal to be mined extensively during the Industrial Revolution, and this led to the growth of a coal mining community. Today, the Parish is, as th' owd timers say, "riddled wi' owd workins" (Figure 4).

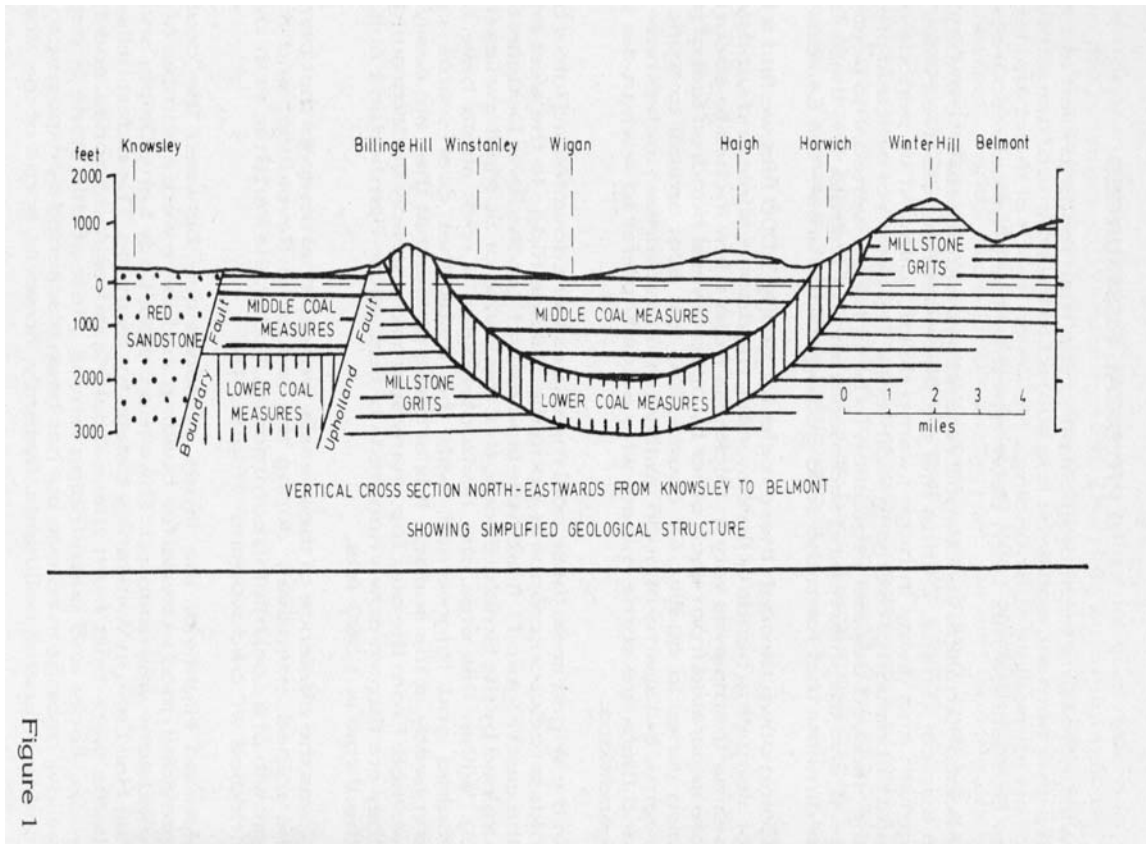
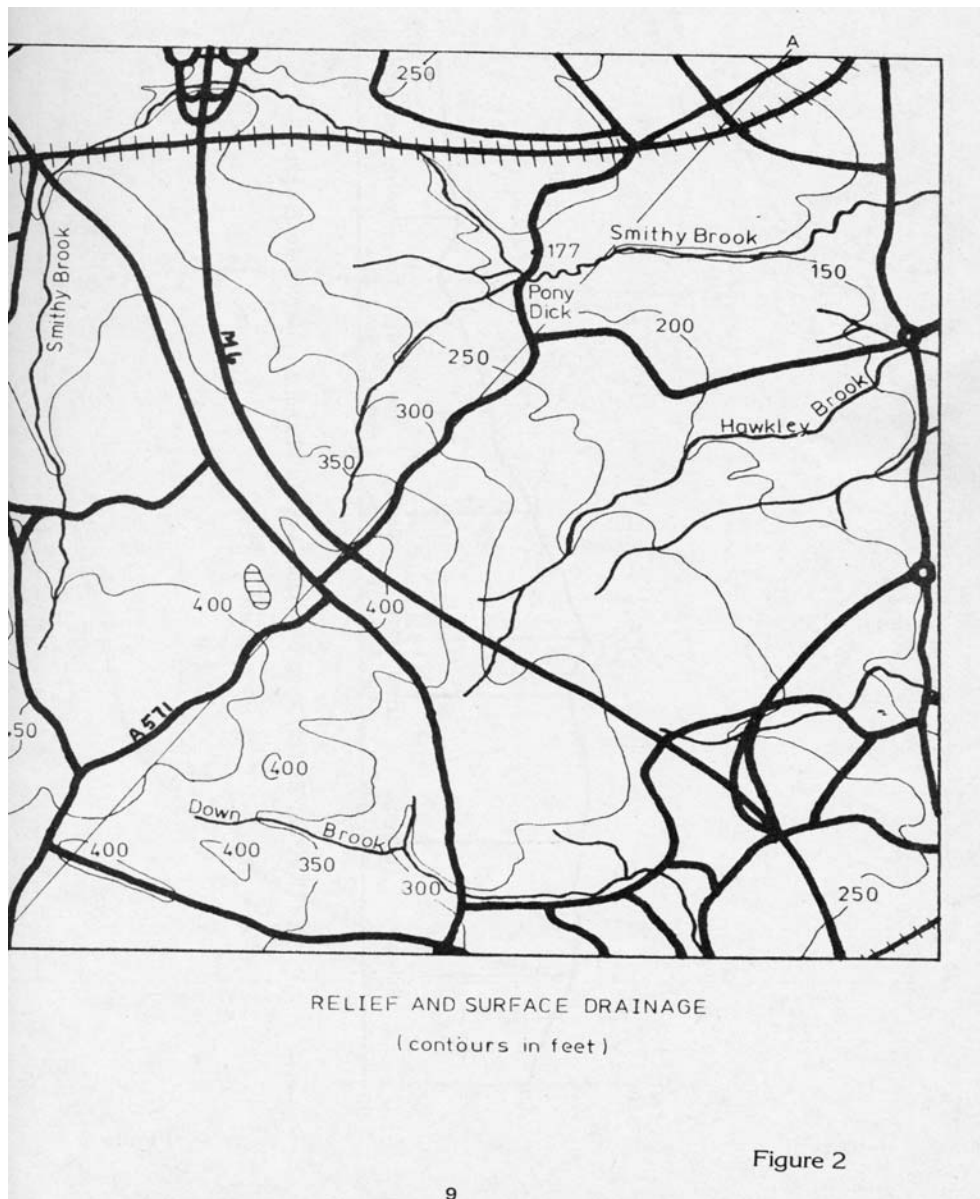
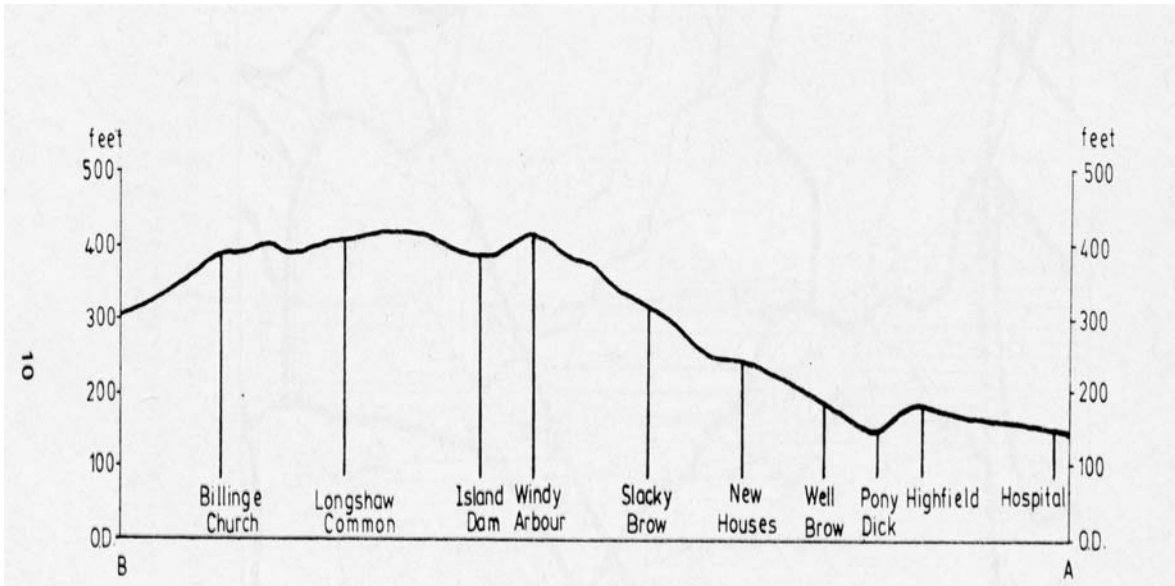


Figure 1

Around Highfield, the layers of sandstone between the coal seams also provided good material for building and there were a number of delphs where sandstone was quarried: Thwaite's Delph; Lady Lane Delph; and the delph by the Hall Lane in Winstanley Estate, for example. The oldest halls, cottages and barns were built from these Coal Measures, sandstones, and had flagstone roofs, floors and surrounding fences. Most of this stone is naturally brown, yellow, or beige in colour, but has been blackened by exposure to the elements and to industrial pollutants. Recently, however, some of the stone, such as in the bridge at Pemberton Railway Station, has been cleaned and restored to its original colour.







VERTICAL CROSS-SECTION ALONG LINE A-B IN FIGURE 2 , ALONG ROAD A571

Figure 3

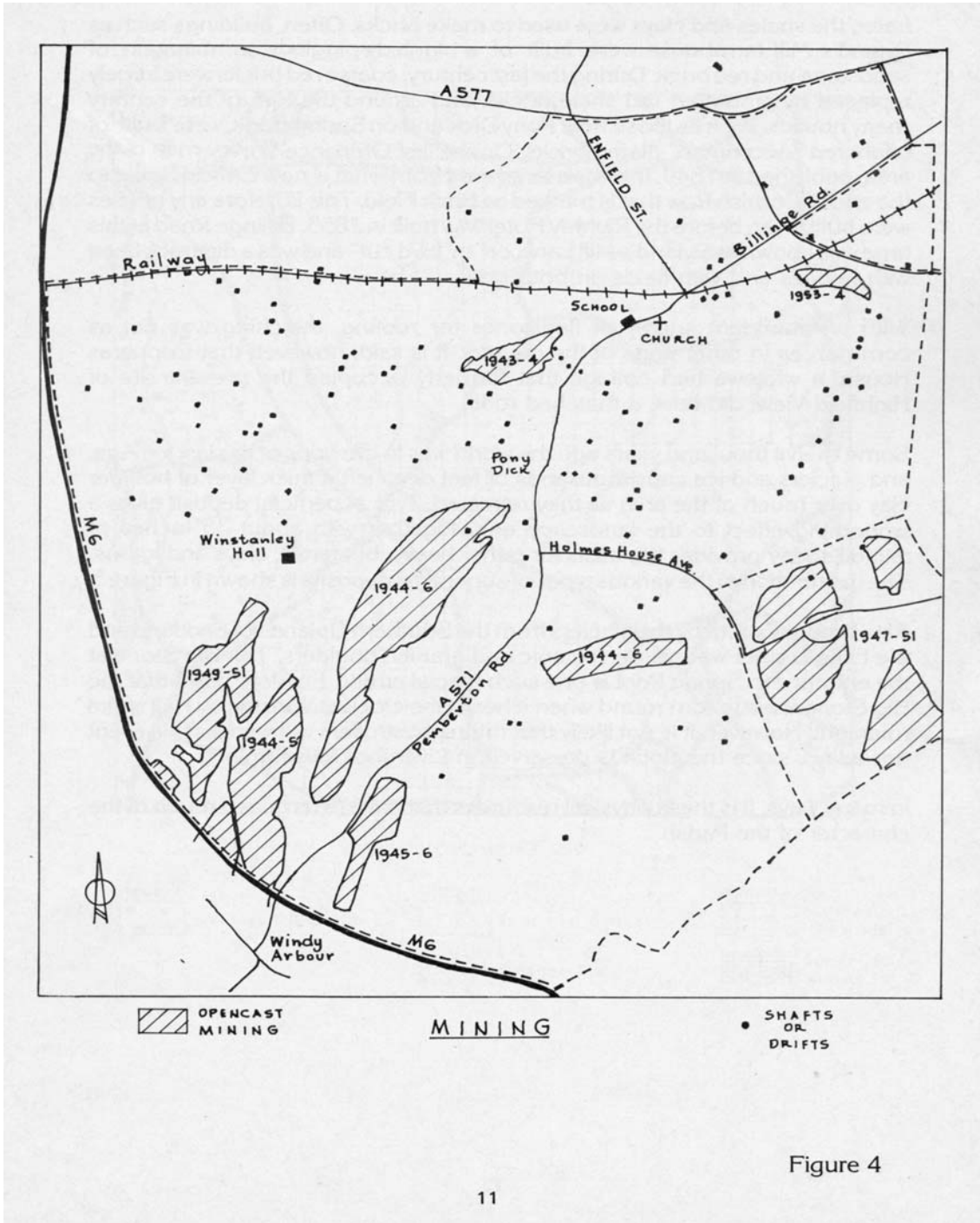


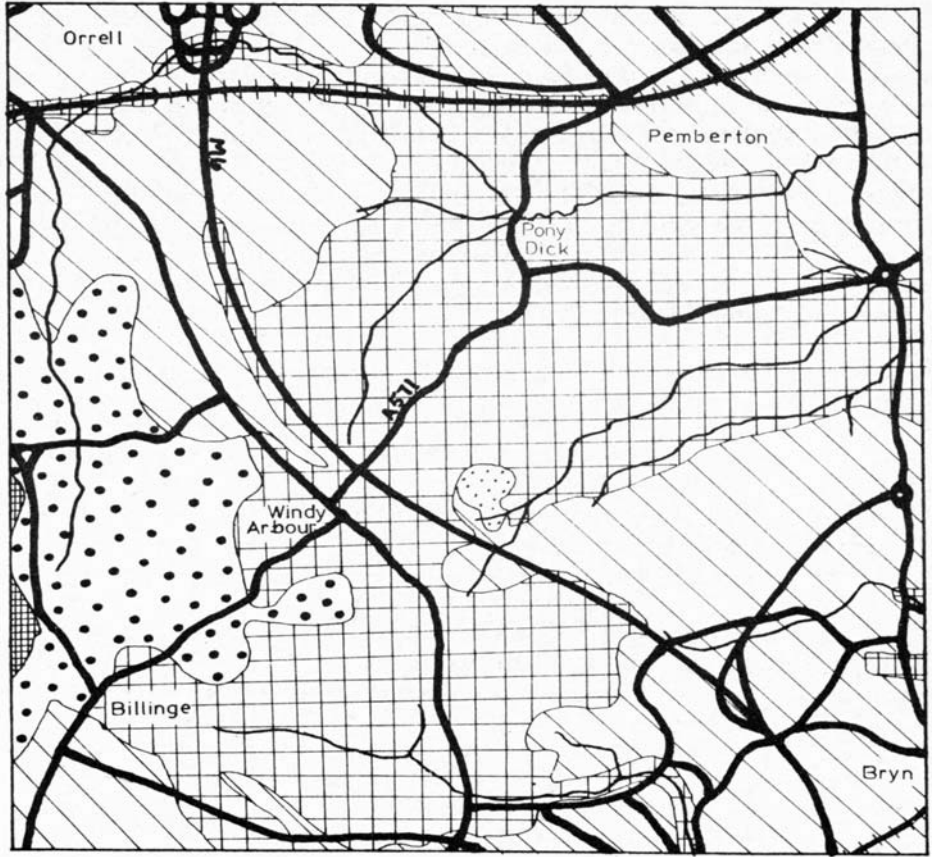
Figure 4

Later, the shales and clays were used to make bricks. Often, buildings such as Ryland's Mill farmhouse were built of a higgledy-piggledy combination of sandstone and red brick. During the last century, coarse red bricks were largely replaced by smoother red shale bricks, and around the turn of the century many houses, such as those near Pony Dick and on Spring Bank, were built of bright red "Accrington" glazed bricks. On the first Ordnance Survey map of the area, published in 1849, there is a large area from what is now Enfield Street to the end of Cornish Row that is marked as Brick Field. This is before any houses were built, even before the Railway Hotel was built in 1853. Billinge Road at this time was known as Ryland's Mill Lane, or "th' owdcut" and was a dirt track lined with hedges and with fields on both sides.

With an abundant supply of flagstones for roofing, thatching was not as common as in other parts of the country. It is said, however, that Copperas House, a whitewashed cottage that formerly occupied the present site of Highfield View, did have a thatched roof.

Some twelve thousand years ago the world was in the grips of the last Ice Age, and glaciers and ice caps thousands of feet deep left a thick layer of boulder clay over much of the area as they retreated. This superficial deposit gives a smoothing effect to the landscape and, together with about 35 inches of rainfall, today provides the basis for rather heavy, but fertile, clays and loams. The distribution of the various types of superficial deposits is shown in Figure 5. Also brought south by the glaciers from the Southern Uplands of Scotland and the Lake District were large volcanic and granitic boulders. The Big Stone at the entrance to Spring Pool is one such glacial erratic. Folklore has it that the Big Stone used to turn round when it heard the clock at Winstanley Hall strike midnight! However, it is not likely that midnight strollers will witness this event nowadays, since the clock is preserved in Liverpool Museum.

In many ways, it is these physical resources that have determined much of the character of the Parish.



GEOLOGICAL DRIFT MAP

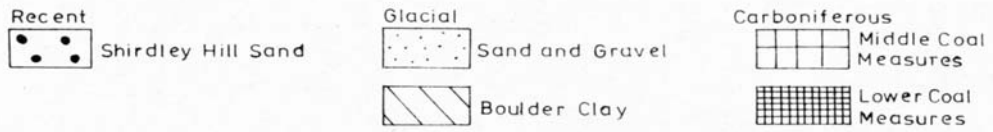


Figure 5

### III. PRE-1800

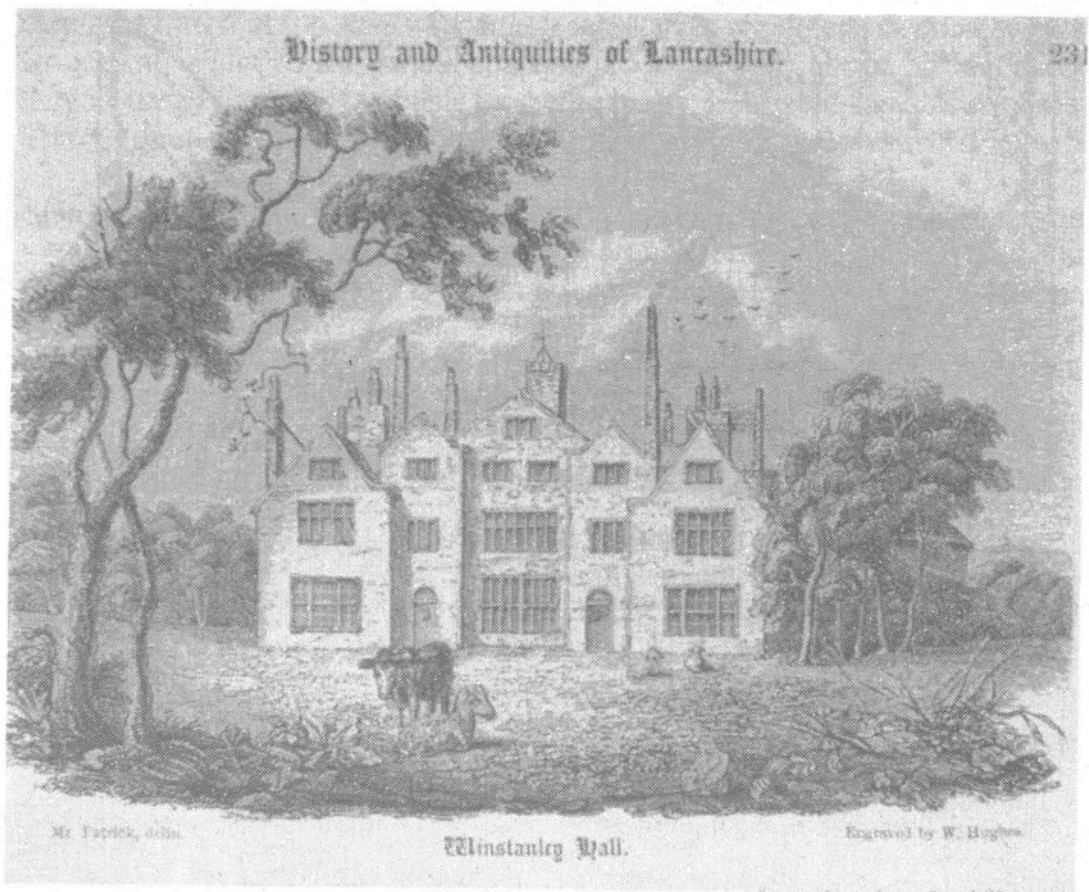
Although the Romans established a fort, Coccium, on the present site of Wigan, the area remained remote and underdeveloped during Medieval times. It is thought that Billinge was settled by the Angles in the late 6th Century, and Skelmersdale and Scholes by the Danes in the 9th Century. In The Domesday Book it is stated that, "Gilbert held Wibaldeslei (Winstanley). There are two carucates of land. It was worth 64 pence" (One carucate of land was the amount that could be cultivated by an oxen team in a year).

It was about the 12th Century before woodland began to be cleared on a serious and continuous basis. Families then began asserting ownership of land, and bearing the same name as the township or estate. The origin of the name "Winstanley" is uncertain. "Winstan" or "Wynstan" is a common Old English personal name, and "ley" or "lea" is a wood or clearing—so the derivation is possibly the "ley" of "Winstan". A reference to Unstanesle, or Vnstaneslee, in 1206 could be an early version of the name. It is possible, then, that a patch of virgin vegetation was cleared for arable cultivation and the family took the name "Winstanley".

The Township of Billinge and Winstanley was originally one manor, but had been split into three before 1212, two of the subdivisions being held by Simon de Winstanley.

The head of the Winstanley family lived in a homestead moat-house, or manor house, probably built of wood on a stone foundation. Although the site of the house is now covered with trees, three sides of the moat still remain, at a distance of about 400 yards to the north of the present Hall. Rufford Old Hall, built around 1480, is perhaps the nearest remaining example of this type of manor house. Sir James de Winstanley was one of the Knights attendant upon the Black Prince during his wars in Spain, and another member of the Family was a Windsor Poor Knight.

During the period 1555—1562 the Winstanleys of Winstanley built a stone Elizabethan Hall, the core of the present Hall. At this time Thomas was head of the family, and he married Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Gilbert Gerard, and had two daughters, Dorothy and Margaret and a son Edmund. After Thomas' death in 1561, Elizabeth married John Bradshaw of Presteigne, Radnorshire, and she moved to Wales with Edmund some time later. Edmund, who became Sheriff of Radnorshire and of Pembrokeshire, was married three times and had one son, Charles, who died in 1578 and was buried at Pemberton.



1. Winstanley Hall before extensive alterations were carried out.

Edmund finally sold Winstanley Estate to James Bankes, a London goldsmith, for £3,100 in 1595. Since this time, Winstanley Estate has been owned by the Bankes family, a second branch of the Bankes' of Bank Newton in Craven,

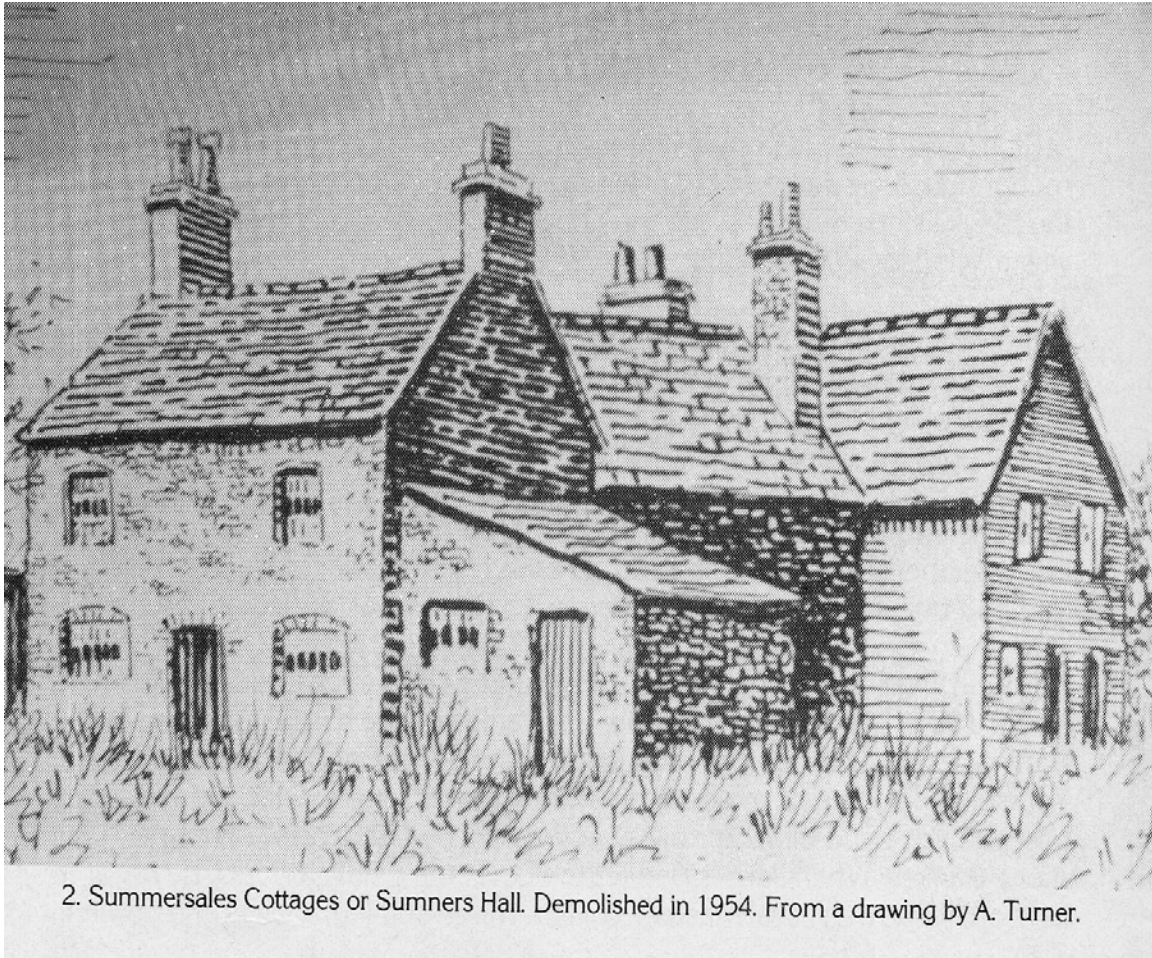
Yorkshire. The line of male succession once became extinct and once was passed over, necessitating Royal Decrees in 1804 and 1882 to maintain the name Bankes. When James Bankes took over the Estate in 1595, he became landlord to farmers, coal masters, colliers, millers, cutlers, nailers and bowlers.

Like Winstanley, the neighbouring Manor of Pemberton was originally part of the Manor of Newton, and in the second half of the 12th Century it was sold by Adam de Pemberton. The Manor was subsequently divided into four parts, later sub-divided, and eventually dispersed. By 1466 the Manor rights were little more than an abstraction. Some of the place and field names of that time survived for hundreds of years and most, with modifications and corruptions, through to the present day: Norley Hall; Lonemerehed Green; Kytte Green; Hawkley Hall; Shevyngton Hall; Tunstead Hall (hence, Tunstall Lane); Worsley Hall; and Somersale. As the Summersale's Cottages (These cottages were located to the eastside of Summersales Colliery, the site now being covered with concrete) or Sumner's Hall, were referred to in this document, they must have been built some time before 1466. It is unfortunate that they and the inn at Pony Dick were demolished in 1954.

In those early days, salt, always an essential commodity, was brought up from Cheshire along the old saltway, which ran through Winstanley Estate to Lamberhead Green; here, Adam de Salter lived in 1292.

By this time, markets and fairs were held regularly in Wigan, which had been granted a Royal Charter in 1246. It was in 1351 that the Duchy and County Palatinate of Lancaster was created by Edward III to reward Henry of Lancaster for loyal military service.

As far as agriculture is concerned, mixed farming has always been practice in the area, on a rotation basis. In the 16th Century, two to four crops would be taken before the land was laid down to grass for about seven years. The traditional crops have been oats, wheat, hay, barley, peas and beans, with potatoes and turnips introduced in the second half of the 18th Century. Recently, barley has become the dominant cereal crop, mainly at the expense of oats, and more vegetables are grown. The average size of a farm in the Parish is about 50 acres, and the largest, possibly that farmed by John Turner at Windy Arbour, is about 150 acres, although only a part of this farm is in the Parish.



2. Summersales Cottages or Sumners Hall. Demolished in 1954. From a drawing by A. Turner.



Cattle and pigs have always been stocked far more than sheep, and pigs were also kept by ordinary householders. Many cottages, such as those down Queen Street, were built with a pigsty at the bottom of the yard or garden. The main draught animal was the horse, although oxen were used in earlier times. Moles must have been a particular pest, and in the late 18th Century there was a manorial mole catcher at Winstanley; he had a record catch of 42 dozen moles in one year, for which he received £2.00. Rabbits and foxes too have always caused damage on the farms. Until recently, farming was a slowly evolving conservative way of life, lacking the sudden invigorating experience of rapid technological change.

On a map of Winstanley Estate dated 1770, a flaxyard is marked near Ryland's Mill at Pony Dick. It seems likely, therefore, that there was a cottage textile industry in the area at the time; certainly, there would have been a considerable amount of domestic spinning and weaving. Flax used to be grown around Croston and Rufford, and wool came from sheep on the Pennines. Later, flax and wool were imported from Ireland. Liverpool developed into a major port and the Leeds-Liverpool canal, opened in 1774, allowed cotton to be imported in large quantities—mainly from the U.S.A. where it was grown by four million black slaves.

The origins of the old tithe mill at Pony Dick are unknown, but it was probably at least four or five hundred years old, and was certainly one of the oldest tithe mills remaining in Lancashire, when it was demolished in 1927. The mill was correctly known as Ryland's Mill, although it is spelled Rylance Mill on Pony Dick Bridge. It was about 1895 when the mill stopped operating, probably because of competition from steam power and electricity. All that now remains is part of the wall of the mill, which was incorporated into the "long wall" when it was built around Winstanley Estate in the latter half of the 19th Century.

During the 18th Century a number of events and developments occurred outside the Parish that were to be of great significance in the growth of the community. Of special importance was the improvement in the transportation network. In 1720 the River Douglas Navigation Act was passed and by 1742 the river had been made navigable from Wigan to the Ribble Estuary. In 1770 an Act was passed enabling the construction of the Leeds-Liverpool canal. By 1774 the section from Dean Locks to Liverpool was opened, although the entire length was finished only in 1816.

These water-ways provided natural outlets for coal mined in the Wigan area, and it was about 1774 that Johnathen Blundell first agreed to become partner in a coal mining business, transporting coals from mines near the River Douglas. Offices and coal yards were opened at the northern end of Old Hall Street in Liverpool, and by 1788 Blundells were selling coal worth £10,000.

The Blundells were Liverpool merchants and appear to have obtained a great deal of wealth from the slave trade. On his death in 1800, Johnathen Blundell was described as, "Merchant of the Island of Jamaica".

In Orrell and Winstanley wagon roads (railways) were constructed from the coal mines down to the canal, one of the first being from Mr. Jackson's coal mines in Orrell, in 1776. Four years later, Johnathen Blundell bought Orrell House Farm and Colliery from Michael Jackson. This transaction cemented the Blundell's roots in the coal mining industry in the area, and in 1796 Johnathen Blundell left Liverpool and moved to Blackley Hurst Hall, Billinge.

It was about 1785 that John Clarke, another Liverpool businessman, built a wagon road to transport coal from the mines in Winstanley and the Pingot down to the canal at Crooke. In the Pingot, just to the east of the present railway bridge, he constructed a viaduct known as The Arches to carry the wagon road over the Smithy Brook. At this time the Pingot is depicted as a thriving community with a farm, cottages, a lime kiln, perhaps a smithy and a shop, and a well that provided water for most of Lamberhead Green. Water from this well was delivered around Pemberton by donkey and cart as late as the 1890's, at a price of 1d for 4 gallons. This water was in great demand and at times carts, from as far away as Hindley, had to queue along the full length of Brook Lane waiting to fill. This well was never known to fail and it was said that the water contained properties valuable for the treatment of consumption.

In addition to the halls and houses already mentioned, there are still in existence today in the Parish farm buildings which are hundreds of years old: for example, Hill House Farm, near Windy Arbour, dates from 1709; and Atherton's Farm, off Winstanley Road, must be much older, for an extension to the original building is dated 1712. The age of the Hall Lane cottages is not known, but on one of the iron window frames we found 52 layers of paint It is said that last century these cottages were a school and a schoolmaster's house. The oldest part of Smethurst House, in Smethurst Lane, is over 200 years old, but there are several additions of a later date. The roof was originally flagstone, but this was removed in 1948 and replaced by slates. Rainford House, originally Rainford Hall, was built in 1665. Originally this was one home, at some time was made into two, and later was re-converted to a single cottage. It was demolished in 1967 to make way for the Holmes House Building development The old house at the northern end of the slated terraced houses in Highfield has been called Duck Pond Hall and Duck Foot Hall. Its origin is obscure, but it was probably part of a group of early buildings, of which the present Nursery Unit was the barn. Many of these old halls, cottages and barns have massive oak beams, with partition walls made out of wattle and daub.



3. Rainford House. Built in 1665 and demolished in 1967 to make way for the Holmes House development.

A combination of factors created a revolution in the textile industry in the area in the 18th Century: the availability of American cotton via the Leeds-Liverpool canal; the invention of machines for mechanical cotton spinning and weaving; the steam to power these machines. Factory cotton spinning in the Wigan area dates back to 1792, and from these beginnings it grew into a major industry.

Until the 18th Century, coal was obtained on a small scale, with relatively little effort, from a large number of places where coal outcropped at or near the surface. From the late 1700's to the early 1900's the incredible rate at which the coalfield developed was due primarily to two major factors: increasing demand for coal; and technological advances that enabled vast quantities of coal to be mined and transported. It was the start of the Industrial Revolution.

The whole process of change during this period was driven by spiraling interplays and feedbacks between technological, industrial, economic, financial and social factors. Technological inventions, such as the steam engine, created a demand for coal, but only with the adaptation of some of the inventions by the mining industry was it possible to obtain more coal from deeper mines to meet this higher demand. Similarly, escalating demand for coal attracted the private venture capital necessary to develop the coal fields and to improve transportation networks. The steam locomotive itself increased the demand for coal, and this in turn attracted more capital to increase the supply. All these changes were accompanied by a vast and rapid increase in population, similar to that being experienced in the developing countries today. In 1800 there were only 11,000 people living in Wigan. In only thirty years this had doubled. By the end of the century it had risen to 60,000.

Coal was already being mined at Winstanley when James Bankes took over the Estate in 1595; in fact, the oldest record of coal mining in Winstanley is 1507. There would also have been shallow workings in the Pemberton area at this time, for it was in the 16th Century that Parliament restricted the use of timber for fuel purposes, thus compelling householders to turn to coal.

In 1678 a pit was sunk in Winstanley to a depth of 72 feet, a previous one being to a depth of only 42 feet. In 1676 the output from Winstanley pits was 693 tons and this rose to 2,074 tons by 1693, when about six to eight hewers were employed.

At this time, coal would be hauled from the coal face to the bottom of the shaft on the backs of women and girls—there was no women's lib in those days! From there, coal was wound up to the surface in baskets, either by means of a manually operated windlass or a horse-powered gin. The coal seams were worked away from the bottom of the shaft until there was danger of the roof collapsing—or until it actually collapsed! Not surprisingly, early reports list the

causes of death as: "falling down a coal pit", "coals falling on him in a coal pit", and "tub falling on him in a coal pit".

Living conditions were rudimentary for most families and many of the necessities of life were luxuries. The poor working conditions, the long hours of back-breaking work, the low wages, and a high risk environment had a pervasive influence on all aspects of life, including a short life expectancy. A letter in Lloyd's Evening Post in the 1770's mentions the terribly long hours of arduous work by the miners:

Cut off from the light of heaven for sixteen or seventeen hours a day, they are obliged to undergo a drudgery which the veriest slave in the plantation would think intolerable.

Lombragreeners must have wondered what life was like up at the Hall whenever they saw the Squire riding by in his coach or gig.

It was in the 1790's that the maximum production of about 250,000 tons a year was obtained from the Orrell coalfield; of this, about 55,000 tons came from Blundell's Orrell Collieries. Annual output from Winstanley Collieries was perhaps about 5,000 tons at this time.

It is evident, therefore, that the people living in and around Pemberton, Orrell and Winstanley played an important role in fueling the Industrial Revolution, which spread around the world.

#### **IV. 1800—1950**

Two major developments occurred about 1800. One was the granting, in 1792, of a lease to John Clarke to work the high quality Orrell Four and Five Feet coal seams under Winstanley Estate. The other was the transfer from Orrell to Pemberton of the Blundell mining interests.

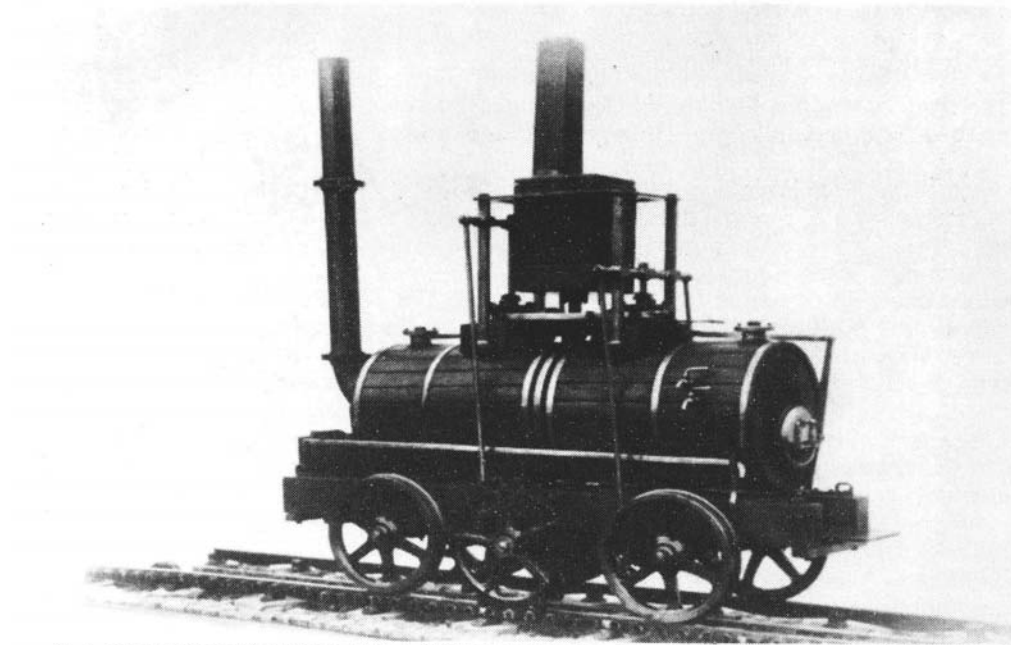
John Clarke and Company sank forty-two shafts in the Winstanley and Pingot area between 1793 and 1842, the deepest being 240 feet to the Orrell Four Feet. The average area worked from each shaft was 4.2 Cheshire acres and the average output per shaft was 31,000 tons, so the total amount of coal extracted from these mines was about 1.5 million tons. The caps placed over Clarke's Engine and Bye Pits in the Pingot, about seventy yards to the west of the level-crossing over the railway, can still be seen today. There are also good underground aquifers in this area and at one time a fixed locomotive was used at Winstanley Colliery Sidings to pump up water for use by passing steam trains. Until 1967, water was pumped from behind Tucson House, where Bill Nicholson was in charge of the machines, to Orrell reservoirs, the latter having

been constructed in the early 1870's.

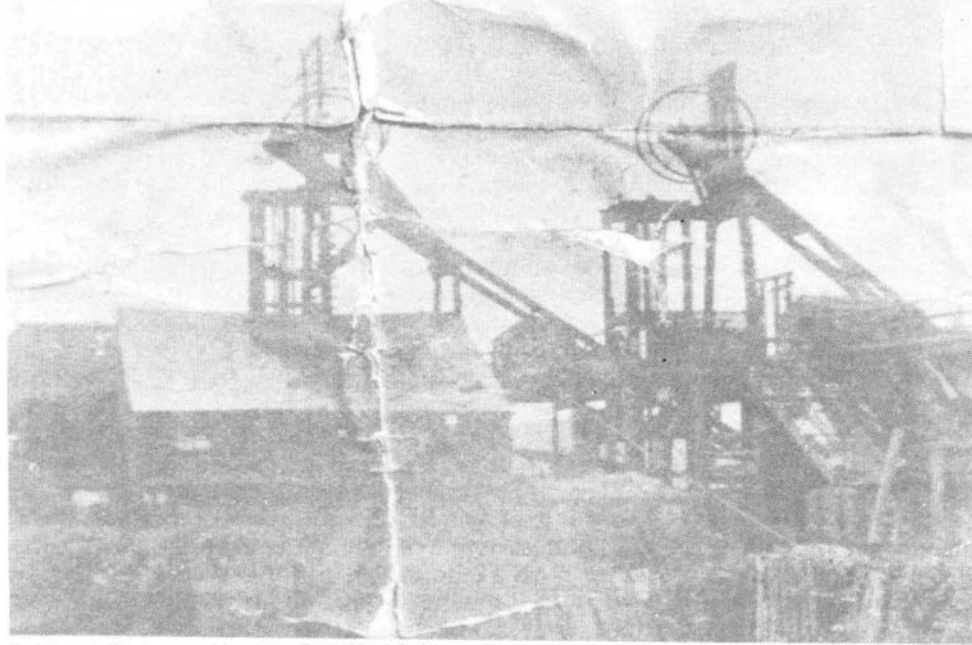
The mining operations generated considerable profits, both for the Bankes' and Clarke. Although John Clarke was declared bankrupt in 1816, mainly as a result of his Liverpool business activities, he built Orrell Mount as his residence. His manager from 1810, Robert Daglish, lived in Orrell Lodge, a short distance down the road.

It was Robert Daglish who, in 1812, built at Haigh Foundry, and put into operation in 1813, one of the earliest steam locomotives in the world. The wooden wagon road from Winstanley down to the canal at Crooke was specially converted to cogged fishbellied rails and stone sleepers to take the "Yorkshire Horse", as this locomotive was known. This was certainly the first locomotive made in Lancashire. Also, since people were carried on the railway, albeit it unofficially, it has claims to being the first passenger carrying train in the world. A few years later two additional locomotives were in operation at the Colliery. In 1938 an excellent working model of the "Yorkshire Horse" was made by Eli Banks, who eventually gave the model to the Miners Home in Blackpool, where it is still on display today, in a glass showcase in the entrance hall. During the twelve years up to 1816 the Winstanley Colliery averaged £11,000 clear profit per year, with average sales of 55,000 tons of coal over the last six of these years.

In 1800, Henry Blundell, who was Mayor of Liverpool in 1791, 1793 and again in 1807, first paid land tax on property in the Pemberton area. Beginning in the early 1800's, Blundell sank many shafts on the Pemberton side of Pony Dick. The seams which outcropped at the surface in Winstanley were here thrown down by faults to much greater depths (Figure 6), and the sinking of deeper shafts into unknown territory involved considerable financial risk. This was reflected in the name of the Venture Pits, which were near the present telephone box at the end of Merton Road. The sinking of these new and deeper shafts were arduous and time consuming undertakings. To sink Blundell's Bye Pit 390 feet in the second decade of the 19th Century, for example, took three and a half years. Other pits sunk by Blundell had names such as Cat Bank, Tanpit, Farrimans, Rainford and Mill Pit. By 1835, Blundell's Pemberton Collieries were producing over 50,000 tons of coal a year.



4. A model of the Yorkshire Horse, built by Eli Banks. Now in the Miners Home in Blackpool



5. Blundell's Lower Venture Pits, Highfield.

In the 1830's the most easily worked sections of the Orrell seams in Clarke's Winstanley Collieries had been exhausted. The natural development, therefore, was to follow them down the dip, where to the south they were encountered at a depth of about 675 feet Pits such as Winstanley's Nos. 1 and 2 at the top of Well Brow, Baxter Pit, Windy Arbour Pit, and later Leyland Green Pit were sunk. In 1863 the Winstanley Collieries produced 39,000 tons of coal. As late as the 1880's coal was still being wound to the surface in baskets at Baxter Pit, whereas at Blundell's Pemberton Collieries these had been replaced by metal tubs some 30 years earlier.

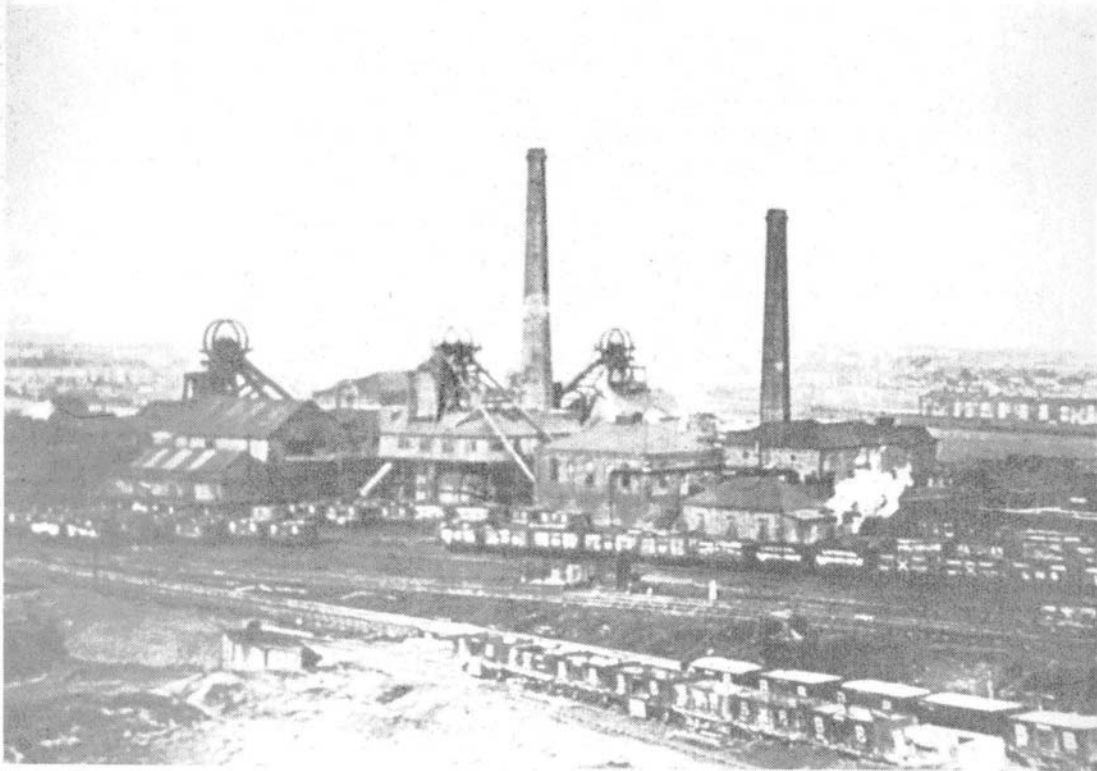
Working conditions for the miners remained harsh, and the standard of living Spartan. Between 1819 and 1826 some 50 people were killed in explosions in the Winstanley-Pemberton-Orrell area. Although the African slave trade was officially abolished in 1807, in 1843 placards reading, "Slaves, Stop and Read"! were posted around Wigan. As late as 1886 miners at Blundell's Queen and Bye Pits were working twelve hour shifts, and that did not include traveling time from the bottom of the shaft to the coal face, often a distance of several miles. In 1892 the output per man-shift at Pemberton Collieries was 28.9 cwts. The fact that 71 years later, at Summersales Colliery, the output with almost full mechanization was only 26.3 cwts. testifies to the productivity of strenuous manual labour in the earlier days.

During the 19th Century many colliery railroads were built It was in about 1823 that Wigan Pier, made famous by George Orwell and George Formby, was constructed on the Leeds-Liverpool canal. It was, in fact, a small promontory with a hook mechanism (known as a spout or tippler) where coal in the wagons on the Winstanley Colliery railway was emptied into the canal barges. The railway from Pemberton Collieries terminated at another pier about two hundred yards farther along, just to the west of Seven Stars Bridge. This railway had a long straight incline along what is now Victoria Street At this time, both the wagons on the railroad and the barges on the canal were pulled by horses. The horses often had a free ride down to the canal, but earned their oats by pulling the wagons back up the incline. It was only in the 1870's that a new generation of steam locomotives was introduced at both the Pemberton and Winstanley Collieries and were given such names as "The Queen", "The Pemberton", and "Eleanor" (the name of Squire Bankes' wife), and later "Billinge", "Winstanley" and "Bess".





6. "Billinge", one of the Winstanley Colliery locos.



7. Pemberton Collieries showing King, Queen and Prince pits.

In 1848, the opening of the Bury to Liverpool railway provided a further outlet for coal from the Pemberton and Winstanley Collieries. The Winstanley Colliery Line was branched near Langley Farm and from there ran down Well Brow, across the road at Pony Dick and through the Summersale. It connected with the main line at Winstanley sidings, a few hundred yards to the west of the Hayes Bridge. Many hair-raising stories are told of locos tearing down Well Brow, sounding their whistles as they picked up speed. On the way back, however, they often failed to reach the top of the steep incline and had to roll back and try again. The chamfering of the south-west corner of Ryland's Mill Bridge was done to prevent further accidents after a loco driver was seriously injured when his leg was caught between the bridge and the footplate. Across the road, at Wigan Lodge, a large and particularly well grown holly hedge was destroyed when it was set on fire by sparks from one of the passing locos.

Public utilities and social services improved only slowly. Gas lights had been introduced in Wigan in the 1830's, but it was August 1880 before a narrow gauge tramway was opened between Wigan and Pemberton. A sewage works was built the following year. In 1873, seven years after cholera had killed 30 people in Wigan, The Royal Albert Edward Infirmary was opened. In 1875 Wigan still had the highest birth and death rates in the country. At the turn of the century, in 1907, The Carnegie Library was opened..

At Pemberton, it was the sinking of the King and Queen Pits that led to really large quantities of coal being mined. To work the high quality Orrell seams, which outcropped at the surface in Winstanley, a shaft 1,908 feet deep had to be sunk at Pemberton (Figures 6 and 7). Above the Orrell seams were 17 other beds of coal, which is one reason why Pemberton Collieries prospered on that particular site. Output from the Collieries increased dramatically from about 50,000 tons in 1860 to 385,000 tons in 1875, and to a peak of 738,000 tons in 1913. The cost of sinking the new shafts and of the surface buildings was high—£88,600—but then the profits were also high. Sinking of the Prince Pit did not commence until 1898.

In addition to being self-sufficient in energy the Collieries also sold large quantities of by-products and chemicals, Blundell's employed some of the top men in the country as managers and consultants and the Collieries were technologically advanced for their time. Even so, coal cutting machines were introduced only in 1902. At their peak the Collieries boasted some 4,700 pit tubs and 2,000 railway wagons, 15 miles of sidings, and a surface area of about 85 acres. Air was circulated underground at a rate of about 270,000 cubic feet per minute. Each year one and a half million bricks were produced. The total number of workmen employed was 2,800. The ponies kept underground numbered 270, except during the long strikes when they were brought up to pasture. It required an extensive operation to maintain

stables underground, with feeding and grooming facilities. Most of the ponies, although virtually blind, could find their way about the pit and, on occasions, have saved men's lives by their sharp instincts. These ponies were "run-in" blindfolded along Foundry Lane, where metal tubs running over cobblestones made a horrible clattering noise.

As the mining and cotton industries grew, so did the local population. Nearly all the terraced houses in the Parish were built between 1865 and 1910. People from other parts of the country came to live in the area, including miners from Staffordshire and Cornwall. Memories of the latter are preserved in "Cornish Row", the terraced cottages in Billinge Road nearly opposite the station yard..

In 1900, Blundell's Pemberton Collieries were turned into a private limited company—The Pemberton Colliery Company Limited—and this was sold in 1929. During the first quarter of the 19th Century it was the largest colliery in Lancashire.

Output of coal at Winstanley Collieries increased at a more modest rate from 39,000 tons in 1863 to 150,000 tons in 1880. In 1897, however, Leyland Green Pit (Mackies) was sunk and during the Great War employed about 200 men. Coal ceased to be mined at Leyland Green in 1927. Bankes' Winstanley Collieries were leased in 1885, and the Winstanley Colliery Company existed until 1928, at which time ownership of the pits became fragmented.

The last tub of coal was raised at Pemberton Collieries on 3rd November, 1946. Summersales Colliery produced coal from 1944 until March 1966 and Windy Arbour and Pony Dick Collieries until the 1970's. In fact, in the 1950's and 1960's Windy Arbour was the largest private pit in the country, producing 1,100 tons of coal a week.

In a mining community accidents have always been accepted fatalistically as part of life, but a number of tragic events stand out in the history of the Parish. In 1860, thirteen men were killed in an explosion in Baxter Pit. In 1865 William Greener, manager of Pemberton Collieries for the previous eleven years, was killed at Rainford Colliery. His successor, incidentally, was another Durban man, William Watkin, who is remembered in "Watkin's Brew", which is now a pathway from Ravenswood Avenue, across Smithy Brook, to behind Woo( Cottage, the traditional residence of the manager of the Collieries. On 11th October, 1877, an explosion in the King Pit killed thirty-six men, including William Watkin. Such a major accident caused much distress, but Co Blundell made what was at the time generous provisions for the dependent. The use of explosives was then discontinued for many years, and coal was dug with the aid of only picks, shovels and wedges. Another manager of the Collieries, William John Greener, was killed in the Bye Pit on 1st February 1897.

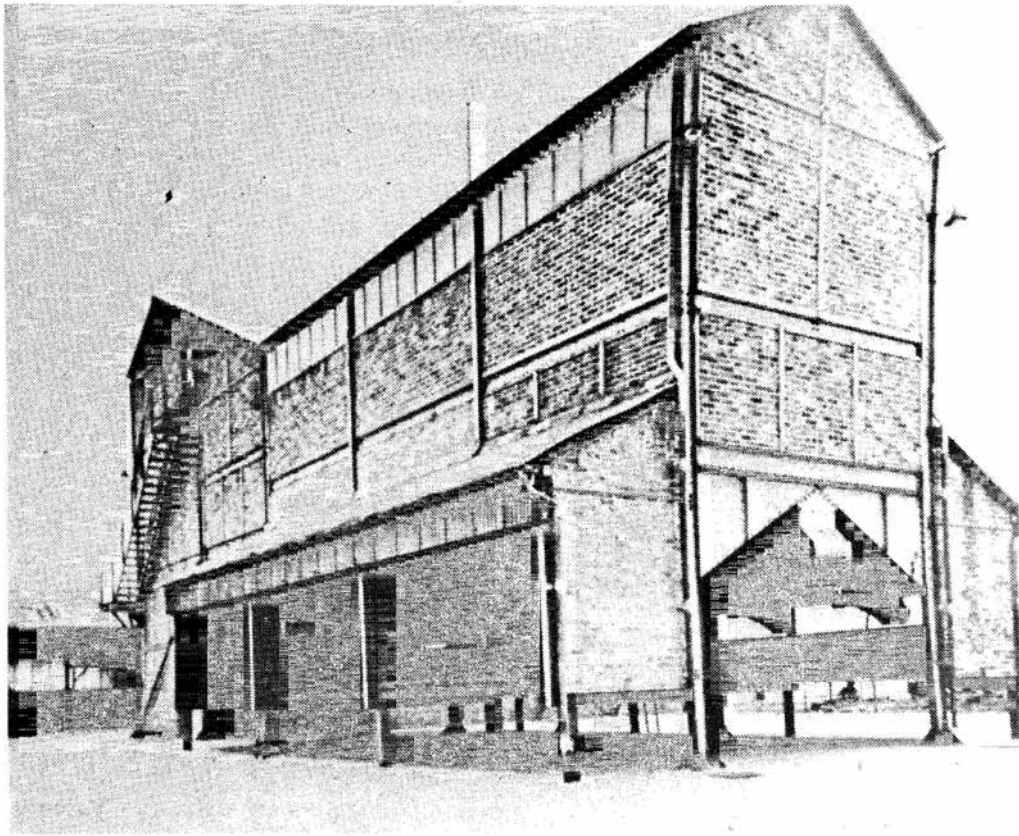
## Recorded Colliery Explosions in the Area

Date	Colliery	Fatalities
21.7.1814	Lamberhead Green	7
1819-1826	Pits in Pemberton, Orrell and Winstanley	50
4.4.1830	Blundell's Pemberton Colliery	9
26.4.1831	Pit in Pemberton—Orrell area	17
19.12.1831	Pit in Pemberton—Orrell area	28
6.10.1842	Pit in Pemberton—Orrell area	28
20.11.1843	Winstanley Colliery	5
24.4.1852	Norley Colliery	12
-7.1860	Baxter Pit, Winstanley	13
21.12.1868	Norley Colliery	7
11.10.1877	Pemberton Colliery	36

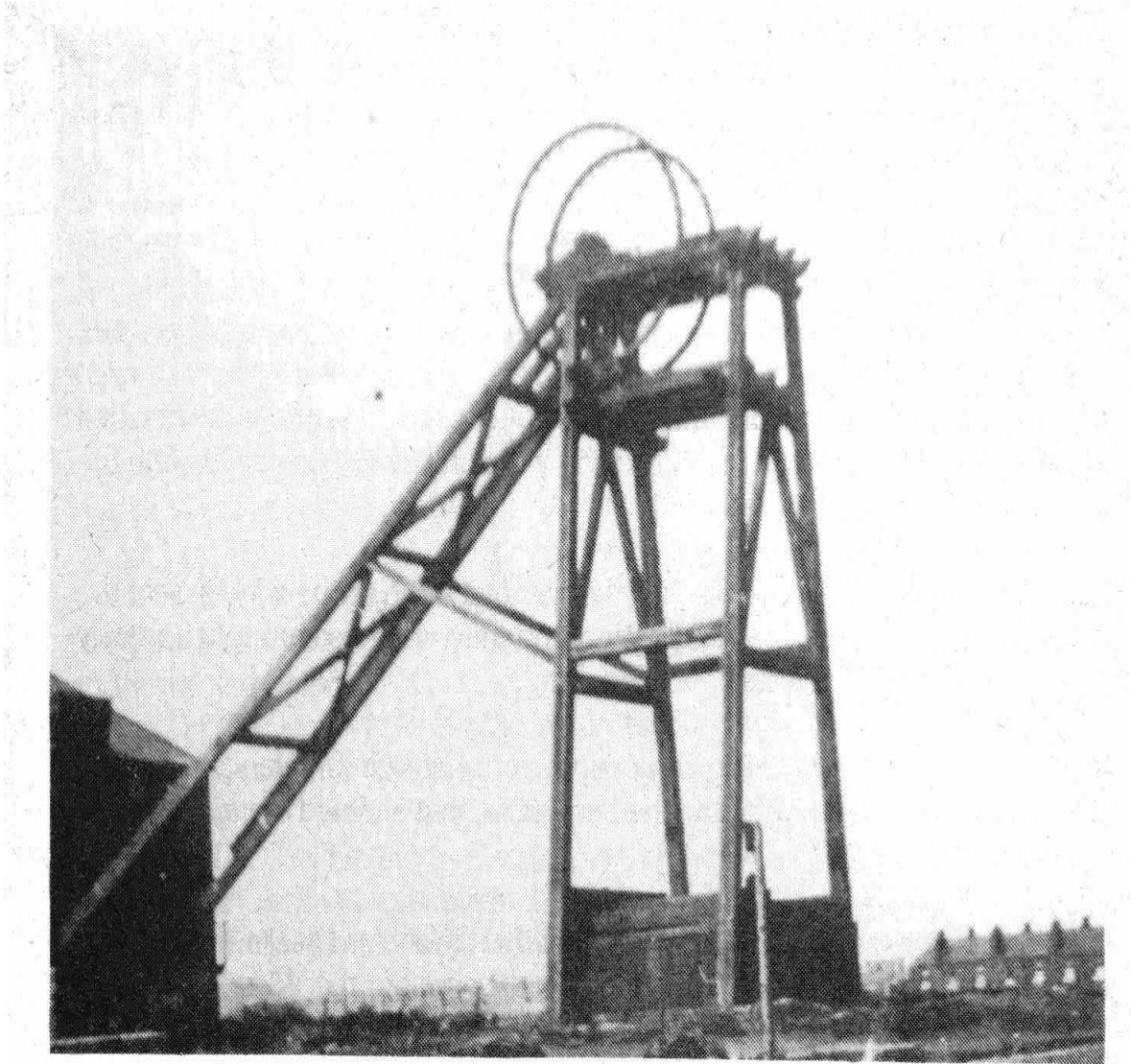
In 1910 the Pemberton New Venture Pit was started. It took three years to sink the shaft 600 yards to the Lower Mountain Mine. About 200 yards down, a mouthing had been left in the brickwork to enable a particular coal seam to be worked at a later date. Similarly, further down the shaft another mouthing had been excavated for the Middle Mountain Mine, about 60 yards from the bottom.

By April 1913, operations were under way to get coal, and the Lower Mountain Mine had been followed for about 200 yards. The Middle Mountain Mine was also being worked. In the Top Mine work was underway to drive a tunnel upwards to another mine, which was known to have two roads driven into it from another pit some half mile away. The last shot to be fired in this mine broke into the bottom of one of these old roads and released an enormous torrent of water, which had collected in the old workings. The men working there heard the water and immediately raced towards the shaft. They had great difficulty maintaining a hold on the pit props, and were in danger of being swept down the shaft by the flow of water and the debris carried with it.

When the men in the Middle Mine found out about the water, they also made a dash for the shaft. What they found was a torrent of water gushing past them to the pit bottom.



8. Summersales Colliery ca. 1955. Coal was produced here from 1944 to 1966.



9. Headgear of the Pemberton New Venture Pit. Photographed in the early 1930's.

The men in the Lower Mine quickly realised that something was wrong when the direction of the air flow reversed. One man was sent to investigate and soon reappeared, shouting, "There's a whole loto' watterflowin dehnf shaft!" There was a mad scramble to the pit bottom, about 150 yards away. By the time the 13 men got to the shaft, the water was up to their necks.

Fortunately, at this time a metal water tank was in use in the shaft to remove water from the sump at the pit bottom. The tank was held by chains. By this time, the winder and other men at the surface knew that something was wrong, as they had received an urgent signal from the Top Mine to hoist the tank up there. The men from this mine, where the water was pouring in, climbed into the tank and were taken up to safety. The tank was then sent down again to the Lower Mine. If the usual wooden hoppit had been in use, this would probably have become detached from the winding rope as it hit the water at the pit bottom; but the metal water tank remained intact. The men at the pit bottom, now in total darkness, had great difficulty locating the tank and climbed aboard. The signal to take up the tank was "three and one", but as they tried desperately to give this signal, the wire snagged and a signal of only two was given. The winder was aware that this was the signal to lower, but, fortuitously, he used "a bit o' common" and realized that this could not be what the men at the pit bottom wanted. After waiting for a few seconds, he decided to bring up the tank and all thirteen men were brought to safety through the falling water—frightened, wet, but unhurt.

Having saved the men who were in the greatest danger, the winder sent the tank down to the men in the Middle Mine, and they were also brought up safely through the torrent of water.

It was, in fact, a combination of unusual, fortunate circumstances and the quick thinking of the winder and the banksmen that enabled a major disaster to be averted.

The pit was subsequently abandoned, but the Orrell Yard seam was worked seventeen years later through two tunnels driven from the Wigan Five Foot Mine in the King Pit. The capped-off shaft of the New Venture Pit can be seen near the Triangle Valve works on Lamberhead Green Industrial Estate. Another near miss was the collapse of about 7,000 tons of stone at Ashcroft's Delph on 14th April, 1894. Fortunately, the men had just stopped work and had moved away from the quarry face. Nobody was injured, but some machinery which had been in use only a short time before was buried; the cost of the damage was about £1,000.

During the history of the Pemberton Collieries there were a number of disputes and strikes, and these resulted in severe deprivation and suffering in the

community. In July 1893, the colliers were told that their pay was being decreased by 25 per cent. When they refused to accept this, they were locked out. Soup kitchens were opened at the Blundell's Arms, the Railway Hotel, the Pony Dick Inn, the Half Way House, the Hare and Hounds and the Castle Inn in Little Lane. Food tickets were also distributed. Four months later, in November, the colliers begrudgingly returned to work at the old rate of pay; but membership to the Union dropped after this dispute.

There were similar protracted strikes, or lockouts, in 1905, 1912, 1921 and 1926. During these last two strikes ponies were brought up "to t' leet" and put out to graze at Parbold and at Winstanley. At this time miners started to dig for their own coal in shallow pits in various parts of the area. It was known that coal occurred very close to the surface in Blundell's Wood, at Pony Dick, and this soon became the scene of many small mining operations. The wood was virtually covered with holes and mounds of dirt, each operation being well guarded to prevent other miners from taking over. Many crude, and generally not very safe, mini headgears were constructed, usually from trees chopped down in the wood. This timber was also used for pitprops. Haulage in and out of these holes was mainly achieved by the direct physical efforts of the wives and children of the miners. Even though dirt from Pony Dick Colliery has obliterated most of the evidence, some of these holes can still be seen. Similar evidence is also discernible in Barton's Wood, near the "Poacher".

"Coal picking" from colliery waste tips was, even until very recently, a traditional means, of keeping the home fires burning. By selling the excess coal, it was also a source of income.

It was evident that much of the history of the Parish is tied closely with the struggle by working class people to gain respectability and to improve working and living conditions. With weak and inefficient workers' organizations, the miners in the early days had to resort to bargaining by riot. Reforms and improvements came slowly. In 1841 the National Miners' Union was formed, and in 1860 the Mines Regulation and Inspection Act was passed. It was in 1868 that The Trades Union Congress was formed, and three years later The Trade Union Act was passed. In 1873 the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners Permanent Relief Society was formed, although almost sixty years were to pass before silicosis was recognized as an industrial disease and compensation granted. The passing of The Employers' Liability Act in 1881, and the formation of The Miners' Federation of Great Britain, provided further solidarity for the miners.





10. Pit Brow girls about to join a deputation to London.  
Left to right—Lizzie Bradshaw, Polly Gee, Mary Barton, Alice Hopson

During the early days of mining especially, the miners were exploited as the long hours, dangerous conditions and low wages show. It would be quite possible that a boy, or girl for that matter, having been employed in the mines from an early age, could be physically burned out by the time he or she reached the age of 30. But this was the beginning of the industrial revolution, the population was increasing rapidly and with no unemployment benefits it was perhaps even more important than today that people should have jobs. The mine owners and later the mill owners provided these jobs.

Later, as Blundell's Pemberton Collieries grew, especially with the sinking of the Queen and King pits, people from many different parts of the country came to Pemberton to find work. By the standards of the day (which were not high), the miners made a reasonable living.

By the 1920's and 30's the supply of labour exceeded demand, which meant that the employers always held the whip hand. It was not unusual for a man to be dismissed from his job for the slightest infringement, and also other members of his family might also be dismissed, even though they had nothing to do with the incident Economic and financial interests as dictated by the owners and their managers often over-rode considerations of human welfare and dignity. In this respect Blundells were perhaps no better than other mine owners; however, in other ways they did much for Highfield in that they built a church, schools and recreational facilities.

A year that stands out in the memory of old timers is 1903. This was the year when Pemberton Old Band ( The Band, formed in 1890, was originally known as The Blue Jackets, and First took part in competition in 1895. It was also known as The Rappit, which is possibly a Corruption of The Rat Pit) won the National Brass Band Championship, playing the "Triumphal March" from Elgar's "Caractacus". It is said that it was late at night when the Band returned from Belle Vue, Manchester, and everybody, was in, shall we say, a vibrant mood. As they marched along Wallgate, playing the Triumphal March, some told them to make less noise. Being an obliging group of fellows, they all took off their shoes and continued their Triumphal March in stocking feet After this, the civic dignitaries must have realized that they could no longer exclude these Lombragreeners, for in 1904 Pemberton, with a population of about 23,000, became part of Wigan.

Pemberton Hospital, which is still in use today, was opened in 1886 and used mainly to treat consumption, or T.B.

Electric power for the Pemberton and Highfield area was generated at the Pemberton Electric Works, off Billinge Road, and this was opened in 1902. The capacity of this plant was 900 KW with three boilers available, but only two were

used at any one time. For the financial year 1905-1906 a total of 572,104 units were generated, and this increased to over one million units the following year. The building was later used as a rope making works, and latterly by Lord and Sharman Limited for the manufacture of footwear.



11. An early walking day at Highfield. Pemberton Old Band passing Cornish Row.

In the early days of the cinema, "animated pictures" were shown at The Carlton which is at present Unit Four. The music was provided by Man Aspey, who flitted rapidly from piano to organ in order to maintain the mood and tempo of the scene. The seats were wooden forms, and there was no heating. Customers, therefore, often wore overcoats and rested their feet on "bed bricks", which they took with them to keep themselves warm. Before World War I, children could go to the pictures on a Saturday afternoon for only 1d. One event that occurred at The Carlton deserves an Oscar for outstanding performance. The story goes that in the newsreel of the sinking of The Titanic, hundreds of people were seen bobbing up and down in the cold waters in the north Atlantic, in a desperate effort to hold on to life. Man Aspey, with his usual coolness and sense of occasion, was playing, "Watch them shuffle along"!

Around the turn of the century, not much emphasis was placed on hygiene, and it was not unusual to see meat on display in front of the butcher's shop. Of course, at that time, there were very few cars and little lead pollution from petrol. There were, however, many horses and horse droppings and the latter would dry out and be blown, along with dust and flies, onto the meat.

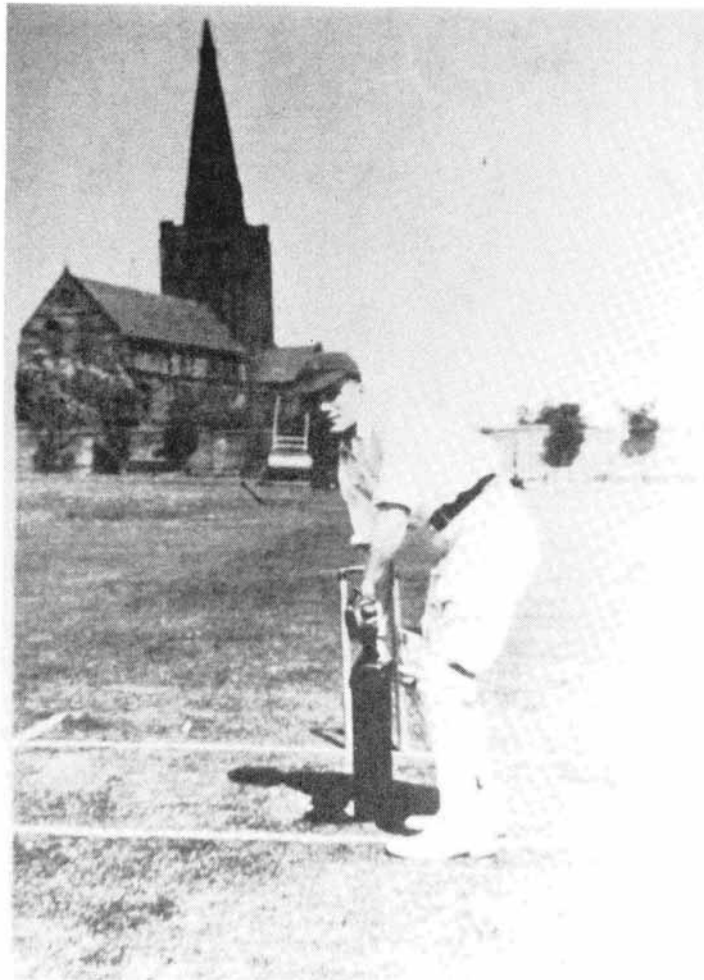
Recreational pursuits have for many years been dominated by sporting activities. Rugby league football, soccer and cricket have been the major team sports, but even before the turn of the century Highfield Harriers and Highfield Athletics Club were holding competitive meetings. In May 1895, an athletic festival, promoted by Highfield Athletics Club, was held on what was described as the new ground adjacent to Pemberton Station, presumably the open land behind the Railway Hotel. This must have been a major event, since over 2,000 people attended and athletes from many parts of Lancashire took part.

Rugby league teams from schoolboys upwards all have enviable records, but the best known is Highfield Rugby Football Club. Originally the Club played in a league comprising the "A" teams of the major clubs. The ground was originally behind, and to the west of, Tunstall Lane. In 1921—22 the Club made an application for full Rugby League status, but it was decided that the ground was not big enough. By incorporating a field between Billinge Road and Queen Street, it was possible to increase the size of the ground by turning the pitch at right angles, and in the 1922—3 season the Club entered the Rugby League as Wigan Highfield. The first match was played against Wigan, who were the victors. Because of alterations to the pitch, one half had well established turf, and the other relatively long grass. After the Wigan match, a cartoon appeared depicting Jim Sullivan peering out through head-high grass, trying to find the goal posts. The Club soon moved to White City, London, as London Highfield and was probably the first Rugby League team to play under floodlights. The Club later moved back north, to Liverpool, and before World War II had a very good team as Liverpool Stanley. The club today is known as

Huyton.

Numerous noted rugby players have been associated with Highfield in one way or another, and these include: Ken Gee (Wigan); Tommy Bradshaw (Wigan); Bill Derbyshire (Warrington); Billy Cunliffe (Warrington); Stan Langshaw (Rochdale); Bob Smith (Leeds); and Jack Maloney (Liverpool Stanley), all of whom were internationals.

Cricket in the area has been at local league level and there has always been considerable rivalry between Highfield and Winstanley Park Cricket Club. Names which are frequently mentioned are: John Heaton; Harry Stretton; Jimmy Anglesea; Jack Prescott; and Bill Ashurst. It should also be noted that two Wigan Rugby League stars, Billy Boston and Mick Sullivan, played cricket for Highfield.



12. John Heaton batting at Highfield.

There have been numerous soccer clubs in the area and the Highfield Football Club dates back to at least 1881.

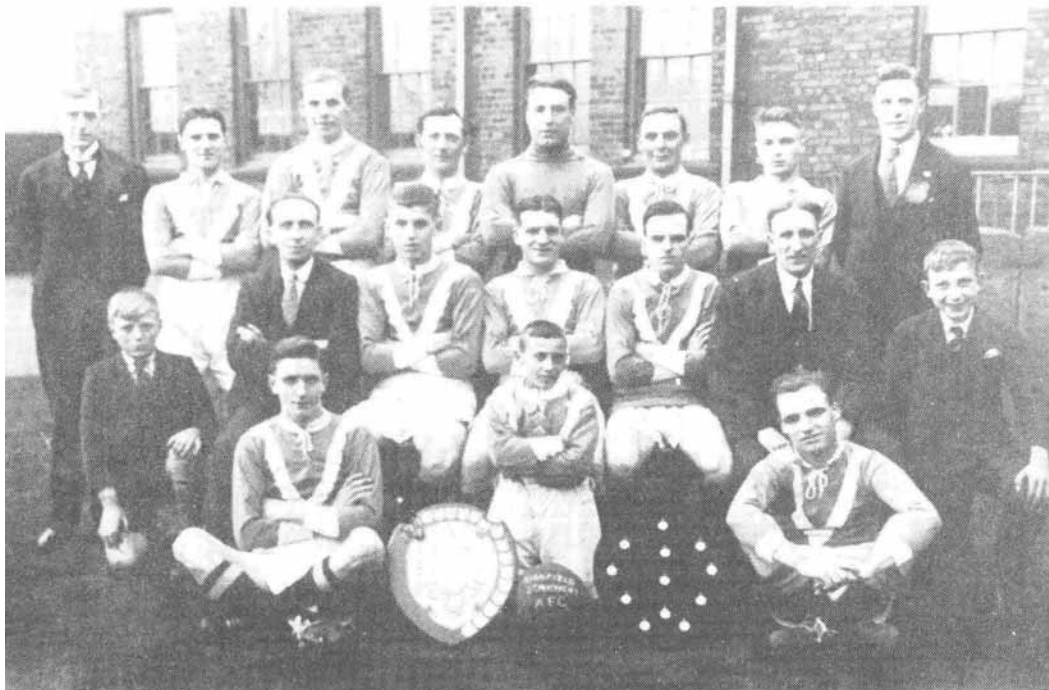
Crown green bowls was played on the subscription bowling green at Blundell's Arms from 1881 and from the 1890's at Highfield Club, where Wigan Metro now maintains the greens.

On a more individual basis, pigeon fancying and angling have been traditional leisure activities. In the olden days bear baiting, cock fighting and ferreting were common pastimes. Perhaps the most physical of all the sports was "porring", or up-and-down fighting. This was a no-holds-barred fight between two men using fists and clogged feet. There was one such match in 1876, on the field by Ryland's Mill. After fighting for over half an hour, the victor had kicked his opponent into unconsciousness. The winner was upset, not for having laid out his "friend", but because he had been bitten. He slunk away without saying a word, carrying his prize: a new pair of clogs.

The farm and the mill at Pony Dick have already been mentioned. The wheelwright's shop and the Favourite Pony Dick Inn (also known as the Favourite Pony Inn and Pony Dick Inn, and earlier still The Horse and Jockey) were located where today Ribbesford Road joins Billinge Road. For many years these establishments were run by successive members of the Starkey family, whose descendants still live nearby.

In about 1830 William Starkey came from Cheshire and was put in charge of the horses and stables on Winstanley Estate. Records held by Joseph Starkey include a rent book for the Inn, dating from 1837; so it was probably at this time that William Starkey became landlord. The Inn was previously called The Horse and Jockey, but sometime in the mid-19th Century the name was changed to The Favourite Pony Dick Inn. This was in honour of a white pony that belonged to Squire Meyrick Bankes. When the pony died in 1841, at the grand old age of 36, he was buried in the animal sanctuary near to the Hall.

It was in 1830 that the then-young Meyrick Bankes married Eleanor Starkie, from Knutsford, Cheshire. It is a moot point whether the above-mentioned William Starkey was related to Eleanor. Little is known about Eleanor and, in a history of the Bankes Family, Joyce Bankes makes minimum reference to the marriage, and absolutely no reference to Eleanor after the marriage.



13. Highfield St. Matthew's A.F.C. ca. 1929 Carter shield winners.

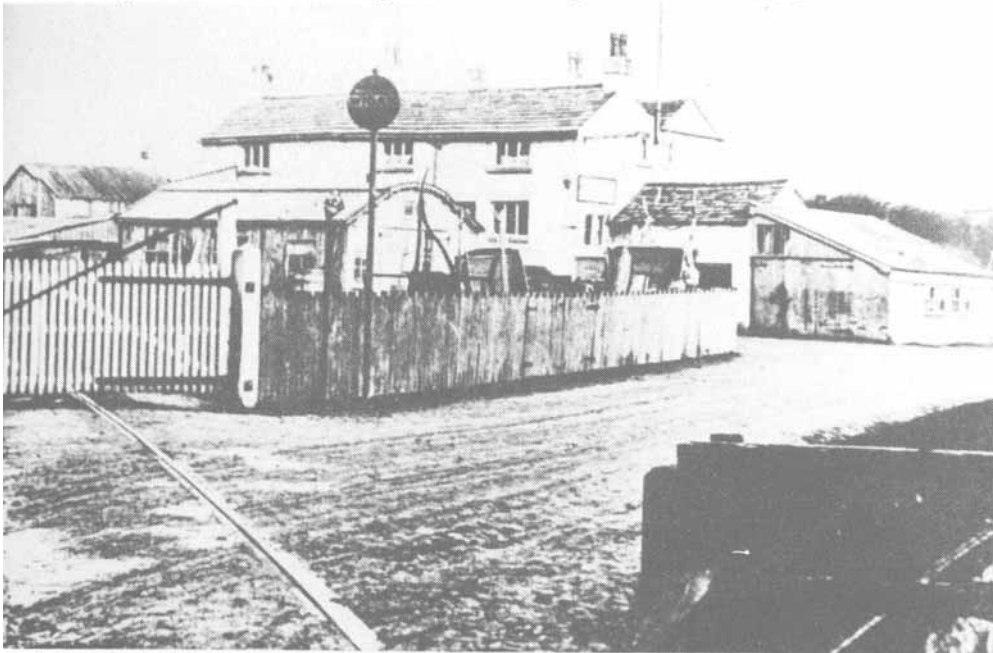
Meyrick, known affectionately as "th' owd squire" had a reputation as an eccentric. It is said that on coming home from Scotland he ordered two of his men, riding on the back of his coach, to blow post horns all the way from the present site of Highfield Church to Winstanley Hall, so that all would know that he was back and everything would be in readiness for him.

He was also reputed frequently to wear old clothes, and on one occasion, when he had bought some land a considerable distance from Winstanley and the tenants did not know him, he dressed in his old clothes and asked for money. Those who gave him money were later rewarded by being given ten times the amount in return, but he subsequently refused to acknowledge those who had ignored him.

The ponies and horses became accustomed to turning in to the Pony Dick Inn, where Meyrick was in the habit of calling for a few noggins; but when distinguished visitors were being chauffeured up to the Hall, the coachman had to pull hard on the reins to ensure that the animals turned to the Hall and not to the Inn.

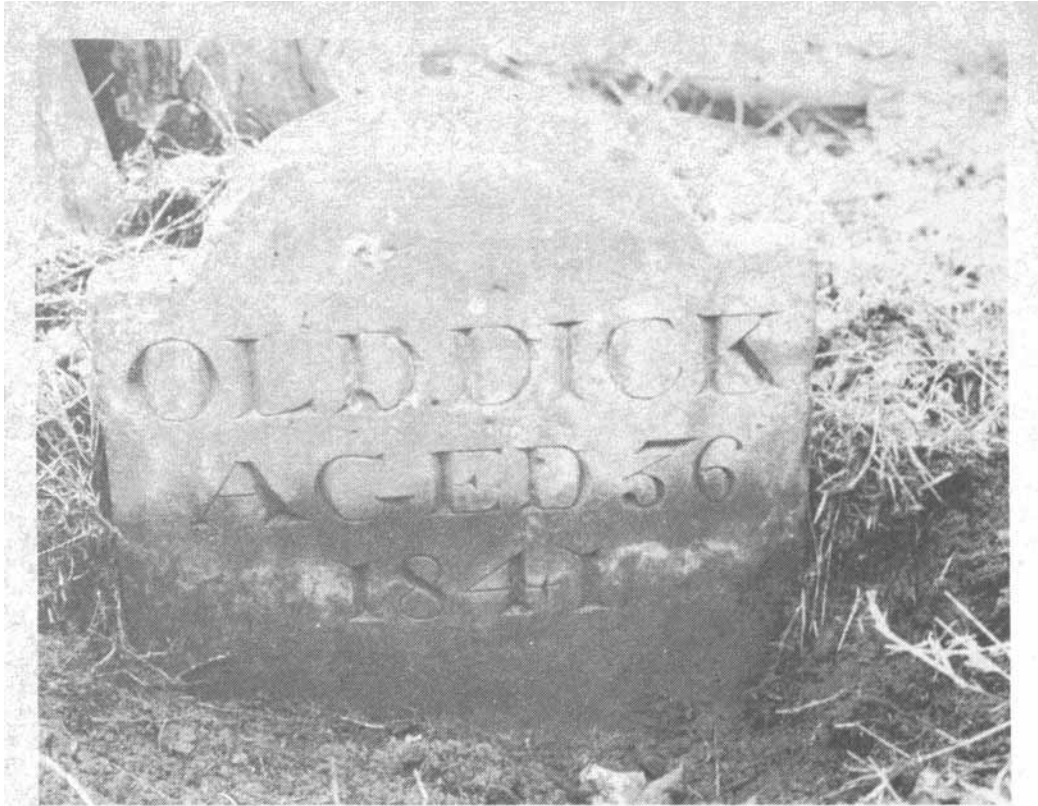


14. Highfield St. Matthew's Bowling Club. Churches league winners. Late 1930's.



15. 1923. Pony Dick Inn with the smithy on the right and the Winstanley Colliery line crossing the road, front left.





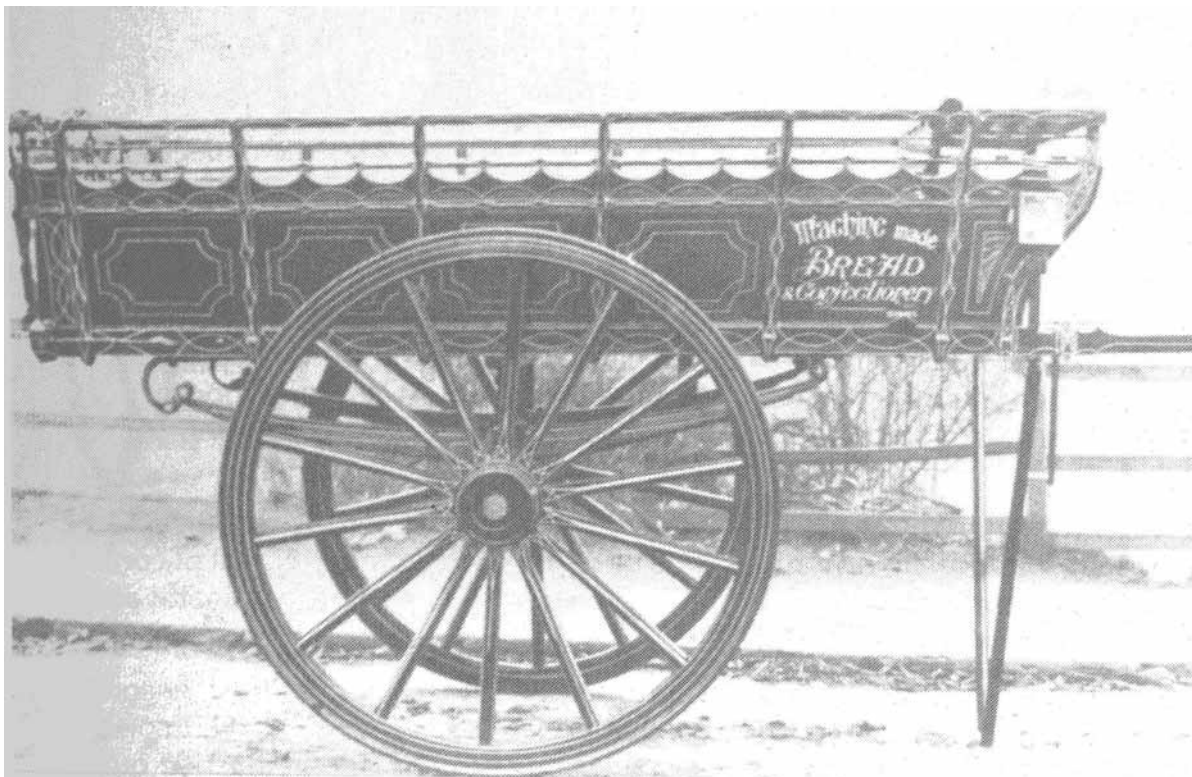
16. Gravestone of Pony Dick, Winstanley Hall.

It was during the 19th Century that many additions were made to Winstanley Hall, including, in the 1830's, the courtyard and the fountain of Father Neptune. During this period, the income from leasing mineral rights was considerable and the Bankes' went on a spending spree. In addition to buying an estate in Scotland (Letterewe, which in 1898 was sold to Lord Zetland for £70,000), much of Winstanley Estate was landscaped. Visiting dignitaries enjoyed themselves shooting and fishing, and Spring Pool Wood was said to be as beautiful as anywhere in England.

In 1887, to celebrate Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee, all the local school-children and friendly societies were invited to form a procession and spend an afternoon in Winstanley Park. The Lamberhead Green portion started in Church Street and walked to Pemberton Station, where they were joined by the contingents from Newtown, Goose Green and Highfield. The people from Orrell, Billinge and Bispham entered by the west gate. In all, about 7,000 children took part, 625 of whom were from Highfield and 175 from the Little

Lane area. Many other people also made their way to Winstanley Park, and in all over 15,000 people attended. The weather was fine and a good afternoon was had by all, listening to the many bands, dancing and participating in games. Later in the evening many of the people went to Pemberton Collieries, where a massive bonfire was lit. Fires were also lit on all the major beacons in the area on that night.

The wheelwright's business next to the Inn at Pony Dick was run by James Starkey, grandson of William Starkey, the first of the Starkeys to be landlord of the Inn. After being apprenticed to James Hesketh in Wallgate, he started business at Pony Dick in 1889 when he was 20 years of age. There was no power supply to the buildings and all the work was done by hand—true craftsmanship. James Starkey made new carts, shafts, lorries, floats, pig crates, barrows, cow troughs and wheels, and repaired ploughs, reapers, binders, spades, traps and churns. He had a reputation for excellent workmanship for miles around and his customers came from as far afield as Skelmersdale. He used only the finest English woods—oak, hickory and ash—and at agricultural shows and fairs he was awarded medals for his carts. It was the end of an era of skilled craftsmanship and horse-drawn carriages when the first Wigan Corporation bus arrived at Pony Dick in 1926.



17. A typical example of the high quality carts made at Pony Dick.

The Starkeys also ran an undertaking business, and served meals at the Inn. The upstairs room was used for meetings and as a club room, and catering was provided for the Picnic Club, the Children's Club, Foresters' meetings and the Winstanley Horticultural Society. The cost of providing dinner for one hundred children in 1902, before the days of high inflation, was the princely sum of £4-13s-0d, which was for 37 lbs. of beef, 3 legs of mutton, 40 lbs. pork, butter and sausages.

The Inn, owned by Bankes', lost its license in 1924, but continued as a private dwelling until it was demolished in 1954, having been occupied by the Starkey family for about 120 years.

In this type of community it was inevitable that a characteristic dialect would develop, typified in the following pieces of local folklore.

### **Owd Mo's Brokken Leg**

It was relatively quiet and uneventful day. A horse and cart loaded with buttermilk and eggs plodded slowly over the cobbles and a few people stood at their front doors, idly gossiping. In the background was the sound of nails being driven into clog irons at the dogger's shop. The peace, however, was not to last.

Suddenly, around the corner and into the street, came Owd Mo with an ancient bassinette loaded with umbrellas. The bassinette went careering out of control towards the horse and cart. Somebody shouted, "Stop yon bassinette afoor th' 'orse teks boggarts. Weer's Mo?"

The bassinette came to rest, overturned in the gutter, amidst assorted umbrellas and spokes. Owd Mo, who fettled umbrellas, was half sitting on the hard cobbles in a daze. There was much confusion as people dashed out to see what had happened, and when Bert looked he said, "Sithi, Owd Mo's brokken 'is leg."

"We'd best send fer th' ambulance, then," said Jem with deep concern. Bert cracked off laughing, which surprised everyone. "Nay, lad. It waint do thi' much good sending fer th' ambulance, ner a doctor neether. It's 'is peg leg wat's brokken."

Sure enough, Owd Mo's wooden leg lay on the ground, splintered..

By this time, a small crowd had gathered. "Wot con wi do wi' 'im?" asked Jem. Heads were scratched, then one owd codger, smoking his ration of thick twist, spat in the gutter and shouted, "Jem, run up fut bottom shop and tell um

tha' wants a barrer. Rush theer, and bi sharp back."

Young Jem dashed off to the "Bottom Shop", which was a woodworking shop, and returned in next to no time with a wheelbarrow. Jem lifted Owd Mo up like a baby, sat him in the wheelbarrow, and dropped the broken leg in as well. "Cum on, Mo. We'll soon 'av thi' fettled," he said, and trundled him off up the street to the bottom shop.

When they arrived, the foreman came out, took one look, then shouted back into the shop, "Win gotten a reet un 'ere, an a rush job's needed bi't look on it Bill, wilt cum an' 'av a look at this? Ah reckon tha' must bi't best leg turner wi' 'av."

"Hmm," said Bill, brushing sawdust off his overalls, "this could be tricky. Tha' shouldn't bi walkin' o'er f cobbles wi' a leg this shape, Mo, but if tha'll wait a bit, ah'll make thi' a graidly un."

Bill turned to Jem. "There's this nice bit of rosewood 'ere, but if ah polished that, ee'd 'av a red leg, and wi don't know 'is politics; but ee could play ont' wing fer Wiggin."

"It'll af fot bi oo-ak fer bravery, then," said Jem.

Just then the boss came along, picking his way through the shavings and sawdust Turning his back to Owd Mo, who was still in the wheelbarrow, and giving Bill a huge wink, he said, "Is this 'ere piece of oo-ak for yon gate wey an' on order? Carry on, and make sure tha' makes a good job on it" In a remarkably short time the new leg was made and fitted. Owd Mo, still a bit flummoxed, but rather proud of his new leg, thanked everybody and went off down the street to pick up his umbrellas—with a rather longer stride than before.

The demolition of the shops by Pemberton station encouraged Brian Lancaster to put pen to paper to recall childhood memories in the following poem.

### **Thoughts on a row of shops**

They've bin an gone an knocked it deawn  
Wot? Uncle Billies shop.  
Once they start wi them C.P.O.'s  
Tha doesn't know weer they'll stop.

But still they wanted knockin deawn,  
They've made a job aw reet.

It's safer neaw fur gooin skoo,  
Fort' kids in Enfield Street

Bein a kid in Enfield Street--  
That teks mi back a bit  
Wi two mills workin, gooin a treat,  
Un work at local pit.

An wi used to sheawt tut mill girls  
"Ast any 'bandin' luv?"  
Un if perchance oo fond a bit  
Tha near geet kilt int shove.

Cos bandin it wert finest string  
Fer use wi whip an top,  
An tha cudn't buy nowt better  
At any local shop.

We'd go deawn t' Uncle Billies  
For bags o' cherry lips,  
Then pop next door to Marwood's shop  
Fur three pence worth o'chips.

Arthur's penny 'specials' an a  
Penny a glass o' pop,  
Five loose cigs at Maggie Gaskell's  
Our local comic shop.

Kitt's off-licence—one eend ut row,  
A real dismal out-door,  
But on Skittle Alley's corner  
Marion's grocery store.

A row of shops, a way of life,  
All swiftly swept away,  
But happy childhood memories  
Will always with me stay.

Textiles have been spun and woven in cottage industries for probably at least as long as coal has been mined. On a commercial scale, however, the oldest recorded textile mill in the area was that built by Wilde, who also built Wilde's houses. This mill, built probably in the 1850's, is recorded as a woollen factory and was situated between the present site of May Mill and Wilde's Houses. This would have been a very small concern compared to the present May Mill. On

13th June, 1859, a fire destroyed the entire building and a messenger was dispatched on horseback to notify the police and fire brigade. Although the Wigan fire engine arrived in good time, considering it was horse-drawn, nothing could be done to save the mill, as no water was available. The site of this mill was eventually used for wagon fitting and paint shops by Pemberton Collieries.

In 1861 —2, a cotton spinning mill was built by Joseph Roper on the site of the oldest part of the present May Mill. Although this was operated by May Mill Spinning Company, it was generally known as Roper's Mill. From the commencement of operations until December 1884, all went well; but then another fire, which started in the engine house, destroyed most of the mill. The fire brigade was called, but again there was insufficient water to extinguish the fire.

In January 1887 (1887 is the date given in Wigan Observer records. Skinner's Cotton Trade Directory gives the date of constitution as 1889), a meeting was held at the Victoria Hotel in Wallgate, to consider proposals to form "May Mill Spinning Company limited", to build a new fireproof mill to replace the one destroyed by fire in 1884. A week later, an advertisement was placed in the Wigan Observer offering for sale 10,000 shares in the Company at £5 per share. On 25th March, 1889, the cornerstone of this mill was laid by Mrs. E.S.L. Bankes of Winstanley Hall.

In May 1890, the ceremony of christening the engines was performed by Mrs. Barrett, wife of the Chairman of the Company. The names chosen for the two main engines were Louisa and Helen. Steam to drive these engines was from two 30-foot by 8-foot high pressure Lancashire boilers. The mill was lit throughout by electricity, generated on site by a Parsons dynamo.

One of the special events in any year was the annual works outing, and in June 1894, many employees of the mill went by train from Pemberton Station to Rhyl, Colwyn Bay and Llandudno. In the following year, the trip was to Liverpool.

At the half yearly meeting of the shareholders, held on 28th January, 1897, at Blundell's Arms, Mr. Henry Clayton, Chairman of the Board, announced a dividend of five per cent, with £200 carried over. Also on the agenda was the election of a successor to the late Mr. Joseph Roper, who must have died during the latter part of the previous year.

The final (western) part of the new mill was started in 1900 and the memorial stone was laid on 16th May by Mrs. E.A. Partington, wife of the Chairman of Directors. It was completed in 1902.

The company was reconstituted in 1920, when the directors were A. Burns, J. Wild, A. Piggott, W. Martland and J. Clegg. The authorised share capital was £600,000 in £1 shares, with a subscription of £300,000 at 10/- per share. The dividend for 1920 was 10 per cent tax free, but no dividend was paid during the next two years, presumably because of the slump in trade. At this time American cotton was being spun on 75,340 spindles.

In about 1930 the company became part of the Lancashire Cotton Corporation Limited, which was constituted on 23rd January, 1929. By 1950, this company had 48 mills, which included May Mill, Empress Mill at Higher Ince, Coppull Ring Mill, Mavis Mill at Coppull and Trencherfield Mill in Wigan.

In 1946 May Mill had 77,964 ring spindles, but by 1948 this had fallen to 72,984. Although these numbers represent installed spindles, it is not clear if these were all in use. Between 1960—1962 the mill was converted to electric ring spinning frames.

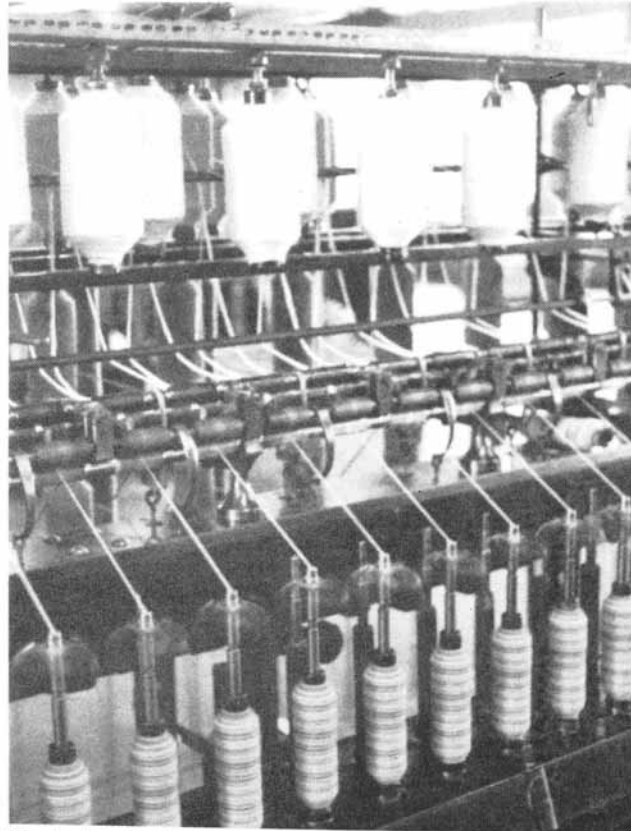
The mill was eventually taken over by Courtaulds in 1962—3 to produce carpet fibre and this it continued to do until the final closure on Friday, 17th October, 1980.

The original 1902 engine, which developed 1500 H. P. at 62 revs. and had a 28 foot diameter flywheel, was finally scrapped in 1964.

For many years the Venture Lodge was used as an emergency water supply for May Mill. The lodge was connected to the mill by a cast Iron pipe, which possibly still exists. This was routed under the Factory Pad (an old colliery line which ran along the outside of the western edge of the cricket field), and on to the mill. The joints in this pipe were made by driving in dry wooden wedges, which expanded when wet to seal the joint.

At the invitation of the assistant manager, Mr. Bill Crank, we visited the mill in September 1980, as, it should be noted, total novices in the ways of textile spinning. Although we expected to see some old spinning machines, we were very surprised to find so many still in use; in fact, there was very little new machinery. Many of the machines were pre-1920, and some dated to about the turn of the century. Slubber and drawing frames were said to be part of the original May Mill equipment These were made in 1902 by Howard and Bullough of Accrington. Numerous carding frames by Platt Brothers of

Oldham were dated 1905, 1907 and 1920, but some of these had been converted to suit Courtauld's needs. Fly frames, also made by Howard and Bullough, were dated 1915. The scutchers made by Platt Brothers, were built in 1921 and 1924. Cone winders by Geo. Hattersley were made about 1950. Perhaps the most modern machines were ring spinning frames, dated 1967.



18. May Mill 1980, shortly before the mill closed. This spinning frame had been converted to spin two coloured thread.

It is a credit to the manufacturers that these machines have given such long service, and that other mills are still using similar machines. It could also be argued that this has been a contributing factor in the decline of the textile industry. There has obviously been very little investment in modern machinery, and it is difficult to believe that these mills could be truly competitive using such antiquated equipment.

May Mill was the last cotton spinning mill in Wigan. Following the mill closure, the Industrial History Officer for Wigan Metro, Mike Haddon, obtained several of these machines, which would otherwise have been sold for scrap. These are at present in storage, but will eventually be put on display, in working order. The



rest of the machinery has now been sold, much of it for scrap, and the mill, like so many other textile mills, now lies empty (June 1981). The fate of the building is at present uncertain, but it is extremely unlikely that it will ever again see textile production.

Although 17th October, 1980 had been designated as the official closure date for May Mill, the management and staff had a farewell lunch in the works' canteen on the 16th. Following this, many of the staff partook of liquid refreshment at Frank Oliver's hostelry, the Railway Hotel, returning later to continue the party. By this time it was more like a Christmas party than a farewell to their jobs, but it was noticeable that some were near to tears. Mr. Bill Crank, the assistant manager, was obviously very well thought of by the workforce, and the fact that the respect was mutual was evident in one of his parting comments: "They are a first class workforce and I shall be sorry to see them go."

The last manager was Mr. Fineberg, and the accountant Mr. Stringman. Not to be forgotten, the last "Miss May Mill" was Janet Sweeney.



19. Farewell party at May Mill, 16th October, 1980. Bill Crank, the assistant manager, in the centre.

In addition to spinning, there has also been weaving in the area. On 12th February, 1907, Pemberton Manufacturing Company Limited was formed for the purpose of erecting and working a weaving shed, to be sited to the west side of Enfield Street, on land leased from the Earl of Ellesmere. The share capital was £20,000 in 4,000 £5 shares and £3,000 in £1 preference shares. The directors were James Bentham, who was chairman of Bradley Manufacturing Company Limited, Richard Gore, a grocer from Pemberton, Henry Home, a mill manager from Aspull and Henry Martlew, a provisions dealer from Pemberton.

By December 1907 Enfield Mill was in course of erection. It was planned to have 400 looms and a workforce of 200, with facility to expand to 1,000 looms if required. The contractors were Massey Brothers and the architect was R. Pennington of Wigan.

The official opening ceremony took place on 23rd September, 1908. The engine house was opened by Miss Jeannie Gore, a daughter of the Chairman, and the engine was named after her. The weaving shed was opened by Miss Martlew, daughter of another director.

In the early 1920's the company still had 400 looms in operation and was producing casements, cambrics, repps, muslins and voiles. By 1950 there were 500 Cooper Brothers' looms and a cloth width of 32—54 inches was being produced. The fabrics woven there included bandage cloths, calicoes, cambrics, casements, domestics, Doria stripes, plain gauze, limbrics, Fine muslin, poplins, printers, repps, royal ribs (light), splits, voiles and Wigans. During World War II Enfield Mill contributed to the war effort by making, amongst other things, cloth for barrage balloons.

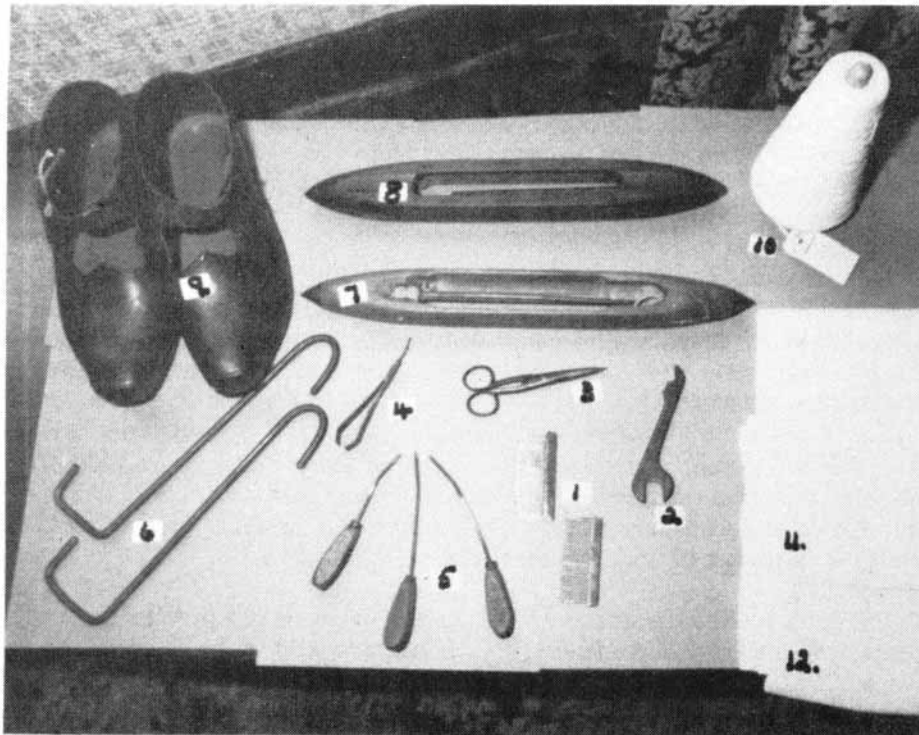
The mill finally closed on 11th December, 1975, and the lodge, which was originally dug out by hand, has now been filled.

When Lamberhead Green Industrial Estate was built, soon after World War II, Ingram Textiles commenced operations there and in 1950—1 were producing furnishing fabrics, repps and light upholsteries. Like so many companies in this field, they eventually folded. Remploy, however, which originally produced candlewick products, has been able to diversify and continue operations on the same estate.

Working in the textile industry, especially in the days of maximum cotton production, was never a healthy occupation. Respiratory diseases were common. The heat generated by the machines created a high temperature environment and this was exacerbated by the artificially high relative humidity (not less than 78%), which was required to prevent the yarn from breaking. The

machines were sited as close together as possible, and noise was a serious problem. Until recently no ear protection was provided, even though the noise levels were so high that many of the mill girls could communicate only by lip reading.

The closure of these mills effectively brings to an end the reign of coal and cotton, which for so long played key roles in the development of the community.

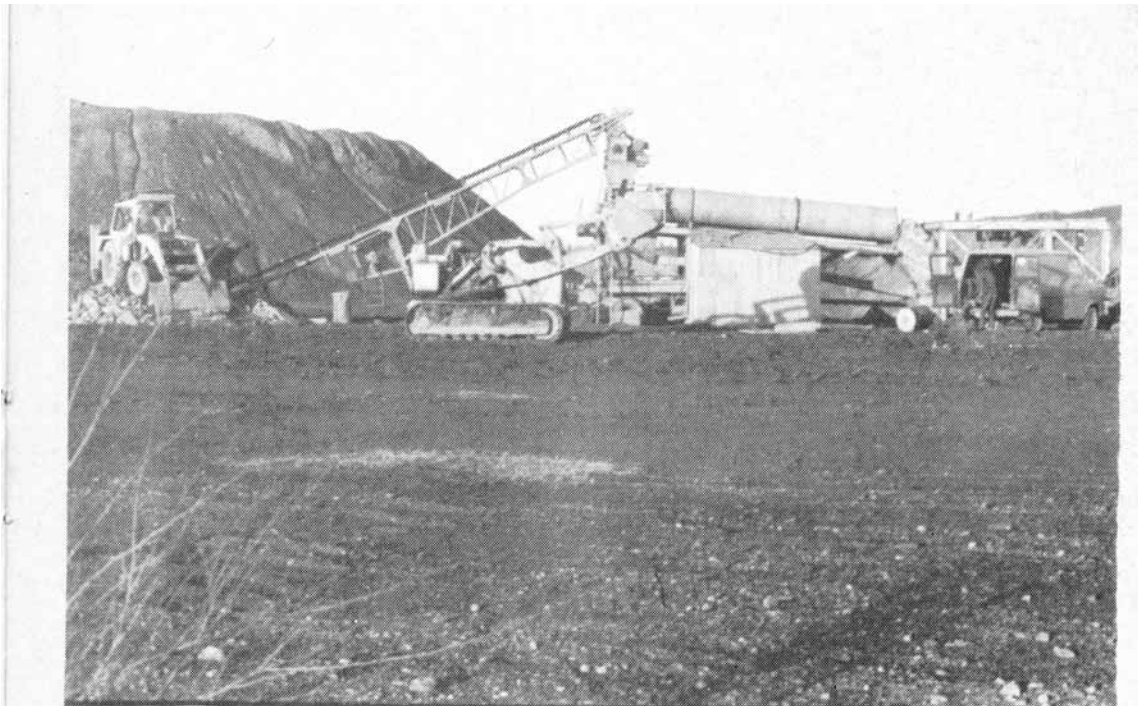


20. Collection of items from Enfield Mill, by Mrs. L. Lancaster.

- (1) Unweavers. The coarse one was for open weave materials such as bandage, and the other for finer materials.
- (2) Temple key.
- (3) Scissors. These are over 100 years old and have been used by weavers in the family throughout that time.
- (4) Pickers.
- (5) Three reed hooks.
- (6) A pair of weight hooks.
- (7) Self-threading shuttle.
- (8) "Kissing shuttle", so known because of the way the cotton was sucked through to thread it.
- (9) Working clogs.
- (10) Cone.
- (11) Finished cloth. Calico.
- (12) Finished cloth. Egyptian.

## V. THE PRESENT

The past 35 years have been marked by the virtual disappearance of the traditional coal and cotton industries. The sound of clog irons clattering along the pavement with each change of shift, the sight of men's unrecognisable black faces and of women wearing shawls walking arm in arm have now become memories, as have lamp lighters, knockers-up, and milk cans. Just outside the Parish, Quaker House Colliery, not far from the site of the old Leyland Green pit, is still in operation as a private venture, and the N.C.B. Opencast Executive is mining Tanpit Slip, but these are the tail ends—or are they? There are sites within the Parish where, with modern machinery, it might be profitable to renew opencast mining. In September 1980, the N.C.B. announced an intention to carry out test borings on the old Pemberton Colliery site, with a possible view to opencasting in the near future. If this operation does go ahead, it will be the best thing to happen to this large area of waste and dereliction since Pemberton Collieries closed. Meanwhile, a coal reclamation plant, operated as a private enterprise, has been set up on this site to reclaim coal from the pit dirt and from the old coal dump, the latter having been used to store coal when opencast mining was in its heyday. This plant is reputed to be economic on a 16 percent recovery.



21. 1981. Coal reclamation plant on the old Pemberton Colliery site.

Because numerous coal seams either outcrop or run close to the surface in this area, opencast mining has been fairly extensive. The first site in the Parish was mined in 1943, in an area behind Highfield View that now encompasses Merton and Kinlet Roads. Old underground pillar and stall workings were exposed and tools, including a wooden shovel, were recovered. Further sites in Winstanley Park, around Hill House, and in the area around Harvey House and Tanpit Cottages to the south of the old Winstanley Colliery Line, were worked in the 1940's and early 1950's. The last site to be worked in the Parish was an area to the south west of Little Lane, in 1953—4.

In the earlier opencast mining operations land restoration was of a somewhat haphazard nature. Re-draining was often inadequate, fields contained large quantities of stones, and hedgerows were replaced by stark concrete posts and wire fencing. Now, the position is quite different. The Opencast Executive goes to great lengths not only to restore the land, but in many cases to generate a positive improvement. The prime example of this in the Wigan area must be the first Tanpit Slip site, which has recently been returned to agriculture.



22. Opencast mining 1940's.

Large parts of the Winstanley Estate were sold in 1951 and it was largely on this land, and on previous opencast sites, that new housing estates in Highfield and Winstanley were built in the mid-1960's and 1970's. The M6 motorway was opened in 1963, creating a man-made boundary to the Parish. The population of the Parish has increased dramatically over the past twenty years. New churches, schools and shops have been built, but part of the heritage of the Parish was lost as Rainford Cottage, Holmes House, Mellings, Highfield Farm and Highfield House were demolished in the process.

Since a very difficult period during and after the second world war when Winstanley Hall was requisitioned by the RAF., and opencast coal mining was tearing up large parts of the estate, the Bankes' have gradually attempted to repair some of the damage and to maintain agricultural land. Many trees have been planted and Island Dam, near to Windy Arbour, now provides relaxation and sport for many anglers.

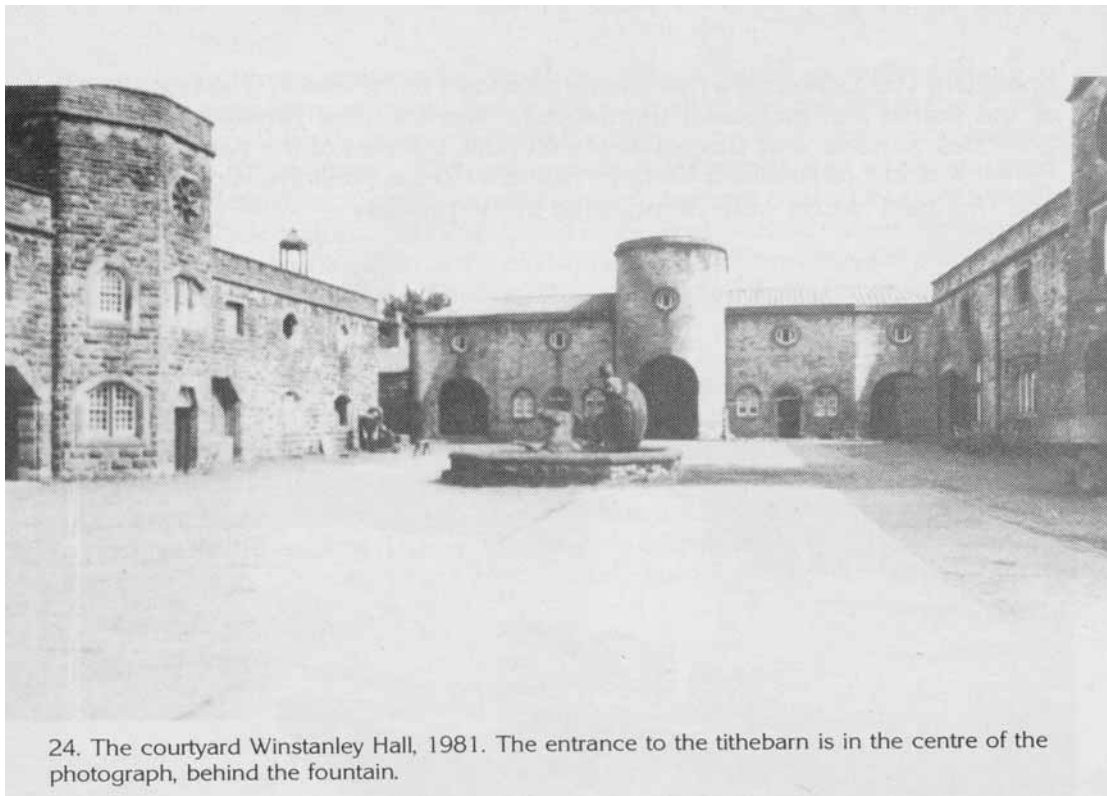


23. Holmes House farm and duckpond, ca. 1955.

Of

ficial attempts to preserve some structures seem to have little effect A check in November 1980 showed that some buildings were subject to preservation orders: these were Winstanley Hall, the tithebarn, the fountain, Wigan Lodge and associated walls, and Highfield House. However, the latter, which was built about 1780, has been demolished to make way for SL Matthews Close.

Winstanley County Primary School was built to accommodate the increasing number of young school children. Situated in Tanhouse Drive, the school was specifically designed for children in the 5-10 age group. The first children were admitted on 29th August, 1972 and the school was officially opened on 22nd November of that year by Councillor E. Cowser, then chairman of the Education Committee. The headmaster, Mr. B. Leigh, was appointed as early as 1970, in order that his views could be considered by the architects. The school was later extended, the work being completed in 1976. During this extension work, sealed canisters containing lists of the names of all the children and staff, coins and other artifacts were included in the foundations for recovery by some future generation.

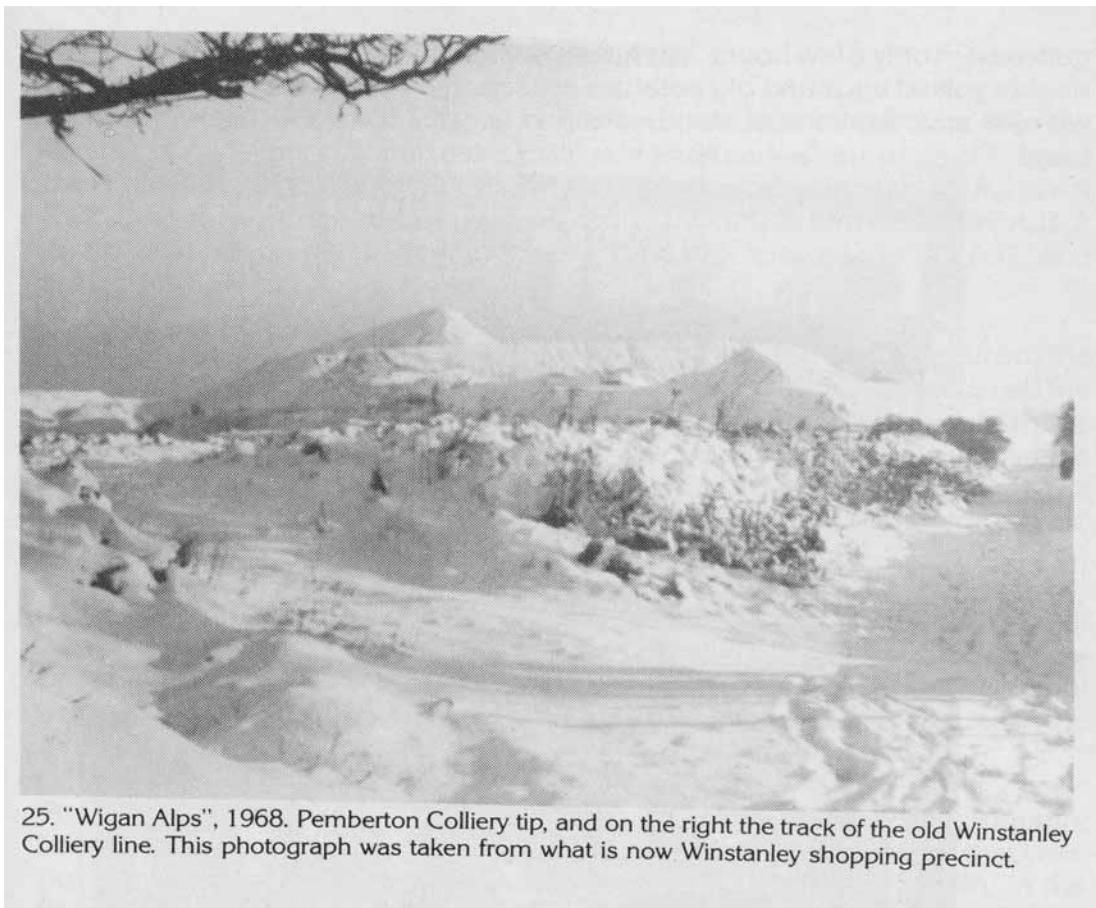


24. The courtyard Winstanley Hall, 1981. The entrance to the tithebarn is in the centre of the photograph, behind the fountain.



On the weather front, the winter of 1962-3 was severe. The many burst pipes led to a large increase in insurance premiums. The Venture Lodge was frozen to a thickness of 6-7 inches and provided some excellent skating over a period of several weeks. In the evenings the lodge was lit by mercury vapour street lights, which had been installed along Billinge Road in the late 1950's. When the Lodge was frozen over, the two swans which lived there for many years used to slide along the ice on their webbed feet as they touched down.

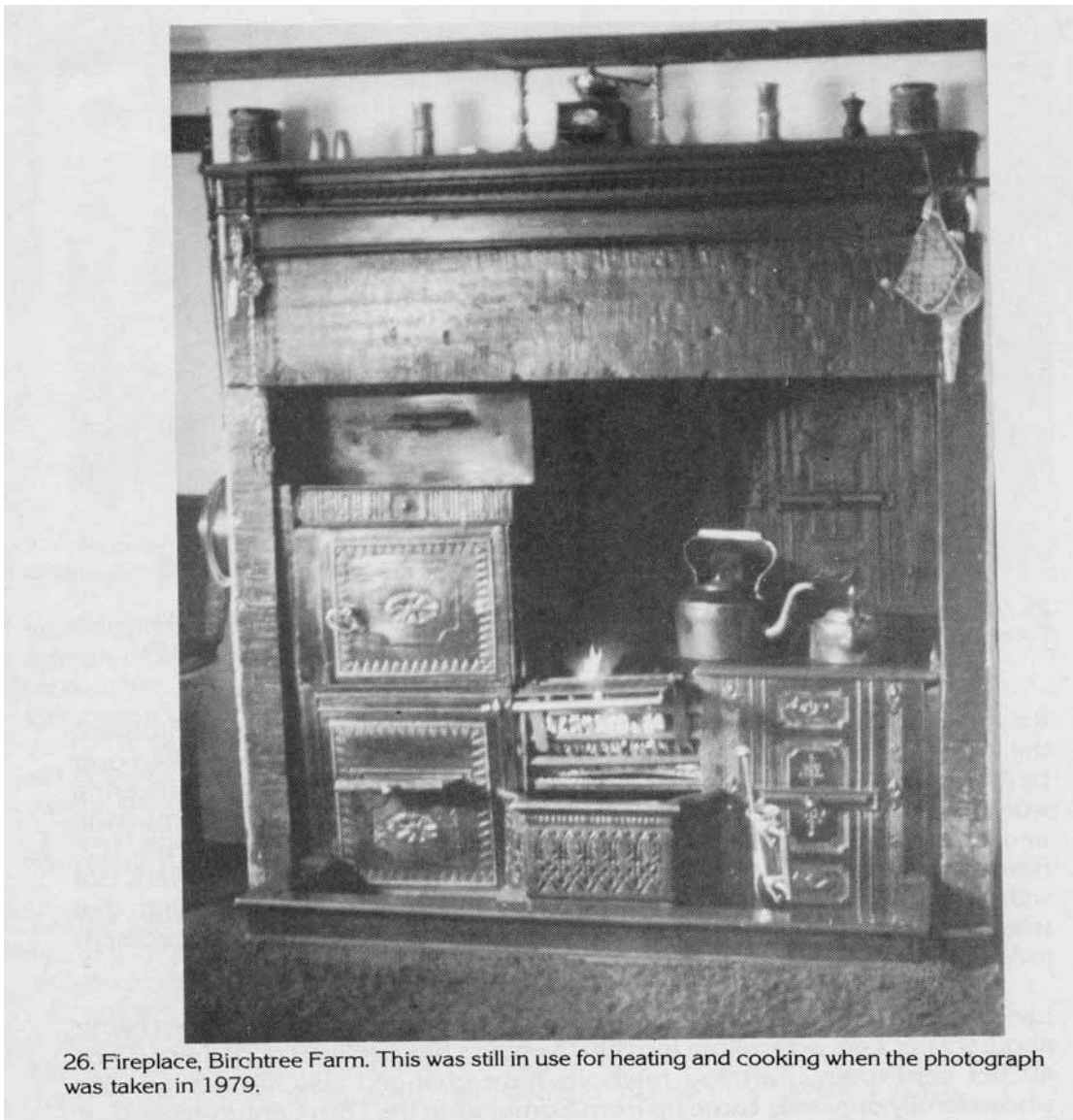
Land clearance for building, opencast mining, and the need for fewer and bigger fields to accommodate new agricultural machinery has resulted in the loss of many hedgerows and the associated flora and fauna. Not so long ago, dandelion and burdock pop was homemade from plants collected locally; but in the last three years only one burdock plant has been seen in the area, and this probably could not be used safely because of the danger of lead pollution from vehicle exhausts.



25. "Wigan Alps", 1968. Pemberton Colliery tip, and on the right the track of the old Winstanley Colliery line. This photograph was taken from what is now Winstanley shopping precinct.



It is not only the coal and textile industries that have changed. Massey Brothers, the long established firm of builders and coach builders, has been taken over by Northern Counties. Employment is now more diverse and light engineering works and service industries have been established on the sites of Pemberton and Summersales Collieries and along Little Lane. Outside the Parish, H.J. Heinz, which started production in 1958, and Reeds are major employers. But with 2.5 million people unemployed nationally, it is not surprising that unemployment in this old industrial area presents a particularly large problem today.



26. Fireplace, Birchtree Farm. This was still in use for heating and cooking when the photograph was taken in 1979.

Land use patterns within the Parish have changed dramatically too; from being about 95 per cent agriculture in 1850 the figure has declined to perhaps 35 or 40 per cent today. Farming methods have changed also. Sam Fouracre, whose family originally came up from Somerset in the 18th Century to work at Winstanley Hall, can remember his father working in the field until the early hours of the morning, scything corn by hand. It was only in the early 1950's that tractors came into regular use. As late as the 1960's, the two horses Prince and Duke were still turning hay for George Ackers on the field where Merton Road is today. Binders, too, were still in use, and the sheaves were "stocked" in the fields by hand, later to be carted down to the barn or stackyard and eventually threshed. But all that has disappeared. Machines now ensure that all is safely gathered in only a few hours. Machines pick spuds and spread muck too. Even double-yolked eggs and big potatoes are rejected because they fail to comply with the specifications of standardization

This is perhaps symbolic of a fundamental change that has occurred in the Parish, and in society in general: everything is much more standardized and uniform. There are fewer individual characters' within the community; and the Parish itself has lost some of its distinctive features.

## **VI. THE CHURCH**

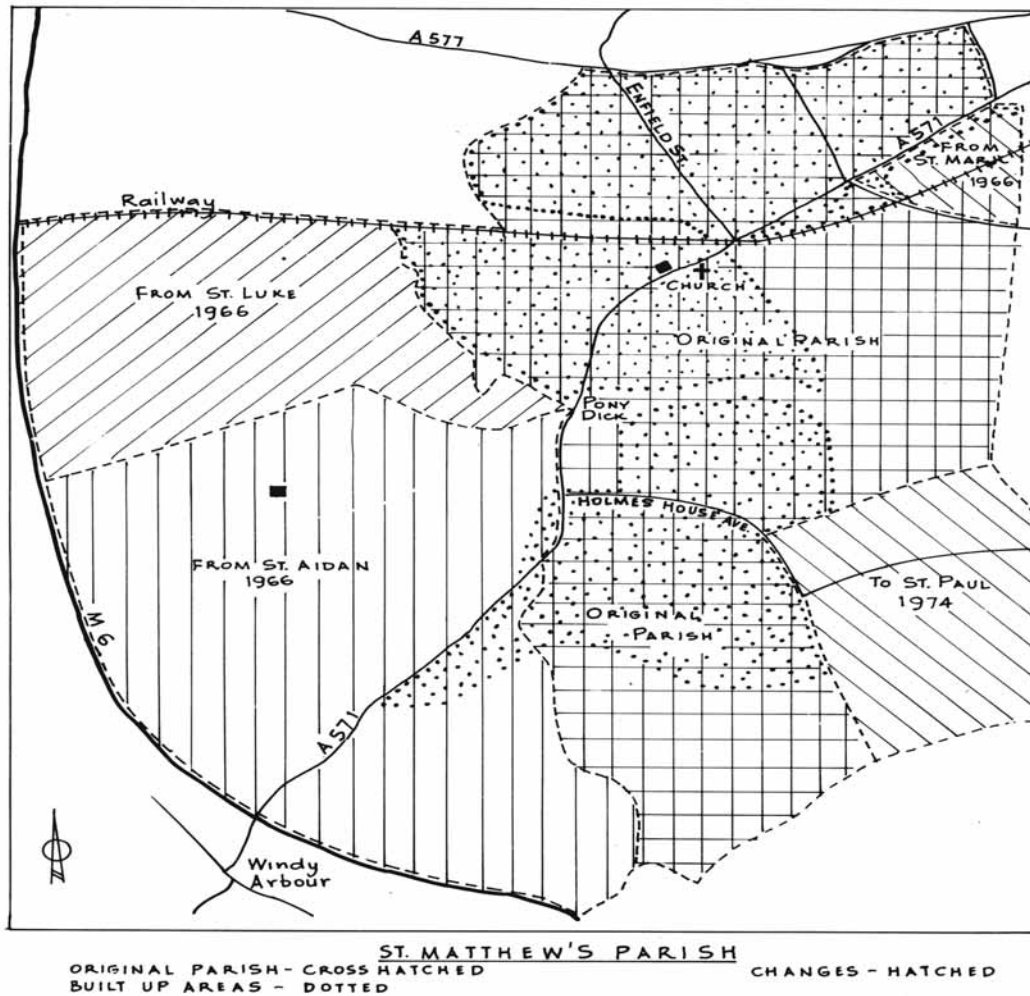
It is not known when Christianity was first introduced to the area, but the Church of All Saints in Wigan dates from at least as early as the reign of Edward the Confessor. Originally, the Wigan area, including what is now the Parish of St Matthew, came directly under Canterbury, which was formed in 597 A.D. It eventually became part of the Province of York, which formed in 627 A.D., and remains so today.

Wigan area became part of the See of Lichfield when this was formed from the Diocese of the Bishop of Mercia, in 669 A.D., although the bishops retained the seat at Lichfield until 1075 A.D. Soon after the Conquest, an order was made for all bishops to remove to the greatest cities. Peter, then bishop, moved his See (seat) to Chester and was styled Bishop of Chester. Robert de Linsey, the next bishop, moved to Coventry in 1095 A.D. A later bishop, Robert Clinton, moved back to Lichfield in the reign of Henry 1.

In 1539 the Bishopruck of Chester was one of six founded by Henry VIII out of the spoil of monasteries and religious houses after the Dissolution. Chester thus became separated from the See of Lichfield. In 1880 the Diocese of Liverpool was carved out of the Diocese of Chester, the Wigan area being included in the new diocese, which is as it remains today.

Previous to 1865, Highfield was included in the Rural Deanery of Warrington, but became part of the Rural Deanery of Wigan when it was created in that year. So, the Parish of St Matthew is part of the Rural Deanery of Wigan, in the Diocese of Liverpool and the Province of York.

Other parishes in the neighbourhood also have links with St Matthew's. (Upholland Church (Priory) was founded in 1307 by Sir Robert de Holland as a collegiate church, or chapel, with a dean and twelve canons. In 1319, the church was handed over by Richard de Langton, Bishop of Lichfield, to the Benedictines, who placed a prior and monks there. It was later made a chapel of ease to Wigan Parish Church, but in 1643 became a parish in its own right. At the Restoration, it again became a chapel of ease to Wigan and continued so until 1882, when it again became a separate parish, and has remained so since.



At Billinge, a church was first established in the early 16th Century, completely rebuilt in 1718, and enlarged by Sir T.G. Jackson in 1908. It is dedicated to St. Aidan.

The Church of St John, Pemberton, is known as a "Waterloo" church and was built in 1832 by Rickman and Hutchinson at a cost of about £5,000. Money was provided by the Government as a thanksgiving following the Battle of Waterloo. The Parish was created in 1838 from Wigan Parish.

In the mid and late 19th Century the rapidly expanding population was justification for creating new, smaller and more compact parishes. The Church of St James, Poolstock, was completed in 1866 by E.G. Paley, at a cost of about £13,000. The Parish of St Mark, Newtown, was founded in 1891 from St John, Pemberton, the church being completed in that year by Heaton and Ralph. In 1910 the Parish of St. Matthew was formed from the Parishes of St John and St James. The Parish of St Paul, Goose Green, was formed in 1915 from St Matthew, St Mark and St. James. The architects of the church were W. Chasen, Ralph and Son. The youngest church, that of St Luke, Orrell, was built by Austin and Paley in 1927, but the east and west ends were completed only in 1936.

On 16th May 1966, under the Mew Parishes Measure 1943, a scheme to change the parish boundaries was placed before the Queen by the Church Commissioners. This involved extending the Parish of St Matthew westwards to the M6 motorway, and taking in part of the Parish of St Luke, Orrell, and part of Billinge Parish. Also, on the north eastern side, part of the Parish of St Mark, Newtown, was annexed to St Matthew's Parish. Later, in 1974, an area encompassing Highfield Grange Avenue was annexed to the Parish of St Paul, Goose Green. The changes in the boundaries of the Parish of St Matthew are shown in Figure 8.

By about 1860 Highfield was experiencing what was almost a population explosion. At this time the area did not have a place of worship or a school of its own. However, in 1863 Miss Greener started a Sunday School at Pemberton Collieries, in the plate layers' cabin, which was a small building used by the colliery workmen as a reading room. On the death of Mr. Greener, about two years later, this work was continued by Mrs. Watkin, wife of Mr. Greener's successor as colliery manager. Apparently, the Sunday School was a success and attendances grew rapidly. This prompted Mr. Watkin to hold a Young Men's Class in the colliery offices.

In 1867 Colonel Blundell C.B. made a gift of a church/school to Highfield. This was an ironclad structure, situated at the junction of Foundry Lane and Billinge Road, and was known as the Pemberton Colliery Church School. This was

opened on 12th May by the Reverend Arthur Coates, vicar of St John's, Pemberton. The stained glass Window was designed by a Mr. Hare, who was sometime colliery head surveyor and Sunday School superintendent, and the gothic style frame was made in the colliery carpenter's shop. The pulpit, lectern and communion rails were in yellow pine. During services the boys always sat on the south side of the church and the girls on the north side. The organ was eventually sold to the Mount Zion Methodist Church, after the new church was built School House, nearby in Foundry Lane, was built for the schoolmaster, and Ivy House (now known as IONA) was occupied by the curate, the Reverend S.L Laidman. He was followed as curate-in-charge by the Reverend T. Evans, who was married on 14th March, 1876 and finally left to take up a living near Windsor on 22nd August, 1881. From these beginnings, religion and education in Highfield have remained firmly intertwined.



27. Pemberton Colliery Church School at the corner of Foundry Lane. Built in 1867 and demolished in 1938.

It was on 23rd August, 1881 that the Reverend J. Wood entered upon his work in Highfield, and this continued until his retirement in November 1908. He died on 14th June, 1911. During this ministry the great event was the building of the present church. This was commissioned by Colonel Blundell as a memorial to his wife, who had at one time been a lady-in-waiting to Queen Victoria. The foundation stone was laid on 23rd April, 1892. The design was by the noted church architects Austin and Paley of Lancaster, and is regarded as a particularly good example of their work. They were regarded at that time as producing work of the highest European standard.



28. St. Matthew's Church, Highfield, before the east and south extensions were added.

This architectural partnership started in 1845 and until 1851 was under the name of Sharpe and Paley, but from 1851 to 1868 E.G. Paley designed alone. It was during this latter period that he designed the Church of St James, Poolstock. Austin ( 1841--1915) became a partner with Paley in 1868 and it was Austin who was said to have the superior design flair. The partnership subsequently became known as Paley, Austin and Paley and this is the name on the original drawings for Highfield Church. Paley died in 1895 and the name was changed again to Austin and Paley. This name is on the drawings for the extension to the church.

Many of the original drawings are in fact still preserved at the vicarage. However, this is purely fortuitous, since there was a directive to submit all records to Liverpool for safekeeping but, for some unknown reason, this was not done. During World War I the Liverpool Record Office was destroyed by enemy bombs and the records of many churches were lost.

Saint Matthew's Church is built from flecked Woolton Sandstone and has a crossing tower with recessed spire. The stone was brought by rail to Pemberton station and then carted the short distance to the site. The specification for the stone required that the whole should be selected from the best of its kind, perfectly sound, free from pebbles, rends, laminations or other defects. Where practicable, each stone was to be set on its natural or quarry bed. The final pointing of the exterior was to be of equal quantities of Portland cement and clean sharp sand, and that of the interior to be of fine light mortar. The timber specified for the nave roof principals and cornice was oak. For other parts of the roof structure selected pitch pine and Baltic red fir were chosen. The doors, seats and the floor blocks were to be of Riga Wainscot oak. The whole was to be cut from the log and die sawn, to be well seasoned and of the best quality of its kind, perfectly sound from sap shakes, large or unsound knots, wavy edges or other defects and applied in the most substantial and workmanlike manner. All timber was to be of the full strength specified, and all framing to be square jointed and put together with oak pins, the mitres and angles to be wrought in the solid.

Edwards plain red tiles were specified for the roof covering, with every fourth row nailed with two inch strong copper nails, two to each tile. The overall original dimensions of the church were approximately as follows:

Height	145ft
Maximum width N-S	64ft
Maximum length E-W	117ft
Maximum depth of foundations for main pillars	9ft
Height of tower to top of parapet	70ft
Height of main roof	45ft

Height above altar	40ft
Chancel arch 16 ft. between pillars and overall height	30ft

The church took two years to build. On 4th July, 1894 it was licensed and opened for Divine Service by the first Bishop of Liverpool, Dr. J.C. Ryle. The church register and the magazine both date from that year and a copy of an early issue of the magazine is held at the vicarage.

The breakdown of the cost of building the church is recorded in a letter by James Pickering, who was Blundell's commercial agent in Liverpool at that time:

	£.	s.	d.
Building contract	8,872-	1-	0
Heating apparatus	160-	0-	0
Draining and sundries	94-	10-	10
Architects fees	589-	11-	0
garble pavement	175-	0-	0
Bell and fittings	149-	7-	0
Pulpit	134-	16-	0
Dossal	18-	8-	0
Fence	36-	10-	9
 Total	 £10,230-	 4-	 7

The dossal was a back cloth behind the altar, which was subsequently replaced by the reredos.

28<sup>th</sup> September, 1906 was a sad day for the Parish, as this was when Colonel Blundell died. His funeral was on 2<sup>nd</sup> October.

The Reverend J. Woods entered his work in February 1909, and steps were immediately taken by Major Cuthbert Blundell, O.B.E. to have the church enlarged so that it could become a Parish Church. As already mentioned, the architects were Austin and Paley, and the surveyors Wright and Sons of Lancaster. Building operations on the western end commenced in October 1909, and the south side of the roof had to be supported by ten inches square wood props while the wall was removed and pillars built. The work was completed in July 1910, and this extension increased the seating capacity by 139 to a total of 500.



# Highfield Magazine.

JULY, 1895.

## BAPTISMS.

- June 9.—Alice, daughter of Joseph and Sarah Elizabeth Martindale, Ormskirk-road, Pemberton.  
 „ 9.—Joseph, son of Joseph and Sarah Banks, Ormskirk-road, Pemberton.  
 „ 9.—John, son of Hugh and Hannah Wallace, Chatsworth-street, Pemberton.  
 „ 9.—Walter, son of Thomas and Margaret Fletcher, Billinge-road, Highfield.  
 „ 23.—Nelly, daughter of John and Margaret Hughes, Tunstall-lane, Highfield.

## MARRIAGE.

- June 11.—At the Parish Church of St. John, Pemberton, James Starkey and Margaret Nixon, of Pemberton.

## NOTICES.

- July 6.—The Annual Field Day. Scholars will assemble at the Schools at 1.30 p.m. The Procession will leave the Schools at 2 o'clock with banners and band of music.  
 July 7.—The Annual Sunday School Sermons. Services 10.30, 3.0, and 6.30. Holy Communion at 12. The Preacher: Afternoon and Evening, THE REV. CANON BLUNDELL, M.A., Rector of Halsall.  
 July 21.—Holy Communion at 12 o'clock.  
 Field Day Hymns, 509 and 490.

## SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS AND HYMNS FOR JULY, 1895.

DATE 1895	REPETITIONS.		SUBJECTS FOR LESSONS.		MEN'S BIBLE CLASS. LESSONS.	CHURCH HYMNS.
	MORNING	AFTERNOON	MORNING.	AFTERNOON.		
4TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY, July 7th.	Collect and Rom. viii. v. 18 & 19.	Catechism, The Apostles Creed. Part 3rd.	Joshua iv. Lessons of Memorial Stones.	St. Matt. v. v. 21—32.	Exodus xiv. v. 19—29.	M. 569, 367, 362. A. 62, 568, 549. E. 331, Anthem, 403, 524.
5TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY, July 14th.	Collect and Pam. cxxiii. v. 1 & 2.	Psalm cxxiii. v. 1, 2 & 3.	Joshua xx. Cities of Refuge.	St. Matt. v. v. 35—48.	Exodus xv. v. 1—22.	M. 363, 426. E. 486, 447, 423.
6TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY, July 21st.	Collect and 1 Cor. ii. v. 9.	Micah vi. v. 8.	Joshua xxiii. His last Exhortation.	St. Matt. 6. v. 1 to 16. Alma, Fasting, and Prayer.	Exodus xv. v. 22—27.	M. 468, 547. E. 388, 559, 27.
7TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY, July 28th.	Collect and St. James I. v. 26 & 27.	Heb. xii. v. 2.	Joshua xxiv. v. 1 to 26. A Brief History of Good Service.	St. Matt. vi. v. 16 to 34. True Service.	Exodus xvi.	M. 353, 379. E. 333, 466, 29.
8TH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY, Aug. 4th.	Collect and Prov. iii. v. 5 & 6.	Catechism. The Lessons of The Creed.	Joshua xxiv. v. 26 to 33. Joshua's death.	St. Matt. xiii. v. 24 to 31. Parable of the Tares.	Exodus xvii. v. 8—17.	M 1, 212. E. 512, 490, 492.

## RAILWAY TIME TABLE.

	Sundays.	
Liverpool.....dep. 10 37	7 0	11 43
Orrell.....dep. 7 28	9 28	12 31
PEMBERTON.....dep. 7 42	9 31	12 35
Wigan.....dep. 7 41	9 7	12 36
Wigan.....arr. 7 56	9 25	12 50
Bolton.....arr. 8 16	9 47	1 0
Manchester.....arr. 8 34	9 55	1 18
Manchester.....dep. 8 37	9 58	1 21
Bolton.....dep. 8 57	10 18	1 41
Wigan.....dep. 8 57	10 18	1 41
PEMBERTON.....dep. 9 11	10 32	1 55
Orrell.....dep. 9 11	10 32	1 55
Liverpool.....arr. 9 26	10 47	2 10

Letters are despatched from the Highfield Post at 15 and 7.5 p.m. ST. MATTHEW'S S. S. CLOTHING CLUB. Receipts for June, 1894.  
 Boys.....£15 2 6 £16 14 9  
 Girls..... 30 13 3 48 8 9  
 Infants..... 5 9 6 9 15 0  
 Little Lane..... 1 19 3 1 4 10  
 Total..... 459 4 0 £464 3 4  
 Sick Society, June, 1894.....£1 3 11  
 „ 1895

Via Atherton Will stop at Orrell when required for Liverpool passengers

## HIGHFIELD MAGAZINE.

### THE FIELD DAY, HIGHFIELD, JULY 6th, 1895.

It has been found more than inconvenient to extend the procession this year to Winstanley, New-houses. It is a source of much regret, but it is reported from all sides that the toil of such a climb would not only exhaust the strength of the many small children in the procession, but also spoil, in respect of even those who are older, a great deal of the after pleasures, making it a labour instead of a treat. I hope the Winstanley friends may find it convenient to come down to Highfield to see the Procession, and so spare the feet of the little children the necessity of a severe climb. The Procession will leave the New Schools as soon as possible after two o'clock; will walk as far as Starkey's Houses, and then, returning, will go round by Enfield-street and Tunstall-lane to Wood Cottage.

The Field Amusements will be in the form of Races and other Competitions.

The Sports for the Juniors will come off first. These will be followed by races open to boys belonging to the first three classes of the Boys' School. The first prize is a watch; the 2nd prize, a book. Names to be given in to Mr. James Dyson six days, at least, before the event. The Seniors (Men of the Bible Class) are arranging other Races, &c.

For particulars apply to the Secretary of the Men's Bible Class.

### BLACKPOOL. CHOIR AND SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS' ANNUAL EXCURSION.

The above-named outing for this year is fixed for Saturday, July 20th. Provided all arrangements made at the Meeting on Monday, June 24th, continue satisfactory and possible, the Choir and Teachers will leave Highfield Schools in wagonettes at 6-30 a.m., and Wigan by rail at 7-15 a.m., arriving at Blackpool about 9, and leaving Blackpool at 8-35 p.m. One substantial meal will be provided at a convenient centre, and notice of further particulars will be given on or before the 20th July. It is much to be hoped that the day may be fine, and the outing thoroughly wholesome and enjoyable.

### ANNUAL INSPECTION.

#### HIGHFIELD SCHOOLS, JULY, 1895.

Notice has been received by the Managers of the Highfield Schools from the Education Department that these Schools will be examined and inspected on July 9th and 10th, when all children whose names are on the books should attend without fail. Full examination will be made of the Departments of Girls and Infants, but the examination of the Boys' School is waived for this year. This Department (Boys) will, however, have a short visit of Inspection on Tuesday, July 9th.

### ST. MATTHEW'S MEN'S BIBLE CLASS, HIGHFIELD.

#### REPORT FOR JUNE, 1895.

Rev. Sir,

The attendance for this month is very favourable, viz., 57.5 as the monthly average. I hope that members will try and increase this average.

The lesson on Sunday, June 23rd, was given by Mr. J. C. Townsend.

The Class is arranging Sports of different kinds for the Field Day, July 6th:—100 Yards Sprint Race (handicapped); Three-leg Race; Sack Race; Tag of War, &c. I shall be glad to give all the information necessary to intending competitors.

Officers for next six months—July to December: Teacher of the Class, Mr. J. W. Duddle; secretary, Mr. W. Richardson; Assistant Secretary, Mr. J. T. Powell; Treasurer, Mr. James Horrocks; Librarian, Mr. W. H. Roby; Assistant Librarian, Mr. W. H. Ashurst. Committee: Messrs. W. H. Ashurst, J. W. Green, James Stretton, W. H. Roby, Thomas Atherton, J. Tillotson, W. Derbyshire, Jas. Silcock. Library Committee as before. Probationary Sunday School Teachers: Messrs. W. H. Roby, W. H. Ashurst, J. W. Green, James Stretton, Thos. Atherton, James Rylance.

I remain, Rev. Sir,

Yours truly,

P. TABERNEE, Hon. Sec.

Rev. J. Wood,  
Highfield.



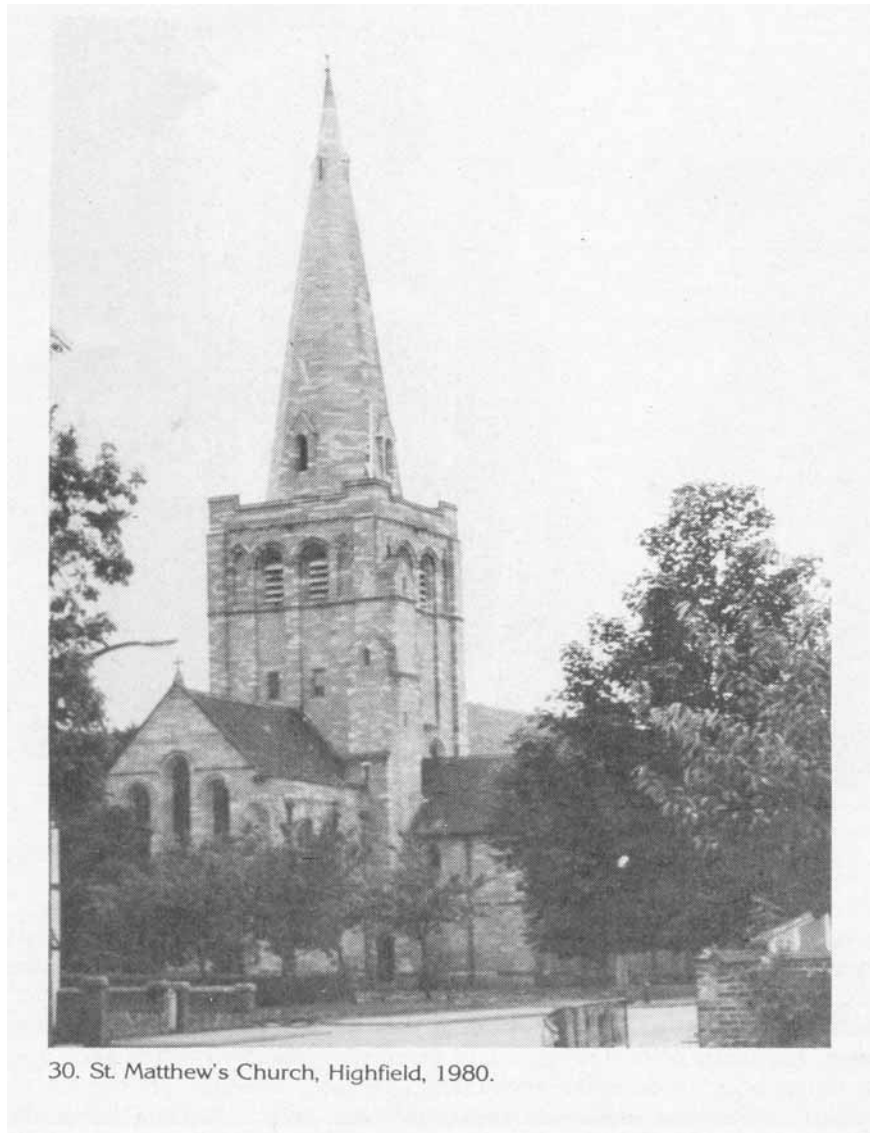
29. Colonel H.B-H-Blundell (left), and Major Cuthbert L.B-H-Blundell.

The consecration of the whole church was carried out on 22nd July, 1910 by the second Bishop of Liverpool, Dr. Chevasse. The church then had a parish assigned to it and the Reverend J. Woods was instituted as the first vicar on 20th October, 1910. However, at that date, the word 'District' and not Parish was on the register headings and Reverend J. Woods was referred to as "Incumbent". It was not until 29th December, 1910 that all the requisite arrangements were finalized and deeds signed for St. Matthew's to become a New Ecclesiastical Parish. The word "Parish" could then be used instead of District, and the Reverend J. Woods was entitled "Vicar".



From 1867 until the death of Colonel Blundell the full stipend of the clergy had been provided by the Colonel and later by Major Blundell. Eventually, Major Blundell made benefactions to the Commissioners, which were met by them so that the Benefice became endowed to its present amount.

On 13th June, 1913, in accordance with the will of Colonel Blundell, a piece of land (I rood, 21 yards and 3 feet) was given to the church for the site of a new vicarage. By May 1914, the vicarage house had been built and was dedicated by the Bishop of Liverpool. Major Blundell provided £350 towards the cost of the building, the other half being provided by the Ecclesiastical Commissioners.



30. St. Matthew's Church, Highfield, 1980.

The "Field Days" and "Sermons" have always been well supported at Highfield and years ago there were always two walks. The first was on a Saturday, starting from church at 2.00 p.m. and following the traditional route to Pemberton Station, along Enfield Street, Rose Hill, Spring Bank, Little Billinge Road, a stop at Pemberton Hospital to sing a hymn, and then back to the church. The older members then retired to the school for tea, while the children walked down to Wood Cottage, the home of Mr. Douglas, the colliery manager. There they sat on the lawn and Mrs. Douglas served tea from a large white enamel jug into cups carried by the children, who were also given cakes. After that, everyone went in procession to Winstanley Park via the entrance on Well Brow where, weather permitting, there was racing, dancing and a band to entertain.

The following Sunday was the annual Procession of Witness, otherwise known as the "Sermons". The route followed was as for the Field Day, but it was normal to engage four bands with so many parishioners taking part. In fact, given a good turnout, as the leaders of the procession turned into Rose Hill the last in the procession would be just entering Enfield Street at Pemberton Station.

During the Great War conditions at home became desperate and on 2nd May, 1917 a Royal Proclamation was issued demanding the immediate reduction in consumption of all forms of grain and flour and requiring all ministers of religion to read this to the congregation on four consecutive Sundays.

In 1923 land for a graveyard was given to the church by virtue of the will of the late Colonel Blundell, and this constituted 7105 square yards. The graveyard was consecrated on 8th September by Dr. Chevasse, Bishop of Liverpool. The church wardens at that time were W. Richardson and J. Starkey.

The scale of charges for marriages and burials in 1923 will give some idea of prices at that time:

Marriages after banns	4/-to minister	2/-to clerk
Burial at usual hour	3/6 to minister	1/6 to clerk
Burial not at usual hour	7/6 to minister	2/6 to clerk

For each burial there was also a charge to the sexton of 2/6d per foot.

It was also in 1923 that the Recreation Ground was opened and electric lighting was installed in church to replace the original gas lighting.

The large roller which is now almost a monument is at least as old as the recreation ground. It still has shafts for horse-drawn operation, and at one time the horse was stabled in a shed on the bottom part of the Field. To protect the turf, the horse was fitted with large, flat-bottomed leather boots.



31. Consecration of St. Matthew's graveyard, 8th September, 1923.

In 1929 the Church Council decided to allow two telegraph poles to be placed on land adjacent to the church, subject to an annual payment of one shilling per pole.

The wife of the manager of Pemberton Collieries, Mrs. Douglas, died in 1930 and the funeral was held on 10th April. It was less than a year later that Mr. Douglas died and his funeral was on 2nd March, 1931.

Reverend J. Woods, the first vicar, died on 28th September, 1936 after a long illness. His funeral took place on 2nd October and a cinerary casket containing his ashes was placed in church under the floor of the north side of the sanctuary. The churchwardens at that time were W. Richardson and I. Massey.

It was the next vicar, the Reverend Parker Johnson, who saw the church

through the worst of the World War II years.

The old Iron Church, which had latterly been used as a parochial hall, was finally demolished in 1938, after standing for more than seventy years. Soon after this, many of the decorative iron railings around local houses and other buildings were gradually removed for the war effort. A hut was also built at the top of the church tower, leaning on the base of the spire, for use by fire watchers and the Home Guard. As far as is known, the only real action which they saw was the attempted arrest of a cow, which from a distance was thought to be an enemy paratrooper. Talk about Dad's Army!



32. Sunday School banner destroyed in 1941.

In August 1939, the Sunday School Banner was sent to R. Jones and Company Limited for repairs and renovation. This was thought to be a slow process, since after nearly two years the banner had not been returned. Then a letter was received from the company which read as follows: "We regret to inform you that as a result of enemy action your banner was lost along with the rest of our goods on May 4th, 1941.

The Reverend Parker Johnson died on 5th February, 1944, and his funeral took place on the 11 th. The induction and institution of the third vicar, the Reverend W.H. (Bert) Bullough was in 1944 by the Bishop of Liverpool. In 1945 the War Graves Commission informed the vicar that there were four graves at SL Matthew's for which they would make a grant of five shillings each towards the upkeep, provided they were maintained to certain standards. These were the graves of:

Baron Cpl T. Lanes. Fusiliers 27.7.41  
Hosier Pte. A. Canadian Army 26.2.41  
Hunt Sgt O. R.A.F. 29.3.43  
Taylor Pte. R.R.A.M.C. 5.7.45

As from 1st April, 1947 there was a directive that any person not resident in the Parish could not be buried in a new grave, but the vicar could allow the burial of those members of the congregation who were recorded on the electoral roll as non-resident electors and had been active in the Parish.

Two weeks later, on 16th April, 1947 Major C.L.B.H.Blundell, O.B.E. died. His funeral, on 19th April, was at Halsall. This marked the beginning of the end of the close links between the Blundell family and Highfield.

In 1950 the church fire insurance was for an insured sum of £32,030. It is interesting to note that the oak screens were insured for several times as much as the main stone reredos. By 1955 the total sum insured had been increased to £50,000.

Before World War II it had been planned to build a new parochial hall to replace the old Iron Church, but it was 1954-56 before it was actually built, thanks largely to the infectious enthusiasm of Rev. Bullough. He and a willing team of parishioners spent many hours in that two-year period altering the old cricket pavillion and building the new extension. The new hall was opened by Lord Derby in 1956. Incidentally, the cricket pavilion had been used during the war years to house refugees from Liverpool.

The effort put into building the new hall has since been rewarded many fold, and it is a focal point for leisure and other activities. It is in constant use and several different organizations often use the hall the same day.



By 1959 the organ was in need of substantial renovation. This was carried out by Rushworth and Dreaper, at a cost of nearly £4,000.

Towards the end of the year Rev. Bullough left Highfield and moved to Halsall. He was succeeded by the Reverend R.J. Smith, whose induction and institution took place on 7th January, 1960.

The early 1960's saw the beginning of what was to be a vast increase in the number of private houses in the parish. The areas around Edinburgh Drive, between Tunstall Lane and Enfield Street, the land which was part of Highfield Farm, and the area around Holmes House Avenue, were all taken up for housing. This naturally led to a very substantial increase in the population.



33. Workers who helped to build Highfield Parochial Hall, 1954—6. Rev. W.H. Bullough in the centre of the front row.

At about this time the vicar distributed 3,000 copies of the New Testament to homes throughout the parish.

The major changes to the parish boundaries, mentioned earlier, took place in 1966, and the parochial hall was further improved in 1967-8 by the addition of a sun-lounge.

In 1974 the vicar, the then Canon Smith, relinquished his position and this led to the Reverend W. Bynon, the present vicar, commencing his work at Highfield. His induction and institution was on 14th March, 1975 by the Bishop of Warrington.

Also in 1975 the church was given a face lift and years of industrial dirt and grime were removed from the stonework. Even the weathercock was brought down to be cleaned and re-gilded. This was important, not only from the cosmetic aspect, but also because it forms part of the lightning conduction system.

Since the church was built much has been done to enrich it, such as the addition of stained glass windows and other memorials. However, neither the vicar nor the Church Council have a free rein to make modifications or alterations to the church and they must submit a "citation to faculty" for each proposed alteration for approval by the Bishop.

A brief trip round the church highlights some of the many memorials. At the back of the church, in the north west corner, is the old font. This must have been placed in its present position when the church was extended. It is constructed in grey stone with side pillars of the same material and stands on a two tier octagonal stone base. The oak cover is a memorial to Rev. John Woods, the first vicar.

Behind the font is a large chest presented by the Women's Fellowship on their 21st anniversary 1977.

On the north side of the church are two stained glass memorial windows. One depicts coal mining, and is in memory of James and Isabella Anderson and was given by their children. The other window, next to the chapel, is in memory of William Atherton who was vergier of the church for 53 years, and was given by his wife and children.

On either side of the north aisle are the flags of the Boys Brigade and 6th Wigan Brownies and Guides.

At the entrance to the Memorial Chapel is an oak screen which was erected by

parishioners and friends to the memory of Major Cuthbert L.B.H. Blundell, O.B.E., patron and benefactor to the church and parish. On the north wall of the chapel is a rectangular plaque in memory of 22 parishioners who died in the Second World War. A prayer desk, a memorial to Thomas Frederick Hampson, and a lectern, a memorial presented by 'D' company Home Guard, are part of the chapel furnishings. Also in the chapel is a painting by T. Hilton in his memory, donated by his wife. He had some of his paintings of members of the Royal Family accepted by Buckingham Palace.

The pulpit has side pillars that match the old font. It is interesting to note that the pulpit is now on the north side of the church but was originally on the other side where the lectern now stands, and was moved to give better visibility to the congregation when the church was extended.



34. St. Matthew's Church before the extension was built. Note pulpit on the south side.

The organ, renovated by Rushworth and Dreaper in 1959, is behind the pulpit and choir stalls, but the organ pipes are on the south side of the church. Near to the choir stalls is a prayer desk made and presented by James Anderson.

The gates in the centre of the communion rail are in memory of William John Greener and Maria Elizabeth Greener, and were erected by their children. Mr. Greener was at one time manager at Pemberton Collieries. It is thought that the oak from which these gates were made was from another old building in Wigan and consequently could be several hundred years old.

The dedication stone for the church is on the north wall of the chancel and has the following inscription:

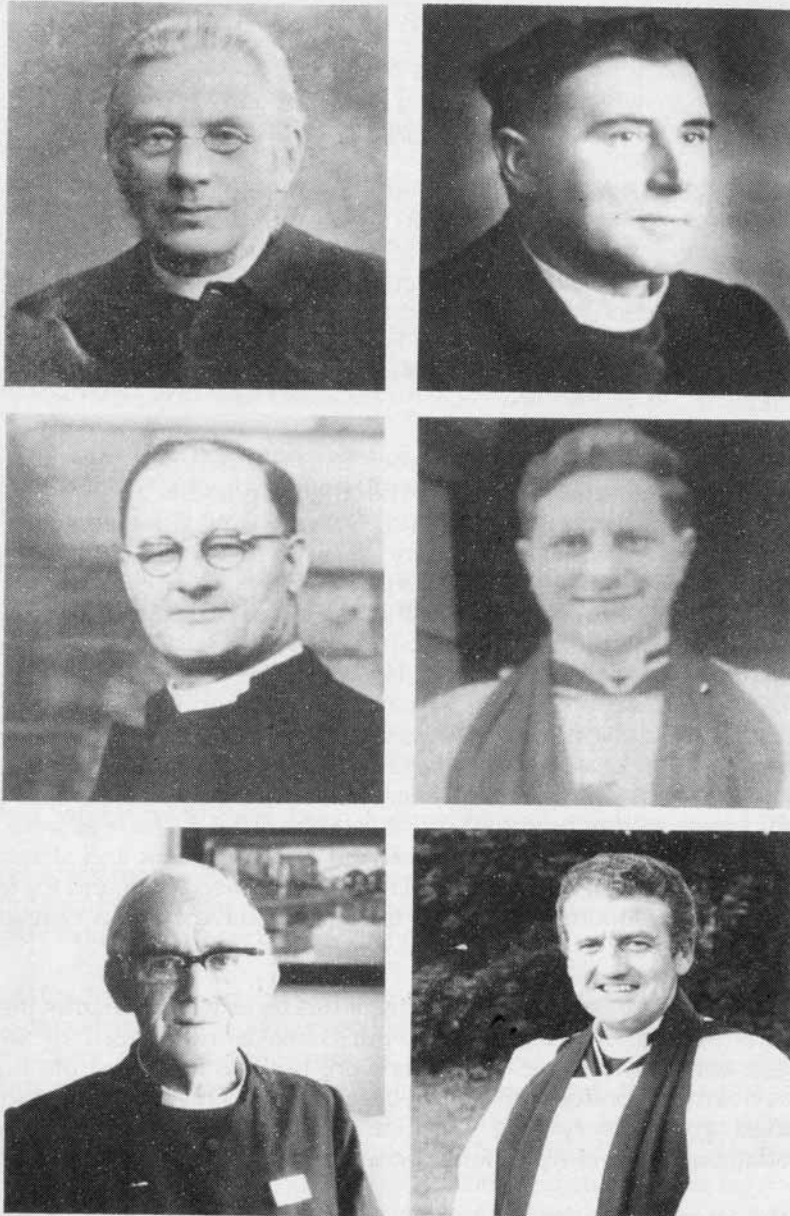
To the Glory of God and in memory of the Hon: Beatrice wife of  
Col. H.B-H-Blundell for XII years as maid of honour to the Queen.  
This church was erected by her husband AD MDCCCXCIV.

On 16th May, 1917 a faculty was granted to Rev. J. Woods and churchwardens, William Richardson and Richard Atherton Southworth, to remove the plain glass from the three-light east window and insert stained glass depicting "The Ascension" with subsidiary subjects. The centre light to show "The Resurrection", the right hand light, "The Appearance to St Mary" and the left hand light "The Scene at Emmaus". The cost was to be met by Capt. Cuthbert Leigh Blundell Hollinshead Blundell as a memorial to Col. Blundell. This was completed in December 1917. It was also proposed to remove the dossal frame from behind the altar and erect instead a reredos of Hollington stone with marble panels containing carved figures of St Matthew and St John on the right and left sides of the altar respectively and to affix marble tablets on the north wall of the chancel, with memorial inscriptions. This was paid for by parishioners and friends.

The ashes of the first vicar, Rev. John Woods, are buried below the tiles on the north side of the sanctuary.

The stained glass window at the east end of the north wall of the sanctuary was installed in 1938 by Rev. Parker Johnson and churchwardens, William Richardson and Isaac Massey. It represents the Apostle St. John with a memorial inscription in the glass at the foot of the window to Rev. John Woods and was erected by voluntary contribution. At the same time a plain brass cross was placed on the altar. This was a gift of John and Mary Elizabeth Berry.

In 1963 Frank and Rev. Prof. Alan Richardson presented a processional cross in memory of their parents and also a pair of altar candlesticks in memory of Mabel Moss.



35. Vicars of St. Matthew's Highfield<sup>1</sup>.  
Rev. J. Wood. Rev. J. Woods (first vicar).  
Rev. Parker Johnson. Rev. W.H. Bullough.  
Rev. J.R. Smith, Rev. W. Bynon.

<sup>1</sup> Although Rev. Wood was not strictly speaking a vicar, his photograph is included rather than incur the wrath of some of the older members of the parish.

The oak screen at the east end of the south aisle was erected by the owners of Pemberton Collieries. Seven carvings across the top of the screen depict mining scenes. The inscription reads: "In memory of all of those who for; many generations have worked in the coal mines near this parish".

The first and second stained windows in the south aisle beyond the above screen were installed in 1917 and depict "The Presentation" and "The Visitation" and are in memory of Rev. J. Wood and Gertrude D. Woods. The new font, in a modern design, was presented by the 1975 confirmation class and the matching candle holder in memory of Margaret Ellen Barton and James Barton was given by their children.

The remaining stained glass windows in the south aisle were provided from funds raised at the close of the Great War as a memorial to those who died. Two windows represent "The Noble Army of Martyrs Praise Thee", the third "Farewell of David and Johnathan" and the fourth "David's Lament Over Johnathan". In addition, a tablet was placed on the wall between the windows with the names of the 51 who had fallen engraved on it.

On the outside of the church is a Garden of Remembrance for cremated remains. The faculty for this was granted on 6th December, 1967.

### **List of Clergy**

1867—? Rev. S.L Laidman  
1881—? Rev. T. Evans  
1881-1908 Rev. J. Wood  
1909—1936 Rev. J. Woods (first vicar, 20th October, 1910)  
1937—1944 Rev. Parker Johnson  
1944-1959 Rev. W.H. Bullough  
1960—1974 Rev. J.R. Smith  
1975—Present Rev. W. Bynon  
1978—Present Curate Rev. G. Thomas

## **VII. THE SCHOOLS**

Formal education at Highfield had its beginning in the Iron Church/school in 1867, the year in which the building was opened. It was known as The Pemberton Colliery School and consisted of one department only.

On 15th April, 1873, the Infants was made a separate unit, but still in the same building. However, it would appear that Jane Sutherland, who was in charge of the unit, did not enjoy a great deal of success. The School Inspector's report of March 1874 reads: "One tenth is deducted from the grant to the Infants School

for faults of mistruction, discipline and registration". On 4th May, 1874 Jane Sutherland was replaced by Mary Ann Twiss. About this time Mrs. Watkin, wife of the colliery manager, frequently visited the school and often took charge of a sewing class.

The first record of the Girls' School is for 18th September, 1876 when Mary Ann Twiss was still mistress. It seems that for a few months she was responsible for both Infants' and Girls' School, until Ellen Rose assumed responsibility for the Infants in February 1877. At this time education was not compulsory and attendances were very variable. A local event, such as the twice-yearly Wigan Fair, was usually sufficient excuse for missing school. The Compulsory Education Act came into force on 8th October, 1877 and from then onwards attendances improved. However, the record for 11th October reads: "Dismissed scholars at 3.30 p.m. on consequence of hearing of a dreadful explosion at Pemberton". This was the King Pit explosion in which 36 men were killed. The schools were closed for several days. A few weeks later a list of children whose fathers had been killed in the explosion was sent to Colonel Blundell, so that he might pay their school fees. The fees were 1d per child per week to cover the cost of materials such as chalk and slates. Soon after this, in February 1878, the school fees were raised to 2d and for families with three or four children at school this would have been a considerable financial burden.

Records for the Boys' School are sketchy at this time. It appears that the Boys' Department opened in about 1876, but there is no record of who the headmaster was at that time. The boys were housed in a separate building, which was not much better than a semi-derelect barn. This is the building which now houses the Nursery Unit. In about 1895 Mr. William Williams was headmaster, but there is no official record of the Boys' School until 1906.

In 1879 the Infants were moved to a room in the same building as the Boys, and in August 1880, Mary A. Ashurst became headmistress.

Colonel Blundell visited the schools on 28th September, 1883 to inspect a new classroom built for the Girls' Department.

Miss Twiss resigned her position on 29th March, 1888 and was replaced in mid-April by Emily Rowlinson. A half day holiday was granted on 25th April for the marriage of Miss Twiss. A further wedding, that of the Reverend J. Wood, warranted a holiday on 17th June, 1893. The records are not clear, but it seems that it could have been his second marriage.

Throughout the first forty years or so of school records there are many references to scarlet fever, whooping cough, measles and diphtheria being the

cause of low attendances, not only during winter, but throughout the whole year. A particularly bad year was 1894, when several children died in an epidemic of scarlet fever. On a lighter note, 30th June was declared a holiday for the opening of the new church, and on 27th August, school opened in new premises for the Infants and Girls.

Emily Rowlinson, headmistress of the Girls' Department, resigned on 5th December, 1895 and was replaced on 13th December by Ada E. Hitchen. Mr. William John Greener, manager of Pemberton Collieries, was killed in the Bye Pit on 1st February, 1897 and the schools were represented at his funeral on 4th February.

Ada Hitchen resigned as headmistress of the Girls' Department on 11th July, 1901. Her successor was Annie Taylor, who took up the post on 2nd September.

By 1903 the number of children on the registers was 323 for the Girls' Department and about 230 for the Infants. As both departments were understaffed, the classes were large and in September 1904 one class in the Girls' Department had 65 children. In October 1903, school fees were abolished, which must have been a considerable relief for many families.

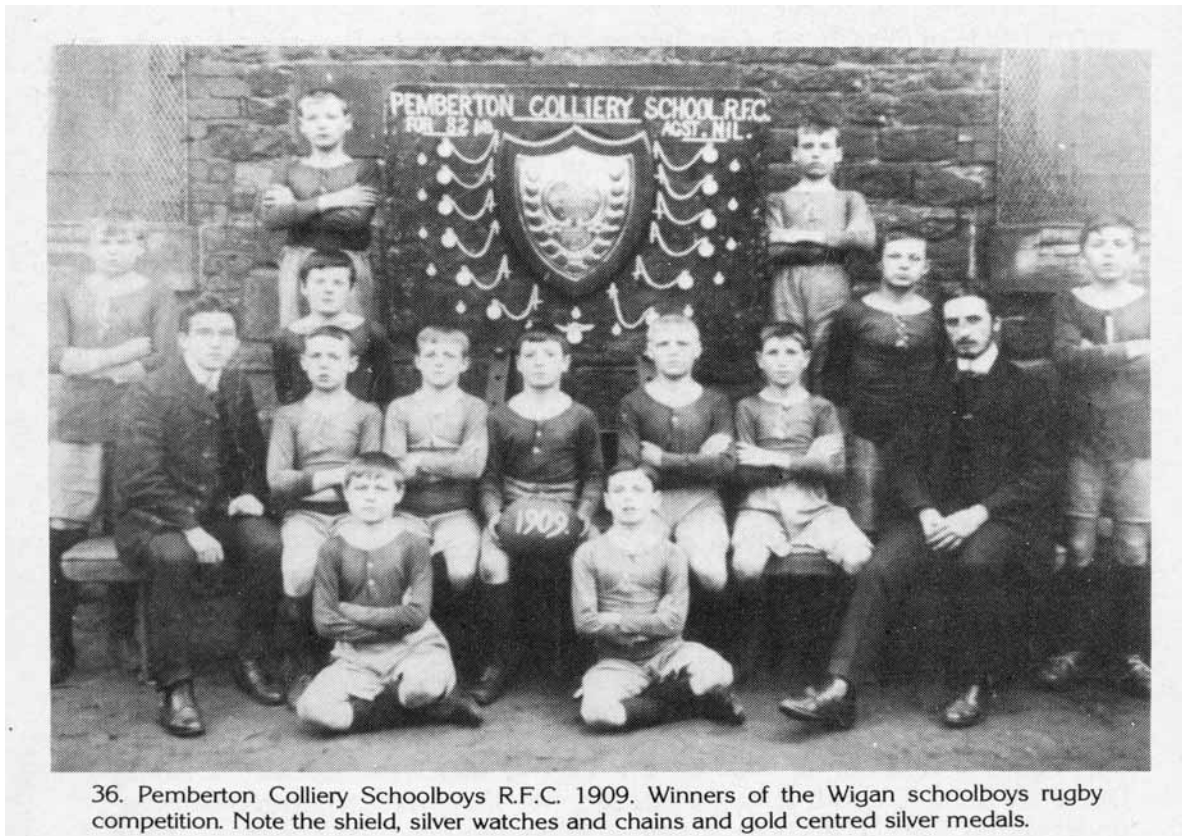
The first record for the Boys' School is for 27th August, 1906. The headmaster at that time was Mr. William Williams and 311 boys were present. Also in 1906 a new classroom was erected for the Girls' School.

At about this time a great interest was being shown in rugby league football, even at schoolboy level, and it is recorded with pride that on 29th April, 1907, "thirteen silver medals were gained by the boys on winning the Wigan Schoolboys Rugby Competition". A similar record for 4th May, 1908 reads: "presented thirteen silver watches and chains to boys, won in the Schoolboys medal competition of the Wigan Rugby Football Club. They also won thirteen silver medals with gold centres with their names engraved". The boys won the competition again in 1909 and in 1910, and were runners-up in 1911. The boys showed their consistency by winning the competition yet again in 1912, beating St. John's R.C. in the final, and in 1913, defeating Orrell Council Schoolboys. The competition was suspended after this due to the outbreak of war, and was not held again until 1921.

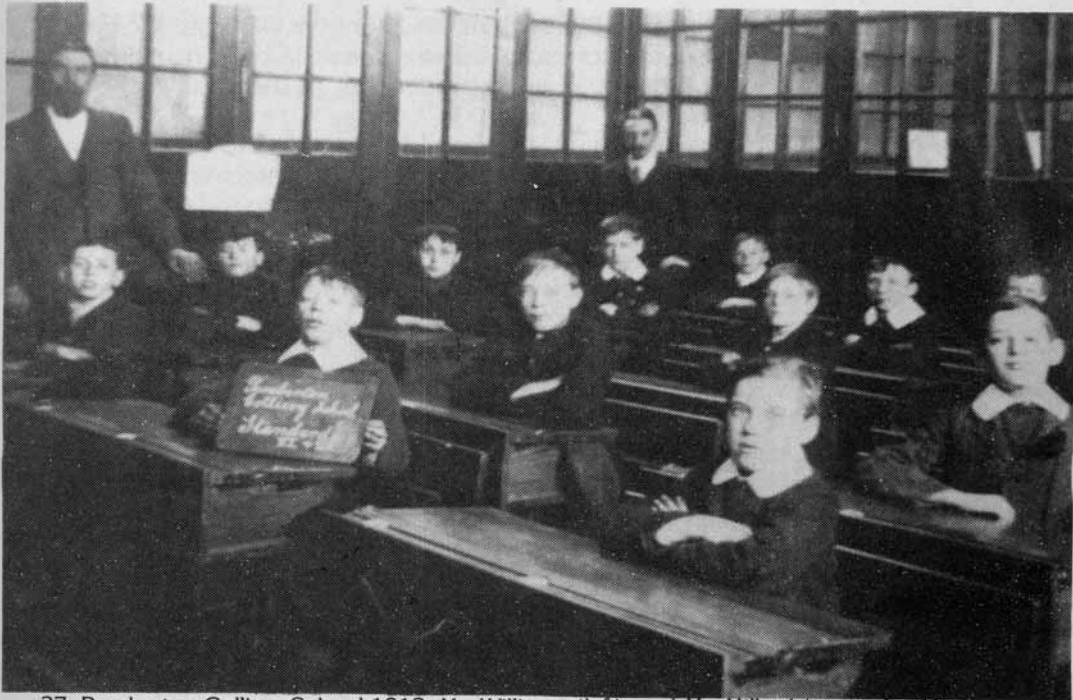
On 23rd March, 1910, Annie Taylor resigned her position as headmistress of the Girls' School, but it was not until 22nd August that Miss Emily Crebbin replaced her. In October of that year attendances were low, as was usual at this time of year, since many of the children stayed away from school to go "prayta pickin".



The accommodation in the Boys' School still left much to be desired, as a report by His Majesty's Inspector shows: "Boys housed in an old barn-like building. The two large rooms, over twenty feet in height, have rough unsightly walls and a very bare and cheerless appearance". There was no staff room, and toilet facilities were, to say the least, grim; for the female teachers were they non-existent It was not until 1911/1912 that the situation improved, when modifications were carried out and new classrooms built.



36. Pemberton Colliery Schoolboys R.F.C. 1909. Winners of the Wigan schoolboys rugby competition. Note the shield, silver watches and chains and gold centred silver medals.



37. Pemberton Colliery School 1913. Mr. Williams (left), and Mr. Millard (centre back).



38. Infants' class, Pemberton Colliery School, ca. 1918.

On 17th September, 1913, Mr. Williams retired, the vacancy being filled by Mr. Joseph William Brierley, who took up his post on 1st October.

Miss M.A. Ashurst, headmistress of the Infants' Department, died on 17th June, 1915, the funeral being held on 21st June. From then until 2nd November, when Miss Lilian Holland commenced duties as headmistress, either Mary Steadman or Miss M.E. Simm was in charge. Measles, chicken pox, influenza and scarlet fever were still prevalent, and schools were often closed for a week or more to prevent the spread of these diseases. For a short time in August 1919, Kathleen A. Fidler was a supply teacher in the Girls' School.

On 29th April, 1921, a list was drawn up of children entitled to free dinners during the coal strike. Hard times, however, breed guts and determination, and on 7th May the school rugby team beat Ince Central School in the final of the Wigan R.F.C. Schoolboys' Competition, which had not been held since 1913. In winning the competition they scored a total of 95 points, with no points being scored against them.

During 1924 Miss Crebbin, headmistress of the Girls' School, was away for some time, presumably sick, leaving Miss Barton in charge for at least part of this time. On 1st December, Mrs. S. Anderton was appointed temporary headmistress until 17th July, 1925. On 18th August, Edith Johnson commenced duties in that capacity. Mrs. Anderton and Miss Johnson were sisters. Another sister was Mrs. Steadman who was mentioned in 1915.

In April 1928 a Fire Brigade Officer called to check THE fire extinguisher in the Infants' School!

1932 saw a complete reorganisation of the schools. Previous to this, there had been considerable correspondence between the vicar, the Reverend J. Woods and Major Cuthbert Blundell over the proposed alterations, and in one letter, handwritten by the latter, he states: "I suppose the only thing to do is to acquiesce in the Govt scheme for the reorganisation of the schools. It is more than probable that the population of Pemberton (and for that matter the whole of S.W. Lancashire) will decrease enormously in the next ten years and all this money spent on alterations will be wasted". How wrong he was. A new building was completed to house the Senior Boys and this was to be known as Highfield Church of England Senior Boys' School. The official opening was performed by C. L.B.H. Blundell and the school was hallowed by the Bishop of Liverpool on 19th September. The old Boys' School was modified and a staffroom and boys' cloakroom added to house the Infants' Department, with special provision for children from four years of age, with Miss L Holland as headmistress. The Girls' Department was converted to a Junior Mixed Department under Edith Johnson, and Mr. J.W. Brierley was head of the

Senior Boys' School.

On 23rd November, 1932, the children all left school and lined up along the main road to watch the Prince of Wales pass on his way to Liverpool. The first mention of the school being divided into "houses" is in June 1933. A shield bearing the Blundell crest and school colours was presented to the school by the vicar and first won by Astley house. The houses and colours were:

Blundell	gold
Byng	red
Leigh	white
Astley	black



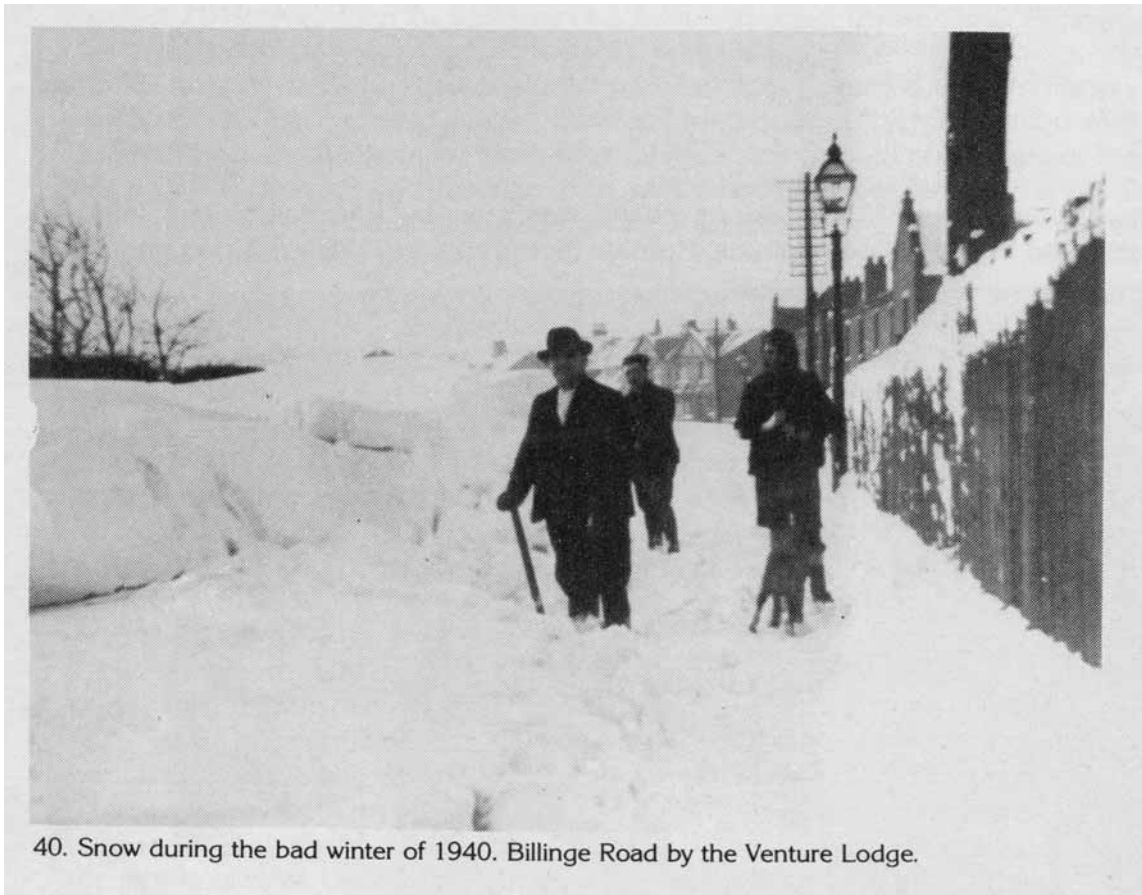
39. Sports day presentation, Highfield School 1935. Rev. Parker-Johnson (left), and Edith Johnson (right), the winning house captains, Hannah Houghton and William Speakman, holding the shield.

M

rs. Taylor (nee Ada E. Hitchen), a former head of the Girls' School, died in July 1936, the funeral being on the 13<sup>th</sup>.

Because of the outbreak of hostilities, the schools were run on a part-time basis from September 1939 until air raid shelters were completed, and continued full-time from 11th December.

On 27th/28th January, 1940 there was exceptionally heavy snow, which drifted to more than six feet in places. Almost every road was impassable and virtually all services came to a halt.



40. Snow during the bad winter of 1940. Billinge Road by the Venture Lodge.

From August onwards, there were numerous air raid warnings and teaching was disrupted when the children were taken to the air raid shelters for varying lengths of time. The infants in particular often came to school bleary eyed because of spending parts of nights in the shelters; but fortunately the area was never seriously attacked.

Although building and other services were seriously curtailed during the war years, a new dining hall was built and was opened on 28th August, 1944.

Mr. J.W. Brierley retired on 31st December 1945 with over thirty-two years dedicated service as head of the Boys' School. His replacement was Mr. Ernlyn Davies, who took up his post on 6th January, 1946.

The school leaving age was raised to fifteen years in 1947. This required some reorganisation, but did not present a serious problem. It was also in 1947, on 16th April, that Major C.L.B.H. Blundell died. His death very nearly had disastrous consequences for the schools, as no provision had been made for them in his will.

Miss E. Johnson retired on 31st August, 1948 after many years of service, and was replaced on 1st September by Mr. E.G. Elliott.

Following the death of Major Blundell, valuers visited the schools on 3rd May, 1950 with a view to selling them for industrial development. Emergency meetings were quickly arranged and it was agreed that the Infants and Juniors were to become "Voluntary Aided" Schools and the Secondary School to become "Controlled". A compulsory purchase order was made on the schools and this required the raising of £10,000 for the purchase of the school buildings, £6,000 for implementing the development plan for the Infants' Department and £10,000 for the Junior Department.

Miss Young, who had never been headmistress, but was nevertheless well known, retired from the staff of the Boys' Secondary School on 4th July, 1952 after a grand total of forty-six years service. Just a year later, on 31st August, Mr. Ernlyn Davies left and was replaced on 1st September by Mr. Richard H. Gaskell. He held the position of temporary headmaster until Alfred Coates was appointed on 1st January, 1954.

It was noted with regret in the school records that on 30th August, 1954, one of the boys, Joseph Davies of Queen Street, was drowned in the Venture Lodge.

Four months later, on 21st December, Miss L. Holland retired after thirty-nine years as head of the Infants' Department, and was replaced on 5th January, 1955 by Lynda M. Waddington.

Alfred Coates resigned his position as head of the Secondary Boys' School on 6th July, 1956. George Anderson Procter was the new head, and took up his post on 13th August.

30th April, 1959 saw the retirement of Miss E. Barton from the staff of the Junior School, after many years service. Although never headmistress, she is well remembered and respected. Later that year, on 18th November, there was a fire in the girls' cloakroom in the Junior School. The cloakroom was gutted and there was also extensive heat and smoke damage to the assembly hall and Class 1.

On 5th February, 1961, Mr. J.W. Brierley, a former head of the Boys' School, died. He is remembered for his long association with the schools and church. The funeral took place on 10th February.

In 1962 the annual sports day for the Junior School was held in June. The victorious house on this day was Astley, or "Black", and they were presented with a cup donated by Mr. H.W. Morton, which replaced the shield donated by the Reverend J. Woods.

Richard H. Gaskell was appointed head of the Boys' School on 1st September, 1964 when Mr. G.A. Procter resigned.

Miss M. Barton, yet another teacher with many years service at Highfield, retired on 31st August, 1966.

Following the retirement of Miss LM. Waddington on 30th August, 1968 the Junior and Infant Schools were merged to form a "Primary" School with Mr. E.G. Elliott as headmaster. The total number of children on the roll was 331. This had increased to 417 by January 1970.

On 2nd July, 1970, the Secondary Modern Boys' School ceased to exist as such, and all boys were transferred to the Deanery High School, Wigan. The headmaster, Mr. R.H. Gaskell, retired after thirty-eight years at Highfield. The managers of the Primary School decided to purchase the buildings for use by the Primary School. The total cost was £9,641, of which £1,926 was met by the Church and the remainder by ministry grant. The old Infants' School was refurbished to be used as a Nursery Unit.

On 12th September, 1972, a new corridor linking the old Junior and Secondary Modern buildings was completed.

After twenty-five years as headmaster, Mr. E.G. Elliott retired on 31st August, 1973. He was succeeded on 1st September by Mr. W. Spencer, who had

previously been with St George's, Wigan.

On 2nd April, 1974, one day after local government reorganisation, a plague of ants was removed by members of the new Wigan Metro.

A reorganisation of the "house" system took place in June 1974, when the whole school was divided into four "houses"—red, yellow, blue and green. The first house captains under this system were: Tony Clark (red); Vicky Baynes (yellow); Jeffrey Clayton (blue) and Llyn Daniels (green). On the Junior sports day, a week later, yellow house won the cup which was presented to Vicky Baynes.

On 17th March, 1975, the Reverend W. Bynon became chairman of the school managers.

The boys' swimming team won the Inter-Schools Gala at Hindley on 3rd March, 1980 and was presented with the Haydn Rigby Trophy.

At the time of writing, June 1981, Mr. W. Spencer continues as head, with Mrs. E.M.Gaskell as deputy head.

## **HEAD TEACHERS**

### **Infants**

1873 April 15, J. Sutherland

1874 May 4, M.A. Twiss

1877 February, E.Rose

1880 August, MA Ashurst

1915 June 17, M.A. Ashurst died. M. Steadman or M.E. Simm in charge

1915 November 2, L Holland

1954 December 21, L Holland retired

1955 January 5, LM. Waddington

1968 August 30, LM. Waddington retired

1968 Reorganisation as Primary School under E.G. Elliott (Infants and Juniors)

### **Boys**

1876?

1906 September 3, W. Williams

1913 September 17, W. Williams retired

1913 October I, J.W. Brierley

1933 April 24, start of Junior Mixed

1945 December 31, J.W. Brierley retired



1946 January 6, E. Davies  
1953 August 31, E. Davies left  
1953 September I, R.H. Gaskell (temp.)  
1954 January I, A. Coates  
1956 July 6, A. Coates left  
1956 August 13, G.A. Procter  
1964 August 31, G.A. Procter left  
1964 September I, R.H. Gaskell  
1970 July 2, school ceased to exist. Boys transferred to Deanery High School, Wigan

### **Girls**

1876 September, M.A. Twiss  
1888 March 29, M.A. Twiss left  
1888 April 13, E. Rowlinson  
1895 December 5, E. Rowlinson left  
1895 December 13, A.E. Hitchen  
1901 July II, A.E. Hitchen left -  
1901 September 2, A. Taylor  
1910 March 23, A. Taylor left  
1910 August 22, E. Crebbin  
1924 December I, S. Anderton (temp.)  
1925 July 17, S. Anderton finished  
1925 August 18, E. Johnson  
1933 April 24, start of Junior Mixed  
1948 August 31, E. Johnson retired  
1948 September I, E.G. Elliott  
1968 Reorganised as Primary School under E.G. Elliott (Infants and Juniors)  
1973 August 31, E.G. Elliott retired  
1973 September I to present (June 1981 ),W. Spencer

### **Other Long-Serving Teachers**

Miss Young  
Miss E. Barton  
Miss M. Barton  
Miss M.E. Simm

## VIII. CONCLUSIONS

Although we have just now come to the distinct end of a long hard industrial era with the final closure of May Mill, the pattern for the future within the parish seems already set. The major heavy industries are now gone and future industry is likely to be light and more diverse. Because of the proximity of a good motorway network, service and distribution industries may well predominate.

Most of the housing which can be built has now been completed, and the many younger people who came to live in these houses in Highfield and Winstanley have settled down and have families. Instead of the old close-knit, and somewhat inbred population, there is now a different and refreshing new mixture, due largely to the number of people from Liverpool who now live in this area, and it is noticeable that many younger children are developing an accent and dialect which is a hybrid between Scouse and Highfield.

Unemployment throughout the country is very high and probably will be much worse before the situation improves. How this will affect the parish in the long term is not clear, but established employers such as Triangle Valve and Lord and Sharman have had considerable reductions in their workforces.

Winstanley Hall, perhaps the last bastion of old Winstanley, remains and the estate forms a green belt buffer—but for how long?

In spite of Major Blundell's prediction, places in the schools and nursery unit are very much in demand.

Throughout all these changes the church has retained its focal position. At the present time congregations are increasing, and on many occasions during the year the church is full to capacity.

Hopefully, the hard times are now past and we can look forward to a brighter tomorrow.

## Acknowledgments

It was our original intention to compile a history of Winstanley. Later, Rev. Bynon, who is very interested in local history, asked us to write a history of the church in Highfield. We therefore agreed to amalgamate the two and research a history of the area covered by St Matthew's Parish. Rev. Bynon has given us much encouragement and allowed access to church and school records, which added considerably to our data.

Our thanks also to:

The ever-helpful staff of the Wigan Reference Library

The N.C.B. Lowton for mining details

Donald Anderson for encouragement and access to his mine of information

Capt. Banks for permission to photograph Winstanley Hall

Bill Crank for access to May Mill

Mrs. Bessie Winstanley for "Owd Mo"

George Jepson who has given up many hours answering our endless questions

Joe Starkey for Pony Dick

It is impossible to list the people who have given us information and allowed us to copy old photographs. However, our thanks go to them all.

We would be pleased to hear from anyone who has any information or photographs relating to Highfield or any part of Winstanley, for use in a further publication.