

### **Richardson Thomas Johnson (RTJ) (1848 -1929)**

Born: Stepney, London 1846 Died: Walton, Liverpool 1929

His parents were William who was born in Wigan and his mother Eleanor from Antwerp, Belgium.

His family moved from London to Wigan in the 1860's , with father William managing the family public house.

In 1871 RTJ is living with his parents at the "Hole in The Wall Inn" situated in Market Place and developing a business as an architect.

RTJ was Hon Sec of Wigan Cricket - 1869 &1870

By 1876 RTJ had an architectural practice in Hopwood Chambers in King Street.

Some of his major works:-

1870 – The Arcade, aka Grimes Arcade (Grade2 Listed Building)

1886 – The Royal Court – original design, later redesigned by James Priestley Briggs in 1899.

1892 – Redesign of the Alexandra Music Hall, later to become the Empire Palace Theatre.

1896 – Architect and Design of the Springfield Trotting & Athletic Ground, later to become the home of Wigan Athletic FC

RTJ also designed several smaller buildings and houses throughout Lancashire, even designing a bridge at Saltcotes, near Lytham, there doesn't appear to be any evidence of the design of any significant buildings.

During his time in Wigan, he lived at Darlington Street, Hodson Street and Caroline Street.

By 1901 RTJ was living in Blackpool with his wife and 2 daughters with an architectural practice also in the town.

On the death of his wife RTJ went to live with one of daughters, Alice Maude de Coursey Kewell at 8, Agnes Street, West Derby, Liverpool.

RTJ died on 15<sup>th</sup> April 1929, aged 82 years, at 107, Rice Lane, previously referred to as the Walton Workhouse.

RTJ's heyday as an architect were certainly between the 1870's and 1890's. It is an interesting fact that he designed the Grimes Arcade when only 24years old.

Notes:-

The Hole in The Wall Inn played a significant role in the retreat/escape of the Earl of Derby from Wigan to Worcester, during the English Civil War.

**Newspaper Cuttings (next page)**

**RICHARDSON T. JOHNSON,**  
**ARCHITECT & SURVEYOR,**  
**HOPWOOD CHAMBERS, KING-STREET,**  
**WIGAN.**  
 Plans, Specifications, and Bills of Quantities Prepared. New  
 Structures and Alterations Carefully Superintended.

April 1876

**RICHARDSON T. JOHNSON,**  
**ARCHITECT & CIVIL ENGINEER,**  
**DARLINGTON STREET, WIGAN.**  
**DESIGNER OF THE ROYAL COURT THEATRE**  
**WIGAN.**  
*Vide the Press.*  
 "The Theatre was filled with an enthusiastic audience  
 who scanned the architectural beauties and exceedingly  
 pretty decorations of the interior with much admiration.  
 Mr. Richardson T. Johnson is the architect, and his work  
 deserves the highest encomiums."—*The Era*, Nov. 27th,  
 1886.  
 "The architect is Mr. Richardson T. Johnson, of Wigan.  
 The Theatre is a happy mixture of convenience, comfort,  
 and elegance. The acoustic properties are admirable. The  
 interior presented a most brilliant appearance, and the  
 beauty of the place won the admiration of the audience."—  
*Wigan Observer*, Nov. 27th, 1886.  
 Captain Bainbridge before the curtain said "It is one of  
 the most handsome theatres in England."  
 Plans and Specifications prepared and Quantities  
 obtained for any class of Architectural or Civil Engineering  
 work upon reasonable terms.

Wigan Observer - Sept 1887