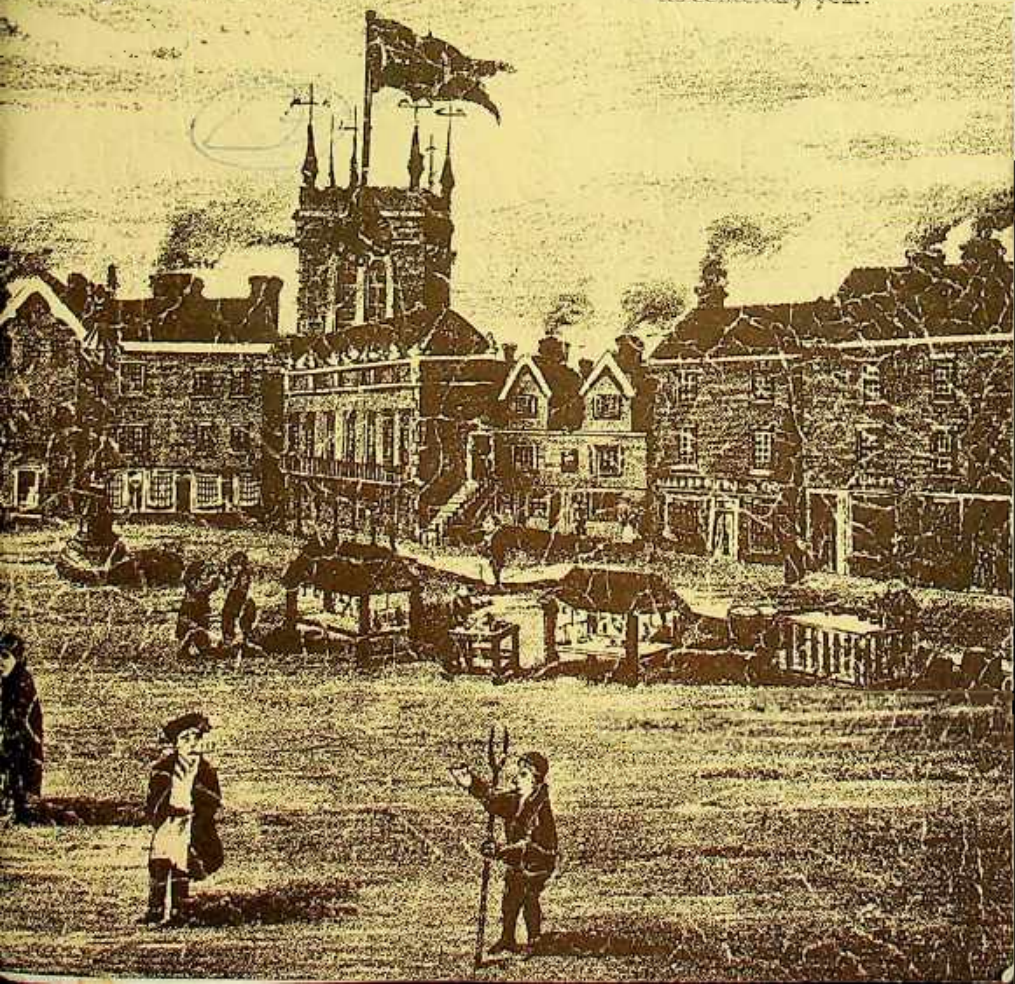


WIGAN 1878 ~ 1978

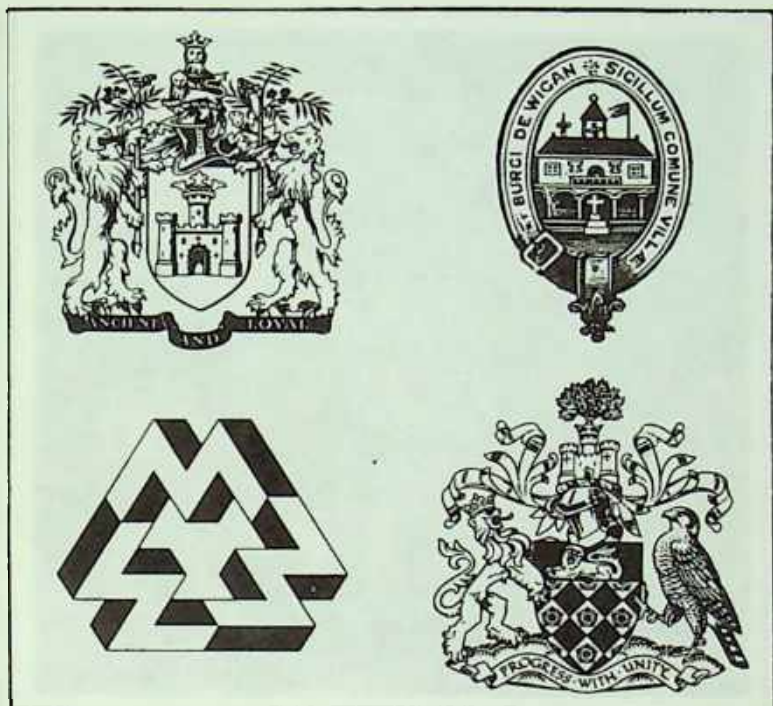
Wigan and Its Library:
An illustrated History in
its centenary year.



Published by Wigan Leisure Department
Libraries and Archives Sector to
celebrate the Centenary of Wigan Library.

Gil. Swift Director of Leisure

Noel E Willis Chief Librarian



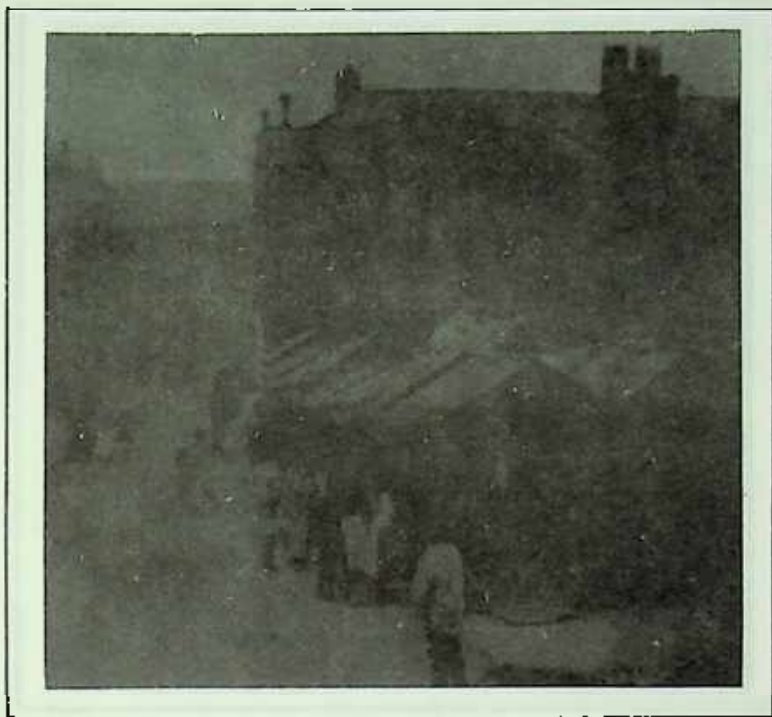
WIGAN 1878-1978

In 1878 when the Public Library first opened its doors, Wigan was a thriving industrial town. Its recently paved streets were lit by gas, and the main form of transport was usually horse powered. The people living in the town were employed in the coal mines or cotton mills, or in the iron and steel making or engineering works.

The illustrations on the following pages show something of how the town has changed and developed over the past hundred years, and a little too of the library's history.



A Victorian view of Standishgate. The Royal Hotel to the right of the picture is where the Woolworth's store is now sited.



An early photograph showing a corner of the Market Place prior to the opening of the new Market Hall in 1877.



Victorian Wallgate, the Dog and Partridge pub and Parish Church prominent features as they are today.



The Market Place in the 1880's.



King Street in 1892, almost disappearing from sight in a steam tram.



The Horseshoe Inn, 106 Millgate, when this photograph was taken around 1892 the licensee was Giles Westhead.



Market Place and Millgate, 1889, before Station Road was made.



Another typical Victorian 'local' pub, this time in Scholes. The Harp Inn around the end of the last century.



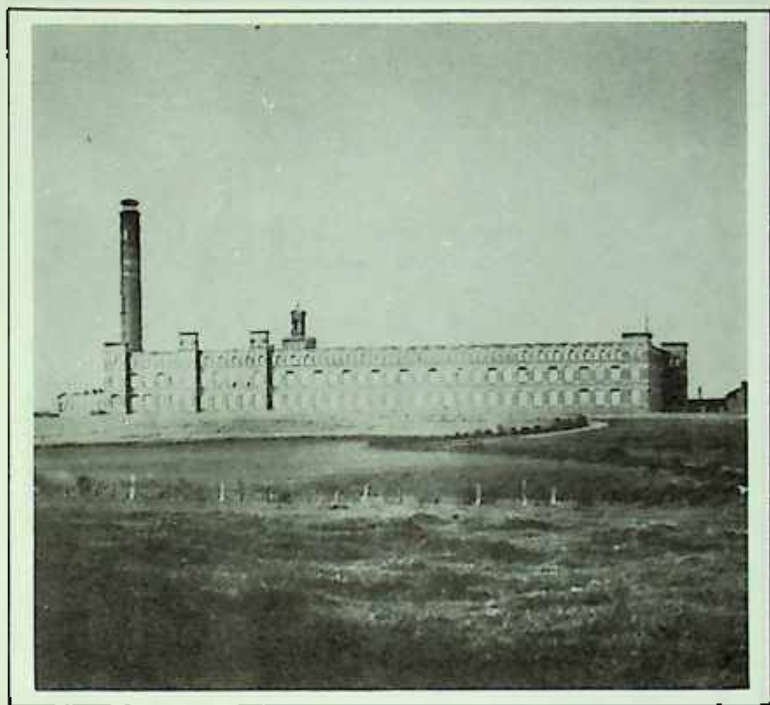
Wigan by the 1870's was connected to Manchester, Liverpool and Southport by the L & Y Railway, whose passenger station in Wallgate is shown here.



This photograph is of the bridge in Wallgate to the London and North Western Railway Station, from where one could travel to London and the South, or to the North and Scotland via Preston.



A new method of public transport appeared in Wigan when the Wigan Tramway Co. Limited began a horse-drawn tram service on the 30th October, 1880. These were rapidly replaced in 1883 by steam trams. William Wilkinson of Holme Foundry, designed and built a steam tram widely used in Wigan and other northern towns. Above a local steam tram built by Kitson Co. of Leeds.



Mesnes Park opened in August, 1878, shortly after the library. This view of the Mesnes before the Park had been made would probably have been familiar to many Wiganers, especially perhaps those who worked at Rylands Mill shown in the background.



The Royal Albert Edward Infirmary was opened by the then Prince of Wales in 1873 and was named after him. This illustration is one artist's impression.



The Market Hall opened in 1877, designed by a Mr. J. Hunter. It cost £16,000. Prior to this there had been market stalls in Hallgate, Standishgate and the Market Place.



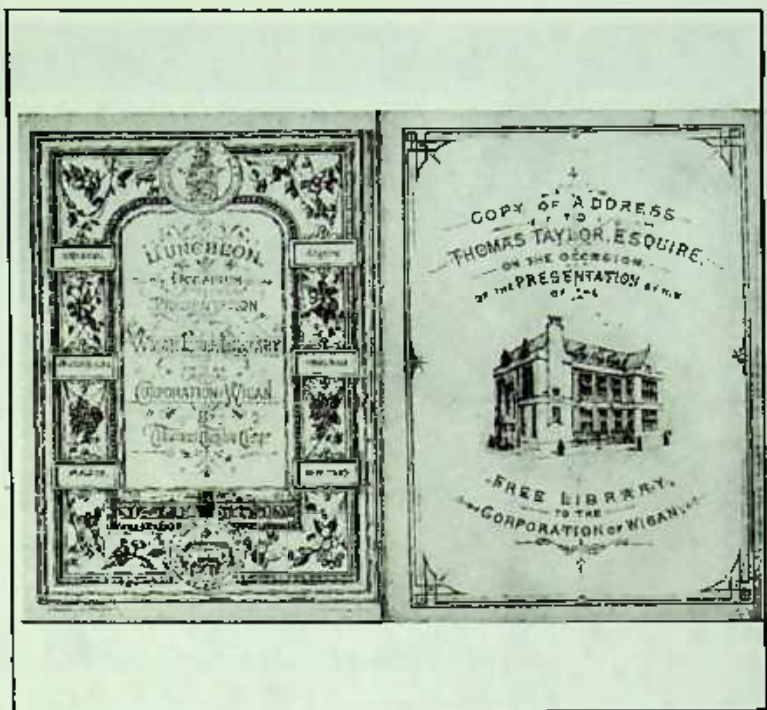
The new Town Hall was to be a familiar sight until it was demolished for street improvement in 1882. Built in 1720-3 at the expense of the two local M.P.'s of the time, when this photograph was taken in the late nineteenth century the bottom part of the building was occupied mainly by butchers shops.



The other Town Hall in Wigan in 1878, when the library opened, was in King Street. This had been built between 1866-7 and housed the Borough and Police Courts, Council Chambers, Fire Brigade Station and the municipal insignia.



On October 16th, 1877, Thomas Taylor, a local cotton spinning mill owner, presented the Free Public Library building to Wigan town. It was, apparently, a great day. Shops, offices and banks closed early. The streets along which a procession, including Mr. and Mrs. Taylor, the Mayor and Councillors, the Rifle Volunteer band and teachers and lecturers from the Mining School were to pass, were decorated with bunting and mottoes. At the special platform erected at the Grammar School Crofts, an illuminated address was presented to Mr. Taylor.



Following this there was a banquet at the Public Hall, which had been specially decorated by Meek and Sons of Wigan with flags, bunting and mottoes, and from the gallery the diners were serenaded by Mr. Goodwin's String Band.

On the 6th May, 1878, the Mayor, Councillors and people of the town gathered at the library at 8.00 p.m. to see the public acceptance of the books bought from Dr. J.T. Winnard's bequest. An illuminated address was presented to Mrs. Winnard. At 4.00 p.m. on Tuesday, May 7th, the library opened its doors to the public and by 4.30 p.m. was thronged with people.

A Photograph of the Original Address is on the following pages.

we deem this a fitting opportunity for expressing to you in the name of the Inhabitants generally the grateful recollection and the warm admiration of the people of Wigan of the very handsome and most useful bequest of your late lamented son Sir Joseph Taylor Wignard, by means of which this building is opened with a large and valuable collection of books suitable in every way for the instruction and amusement of the people, and selected strictly in accordance with the directions of your Honors Will.

The presence of these volumes will be a worthy monument of your Son's magnificence and foresight, and will cause his memory to be cherished both by ourselves and by future generations whose best interests we believe will be advanced by his bequest.

The Corporation hope that the of Sir Thomas
which they will shortly place in this Library will remind
all concerned of what, no doubt, was his warmest wish - that by the
patient study of the works provided by his gift they should advance not
only their personal interests but also the welfare of the Town in which
he spent an active, honorable, and industrious career.

Given under the Common Seal of the
Mayor, Aldermen, and Burgesses
of Wigan, this sixth day of May 1878.



Walter Mayhew, Mayor.

Marshall W. Leach, Town Clerk.

The first annual report of the librarian shows just how busy the library was, and how universal its appeal.

WIGAN FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY.

Report of the Librarian.

To the Committee of the Wigan Free Public Library.

GENTLEMEN,—I have the honour to present my Report for the year 1878.

The Institution was opened on the 7th of May, and the Report therefore relates to a period of eight months only. The details contained in the tables appended will show the extent to which the Library has been appreciated by the inhabitants of the Borough; and it will be a source of gratification to know that in this respect the career of the Wigan Library compares exceedingly favourably with the early history of other Libraries of a like nature.

The books purchased by means of the munificent bequest of the late Mr. Winnard have now been arranged and shelved; a first catalogue of the Lending Library has been issued, and 420 copies sold; the cataloguing of the Reference Library has been commenced. The Reference Department contains 15,300 volumes; it has been open to the public 202 days, during which time 5,046 works have been consulted. The Lending Department, which contains 6,808 volumes, has also been open to the public 202 days, during which time 42,174 volumes have been issued to borrowers. The number of tickets issued to borrowers is 3,407, and the weekly average of issues is 1,240.

The News-room has hitherto certainly proved the most popular branch of the building, and more especially since the placing there of the small Library, accessible without any restriction whatever, except that the books may not be taken out of the room. So far the News-room, owing to the limited income at the disposal of the Committee, has been the only portion of the Library open on Sundays, and the average attendance has been 183; but, through the liberality of Mr. Taylor, the donor of the building, the Reference Library will on and after Sunday, the 19th inst., also be opened to persons holding special tickets issued by the Committee.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Your most obedient Servant,

HENRY TENNYSON FOLKARD.

January 16th, 1879.

TABLE 1.

Classification of the volumes consulted in the Reference Library from May the 7th to December 31st, 1878 :—

CLASS A.—Encyclopedias, Dictionaries, Magazines, and Reviews ...	333
CLASS B.—Philosophy	246
CLASS C.—Theology	307
CLASS D.—Sociology	126
CLASS E.—Philology	53
CLASS F.—Natural Science	376
CLASS G.—Useful Arts	789
CLASS H.—Fine Arts	893
CLASS I.—Literature	818
CLASS J.—History and Biography	1105

5046

TABLE 2.

Showing the class of readers to whom books have been issued in the Reference Department, from 7th May to December 31st, 1878 :—

READERS.	BOOKS ISSUED.
Agents	80
Apprentices	147
Architects and Surveyors	50
Assistants	144
Bakers	2
Booksellers	16
Foot and Shoemakers	17
Brass Finishers	2
Bricklayers and Stonemasons	74
Builders	12
Butchers	6
Carpenters and Joiners	208
Clerks and Book-keepers	988
Coachbuilders	35
Chemists and Dispensers	13
Colliers	885
Domestic Servants	2
Drapers	204
Engineers	160
Factory Operatives	64
Farmers	8
Firemen and Underlookers	95
Grocers	97
Ironworkers	19
Labourers	75
Ladies	60
Merchants and Manufacturers	5
Moulders and Fitters	223
Painters and Plumbers	95
Printers and Bookbinders	9

TABLE 5.

Classification of the ages of borrowers from the Lending Library.

From 14 to 20 years	...	...	...	...	1377
" 20 to 30 "	...	...	...	...	1184
" 30 to 40 "	...	...	...	...	426
" 40 to 50 "	...	...	...	...	168
" 50 to 60 "	...	...	...	...	54
Above 60 years	...	...	...	...	13
Ages not given, chiefly ladies	...	...	...	...	185

3407

LIST OF SOME OF THE MORE IMPORTANT WORKS IN THE
REFERENCE DEPARTMENT.

THEOLOGY.

- Acta Sanctorum, quotquot toto orbe coluntur; collegit Joannes Bollandus. 53 vols. folio. Paris, 1863-68.
- Baronius (Cardinal), et Reynaldus (O.) Annales Ecclesiastici cum Antonii Pagii critica, &c. 38 vols. folio. Luca, 1738-59.
- BIBLES.—The Bible in Englyshe of the largest and greatest volume. Printed November, 1541. Folio.
- " Biblia Sacra polyglotta, edidit Brianus Waltonus. 6 vols. folio, London, 1657.
- " The Holy Bible, edited by Rev. Josiah Forshall, and Sir Frederic Madden. 4 vols. 4to. Oxford, 1850.
- Clark's Foreign Theological Library. 130 vols. 8vo. Edinburgh. V.D.
- Helyot (P.) Histoire des Ordres Monastiques. 8 vols. 4to. Paris, 1721.
- Migne (L'Abbé) Patrologiæ Cursus completus, &c., &c. 387 vols. 4to. Paris, 1855-78. (Complete set).
- Mischna, sive totius Hebræorum Juris, Rituum, Antiquitatum, &c. Illustravit C. Surenhusius. 6 vols. folio. Amsterdam, 1698-1703.
- Picart (B.) Ceremonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde. 10 vols. folio. Amsterdam, 1736-43.
- Tillemont (Le Nain) Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire Ecclesiastique. 16 vols. 4to. Paris, 1701-12.

NATURAL SCIENCE.

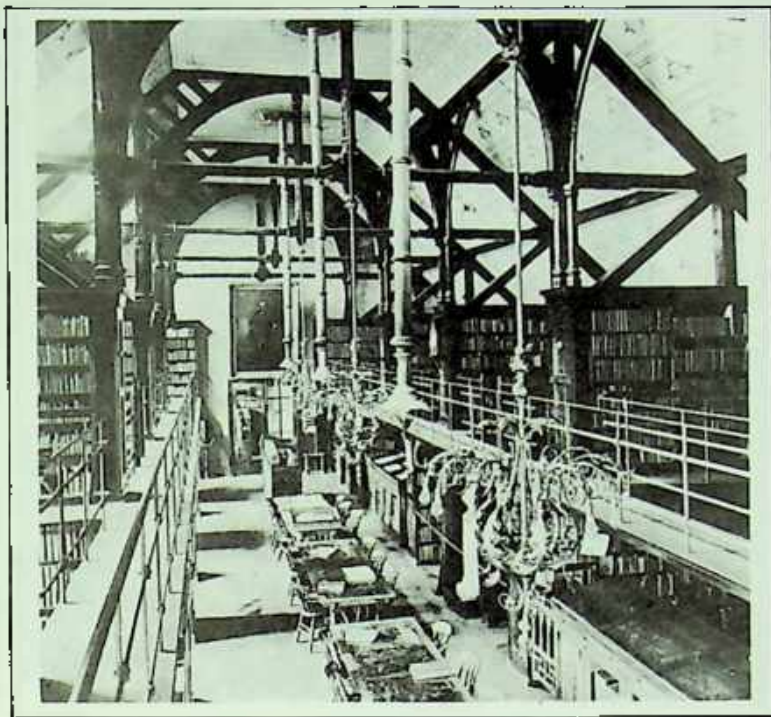
- Agassiz (L.) Recherches sur les poissons fossiles. 4 vols. 4to. Neuchatel, 1833-34.
- " Histoire naturelle des poissons d'eau douce. 2 vols. folio. Neuchatel, 1839.
- Astronomical Society's Memoirs. 4to.; and Notices, 8vo. (Complete sets.)
- Bloch (W. E.) Ichthyologie. 12 vols. folio. Berlin, 1795-97.
- Blume (C. L.) Flora Javae. 4 vols. folio. Batavia, 1828-36.
- " Rumphia, sive Commentationes Botanicae. 4 vols. folio. Batavia, 1835-48.
- Chemical Society's Journal. (Complete set.) 1849-78.
- Curtis (W.) Botanical Magazine. 103 vols. 8vo. London, 1793-1877.



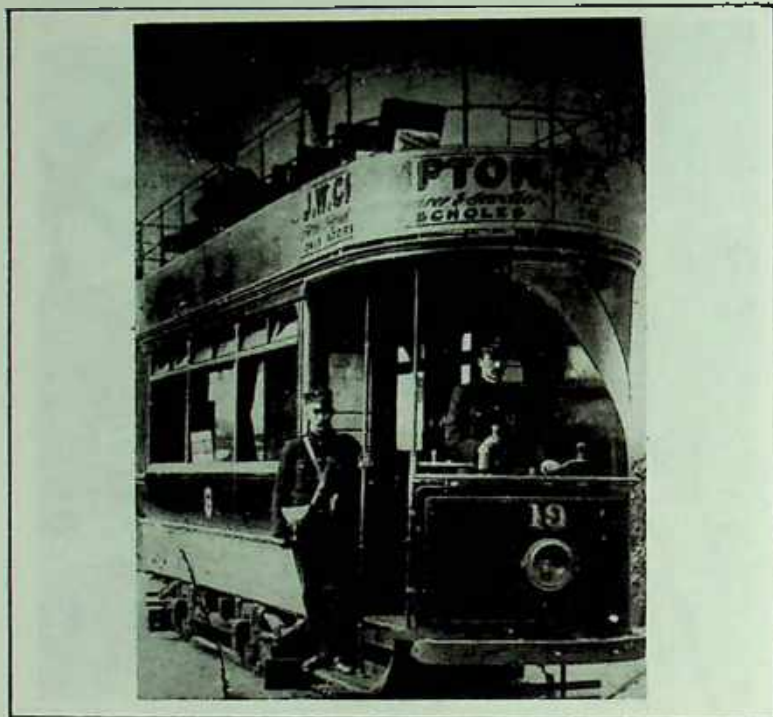
Although some children's books were included in the lending library, it was not until 1893 that they had their own library when Sir Francis Sharp Powell, an M.P. for Wigan, presented the Powell Boys Reading Room. Girls were allowed to use the library but it seems that they were very much in the minority. The photograph shows an early view of the Powell Boys Reading Room.



The new century saw the death of Queen Victoria and the beginning of a new era. The South African War ended and a new King, Edward VII, was crowned. Photograph of a local school celebrating these events.



Inventions such as the internal combustion engine, and the greater use of electric lighting, were to have a great impact on the town. Above the interior of the reference library - nothing very unusual at first sight, the major difference is that it is now lit by electricity, which was installed in 1900. The first 23 subscribers to the new method of lighting were paying 7d per unit.



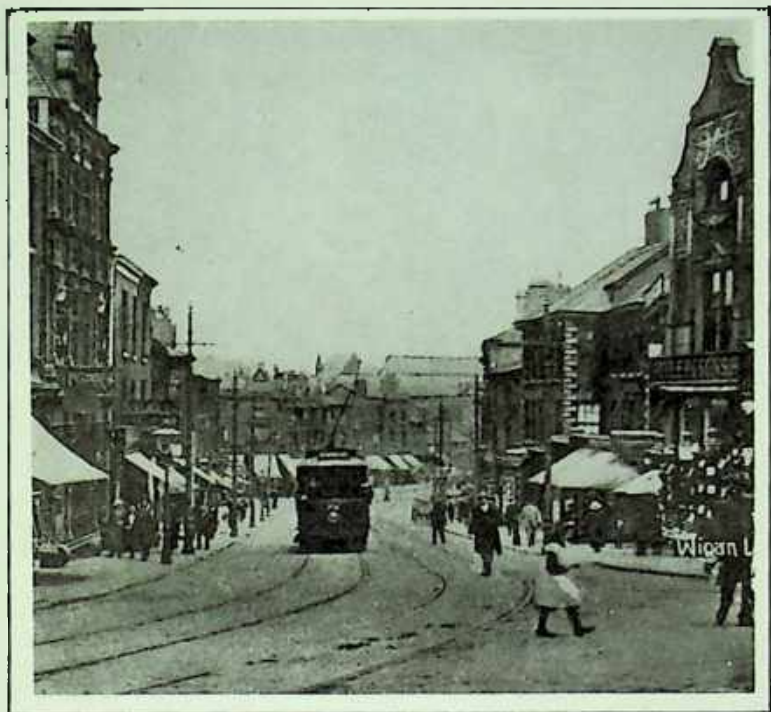
The new electric generating station provided power for the latest Corporation owned public transport - electric trams. A service was begun in 1901 and by 1906 there were trams going to Martland Mill, Boars Head, Scholes, Platt Bridge, Pemberton, Goose Green, Ashton, Hindley, Poolstock, Standish and Aspull. Open deck trams were in service from 1901 - 1925.



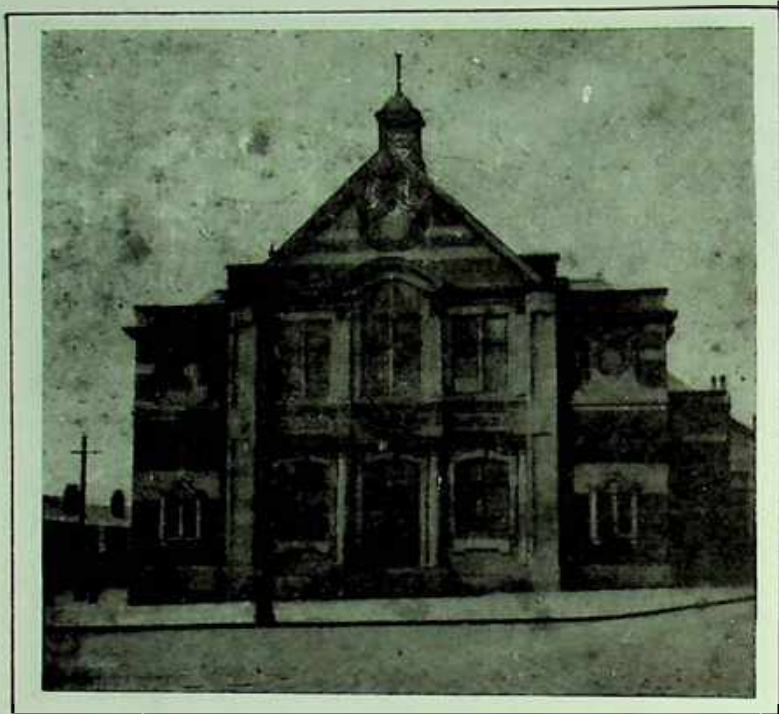
Technical College in Library Street. The College one of the first to be founded in this country dated from 1858, the first lectures being delivered in a room in the Public Hall.



Wallgate in the early years of this century.



Standishgate around the same period
(obscure caption on postcard says it is Wigan Lane)



Pemberton had become part of Wigan in 1904. Carnegie, the Scots-American philanthropist, had provided £5,000 towards the cost of Pemberton Library, opened in 1907, which rapidly proved as popular as the Wigan Central Library.



When Andrew Carnegie later visited Wigan in 1909 he was made a Freeman of the Borough.



Photograph taken when King George V and Queen Mary visited Wigan on July 10th, 1913, as part of their Lancashire tour. The Mayor and Mayoress, Alderman and Mrs. F. Dickinson, are waiting to greet them.



Market Place as it was at the time of King George V's visit in 1913.



Wallgate Station about the same time the King made his visit



In 1914 Britain entered the Great War. Like many other Wigan men, most of the male library staff joined the Army, Navy or the new R.F.C. The library itself was insured against aircraft risk. When Wigan's first Chief Librarian H.T. Folkard pictured above, died in 1916, he was succeeded for a brief time by Miss Edith Lea, one of the first women to join the Library Staff.



Officers of the Wigan Territorials 5th Manchester Regiment,
August 1914.



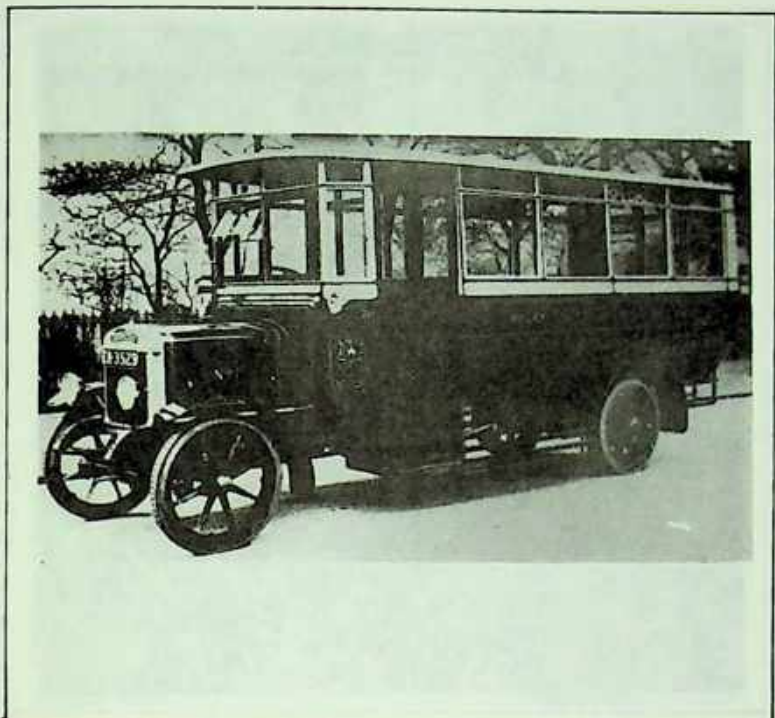
Wigan Volunteer Corps, Mesnes Park, 1916.

Peace came in 1918 but there was not to be a new era of prosperity for the town. The coal and cotton industries were declining in importance. The depression of the 1920's hit Wigan hard. Although over £1,000,000 was spent by the Corporation in new housing schemes, modernising the town, and schemes to attract new industry to the town, George Orwell's picture of Wigan in the 'Road to Wigan Pier', published 1937, was very gloomy.

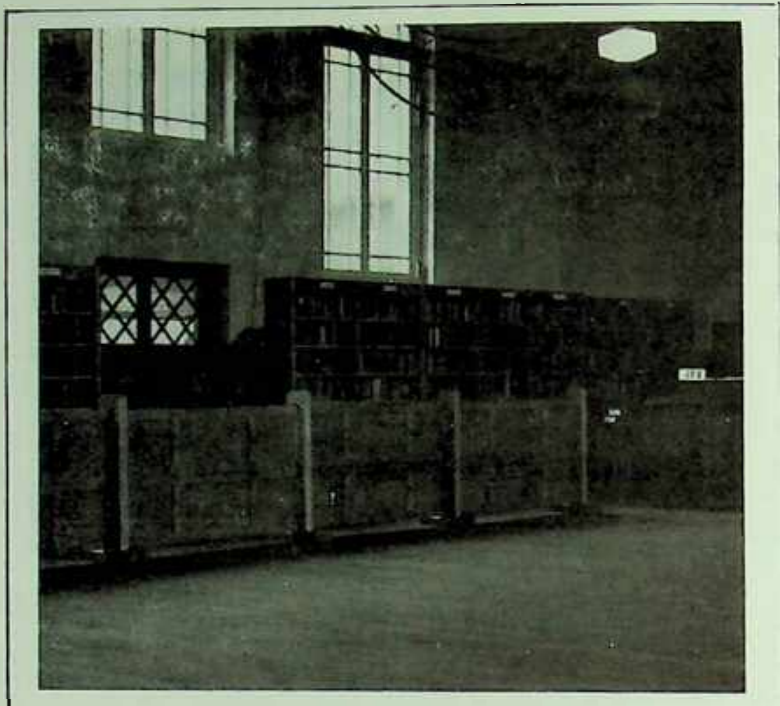


37. Motor-bus of the Wigan Corporation
at Orrell & Billinge in 1919. Outside the
at Orrell Post.

A new sight in post-war Wigan was the petrol engined buses that the Corporation introduced in October, 1919, on the Skelmersdale-Wigan route. The photographs show one of the buses that ran between Billinge and Orrell from November, 1919.

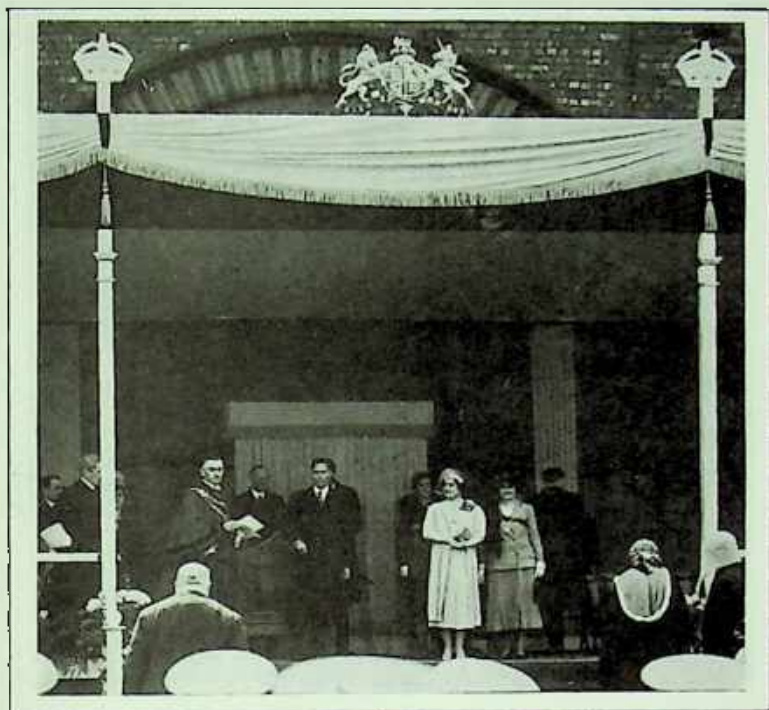


In 1922 the buses ceased to operate, but a new service was commenced to Beech Hill in 1924, using diesel engined buses. Trams disappeared from the Wigan streets in 1931.



Under the new librarian, A.J. Hawkes, the Central Library underwent further changes. From the summer of 1920, the public were able to select books from open shelves instead of using the cumbersome method of consulting the catalogue and library indicator.

The people who had been re-housed on the Beech Hill estate, too far away to visit the Central Library, were, from 1938, able to use the branch library in Gidlow School.



May 21st, 1938, the visit of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth. This photograph shows their reception at the Market Square. The Mayor and Mayoress at that time were Mr. and Mrs. E. Ball.



In September, 1939, the Second World War broke out. Rationing of food, clothing, petrol etc., became the order of the day. Local people, if not serving in the armed forces, were involved in essential war work, or with the Home Guard or Civil Defence. Patriotic savings drives and fund raising events were enthusiastically supported.

A patriotic shop window display during World War II.
(Photograph courtesy of Mrs. M. Blackburn).



The band of the 6th Seaforth Highlanders on parade on the Market Square during War Weapons Week, December 1940. (Photograph courtesy of Mrs. M. Blackburn).



Women's Day, Wigan Warships Week, 1941 - Munition Workers, perhaps from the R.O.F. factory at Beech Hill or Euxton.

(Photograph courtesy of Mrs. M. Blackburn).



Market Place, in the 1950's.
(Photograph courtesy of Mr. S.A. Hall)



Standishgate and Wigan Lane in the 1950's.
(Photograph courtesy of Mr. S.A. Hall)



The post-war years saw radical changes in Wigan as it became the modern town it is today. Areas like Scholes, one of the oldest parts of the town, acquired a new face when re-development of the area began in 1962. Above, Douglas House, one of the new blocks of flats in Scholes.
(Photograph courtesy of Mr. S. Hall).



Re-development of the town did not only affect housing. Places like T'owd Arcade, as the familiar Market Arcade was known, was demolished by 1972 and replaced by the present new shopping precinct.
(Photograph courtesy of Mr. S. Hall).



Market Place, the entrance to the Commercial Yard, once an important part of the town it was demolished in 1971 to make way for a new shopping centre.
(Photograph courtesy of Mr. S. Hall)



Modern Millgate and the new Civic Centre, the first phase of which opened in 1971.




The public swimming baths had been opened in Wigan in 1882. Above, the new International Pool, opened in 1966.



The Central Library in the post-war years kept up with modern trends and new ideas. In 1952 a travelling library began to visit the new housing developments lacking a convenient local branch library. Wigan's first travelling library.



In 1961 the long awaited Beech Hill branch library opened. At this time the Central Library was able to loan records from the new record library, as well as loaning books. (Photograph courtesy of the Wigan Observer).



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Cover illustration - Old Market Place, Wigan (1838)

