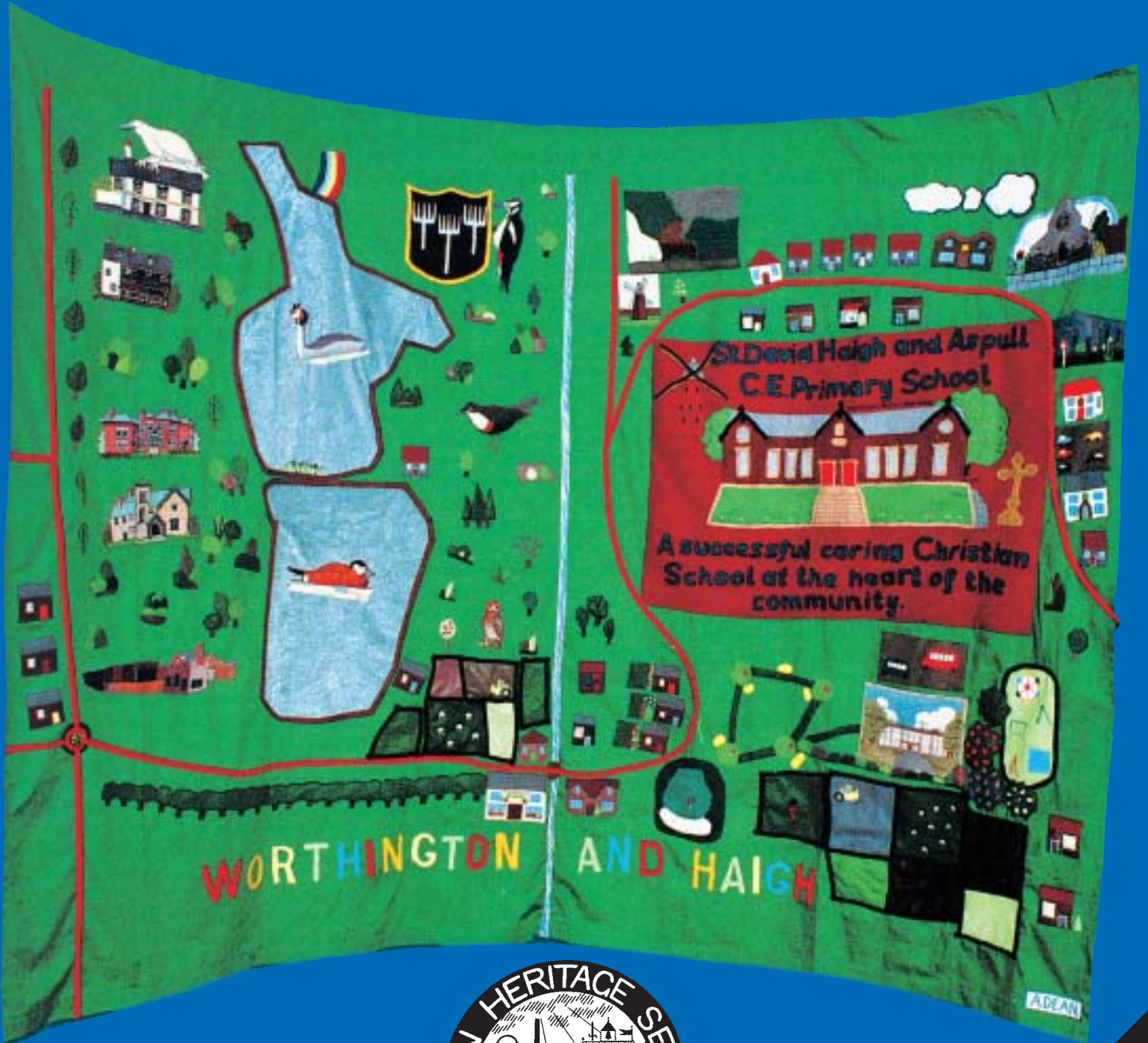


# PAST FORWARD

ISSUE No. 24

SPRING 2000



*The Newsletter of Wigan Heritage Service*

**FREE**

## From the Editor

This first issue of *Past Forward* in the 21st century has got a very distinct Millennium flavour. I would particularly draw the attention of readers to two exciting exhibitions - *Mapping the Millennium* and *Year 2K*.

*Mapping the Millennium* is a travelling exhibition, which will be launched in April, and will then visit over 20 venues throughout the Borough. It is based on the *Parish Map*, which has attracted massive support and involvement from all communities; but will also include examples of children's play, midi music activities by young people and the Millennium Play - full details on p13.

The Heritage Service's *Year 2K* exhibition can be seen in the History Shop from late summer onwards. There is still time for *Past Forward* readers to be involved in the exhibition, but you will need to be quick.

Also very timely is regular contributor Fred Holcroft's splendid description of local celebrations of a notable national event exactly a century ago.

Not everything is to do with the Millennium, or century, however. I cannot recall any articles on hockey in *Past Forward* - but this issue contains two! Dialect is a topic which has aroused a great deal of interest and discussion - and particularly so in this issue. I am also delighted to welcome some new contributors to *Past Forward* - including Ruth Symes's delightful story about her 83 year old great-great-grandmother on a motor-bike!

As always, this issue of *Past Forward* has something for everyone.

# New to the Archives

**INSTEAD** of the usual 'News from the Archives' I have decided to call my first piece for *Past Forward* 'New to the Archives' by way of introduction. But do not worry, the regular service will resume as of the next edition!

I arrived in Leigh at the end of October, shortly after completing my Masters in Archives and Records Management at Liverpool University. At first it seemed rather daunting, knowing that I alone am responsible for the archives of the Borough as a whole. Looking at things from a more positive angle, of course, I welcomed the challenge that the position presented. I know that I have both the opportunity and enthusiasm to take the archives into the 21st century.



I would like to thank all those people, staff and members of the public, who have helped me to settle in and show me the ropes. I am new to the area, so it has taken time simply to get my bearings, so to speak. It is surprising, you do not realise how much knowledge is acquired just by living in an area and of course how long it takes to find your feet in a completely new area! It is a gradual process, but it is getting easier over time with the kind help and patience from staff and regular visitors to the Archives.

The Heritage Service as a whole has a high profile within the Borough, but the Archive unfortunately has a much lower profile. My aim is to raise this profile, and to make a visit to the Archives less daunting and more enjoyable. Users should feel able to browse the various finding aids (indices, catalogues etc), use reference materials to understand different types of documents and so on. I want to encourage the use of the records we hold here. There are vast quantities of documents that are not used

as often as they should be e.g. business collections, records of societies and trade unions, diaries - the list is endless. These documents, can really add depth to such things as family history.

Although it is vital that users make an appointment to view documents in advance,

members of the public can call in during our opening hours to browse our reference material. This way you can really understand the collections we hold. Often the context of a document can be almost as important as the document itself.

I realise that the opening hours are not ideal. However these restrictions are crucial to ensure a higher quality service during our hours of opening. It is important that I know which

documents are required for the day before 9.15 am and 12.45 pm. This ensures that the documents you require are waiting for you on your arrival and keeps the searchroom open. The days on which we are closed gives us the opportunity to maintain a high quality service at all times.

Changes are being made slowly. Hopefully you will begin to see the results in the next few months.

### OPENING HOURS:

Monday	10 - 1.00	2.00 - 4.30
Tuesday	10 - 1.00	2.00 - 4.30
Wednesday	Closed	
Thursday	10 - 1.00	2.00 - 4.30
Friday	Closed	

Document production times  
9.15 to 12.45  
by prior arrangement.

Joanne Revill - Heritage Officer  
(Archives)

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**Cover: The Worthington and Haigh Parish Map.** The many features depicted include the White Crow Inn, Worthington Hall, Kilhey Court, Worthington Lakes, the Worthington coat of arms, Haigh Windmill, the Crawford Arms, St. Elizabeth's Church, St. David's School and, of course, Haigh Hall. This map is one of 28 magnificent pieces of work produced by local communities over the last two years, all of which will be going on display throughout the Borough as part of the Mapping the Millennium Festival during 2000. See p13 for further details and back cover for six more maps.

# UNPARALLELED SCENES

## 100 YEARS AGO

### Wigan and District on Mafeking night

**“T**HERE’S nowt so queer as folk” runs the old saying and indeed who can explain the eccentric aspects of human behaviour. One of the most unusual events in history was the public reaction to the news that the British force trapped in Mafeking during the Boer War had successfully held out after a siege lasting almost eight months. When word reached Britain that Mafeking had been relieved pandemonium broke out in the streets. Not just in London but in cities and towns all over the country. Wigan was one of those places which went wild that weekend in May 1900.

In the autumn of 1899 the complacency of Victorian England was shattered when the mightiest empire that the world had known up to then - the British Empire - was challenged by two small faraway countries, the tiny Boer republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. After negotiations between the two sides had lasted all year, war was declared in October 1899 and three Boer armies left their homelands in the interior of South Africa to invade the British coastal colonies. The Boers believed - quite rightly as it turned out - that time was not on their side and that if they could win some early victories before Great Britain could bring its superior numbers to bear then the British Government and people would become disheartened and negotiate a peace settlement as had happened in an earlier war between the two sides almost 20 years previously in 1881.

These plans came unstuck when two strategically important towns - Ladysmith in Natal and Kimberley in Cape Colony - refused to surrender, and when they held out in the rear of the advancing Boer armies it deflected them from their main purpose of thrusting deep into British territory and gave Great Britain time to recover. In addition Mafeking, a small town of no particular importance out in the bush, also refused to give in and its siege soon became

by Fred Holcroft



*Memorial to those who died in the Boer War, which once stood in Mesnes Park, Wigan (Wigan Heritage Service)*

a story which gripped the imagination of the British public.

#### Hurriedly protected

Mafeking was a small market town of 1,500 inhabitants, typical of scores like it in Southern Africa, with no strategic importance yet destined to endure a siege of 217 days, over seven months - one of the longest in history. Mafeking’s significance was not in its military importance but in its propaganda value as the siege dragged on and its defence became a legend. In the summer of 1899, while negotiations were still going on between Britain and the two Boer republics, the British War Office sent Colonel R.S.S. Baden-Powell to the north west frontier of the Cape Colony to raise and train two regiments of mounted

infantry, who it was hoped would play an important scouting role should hostilities commence. When war broke out and a large Boer army of 9,000 men advanced towards him Baden-Powell’s 745 strong force retreated into Mafeking and Baden-Powell made his mind up to defend the place as long as he could and keep as many Boers as possible away from the main action.

Mafeking had to be hurriedly protected by improvised defences consisting of a five mile long perimeter of trenches, earth and sandbagged forts, barbed wire and minefields enclosing the town of Mafeking itself and the village of the native Baralong tribe. Boers were not keen on frontal attacks and after they had made several half-hearted attempts the besiegers were content to keep the town surrounded, annoy the defenders by firing shells into the town from their siege artillery, and try to starve the place out. In fact the longer the siege went on Baden-Powell’s main problems became the dwindling supplies of food and the falling level of morale especially among the civilians.

As the months went by the first part of the Boers’ overall plan began to work as the British armies trying to reach Kimberley and Ladysmith suffered several humiliating reverses - three in one week at Stormberg, Magersfontein and Golenso - as well as the disaster at Spion Kop. So it looked as if British resolve would weaken. However these setbacks had the opposite effect to the one anticipated by the Boers. Thousands of volunteers from all over the Empire rushed to enlist in the British armed forces and after further struggles both Kimberley and Ladysmith were relieved. This was not much use to Mafeking, still isolated and surrounded, so when Bloemfontein the capital of the Orange Free State had been captured and Lord Roberts’ army was marching on Johannesburg and Pretoria there was still no sign of an advance towards Mafeking. On 12 May 1900 a Boer force even penetrated the outer defences of Mafeking,

*Continued on page 4*

## UNPARALLELED SCENES 100 YEARS AGO

### Wigan and District on Mafeking night

*Continued from page 3*

but eventually it was surrounded and captured. A few days later Baden-Powell sent a message that his food supplies would soon be finished.

### Hurriedly protected

A determined effort was then made to break through to the beleaguered town and at 7.30 pm on Thursday 17 May 1900 ten troopers of the Imperial Light Horse trotted into Mafeking, the advanced scouts of a combined British force some of whom had come up from the south led by Colonel Mahon and some who had come down from Rhodesia under Colonel Plumer. At about 9.30 pm on Friday 18 May 1900 a Reuters news agency message arrived in London to inform the British Government that Mafeking had been relieved.

The news spread quickly throughout the capital. Theatre and music hall performances were interrupted and huge crowds swarmed into the streets, shouting, cheering, dancing and singing patriotic songs.

It was not merely London that was caught up in tumultuous celebrations. Crowds paraded round city centre streets throughout the provinces in a nationwide display of enthusiasm.

The uncontrolled behaviour of the revellers added a new word to the English language - to "maffick" became used to describe outrageous behaviour and a street rhyme was sung by children for years afterwards.

*"Mother, may I go and maffick.*

*Run around and hinder traffic?"*

Such celebrations took place in Wigan and surroundings, described in the local papers as "unparalleled scenes." This is their story.

## WIGAN

ALL through Friday large crowds of people had hung around outside the Post Office at the top of Wallgate hoping for news that British cavalry had reached Mafeking, but by half past nine most had

gone home and the town centre, although the public houses were full as usual, was subdued. Most people were quietly at home, some having supper, some had even gone to bed. At a quarter to ten there was a buzz of excitement as a telegram was fixed to the inside of the Post Office window. At last Mafeking had been relieved. From the town centre men ran excitedly down the main streets, down Wallgate, up Wigan Lane, across the bridge over the River Douglas into Scholes, and along Manchester Road into Ince, their feet pounding on the cobbles while they shouted "Mafeking's Relieved!" at the top of their voices.

The effect was electric - sleepers awoke and jumped out of bed, hurriedly put on their clothes and rushed outside, everybody smiling, talking, and shouting. Within a quarter of an hour thousands had turned out and made their way to Market Place so that soon the streets became so crowded that they were impassable. Men, women, children, all ages, all classes, formed a moving mass of people, there was no attempt at restraint and their enthusiasm was unbounded. These scenes, and those shortly to follow, were unparalleled in the history of the town and were never to be repeated - not even at the end of the two terrible world wars that nobody then knew were to follow. Within half an hour people were arriving from the out-districts and pouring into the town centre, swelling the crowd to even greater numbers. In the nearby goods yards of the two town centre railway stations, railwaymen let off fog signals and their enormous bangs accompanied the whoosh of rockets being let off from the Post Office. Factory and colliery whistles added to the din and the Parish Church bells began to peal. The crowd cheered and the National Anthem and Rule Britannia were sung and re-sung over and over again, Union Jacks were waved in the air and began to appear in the upper windows of many buildings. Youths formed impromptu mouth organ bands while those without any instruments banged buckets and trays and tin cans.

A march began, along King Street and into Wallgate, led by the Old Borough Band playing "Soldiers of the Queen". They were joined by the Volunteer Bugle Band and two torchlight processions marched around the town centre streets. One of them held aloft an effigy of the Transvaal's president, Kruger, and the pavement spectators struck at it as it went by with their walking sticks and umbrellas. In another procession a youth stood in an open crate carried on his friends' shoulders while he banged a bucket with a stick.

The public houses did a roaring trade. There was no chance of a prompt closing time and as the police looked the other way they remained open into the small hours with not a whisper of "eleven o'clock gentlemen" or "time gentlemen please" as was usually the case. A few revellers stayed out all night but as the crowds broke up and most drifted home in the small hours of the morning they saw the twinkling lights of bonfires which had been lit on the hills around the town.

Saturday was supposed to be a work day - at least the morning was - but no work was done. Many turned up at their workplace but it was not to do any work but to carry on celebrating. Even though several thousand Wiganers left for Blackpool to attend the Miners' Demonstration there were still thousands left in the town who wanted to continue celebrating the relief of Mafeking. Those who entered the town centre on Saturday morning were met with an amazing sight. Streamers and bunting stretched across every street, flags hung from every window, and every pedestrian seemed to be wearing a button badge with the face of "B.P." or "Bobs" or "Kitchener". Once more impromptu parades began to march around the streets waving flags and from an upper window of the *Wigan Observer* office in Rowbottom Square hung an effigy of Kruger while another one hung from the balcony of the Royal Court Theatre in King Street. In the evening the Market Hall and the Municipal Buildings were illuminated by flickering gas lights in the shape of a crown. Still the crowds sang until midnight. It had been a day of jubilation. The news was not official. It was not even confirmed. But the people knew. They trusted and believed and their faith was justified.

## PEMBERTON

THE news reached Pemberton just after 10 o'clock on Friday night. Soon the centre of Lamberhead Green was subjected to scenes similar to those in Wigan town centre. Flags, bunting, cheering crowds, home-made entertainment took place before Pemberton Old Band as well as several other bands led torchlight processions round the village. Saturday too saw scenes similar to Wigan but it was Wednesday when Pemberton mounted its biggest demonstration. The idea came from the offices of the Volunteer Fire Brigade and some officials of the Pemberton Urban District Council. Because of the short time



space in which to arrange an official procession anyone was allowed to join in, "Let 'em all come" said one councillor.

At about 8 o'clock in the evening those wishing to take part assembled outside the Urban District offices while the Pemberton Total Abstinence band played "Soldiers of the Queen" and a crowd of about 8,000 joined in the singing. At 9 o'clock the captain of the Volunteer Fire Brigade, John Rigby, gave the signal to start. Three mounted firemen led the way, followed by the Pemberton Total Abstinence Band mounted on a lorry draped with an inscription appealing for donations to the Indian Famine Relief Fund. The next lorry contained the members of the Halfway House Botanical Society dressed in female costume, accompanied by their "special war correspondent" also mounted on a horse with his field glasses made from two bottles of stout tied together. Next in line was a group of cyclists carrying Chinese lanterns followed by another lorry with the by now obligatory effigy of Kruger hanging from a gallows.

The torchlight procession seemed never-ending with scores of riders and lorries provided by the various local tradesmen - grocers, drapers, butchers, coal merchants, and others carrying enthusiasts in costume dressed up as police, kaffirs, sailors and all types of colonials, soldiers in scarlet, khaki, and even some dressed as minstrels. Many of the vehicles displayed large photos of the British generals and in one was a scene depicting President Kruger, in exile on St. Helena, sat in a wheelbarrow.

The route taken by the procession was Billinge Road, Enfield Street, Ormskirk Road, Lamberhead Green, back along Ormskirk Road to Newtown, along Warrington Road to Goose Green, up Little Lane, and reaching the council offices in Tunstall Lane at about 11.30 pm.

All along the route a collection was taken for the Indian Famine Relief Fund which raised 20 pounds. Inspector Harlow and the Pemberton constabulary marshalled the procession which was watched by thousands.

The Halfway House was granted a two hour extension and the organisers enjoyed a musical evening into the small hours of the morning after.

## INCE

THE heavily built up district of Ince celebrated in the dark because the news was received after the gas street lamps had been put out. But through the darkness lit

only by the light which streamed out from open doors and through windows the inhabitants of Ince celebrated noisily, cheering, shouting, singing and banging drums. A crowd gathered outside the Post Office in Manchester Road to look at the telegram exhibited in the window.

## ASHTON

AT 9.50 on the Friday evening news of the relief of Mafeking was telephoned to the Ashton police station and a few minutes later a message confirming this was posted on the inside of the Post Office window. There had been a rumour on the previous day which had been quickly denied but this had not left any feelings of anticlimax.

Within minutes the sounds of shouting and cheering could be heard, soon followed by the flashes of fireworks. Bonfires were quickly lit and effigies of Kruger thrown on. The event coincided with the half-yearly Ashton fair on the Market Place and throughout the night the musical instruments and whirlitzers blazed out military tunes. As dawn came on Saturday the village quietened down, but early visitors to the market saw that Gerard Street was an avenue of red, white and blue. "BP" badges and rosettes were being worn by almost every pedestrian, and all the places of worship and public buildings were flying flags. Almost every cart and bicycle which passed through the village was decorated and one enthusiast even adorned his bulldog with an appropriate ribbon.

Again at Ashton, an important coal mining centre, as at Wigan, the absence of the miners at Blackpool on their demonstration took some gloss off the occasion.

## COOP'S FACTORY

EVEN on Monday things did not return to normal. At Coops' factory in Dorning Street, a firm of clothing manufacturers which had completed several large orders for khaki uniforms, the largely female staff had decorated the building so that in the words of the Wigan Observer reporter "it was a veritable fairy land of flags and colour." The despatch room was full of crates marked Warrenton, Bulawayo, Johannesburg, even Mafeking itself. 'The girls who make the khaki have got Khaki-mania' exulted the reporter. Without informing the supervisors, the girls festooned their workrooms with red, white

and blue coloured streamers from each side, joining at the middle, with here and there a strip of green to represent the Irish soldiers, while now and then in a poignant touch there were black ribbons to honour the fallen, many of whom came from Wigan and were known to the girls. Around the walls hung Union Jacks and portraits of Lord Roberts, the army commander, Colonel Baden-Powell the defender of Mafeking, and Queen Victoria.

The ceilings and walls of every workroom was festooned with banners and slogans. One in green with white lettering proclaimed "Long Live our Irish Regiments" and another in red wished "Success to the Lancashire Lads," while another in tartan expressed "Good Luck to our bonny Gordons." And of course there were the usual "God Bless Tommy Atkins," "Britons Never Shall be Slaves", and "On to Pretoria"; the nurses too were remembered with one which read "God Bless Our Nursing Staff."

All that day the girls sang as they sewed, a marked contrast to the Saturday morning when they had marched in processions through the building, and after trying in vain to get them to stop parading around and start work the management gave them the rest of the day off.

## STANDISH

FRIDAY night saw celebrations in Standish as crazy as anywhere around Wigan, and they ended around midnight only to resume early next day.

At the close of the afternoon school on the Monday the boys of Standish Grammar School accompanied by their teachers marched four abreast down School Lane waving red, white and blue streamers and singing "It's A Dear Old Flag To Fight For" as far as the Wigan to Preston Road. Here they blocked the road and held a sing song of patriotic tunes. People began to throw money so they passed a cap round and collected 8s.4d (41p) which they gave to the Mayor of Wigan's relief fund.

## GOLBORNE

THE first to get the news was the post master Mr. Pennington who fired off a number of shots in a pre-arranged signal. In ten minutes the whole town was alive. The hooters and whistles at Brown's factory, the colliery, and the paper mill

*Continued on page 6*

## **UNPARALLELED SCENES 100 YEARS AGO**

### **Wigan and District on Mafeking night**

*Continued from page 5*

competed with each other to see who could make most noise. Everyone made for the post office and gave vent to their feelings. Flags and streamers appeared as if by magic to transform the crowd into a mass of colour.

The crowd wanted to march round the village but there was no band. The cry was repeated "where's the band?" and eventually someone produced a big drum which was beaten enthusiastically at the head of the raucous column of revellers. At the junction of Grundy Street and Leigh Street a bonfire had been lit by Mr. R. Openshaw a prominent resident, and here the procession paused and held another sing-song until two in the morning.

Next day, only a few millgirls turned up for their customary Saturday morning shift at six o'clock, and when work stopped at eight as usual for breakfast they decided that they'd done enough and left to join the processions that were starting up again.

On the recreation ground another bonfire was lit and the seemingly indestructible Kruger was thrown on it yet again. There was a huge firework display and no one present could remember a day that was even remotely like it!

## **WESTHOUGHTON**

THE news was relatively late reaching this village located midway between Leigh and Bolton. It was about 11 o'clock when the pealing of St. James' Daisy Hill church bells drew crowds thronging to the church and the vicar, Reverend H.H. Oliver held a short thanksgiving service. Later celebrations were marred when Richard William of Bolton Road badly injured his hand setting off some explosives and had to be rushed to hospital.

## **HORWICH**

THE news that Mafeking had been relieved had been telegraphed from Pretoria in South Africa at 11.35 am. on Friday 19 May and reached London at 9.17 pm. that night. It was then transmitted to the

provinces as quickly as possible, and at 10.10 pm Inspector Graham at Horwich police station received a phone call from Superintendent Leeming at Bolton telling him the good news. Almost at once pandemonium broke out in this little industrial town.

Hooters and whistles from the railway works and other factories almost drowned out the many church bells being pealed vigorously by groups of enthusiastic volunteers. Fireworks were let off from the Conservative Club and after a flurry of patriotic speeches the Woodward brothers of Winter Hey Lane marched round the town banging drums. They stopped outside the house of a local solicitor, Mr. Foley, whose son was a lieutenant serving in South Africa, followed by another demonstration outside the house of Lieutenant Thornton's father. When they stopped outside the house of Mr. Hughes, the manager of the L and Y Railway Company's engine works - the biggest employer in Horwich - the crowd sang the National Anthem then asked if they could have the next day off work! He replied he was not in a position to promise anything but he had no doubts that if they did not turn in for work it would be alright.

On the waste ground near Mr. Rose's on Chorley New Road a bonfire was lit using materials provided by Carter's greengrocers, Marsden's butchers and Horsfall's grocers. In addition an empty tar barrel belonging to Horwich district council which "happened" to be nearby was thrown on to the flames, to be followed soon after by a full one! Once more President Kruger of the Transvaal was consigned in effigy to the flames but this time he was accompanied by his ally President Steyn of the Orange Free State, both figures taken from a waxworks exhibition in the town. A portrait of Baden-Powell was hung from a pillar which supported the overhead tramlines and it could be clearly seen so brightly burnt the bonfire.

Councillor James Marsh was spotted in the crowd and several people shouted to him to make a speech. Like most politicians he was not slow in coming forward and promptly put a few words together saying what a happy moment it was for Great Britain, and how glad he was that people were showing their patriotism and loyalty in the way they were doing. He thought that New Horwich had quite outdone Old Horwich and he was sure that the young children present, although it was well past their bed time, would remember this occasion for the rest of their lives. The crowd then sang "For he's a jolly good fellow" by way of a thank you.

The celebrations continued into the night. Mr. E. Woodhead brought a gramophone out of his music shop and into the street where it played patriotic and popular songs to accompany the singing, but it is doubtful how much could be heard over the noise of the church bells, factory and colliery hooters and whistles. Mr. Kenyon who owned a watchmaker's shop on Winter-hey Lane had put up a big sign "Baden-Powell watches Mafeking - Kenyon's watches for Horwich."

Mr. Watts, the manager of the tea-shop opposite, had placed a portrait of Baden-Powell on the pavement outside his shop and chalked patriotic slogans on the flags around it - "To Baden-Powell and his gallant men, a hearty greeting from Horwich, well done, England's honour is safe in your hands." Two men, obviously intoxicated as well as overcome by the exuberance of their own patriotism - one with a bottle sticking out of his back pocket - knelt down and kissed the picture.

About three o'clock in the morning the crowds drifted home but the bonfire was still smouldering at tea-time on the following day. As predicted, very little work was done on the Saturday. Those who entered their workplaces left again soon afterwards and the celebrations continued in the streets, decorated with flags and bunting like all the other towns and villages around Wigan.

On the Monday, the school children were assembled in the schoolyard where, watched by a crowd of parents, they sang "God Save the Queen" and "Rule Britannia," gave three cheers for the Queen and for Baden-Powell, and were given a holiday for the rest of the day. This scene was repeated in almost every school in the district.

In the evening a torchlight procession, similar to the one at Pemberton, was organized by the Tradesmen's and Ratepayers Association. With about 500 torches, it was an impressive sight, yet contained a humorous element. It was led by Mr. Lilley riding a bicycle festooned with Union Jacks, followed immediately by the Horwich Old Band, the Railway Works Band, and a "scratch" band which christened itself the Piketown Road Band. A spoof band with real drums but mock instruments tagged on behind them, although at various intervals along the route kept leaving the procession, usually when passing a public house!

Starting from the Bridge Hotel at about half-past eight it was waved off by a party stood on the balcony of the Conservative



Club as it moved through Church Street and Winter-hey Lane down lower Chorley New Road to the Crown Hotel. There, needing no prompting, Councillor Howarth harangued the crowd by the light of the big street lamp, before the procession returned by way of Lees Lane, Winter-hey Lane, Chorley New Road, Barlow Street, Victoria Road back to the Bridge Hotel.

The evening concluded with a meeting in the Masonic Hall of more speeches and toasts, where the prominent local officials again led the proceedings.

## LEIGH & DISTRICT

THE news that Mafeking had been relieved only reached Leigh at 10.30 pm on the Friday night, but just as everywhere else spontaneous scenes of extraordinary enthusiasm erupted. The mills sounded their whistles and hooters while the crowds sang patriotic songs and let off fireworks. Thousands of people thronged the town centre streets until after midnight. On the following Saturday morning the mills, mines and foundries all took a holiday while the children marched in processions round the town. For the umpteenth time President Kruger was hung from a prominent lamp post.

At about the same time as the news reached Leigh it was being spread around Atherton and as the inhabitants swarmed out, Market Street was crammed for hours. Noisy bands paraded up and down and by midnight the revellers were getting quite thirsty. Some of them broke into a local club, and disturbed a quiet party that had been drinking after hours in the back room!

Tyldesley was only told later, slightly after 11 o'clock, but there was the same reaction and Elliott Street was soon hidden in flags, a bonfire of tar barrels and orange boxes was lit on the Square, and celebrations continued until two in the morning.

Mosley Common never received word but the inhabitants heard the noise from Leigh and the whole village turned out. A mixed cacophony came from the church bells and the steam whistle on Yates' mill, added to by wild cheering and the horrible music of an impromptu "kazoo" band.

All this time the little village of Astley slept through it all and only joined in the celebrations on the Saturday morning.

## CONCLUSIONS

Frequently during the 19th century poems would appear in the local press in celebration of prominent events. The relief

of Mafeking was no exception and the following appeared in the *Wigan Examiner*:

### "The Relief of Mafeking"

*And are ye sure the news is true?  
And are ye sure its right?  
They tell me Mafeking's relieved,  
Oh! has it come tonight?*

*Oh! how we've hungered for the word  
Through many a weary day,  
And can it be it's come at last,  
This eighteenth day of May?*

*Yes! Yes! A thousand times it's true  
The siege is o'er and past;  
The brave true men of our loved Queen  
Are free again at last.*

*Then here's a hand my trusty friend  
And gie us a grasp o' thine,  
We'll tak a right guid hearty shake!  
As we did in auld lang syne.*

*And pray God bless our faithful few  
That stood the test so long,  
And bring them safely home again  
To dwell with us among.*

*And when our soldiers home return  
With honours as of yore,  
We'll let them see we've thought of them  
And shall do evermore.*

*For auld lang syne can ne'er forget  
The soldiers of our Queen,  
We are the people - they the men -  
The best the world has seen.*

*For auld lang syne my lads  
For auld lang syne we'll sing  
And tak' a right guid hearty grip  
or relief o' Mafeking."*

What made people do it? Why was there such a spontaneous outburst of feelings?

The leader writers in the local papers thought they knew:

*"A more remarkable demonstration than that which followed the receipt of the news that Mafeking had been relieved cannot surely have been seen before in this old town. The rapidity of its rise, the fervour of it, the great sincerity of the joy and the thankfulness mark it as a unique demonstration. No-one who saw these demonstrations will ever forget them. We*

*did not rejoice over the discomfiture of the enemy, we rejoiced because of the deliverance of our friends from terrible strain and trials, and nowhere was that rejoicing more sincere than in the ancient borough of Wigan and the surrounding district."*

and:

*"No incident of the war has stirred the British people so profoundly as the successful defence of Mafeking. The place was of no strategic importance but this brave little garrison never for a moment the garrison belongs. The world is impressed with the powers of endurance and the fighting entertained thoughts of surrender. It was natural that public sympathy with the defenders should be strong, that the desire for relief in the public mind should be pressing. But the rejoicings which followed the news of the relief were the outcome of much more than a keen sympathy. The element of pride was there. The success of the efforts to hold the place reflects honour not only on the garrison but upon the race to which qualities of the British race. Not only have the Boers learned how hard a thing it is to capture even the weakest of strongholds when held by Englishmen but the military authorities on the Continent of Europe have a better idea of what a war with England means. We stand higher today than ever we stood before in the estimation of the world. The link which binds all parts of the Empire together is stronger today because of the sufferings of the defenders of Mafeking."*

Viewed from almost 100 years on it doesn't look quite like that. Baden Powell's achievements were indeed impressive. Autocratic, imaginative, firm-minded, humorous and even ruthless when he had to be, Baden-Powell came to symbolise "British pluck" at a time when British power looked fallible if not ludicrously inadequate.

Yet the Mafeking celebrations disgusted the opponents of the war and even caused the serious-minded supporters of imperial expansion to stop and think. The celebrations were both vulgar and fun, embarrassing and exhilarating. Essentially the pandemonium was pathetic, the relieved reaction of an overconfident nation who, underneath all the glitter, pomp and circumstance were insecure, resentful of international envy and hostility, and embarrassed by the war's early fiascos.

For all that, it was genuine enough and the people had a good time in a short burst of escapism from their ordinary hardworking humdrum lives, losing themselves in "unparalleled scenes".

# WILLIAM MASKELL PEACE

WILLIAM Maskell Peace, the son of William Peace who was, for many years, the mineral agent for Lord Crawford and a prominent figure in the development of Wigan's coal trade, was born in Wigan on 3 April 1834. He was educated at Rossall School and, on leaving, was articled to John Mayhew, a leading town solicitor. On being admitted solicitor in 1854 he went into business on his own account, taking into partnership Mr. Booth Bell. The partnership was dissolved when Mr. Bell went to London, being carried on in King Street as Peace, Ackerly and Appleton. In 1883, Mr. Peace merged with Mr. (later Sir) Thomas Ratcliffe-Ellis, which was to become the most notable law firm in Wigan.

## Prominent position

Like his father, Maskell Peace held a prominent position in the mining world for over 30 years. He made the coal industry his particular study from the beginning of his public life and was deeply involved, not only in its development, but in the settlement of local and national problems related to the trade. The progress of the Wigan Mining and Mechanical School was a project dear to his heart and he was the first secretary when it opened in 1857, holding the position until his death. He was also the Law Clerk and secretary of the Lancashire and Cheshire Coal Association, the concern of the coal-owners, and he was appointed the solicitor of the Mining Association of Great Britain in February 1866, secretary to the Association in 1870 and later the Law Clerk. All these positions were held until his death. As secretary of the Wigan Coal and Iron Company, in its day the largest mining company in the world, he was a major figure in mining circles, while the efforts he made to help establish the Miners' Permanent Relief Society earned him the gratitude of many thousands of miners who received its benefits.

As an author on legal mining questions and the associated problems, he was an authority of the front rank and was regarded as such in the United Kingdom. One of his most successful books was *Coal Mining Regulations, 1887 and the Truck Act, 1831 & 1837*. This became a standard work on the subject, and so enhanced his reputation as a



*William Maskell Peace*

mining lawyer that it was said at the time of publication that no man, be he owner, agent, part of management or union official could afford to be without a copy. He was the secretary to the Board of Examination for mine managers certificates for the district of Lancashire and North Wales. The National Association of Colliery Managers always found him a willing helper and advisor. In fact, all bodies having for their object the advancement of the mining industry and the workers connected with it could always rely on his support. It was perhaps unfortunate that the heavy demands on his time prevented him giving as much time as he would have wished to writing for he was an author of force and powerful diction.

## Sanitary improvements

Early in his career, Maskell Peace was elected a Conservative member for the Swinley ward but resigned to become a candidate for the office of

Town Clerk which had become vacant on the death of Mr. Caleb Hilton. He was unanimously elected to the position on 24 September 1866, and stayed in office until 1885 when he resigned because of the pressure of business. During his tenure of office, many important sanitary improvements were made in the town and he represented the borough of Wigan on the Joint Committee to enforce the provisions of the River Pollution Act in 1876. In 1871 he travelled to London with Mr. Nathaniel Eckersley, the Mayor, to complete the purchase of the manorial rights from the Ecclesiastical authorities which enabled Mesnes Park to be built. At a retirement dinner he was presented with a valuable piece of plate and an illuminated address by the members of the Town Council.

## Offered the Mayoralty

Such was the regard in which he was held by the Town Council, that shortly after resigning as Town Clerk he was elected an Alderman of the Borough. He was also offered the Mayoralty, and would have proved to have been a popular Mayor, but had to refuse because of business commitments. Twice he was elected unopposed to the Lancashire County Council as the member for Standish, and the Council quickly made him the Chairman of its Parliamentary Committee. He was also a member of the Standish Local Board, always taking a keen interest in the town where he lived for many years.

Maskell Peace was a member of the Church of England, a Conservative and a willing supporter of connected organisations. But other bodies, educational, social and religious, had reason to be thankful for his generosity.

Mr. Peace died on 10 November 1892, at Lynnwood, Park Avenue, Southport.

*James Fairhurst*



*Alan Roby continues his fascinating account of the life of Ellen Weeton, focusing here on her stay in the Lake District and the Isle of Man. He also looks at her disastrous marriage to Aaron Stock, and throws some dramatic new light on the latter's final days.*

# ELLEN WEETON

(1776-1849)

## GOVERNESS

### Work, pleasure and drama in Lakeland plus Excursions on the "Isle of Refuge"

**MISS Weeton's long and tiring journey from Liverpool to the "charming seat" known as Dove Nest, overlooking Windermere, near to Ambleside was undertaken via a combination of stage coach, mail coach and post chaise. She arrived 13 December, 1809; the journey took two days.**

Her new employer and occupier of Dove Nest, Edward Pedder, Esq., received her "very politely". Miss Weeton was particularly taken to Mrs. Pedder who she described as "a pretty woman; I may say handsome; and a most sweet temper." She described Mr. Pedder as "a good looking little man. His natural disposition is good but worked a little by the usual dissipation of military life. He is good natured, liberal, hospitable and unsuspecting. He is what most people would call a good husband - he would be better if he were less fond of the bottle." Miss Pedder, his 10-year-old daughter of a former marriage, was a sad child who had fits.

Miss Weeton's natural organisational ability soon made an impact on the household, which consisted five servants (two men and three maids), four or five horses, five or six dogs, a cow, two pigs and a whole host

of rats, of which she described as a want of regularity in the house which I shall attempt to remove by sensible degrees."

The Pedders treated Miss Weeton extremely well. She soon felt very much at home and far from making her feel any dependence, they treated her with "much deference". She described a typical dinner scene at which two servants in livery attended on them. There was "some display of plate, silver nutcrackers, etc. After dinner Mr. And Mrs. Pedder were seated at their wine with Mrs. Pedder dressed in pink muslin with a very becoming head dress of the same."

### Burned to death

The idyll was shattered on 16 February 1810 when Miss Pedder was burned to death. Her clothes had caught fire from standing too close to the parlour fire. Before the funeral Mr. Pedder's behaviour, fuelled by alcohol, became extreme and bizarre. "Completely drunk he went into the room where the body lay and worked himself

into a frenzy; laying down beside the coffin, getting astride of it, pulling and mawling the body. He opened the mouth repeatedly, kissing it and declaring she was not dead; calling her to speak to him; bewailing the loss of an heir to that part of his property he had it in his power to leave."

Miss Weeton quickly began to see the true nature of Mr. Pedder: "Self, and self alone is the powerful principle with the master of this house." He became a tyrant, manifested in bouts of irrational rage and

miserliness. He with-held the hard-earned wages of tradesmen and those in his employ. Initially his wife then later Miss Weeton became the butt of his tyranny with a combination of wife-beating and governess-baiting.

### Magnificent repast

Despite the difficulties of living in the household of an unpredictable and violent master, the situation was

*Continued on page 10*



*Dove Nest was erected towards the end of the 18th century by Mr. Benson, Wordsworth's landlord whilst resident at Dove Cottage. It is located just off the road which runs alongside the Lake between Windermere and Ambleside very close to the Ambleside boundary.*

*Horne's 'Lakes of Lancashire, Westmorland, and Cumberland' (1816): 'A little beyond Low-wood Inn, is Dove Nest, a charming seat . . . at present the residence of Edward Pedder, Esq., who has made considerable improvements to the original building. It is pleasantly situated and the fields in front of the house slope regularly down to the water's edge'.*

*Miss Weeton lived at Dove Nest as governess to the Pedders from December 1809 to March 1811.*

*Today (as pictured) Dove Nest is known as 'The Samling at Dovenest'. For a night, a weekend or a week or more, the place is available to hire for single groups or parties as a private country house. (The word Samling in old Cumbrian language means a gathering of people).*

## ELLEN WEETON (1776-1849)

### GOVERNESS

Work, pleasure and drama in  
Lakeland plus Excursions on  
the "Isle of Refuge"

*Continued from page 9*

somewhat ameliorated by occasional days out to Ambleside, Allonby, Kendal and Lancaster. In particular Miss Weeton described the exhilaration of a day's excursion and picnic on the summit of Fairfield, where the party earned a magnificent repast of veal, ham, chicken, gooseberry pies, bread, cheese, butter, hung leg of mutton, wine, porter, rum, brandy and bitters. The experience prompted Miss Weeton to comment: "I have never in my life enjoyed a more agreeable excursion; such a scramble exactly suited me. A fine noble, lofty, rugged mountain, has far more charms for me than a fine, formal artificial walk in a garden or pleasure ground."

\*\*\*\*

Towards the end of 1810, Miss Weeton's position became increasingly untenable. Whilst her services were retained on behalf of the illiterate young wife after the tragic death of Miss Pedder, Mrs. Pedder increasingly began to look upon Miss Weeton more as a pleasant companion. In a letter to Miss Bessy Winkley dated 4 February, 1811, she commented that she was no longer prepared to subject herself to Mr. Pedder's vagaries. "If I have any value for my life, I must endure it no longer and I am quitting Mr. Pedder's house next month".

### "Pecuniary affairs"

Back rent accrued on her cottage property in Liverpool enabled her to leave the Pedder household without first seeking another position. For the next

seven months she stayed in and around Ambleside. She then moved south, staying briefly at Lancaster, (her birthplace), for a fortnight before travelling to Liverpool "to settle some pecuniary affairs", then travelling on to Leigh to see her brother and his family. Afterwards she moved back to Upholland to see once again her Aunt and Uncle Barton. Finally, after some six weeks, she left them to reside with Miss Bessy Winkley at Liverpool, with whom she boarded for six months.

\*\*\*\*

By May 1812, having sufficient income from rent to keep her comfortably, Miss Weeton became increasingly ill-at-ease with the inactivity. Before deciding to take a further position as governess, she first decided to visit the Isle-of-Man. Embarking on 23 May, the ship did not arrive at Douglas harbour until the following day due to being becalmed.

For the price of one shilling (5p) Miss Weeton stayed the first night on the island at a "filthy inn", and dined with the family and their friends on a fine turkey, a fowl, asparagus and potatoes. Not bad for a shilling!

Whilst rambling along the narrow streets of Douglas next morning she found a stationer's shop from where the local newspaper was issued. In it advertisements of lodgings led her to "convenient and comfortable" accommodation "and to dine with the family for 12 shillings (60p) a week".

Miss Weeton described the Isle-of-Man as an "Isle of refuge\* for the unfortunate and unprincipled; for it literally swarms with English vagabonds".

\* William Stout (1665-1752), social historian, said of the Isle-of-Man: "Many goe there to dwell who are reduced to strates here by extravagance here or other misfortunes, who are safe there from any prosecution of the laws of England for any debts contracted here, or other misdemeanures committed in England or Ireland".

Her first long walk was on 28 May. She had been on Douglas Head and had noticed some mountains in the distance. Setting off towards Greeva (the highest) she passed Kirk Braddon and after first entering its interior remained some time in the churchyard then "quitted it with religious awe". She ascended Greeva before the day's end, then returned home "very pleased."

### Courtesy and civility

Her observations of the Manx is of interest: Poor people seldom wore shoes. Mostly she was met with courtesy and civility, yet never before had she met a more inquisitive people. "Where did I come from? How long had I been on the Island? When did I mean to return? Where was I going?" At first Miss Weeton thought them impertinent, then quickly realised they were "ignorant" and were not guilty of any "impropriety". Many spoke in Manx, then in English when realising she did not understand.

### Old Irishman

On 1 June she decided to walk to Laxey, some eight miles from Douglas. After passing through Kirk Conchan, she was overtaken by an old Irishman, who made several attempts to converse with her. Shy at first, she "examined" him more closely. He was old, rather infirm, and was confident she could overpower him, should he attempt to rob her. He told her he had walked that day from Ramsey to Douglas (16 miles) and was now returning.

Miss Weeton described Laxey as a beautiful little vale. "Cottages, huts, gardens, orchards and little patches of corn and meadow-land ornament the view for two or three miles, while in front, the bay surrounded with 30 or 40

fishermen's boats." She then headed back home in the company of a woman pedlar and fortune teller who had "a good deal of sly drollery".

### Summit of Snaefell

Before leaving the island on 21 June, Miss Weeton undertook many more walks, including an excursion to the summit of Snaefell (2,034 ft.). Reaching the cairn she "determined that the wind should not entirely conquer me, I crept over on my hands and knees, though with great difficulty, and then added my mite to the heap of stones".

She concluded her account of her visit to the island of which in her own estimation she had walked at least 203 miles, by commenting: "Knaveish indeed must be that foreigner who can outwit a Manksman; yet the English or Irish have only to thank themselves for it; for much to their discredit, the Manks have only been their pupils... A few, and but a few, 'retain their integrity to the last'. Happy are they for they will meet with a joyful reward."

\*\*\*\*

On Friday 10 July, 1812 Miss Weeton left Liverpool via Warrington and Manchester to the home of her new employer, Joseph Armitage, situated at Honley, near Huddersfield. Very soon she would witness the fear of those around her caused by attacks and burning of mills by the Luddites.

● In the next issue life at 'High Royd', Honley, near Huddersfield, with the Armitage family; Mary Stock (Miss Weeton's daughter) at Parr Hall boarding school, near St. Helens; stage coach ex-periences including the report of an overturned coach in Wigan; a visit to London; an accurate description of Miss Weeton's appearance – by her own hand.

# AARON STOCK of Wigan

HOW Miss Weeton met Aaron Stock, owner-manager of a small cotton spinning mill in Wigan, is not at all clear. Even less clear is why Miss Weeton, so independent and so protective of her money and assets should surrender her liberty in order to become mistress of the household of a virtual stranger. In fact her first mention of Stock in her letters was but a fortnight before the marriage. It is known that two years' silence between herself and brother Thomas was broken when Miss Weeton sent him a letter asking for a confidential report on the character of her intended husband, Aaron Stock. A highly satisfactory character reference soon returned but what Miss Weeton could not have known was that Thomas was due to receive the large sum of £100 upon her marriage to Stock

## Marriage

The marriage took place at Holy Trinity Parish Church, Liverpool, in September, 1814. Miss Weeton was 37 years of age and Aaron Stock, a widower, just 11 months her senior, having been born 24 January, 1776. Their home together was at the rear of his factory in Chapel Lane, Wigan where all the ingredients for a disastrous marriage converged: There resided two adult daughters of Stock's first marriage, a spirited and sensitive step-mother, together with a dominating and violent-tempered husband and father. And to add to the new Mrs. Stock's misery (whom I shall, for convenience, continue to refer to as Miss Weeton), there appears to have been a succession of easily influenced servants, one of whom never missed an opportunity to prejudice her master against the isolated 'mistress' of the household.

Nevertheless a daughter, Mary, was born in June, 1815, just nine months and nine days after the marriage. Sadly the daughter on whom the mother lovingly doted and the father who smiled with fond indulgence, failed to hold husband and wife together.

At the time of their marriage Stock was practically a bankrupt with a summons for assault hanging over him the attraction for him was obvious. By dint of hard work and commercial astuteness Miss Weeton had derived an income from her cottage property speculation and other investments and she was by then very materially comfortable. At a stroke it became incumbent upon her on her

marriage to deliver up everything to her husband. Stock in turn eagerly used all to bolster up his tottering cotton-spinning concern.

## Systematic brutality

Having secured freedom from pressing creditors and placed his cotton-spinning concern firmly on its feet again by means of Miss Weeton's money, Stock began a course of systematic brutality towards his hapless wife. His conduct, whilst not actually condoned by the almost non-existent laws for the protection of wives, encountered no opposition. Beatings, confinings on bread and water to her bedroom, affronts to her dignity, she suffered for the sake of her child. It would seem that nothing he did could drive her out of his house and thus achieve his objective of sole guardianship of the child of the marriage.

A prayer written by her on 10 January, 1818, whilst suffering another period of 'solitary confinement' in her own home appealed to God for a change in her husband's heart:

*"... although my husband makes me, as it were, a prisoner in my own house, I have a Peace which he knows nothing of, a Joy which he cannot take away. Oh! That his heart would soften, and that he might repent."*

## Increased prosperity

Meanwhile Stock's local standing had increased in line with his increased prosperity and along with it an intensification of his wife's persecution. There were repeated confinements and 'turnings-out', actual imprisonments and a mysterious case of attempted arson (which he blamed on his wife). Finally came action on his wife's part which weakened her position - window breaking and physical resistance to his brutality.

Brother Thomas at last, most unwillingly, was pressed to assist in his official capacity as a solicitor. Under threat of starvation and further imprisonment, also the threat and horror of being sent to a Lunatic Asylum, a Deed of Separation was forced upon her. The crux of its content was to 'banish herself' from Wigan and its immediate districts and limited herself to three annual interviews with her child. Her net gain was her liberty and a pathetically inadequate quarterly allowance.

\*\*\*\*

The many letters written by Miss Weeton over the years on her views on Christianity and marriage leaves no-one in doubt of her belief in its sacredness and there is no evidence of her intention to treat it in any way but nobly. So too, must have once been the views of Aaron Stock. It is an established fact that he possessed an "excellent Calvinistic library". In addition he gave liberally to missions, schools, etc., though it was observed by Miss Weeton that his charitable giving was limited to good causes which issued lists of subscribers for public edification. It is also known that the Rev. Alexander Steill, of St. Paul's Independent Chapel, Standishgate, made free use of Stock's library and accorded its possessor all the consolations of the Calvinism they jointly professed, which was not extended to Stock's wretched second wife. Furthermore Rev. Steill excluded the new Mrs. Stock from active membership of his church and also, seemingly, within the sphere of his local influence, adversely influenced others against his wife.

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**It seems inconceivable that Edward Hall, meticulous editor that he was in compiling the life of Miss Weeton's Journal of a Governess, should make an error in recording the final days of Aaron Stock. Mr. Hall states that Stock left Wigan suddenly in 1825 to live near Ashton-in-Makerfield in his new capacity as "a coal-owner with a home situated at Seneley Green". Further investigation in the writing of this article to establish the place and date of death of Aaron Stock has revealed that the Aaron Stock connected with coal mining at Ashton-in-Makerfield, as referred to in Miss Weeton's Journal of a Governess Vol.2, p406, (David and Charles, 1969, in two volumes), was not the husband of Ellen Weeton. It is now clear that two entirely separate families named Stock with sons named Aaron lived in the Wigan/St. Helens areas at that time. An Aaron Stock born 27 May, 1809, who died on 29 June, 1869, was a coal merchant in the employ of his father Thomas Stock of St. Helens and owner of a local colliery.**

**The final days of Aaron Stock, husband of Ellen Weeton and son of Matthew Stock (locksmith and later a brewer's journeyman) of St. Helens, remains undiscovered. Prior to 1837 it was not legally necessary to record by civil registration, a date of death.**

# ***Cursing King George at the old Bull and Dog***

THE PUBLIC Record Office in Kew contains over 1300 documents concerning Wigan, from medieval land disputes to railway acts, from mining leases to sanitary measures. This wealth of material leaves one rather spoiled for choice, but on a recent visit my eye was drawn to an entry concerning the King versus John Hart, heard before the court of Wigan's January Sessions 1817.

## **Brief for the Prosecution**

A beautiful flowing hand has lettered the case against John Hart, who is indicted that "being a pernicious seditious and evil disposed person and greatly disaffected to our Lord the King and to his Royal Highness George Augustus Frederick, Prince of Wales, Regent of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland etc. etc. He did move to hatred and dislike of the persons and Government of our said Lord the King and the said Regent..."

This apparently took place on 13 December 1816 at a public house in Wigan called the Bull and Dog before witnesses who were to appear for the prosecution.

These were:-

Richard Holmes, William Parke, Jonathan Parke, William Brookes and Clement Dodenhoff(?)

## **Words spoken in Drink**

John Hart is referred to as a labourer and a cotton spinner within the facts laid

before the court. The essence of his crime was that "he did push, utter, and declare with a loud voice the scandalous, malicious, and seditious words following of and concerning our said Lord the King, that is to say 'God damn the King'. This being against the peace of our said Lord the King, his Crown and Dignity."

A further count against John Hart was that he uttered the words 'God damn King George' and insulted the Prince Regent, but perhaps it is time to allow the words heard in the court room 183 years ago to be read again.

## **The Case (as quoted in the written testimony)**

*The defendant in this case is a cotton spinner in the town of Wigan and on the day mentioned in the Indictment, the 13th December last, was at a Public House in Wigan called the Bull and Dog, he was a little intoxicated at the time and asked a person of the name of Brookes who happened to be there, if he was not a Constable, Brookes replied that he was which was in fact true.... a great number of Special constables had been appointed for the Borough of Wigan - Hart then cursed all Constables and used some very violent expressions and amongst other things said "God damn the King" and putting his hat in the fire said "I wish the Prince Regent's head was in it". He also expressed a wish that the French might land and that the Irish Rebellion might get on and said they had begun in Scotland (there was at that time intelligence in the papers of disturbances having taken place*

*at Dumfries). He also said he did not care for a Bayonet or two, that he had a little rusty sword and should like to kill three persons in Wigan and Brookes the Constable was one.*

At this point in his rantings Brookes apparently warned Hart that he was "within the lash of the Law", however, Richard Holmes, (who appeared as a witness) "an apothecary in Wigan and one of the most violent of the persons who call themselves Reformers" disputed the fact by telling Hart that "the Prince Regent was cursed to his face last Monday and that was not treason".

Apparently it was soon after this that Brookes took Hart into custody and, according to the brief laid before the Court, Hart was willing to submit to the Indictment, therefore the Court was to be left to its own discretion regarding the punishment.

Brookes was brought before the court to repeat the oaths and curses made in his presence, while Jonathan Parke, a victualler, reported on the episode concerning the little rusty sword. William Parke, presumably a relation, would swear to hearing the violent language whilst failing to recollect words. Holmes was brought in to back up Brooke's testimony, despite appearing to egg Hart on at the time.

## **Circumstances in Wigan at the time**

As well as providing an interesting view of the legal process the case notes also describe the situation, real or imagined, in Wigan at the time.

Returning to the words of the document prepared for the case:-

Yet it may be necessary to observe that the Peace of the Town of Wigan has of late been much disabled by meetings of a set of men whose ostensible object is that of considering the necessity of, and petitioning Parliament for, Reform, and a more equal Representation of the People but whose real object judging from the manner in which they proceed is much more dangerous.... they prefer roving about in bands in the night plundering and despoiling their neighbours of their Property.... and there is scarcely a farmer in the neighbourhood who has not been robbed of the produce of his farm.... by gangs of men, some of them armed and all of them regularly organised, who confiding in their numbers, scarcely use any caution in disguising themselves and it is found absolutely necessary in the Town of Wigan to put into execution the Watch and Ward Act and not less than 60 or 70 persons are out every night to protect their own property and that of their neighbours.

Our history books tell us that, this was a time of agricultural hardship, embryonic trades, unionism, Luddism and Radicalism. The Napoleonic War was just over, the Peterloo Massacre only a few years away and yet sometimes these events seem hard to imagine. Place them in the context of a place you know, such as Wigan, give the people names and read their words and they come to life. Sitting in the air conditioned Public Record Office in the year 2000, I could almost feel the heat from the fire in the Bull and Dog - Wigan 1816.

Can any reader place the Bull & Dog?

*Neil Cain*

# Mapping the Millennium

## PROGRAMME APRIL - DECEMBER 2000

	VENUE	MAPS ON DISPLAY
25 April-1 May	Leigh, Derby Room	Leigh, Westleigh
1-15 May	Golborne Library	Golborne, Lowton
15-22 May	* Atherton, Formby Hall	Atherton
22 May-5 June	* Wigan, Robin Park	Wigan West (inc Pemberton, Beech Hill), Town Centre
5-19 June	Shevington Library	Shevington, Shevington Moor
19-30 June	Standish Library	Standish, Shevington Moor
30 June-3 July	Haigh Hall	Visual Arts Festival Launch
5-24 July	* Leigh, Turnpike Centre	Leigh, Westleigh
24 July-7 August	* Lowton Civic Hall	Lowton, Golborne
7-14 August	Marsh Green CRC	Pemberton/Newtown, L'head Grn
14-21 August	* The Priory Wood	Orrell
21-25 August	Aspull Library	Aspull, Haigh/Worthington
25 August-4 September	* Haigh Hall	Haigh/Worthington, Aspull
4-11 September	Tyldesley Library	Tyldesley/Hindsford
11-18 September	Astley Green Colliery	Astley, Tyldesley/Hindsford
18-25 September	Scholes CRC	Scholes
25 Sept-9 October	* Wigan Library	Wigan South (inc Marus Bridge/Poolstock), Town Centre
9-16 October	* Standish Library	Standish, Shevington Moor
16-30 October	* Ashton Library	Ashton-in-Makerfield
30 Oct-13 November	Hindley Library	Hindley
13-20 November	Abram Library	Abram/Platt Bridge/Bickershaw
20-27 November	Atherton Library	Atherton, Tyldesley/Hindsford
27 Nov-11 December	Ince Library	Ince
11 December - 2001	Wigan, History Shop	Wigan North (inc Swinley), Town Centre

\* Denotes performance of Millennium Play.

## MILLENNIUM PLAY

A special Millennium musical play has been commissioned, to be performed at selected venues during the Festival. Written and produced by Edward Applewhite, Artistic Director at Wigan Pier, with music by David Powell, the play will give a brief history of the last 2000 years, from the Romans through to the Battle of Hastings onto Shakespeare and finishing with the Spice Girls, told in a fun but informative way by Wigan Pier Theatre Company and Wigan Pier Youth Theatre. A must for all the family.

The Millennium Play will be performed in those localities marked with an asterisk in the programme above. See local press and publicity for details of date and venue.

Admission at all venues will be £1, payable at the door.

### MILLENNIUM CONCERT

Kick off the *Mapping the Millennium* Festival on Friday 14 April, at 8.00 pm, with a special Millennium Concert at the Mill at the Pier, featuring Wigan Youth Jazz Orchestra (Musical Director Ian Darrington) and special guest star Don Lusher, playing numbers from the various decades of the 20th century.

**Tickets only £8 (£7 concessions) from Tourist Information Centre, Trencherfield Mill (01942 825677) or Leisure Services Marketing Section, Market Suite, The Galleries, Wigan (01942 704986).**

WIGAN'S Millennium celebrations get underway at the end of April, with the launch of the *Mapping the Millennium* Festival and *Streets Ahead*.

*Mapping the Millennium* is based on Wigan's *Parish Map*, an exciting community project initiated in 1997 throughout the Borough by the Wigan branch of Soroptimists International. Since then it has captured the support and imagination of all sections of the community at an unprecedented rate.

The entire map is made up of 28 sections, which will finally be brought together, as a modern-day Bayeux Tapestry, during 20001 - appropriately in Wigan's History Shop - to make up a staggering 300 feet! A candidate for the *Guinness Book of Records*?

Before then, however, local sections of the *Parish Map* will form the focal point of the *Mapping the Millennium* Festival. These will tour round all parts of the Borough, beginning with Leigh immediately after Easter, until the end of 2000, as part of a wider package which will also include children's play activities and a midi music project for young people, as well as an exciting audio-visual programme and a specially commissioned Millennium Play. Venues include libraries, public halls and community resource centres, and perhaps even ..... the Millennium Dome itself!

**A quarter of the panels are featured - in full colour! - on the front and back covers of this issue of *Past Forward*. The six on the back cover have deliberately not been given captions - how many panels, and scenes, can you identify?**

The History Shop has a Meeting Room, with a capacity for 36. This is available for hire by local groups and societies at a very reasonable cost:

**£7.50**

**PER MORNING OR AFTERNOON SESSION**

**£11.00**

**PER EVENING SESSION**

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## Exhibitions in the History Shop

**1 April - 29 April**

### ***Haigh School Exhibition***

An exhibition of children's work based on a project to discover the history of their school. Plus Easter activities for our younger visitors.

**3 May - 29 June**

### ***The Wigan Coalfield***

Exhibition using images and text from the new title in the "Images of England" series.

**1 July - 29 July**

### ***Wigan Artists Network***

Our annual contemporary arts exhibition in conjunction with the Turnpike Gallery, Leigh. Details to be finalised.

**1 August-17 August**

### ***Atherton Photographic Society***

The annual exhibiton of this local photographic society.

**19 August - 2 September**

### ***Wigan Photographic Society***

Come along and vote for your favourite image

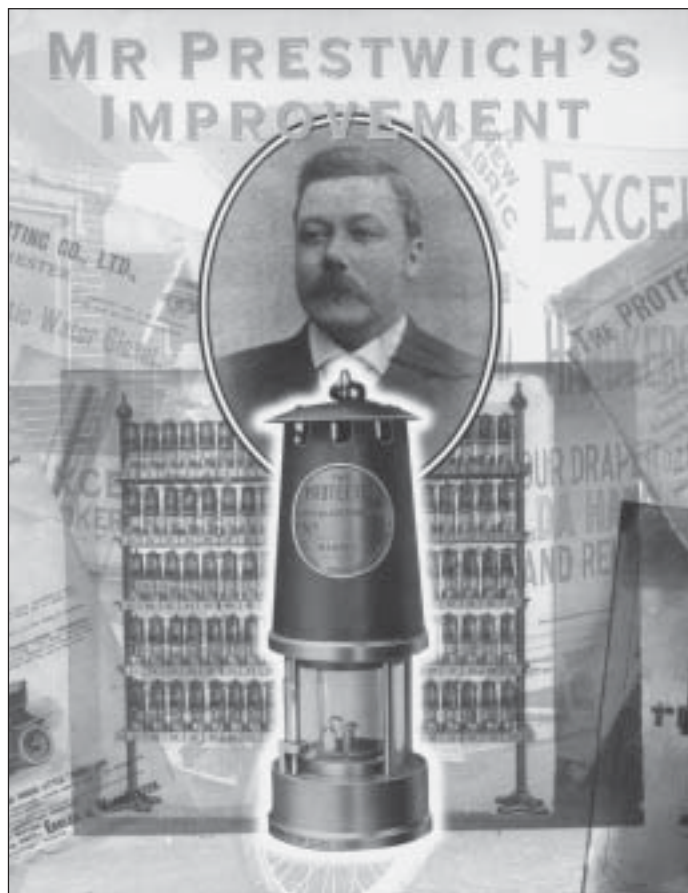
### **THE DERBY ROOM, LEIGH LIBRARY**

**6 November - 2 December**

### ***The Wigan Coalfield.***

Our family history exhibition "Back to Your Roots" was very successful both at its Wigan and Leigh venues. Our thanks go to both Wigan and Leigh Family History Societies for their help and to Mr. and Mrs. Finch for their advice sessions. October saw the publication of *Standish and Shevington*, a book in the "Images of England" series compiled by Nicholas Webb of the Heritage Service. Prints from the publication were used to produce the exhibition of the book, which could be seen at The History Shop in the run up to Christmas.

The turn of the Millennium is as good a time as any to reflect on Wigan's proud heritage. Coal mining features both in our May exhibition "The Wigan Coalfield" and the exhibition coming to a close as we go to press, "Mr. Prestwich's Improvement" - "Mr Prestwich" was a travelling exhibition produced by Ian Reynolds and photographer Ian Beesley. It celebrated 150 years of the Protector Lamp and Lighting Co of Eccles, a company familiar to our many readers connected with the coal industry. How many of you knew, however, that the firm responsible for your safety lamps also produced early motor cars?!



*Seen the exhibition –  
now buy the book!*

Both books detailed above (*Standish and Shevington* and *The Wigan Coalfield* by Alan Davies and our own Len Hudson) are available at the History Shop, price £9.95 (plus 50p p&p).



*Market Place, Standish, 1930's.*

## Public Lectures in the History Shop

12 April

### *The Romans in Lancashire*

Rachel Newman (Deputy Director of the Archaeological Unit, Lancaster University)

**NB Due to unforeseen circumstances, there will be no further lectures during the current season. Details of the new season of lectures will appear in the next issue of *Past Forward*.**

### Don't miss out on a cracking good read

If you want your copy of *Past Forward* delivered to your door three times a year, then register as a Friend of Wigan Heritage Services today.

## F R I E N D S

Thank you for your support over the outline constitution for our Friends group. All the feedback was positively in favour of the model we put forward and so this is the route we shall take. With such support how can we fail?!

As stated last time the next step is to elect a committee to formally adopt this constitution. **PLEASE, PLEASE**, please write to me now on the slip provided and put yourself forward. Don't be shy, we need to select a committee so we need your help. It will be your chance to influence the future of the Friends.

We need to have notification of all candidates by 6 May so that a committee can be adopted at the next Friends meeting, provisionally set for 5 June.

Remember the suggested make-up of the committee was six members, with a number of regional and international correspondents.

**FRIENDS OF WIGAN HERITAGE SERVICE**

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

Existing Friend  New Friend  (£5 annual subscription payable to Wigan Council)

Committee - Do you wish to be considered? Y  N

Do you wish to nominate a candidate Y  N

Preferred position .....

Name and Address (if different from above) .....

## WIGAN 2000 EXHIBITION - Y2K

THE exhibition celebrating Wigan at the turn of the Millennium is due to be in the Wickham Gallery by late summer. The exhibition is to rely heavily on partnerships with the community. Both private individuals and local businesses are participating and its not too late for you to get involved.

### LAST CHANCE

**There's still time for *Past Forward* readers to be involved with our Wigan 2000 exhibition, but please contact us as soon as possible if you would like your suggestions to be included.**

### Object of the Millennium

What item would you put in a time capsule, to symbolise life in Wigan at the turn of the Millennium? What present day gadget would you be unable to live without? What would you take to a desert island to remind you of the life you've left behind? Suggestions to date include items as diverse as 'Grandad's snuff box', a Wigan rugby ball, disposable contact lenses and a bottle of washing-up-liquid. Contact Dawn Wadsworth at the History Shop (01942 828124) with your chosen item and a brief reason for your choice as soon as you can. We want to include as many as possible in the exhibition.

### Day in the life

The exhibition is all about life in the Borough in the year 2000. As well as using people's chosen objects we also want to feature "A day in the life" of a variety of local people; shop assistant, schoolchild, busy mum, publican, business person, retired. Whatever your occupation, if you would like to be involved please get in touch. Its **your** chance to help us reflect **your** lives.

**FRIENDS OF WIGAN HERITAGE SERVICE**

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Existing Friend  New Friend  (£5 annual subscription payable to Wigan Council)

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.....

.....

.....

*At the outset of the new Millennium, Ernie takes the opportunity for a timely backward glance.*

# *I remember when . . . . .*

**NEXT door to the old Hippodrome in King Street was the King Street Baptist Chapel, outside of which was “a wayside pulpit” type of billboard displaying a text of the week intended to be spiritually uplifting to all readers. One still sticks in my memory after more than 70 years: “The Glory is not in never falling, but in rising each time one falls!”**

**With the Millennium we are all being given a chance for a backward glance when in effect if we didn’t get it right last time, now we can.**

I refer, sir, to page 17 of *Past Forward* No. 19 in which you portrayed the Earl of Crawford with chauffeur and family in their Model T Ford, which I had confirmed for you as authentic, when in fact it was a Crossley made at Crossens in Southport. I knew they made commercial vehicles at Crossens but until a *Past Forward* reader, Mr. John Warburton of Atherton, pointed it out to me that they also made a few (12 in all) open topped tourers I decided to check with our own Museum of Transport in Coventry, where it was confirmed that 12 were in fact made at Crossens Southport around 1910.

## **A “Fackelin”**

I have been connected with cars/commercials ever since I could “race” them alongside on the pavements as a boy of seven or eight years old in the mid 20’s when we would run indoors and tell our parents “we had seen a “Fackelin” and beat it in a race! My readers will not find “a Fackelin” described in any old motoring reference books so I will enlighten them now - it was a name created by my cousin who seeing a motorist with his

head under the bonnet of his car was told he was “fettling it”. Older Wigan readers will know that if anything was wrong it had to be “fettled” (mended) but my cousin couldn’t say “fettled”, so created his own “fackelled” from which evolved his description of any old car as “a Fackelin”.

If by now, dear reader, you are wondering what the old wayside pulpit message has to do with my thinking on the eve of the millennium, it is to record that we could all get things wrong occasionally and a second opinion can be helpful!

## **“Flabbergasted”**

When Mr. Warburton wrote to you to suggest that the Balcarres family were not in a Ford Model T but in a Crossley made at Crossens in Southport “I were flabbergasted”. I knew of the Crossens Works at Southport but believed that only “commercials” were built there, and I had never heard of a Crossley car. All my “I remember features” are products of my own reminiscences, so my initial reaction was that, whoever Mr. Warburton was, he was being slightly pedantic.

My understanding was that Model T Fords at that period

destined for the Northern Counties were built at Old Trafford, Manchester as cars and chassis only - no bodies. These would then be despatched to specialist body manufacturers (in Wigan one such being Santus Motor Bodies Ltd.) with instructions to complete the vehicle to customer’s own specifications. Effectually, therefore, each “Model T saloon” was a “one off”.

Perhaps now, readers are wondering why all the fuss about one man’s opinion anyway, and how can this be connected to that wayside pulpit message in King Street in the mid 20’s and the present day Millennium thinking?

## **“Cape to Cairo”**

Here’s why, naturally there was some correspondence between Mr. Warburton and myself when I was able to tell him that one of the two Crossleys used in the “Cape to Cairo” Expedition by Major C. Court Treet F.R.G.S. was exhibited on the forecourt of the Pavilion Cinema for I think, one week at the bottom of Library Street, Wigan!

As the Expedition reached Cairo on 26 January 1927 I must presume that I saw the Crossley before it left, when I would then have been a ten year old boy. This revelation “cemented” our friendship and I can now relate back to that “wayside pulpit” message. Normally as all my *Past Forward* readers know I never research any of my subject matter, depending on my own memory of events at that time, hence my usual leader “I remember when . . .” and you know, sir, the feature is quite popular especially with older motorists and, like you sir, your

readers often tell me how they enjoyed my recollections.

Since Mr. Warburton challenged my opinion in the summer of 1998 I have always felt just a little guilt that *Past Forward* readers had been misled by me, (albeit in good faith!)

## **Chance to reflect**

With the Millennium we all have a chance to reflect, if we were right always in our past thinking, and if not to correct it. I do so now with due deference, but I’m sure Mr. Warburton will feel “compensated” he not only knows his Crossleys, but until this appears in print he also is only one of two people in the whole world who knows what a “Fackelin” is!

I do hope, sir, that you will permit my version to be reproduced, so that honour once again will be vindicated. To Mr. Warburton I would confirm that the way he handled the misunderstanding was of the highest order as befits a gentleman but then all older motorists were just that - gentlemen!

Incidentally I have now completed ten years of my association with *Past Forward*, so here’s to the next ten! By then I shall be 93 years old, and since I wrote earlier of cost of cheap petrol then at eleven and a half pence (under 5p) per gallon (1938) I wonder if some politician will come up with the unusual idea of petrol being free, provided car owners left their vehicles at home or used their bikes!

As older Wiganers might say “Aye an pigs might fly”, so don’t rule it out!

© E. Taberner



Dear Editor,

I would like to reply to your feature (issue No. 23) which asks 'Is your dialect really necessary?' and answer with the enclosed item.

Some while ago I compiled a collection of dialect words that are spoken around my area with the hope to keep these words alive and help students of languages. The collection remains unpublished and perhaps will remain so because of the lack of its commercial value. But going back to the question of your feature 'Is your dialect necessary?' From the short tale I've told, I bet that if the army officer had just an inkling of the speech of we northerners, his face wouldn't have been as red!

**Ernest Ford**  
**11 Esther Fold**  
**Westhoughton**  
**Bolton BL5 3RR**

P.S. I have been asked to adjudicate in two competitions for the Lancashire Authors' Association and deem it an honour to be one of the last adjudicators of this century.

# 'LANKY TAWK'

OR

## Language in its warkin' cloos

by  
**Ernest Ford**

THIS article has not been written with the intention of creating a dialect dictionary as the author is convinced that such a task borders on the impossible. The reason for this remark is that dialect varies to such a degree in the spoken word and becomes increasingly more difficult in the written word that a standard spelling just cannot be undertaken. Each dialect writer uses his pen phonetically, thus the variance in spelling from one writer to the next.

It is my opinion that dialect speech changes in some degree every five miles or so. In Wigan for instance the word 'WAS' is pronounced as 'WUZ', whilst five miles away the word changes to 'WER'.

Why in some communities is dialect frowned on whilst in others it is fostered with pride? Why are so many willing to go to its funeral? This is the natural language of Lancashire, so since when has its people been ashamed of being natural? Perhaps it is the same kind of ashamedness that makes one shave off the body hair from

unwanted places. Are we turning our backs on dialect because 'it doesn't seem nice'? Are we so vain to think that we can change nature and its habits?

Dialect words were uttered long before they were seen in print and one wonders but for the advance of progress, whether standard English would have been understood at all in most parts of the country.

Let us then look back a few centuries where a person of poor living standards (there was more of these than the gentry) was born in a village and in fact never left the village until his life expired. His only knowledge of any language was that

*Continued on page 18*

## HELL UNDER HAYDOCK

### BOOK REVIEW

A NEW book has been published to coincide with the date, just 70 years ago, when 13 men were killed in an explosion underground in a Haydock coal pit.

**Hell under Haydock** recalls the events of 26 February 1930 when Haydock was brought to the centre of the nation's attention after a miner drilled into a fault in the rock which held methane gas, known as 'fire-damp'. It was ignited by the firing of a shot. This caused a secondary explosion and a fire which raged underground setting men and structures alight.

Author Ian Winstanley tells for the first time how quick thinking and the use of the pit's underground telephone system made the implementation of the pre-planned emergency arrangements a speedy and efficient process. Even so, Haydock and its neighbouring townships were greatly affected by the loss of and bad injuries to breadwinners.

He has read the local newspapers, the Reports of the Commission of Inquiry and the Coroner's Inquest to tell of the hell when the force of two explosions and the resulting fire brought Haydock to the centre of the nation's attention.

Ian explains the working of the pit and the events of the day in language that those not familiar with coal mining will understand. He includes a short glossary to explain the technical jargon (words like inbye, outbye, gob, ripping,

chock). Thus he combines mining and local history and provides illustrations too.

Remarkably the pit ponies stabled and working underground that day were uninjured. "*Were they under God's protection?*" [see page 37].

Retired teacher Ian is a 'Yicker' (a native of Haydock) who lives in Ashton-in-Makerfield. His grandfather was killed in a mining accident. He is passionately keen on coal mining history. This is his third book on a mining disaster in the Wigan coalfield. He is a national authority on mining disasters and maintains a website called "The Coal Mining History Resource Centre" (<http://wkweb5.cableinet.co.uk>).

The book is a 60-page high quality illustrated paperback. Copies may be obtained from Landy Publishing without postage charges (UK only) if payment is sent with order. Cheques/POs should be made out to Landy Publishing. Please do not send cash. No credit card payments can be accepted. Overseas customers - add £3 per order, not per book, for airmail postage. Also available from The History Shop (please add 50p postage and packing).

**Hell under Haydock (The Lyme Pit Explosion), Haydock, Lancashire, 26 February, 1930.** Ian Winstanley. £6.00. Landy Publishing, "Acorns", 3 Staining Rise, Staining, Blackpool, FY3 0BU. Tel/Fax (01253) 895678.

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**'LANKY TAWK'**  
OR  
**Language in its  
warkin' clooas**  
*Continued from page 17*

spoken around him. This was his natural tongue. This was dialect!

Of course one is free to choose, but since when has being bi-lingual been a handicap? The world changes, we change, Lancashire changes, but its dialect tones remain unscathed.

One of the oldest ballads in the Lancashire dialect was 'Warrikin Fair', written about 1548, and it is interesting to note which dialect words spoken then have weathered the storm of time to be spoken now over 400 years on.

The words FOAK, YO, COOM, FAW, and many others it seems were freely used in the 16th century, and also two dialect words then as it is now were used to illustrate the same meaning. COOM and CUM, meaning COME are used in next to the same breath. This is one advantage that the dialect speaker has over his standard English friend. He has a larger choice of words to give the same meaning. Perhaps this can best be illustrated by the little story to follow:-

An army officer from Aldershot whilst on business in the north was asked to call on his old friend who was the C.O. of a Lancashire Regiment. On arriving at the barracks he was asked if he would honour the regiment by inspecting his men. This he readily agreed to, and slowly walked between the ranks. Noticing something amiss with the apparel of a small built Lancashire soldier he stood rigid as in his best Oxford English, he confronted him.

"Where is your bayonet?" he asked the officer.

"Geet noan". Answered the soldier.

The officer's brow puckered in thought as he looked at the second soldier.

"What did he say?" asked the officer.

"An noan", came the reply.

Getting further confused the officer thought that he would give it another try and approached the third man.

"What did he say?" again asked the officer feeling that he was getting the worst of this conversation.

There was a few seconds silence as the third soldier thought how best he could explain to the officer.

"Well?" said the officer. "What did he say?"

"He sez he's bewt," came back the reply.

The story you have just read deals with phrases.

One word can be uttered in three different ways, not just from the same town, not just from the same house, but in fact from the same mouth. This one word, in dialect used three ways, has only one English meaning DOOR. A dialect speaker has either DOR, DOOWR, or DUR to call on and will use which one comes to mind first.

Before sinking further into the intricacy of the dialect tongue I will leave the reader to look through the following extract from my collection of dialect words

<b>A</b>	
ADDLT	Addled (rotten egg. A name given to a fool suggesting an empty head.)
AEWTIN	Outing
AFTHUR	After
AGATE	To start doing something
AHM	I'm
AIQUIL	Equal
AKEAWNT	Account

ALEAWD	Aloud
ALUNG	Along
AMEAWNT	Amount
AMUNG	Among
AN	And
AN	Have
ANNY	Any
ANNYBODY	Anybody
ANT	Hasn't
APPEN	Perhaps
APPEYNT	Appoint
APPEYNTED	Appointed
APPO	Apple
ARGIMENT	Argument
ARGY	Argue
ASSAWT	Assault
ASTID	Instead
AVIN	Having
AWE	All
AWF	Off
AWKURT	Awkward
AWLREET	Alright
AWLUS	Always
AWREDDY	Already
AWTER	Alter
AWTOGETHER	Altogether
AWQURT	Awkward
AX	Ask
AXIN	Asking
AYED	Ahead
AYNSHUNT	Ancient
AZ	Has

<b>B</b>	
BABBI	Baby
BACKURT	Backwards
BALLY	Stomach
BAW	Ball
BAWD	Bald
BAWK	Baulk

So far, this article has dealt with the single word - one word dialect which in most instances has a word to equal it in any English dictionary.

Now we advance from the single word to the one word dialect that means two words in standard English. This is certainly an advancement in any language where one speaks half the amount to say twice as much. Why say 'Brought them', when 'Brotum' is more economical?.

There are in fact a number of dialect words that would take three standard English words to give it a meaning.

These have not been listed in compilation, but after mentioning this, one cannot leave the reader in doubt so I find it my duty now to give a few examples.

EEOWT = He ought to. ? = Who is he? SNORIT = It's not it: are good examples of what I tried to explain.

By now, you the reader will have a smattering of the language and will find the following extract much easier to digest. So let's see how one word can replace two!

<b>A</b>	
ABEAWTIM	About him
ABET	I bet
ABROWT	I brought
ALCLOUT	I'll clout
ANEAWR	An hour
ANTER	Hasn't she
ANTI	Hasn't he
ANTIT	Hasn't it
ARE'OWSE	Our house
ARESOART	Our sort
ARTO	Are you
ASBIN	Has been
ASNT	Has not
ASTA	Have you
ASTER	Asked her
ATOWD	I told
AWE'GON	All gone
AWL	I will
AW'M	I am
AWOM	At home
AWE'REET	All right
AW'S	All is
AWST	I shall
AZER	Has she
AZI	As he

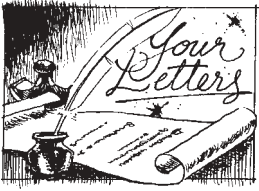
<b>B</b>	
BEAWNT	Going to
BEAWNTO	Bound to
BEAWTIM	Without him
BEAWTOWT	Without anything
BERRIT	Bet it
BEYLTOER	Boiled over
BIAWF	Be off
BOWTER	Bought her
BOWTUM	Bought them
BRUNUM	Burn them
BROWTIN	Brought in
BROWTER	Brought her
BROWTIT	Brought it
BROWTUM	Brought them
BURRA	But a
BURRIT	But it

# Who? Where?

Thanks to all those who responded to last issue's **Who? Where?** Unfortunately, however, we have not yet had any positive identifications.

**This time, we have a lot of human interest, which should attract a good response. All suggestions, please, to Len Hudson in Leigh Town Hall (01942 404432).**





Dear Sir,

My family and I have read your magazine *Past Forward* with interest and enjoyment over the last year. I am a freelance historical researcher with strong Wigan connections. A couple of years ago, I discovered a photograph of my great-great grandmother, Lydia Fletcher, sitting astride a motorbike in a back yard in Aspull. Her

robust features and cheerful smile inspired me to see if I could find out anything more about her history. The result is the enclosed article, "**Tamperin' wi' t'moon: The Life of Lydia Fletcher (1845-1933).**" I wonder whether you would be interested in publishing all or part of this article in a future edition of *Past Forward*?

Lydia Fletcher was a working-class Wigan lass who left few records of her life and I therefore found her history difficult to trace. By paying careful attention to records of births, marriages and death, however, together with

some research in the archives of Wigan newspapers and some patient questioning of elderly relatives, I have managed to piece together a life story. Though on the surface "ordinary", Lydia's life involved more than its fair share of troubles and misfortunes. She witnessed the horrors of tuberculosis and syphilis, had an illegitimate child, gave birth to ten other children (many of whom died as youngsters), married twice (her first husband was killed in a roof fall at No. 1 Crawford Pit) and had a father and father-in-law who were both found

drowned and intoxicated in the Leeds-Liverpool canal!

As an historian with a particular interest in Women's History and Labour History, I have tried to connect Lydia's life up to some of the important historical forces shaping working-class women's lives in 19th century Britain. Thus in the article I have looked outwards to the general history of working-class women's education, the history of contraception and abortion, working-class marriage practices, and women's work in the mills. I have also looked at the Reform Acts, safety in the pits, and temperance, all in

relation to Lydia's life.

I think that the readers of *Past Forward* might be interested in Lydia from a number of points of view. It is possible that some may remember her or her family. Others may recognise in her life, aspects of their own family histories in Wigan, some might be inspired to trace their own family trees.

**Ruth A. Symes**  
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**Fax: 01925 602898**

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**ruth@symes.demon.co.uk.**

# *Tamperin' Wi' T'Moon:* *the life of Lydia Fletcher (1845-1933)*

by Ruth A. Symes

**THE year is 1928 and my 83 year old great-great grandmother Lydia Fletcher, dressed in traditional Lancashire clogs and apron sits astride her grandson's motorbike in an un-exceptional back yard in Aspull, Wigan. Lydia's grandson, Freddie, known as "the Fearless Fly" by the family, sits in front of her, dressed in black leathers and poised as if to rev the engine and be off. In the background, Lydia's daughter, Mary, my great grandmother stands in front of the privy, her arms folded, smiling at these strange riders. It is an odd combination, this very old lady confidently straddling this new fangled machine.**

Only one phrase of Lydia's has come verbatim down through the family to the present generation. At the very end of her life, intrigued yet bewildered by the speed of the technological changes that she had witnessed, she looked up to the night sky and commented archly, "Ee, they'll be tamperin' wi' t'moon next." It was nearly 40 years after she made this



remark that man first stood on the moon. The photograph and the remark gave me clues to several aspects of Lydia's character her robust health, her passion for life and her good humour. On the strength of these clues, I became interested

enough in her to embark on writing her history.

## **Illiterate**

Lydia could not have written her own biography, she was illiterate. In addition,

there is very little written evidence about her, but it is possible to piece together her tale from the official records and from other scraps and snippets. Other histories of Wigan can fill in the gaps and give us a more complete picture of her cultural background. Lydia's life was shaped by the industrial landscape in which she lived. It was a life of cotton, canals and coal. It was also a life marred by what one historian has called the "savage trinity of tuberculosis, alcoholism and syphilis." This sounds dramatic. In fact, Lydia's was no more than an ordinary 19th century Lancashire life with perhaps a little more than its fair share of misfortune. Lydia lived through a significant period in labour history and in the history of women. It is unlikely that she knew anything about the political debates that circulated in the National Press but nevertheless she is interesting to the historian because her life ran with the issues of the day, casting light here and there. Because of this, if



because of nothing else, she is special.

Lydia Fletcher was born in Wigan, Lancashire, on 26 August 1845, the same year as the philanthropist Thomas Barnado and a year before the Irish leader Charles Stewart Parnell. It might also be pointed out that Lydia entered the world some eight years after Queen Victoria came to the throne. In 1869, the Wigan Directory commented somewhat facetiously that "Her Majesty Queen Victoria often passes through Wigan, but it is with the speed of an express train, on her journeys to and from Scotland." Queen Victoria may not have cared to stop in Wigan but it was in fact one of the most successful and defining towns of her Empire. It was a small but rapidly expanding industrial town, 18 miles north-west of Manchester, 19 miles north-east of Liverpool and 38 miles south of Lancaster. The town, which by 1899 had a population of sixty thousand, was well within what was to become the vast industrial and urban belt connecting Liverpool and Manchester. It occupied a prime geographical position. The Leeds-Liverpool canal connected it with Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester.

Moreover, the North Union Railway connected it with London through the North Western system and the Lancashire and Yorkshire railway also passed through the town. Later, in 1884, a third railway line would connect it to Sheffield and Lincoln.

## Coal and cotton

Coal and cotton - Wigan's two chief industries — created an interdependent economy, providing much of the town's employment and hence indirectly funding all the other business in the town. One branch of the coal industry was the mining of cannel, a coal which burned with a particularly bright flame and which was used in

the making of gas. Wigan also had a highly productive iron smelting industry, steel manufacturing industry and factories manufacturing mining machinery and edge tools. The 19th century brought a burgeoning of industries in Wigan. As one recent historian has noted "there seemed to be no limit to expansion as larger factories were built and deeper mines were sunk." Whilst at the forefront of industrial development, Wigan also preserved the memory of its pre-industrial roots, retaining in popular memory a rich heritage of stories, poems and legends, including those about the Witches of Pendle Hill.

Into this industrial heartland, Lydia Fletcher, my great-great grandmother was born. She was the eldest daughter of Margaret Fletcher, nee Coulson, (variously recorded as Colson, Coleson, Colston, Couldson, Coldston, Coldstone, and even Collins and Connell) who was in turn the daughter of Robert, a blacksmith (later described as a bread baker) who operated from Market Place, Wigan. Lydia's mother was born in Manchester, suggesting that her family had moved to Wigan to take advantage of the growing need for smithies in this developing industrial town. The number of blacksmiths in Wigan increased rapidly over the course of the 19th century. There were 15 by 1889, which gives some idea of the enormous number of horse drawn vehicles passing through the town.

Margaret had married in Wigan Parish Church on 1 March 1842, at the age of 19. Her husband, Lydia's father, was a 27 year old miner's son from the poor subdistrict of Ince who rejoiced in the name of Enoch Fletcher. He was an engine fitter or engine tender, described later on Lydia's marriage certificate as an engineer, employed at the Wigan Coal and Iron

Company's works. Whilst Margaret was illiterate, her husband could sign his own name on his marriage certificate.

## Well supplied with churches

The couple lived in Aspull, a small township with a population by 1861 of 4,290. It was here that their first child, James, was born, probably at Kirkless Lane, on the first of July 1843. Aspull had its own resident member of the gentry, Roger Leigh Esquire of Hindley Hall, and was well supplied with churches having Anglican (established); Roman Catholic, Independent Methodist and Wesleyan establishments. Aspull bordered with open countryside and a number of farmers are recorded as living in the district in the *Wigan Directory* of 1869. The landed interests of the township were balanced by its commercial interests. Much of the marshy land around the township (known as common land) was owned either by the Wigan Coal and Iron Company or by the cannel company Messrs. William Woods and Son. The Fletchers would have felt their own humble position in this environment where the very ground beneath their feet was owned by a hierarchy of pit-owners and the subcontractors who leased seams from them. In 1869, the businesses in the area included (as well as the coal and cannel proprietors) a number of beer retailers, several of whom, perhaps surprisingly, were women. Pubs included *The Red Lion Inn*, *The Packet House Inn*, *The Crown Inn* and *The Running Horses*, all of which at one time or another would become the haunts of Lydia's family. There were also cloggers, shoemakers, a saddler, a tailor, a grocer, a baker and a wheelwright in Aspull. Thus Lydia was brought up in an environment in transition, a place in which

the effects of industrialisation could be keenly sensed in the landscape, a place poised between the 18th and 19th centuries.

The Fletcher family lived, first at Kirkless Lane and, by 1862, at Cale Lane. They probably considered themselves lucky to live at Aspull. The really poor districts of Wigan were Scholes and the network of narrow courts and alleys in the town centre. Here disease was rife. One historian notes that by 1889 there were 25 slaughter-houses in the poorer parts of town." Because privately-owned businesses were rarely inspected, meat infected with tuberculosis and other diseases was frequently sold. Around the time of Lydia's birth in 1845, Scholes and the other poorer districts of Wigan were flooded with hundreds if not thousands of Irish immigrants desperate to escape the potato famine. The Fletchers like many other working-class Wigan families were anti-Irish and anti-Catholic. In reality their income and lifestyle probably differed little from those whom they chose to despise.

## Organs of mystery

Lydia probably received no schooling. Wigan Grammar school with its curriculum of classics, mathematics, natural science, chemistry, drawing and English would have been barred to her on the grounds of both class and gender. Wigan was in fact fairly well-provided with schools for the working classes but during Lydia's childhood there was no legal requirement for children to attend them. We know that throughout her life Lydia was unable to sign her name, leaving only a cross as her mark on registrations of births, deaths and marriages. Compulsory education for the working classes did not appear until 1870, a

*Continued on page 22*

**Tamperin' Wi'  
T'Moon:**  
*the life of Lydia Fletcher  
(1845-1933)*

*Continued from page 21*

revolution that would allow Lydia's daughters to become literate, thus finally breaking the centuries-old absence of working-class women from the written record. For Lydia herself, the town's two newspapers, the *Observer and District Advertiser* (a Liberal paper) and the *Wigan Examiner* (a Conservative Paper) in which details of her own family's affairs would appear over the decades, would have remained organs of mystery throughout her life.

When Lydia was a girl, her parents probably considered that, as the eldest sister, her schooling was less important than her usefulness in helping look after her younger siblings and to keep house. As well as her older brother, James, she had a sister, Mary born on 14 August 1848, a sister, Ellen, born on 29 August 1850, a brother, John, born on 13 January 1853, a sister, Elizabeth, born on 18 August 1857, a brother, Giles, born on 12 October, a brother, Enoch, born on 3 April 1862 (at Cale Lane), and a sister, Jane, on 17 September, 1865. Such a large family inevitably meant bed sharing, food rationing and other sorts of deprivation.

As a girl, Lydia would have been immersed in the affairs of her community. She would quickly have become intimately acquainted with the darker side of life in the neighbourhood, perhaps attending at births and miscarriages within the family. Years later, she was known for her skills in laying out the dead and it is likely that she learnt this practice from her own mother as a girl. Certainly it was something that she passed on to her daughters and

grand-daughters. Life in the home would have been arduous. Water for cooking and washing would probably have been fetched from a communal waterpipe at the end of the street, privies in the backyard needed to be emptied manually and washing of clothes and selves would be done in stone sinks and tin baths. Meals for the growing band of brothers and sisters would have been made as economically as possible with the cheapest cuts of meat and plenty of potatoes and onions. Lydia's mother's recipes, which were passed down orally from mother to daughter, are still commonly used in the family.

### Cotton

Lydia went to work as a weaver in the mills at a fairly young age, perhaps 12 or 14. Wigan's place in the growing cotton industry around Manchester was central. It had excellent carriage facilities with Liverpool, a factor which was much to its advantage. Mills were springing up all over the town in the mid 19th century and work was plentiful. Mills were concentrated in two areas, older mills near the River Douglas, off Chapel Lane, and newer mills extending from Wallgate to Poolstock. A report on the Lancashire cotton mills made in 1852, commented that there was more work than operatives to do it and that in some mills machines were standing empty. This was good news for a poor family such as Lydia's. The Wigan Mills were very large buildings and the new Britannia Mill must have impressed Lydia when she first started work there. Even the mansions of the wealthy and the great public buildings of Wigan could not rival the mills for size. The process of weaving had become mechanised somewhat later than that of spinning, but in the 1860's, new machinery which made weaving less arduous, ensured that factory work was popular among young girls.

For Lydia, mill life was probably far less of a trial than might be supposed. The mills were warm and clean and infinitely superior to the pit brow where many young girls worked from the age of ten upwards. Lydia might have undertaken any of a number of jobs; scatter, tackler, careered, winder, twister, dover or little piecer, were the intriguing names of but a few. She would probably have rejoiced in her freedom from the bonds and obligations of home. Even though the work offered to women in the mills was almost always inferior and less well-paid than that offered to men, mill pay was better for women than that in many other industries and Lydia was probably pleased with her wage packet.

It would be wrong to think that life in the mills was easy, however. Diseases such as byssinosis, spinner's cancer, tuberculosis, bronchitis and asthma were rife. Mill owners could do much as they pleased and there was little sign of unionisation in this period, particularly for the female employees. Moreover, by the 1860's, the prospects for Lancashire millworkers were not as good as they had been a decade earlier. The American Civil War led to a massive reduction in the demand for cotton from across the Atlantic and at one point a total cessation in trade with Wigan. Hundreds were thrown out of employment. Many of the male operatives were put to work during this period improving the paving and sewerage in the town. Some people were so poor that they resorted to picking their own coal from the pit brow. It is possible that because Lydia was a young girl during this period, she actually benefited from the problems experienced by the cotton trade. After all, she could provide cheaper labour than the men.

### Illegitimacy

Given the size of her family and the close proximity

of her living conditions, Lydia probably had few misconceptions about the opposite sex by her late teens. But in the mills, she would have found the opportunity to mix with young men of her own age outside the family and outside the confines of her home. In Victorian society, quite differently from the previous century, women were idealised in books and paintings as sexually passive. The stereotype, however, applied largely to middle-class women who were supposed to be morally superior to both their working-class and their aristocratic counterparts. Lydia's experience and that of many women of her environment speaks little of sexual restraint or self-imposed chastity. At work, Lydia would have presented herself attractively and fashionably wearing a clean print frock and shawl. As one historian puts it, the mill girl was "a pleasing contrast to the grimy pitmen and iron workers who may, and often do, form part of the same family." The mill girl represented unbridled sexuality to many Victorian readers. In my own family, reminiscences of life in the mills recall the bawdy atmosphere amongst the millgirls and some of the mills songs that have been passed down from generation to generation are peppered with raunchy words and actions. All in all the mills were a heady world of hard physical action and material prosperity in which girls like Lydia could find excitement if they wished.

By the 1860's, the supposed moral degradation of women working in the mills and other mixed environments had already led to expressions of horror from the British government. For them, Lydia's life would have been a case in point. In the spring of 1864, at the age of 19, she fell pregnant. She was probably ill-prepared for the



consequences of her flirtations with the male millhands and it is unlikely that she knew much about contraception. A book on contraceptive advice by “Francis Place and other radical men” was published in 1826 and was freely available in cotton mills. Given Lydia’s illiteracy this would have been little use.

## Pregnancy before marriage

Pregnancy before marriage was hardly unusual among working-class mill communities at this time, indeed many working-class women saw pregnancy as a precursor of marriage, a sign that they were compatible with their future partner. In one northern weaving town, 90% of first births were conceived outside of marriage in the first half of this century. There was little shame associated with a pregnancy before marriage, provided matrimony ensued fairly rapidly. It is fairly likely that Margaret Fletcher did not reprimand her daughter too strongly for her indiscretion, at least in the first instance. Lydia’s imminent marriage would have been expected. But as the weeks passed and Lydia showed no signs of betrothal, Mrs Fletcher may well have grown anxious. Lydia’s pregnancy warrants our curiosity mainly because it did *not* lead to marriage. There may have been any number of reasons for this. Perhaps the father was a married man, or simply a man who shirked his responsibilities towards Lydia. Maybe Lydia rejected him. In such circumstances, one might have expected an abortion to have taken place. Although abortion was against the law and punishable by transportation or imprisonment, illegal abortion practices were carried out in all working-class communities. Many

local women would have known the tricks that could procure such relief. If Lydia ever considered abortion, however, she did not follow it up. Whatever the circumstances of the conception, the pregnancy proceeded.

Baby Alice arrived on New Year’s Eve, 1864, a fine herald of the New Year. The child was born at home and was probably delivered by Lydia’s mother. Despite the fact that chloroform had been introduced as an anaesthetic in 1847, it was very expensive to procure — too expensive for the Fletcher family at any rate. Lydia recorded no father’s name on Alice’s birth certificate. Once the child was born, Margaret Fletcher may well have pretended that it was her own for the sake of respectability. Her own childbearing days were not yet over (Lydia’s youngest sister Jane would be born the following year) and one more child in those crowded streets brimful of large families would hardly have been noticed. Whether Lydia’s mother took on the child as her own, or Lydia herself devoted her attentions to it, one thing is clear, it was Lydia’s family and not the family of the father who was expected to maintain the child. From 1834 onwards, the welfare provisions of the new Poor Law made mothers almost wholly responsible for the support of their bastard offspring.

Alice’s life was brief. She died just 14 months after her birth in February of 1866. Two causes of death were given. The first — teething problems which had lasted four months — may well have been a more dramatic condition than it sounds today. The second, pneumonia, which she had suffered for 12 days, is more likely to be the true cause of death. Terraced houses were cold and damp in Wigan in the 1860s and a baby kept upstairs for any length of

time, no matter how many young aunts and uncles to keep her warm, may well have suffered greatly. Alice’s death would not have been an unusual event in those Wigan backstreets. Child mortality was high as were the incidences of miscarriage. Many years later my grandmother, Mary Wilkinson (nee Daniels) Lydia’s granddaughter, would recall how women just bundled up their dead children with little ceremony and few tears and got on with their lives. On Alice’s death certificate, Lydia’s occupation is given as weaver in a cotton factory, which indicates that she had not left work after Alice was born. Alice’s death was to be the first of many losses for Lydia.

## Marriage

It was not long after Alice’s death that Lydia was courted by James Cooke, a local collier, three years her senior. Courting in Wigan usually took place along Wigan Lane where young couples would go walking on a Sunday. Before long, Lydia found herself pregnant again, and this time did not hesitate to name and marry the father. James was the son of Lawrence Cooke, a mule spinner or cotton spinner (described on their marriage certificate as a factory operative). The Cookes were probably slightly better off than the Fletchers; mule spinners were skilled workers known affectionately as the “barefoot aristocrats” of the mills. The date of the wedding was 29 June 1867, the venue, St James’s Parish Church, Wigan. Lydia was 21 and James 24 years old. One contemporary historian remarks that the parish tower “had a handsome tower, which is a prominent feature for many miles round, and there is a fine peal of bells which can be heard at a considerable distance.”

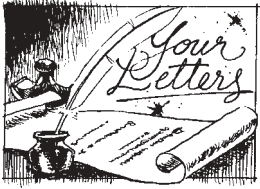
James signed his name

expertly in the marriage register on that day in early summer 1867. As Lydia bent to make her own pencilled cross, she unknowingly embraced the fate of all women in the nineteenth century. For the purposes of law, she became, at that moment, as one with her husband. This meant that she could not own property in her own right, and could not sue or be sued. She had lost her legal identity as an independent person, but on the other hand, she had made some very material gains. James would have earned more than she did and together they could finally rent a property. On marriage, Lydia gave up her work at the mills, although marriage was not an automatic bar on women’s work in the mills as it was in some other occupations.

James and Lydia’s son, William, was born on 9 December, 1867, the momentous year in which the Second Reform Act was passed and at a time when the number of electors in the whole of Wigan rose from 900 to 4,400. By the time of William’s birth, the couple were living at 27 Woods Houses, Henhurst Bridge. If James was the main tenant of this rented property, then he might well suddenly have found himself able to vote, though whether or not he ever exercised this right must be left open to question. As has been noted, James could read and write and in addition he might have had some political knowledge through early attempts at unionisation in the pits.

Whatever James Cooke’s political predilections, at some point in the 15 months after the birth of William, the Cookes moved from Henhurst Bridge to Bottom Row, Aspull, suggesting perhaps that their fortunes took a turn for the worse at this point.

*To be continued*



Dear Editor,

Your correspondent, Mr. J. Harold Smith, who wrote "Is Your Dialect Really Necessary" in the Autumn/Winter issue expressed concern about the survival of the Wigan dialect. The same concern was expressed to me by the late, great Cliff Webb of the Wigan Observer who often wrote in dialect for the newspaper. During many talks I had with him in the 1970's he said, "I love the Lanky twang and hope it never dies out".

Cliff would have been glad to know, as also Mr. Smith, that not only is dialect alive and well but is being used in Wigan schools as a means of expression. A recent poetry competition for first and second years at St. Edmund Arrowsmith R.C. High School, Ashton-in-Makerfield completely open as to language use, was won by Anna-Marie Hindley of Garswood whose father

## Cliff would have been glad to know dialect is alive and well

came from Wigan. Her poem, printed right, is entitled "It's Cowd".

Mr. Peter Lacey, head of the English Department at the school, told me that the pupils study the various cultural influences on our language from the Roman, Saxon, Viking and Norman through to literary influences of such writers as Chaucer and Shakespeare, from the printing press to the Internet. He said, "although pupils are encouraged to develop the use of Standard English, they are also encouraged to appreciate their own local and regional development of language through reference to dialect and accent."

**James Fairhurst  
38 Tatton Drive  
Ashton-in-Makerfield  
Wigan Lancs.  
WN4 9TY**

See p8 for an article by Mr. Fairhurst. Ed.

### It's Cowd

*Al tell thi wot  
I'm feelin' owd,  
it must be cos  
it's bloomin' cowd.*

*Mi fingers are numb  
mi nose has gone red,  
I've ne'er been warm  
since I left mi bed.*

*I'm frozzent deeth  
mi feet are like ice,  
I can't get warm  
and that's not nice.*

*I'll 'ave a brew  
to warm me up,  
mashed in't pot  
and supped from cup.*

*I'm sat bi't fire  
Wi't cap on't yed,  
cobblers to this  
I'm gooin' back't bed.*

**Anna-Marie Hindley  
from Garswood.**

## Albert V. Twose (A Reader's Reminiscence)



I guess that it would be in the autumn of 1931 that A.V. Twose came north from Torbay Albion to play at Central Park and that his first match (which I watched) was against Huddersfield. I can see him still in my mind's eye, hoisting a huge "up and under" from his wing into the middle of the field. I remember also the result - Huddersfield 14, Wigan 6. The 1930's wasn't the most memorable period in the saga of Wigan's successes on the rugby field. First, Swinton and St. Helens, then Salford were the successful local clubs and it was against Swinton that I recall Twose's potential beginning to come through. That was probably in 1932 for the following season was a good one and Twose played a notable part in our winning the championship in 1934. (How impressively my grandfather roared that Easter Monday at Weast as Twose set the pattern for victory with two first-half tries!) Yes, I'd become a fan of this sun-tanned athlete with his general nippiness, considerable upper body strength that enabled him to escape seemingly successful tackles, and his all-round pleasantness.

Alas, the directors did not share my enthusiasm, and that same summer by buying Alf Ellaby from St. Helens, indicated that the Devon man's future might lie elsewhere. Though only a teenager, I sensed then that Twose was under-valued. Not least, he had marvellous ability as a goal-kicker - I once saw him put over seven out of seven against Hull - but of course with Sullivan at the back what need was there for another kicker? He was transferred to London and the last time I saw him play at Central Park was for Streatham and Mitchem. The London club folded in 1937: what, I have often wondered, did a Rugby League player do in those days if his club folded?

During the winter of 1942/3 I was training with the R.A.F. in Torquay. One free afternoon, strolling with a friend along the cliff top road through the woods, I perceived two local men approaching. The younger of the two was in R.A. F. uniform. It was Albert Twose! I was not an

aggressive fan. I never even asked for an autograph and now I simply drew in my breath and watched as my hero passed by. Subsequently, again and again through the long years of my life, I've regretted not having hailed him then and told him how much he had meant to me in my boyhood, how inspiring had been his personality and his play. In the 1960's, in civilian life, my employment took me often to Torquay. "R.G. Twose: Builder" I'd see emblazoned on trucks and workshop wall. I'd wonder, "Is it? Can it be?" But I never made the effort to pick up a phone or knock at a door. Then came the 90's and something caught me in my 70's.

In the sports pages of my newspaper I began to read of a "Roger Twose" on Warwickshire County cricket team sheets. Again I wondered. But Roger disappeared - to New Zealand. Last summer, he returned as part of their outfit. I could keep it to myself no longer. First I went to Chelmsford to see Roger bat. Yes, he was of similar build to Albert. Then I wrote to Roger c/o Lord's. Was he any relation to the A.V. of the 1930's? Admiration made me long for an answer. It came - by phone. The caller was from Torquay, not Roger but his father. Yes, I was on the right track. Albert had been Roger's grandfather. "They called him 'Rocker'", he added. "He died in 1989". Roger's father also thanked me for my "very nice letter" about his father. I thanked him for allowing me to express myself and I felt so warmly grateful for a golden moment sprung from more than 60 years before.

**Revd. Roger Taylor  
Chapel House  
Lindsey  
Near Ipswich  
IP7 6QA**

## FIRMLY FOCUSSED ON WIGAN PIER

Dear Mr. Gillies,

I am a third year student studying for an honours degree in English and History at the University of Northumbria at Newcastle. My specialist subject is social history and as a Wigan resident (Miles Lane in Shevington), I have chosen to focus my dissertation on the history and reputation of Wigan Pier. The structure of my essay is as follows:

The function of Wigan Pier and associated companies c1900  
The Music Hall joke  
Orwell's relationship with Wigan  
Wigan's relationship with Orwell  
The debate over the establishment of the Heritage Centre  
Wigan Pier today

I have read all the issues of *Past Forward* and have found the content vital to this project.

If you could print my request in the Spring issue of *Past Forward* I would be much obliged.

Once again I would like to thank your publication for the indispensable information I have obtained so far.

**Sarah Lowe  
367 Chillingham Road  
Heaton  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne  
NE6 5SB  
Tel: 0191 224 2187**

## RECORD PUT STRAIGHT

Dear Alastair,

First of all best wishes for the New Year and all that may lie in front of you in your guise of 'Mr. Millennium'.

In the last edition of *Past Forward* you ran an article 'Early Days in Hindley' by Mr. E. Bennett, in which he recalls his early life in Wigan and Hindley. In the article he writes of Princess Margaret coming to town to open the

Princess Cinema.

I am afraid that the gentleman has his facts confused. The Princess Cinema from the architecture is a building of the 1930's. Princess Margaret was born in 1930 and would have been too young to undertake any royal duties at that time. To my recollection she has only visited Wigan on one occasion, during the 1950's.

I am reliably informed by an aunt, who as a teenager was in the crowd on the day of the official opening, that the Princess Cinema was in fact opened by Anna Neagle who at the time was one of

the big names in British films.

I hope this sets the record straight and look forward to reading the next edition of *Past Forward*.

**Jim Pryle  
33 Hardy Street  
Springfield  
Wigan WN6 7AL**

● Mr. Bennett has now published his life-story in a very readable and well-presented booklet. Copies @ £1.50 plus 50p p & p, can be obtained direct from Mr. Bennett, 2 Wells Road, Chilcompton, Nr. Bath. BA3 4EX. Ed.



### Aspull & Haigh Historical Society

Meetings are held in Our Lady's R.C. Church Hall, Haigh Road, Aspull on second Thursday in the month at 7.30 p.m. Further details from the Secretary, Mrs. Rosalie Naylor, 3 Pennington Close, Aspull, Wigan (01942 256145)

#### 13 April

"A Mysterious Edwardian Romance"  
Ron Severs

#### 11 May

"Anne Clifford"  
Walter Johnson

#### 8 June

"Reminiscences of Royal Service" Part II  
Paul Kidd

### Atherton Heritage Society

The programme includes monthly meetings with talks on local history and visits throughout the year to places of historical interest. Meetings are held usually on the second Tuesday of the month at 7.30 p.m. at St. Richard's Jubilee Hall, Atherton. Admission: Members £1. Non-members £1.50. The annual membership fee is £3. Information from Hon. Sec. (01204 651478).

#### 11 April

"Bolton Royal Infirmary"  
Mrs. M. Harrison

Mrs. Harrison will tell us about when the Infirmary first opened its doors to the sick of the Bolton area, right up to the day in recent times when it closed its doors to merge and become Bolton Royal Hospital.

#### 9 May

"Stick Around"  
Mr. B. White

No, not a talk about glue! But about walking sticks, their origins and their particular stories - at one time the essential accessory.

#### 13 June

"Underground Canals of Worsley"  
Mr. G. Atkinson

The hidden world of the canal system under our feet which made it possible to move from Bolton to the USA without touching dry land. Hard to believe but true.

### Billinge Local History Society

A web-site is currently being prepared, and a Millennium Exhibition is planned for later in the year. For further details contact Roger Hart, 57 Windsor Road, Billinge, Wigan WN5 7LD (01744 892915)

## SOCIETY NEWS

### Golborne & Lowton Local History Society

Founded in 1984 the society now has an average monthly attendance of over 20. Meetings are held at Golborne Library on the second Tuesday of the month at 7.00 p.m. Non-members welcome. Further details from Ron Marsh, P.R. Officer (01942 726027).

### Leigh & District Family History Society

Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of every month in the Derby Room of Leigh Library. For further details contact the Secretary, Mrs. O. Hughes (01942 741594).

#### 14 April

"Who's been sleeping in My House?"  
Joyce Culling

#### 16 May

"The Grime Family of Shuttleworth and Little Holcombe"  
Andrew Todd

#### 15 June

Visit to the Record Office, Leigh

#### 18 July

Visit to the History Shop, Wigan

### Leigh Literary Society

Meetings are held in the Derby Room, Leigh Library on Mondays at 7.30 p.m. Subscription £10. Visitors £1. Secretary Mrs. H. Gaskell (01942 801743).

### Leigh Local History Society

Meetings are held in the Derby Room, Leigh Library, on the last Wednesday of the month. For further details contact the Secretary, Mrs. Norma Ackers (01942 865488).

### Tyldesley & District Historical Society

Meetings are held on the third Thursday of every month from September to May at the Tyldesley Pensioners Club on Milk Street at 7.30 p.m. We do not charge an entrance fee although voluntary contributions are always welcome. Refreshments available. Everyone is welcome, so come along, drag yourself away from the tele and have an informative and cheap night out! Contact the Secretary (01942 514271).

#### 20 April

"Farewell to Lord Derby"

Lizzie Jones

The story of the execution of the royalist Earl of Derby in Bolton 1651.

#### May

Annual Visit

To be arranged.

### Wigan Archaeological Society

The Society meets in the BP Centre, Scout HQ., Greenough Street, Wigan (ample parking) on the first Wednesday of the month at 7.30 p.m. New members are always welcome. The Society now has its own web-site - [www.wiganarchsoc.co.uk](http://www.wiganarchsoc.co.uk). Further details from the Secretary, Bill Aldridge (01257 402342) or by Email - [contact@wiganarchsoc.co.uk](mailto:contact@wiganarchsoc.co.uk).

#### 5 April

"Excavation of Sutton Hoo"

Eric Houlder

#### 3 May

"Recent Roman Discoveries Around Chester"

Adrian Tindall

#### 7 June

"The Roman Countryside of the North West"

Dr. R. Philpot

#### 5 July

"Medieval Parks"

Dr. Mary Higham

#### August

Annual outing

### Wigan Civic Trust

The Trust meets at 7.30 p.m. on the second Monday of the month at Drumcroon Arts Centre, Parsons Walk, Wigan. For further information contact Anthony Grimshaw, Secretary (01942 245777). New members are always welcome.

#### 13 March

"A History of the Bayeux Tapestry"

Fred Holcroft

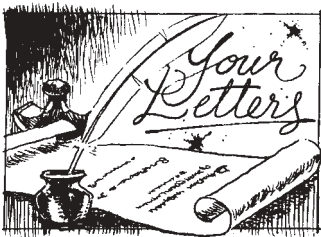
#### 10 April

"An illustrated talk on the History of the Roman Catholic Church in Wigan"

John A. Hilton

### Wigan Family and Local History Society

Meetings are held on the first (workshops), and third (speakers) Tuesday of the month at the Springfield Hotel, Springfield Road, Wigan, at 7.30 p.m. For further information contact Mrs. Lynne Kearns, 28 Wareing Street, Tyldesley, Manchester M29 8HS. (01942 878549 evenings/weekends).



Dear Sir,

Further to my visit to The History Shop on 20 January, I thought that I would drop you a line regarding the hockey team photograph I left with you.

I would very much like to identify the team in the photo. Two of its members are my mother, Gladys Peel, (extreme right on back row), and her married sister, Elma Drummond (extreme right on front row), both now deceased. They would have been in their mid twenties when the photo was

taken.

I believe that the photograph was taken between 1934 and 1938, when my mother married and moved to Carlisle to set up home with my father. I have contacted the photographer, Austin Lyons, but not surprisingly he could not identify the team after 60 years! Looking through copies of the *Wigan Examiner* of that time I came across fixtures of the Wigan & District Ladies Hockey League, and one of the teams in the League was Newchurch. This name is familiar to me as it is associated with the village of Culcheth, near Leigh, where my mother and her sister were born and brought up. Perhaps this is the team that they played for.

Also the *Examiner* mentions the Leigh & District Ladies Hockey League, but I could find no mention of the teams that

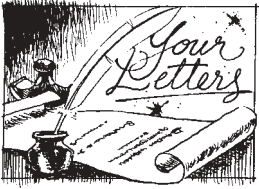


played in this league.

I shall be most grateful if you will consider publishing the photo in a future edition of *Past Forward* in the hope that any surviving members of the team might make

contact and provide me with details.

Geoffrey M. Hall  
22 Garland Way  
Northfield  
Birmingham B31 2BT



# BULLY OFF!

Dear Mr. Gillies,

I spoke to you last week about my memories of the Wigan and District Hockey League. Here are my memories.

I was interested to read in the Issue No. 23 of *Past Forward* an item in the article by Harold Knowles. In it he refers to a teacher at Ashton Grammar School, namely Miss Hilda Corless, adding that she was an English Ladies Hockey International.

I don't know if any of your readers will remember the Wigan and District Ladies Hockey League, which was in existence in the 1930's. This league consisted of teams from local factories, churches, and former school players. As a youngster of 7/8 years of age I went regularly, on a Saturday afternoon to watch a match, travelling on my own either by bus or train. My father, the late Edward Taylor, was the secretary to this league, a position he held for a number of years.

The teams I remember mostly are:- Old Ashtonians, who were former members of Ashton Grammar School, Ashton Ladies, Cromptons Recs (the Ashton Nut and Bolt Firm), Blackrod Ladies, Eckersley's (the mill in Swan Meadow Road), Newchurch Ladies, a team from the Culcheth area, St. Mark's Church team, St. Catharine's team, and Wigan Junior Unionists. (I usually went to watch Eckersley's team whether they were playing at home or away). Each team had its own colours, which mainly consisted of a navy blue gym slip and coloured shirt or blouse, black stockings and hockey boots. Games were played on Saturday afternoons on a 'home and away' basis. Play lasted 35 minutes each half with a 10 minute break at half time, when orange slices were usually given to the players.

The referees were all men, amongst whom I remember Jim Darbyshire, Bill Platt, Ken Drummond, Bill Stevenson, Harold Dowling, Mr. Cutler and my father.

At the end of the season a match was arranged when a select ladies eleven played the referee's side; in this case the referee was a lady, usually Jenny McKenzie, from the Eckersley's team. This game was always played on Eckersleys ground and usually with much hilarity.

In 1937 my father was presented with a clock, bearing the inscription 'Presented to E. Taylor by the Wigan and District Ladies Hockey League, 1937'. This was in appreciation of his services to the league. He was responsible for arranging all the fixtures, the printing of the fixture cards and lists, appointing the referees, together with sending the match results to the *Daily Herald*, *Daily Despatch*, *Manchester Guardian* and *News Chronicle*, as well as the local *Observer*. As most of the hockey grounds were commandeered during the war for other purposes, the league ceased to exist and was never re-formed.

Some of our older readers may remember taking part in these games and may be able to add to my memories.

**Charlotte Ashurst**  
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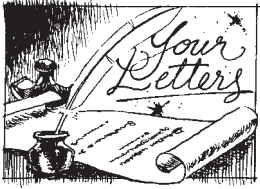
**Wigan Ladies XI v the Referees, c.1935.** Mrs. Ashurst has identified her father (fourth from left), Jimmy Derbysbire (left), Bill Platt (centre), Mr. Cutler (fifth from right), Ken Drummond (3rd from right), Harold Dowling (2nd from right), Hilda Corless (middle row, third from right) and Jenny McKenzie (front row, left).



**Wigan Mens Hockey Team, c.1960.** Mrs. Ashurst's father is the goalkeeper.



**Mrs. Ashurst's father receiving a commemorative clock for his services to the league from Mr. Cutler (centre) and Jimmy Derbysbire (fellow referees), 1937. Jenny McKenzie is on the right.**



*A treasure trove for me . . .*

## IMAGINE A BIBLICAL TOUR OF HIGHER AND LOWER INCE!

Dear Sir,

It is often claimed that stories on radio are preferable to TV because in 'setting the scene', we can use our imagination which is not limited by fixed studio sets or the needs of cameramen. Of course, this presupposes that we can choose an appropriate scene - not difficult perhaps in adulthood as we use our past experiences and images gathered from books, TV and films, etc. However, how do small children cope, or more particularly how did they cope before daily exposure to TV was available, and if they were too young to read properly?

Recently, while out walking with a friend, appropriately a retired vicar, this question was raised. Although I am no child psychologist, I suggested that even small children use their experiences however inadequate these might be. To illustrate the point, I described some of my earliest memories of learning, many involving Bible stories.

I was born at Clinker Valley (is it still known as such?) Spring View and moved to Higher Ince in the early 1930s. As I had grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins, in Lower Ince, Spring View and Platt Bridge, very frequently visiting meant that I was equally familiar with all the areas. I went to Sunday School and to 'Ince Central' C of E School, and still have a Songs of Praise hymn book awarded in 1937 for Proficiency and Good Conduct.

What did I make of Bible stories? Well, we used crayons to copy pictures and it appeared that men in the Holy Land lived in small,

Dear Sir,

Another excellent *Past Forward* (No 23) and a treasure trove for me personally.

Re: Neil Cain's '*It Happened in Ince*' my great-great-grandfather James Brown moved to Ince from Standish around 1853. His son Aaron (my great-grandfather) to his second wife Ellen (formerly Holland) was born at Ince and died there having spent all his life there as far as I know. My grandmother Margaret Alice was born at Ince as was my mother but they left when my mother was a small child. Margaret Alice married at the now demolished St.

Mary's as did several of her husband's aunts and uncles - the Perkins family. So the article and pictures are of great interest.

Then the Royal Albert Edward Infirmary was featured which was where James Brown died on 26 January 1879. His death was recorded by John Brown his older son to his first marriage. So many thanks.

**Yvonne Morris (Mrs.)  
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squat, mud built houses with unglazed windows and wore sandals and unusual clothes. But exactly where did Biblical events take place? The answer, of course, is "in Ince" - as I have said, children make use of their knowledge.

There was no bus service from Higher Ince to Spring View and in decent weather, the route lay over Ince Moss, first along the mineral railway line from near Ince station passing between the Bolton railway line and Ince Forge and used by the saddle tank engines, Dorothy and Delia. It was on the low-lying ground between the line and the Forge, that Jacob, while journeying to find a wife, rested with his head on a stone for a pillow and there dreamt of a ladder leading to Heaven.

Now we move to the story of Jacob's sons. As we all know, sand is everywhere in the Middle East and it must have been so in Biblical times. There was a 'sand hole' opposite the lock keeper's house near Lock 16 on the canal and from here a path went along the wall of the Empress Mill to Anderton Street. Joseph was walking along this path in search of his brothers when they met him and carried out their dastardly deed The pit "in the wilderness" into which they cast him after removing his coat of many colours was close to Jack Marsh's pen. This area of the 'Chemical Fields' (to use the posh phrase), was truly a wilderness.

Of course, the brothers relented and sold Joseph for 20 pieces of silver and he was taken on the long journey to Egypt. The scene must therefore move some distance - to Clinker valley in fact. This is where Jacob's

sons were sent to buy corn during the famine and where they unknowingly met Joseph. Where the road rises to cross what was the Platt Bridge Junction Line, there was a grass bank sloping down to a wall opposite the houses and it was over this wall that Joseph sold corn to his brothers and tricked them in order to meet his brother Benjamin and later his father.

It is many, many years since I saw Clinker Valley and I'm not sure that the large hollow that I remember as a child still exists. It was in this hollow that one of the Bible's best known incidents took place - an incident that is now often referred to metaphorically. I refer to the victory of David over Goliath.

In my mind's eye, there was a stream with bullrushes on the Platt Bridge side of the hollow and Miriam was nearby as her baby brother was found by the Pharaoh's daughter. Time passed and we find Moses at the "backside of the desert" where he saw the burning bush and later leading the Israelites out of Egypt being assisted by the parting of the Red Sea. Now a great deal of sand and water is needed 'to paint' these pictures and I must leave Ince briefly to go to the shore at Blackpool - devoid of holiday makers and deck chairs of course.

Enough of the Old Testament, now for the New. Bethlehem was in Lower Ince and the stable was near St. Mary's school. When Joseph heard of Herod's threat, he hurriedly gathered his family and left along Warrington Road, past the top of Westwood Lane. Some years later, Jesus was learning his lessons not as

we were, at desks but in the open air sitting cross-legged on the floor; it was always sunny. This took place on the very wide pavement in front of the Co-op shops at the junction of New Street and Walthew Lane, Platt Bridge. Not far away was the Sea of Galilee, the stretches of water at the back of the odd-numbered houses at the bottom of Victoria Road, where Peter and Andrew, James and John, became "fishers of men".

To end this Biblical tour of Ince, I come to the crucifixion and the entombment, both of which took place in my grandfather's front garden at Clinker Valley. I have other, less vivid memories of related events but they cannot all be recounted here. I wonder how many of your readers have similar experiences.

Finally a warning; if the path from the sand hole is still there and you should use it, take great care, especially if you have a lot of brothers.

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## LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE IN TOUCH

Dear Mr. Gillies,

Regarding the continuing strides *Past Forward* is making in putting like-minded people in touch, you may be interested to learn that I recently received a telephone call from a lady whose husband is a direct descendant of Wigan's mid 19th century M.P. and local entrepreneur - John Lancaster, founder of the Kirlless Ironworks. Being prompted to follow up the call with a bit of reading I discovered Lancaster's home - Ashfield in Standish - still stands. Additional help in locating it came from pen friends made through *Past Forward*, together with a very helpful postman in the backstreets of Standish, and this allowed me to forward a photograph to the Lancasters in Cheltenham. Regular reader Harold Smith of Sutton Coldfield said in a letter published in *Past Forward* some while ago, that it is now hard to imagine how life was before *Past Forward*, certainly life would be poorer without it, so continued success.

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• Neil Cain's latest article is on page 12. Ed.

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# Wigan's Parish Map

