

# PAST FORWARD

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*The Newsletter of Wigan Heritage Service*

**FREE**

## From the Editor

WELCOME to the latest edition of *Past Forward* which, I'm delighted to say, includes a number of articles written by first-time contributors - encouraging people, who otherwise would never have done so, to put pen to paper is one of the many success stories of the magazine.

One of the highlights of this issue is a splendid piece of artwork by a very good friend of the Heritage Service, local artist Gerald Rickards. Gerald has designed the cover for a forthcoming book on Aspull, and *Past Forward* readers are privileged to be able to enjoy a preview of this, albeit in black and white, in advance of publication. Even better news is that Gerald has agreed to cover the entire Borough in his very distinctive style for *Past Forward* over the next five years.

Another first for *Past Forward* - we are hoping that, during 2002, the magazine will also be available on audio tape. This is a new initiative aimed specifically at the visually impaired and housebound.

It's hard to believe, as I write this prior to having a short 'mid-term' holiday, that it will be nearly Christmas before many of you read this. So a very Happy Christmas and prosperous 2002 to all readers of, and contributors to, *Past Forward*. Thanks for all your support over the years, and long may it continue.

All comments and correspondence should be addressed to:  
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Wigan WN1 1PX

### COPY DEADLINE

Please note that the copy deadline for issue no 30 of *Past Forward* is 1 February.

# WIGAN AND LEIGH TOWN TRAILS

Now available - *Leigh Town Trail*: two guided walks in Leigh town centre (Wigan Council, 2000; 67pp illust, maps).

To complement the Wigan town centre trail booklet (reprinted in 1998), Philip Powell, Conservation Officer in the Planning Department, has produced one for Leigh. This is a celebration of the town's history, architecture and townscape which provides a wealth of information about the buildings and personalities of the town.

Walk one centres on the Market Place and Railway Road, whilst the second focuses on King Street and Bradshawgate. Armed with this valuable little book, which has maps of the two areas and a wealth of background information and photographs, the reader can take a walk back in time from the present.

If you don't already have a copy of this, why not treat yourself for Christmas? It only costs £3 and can be bought from either Leigh Local History Service or the History Shop.

Tony Ashcroft  
Local History Officer  
Leigh Library

## STOP PRESS

### Past Forward on Tape!

We are currently looking at the feasibility of making *Past Forward* available on audio-cassette tape, for the visually impaired and housebound. However, this new initiative is intended as a complement to, rather than a replacement for, the magazine itself. Hopefully the tapes will be available at the same time as the magazine itself. Further details in the next issue.



## EVA BARKER

AS this issue goes to print, I have just heard the sad news that Eva Barker, whose book on Aspull is shortly to be published, has died. It is, of course, particularly sad that she should have died such a short time before the publication of her book, which I know meant so very much to her. It will be a fitting tribute to a delightful lady who always took a keen interest in her local heritage. See p20 for a preview of Gerald Rickards's splendid cover for Eva's book.

Cover: Clifford Young, as a young pilot in London, 1932. The exciting story of this Wigan airman is told by his widow on p26.

# Jonathan Dewhurst

UNTIL a few years ago I knew only two things about Jonathan Dewhurst: that he was my great, great uncle and that at the turn of the century he was managing the Theatre Royal in Leigh, an industrial town in Lancashire. In 1993 my wife Sue and I visited Leigh and on a sudden impulse called in at the library to see if they held any information about Dewhurst. The Local History Officer, Tony Ashcroft, was most helpful and provided us with a copy of an interview given by Dewhurst to the local press when he took over management of the theatre in 1888.

We were astounded by what we read. Far from being a minor character in the Victorian theatre, Dewhurst had been a leading actor for over 20 years, subsequently managing the Leigh Theatre Royal for 18 years. The record of the interview contained the bare bones of his achievements, but we knew without doubt that we had to research his life and career to put flesh on those bones.

## Nothing to go on

Apart from the 'interview' we had nothing to go on – no diaries or correspondence, no existing biography or memoirs, and very little reference to him in other books we consulted. So for over seven years we have carried out our research, and some time ago knew that we must 'celebrate' Dewhurst in a book. We had more than sufficient material and felt that a permanent record of his achievements was the least he deserved. It is a sad fact that of the thousands of actors and actresses who have given life to the theatre, the careers of only a few have been recorded – the vast majority are long forgotten. In telling the story of Dewhurst's career, we felt that we were also offering a modest tribute to many other unsung heroes of the stage.

There were no theatrical connections in the Dewhurst family, but from an early age it seems that Jonathan had been hypnotised by words – poetry and plays, particularly Shakespeare – and the theatre. His elder brother, John, had taken him to the Theatre Royal in Manchester to see the renowned actor Barry Sullivan, and the experience had persuaded the young Jonathan that his future lay on the stage. Before that happened, however, he was employed on the staff of a local newspaper, by an

## THE LANCASHIRE TRAGEDIAN



*Jonathan Dewhurst as manager of the Leigh Theatre Royal, with his third wife, the actress Fanny Rivers*

engineering company, and as a grocer's assistant.

Dewhurst became a professional actor at the relatively late age of 28, beginning his career at the Prince's Theatre, Manchester, in 1865. The manager of the theatre and its leading actor was the celebrated Charles Calvert, who had an enviable reputation for his splendid productions of Shakespearean plays. Dewhurst's debut was in *Louis XI*, and the cast included Henry Irving who, although the same age as Dewhurst, had already been on the stage for 10 years.

## Good stage presence

Dewhurst soon made up for his 'lost' years and in his two seasons at the Prince's had graduated to major roles. It is not surprising that at the start he played 'heavy' roles, or that throughout his career he played mainly these and leading roles. He was over six feet tall, with an impressive physique and good stage presence. Vocally he was well suited to these roles and had a remarkable memory. He spent the next four years touring the provinces, during

which time he was playing the lead in Shakespeare's tragedies as well as in the popular dramas and melodramas of the day. A major change in his life followed a meeting with the dramatist Andrew Halliday, and Dewhurst made his first appearance in the West End, playing at Drury Lane in Halliday's adaptation of Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, opposite the talented and popular Adelaide Neilson.

Although Dewhurst played in London on many future occasions, his heart was in the provinces, particularly in the north of England. He toured, playing the lead opposite several famous actresses of the day, including Mlle Beatrice and Mary Gladstone, before forming his own 'Powerful Legitimate Company'.

In 1881, however, something else stirred in him and, following the example of earlier tragedians including G.V. Brooke, Barry Sullivan and Walter Montgomery, he packed his bags and sailed for Australia. The journey on the '*Cotopaxi*' took 44 days and on 8 July he arrived in Melbourne. His agent, James Kitts, had no trouble in arranging a very full programme for him at all the major theatrical venues supported by resident companies or by those specially engaged. For some reason, throughout his time in Australia, he was billed as 'John' Dewhurst! Dewhurst wasted no time – eight days after his arrival he opened at the Theatre Royal, Melbourne, presenting eleven plays in a four-week season before moving to Sydney for six weeks. It was here that he received almost entirely (and unaccustomed) criticism from the drama critic of the *Sydney Bulletin*.

Although they make the most entertaining reading, these critiques are unfortunately far too long to be included in an article of this length. The style is perhaps typical of the late 19th century critical writing, but we are also left with the suspicion that the author was at least as interested in demonstrating his own literary cleverness – and ability to entertain – as anything else. Fortunately for Dewhurst, the *Bulletin's* views were not shared by other critics we have unearthed.

Brisbane followed and was a critical success. However, Dewhurst was interested not only in the major theatres,

*Continued on page 4*

# Every Picture Tells a Story

**THIS IS a very old adage, to be sure, and how true it must be of thousands of readers throughout the land who have laid hands on a copy of 'The Archive Photographs' series appertaining to their area. Thumbing through the pages they will have been mentally jerked back through a generation or more to situations where they, the readers, had in some way, been involved.**

Presumably this was the publisher's central idea, having in mind the fact the reader would append far more mental text to the photographs than the printer could have coped with and on that score, he is to be congratulated.

In collating the pictures for the edition, *'Around Ashton-in-Makerfield and Golborne'*, congratulations must surely be

extended to Tony Ashcroft, Local History Officer, aided and abetted by his colleagues in Wigan Heritage Service, for choosing such a collection of delightful reminders of a past age with which even younger readers might identify.

But to the subject of the book itself, and in particular many of the pictures reminiscent of certain stages of my young life in and around Ashton. Unfortunately, contrary to popular logic, I cannot begin at the beginning, that being the province of those of a much earlier breed. I do, however, vaguely remember that at some stage, my mother spoke of being a seamstress, or similar occupation, in the employ of Lord Gerard.

In that connection, isn't it amazing how things, and even people, diminish in the mind with the passage of time? My mother's mention of Lord Gerard evoked images of a

Dear Alastair,

The attached is a specimen of what the first of a series of word pictures, prompted by Tony Ashcroft's *'Around Ashton-in-Makerfield and Golborne'*, would look like in the event of your agreement that it would not, in any way, cross any ethical barriers.

The subject publication contains many pictures of which I could add more than a few words as, for instance, the picture of the very first person to set eyes on me – even before my mother! I refer to that of Nurse Taberner on page 21.

**J. Harold Smith  
108 Worcester Lane  
Sutton Coldfield  
West Midlands  
B75 5NJ**

nine-foot tall front row forward frighteningly arrayed in military uniform, dripping with brassware and ribbons. Even now, after seeing my very first photograph of him in the subject volume, I find it peculiarly difficult to accept that he, the richest landowner in Britain of the day, is the

most diminutive figure in the group appearing on page 9.

## Idyllic setting

I retain vague memories of a sort of expansive tea party or field treat held on Garswood Park alongside Liverpool



## Jonathan Dewhurst

**THE LANCASHIRE TRAGEDIAN**

*Continued from page 3*

but in taking Shakespeare to the provinces. In his words:

*'Following Brisbane I went up the country with a small company and played Shakespearian and other pieces in schools, barns, or other buildings that we could get hold of. We had only sheets for scenery, but our productions were very acceptable to the squatters, who, of course, rarely had an opportunity of witnessing anything of the kind'.*

In Bendigo he was *'received with open arms'*, following which he appeared with great success in Ballarat, Hobart, Launceston and Sydney again.

After 15 months Dewhurst's visit to Australia had come to an end – a notable, successful and exciting episode in his career. But although he had intended to return to England on the *'Verona'*, his plans changed. The *'Verona's'* passenger list also included the American actress

Louise Pomeroy, with members of her company, the Pomeroy Dramatic Combination. They too had been touring Australia and were now bound for India – and Dewhurst joined them as Louise Pomeroy's leading man. On his eventual return to England Dewhurst again formed a touring company, interspersing this work with roles in major London and touring productions, for such as Augustus Harris, H.C. Arnold, and his great friend Wilson Barrett.

## Widowed twice

Dewhurst had been widowed twice and in 1886 married the actress Fanny Rivers. Her parents were both in the theatre, as were her three brothers, and of the four children she and Jonathan had, three became actors. One of Fanny's brothers – Alfred Rivers – was an actor who assumed supporting roles when necessary, but was a highly regarded stage manager who worked for some of the leading names in the theatre including John Martin-Harvey, Laurence Irving, Julia Neilson and Fred Terry, as well as Wilson Barrett with whom he stayed for 17 years, touring Australia twice and America five times.

In 1888 Dewhurst moved into theatre management, mainly to provide a more stable life for his family, but he and Fanny still took the opportunity to take the stage when a suitable visiting company appeared at Leigh. His final appearance on any stage – at the age of 70 – was at the Royal Court Theatre, Wigan, in his favourite role of Richelieu, supported by the Allan Wilkie Repertory Company.

Jonathan Dewhurst cared deeply about the theatre and believed implicitly in its civilising and educational possibilities. He was concerned that in all aspects of theatre the highest standards should be the aim – nothing less was acceptable. He was enormously popular with audiences and all those with whom he worked. We believe that he deserves a permanent memorial and hope that our book will do justice to Jonathan Dewhurst – the Lancashire Tragedian.

***Jonathan Dewhurst – The Lancashire Tragedian* by Philip and Susan Taylor is published by The Book Guild of Lewes, East Sussex and will be available at the end of November, price £16.95. ISBN 1 85776 524 9.**



*Mrs. Ellen Tabner (or Taberner), a North Ashton midwife in the early 1900's, lived at 49 Station Road, Garswood. She is seen here in her working dress.*



*In March 1898, the Prince of Wales visited Lancashire. During his visit the Prince was the guest of Lord Gerard at Garswood Hall. This formal photograph taken at the Hall includes, from left to right: Col. Swanne, Capt. Holford, Lady Curzen, Lord Gerard, the Prince of Wales, Sir Kelly Kenny, Gen. Brabazon, Lady De Trafford, Lady Gerard, Lady Randolph Churchill, Hon. Mrs. Oliphant (Lord Gerard's sister), Hon. Ethel Gerard, Mr. Christopher Sykes and Hon. H. Gerard.*

Road. In those days it was, in my memory, quite an idyllic setting of typical English parkland. A little later in life, I was to learn that, lurking within that beautiful picture, was a chap who had to be avoided, should one get the urge that trespass held a far greater thrill than just walking along Liverpool Road. His name was *Owd Markland*, summat they called a gamekeeper who was not averse to painful peppering from his double barrels of the area of the intruder's rear anatomy with grapeshot – so I was informed at the time.

Two things stand out in my memory of that country gathering, one being the nearest I had ever been to being frightened to death. As part of the entertainment a Doo Dah Band was in attendance. With the benefit of hindsight I see the scene now (which took place during a lull in the proceedings) as nothing more sinister than my mother chatting to someone she knew who was later joined by a member of this DD band, still heavily disguised in face paint. Unwittingly, this

unfortunate man had modelled for the bogeyman with which my mother had threatened me and seven siblings. I screamed uncontrollably and tried to hide behind mum's voluminous drapery!

### **Amazement**

The effect of that incident did, however, subside in the anticipation of an event advertised on the billposts which read, "A Flying Machine will land in the grounds and take off again" – and it did, much to everybody's amazement and enjoyment in the days when a plane passing overhead would halt all earthy proceedings until the object disappeared from sight!

And that is about as much as I can recall in terms of the gossamer connection with Lord Gerard unless, of course, I were permitted to include the Ashton Street that carried his name.

Gerard Street was not exactly Princess Street or Lord Street, but in my young lifetime it held certain attractions and not a few

examples of irk, like having to walk the two miles from Garswood in order to purchase or obtain something that was only available in Ashton – or Wigan – or St. Helens.

Come the Sabbath, however, following the close of evensong at Holy Trinity, the teachings of the sermon had already become dimmed; for Mecca, read Gerard Street, Ashton or, to give it the more derogatory title, "T' Monkey run," a term often applied by those who preferred to forget that they too, in the mists of time, stood in hope on the edge of Gerard Street's pavements and that it was more than likely that the rocking chair from which the statement emanated, was supplied by someone they met on the "monkey run".

Moving now to page 11, we see a picture of the opening of what was, in my experience, referred to locally as "Ash'n Libry."

Some 22 years later that noble institution entered my life in a rather circuitous way. I had been aware of the existence of Ashton Library for many years via the number

of books my father devoured, and yet it was within the realms of possibility that even he had never set foot in the place – his library books always arrived via the auspices of my sister who was a pupil at the local Grammar School.

### **Sheer euphoria**

In 1928, having finally got over the sheer euphoria of "starting" at the then three year old Central School, I befriended (or got into the company of) a little knot of lads of Ashton birth whose ideas of filling the time immediately following school dinner (one meat and potato pie delivered and placed in the warming oven by Dyke's delivery man, plus whatever the pupil's parent(s) thought necessary to sustain existence) usually included such pastimes as clock-watching, pupil watching, mock football with a tennis ball or similar, not to mention, for some, catching up with the antics within the folds of Tiger Tim's

*Continued on page 6*

# Every Picture Tells a Story

*Continued from page 5*

Weekly or other comics of the day.

Tagging on to these lads, I would learn that they were bound for "Ash'n Libry" and though in hindsight, the venture may even have a commendable ring about it, for me at the time, a certain guilt gripped me, as though we were bent on robbing a bank or something of that ilk.

The feeling of guilt did not entirely disappear on learning that these lads were just as strange to Ash'n Libry as I was. The difference was in the outer skin, they were "townies" and I was a village yokel still to learn the ropes. (I never did!)

After a few of these lunchtime forays to Ash'n Libry, I grew to like the experience, albeit with the attendant aside of running the gauntlet of Miss Hughes, THE librarian of the day and, I venture to say, for many a day thereafter. I cannot recall ever having heard Miss Hughes speak but, if looks could be measured in terms of decibels, then she could have been heard in Australia! Not only was she the epitome of super efficiency that gave youngsters like us the impression that she really was Ash'n Libry in disguise, but she doubled as a fearsome sentinel who, with one look, could inflict very serious injury should one overstep the mark. This could quite easily include the flouting by as little as a loud whisper, the conspicuously sited black on white notice that shouted to the would-be bibliophile, **SILENCE** as the entrance door was still closing behind.

## **Callow minds**

Our adopted headquarters in the library was the tiny reference library where books on far more subjects than our callow minds would ever have apprehended. This, of course,



*On 17 March 1906 Lord Gerard officially opened the Carnegie Library at Ashton-in-Makerfield. The building cost £5,843. This venture was made possible through the munificence of the American philanthropist Mr. Andrew Carnegie.*

was not particularly healthy, having in mind the raw matter which such erudition was supposed to enhance. Unfortunately, and often to the chagrin of Miss Hughes, the odd meeting with some hitherto unknown fact or a picture requiring (in the mind of the discoverer) attention of the rest of the company would often evoke the odd, "Hey, look a' this!" in decibels far in excess of those suggested by the aforementioned notice.

Such an outburst would undoubtedly summon the arrival of Sentinel Hughes who, without uttering a word, would make a beeline for certain sections of which, it could almost be guaranteed, she knew every word of every book. These would include Art, Medical, (like Gray's Anatomy) and French, the first two most likely to raise a snigger – or two. Having assured herself that all was in order, she would quietly return to her oak panelled fortress in the main body of the library. Otherwise, she would scan the area surrounded by our daily mob and if within the area she espied a book "not fit for little boys" it would be removed forthwith and replaced whence it came and not a word uttered.

French? It would be distorting the truth in the extreme by suggesting there was anything serious in

removing a Larousse from what I imagine would be, in those days, a permanent berth on the shelves of that library. In truth, we would thumb through a few pages, tarry on a few words we thought we could memorise. Later on in school we would (in our tiny minds) show off, no doubt at the expense, had there been a French speaking person present, of creating the most uncontrollable hilarity.

Funny how times have changed almost every aspect of one's life. In between the years of leaving school and moving to Birmingham in late 1938, I went through a few stages of using Ashton Library. In that period I grew to respect Miss Hughes for what she was, a brilliant librarianne who, in my mind, WAS Ashton Library.

## **Afternoon addiction**

The Chief Librarian was Mr. Lamb (no silly puns about ewes and lambs please); he had two sons at Ashton Grammar School whom I knew only by name via my brother who was a pupil there at the same time. I did, however, get to know the elder son, though very briefly. At the beginning of World War 2, whilst working at Rolls Royce in Crewe, I continued my Saturday afternoon addiction of browsing around

bookshops. W.H. Smiths in Crewe was miniscule by comparison with Hudsons in New Street, Birmingham, but none the less busy throughout the week. It was in there that, for some reason, I asked to speak to the manager who, to my surprise, came out and introduced himself as Mr. Lamb. From thereon, my reason for asking to see him was lost in antiquity, Ash'n Libry and all that its memory unearthed was well and truly wrung from the meeting.

But what is more surprising is the fact that Cupid had shot his arrows in targets not a million miles apart, he having married a farmer's daughter from Nantwich and I later to marry (57 years ago) a Nantwich born lass from Crewe; colloquially, that means we both married Dabbers. (you wouldn't find that in the reference section of Ash'n Libry!)

A final note – I would suggest that the picture of Ashton Library taken in 1906 would not have been possible had Miss Hughes been in charge. The four men sitting with their caps on would have received a curt and not entirely unclear message that this was not allowed in HER library!

*Around Ashton-in-Makerfield and Golborne is available from the History Shop @ £9.95, plus 50p p&p.*

# The Witches of Wigan

AS PART of the history of this country, witchcraft will always be a dark and fascinating chapter. During the 17th century, Roman Catholic and Protestant alike were obsessed with the horror and terror of witches.

Panic produced a spawn of informers and to be accused was to be virtually condemned to a cruel, lingering death.

The number of victims is as incredible as the number of deaths from road accidents and it seems equally as incredible that people could put up with one any more easily than the other

Genuine hatred of a personified evil, a genuine love of God, the love of one's fellow-man and an anxiety for his eternal welfare co-operated with love of cruelty, ignorance, credulity and political interest to produce one of mankind's great collective humiliations.

Learned and often careful and conscientious judges shared the belief in the reality of witchcraft with their victims.

The witches knew they were witches and confessed and often gloried in their alleged powers and exploits. It seemed as though the madness of the accused reacted on the judges and the judge's belief confirmed that of the accused.

## Tortures

So they were strangled, burnt and torn asunder after tortures which make one ashamed to be human, with the strange result that witches multiplied beyond all counting.

When in the 18th century a rationalistic and scientific period dawned, witchcraft was regarded as a delusion or, at all events, not a matter for serious consideration. Once robbed of its horror and fear it was quickly relegated into the limbo of forgotten things.

But in its heyday, supported by Exodus Chapter 22, verse 18: *Though shalt not suffer a witch to live*, King James I in his "Duemonologie" advocated death for dealers in "Black Magic". The clergy believed and proclaimed from the pulpit the doctrine of Satanic possession.

Among the records is the hanging of a woman, Isabella Rigby, condemned to death in October 1665, on a charge of witchcraft. According to the church register of the County Palatine her burial date is April 10, 1666, executed for witchcraft and a native of Hindley.

It is probable that she was one of the witches referred to in a letter written on 30 January 1666, by Sir Roger Bradshaigh of Haigh to Sir John Williamson, a Secretary of State. The letter

states that he, Sir Roger, took a severe course at the sessions when, on Christmas Day, the Common Prayer Book had been taken out of Bolton Church, torn in pieces and thrown into the street channel.

"I have examined four reputed witches," wrote Sir Roger. "One confessed that she and her father and mother each rode a black cat to Warrington, nine miles off and that the cat sucked her mother's blood. I have little faith in this testimony even though given on oath but have sent two to jail."

In his *Bygone Lancashire*, Ernest Saxon gives an account of the trials and executions of witches at Lancaster Castle. In 1612, Lancaster was the scene of one of the bloodiest events in the history of the town. On the morning of 20 August 10 people of both sexes were executed "for

having practised and exercised divers devilish artes called witchcrafts, enchauntments, charmes and sorceries."

These were the unfortunate Pendle witches whose trial had concluded the day before. Several alleged witches lay under sentence of death in the castle in the early part of 1635, four of them from Wigan.

Writers on this subject have failed to make a record of the last cases of witchcraft at Lancaster. So far as can be ascertained, Isabella Rigby was the last person to suffer death for the "offence".

But perhaps the last alleged witch to be sent for trial was an old woman named Catherine Walkden of Atherton who died in jail before the case came to trial in the early part of the 18th century.

©James Fairhurst

## Ladies and Girls of Ince Parish Sunday School, 1935

This splendid photograph was kindly sent in by Mrs. Freda Smith (nee Clark) from Standish. It was taken in Ince Central School yard in 1935. Ladies and girls from Ince Parish Sunday School were waitresses on a mock cruise. Mrs. Smith is on the extreme left. Rev. J. Pain was the Captain and Rev. Blofeld the Deputy.

Evening entertainment included such songs as *Red Sails in the Sunset*, *On a Steamer Coming Over* and *Harbour Lights*.



# The Hitchen name in Wigan:

## Some clues to the past

AN INTEREST in Family History led me to trace my ancestry back to Peter Hitchen my 3X great grandfather, born in Pemberton c.1784/88. By 1818 Peter had left Pemberton, become an engineer, married Isabella (from nearby Billinge) and settled near Dukinfield, Cheshire, where they raised a family and where Peter eventually died in 1854. Three generations of Peter's male descendants became coal-mining engineers.

My search for records of Peter's early life (which proved difficult) led to the collection of records of Hitchens who had lived in the Wigan area. From the 1800's, records (such as the international Genealogical

Dear Sir,

I enclose an article on Family History, "The Hitchen Name in Wigan: Some Clues to the Past", which I am submitting to you for possible publication in *Past Forward*.

In Wigan from the 1800's, compared with other places in Lancashire, there is a concentration of people with this name, so I feel that there will be some local interest.

Four Hitchen records are summarised, found in sources that are not likely to be used routinely by family historians in Wigan, dating back to 1760 and linked with the history of the Orrell coalfield. An attempt is made to relate these to my own ancestry, traced back over several generations of colliery engineers, to Peter Hitchen (an engineer, born in Pemberton c.1788).

**Pam Baxby (Dr.)**  
**35 Galston Avenue**  
**Rainhill Prescot**  
**Merseyside L35 0NY**

Bankes having diverted the stream which supplied Hawarden's waterwheel, used to provide motive power to pump water from his mine, causing it to flood. As a result, from 1758 to 1760, Hawarden was forced to use a horse gin instead, which was more expensive to run.

Peter is described as knowing both the collieries in dispute. He had been asked by Mr. Bankes "to search for and find the sough – that it might be scoured and cleansed."

In 1817, Annie Hitchen is recorded as a driver of a gin horse, the first mention of the employment of women in the collieries in Winstanley and Orrell. Horse gins were used to remove water from the mines and to "wind" coal up to the surface.

*From 'Records of Mining in Winstanley and Orrell' by Mrs. J.H.M. Bankes, Lancs. And Ches. Antiquarian Society 1939, Vol.54 pp31-64: of interest to me because of my family's links with coal-mining; unusual perhaps as a source for family historians.*

### WIGAN CENSUS RETURNS

In 1811, an unusually early census records three families of Hitchens, two living in Wallgate and one (that of Peter Hitchen) living in Millgate. Later census returns (1841 and 1851) list 71-73 Hitchens from 14-16 families living in Winstanley, Pemberton, Billinge and Orrell. This was the area covered by the Orrell coalfield, mined extensively from 1740 to 1850, with which Hitchens appear to have close links. In Winstanley, several Hitchen families lived in New House Row, built by Meyrick Bankes of



*Gerrard Hitchen, my grandfather*

### THE DRAGOON WHO SERVED UNDER WELLINGTON

John Hitchen born in Pemberton, attended the unveiling ceremony of the Wellington Memorial in Piccadilly, Manchester in 1856. John was then aged 71 years. He joined the 7th Dragoons in 1803 and was credited with the Military General Service Medal, having served under

Wellington in the Peninsular War from 1808 to 1814, possibly also at Waterloo in 1815 and was discharged in 1821. It seems that he probably later transferred to the 2nd Footguards, from which he was pensioned in 1824. (It has been suggested

that further information might be found in the Muster Rolls of either regiment in the Public Records Office in Kew).

*From 'Manchester Wellington Memorial' by J. Beckett, past President of Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society, Manchester Genealogist Jan. 1992, Vol.28 pp37-39, first published in the Manchester Guardian, with additional information from the National Soldiers' Index.*

### MINING IN WINSTANLEY AND ORRELL

In 1760 Peter Hitchen (then aged 50 years), a local collier, gave evidence in a lawsuit over mine drainage between two owners of adjacent coal mines. William Bankes of Winstanley Hall (Peter's employer) was sued by Dr. T. Hawarden of Pemberton for damages caused (it was claimed) by

Index and recent BT telephone directories) suggest that there were more Hitchens here than elsewhere in Lancashire. So, I felt that there might be interest among readers of *Past Forward*, in at least the more unusual records that I found.



Winstanley Hall for his colliery workers and in Pemberton, several Hitchen families lived in the area of New St. Lamberhead Green. The earliest were born in Winstanley and Pemberton about 1781/2.

From the 1740's, parish registers of Wigan All Saints' Church, St. Aidan's Chapel, Billinge and St. John's Church, Pemberton also contain many Hitchen (and in the case of All Saints, Hitchin) entries. This confirms that there was a concentration of their homes in the area to the south-west of Wigan.

The full census is available in the History Shop, Wigan.

**PETER HITCHEN JUNIOR, OWNER OF BIRCHLEY COLLIERY, BILLINGE**

How do these records relate to my own Family History?

Clearly Peter employed by William Bankes in 1760 lived at an earlier time than Peter my 3X great grandfather born in the 1780's. My ancestor Peter could be Peter of Millgate, but the size of the family of the latter in 1811 suggests that it is not and Peter of Birchley Colliery in 1903, lived at too late a date.

So what evidence did I find of "my" Peter in Wigan records? Parish Registers of All Saints' Church, Wigan list the baptism of a Peter in 1788 (also the year of his birth) and of a John in 1786 (the year of his birth), sons of James "Hitchin" of Wallgate weaver and Mary, daughter of James and Mary Taylor. The marriage of James "Hitchen" and Mary Taylor is recorded in the parish register of St. Aidan's Chapel, Billinge, in 1785.

So James of Wallgate may be the father of "my" Peter, and John (the Dragoon) could be Peter's brother.

BIRCHLEY,  
BILLINGE, NR. WIGAN, *July 11<sup>th</sup> 1903*

*Mr. Thomas Little*  
**Bought of PETER HITCHEN, JUNR.,**  
BIRCHLEY COLLIERY NO. 2., BILLINGE.

DATE	lb	CWTS.	<i>Burgg huto</i>		CWTS.	CWTS.	TOTAL		PRICE	£	S.	D.	
			CWTS.	CWTS.			TONS.	CWTS.					
<i>July</i> 6			96	8									
7			26	6			6	16	12/6	4	5	0	
11			4	6			1	0	8/4		8	4	
			136	20							4	13	4
												4	4
											4	8	9

*Wkly a/c. 5/4. Discount*

*Received July 29 1903*  
*Peter Hitchen Junr.*  
*Wigan*

Received bill, 1903, signed by Peter Hitchen Junior. This bill and other records of Birchley Colliery (including its sale to Peter Hitchen "of Orrell", described in the St Helens newspaper of 17 January 1902) are kept in St Helen's Local History Library.

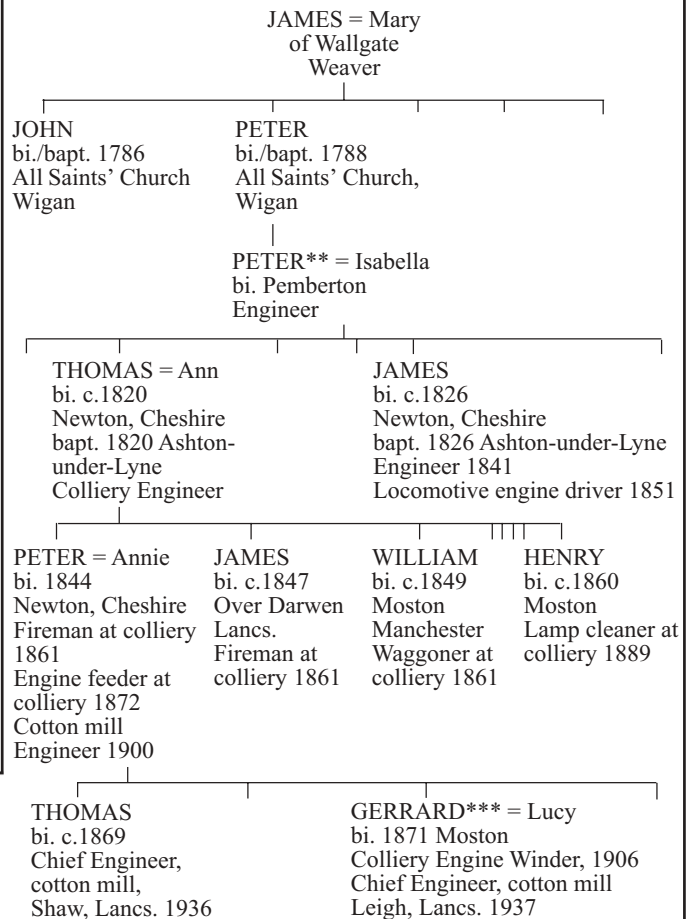
Finally, is there any evidence that the Hitchens listed in Wigan records were in fact related to one another?

Given the concentration of the surname in one area, to the south-west of Wigan, the repeated use of a limited number of Christian names (James and Thomas, as well as Peter), and the links with coal-mining, it would seem so, but the sorting out of such details from Wigan records must await the attention of future family historians.

With thanks to the staff of Wigan Heritage Service and St. Helens Local History and Archives Library.

**Pam Baxby (nee Hitchen)**

**An Outline HITCHEN Family Tree:**



\*\*my 3X = great grandfather  
\*\*\* = my grandfather

bi. = birth  
bapt. = baptism

# ELLEN WEETON

## (1776-1849)

### GOVERNESS

#### Final Days

**THE last we hear of Miss Weeton by her own hand, is during a lone tour of North Wales in the summer of 1825. On 20th June, restricted by rain from doing no more than a three-and-a-half mile walk along the Pwllhelli road, she wrote:**

*“... The solitary life I lead, is not from choice; I see no way of avoiding it. In lodgings, I have hitherto found it unavoidable; and I have found no family to board with, who would take me on such terms as I can afford – such a family, I mean, as I could wish to reside with; for I could not be comfortable to mingle continually with people of coarse manners, vulgar, and illiterate. I appear to be condemned to solitude for life. I am naturally of a lively, social turn, and to be often in the company of such as possess highly gifted and highly cultivated minds, would be a gratification to me, superior even to books... But! God has said ‘Set your affections on things above, and not on things on earth’ – and therefore appears to have specially deprived me of all those things on which I could have set my affections. Thy will be done! I see Thy mercies and Thy graciousness in this, and am thankful.”*

And on this beautiful but tragic note the manuscript comes to an end. The rest must be told in words other than hers.

#### Obscurity

Owing to Ellen Weeton's comparative obscurity and sparse local records, few details had emerged covering the latter portion of her life until recently, although it had been ascertained, by reference to the records of Hope Chapel, Wigan (see *Past Forward* 28), that her fortunes had taken a decided turn for the better and her wandering days ended soon after her return from her Welsh tour of 1825.

Local directories of the period and local Rate Books, together confirm that her daughter, Mary, became the owner of her father's property in Standishgate, Wigan. And that both Mary and her mother occupied the property as late as 1844. In the same year the property was sold but what of its occupants?

#### No trace

Unfortunately no local newspaper was in circulation at that time. The *Wigan Times* newspaper was established in 1849 and ceased circulation in 1851, but revealed during its existence no trace of an obituary notice, nor anything remotely attributable to Miss Weeton's (Mrs. Stock's) 'ready pen'. Likewise the *Wigan Observer*, and the *Wigan Examiner*, both established 1853, contained

Dear Alastair

Herewith my final article on the life of Ellen Weeton. As you know the first article (published as long ago as Issue 20 Autumn/Winter 1998), was intended only as a single-issue contribution to commemorate 150 years since her death in 1849.

I first became aware of this remarkable local woman through an article in the *Post and Chronicle* (12 May 1975), which was based on the book published by David and Charles in two volumes *Miss Weeton's Journal of a Governess* (1969). The title has long been out of print and unlikely to be reprinted. Nevertheless, I believed Miss Weeton's contribution to our local and social history would be of interest to the public, at this time, both locally and further afield.

In writing the series of articles, at your request, it has been both an interesting undertaking and a difficult challenge, not least because I am in full-time employment and have other interests. Furthermore I am acutely aware that I am not a 'historian' in its true sense. Over the past three years I have been at all times conscious of the fact that a 'professional' could have done better. However, I have been constantly encouraged by appreciative comments from individuals and your most helpful staff at the History Shop in Wigan and the Archives in Leigh (where Miss Weeton's original volumes of 'copy' letters and journals are held). Also the Local History Department at Leigh which retains much information about Miss Weeton's brother, Thomas. I am also indebted to the staff of the Local History and Archives of St. Helens for their enthusiastic assistance with information on Parr Hall, St. Helens (Issue 27).

Thanks also (for Issue 28) to both Miss Joan Bamford of Wigan for the loan of her precious personal copy of *Ebenezer, St. Paul's Independent Chapel, Standishgate, Wigan* (1847) and Mrs. Margaret Kenyon for managing to obtain, almost instantly, privately held copies of *A History of Hope Congregational Church, Wigan (1812-1962)*; *The Chronicle of St. Paul's* (1977); *The Presbyterian Chapel, Chapel Lane, Wigan* (1969) and *Centenary of the Church of Christ, Rodney Street, Wigan (1841-1941)*.

Finally my thanks to you and *Past Forward*, without which it would not have been possible to bring the knowledge of Ellen Weeton's fascinating life to another generation.

**Alan Roby  
Orrell  
Wigan**

no information about Ellen Stock or her daughter. Certainly she was not buried at Wigan or Upholland where her mother's grave is located.

Edward Hall, editor of *Miss Weeton's Journal of a Governess* finally gave up all hope of finding further reference to her, with his

recorded words: "It is assumed that obscurely as she lived, so obscurely she died; but not before she ensured the safe-custody of her life's history for the benefit of posterity."



*Mab's Cross (Standishgate), Wigan, 1829, as Ellen Weeton would have known it. She lived happily together with her daughter, Mary, in Standishgate from 1827 to 1844.*

But where did Ellen die? And to whom did she bequeath her precious copy-letter memorandum books? The answer came only in 1994. A gentleman resident of Liverpool, Mr. L. Stock (no relation to Aaron Stock, the estranged husband of Miss Weeton), found her burial records in the registers of the Necropolis Cemetery, Liverpool: grave number 7611, Nelly Stock aged 72; cause of death decay; date of death 12 June, buried 14 June 1849; address Bedford Street.

### **Typhoid fever**

Her death certificate confirms her date of death and age. The cause of death on the certificate is more specific, as being caused by typhoid fever, which is very likely to be correct. The informant is given as William Newell of 71 Bedford Street, Toxteth

Park, who was Miss Weeton's son-in-law.

### **Christened 'Nelly'**

Her Christian name of 'Nelly' recorded in the cemetery register, confirms her own statement that she had been christened 'Nelly' rather than 'Ellen' as recorded in the registers of St. John's parish church, Lancaster. This information would suggest that Ellen Weeton (Nelly Stock) spent her final days with her daughter's family in Liverpool.

It was Mr. L. Stock who also discovered that Ellen married Aaron Stock at Holy Trinity parish church, Liverpool in 1814, and certainly she had lived there for a time with friends before meeting her future husband. Perhaps her old friends had offered to look after Ellen during her old age?

Ellen's will, which was proved on 15 August 1849, has also been found by Mr. Stock and adds further to the picture. It was drawn up in July 1847, when Ellen described herself as 'of Liverpool'. One of the most interesting points is that she bequeathed her manuscript journals to Rev. William Marshall. She mentions **nine** volumes of these, whereas previously it had been thought there were only seven, three of which survive today in Wigan Archives, in addition to her 'religious diary' entitled *Occasional Reflections for the year 1818* plus a fragment entitled *The History of the Life of N. Stock, 1824*. Also bequeathed to Rev. Marshall was her copy of 'Clarke's Commentary on the Old and New Testament.'

The rest of her books, together with furniture, clothes etc. were left to

Ellen's daughter, by this time Mary Newell. The residue of the estate was left in trust for the benefit of Mary and her children. Legacies of £10 each were to be paid to the executors of the will who were, in addition to Rev. Marshall, Richard Walmsley of Wallgate, attorney's clerk and Thomas Dawson of Liverpool, house agent.



Exactly 100 years were to elapse after Miss Weeton wrote her last page in volume seven of her life's experiences, which covered the reign's of four monarchs from George III to Victoria, before Edward Hall found a single volume in a Wigan book dealer's shop.

Volume one was commenced in 1805. The period of her life covered by

*Continued on page 12*

**ELLEN WEETON**  
**(1776-1849)**  
**GOVERNESS**  
**Final Days**

*Continued from page 11*

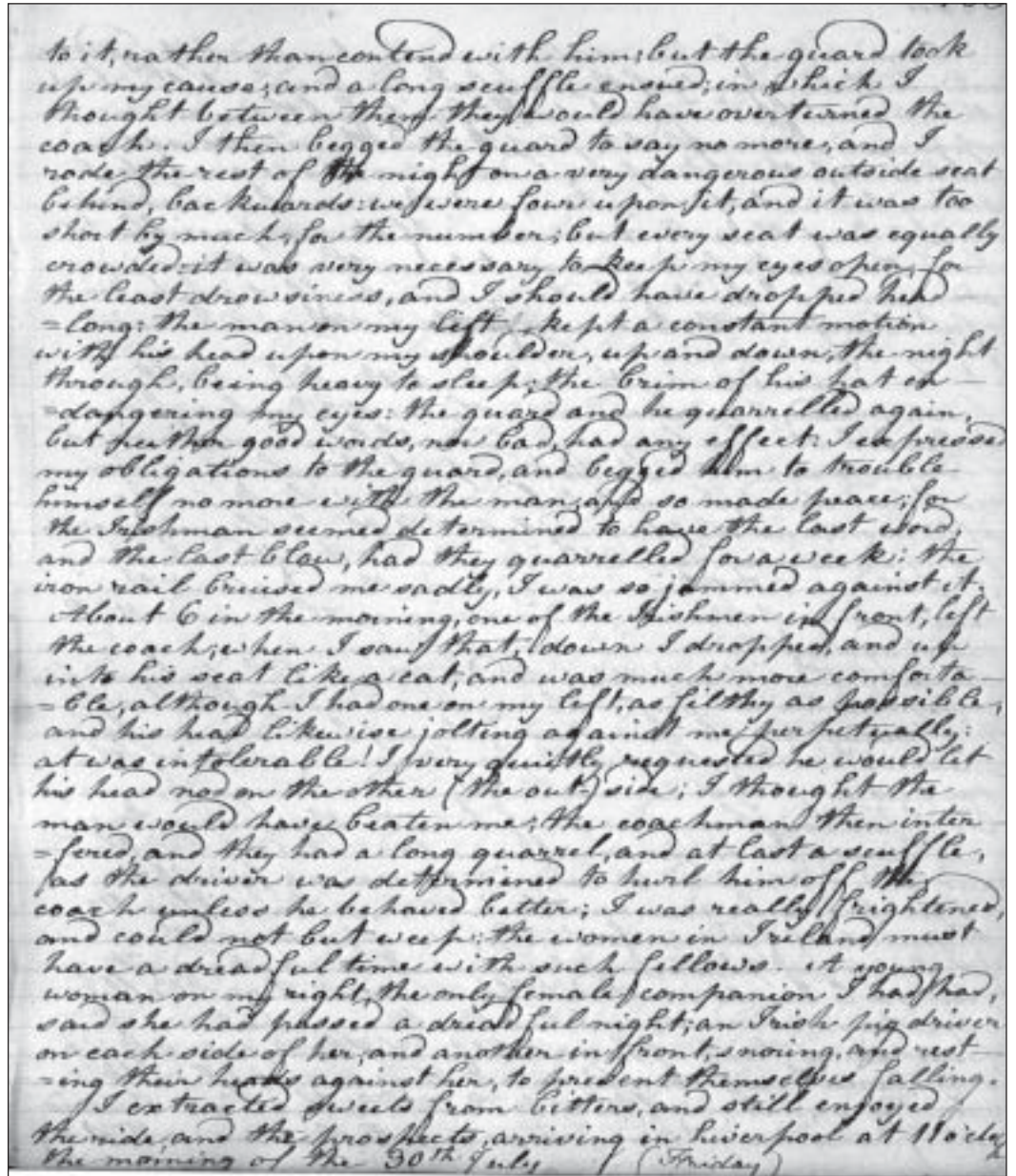
seven volumes is between her 31st and 49th year. Each letter contains an average of 1,700 words, legibly written, and the time involved for composition and subsequent copying, in her own estimation, is five hours.

As the late historian J.J. Bagley stated in his new introduction in the 1969 edition of *Miss Weeton's Journal of a Governess*: "All who are interested in England in the early 19th century, and all who like to encounter exceptional personalities must count it a most fortunate day in 1925 when so energetic and determined an enthusiast as Edward Hall lighted upon the first-discovered of these letter-books and so quickly realised its worth."

**Expressed concern**

At this point it should perhaps be noted that as far back as 1810 Miss Weeton had expressed concern for the future security of her writings: "I have spoken too freely of most of them, or their near connexions, and to whom I can bequeath them at death, I know not."

There was, however, one man, an intimate and highly respected friend of Miss Weeton, Rev. William Marshall (1792-1861), of whom from his institution as a minister of Hope Independent Chapel, Wigan, in the year 1822, not one word did she pen about him which was likely to jeopardise the future security of her volumes. It was to him, as her will confirms, that she bequeathed her **nine** copy-letter volumes, of which only three, numbers 2, 3 and 7, are extant.



A sample page of Ellen Weeton's handwriting from her autobiographical journal, entitled 'History of the Life of N. Stock, 1824'. This page records part of her return stagecoach journey from London to Liverpool in July 1824, and refers to six Irish pig drovers who joined the coach at Birmingham and then "selfishly and rudely usurped" her seat on top.

According to her will a further two volumes – nos. 8 and 9 – were completed, about which we have no knowledge or dates and which now, like volumes 1, 4, 5 and 6 are unlikely to come to light.

And her reason for writing: "My only reasons for undertaking such a piece of work is, that it has been a great amusement during many a solitary hour; when I had no other employ, when I should only have been engaged in some fine, tedious piece of needlework or other."

I end this series of ten articles on Ellen Weeton in the way, I believe, she would heartily approve. Frequent references to God, often in verse, are scattered throughout her writings, although these, perhaps for sound commercial reasons, are largely edited out of the book. Two such verses were written together in her Journal, when she was 48 years old, in 1824. The first verse is attributed to 'Watts' (Dr. Isaac Watts (1674-1748) was a dissenting Independent minister and prolific hymn writer), for whom she clearly had great respect. The second

verse, simply signed 'N.S.' (Nelly Stock), is a fitting epitaph by her own hand:

**Then dearest Lord in thy  
 embrace,  
 Let me resign my fleeting  
 breath;  
 And with a smile upon my  
 face,  
 Pass the important hour of  
 death.**

*Watts*

**And when to judgement  
 though shalt come,  
 O may I in thy likeness rise!  
 And guardian angels bear  
 me home  
 To holier mansions in the  
 skies.**

*N.S.*

# The Ghost of Christmas Past

OH, HOW I hate the dark nights, don't you? But it wasn't always so. Once they held a certain magic which I can still feel if I journey back to carefree childhood days – to misty autumn teatimes when a casual comment of “Ee, t' nights are drawin' in now' brought a tingle of excitement and the joyful anticipation of winter activities, such as penny-for-the-guy, Silcock's Fair on the spare land, carol-singing in cobbled streets where houses with lit-up “Avon calling” doorbells were prime targets in illicit games of “ring and run”.

And of course Christmas – the jewel in the winter's crown. It started as school finished, with the end-of-term party to which we had to take our own plate and bowl with our name on. We tucked into sandwiches and jelly, and drank lemonade through paper straws that went soggy long before the lemonade was finished, then played games in the hall, feeling importantly different in our best clothes, before going to our silent classroom to collect hand-made wobbly gifts for our mums. Then prayers – “hands together and eyes closed” – and out into the December darkness, still wearing our paper hats, to little terraced homes long, long demolished, wherein lay safety and where Christmas preparations brought simpler pleasures than they do today.

Out would come the dusty old tree and the old glass baubles, kept in a shoe-box and brought out year after year, some shabby, some chipped, but all dear, familiar friends, joyfully greeted and lovingly hung on sparse branches as if they were the crown jewels! Tissue-paper garlands were criss-crossed over the ceiling and oh! that magic moment when the final decoration unfolded into a rainbow-coloured, honeycombed paper bell that hung in the centre of the room, twisting this way and that in the draughts that whistled through keyholes and

Dear Mr. Gillies,

I have just read the latest *Past Forward*. I am far too impatient to wait for it and I wear a groove in the History Shop doorstep when it is due out!

Mr. Gillies, what can I say? It sounds such a cliché to say, “each issue is better than the last”, but it is! It goes from strength to strength and has given us ordinary people a chance to write and to share memories, especially your older contributors – some in their 90's – whose fascinating stories have painted pictures for us comparative “youngsters” of a Wigan we have never seen, and which may, in time, have been lost forever but for *Past Forward*. Future generations will find them undoubtedly more interesting than facts and figures in a history text-book.

It was such a thrill to see my article “Yesterday in the Park”, in issue 27.

I enclose an article about Christmas which I hope you might consider suitable for the winter issue, but as more and more people are contributing – which is wonderful! – I do realise the problem you face finding space. I know I speak for us all – your readers and contributors, who are almost like family now when I say a heartfelt “thankyou” for *Past Forward* – you really have created something wonderful, you know!

Irene Roberts  
Abram  
Nr Wigan

under doors, bringing earaches and stiff necks. Mum dosed all ailments with “junior aspirin” and bottles of Lucozade in crackly yellow cellophane, bought from the corner-shop where, one unforgettable Christmas, she won the hamper-affle, and our excitement knew no bounds!

## Aunty Mary's present

Christmas Eve! – the shopping done at the Co-op and Ben Turner's butchers, the letter carrying a child's hopes and dreams sent up the chimney, and mum peeling carrots and turnips in front of the telly, watching “Dixon of Dock Green”. “Goodnight all!” said Sergeant Dixon, and up the stairs we went on the most magical night of the year, with “duckstones” heated in the oven and encased in old socks to warm our icy beds, and next morning, Jack Frost would have painted beautiful leaves and ferns on the bedroom window. Downstairs, dad has propped the spade up in the grate and was holding a sheet of the “*Evening Post and*

*Chronicle*” over it to help the fire to “draw”, and in a pillowcase, tantalising parcels held new toys, silently waiting for a little girl to bring them to life. A trembling tearing of paper revealed a toy Post Office – I always got a Post Office, didn't you? – with cardboard money and pretend postal-orders, or a Sweet-shop with tiny scales and minute jars of sweets. Oh look! – a sewing-box with coloured cottons, scissors and a pincushion. There's a Compendium of Games, a Bunty Annual, a torch whose beam changes colour, and a “Magic Painting Book”, then – joy! Aunty Mary's present!

Aunty Mary! – a smile that could light up a room, and cotton from the mill in her hair. I was grown up when I discovered the terrible life she had endured – browbeaten and bullied by a lazy, arrogant husband; such things were kept hushed from a child. Her present was always an Oxo-tin or a Chocolate-box containing a little hanky – not new, but one of her own, lovingly washed and pressed just for

me – an old lipstick to play “dressing up” with, a comb, a tiny bottle containing a drop of scent, a pencil and a sixpence. She had no money to spend, but somehow, “Aunty Mary's Present” brought its own special magic.

## Endless patience

My own parents were far from well-off, and year after year I asked for a “Petite” typewriter for Christmas. “We'll see” they said, but I never got one. The typewriter I did get didn't have a keyboard – it had a wheel which you turned to the letter you wanted and pressed – but not for the world would I have shown my disappointment; they had done their best, but my coveted “Petite” was beyond their means. But something my parents had in abundance was endless patience to play “shops” on Christmas afternoon, when dad smoked his Christmas cigar or a pipeful of his “special aromatic” tobacco – why do you never see men smoking pipes now? That fragrance spells “Christmas” for me to this day.

Years passed and the time came when my own children awoke to Christmas Day in an age when children did get what they asked for but no longer knew how to play, until one Christmas when my daughter got the “must have” toy of that year – a “my little pony stable” which she duly admired for a whole five minutes before she got out the scissors and glue and began “making one” out of the box it had come in! “That thing cost an arm and a leg!” yelled her dad, pointing at the ornate abandoned pink plastic stable standing forlornly amidst discarded wrapping paper. “What on earth is she doing?!”

“Playing!” I said, and she hummed quietly to herself as she plied paste-brush and paint, and a family of little ponies looked on admiringly at their new home.

Irene Roberts

‘Get Younger here’ . . .

# Market Hotel, Wigan, 1931-1976

Dear Sir,

YOUR many excellent articles on various aspects of social life in Wigan in the 20th century have prompted me to write about one very important part of the Wigan scene, namely the public house or, as it is more commonly known, t’pub.

Born and bred in Mesnes Street (you can’t get more central Wigan than that), and the son and grandson of the licensees of the Market Hotel for nearly 46 years (1931-1976), I feel I may be one of a few who have experienced at first hand, all that went into keeping a ‘pub’ in the centre of Wigan.

In my opinion there are four essential features that make a pub special and I believe the Market Hotel had them all.

## 1. The Environment

Situated in the centre of the town, adjacent to the old Market Square and Bus Station (convenient for all except the customer who left the Market Hotel to take the single decker to Shevington and finished up in the all night coach to London with the first stop Birmingham!) and back-to-back with the Park Hotel, the Market Hotel began its existence as a coaching inn, providing stabling for the market traders. With the demise of horses the garage was always known as the stables because it retained most of the features associated with its original use. These included a cobbled floor, hayracks and a loft above which was loaned out to Warburtons the Furnishers as a

renovation and restoration room. The whole complex had a unique atmosphere and was a place of welcome to all.

## 2. The Product

Initially the Market Hotel sold Younger’s beers and, after an amalgamation, Scottish Brewers beers. What an incredible range of dark and light ales! How many Wiganers can remember Younger’s No. 3, I.P.A., Double Century, King of Ales, Tartan, Newcastle Brown and the legendary Younger’s No. 1? No.1 was a dark beer of exceptional strength, hence the reason it was usually consumed in ‘gills’ (1/4 pint) and, as I recall, cost 3s. 10d. (about 19p) a pint in 1960. My father only purchased it in firkins (9 gallon barrels) because it was so expensive. What would it cost now?

There was, of course, one exception to drinking No. 1 in gills and that was a certain gentleman who, from his seat in the ‘Gentlemen Only’ room consumed 5 to 6 pints every night! The stories about his journeys home to Newtown are legendary and are still recalled wherever Wigan drinkers meet! The Market also had a brew of its own. This was known as ‘Bright Eye’. It was a mixture of 2 light beers.

## 3. The Clientele

This was an incredible, cosmopolitan mixture of every strand of Wigan society. Most were the ‘salt of the earth’. The Market was an old fashioned pub with many separate rooms, none of the modern, open-plan design. Because of this you could range from a room containing the Town Clerk and his entourage, through the News room with a group led by a retired R.S.M. of the Guards, past the two lounges which, in the 1950’s and ‘60s, would act as Labour Exchanges for the many itinerant Irish construction workers employed



*The Market Hotel, Mesnes Street, Wigan (c.1950). For many years it was the venue for a “cosmopolitan mixture of every strand of Wigan society.”*



firstly in open cast coal mining and then motorway construction, through the Gentlemen Only room (would this be allowed today?) with its wonderful mixture of wholesale and retail market traders, finally finishing up in the Vault in the company of Micky Dalton, Granville, Clapper and Gordon the wholesale fruit porter. All these mentioned were legendary characters in Wigan's past.

The Market Hotel was a meeting place for many organisations. The Old England Club, The Burma Star Association, Manchester Regiment and Comrades, The R.A.F. Association, Wigan Hockey Club, Wigan Rugby Union Club and The Magic Circle, to name but a few. Members of the Amalgamated Engineers Union would call into the Market every Friday night to pay their Union subscriptions. The one meeting that for many weeks would cause me the greatest mystery was the Wigan Mountaineering Club. I would see them all arrive and go upstairs but seldom saw many leave until the answer was revealed – they were abseiling from the upstairs window!

The Market Hotel was as busy at lunchtime as some pubs could only wish for on a Friday night. The employees of Great Universal Stores, based in Rylands Mill, would use it as their canteen and on market day it would be full of farmers. The lunchtime trade would also include the many shoppers from out of town (Leigh, St. Helens, Warrington) who would come to Wigan to shop. What would the retailers of Wigan give now for that volume of custom?

#### 4. The Licensee

In this case, Colin Cook, a man who loved his job, his place of work and most of all his customers, the perfect role model for any pub landlord. The Market Hotel opened at lunchtime and evening time, seven days a week, every week of the year. Apart from his annual holiday and his one night a week off, Colin would be at the pumps. One of his many skills, which I often observed, would be his ability to get two complete strangers, who had usually just called in for one drink, engaged in conversation and then proceeding to buy each other one or more drinks whilst Colin would move on to two more unsuspecting customers!



*Colin Cook, Licensee of the Market Hotel.*

Perhaps the changing face of the Wigan pub scene is best illustrated to me when I go into Wigan at noon on a Sunday. The town centre is dead; the desecrated King Street (the new pub scene) with its accompanying vandalism is plain for all to see. Yet 40 years ago Sunday lunchtime, initially noon to 2 pm then 12.30 to 2.30 pm (to fall in line with other local authorities) was a time of good humour. Wigan men would don a suit, collar and tie and clean shoes, and go for a pint before their traditional Sunday lunch. One little known fact was that Colin always insisted on having freshly tapped ale in all pumps at Sunday lunchtime. You could certainly guarantee the quality of your pint.

One other noticeable feature of modern town centre pubs is the need to employ security staff to keep unwelcome drinkers out. In the past, it was the opposite – you would endeavour to keep customers in. Wigan had an exceptional group of policemen and women who kept the town centre safe, and Colin would never close the gates into the pub yard until bedtime. Many Wigan Bobbies would call for a glass of lemonade and one of the Market's meat and potato pies smothered in gravy. The recipe for this gravy was a guarded secret, and may I take this opportunity to quash one local myth; the gravy did not double up as chicken soup – it was oxtail!!

L.M. Cook  
Standish  
Wigan

## STOP PRESS

### George Lyon *Up Holland Highwayman?*

Just in time for Christmas! Dr. Allan Miller's latest book is about George Lyon, who was executed at Lancaster in 1815, aged 54 years. The village of Up Holland, near Wigan, is synonymous with Lyon and some details about him are recorded in the letters and journals of Ellen Weeton.

Watched by a crowd of thousands, Lyon, together with two accomplices, was "turned off" by 'Owd Ned' Barlow, hangman at Lancaster Castle. After the execution Lyon's body was handed over to the landlord of The Old Dog Inn, Up Holland. His burial, in the parish churchyard of Up Holland the following day, was 'amidst a concourse of several thousand spectators'.

The book explores the cult of George Lyon and his legendary status as a highwayman and Robin Hood figure. But the real George Lyon was responsible for a great number of serious crimes. As a young man he was sentenced to transportation, and on his return continued his life of crime for another 30 years.

*George Lyon, Up Holland Highwayman?* Dr. Allan Miller. Published by European Library, price £9.95 including postage and packing (U.K. only). Available direct from the author at 8 Holgate Drive, Orrell, Wigan WN5 8SL. Tel: (01695) 625370. (Cheques payable to Dr. A. Miller). All author's proceeds donated to local churches and Cancer Relief.

From all at  
Wigan Heritage  
Service  
to all readers of  
Past Forward  
a Happy Christmas  
and a  
Prosperous New Year



# AWAY THE LADS

*Mr. Stanley Morgan of Church Stretton, Shropshire, has kindly sent in this delightfully evocative account of the Leigh Parish Church Scouts summer camp at Filey, Yorkshire, 1934.*

## Saturday July 7th

Everybody eagerly looking forward to Camp, Camp the best holiday possible. Skipper and four others left Leigh in car at 7.20 a.m. making a fine beginning. Everybody wondered who would get there first. The rest of us in high spirits left Leigh at 8.30 a.m. in a corridor train.

We had a very interesting journey, especially those boys who had not been that way before. The following are some times taken on the way. We left Leigh 8.30 a.m., arriving at the entrance to the Pennine Tunnel at 9.45, and passed through in 9 minutes according to one of the scout's watch. We passed straight through Huddersfield, and stopped at Dewsbury, leaving there at 10.20 a.m. We then went straight through without stop to Filey, arriving there at 1.15 p.m. We arrived at Camp at 1.30 p.m., being met halfway there by the Skipper, whom we found had arrived three-quarters of an hour before us.

Tea was ready by 3.30 p.m., and it was declared the best ever tasted in the camp life of Troop. A party went to Filey for accessories, after which Skipper tried his hand at paddling. Bed was greatly called for by some, and after supper, Flag Down and prayers we all retired for a peaceful night's rest.

## Sunday July 8th

Skipper and Rovers got up at 7 a.m., and went down

## SCOUTS AND ROVERS PRESENT

Rev. W. King	- Group Scout Master & Rover Scout Leader	S. Morgan	- Scout
W. Riley	- Quarter Master	D. Ellis	- Scout
R. Wilson	- Quarter Master	J. Johnson	- Scout
H.H. Axon	- Camp Scribe	J. Hilton	- Scout
S. Wossick	- Rover	N. Tunley	- Scout
H. Foster	- Rover	H. Watson	- Scout
C. Seddon	- Patrol Leader	N. Hayes	- Scout
T. Penrose	- Patrol Leader	J. Cunliffe	- Scout
J. Langford	- Patrol Leader	W. Parr	- Scout
H. Dainteth	- Patrol Leader	L. Thomasson	- Scout
J. Taylor	- Scout	F. Platt	- Scout
J. Boardman	- Scout	F. Thompson	- P.L. 1st Glazebury
G. Morris	- Scout	J. Starkie	
A. Hughes	- Scout	W. Rigby	

## WEATHER REPORT FOR WEEK

Saturday	- Sunny – hot – stifling.
Sunday	- Sunny until 8.30, after mist until dinner. Rest fine.
Monday	- Sunny & hot. Ground mist at night.
Tuesday	- Sunny & hot. Ground mist at night.
Wednesday	- Sunny & hot. Ground mist at night.
Thursday	- Sunny – dull afternoon – heavy rain and wind at night.
Friday	- Misty – rain – cleared up afternoon and night.
Saturday	- Misty to rain all day.

to the beach for a dip before breakfast. After breakfast we all went to St. Oswald's Church in Filey.

Afterwards we all had a

walk round village, creating a sensation, as I do not think many had seen scouts before. One little girl on the front door step got up and

shouted to her mother "Look mother! Soldiers", for which she was scolded and told that we were Boy Scouts.

Skipper and a party left in car for Hunmanby to hear the Archbishop of York preach. The rest passed, or should I say enjoyed, their time in Filey admiring the beach pyjamas and bathing costumes worn by visitors and girls of Filey. Bad Lads!

## Monday July 9th

Dinner went in fine style, after which most of the younger scouts indulged in sun bathing. They were told they would suffer, but you might as well have talked to a cow or the tent for the notice they took.

After tea Skipper took a party to Scarborough. Here, according to tales told afterward, they enjoyed themselves. They visited a shooting gallery, and found



*18th Leigh Parish Church Scouts (1934) Camp at Filey/Scarborough.*



that it was dearer than at Filey, so promptly walked out, the attendant yelling after them "Rotten Sports!"

The day finished well, but we had a few complaints from the youngsters, such as "Don't touch my back or arms", sunburn again. They were sorry for themselves.

## Tuesday 10th July

Camp roused at 8.15 a.m. by camp horn blown by cooks. Then followed Flag Break, Prayers, Breakfast and Kit Inspection.

Afterwards we went for walks in high spirits. We were told that at 1 p.m. we should have dinner, after which we were going to Flamboro Head. Dinner soon went, practically the fastest dinner in the Camp, and we all left by 2 p.m. for Flamboro.

We took a pack lunch with us, and on arrival we were urged by one of the fishermen to take a sail in a boat around the caves or cliffs. We went after tea. The fisherman took us in what he called the smugglers cave. We estimated it to be 30 feet high, and we were told it was 14 feet deep. The sea was perfectly clear, and the rocks and coloured seaweed could be seen on the bottom. We eventually arrived back at Camp at approximately 8.30 p.m.

Before retiring Skipper gave a demonstration of administering cascara tablets to one of the boys, Tom Penrose. When he eventually got it down, Tom and Skipper retired, but five minutes afterwards Tom came running across field to Skipper's tent wanting to borrow his running pumps. His reason was, "I may



need them tonight, its cold to the feet."

After prayers and Flag Down we retired, calling it a good day. (Actually the best day of the Camp).

## Wednesday 11th July

Skipper found out that some of the lads were a bit constipated, and so purchased a tin of Epsom Salts. Unknown to the Scouts he put into the tea a quantity of same, and after they had drunk it there was a rush. Epsom Salts have never, as far as we know, acted so quickly.

The Rovers had a late pass, and so went to Filey Pictures. W. Rigby sat next to a girl, and eventually got talking to her. He left us, and went out with the girl. When we saw him on the Prom later he gave us this advice; "Don't pick a girl up in the dark." You could have knocked me down with a feather. I couldn't get a word in.

We all returned to Camp at 11.30 p.m. to find that the Scouts had arrived back from Scarborough and had all retired. We paid a visit to Skipper's tent to have a chat, and he gave us a candle. This was lit, and placed on an upturned enamel plate. It was left for not more than half a minute,

and it had vanished, and nobody out of their tents. It could not be found, as nobody or Mr. Nobody had it. When we did get a light in tent we found our pyjama coats tied in knots and our trousers tied round the tent pole. Jack Starkie strived very hard, going red in the face in his endeavour to untie the knots. Quietness eventually prevailed, and the Camp became as the dead, when our flap was lifted, and a little head peeped in (J. Taylor):

"Eh! asleep. I've blacked S. Morgan and myself, will he suspect me?"

Next minute Stanley arrived:

"My face is smarting, have I been blacked?"

"Yes"

"Well I'll black him when I find out."

Then he rushed to the wash place to remove all traces. I don't think he has found out yet who did it. (He will when he reads this!) They both eventually retired, and the Camp fell to rest.

## Friday 13th July

11 of the Scouts left Camp, and did not return until long after dinner. Dinner was made at 1 p.m., and the 18 in Camp participated thereof. Skipper told us that if the others did

not come in by a certain time, we could finish off what was left. This we did, and left half a fig pudding for them. S. Morgan was given the job of telling them that there was no dinner, and their sighs and groans could, I am sure, be heard a mile away. Their faces would have broken all cameras, but it was all their own fault.

After tea Skipper and a party went to the "Grand" in Filey to see pictures, and got a surprise. The Pierrots from the beach were giving a Show, and they came on dressed as a Policeman, Sailor, Soldier and a Scout. The comedian dressed as the Scout had not a scout hat, so he came down into the audience and asked one of the Scouts to complete his outfit. The comedian started to call and insult Scouts, and the result was pandemonium. Skipper stood up, and waved a mac on his stick, with his Scout hat perched on the top.

## Saturday 14th July

Camp roused at 7.30 a.m. by Cooks, who prepared breakfast. Next came Prayers and Flag Break, then Kit Inspection. Cooks were put on preparing dinner. The rest packed Kit, for this was the day of sorrow; we were leaving.

Four Scouts left for Leigh in Skipper's car at 3.20 p.m. The rest left at 3.45 p.m. to get to the Station for the 4.31 train to Leigh. The train arrived 10 minutes late.

The journey went very well, and we arrived in Leigh at 9.05 p.m. Back to the old home town, after having had a most enjoyable Camp and a fine time.

**H.H. Axon**  
**Camp Scribe**

# HISTORY SHOP NEWS

## Exhibitions in the History Shop

ONCE again it has been a busy summer at the History Shop. After the double show of **Open All Hours** and **Mesnes Park** we were expecting to squeeze in a show related to the Wigan Arts Festival. As it turned out we were very grateful not to get a show from the organisers this year, and to run the above show directly into the annual exhibition from Wigan Photographic Society.

The Society's Annual Show was once again an excellent production. As usual the quality was very high, although the sheer number of prints achieved ensured that to participate in the voting for the best print of the show competition time counted in hours not minutes was required.

It has now become something of a tradition at the History Shop for the WPS exhibition to be followed directly by the Atherton and District Amateur Photographic Society annual show. The contrast in terms of the density of the hanging was indeed very great, but not in terms of the quality or interest of the prints.

Both shows were very well received and we would like to extend our congratulations to both societies for another good year's work. If you would like to find out more about them you can contact the societies at: Wigan - Tom Banks (01257 400036), Atherton - Barry Fairclough (01942 811443).

**Back To Your Roots** is an informative Wigan Heritage Service exhibition on the subject of family history, due to open as we go to print. This is not the first time we have put this display on and indeed the last time in 1998 a number of visitors were noted spending hours studying each panel and making extensive notes. Doubtless they were looking for pointers in the ever more popular pursuit of genealogy - the search for your ancestors - and hopefully they found just that.

The number of people enquiring and doing research continues to grow and so another showing of this exhibition is very welcome. It is also

particularly timely for two reasons. Firstly 2001 was the 200th anniversary of the census. Secondly the end of the year (2 Jan 2002 to be exact) marks the release of the 1901 census. As the national census is only taken every decade and is then kept closed for 100 years, the release of this information is very eagerly awaited by all our researchers.



*The Mayor of Wigan, Cllr. John Hilton, at the Opening of Wigan Photographic Society Annual Exhibition, 17 August.*

**Just to make things clear to all those of you who will be coming in to use the new census. We will be getting it on microfiche for all our areas just as we have for 1891. It will also be available 'on line' from the Public Record Office, hopefully in the History Shop and all libraries in the borough through the Peoples' Network. This is not a free service from the PRO, and to look at any of the entries for the census or get printouts, you will need to purchase pre-paid vouchers.**

Arrangements have not yet been finalised, but these will be available either from various libraries or from the History Shop in Wigan.

The Local History Service at Leigh and the Archives Service searchroom will also have microfiche copies of the census.

## 1861 Census Indexing Project

A special area within the exhibition *Back to your Roots* will be devoted to the census, its anniversary and the release of the



*As a taster for the forthcoming Manchesters exhibition, here is a splendid photograph kindly presented by Tom Heaton of Telford. It shows a band from the Manchester Regiment, based at the Drill Hall, which used to be in Greenhough Street, opposite St. John's Church. Tom's wife's grandfather, Richard (Dick) Ormesher, is seated second from left. He served in the Regiment from 1903 until 1908, and later worked for some time as an engineer at Walker Brothers in Frog Lane; he lived all his life in the Gidlow Lane area of Wigan. The drummer is Tommy Hogg; his drum is inscribed with the name of the regiment and the historic campaigns in which it took part.*

# HISTORY SHOP NEWS

1901 information. This area will also house a microfilm workstation for the Friends of Wigan Heritage Service census-indexing project. Starting with the indexing of the 1861 census for the borough, the Friends are providing the manpower and the impetus to create new census indexes to make family history searching quicker and easier in the future. For more details about this project and how to get involved see the Friends section on this page.

## 5th Manchesters

Thanks to your responses to our appeal for information on the 5th Manchester's during the Second World War and beyond, we have had a slight change of plan. We had scheduled an exhibition on this topic for November/December this year. With so much additional information to look at we have decided to put this back to May/June of next year. The Manchesters were evacuated from Dunkirk in 1940 (26 May - 4 June) and earlier in the First World War fought in the battle of Krithia on 4 June 1915, during the Gallipoli campaign. It would seem appropriate, then, to schedule the exhibition so as to commemorate this. Don't forget, we are still very interested in talking to anyone who has memories of the battalion and particularly any photographs from the Second World War. Please contact Dawn Wadsworth or Philip Butler at the History Shop, and once again a big thank you to all of you who have contacted us already.

## FORTHCOMING EXHIBITIONS

### The History Shop

**Wickham Gallery:**  
*Wigan 2000* - summer 2002.

### Taylor Gallery:

*Back To Your Roots*, a celebration of the Census Bi-Centenary, Oct 2001 - Jan 2002.

*The Holocaust and Recent Genocides*, an exhibition to commemorate Holocaust Memorial Day, Jan - Feb 2002.

### The Derby Room Leigh

*Open All Hours* - food retailing and shopping over the years, Dec 2001.

## Friends of Wigan Heritage Service

THE Friends organisation has now settled down into a regular pattern of meetings with a core group of members attending. As was stated last time Max Finney has very kindly stepped forward to act as the first Chair of the group and officiated at the last meeting on 15 September. At this meeting the familiar topics of voluntary Friends work projects, such as census indexing and map sorting and listing, and contributions to *Past Forward*, were discussed, as well as ideas on photographs and oral history recording.

The next meeting is on 8 December at 1pm and all Friends are welcome. Do please try to let us know if you intend to come along so that we get some idea of numbers. We should be discussing the possibility of Friends getting involved in research and Friends helping in other areas of the Service, such as local history in Leigh and the Archives.

As a member you of course continue to get your priority mailing of this magazine, but we now run the subscriptions for a full year (three issues) from your last instruction, so keep your membership up to date to ensure your copy.

To become a Friend or renew your subscription please send a cheque for £5, payable to Wigan Council, to the History Shop (See the coupon below)

### 1861 Census Indexing Project

The big news for the Friends is that the first of the work projects has got underway. In conjunction with an

exhibition in the Taylor Gallery at the History Shop, to commemorate the bi-centenary of the census and the release in January of the 1901 record, we are undertaking a census indexing project for the whole of the borough. Starting with the 1861, census projects like these soon build up into invaluable resources for the local and family historian alike.

We need your help. It will have to be in person at the History Shop in Wigan. You will need to be able to spare us regular time, say a morning or an afternoon each week. You will also need to be or become familiar with the census, and be able to record information accurately. If all goes to plan we are hoping that members of the Friends group will take full responsibility for the project, including its planning, the rota of volunteers to undertake the work and the quality control and checking of the final index.

If you would like to find out more or get involved, contact our enquiry desk first on 01942 828020 and we will give you the name of the Friend to speak to.

We are hoping that the census project will grow from just the 1861 into all the other years, including in the New Year the 1901. We will supply the reading machine and of course the all important microfilms.

Coming up in the future could be work projects on maps, photographs and even research that could form the basis of exhibitions. If you as Friends are keen then we will find the work.

## FRIENDS OF WIGAN HERITAGE SERVICE

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Interests .....

.....

**Please enclose £5 subscription for one year's membership.** Cheque/P.O. payable to Wigan Council. Please return to the History Shop, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU.

Remember your subscription entitles you to a priority mailing of *Past Forward* three times a year, starting with the current issue unless you request otherwise.

N.B. If you do not wish to cut this coupon out, a cheque along with your details on plain paper is fine.

# ASPULL - THE STO



EVA BARKER, whose article on her father, Arthur Turner, appeared in *Past Forward* 18, is currently preparing a book entitled *Aspull - The Story of a Village*. The book is based on conversations with older members of the community of Aspull, some of whom have also written their reminiscences; these are linked with local photographs.

The cover for the new book has been designed by local artist, and very good friend of the Heritage Service, Gerald Rickards. It is in similar style to some of his larger scale work, such as his splendid mural in the History Shop and triptychs for the Standish Forum. Gerald was born in Aspull, where he attended school, was a member of the first scout group and even had a short spell as a choir boy before becoming a server and crucifer at St. Elizabeth's church, where his father had been

vicar's warden and his mother a long serving member of the Mothers' Union.

Gerald writes, "*I apologise for any omissions in my selection of items, as I have inevitably been influenced by personal memories. I have included, for example, several of the farms which I first visited in my father's lorry, and still remember many of the people who lived and worked there. I have walked around the village and found many places which have changed very little over the last 60 years or more. The wall at the back of the school, for example, is still there, where I clambered over with the rest of the scout troop when the American Liberator crashed in the field off Hall Lane in 1943 [see *Past Forward* 27, p14]. Parts of the moor land are still to be seen, where jackets were put down for goal posts and sticks erected when wickets were not at hand.*"

*However, t  
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# DRY OF A VILLAGE

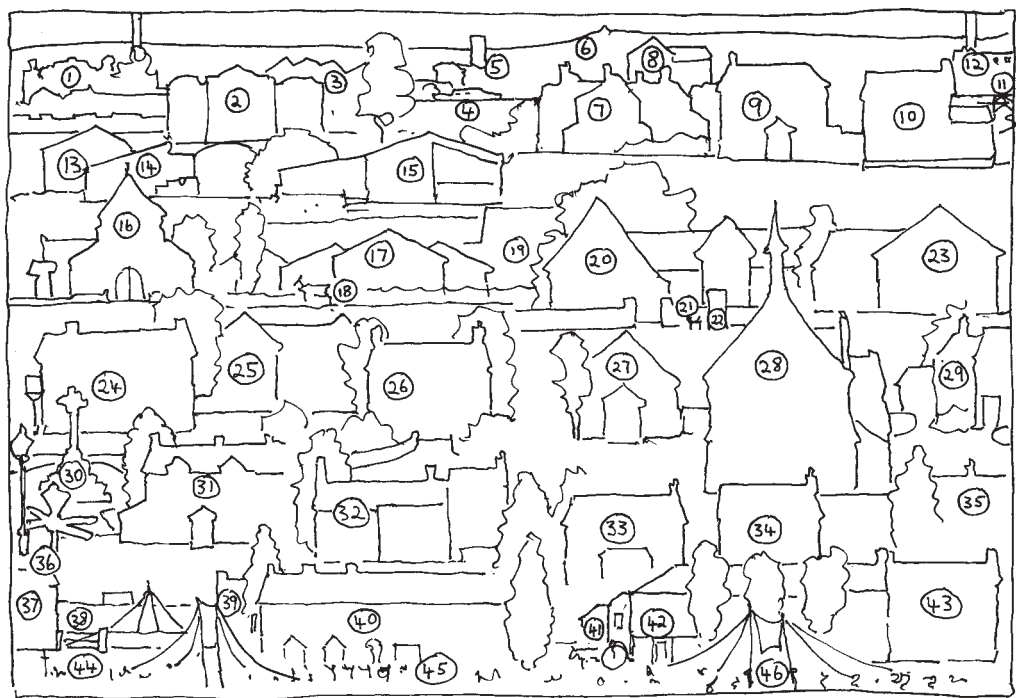


1. Crawford Pit, long since demolished.
2. Hindley Hall, now Hindley Golf Club, once the home of the Leigh Pemberton family.
3. Spoil heaps, which have now been removed or landscaped.
4. Canal barge, near bridge and public house at Top Lock.
5. Air shaft for former Number Five Pit, near junction of Haigh Road and Ratcliffe Road.
6. Rivington Pike and Pennine skyline.
7. Ainscow's Farm at the junction of Hall Lane and Bolton Road.
8. Dicconson Lane Methodist Chapel, supported for many years by families from Lower Gulleit.
9. Former Council Offices on Stanley Road. Still used by the Local Authority.
10. Queen's Head public house near the 'Finger Post'.
11. Foot bridge in Borsdane Wood.
12. Dicconson Mill cotton factory and chimney.
13. Village Club.
14. Surgery.
15. Library, near junction of Haigh Road and Scot Lane.
16. Our Lady's Roman Catholic Church.
17. Anglican and Methodist Junior School, opened by Sir Robert Leigh Pemberton, chairman of the Bank of England, in 1992.
18. Life size model of a cow outside the school.
19. Moorgate Inn in Scot Lane.
20. Parish Hall. Previously St. Elizabeth's School.
21. 'Mog', the family cat, who appears in a few selected paintings, drawings and murals.
22. More recent style telephone kiosk.
23. Methodist Chapel on Wigan Road which replaced the nearby building in 1991.
24. Running Horses Hotel.
25. Pennington Hall Farm on Pennington Green.
26. Attractive sixteenth century stone built Gidlow Hall Farm, with moat.
27. House, once a chapel on Bolton Road. Past tenants include the late Roger Stott, MP.
28. West end of St. Elizabeth's Church as seen from Hall Lane.
29. Vicarage across the road from the church.
30. War Memorial at the Finger Post.
31. Nearby Lucas Nook Farm, which used to have a butcher's shop alongside.
32. Bell Cottages in Hall Lane.
33. Bradshaw House Farm.
34. House adjoining Bradshaw Hall Farm, overlooking field in Hall Lane where American Liberator bomber crashed during World War II.
35. Higham family house on Bolton Road - Harold was for many years verger at St. Elizabeth's Church, printer of church magazine and agent for funeral directors Middleton and Wood - as indicated on plaque alongside the front door.
36. 19th century lamps and signs at Finger Post.
37. House opposite junction of Hall Lane with Bolton Road.
38. Gate leading to field, once used by village soccer team, pupils on a Friday afternoon and for the annual 'field treat' on the Saturday before the Sunday 'Walking Day', with races, stalls, maypole, horse rides, brass band and dancing.
39. The only remaining house in Simm's Yard.
40. Houses on Bolton Road.
41. Stable where Clifford Woods used to take his horse when the weather was unsuitable for it to be left on the field opposite the church - the horse (Prince?) was harnessed to his fruit cart six days each week and used one day a year for rides at the 'field treat'.
42. Village shop at the corner of Ashworth Street. The penny farthing bicycle was discovered in the network of cellars when they were opened up in 1939 to be used as air raid shelters.
43. The Hare and Hounds Public House, across the road from the old school building.
44. Traditional 'walking day' procession with banners, choir, church societies and scouts.
45. Brass band, always an important part of the 'walking day' procession.
46. Banner made by parishioners around 1950, to replace one damaged by strong winds.

There are new houses where it was and follow it' when the ball went into follow it' part had to be put on hold if or Billy Rutter were around at the view towards Rivington has no doubt y less pollution and the removal of

ted that Gerald has kindly given his a preview of his latest work to be ere in Past Forward - even if the our does not do it full justice. I am ghted that he has agreed to produce a f work for each area of the Borough. ed to be the subject for the next issue, eas following over a period of five

uctions will be available for purchase watch out for further details. Ed.



# A TIME LONG AGO

*AS I sit and write in Hertfordshire in 2001, I wonder if I have the ability or the right to look back and remember and record a time of long ago from my 84 years – it is all memory and that can trick you, and paint different pictures. Maybe that is how past and history has always been painted to please, or sometimes fool, someone. I myself have found that the poets paint a truer picture than the historians.*

So I will write of 1920-32 if only to remember these times and those I lived with – John McAndrew (Bro), James Molloy (Skimmer), Tommy Guest, Bill Fairhurst (Fozzy), Jimmy Garny, Levi Bird, Ernie Kidd, James McLoughlin, James Kelly, Tommy and Danny Moran, Billy Saxon, Phil Saxon, Frank Norburn, Frank Wade, Frank Ashcroft and others with brothers and sisters who all lived in Scows, in Wigan.

My memories are particularly of 26 Holland Street, Scholes, (Scows), a two up and two down. Grandma and granddad, three aunties (all mill workers), my sister Molly and I lived there. It was lit by a single gas mantle in the living room, which was heated by a coal fire which was also used for cooking, with an oven on one side and the boiler filled with water at all times, on the other. The bread was baked in the oven, the dough was raised in a large basin by the fire.

Outside was a standpipe which was the water supply. A backyard was shared by six houses, with six closets and middens, one for each house. The closets were

built of brick with a small door to slide the bucket out; inside you sat on a wooden platform with a hole. On the opposite side was the midden for the family refuse. An entry gave access to the night soil men, who would pull out the buckets and carry them to a vehicle on two wheels pulled by a horse to empty them. The refuse was much the same, but shovelled up into barrows, which were wheeled away, dumped into a cart and taken away to the refuse tip.

**G r a n d m o t h e r** Roseanne was of German descent and spoke more of Liverpool and how she met granddad, a big man who walked with two sticks, a cripple from a mining accident he never talked about. He was a member of the “Ancient Order of Buffalos”.

Aunt Maggie was the eldest aunt; she did not talk a lot as she was deaf. Grandma told us that Aunt Maggie was a weaver and a lot of weavers became deaf. Aunt Helen was the middle aunt; she was a ring spinner in the same cotton mill and had also been injured – by a broken drive belt of a spinning machine which had left a scar on her

shoulder near her neck.

Aunt Mary, the youngest, was also a ring spinner, she was marked with a distorted thumb, the first joint of her right hand twisted out of shape after being caught in her machinery. Mary was a reader, and as soon as I was old enough she bought me comics; when I was older, she made me join the Public Library.

## Big man

There was also another person - it must have been when I was 4/5, when my dad first came to the house. He was a big man who seemed to fill the house. One of the first things he did was to tell me how to tell the time from his pocket watch on a silver chain (I still have it). And it was my dad and Aunt Nellie that took me to St. Patrick's Roman Catholic school on the first day. I was five years old.

School meant changes. The first one was getting up in the morning. I now had to have my breakfast with the workers, which meant that I woke with the knocker-up, who went around waking workers up, by knocking on their bedroom windows with a piece of metal on a broomstick and shouting the time and your name. My sister and I usually got up after my aunts had gone to work at 6.30. At 8.30 my sister Molly (who was then seven) and I started for school.

The first day I was given what I thought was

clay and told to play with it. I soon seemed to fit in and started talking and playing. The school was run by priests and nuns and the pupils were largely Irish or Irish decent or mixed as my one was. We, at the age of five, were taught by the priest; this consisted mostly of the duties and rules of the catholic faith. You were also questioned on Monday morning if you had been to mass on the Sunday morning and Benediction in the afternoon and who with. Also with the priest was novice nun who taught us basic writing and sums.

## Noise of clogs

In the morning and afternoon we had a break and went into the playground where we just stood or ran around in groups. One of the games we played was with a stone – you threw it in the air and the one that caught it had to run. When we caught him the game started all over again and the usual fight started, but nothing serious. In all our lives there was one noise – the noise of clogs. Clogs were the footwear of everyone, they were of a wooden sole shod with iron, much like horseshoes, separate heel and sole nailed on, with a leather top nailed round the sole. You slipped your feet in like a shoe and it fastened with a metal clip. The irons wore out in time, so you would then take



them to a clog maker who renewed them. There were dress clogs, fighting and dancing clogs, which were sometimes decorated and expensive.

The school also had a Rugby League team. Its ground was away from the school. Training was on Friday afternoons and matches on Sunday morning.

Many residents of Scholes came from Ireland, who had come over because of hunger and no work. The Irish used to sing of Ireland, and I still remember some of their songs: *The Rose of Tralee*, *The Londonderry Air*, *Phil the Fluters Ball*, *The Mountains of Mourne*, *Delaney's Donkey*, *Master McGrath*.

### Bare-fist fighter

I became friendly with James Molloy, whose father was a bare-fist fighter. James was a year older than me, and nicknamed Skimmer. He was good at all our games – running, Rugby League, and swimming; he also knew all the Irish Rebel songs and would sing them whenever he got the chance at rallies or parties. When the music stopped they would tell stories of Ireland, potato famine and hunger and of friends that had gone to America. When the talk was of their own lives it was of the rebellion in 1916, and the troubles which were still going on in 1926.

Every Whit Monday, each Catholic school would bring out its banners usually kept in church, depicting their saint and other figures. It

was then carried by two men, and from it were streamers, held by girls. It was a great honour to carry the streamers, so the girls had to look good and be the best; if you got picked it meant a new outfit no matter how it was bought, even if it meant pawning dad's suit or his gold watch. These banners were then at the head of each church group of the different orders; they wore different sashes with the name of each order, then the women's order, and then came the people. Each church competed against each other to be the best overall and to beat the Church of England! Then they would march round the town picking up other churches on the way until they arrived at the Market Square, where they sang hymns – hundreds of people with a feeling you can't describe.

### Liver sandwich

At the age of ten, I met Billy Fairhurst – Fozzy he was called. He worked on the Wigan open market at week-ends with James Carney, and said that as they needed another hand at the market, why didn't I give it a try? It meant getting to the market at 6.30 in the morning with them to start work. We had to help to set up stalls, two wheelbarrows on which they would display their goods of vegetables and fruit. These stalls were all round the market hall. On the Market Square were the local farmers who sold potatoes, swedes and cabbages which were delivered on sack barrows. We, the lads, would be

working till eight o'clock, then we would get a mug of tea and a sandwich; one stall-holder always give us liver sandwiches – strange how that still remains in memory.

We could not work all day because we had to go to school. There was an official who went round checking. So at 8.30 we would be off, and at 5 o'clock we were back to help with the selling and re-stocking.

I remember one particular stall, with a small tent behind it, which was opposite our stall; it was run by two men, a father and son, called the Cornelios. Each had a beard and wore a long frock and round hat; they sold bottles of medicine and pots of cream to rub on, to cure strains, aches and anything else you suffered from. The young

one did the talking and selling, while the older one was in the tent where he attended to mostly people's feet; he had all kinds of knives and scissors with which he removed corns, bunions and cut your nails and hard skin, and he also gave massage and told customers how to use the cream and medicine. His son was the one who handled the money and paid us if we did any job for them; they also paid well.

But in 1926, most of the mines were closed and the cotton mills went on a three day week. As no money was being spent, the stallholders no longer needed us. This caused many changes, and indeed marked the end of an era.

Fred Schofield  
26 Shephall View  
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# Rev. Alfred Williams Momerie

(1848-1900)

IN 1878, Leigh had a new curate at St. Mary's Parish Church, an Alfred Williams Momerie. He was born in London on 22 March 1848, the only child of Isaac Vale Mummery, a well-known congregational minister, and his wife Amelia. A descendant of Huguenot refugees, he decided to revert to the original spelling of his surname – Momerie.

He was educated at the City of London School, as well as at Edinburgh and Cambridge Universities. At Edinburgh he won the Horslie Hill and Miller scholarship with the medal and Bruce prize for metaphysics. He graduated with an M.A. in 1875 and a D.Sc. in 1876. After Edinburgh he proceeded to St. John's College at Cambridge where he was admitted in 1875. He graduated with a B.A. in 1878 and an M.A. in 1881. Momerie was ordained deacon in 1878 and priest in 1879, when he became a curate at Leigh Parish Church.

Although his father and grandfather before him had been Congregational ministers, Alfred decided to enter the Church of England, after much soul searching and parental opposition. However, his increasing liberal tendencies brought a certain amount of criticism upon his head.

## Consternation

His arrival in Leigh was met by some consternation, chiefly because of his reluctance in parish visiting. This caused some concern at the vicarage, with the incumbent vicar writing a letter of complaint to the Bishop of Manchester, Dr. Fraser, which prompted many influential residents to protest and express how popular and well thought of he was. Dr. Fraser already knew of Momerie's dislike for this particular aspect of church life, for he had already consulted him on this subject and,



although Dr. Fraser felt parish visiting was an important and necessary aspect of the duties of a priest, he had a high regard for Dr. Momerie and did not let this particular incident influence him.

Yet once installed he did fulfil his duties, for one of his reminiscences of his time in Leigh was when he was sent to visit an old lady who was ill and concerned about her entry into the next life. Trying to put her at ease, he asked her to tell him all about herself to which she, no doubt hedging her bets, told him she has always had a great respect for clergymen. "God", he replied, "anything else?" and she went on to tell him about a large bread oven she had had that reminded her of hell. Dr. Momerie felt extremely sorry for her and for the hell-fire and brimstone faith that had instilled those ideas, for his personal belief was that church gospel was beautiful as well as reasonable and that it should satisfy both the heart and the intellect. Whether he was able to help the old lady is not known, but what is certain is that his honest and original mind made a good impression on many of his congregation, especially the miners and others who appreciated his clear and reasoned thinking. On his part he found the miners an intelligent and earnest body of men who understood

the drift of his teaching better than many of his fashionable hearers.

## Interesting talks

Although his stay in Leigh was not long – a little over a year – he entered fully the social life of the town. He was an early friend of the newly flourishing Leigh Literal Society and was one of its first four Vice Presidents. He gave several interesting talks whilst there, ranging from 'Descartes' to 'Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians'. He also took part in the Cambridge University Extension Programme, giving lectures which confirmed the educational status of Leigh and satisfied in some part the healthy thirst for knowledge. In 1879 he published the first of his books, *Personality, the Beginning and End of Metaphysics*. Many more followed, including books and collections of sermons on Christian philosophy.

The following year, he left Leigh. In his farewell sermon he told his congregation, "I shall always be glad that I came to Leigh". He also spoke of making friends whom he hoped to retain for life. He did indeed return to Leigh occasionally to give further lectures in the University Extension scheme.

Upon returning to London, he took up his new appointment as Professor of Logic and Metaphysics at Kings College London, and in 1885 was chosen to be Morning Preacher at the Foundling Hospital. He was a popular preacher, clear and direct in his rhetoric and stimulating to his hearers. An essentially optimistic man, Dr. Momerie believed there was probably more unsuspected good doing in the world than bad. He had a keen sense of the goodness and humour of life, he enjoyed a good story and a good cigar, he never underestimated the ordinary pleasures of life. Yet he was at heart a man who kept his intimate self closely hidden, despite feeling compelled to speak out for his inner convictions.

Upon his resignation from Kings College, after disagreements with members, he decided to travel. In 1893 he visited Canada and America. In Chicago he spoke at the Parliament of Religions which had invited him to





read a paper on his own special subjects. He travelled extensively whilst in the USA, spending many months there and preaching in several states.

### *Combative and buoyant*

In his writings Dr. Momerie reveals something of his combative and buoyant spirit. Speaking of his love for the southern climate and the southern lifestyle of New Orleans he says, "Southern warmth is a pleasant contrast to the fogs of London, they stiffen our muscles and our moral nature at the same time. Taine said that it was impossible for the Saxon to go in for pleasure in their detestable climate, and so they went in for morality, which they are likely to get in their climate." He also remarked that in England his lack of conventionality had been trying to his friends but in America it was an advantage. He mentions the huge amount of food presented at each meal, and says not to order every course is considered a bad reflection on the hotel. This observation he used as an opportunity to tell a humorous story, indeed he seldom missed such an opportunity. "A traveller who was dining at one of these hotels asked what pudding there was. The waiter said, 'apple pie, pumpkin pie, stewed peaches and custard'. 'I'll have apple pie, pumpkin pie, and stewed peaches', replied the visitor. 'What's wrong with the custard?' queried the waiter anxiously." Dr. Momerie enjoyed this joke very much and no doubt it became part of his repertoire. He repeated it to an American lady; she stared at him wonderingly for a while and then asked with concern, "What was the matter with the custard?" On American children, he stated that they are not young, but they get younger as they grow older.

On his return to London in 1896 Dr. Momerie married Ada Louise Herne, the widow of Charles E. Herne who had been art tutor to the daughters of King Edward and Queen Alexandra.

Throughout the last few years of his life, Dr. Momerie was without a church to preach in, so he hired, with the Bishop of London's approval, the Portman Rooms and bore all the expenses himself whilst waiting for a vacant church or propriety chapel to

fall vacant. It was a heavy financial responsibility but he had never any desire for money and he regularly donated his collection to a charitable fund. Although it was a severe disappointment to him to be without a church it did give him a degree of independence which enabled him to express himself even more freely.

**Kathleen Higgins & Tony Ashcroft**

The following titles can be referred to in Leigh Local History Library

1. Momerie, Velia  
**Dr. Momerie: his life and work** – Blackwood, 1905 – 266p.
2. **Agnosticism: sermons preached in St. Peter's, Cranley Gardens 1883-4** – 2nd ed rev. Blackwood, 1887 – 308p.
3. **The Basis of religion, being an examination of natural religion** – Blackwood, 1883 – 57p.
4. **Belief in God** – 2nd ed – Blackwood, 1888 – 86p
5. **Church and Creed: sermons preached in the Chapel of the Foundling Hospital** – 3rd ed – Blackwood, 1893 – 258p
6. **The Corruption of the Church: an oration delivered at the Prince's Hall on May 25th and July 4th, 1891** – Eglington, 1891 – 50p (includes a biography of Momerie)
7. **Defects of Modern Christianity and the sermons preached in St. Peter's Cranley Gardens, 1881-2** – 3rd ed
8. **Essays on the Bible** – Blackwood 1909 – 146p (Edited by Mrs. Momerie)
9. **Immortality** – Allenson, 1904 – 120p. Bound volume also includes; **Belief in God** (86p) and **Theological Essays** by F. D. Maurice.
10. **Inspiration and other sermons delivered in the Chapel of the foundling hospital** – Blackwood, 1889 – 284p
11. **Modern Scepticism and Modern Faith** – Blackwood, 1910 – 136p (Edited by Mrs. Momerie)
12. **The Origin of Evil and Other Sermons** – Blackwood, 1879 – 244p
13. **Personality: the beginning and end of metaphysics and a necessary assumption in all positive philosophy** – Blackwood, 1879 – 119;
14. **Preaching and Hearing and other sermons delivered in the Chapel of the Foundling Hospital** – 3rd ed enl – Blackwood, 1890 – 327p
15. **The Religion of the Future and other essays** – Blackwood, 1893 – 141p

Should anyone have any further information about Dr. Momerie, or would like to peruse any of the above books, please contact Tony Ashcroft, Leigh Local History Officer (Tel: 01942 404559).

## WANTED

As most people will be aware by now, the City of Manchester will be host to the 2002 Commonwealth Games. To celebrate this particular event, Wigan Heritage Service is intending to put on a display in the History Shop to commemorate sporting heroes of the Wigan area, past and present. The focus will be on sports associated with both the Commonwealth and Olympic Games. If anyone has photographs, programmes, mementoes, medals etc. appertaining to sportsmen and women of the area or the clubs they trained with, please could they contact Tony Ashcroft, Local History Officer, Leigh Library (tel: 01942 404559).

## AFGHANISTAN

Today no one can escape the fact that Afghanistan is a country under siege. For those who are interested in this particular country, they may like to know that the following book is available for reference in the History Shop:-

Sale (Lady)

**A Journal of the Disasters in Afghanistan, 1841-2**

J. Murray, 1843 – 451p: 2 maps  
Includes a vocabulary of Persian, Hindoostani and other oriental words used in the book.

Shelf reference EP1140.51

**Tony Ashcroft**  
Local History Officer, Leigh Library

## HINDLEY MONUMENTAL INSCRIPTIONS BOOKLET

A 32pp A5 size booklet has recently been edited and published by Mr. J.A. Hilton, entitled *Monumental Inscriptions of Five Hindley Chapel Graveyards*.

Copies are available direct from J.A. Hilton, 282 Whelley, Wigan, Lancs. WN2 1DA. (Tel: 01942 235681). Price £2.00 each (post free). Cheques should be made payable to 'Mr. J.A. Hilton'

# “Our Clifford”

**As told by Mrs Margaret Young to her nephew, Bill Chaloner, March 2001**

**JANE and Adam had three girls – Jane, Beatty and Lizzie – and a son, Adam, a big stocky man. A hard worker and careful with money, he would walk three miles to save a penny on the bus. When it was his turn to pay for a round of drinks at the Conservative Club, he left! A stern man, but he nevertheless provided well for the family; there was always a very good table in the two-up and two-down Wigan home.**

In those days men and women worked in the pit. Adam worked the cage that brought the miners up and down from the coal-face. Women worked on the coal-face, selecting coal. Bonnets covered their hair and they wore overalls and a sack-apron.

Jane and Beatty worked at the pit but not Lizzie. She was so different from the other two. Jane and Beatty were plain, short and stocky, but Lizzie was beautiful, just like a Dresden doll – tall and slim with pale gold hair. Her hands weren't to be roughened picking coal! She was Adam's favourite, and was to train as a dressmaker and milliner. Lizzie met and fell in love with Joe. She fell pregnant and a marriage was arranged. Adam bought them a small house nearby.

However, there was no domestic side of the marriage – Lizzie was too busy to cook and clean. Meals were non-existent, so Joe spent his evening and nights in the pub opposite. When the baby arrived (a boy Clifford), Lizzie was too frail to care for him, so granddad, grandma and the girls took over. Lizzie's health soon deteriorated – the doctor

said she had TB – and although granddad took her to Blackpool for fresh air it was to no avail. She died aged only 26, leaving a two year old son.

## No more tin baths

Our Clifford soon grew into quite a young man. Granddad decided to buy a bigger house so Clifford could have his own room. He also had a bathroom installed to wash away the coal dust. No more tin baths in front of the fire! Clifford's main job was to take granddad's meal to the pit in a basin wrapped around by a red spotted cloth. The basin was put on the winding engine to keep warm.

Clifford used to sit and gaze into the sky, dreaming about flying. And now he had his own room, he plastered the walls with pictures of aeroplanes. His favourite books were *Flight* and *Aeroplane*.

At school he was top of the class, mathematics being his favourite subject. He wanted to learn to play the piano; a brand new one arrived and lessons were arranged. In fact, his every wish was granted, except for one – **flying**.

When the time came to

leave school to get a job, he had to choose between the cotton mill and the pit; he chose the mill, but his heart was still with flying aeroplanes.

His world fell apart around him when granddad collapsed with a fatal heart-attack. The will was read and each had a legacy, so now it was back to his flying books. In one was a London Flying Club advertisement which he had read many times: “**We Will Teach You to Fly**”. So off he went on the coach. This was a big step, for the only travelling he had undertaken up to now was to Blackpool every year, to the same boarding house.

‘The Herts & Essex Aero Club’ was a fairly big building, with aeroplanes around it. Inside was a cocktail bar and big leather armchairs, not to mention thick carpets. It was so rich-looking he felt like running away! This wasn't for a Lancashire lad, the grandson of a coalminer.

Then a gentleman appeared, tall and elegant, greying at the temples. He studied Clifford – he must have looked like Charlie Chaplin. When he realised what Clifford wanted he said, “Sure son, we will teach you to fly”. A maid appeared to escort Clifford to his room.

## Flying fraternity

He was now a member of an exclusive flying fraternity, meeting with the famous such as Amy Johnson and Jim Mollinson, and the very rich like Mr. Ercolani (founder of the famous ‘Ercol’ furniture). They owned their own

planes, and when they were going up for a flight many would call out “come on Cliffy boy, we are going for a flip”, as they preferred company when flying.

However, this couldn't last. He had soon spent all his legacy, and funds had run out; he had to return home to Wigan.

The only flying he did now was an occasional flight around Blackpool Tower – mostly his time was spent standing on the street corner chatting to his mates. Until a flying club opened in the town!

He didn't waste any time joining. A very pretty young lady signed him in – this young lady, Margaret, was to become his wife! But he needed a job. He began to work as a fitter with the Fairey Aviation Co. in Stockport, building the ‘Fairey Battle’. Promotion came quickly – he soon had his own private office and a secretary. His first car, with an Air Ministry Badge on, enabled him to go anywhere. And he had frequent flights with the Test Pilot.

## War begins.

Then the air raids started. There was a direct hit on the house. What wasn't destroyed was looted. And no insurance cover for that!

Clifford's Pilot's Licence began to burn a hole in his pocket. When he told Lord Austin he was going to volunteer the reply was, “Young man, you're a bloody fool!” After all, he had it made! Petrol and food rationing meant nothing to



him; he wined and dined at the best places, enjoyed a very good salary, and commission for every plane that left the tarmac. Yet he decided to volunteer for the RAF.

Clifford went to train in Canada. His Service pay was a mere pittance compared to the income he had been earning. But he was having a wonderful time – going to America for parties at the “Stage Door Canteen” and meeting film-stars. When he returned, he proudly wore his Sergeants stripes.

### “The Wimpy”

Soon he was air-crew on bombers. His log-book reveals he commenced on the Wellington Medium twin-engined Bomber (affectionately known as “The Wimpy”), then on to the four-engined Heavy, the Shorts ‘Stirling’, before ending up on the heaviest four-engined English Bomber, the Avro ‘Lancaster’. He went on night raids over German railways and ball-bearing factories. Clifford’s crew position alternated between bomb-aimer and navigator. Ironically, he never flew as a pilot – the powers that be said that he was too short!

On one occasion, Clifford was returning from a bombing run over enemy territory. He’d dumped his bombs and was watching the ‘flak’ coming thick and fast. **FIRE!** The flames started on one of the Lancaster’s wings and took hold fast. Jeff Grantham, the Captain, yelled ‘Everybody out!’ and it was every man for himself. In his position as bomb-aimer, Clifford was right near the forward escape hatch, in fact it was right under his feet. He was first out. He landed safely in a cornfield. After burying his parachute he found a ditch to eat his last bar of chocolate and smoke his last “Woodbine”. (He had now joined the “Caterpillar

Club”, reserved for air-crew who had baled out of a crippled aircraft under combat conditions).

After lying low he became hungry; he saw a farm and a woman feeding the chickens. She brought her husband out, and then they all went inside for food. Suddenly the Germans were coming for the milk quota. (The Germans insisted that the farmers hand over most of their milk to help feed the German troops). So Clifford was pushed down a hole, until they had gone. After a night’s sleep in the loft, he was directed to the Catholic Cathedral with some eggs. There his uniform was changed for a pair of trousers, with six turnups (as he was quite a short chap), a blouson and beret. He was now a farm labourer with a hoe, and sent on his way. But as he walked along, a man walking alongside tapped him

on the shoulder and pointed to his shoes. The fluff was showing from his flying-boots! The man motioned him to follow him to a farmhouse, where he received a warm welcome and food and stayed for some time.

### Safe-home

But soon it was time to move on, and he decided to go in the direction of Spain, a neutral country. By now, however, he had eaten his emergency escape map. Before long, still with his hoe, he saw some Germans a little way ahead. What luck - there was a safe-house across the road, signified by the statue of the Virgin Mary in the left-hand corner window. (This was the French Resistance identification for a safe-house, and was never discovered by the Germans).

News soon came that the British were in a village three

miles ahead, so once again he was on his way with his hoe, hoping the British really were there. And there it was! A British motorcycle propped against a wall. Clifford pointed to the people round about and enquired about the driver. They said the driver was inside the Café. He went in and introduced himself, but they didn’t believe this scruffy, unshaven, short man was an Airman! So after something to eat and drink he was placed under guard and told to stay put until the Officer arrived.

Everybody gathered around to hear the news. Clifford was in the crowd. The Officer wanted to know where the telephones were to get in touch with the Authorities and get things moving. Clifford spoke up, saying in a broad Lancashire accent. “Ee, thar’s taken’t

*Continued on page 28*



*The seven man crew beside their Wellington Bomber (affectionately known as ‘The Wimpy’). Clifford Young is third from left.*

# "Our Clifford"

Continued from page 27

time coming, 'asn't thee?" The Officer looked very surprised, saying "Where did you learn your English?" Clifford said, "I am English!" Officer: "Where do you come from?" Clifford: "Wigan, in Lancashire". Officer: "Who was the famous footballer? How many cinemas, dance-halls, theatres? Clifford replied, "As a matter of fact, Sir, I don't come from Wigan, but Hindley ... it's three miles in the direction of Manchester". Officer: "So you'll know Atherton then? Clifford replied, "Yes, my dad came from Atherton!" Officer: "So what's your name?" Clifford: "Cliff Young". Officer: "You're not Joe Young's son are you?" Clifford: "YES!" Officer: Your father is my drinking pal! Bloody hell!

Until then Clifford didn't know anything about his father; he had never met him. When Clifford's mother died his father enlisted in the Army and nothing was heard of him. The family thought he had been killed in action. The Officer said that he would write to his wife to tell Clifford's wife, Margaret, that he was safe and well!

Clifford eventually returned to England with the help of the French Underground. On his return, he and his wife Margaret went to Atherton and enquired of a policeman about Joe's whereabouts. The policeman said, "If you'd asked me that yesterday I wouldn't have been able to tell you. But we had an air-raid last night and a bomb landed where Joe lives. The policeman told Clifford and Margaret about a pub that Joe owned. So they went to that pub and met Clifford's dad, step-mother and half-

brother and sister.

So Clifford and his dad met for the first time!

© Margaret Young

## EPILOGUE

After the war Clifford, Margaret and their only child Norma settled in Hindley, Wigan. Clifford went to work at the de Havilland Aircraft Company in Bolton, and Margaret continued work for the Manchester Cotton Board. After their retirement they lived in Chester. Mrs. Young is now in her eighties, alert and sprightly, and a delight to talk to. Sadly Clifford departed this life on 19 June 1994, having spent most of his leisure time instructing student pilots on the finer points of flying and entertaining the fellow residents in their home complex with his brilliant organ playing. His ashes were strewn over the Lancashire Flying Club Aerodrome.

Rest in Peace, Uncle Cliff - "My Hero".

## Goodbye "V for Victor"

Attached is a first-hand account of Sgt. Clifford Young's dramatic experience of baling out of a burning Lancaster bomber.

I decided not to re-type it, but rather leave it just as Cliff wrote it for two reasons:

1. Cliff's handwriting is very neat and totally legible, and nothing would be gained by re-typing it.

2. There is considerable sentimental value in being able to read Cliff's first-hand account of his terrifying experience in his own handwriting. I feel certain his family and friends would appreciate this. I know I do.

Clifford's description of the events immediately following the attack by an ME110 night-fighter (radar guided) makes for gripping reading. Only Cliff and Jeff Grantham escaped alive. Their five crewmates lie in a French Churchyard. May they rest in peace.

Bill Chaloner

## Goodbye V for Victor

✓ Victor was a Lancaster bomber straight from the manufacturers, it had been with us on 32 operations with one being without mishap.

July 7<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> 1944 returning from a raid on St. Lau - d'Barrent we were hit and shot down by a German night fighter setting the starboard inner engine on fire. Weathering the disaster and applying the fire extinguisher system failed to put out the inferno. From now on it would be every man for himself getting away from the plane the best way you can.

I estimated two minutes would be the most time we had to get clear. By then the wing would fall away or the petrol tanks would blow.

There are certain things you have to do before you jump. Attach your ~~root~~ parachute to your harness, there are two hooks on your harness which clip on two rings on the chute. Next comes attaching your rubber dinghy by a hook to your belt. This is in case you land in water (Drink)

2

Remember the plane is now careering all over the sky, the height is roughly 16,000 feet on fire and you have only 2 minutes (approx) left. So here goes for the descent!

At the time of the incident I was lying in the bomb-aimers compartment after loding the bomb computer and sitting head. Someone shouted "Everybody out." I grabbed the nearest parachute and clipped to my breast straps.

Next to remove the large escape panel on the airframe floor. <sup>unlock</sup> ~~unlock~~ all the catches and waited for it to disappear into the air, it didn't, it opened <sup>only</sup> half-way and stuck to the underside of the aircraft. So I kicked it with both feet and shot through the hatch along with the panel. At this time V (Victor) was a ball of fire.

Having left the aircraft, counted slowly to three (3) I realised I was stood up in suspended animation, it was a queer sensation. Nothing happening, just standing no sensation of dropping to earth at a high rate of knots. It was extremely <sup>cold</sup> on the clouds with lots of rain around.

chew some the time to pull the chord I felt for the chute and the "D" ring which is used to deploy the chute. It wasn't there. Then I realised the straps and chute were above my head. Reaching the D ring in the chute was very difficult as my arms are <sup>rather</sup> short. Managing to get my finger tips on to the D ring I pulled hard, it eventually came away. I decided to keep it as a souvenir but it was freezing so I let it go.

The pilot chute opened with a "blop" then the main chute followed with a loud bellow. The next sensation, ~~was~~ I ~~was~~ thought I was going up again, but this is a "funny illusion" it is really because you are slowing down.

Pathing my ~~sight~~ about me, I opened my eyes fully to see what it was all about. First dismay, I had forgotten my dinghy secondly there was a huge river below flowing <sup>under</sup> the lower I got.

Next thoughts sumo's daff but I was wondering how much back pay I would have if I was made a prisoner of war, after the war was over.

Next comes the dreadful thought of where you are going to land everything apart from the <sup>light</sup> (miscalight beams) is black and only comes into focus later. I wondered where <sup>our</sup> flight engine was, I <sup>had seen</sup> saw a glimpse of him behind me when I left the aircraft.

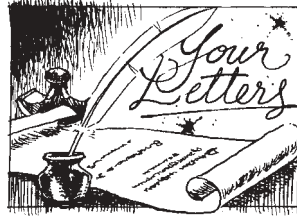
The river <sup>time</sup> by this <sup>was</sup> getting wider and <sup>wide</sup> thoughts of swimming in that river did not please me one bit. I thought of many things most of them selfish wishes, but my past life never, it would have probably frightened me more. It was during my thoughts of how I landed with an unexpected lump, I had misjudged the speed of descent. My knees just bent a little, but I was standing upright with the canopy settling over my head like a tent, right in the middle of a cornfield.

"Allah be praised" I went <sup>apart</sup> <sup>later</sup> and two bars of <sup>chocolate</sup> says chocolate, parachute packed away with the harness in a ditch, I settled down in the ditch for H&S hot before the next move.

I suppose the night fighter pilot who shot us down ~~will~~ ~~be~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ ~~middle~~ ~~of~~ ~~the~~ ~~river~~

By the way when I got my actual location on my rankeschief-escape map, the river was approx 5 miles away.

Cheers



## HAROLD CONNOR

Dear Sir,

Are there any people who might remember Harold Connor of Beech Hill - Lavender Road, I think. He was a Sergeant Gunner in the RAF and was killed in February 1945 in Italy, aged only 24.

He had a brother, Bert, who was killed in a road accident in 1938, when riding his bike in Abram (killed by a drunken doctor who had delivered his daughter Marion only a few months earlier).

His mother Agnes was

a widow. His father, Bert, died of T.B. in the 20's, I think.

I am particularly interested to hear from anyone who was in the RAF with him. I know he had a lot of mates who all "joined up" together.

I would also dearly love to know some more about my paternal grandma - maiden name Mary Ann McLennon - but I expect it was too long ago for anyone to remember. My father's name was John Norman Connor. The family lived in Manchester Road, Wigan. His father had a pub at one time I believe. Mary Ann's husband (my grandfather) was an alcoholic, and the strain of this and six children sent her into a mental hospital before the First World War.

Monica Connor  
2 York Road  
Sale Cheshire

## Bombardier Grimshaw

Dear Alastair,

Whilst going through my late father's effects (Jack Cain) I found a postcard dated July 1945 that he sent to a Bombardier F.W. Grimshaw in Hakodate prison camp Japan. As the name Grimshaw suggests an acquaintance with someone from his formative years in Wigan, rather than Brighton where it was posted, I wonder if relatives of Bombardier Grimshaw (1779992) may read this? Obviously the fact that the card was returned may sadly suggest the soldier died in the camp and I have hesitated in contacting Past

Forward in case it brought back sad memories for his family. Because of the passage of time I have, however, decided to mention the postcard in case a young relative may be keen to possess a memento of the soldier's service - albeit a possibly sad one.

Alastair, I am certain I reflect the sentiments of the growing Past Forward fan club in thanking you for all your tireless efforts. I do hope you are able to discern the pleasure the magazine is bringing to so many, and that this makes the hours you put in worthwhile.

Neil Cain  
26 Sheridan Terrace  
Whitton Avenue West  
Northolt  
Middlesex UB5 4JS

# A Matter of Belief

LOOKING back over one's life it is interesting to find incidents that suddenly spring to life again, bringing with them the original sense of atmosphere.

One such theme for me is spelling, which has played a particularly important part in my life, not only as a child but in the many years of teaching. It is only in the last ten years that I have realised what a misery our English spelling system causes many thousands of children. This was brought sharply into focus by the knowledge that my grandson was dyslexic, and from then onwards the study of spelling disability became the main area of my research.

That, however, is jumping ahead too soon. I should like to take you back 60 years to the time when I was seven and my sister Betty was nine. The school that we attended then, after we moved from Warrington Lane to Swinley Lane, was Marylebone Primary School, just off Wigan Lane. At that time the little road that led to the school had a street name which was spelt "Mariebonne", like the name on the corner of the Post Office.

## Grim-looking

It was quite a change to come to a small country school with only three teachers. Miss Halliday had the back room for all the infants. The large front room was divided into two by a screen. Junior classes 1 and 2 (the 6-8 year olds) were in the left-hand side and the older children were in the other, right-hand side. My teacher was Miss Parker, a very musical lady, while Betty's teacher was Miss Gee, a rather grim-looking person. I was glad that I wasn't in her class!

All the desks in our half of the room faced the wall and we were not allowed to turn round to look at the older children in the other half. Normally, this wasn't a problem, but one memorable day, I heard Miss Gee shout, "I, E, I, E, I, E! – I comes before E, except after C! How do we spell belief?" As she shouted, all her children turned round to see who the victim was. It was my sister! I was even more horrified to see Miss Gee thrust the exercise book which she had

been marking, with a newly sharpened red pencil, towards Betty. She was holding the pencil in her right hand, with the point between her fingers. The sharp point cut a vivid red line across the child's face, as she did so.

## Alarmed

When she saw what had happened, she was alarmed. "Get on with your work!", she said loudly, as she pushed my sister towards the cloakroom, taking the First Aid box with her. When they came back into the room, Betty had a large piece of sticking plaster taped across her cheek. Miss Gee's manner had completely changed. "Sit down dear!" she said, as she sent the monitor to bring a drink of water.

As soon as four o'clock came, we were told to wait for a letter to take home. "Give that to your mother", she said. We walked home as quickly as we could, anxious to know what was in the letter. As a headmaster himself, my father generally took the part of the teachers and trusted their judgement in matters of discipline. Over this incident, however, he was very put out. "Miss Gee will be coming this evening", he said. "I will except you both to stay in your bedroom whilst we have a talk".

A knock duly came to the door. Miss Gee followed my parents into the sitting room. As soon as they had all gone into the room, I went and sat at the top of the stairs and listened carefully. (I was always a very inquisitive child who wanted to know the answer to everything).

## Trembly voice

Suddenly, there was the sound of loud sobbing. Miss Gee's voice could be heard. "Oh, Mr. Middlehurst", she burst out, "please, don't report it! I shall lose my job!"

My father was usually a very kind and sensitive person. "There now, don't upset yourself. I'm sure you didn't mean that to happen. Mind you, if that had been my younger daughter, I would not have been so surprised! I'm sure you will never allow such a

thing to happen again!" Miss Gee sounded very contrite. "No, of course, I shan't. Thank you very much", she said, in a trembly voice.

Mother was sent to put the kettle on, to make a cup of tea. I crept back along the landing very quietly, and sat on the bed. Betty had been reading and trying not to hear what was going on downstairs. As I regaled her with what had been said, I realised that never again would I be afraid of Miss Gee. "Do you know? I don't think I shall ever forget the word 'belief' again", I said. "Neither will I", she replied, with some relief!

Yesterday, as we sat chatting over a cup of tea, I said to her. "Do you remember the word 'belief'?" "I'm not likely to forget it", she laughed.

**Mrs Margaret Hirst  
(nee Middlehurst)  
Parbold Nr Wigan**

## HIRE OF MEETING ROOM

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:

**SOCIETY RATE  
£7.80**

**PER MORNING/  
AFTERNOON SESSION  
£11.50**

**PER EVENING SESSION  
COMMERCIAL RATE  
£18.50**

**PER MORNING/AFTERNOON/  
EVENING SESSION**

*If you are interested,  
contact Philip Butler*

**Tel (01942) 828128**

## **Aspull & Haigh Historical Society**

Meetings are held in Our Lady's R.C. Church Hall, Haigh Road, Aspull on the 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 December**

Christmas Party

### **10 January**

*Wills of the Rich and Famous*

April & King, Solicitors

### **14 February**

*The Rivington Bungalow*

Malcolm D. Smith

### **14 March**

Lecture

Dr. Alan Crosby

Further details from the Secretary, Mrs Barbara Rhodes, 1 Tan Pits, Winstanley, Wigan (01942 222769).

## **Atherton Heritage Society**

Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month at 7.30 p.m. at St. Richard's Jubilee Hall, Atherton. Admission £1 (members), £1.50 (non-members). Further details from Mrs. M. Hodge, 82 Leigh Road, Atherton M46 0PA

### **11 December**

*Children's Games*

Eric Loveless

An insight into life in Atherton in the 1930's

### **8 January**

*The Yorkshire Coiners*

Cliff Stockton

### **12 February**

*James Naysmith – The Steam Hammer Man*

John Alldred

### **12 March**

*Bill Naughton's Bolton*

Ken Beevers

9 April

*Queen Victoria's Visit to Worsley*

Anne Monaghan

## **Billinge Local History Society**

For further details contact Jack Boardman, 38 Garswood Road, Billinge, Wigan WN5 7TH (01744 892613), or visit our web site at [www.billinge-history.com](http://www.billinge-history.com).

## **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 are 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 at 7.30 p.m. in the Derby Room of Leigh Library. For further details contact the Secretary, Mrs. O. Hughes (01942 741594).

# **SOCIETY NEWS**

### **20 November**

*Catholic Ancestry*

Dr. A.J. Mitchinson

### **18 December**

*West Lancashire Town Crier*

Roy Harness

### **15 January**

Members' Evening

### **19 February**

AGM

### **19 March**

*Wills of the Rich and Famous*

April and King (solicitors)

## **Leigh Literary Society**

Meetings are held in the Derby Room, Leigh Library, on the last Wednesday of the month. For further details contact Tony Ashcroft, Local History Officer, Leigh Library (01942 404559)

### **19 November**

*Art and Design*

Stuart Taylor

### **3 December**

*Victorian Crime and Policing*

Duncan Broady

### **17 December**

*Snippets from the Past*

Tony Ashcroft

### **14 January**

*Shakespeare and Music*

Stephen Lythgoe

### **28 January**

*The Life and Works of Elizabeth Gaskell*

Liz Williams

### **11 February**

*Leigh Town Centre Trail*

Philip Powell

### **25 February**

*The Artist in Residence*

Suki Chan

### **11 March**

*Wigan and Tourism*

Keith Bergman

### **25 March**

*Wigan's Twinned Town of Angers*

The French Ambassadors

### **22 April**

AGM

## **Tyldesley & District Historical Society**

Meetings are held on the third Thursday of every month from September to May at the Tyldesley Pensions club on Milk Street at 7.30 p.m. We do not charge an entrance fee although voluntary contributions are always welcome. Refreshments available. Contact the Secretary (01942 514271) or Email: [rydings@cablenet.co.uk](mailto:rydings@cablenet.co.uk). You can also visit our website at [www.amw02593.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk](http://www.amw02593.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk).

### **20 December**

AGM, followed by *Was the Spinning Jenny Invented in Leigh?*

Norma Ackers

Was Leigh man Thomas Highs the real inventor of the Spinning Jenny?

### **17 January**

*What Can The Parish Registers Tell Us?*

Fred Holcroft

A talk and workshop session looking at the burial and marriage registers for Wigan at the time of a smallpox outbreak in 1796.

### **21 February**

*Snippets from the Past*

Tony Ashcroft

Amusing stories from Leigh and District as recorded in the *Leigh Chronicle and Journal*.

### **21 March**

*A History of Atherton Collieries*

Alan Davies

A talk and slide presentation of these famous local pits.

### **18 April**

*Chowbent Chapel*

Rev. P. Hughes

A meeting with a difference, as Rev. Hughes takes us on a guided tour of this fascinating old chapel built in 1721. **NB** Meet at the Chapel at 6.00 p.m.

## **Wigan Archaeological Society**

The Society meets at the BP Centre (Scout HQ) in Greenhough Street on the first Wednesday of the month at 7.30 p.m. Entrance is only £1.

### **7 November**

*Industrial Archaeology of Greater Manchester*

Robina McNeal

### **5 December**

*Manchester University Recent Finds*

John Walker

## **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.

## **Wigan Family & Local History Society**

Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of the month at the Springfield Hotel, Springfield Road, Wigan, at 7.30 p.m. For further information contact the Secretary, Tracie-Ann Brown, 16 Florence Street, Higher Ince, Wigan WN1 3JS.

### **20 November**

*My Family History*

Tracie-Ann Brown

*The Census*

Derek Horrocks

### **18 December**

*Nursery Rhymes*, followed by buffet

Fred Holcroft

### **15 January**

*The IGI*

Brian Fairhurst

*The Buttons of Somerset*

Glenis Aspinall

### **19 February**

*The Gerard Family of Ashton*

Walter Carney

### **19 March**

*The Parish Records*

Brian Fairhurst

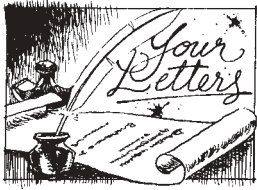
*The Burdekins of Hindley and Wigan*

Janet Clayworth

### **16 April**

*Child Labour in Victorian England*

Fred Holcroft.



## A VENUE FOR SOCIAL OCCASIONS

Dear Sir,

Mrs. Annie Ingram, of Deansgate, Hindley, has sent me a copy of your Issue No. 28, concerning the 'Hut' in Hindley, as she remembers that when we were teenagers in the 1930's, I lived at No.7 Gaskell Terrace (Stoney Lane). The street was renamed after the owner of the property, a Mrs. Gaskell, who came every Saturday morning from Blackpool to collect the rents. The houses were, in fact, the old Workhouse converted.

I was taken there in 1924, aged three, and I remember that in 1929 the 'Big Pit' off Liverpool Road closed down, which left no mining in Hindley. A scheme was therefore put in hand (I regret I was too young to know by whom), to provide allotments on land to the East and North of the houses in Gaskell Terrace for the local unemployed to cultivate, and a hut was erected for them to gather in (1931). This became a venue for social occasions and eventually small dances, but its size was limited (approx. 20 x 40 feet).

There was by now an active organisation, and in 1933 they decided to have a larger hut (approx. 30 x 60

feet) as well, and to have a bowling green. The new hut was beautiful, with a wooden dance floor. For children's dances a small band played consisting of Tommy Whittle (who still lives at Broadway in Hindley) on piano, myself on the banjo, and Sidney (who's surname I can't remember) on drums! For the main dances I remember at one stage the band being called 'The Philadelphians'. The old hut remained for the old ones' dominoes, cards and darts.

In 1937, the houses were condemned by reason of mining subsidence and lack of modern amenities. Some families, including mine, obtained houses on the Council's development at Sandy Lane. By then, most of the former unemployed had found employment away from Hindley, in the Lancashire Steel Works at Irlam, or on munitions in Euxton, etc., and in 1939 the young men were joining up for war service, including me; so I don't know just when the 'Hut' went out of service, or what happened to the mission.

As to the further notes in the article concerning the poverty of residents, I remember a photograph of a St. Peter's class taken in 1926, in which some boys were missing because they had no clogs or shoes to wear. I was on the front row, because my footwear was reasonable!

**Joseph Alcock  
25 Longleat  
Tamworth  
Staffs B79 7US**

## IT DEFINITELY EXISTED

Dear Editor,

With regard to Mr. Kenneth Lucas's letter, in the summer 2001 edition of *Past Forward*, which queries whether 'Th'ut' really existed, I can tell you it definitely did. It was down a path off Liverpool

Road, Hindley, which in years gone by led to a bleachworks, near the brook. Enclosed is a photograph of a picture of the band that played there.

**C. Williams  
30 Liverpool Road  
Hindley Nr Wigan**



## DANCING IN TH' 'UT

Dear Sir,

Regarding 'Th'ut' in Hindley where dancing took place. Would this not be the hut sited just off the Liverpool Road, which at that time (the 1930's) was either owned or rented by the Hindley British Legion?

At that time my dad was Treasurer of the British Legion and I used to go with him when a dance was to take place, usually on a Wednesday or Saturday night, and I would sweep the floor, dust the forms round the sides of the room (it didn't run to chairs), sprinkle the floor with French chalk and serve in the little shop at the

entrance to the 'Ball Room'.

For these duties I was rewarded by my dad on behalf of the British Legion with the sum of 1s. 6d. – a small fortune for a young teenager in the 1930's when the pictures cost 4d., a bar of chocolate 1d. or 2d., five woodbine cigarettes 2d. and a small box of Cadbury's Milk Tray chocolates 6d.

All this and still some money left in the purse!

**Elsie Walsh (Mrs)  
9 Cunningham Avenue  
Chorley  
Lancs PR7 2PS**

## Happy days on the farm

Dear Editor,

I read in *Past Forward* 28 (p.34) about 'Recommends'. I was born at Melling's Farm (Moss Hall Farm), Ince. We used to have a box from Wigan Infirmary where we put money in. Many people used to come to the farm for hay seeds to make their lawns; they would ask dad how much he wanted, and he would tell them to put the money in the Infirmary Box. We took the box back to the Infirmary when it was full; they

would then count the money and send the 'Recommends' accordingly.

Our milk customers used to come for 'Recommends' when someone was going into hospital; also our workmen would ask for them if any of their family went in the Infirmary. I have taken the box back myself many times.

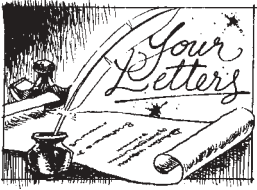
Happy days on the farm!

I have also read the article on p33 entitled 'A Hut or Not a Hut?'

I know there was a hut for dancing – a wooden one called the 'tuppenny hop', in Liverpool Road. A young man who worked for us on Melling's Farm used to go dancing there, I think about twice a week. They were only poor people who went to dance there but also very honest. So you see, Harry Entwistle is correct.

**Mrs. Molly Taylor  
(nee Melling)  
5 Durham Road  
Hindley Nr Wigan  
WN2 3NA**





## Did a dance venue exist in Stoney Lane?

Dear Editor,

I am advised by Mr. Len Gibson of Hindley, a former naval man who served on the Battleship H.M.S. Nelson during World War II, that there was a dance hut sited in the middle of a field behind Charnocks Grocery Store in Hindley, (a Do It Yourself Shop in recent years). This was a dance hall with no proper gentlemen's toilets, where accordionists Bill Smith from Hindley's Ellesmere Street (Lancaster Road) and Tommy Whittle, also a pianist at Hindley and Higher Ince British Legion, played in Tommy Mullins Band. Tommy's wife who lived in Hindley's William Street was, like her husband, a drummer.

Could this dancing hut have been the old Liverpool Road St. Peter's Church Mission Hut? It seems likely!

Len Gibson a dancer until several years ago, remembers how his late good lady wife Dorothy used to like dancing to the Roy Fox Dance Band at Hindley Public Hall, over the Hindley Industrial Co-op building.

Len recalls also dancing nights wholly enjoyed at Hindley Green Social Club. Mr.

and Mrs. Jackson and the Flitcrofts ran these dances.

My knowledgeable informant, who has lived in Higher Ince (West Street), Bickershaw and Hindley, also tells me that, in his civilian occupation of window cleaner, he knew all the occupants of the Cann Row, near to Ince Walmesley Park; he believes that the poem, "The Beauty of Ince", which featured in *Past Forward* 26, was written not by a Cann Row gentleman, but more likely by "three educated Ince female scholars"!

While based in the U.S.A., Len tells me how he recited "The Ince Poem" in 42nd Street, Times Square, "the Stagedoor Canteen" which was a forces club, Jack Dempsey's Bar, in the Irish Shamrock Clubs and the Scottish Thistle Clubs. The poem was well received everywhere.

Which brings me to two ladies who have recently also assured me that t'hut really did exist in Stoney Lane. Former St. Nathaniel's scholar, Mrs. Anne Ashcroft, was born in Eatock Street, near Charnocks grocery shop in Liverpool Road. She learned her "weaving trade" from 13 years of age at Hindley's towering "Prospect Mill", which Keystone Paints operated in the 50's. The Prospect Mill "still glitters" in Platt Lane! Anne fondly remembers Bob Darby's dance band which played in Hindley Green Sacred Heart Church, with the church altar

momentarily railed off, and she liked dancing to Blackpool Towers Bertini dance band when dance trips cost 2s. 6d.

Mrs. Sheila Spinks (nee Banks) of Hindley Green writes, "I was born in 1933 and lived in Yarrow Street, off Liverpool Road. There was such a dance hall called T'hut. My aunties who lived in Mawdesley Street used to tell me about going dancing there. It was set well back in the fields, situated between Charnocks grocery and drapery shop and Stoney Lane Bridge.

It was a long low wooden building with windows. These fields and the surrounding areas were the adventure playgrounds of the children of the "Navvies Lump". As a child I remember playing around this wooden building and trying to reach up to the windows and peer inside. It must have been pulled down in the late 1930's or early 1940's.

Set further back behind T'hut ran Borsdane Brook and on its banks stood the ruins of the old Bleach Works which was another playground, as was the "Piggy Field" where my father's generation before me played a game called "Piggy".

I remember the couple of old houses which stood close to the ochred Stoney Lane Brook and I have heard my Uncle Albert Gibson speak of there being a mission hall in the vicinity."

**Kenneth Lucas  
80 Park Road  
Hindley  
Wigan WN2 3RX**

## CAN PAST FORWARD READERS SHED LIGHT ON THIS MYSTERY?

Dear Sir,

I am tracing my family history and have recently been to see some cousins in America, who loaned some photographs to me. These photos are relatives, but neither my cousins nor I know who they are, other than from what was written on the back. Therefore, I wonder if you could publish them to see if any of your readers can shed any light on this mystery.

As an aside, I enjoy reading *Past Forward* and look forward eagerly to picking up each new issue.

**Margaret Warren  
128 Shackleton Close  
Old Hall  
Warrington  
Cheshire WA5 9QE**



"Aunt Hannah's (Hannah and Henry Brooks) family at Abram. Front left and right, standing, are Doris and Albert Calderbank (nee Brooks)". Doris and Albert were married in August 1939, so the photograph was probably taken around that time. Does any reader know who the other people are?



"Bunch from Abram with Mag, all cousins". Mag (Margaret Fitzpatrick) is seated centre; she was born in 1915, which probably dates the photograph to the 1930's. Does any one know who the others are?



## It's simple!

Dear Sir,

I am replying to Donald Norton (aka Harry Entwistle) in *Past Forward* No 27.

He referred to me as a "mystic herald" and asked that I elucidate about the Ince All Blacks, the team my dad Billy Lees played for in the 1920's. He seemed perplexed that a team playing Rugby League could exist apart from the more famous one (down under) with that name.

Well, it's simple! They were a group of mostly miners, who played for the love of the game and who didn't command or expect high fees. The local newspapers of the time i.e. *Wigan Examiner* and

## He won the Lower Ince silver cup!

Dear Sir,

I was born in Winifred Street, Lower Ince in 1937. In those days our council house was very 'high tech' - we had hot running water and a bath. The water was heated by a back boiler in a "Yorkshire type range" in the front room. We had a garden back and front - front enclosed by a privet hedge, would you believe?

My dad, Joseph Baden Cooper, was a national fire fighter during World War II and on his days free -

*Wigan Observer* mention that they often played at Central Park and Highfield.

Mr. Ernie Taberner wrote in issue No. 28 that the name Ince All Blacks could have arisen from the fact that the men played in their pit dust. But I don't think so. Although most of them were miners, not all were. They simply chose that name because of their strip - their shirt and shorts were all black.

I have learned recently that a well-known Wigan Rugby League player, Dodger Owen, may well have played with the Ince All Blacks.

Thanks to one of your contributors, Mr. Neil Cain, for this research made on my behalf. Thanks also to Mr. Norton and Mr. Taberner for writing in - it's refreshing to hear their views.

**John Lees**  
49 Sherwood Drive  
Wigan WN5 9QX

which were few - he loved his gardens, and won the Lower Ince Silver Cup in the "Best Kept Gardens" Competition about five years on the trot. I think it was called "The Barnes Cup", named after local councillor 'Barnes' who used to live opposite the council offices in Ince Green Lane.

I could go on forever about Lower Ince. What about the shell cartridge dump on the "quinic" that caught fire and all the shell cases melted - who dug up the brass? But that's another story!

**William Cooper**  
Box 50  
UBN Monte Pego  
03780 Pego  
(Alacant)  
Spain

## 'SUPPORTED BY VOLUNTARY SUBSCRIPTIONS'

Dear Alastair,

I would like to comment on the letter you printed from Mrs. Elsie Mack regarding hospital recommends at the Wigan Infirmary (*Past Forward* No. 28), and feel that the enclosed list of local contributors of more than 100 years ago for 1899 and 1900 may be of interest to your older readers.

As a youngster I often wondered why the main notice in the gateway of the hospital advertised "Supported by Voluntary Subscriptions", and used to think that if anyone needed treatment, the would-be patient would have to put something in the box hanging on the gate before he/she would receive treatment. As I got older I knew that the doctor's man who called weekly, for his shilling, was for the maintenance of the Doctor's Surgery, in our case Dr. Warburton of Poolstock

For this shilling, we got cover for minor surgery, as well as medical prescriptions for the usual children's ailments of chicken pox, measles, mumps and ear, nose and throat infections, and for adults complications arising from childbirth.

One youngster had a penny removed that had dislodged in his throat when, with it in his mouth, he jumped from a low wall ont' cut bank; this same lad was once bitten on the temple by an organ grinder's monkey, and the wound needed a couple of stitches! We certainly had our bob's worth in our case!

The list I enclose of weekly contributions to th'infirmary was copied by me from an old *Wigan*

### WIGAN INFIRMARY.

#### WEEKLY CONTRIBUTIONS.

The following contributions are most gratefully acknowledged:-

	1899.		1900.	
	£	s. d.	£	s. d.
Previous list.....	2773	10 1..	2861	1 8
W. H. Baker, Clayton-street .....	5	5 0	6	18 0
Brown and Haigh, Chapel-lane.....	6	14 4	7	0 0
Wilson and Co., Caroline-street .....	5	1 1	5	1 4
Magee, Marshall, and Co.....	2	3 9	2	8 2
Ince Urban District Council .....	5	5 0	5	5 0
Clarence Printing Works.....	2	12 0	2	12 6
Whitley and Co., Ashton .....	9	8 0	8	10 0
Midleton and Wood .....	6	2 6	8	2 8
William Leyland, Ince .....	1	17 6	1	2 0
Thomas Crompton, Ashton .....	7	0 0	11	0 9
William France, Newtown .....	3	12 0	4	5 0
White Moss Colliery, Skelmersdale.....	19	12 0	17	15 9
Messrs. James Eckersley and Co., Ltd.	63	16 7	56	17 7
Messrs. Harrington Eckersley and Co., Limited.....	51	17 7	47	0 8
Ince Coal and Cannel Co.....	4	4 8	1	9 2
Seowcroft and Co., Limited .....	57	3 5	58	2 9
Garwood Hall Collieries Co., New Pits.....	145	4 7	154	0 10
Old Pits.....	40	13 10	43	17 1
Tickle Brothers, Vulcan Foundry .....	5	1 6	5	6 0
L. and N.-W. Railway Traffic Dept.....	8	17 0	7	15 0
Wigan Coal and Iron Co.'s Employés:-				
Kirkless Iron and Steel Works Sick and Accident Fund, annual sub.....	40	0 0	40	0 0
Alexandra Pit.....	51	11 2	53	0 10
1 and 2, Lindsay Pits .....	30	12 6	22	6 9
Lindsay and Alexandra Pits, Surface .....	4	12 6	5	1 0
1 and 2, Kirkless Pits.....	0	6 6	0	6 6
Kirkless and Marsh House Coke Ovens.....	5	0 0	5	0 0
No. 1 Crawford Pit .....	63	2 0	53	5 6
No. 2 Crawford Pit .....	41	0 8	39	4 8
Surface No. 1 and 2 .....	12	11 3	7	6 7
No. 1 Hewlett Pit .....	37	0 0	35	0 0
No. 2 Hewlett Pit.....	74	0 1	37	10 10
Nos. 1 and 2 Hewlett Pits (surface).....	7	15 0	7	15 0
Eatock Pits.....	60	0 0	62	12 0
No. 4 Ladies'-lane Pits .....	30	10 0	24	0 0
Priestner's Pit, Westleigh .....	49	18 2	53	19 7
Surface .....	9	9 11	9	14 0
Sovereign Pit, Westleigh.....	27	2 7	33	14 5
Surface .....	8	9 0	10	5 8
Lindsay Coal Wharf .....	2	3 6	2	9 6
Meadow Pits .....	20	16 6	27	7 9
Kirkless Brickworks .....	...	...	6	14 7
Woodshaw Pit .....	8	11 0	9	0 6
Prospect Pit .....	31	12 6	34	3 8
Surface.....	7	3 10	6	18 1 1/2
Broomfield Pit .....	19	3 9	24	14 0
Surface.....	4	19 9	5	0 7
Langtree Pit .....	31	13 0	30	9 0
Surface.....	4	5 2	4	13 5
Gidlow Pit .....	29	10 9	25	18 11
Surface.....	7	14 2	7	11 2 1/2
Giants Hall Pit.....	32	15 0	34	18 0
Surface .....	6	11 4	6	4 4
Taylor Pit .....	38	9 6	31	5 10
Surface.....	6	12 11	6	1 3
John Pit .....	7	7 5	18	3 10
Surface .....	5	1 4	4	19 6
	£4002	15 2	£4072	9 3

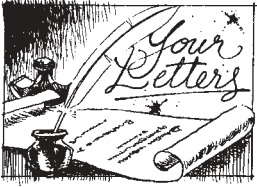
List of contributions to Wigan Infirmary for 1899/1900 from the "Wigan Observer" dated 13 April 1900.

*Observer* dated 13 April 1900, and even at a glance shows how many pits there were in the area at that time. No wonder the area became depressed as one by one the pits became "worked out", when a brick wall would be built around the shaft - which reminds me of a stupid "dare" I undertook around the wall of the pit outside Mesnes Park on the Walkden Avenue side.

The dare was that I couldn't run around the

top of the wall whilst the Royal Scot train was passing on the railway alongside. Had the top of the wall been even it would have been easy, but here and there was the odd brick missing which meant I had to jump the gaps occasionally. Even recalling this escapade now makes me shudder to think what could have happened had I missed my 'footing'! Ah well, as they used to say in Wigan, "Lads'll awluz bi lads".

© E. Taberner



## From an Ex-Pupil of Ashton Central School

Dear Sir,

I am writing with regards to the article on Central School, Ashton-in-Makerfield in issue No. 28 of *Past Forward*. As a pupil at the school who left in 1961, I can put a name to the teachers on the bottom picture except for one. They are as follows:

Back row L to R

Mr. Merry (Science), Mr. Ward (Art), Mr. Rowbottom (?), Mr. Anderson (Woodwork),

Mr. Darbyshire (Maths & Science), Mr. Winard (Music), Mr. Cockram (P.E.), Mr. Kelly (History).

Bottom Row

Mrs. Corser (Secretary), Mr. Latham (General Teacher), Mr. McKensie (Geography & Gardening), Mr. Ralls (English), Mr. Price (Headmaster), Mr. Hartley (Woodwork), (?), Mr. Simister (Practical Drawing), Mrs. McMinn (General Teacher).

The above subjects are to the best of my memory but will stand to be corrected.

As you can see from the address, I live in Blackpool and have done for the last 27 years, but my sisters still live in Wigan and forward me your magazine which I enjoy very much; it brings many memories back of my birthplace.

**Tom Mylecraine**  
2 Peel Avenue  
Layton  
Blackpool FY3 7AQ

## We got paid for our 'Services' – about ten bob

Dear Sir,

I wonder if you can help me via your excellent magazine.

I was born in Wigan in 1940 and was a chorister (nay Head Chorister) at All Saints Parish Church. In the 1950's The Hippodrome used to stage rep; a particular play, called "Seven Days Leave", required a military funeral, and I was probably about 11 when this happened.

All we had to do was to line up, chevron fashioned, three to each side of the coffin which was draped by the Union Jack, and sing a hymn. After every show we were required to take our curtain call along with the rest of the cast on stage; however, because of local by-laws stating that children could not remain back-stage after 10.30 pm, and the show did not finish till about 11.00 pm, we had six reserved seats on the front row, and when the cast came on for the final curtain the spotlight would shine on six far from angelic faces – a couple of nights, we put make up on

for our late bow, "for a laff".

The company was the "Frank H. Fortescue Players", and apart from Arthur Lesley, who was Jack Walker in Coronation Street, none of the others seem to have progressed in show business. Some autographs I have are as follows:

Frank Powell, Bernard Graham, Harold Wolfenden, Nicholas Brent, Raymond Graham, one name which looks very much like Joan Simm and William Graham, who played "Just William" in the films.

We got paid for our "services", about ten bob I think. That was my first professional job, and although I continued as a singer in the club circuit, I did not turn "pro" until 1998 at the age of 58, when a back injury forced a career change. Moreover, I have never enjoyed working so much.

**Gerard Higham**  
Hills View  
58 Church Street  
Horwich  
Bolton BL6 6AB

## Geoffrey Hosker, Woodwork Classes and Trips to Grasmere

Dear Sir,

The article 'Memories of the Central School, Ashton-in-Makerfield', by Stan Ralls, following 'I Won't Dance – Don't Ask Me' by my uncle, J. Harold Smith, brought back many memories of my late brother, Geoffrey Hosker, and of his woodwork classes and trips to Grasmere.

Furthermore, I'm delighted to be able to forward two photographs, one of Geoffrey's class, he being on the teacher's right, and the other of Grasmere camp.

With regard to the photograph of the staff of the above school, in *Past*

*Forward* Issue No. 28, I believe that Mr. Latham is second left on the front row, and not first left on the back row, as stated, and that third right on the front row is Mr. Arnold.

Finally, I'd like to take this opportunity of thanking you for a wonderful magazine, and to Florence Westhead, for her reminder of our happy working days at Billinge Hospital.

**Irene Migy**  
Calle Borret 3  
03580 Alfaz del Pi  
Alicante  
Spain



## Ashton Central School (1935-9)

Dear Sir,

I have just finished reading *Past Forward* 28. The article 'Memories of Ashton Central School' brought back many recollections, mostly very happy ones.

In the summer of 1939 I left this school on a Friday and started work the following Monday.

During my time at the school, 1935-1939, Mr. Moore was headmaster. In naming the teachers in the 1948 photo, I differ slightly from Mr. S. Ralls as follows:

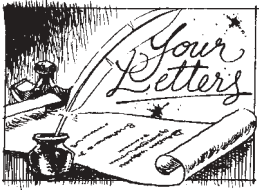
Back row Heaton (Maths), P. Ralls (English),? ,?.

Front row: McKenzie (Geography), Hartley (Woodwork), ?, Vernon (Art, Sport), Simister (Maths).

A. Jones (History & Music) I do not recognise in either photo.

Perhaps someone can throw more light on the subject.

**R. Hanlon**  
P.O. Box 699  
Wynyard  
Tasmania 7325  
Australia



## LEFT BOOK CLUB, LEIGH

Dear Sir,

I visited my cousin in Wigan two weeks ago, and she showed me copies of *Past Forward*. In one of them you were asking for information about the Left Book Club in Leigh and I wonder if the following would be useful.

During the 1930's my father, Wesley Griffiths (who came from Wigan) was the Brooke Bond Tea representative for Leigh and District, and he was very friendly with the Lyons Tea rep., Frank Cowling, who arrived from London about 1936. Frank was a very energetic, versatile individual, at that time very fat, who later surprised us all by slimming down when

he was conscripted into the RAF Regiment during the War and emerged as a Wing Commander.

He and my father formed the Leigh branch of the Left Book Club, and Frank made a number of card-tables for use in the premises, which I think occupied the same building as the Zip cleaners in Market Street, where my father's sister, Margaret, was manageress. As a child then, I only heard bits of gossip about what went on, but my father and Frank were keen Bridge players and often discussed politics when they played at home on Saturday nights. The other members would be the usual local intellectuals whom I always saw at meetings of the Literary Society or (later) at WEA classes, and also at a packed meeting to hear Nye Bevan on the

Popular Front in early 1939. Most of these intellectuals had received little formal education, but were keen auto-didacts and often extremely well read and highly intelligent, fluent speakers. Most were men, but there were a few women.

The main business of the Left Book Club was to obtain the publications of Victor Gollancz, read them, and then discuss – usually with inputs from the *News Chronicle* and the *Daily Worker*. I only remember one actual Communist, Bill Murphy, who'd had a very hard life but cheerfully borne.

I suspect also that the proceedings would follow the pattern of the meetings of "The" Book Club which began many years before. The members of this were more middle class

because the books were more expensive than those of Gollancz; each month's choice was bought in turn, and then passed around in time for the discussion which was more literary and less political. A leading member of both groups (who probably transferred the Book Club's procedure to the Left Book Club) was Philip Lees, a well-known figure at Leigh Baths where he worked.

I left Leigh Grammar School in 1945 for Manchester University, and then began my academic career in Aberdeen, Bristol, Birmingham and Southampton. My parents left Leigh to run a bookshop in Grasmere, in 1955, so I lost touch with Leigh thereafter, although I still have relatives in other parts of Lancashire.

One other thought about the Left Book

Club occurs to me. When the War started, some of the younger members became conscientious objectors, on pacifist (not political) grounds, and met at the Friends' Meeting House in Twist Lane where I remember several very pleasant social evenings.

On this subject, I would like to know more about a conscientious objector of World War I, Arnold Partington, who taught me the violin. I also knew Joe Hilton who worked in Leigh Library until 1939, then worked on farms until he ran the Library at Winscale, but died young. We still keep in touch with his wife.

**H.B. Griffiths**  
Emeritus Professor, and  
Professor of Pure  
Mathematics, University  
of Southampton  
(1964-1992)  
5 Glen Eyre Road  
Bassett Southampton  
SO16 3GA

Dear Friends,

I am on the family history trail and, as all of my family came from the Wigan area, I have great interest in your splendid magazine. I am including my E-mail address and would be very pleased to make contact with my long lost relatives. My father's people came from Ashton-in-Makerfield – the Greens, who were coal miners, and the Harts who were hinge-makers. My mother's people came from Pemberton, the Parkinsons and Brimelows, who were coal miners. All of my other ancestors, whom I have traced so far, have well known Wigan names – Eckersley, Calderbank, Pilkington, Rainford, Harrison, Turton, Banks and Gaskell.

My father, Eli Green, served in World War I, and I am enclosing a copy of a poem he wrote and which was

## COAL MINERS AND HINGE MAKERS

published in a Lancashire newspaper on 16 November 1915. Private Eli Green, 35764, served with medical units rescuing casualties by means of mules. He

had first aid training for rescue work in the mines. He served in Salonika and Bulgaria, and I remember him telling me the Bulgarians mounted the big guns on

trains which they hid in railway tunnels and then brought out to fire. My father had a terrible war – he contracted malaria in Greece, and never fully recovered. After the war, he attended Wigan Mining and Technical College, gained his mine manager's certificate, married my mother Betty Parkinson and moved to Wales where he worked at the Gresford Colliery.

In 1929, having endured strikes and lockouts, he was forced to give in to the Great Depression, and migrated, with my mother, to Australia, accompanied by two of my uncles, Tom and Jim Parkinson. My father worked as an engineer with Brisbane City Council, and sadly Jim Parkinson died on active service in New Guinea during World War II. The poem my father wrote in

1915 is even more sad because his brother, Matthew Green, was killed in France in the closing weeks of World War I. Matthew Green was aged 30, and died on 23 October 1918. He served with the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the King's Own, Royal Lancaster Regiment. My mother remembered the time she last met her dying mother-in-law, and asked if there way anything she would like; she heard her whisper, "Yes, roses for Matt's grave".

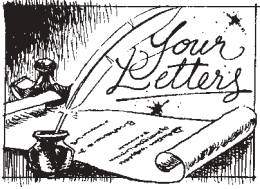
**Ronald Green**  
5 Martin Avenue  
Fitzroy, Adelaide, S.A.  
5082 Australia  
Email:  
[beckett5@ozemail.com.au](mailto:beckett5@ozemail.com.au)

An account by Ronald's sister, Olwen Colquhoun, of her days in Garswood before their parents emigrated to Australia will appear in the next issue.

### THE WAR

by Eli Green

*Boom! The big gun speaks with its fiery tongue  
Men fall who have fought both well and long  
Comrades are slain, they are given no time,  
But – "To err is human, to forgive is divine".  
Still speaks the gun, with the fire of hell  
The death roll, yet no one can tell  
Until all is calm, and you look for one,  
A comrade in arms, but – that comrade has gone.  
Yes, gone – where guns speak not and there are no wars  
To blight men's lives with wounds and scars.  
He's a sacrifice, one of Britain's sons,  
He now lies at rest; still on speak the guns.  
A convoy now toils, slowly up the hill  
All full of life, both man and beast, until  
A hissing sound is heard, and the shell we know  
Has maimed both man and beast and laid them low.  
This still goes on, each day a number slain;  
But we must fight on, our honour to retain,  
Yes – fight to the end, so when this war shall cease,  
Twill bring about an everlasting peace.*



# SO MUCH OF INTEREST

Dear Sir,

When my relatives in Billinge introduced me to *Past Forward* a couple of years ago, little did I expect to find so much of interest to me personally. There are three coincidences I would like to tell you about.

The first concerns the article in Issue No. 28 on Mr. Tyrer, the ex-Town Clerk of Wigan, and my father, James Atherton, who was Mr Tyrer's Chief Assistant until his death in February 1923. Although I was only two years old at the time and remember nothing of those years, I have in my

possession the account of his death and funeral which was published in the *Wigan Examiner*. The funeral was attended by Mr. Tyrer and numerous officials, including the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Wigan, and the pallbearers from the gates of Upholland Parish Church to the graveside were two sergeants and four constables from the Wigan force. I understand that Mr. Tyrer was very helpful to my mother afterwards – she was only 30 years of age, left with three older step-children and three very small ones and, of course, there was no widow's pension at the time – and organised her financial affairs so

that we had a small income to rely on for the next 10 years.

The second coincidence concerns the article in Issue No. 27 about the American B.24 Liberator Bomber which made an emergency landing at Aspull in 1943. As I was born and bred in Orrell it seemed almost on my own doorstep, and now I live here in Norfolk, just down the road from Wendling, which was the home base of the crew. Within walking distance of my home is the beautiful War Memorial to the men

who served on the Wendling Station, and one of the local pubs, "The Ploughshare", which was the watering hole for the off-duty personnel, still considers itself to be 'their' pub. Round the walls in the bar are numerous photographs and letters from Americans and many reminders of the War years.

My third coincidence is very personal – a renewal after almost 50 years of a teenage friendship brought about by your publication of a letter from my

friend, Mrs. Kathleen Monks, re the Wigan Telephone Exchange. It was read by Mrs. Pauline Walker of Aspull who, like Kath and I, was another 'Hello Girl' and made up the third member of our little group. Sadly, we lost the fourth one a few years ago. How nice, though, to find that three of us, all now in our 80's, are still around.

I'm looking forward with keen anticipation to the next issue.

**Marion I. Maggs**  
**1 Lime Tree Crescent**  
**Little Fransham**  
**Dereham**  
**Norfolk NR19 2JL**

## ST. PETER'S SCHOOL, HINDLEY

Dear Editor,

I enclose two photographs. The first one shows an Infants' Class at St. Peter's School, Hindley in 1947/48. My sister, Pat Hutchinson, is on the front row, trying to shield her face from the camera.

The second photograph shows myself and my Infants' Class at

Britannia Bridge County Primary School, Ince in 1950. I am the adult on the right. There may be people who recall both my sister and myself or recognise themselves.

**Margaret Hutchinson**  
**46 Kings Gardens**  
**Honiton**  
**Devon EX14 1FL**

### DUNKIRK

*He waits his turn, in the queue,  
Pension book in his hand  
Then his mind goes back to Dunkirk,  
Where he queued, upon the sand.*

*Every time he thinks about it,  
A lump comes in his throat,  
And he remembers all the soldiers,  
Who never made it, to a boat.*

*He recalls how he lost his mates  
On some God forsaken beach,  
Cut down, by a hail of bullets,  
Freedom just out of reach.*

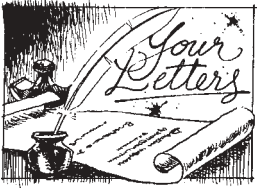
*Its sixty years ago today,  
Since he took part in that retreat,  
Now, kids just ridicule him,  
As he shuffles down the street.*

*If only, we could educate them,  
And make them understand,  
How this person, fought for freedom  
In some foreign land.*

*Now life is such a struggle,  
From one day to the next,  
He doesn't want any glory,  
All he wants is some respect.*

**Dave Hawkins**  
**Goose Green**





## So many Memories

Dear Sir,

I have just finished reading Issue No. 27 which was sent to me by my sister Marion Edwards who lives at 171 Dorning Street. She also sends the *Wigan Observer* to me on a regular basis.

So many memories! I was born in Miry Lane, delivered by the ever reliable mid-wife. That was on 26 September 1918. Although such a long time ago I still see in my minds eye, different lodgings that we lived, or should I say survived, in. My dad was in and out of work – not through being idle but because good jobs were scarce. I can see him now taking off his union shirt and his back full of boils – bleeding, through carrying bags of coal he was delivering to houses all round Kendal Street.

Eventually we were able to rent a house at no. 11 Kendal Street. My Grandma Dawber lived at no. 2 just across the road. For two wonderful years I lived with her because of a shortage of space at no.11.

What a character! Everybody over a long distance knew Granny Dawber. On odd occasions she would visit the Guardians Inn – not far away. So did my mum and dad. Mum always brought back one bottle of Guinness – and on the next day I was given a sample because it “would do me good”. In those days I used to pull my face – today it’s

a different story!

Why was Gran so popular? In a private capacity she used to ‘lay out’ persons of both sexes – young and old; even in death money was hard to come by, and Gran did not charge much.

I well remember – after business was concluded – Gran would place a newly baked cake on the table and, always forgetting she was practically stone deaf, would shout “help yourself”. There was never a crumb of cake left on the plate and everyone, including Gran, was satisfied.

The terraced houses are still there – still as clean as ever (well almost!) I still see the horse and cart carrying goods for sale, mainly selling stones in exchange for any unused clothes (there were never many of these). Despite the struggle for cash everywhere was spotless – front and back. I can still remember the paraffin lamps in the outside toilet at the bottom of the yard to stop the pipes from freezing, mother climbing the steps to the bedroom so many times in a day, and sometimes at night as well, seeing to her family, the “slopstone” and the boiler in the kitchen, the Yorkshire range and big zinc bath for dad to get cleaned up, with steam everywhere from drying clothes.

What a life – no money, but we were always clean. I could go on and on. So many memories!

**James Dawber**  
161 Malgrove  
Prospect Hall Road  
Durban North 4051  
Qwazulu  
South Africa

## Any Marsden research in Wigan?

Dear Alastair,

Many thanks for *Past Forward*, an excellent magazine that I read from cover to cover, and which is helping me to learn more about Wigan, while I delve into family history at the same time.

In Issue 28, Alan Roby’s latest interesting article on the life of Ellen Weeton mentions early 19th century nonconformity and the Rev. William Marshall, minister of Hope Chapel from 1822, who married the daughter of a Mr. Marden. I stopped at the name “Marsden”, as this is one of the family names that I’ve been searching, and decided I must write to you.

I wonder if anyone has done any research on the many Marsden lines in Wigan? Some years ago I exchanged letters with the late Len Marsden of Wigan, who I believe did extensive research on his line, but we were not able to find a link between our ancestors. Since then my search through church records in Wigan and Blackrod has produced a list of over 300 Marsden entries between the 1780’s and 1830’s. From the detail in the entries it is possible to string many of them into families, and it seems there were probably more than 20 Marsden families baptising children in Wigan in the early 1800’s. Some of these would likely be cousins linked

by earlier ancestors.

One of the entries on my list is the marriage of Rev. William Marshall, at that time still of Macclesfield, to Elizabeth daughter of Thomas Marsden on 10 April 1820. The marriage took place at All Saints parish church because, although Rev. Marshall was a Congregational minister, in those days marriages could only be solemnised in the established church. The marriage was by licence, as William Marshall came from outside the parish.

Recently, I found a useful book “*Hope Congregational Church, Wigan 1812-1962*” by J. Basil Horsman, and I have a note from this book that Marsden Square, close to Hope Street Chapel, was named after Thomas Marsden, father-in-law of the Rev. William Marshall.

My own Marsden line stops short at a Christopher Marsden whose birth and death seem to have escaped the records I have searched so far, but his marriage is there – at All Saints on 9 Jan 1822. He was living in Aspull, and his bride was Mary Greenough, aged 17, who was given in marriage by her widowed mother, Ann.

Christopher and Mary had a family of at least five and probably six children in Aspull, and it was here that Mary died, aged 33, of “decline”. It is

difficult to know what “decline” might be, but consumption, cancer, or poverty-induced malnutrition spring to mind, and at least two of her descendants are known to have had diabetes. Mary was described as a housewife, but Christopher does not feature on her death certificate, and it was the couple’s eldest son, Henry, only just 15, who was present at the death and who informed the registrar.

Christopher seemed to have vanished, and when the census was taken in 1841, most of the Marsden children were living with their grandmother, Ann Greenough at Moorside, Aspull. The first definite indication that Christopher had died was in 1845 when Henry married and referred to his father as “deceased”.

I should be delighted to hear from anyone tracing Wigan area Marsdens. Also, a flourishing Marsden group, for Marsden researches worldwide, is registered with the Guild of One Name Studies, and is run by John Marsden of 3 Hesketh Road, Sale, M33 5AA. John’s Email address is [johnmarsden@compuserve.com](mailto:johnmarsden@compuserve.com).

**Sybil Cant**  
3 London Road  
Baldock  
Herts SG7 6LE  
Email:  
[sybil.cant@tinyworld.co.uk](mailto:sybil.cant@tinyworld.co.uk)

## A FILM OF INCE WANTED

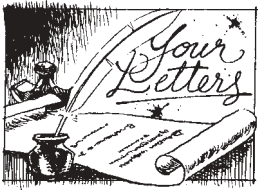
Dear Mr. Gillies,

A plea through *Past Forward* – I have at home a video of walking-days at St. Nathaniel’s Church, Platt Bridge, c.1960’s, which has been compiled by a member of the church, from people’s old cine-film footage. Can any Ince readers tell me if any church or organisation in Ince has produced anything similar, as I would be very

interested in purchasing a copy? Also, if anyone could lend me photos of Ince (particularly Ince Green Lane) pre-1970’s, I would be very grateful.

Best wishes to all *Past Forward* readers, **wherever** you are!

**Mrs Irene Roberts**  
115 Warrington Road  
Abram  
Wigan WN2 5QH



## PRE-EMINENT IN HIS FIELD

surveying, but the only surveying course on offer at the "Tech" was mining surveying in Thomas Bryson's department, so we had to accept that. We were allowed day release from work of one day per week to attend College, plus one evening for night classes each week. We filled our periods of college attendance by selecting suitable subjects from other Higher National Certificate courses. It was somewhat strange not to be part of a self-contained course but we soon adapted to it.

The thing I remember most about our early days in Thomas Bryson's surveying classes was, to me, his almost impenetrable Scottish (Glaswegian, I think) accent, but I eventually got the hang of it. Mining surveying encompasses surface land surveying and also the "dark" – in all senses of the word – art of underground surveying, where the additional

problems of severely restricted working conditions and inadequate light pose very real handicaps.

When I knew him at Wigan Tech., Thomas Bryson was pre-eminent in the field of mining surveying, widely known as the author of a number of books on the subject.

About 12 years or so after I had been one of Thomas Bryson's students, I was working in the North-east of England as Deputy Engineer and Surveyor to the Houghton-le-Spring Urban District Council. Houghton-le-Spring is a town, predominantly a mining community, in the middle of the Durham coalfield. One evening I was attending a social function of some sort, probably something to do with Council affairs, when I was engaged in conversation with a chap who said he recognised my Wigan/Lancashire accent. He was intrigued by meeting a Wigan lad who was so far from home; I was equally

intrigued as to how he could recognise my Wigan accent.

When I told him that I was a civil engineer and surveyor with the local council he asked me if I had ever attended Wigan Tech. And then he revealed that his name was Bryson! He was Tom Bryson's son who was employed as, I think, a mining engineer and surveyor, or a mine manager, in the mining industry in the Houghton-le-Spring area. Obviously, he would have spent a few years living in the Wigan area when his father was at Wigan Tech., which would explain how he was so readily able to recognise my Wigan accent!

By an amazing coincidence his father, by now elderly and rather frail, was staying with him on a visit and a few days later I went to see the old man. Although I don't think he really remembered me in any sort of detail, he did recall a couple of "strange" students in his surveying classes one year who didn't seem really to fully belong to the mining surveying fraternity!

It really is a small world!

**Harold Knowles**  
30 Drayfields  
Littlemoss  
Droylsden  
Manchester M43 7ET

**I.M. Morgan**  
4 Green Barn Way  
Blackrod  
Bolton BL6 5TA

## Who says Lancashire is Damp?

Dear Sir,

I found J.H. Ollerton's article in the latest issue of *Past Forward* most interesting.

I note that his schoolmaster had told him that the damp atmosphere of Lancashire was essential for the processing of cotton. I was taught the same thing at school, and, I would guess it is still being taught, probably because textbook writers are notorious for copying from each other. The atmosphere of Lancashire, however, is not especially damp as I demonstrated some years ago by taking relative humidity readings kindly provided by Wigan Grammar School and comparing them with readings taken at meteorological station in Kent. I later found that the Met. Office already had figures confirming this.

Water certainly played a part in the siting of the cotton industry in Lancashire, but it was in the form of the fast-flowing streams that powered the early mills.

## HE'S THE ONE IN THE 'PERSIL' WHITE SHIRT



This quaint school-yard picture has been kindly loaned by a very good friend of the Heritage Service, and *Past Forward*, Colin Bean. It shows the St. Michael and All Angels C of E Infants School in 1932. Even then Colin stood out – he's the one in the 'Persil-white' shirt!

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# Who? Where?

There have been positive identifications for two of the photographs in the last issue. The school class (bottom left) is Dicconson Street Wesleyan, Wigan, c. 1947. Mrs E M Ormrod of Southport has no doubt that the photograph of the hunt (top right) shows a green in Newburgh where her cousin used to live; the house in the background is called 'Mooncroft'.

