

# PAST FORWARD

ISSUE No. 30

SPRING 2002



The Newsletter of Wigan Heritage Service

**FREE**

## From the Editor

It's hard to believe - issue no. 30 already! How time flies. I can honestly say that, when *Past Forward* was conceived a decade ago, I never envisaged a fraction of the success which it has achieved, not just locally but nationally and even internationally. To the best of my knowledge, there is nothing else like it - so a very big thank you to you, the readers, for your feedback and encouragement, and to all the contributors - without you, this success story would not have been possible.

It can be invidious to mention names, but such contributors as Ernie Taberner, Harold Smith, Harold Knowles, James Fairhurst and Neil Cain do spring immediately to mind, as people who have been 'on-board' almost from day one. Two other 'old friends' - Harry Entwistle (alias Don B Norton) and Kenneth Lucas - have sadly died within the last few weeks. Harry lived in Ince, of which he was a great champion, in the local press and in *Past Forward*, in which I was pleased to feature many of his letters and articles. Kenneth was a Hindley man, and never tired of singing the town's praises and stirring so many memories of days gone by - he did a great deal to revive the name of Lily Brayton, and latterly provoked great discussion in *Past Forward* about t'Hut. Ken's final letter to me appears on Page 35. We will miss them both.

But things move on. The plans for producing *Past Forward* on audio-cassette tape are progressing, and during 2002, the first tapes should appear, in conjunction with the magazine. Since I first mentioned the project, I have been very pleased to receive a lot of positive feedback, particularly from or on behalf of partially sighted readers. One lady, for example, has been telling me how she reads out every word to her blind husband, and at the age of 80, this can become quite a strain.

Ashton-in-Makerfield, and Garswood in particular, figures very prominently in this latest issue, which once again contains not only articles from the old faithfuls but also from a number of first-time contributors as well. There is also a new feature of readers' mystery photographs, as well as the Heritage Service's own, and the second in Gerald Rickards' excellent series of line drawings of local townships. I am sure you will find it a good read.

All comments and correspondence should be addressed to:  
Editor, 'Past Forward',  
Wigan Heritage Service, Market Suite,  
The Galleries, Wigan WN1 1PX

## A FINAL FAREWELL

It was sad to hear the news of the death of Roy Wareing, a very dear friend both to the Heritage Service and to Wigan Pier. Fittingly, the church was packed for Roy's funeral service, and it was good to see a display of the canal art for which Roy was particularly noted. It was not a mournful occasion - Roy would have hated that, for he was never one to grumble, and always lived life to the full.

We bade our first farewell to Roy five years ago, when he had to take early retirement due to ill-health. Roy was devastated to have to go, because he loved his work as a heritage technician, based at Wigan Pier, where he had worked since 1989. His association with Wigan Pier, however, went back much further. His speciality was canal art, which he demonstrated at the Heritage Centre at the Pier from its opening in the mid 1980's. Roy loved the Pier, and his appointment to the staff there



*Roy Wareing*

was a natural progression - his dedication and enthusiasm were infectious.

But sad though he was to have to leave, Roy remained cheerful and positive to the very end, continuing the love of archery which he and his wife Pat shared together even when he was confined to a wheelchair. He was a truly lovely man, whose friendliness and love for life we will always remember. Our sympathy goes out to Pat and all his devoted family.

Readers of *Past Forward* will be interested in a new Wigan web site - [www.LQQK.co.uk](http://www.LQQK.co.uk) - which I came across recently. It includes lots of old photographs of the borough, a quiz, memories, facts about Wigan - and much, much more. Well worth a look. *Ed.*

### **COPY DEADLINE**

**Please note that the copy deadline for issue no 31 of *Past Forward* is 1 June.**

## 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**

**£8.00**

PER MORNING/AFTERNOON SESSION

**£12.00**

PER EVENING SESSION  
**COMMERCIAL RATE**

**£19.50**

PER MORNING/AFTERNOON/  
EVENING SESSION

*If you are interested, contact  
Philip Butler*

**Tel (01942) 828128**

**Cover:** St. Andrew's Mission, Garswood, Walking Day and 'Field Treat', 2 June 1951. At the end of a 'Procession of Witness', a 'Field Treat', or outdoor party, was once a popular 'treat' at the end of the walk. (More Garswood pictures on p22).

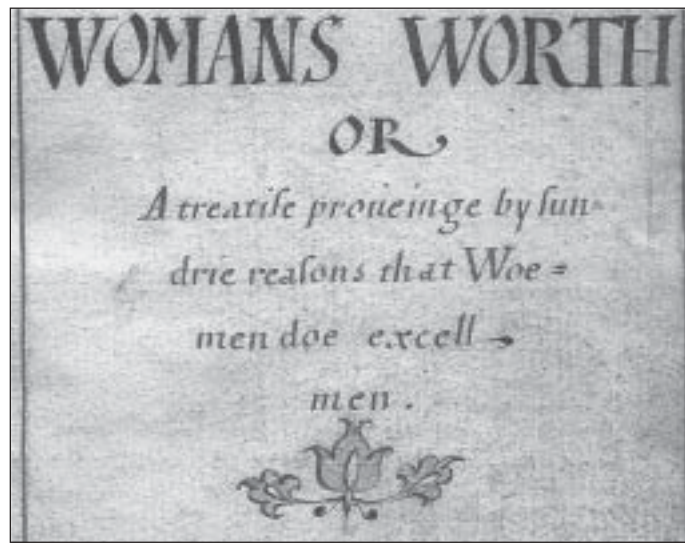
# A hidden gem in the Archives

SINCE coming to work at the Archives last June I have encountered many extremely important and interesting documents and publications. Occasionally something stops you in your tracks as being particularly special.

When working with early archives I have always felt a strange link with the author of the documents. My first experience of this was way back in 1974 on a visit to, of all places, Wigan Archives at Leigh Town Hall. In those days the archives were situated in the depths of the basement, haunted now as then by Len Hudson, the demon of the photographic darkroom.

It's hard to describe the thrill I experienced when allowed to handle the Bradshaigh Orders (1635-1698), a notebook bound by a mediaeval missal concerning mining operations at Haigh. As I looked at the scratched marks of the miners, similar to mason's marks found in churches, I felt a direct link with those early Wigan miners who had descended the shafts in the Haigh woods.

27 years later, after spells working and studying in coalmines, then as curator of the Lancashire Mining Museum, Salford for 15 years, I find myself experiencing the same sensation in the same building. While searching the Archives strongroom for a requested item I was diverted to the rare books section. One small volume had 'Womans Worth' written on its dust cover. The volume measures 9cm x 5cm, 182 pages, 93 of text. It was purchased for the Wigan Reference Library in March 1904.



## Women's Movement 350 years old?

Many readers might think of the women's movement emerging in noticeable form towards the end of the 19th century. As early as 1529 a text which was to become the standard for many generations and much translated was *De Nobilitate et Praecellentia Foeminei Sexus* (On the Nobility and Pre-eminence of Women), by Henricus Cornelius Agrippa, circulated in England throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. Apart from this earlier work only Henry Care's *Female Pre-eminence* of 1670 was to be available to the like minded student in the 17th century. As our work is earlier than Care's there is every chance it is an important and unique study.

An E-mail to acknowledged expert Professor Kari McBride at Arizona University Department of Women's Studies brought an enthusiastic response: "What a find! I wish I could hop on a plane right now and visit you to see this little treasure". Incidentally, I am indebted to Kari for

background information on the subject of early English women's literature.

In *Womans Worth* we get an insight into a well educated 17th century woman systematically laying down her strongly held views. Women writers had by the early 17th century one common aspect in their work, that of promoting an alternative culture alongside the dominant male culture. Women had to negotiate inventively the restraints, formal, social and moral imposed upon them. Such strategies, as seen in *Womans Worth*, could take the form of a challenge to the authority of male readings of the scriptures. If this private work had been widely published at the time, who knows how events might have been brought forward by at least a few generations.

## Education lacking, of low priority and quality

In the 17th century lower class women's education was as good as their brothers. Strangely we find that the daughters of the better

classes had to determinedly search for good sources of education. Girls' residential schools were few and far between. Many girls were taught in the home by mother or occasionally by private tutors, and more often than not schooled in the fields of reading, writing, sewing and the management of household matters.

Some women, though, were more determined to acquire knowledge, so much so that they were held in a certain degree of awe by those around them. These women were definitely the minority as Jonathan Swift (1667-1745) sadly stated, probably 50 years after *Womans Worth* was produced, "that not one gentleman's daughter in a thousand should be brought to read her own natural tongue, or be judge of the easiest books that are written in it."

Many men of the time stated that women were best kept in subjection and that the lack of decent educational provision was no bad thing. Other literary male figures of the time felt that the lack of an educational option was leading women of the higher classes to their gambling habits and general frivolous attitudes.

## Time to take pen to paper

Our author, sadly unknown, obviously must have been fuming with the attitudes of those men around her. Perhaps her lack of opportunity to debate their prejudices head-on inspired her to at least study the evidence from the

*Continued on page 4*

# A hidden gem in the Archives

Continued from page 3

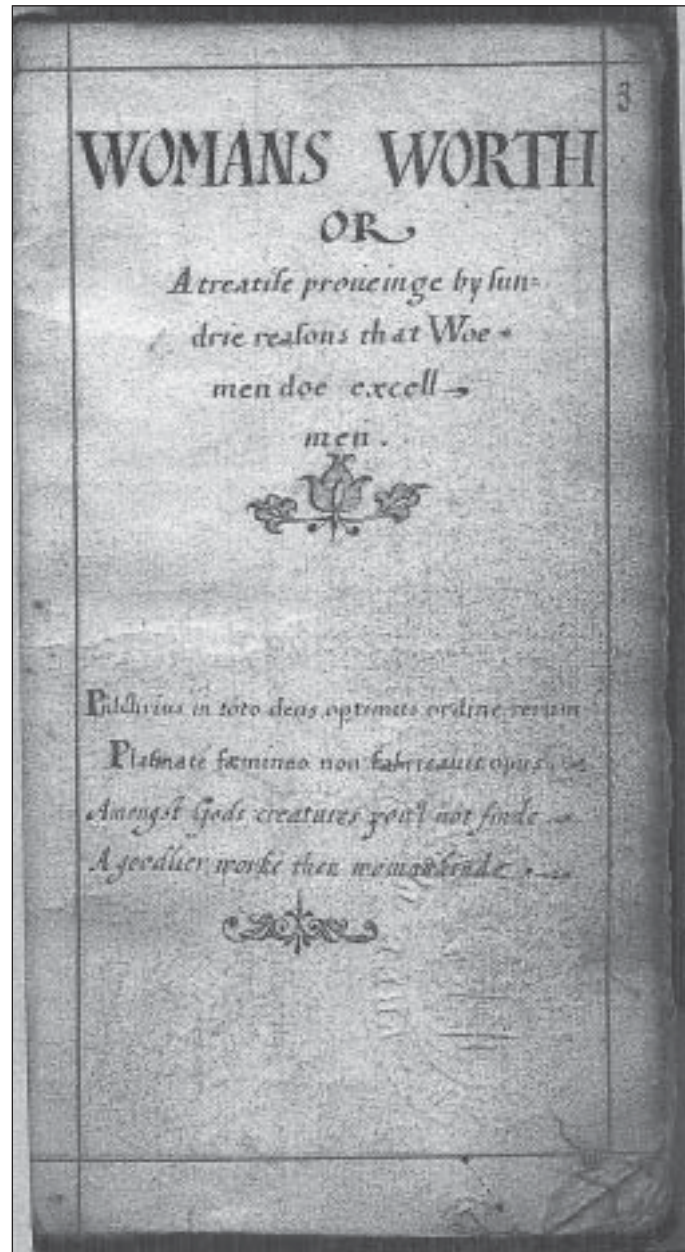
scriptures and produce her private study, to be 'dipped into' when needed. Perhaps also she showed or lent her study to other women and even may have set up a discussion group for those with similar views?

The well read and Latin educated author of *Womans Worth* obviously felt so strongly about her life of subjection that she began to pen her thoughts. She begins with references to women featuring in the Bible. Chapter 1 is headed **Eve more excellent than Adam** where our author argues that the name signifies 'life', that Eve is the mother of all men and women living, and that Adam 'signifieth nothing else but clay, or red earth'.

Chapter 2 is entitled **Eve less sinful than Adam** where the argument is put forth that '*women do excell men in virtues and rare endowments of the minde, and I think we shall finde that herein also women doe farre outstrip men*'.

After the next chapter entitled **Mary make(s) amends for Eves fault**, Chapter 4 is headed **Women more chaste than men** where in her summing up our author declares that '*the scripture is full of women who kept their conjugal knott entire and inviolable. But of men that are commended in this kind, I read not of any but famous; or rather infamous they are for the contrarie views of incontineny and uncleanness*'.

Chapter 5 propounds **Women more religious than**



**men**, followed by Chapter 6 **Women loved Christ more than men**. We arrive at Chapter 7 to learn why we should consider **Women wiser than men** and '*we will seek further and see whether women be destitute of wisdom valour and suchlike virtues which men call manlike and doe thereby engross them to themselves*'.

Chapter 8, **Women more valiant than men**, begins with '*YEA that which men appropriate to themselves as their peculiar priviledge and belonging to them alone, to witt, courage and valour shall we finde none of this in women? Yes if wee looke narrowlie into the booke of God we shall read that*

*womans fortitude and magnanimity hath not come short of mens*'.

A diversion follows in Chapter 9 with the argument **Womans badness better than mans goodness**. Once more through scriptural extracts the author concludes (debatably!) that

even the extremes of female bad behaviour are still superior to mans attempts at virtuous living!

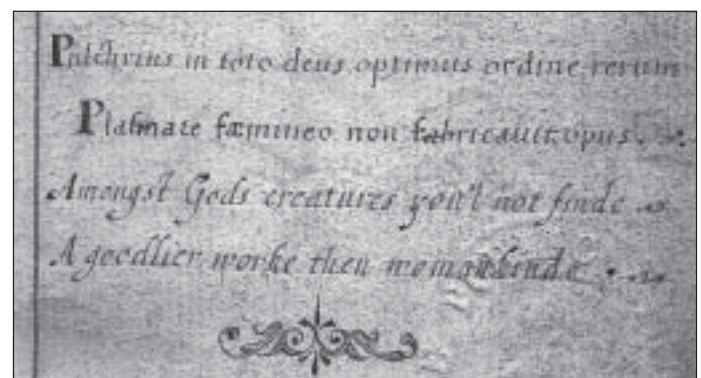
Chapter 10, **Women bare rule over men**, introduces the debate with '*I say that shee should have the preheminy and bare rule over men but I have no sooner spoken of power and authoritie but mee thinkes I heare some man begin to interrupt mee and go about to stop my mouth with that punishment which was layd upon the woman*'.

The lengthy Chapter 11, **Women more charitable than men**, brings the study to a close but the ruling of the following 45 pages perhaps signifies a much more extensive work was planned!

As I mentioned earlier, one of the powers of the archives is the physical connection with the author, the ink on the paper, the fingerprint alongside the occasional mistake; to hold this lady's study in your hands 350 years after it's production is a thrill open to anyone who makes use of the superb Archive collection held in Leigh Town Hall.

The subject matter of *Woman's Worth*, especially in view of its period, astonished and excited me, as much as I might get excited by the spare parts manual for my 1958 Greeves trials motorcycle!

Alan Davies  
Heritage Officer  
(Archives)



# Great Days on the Great Central

*PAST FORWARD* issue 22 contained a photograph showing railwaymen at the Lower Ince shed of the old Great Central Railway taken in the late 1920's. Soon afterwards I received a letter from Fred Darbyshire of Engineer Street in Ince putting names to some of the faces in the photograph. As my uncle Stanley Morris was one of the men in the picture I used Fred's letter to prompt Stan's memories of life working on the Great Central over 70 years ago.

The Great Central started life well after the other railways serving Wigan. As the Wigan Junction Railway, with a terminus near Darlington Street, it opened to passengers in April 1884. The plan to push on north beyond Wigan along the Douglas Valley only produced a short extension, via the now demolished "Smoothing Iron" bridge by Peppermill Brass Foundry, to the old Central Station which is now the site of the car park at the top of Station Road. This opened in 1892. The Junction Railway was absorbed into the Great Central Railway, along with the Liverpool, St. Helens, and South Lancashire Railway, in 1906. The Great Central was in turn absorbed into the London and North-eastern Railway in 1923. The goods engines working over these lines were in part located at the Lower Ince shed in the area bounded by Ince Green Lane, Warrington Lane and Darlington Street. Life at this shed features heavily in this story.

## Started as a cleaner

My uncle Stan went to work there at the age of 18 in 1925. Having passed an interview at offices near London Road, Manchester,

he started his railway days as a cleaner. He told me that a team of four to six lads would clean the engines which, according to Fred Darbyshire, were mainly designated J10s and J11s.

Duties were allocated each day by Fred Ford, the shed foreman. Part of a cleaner's duties involved



*A 'Director' class locomotive of the Great Central typical of the 1920's*

coaling the engines which would usually require the shifting of between four and six tons. Before automated coaling machinery was installed, the men had to manhandle a number of one hundredweight baskets, each man taking one side whilst his mate lifted the other, until the task was completed.

Billy Greenhough – one of the men on the photo in issue 22 – would light the fires in the locomotive fireboxes before the engine crews arrived; at which point the fireman would raise steam by stoking the fire. Stan told me that there was a science to stoking and that shovelfuls of coal had to be placed accurately around the firebox in a set manner. As well as keeping an efficient fire, the fireman had to keep the correct level of water in the boiler and ensure that the pressure was maintained for efficient

steaming. Fred Darbyshire knew Billy Greenhough in later years when, unfortunately, his eyesight had deteriorated to the point where he had had to move to working in the store.

A heavy-handed driver could make for hard work as far as the fireman was concerned, added to which

Wigan coal could be dirty stuff, necessitating regular cleaning of the fire throughout the day. This was hard physical work but it would seem that whoever you talk to will tell you the camaraderie was first class.

Some of the other men working at Ince shed at around this period were: Jack Green, Jonty Banks, Tommy Lee, Arthur White, Jimmy Barker, the Parkinson brothers (Bert and Fred), J. Atherton, 'Tuggy' Harford, Bob and Harry Maybury, Bob and Pete McSorley, Harold Livesey, Bill Dutton, Jack McCann, Harry Norris and 'Sergeant Major' Christie.

## 'The Count'

The Great Central having been taken over by the L.N.E.R. (does anyone recall the L.N.E.R. sign on the side wall of Woolworth's?) Stan was

sent to work for a spell at Grantham, along with Tommy Anglesea from Poolstock, Bill Pendlebury from Manchester and a character Stan remembers as 'The Count'. 'The Count' would borrow enough money from others to buy a beer in a local pub, then settle himself at the piano and play for tips. The others had to recover their original stake by visiting the pub and recoup it in the form of beers that 'The Count' had lined up. This often required them calling in on the way to work! A health and safety man's nightmare.

Next up for Stan was a three week spell at Sandringham where he recalls having fried bananas served to him at breakfast, which left him averse to bananas ever-after, and a chip shop at nearby Hunstanton which proudly proclaimed 'Under Royal Patronage'. King George V must have enjoyed a bag of chips!

From Sandringham the four lads moved on to King's Lynn where they got digs together in the same house; however, this meant that to reach their room they all had to pass through the bedroom of the owners, together with that of the three daughters! The lads quickly worked out that the couple running the lodgings saw the chance of pairing off their daughters, but as soon as they caught sight of the girls they decided to flit and drew lots as to who would throw the bags out of the window to the others.

The next lodgings proved to be a paradise by comparison, with a glass of beer on the table and best butter. Bill Pendlebury had never had butter and refused it, whereupon the landlady said that she

*Continued on page 6*

# A Postscript...



Elsie Laing c.1905.

Regular readers of *Past Forward* may recall an article titled: 'Lives of a Victorian Family Revealed in a Scrapbook' (*Past Forward* no. 18, Spring 1998).

The article related to the Laing family, and in particular Alexander Laing, who removed from Charnock Richard to Wigan on his retirement where he had been Headmaster of Charnock Richard C. of E. School for 30 years. Until his death at the age of 73, in 1932, Mr. Laing resided at 46 Park Road, Wigan. The writer of the article stated that he had believed this address had remained a Laing family home after the death of Mr. Laing.

Canon Malcolm Forrest, Rector of Wigan, has recently sent me information which confirms that 46 Park Road, Wigan, did remain a Laing family home right up to 1981.

Miss Elsie Laing, the daughter of Mr. Alexander Laing apparently never married. She was a member, as was her father, of Wigan Parish Church. She was a retired Headmistress of a Bolton

school, and an accomplished pianist and needlewoman to the very end. The Rector recalls a kindly lady, formal but with a fine sense of humour, to whom he took the Sacrament every month from March 1975 until her death; she knew by heart every Collect in the Book of Common Prayer.

Elsie Laing, died on 18 November 1981, aged 86.



The Laing family c.1902. Mr. and Mrs. Laing with their children, Harold (left), Elsie and Alexander jnr.

## Great Days on the Great Central

*Continued from page 5*

wasn't lowering her standards and that if he wanted margarine he could spread it himself!

### 'How do you fire up?'

After the spell in East Anglia, Stan returned to the Ince shed and in about three years was promoted to spare fireman. Once again this involved an interview at the Manchester offices where he was expected to give correct answers to such questions as: "How do you fire up? What is the optimum working pressure in the boiler and how do you obtain that pressure? How hot should be boiler be? How do you stoke a boiler?" Stan passed this hurdle and started acting as spare fireman should a driver's regular mate not turn up. He still has his log book for

this period showing the date, engine number, driver, time of working and the running total of firings he had performed.

The anecdotes old railwaymen can recount are many and varied, but one of the most common is that of cooking on the shovel, and both Stan and Fred make mention of it. The steam injector was used to clean off the blade of the shovel, and then bacon, eggs and fried bread would be prepared, often – in the case of the morning runs to Manchester Central (now the GMEX Centre) – to an audience of salivating

commuters as delicious smells rose into the early morning air. Stan's story of shooting driver Algy Horrocks's breakfast out of the chimney by accident illustrates why modern diesel engines fail to fascinate most of us in the way old steam engines did.

Stan's last job on the railway before redundancy in the dark days of the 1930's, was working out of Altrincham on tank engines hauling local passenger trains. He remembers that non-stop commuter trains such as the 5 pm would do the 15 miles from Oxford Road Manchester to

Altrincham in 15 minutes at 60 mph average speed.

### 'The big boys'

Most of his railway days had been spent working on the work horses of the Great Central – the tanks and goods engines – but we ended our chat with his memories of seeing 'the big boys' – the Atlantics and Pacifics – at weekends. I remembered that a few years ago I had seen another of these larger types (a Director Class) at the preserved Great Central Line at Loughborough. Maybe if I shut my eyes and focus on that engine I can transport myself back to Wigan's long gone railway.

The railway may be gone but some of the railwaymen are still with us. I would be delighted to hear from anyone who may recall either Stan Morris or my cousin Ben Langford of Crow Orchard Terrace, Lower Ince who worked on the Great Central.

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

Date	Driver	Time	Notes
July 24 <sup>th</sup>	H. Mayhew	1:00 pm	1820
July 24 <sup>th</sup>	W. Wright	6:00 am	1812
July 24 <sup>th</sup>	H. Mayhew	8:00 am	1826
July 24 <sup>th</sup>	H. Mayhew	11:00 am	1838
Aug 1 <sup>st</sup>	H. Mayhew	6:00 am	1820
Aug 1 <sup>st</sup>	J. Jarrin	7:00 am	1833
Aug 10 <sup>th</sup>	J. Jarrin	7:25 am	1823
Aug 15 <sup>th</sup>	J. Jarrin	0:20 am	1833
Aug 19 <sup>th</sup>	F. Barber	10:45 pm	1820
Aug 20 <sup>th</sup>	J. Jarrin	1:00 pm	1812
Aug 20 <sup>th</sup>	H. Mayhew	2:40 pm	1826
Aug 21 <sup>st</sup>	H. Mayhew	1:00 pm	1838
Aug 21 <sup>st</sup>	H. Mayhew	11:00 am	1820
Aug 21 <sup>st</sup>	H. Mayhew	7:00 am	1833
Aug 26 <sup>th</sup>	C. Cordan	11:00 am	1820
Sept 8 <sup>th</sup>	J. Horrocks	12:40 pm	1823
Sept 9 <sup>th</sup>	J. Jarrin	6:20 am	1833

Stan Morris's log for summer 1930 showing drivers' names.

# James Hilton

THE NOVELIST and scriptwriter James Hilton is rightly regarded as one of Leigh's most famous sons. Born in a humble terraced house, he rose to become a best selling novelist and one of the highest paid scriptwriters of his time. Many of his books were turned into blockbuster Hollywood films including *Lost Horizon*, *Random Harvest* and *Goodbye Mr. Chips*.

James Hilton was born on 9 September 1900, at 26 Wilkinson Street, Leigh. He was the only child of John Hilton, a schoolmaster, and his wife Elizabeth (nee Burch), who had also been a schoolteacher prior to James's birth. As a small boy James was taken to Walthamstow, where his father had obtained a post as headmaster of an elementary school, a post he retained for many years. James was educated at Walthamstow and at the age of 14 became a pupil at The Leys, a boarding school in Cambridge, where he became the editor of the school magazine and wrote numerous short stories, articles and poems. He also began writing a longer work which was eventually published as his first novel under the title *Catherine Herself*. This was published in 1920 when he was an undergraduate at Christ's College, Cambridge. After obtaining his B.A. degree in English and History, James earned his living through journalism, writing articles and book reviews and in his spare time working steadily on a succession of novels. He said later, "I was not exactly overburdened with royalties".

For more than 10 years he worked away in this manner, living modestly with his parents at their home in London and later at Woodford Green, Essex. His first real break came in 1933 with the publication of *Lost Horizon*, a haunting story of a lost civilisation hidden in a remote valley in Tibet. This was awarded the Hawthornden Prize, an award made annually for the best novel written by a British novelist under the age of 40. He followed this success with *Goodbye Mr. Chips*, the charming story of a venerable schoolmaster who looks back with affection on his years as a classics teacher at a boys' school. The character of "Chips" was based partly on Hilton's own father and partly on Mr. W.H. Bagnard, the revered classics mater at The Leys. The success of *Lost Horizon* and *Goodbye Mr. Chips* was so great that James Hilton's name became a household word in Britain and America, and he was invited to Hollywood to work on the film scripts of these and other novels.

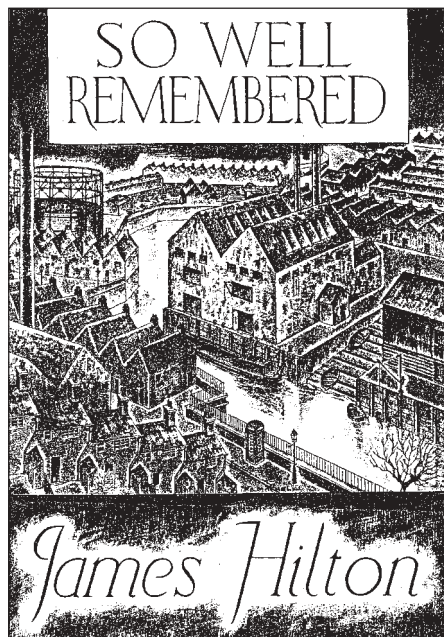
After some years he decided to settle permanently in Hollywood, working on films based on his own novels and on other projects including the script of *Mrs.*

## A famous son of Leigh



*Miniver* (1942), for which he won an Oscar, and *Madame Curie* (1944), which he narrated. He befriended the other English expatriates in California including Greer Garson and Ronald Colman, soon feeling at home in America. As well as working on films he continued to write distinguished novels such as *We Are Not Alone* (1937), *Random Harvest* (1941), *Nothing So Strange* (1948) and *Time and Time Again* (1953). He died in California in December 1954 at the early age of 54.

Although he only spent a few years living in Leigh he never forgot his Lancashire roots and returned to visit Leigh whenever he could. His parents' home at Woodford Green was renamed "Leigh" in honour of his birthplace.



Moreover, two of his novels have a Lancashire setting, *And Now Goodbye* and *So Well Remembered*. Published in 1931, *And Now Goodbye* is a moving love story set in the fictional town of 'Browdley', which is clearly based on Leigh. There are interesting descriptions of the town and its people, and the novel is well worth reading for its acute observation of ordinary men and women. Hilton excelled at describing solid, believable characters: people who are recognisably the same as those we know in real life.

*So Well Remembered*, published in 1947, is a long family saga, again set in 'Browdley', and depicting the life and background of George Boswell, a Councillor who also runs a printing press and edits a weekly newspaper. *So Well Remembered* is filled with memorable characters and incidents and – in common with the novels of Howard Spring and Francis Brett Young – gives a fascinating insight into the fabric of English life.

Sadly, both these Lancashire novels can only be obtained in second-hand bookshops. Indeed it is regrettable that much of Hilton's finest work is out of print, although his films continue to be in demand and many are available on video. To help remedy this situation a James Hilton Society has now been formed to promote interest in his life and work, and to persuade publishers to reissue his books. Anyone interested can obtain details from myself at the address below.

**Dr. J.R. Hammond**  
(Chairman of the James Hilton Society)  
49 Beckingthorpe Drive  
Bottesford  
Nottingham NG13 0DN

● On 18 May 2002 the Society will arrange a conference at Leigh, Lancashire, the town where James Hilton was born. The aim will be to discuss the novels set in Lancashire, especially *So Well Remembered* and *And Now Goodbye*. We will also discuss Hilton's fictional town of "Browdley", which is presumably based on Leigh. A guided tour of Leigh will be included as an optional extra.

The novels will be introduced by John Hammond and Laurence Price, the Chairman and Secretary of the James Hilton Society.

The house where Hilton was born, 26 Wilkinson Street, still stands today, and we will also be able to see the handsome plaque commemorating him which stands in Leigh Town Hall.

The conference will be of interest to many of our members, and we hope it will be of particular interest to members in Lancashire.

# Two Courageous Gentlemen of Leigh

## Death of a Waterloo Veteran in Leigh - Benjamin Baddeley died April 1873

**WE HAVE** to record this week the death of one more of the very few now living who, in the beginning of the present century, helped to overthrow the mightiest of conquerors – the great Napoleon – on the field of Waterloo. We refer to that much-respected townsman, Mr. Benjamin Baddeley who passed from amongst us on Saturday morning last at the age of 79. The life of this old veteran deserves to be recorded as a model that all young men entering into the world and all its troubles would do well to copy.

He entered the British Army in the year 1812, and joined the 23rd Royal Welch Fusiliers then operating in Spain under the command of the Duke of Wellington. He was present at all the great engagements fought under the commander until the close of the war in 1815, including the battles of Vittoria, Nive, Nivelle, Orthes, Toulouse, the Pyrenees, Waterloo and was also at the capture of Paris.

After the Army of occupation had been withdrawn from France, Mr. Baddeley served in Gibraltar, the West Indies, and several of the British Colonies, until the year 1834, when he was discharged from the Army at his own request, on a pension, after a service of 23 years. He possessed the medals for the Peninsula campaigns, with clasps

Dear Sir,

I have been reading issue no. 29 of your splendid magazine *Past Forward*, and read with some interest the article entitled 'The Hitchen name in Wigan'. I was particularly interested in 'The Dragoon who served under Wellington', and this has prompted me to write to you with regards to another brave soldier of the Wellington era who is buried in the Leigh Cemetery; his name is Benjamin Baddeley. His Battle Honours are inscribed on his tombstone. This is a gentleman who served his country, and his community with distinction.

The public of Leigh may be unaware of another courageous gentleman who is also buried in the Leigh Cemetery. His name is Alfred Wilkinson V.C. (the Victoria Cross is the highest honour that this country can bestow on its servicemen), who came unscathed through World War I, only to die a tragic death at the age of 43 years.

Thanks to Leigh Local History Service, I have written a short history of these two gentlemen who lived respected, and died regretted, and should not be forgotten.

**John A Christy**  
1 Edinburgh Drive  
Hindley Green  
Wigan WN2 4HL

for the various actions, and a special medal conferred on him for the Battle of Waterloo.

Some time after his discharge from the army Mr. Baddeley was appointed station-master at Bradshawleach, and afterwards removed to the larger and more important station of Kenyon Junction, where he served the company for nearly a quarter of a century.

He was compelled to resign through age and failing health; his service was rewarded by a gratuity and a pension for life, and a gold medal was also subscribed for and presented to him by the public. Such was the eventful, honoured,

and useful life of this brave soldier. He was buried on Tuesday last, the 15th instant, in Leigh cemetery; at the conclusion of the burial service Rev. Father White who officiated said that he had not only served his King and country in many a hard fought field, but also the Great King, whose banner was imperishable, and who had now taken him to himself to receive his reward.

*(From the Leigh Chronicle 19 April 1873)*

## Lance-Corporal Alfred Wilkinson V.C.

**LANCE-CORPORAL** Alfred Wilkinson V.C. was born in Leigh, Lancashire. He enlisted in the 1/5th Manchester Regiment on 12 December 1914, and went out to France in July 1916. It is remarkable that although he took part in a vast number of engagements for two and a half years he escaped without a single scratch. He first went over the top at Fleurs, near Bapaume, in the autumn of 1916 and when the great Battle of the Somme commenced, he went though all the Somme campaign. Then he went to Arras, and took part in the numerous engagements when the Germans were fighting rearguard actions.

Later he went to Ypres, now a heap of ruins, and took part in the third battle of Ypres. Just after the Messines ridge had been blown up, his regiment went there, but soon returned to Ypres, and then took part in the second series of the Somme battles. His Division, the 42nd, were billeted near Peronne, and were resting a few miles from the firing line when the great





German offensive started on 21 March 1918; they escaped with a few casualties, and retired to Corbie.

In September, they took part in the great offensive initiated by Marshal Foch, and afterwards their advance was practically continuous. It was while fighting at Marou, near the big town of Solesmes in October, that the Leigh man performed his heroic act that led to his being awarded the Victoria Cross.

His company, under the command of Lieutenant Lucas, were on a slope, the Germans being in a sunken road only 50 yards distant. The British were advancing, but owing to heavy losses they could not advance any further, and were in peril where they were. The Company Commander asked for a volunteer to go back for reinforcements. One Yorkshireman volunteered, and was shot dead while crossing the 600 yards level field that lay between the Company's position and the main reserve body of the British troops. There were no trees, only a few bushes behind which one could take cover, and very few depressions in the ground, and all this open part was being continually swept by a great German barrage of shells and machine-gun and sniper fire. Three other volunteers were also shot dead in turn – it looked absolute death for anyone else to go – but Lance-Corporal (then Pte.) Wilkinson calmly stepped forward and said that he would try.

Asked by an interviewer if he did not think that he was going to certain death, the Leigh V.C. replied: *"I did not think anything! I knew that somebody had to get back, and I thought that it was to me to get back, I did not think of the consequences or anything else."*

It took him an hour and a half to get across 600 yards of barrage-swept land. Sometimes he crawled on hands and knees, sometimes he ran, taking advantage of every bit of cover. Shells and machine-gun bullets fell all around him, but by extraordinary luck none touched him. He gave the message all right, only for the Commander of the reserves to tell him that it was impossible owing to the intense barrage, especially from the machine-guns.

The Leigh man accordingly went back over the dangerous 600 yards and got through again safely. Under cover of British machine-gun fire Wilkinson's company then fell back in open order to the reserve lines, but lost a considerable number of men in doing so. For the third time Lance-Corporal Wilkinson got across the dangerous zone without a wound. In the afternoon, having been reinforced, the British, including the Leigh man, took the German position and drove the enemy back 1000 yards.

It was for this wonderful brave act that Lance-Corporal Wilkinson was awarded the V.C., invested on him at Buckingham Palace by His Majesty the King. He also received the hearty congratulations of the Divisional Commander, Major-General Solly Flood.

### OBITUARY: Tragic Death of Leigh V.C., 23 October 1940

Mr. Alfred Wilkinson, Leigh's only V.C., died under tragic circumstances on Friday. Employed in the surveyor's laboratory at Bickershaw Collieries, Plank Lane, he was found dead in a chair at noon. Mr. Wilkinson was testing the samples of air taken from different areas of the mine to determine the amount of gas present in order to monitor the amount of ventilation required in any part of the mine.

According to a colleague, Mr. Wilkinson felt unwell, and sat in a chair; it was sometime later that his colleague returned (he had been underground) and found him in the chair as though asleep. All attempts to resuscitate him were made, and Mr. Wilkinson was confirmed dead on the way to hospital.

The post mortem revealed that he had died from carbon monoxide poisoning and a subsequent investigation found that a ventilation pipe had been blocked by a dead bird. He was just 43 years old. On the morning of his death he received a letter informing him that he had been granted a commission in the Pioneer Corps. He left a widow and child. Flags in the town were flown at half-mast and he was buried in Leigh cemetery with full military honours.

## A STORM IN WIGAN

ON Tuesday night . . . Wigan and its neighbourhood were visited with one of the most violent thunder storms ever remembered, although it was of short duration. Westwood House, the seat of C. Walmsley Esq., was struck with the electric fluid about eleven o'clock in the forenoon. Mr. W had called the children out of the dining room (where they were playing) into the library, and three minutes after, the top of the chimney shaft was shattered to pieces, and a tremendous explosion took place in the dining room chimney, which instantly filled the room with sulphur and soot. All in the library were much stunned. Stones and bricks were thrown twenty or thirty yards from the chimney shaft over the fireplace, and the total destruction of a picture of the late Lord Camden, placed there. The report down the chimney was as loud as the discharge of a 24-pound cannon. In the Scholes, which forms a part of Wigan, the electric fluid entered the kitchen window of Mr. Byrom, grocer, and came out of the shop door, without doing any damage; but a small factory in the occupation of Messrs. Acton, Roby and Co. in the immediate neighbourhood of Mr. Byrom's, caught fire, but was soon extinguished. Though not before the man who effected it was much burnt in the hands. A cow was also killed in Haigh, at the same time.

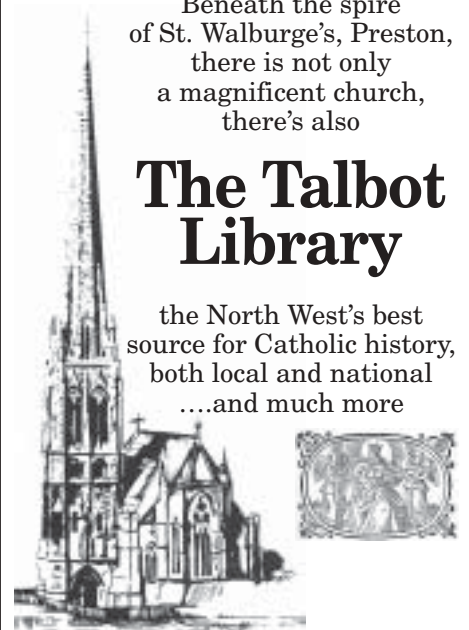
THE TRUTHTELLER  
Vol. 1, No. 34  
12 May 1825

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# ‘What Auntie Winnie Said’

by Joan Francis (nee Coupe), born 7 May 1925

I REMEMBER little of the information given me by my relatives other than the immediate family, but one statement made by Auntie Winnie stuck in my mind – that our ‘Coupe’ name was on the gates of a Wigan Iron Foundry. No further explanation was given by her or asked for by us children on our Sunday visits.

My father, Frank Coupe, served an apprenticeship as a boilermaker at Horwich Locomotive Works and, having to leave as a ‘journeyman’, moved to Liverpool for work. He married Emily Collinson, a nurse from Chorley, in 1917 at Chorley. Frank and Emily finally moved back to Horwich in 1927 when father was re-engaged at the Locomotive Works.

I was fortunate in passing the ‘scholarship’ at 11 years and, after gaining my school certificate at Blackrod and Rivington Grammar School, also started work at the Loco Works in the Cashiers Office in 1941.

## Donned overalls

I met my future husband, Jim Francis from Blidworth in Nottinghamshire, in 1944 when he was on an HM Army course at Bolton Technical College. We were married on 1 May 1948. Demob leave over, Jim donned overalls to work in the machine shops and foundries of L. Gardner and Sons Ltd. of Patricroft, diesel engine manufacturers. Newly married couples had no chance in those days of getting a house and we stayed at mothers until we had saved enough money to buy a small semi at Little Hulton in 1950. In 1957, Jim was appointed the first Works Manager of Gullick Ltd., a small King

Street, Wigan, mining machinery supplier. Gullicks had recently been purchased by William Park and Co. (Forgemaster) Ltd. and were established at Clarington Forge. After working for the same Group my husband was finally appointed Chairman of Dobson Park Industries plc, Clarington, in 1980 and it was after his retirement in 1986 that we both took a closer interest in local history as well as our own family histories.

It was at this time I remembered what Auntie Winnie had told me about our

difficulty in recognising marriage outside their strong Catholic faith.

## Death certificate

Grandfather Richard Coupe’s death certificate was in the family and certified death on 1 January 1932, aged 65; he was described as an engine fitter, railway works, retired. Obtaining his marriage certificate, we found Richard Sylvester Coupe aged 24, an engineer, son of Richard Coupe, an engineer, deceased, married Elizabeth

Crown Lane, Horwich. Grandfather’s birth certificate shows he was born 3 January 1866 at Upholland, his father being Richard Coupe, iron founder and mother Elizabeth, formerly Turner, of Aspull. We were now well and truly in the iron foundry family.

Looking now at the Census Returns of 1871, grandfather Richard was confirmed as aged five years living with his father Richard (45 years) and mother Elizabeth (32), sisters Louisa (17) and Mary Agnes (4) and brother Thomas (2) all living at Lime Vale House, Smithy Brook, Wigan. A domestic servant, Annellin Halliwell aged 21 years, was employed in the household, Richard Senior was described as ‘iron founder’.

Ten years earlier the 1861 Census noted Richard living with his wife Agnes aged 29 at Hindley Hall, Pemberton, not Hindley Hall of Hindley but another of that name between Smithy Brook and Worsley Mesnes – probably an old farmstead. Their children at this time were Louisa aged 7, Amelia of 5 years and Edward of 2 years. It seems the latter two children died with their mother Agnes before 1864 when Richard married his second wife

Elizabeth Turner, daughter of Benedict Turner, a farmer of Highfield, Aspull on 1 August 1864. Father Richard is still noted as iron founder.

Subsequent searches found that Richard Coupe’s first marriage to Agnes Gobin was on 5 May 1852. Agnes was the daughter of James Gobin, a weaver living in Poole Street, Wigan, a street connecting Wallgate with Poolstock Lane.

## Engineering enterprise

The earlier Census of 1851 details great-grandfather



Richard Coupe  
1826 - 1886



Elizabeth Coupe  
1839 - 1978

‘Coupe’ name being on an Iron Foundry gate at Wigan. Dredging my mind for other memories after so long, I can just remember my grandfather, Richard Coupe, a bearded rather refined figure sitting in lonely state in the front parlour of 38 Fox Street, Horwich with Grandma and Aunties Helen (Nellie) and Winifred (Winnie), while I and sister Marjorie suffered the discomfort of sitting on their horse-hair chairs. Unfortunately our Sunday afternoon walk round visits were inhibited by the fact that my father had married mother outside the Catholic Church and the older Coupes had

Crossley aged 24, daughter of James Crossley, a Mersey River pilot on 29 November 1890. Richard lived at 14 Carnarvon Road, Walton, while Elizabeth lived at 16 Carnarvon Road, Walton. The marriage was solemnised at the church of the Blessed Sacrament, Walton in the district of West Derby. We were puzzled that a son of an iron founder of Wigan lived in the Liverpool area. He had seemingly gone to Liverpool to seek work, the same reason later took him to Horwich to work at the then new L. & Y. Locomotive Works. The 1892 Bolton Directory notes Richard as a fitter living at 4

Richard Coupe, aged 24, living at home with his father Thomas Coupe (62) and mother Ellen (59) in Clayton Street, a side street off the bottom of Wallgate, Wigan. He has an unmarried sister, Mary (27) and Richard (24) is noted as 'engine maker employing 3 men'. Brother Joseph of 23 years is also noted as engine maker while brother Edward of 20 years is an apprentice. Here we have the first evidence of an engineering enterprise. Father Thomas Coupe is noted as 'cotton work sizer' – a textile finisher.

The 1841 Census of great-great-grandfather's family includes sons Thomas (20) and Edward (10) and daughters Ellen (20) and Mary (15). Richard and Joseph, then 14 and 13 years of age respectively, were not included and could well have been away serving an engineering apprenticeship – possibly at Haigh Foundry, the big engine builders of the area. A search of the local area census unfortunately shows nothing. Great-grandfather Richard Coupe was baptised 20 October 1825 at Wigan St. John's Roman Catholic Church.

Having established the family line and finding the early indication of his business, it seemed worthwhile to follow the course of the Coupe enterprises from then on to wherever it led. The first note of the Coupe name appeared in the Wigan Directory of 1816 when Thomas Coupe was noted as a sizer on New Church Street, being a side street off Standishgate. This was repeated in the 1824/5 Directory as well as Thomas Coupe, Standishgate, cotton manufacturer and Thomas Coupe of Standishgate operating a Fire and Life Office on behalf of the Atlas Insurance Co. Whether these are all our Thomas Coupe we are not certain.

The 1838 Pigot and Sons Directory notes Thomas Coupe as calenderer, tow spinner and bleacher on Clayton Street, Wigan as well as at Haigh. In 1848, the last

entry of Thomas Coupe is as cotton waste spinner of Clayton Street.

## Great Great Grandfather

Great-great-grandfather Thomas Coupe was noted in the 1841 Census as a spinner and a cotton work sizer in 1851. Both he and his wife Ellen originated from Houghton near Haydock and lived on Clayton Street from at least 1838. His brother John Coupe and family also lived on Clayton Street in 1841 and was also a sizer.

It seems certain that Thomas Coupe had some business premises on Clayton Street from the late 1830's. The 1841 map of Wigan Town shows Clayton Street running northwest from Wallgate between Lyon Street and Miry Lane, also off Wallgate. The northeast side of Clayton Street bounded by Wallgate and Brown Street appears to be a long terrace of cottages where the Coupes could have lived. On the opposite southwestern side of Clayton Street are what can best be described as various works buildings interspersed with the odd cottage. On this side towards open ground to the west are a timber yard, a cotton spinning mill, Vulcan Foundry and a large boiler shop with a chimney which could have been part of Victoria Mill fronting on to Miry Lane.

In 1848, Thomas Coupe was working as a cotton waste spinner in Clayton Street, while at the same time James Martlew worked as an iron founder as did Swift and Tickle, both in Clayton Street. The Vulcan Foundry appears to be made up of two separate units on the 1841 map, probably housing the above two iron foundries. The next Directory of 1852/3 details R. & J. Coupe as millwrights and engineers on Clayton Street. The Vulcan Foundry appears to be made up of two separate units on the 1841 map, probably housing the above two iron foundries of James Martlew and Swift and Tickle. The 1851 Census shows

Richard Coupe with his brother Joseph as engine makers employing three men, while brother Edward is a 20-year-old apprentice, probably working with his elder brothers.

## Practically capable

We can reasonably assume that Richard and Joseph Coupe set up their engine building/millwright business about 1850 when Richard was 23 years old and Joseph 22. Apart from being practically capable, they would have been helped by their father, Thomas who had a business background. Thomas, now in his early 60's, would be retired, as there are no further records of his earlier textile operations.

The 1858 Wigan Directory refers to a Richard and Joseph operating as iron founders and engineers on Clayton Street, while in 1861 the business is referred to as Richard, Joseph and Edward Coupe, Iron Founders, Engineers and Millwrights, having now brought in younger brother Edward as a partner. Now being iron founders they must have started their own foundry or taken over the Clayton Street foundry of James Martlew.

An interesting report was published on 29 May 1863 in the *Wigan Observer* headed 'Fall of the Chimney at Messrs. Coupes Foundry'. The report stated that the 90-foot chimney had already shown signs of deterioration with cracks and openings, but it is reported that Messrs. Coupes hoped the chimney would last them out as they were on the eve of moving to more extensive and commodious buildings in Pemberton. This was not to be and the whole of the chimney fell down about 10.00 a.m. on that Tuesday morning. It crashed on to the pattern-room and into the smithy underneath. Luckily the workforce of 40 men and boys were withdrawn from the premises before the fall.

Coupes must have been well on with the building of their new works at Worsley Mesnes and moved everything

over soon after the chimney fall wrecked their Clayton Street premises. Production must have continued apace because, on 22 October 1864, they advertised a range of steam engines for sale in the *Colliery Guardian* under the name of R. J. & E. Coupe, Worsley Mesnes Ironworks, Wigan – the first evidence of their big move from Clayton Street. Some 11 new horizontal steam engines were offered for sale, finished or in progress covering sizes of 24 inch diameter cylinders with a stroke of 4 ft. down to 10 inch cylinders with 1 ft. 8 inch stroke.

## Wide range of plant

To produce engines of this range and size would have required a wide range of plant including large turning, facing and boring lathes, planers, shapers, S/C lathes, drilling and milling machines of all sizes as well as pattern-making and moulding equipment, foundry cupolas and smithy facilities. The Works space and craneage must have been extensive, all requiring financing – a problem that probably led to the above advertised sale of stock and work in progress.

Joseph Coupe died on 19 April 1874 aged only 47 years, of dilated heart and congestion of the brain. His death certificate notes his previous occupation as iron founder and engineer of Worsley Mesnes, Wigan. His wife Alice Mather Coupe died soon after on 13 September 1875.

By this time, after 20 years experience, R. J. & E. Coupe were producing steam winding engines of repute, supplying the expanding coal industry of Lancashire and the rest of the country. One such engine of this period surviving today is that ordered for Bestwood Colliery in Nottinghamshire in 1873. It is interesting to note that Bestwood Colliery was sunk at great financial risk by John Lancaster, who had over the previous 30 years enjoyed extensive experience in building up Wigan Coal and

*Continued on page 12*

# 'What Auntie Winnie Said'

Continued from page 11

Iron Works. Born in Bury he eventually moved to Ince where he and his partners took up mining leases in 1845 from the Kirkless Hall estate near Wigan and formed the Kirkless Hall Coal Co. In 1858 they built Kirkless Iron Works which with their coal interests were finally merged in 1865 into the Wigan Coal and Iron Works Co. Ltd. of which John Lancaster became the Chairman. He was Member of Parliament for Wigan from 1868 to 1874. After an internal dispute he resigned and left the Company in 1869 to set up his newly formed Bestwood Iron and Coal Co. Ltd. soon after.

## Knowledge of Wigan

Lancaster's knowledge of Wigan and its people may have influenced his decision to order a R. J. & E. Coupe engine for one of his new pits at Bestwood, or it may have been its price of £3,640. The engine ran continuously for almost 100 years, until Bestwood Colliery's closure in 1967. The only renewals on the engine since 1876 have been the replacement of the cast iron piston rings and the piston rod glands.

On 2 January 1874 the Colliery Guardian carried a R. J. & E. Coupe advertisement again showing the engraving of Worsley Mesnes Ironworks and specifically referring to their deep mine pump working in the Wigan area capable of lifting 40,000 galls per hour from a depth of 224 yards powered by a 33 inch diameter bore steam engine. A further advertisement in the Colliery Guardian of 15 October offers rolling mill and winding engines for sale as well as their multi tubular feed water heater. Coupes seemed to be broadening the range of equipment on offer.

The 1881 Census return lists Richard Coupe, now aged 55 as a mechanical engineer and iron founder, while Edward Coupe, aged 50, is listed as a master engineer employing 51 persons in the firm of R. J. & E. Coupe.

Another tragedy, however, struck the partnership when Richard, the senior partner, died on 8 May 1886, aged 60, leaving Edward to carry on the business. But it would appear that the continuing financial, supervisory and practical requirements of running this quite complex operation was too great a load for him, and on 7 July 1886, only eight weeks after Richard's death, he placed an advertisement in the Colliery Guardian offering the business and works of Worsley Mesnes Ironworks for sale.

The Ironworks were bought by J. P. & S. Melling, a long standing engineering family operating Ince Forge Co. Ince. Although the 1887/9 Directory still mentions R. J. & E. Coupe, Ironfounders, the 1890 Directory reports Worsley Mesnes Ironwork Co., signifying Mellings had now incorporated the business, and in the 1903 Wigan Directory, the Worsley Mesnes Ironwork Co. of Richmond Street, Worsley Mesnes is noted as 'Late R. J. & E. Coupe'. This is the last recorded use of the old original family name in Wigan engineering. Edward Coupe was listed, as a consultant engineer in the 1891 Census and eventually died in 1897 at Chorlton.

## Forefront

Samuel Melling was a Director and Chairman of both Worsley Mesnes Ironworks Co. and Ince Forge Co. during

the early 1900's. Ince Forge Co. was at the forefront of forging technology and installed a 1,800 ton press during World War I especially for the production of heavy gun breech blocks. The forge remained under the control of the Melling family until the end of World War II, when forging demand started to decline. It was closed and sold in 1946 to William Park & Co. (Forgemasters) Ltd. of Clarington Forge who continued to operate Ince Forge with the old Melling plant supplemented by some transfers from Clarington Forge. In 1979, when heavy forging was fast disappearing, the Forge was finally closed. The Forge site was later used

the reduction in the U.K. coal industry generally from 1950 onwards meant that the heavy, traditional steam powered engineering plant became obsolete and Worsley Mesnes Ironworks gave more attention towards general welded fabrications for both mining and general engineering requirements. After 100 years of heavy steam engine based work it must have been most difficult to change direction but even in 1951, Worsley Mesnes Ironworks Ltd. were advertising as makers of steam and electrically driven winding, hauling and pumping engines as well as of steam hammers, forge and rolling mill plant.

## Difficulties

Trading changes and difficulties continued until on 5 May 1966 the *Lancashire Post* reported 'Wigan Ironworks sold for £63,000'. The company and business of Worsley Mesnes Ironworks Ltd. was bought by Readson Ltd., a Manchester based group of General Engineers. Their intention was to concentrate on plate and boiler engineering and general fabrication work. This pattern of work continued until 1972 when an article in the *Wigan Observer* of 6 October 1972 signalled – 'The Last Act at Ironworks' – with the closure of Readson Engineering at the old Worsley Mesnes Ironworks site. The subsequent housing development marked the demise of Worsley Mesnes Ironworks and the part played by the Coupe family in the industrial heritage of Wigan.

Auntie Winnie would have been pleased to read this story of our Coupe family history.

Acknowledgements to:  
Mike Haddon (Wigan Heritage Service)  
*Wigan Coal and Iron* – D. Anderson and A.A. France  
*Industrial Railways of Wigan Coalfield* – Townley, Smith and Peden  
*Bestwood Colliery* – Dissertation by George V. Bloomfield  
*Stationary Steam Engines* – C. Bowden, G. Cooper and E. McAvoy



Joan Coup marriage to Jim Francis 1 May 1948 (Richard's great granddaughter).

by Gullick Dobson Ltd. the Mining Machinery Division of the then group Dobson Park Industries plc. It was at this stage that the oldest working steam forging hammer was presented to Wigan Pier for permanent display in their car park.

The mining industry gradually moved from steam engine powered equipment towards electrically powered plant from the beginning of the 20th century, and after World War II few if any stationary steam engines were being made. This trend, coupled with

# Every Picture Tells a Story (2)

*“What is the use of a book, thought Alice, without pictures or conversations?”*

*(Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland)*

INDEED, Alice, but what about a book of pictures with no conversations? The answer is, that pictures can make conversations whether viewed alone or in company.

And this is exactly what happened to me on first thumbing through my then new copy of *Around Ashton-in-Makerfield and Golborne*, a compilation of old photographs by Wigan Heritage Service’s own Tony Ashcroft.

First impressions were of infuriation at what I thought was a crass paucity of the written word beneath each photograph. But then, with my own mind running riot at every picture with which I had, in some way, been connected, I envisaged the 128 pages adding a thousandfold thickness to the book with a mortgage-sized over-the-counter cost.

The experience of thumbing leisurely through *Around Ashton-in-Makerfield and Golborne* is a pleasure in itself, but the real satisfaction is in taking the time to sit down and wring from every picture one can identify with, every detail

that comes to mind and in doing so, record them in writing as I have so enjoyed doing since receiving my copy.

## Stag Hotel, Garswood

This picture could have been taken from our front door, at 106 Station Road, the birthplace of eight siblings, I being the sixth born. Strange to relate but up to the gathering following my brother’s funeral two years ago, I had entered *The Stag* portals on less than a handful of occasions.

The venue itself, though, was ever in the day to day rounds of the extensive playground of Garswood’s kids. One of the highlights was arrival, in summer evenings, of open topped charabancs laden with folk of good cheer, and departing with even better cheer.

That was the time to begin the chorus, “Throw us a penny mister”. And more often than not, there were those who were happy to oblige, triggering off scrums that would have graced Central Park. It was on one of these occasions, not being robust

enough to risk a scrum, I was lucky enough to pick up a penny that had been missed. Taking it home with great delight to show mother, I received a severe ticking off for my part in the begging chorus.

But the very earliest memory is one of those inexplicable occasions where the picture in the young mind bears no connection with any chronological event that I can think of. All I remember is standing at our front bedroom window with my sister who pointed to the sky, over the bowling green of *The Stag Hotel*. There, floating lazily on a northerly path, was a huge airship. As the year must have been well after 1918, it is unlikely to have been a Zeppelin, at least not one on a bombing mission as the last previously known air raid occurred six months before I was born in October 1917 .... any clues anyone?

On a pleasanter note, I remember my bird’s eye view of *The Stag’s* bowling green (now a car park I believe) in the summer, fully occupied by shirt-sleeved, cloth-capped miners wearing, possibly for that occasion only, boots or shoes (tha mawnt goo o’ t’ green wi thi clogs on), in which they were allowed to hasten their step, if not break into a bent kneed canter, whilst their hand performed a sort of wide arc scoop, urging their ‘wood’ to ‘run away, run away,’ in the hope that within that diagonal traversal, the tune might be changed to, “It’s a tuch-er”. Or, to his opponent’s tune of, “Oh tha’s lost thar ‘arry.”

A red brick wall ran round three sides of the bowling green. Allowing for the fall of the land from the road, the wall adjacent to the road was about 8 ft. high whilst the opposite side would be at least 10ft. high. A glazed engineering type coping ran

all the way round. Much of the inside was ivy clad, especially that adjacent to Station Road. I look back in amazement now when remembering the way we used to climb up the 10ft. high wall with only the aid of the finger and footholds of the weathered steps the climate had fashioned over the years. It mattered not whether the climb was awarded by a spectacle of any description, it was just a sense of achievement to us.

Alas, one very windy night in December 1922, just like its counterpart in Jericho, *The Stag* wall came a tumbling down. But not before the wind had wreaked havoc in our very own bedroom. One particularly high gust ripped out the whole of our front window which came crashing down onto the bed’s footboard, thus saving the whole thing from falling onto the bed – and we three little mites asleep therein. Luckily, we lived next door to a carpenter who conjured up, from somewhere, a suitable length of timber with which he and my father were able to “sprag” the window temporarily back in its alcove.

Come the following morning, however, looking through our wounded window, it became quite evident that we were only a part of the overall havoc – chimney pots, windows and garden walls had all succumbed to the gale. And this included none other than *The Stag* wall. The result, however, was rather unique, nature, the artist, having decreed that the aforementioned ivy cladding should cling to the last, unwittingly devised a method of assembling a brick tunnel, rather like an elongated entrance to an igloo.

Sadly, pursuit of the almighty pound by everyone, including breweries, brought



*This is what the original Stag Hotel would have looked like around 1900. Built in 1890 and situated at 83 Station Road, one of the early licensed victuallers was a Richard Haydock, who remained there until the early 1900’s. By 1909 John Hamill had taken over. It is still in business.*

*Continued on page 14*

## Every Picture Tells a Story (2)

Continued from page 13

about the destruction of the idyllic scenes that we always claimed as our heritage. The motor car could pay for many, many 'ends' of bowls – all the year round. With that thought in mind, I have to confess that on the last occasion I visited *The Stag*, I thought the rape of the old bowling green had destroyed many happy memories; somehow, the sward will never be the same, and neither will *The Stag*.

### H.J. Evans, Garswood

Beneath the picture of Wigan Road, Ashton we see Bert Evans's errand lad, a well known character in Garswood, Hector Ralphson, holding his errand bike outside Trinity Church, Downall Green. (I had no idea that Bert's fame had spread that far).

My earliest recollections of Bert Evans go back to when he was manager of the Garswood Branch of O. & G. (Oates & G) Rushton Ltd. whose H.Q. overlooked the western side of Wigan Market Square. About the late 20's Bert decided to go it alone and indeed had a wooden store built across the road from Rushtons, who eventually closed their shop down. Funny how little things stick in the mind. In Bert's newly opened shop, chairs were actually provided, not particularly of the dimensions in which one could grab forty winks but at least somewhere for the weary or overweight housewife to take the weight off her feet.

In that period there was a washing powder by the name of *RESTU* and guess who it was that supplied the chairs. What an opportunity for a corny homonym AND an advertising plus. Plastered in large letters on the backs of the chairs was the invitation (to



Before cars became common, shopkeepers frequently employed delivery boys to take groceries to customers by bicycle. Here one such employee of H.J. Evans, grocer and provision dealer of Station Road, Garswood, poses outside Holy Trinity Church. Notice the covered wicker basket in front of the bicycle.

those of brighter wit) **RESTU!**

On Bert's demise, the shop became a fish and chip shop followed by other retail outlets, but the last time I saw it in late 1998, it was a chemist's shop directly opposite the house of my aforementioned late brother.

### The Palace, Bryn Street

Cinema going meant different things to different ages for many decades. On reaching maturity you actually remembered, almost in detail, the film you had just seen. But of the décor or general atmosphere throughout the building, or what went on before the films you could probably remember nothing at all.

Not so at the other end of the age scale. Firstly, it would be most likely that your viewings would be limited to Saturday matinees for which, in the majority of cases, your parents had searched the bottom of their purses for one penny, hence the term *Penny Rush*. Secondly, those pictures that adults watched, were only *fert big uns*.

Of the three Ashton cinemas, I would say that *The Palace* was THE place for the Saturday 'Penny Rush'. Once inside, either via the posh front entrance or the side

entrance (Top Door), Bryn Street could have been a million miles away and I'll bet Mr. Taberner, the manager, often wished that were true – every Saturday afternoon.

Long before the canned musical interludes appeared on the scene, it was everybody for himself. The general scene was like that of a school playground – with upholstered seats, barely visible in the subdued lighting. The occupants (some actually seated) would be engaged in just sitting, if not standing, to find out where that orange peel missile had been fired from, or shouting at the top of his voice to someone he recognised 40 rows of seats away. He might be searching

for a place to dispose of his two mouthfuls of bubble gum (probably in the hope that someone would provide the answer, simply by standing up), or testing out that screaming toy, a free gift in the current copy of a juvenile magazine ... all terrific fun!

Until, that is, Mr. Taberner thought otherwise and stated so by hurriedly and noisily clumping down the side aisle with long cane in hand, down to the bottom door on the left-hand side of the proscenium. I should explain here that once, this was a perfectly good door, complete with half glazed panel but someone, probably panicking to escape the illusion that the advancing train was about to burst through the screen, into the auditorium, had broken it many years ago.

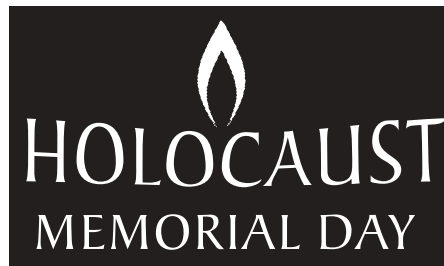
Mr. Taberner had, however, by accident or design, discovered that the plywood replacement provided him with the immediate, if not temporary means of changing Bedlam into Paradise. Half a dozen sharp, staccato raps with his cane on the ready made off-stage reproduction of a Lewis gun, combined with the backstage command UP LIGHTS, worked like magic, which gained him quite a few precious seconds in which to announce in most threatening tones, **"Unless I have silence, I shall stop the show"** – and that was before it started!



*The Palace Cinema, Bryn Street, Ashton-in-Makerfield, gaily decorated in May 1937 to celebrate King George VI's coronation. 'East Meets West' was a 1936 British picture starring George Arliss and Godfrey Tearle, whilst 'The Texas Rangers' was an American cowboy film which featured Fred MacMurray, Jack Oakie and Jean Porter.*

**HOLOCAUST Memorial Day** was commemorated for the second time on 27 January (the 57th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz); this year the national ceremony was held in Manchester. Wigan Council, including the Heritage Service (see p18) once again played a full part in remembering all those who have died as a result of genocide during the 20th century.

Two ceremonies were held in Mesnes Park, Wigan and Firs Park, Leigh, beside the commemorative silver birch trees which were planted last year. Although this year the weather was far from kind (especially during the Wigan ceremony), there was still an encouraging attendance at both ceremonies, led by the Deputy Mayor and Mayoress (Wigan) and Leader of the Council (Leigh). Guests of honour included Aukje Clegg, whose parents were members of the Dutch Resistance during World War



II, and Bill Hampson of the Epiphany Trust. Particularly moving was the contribution of young people from two local schools – Kingsdown High and Bedford High – who gave readings and lit candles in memory of all the victims of genocide.

Exhibitions were also held in the History Shop and Leigh Library, with the help of the Holocaust Centre, Beth Shalom. These exhibitions were complemented by a moving programme of readings and music given by Stephen Lythgoe, Wigan Library Service's Reader-in-Residence.

*I cannot look at people without examining their faces. It's been this way since I came back. I peruse their lips, eyes, hands, seeking an answer there. Facing people I meet I wonder, 'Would he have helped me walk, that one? Would he have given me a little bit of his water?' I examine all the people I see – yes, all of them everywhere....Those whom I know from the very first glance would have helped me walk are so few.*

**Charlotte Delbo**

*He who does not learn from history is doomed to repeat it.*

**George Santayana**  
1905

*If your neighbour's house is burning, you help put out the fire, Because you don't know where the wind will blow the flames.*

**Yolande Mukagasana**  
Rwandan refugee

## Walking Day\*

Though the immovable feast of Christmas is the most important date in the Christian calendar, Trinity Sunday in North Ashton, was without doubt, far more visibly in evidence. The picture shown here, important though it may be, represents only a microscopic detail of the unification behind the huge build-up to that final feature of the Trinity Sunday celebration.

It would be a formidable task to even begin to ascertain the breakdown of the logistics that went into (and I suggest, still go into) the spiritually attractive spectacle of, not just the final service on the Green but that of the procession leading thereto, not forgetting the universal pride of each and every one taking part. Sadly, with today's diminishing church congregations in mind, the task of plumbing the depths of what Trinity Sunday meant to hundreds, if not thousands, of devout parishioners in days gone by, would be nigh impossible, even with the help of the longest, reliable memories.

My own experience of Trinity Sunday can only be

based on that gained in my early to formative years. As a member of a fairly strong and large C. of E. family, the imminence of Trinity Sunday seemed to start before Easter. Questions like, "What ye wearing for Trinity?" or "ave you heard who's under t' banner this time?" being bandied around. A time for young lads like myself to prepare themselves for that embarrassing ordeal of being

measured for a new suit by old Charlie Gibson at the Co-op, or by Mr. Swallowell, who would travel all the way from Wigan on the train.

But back to the photograph which, I would guess, depicts perhaps one of the last years of my attendance at which, I hasten to add, I had travelled with my wife and very small daughter, from Birmingham. Towering high above that small section of what, I would

guess, might have been a gathering of a thousand or so worshippers, is The Reverend W.R.H. (William Robert Hawksley) Hall, Rector of Holy Trinity, North Ashton, more commonly known as Downall Green, or Deayna Green. He was a tremendously popular Rector who came from the Hightown Parish of Liverpool in 1933, at the age of 33. I seem to remember that he played cricket for Wigan but an arm injury ended that career. Rector Hall occupied the crumbling old Rectory behind Holy Trinity Church in, what I can only imagine to have been, a semi-reclusive existence, until he died after a vein operation a Wigan Infirmary in 1961.

May God rest his soul and that of the millions gone by who had no hesitation in highlighting their Christian beliefs on the celebration of Trinity Sunday at Downall Green.

**J. Harold Smith**  
Sutton Coalfield

Tony Ashcroft's book *Around Ashton-in-Makerfield and Golborne* is available from the History Shop @ £9.99, plus £1.50 p & p.

\*See other photographs on p22.



*This annual Procession of Witness or 'Walking Day' as it was known, was originally held on the Monday following Trinity Sunday, with a field treat the following Sunday. Later, however, the actual 'Walking Day' was changed to the Sunday itself. This photograph was taken during a service at the end of the walk in the early 1950's when members of Holy Trinity Church congregated on the green at the bottom of Rectory Road. Notice the two large banners which were carried during the procession. (See also p30).*

# Were they ‘cooking the books’?

Dear Editor,

Having read with interest the recent correspondence about the local hospital (both Mr. Flo Whitehead and Ms. Migy were colleagues), particularly Mr. Taberner’s contribution about subscriptions to the Royal Albert Edward Infirmary, I remember some items I came across whilst researching my story on the opening of the RAEI which was published in issue 23. As Mr. Taberner shows, money came from many sources but the following letter from Pearson & Knowles Coal & Iron Co. Ltd. indicates contributors were not always happy. Indeed the writer stated that the administrators at Wigan Infirmary were cooking the books! The letter dated 1883 is beautifully written, somewhat repetitive but the writer certainly makes his point.

**THE PEARSON & KNOWLES  
COAL & IRON CO. LTD.  
Secretary’s Office  
Dallam & Bewsey Forges**

Warrington, January 11th 1883.

William Taberner Esq.  
Royal Albert Edward Infirmary  
Wigan.

Dear Sir,

I have yours of the 10th instant, the accounts as they appear in your annual reports are as I have shown anything but creditable to your management, but your explanations show they are in a far more unsatisfactory state than we anticipated – we thought the serious discrepancies we pointed out were the result of clerical inadvertence but we are amazed to receive your assurance that the list of receipts on account of Hospital Saturday and Sunday collections has been designedly “cooked” to meet the views or at any rate the cases of clergymen and employers who having received money from their congregations and men before March 31st 1882 for your infirmary, have nevertheless for reasons of which nothing is known by us kept the money back, in some instances until six months after the date on which you have put their names in the list not as promised but of received subscriptions. But not only is it admitted that your list of receipts credits certain clergymen and employers of your last year with at least £324 (we do not know how much more) which they had not

handed over, and which you had not received, but in the case of our workmen’s contributions you have admitted that a very large percentage of amounts actually received by you have never been credited in your reports at all. We do not know how many similar omissions have occurred, but we do think that we are entitled and the public are entitled to complain that whilst you credit certain clergy and employers in your annual lists of subscriptions received with sums you have not received from them you, at the same time, not once but frequently in the case of one and the same lot of workmen omit to give credit on the same lists for sums actually received by you. We have not suggested, nor do we consider you should publish a list of subscribers in arrears but we do say that you have no right to deceive the public (of course unintentionally) by giving as a list of subscriptions received a list which contains a large percentage of sums which have not been received, and some of which may not be received for six months and some never at all. We say it is a grievance to fail to credit a body of hard working men or anybody else with money you have actually received by them, but it is no grievance to omit from a list received subscriptions those of clergymen or anybody else who have in hand money received by them for you, but which you have not received from them. We have not asked you to please everybody, we would advise that you do not try to do so but do right, to let your accounts of each cash received represent what you have received, to let them include all you have received and exclude all your have not received or if you won’t do this we should recommend you to alter the heading of your lists so that it may clearly indicate what the names and amounts under it represent. If you act on either of these suggestions you will please all who deserve to be pleased including ourselves. We doubt that your accounts are prepared in accordance with the established rule in most other institutions such as yours, indeed we venture to deny it. Since receiving your letter this morning we have asked the Honary Secretary of the Warrington Infirmary for copies of his last three annual reports – we enclose them, you will see the accounts are stated and balanced precisely, as we say that yours or those of any other institutions such as yours ought to be, and no subscriber here is dissatisfied. If he duly pays his subscriptions, he is credited, if not, as a reasonable man he does not expect his

name in a list of paid subscriptions. But the fact that he must pay if his name is to appear induces him to pay duly next time. Is it because you credit certain people whether they pay or not that you have so much trouble in getting prompt payments? But even if there are other institutions, who make up their accounts in your loose style, we do not see that two or any greater number of blacks make one white. ’

YOURS TRULY, JAMES DODDS

Further research by me shows that pits owned locally by Pearson and Knowles in December 1867 comprised Moss Hall, Hindley Hall, Ince Hall, Barley Brook and Spring Colliery. The sum of £19.15.7d. was promised towards the building fund set up to finance the erection of Wigan Infirmary; this was six years before its opening in 1873.

In the same report it is noted that the workmen of the Wigan Coal and Iron Company “freely regularly and voluntarily pay a small contribution into the hands of collectors appointed by themselves”. The fund raising committee also stated “that if the same plan were adopted at every colliery, factory, foundry and workshop, some thousands could most easily be raised.”

I have also had sight of a note from the parish priest at St. Mary’s in Wigan having a moan about seeing a poster in his church advertising a Hospital Sunday collection at his church; it seems nobody from the hospital had bothered to tell him about it! I hope he wasn’t one of those accused by P&K Ltd. Money also came from the better off benefactors as I stated in my previous article; again during research I came across a note dated 1887 from Francis Sharp Powell (well known in Wigan as the man in Wigan Park) from Horton Hall, Bradford forwarding a cheque on London value £100. Wigan people have been rubbing his foot on his statue every since!

**Don Rayner  
8 Edale Drive  
Standish  
Wigan WN6 0LN**

P.S. I wonder if E. Taberner and William Taberner were related?



# A Wigan Childhood

**I WAS born at 97 Warrington Lane, Wigan on 10 August 1927. The row of houses on that side of the road was owned by my grandfather, Edward Dickinson (the Bottler). My mother was Susan Lilian Dickinson, later to be known after marriage as Susan Lilian Middlehurst.**

Father was 40 years old when I was born, and was the headmaster of Spring View Senior Boy's School in the mining area of Lower Ince.

My mother was 12 years old and a pupil at the New Jerusalem British School when she met by father (the British schools were non-conformist, Church of England schools were called National Schools). Father was a pupil teacher at the New Jerusalem British School and he said that he fell in love with my mother from the time when he helped her with her Arithmetic. He was always good at both Maths and Music. He played the organ at the New Jerusalem Church across the road. He later became a local preacher.

## Disciplinarian

The headmaster of the New Church was Richard Middlehurst, a very strict disciplinarian. Mother was afraid of him, as were many of his pupils. (This was described by Neil Cain in his article in *Past Forward* 28 about his grandfather who came from Spring Street, where Edward Dickinson had the bottling works, which he called "The Stores". They had the agency for both Guinness and Watneys.)

My brother Roy was seven years older than me, born in 1920. He was said to have been a delicate baby. In 1918 mother had given birth to a first child (whom she called "Little Frank"). He had a heart problem and lived only for ten minutes. Father was fighting in France with the Duke of Lancaster's

Own Yeomanry. He too was devastated when he heard the sad news.

After Roy, on 25 November 1924 my sister Betty (Elizabeth Dickinson Middlehurst) was born. She was christened after Granny Dickinson. Both the Dickinson grandparents played a great part in our lives. Edward (Ted) was fat and bossy but kind, and was always concerned about our welfare.

## The strap

One of my earliest memories was of the strap behind the kitchen door "for naughty children". I assured him that I was "always good". We were schooled into obedience at an early age, but we also had a great sense of belonging, which was so important to every child.

In 1933, when I was six, we moved to 51 Swinley Lane, Wigan. The houses were built by Jolleys of Mesnes Road. The price was £350, the last £50 was for the garage! We did not own a car, as my father never learned to drive, so the garage became a storeroom for all his many papers. He always wrote in green ink which made it rather distinctive. He wrote books of General Knowledge and Intelligence Tests, one of which was published by Schofield & Sims of Huddersfield.

In 1933 Betty (who today also lives in Parbold) and I started at Marylebone School in Wigan Lane. The Post Office on the corner had the name "Mariebonne" on the wall. We were there for two years until it became an infant school, the children then having to leave at seven. We then went on to the Wesleyan Methodist School, off Standishgate, because my father knew the headmistress, Miss Nellie Lathom. I enjoyed the Methodist School where I met my friend Margaret Griffiths, later Margaret Watson.

## Started teaching

Jumping ahead to 1947, I

started teaching at Marylebone School where I had only 17 pupils. This was very good, as later on, I was to have as many as 40 pupils in one class. However, that is another story and must wait for another time. I taught for 40 years and enjoyed my career immensely. After my retirement in 1985 I specialised in dyslexia and dyspraxia. We lived in Wigan, Upholland, Worcestershire, Carlisle,

Preston and then back to Wigan where my roots lie. I have lived in Parbold for the last 20 years.

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

**P.S. My thanks to Neil Cain for his article on his grandparents from Spring Street where my grandfather Edward Dickinson also lived and worked.**

*James Fairhurst has kindly sent in this extract from the local press of January 1901.*

## The Frog Lane 'Ghost' - January, 1901

**THE loneliness of the road leading from the workhouse into Wodehouse Lane is notorious and would, in the opinion of many, form a happy hunting ground for spirits and goblins from the far nether world. On Friday night, at the hour when churchyard's yawn, a young man was wending his way homeward, past the above harbour of refuge – when something most uncanny caught his eye. The apparition – for such it appeared to be – was enveloped in a garb of white and gesticulated in an unearthly manner which had an immediate effect upon his feelings. He resolved at once to seek safety in flight and at once took to his heels, followed closely by the supposed "ghost", and his speed was such that he broke all previous records for the distance traversed. However, nature had to give way and he sank to the ground exhausted, near the entrance to Park Road.**

**In this condition two passing pedestrians found him, soaked in sweat. He could scarcely speak to his questioners and the reason**

**for this was soon forthcoming for there suddenly emerged from an adjoining footpath, not a ghost, but flesh and blood in the form of a man, having on only his nightshirt. The passers-by were naturally startled but, determined upon action, were not long in having him secured. The kindly offices of P.C. Meakin, who was fortunately in the neighbourhood, were sought after and the "ghost" was transferred into a passing cab.**

**It was afterwards found that one of the inmates of the workhouse had broken out of his bedroom by way of the window and emerged into the lane. While the above drama was being enacted the governor and male attendants had set up a search for the missing man in the adjoining grounds, but then fears were soon set at rest when the police constable turned up with his charge. The young man will not soon forget his escapade and will in future be keeping his eyes about him when passing this lonely spot at a time approaching the midnight hour.**

# HISTORY SHOP NEWS

## Exhibitions in the History Shop

The temporary area in the Taylor Gallery at the History Shop has once again been very busy.

The New Year had seen the opening of the 1901 Census, a very significant occasion for family historians. It was marked in the gallery with the exhibition **Back to Your Roots**, all about how to trace your family history and use the records such as the new Census. This had been held over the Christmas and New Year period to give people a chance to study it and as an introduction to those who had been inspired to come in after 2 January to see the new Census. Nevertheless, the week after it came down, the inevitable comments from people returning to have another look and get more genealogy tips were heard. Yes, we will be putting this excellent exhibition up again in the future; however, it is unlikely to be this year because there is fierce competition for space.

An area of the gallery is still given over to the Census and in particular the Friends' indexing project of the 1861 Census for the borough. There is still time to get involved in this or in the next indexing project; just come along to the History Shop to find out more.

**Back to Your Roots** had to come down by mid January, though, because the exhibition following it marked a specific occasion and national day of remembrance.

**Holocaust Memorial Day 2002** was on 27 January and was marked in our gallery by a detailed and challenging exhibition from the Holocaust Centre, Beth Shalom. Three bays of photographs and text were accompanied by a video presentation dealing with many

aspects of the Holocaust and of modern day war crimes and genocide. Not always comfortable viewing, but challenging and thought provoking. We also had some readings in the History Shop by our *Reader in Residence*, Stephen Lythgoe, to mark the occasion.

Although plans are very busy, they are a little fluid as well. Following the Holocaust exhibition, we shall be putting up either the exhibition on this building as a Library or sections of **Back to Your Roots**, then in May we will have the long awaited **5th Manchester's** show.

This has been mentioned in previous editions of *Past Forward*. But for those who haven't heard, the Manchester's were evacuated from Dunkirk in 1940 (26 May – 4 June), and earlier in World War I fought in the battle of Krithia, 4 June 1915, during the Gallipoli campaign. It would seem appropriate, then, to schedule the exhibition 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 World War II. 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.

We were hoping to follow it very closely with a small show to mark the opening of the **Commonwealth Games** in Manchester in late July. Following a disappointing response to an appeal by Tony Ashcroft in the last issue for information on local sports clubs, however, this is now in doubt. If you do have anything, however, there may still be time to revive the idea. **We want any local material, stories, photographs, medals of sporting heroes of the past involved in the sort of sports competed for in the Commonwealth Games. If you think you might have anything at all please contact Tony**

**Ashcroft at Leigh Library on 01942 404559.**

Then we will be into the summer again with the usual season of **Wigan Photographic Society's annual show** in August, followed by the **Atherton and District show** in September.

## The Wickham Gallery

Downstairs at the History Shop we have made no significant changes to the Art Gallery or to **Wigan 2000**. These two attractions will be open throughout the spring and summer this year, with the possibility that we will be following Wigan 2000 with a new show in the autumn or winter. For those who have not yet seen **Wigan 2000** it is a colourful and fun look at Wigan at the turn of the Millennium. The borough was recorded with a series of photographs to mark the occasion and these are displayed along with examples from local businesses, leisure activities, groups, schools and individuals building up an ordinary picture in an extraordinary setting. This modern view is contrasted with examples from the museums permanent collection of objects and pictures showing life as it has been in ages past. As this is on the ground floor, it is fully accessible with a ramped entrance and adapted WC.

We are hoping to put on a show or two in the spaces that remain on the ground floor. There is an opportunity to get involved with one that can bring together national events with your own communities. This year is the **Queen's Golden Jubilee** – the 50th Anniversary of her Accession to the Throne. Nationally the themes of the celebrations have been set to include *Celebration, Involving Communities* and *Looking Forward as well as Back*.

We thought we would contribute to this by sharing our Jubilee memories and



# HISTORY SHOP NEWS

celebrations with you. A small exhibition in the Wickham Gallery is planned for May and June so once again **if you have anything from the coronation itself or the Silver Jubilee 25 years ago (doesn't time fly!) then bring it along and share it with us, and we may be able to incorporate it in the display. It could be an object, a picture or just memories, but contact us soon as we are putting the pieces together right now. Contact Philip Butler at the History Shop**

**for more information.**  
4 – 11 May is **Local History Week** across the UK. The Historical Association is looking to local groups and communities to devise their own way of celebrating and exploring their

local history. The Jubilee seems to be the ideal focus for this so get involved. There is a national website for the Historical Association at [www.history.org.uk](http://www.history.org.uk), which also contains activities and competitions for schools.

## THE HISTORY SHOP

Wickham Gallery	<b>Wigan 2000 Golden Jubilee</b>	Feb 2002 – Autumn/Winter 2002. May 2002 – June 2002.
Taylor Gallery	<b>Library/Roots 5th Manchester's Sporting Heroes?</b>	March 2001 – May 2002. May 2002 – July 2002. July 2002 – August 2002.

# FRIENDS OF WIGAN HERITAGE SERVICE

THE message this time about our Friends group is that things are definitely moving forward. The Friends are soon to have a voice on the newly formed Cultural Forum. This is a group that feeds local opinion on cultural matters into a wider group, the Leaders Forum, part of the Council's partnership with the public. We are very pleased about this and feel that lobbying on behalf of our service is an important role for the Friends to adopt.

Friends group meetings are well established and attention has now been turned to activities. Much progress has been made on our headline project, the indexing of the 1861 Census for the area. No fewer than eight willing volunteers have been working on the transcription from microfilm on our dedicated reader in the Taylor Gallery. A big thank you to each and every one of them, and especially to Barbara Davies who is tackling the job of entering these on a database for us. With their continuing efforts the project is now well advanced and thoughts are turning to the next Census year to tackle. It could possibly be to do the areas not so far covered by the 1891 Census index done for us by the Chorley branch of the Lancashire Family History and Heraldry Society, or to undertake a complete index for the 1841 Census. **If you feel that this is the type of work and company that might suit you, and can spare up to a few hours each week, then why not contact us the History Shop? We can explain what is involved and**

**put you in touch with the appropriate Friend.**

Other projects are taking off too for people with interests other than genealogy. We are undertaking a basic inventory of the maps in the drawer cabinets of the History Shop. This is hoped to be the first step of a wider project driven by Heritage staff to rationalise and sort our map holdings. As you can imagine this sort of detailed work can be very labour intensive, and **the assistance of Friends is likely to add a whole new dimension to the way we can operate.**

We are also trying to develop an indexing project for our files of archive photographs held in the History Shop. This has to be both useful and practical, we have a huge archive of

pictures and it doesn't help to set off on something we can't achieve. Again, **the invitation is open to anyone who feels they would be interested in getting involved to contact us at the History Shop.**

Projects are not the only form of activity the Friends could generate. At the last meeting a volunteer was sought to take responsibility for social activities and public relations. Not as onerous as it sounds, simply someone possibly from this sort of background to give some thought to how the Friends and the Heritage Service portray themselves and add some fun to ideas for future meetings and events. As no one came forward at the meeting we are still looking. **If you think you may be interested contact Philip Butler at the History Shop.**

## 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.

# Orrell

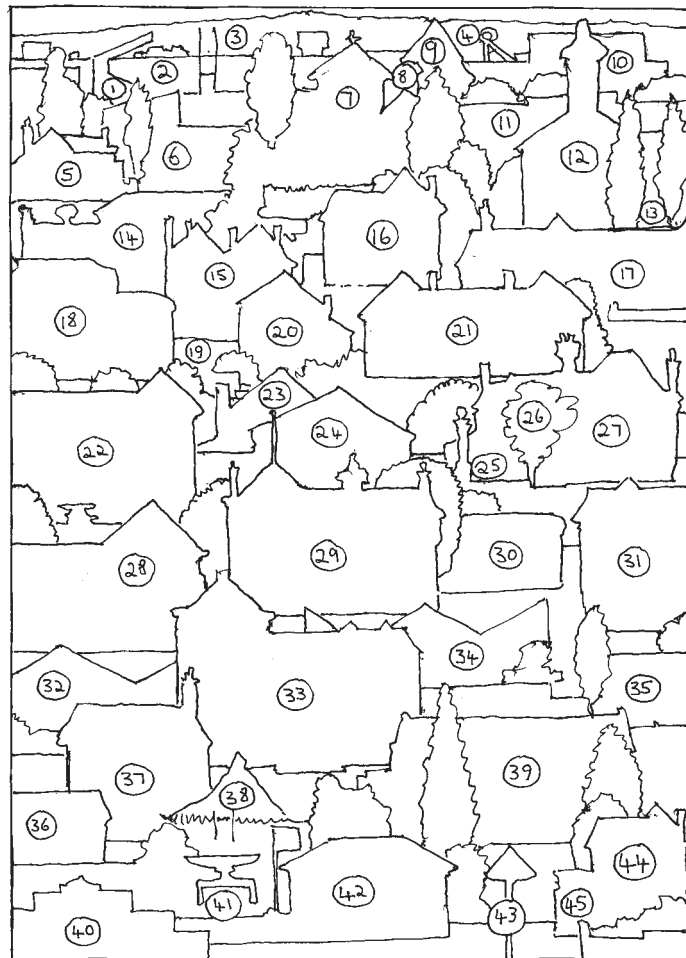
Here is the second in the series of line drawings by Gerald Rickards, covering all townships in the Borough. Orrell was a particularly appropriate choice for Gerald:

*“having lived in Winstanley Road for 37 years and knowing one end of the village particularly well has no doubt been a bonus. Our children walked down to two of the schools in the village and later went on to two secondary schools just over the boundary. In the early 1960’s when I was appointed Head of Art at Upholland Grammar School (later Winstanley College) the school had an Orrell postal address. During the next 26 years I got to know pupils, parents and staff from Orrell and beyond and learned much about the area, past and present.*

*As with the Aspull project, I again apologise for any omissions in the selection of items – 45 (plus a few hidden extras) are quite a lot to crowd into the space available. I have tried to represent the different areas of the village, as well as including some reminders from the past. I have received help and advice from so many people, which has been much appreciated.”*

Gerald is also working on an Orrell painting, similar in style and content to the drawing but on a large scale. Prints will be available for purchase as the series progresses. Ed.

1. Orrell Rugby Club, Edge Hall Road, where the first match was played in 1950. Team later received national recognition.
2. M6, approaching Junction 26, for M58 and Orrell.
3. Rivington and Pennines in the background.
4. One of the many coal mines that used to be dotted around the village and surrounding area.
5. The original gatehouse to ‘Harvey House’, leading to..
6. St. John Rigby College.
7. St. Luke’s Parish Church, where the 75th anniversary is celebrated this year.
8. Parish Hall, added to the church building in 1983, using stone reclaimed from the old Parish Hall.
9. Old Parish Hall, Church Street; built in the second half of 19th century. Used as church and school.
10. St. Peter’s Catholic High School in Howards Lane, near the busy road junction.
11. St. James Catholic Primary School, alongside the church and social club.
12. St. James Roman Catholic Church, built in mid 19th century, with the distinctive belfry added around 1870.
13. The Presbytery just visible behind trees.
14. Orrell Lodge, 19th century home of the engineer Robert Daglish; designer of the steam locomotive for the Orrell Colliery. The building later became Education Offices and is now Wish FM Radio Station.
15. Orrell Hall in Spring Road. Listed 17th century building on the site of the Orrell Hall Colliery. Now a rest home, it was for many years the home of the Leigh family.
16. Rangers House, which was once the property of the Water Board. The two former reservoirs are now part of Orrell Water Park - a favourite spot for waterfowl, walkers and anglers.
17. Newfold (previously St. James Road) County Primary School.
18. Priors Wood, previously Orrell Mount. An impressive ashlar stone building, now a restaurant. Built by John Clarke, coal owner.
19. Railway engine, as used at local collieries. The ‘Yorkshire Horse’ designed by Robert Daglish of Orrell Lodge.
20. Trinity Trees. Distinctive decorative windows and memories of an idyllic garden with steps leading to a tennis court. Currently offered for sale.
21. Former Police Station. Now private houses but the Lancashire Constabulary emblem remains above the entrance.
22. Abbey Lakes Inn and Lodge, close to the borough boundary and Up Holland Parish Church.
23. Orrell Methodist Sunday School in Church Drive.
24. Orrell Methodist Church, built in 1964. A stone alongside inscribed ‘Ebenezer Primitive Methodist Chapel, 1859’.
25. Orrell Post; probably constructed in the first half of the 18th century.
26. Large beech tree, near the inn. A well known landmark, until blown over in the great gale of 1920.
27. Stag Inn, standing on a site used as staging post since the mid 18th century.
28. Orrell Post Methodist Church as it is today with the extension on the left that was added in the 1970s.
29. Council Offices, in Orrell Gardens, opened in 1908 and still used by the local authority.
30. Library, near to a private nursery and Council Offices.
31. Orrell Clinic. The names Nordene and Oakdene boldly cut out above the two doors.
32. Orrell Holgate Primary School. The old school demolished in 2002 to make way for a new road.
33. Holgate National School where the first pupils were girls, who had previously all ended classes in a room at the Rose and Crown. Extended in 1883 to accommodate boys. Now offered for sale.
34. Farmoor Residential Care Home, built on land where Crabtree’s Farm was on one side and a foundry, used by the local nailmakers on the other.
35. Abraham Guest High School, named after a well known councillor who lived across the road at ‘The Mount’.
36. Orrell YMCA. The brick building has replaced the structure opened in 1920 by Princess Marie Louise. Cricket pitch in the background.
37. Rose and Crown public house, in Far Moor part of the village. Once a meeting place for burial clubs, lodges, etc..
38. Replica Iron Age Roundhouse at Greenslate Farm. Constructed in 1986 as a joint venture between Wigan Education Department and the Archaeology Unit at Manchester University.
39. Orrell United Salem Reformed Church, which was established in 1804. Present building dates from 1907.
40. Majestic Cinema, near ‘The Grapes’ crossing. Built 1936, and like the Lyric in Up Holland named after a naval ship. Later the home of Majestic Glass. Recently demolished and replaced with domestic properties.
41. Anvil, at the entrance to the Rugby Club. It appears on the crest and is a reminder of the local nail makers.
42. Orrell Station, opened in 1848. The Ticket Office is no longer in use but the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway sign can be seen above the door.
43. Road sign, warning that ducks stray on to Winstanley Road from the adjoining water park.
44. Artist’s home in Winstanley Road. Postal address used to be Orrell but now it is Billinge and along with many Orrell residents the telephone number is in the St. Helens rather than the Wigan Directory.
45. ‘Mog’, the cat, depicted in a few special paintings and murals.





# ST. ANDREW'S MISSION GARSWOOD

(from a box of 'mementoes')



*Garswood and Downall Green Sunday School Gathering c.1950. Rev. W. R. H. Hall is prominent right of centre.*

Dear Sir,  
 Prompted first by my sister-in-law, Irene Migy's interesting contribution in the latest issue of your excellent magazine; and secondly by the fact that I have just reached the "Biblical Limit", I felt it was time to dispose of the boxes of "mementoes" my late wife Elaine (nee Hosker) and myself had amassed over the years.

Well aware that any material, particularly photographs, are of little use without titles and dates, I have quite enjoyed myself over several weeks piecing together bits of diverse information to title and date most of the enclosed items. I freely admit defeat on a few – also some of the information may not be totally accurate.

I hope at least some of these photographs may be of interest to your readers – and some of the material also suitable for your archives. Some items were displayed at the 150th Anniversary of Downall Green Holy Trinity church in 1988.

May I take this opportunity to thank you for a very interesting publication.

**Bill Foster**  
 "Bonhill" Glenacre  
 Innellan Dunoon  
 Argyll PA23 7TL

(See also Harold Smith's reference to Walking Day, p15.)



*Annual walk, 1935.*



*Annual walk, 1963.*



*Annual walk, 1948.*



*Left to right: Elaine Hosker, Enid Redford, Bill Foster, Norma France, 1952.*

# My Year in Garswood, 1928-1929

**AS I am now approaching 79 years of age, I find I have the time and desire to reminisce. In doing so, my thoughts return to the land of my birth, far away from my present home in Hobart, Tasmania. My husband Alex and I moved to this small island south of the Australian mainland soon after our marriage. Alex and I had met when we both served with the Australian Air Force during World War II.**

I was born in Wrexham, Wales, the daughter of Elizabeth Parkinson whose family lived at "The Oaks", 319 Garswood Road, Garswood, and Eli Green whose family home was "The Laburnums", 296 Bolton Road. Ashton-in-Makerfield. My father served in the Great War, and on his return he attended the Wigan School of Mines and gained qualifications in mining engineering, surveying as well as in safety procedures, and decompression. My grandfather, also Eli Green, was a coalminer, and he had married Alice Hart, whose family had been for generations, hingemakers in Ashton-in-Makerfield. My mother's father, Thomas Parkinson, was a coalminer, and he had married Mary Brimelow. The Parkinson and Brimelow families came from Pemberton.

After their marriage my parents moved to Wales where my father worked at the Llay Main colliery, but as a result of the Great Strike of 1926, and the subsequent lockouts, my parents decided to migrate to Australia. In 1928 my father set sail with two of my

mother's brothers, Tom and Jim Parkinson. Mother, my brother Newton and I were to stay with Grandma Parkinson in Garswood to see how things went for Dad in Australia.

## Much joy

I was five years old when dad left, but despite my early age, I have very distinct memories of my year in Garswood, and these memories have given me much joy. As I recount them I feel it is only yesterday. I was a shy little Welsh girl, but I have never forgotten the happiness I found from the kindness of the folk, during my year in Garswood. I attended St. Andrew's Church school which was opposite grandma's house in Garswood Road. It seemed quite a small building – very old even then – and had been under the auspices of the Lady of Manor, Lady Gerard. In earlier times, my mother told me that Lady Gerard dispensed charity and welfare in the district and did her rounds in a pony and trap. I loved my year at St. Andrew's School, and I especially loved the schoolmistress Miss Roberts.

In Garswood Road, just up from grandma's house, was a lady who sold ribbons and laces from her front room, and she would give me the remnants to dress my dolls. At another house, Mrs. Glover sold sweets which I loved to purchase with my treasured penny. I remember coming home with sweets to share with my brother. I had two cousins living nearby. They were both boys and more than seven years older than I was but we would walk together to the local picture show. We walked on a path through a field of golden corn, and in the Spring we walked to a little forest to pick bluebells.

## Fun of the fair

Lucky me – while I was staying with grandma, I was

chosen to be one of the fairies attending the May Queen at the May Day Festival. Clad in my gossamer blue silk dress and with a garland of flowers around my head I rode with the May Queen on the decorated May wane which was drawn by a shire horse. Later in the day I was one of the Maypole dancers and then we all joined in the fun of the fair. A few weeks later, on 29 May 1929, mother, brother Newton and I sailed from Southampton on board the S.S. 'Largs Bay' to begin our new life in Brisbane, Australia – but that is another story.

As well as my memories, I have some treasured keepsakes from my year at Garswood. As farewell presents, the superintendent, teachers and children of St. Andrew's Sunday School presented me with a Bible. Mr. and Mrs. Clarke gave me a prayer book. Miss Roberts and my classmates gave me a

cross-stitched sampler mounted in a picture frame. This sampler hangs in my bedroom, and every day fills me with joy. The sampler is most beautifully stitched with a little girl and a boy, a house, some roosters, a little girl praying and these words, which I still say to myself every night before I sleep –

*God keep you safe  
Throughout the night  
From candle until  
Morning light.  
When you awaken  
Kneel and pray  
God keep you safe  
Throughout the day.*

**Olwen Mary Colquhoun  
4 Namoi Place  
Lenah Valley Hobart  
Tasmania 7008  
Australia**

● A letter from Olwen's brother appeared in *Past Forward* 29, p36.

## BOB DOBSON

**Publisher and Book Dealer**

**LANCASHIRE**

**YORKSHIRE & CHESHIRE**

I buy, sell and search for second-hand books relating to these counties: I search for books: I issue lists. I buy quantities of other books.

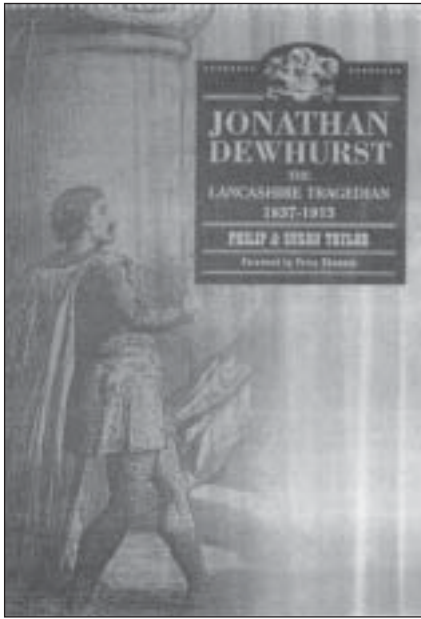
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**LIST OF MY NEW PUBLICATIONS  
ON REQUEST**

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**BOB DOBSON  
"Acorns"  
3 STAINING RISE  
STAINING  
BLACKPOOL FY3 0BU  
Tel: (01253) 895678**





THE last issue of *Past Forward* featured an article about Jonathan Dewhurst, the Lancashire Tragedian – the subject of a new book by Susan and Philip Taylor. Susan has sent me the following additional details about some of the family connections in Wigan, which have emerged since the publication of the book, which has recently been shortlisted for the Society for Theatre Research Book Prize.

Jonathan Dewhurst was born in Lowton, near Leigh, Lancashire on 28 April 1837. His father, John, was at the time a jail turnkey, but over the years followed various trades, being at one time or another a provision dealer, a victualler, a police officer, a publican and for several years Governor of the Workhouse at Wigan. Somewhat surprisingly for the times John always seemed to be in work and able to find the means of looking after his family. One of Jonathan's private jokes was to tell an unsuspecting

listener that he had been brought up in the workhouse before explaining (to the merriment of the assembled audience) that as his father was Governor and his mother the Matron, of course he was brought up there – it was the family home.

Jonathan's primary education was provided in Wigan, after which he attended school in Manchester. On leaving school he worked in the editorial offices of the Leigh Chronicle at the time of its foundation.

# *I remember when . . . . .*

I LEARNED my first lesson in “applied psychology”, within the proverbial stone’s throw of the present Wigan Pier Heritage Centre, (where I was born and bred) in the formative years of my long life!

It was at St. Thomas’s Church School in Caroline Street, as an eight-year-old pupil of Mrs. Hodgson, a widowed mother of three children herself. On a bitterly cold morning she suddenly rapped out my name, when I wasn’t paying attention. I stood up in due deference and acknowledged her with “Yes Miss” (even though she was a Mrs. - all lady teachers were Miss). She rapped the command “repeat what I have just said” and in all honesty I replied “please Miss, I can’t”. Had I surreptitiously released a stink bomb I was not prepared for the next part of the altercation!

## **Vituperative reaction**

“Don’t you ever use that word again to me, or anyone else,” and dreamily I tried to remember what word could have caused such a vituperative reaction. But she soon enlightened me, telling me “can’t is an expression of

laziness most often, and can be translated usually as such to ‘can’t be bothered’. If you honestly don’t know, it’s my job to impart knowledge, so that you do know, and what is more important, in such a way that you get the right answer first time. Do you understand?” Meekly I answered, “Yes Miss”, and was about to sit down when she added, “I haven’t finished”. And she continued with many examples of people who had refused to accept defeat and laboured on to overcome initial obstacles to the ultimate benefit of mankind rather than admit “I can’t”.

Among them I remember: George Stephenson, who produced the first steam locomotive; John Bridgewater, whose canal linked Manchester to the Irish sea; Sir Richard Arkwright, who gave Lancashire ‘The Spinning Jenny’, vital for transforming imported raw cotton into cloth, and others, until I was beginning to think we hadn’t won the 1914/18 war and it was my fault, when she eased my guilt with her final words: “Therefore never say ‘I can’t’, instead say ‘I can and I will’, Do you understand?” “Yes Miss”, I acknowledged, suitably subdued.

## **Four to a bed**

I remember clearly those days, sleeping four to a bed in a small back room bedroom with neither lighting nor heating, with an old army greatcoat as an eiderdown, heated oven shelves wrapped in rough ‘wrapperings’ (discarded flour sacks washed over and over until pliable) as bed warmers, and for breakfast a slice of half burned toast toasted on an extended fork in front of a coal fire. Porridge was better but took longer, and there was never enough time. In fact we had a saying, “first up – best dressed”, because he had the choice of shirts, ganseys (a woollen pullover fastened at the neck) and stockings without holes in toes or heels. The last one out of bed got the leftovers!

So it was, that mid morning ‘day dreaming’ was nature’s way of compensation until Mrs. Hodgson’s admonition altered everything, when the psychological “I can’t” became “I can and I will successfully.” Others must be the judges of whether or not I succeeded when I remind them of my past experiences as a former slum kid and some of my subsequent activities.

I saw each boat race between Oxford and Cambridge from the river Thames embankment for several years and have dined at all London’s top hotels.

I was responsible for persuading the Duke of Marlborough, the father of the present Duke, to open Blenheim Palace to the public when only the gardens were previously available to them.

## **Personal friend**

I have played in “The Black Rose” with the lead taken by Tyrone Power. I have also played with Robert Newton and the boys from Rugby School in “Tom Brown’s Schooldays”. I was a personal friend of Sir Eric Quentin Hazel who kindly sent to me a copy of his book endorsed “To Ernie Taberner, keep up the good work for Wigan and Lancashire”.

As a full time carer of my invalid wife of almost 60 years, I rarely do any travelling these days, but I’m quite happy to let others sit in judgement of Mrs. Hodgson’s effect on one of her pupils who once said, “Please, Miss, I can’t”.

© E. Taberner



### **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, Barbara Rhodes.

**11 April**

AGM

**9 May**

Wally Rouse, historian & author

**13 June**

Colin Bean

### **Atherton Heritage Society**

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

**9 April**

*Queen Victoria's Visit*

Anne Monaghan

This illustrated talk tells the story of Queen Victoria's stay at Worsley New Hall, 1851.

**14 May**

*What the Papers Said*

Glen Atkinson

Was the Victorian media the same as today's? Or was it worse, or better?

**11 June**

*The Bowmen of England*

Len Heathcote

No wonder the English longbowmen were the scourge of the French!

### **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**

**16 April**

*Manchester Police History*

Curator of the Manchester Police Museum

**21 May**

*Oral History for Family Historians*

Ann Monaghan

**18 June**

Visit – to be arranged

### **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)

### **Leigh Probus Club**

Members of the Club, which is non-sectarian, are generally retired professional/businessmen. The Club meets at the Leigh Masonic Hall on alternate Thursday afternoons between October and April. New members are welcome – anyone wishing to join should contact H. Wilkinson (01942 671943).

**11 April**

*Secret Britain*

Peter Robinson

**25 April**

AGM

**26 April**

Annual Dinner

**9 May**

Annual Outing

### **Shevington Memories Group**

This small, informal group meets each Friday at 2.30 p.m. in Shevington Methodist Church (New Lounge), to share memories about old times. Anyone is welcome – just turn up! Contact Maurice Hilton (01942 223107) for further details.

### **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).

### **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.

### **Wigan Civic Trust**

The Trust stimulates public interest in the Wigan area; promotes high standards of planning and architecture; and aims to secure the preservation, conservation, development and improvement of the historic parts of town and country. The Trust meets at Drumcroom Education Arts Centre, Parsons Walk, Wigan, on the second Monday of the month at 7.30 p.m. For further details contact the Secretary, A.J. Grimshaw, 6 Bridgeman Terrace, Wigan (01942 245777). New members always welcome.

**8 April**

*The Wildlife Trust at Wigan Flashes*

Mark Chapman

**13 May**

*Barons and Saints*

Walter Carney

The history of the Gerard family of Ashton-in-Makerfield

**10 June**

*The Lancashire Cotton Famine*

Fred Holcroft

### **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.

### **‘H.M.S. WIGAN’?**

Dear Sir,

I am trying to obtain photographs of all the ships my late father was in during World War Two and have not been able to purchase one of H.M.S. Wigan, a minesweeper trawler.

I wondered if any of your readers might have a photograph of the ship. I know it's a long shot but worth trying as neither the Imperial War Museum nor the R.N. Museum have one.

**44 Main Road**

**Bilton Hull**

**East Yorks HU11 4AR**

**Email:**

**[petrene@bishop44.karoo.co.uk](mailto:petrene@bishop44.karoo.co.uk)**

HAVE you been to the pictures lately? Isn't it posh?! I went recently with my daughter and was stunned! Although it lacked the character of the cinemas of my childhood, I have to admit to being impressed. Shortly after the film started there was a scene in which it was raining – and so realistic was it, that it seemed to be all around me. I glanced round, but all eyes were on the screen. Was I imagining it? “Can you hear that?” I asked, “It sounds like it's raining in”. Whereupon my daughter – child of the age of technology that she is – gave me a withering look and informed me that it was “Dolby Surround Sound”. Gathering as much dignity as I could, I told her that I couldn't be expected to know that, as I remembered ‘The Bug’ in Ince where it really did rain in! And I closed my eyes and let Memory guide me back there. . . .

### “Wozzee say?”

To be honest the Doric Cinema (known as ‘The Bug’ for reasons we won't dwell on!), closed when I was five in 1957, but I have a hazy memory of being taken to see “The Wizard of Oz”, and of hiding under the seat when the green-faced witch appeared! My brothers, however, (many years my senior), remember it well and recall our Grandma, who I sadly never knew, telling them of the era of silent films, when many elderly Incers couldn't read, and would take along a young companion – perhaps a grandchild – to read the captions. And, in the silence of the cinema, maybe during a scene with a jealous lover, a rather deaf old lady would pipe up, “Wozzee say?” and her little companion would bellow “E sez ‘e's gooin' t'porr 'im!”

In later years, my eldest brother attended the ‘Penny Rush’ at ‘The Bug’ on Saturdays. There was no

# ‘THE BUG’

queue – the kids just scuffled about outside, pointing outstretched fingers as they fired imaginary guns, and slapping the seats of their short pants as they rode imaginary horses in imitation of their cowboy heroes, until the owner of the cinema, a Mr. Pennington, known to one and all as ‘Owd Penny’, arrived to open up. Whereupon an almighty cheer arose and the ‘Penny Rush’ lived up to its name! The kids got in for a penny and a jam-jar, which the owner sold back to Teg's pickle-works nearby.

### ‘Cocker’

Once everyone was in, he went home, locking the front door and leaving inside just the patrons, the projectionist and the chucker-out, who was a former wrestler known as ‘Cocker’. The kids sat on long forms, and Cocker had a clothes-prop with a rag tied to the end with which he shoved them along to make room for a newcomer. This resulted in the child at the other end falling off – can you imagine that happening today? – but in those days it was all part and parcel of the ‘Penny Rush’ – and no hard feelings! By the time the picture started the din was horrendous! Orange-peel flew through the air and carefully-aimed apple-cores hit backs of heads as the villain was booed and the hero received the deafening information, “‘E's be'ind thee!” from a hundred Lancashire voices.

One particularly rowdy Saturday, Cocker decided enough was enough! He opened the exit-doors, which opened outwards onto a little alley, stepped outside and yelled “Right! The lot of you – out!” – whereupon some opportunist little lads jumped up and shut the doors, leaving

Cocker in the alley and the kids on their own inside! My brother doesn't remember the outcome but he has never forgotten the glorious pandemonium in ‘The Bug’ on that long-ago Saturday afternoon!

### Very smart lady

In the evenings, a relative of Cocker's manned the paybox – a very smart lady, who had beautifully-styled blonde hair. One year she holidayed on the Isle of Man, and a local Ince family was staying in the same boarding house. During the polite, murmured conversation in the dining room, the little lad of the family, spotting the familiar face, bellowed, “Ey look mam! – it's t'Bug lady!” much to her embarrassment!

In the early 1960's I accompanied my brother to collect some hardboard ordered from a local hardware shop which used the now empty ‘Bug’ as its storeroom, and I found it a strange experience. There is something very sad and eerie about a disused cinema or theatre. It becomes a place full of ghosts – waiting in vain through the silence and the dust and the memories for the bustle of its former days and for the people who will never return. I can still recall the relief of getting out on to Ince Bar, of seeing people going about their shopping, and of noise and normality.

My eldest brother often went to the cinema in Hindley, as a boy, where there were a few local characters who were regarded as “a bit slow” and were held in great affection by the kindly Hindley community. Two of these were Billy Boydell and “Moses Elias” (known as Mo Lias). Now, one cinema had a manager who had a set of false

teeth which made him look as if he were always smiling – a kindly man who often let these patrons in free. One day, Billy Boydell was just in front of my brother and the manager said, “Go on in, Billy Lad” and let him pass, whereupon Mo Lias's sister, who was in the foyer, and had paid for Mo, charged up, all guns blazing! “Tha's let ‘im in fer nowt!” she screamed, pointing at poor, quaking Billy – “An' our Mo's dafter than ‘im!”.

### Regular turn

My brother also recalls a Hindley Cinema that held a talent-show between the first and second-house pictures, which was the cause of much chaos, as the first-house people stayed in their seats for the show and the second-house were trying to get in. Another local character, a contemporary of Billy and Mo, was a regular ‘turn’ on the talent show. One evening he opted to play “Oh Mein Papa” on a trumpet, but he couldn't find the end of the tune, and kept on playing it over and over again, whilst the audience fidgeted and the remaining ‘turns’ grew increasingly impatient as the cinema-clock ticked its way towards the second-house. In the end he had to be led off the stage (still playing!).

When I was nine or ten I belonged to the “ABC Minors” Matinee Club at the ‘Ritz’ in Wigan – were you a member too? We each had a glow-in-the-dark badge and sang “we are the boys and girls well-known as the Minors of the ABC”, to the tune of ‘Blaze Away’. I imagine this organised camaraderie was intended to unite children from all areas of Wigan in fun and friendship, but I can still see the poor manager struggling to make himself heard above the din, and I suspect we were every bit as bad as the ‘Penny Rush’ gang at ‘The Bug’!

### A lifetime away

But back to the start of my story, in the modern cinema-



# My Grandparents

MY GRANDPARENTS both married at the age of 19 and both worked hard and prospered. Grandma had a small legacy when she was 21 and this helped purchase a small, two up and two down house in a mostly poor part of Wigan.

My grandmother was a tall, handsome woman with fine dark hair, always worn in a severe unflattering style, scraped behind the ears into a bun. Had she favoured a softer coiffure she could have been a beauty, since her features were attractive and well-defined.

She was a proficient needle woman and was able to produce beautiful crocheted mats, tablecloths and tray cloths; another of her accomplishments was to make everyday items, such as cotton bloomers – after unpicking bloomers she had purchased and cut out a pattern from these. She would turn the front room into a shop and displaying business sense would allow her customers to purchase them on weekly terms, charging a small interest for this privilege. Later, when she became landlady of a number of terraced houses, my grandmother extended this service to lending money with which her tenants could purchase necessary

complex – a lifetime away from ‘The Bug’ and the ABC Minors, where memory had led me – and slowly, slowly, my mind came back through the years, and I found myself staring unseeingly at the huge screen and, reluctant to leave the past, I let my thoughts linger for just a few more precious moments on the old ‘Pearl and Dean’ adverts, when you were “never alone with a Strand”, the local adverts for ‘Rathbone’s gold-medal bread’, the Pathe News, the ice-cream lady’s torch and her tray laden with ‘Kia-Ora’ and

Dear Sir,

I enclose a snippet from the memoirs of my mother, Mary Lilian Hodge and, I hope, an amusing yet true dialect poem relating to an old friend Eric Cowsill who lives in Whitefield, Manchester.

I hope these may be of interest to *Past Forward* readers.

**Elene Humphreys  
Rockliffe Cottage  
Corwen Road  
Treuddyn Mold  
Flintshire CH7 4LE**

items to furnish their homes; this was again operated at a very small rate of interest – quite a clever business flair!

My grandfather had a steady job at Clarington Forge as a storekeeper. The foundry predominated the surrounding terraced houses and today is owned by Gullicks. There was an enormous chimney which spilled out smoke and fumes but in those days no-one cared about any adverse affect this could have had on health. It is only in recent years I have come to realise that my grandmother’s chronic bronchitis might have been as a result of breathing in the polluted fumes from Clarington forge chimney, as for a woman to smoke cigarettes in those days would have been regarded as perfectly shocking and the last thing grandmother would have contemplated.

ice-cream tubs with cardboard lids and wooden spoons, the ‘Film Review’ magazines, ‘Payne’s Poppets’ from the kiosk, and popcorn, which has survived the years – my daughter sits eating some now engrossed in the film, in her wide, comfortable seat, surrounded by air-conditioning and ‘Dolby Surround Sound’ . . . I wonder what she’d do if she suddenly received a sharp prod from Cocker’s clothes-prop?!

**Irene Roberts  
Abram  
Nr. Wigan**

badly.

Grandfather’s funeral was a grand affair, with shiny black coaches pulled by Belgian horses (specially bred for the purpose with black plumes on their heads). A slap up boiled ham tea for 50 people was held at Voses. Myself and cousin Jane had new black coats for the occasion. Not quite a year had elapsed since grandad’s death – I’m sure this was the most miserable period of her entire life – when grandma died. Perhaps an extra sleeping pill had been taken to help her insomnia but we will never know. She must have welcomed there being an end to it.

After another elaborate funeral we settled down at number 1 Gordon Street which had been left to my mother, along with eight other houses. Uncle Arthur, her brother, was willed the other nine houses in Chatham Street. In those days rents from these terraced houses provided a nice income for their owners, unlike the liabilities they became in the ‘80’s when a whole week’s rent would not have bought a pound of bacon!

## ERIC’S CARDI

**Ah ad this cumfy cardi  
It wuzzant up t’much  
T’wer great fot doin’t jobs in  
‘An gerrin’ full o’t slutch**

**It’ad rat ‘oles in th’elbows  
‘Wer pull’t awl out o’ttrue  
Ah allus felt at ‘ome in it  
(Ah allus like’t pale blue)**

**Ah paid mi mam er visit  
Shi sed ah look’t a mess  
Shi sed ah should look smarter  
Tek more pride i’ mi dress**

**Su, shall ah say reluctantly  
Ah left i’ jus’ mi’ shirt  
Shi sed shi’d chuck it straight in t’bin  
Ah mus’ say ah felt ‘urt**

**Nex’ time ah paid er visit  
Ah couldn’t trus’ mi eyes  
Shi add it on (wi’ th’elbows darn’t)  
‘Ows tha’ fer er surprize!**

*You may have been reading elsewhere in this issue (see p 19) how the Friends as a group are allowing us to get some projects going to index the local census records, order our map collection or sort our photographic files. We are always looking for support in this and you are more than welcome to get involved. However, it must not be forgotten that a lot of excellent*

*work has been going on by volunteers for many years. In the last issue we thanked the continuing efforts of Ted Cheetham on local church records. This article features Ken Taylor and the work of the Lancashire Parish Record Society.*

Alan Davies,  
Heritage Officer (Archives)

# PARISH REGISTERS

FEW family historians would deny the importance of parish records or that they can be very frustrating. Baptisms, for example, frequently mention only the father; burials rarely give ages so we cannot tell if an adult or child has died. Some registers, though, are unusually full. From the late 1770's, both Hindley and Wigan registers give details of mothers of baptised children, the position of the children in the family, occupations of fathers, specific places of residence, details of the mothers' parents, ages at death and causes of death. They thus can be marvellous sources of information for local history researchers as well as for family historians.

Finding just which registers we need, however, is not easy. Because of their importance and the need to prevent deterioration and wear and tear, most Church records are now deposited with Record Offices. The particular Office is determined by the Diocese rather than the County boundaries. The records of Leigh Parish Church, for instance, are deposited in Manchester, while those of Newton-le-Willows are in the Wigan Record Office at Leigh! To help with both conservation and also ease of availability, many of the registers have been microfilmed, but there still remain the problems of readability. Fading, damage, difficult handwriting as well as the differing styles of earlier handwriting, are all made even more frustrating when viewed



*Ken Taylor transcribing a Wigan parish register.*

on a screen. The easiest access to parish register material is that provided by transcriptions, especially if they have been indexed. The Lancashire Parish Record Society has been publishing such transcriptions for just over a century. Normally, their policy is to have a cut-off date of 1837, when the civil registration of births, marriages and deaths was introduced.

## Disappointment

Some 15 years or so ago the editor of the Lancashire Parish Register Society

expressed his disappointment that no one seemed to be working on registers of the Merseyside and Greater Manchester area. Although there were several volumes of churches in that area that had been transcribed earlier, there was no current research. Helped by early retirement, a doctor, a couple of engineers and I, a teacher, have been rectifying the deficiency by transcribing some local parish registers held at Wigan Record Office, and several volumes have recently been published. In 1997 John Perkins edited the late John Bulmer's transcriptions of St.

Thomas's, Ashton-in-Makerfield. These are in two volumes and cover the baptisms 1810 – 1873 and burials 1810 - 1873 (vols. 141 and 142). Earlier registers 1698 - 1809 are available on microfiche. Two years earlier John's transcriptions of Prescot Parish Church Registers from 1531-1595 had appeared (vol. 137). (These registers are housed at the Lancashire Record Office, not at Leigh). This volume is truly magnificent for it keeps as faithful as possible to the original format. It has set a standard that is unlikely to be equalled. A more recent volume, published in 2000, covers the Prescot parish registers 1665-1726 (vol. 149). Two years earlier, Ken Taylor transcribed All Saints, Hindley 1644 – 1814 (vol. 138). In 2001 his transcriptions of St. Peter's, Newton-in-Makerfield (Newton-le-Willows) 1735 – 1837 were also published (vol. 151). In the same year Ken edited the late Len Marsden's transcriptions of All Saints, Wigan 1626 – 1710 (vols. 152, 153).

Ken is continuing to transcribe the Wigan registers and has reached 1800. He is hoping to retain enough sight and sanity to get to 1812! His typed transcripts up to 1790 are available at the History Shop. Michael Follows is trying some computer wizardry to provide a kind of index. Despite having moved



# ROMAN COAL MINING IN WIGAN

**DURING excavations in the centre of Wigan in 1982, extensive Roman remains were found dating to the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. Amongst the finds, the archaeologists found scorched clay, iron slag, charcoal and significant quantities of coal.**

It was obvious that the Romans were carrying out some kind of metalworking operation; probably iron smelting in small-scale

bloomery furnaces. The use of coal is hardly surprising considering the fact that high-quality coal seams outcrop all over the Wigan area and could well be the reason that the Romans were attracted here in the first place.

So where were the Romans getting the coal from? On a 1930's map the note '*supposed Roman workings found*' is marked in the area which is now part of the golf course of the Wigan Golf Club at Arley. This map was

commissioned by the Geological Survey of England and Wales (Lancashire Sheet 85SE) and shows the various coal measures and where they outcrop, including the famous Arley seam, whose quality is renowned throughout the South Lancashire area.

## Ancient Workings

Presumably the map-makers got the Roman reference from evidence given by the Victorian

geologist Edward Hull who mentions 'ancient workings' at Arley in his memoirs published in 1860. He specifically identifies these workings as Roman in his book entitled "*The Coalfields of Great Britain*", published in 1861, in which he describes finding "a series of polygonal chambers, with vertical walls opening into each other by short passages". He goes on to say "The chambers were regular in both size and

*Continued on page 30*

out of the area. Michael Watts is continuing to tackle St. Luke's, Lowton 1733 – 1837.

Perhaps the most monumental work, however, is that by Michael Follows. A few years ago the parish registers of St. Mary the Virgin at Leigh were still housed in the Church. Tony Ashcroft, Leigh local History Officer, asked Ken Taylor if he could make a start to transcribe them because the microfilm copy was difficult to read and the registers were due to be re-housed at Manchester Central Library. Manchester agreed to relevant volumes being 'lent' to Leigh. The work had reached the 1790's when Michael retired early and continued the work that Ken has started. He is now in his final check, having reached 1837. When the transcriptions are published, Leigh will be the first of the Lancashire pre-Victorian 'big' towns to have a complete transcription of its registers from 1558. It has been a massive task and, as many

readers will already know, Michael has made it an even bigger achievement by gleaning information of Leigh people from other local registers and incorporating entries from the pre-1837 registers of Astley, Atherton and Tyldesley. The typed but unindexed transcriptions of Leigh up to 1790 are available at the Archives Search Room. John Bulmer's transcriptions of Winwick were privately printed some years ago. They are available on microfiches and in book form at Leigh Library.

Although the LPRS will continue to publish registers, the size of those of Leigh and Wigan is posing problems. It is likely that each Parish will occupy some further eight to ten volumes. As the Society can afford to publish only two or three volumes a year, it is unlikely that it will continue to give priority to just these two parishes. Therefore it may be many years before the registers are available in book form. However there is

discussion about producing the transcriptions on microfiches or on CD-ROMS, so there is hope that readers will be spared some of the problems of ancestor hunting on microfilm! There may well be other transcribers working on local registers. It would be nice to hear what is being done.

## Numerous checks

The transcribers would like to issue a note of caution. Errors are made. Parish clerks make them and so, unfortunately, do transcribers despite numerous checks. Entries in the original registers are often badly faded and damaged and may be mis-deciphered or misinterpreted. Where at all possible, information should be checked with the actual entry or with the microfilm copy.

Most of the printed LPRS volumes are available in the History Shop, Archives Search Room and Leigh

Library. Although the published works are principally for the members of the Society, additional copies are sometimes printed for purchase. Enquiries about availability should be made to the Society's Publications Manager, Neil Hudson, Raising House, Leece, Near Ulverston, Cumbria LA12 0QP. Enquiries about membership should be made to Tom O'Brien, 135 Sandy Lane, Orford, Warrington WA2 9JB. Those wishing to join the ranks of transcribers should contact the Hon. Editor, Colin Rogers, Ebenezer Chapel, 121 Old Road, Tintwistle, Glossop SK13 1JZ. The Society's web site is [www.genukior.org.uk/big/eng/LAN/lprs](http://www.genukior.org.uk/big/eng/LAN/lprs).

As a postscript to this article you may be interested to read that Michael Follows's indexes for Wigan Parish Church mentioned above are available for reference in the History Shop (*baptisms 1676 – 1790, burials 1626 – 1802*).

# ROMAN COAL MINING IN WIGAN

*Continued from page 29*

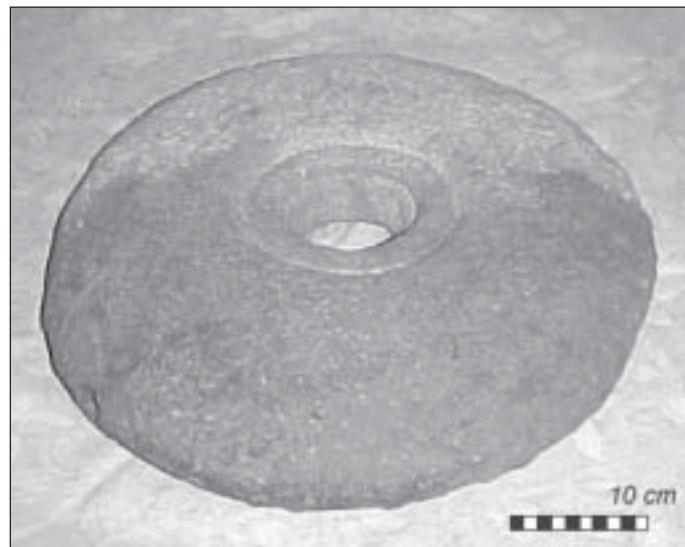
form over an area of at least 100 yards and were altogether different from anything within the experience of the miners of the district". Hull was convinced of their Roman antiquity, remarking on "the symmetrical arrangement and regularity of workings ... reminding one of their tessellated pavements or ground plans of their baths and villas".

Edward Hull's 'workings', however, were not under the golf course, but in the adjacent field which lies between the Arley Brook and the Worthington Lakes. The River Douglas flows directly under this field, in a tunnel which dates back to the 1850's. At that time the reservoirs were being constructed to supply drinking water for the Wigan area. The River Douglas, however, happened to be the main drainage for all the mine water being pumped out of the many shafts and 'soughs' along the Douglas Valley, thus it had to be diverted to avoid the resulting pollution. It was during the construction of the tunnel that Hull, acting as government inspector, identified the ancient coal workings. There was also a report at the time of hoard of Roman coins being found in one of the galleries; however, Hull does not mention these

and so far no other corroborating evidence has emerged.

## Field Work

In 1998 the Wigan Archaeology Society carried out extensive field walking in this area but, despite collecting over 1200 shards of pottery, a Roman connection was not established. Last year, the nine-hole course of Wigan Golf Club was extended to a full 18 holes. Before construction, an archaeological assessment



*Quern Stone section.*

was carried out in the area around the 13th and 14th fairway, which happen to be in the field beneath which the 19th century tunnel runs. The assessment, carried out by Lindsey Archaeological Services of Lincoln, involved stripping the topsoil and excavating two 25 metre long trenches. Again no specifically Roman activity was detected, but a considerable amount of ground disturbances was evident, including at least two unrecorded

mineshfts. Without completely digging these out it would be impossible to date these and, as landscaping of the greens is now complete, the chances of further investigation in this immediate area is now impossible.

## Roman Evidence

Earlier this year a remarkable new discovery came to light, in an area not far from the tunnel field we have been investigating. A member

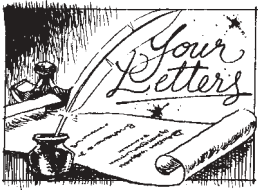
military grindstone and would have belonged to an eight-man unit (10th part of a century). The find has been properly recorded and entered into the Sites and Monuments Record held by the Lancashire Archaeological Services based at Preston. Recent foot and mouth restrictions have prevented any further detailed study of the site, but before these came into force, a quick check of the area immediately around the spot, failed to find any archaeological context. There should also be a lower stone upon which this stone acted. As soon as the recent emergency restrictions have been removed, the Society will be able to carry out a complete survey of the find area and hopefully establish the full extent of the Roman activity.

Finding the Roman quern stone has caused quite a stir, as it may well confirm the report by Edward Hull as being genuinely Roman. This would perhaps establish a unique site in British Isles as well as being a significant first for the society.

## Bibliography

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3. *Memoirs* by Edward Hull 1860
4. *The Coalfields of Great Britain* by Edward Hull 1861
5. *Wigan Coal & Iron* by Donald Anderson & A A France
6. *Arley Excavation Report* - Lindsey Archaeology

Bill Aldridge - Wigan  
Archaeological Society



## From the other side of the Ditch

HAVING read with great interest 'Memories of the Central School, Ashton-in-Makerfield' by Stan Ralls in issue 28, I would like to complete the names to both photographs and to correct Stan on a couple of mistakes, that is if a chap from the other school across the playing fields dare challenge a chap from Ashton Grammar (Heaven forbid!) I should add at this point, for the benefit of your readers, that the Grammar School and the Central School had adjoining playing fields, with the Jack Brook dividing the two; this was something like a moat between two enemy encampments. To cross

to the other side was like risking life and limb.

### Camaraderie

It is interesting to note that seven of the nine teachers in the first photograph also appear in the second. It comes as quite a shock to realise that these men must have shared a friendship and camaraderie, which I myself experienced over 20 years working with colleagues in my chosen career. We pupils could not imagine these men having souls, let alone friends and family. The names of the men in the 1948 photograph are: back row (l to r): Gordon Derbyshire (Mathematics), Percival Ralls (English), Mr. Anderton (Woodwork), while the man standing on the right looks like a very young Tom Aitkin; front row (l to r): Mr. McKenzie (Geography and Gardening), Firth Hartley (Woodwork). The Headmaster Mr. Lester I do not recognise at all; next to him is Bob Vernon (History), who Stan Ralls describes as Arthur Jones, a name I cannot recall; but Bob Vernon certainly moved on as Head of a

school for children with special needs. Finally on the front row is Mr. Simister (Mathematics).

The names in the second photograph are; back row (l to r): Brian Merry (Mathematics), Fred Ward (Art), Mr. Rowottom (?), Mr. Anderton (Woodwork), Gordon Derbyshire (Mathematics), Mr. Winnard (Music), Bill Corcoran (Physical Education) and Mr. Kelly (English); front row (l to r): Mrs. Corser (Secretary), Mr. Latham (Woodwork), Mr. McKenzie (Geography and Gardening), Percival Ralls (History), mMr. Simister (Mathematics) and Mrs. McMinn.

### Sinbad the Sailor

I can recall two teachers who acquired nicknames – one was the Headmaster, S. J. Price, which became Slimy Joe, and Simister, who became Sinbad the Sailor; the other rest escaped this indignity. Mr. Simister did bestow upon me the nickname of Kelvin – because my name was Thompson, he expounded that Lord Kelvin Thompson was the inventor of the

refrigerator and I must have been a direct descendant, hence Kelvin, a name I learned to loathe.

### Choose Your Weapons

Stan Ralls mentions in his story the punishment his father inflicted on pupils, either real or imagined; to my knowledge Percy Ralls rarely used physical violence, but preferred to give out a verbal lashing. I remember him as a gentle giant with a booming voice, which could certainly give your ears a good bashing. This was in some contrast to other teachers who used a variety of implements to inflict punishment.

One teacher, for example, used to have a two foot cane, a black plimsoll and a tartan slipper; should any boy cause him annoyance, the offender would hear a terrifying summons such as, "Thompson, choose your weapon"; it made no difference which you chose, as he would apply them with equal force. Another used to throw chalk, or occasionally the board duster would be launched at an offender; unfortunately, an innocent

head sometimes got in the way, leaving the guilty party with a huge grin all over his face, and the innocent with a sore head.

### Elephant Detectors

Mr. Simister, I recall, used to stand pencils up on their end on his desk; these he described as elephant detectors. This was his method of acquiring silence in class – should one of his elephant detectors fall over, it would result in a mouthful of abuse, with the offender being required to stand in a corner. One of this teacher's favourite comments would be made when anyone needed to use the toilet; the request of "Please Sir, may I leave the room?" would be followed by a reply of "You can take it with you, boy".

The above may all sound like sour grapes, but by and large I did enjoy my time at Ashton-in-Makerfield Secondary Modern School, to give it its correct title. I still have my school report, and the final page written by Percival Ralls fills me with pride. Thanks Percy!

**David Thompson**  
(Central School pupil 1954-1957)

# SPOKEN (Mondays was Washday)

3rd – 30th APRIL 2002

MIXED MEDIA EXHIBITION IN THE ARTIST'S STUDIO,  
THE DERBY ROOM, STAIRS GALLERY  
(TURNPIKE GALLERY) AND ST. MARY'S CHURCH.

This exhibition celebrates the completion of the reminiscence project 'Mondays was Washday'-inspired from the memories of the people living in Leigh.

There will be a programme of educational and reminiscence events to compliment the artworks.

These include craft workshops, slide shows, music quizzes, North West Sound Archive recording day, tours of Leigh on minibuses and by foot, as well as a talk by the artist in residence.

We welcome participation from all members of the public, in particular the elderly community living in and around Leigh.



### WORKSHOP/EVENTS

**3rd April - 11am-3pm**  
**Derby Room (Turnpike Centre)**

Exhibition opening. With slide show, music quiz, craft activity and complimentary buffet.

**9th April - 10.30 am, 2pm**  
**Turnpike Centre**

Exhibition tour and talk with artist in residence Suki Chan.

**11th April - 11- 4pm**  
**Derby Room**

North West Sound Archive Recording Day and a Brief History of Sound exhibition. With complimentary buffet.

**11th April - 1- 4pm**  
**Turnpike Centre**

Exhibition tour and talk with artist in residence Suki Chan.

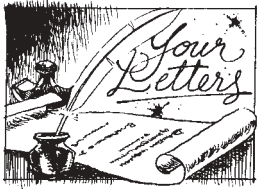
**18th April - 2-4.30pm**  
**Meet Foyer of Turnpike Centre**

Learn about our local heritage on a guided tour of Leigh with local historian, Tony Ashcroft. £1

**29th April - 11am-4pm**  
**Derby Room**

Screening of video on the past, present and future of Wigan, commissioned by Wigan Council. Come and meet new media artist Jackie Chatur and find out more about the video, CD-Rom and website designed to encourage the public to play a role in community planning.

**For more information on the project, or how to get involved in any of the above events, please call Suki at the Turnpike Gallery, on 01942 404469.**



# 34 years at Ashton-in-Makerfield Central School

Dear Editor,

I am not a regular reader of *Past Forward* but a friend informed me of an article about Ashton-in-Makerfield Central School which had appeared in a recent issue. My interest was aroused as my father (Firth Hartley) had taught there for 34 years. It was a very happy and fulfilling time for him.

I am enclosing some notes about my recollections of the school which I hope might complement Stan Ralls' article.

I attended the 'British School' in Ashton and then the Grammar School. After leaving the area for a few years I returned to teach for seven years at the Girls' High School in Wigan. Although now living in Yorkshire my memories of the

Wigan area are very happy and I would like to receive further copies of *Past Forward* for which I enclose a cheque.

**Barbara M. Hartley**  
2 Southwood Avenue  
off Hall Ing Lane  
Honley  
Holmfirth HD9 6QP

I read Stan Ralls' article about the Central School in Ashton-in-Makerfield (issue no. 28) with great interest. My interest was generated by the fact that I had known the school well over many years and I feel I could add to the information contained in the article. My later father, Firth Hartley, joined the staff of the school in 1931 when he was a newly qualified teacher and one of 19 applicants for the post who were interviewed. Teachers were very plentiful at that time; in fact shortly after my

father started teaching there was a salary cut (10%, I think, and called 'The Geddes Axe'.) How would that be received today?

My father was a Yorkshire man who committed the terrible sin of moving from Brighouse in the West Riding of Yorkshire to Lancashire! He was very happy at the Central School and stayed there throughout his teaching career. When he retired in 1965 he declined an offer to return to Yorkshire and remained in Lancashire until he died in 1968.

My father had many colleagues who became good family friends including the Ralls family. I have copies of the photographs reproduced in your magazine in my possession and I think I can identify many of staff and fill in some gaps.

With reference to the 1948 photograph; Back row from left to right:

Ernest Heaton, Percy Ralls, Dick Anderton, ?  
Front row left to right: Alec McKenzie, Firth Harley, Cliff Lester (Headmaster), Bob Vernon, Herbert Symyster.  
1960's photograph; Back row 4th from left Dick Anderton, 5th from left Gordon Derbyshire.

Front row left to right: Arthur Lathom, Alec McKenzie, Percy Ralls, Cliff Lester, Firth Hartley, Bob Vernon, Herbert Symyster.

The Headmaster who succeeded Mr. Farrand was Mr. T. Moore; he was a bachelor who came from Southport and lodged during the week with Mrs. Hayes who lived in Wolmer Street off Old Road in Ashton. Sadly he died while he was still

Headmaster and was replaced by Mr. Lester.

The Headmistress of the Girls School was Mrs. Bradbury and she must have been amongst the first women teachers allowed to keep her job after getting married. Prior to World War II woman teachers who married had to relinquish their posts. How things have changed!

The school caretaker was Mr. Jim Cottam. He was a loyal and conscientious member of the school staff who in later years accompanied the school on their annual visit to Grasmere.

I hope my recollections will add to those of Stanley Ralls. They are based on my father's experience over 34 years and it has given me much pleasure recounting them.

**Robert Chadwick has kindly sent in this photograph of the Hindley & Abram Grammar School 1st XI of 1949, with every player named.**



**Back row: l-r** R.Molyneux, G. Withington, R. Chadwick, M.B. Rothwell, G. Alldred, Mr. Berry. **Centre:** B. Lawson, D. Huntington, H. Sharratt, Capt. E. Forshaw, W. Gill **Seated:** G. Barratt, K. Sumner.

Dear Sir,

As a former pupil of HAGS (1944-49) and secretary of the football club, I am seeking 'lost' silver trophies, the disappearance of which came to light when I attended a recent Old Student's reunion. I wonder if any of your readers may be able to shed any light on this mystery.

I am particularly anxious to locate the two trophies presented to the Grammar School by the Old Boys' Club when they disbanded in the early 1960's - the Len Fielden Memorial Trophy, for House football, and the Old Boys' Trophy for house hockey.

But I am also keen to locate other 'lost' trophies, all of which would appear to have been in use before 1970.

These are the Dr. Lewis Cup for Senior Boys' cross country, the F.K. Platt Cup for Junior Boys' cross country, the Old Pupils Cup for the Middle Girl champion, the Mrs. Stone Cup for the Senior Girl Champion and the Eckersley Cup for the Senior Boy champion.

The trophies may be forgotten in some trunk, or on display by a former winner who may feel it appropriate to return the trophy, no questions asked. These trophies are a big part of the school's history and deserve to be found and restored to their 'home', hopefully to be put on permanent display.

**Robert Chadwick**  
**Nottingham**  
**Email:**  
[robertchadwick@freeuk.com](mailto:robertchadwick@freeuk.com)





## Bombardier Grimshaw did survive

Dear Alastair,

You may recall that in the last issue of *Past Forward* you included my appeal for any relatives of a former POW named Grimshaw to make contact. I really thought it a forlorn hope, but this morning's mail brought a letter from the former soldier's son in Standish. Once again *Past Forward* pulls it off! I will now be able to send the family, which includes grandchildren, the post-card my late father sent their relative nearly 60 years ago. The happy outcome of the story is that Bombardier Grimshaw did survive the Japanese camp, living on until the mid 1980's.

I wonder if I could make yet another of my pleas? Whilst going through some old photographs, my uncle Stan Morris found pictures of his late wife's best friend Doris Moss (nee Nelson). Doris sadly died shortly after the birth of her only child – a daughter, name unknown. We believe the child, who would now be about 70, grew up with her father Tom Moss somewhere around the Upholland area. Should she, or perhaps one of her children, read this and wish to have the photographs, then they may contact me and I will arrange it.

I find that with each issue of *Past Forward* I am corresponding with more and more fellow readers of the magazine and we are all awaiting the next issue with anticipation. Perhaps the film 'Band of Brothers' should have been made about the *Past Forward* brotherhood (ha ha).

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

● The story of Neil's Uncle Stan's life on the Old Great Central Railway appears on p5 Ed.

## 'I NEVER WANTED TO LEAVE SCHOOL'

Dear Sir,

I attended Whelley Senior School, at the bottom of Great Acre, off Bradshaw Street, from September 1941 until December 1943. I remember forming into an orderly line outside my previous school, St. Stephens, then we were taken down to the new school, which stood in a nice setting with green lawns sloping down to the playground. This was quite a contrast to the old Victorian buildings I had previously attended – St. David's in Haigh where I was born, then St. John the Baptist, New Springs, and lastly St. Stephens, Whelley.

On arriving at the main entrance we were told to stand still and wait; after a while we saw another line of children coming towards the entrance, another wait, then yet another line. We were finally taken into the main assembly hall, where the headmistress, Miss Ore, introduced herself, then welcomed us to our new school.

Then we were sorted into groups of about 25 or 30, and ushered into separate classrooms to be assessed as to whether we would go into 1A, 1B, or 1C. This was done by an exam in Maths, English and General Knowledge. After a long wait, the teacher came back and called out names. I was in the 1B group. I remember there were four rows of desks in our classroom, two seats in each desk.

12 o'clock was dinner time. We had been told beforehand that dinner money had to be handed in one week in advance, so, the money duly handed over to the teacher, we walked down the corridor back to the assembly hall, which was now lined with tables and chairs. This was luxury as up to now dinner times had mainly been a packed lunch of jam butties and an apple.

At 1 o'clock we were back to the classroom. We were then divided into teams, as follows: Red – Romans, Green – Trojans, Blue – Spartans and Yellow – Greeks. Being on the first row near the window, we became the Romans.

During the first week we had a music lesson with Mrs. Swinley, the singing teacher; I had heard on the grapevine that everyone had to sing a song to see who was good and not so good. As I came under a third category – can't sing a note! – I was dreading my turn. I tried to sing "Early one Morning! But the teacher never let me finish the first line, and told me to sit down.

I never could draw or paint either, but I did make an effort; I drew a picture of an old coal tip

which I saw every day from my bedroom window in Ivy Brow, New Springs. (I think people called it the "wutchy rook"). I never did finish the school pullover in all the years I was there. I was also desperate at sewing; though in later years I made most of the clothes for my four children, and knitted dozens of jumpers for my grandchildren. Mrs. Swinley would never have believed it!

Cookery lessons were something else; I ate a lot of the ingredients before they ever got the chance to be cooked. The day we made a Victoria sponge, for example, I put all the ingredients into the bowl and stirred the mixture well; but then I had a little taste, then another little taste, and just a bit more. When my tin was lifted out of the oven, the teacher lifted it on high and said, "I think this little fairy cake belongs to you, Edna!" I had rather a pale complexion as a child, but on cookery days I was a picture of health! Miss Ackers put it down to the heat in the kitchen, but I had my own little secret – I had found some red food colouring in one of the cupboards, and applied a quick dab on both cheeks, when Miss wasn't watching!

Another episode of St. George's (where we went at least twice a week during the War as some of our rooms had been taken over by the ARP) was the day a gang of us girls were found smoking in the toilets at break time. One of the infants had complained to the teacher that they were being stopped from using the toilets, so the teacher hauled us out to face a furious Miss Ackers. Another time we were late back after the dinner break, because we had been paddling in the River Douglas. "Where have you been?" I replied with the first thing that came into my head, "please Miss, we couldn't cross the road because there was a funeral passing and it took a long time". She didn't believe a word! Both times we got slapped on the hand with a ruler.

We had elocution lessons and poetry once a week, but I think the teacher was flogging a dead horse here as well. We had to say over and over every week, "how now brown cow?" One night on the radio I heard a very good ending for the brown cow saga. So the next lesson I was ready – when the teacher asked "how now brown cow", I piped up, "grazing in the green, green grass". There was a hushed classroom, then Miss said "very good, where did you learn that?" From then on, it was added on to brown cow.

We had some very good teachers, including Mrs. Berisford, the Geography teacher, who always made the work easy with her stories of far away places. I was to remember her one day when I stood in a rubber plantation in Malaga (my husband was stationed with the RAF in Singapore) watching the rubber tappers at work, just as she had told us.

I never wanted to leave school, but in those days, at 14 you had no option. But I will always remember my days at Whelley Senior School, and all the girls, most of whom I have never seen since the day I left. If there are any of you out there who remember, please give me a call, or drop a line.

**Edna Land (nee Heeley)**  
63 Botany Brow  
Chorley PR6 0JN  
Tel: 01257 263510

## THOMAS CHAPMAN?

Dear Alastair,

Can *Past Forward* readers throw light on the author/poet Thomas Chapman, who is credited with compiling a book of "Poetic Tit Bits" entitled 'Namby Pamby', c.1876.

He also wrote about "Widder Bagshaw" and her trips with her nephew from Chowbent to Paris, New Brighton and the Crystal Palace. So, perhaps he was an Atherton chap. I suspect

he had connections with Liverpool.

Two poems in 'Namby Pamby' lead me to think he may have been a member of Hope Street Congregational Church, Wigan – unless there is a church in Hope Street, Liverpool.

**Bob Dobson**  
"Acorns"  
3 Staining rise  
Staining  
Blackpool FY3 0BU



# THE STORY OF GREAT GREAT GRANDFATHER HORROCKS

Dear Sir,

Early last year, now retired, I decided to investigate a suitcase full of documents which my father gave to me before he died. He asked me to keep them even if I was not interested in them.

The case contained letters sent from Australia in the early 1900's, solicitors' papers, lists of documents, copies of wills and an ink drawing of my great-great-grandfather.



law, who had emigrated to Australia in 1870. Many Emails have since passed between us.

The story of great-great-grandfather Horrocks is long, full and ongoing, but briefly is as follows. James Horrocks was born in Wigan on 27 January 1805. His mother was a Ford heiress, totally blind, while his father had tuberculosis and died when his son was still a toddler.

His grandfather put the child and his inheritance in the care of a trustee, also sent young James and his own young son to Usher College in County Durham for his safety (so he said) and to get an education.

Years passed before James, now married and with a family, returned to

I made a journey to Wigan Library last year and found more details and was 'hooked'. While playing around on my son's computer, by pure luck (or more by divine providence) I got into an Australian website, saw a list of names and recognised it as being an exact copy of one in my possession. With my son's help, I contacted the person who had submitted the list and found she was a descendant of great-great-grandfather's eldest son, his heir-in-

Wigan in search of his 'roots'. He met an old man who recognised James. He told James that he had cared for him as a child, when in the service of the trustee. He said that some years earlier his master had sent the old man looking for James, and although he had searched for almost a year, had been unable to find him. Fortunately the trustee was still alive – just. James visited him on his death and was given a case of documents which would prove his

right of ownership to lands and properties in and around Wigan. The old man bitterly regretted withholding this evidence from James for such a long time and begged his forgiveness.

As it happened, one of the properties named in a will had become vacant and James was encouraged to take possession. This he did, so began the

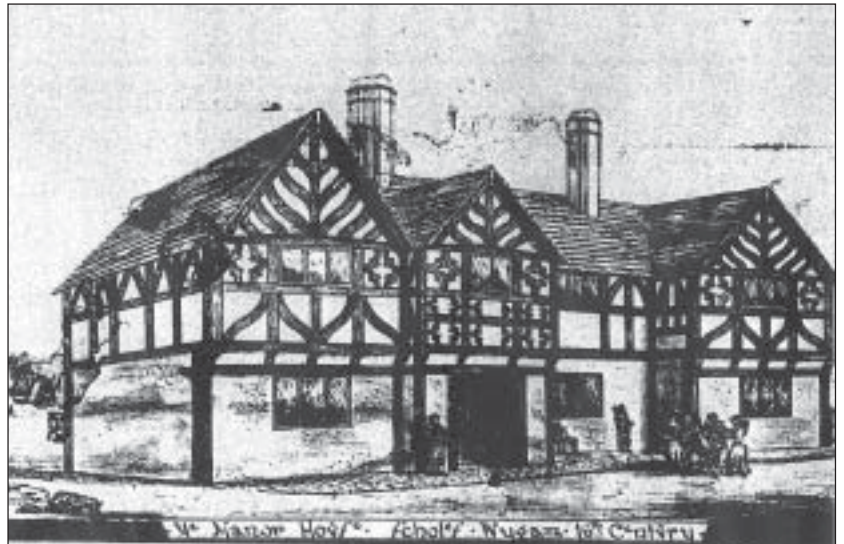
famous 'Siege of Scholes' in 1864.

I recently wrote to the History Shop seeking more information and received a copy from an old newspaper of a very dilapidated Scholes Manor. I sent a copy of this to my Australian contact, and received in return the enclosed picture of the manor in its heyday. Being a bit of a

dreamer, I wondered what it had looked like in reality, so I asked a local artist to paint an impression, a copy of which I enclose. I wonder if anyone recognises the old drawing? It seems to have come from an old publication which may have more information.

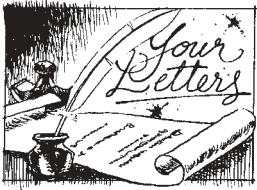
Thank you.

**Mrs. J. Cooke**  
36 Shadwell Walk  
Leeds LS17 6EG



*Scholes Manor House as it appeared in the 16th century (above) and (below) an artist's watercolour impression as it may have appeared in its heyday.*





## Those who died young, remembered

Dear Editor,

I should have had this article in for the November issue because my story relates to the battlefields and memorials to the boys who died in France and Belgium 1914-18. However, I expect it will hold some interest for your readers.

My daughter Sheila teaches Fine Art at 'Tudor Hall', an all girl's school in Banbury Oxon. The Head of History had arranged for a party of 40 girls and teaching staff to visit the battlefields of France and Belgium, including the Somme and Ypres. I was also invited to join the party if I wished.

Now I had hinted in a letter to one of your regular contributors to *Past Forward*, Neil Cain, of my intention to go on this trip – and in a reply letter Neil wrote to say how it was his own intention to one day visit 'Tyne Cot' – it

seems there is a memorial there to commemorate those killed at the Battle of Pachedale. As his Uncle Hance Cain, who served with the Royal North Lancs Regiment, was among those killed there his name would be on this memorial.

As it happened 'Tyne Cot' was on our list for visiting. As we approached it my daughter stood up to address the girls. She held up a very large bar of Belgian chocolate, saying, "this is for the first girl to find Hance Cain's name on the memorial".

About 10 minutes after we had begun our search, one of the girls called out "Its here, Mr. Lees, Miss Lees, Its here".

To think! Here are youngsters of another generation calling out the name of a man, a stranger to them, who had given his life for them like thousands more, 84 years ago.

I am sure that if it were possible there would be smiles on the faces of those brave dead soldiers, knowing that people still remembered them – and particularly the young, because that's what most of them were.

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

## NOT A WELLINGTON BOMBER

Dear Sir,

On reading issue no. 29 of your excellent magazine, I beg to pass comment on the article "Our Clifford". The wording under the photograph on page 27 is incorrect, as to the description of the aeroplane. The aeroplane on the picture is not a

Wellington Bomber but is in fact a Short Stirling Bomber.

**T. Bimson**  
64 Church Lane  
Shevington  
Wigan WN6 8BD

● *Mr. Bimson is only one of several readers who spotted this mistake. My apologies. Ed.*



Dear Sir,

I am a member of Leigh Harriers Athletic Club trying to put together a pictorial history of the Club, for which I need information, photographs and programmes etc.

If any reader is a relative of the athletes shown in this photograph, taken on the Athletic ground c. 1930-31, recognises any of the athletes, or knows their names, please get in contact with me or leave a message at the Leigh Harriers Athletic Club.

I am also interested in any past

members of the club – athletes, boxers, wrestlers, and cyclists, between 1890 and the 1960's.

Left to right:

Arthur Darnell, N. Thomas, unknown, Teddy Roberts, Jimmy Andrews, W.T. Battersby, unknown, unknown, Jimmy Noon, unknown.

**John Taylor**  
287 Twist Lane  
Leigh  
Lancs WN7 4EH  
Tel: 01942 730904

## KENNETH'S FINAL LETTER

Dear Mr. Gillies,

Another interesting snippet on the Stoney Lane 1930's Dance Hall has been telephoned to me by Castle Hill, Hindley, *Past Forward* reader Bob France.

Bob believes the dance hall came courtesy of the late Joe Izzard, likely a joiner.

Joe Izzard presumably gave those unemployed or on short time the hall to dance in and for various uses. Another dance hall, the Carlton was situated behind the *Bonnie Lasses* pub at one time.

This information came my way on Remembrance Day but due to 'Leukaemia

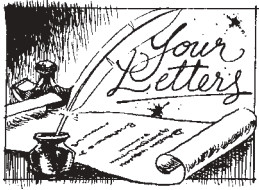
tiredness' I haven't been able to contact any of the informants.

It's nice to know, though, how people of senior years 'remember' a once popular part of Stoney Lane!

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



**Mrs. E. McDonald of Orrell, has kindly loaned us this splendid photograph of the Wigan Wheelers, c.1920. Her grandfather, Jim Chisnall, (front row extreme left) was a founder member. Tom Hughes, snr. (front), the founder, was featured in *Past Forward* no. 4.**



## KENNETH'S WORD PICTURE EVOKED MEMORABLE LOVE FOR DANCE MUSIC

Dear Sir,

We have been avid readers of *Past Forward* for many years, thanks to my sister Joan McAvoy of Whitley and school friend Chris Settle of Ince who between them ensure that we never miss a copy. We left Wigan for Rhodesia as a young married couple in 1958. Maureen hailed from Spring View and my home was in Higher Ince. We have made frequent return visits "wom" over the past 44 years.

Of the many articles I have enjoyed I would like to make particular reference to a letter from Kenneth Lucas\* in Issue 26 under the heading "Take Your Partners Please". Kenneth painted such a vivid word picture of a memorable time of my life. It is quite uncanny how such similar interests in a very narrow field locally could be matched over half a century later. Perhaps my interests were centred more on the music than the dancing but we

certainly trod the same path. Hopefully I will get the opportunity to meet Kenneth on our next visit "wom", possibly later this year.

My love for dance music started as a young trumpet player in the school orchestra at Hindley & Abram Grammar School and a short spell with a brass band. I later traced a very similar route to Kenneth around the district starting as a teenager at Ince Public Hall where Roy Crabtree and his band held the stage, although I was not a piano accordion fan. His comments about the Manley were so apt. I then graduated to becoming a regular at the Empress Hall where I thought Ken Hewitt and his band were fantastic. They had a great arrangement of the Mexican Hat Dance. At this stage I was doing my National Service in the RAF at Padgate where I was highly involved in the band at the camp, both Military Band and Dance Band. As I was

within such easy reach of home I was fortunate to have some trumpet lessons from Ken Hewitt's lead trumpet to help with my section work.

Young musicians around Wigan today are so fortunate to have the facilities and opportunities afforded to them by the Wigan Youth Jazz Orchestra and such an able and dedicated team of administrators. We had to find our own ways and means of musical growth 50 years ago. I then played with, I think his name was Jess Greenalgh, at Atherton on Saturday nights and have vivid recollections of the pianist checking his football coupon from the Football Pink Saturday night paper on the piano as we played the first dance. He was a very good pianist to play a big band score and check his coupon at the same time! I then went a small step further afield to play with Bill Shuttleworth and his band at Preston Public Hall every Saturday. I travelled on my little

98cc James motorcycle with the trumpet strapped on the back. One Saturday each month was a two band job with a "name band" half an hour on, half an hour off with such stars as Ronnie Scott, Jack Parnell and Ivy Benson. Our dance of the year was Leyland Motors Ball at the Winter Gardens, Blackpool. We also had a few gigs at Floral Hall, Southport.

As an aside I remember taking Maureen to see Ted Heath at the Winter Gardens when we were courting. We were walking home to Spring View from Wigan North West Station very late at night when Maureen complained that we had spent a night at the Winter Gardens and I never asked her for a single dance. I had sat us very close to the brass section and was glued to them in a trance for four hours!

One of the few local dance halls not mentioned specifically by Kenneth was the Court Hall which was

somewhat more exclusive in clientele and which for me did not have the attraction of a band of the calibre of Ken Hewitt.

Well done Wigan on becoming internationally known for your Annual Jazz Festival and attracting the best in the world to Wigan. The best we could do in my day was a very rare appearance of Eddie Calvert, Kenny Baker and Doctor Crock and His Crackpots at Wigan Hippodrome and a once only visit of Billy Cotton to the Ritz featuring a great lead trumpet (Grecia Farfell).

A big thank you to *Past Forward* for preserving my pride in my home town and a particular thanks to Kenneth Lucas for reminding me of all the pleasure I had from jazz, swing and popular music around Wigan in my early days. You have a great quality magazine. Please keep up the good work.

**Mr & Mrs Joe Siney**  
11 Methven Mews  
99 Methven Road  
Westville 3630  
South Africa  
Email: [Jomos1@freemail.absa.co.za](mailto:Jomos1@freemail.absa.co.za)

\*Sadly Kenneth died earlier this year; his final letter appears on p35.

Dear Sir,

I have just received your latest copy of *Past Forward*. I enjoy the articles that you publish very much. It helps me to learn more about Wigan and the people who lived there as I research my family history.

I am currently researching the Round

## The Round family of Wigan and Pemberton

family of Wigan and Pemberton. My grandfather, Edward Round was born in Wigan in 1903. His father William Round married Isabella Rutherford in 1893. William and his family along with his sister

Elizabeth Alice who was married to Thomas Yates immigrated to Canada about 1906 and settled in Guelph, Ontario. The earliest record I have is the marriage of Adam Round to Sarah Brown in 1799.

Some of the families I am researching besides the Round are: Rutherford, Bibby, Barker, Brown and Winnard.

I am hoping that some of your readers will recognise the family

names and be able to help me in my research.

Thank you for an excellent magazine and good luck on your projects.

**Betty Lalonde**  
Box 359  
Wabamun  
AB TOE 2K0  
Canada

Email: [blalonde@compusmart.ab.ca](mailto:blalonde@compusmart.ab.ca)



## GLAD TO HAVE MISSED MISS GEE!

Dear Editor,

I was very interested in the letter from Mrs. Margaret Hirst recalling days at Marylebone Primary School. I, too, attended that school after removing from Pemberton to Mesnes Road in 1929. My teacher was the Head Teacher, Miss Greig, a kind and thoughtful person who, when my father became unemployed, gave me the *Manchester Guardian* each day to help him look for jobs.

The two other teachers were as described by Mrs. Hirst – Miss Holliday (not Halliday) who took us once a week for Nature Studies, and Miss Parkinson (not Parker). Out of school, Miss Parkinson taught the piano and was a keen cricket fan. On one occasion, she and her

sister took me and another boy (Dicky Armstrong) to Lancashire's Aigburth cricket ground to watch Lancashire play the touring West Indies side. It was a great opportunity for collecting autographs of the famous! Regretfully, the only one to refuse our autograph was the Lancashire and England wicket-keeper George Duckworth.

A popular visitor to the school was one of its managers – Alderman Carey. Whenever he was spotted approaching the school Miss Greig would be duly warned and, as Alderman Carey entered the room we all stood up and chorused, "Good morning Mr. Cary". The benevolent old gentleman smiled benignly as he acknowledged the greeting with a little wave of the hand. Incidentally, Alderman Carey's grandson still lives today at Upholland (Hi! Joe & Lucy).

Thank you, Mrs. Hirst, for triggering these recollections – and how glad I am to have missed Miss Gee!

**C. Miller**  
28 Norbreck Crescent  
Wigan WN6 7RF

## EVEN EINSTEIN GOT IT WRONG – TWICE

Dear Sir,

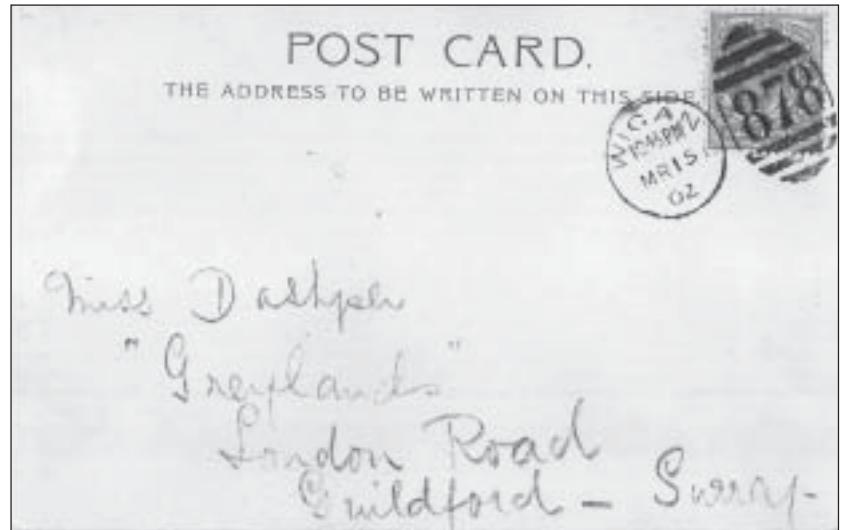
In Issue 29 I read Mrs. Hirst's article about her sister who 60 years ago was admonished about the spelling of belief. She was reminded of the rule 'I comes before E, except after C'.

I remembered one of Barry Cryer's asides about this 'rule':

"Even Einstein got it wrong...twice!"

**David Whalley**  
18 Kingsdown Crescent  
Wigan WN1 2RS

## Wallgate, Wigan, 100 years ago



Dear Editor,

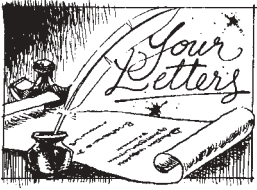
Your readers may be interested in this postcard [above] showing Wallgate, Wigan, as it was 100 years ago. Some of the buildings are festooned with flags and bunting, possibly in celebration of the accession to the throne of Edward VII following the death of Queen Victoria on 22 January 1901. The King's Coronation had been planned for 26 June 1902 but, due to an attack of peritonitis, it had to be postponed until 9 August that year.

The postcard, which is addressed to a Miss D. Ashpen of Guildford, Surrey, appears to have been written by someone in the field of entertainment whose comments concerning the local populace are less than flattering, to say the least! The message, which is signed "V. Amnesley" reads:

*"My dear Sweetie – this town is full of factory lads and lasses who stare at one with their mouths open!!! Madge joins me in heaps of love to you all. I am scribbling this in my dressing room so excuse pencil!!!"*

As a matter of interest, the magazine *Picture Postcard Monthly* maintains a list of earliest posting dates from locations in Britain, as submitted by readers. This particular card, which was posted on 15 March 1902, is recorded in the magazine as having the earliest known posting date from Wigan.

**John Myers**  
(ex. Upholland and Garswood)  
23 Marston Drive  
Rhos-on-Sea  
Colwyn Bay  
Conwy  
LL28 4SH



## Dennis Light Four Fire Appliance – info wanted

Dear Sir,

In October 2001 I with four others became the owner of a Dennis Light Four Fire Appliance. The machine has been in private hands from around 1974. While mechanical restoration had been undertaken on the engine and chassis, the bodywork was allowed to deteriorate. Work started in December to replace the bodywork on the machine.

The machine does carry a Lancashire Registration number (ETJ 590), and it would appear that it was new to the Bradley Hall Ordinance Factory at Standish. I understand that this factory was run by ICI (Metals) Ltd.

We know that the machine finished at the H J Heinz factory at Kitt Green. As Heinz took a lease on part of the Ordinance Factory site in the post war years, it would appear that on opening the Kitt Green Factory the machine was transferred across. We have now found one of the Heinz fire brigade officers, Ken Bowden, who remembers the machine, and thinks that it was moved to Kitt Green either in 1958 or 1959. It served until 1972, when it was sold on to Ainscoughs, a local scrap metal firm. They appear to have

taken the machine to various carnivals in the Wigan area.

We are now trying to find anyone who served on the Bradley Hall Ordinance Factory fire brigade around 1941 when the machine was delivered from Dennis Bros.

Such a retired fireman could be very helpful in explaining what fire fighting kit was carried and where it was stowed on the machine. Each brigade had its own ideas and an ordinance factory had its own special risks. Photographs of the machine in service at ICI (Metals) and Heinz would be very interesting and helpful, not least with restoration work.

**Chris Todd**  
25 Sandringham Drive  
Great Sankey  
Warrington  
WA5 1JG  
Email: [Chris.A.S.Todd@care4free.net](mailto:Chris.A.S.Todd@care4free.net)

**Photographs submitted for Readers' Who? Where? When? cannot be published without the name and address of the sender.**

Dear Mr. Gillies,

I enclose a photograph of pit brow girls at Wigan Junction Colliery [right]. I do not recognise anyone on it. Some of your readers may, if you care to print it.

**C. Williams**  
30 Liverpool Road  
Hindley  
Wigan WN2 3HU

# Readers'



Dear Sir,

I wonder if you could find space in *Past Forward* for this photograph [above]. It was found amongst some family photographs and we are in the dark as to which colliery it is. My family came from the Astley/Boothstown areas and worked in several of the pits there.

Thank you for your wonderful magazine, I hope that one of the readers might recognise the photo.

**Anthony McIntosh**  
10 Northiam Road  
Old Town Eastbourne  
East Sussex BN21 1RP  
Email: [AnthonyMcIntosh@eastbourne10.freeserve.co.uk](mailto:AnthonyMcIntosh@eastbourne10.freeserve.co.uk)



*Above possibly Garswood area; contact Bill Foster (see page 22).*



# Who? Where? When?



Dear Editor,

First of all I'd like to say how much I enjoy *Past Forward*; the magazine is always full of interesting articles and covers a wide range of topics.

I'm enclosing a photograph above that you might like to include in your Who? Where? page. The photograph was probably taken by my great grandfather James Davies in the Golborne area. Many faces

look familiar but I'm unable to make a positive identification of anyone on this wedding photograph. I feel sure that you will get a good response, especially in the Golborne/Ashton area where several generations of the family lived.

**Josie Polkin (nee Davies)**  
102 Claremont Road  
Salford Lancs M6 7QF  
Email:

[Josie@Copernicus.demon.co.uk](mailto:Josie@Copernicus.demon.co.uk)



Above and below possibly Garswood area; contact Bill Foster (see page

22)



Dear Editor,

I enclose a photograph which was taken last year by our son John while he was visiting friends in Malawi, Africa. With time to spare he took a walk through the graveyard and this is what he saw.



In Loving Memory  
**JOHN ALBERT  
CALLOW**  
Born at  
Ashton-in-Makerfield  
Lancashire, England  
On 22 May 1897  
Died at  
Limbe Malawi  
On 26 February 1973

I would love to know can any reader tell me anything more about John Callow.

**Jean James**  
2 Lytham Road  
Ashton-in-Makerfield  
Wigan Lancs WN4 9RU

Published by Wigan Heritage Service, Leisure & Cultural Services Department, Market Suite, The Galleries, Wigan WN1 1PX.

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# Who? Where?

One of the mystery photographs in the last issue has been positively identified – the children (top right) are in front of Holgate's School (latterly Orrell Holgate Primary School), Moor Road, Orrell; the school was recently demolished, but the plaque has been preserved. It is very possible that the coronation celebration (bottom right) was held in Darlington Street, Wigan. If you can provide any more information on last issue's photographs, or think you can identify any of the four photographs below, please contact Len Hudson in Leigh Town Hall (01942 404432).

