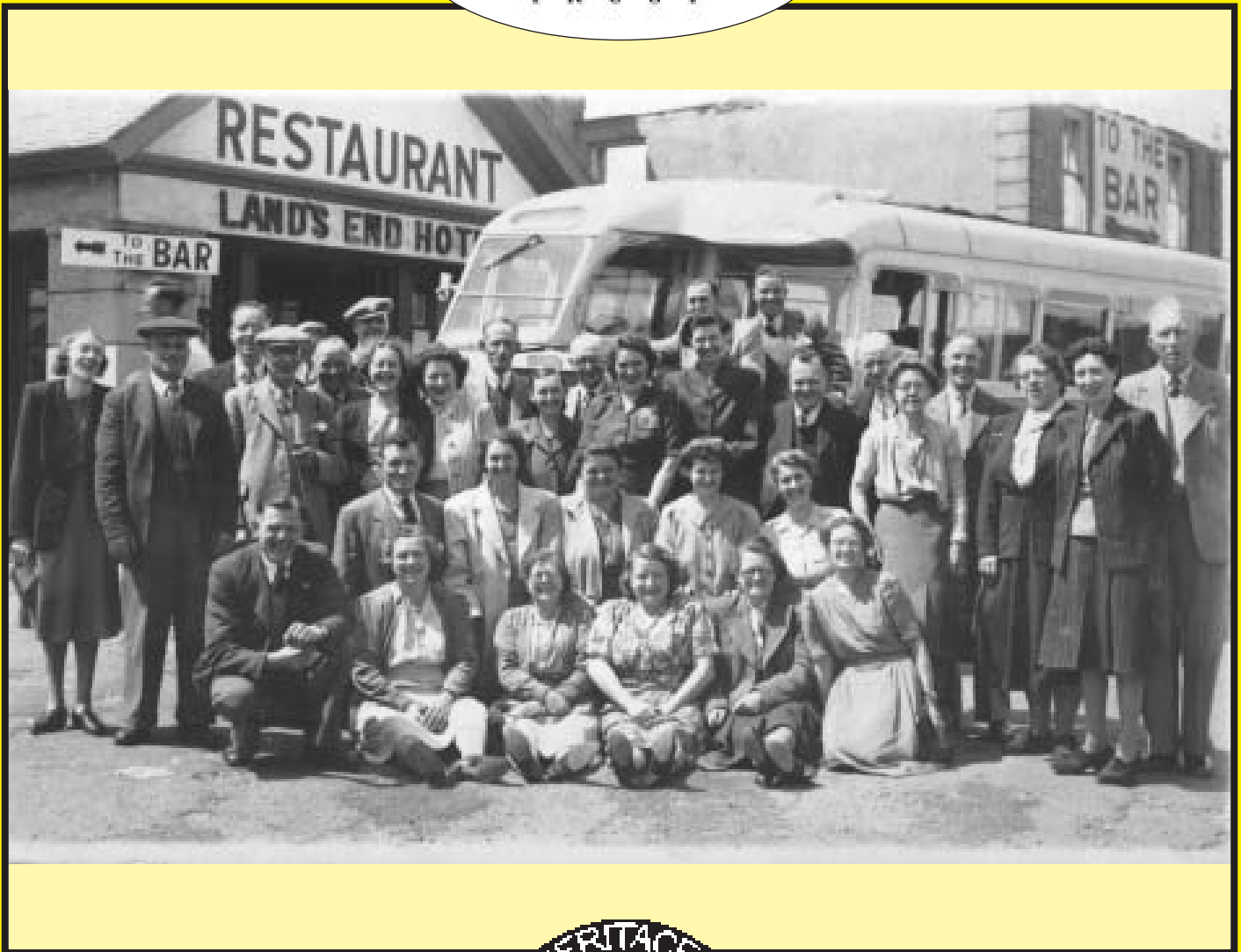


PAST FORWARD

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W I G A N
LEISURE & CULTURE
T R U S T



The Newsletter of Wigan Heritage Service

FREE

From the Editor

WELCOME to the latest edition of *Past Forward*, which has a wealth of articles from contributors new and not so new, including a number of letters written in response to Derek Cross's enquiry about Winstanley Hall a couple of issues ago. I am sure that Derek never imagined that this would lead to such an enthusiastic response

Time does not stand still, and there is sad news as well as happy. Sadly, Tom Bennett, a very good friend of the History Shop, died at Christmas. We will miss him.

But on a happier note, we welcome two new members of staff. Claire Hawkins is our new Community Outreach & Education Officer, and she has settled in well into her new duties, particularly in promoting the *Parish Map* within the local community. Amanda Bradshaw has just begun as a part-time Heritage Assistant; she will work three days a week, two in Archives and one in the History Shop. Her presence in Leigh will enable the Archives searchroom to be open three days a week.

More good news. *Past Forward* on tape has proved very successful; cassettes were distributed free as part of Wigan Library's Housebound Service, and feedback will be very positive. A number of cassettes were also sold to other readers. My thanks to my friends in *Making Waves* in Leigh for all their help here - it's been a good bit of teamwork!

I had the privilege of being closely involved in the *Mapping the Millennium* celebrations in 2000, and so am particularly pleased that, thanks to the hard work of Yvonne, Claire, Tony, Terry and many others, it has finally been possible to display the entire *Parish Map* for the first time under one roof. The *Wigan on the Map* exhibition will open very soon after the publication of this issue of *Past Forward* - see p20 for further details. I would strongly urge all those readers who can get to Wigan to visit this unique and exciting exhibition - each map is well worth seeing on its own, and the effect of all 28 together will be stunning.

Also within the currency of this issue, we will be celebrating 75 years of Wigan Athletic, and hopefully, after many recent near misses, promotion at long last to Division 1 - as I write, Latics are 12 points clear at the top, so every reason for optimism. See p21 to find out how you can help us with the exhibition.

I am delighted with the progress made by the Friends of the Heritage Service. As you will see from p21, tangible results are now emerging from all the hard work put in by Philip and by some very dedicated volunteers. If you feel you could make a contribution, do not hesitate to have a chat with Philip.

Do keep sending me contributions for *Past Forward* - without them, the magazine would not be the success it has become.

COPY DEADLINE

Please note that the copy deadline for issue no 34 of *Past Forward* is 6 June.

All comments and correspondence should be addressed to:
Editor, 'Past Forward',
Wigan Heritage Service, Market Suite, The Galleries,
Wigan WN1 1PX
Email: a.gillies@wlct.org

Ephemera from the Archives

A grand job by Laura!

Over the last year Archives volunteer Laura Binion from Tyldesley has been reboxing and checking the contents of the rather large Peace and Ellis (Wigan) solicitors deposit. We are very grateful to Laura for the work she has done, especially now that she has finally completed this mammoth task.

Peace and Ellis of King Street, Wigan were an important long established company of solicitors, up to their closure in 1963. Their material covers the period 1364-1958, encompassing numerous estates in Ashton Billinge, Hindley, Lowton, Manchester, Newton, Pemberton, Standish, Westleigh, Wigan and Wrightington.

There are records of the Holt Leigh, Kenyon of Swinley, Lathom, Markland, Rylands, Scott, Diggle, Clayton, Baldwin, Lindsays, Earls of Crawford, Kingsdown and Wood concerns. The holdings also include colliery companies records from Richard Evans of Haydock, Ackers Whitley of Abram and Bickershaw, Wigan Coal and Iron Co, and the Sankey Brook Coal Co.

The Peace and Ellis deposit numbers 453 boxes in total, over 300 of which are the original ones in which the collection arrived, in some cases going back to 1942. As such they are of a non-archival nature, ie not made of acid free materials.

Laura set to, carefully re-boxing the



Laura Binion with the re-boxed Peace & Ellis archive.

collection, retaping bundles within boxes as she progressed. Importantly, she also kept a keen eye out for evidence of deterioration of documents, usually by the visible presence of mould spores. By doing this, she has identified 20 boxes which will need conservation attention.

Help is at hand

Just started as Heritage Assistant is Amanda Bradshaw. Initially her post will be for two years, with Amanda working Wednesdays and Thursdays at Archives and one other day at the History Shop. By doing so we will be able to open the Archives Service additionally on Wednesdays as well as the current Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Amanda lives at Lowton and has a keen knowledge of and interest in music. Interestingly, she spent two years in the USA in 1995 - 97, working as an au pair. She is looking forward to working with the public and the collections.

New Age Technology

A public access computer and printer is now in place at Archives, allowing internet access and the use of various database CD ROMs. For those of you new to computers they are small plastic boxes full of wires and electrical circuits which destroy your hours of research when they decide to. They also emit low level radiation which some say gradually raises men's voices!

Seriously though, they are an extremely powerful tool for research of all kinds, especially the amazing search facility called, of all things, Google. By typing in a word in Google you are searching over three million web sites worldwide and it gives you the results instantly.

Heritage Assistant Stephanie Tsang will now be able to use this during quiet periods to carry on her work of putting the collections onto databases, rather than battling for access to the office computer!

Cover: A happy group of Wiganers, including some from Ince, enjoying a holiday at Lands End in 1948. (See letter from Neil Cain on page 36).

I was very saddened to hear of the death over Christmas of Tom Bennett, a regular at the History Shop. Initially, back in summer 2001 when I first came across him while working at the History Shop, I thought, "who's this nosy old man who keeps butting in when I'm trying to help people?"

I was soon to realise how knowledgeable and helpful he was, especially to those new to family history or with limited time available for their research. His connections with 'Uncle Joe's Mint Balls' also fascinated me - a right typical Wiganer I thought!

A few months later, by chance I heard of his wartime service as a flight engineer in Lancaster bombers and other aircraft. When I mentioned that I fly an aircraft myself we soon got on very well. I would meet him in the nearby café for a drink and a chat before the History Shop opened. Those chats were of all manner of details of flying, navigation and technical aspects and also the various sorties he went on.

Tom told me that as flight engineer he would stand alongside the pilot on take off, operating the four throttle levers while the pilot pulled back on the elevator stick and operated the rudder pedals. During the flight his job was to constantly monitor and make adjustments to the condition of the four 2000 hp Rolls Royce Merlin engines. This included fuel pres-

MR. TOM BENNETT

We all started New Year on a very sad note with the news that Mr Tom Bennett, a regular researcher at the History Shop for many years, had died, aged 78, over the Christmas period.

This did not so much come as a surprise, as his health had clearly been failing over the preceding weeks, but nevertheless we all felt a great loss. Tom Bennett was someone whom we had seen three or four times a week at the History Shop, and he had become part of our lives.

His genealogy research, I know, brought him great pleasure and, as I only found out recently, had been inspired by an appeal in the local press. An Australian expat had asked for relatives still living to contact her down under and Tom Bennett responded. At her request he sought out the History Shop and undertook research into their family, sharing his

information with his long lost Australian cousin every step of the way. This culminated a few years ago with him travelling out to stay with her - as he put it, "the trip of a lifetime".

He also enjoyed local history, and his researches into the Santus story, old newspaper advertisements, family connections and the family tree also meant a lot to him. He had spent all of his working life making the famous 'Uncle Joe's', and received fitting testament to his efforts by being featured in their last publication, 'A Sweet Story'.

We will all miss Tom, but are glad to say we knew him.

A strong contingent of staff, Friends of Wigan Heritage Service and fellow researchers from the History Shop attended the funeral and service at Wigan Crematorium on 9 January 2003.

sure, oil temperature and pressure, vacuum suction for the gyroscopes, hydraulic pressure and many other fine adjustments.

I have always had enormous respect for the wartime sacrifice of Tom's generation in World War II. In the 2,074 days and nights between 3 September 1939 and 7-8 August 1945, a total of 387,416 sorties were flown by Bomber Command and over 955,000 tons of bombs were dropped; 8953 aircraft were lost and 55,573 aircrew made the ultimate sacrifice.

To put yourself in the frame of mind where you know the chances of returning from each sortie were very slim, yet you still head off as



Flight Engineer Tom Bennett, during World War II.

determined as ever, is truly inspiring. Tom mentioned that he had been on 15 bombing sorties, and on a number of occasions the German

searchlights found them, followed immediately by anti aircraft attack. Tom was indeed lucky to have survived so many missions.

The thought of taking up a wartime flight engineer in my plane, as a gesture in return for what he risked during the war, entered my mind and he agreed enthusiastically. After introducing him to the flying instructors and engineers and taking him up in the control tower, we took the plane up, heading towards his flat in central Wigan. A circle or two around there, then off to Ashurst Beacon, Burscough, Southport and Euxton munitions site (being demolished at the time).

Once we had reached 3000 feet I handed over the controls to Tom. This pleased him no end, and soon he was smoothly and safely executing turns and climbs. We then headed off to Darwen and Blackburn, over Bolton and Leigh, then back to Barton. I was relieved to round off the trip with a nice smooth landing! Tom later told History Shop staff that he considered me a good pilot, which pleased me no end!

I had a thousand and one questions waiting for Tom, but sadly not to be. He had kept his wartime flying log book and other items such as medals, and told me that he was keen that we should have them in the Archives and Museum collections. Sadly, these have not come to us after his death. I hope, however, they have survived to keep the memory of this character alive.

Alan Davies
Heritage Officer
(Archives)

THE SEXTON'S DAY REGISTERS FOR WIGAN ALL SAINTS PARISH CHURCH

(DP 24 / 6 / A 1-12)

During Ken Taylor's work on the Wigan All Saints registers for the Lancashire Parish Register Society (see *Past Forward* 30, p3), he became diverted on discovery of the 18th and early 19th century Sexton's notes. The Sexton in those days was the general dogsbody, having care of the fabric of the church and its contents, plus bell ringing and grave digging.

That he took the trouble to make a note of his work, especially the burials and grave digging, is understandable, as we get a vision of Wigan All Saints rather like Stanley Spencer's resurrection paintings of Cookham churchyard, with bodies packed into overflowing graves going walkabout in search of better accommodation!

These are not people are berried." As transcriptions. They are important, however. lists of people in the registers kept by the Sexton of All Saints, Wigan, "to find where was for him to record the state of the breadth and the space left in it and to record the

by Ken Taylor

Space for further burials was becoming limited with bodies being tucked under structural features of the church, window bays for example. I personally have a slightly Barchester Towers vision of the Sexton himself in typical early 19th century attire, grave digging in the morning then a spot of bell ringing. Later clay pipe in hand in the nearby inn at lunch, recalling his valiant attempts to squeeze another body into grave number 110. Another spot of bell ringing after lunch, then another grave to dig, more bell ringing in the evening, then round off the night with a few jugs of Aspull Ale, recalling the day's events. Where are these characters today?

A.D.

permission of the person owning the breadth.

Although the registers cover the period 1765-1824, most entries cover only the 30 years from 1765. Some years (1769-1773, 1791 and 1792) are not even mentioned.

There are over 3000 entries, but as there were some 300 to 400 burials a year, it is obvious that not all burials were recorded by the Sexton. Some registers duplicate records in another register. There are 12 registers, although there may have been others which have not survived; some are in better condition and fuller than others. Many have had pages repaired. Volume 7 is a duplicate of volume 5 and is not included. Only some registers indicate the part of the church covered.

James Latham - Sexton

In a different section of the church archive, the Churchwarden's

Accounts, we are occasionally given information about the Sextons. The one most responsible for the registers was probably James Latham who seems to have been helped and succeeded by either his brother or his son. He was trusted to settle large accounts; we hear of the cost of his new clothes and spades, the lace round his hat, repairs to his shoes and on one occasion his salary of £2 10s.

He also received extra payments for such work as emptying the bone house. He also may have been the owner of property adjacent to the Churchyard, for it was land belonging to a James Latham that the Church acquired when it needed extra space for graves. Despite his rather unorthodox spellings he was literate. At a time when 80% of those signing the marriage register were unable to sign their names this was a considerable

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achievement and one, perhaps, not immediately expected from an 18th century Sexton.

Using the Registers

There are problems in using this archive. The Sextons all wrote very clearly but the spelling is frequently 'unconventional' and can make identification difficult. The initial 'H' is often missing, so that Hodgkinson can appear as Odgkinson; conversely, often 'H' is added so that Alker appears as Halker. The West End of the church is the West Hend. People are frequently placed with their "eads next to the church Porch."

More worrying is that names are often left out. My impression is that the Sexton was given the name of the person being buried by a relative and only later was it recalled for entry in his register. Even more of a problem is that many names are different from those in the parish register. Pet names, such as Molly and Sally, tend to be rather more common in the Sexton's entry, though this is not invariably so and sometimes the Sexton can be more formal than the Parish Clerk.

In my lists I have checked the entries against those in the parish register and I have tended to use the name in the official parish register, but making a note of the name used by the Sexton. I have tended to retain the pet names.

As well as the lists of each register an alphabetical list of all the entries has been made. There is also a simplified list which records only the names of those actually buried and not their spouses or

parents. A miscellaneous list has been made which lists those mentioned as already occupying the graves. Names are not listed of those giving their permission or whose property is mentioned as a 'marker' for the location of the grave.

All the information has been placed on a computer spreadsheet. It is hoped that this will be made available to those wishing to do further research and therefore to access the information in different ways.

Although occasionally details are provided of the deceased that are not given elsewhere, this is unusual, and for most family historians the details are likely to add only a little colour rather than provide valuable additional information. Even so, family researchers with ancestors buried during this period may well find a look at this archive to be interesting and possibly rewarding.

K.T.

Some Extracts from the Registers

28 November 1779: John Golding: This "lad met with a great accident by a small piece of iron which was flung at him by James Atherton and which was his end. The iron went through his thigh and mortified. There was a jury went through this which brought in accidental but was a great while before they could agree so that it was after 10-00 before he was buried. He was a Roman."

This is a typical entry in the Day Registers of the Sexton of All Saints, Wigan.

Essentially their purpose was, as the Sexton puts it: "To find

where people is berried under flags." The registers tend to cover different parts of the church and churchyard: eg. the West End, the Middle Aisle, the Carges flats, and so on.

Typically an entry names the person buried, the father and the state of the grave or 'breadth' which is the Sexton's terminology for a grave: December 7, 1787 "Martha wife of James Heyes. We had a great deal of trouble with this grave. We took up a big corpse to put it in beside other children. She lies seven feet to the top of her coffin. Will hold four or five more with taking these coffins up again."

December 1813: "Alexander Wilding, Standish, lies atop of his sister, Jane Blinkhorn."

1774: "Elizabeth Bullock was a little woman but had a large coffin."

As well as the actual entries of the burials, we also hear of the problems of moving bones, replacing coffins, of difficult ground, collapsing graves, disputes over ownership of the breadths. We are given details of the occupants of the graves as well as their nicknames or pet names. Of one he buried the Sexton commented: "It was though hard drinking threw him into a fever." Of John Lowe, liquor merchant, he wrote: "He lies atop of his father. He died of a fever aged 29. His first complaint proceeded from a fall from a horse

going from Wigan Market riding a race which turned to a fever in the brain."

We also are given details of neighbouring property: "Ann Darbisher lies close to Parson Lever's garden wall with feet to the gutter that goes through the wall. Betty Jones lies in the fourth breadth to the hearse house and next to Fairclough's old jobbers."

We hear of the particular wishes of relatives -Charlotte Wigan, Marketplace: "There was but one coffin in the breadth and we took it up and put it in again by desire of Mrs Wigan. She lies 9 feet deep. Mr Banks paid me for clearing this grave. Mrs Wigan ordered him to give me 2 shillings extra which he did." Alice Bibby: "I was paid two days work for taking down the tomb and setting it up again."

These registers were produced by an interesting man with an intriguing job. He has given us details not only of those he was burying but also of bodies he was having to move, of people living close to the church. There may also be the opportunity to work out the positions of the graves inside and outside the church. I am sure that this archive has scope for a very rewarding piece of further research.

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Letters from the Front

Local men in the Boer War 1899-1902

'Black week'

(Episode two)

by

Fred Holcroft

THE first disaster was at Stormberg on 10 December 1899 when General Gatacre, instead of remaining where he was, attempted to surprise the Boers by a night march and a dawn attack. Misled by his guides Gatacre was defeated with the loss of over 700 men killed, wounded and prisoners.

Gunner Thomas Edge of 77th Battery, Field Artillery wrote to his sister Mrs. Rigby of George Street, Hindley:

"We had a night march and came into action at day break. The guides led us into ambush, the general trusted the wrong sort. General Gatacre shot one of the guides straight off, the other got away or he would have been shot. It's a wonder the battery was not captured as we were under heavy fire all the time."

The Royal Irish Rifles lost heaviest as they advanced furthest before the trap was sprung. Private Thomas Banks wrote to his widowed mother, brother and sisters in Wigan:

"We marched all night intending to drive the enemy off the hill before daylight but we were deceived by those trusted to guide us to the enemy. They led us four miles out of our way so that we did not reach before daybreak when the Boers were on alert. We were taken within 200 yards from the hill before we knew anything. Their shots began to fly all around us and we were ordered to retire. We lost 11 officers, about 28 men killed and wounded and 300 taken prisoners including our colonel."

Private William Moss of the Royal Irish Rifles was posted missing but he managed to

evade capture and turned up unhurt next day. In all he spent 21 years in the regular army then worked in the Orrell collieries and played for Pemberton R.F.C. When the First World War broke out he enlisted in the 5th Manchesters and was killed at Gallipoli, aged 45.

On 11 December 1899, not knowing of Gatacre's defeat the previous day, Lord Methuen made a dawn attack at Magersfontein and was decisively repulsed with the loss of over 900 men. Once more the British soldiers suffered out in the open.

Corporal Thomas Derbyshire wrote to his grandfather at Amberswood Common:

"When we tried to shift them they simply cut our fellows down like grass. They fell in hundreds. It was something terrible to see. We kept finding our fellows for two days after the fight. There were killed and

wounded all over the field and they had been out in the burning sun of the day and the cold of the night. If some of our fellows had been seen to at once they would have been saved."

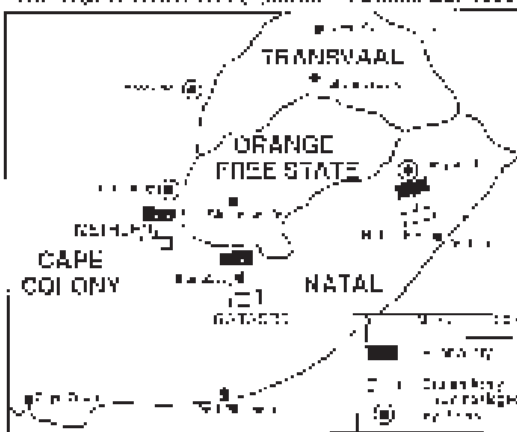
Another Wiganer in Derbyshire's regiment – 12th Lancers – Private Abraham Woodbine, another reservist from the Wigan Borough Police, was unhurt when two shells exploded on either side of him. Private Lawrence Grundy was again wounded, this time losing the use of his arm for a few weeks.

Four days later, on 15 December 1899, Buller, stung into action by these defeats, also attacked a well-prepared Boer position and was defeated with the loss of over 1100 men and 10 pieces of field artillery. Two Wiganers wrote home describing their experiences. Private W. Banks of the Border Regiment to his parents at 68 Clayton Street, Wigan:

"We advanced on the open plain and the enemy opened fire on us with a big gun called Long Tom which killed about 30 of the Dublin Fusiliers. We then opened up in extended order and advanced on the Tugela River. By the time we got there our losses were heavy. Our regiment lost 53 killed and wounded, our division losses were 1200. The bullets came down like rain but we still kept going on to that river. We got there at last but found we could not get across. We had to retire and while doing so they kept firing shells at us. It made me think of home when I saw men in their prime dropping down dead and wounded. If I get home I shall count myself a lucky man."

Corporal Thomas Griffin, who omitted to give his regiment, wrote to his mother in

THE BOER WAR: THE SITUATION IN DECEMBER 1899



THE BOER WAR: 'Black Week', December 1899



Spring Street, Wigan:

"We were in the battle of Colenso. I shall never forget that day, such a sight I never want to see again – men and horses falling like rotten sheep. I watched the Irish Brigade advance. I have often heard of the Connaught Rangers so I watched them closely. They began the battle by lighting their clay pipes. Every man was smoking as they advanced and met a hail of rifle shots and cannon shells. Poor fellows. After three hours they had to come back – what was left of them."

One of the Connaught Rangers who miraculously escaped death was Private Patrick Quinn, aged 34, of 232 Glebe Street, Leigh.

Another Border Regiment soldier, Private Thomas Ashton, wrote to his brother at 18 Farrimond's Yard, Schofield Lane, Wigan:

"It lasted 11 hours and we were in the line all the time. Our regiment lost 41 wounded and 8 killed. Bullets were flying all around us in hundreds and it was horrible to see fellows lying wounded and dead, the wounded crying out for water and you could not help them. If we had moved our heads up too high we would have been shot. I shall never forget it as long as I live. Eleven hours without food or drink. The first thing after was a drop of hot coffee and rum."

When the news of these disasters reached Britain the government decided to replace Buller with Field Marshall Lord Roberts, fondly known as "Bobs" to his men, with Field Marshall Lord Kitchener as his second-in-command. Before Roberts arrived Buller had another try relieving Ladysmith by attacking Spion Kop*, the highest hill in the mountain range blocking his path, but on 24 January 1900 he was

*Dealt with more fully in Wigan Heritage Service's publication: *The Devil's Hill – Local Men at the Battle of Spion Kop*.

defeated with the loss of over 1800 men.

Private Walsh of the Lancashire Fusiliers was in the thick of things:

"We left camp just as it got dark. The march was slow going. The ascent proved hard climbing as the hill was covered with great boulders of stone. We carried our rifles with bayonets fixed and everyone keeping strictest silence as so much depended on this. At last we gained the top at about three or four in the morning. A sharp challenge came from a Boer sentry and he fired his rifle. This was his last and he was quickly bayoneted. Immediately everyone jumped up and charged. The Boers ran leaving horses, clothing, and other things behind them. At daybreak the mist cleared and the Boers returned in numbers and began to creep up the hillside and deliver a very hot crossfire. The general in command was shot. Our colonel took over and was wounded. We were now losing officers and men heavily. Our losses were severe, a great deal being caused by the Boer guns which had got the range and were raking the trenches. The Boers were now so close that bayonets had to be fixed to keep them back. At last reinforcements began to arrive and late in the afternoon orders were given to retire. That night when we formed up we looked like a small detachment."

After four months of fighting and thousands of casualties, the British were no nearer to relieving the besieged towns.

Impressions of war

For most local soldiers the Boer War made a lasting impact on their lives. For many it was their only foreign travel and the sea journey was especially memorable:

Colour Sergeant McCabe of the Wigan Volunteers reflected:

"We have had a very rough time of it, up to now I never saw so

many men sick in my life. The food is something grand, there is something extra every meal. As soon as the weather permits we will have musketry and physical drill. They are a funny lot on board, Welshmen who can hardly speak English and Scotchmen the same."

Corporal Knowles of the Lancashire Yeomanry from Poolstock had a smoother voyage:

"The sea has only been choppy about twice, otherwise it is like sailing on a canal boat from Eckersley's Arms to Bamfurlong. It is a splendid sight at night time to see the phosphorous fish shining like stars in the water and in the day time watch the porpoises jumping about two feet out of the water."

One of McCabe's men, Private K. Ball from Standish, described a variety of incidents: the 'Crossing the Line' ceremony at the Equator, a burial at sea after one of the men died, boxing matches, concerts, and entertainment. For Trooper Arthur Ashton, of 15 Cottam Street, St. Helens, in the Imperial Yeomanry there was more work to do, looking after the horses:

"There is a pleasing absence of sickness among the men. I cannot say the same about the poor horses: we have been on board 19 days and lost 31 horses. The poor things bear up heroically under the great hardship. They look so pleading with their tired-looking brown eyes and we can do but little for them. They have learned to know when the bugle sounds 'feedup', and they make a terrible noise neighing and kicking the stalls. We have about 25 horses on deck for fresh air and it has done them good."

One of them died this morning and we threw it overboard straight away. I was nursing it all Friday, it had inflammation of the lungs. I had to steam it

Continued on page 8

Letters from the Front

Local men in the Boer War 1899-1902

Continued from page 7

by making it inhale steam from hot bran. It was hot work under a vertical sun. Throwing horses overboard has caused several sharks to accompany us. The officers shoot at them."

Once in action the soldiers soon conveyed their feelings when first under fire. Private Boone, 12th Lancers, 78 Firs Lane, Leigh recalled:

"It is fine excitement to hear the bullets whistle over your head, knowing that perhaps the next one is for you. It makes you jump about lively and no mistake. But so long as you don't get hit it's all right."

It was not. Private Boone was hit in the finger and hospitalised.

Corporal W. Wood of the Royal Lancaster Regiment wrote home with mixed feelings:

"I daresay you would like to know what my feelings were on first coming under fire. I can't say much about it. I only remember a bullet hit a man on my right and I thought the chap that did it was a sneaking brute and I ran for the top of the hill and commenced to shoot at everything that moved."

Gunner Edge remembered:

".....the bullets and shell dropping all around us. It's a funny sensation to hear the humming about your ears. It's not a pleasing sensation at first but you get used to it. I felt a bit sick at first but it soon passed away."

Surprisingly, they disagreed over the quality of Boer marksmanship. Most saw the

Boers as experts. Private Boone reckoned that:

"They [the Boers] are shots and no mistake."

Others, to mark their disgust of the Boers, wrote that they were bad shots. Private Cassidy, Lancashire Fusiliers, of Shaw's Yard, Scholes, claimed:

"As for their shooting, well they are not as good as people suppose them to be or their bullets would have hit a few more of us. Of course there are some good shots among them but they are all old hands. The rest couldn't hit St. Patrick's chapel at forty paces."

Boer tactics aroused further controversy. Not signatories of the Geneva Convention, the Boers had never shown many scruples against the natives, and their lack of military niceties angered their opponents who accused them, often justifiably and sometimes not, of firing on the Red Cross, firing on the white flag and using illegal dum dum bullets.

Private Mulrooney's ire was roused:

"The Boers are about the worst people I ever met with. When our stretcher bearers went out to fetch in the wounded they fired on them, and they fired on the ambulances carrying the wounded. When we were beating them they showed a white flag in token of surrender and when our troops went towards them to take them prisoner they fired on us unaware. They are the most treacherous people in the world."

The ordinary British soldier was extraordinarily fair-minded. Signaller J. Woods, 14th Lancers, wrote to his brother in Wigan:

".....Another two minutes then another shell. This one dropped dead into the field hospital. You ought to have heard the ejaculations of scorn, disgust and anger from our chaps on seeing this. Of course it was fired at long range and the Boers may not have seen the Red Cross flag, but Tommy of course

in any thing like that invariably says it was done on purpose."

Similarly, Private Tom Allen of the Shropshire Light Infantry wrote to his parents in Leigh:

"You wanted to know how the Boers treat the wounded. They treat them very well. They are a brave people but they fire on the Red Cross and stretcher bearers. These may be mistakes, of course, but you have the truth."

Irish Volunteers

The Boer armies contained about 3000 foreign volunteers including Irish nationalists only too keen to fight the British. Private A. Jenkinson of Earlestown, serving in the Rifle Brigade, wrote to his friend Thomas Bugle of 11 Haydock Street:

"We have just nabbed 25 prisoners and a nice lot they are. Most of them are our own countrymen – well, Irishmen. You may be surprised at this but it is the truth....they will get 'Home Rule' shortly when we relieve Ladysmith."

Private E. Madden of the South Lancashire Regiment wrote to his mother in Scholes, where there was a large population of Irish extraction, asking her to pass a message to a friend:

"Tell Paddy a pint or two would go down high here....and tell Paddy if I see any of his chums with the Boers I shall surely put a hole in them."

Less humorously Corporal P. Quinn, himself of Irish descent, wrote to his wife at 23 Miry Lane, Wigan:

".....After the war change your nationality, I am. I have had the pleasure of shooting my own countrymen. Irishmen. Traitors I must call them."

In the next issue, Fred looks at the mens' living conditions and the besieged towns of Kimberley, Ladysmith and Mafeking.

ONE MAN'S MEMORIES OF WIGAN GRAMMAR SCHOOL IN THE 1930's



Wigan Grammar School Form 5C, Spring Term, 1935. The form master (extreme right) was W. Williams. Names in quotation marks may not be entirely accurate.

The Pupils

Back row, left to right: "Geoffrey" Hampson, Brock Mill Lane; ? Shannon, from the Scholes-Darlington St. area; Sidney Taylor, Barnsley Street area; ? Rothwell; ? Saunders, "Chapel Lane"; Les Gee, "Mesnes Road area"; Jack Fairhurst, Westwood Hotel, Poolstock; "Frank" Finch of Parbold; J.E. Rigby; L.A. Wood.

Middle row, left to right: ? Seddon, "Whelley area"; ? Stridgeon, Darlington Street area; "Norman" Shallicker, Westhoughton; Sidney Willgoose, Barnsley/Hodges Street area; Arnold Morris, Darlington Street area; ? "Hurst"; Walter Greenlees, Hallgate; George Raymond Unwin, Mesnes Road area; Tom Warburton, town centre area; Edgar Barry, Whelley area; Roland Kenneth Harrison, Parbold.

Front row, left to right: William Guy, Pemberton; Eric Neild, Clayton Street area; ? Winstanley, Orrell; William Smallshaw, Seven Stars Road; John Melling, Darlington Street area; ? Pughe; Leslie Hewitt, Queen's Hotel, Wallgate; Roger Taylor, 18 Poolstock; "Stanley" Greenough, Scholes area; "John" Lynch, Scholes area; Roy Ellam, Gidlow lane.

MY recollections of a situation of 67 years ago must be faulty, in some instances, greatly so, and it follows that in recollections where I am 'judgmental', I could be unjust. But in no instance do I write of my schoolfellows uncharitably with intent. The recollections I adduce are consistently fond, indeed painfully so if lingered over.

But I do admit to writing critically of the quality of teaching that we received at the Grammar School in those days. Hopefully, what I say will be accorded as little or as much credit as it merits.

Some Fellow-pupils

Hampson, whose father owned Jeffrey Miller Cod

Liver Oil factory in Brock Mill Lane. At one period when Geoffrey was a small boy, my mother worked at Jeffreys Miller.

Saunders, whose family had a fruit business in the Market and at the top of Chapel Lane.

Gee, (a 'card') whose family I think were auctioneers.

Fairhurst, whose widowed mother kept the Westwood Hotel in Poolstock. He used to boast of being the only pupil ever to have stayed in form four for four years!! Killed in 1942 in the Japanese war. (Second only to Gee in the card' league).

Finch, and Fairhurst at

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ONE MAN'S
MEMORIES OF
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1930's

Continued from page 9

one period were 'buddies'. For a particular house match, Finch (Bridgeman) was standing as Umpire while Fairhurst (Bankes) was batting against a gangly fast bowler. Prior to the match, Finch had agreed to drop his handkerchief at some point as a signal to Fairhurst that he would no-ball the next delivery so that Fairhurst could clout it for six with impunity!

Fairhurst socially was a protective figure towards me but academically a deadly influence: his indifference to achievement inevitably filtered through to me. Yet in the light of the end he met, who can say anything of him of a derogatory nature?

Stridgeon, I read in the *Daily Telegraph*, years after school days, of the sterling qualities of Stridgeon's father, a serving soldier who rose to the rank of Sergeant-major. The last time I saw Stridgeon junior we were in line together for the booking office at the Court Cinema. World War II had begun and to the general dismay the Soviets had just invaded Poland. But Stridgeon was buoyant. "It will even things up a bit", he suggested. A chip off the old block?

Shallicker and I sat together, by a window, in 5b, under form master Gilbert. He (Shallicker) was a great fan of Bolton Wanderers.

Willgoose evokes the tenderest of recollections. He got a sort of crush on me and I used to try to "freeze" him off. Of course, such things were transient and harmless and, with passing months, paths diverged and interests waned. Then, some time before the outbreak of

World War II, Leslie Hewitt (q.v.) told me that Willgoose was desperately ill and that "they were praying for him at the Parish Church services". Then news of his death came through. Sidney's father worked at Walkers Foundry at Springfield. His mother I recall seeing once when I had called at the house for something or other. Looking back in mature life I knew that my unkindness had been unforgivable; in old age (now) I can scarcely bear to reflect upon the degree of the loss sustained by his dear parents.

Ned Greenlees was an affable, good-to-know sort of chap. His people kept the newsagent's shop in Hallgate.

Because of our initials, S-T-U, from my first day at school in 3C, I sat between **Ray Unwin** and Smallshaw. Unwin and two others in that form were fee-paying and had come up, as fee-payers did, through the Linacre forms. I think that Unwin's father was an auctioneer. I came from a very different background minus the sort of character training that Unwin had received. But looking back at Unwin standing alongside me in the 5C photograph, several tiny incidents and phrases involving him and me come back and I realised how sweet a nature he had. I never once heard an uncharitable word from him, not even when I had starved him on the wing through a rucker match nor, in one crucial match, when I dropped the ball several times with him unmarked outside me.

Warburton once confided that membership of All Saints' choir entailed practice from 6.00 to 7.30, Monday to Thursday, and 8.00 to 9.00 on Friday each week.

I think that it was in 1935 that **Harrison** (who came from Parbold), attempting to use a crib in a science exam,

was caught and paid the consequence. I can still see the ghastly expression on his face as he was marched out of the examination room. Later in my life, I reckoned that he came from a distinctively Christian family in Parbold which would of course intensify the shame. After the episode he dropped science for Greek and Latin which was providential or fortuitous because he became a clergyman. He was curate of St. Mark's, Preston during the war and took a Ph.D., from London University in 1951. But by then he had moved to Canada, where eventually he became Professor of Old Testament at Wycliffe College, Toronto, of which city's cathedral he also became honorary canon: altogether some redemption!

Smallshaw, I am in touch with still by Christmas card from him to me and by birthday card from me to him. We played rucker together for Walker's Old Boys after we left school. In work, he was at Rigby's, Solicitors, Library Street and I was at Lancashire Associated Collieries, first in Manchester than in King Street West. He volunteered for the army early in the War and was taken prisoner in the North African campaign. Returning he moved from one post to another, always I think advantageously, reaching executive level. He was a good influence on me.

Leslie Hewitt was the younger of two brothers with whom I went through elementary school (Poolstock) and Grammar School. Their father was landlord of the Queen's Hotel in Wallgate. It was mother, though, I think from whom they derived their considerably academic ability. Eric, my age, was already forging ahead of us. But Leslie, 18 months younger than his brother, was also exceptional enough to obtain school certificate and attain to the sixth form

at 14 years of age. At the same time he was the victim of his own character. Determined to make a career at sea he took an apprenticeship in the merchant navy at 15 and, leaving school prematurely for this, incurred financial penalties for his parents from the local Education Committee. Within a year, claiming that the terms of his indentureship had not been met, he quit his ship as it lay anchored off Brixham, smuggled himself ashore under the tarpaulin covers of a small motor boat and returned to Wigan. Soon after his unexpected return home, his father took his own life. Leslie duly wired Eric who was now in the Civil Service in London. "Father hanged himself: come home at once", Leslie dictated to the girl behind the counter. "I can't send this", she protested. "Well he has done [i.e. hanged himself], hasn't he?" was Leslie's phlegmatic response.

By now Leslie was working cruelly long hours at the Standish Bleach Works, but with the outbreak of War in 1939, the Civil Service opened its doors of entrance more widely and Leslie followed Eric into that service. Subsequently, I saw each brother but once. Eric was decorated for his bravery on motor torpedo boats in the Adriatic. Leslie, of a different temper, called unexpectedly at the office, just before I myself went away. He summoned me to meet him in the downstairs vestibule where I was apprised that he was taking a shore job in the Navy. "Let the Germans come", he explained was his philosophy! Eric, now happily married and living in Catford, I saw in 1950. He told me that he earned county caps at rucker from both Lancashire and Kent. Then, by now stationed at Hurn airport, he died



tragically, barely 40. Mrs. Hewitt perforce moved into a council house when her husband die. At third son was Roy, possibly even more talented than Eric or Leslie. What a mother!

Academically, **Lynch** found the Grammar School a struggle, I think. I was struck meeting him now and again on the early train to Manchester with the incongruity of things: he was a labourer at the Irlam Steel Works, I had a clean collar and tie job. I did not possess a particularly good outgoing character in those days, but somewhere within, I felt for his position. I wonder what became of him.

Ellam's parents (father was a miner) and sister made great sacrifices for his education. That he should become a doctor was his mother's fixed idea and determination. I imagine it was a hard go for Roy but he did succeed and later became a doctor in South Africa.

P.S. I should add of those of my fellows I have not enlarged upon that the omission is due no more than to vagaries of memory.

The Staff

A few years ago, through the good offices of *Past Forward*, I picked up the address of one of your contributors **Bert Ollerton**. He and I began at the Grammar School together in 1932; now after a gap of 60 years, over a few months we wrote to each other. As memories and such like were exchanged, I was impressed by the use that Bert had made of his education and the solid sort of achievement subsequently that marked his professional life. What also struck me was the respect with which he referred to members of the staff we had shared at the Grammar School because, as my judgements had matured, I had become increasingly critical of them! The memories of some – solid,

applied and human – evoke the warmest gratitude: **Gore, Skirrow, Williams, and Wallace**, among others. **"Joe" Boswell** ("the older you get, the more shall I treat you as adult") chalking on the blackboard, not his customary equations, but the latest cricket score from Australia similarly evokes a smile.

That said, some, highly qualified though they might have been, just could not teach. They did not communicate. One or two, alas, lacked both qualification and ability. But again I find my impressions different from those of my erstwhile fellow pupil. One of my form-masters was **Mr. Gilbert**, whose particular triumph according to Bert was to get 28 distinctions out of 30 in the Matriculation exam. Throughout the year in which I was under Gilbert's tutelage I do not recall receiving one word of encouragement or congratulation; yet at the year's end, I stood second. (After the nadir of 5C and the departure of Jack Fairhurst, I began to shape).

I've also long since concluded that which side of the tracks a pupil came from made a difference. Boys from more advantageous homes, through ingrained instincts and acquired confidence, would be easier and more attractive material for toiling teachers. This is not my imagination. Some 25 years after I left school, at a reunion, **"Paddy" Gore**, also once my form-master, lamented the disappearance of Woodfield Preparatory School (whence came the Grammar School's fee-paying pupils) because, said Gore, from Woodfield they could expect leadership material.

Nowhere was the opposite of this more plain than in my own home. Father had attended grammar school until his own father's death had taken him prematurely away to find employment. In his married life, following a series of misdemeanours,

while I was still an infant in arms, he had been compelled to leave the country and mother perforce moved in with her parents. This meant that the background against which I was supposed to make the most of my time at the Grammar School was that grandfather and grandmother both had left school at eight and my mother at 13. To them Grammar School education belonged to another world. How could they react to my consistently poor reports other than by shocked silences or sighs and tears?

What I wonder in the years of my maturity is whether an elected Education Committee in a town such as Wigan then was could possibly possess the insights requisite to their position. Some councillors would have been in a position similar to that of my people. How could they understand what Grammar School education was about or what qualities were needed to teach in such places? They valued education, of course they did, but more as a Holy Grail than as a discipline with acquired skills. Yet, it has to be said that Bert Ollerton's home also was on our side of the tracks: his people were no more advantaged than were mine. And how splendidly he took his chances! Clearly, a balanced reading of my memoir will involve due reservations. Let me conclude.

"I can't place your face!"

Towards the end of my time at school, on an occasion when I failed to answer a question put to me, **W.S. Savigny**, the French Master, declared for the benefit of the form in general and mine in particular, "Taylor doesn't know, he never did know anything and he never will know anything". As subsequently I took degrees from three universities, the last when I

was 75 years of age, I assume that such was pedagogic rhetoric from Mr. S., or that assessment was not his strong point.

S.W. Whitehouse became head in succession to **"Johnny" Moir** in 1931. I am not sure that he either was ever on the wavelength of my sort. When in middle life he became a clergyman, I ventured to write to him and willy-nilly gained some support for some of the impressions I have outlined above. One surprise with which Wigan presented Whitehouse was that of 70 Roman Catholics in the student body. In Worcester such would have been nothing like the incidence. He claimed, however, and I have no reason to doubt this, that he tackled this well by giving the Catholic boys their own daily assembly. What else I think he recollected was that because of the poverty there was across the town, enforcement of school uniform was out of the question. Personally I recall his being quite free with the cane and retain a strong sense that once one was in the study, there was no possibility of a speech on behalf of the defence. Guilt was assumed.

S.W.W. himself had served in Liverpool diocese, Bath and Wells and Chichester. As his son, Everard, was in business in Bury St. Edmunds, he himself moved there late in life. 40 miles away I asked him over to tea in my Vicarage. He spoke highly (as did Ollerton) of **H.W. Lemon**, the Latin master and informed me also that another of my form-masters, **E.D. Preston**, had been ordained and was now a canon of Hereford Cathedral. But "I can't place your face", he admitted. It was not surprising: on the five occasions when I visited his study, it was not my face that he was addressing!!

**Rev. Roger Taylor
Lindsey Nr. Ipswich**

Michael Worthington-Williams tells the story of a little known car made in Wigan. Fewer than 100 Westwoods appear to have been built between late 1919 and 1924.

The rise and fall of the 'Westwood'

(reproduced with kind permission from *The Automobile*, Sept. 1998)

ONE of the most fascinating aspects of motoring history is the incestuous relationship which sometimes existed between ostensibly separate car makers and companies. Often the link was through the main distributors. This was the case with Lea-Francis, Vulcan and Ruston-Hornsby.

Sometimes it was the designer who was the common denominator, or perhaps there was a shared director. On other occasions, companies struggling to make a precarious existence might share the same premises. In the case of the Westwood car, made in Wigan, Lancashire, there were connections with other makes of vehicles. These were not only through designers, but also main dealers and directors.

An unlimited company, the Westwood Engineering Company of Britannia Works, Lower Ince, Wigan, was formed in 1919. It was certainly placing orders for engines with Dormans of Stafford prior to November that year. Unusually, these orders were channelled through H.H. Timberlake of 28 King Street, Wigan. He was a prominent motor agent in the town who also supplied Dorman engines to the makers of Pagefield trucks, Walker Brothers, of Pagefield Ironworks, Wigan. There is another apparent link between Westwood and Pagefield. The Westwood car was designed by one Bill Williamson, who had



An early Westwood open tourer. Note the 'W' on the radiator honeycomb.

formerly worked for Walker Brothers.

The Westwood took its name from the Westwood House estate in Wigan. It seems likely that Timberlake was one of the backers of the company, as well as their factor. The first order for a Westwood car was booked in November 1919. It was agreed that delivery would be within three months. On 14 January 1920, *The Motor* reported that this promise had been met. This was particularly commendable, bearing in mind that the moulders' strike had been continuing throughout the winter and had not been resolved at the time the first car was delivered. *The Motor* commented favourable on the business ethics of the Westwood Engineering Company, praising the fact that no agents had been appointed and no deposits taken in view of the uncertainty that the strike engendered. It was

predicted, nevertheless, that deliveries in quantity would start to come through within six weeks. A limited liability company was formed on 1 January 1920.

Man of substance

That Timberlake was a man of substance and integrity is a matter of record. He was already a director of Vulcan, of Southport. From 1928 onwards he was destined to be Chairman of Lea-Francis, who had trading links with Vulcan through their London distributors, C.B. Wardman. Timberlake was a Vulcan agent in 1920, although oddly enough he did not represent Westwood. That situation had been remedied by 1922, though his company also handled sales of a host of other makes, including Albert, Crossley, Delage, Hammond, Hupmobile, Calcott, Belsize, Arrol-Johnston, Hotchkiss,

Autocrat, Austin, Vauxhall, Swift, Beardmore, Calthorpe, AC, Singer, Horstmann, Wolseley, Humber, Sunbeam, Overland and Rover. In fact Timberlake's company was destined, as H. H. Timberlake Ltd of Wallgate, Wigan, to continue in business until the mid-1970s at least – and probably later – with agencies for Austin, MG, Wolseley and Rover.

At least two cars had been completed and were available for test in mid January, 1920. *The Motor* commented on the degree of tune of the engines and their efficiency. Parbold, a notorious test hill near Wigan with a gradient of one in six for some distance, was climbed by both cars using second gear and 'without the slightest suggestion of strain'. The reporter went so far as to say that, had the ascent not been made from a standing start, there was little doubt that the majority of the climb would have been achieved in top gear.

The Westwood was generously equipped for the period. A handsome dashboard of polished aluminium housed a speedometer, clock, oil gauge and lighting switch panel. The bonnet was also of polished aluminium and the bright-work was nickel plate. Paintwork was in grey, with the domed wings and the valances in contrasting black. The upholstery was in high quality antique grey leather. The two seater body had a distinctly sporting



appearance with an upswept tail unencumbered by the spare wheel, which was carried on the offside running board. The overall length of this version was 12ft. 10in. – quite generous proportions for an 11.9hp model. Post-war inflation dictated a price of £550 even for the two seater, whilst a four seater tourer and coupe were available at £625 and £675 respectively.

Production would appear to have been on an extremely modest scale. Chassis numbers ran from A.50 up to A.141 for the 11.9hp model, from 1920 to 1923. But it is by no means certain that all the numbers allocated were in fact used. Dorman's engine records indicate that only 57 11.9hp engines were supplied up to 1923. In that year the company was reconstructed as The Westwood Engineering Company (Wigan) Ltd., at the same address, and a number of changes were made to the specification of the car.

Best performance

The year 1920 was a significant one for the Westwood. F.W. Slatter put up the best performance on formula at the Middlesex County Automobile Club's hillclimb at Handpost Hill near Northaw in June. This feat was trumpeted in advertisements throughout June and July. The publicity campaign culminated in a full road test in *The Motor* in the latter month. At the time of this test, the two/three seater Westwood still cost £675, a figure drastically reduced by the time of the November 1920 Motor Show, as the recession began to bite.

In fairness, however, *The Motor* was fulsome in its praise for the car, saying 'there is little doubt that the popular car of the future will be built on lines somewhat similar to the Westwood'. The Dorman engine was said to pull almost indefinitely in top gear, with no crying need

for the revolutions to be kept up. In other words, it had good low speed torque. The accessibility of all components and lubricating points was lauded. The brakes were found to be not only particularly efficient, but also silent. Both the handbrake and the pedal operated internally expanding brakes on the rear wheels only.

The car used for the test was one of the first two seaters made. It had already been subjected to months of abuse before being taken over by *The Motor's* tester. This explained a certain looseness of the gear lever in the gate and a tendency to backlash on the steering. The Ferodo-lined cone clutch was found a little harsh, with a tendency to squeal if engaged suddenly in top gear. The manufacturers confirmed that they were working to eliminate these problems. Springing, whilst adequate with a full load, was found to be a bit hard with only two up and no luggage.

A top speed of just over 50mph was recorded, quite fast enough for any road hog. The Sthenos carburettor returned 26mpg at an average speed of just over 20mph. The test was conducted over ordinary roads with no freak surfaces or gradients, and the car was found to ascend a one in 12 hill comfortably in top at over 20mph. It achieved 25mph with ease in second gear on quite steep hills, and was found to suffer no loss of road speed when an upward change was made whilst still climbing.

Jesse Baker

In 1921, the well known trials competitor Jesse Baker was recruited to drive an 11.9hp Westwood in the MCC's London to Land's End Trial. A native of Wigan, Baker had made his name riding Scott, Triumph and ABC motorcycles in trials, and Scott Sociable three-wheelers. For the 1921 event he was in

competition with 147 motorcycles, 69 light cars and cyclecars and just two other larger cars, both of them Morris Oxfords. Heavy rain, sleet and gale force winds contributed to the hazards on the 400 mile trial, prompting *The Light Car and Cyclecar* to dub it the most strenuous 24hr trial ever held in England. Beggar's Roost was included in the route for the first time. The Westwood was the only four wheeler to achieve non-stop ascents of some of the more wicked gradients. Baker was awarded a Silver Medal for his efforts.

But times were difficult in the British motor trade. Competition was fierce, not only on the home market but from American imports, which were on average 20 per cent cheaper in 1922 than they had been the previous year. William Morris, having already made drastic price reductions in advance of the 1922 Motor Show, shocked everyone by making further cuts less than six weeks later, on the eve of the Show. A four seater Cowley now cost £255 and a two seater only £225. The Oxford two seater was listed at £330, with the four seater at £355 and £390 for the coupe. Westwood just couldn't compete with these prices, and did not appear at the 1922 Show.

The Dorman engined cars, known as the A series, were still available in December 1921. On the 16th of that month, Reginald Foden of Sandbach (and presumably of the famous Foden wagon works) registered chassis number A148. Another, owned by W. Bolton, was entered in the MCC's London to Edinburgh Run on 2nd June, 1922. Out of 392 competitors there were 133 cars and 20 cyclecars. The Westwood completed the event successfully.

Prices in October 1922 were £370 for a bare chassis, £485 for the All-weather and £465 for the sports two seater. Whilst

there was little wrong with the cars themselves, these prices were too high. This is reflected in the fact that in May and June of the same year, 'shop-soiled' examples of the two seater were being offered by the trade for as little as £395. Shop-soiled was a popular euphemism within the trade for unsold stock, and was used to circumvent the Motor Trade Association's strict rules preventing cars and accessories from being sold at below manufacturers' recommended list prices.

'Open to offers'

In September of the same year, a private individual was advertising his royal blue Westwood three quarter coupé with Bedford cord upholstery, interior lighting and cushion tyres. He had only just taken delivery of the car, at a cost of £675. 'Suit doctor', he wrote hopefully, adding that he was 'open to offers'. By November, 1922, Smith's equipment, including speedometer, clock, and horn, was standardised on the Westwood.

In 1923 prices started at £370 for the chassis and £450 for the two seater and sports models. The All-weather was £465, while the coupé varied according to specification. By mid year the chassis had been reduced to £310, the two seater and four seater tourers to £395, and the coupé to £470. This had little effect on sales, and once again the firm did not exhibit at the Show. By this time, the concessionaires for London and the Home Counties were Bonallack and Sons of 268 Romford Road, Forest Gate. Later they were to be better known as commercial vehicle suppliers and bodybuilders, and makers of the Minnow minicar.

Despite minimal advertising, the Westwood continued to receive regular

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The rise and fall of the 'Westwood'

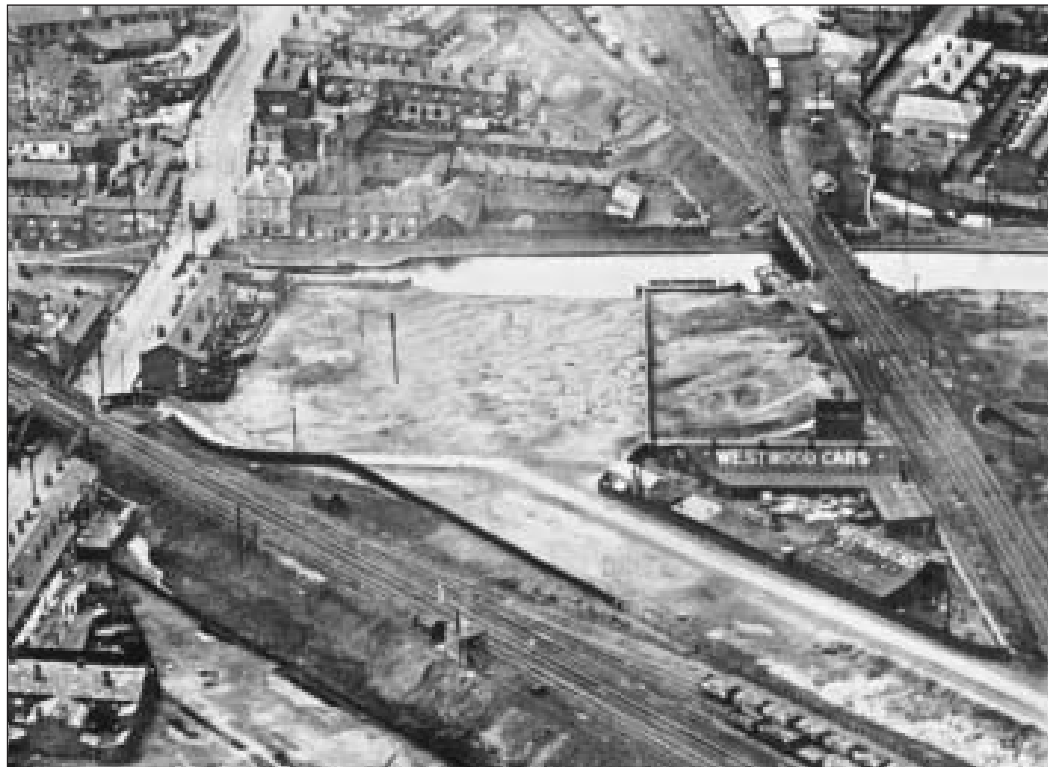
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reports in *The Autocar* and *The Motor*, all of them complimentary. However, 1924 saw the failure of Westwood Engineering Company (Wigan) Ltd. and the formation of a new firm, Westwood-Ince Ltd., still at the same address. The specification was also changed again to give a larger overhead valve engine. Still made by Meadows, its dimensions were 75mm by 120mm, giving 2120cc. A four speed gearbox in unit with the engine replaced the separate type. Like the engine, this was of Meadows manufacture. Similarly, the Westwood back axle was replaced by a proprietary Timken unit.

Despite the economies, prices were unaltered. The range was increased to include a two door coupé (the earlier version had only one door) at £485 and a saloon at £495.

A coupé tested by *The Autocar* in February, 1924, proved good for 53mph (the roads were too wet for higher speeds, it was explained). This indicated greater potential. No gear changing was required until a long, twisting gradient of one in seven was encountered. Comfortable cruising speeds of 35-40mph were maintained, but when traversing some of Lancashire's worst potholes, some damping of the semi-elliptic springs was thought called for. The clutch and gear control could 'scarcely be improved', but the ignition control of the lively Meadows engine came in for some criticism.

Road tests of this kind in those days tended to be over-kind (they were



The Westwood Engineering Company's Britannia Works, Lower Ince, Wigan.

probably aimed at attracting advertising). When *The Autocar* said that the Westwood was comparable in performance to many cars of considerably higher cost, therefore, it carefully omitted to say that it was also comparable to many which were cheaper.

Company's last gasp

Although the controlling company was Westwood-Ince Ltd, the stand taken at the 1924 Show, and all the advertisements, were in the name of The Westwood Motor Company, presumably a subsidiary, or it might indicate that the company also had a separate engineering division. Certainly, with Westwood production totals running at an estimated 57 for the A series and only 36 for the M series (from what can be gathered from the Meadows and Dorman engine records), the company would have needed some other form of income to keep afloat. As it is, 1924 may be seen in retrospect to have been the company's last gasp, though they continued to advertise in both *The Autocar* and *The Motor* through 1925.

The last report of any length appears to have been in *The Autocar* for 24 October 1924. The Wigan Directory for 1925 gives the address of the Westwood Motor Company as Warrington Road, Ince, Wigan, but this may be the same address as Britannia Works – a bridge over the canal is still known as Britannia Bridge.

It would seem that no serious attempt was ever made to build commercial vehicles. At least one was built, however, on the A type chassis. Listed as a 19cwt goods vehicle, it was registered TC 493 to one Lily Florence, Benfold, of Stanningley, near Leeds, in 1922.

In June, 1924, *Motor Technical Records*, a card index type of buyer's guide listing, indicated that saloon prices already quoted were to be disregarded, and would be given on application. Even as late as 1925, all braking was still on the rear wheels, and there was no real change in specification. Prices are quoted as £395 for both two and four seater tourers, £500 for the All-weather, £485 for the coupé, £495 for the three-quarter coupé,

£580 for the saloon and £385 for the sports. Most listings cease with 1925, although *Fletcher's Motor Car Index* continues into 1926, showing wire detachable wheels to be available as an alternative to the steel artilleries in the final two years.

Any report of insolvency has so far eluded me. It may be that the Westwood's backers were wealthy enough simply to call it a day, pay all the creditors and shut their doors. Timberlake, certainly, continued in business for over 50 years more.

It would not seem that there was anything wrong with the Westwood other than the fact that the methods used for its production precluded it from being made in sufficient numbers to produce an economy of scale enabling it to compete with Morris, Austin and other mass-producers. It was a familiar story in the 1920's. *Fletcher's* simply says in 1927 'We cannot trace that this car is now being manufactured'. In realistic terms, that had probably been the case in 1926, even if the car was available on paper.

Following on from the article in the last 'Past Forward' the following are two more short biographies of women writers associated with the area.

'In Their Own Write'

Dora Greenwell (1821-1882)

Of the five children born to William Thomas Greenwell and his wife Dorothy (nee Smales), Dora was the only daughter. She was brought up at Greenwell Ford, Lanchester in the County of Durham. Her father had been a squire, magistrate and Deputy Lieutenant of the County; consequently the family were regarded as being comfortably off.



Dora Greenwell of Golborne

However, by 1848 the family fortunes had dwindled and her father was declared bankrupt, so they ended up selling their home to pay off the debts incurred.

Initially Dora was educated by a governess at home, where she learnt to speak French and Italian fluently. Furthermore she was able to read German and Spanish and had reasonable understanding of Latin. Besides knowledge of modern languages, she taught herself philosophy and political economy before beginning to write poetry.

Women Writers Associated with the Area

She modelled her writings on the works of Tennyson and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. By 1848 Dora's first volume of verse entitled *Poems* was published. It was reprinted two years later as *Stories that Might be True: with other poems*.

After her father's bankruptcy the family were forced to move in with each of the clergymen brothers in turn. For two years Dora and her parents lived at Ovingham Rectory, Northumberland with Rev. Dr. William Greenwell, the eldest son, who was later to become a minor canon and librarian to the dean and chapter of Durham Cathedral. He also had an interest in archaeology, and contributed to various academic journals such as *Archaeological Numismatic Chronicle*, *The Journal of the Royal Archaeological Institute* and *Transactions of the Durham & Northumberland Archaeological Society*. As a result of his research he was elected a fellow of the Royal Society in 1878. It was while Dora was residing at Ovingham that she struck up a lasting friendship with Josephine Grey (afterward known as Josephine Butler) of Dilston to whom she dedicated some of her early prose work.

By the 1850's, the family was once again on the move. This time they settled with Alan Greenwell, who had become the first rector of St. Thomas' Church at Golborne. Their stay here lasted about four years until Alan resigned his living because of ill health. During her time here she helped her brother

Alan with his parish work so was probably well known in the area at the time. Dora and her mother then moved back to Durham for the next 18 years.

After her mother's death in 1871 Dora moved south, living in London, Torquay and Clifton. In later years she became an outspoken critic of vivisection and a campaigner for women's suffrage, although because of her declining health she was unable to take an active role. Towards the end of her life she is reputed to have become addicted to opium, and died in 1882 at the age of 61.

Besides counting Josephine Butler as a close friend Dora also formed a friendship with Christina Rossetti, whom she met at Bell Scotts, and Jean Ingelow. Obviously the friendship was mutual, as Dora was one of the small band of women whom Christina addressed by Christian name. One description that we have of Dora is, "tall, very slender with a gentle hesitating manner and soft cooing voice. Eyes not black, but dark luminous brown and wonderfully vivacious."

References to her work can be found in:

The Penguin Book of Victorian Verse.

The Oxford Book of Victorian Verse.

Modern biographical information can be obtained from:

Dictionary of British Women Writers, *Oxford Guide to British Women Writers and Christina Rossetti* by Frances Thomas (1992).

Earlier publications about Dora's life include:

Memoirs of Dora Greenwell by W. Dorling (1885)

Dora Greenwell by Henry Bett (1950)

Dora Greenwell: a prophet for our own times on the battleground of Faith by Constance L. Maynard - Allenson, 1926.

A sample of her poetry is now given.

Continued on page 16

'In Their Own Write'

Women Writers
Associated with the Area

Continued from page 15

A Scherzo

(A Shy Person's Wishes)

*With the wasp at the innermost heart of a peach,
On a sunny wall out of tip-toe reach,
With the trout in the darkest summer pool,
With the fern-seed clinging behind its cool
Smooth frond, in the chink of an aged tree,
In the woodbine's horn with the drunken bee,
With the mouse in its nest in a furrow old,
With the chrysalis wrapt in its gauzy fold;
With the things that are hidden, and safe, and bold,
With things that are timid, and shy, and free,
Wishing to be;
With the nut in its shell, with the seed in its pod,
With the corn as it sprouts in the kindly clod,
Far down where the secret of beauty shows
In the bulb of the tulip, before it blows;
With things that are rooted, and firm, and deep,
Quiet to lie, and dreamless to sleep;
With things that are chainless, and tameless, and proud,
With the fire in the jagged thunder-cloud,
With the wind in its sleep, with the wind in its waking,
With the drops that go to the rainbow's making,
Wishing to be with the light leaves shaking,*

*Or stones on some desolate highway breaking;
Far up on the hills, where no foot surprises
The dew as it falls, or the dust as it rises;
To be crouched with the beast in its torrid lair,
On drifting on ice with the polar bear,
With the weaver at work at his quiet loom;
Anywhere, anywhere, out of this room!*

Amongst her other writings were ones entitled *On the Education of the Imbecile* (1869), and *Single Women and the East African Salve Trade* (1873). She was also a well known Victorian hymn writer, whose best known work is entitled *I am not skilled to understand* (Hymn No. 55 in the Christian Hymnary).

Elizabeth Jackson

Although Elizabeth Jackson was born at Irlam around 1857, she spent her early years at Leigh, after her father John had taken up residence at Hope Carr Hall, from where he farmed the land. It must be assumed that she had left home by 1891, as she is not recorded on the census of that year for Hope Carr Hall. It is also possible that by 1908 or 1909 she had married a Harold Waterhouse. By 1924 they were living at Ivy Bank, Fulwood Road, Tarleton. Whilst very little is known of her life, she died at St. Annes-on-Sea in April 1950. Her body was brought back to Leigh where she was interred in Leigh Cemetery with the members of her family. However, there is one uncertainty about the information recorded in the cemetery register as it gives her occupation as a spinster, which would assume she was unmarried rather than widowed.

Elizabeth was a prolific authoress and a member of the Lancashire Authors Association. She published under the non-deplume 'Hope Carr' after her Leigh

home. Her poems appeared in the Leigh papers and in journals published in various parts of Lancashire.

A flavour of her writing can be found in the following poem, written in memory of Annie Texter, daughter of Mr. Texter of Bradshawgate.

To a Departed Friend

*Annie, dearest Annie, thou hast left a vacant place;
Nevermore on earth we'll see thy beautiful young face;
Never more on earth we'll hear thy voice so sweet and low;
In joyous happy tones no more to hear its music flow.
Endured bravely was the pain, so hard to bear, we know.
Taken in thy happy youth from those who loved thee well,
Ever in their hearts to feel the grief they cannot tell.
'Xalted high above us, henceforth thy home will be;
To thee revealed the glory which mortals cannot see;
Evermore to dwell with Him who gives and takes away,
Resting from thy labours at the close of life's brief day.*

Elizabeth also made notes of her father's reminiscences before he died in November 1911. Entitled *Reminiscences of One who lived in Five Reigns*, it provides us with information about his life. The following is an extract from this transcript:

My happiest period of churchgoing centres around the Leigh Parish Church. The Vicar, Rev. Canon Stanning was a direct speaker but I always liked him. Although his university career had been so brilliant he rarely diffused much oratory. He left that to some of his curates notably Dr. Momerie. I know he quoted Carlyle and the Higher Pantheism at great length. The M— family stand out clearly. The quiet grace with which the ladies of this house entered the church was an



education. But this charm of deportment was a family asset. The graceful stroll of one of Leigh's greatest benefactors was unforgettable – there was something about his refined face and quiet elegance of dress that was unexpressably reposeful. No ornate monument marks his resting place but his generosity and beauty of life leave fragrant flowers of memory that can fade or pass away.

My elder brother dying at the Higher Barns, Astley and having a lease in the farm my father took it over for a few years leaving a workman in charge of Hope Carr. The Ley or Park – 40 acres – formed a quarter portion of the land and was finely wooded. The Ley road divided this from Astley Hall [now the Leigh Sanatorium]. The Hall, Church and quaint old rectory are the only interesting features of Astley and Morts Grammar School. Mr. Wetherall owned the Astley Estate at that time and consequently was our landlord. He had a delightful personality. I remember him once inviting my sister and myself into the Hall and showing us his exquisite old china, art treasures, old oak furniture, and war trophies. He belonged to a race of soldiers. His father [Sir Edward Wetherall] I believe distinguished himself in the Peninsular Wars. Mr. Wetherall was also at that time the President of the Primrose League and whilst we lived at Astley gave two 'Fetes' in the beautiful grounds. But each were overshadowed by sad calamities. The day before the first had occurred the Wood-end Colliery disaster, its proximity being too close not to cast a terrible gloom.

The second was held a year later on Queen Victoria's first Jubilee. On this occasion an Astley man named Taylor was killed whilst engineering the fireworks. No blame could be attached to anyone for this melancholy occurrence as the victim had been warned repeatedly not to venture too near the fuse trail or whatever the technical terms are for firework ignition, but that made it

none the less deplorable.

Mr. Hewlett was the Rector or Vicar; at the time of our residence in the locality he had ministered over fifty years and was most highly esteemed. Almost his last appearance was at a confirmation service. I well remember seeing him come into church – a feeble old man in his black Geneva gown with his hand on the lawn sleeve of the nobly statured, kindly faced Bishop Fraser. One tottering on the brink of the grave and the other – to all seeming – in the mental and physical prime. Truly in the 'midst of life we are in death'. Dr. Hewlett died within two months of the celebration and Bishop Fraser within six.

I look back with pleasant memories of our four years' residence in Astley. My sister and I were amongst the first members to found the Tennis Club at Tyldesley. In the meanwhile the Leigh Corporation (then Local Board) had bought Hope Carr for an Irrigation farm; and the members of the said Board intimated pretty plainly that our residence there was absolutely desirable. My father had made so many improvements there that he felt loth to give it up altogether, while on the other hand he was reluctant to leave a good landlord and what is next best a good agent, Mr. Selby. However, he did give the Higher Barns farm up and soon found he had made a mistake. If the Farming Committee had been formed of the traditional butcher and baker they might at least have been expected to know something about agriculture and stock, but when it was composed mainly of retired weavers and tailors the case was hopeless and emanating from these an official who could hardly tell a wheat field from an oat field, or a potato from a mangel wursel. What would you friction was a foregone conclusion. After the courtesy of Mr. Wetherall and his agent this arrogance of officialdom "dressed in a little brief authority" was a disagreeable revelation. But

if he had escaped Scylla he might have fallen foul of Chrybdis, as Mr. Wetherall died shortly after us leaving and the Estate came into the hands of a Syndicate.

Father's activities at the Rowe Farm, Risley took the usual form of his ruling passion in life – land improvement. The cost, unlike Hope Carr, fortunately being partly refunded.

The history of Newchurch has often been recorded, but the few relics of Sainted Bishop seen at the Rushen Castle, Isle of Man, brought his association with this parish vividly to my memory. I pass briefly over our residence at Risley, so many sad events were registered there, not the least a very serious accident which happened to my father on the Central Station, Manchester, in his seventy-fourth year, which left him rather lame – otherwise he kept his other faculties unimpaired wonderfully, his memory unclouded to the last. He was never much of a church going man, but amongst his last words were, "if there is any truth in Christianity, I shall see your mother again". In this hope he died. His death occurred at Hebers, Middleton on November 15th 1919. In his ninety-fifth year he "fell on sleep" and crossed the "Great Divide".

**Elizabeth Jackson
Hope Carr
Tarleton Nr. Preston**

Should anyone have any further information about Elizabeth Jackson's life or her writings, then I would love to hear from them. Besides the full transcript of the reminiscences of her father's life, the following are a list of small volumes of verse which can be referred to at Leigh Local History Library:

Poems (1908)
Poems on Nature and other Poems (1909)
Verses (1910)
Thoughts (1913)

**Tony Ashcroft
Leigh Local History Officer
(Tel 01942 404559)**

Clog Dancing - a forgotten side of Wigan's heritage?

by Alex Fisher

THE TRADITION of clog-dancing (step-dance in clogs) has often been connected with the following factors:- a history of mining, textiles, or other heavy industry, the wearing of clogs as footwear and the importance of the music-hall as a source of entertainment. Wigan seems to qualify in all three of these areas but in terms of documented evidence, there is little that reflects the importance and the extent of this unique dance form. The purpose of this article, therefore, is to generate some awareness of the history and social significance of clog dance and, as a result, perhaps gather together memories of clog-dancing actually taking place in the Wigan area.

Although, during the latter part of the 19th century, clog-dancing was often linked with music-hall and 'the professional stage act', the skills of the art were usually passed on through families and working communities. Bearing this in mind, the strongest, and possibly the only piece of evidence that connects clog-dancing with South Lancashire is the story of *The Eight Lancashire Lads*. According to research done by Tony Ashcroft in the 1990's, this internationally acclaimed music-hall act originated in Golborne in 1891. Bill Cawley of 22 Bank Street, an ex-coller who worked at Golborne Paper Mills, apparently used to supplement his wages by clog-dancing at weddings and other functions. He and John Willie Jackson, a white lead

worker from Leigh Street, decided to combine their two young families, and teach them to clog-dance. *The Eight Lancashire Lads*, as a song and dance act, existed for over 30 years and nurtured such stars as Charlie Chaplin, Jack Edge and Tommy Handley.

The history of clog-dance, and how it developed into such a complex and highly

'Championship Belt'

Clog-dancing probably reached its peak of popularity between 1870 and 1905. Existing in the industrial regions of Britain, as well as a dance form, it was also considered a sport, and was often associated with boxing and wrestling contests as it became traditional to compete for a 'championship

1950's, it has become clear that the 'competition clog-dance' had some very distinct characteristics. It was always danced to a dotted hornpipe rhythm and each step (being 8 bars long) had to be repeated off left and right sides. Dancers performed from a narrow base, sometimes a pedestal, and could be expected to display up to 20 continuous steps. They were judged on timing, beats, carriage, execution and originality. Beats were made using toes as well as heels and each routine had to finish with a step called 'hopping double-shuffles'. Despite revivalist claims that clog-dance had regional characteristics, competition steps seem to have developed a uniformity that encompassed all would-be champions and, although clog-dancers also performed to waltz, rag-time, and popular song, it was the 'competition clog-

hornpipe' that remained the mark of true merit. This attachment to the 'hornpipe' provides a link with a previous step-dance tradition.

'Clog Hornpipe'

References to clog dancing in the early part of the 19th century are scarce but include a 'clog hornpipe' performed at the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh in 1819 (Flett & Flett 1996), and a 'clog-dance' performed at the Old Leeds Theatre in 1822 (Kershaw 1995). More detailed evidence has been



Pupils from Ecclestone Primary School enjoy their first taste of Clog Dancing.

Photo courtesy of Chorley Guardian.

skilled activity, is not well documented, but there is no doubt that due to its associations with early music-hall and 'northern industrial culture', it was, like many other 'popular' dance forms, considered an unworthy art. Kershaw (1995) describes how, in the late 19th century, new licensing laws and a drive for 'respectability' forced many music-halls and variety theatres to omit clog-dance acts, thus confining it to the lower priced establishments.

belt'. This competitive aspect most certainly propelled its development, for in 1880 the legendary Dan Leno had become the first *Clog Dancing Champion of the World*. This competition, held in Leeds, gave rise to many similar competitions in cities such as Manchester, Salford, Liverpool, Bradford, Newcastle, Sunderland, Belfast, Glasgow and London.

From material that has been collected from clog-dancers since the early

found in Boston, USA, and features a 'champion single Clog Dance on a slab of marble' in 1850 (Barrand 1993). Going back a further century, we find a similar fascination with the 'solo hornpipe', only this time performed for royalty. Evidence suggests that elaborate hornpipe dances were created by English court dancing-masters, and solo hornpipes also started to appear on the playbills of London theatres as entr'act entertainment.

During the 18th century, it seems that 'step-dancing' became a national craze for professional dance-masters were in great demand not only in the fashionable towns and cities, but in villages and large country houses. By the end of the century, however, step-dancing had become very unfashionable amongst the wealthier classes but in rural areas like Cumbria, Devon and East Anglia it persisted for another hundred years. The South Lakeland hornpipe steps, collected in the 1960's (see Flett & Flett 1979) were passed down through generations of dance-masters and demonstrate a clear link with the step-dance tradition, but even though clogs were everyday footwear, they did not develop into the competition clog-hornpipe. Factors such as heavy industry and urban-living were to fuel this next stage of development. No more dancing-masters and formal classes, clog-dancing became a route to fame and fortune for many a working man.

Clog dance revival

As a popular dance form, clog-dance declined after World War I and it was only after World War II that Folk Collectors recognised its worth as 'traditional' dance. Luckily, clog-dances were still to be found in areas like Lancashire, Durham and Northumberland and much material was collected. In Lancashire individuals in Nelson, Colne, Blackley, Failsworth, Blackburn,

Downham and Accrington were interviewed (see Pilling 1959, 1967 & Flaherty 1968) as well as a barge dancer from Burscough (Arthur 1980) and a puppeteer from Liverpool (Hollis 1983). Sam Sherry of Lancaster (b.1912) has also contributed much to clog-dancing in Lancashire, teaching regularly right up until his death in 2001 (see Sherry 1971).

As can be seen, not much evidence has come from Wigan and district, but the existence of *The Eight Lancashire Lads* must indicate that there was plenty of clog-dancing going on. I have been working as a freelance Dance Artist specialising in clog-dance in the South Lancashire area for just over 12 months, and have already encountered people who have memories of individuals clog-dancing in the 1950's and 60's in places like Appley Bridge, The Rigbye Arms, High Moor and The Highfield Social Club in Pemberton.

My work, so far, has given me the opportunity to offer clog-dance taster sessions to schools in Ecclestone, Coppull, Wigan, Standish, Aspull, Lowton, Leigh, Platt Bridge, Golborne, Abram, Ince, Marsh Green, Worsley Mesnes, Whelley and Tyldesley, and where funding has allowed, to develop these into longer residencies with St. Jude's, Worsley Mesnes and with Ecclestone Primary and St. Mary's, Ecclestone. The level of interest and support at each school has been excellent, and because I provide clogs for each workshop, children from Year 2 to Year 6 have enjoyed the novelty of wearing clogs and making plenty of noise in them. I may be sounding a trifle over-romantic here, but the experience seems suddenly to connect those young people with a very special part of Lancashire's heritage because although, as we have seen, clog-dancing occurred in other industrial areas, the wearing of clogs, it appears, was far more widespread in South Lancashire than anywhere

else.

I hope that this article may raise awareness of the important attachment Lancashire has to its 'clog-wearing' heritage and consequently to its clog-dance history. This is a call for new evidence to be collected and compiled so that future generations will be able to celebrate the legacy of the clog and the fact that it produced a dance form of unprecedented skill and complexity that should take its place amongst the nation's most treasured cultural expressions.

Any enquiries regarding clog-dance taster sessions or if readers have memories of clog-dancing occurring in Wigan and district, particularly before or just after World War II, please write to: Alex Fisher, 40 Middlewood Close, Ecclestone, Chorley PR7 5QG or Email: alexfis@tiscali.co.uk

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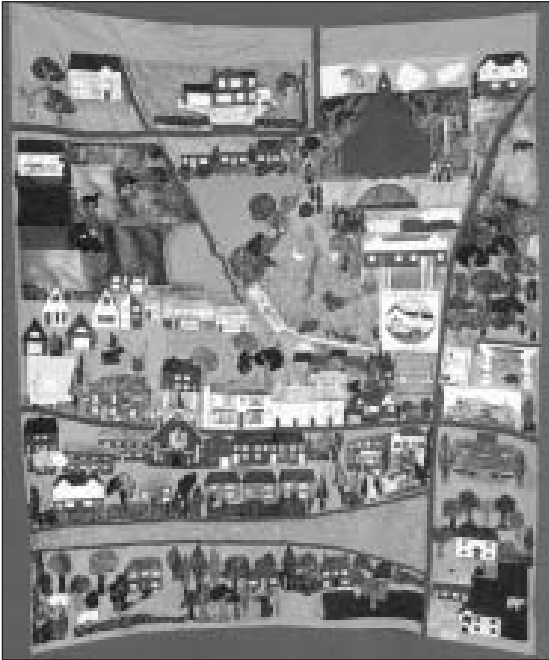
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HISTORY SHOP NEWS

Wigan on the Map

This exhibition will open on 16 April in the Wickham Gallery, and run for the next two years. This will be the first time that the Parish Map has been displayed in its entirety, and it should be a spectacular sight! The Map (consisting of 28 large textile panels), was given to the Council in April 2000 by community groups and Soroptimist International (Wigan Branch), and has previously only been displayed in small sections in local libraries and the History Shop.



Shevington Moor Parish Map

The whole project was originally part of *Mapping the Millennium*, Wigan Council's Millennium celebrations. Community groups were asked to depict in textile form those aspects of their community which they held most dear. However, one of the reasons the Soroptimists undertook the project, was to encourage the community spirit they felt was lacking in our borough. Although the Millennium is now history, we feel that the aim of bringing our communities together is still valid, and that is a primary objective of this exhibition. When you visit, be sure to read the moving introduction written by Marion Andrews (Parish Map Co-ordinator), which captures the friendship which developed between members of the work groups, as a result of the shared goal and hard work needed to produce these giant textiles.

Throughout our discussions on how to present the Parish Map, one idea has repeatedly come to the fore. It is our shared view of our communities that is important, not our differences. Our past history has shaped our present, and what happens now will shape our future history. In this, we find our common ground. This theme is very important to the exhibition, and will be the focus of many of the events and activities we have planned, both educational and fun! (see the article by Claire Hawkins, our Community Outreach and Education Officer opposite).

If you want to know what the Parish Map is really all about, then pay us a visit and join in our activities. You will not be disappointed!

Each month in 2003 and 2004 we will feature a different 'parish', with events and activities at the History Shop and in your area. There will be an update on this in the next issue of *Past Forward*.

SUMMER 2003 PROGRAMME

April – Launch of Wigan on the Map – the Parish Maps will be on show together in one place. Easter Holidays family activities on Wednesday 16th and Wednesday 23rd, 2.00-4.00p.m.

May – Parish of the Month: Atherton. Come to The History Shop and see what the people of Atherton put on their Parish Map. We will also be at the Atherton and Hag Fold Street Festival, with lots of fun local history activities for the family.

June – Parish of the Month: Wigan Town Centre and Mesnes Park.

July – Parish of the Month: Focus on Leigh and the Leigh Parish Map, just in time for the Leigh Carnival on 26th - 27th.

August – Parish of the month: Scholes (see next issue for details).

For further information please contact Claire Hawkins (details opposite).

Exhibitions at the History Shop 2003

Currently showing in the Taylor Gallery until 21 April, is **Ancient Seats**, which charts the development, heyday and decline of the old halls and country houses of the district. The story of the bricks and mortar mirrors the social changes which have taken place over the last century in the 'country house' lifestyle. There are some fascinating photographs of the interiors and gardens of these houses, as well as tales of mystery and intrigue. In addition, several prints and watercolours from the Heritage Service's fine art collection eg Standish and Haigh Halls, are on show.

Ancient Seats will be followed by **You are My Sunshine – 70 Years of Wigan Athletic**. All of you Latics fans will understand the significance of that title, but for the uninitiated, the song of the same name can be heard resoundingly wherever Wigan Athletic are playing. The exhibition, which runs from 10 May to 16 August, celebrates the founding of the club 70 years ago, and 25 years in the football league. Of course the question on everyone's lips is will they or won't they (win promotion to the First Division, that is!)?

Wigan Photographic Society will be staging their annual show in late August, as will **Atherton Photographic Society** immediately after in September. These two local clubs have very different photographic styles, and it is fascinating to see how they each present their own unique view on the art of photography.

Our final temporary exhibition of the year is **Paintings of Wigan and Beyond** by the well known local artist Gerald Rickards, scheduled for November. The exhibition will feature paintings of buildings and places he has visited recently, and includes the series which has been reproduced in the last few issues of *Past Forward*, and further works of the Haigh Lily Ponds.

We are now planning our exhibition programme for the next few years, and are particularly interested in hearing from community groups who have great ideas for exhibitions, and would like to use our temporary exhibition space. If you are interested, please phone Yvonne Webb at the History Shop (01942 828123) or email or write. I look forward to hearing from you!

HISTORY SHOP NEWS

Did you put Wigan on the Map?

Hello readers! My name is Claire and I was delighted to join the team at Wigan Heritage Service in January as the new Heritage Officer, with responsibility for Community Outreach and Education. I would like to hear from anyone who was involved in making the Parish Map. Please tell me about your experiences, who you collaborated with and what happened next? Now the map is on display in full for the next two years, would you like to be involved again in some way? If so, please contact me: **Claire Hawkins, Heritage Officer (Community Outreach and Education) on 01942 828128; Email c.hawkins@wlct.org or write to me c/o The History Shop, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU.**

Calling all Latics fans, we need your help!

In May 2003 we are staging an exhibition at the History Shop marking 70 years of the Latics, 25 of these in the League, and hopefully marking the end of a glorious 2002-03 season. The exhibition will feature treasures we have managed to find either from our own collections, the collections of the National Football Museum in Preston, or from the club itself. We need to hear from you if you have any club memorabilia, photographs, or memories and stories about the club, which we could use.

Now is your chance to get in touch and be a part of this exciting new exhibition. Contact Philip Butler at the History Shop on 01942 828128.

Family Fun Activities in the History Shop

Easter Holiday – Wednesday 16 and Wednesday 23 April, 2.00-4.00p.m.
Arts and Crafts Maps (ages 3-7),
Globe Making (ages 8-12)
And drop in and see the brand new “Wigan on the Map” exhibition. Tel: 01942 828128.

Whit Half Term Holiday – Wednesday 28 May, 2.00-4.00p.m.
Create a Craft Collage (all ages), also visit the “Wigan on the Map” exhibition and make your own version to take home. Tel: 01942 828128.

FRIENDS OF WIGAN HERITAGE SERVICE

Great news from the Friends this time - the 1861 Census index is now finished and ready for use.

A full paper copy of the Friends of Wigan Heritage Service index for the 1861 Census is now on the study shelves at the History Shop. This is great news for all local genealogists as it means that the whole of the 1861 Census for our area can now be searched by surname to make sure that no branch of your family goes undetected.

The news gets better for researchers, as the whole of the index is now available on CD ROM. This is thanks to the dedication and hard work of the project’s supervisor, Barbara Davies. Not only has Barbara handled the allocation of areas covered by our volunteer indexers, she personally has then inputted all the data and created the area files. At her own expense she has now provided the History Shop with copies on multiple floppy disk and now a single CD. A big thank you is extended from the Heritage Service to you, Barbara, and I’m sure a huge debt recognised by all our researchers present and future! **THANK YOU.**

The next Census indexing project is already well under way, the 1841 Census index. Most areas are already allocated and are being administered by Christine Watts here at the History Shop. Should you be interested in giving your time to this project please do still get in contact; there is more work after the main allocation, and in the future more

indexes! Christine can be contacted at the History Shop on 01942 828128.

The other major indexing project which we are hoping to set up through the Friends is the indexing of the Wigan newspapers. At the History Shop we archive the Wigan Observer and have copies on microfilm going back to 1853. Fortunately the vast majority of these issues have been indexed and so it is possible to access some of this information. There is, however, a gap in our records from the early 1950’s until the 1990’s. During most of this time local cuttings were taken from the newspapers, but to complete our index and make more of the information more permanently accessible, we would like to fill in this gap.

For this we need volunteers. Once again, as with the Census indexing projects, we will be asking people to work from microfilm, compiling an index with a fixed set of criteria for inclusion. This index will initially be manually compiled, i.e. on index cards, but if the project takes off then work could begin transferring our whole newspaper index onto a database.

Anyone out there who is interested, please contact Philip Butler at the History Shop (01942 828128) as soon as possible.

- The next Friends Meeting is scheduled for Saturday 3 May at Leigh Library - please let us know if you would like to come along. All are very welcome.

FRIENDS OF WIGAN HERITAGE SERVICE

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Wigan Town Hall

The Wigan Town Hall drawing is something of a departure from the original plan to produce a design that would feature different areas of the borough for each issue of *Past Forward*. Yet it does seem appropriate to have a composition, not only centred round the present Town Hall in Library Street but also containing references to the history of the town.

The style of drawing follows a similar project which I recently completed for the 75th anniversary of St Luke's at Orrell, which was reproduced for the cover of the parish magazine, and later followed by two larger paintings.

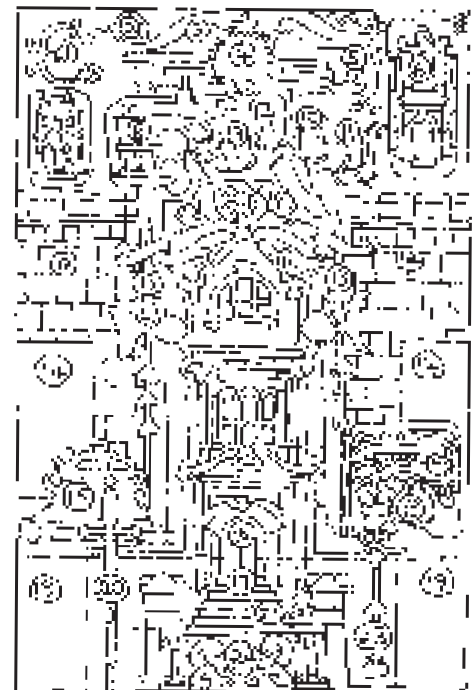
As usual the preliminary work for the composition was interesting and enlightening. The aim of avoiding lengthy outdoor exploring was also achieved. The amount of time involved with research, however, certainly did not decrease and typically I had to try hard to avoid getting distracted and drifting too far away from the main subject. It was all very interesting and the help received both at the History Shop and at the Town Hall was much appreciated.

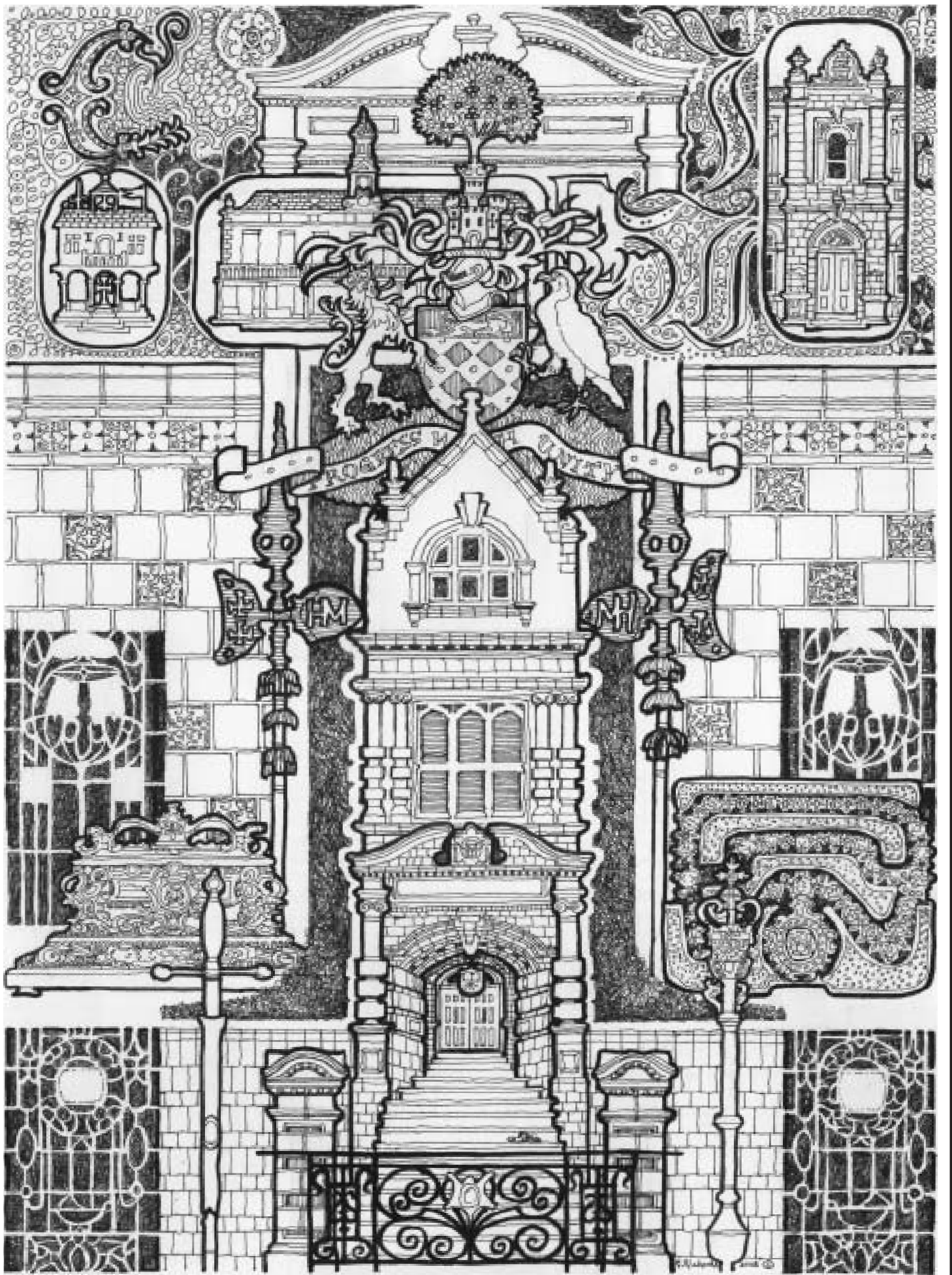
As for the drawing itself, the Library Street entrance to the Town Hall was an obvious centre piece. It has featured in many of my decorative paintings, including five recent compositions for the Borough Chamber of Commerce Awards. It also occupies a prominent position in the Charter Mural in the History Shop. Deciding what to include from the interior proved somewhat more difficult; sometimes helped by my memories of when I was a student there, whilst at other times I had to avoid being over influenced by the building I once knew so well, rather than the building as it is today. Each time I walk into the Council Chamber I think of that Saturday morning when I saw all the desks arranged in long straight lines, waiting for a great number of 10 and 11 year olds to sit down and take the scholarship exam. Some years later, when I was an art student, I saw the room many more times and I also got to know the rarely visited Board Room, now the Mayor's Parlour, which was the venue for occasional sports club and students association committee meetings.

1. Initial letter, which surrounds a portrait of Charles II in the 1662 Charter.
2. Lancashire rose, which can be seen in various places, including the new Coat of Arms.
3. Doorway, leading to the present Council Chamber, which was once the Technical College hall.
4. Mountain ash or Wiggin Tree; a pun on the name of the district. As featured in the Borough Coat of Arms.
5. Initial letter, which surrounds a portrait of James II in the 1685 Charter.
6. The corner doorway to the previous Town Hall in Rodney Street. Built in the 1860's it replaced the 'New' Town Hall and Moot Hall. Sometimes, probably because of the size, unfavourably compared with other northern town halls of the same period. It does, however, have some interesting architectural features, not least the high level wrought iron and the emblem with the Moot Hall crest.
7. The Moot Hall as featured on the town seal and other insignia, including the old Wigan Grammar School badge. The early 15th century building was near to the Parish Church at the Market Place end of Wallgate. The upper floor was the seat of local government. The arched ground floor was at some time occupied by shops.
8. The Town Hall of 1720, located in the Market Place. The Council Chamber was on the upper floor, with a turret and a stone badge portraying the arms of George I above. The railed balcony was a favourite place for political speeches. The ground floor, known as the 'Shambles', was occupied by butchers' shops. The building was demolished in 1882 to make way for street improvements.
9. The Coat of Arms of the Metropolitan Borough, created when 14 former districts were brought together in 1974. The lion is taken from the crest of the Borough of Wigan and the crowned castle from the shield. The sparrow hawk occurs in the arms of the Borough of Leigh and in the crest of Atherton UDC. The motto 'Progress with Unity', an attempt to represent the drawing together of the 14 different authorities
10. Initial letter from the 1973 Charter of Elizabeth II.
11. Initial letter from the 1836 Charter of William IV, which granted the Borough a separate court of Quarter Sessions.
12. Tiles on a section of the small staircase. On the wide corridors where their brilliant dark green gloss was once an eye catching feature they can still be detected beneath a few coats of paint.
13. The oldest of the three pairs of halberds. Bearing the initials H M, they were probably presented by one of the Mayors in the 15th century, either Hugh del Marsh or Humphrey Mather. The practice of placing a pair of halberds outside the home of the current Mayor no longer survives following an incident when they were illegally removed.
14. Two of the stained glass windows on the main staircase. Positioned alongside window ledges that are low enough and wide enough to act as seats, it is amazing how they survived when the building was occupied by hundreds of students!
15. Silver gilt casket presented in 1908 to Alderman Robert Richards when he was made a freeman of

the Borough. One of a number displayed in the Town Hall.

16. The Wigan and District Mining and Technical College Coat of Arms. The 1950's crest replaced an earlier badge but retained the same Latin inscription 'Lux ex tenebris'.
17. Steps leading to the main entrance to the Town Hall in Library Street. Sometimes described as Wigan's grandest building it was completed in 1903 when larger premises were needed for the highly regarded Mining and Technical College. A good example of the decorative use of red brick and terracotta, probably products of local brickworks at Orrell or Upholland.
18. The Mayor's Chain of Office, as encased when not required by the Mayor.
19. Two details from the lower sections of the impressive stained glass windows that are an important feature in the new Council Chamber. Previously the College Hall, which was used for assemblies, examinations, speech days and dances.
20. State Sword, a gift from Charles II in 1662. More than four feet long it has a two edged blade with a silver band bearing the arms of the king and of Sir Roger Bradshaigh, who was twice Mayor of the Borough.
21. Football boots, size 11, a reminder that more than 50 years ago the college steps were often the meeting place for sports teams travelling to 'away' fixtures.
22. Decorative rails, which are on all the landings overlooking the main stairway.
23. The Greater Mace, an emblem of mayoral authority, given to the Council by Alexander Holt in 1653. Along with the town's lesser mace it appears to have been made during the Commonwealth and converted at the Restoration into an emblem of royal authority.





In issue 28, Hugh Heyes told the tale of an American B24 Liberator bomber which crashed in Aspull in August 1943. Hugh was 10 years old at the time, and was one of the first on the scene. He now lives in Massachusetts, USA, and has carried out research into a number of other American plane crashes in the Wigan area. Here he writes about the crash of a North American F-86F Sabre in Billinge in 1956.

The day a North American F-86F Sabre jet crash-landed at Billinge

AT APPROXIMATELY 1335 hours on 22 March 1956, a flight of three North American F-86F Sabre Jet fighters of the 45th Fighter Day Squadron, 17th Air Force, left Bordeaux, France on the next leg of their Ferry Flight from Sidi Slimane, French Morocco to the Scottish Aviation headquarters at Prestwick, Scotland. The purpose of their flight was to deliver the last three aircraft from the squadron.

The leader of the flight was Capt. James M. Hambrick in aircraft No. 52-5355. The No. 2 aircraft, No. 52-5425, was flown by 2nd Lt. Norman L. Wells and the No. 3 aircraft, No. 52-5373, by 1st Lt. Wendell B. Stockdale. The flight path would take them over Cherbourg, Southampton, Burtonwood and onto Prestwick. The flight was estimated to take approximately 1hr 40min; each aircraft carried fuel for two and half hours flying time.

As they taxied out to the runway, the No. 2 aircraft experienced problems retracting its dive brakes and it was decided to return to the ramp. However, the pilot managed to retract the brakes and the flight turned around and took off in five second intervals climbing to 38,000 feet. (This was later to prove crucial, as the extra fuel used here might have allowed Lt. Stockdale to have had enough fuel to make it to the Burtonwood Air Base).

Trouble

Whilst over-flying Burtonwood area, the flight leader experienced trouble with his radio compass and subsequently handed the lead over to the No. 3 aircraft, flown by Lt. Stockdale, to lead the flight to Prestwick. When they thought they were over Prestwick, Capt. Hambrick attempted to contact the tower and after numerous failed attempts by all three pilots, they finally made contact on the guard channel. The tower asked the flight leader if he could penetrate VFR, to which Capt. Hambrick replied "negative", whereupon the tower cleared the flight to penetrate on the Prestwick range. During the descent at about 15,000 feet, the tower contacted the flight and notified them that the range had been turned off. (Lt. Stockdale believes the range had actually been turned off when the radio compasses indicated station passage).

Electing to continue without the benefit of reliable navigational aids, they descended to around 2,000-3,000 feet. When they broke out of the clouds they were

over the Irish Sea. They did see an airfield on an island but the runway was too short, so they contacted the tower for a DF steer. The tower told them to tune into a marker located a half mile from the end of the runway. (It was subsequently determined that the airfield they observed was located at Jurby on the Isle of Man). Unable to get a positive identification off the marker on the radio compass, they again called for a steer. Burtonwood heard the call and asked if they were in trouble or needed a steer. Still attempting to locate itself, the flight spent some time in the area maintaining VRF before accepting a steer to Burtonwood. According to Lt. Stockdale, it was at about this point in the flight that they collectively agreed that they were lost, so the flight leader declared an emergency.

On heading to Burtonwood, they then climbed to around 17,000 feet. Maintaining this altitude for a time, following steers given by Burtonwood and estimating that there was now a possibility of exhausting their fuel before arriving at Burtonwood, Capt. Hambrick decided to let down, maintaining VRF below the clouds. The flight continued at approximately 1,500-2,000 feet, in the hope that they would spot a suitable landing strip en route to Burtonwood.

Head injuries

At 10 or 12 miles from Burtonwood, at 1555 hours and approximately 1,000 feet,

Lt. Stockdale's aircraft flamed out. Then according to eyewitness and newspaper accounts, he tried to make a forced landing on what had been a reclaimed 'open cast' site. The aircraft, with undercarriage down, came down low over the New House Farm on Winstanley Road at a height of about 60 feet, touching down on a fence near to where the Chair Wood now stands. After overshooting the pasture he was aiming for, Lt. Stockdale touched down in a recently ploughed field. The undercarriage and wings were sheared off, the fuselage rolling and careering across the field at an angle of 30 degrees.

After rolling over a number of times, the fuselage went through a wooden fence on the other side of the field and ended up on its side in a drainage ditch 100 yards from Moss Vale Farm on Upholland Road. The aircraft was a complete wreck after travelling a 100 yards or so across the field. Pieces of the aircraft were strewn over a 200 yard area. The nose was at one end of the field, with the undercarriage and wings some 20 yards from the fuselage. The whole area was littered with shattered perspex and ballast bags. The pilot's helmet, cracked down the middle, was lying on the ground near the fuselage. When the alarm was given, it was treated as a general emergency. Six fire engines and two ambulances from the surrounding districts were at

the scene with commendable speed.

Lt. Stockdale crawled from the wreck with serious facial injuries, two fractured vertebrae and several lacerations, abrasions and bruises. He managed to stumble across the field to Mr. Hornby who was coming to help him; then he passed out. He was removed to Wigan Infirmary by one of the ambulances which had to be towed out of the field by a tractor after it got stuck in the muddy field. He was transferred to the Air Force Hospital, Burtonwood at approximately 1823 hours, then later to the Air Force Hospital at Wimpole Park near Cambridge.

25 year old 1st Lt. Wendell Stockdale, from Columbia, Pennsylvania, was hospitalised from March to May of 1956, after which he returned to ground duties in French Morocco, before returning to the United States. Due to his head injuries and a period of amnesia, he was not immediately allowed to return to flying status. It was approximately a year before the flight surgeons determined that his amnesia was psychological and was not due to physical brain damage. (Evidently, when something traumatic happens to a person, the brain will oftentimes do the victim a favour and prevent him from remembering most or all of



The crashed Sabre jet in a field at Moss Vale Farm, Billinge. Lt. Stockdale refused to bale out, thus avoiding Billinge Hospital which he thought was a school.

what happened).

In February 2001 Mr. Stockdale recalled the event as follows:

"After flaming out, I loosened my seat belt and harness in preparation for a low altitude ejection. As I lowered my head in preparation for blowing the canopy, I noticed what I thought was a village and school below and ahead of me. I found out 36 years later what I thought was a school, was in fact the hospital at Billinge. By the time I had glided my aircraft safely beyond the hospital, I estimated that I was well below 800 feet – too low to safely eject. I turned the aircraft to the left and then to the right after spotting a pasture in which to set down. I decided to land diagonally across the pasture, which was adjacent to a ploughed field. From my farming experiences in Iowa where I was reared, I knew that pasture ground was much harder than a ploughed field and that the plane might not sink into the pasture turf. Unfortunately, I overshot the pasture.

The undercarriage sank unevenly, imparting a

rotation motion to the aircraft. The mud piled up in front of the wheels, causing first the external fuel tanks and then the wings and undercarriage to be sheared off from the fuselage. The wingless fuselage then began to spin like a football, in the process of which the headrest and canopy were sheared off as the fuselage spiralled two or three times across the field. Had I still had my shoulder harness and seat belt fastened, I would undoubtedly have been decapitated.

Lucky break

Another lucky break for me was the ejection seat did not fire upon impact or when I evacuated the plane. The standard procedure was to reinsert the safety pins into the ejection seat before a crash landing to prevent the seat from accidentally firing upon impact. After flaming out I had very little time and was very busy. I do not remember whether I forgot or was too busy flying the plane and looking for a place to land. In any event, I did not put the safety pins back in. When the plane ended up on its side, had the seat blown, I would have been ejected into the wooden fence and brambles along the fence line. Also, most fortunately, there was no fire. I was later told there remained only about a gallon of fuel in the tanks.

With no shoulder harness or seat belt to restrain me, the tremendous deceleration caused my head to slam into

the gun sight. The helmet, although it was split down the middle, did limit the damage to my face. I incurred a fracture of the right zygoma arch and maxilla, and my right sinus was crushed. I also fractured two vertebrae and had many cuts and bruises of varying severity, I was very lucky that the fuselage did not come to rest upside down, I was bleeding profusely; had it taken a long time to right the plane and get me out, who knows what might have happened? I think I used a couple of my nine lives that day!

I managed to get out of the aircraft by myself and sat on a rock. A farmer working in an adjacent field called the emergency services. The ambulance was there very quickly and I passed out shortly after it arrived. As I recall, I regained consciousness in the base hospital at Burtonwood. I credit Mr. Hornby, Mr. Alker and Mr. Boardman for saving my life. I was told that one of them called the ambulance whilst I was still in the air. When the ambulance got stuck in the mud, they pulled it out with their tractor. They were responsible for my prompt medical attention and quick departure of the ambulance to the hospital. Years later, I was told by Mrs. Hornby that it was Mr. Boardman who found my watch in the ploughed field the day after the accident.

Again another fortunate break for me was that Dr. Lett was on duty at Wimpole Park Air Force Hospital, near Cambridge where I was eventually sent. He was one of the foremost ear, nose and throat doctors in the Air Force and a specialist in treating head and facial injuries similar to mine. He did a wonderful job on me.

My personal recollections of the accident stopped just after I made the turn into my final approach and started again a couple of days later in hospital. Details, especially covering the period of my amnesia, were supplied later by others - some of it not until 36 years later when I visited Mrs. Hornby."

In 1992, Mr. Stockdale and his wife visited the crash



1st Lt. Wendell B. Stockdale, pilot of the Sabre jet, which crash-landed at Billinge in 1956, after running out of fuel.

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Mining Food for Thought

OVER the centuries coal miners developed social characteristics peculiar to their industry, even down to their eating habits. They even created unique words for food eaten down the pit such as *snap* from the Old English, *to bite or tear*. Regional terms found varied from *jackbit* and *bread, baggin* or *piece* in Lancashire and other areas. *Corn* was also used in Scotland.

Until the Childrens Employment Commission report of 1842 there are very few accounts of the coal miner's typical diet, if it could ever be called that. The corrupt practice of wages being paid 'in truck', with items available at the company shop, was certainly widespread, especially in those isolated mining communities where the coal owner/landowner was as good as a mediaeval Lord of the Manor. If the miners did not like the practice then they were on their way. Very often the selection of food in the company shop could be as little as bread, coffee, tea and sugar, with very poor quality and condition meat.

Perhaps some cheese might also be available from time to time.

The Childrens Employment Commission (Mines) Report 1842

Although in record offices around the country there are probably many insights into the eating habits of individual mining families, the Childrens Employment Commission enquired in detail for the first time in all the coal mining areas into the health and welfare of mineworkers.

Commissioners were appointed to question individual colliers, boys, girls, and women about their working conditions while they worked below ground. Although many mine owners were reluctant to co-operate, they had to, with the result that the nation gained a shocking insight into the plight of mineworkers.

The evidence led to the 1842 Coal Mines Act which banned girls and women from underground work and also boys

younger than ten. Women resorted at times to disguising themselves and their young girls as males, to be able to add to the family earnings. This was the case in remoter areas until the close of the 19th century.

The evidence that nutrition varied dramatically amongst the various mining districts can be seen from the following selected extracts:

Shropshire

Generally healthy, but there is an extraordinary mortality during infancy and childhood owing to the quantity of gin and opium which is given by the mothers to their children.

West Riding of Yorkshire

Food and clothing generally good. The children as well as the adults, have bread and milk and porridge for breakfast, huge lumps of bread, and often bits of cheese and bacon, or fat for their luncheon in the pit, a hot meat meal when they come home at five or six, and often porridge, or bread and milk, or tea for supper.

The colliers take nothing but

the best articles in the shops. They consume a great deal of animal food, milk, and beer or ale. Another section of evidence states that the children take a little milk or coffee and a bit of bread in the morning before they go to the pit, and they will take nothing with them but a little bread and perhaps a little tea, but oftener dry bread than anything else.

The parents cannot often get them more, they do not have meat. When they come out of the pit at night they may have a little meat or milk porridge, but a bit of dry bread and a sup of milk is the usual supper. I have known boys go to work all the twelve hours without more than a bit of dry bread to eat.

Halifax

Breakfast generally consists of a mess of porridge [oatmeal and hot milk or water], the dinner is almost invariably a flat, thin, coarse oaten cake peculiar to the North, or a wheat cake weighing about six ounces with salt butter or lard.

The day a North American F-86F Sabre jet crash-landed at Billinge

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site and met with the wife, daughter and granddaughter of Mr. Alfred Hornby, the first person to get to the crash site to assist Lt. Stockdale. (Sadly Mr. Hornby passed away just a few months before the Stockdale's visit)

Greenslate Farm

Mrs. Hornby recalled that Mr. Hornby was working on the Greenslate Farm (near Billinge) when he observed a flight of aircraft flying very low. He noticed that one of them was apparently in trouble as it was not making any noise and had separated itself from the others. He was also aware that it was losing altitude and when he saw that the wheels were down, he knew it was

definitely in trouble and trying to land. After the airplane hit the ground, he immediately went to the phone and called the police. Hornby then went to the plane, getting there at about the same time as the ambulance. He discovered the pilot sitting on a rock, very disoriented and not knowing where he was. He reported that Lt. Stockdale said something like, "That was surely a rough ride. Where am I?"

Wings missing

Herb Harper, who was one of the American crash party, recently recalled his involvement in the accident as follows:

"As an Armament Technician, I was called out to the crash site to disarm any explosives, gun and pilot's ejector seat, which contained explosive devices. By the time I had arrived, the injured pilot had already been removed. I did know he was injured and he was expected to live, but I did not know who he was and since he was from another unit, I did not ask. When I got to the crash site the aircraft

was lying on its side with the wings missing. After I checked to make sure the guns were safe, I had to crawl through the fence and brambles to get into the cockpit. This was a tight squeeze and when I got there and viewed the seat mechanism, I almost had a heart attack! To fire the ejection seat the pilot would pull up on the seat handles. I

was already in the cockpit area when I noticed the handles were in the raised position, almost the firing position! Just a slight touch in the wrong way would fire the seat. I can still close my eyes and see me and the seat clearing out that fence and brambles, as I am here to tell this story, it is obvious everything went well."

North American F-86F Sabre

Type	Single seat all weather fighter-bomber
Wingspan	37 ft 1 in
Length	37 ft 6 in
Height	15 ft
Engine	5970 lbs J47-GE-27
Speed	690 mph max.
Ceiling	54,600 ft
Range	1270 mls
Armament	6 - 0.5 in Colt Browning M-3's plus two, 1,000lb bombs or 16 rockets
Weight	10,950 lbs empty, 17,000 lbs loaded
No. built	9,502 all marks - 1,539 F-86F's

Land based prototypes adopted swept back wings in 1945. First flight of XJF-1 took place on 27 November 1946. That of the XP-86 on 1 October 1947.

The F-86F had extended leading edges and small fences. The F-86 saw considerable service in Korea. It was in some respects marginally inferior to the MIG-15. But with experienced pilots this effect was essentially nullified. More North American Sabres were produced than any other military aircraft since 1945, with the exception of the Huey Helicopter.



Snap time for coalface workers, mid 1950's. These men have come off the face for a welcome lunch break of 30 minutes.

Lancashire and Cheshire

The adults are thin and gaunt. One or two colliers, somewhat corpulent, were pointed out to me as remarkable for being so. They have a stooping shambling gait when walking, no doubt acquired from their occupations in the low galleries of the mines.

Their complexion, when washed, is pallid, approaching to a dirty yellow. Some of the children are decently clothed, and, according to their own statements, always have sufficient food.

On the other hand many are in rags and in a disgusting state of dirt, and without enough to eat. The usual food of drawers is stated to be "cheese and bread, or bread and butter, and sometimes raisin pasties; they take what they have to eat in their hands, and take a bite now and again; sometimes they carry it until it is as black as coal".

Oldham

James Taylor: "Ate his dinner while working, never had anything except butter cakes [bread and butter]. His father who was a collier drank a good deal of his wages. Has porridge and treacle to breakfast when there is any, and porridge and milk when he gets home, never any potatoes."

The above accounts are amazing in the sense that children and adults could survive such a hard work environment on bread, bacon, cheese, tea and water. Many modern miners, and especially those working at small private mines, tend to eat huge 'greasy sausage, egg and chips' mountains and still have room for more, as well as consuming large quantities of beer, when their workload must be far less

than an adult collier of the 1840's.

Literary Glimpses into the Miner's Diet in the Hungry '30's

Tomlinson G. 'Coalminer', 1937

Mother would make what we called flapjacks - big flat cakes about as big as a large dinner plate, and we children would be on our very best behaviour so that we might have a large piece of flap-jack split open whilst still warm and spread with beef dripping.

Another dish of which we were very fond was 'water-whelps'. 'Water whelps' are pieces of dough taken fresh from the mixing and boiled in a pan. It would kill some people to eat them, but with a spot or two of black treacle on them we children loved them.

Coombes B.L. 'These Poor Hands', 1939

To me the symbol of the miner-boy has been a little fellow who dragged his feet up to the colliery one summer morning last year. I think it was the look on his face that attracted me. He had cord 'yorks' below his knee, just like a real man, it could not have taken many inches of string. His jacket came down to the level of those yorks and his food box caused a bulge in his side pocket that was as large as his chest.

Poetry Extracts

From a Scottish broad sheet of the 1840's called *'The Truckmasters'*, this section probably dates to the period when the use of 'company shops' where miners could

obtain food in advance of their wages was being abolished.

*There is one in Dundyvan as I've heard tell,
At charging a price none can them excel;
For butter and cheese is a penny a pound,
Above all other shops that you'll find in the town.
As for their meat and their bacon it's very good,
And fitting enough for a collier's food;
Their tea and their sugar is fair I declare,
But I sing no more of their grocery-wares.*

From a North East poem of c.1900, *'The Putter'*, (a boy who pushed tubs of coal away from the coalface). This lad is saying that as long as he is well fed and has drink and tobacco he is the best at his work!

*Nuw, ah'm just a smallie laddie,
Hardly owd enough ti hew,
But a'v held me a'n at puttin Wiv th' best a'h iver knew,
Giv us plenty bait and bottle Plenty beef and baccy chows,
And a' hl bet me bunch 'o tokens that from Gannin doon ti lowse.*

Life 'On Tick'

From a study of a Yorkshire pit village in the 1950's it appears that an unskilled miner was paid around £5 to £7 a week. Virtually the whole of the wife's allowance from her husband went on food. By Wednesday and Thursday the pennies were being counted and most things were being bought 'on tick'.

Higher paid coal face men

and tunnellers gave their wives larger allowances which meant that sweet cake, tinned fruit and prepared meats could be bought, as well as the usual fresh meat, bread and potatoes. Food was usually bought from the Co-op or the pit village shop.

And finally, from my own experiences . . .

I remember a man at Bickershaw Colliery, Leigh, in the early 1980's who before day shift used to eat a full cooked breakfast of two sausages, two eggs, about four rashers of bacon and two slices of fried bread at 4.30 am. He was as thin as a rake and avoided hard work like the plague!

Another man I remember at Coventry Colliery used a large food flask on afternoon shift to keep his exotic meal from the Chinese 'chippy' warm (he also used to wear his wife's enormous old knickers but that's another story!).

I always seemed to be hungry; perhaps instinctively I was thinking I should eat as much as possible in case I was trapped in a roof fall! I would eat anything going. A man I knew, and thought I trusted fairly well, once gave me some sandwiches wrapped in Rathbones bread paper which he said he didn't want. After I had eaten them he said he'd found them in a tub which went past earlier!

At home, she who must be obeyed (Helen) often berates me with; "wash your hands before you touch that food!". My reply is, "we used to eat our butties on the face at Bickershaw covered in coal dust, never did me any harm!"



A group of young boy miners grab a butty below ground, early 1950's. These lads marshalled full and empty pit tubs onto and off the rope haulage system.

A Rugby League Diary

1898-1938

(Part two)

Injuries

Injuries and accidents featured in Mr Counsell's diary. Compensation was often the order of the day. On 7 January 1935: 'Paid a junior, J Winstanley, 10s 6d on account of his having his leg broken during a match with Whelley Rangers.' In 1937 Mr Counsell went to see J Wilcock, a junior footballer, who had an accident while playing a match. 'The RL asked me to enquire into the case and to go up to £3 3s. I informed the boy that he would get 10s 6d a week for 6 weeks.'

The club doctors rendered good service. On 26 May 1906: 'Drs Monks and Lindsay presented with hot water jugs and salad bowl for services to injured players.' Likewise, when Spillane broke his leg in an 'A' team match at St Helens Recs in 1930: 'We brought him back safely in the chara. The doctor was very good and made him comfortable to travel.' If the injury was severe the players were referred to medical specialists. In 1903 Harry Lowe went to see Mr Barber, the bone specialist, about his knee injury. Similarly, in 1933 Mr McMurray, the Liverpool specialist, examined George Bennett's ankles.

But there were tragedies on and off the pitch. On 3 November 1903: 'Luke Aspey, a Wigan player, drowned at Martland Mill Bridge.' A diary entry on 20 August 1916 said simply: 'James Leytham drowned.' In July 1937 Mr Counsell went to Manchester Royal Infirmary to see Ian Crockett, a New Zealand footballer, on Wigan's register.

The Diary of Mr. John Counsell

Unfortunately, the diary entry for 6 August 1937 recorded: 'Left Wigan with directors and a few players for the cremation of Ian Crockett.'

Violence

Mr Counsell often expressed concern at rough play in rugby league. When Wigan 'A' team played Liverpool Stanley 'A' team in 1937: 'It was a very rough match, eight players being sent off'. Eventually four players from each side were suspended for four matches each. A meeting of the Northern League Management Committee in Manchester on 5 January 1938 dealt with a large number of players for misconduct on the field. 'The unanimous feeling of the committee was that longer suspensions would be given in future.'

There were also instances of violence amongst the crowds, often triggered off by referees. On 17 February 1904, after a drawn home game with Hunslet, the Wigan authorities 'had difficulty in getting the referee off ground safely; Chief Constable Hardy got him in a hansom cab, at the top of Standishgate.' Likewise, after a 'great match' at Central Park when St Helens Recs beat Wigan 19-18 in 1926, there were 'angry demonstrations after the match against the referee...Police escorted him from the ground the back way.' The League Management Committee and Finance Committee responded vigorously to such

outbreaks. At their meeting on 24 November 1937 in Leeds the Hull Kingston Rovers ground was ordered to be closed for two weeks.

There was also an active policy to improve the standards of refereeing. John Counsell attended the Referees' Examination in Manchester on 10 July 1935. More often, he assessed the performance of various referees:

27 October 1934: 'Observed Referee J F Armstrong in a match between St Helens Recs and Bradford Northern. I considered him fair.'

19 September 1936: 'Went to St Helens to observe a referee but was not impressed by his display.'

6 November 1937: 'At Swinton to observe referee L Thorpe. He was satisfactory.'

8 January 1938: 'Referee E Houghton was observed at St Helens Recs. He only made a few mistakes and was considered quite satisfactory.'

Dissemination

On 14 December 1932 Wigan were defeated by Leeds in the first experimental game to play Rugby League under floodlights. The match was played at White City in London and 'a good time' was had by directors and players. In the following year, the momentous decision was taken by the Rugby League Council to allow the old Wigan Highfield to play their matches as London Highfield at night under floodlights at White City in

the hope that the sport would become popular in the South. However, there was only a poor attendance at White City Stadium in London to see 'the first Northern League match there.' (20 September 1933)

In February 1935 John Counsell 'met with Mr S E Parkes at Royal Automobile Motor Club Ball in London. He is interested in the rugby league game being played in the South.' Mr Parkes was invited to attend a Rugby League Management Committee meeting 're starting our game in that part.' At a special meeting of the Northern League Clubs attended by Mr Parkes it was decided to admit two London clubs to the Northern League. But the experiment was short lived. By the 1937 season Rugby League Management Committee decided to award all clubs due to play Streatham and Mitcham 2 points each. The London club had intimated that they would not fulfil any more fixtures.

Wales and Ireland

The working class, coal mining valleys of South Wales have always been potential areas of expansion for rugby league. Wigan figured prominently in bringing Northern Union football to the Welsh valleys in 1908 and after Ebbw Vale had defeated Wigan 6-5 in March 1911 'Welsh folks [were] delighted.' When England beat Wales in an international match at South Devon grounds, Plymouth, in 1913 the winners received £3 and the losers got 30s. Former Wigan player, Jerry Shea, was involved in efforts

to establish rugby league in Pontypridd. Over 22,000 watched England beat Wales in 1926 but this did not prevent the Rugby League Council accepting the resignation of the Pontypridd Club, 'they being in financial difficulties.' Cardiff Rugby League Club was admitted as a replacement for Pontypridd in 1927.

In April 1934 a meeting of the Cup and Emergency Committee decided against Oldham and Rochdale playing a match in Dublin on 28 April. However, during the 1930's there were efforts to take rugby league across the Irish Sea. On 12 May 1934, Wigan defeated Warrington 32-19 at Sherbourne Park, watched by 8,000 spectators, to win the first Irish Hospitals' Trust Challenge Trophy challenge. After the match, Mr Counsell and other dignitaries attended a 'splendid dinner given by Lord Mayor of Dublin at the Dolphin Hotel.' Rugby league officials received another 'splendid banquet' after Wigan's defeat of Leeds by 12-9 in Dublin on 12 May 1935 before 7,000 spectators.

France

John Counsell's diary made reference to the historic first visit by a French rugby league team to tour England. On 10 March 1934 he went with other Wigan directors to the Mayor of Wigan's parlour and met the French rugby team. On 26 March he attended a meeting of Cup and Emergency Committee in Manchester 'considering the Frenchmen's tour financially.' They need not have worried; the tour was a success on and off the field. Mr Counsell clearly enjoyed his reciprocal visit to Paris in April 1934. The diary spoke for itself:

14 April 1934: 'Left Wigan for London and Paris

via Dover and Calais. Went with Hutchins and Howarth in taxi, Arc de Triomphe, Lido, Maxims etc. Retired to bed rather late.'

15 April 1934: 'Had plain breakfast in F Hutchin's room. Left hotel at 11.30 for Buffalo Stadium and had lunch there with officials of ground. It was a fine match to see. France 21 v England 32 - nearly 20,000 spectators.'

Popularity

John Counsell's diary reflected the on-going popularity of rugby league, especially in its northern hinterland. When Wigan inflicted the first defeat of the New Zealanders on their 1907 tour the match was watched by 30,000 spectators at Central Park, with gate receipts of £1,300. Wigan played at Oldham before 'a huge crowd' in March 1909. 'Very large number outside that could not get in. Gates closed at 3 o'clock.'

However, despite a decision by the Northern Union to continue playing, rugby league in general was plunged into crisis by the First World War. Mr Counsell's diary for 12 April 1918 recorded: 'Air raid over Wigan by German Zeppelin.' Gates slumped alarmingly during the war and clubs took emergency economy measures, including wage reductions for players. In October 1914 Wigan players refused to play on a 25% reduction to wages, although the 'A' team accepted reduced terms in December 1914. A match against Leigh on Easter Monday 1917 was played on 'half gate terms.'

The first decade after the First World War saw a remarkable recovery as huge crowds and prosperity returned to all levels of the game. The Rugby League

Challenge Cup at Rochdale between Wigan and Oldham (April 1924) was watched by over 41,000 - 'a record crowd who broke on the field before the start of the match', requiring mounted police to clear the pitch before the kick off could take place. On 26 February 1927 a crowd of 30,000 saw Leeds defeat Wigan in a Rugby League Challenge Cup. It was a 'big disappointment' because Wigan were 'rather overplayed.' Likewise, a 'big gate watched Swinton defeat Wigan in a match to mark the 'opening of Swinton's new ground near the station' in 1929.

This popularity extended to lower grade level rugby league. Nearly 22,000 watched Wigan St Patrick's beat Widnes St Bede's in the Final of the Daily Dispatch Shield played at Central Park in May 1926. In 1933, when Wigan were drawn at Askern, near Doncaster, in the First Round of the Rugby League Challenge Cup, the match attracted 4,000 spectators. 'Wigan's going there was a very popular attraction as a fair number of Wigan people had gone to live there in recent years.' (These were mainly miners seeking work.) Such large crowds gave the clubs the opportunity to improve their financial viability. Thus, 'Wigan's share of the gate from the Leeds cup tie in 1938 was £815 0s 3d including 13 players' train fares.'

However, this relative prosperity was not shared by all clubs. On 4 March 1937 Mr Counsell attended a combined meeting of League Management Committee and Directors of Leigh Football Club 're financial position of Leigh club.' Following a meeting of the Rugby League Finance Committee meeting in Leeds, Mr

Counsell 'had to write to Bramley, Bradford Northern, Featherstone, Hunslet and Leigh re loans. Money owing to the Rugby League.' Later in the same year he was appointed by League Management Committee and Finance Committee 'to visit Leigh and assist that club to fulfil fixtures.'

Wembley

A Rugby League Council Meeting in Leeds took the momentous decision to play future rugby league Cup Finals in London. Wigan defeated Dewsbury in the first Rugby League Cup Final to be played at Wembley in May 1929, watched by over 40,000 spectators. Wigan directors and players returned to Wigan with the cup. 'We took the cup to Central Park where a junior final was taking place, which swelled the gate to over £100 - a good stroke of business.' Thus began Wigan's remarkable history of Wembley visits and the annual attempts to educate the southerners. Each April in the early 1930's, John Counsell 'went with a few members of the Rugby League Council to London and Wembley and met representatives of London papers re publicity of the forthcoming Rugby League Cup Final at Wembley.' In April 1933 the Rugby League Council delegation met with 'distinguished sportsmen and London newspaper representatives at the Hotel Metropole' to generate publicity for the Rugby League Cup Final at Wembley.

Sensations

John Counsell's diary was littered by sensations and controversies both on and off the field. During the

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A Rugby League Diary, 1898-1938

Continued from page 29

1906-1907 season Wigan suspended Windsor Jones and Trezise sine die, and two other players, Voisey and Watkins, for one week, but 'the directors went to Wales to fetch Bert Jenkins back after suspension.'

Wigan often had trouble with their Welsh imports, usually over money. In the summer of 1908 Wigan took Johnny Thomas to court for alleged breach of contract. After being barracked by sections of the crowd in a match against Oldham in February, Thomas refused to play again. The club secured the verdict and £65 costs against Thomas 'for breach of contract with Wigan Football Club.' In January 1909 Mr Counsell had to make two visits to Bert Jenkins: 'Once more it would seem money is the problem with him.'

9 November 1908: 'For attempting to bribe two Wigan players, Lance Todd and Massa Johnston, E Croston was jailed for two months.' In the *Dog and Partridge* public house, Mr Croston, a local coal merchant and part-time bookmaker, had 'unlawfully and corruptly' offered Todd and Johnston £20 each to ensure that Wigan lost a match against Hunslet on 11 September 1908.

Wigan were fined £25 by League Management Committee for 'fielding the 'A' team against St Helens on Good Friday 1909.' Between 1922 and 1933 there were two professional rugby league clubs in

Wigan; in addition to the famous Cherry and Whites, Wigan Highfield played at Tunstall Lane in Pemberton and derby matches attracted large crowds. In March 1926 Wigan Highfield, the 'babes of the Rugby League', had a 'remarkable victory' over Leeds in a match played at Tunstall Lane in the Third Round of the Rugby League Cup. This was regarded as 'something of a sensation at the time.' Four years later Wigan Highfield defeated Wigan for the first time – 'a milestone in the history of the old Wigan Highfield Club.'

Community

Rugby league has always been community based. John Counsell's diary recorded many of the achievements and successes that were shared by the Wigan community. In December 1912 the comedian, George Formby, kicked off the match at Central Park against Hunslet. On 15 August 1903 about 400 people watched a wrestling match at Central Park for which the club received £3, but in 1932 negotiations to allow Central Park to be used for greyhound racing fell through. On 5 February 1927 Crooke Brass Band led mass singing at the match between Wigan and Broughton Rangers. (This was a first for Central Park at least.)

On New Year's Day 1905 Wigan beat a Dai Rees's Welsh team 13-0, 'the net proceeds of the £104 gate money being donated to the Mayor's Unemployed Fund.' On 17 September 1910 about 10,000 attended a carnival at Central Park in aid of King Edward Memorial and Million Sixpence Fund. In January 1926 the Wigan

directors 'granted £10 10s to the Wigan Examiner Subscription Fund towards defraying the cost of damage done by the storm to the Wigan Boro Association Football Club, Springfield Park.' When Wigan returned after defeating Leigh in the final of the Lancashire Challenge Cup in December 1905 they found a 'tremendous number of people waiting arrival of team with cup at Wigan.'

1 May 1909: 'Tremendous crowds awaited the arrival of the train with the Northern League Cup and also the Lancashire Cup.' (Celebrations seem to have gone too far: 'Went to try and get one of our players out who had been locked up for being drunk but we failed.')

Saints and Australians

The attraction of games against the 'old enemy' was obvious from the following diary entry in 1910: 'Boxing Day at St Helens. Record crowd. Sat with Lord Derby.' Even after defeat in the Lancashire Challenge Cup on 9 December 1925 there was a 'lively evening in the committee room' at Central Park.

Wigan players usually figured prominently in Great Britain sides selected to tour overseas. In April 1927 Mr Counsell went to London to see local players, including Jim Sullivan and Nat Bentham, off to tour Australia and New Zealand. Five months later he met the Great Britain tourists at Liverpool landing stage as they disembarked from the '*Duchess of Atholl*' on their return from the Antipodes.

Wigan had a history of momentous battles with visiting touring sides, though the weather often

intervened. Anticipating the first Australian tour of Britain in 1909, Jack Hesketh, the Wigan trainer, expressed the on-going philosophy: 'The Australians come this season, to try and beat us. That we must not let happen.' In a truncated match, almost obliterated by fog, Wigan beat the tourists 10-7. Wigan won a re-arranged match and they beat the visiting Kangaroos again on their 1911 tour by 7-2. In 1929 they were defeated 10-9 by the Australians in a match 'spoiled by heavy rain.' In September 1933 players and officials of the Australian touring side, including Mr Harry Sunderland, were entertained in the Mayor's parlour before the match which saw the tourists defeat Wigan 10-4 in front of 16,000 spectators.

Perhaps the most inappropriate items ever presented to rugby league teams were the 'manicure sets' presented to Wigan players and the Australians after the tourists had beaten Wigan 23-25 in 1937 after 'one of the best football matches played.' Nevertheless, the Wigan directors realised that the Australians had much to offer British rugby league. In December 1937 they offered Harry Sunderland the post of Secretary-Manager of Wigan RLFC at £400 a year and a bonus of £3 per match won and £2 for draw and 10% bonus of profit at end of the season. However, the next month this offer was rescinded.

Sadly, the final entry in John Counsell's diary, on 18 April 1938, shortly before his death on 1 May, was: 'Salford 13 v Wigan 2. The play of the Wigan team was most disappointing.'

**Allan Miller
Orrell Wigan**

Ashton-in-Makerfield Probus Club

Members of the Club are retired business/professional people, who meet at the Angel Hotel, Ashton-in-Makerfield on the first Wednesday of every month at 11.00 a.m. New members are always welcome, and can receive details from the Honorary Secretary, Alan Bradshaw (01942 726493)

2 April

Stephen Walsh
James Fairhurst

7 May

AGM

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 (01942 222769)

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 Tel: (01942 884893)

8 April

Through a Glass Darkly
Len Hudson

13 May

Wardley Hall
Ann Monaghan

10 June

The Sea to the West
Margaret Curry

12 August

Haigh Hall
Carol Banks

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.

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

To all Secretaries

Would Secretaries please note the copy deadline on p2, and ensure that you send in all details of your meetings up to the end of 2003 for inclusion in the next issue. Thanks

15 April

A Bag of Treasures
Simon Martin

20 May

Have You Any Irish Ancestors?
James Firth

16 June

Visit to Lancashire Record Office

15 July

Visit to Manchester Police Museum

10 August

Getting Started

Leigh Literary Society

This is the Society's 125th season. Meetings are held in the Derby Room at the Turnpike Centre, on alternate Monday evenings at 7.30 p.m. Annual subscriptions £11; visitors £1.50 per meeting. For further details contact Tony Ashcroft, Local History Officer, Leigh Library (01942 404559)

14 April

AGM

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).

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.

Standish Probus Club

The Club was only established in 2001 but already has 70 members. Members are retired business and professional people. Meetings, which are open to both men and women, are held at 'The Owls', Rectory Lane, Standish on the second Tuesday of every month at 10.30 a.m. New members welcome. Further details from the Secretary, Bryan Shepherd (01257 424994)

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. You can also visit our website at 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 Drumcroon 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.

Wigan Family & Local History Society

Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of every month (except in July and August) in the Springfield Hotel, Springfield Road, Wigan, at 7.30 p.m. for 8.00 p.m. The meetings alternate between members' evenings and external speakers on history related topics. Annual Membership fees are £6 for individuals, £7 for families and £10 for overseas membership. A meeting fee is charged at £1 per member and £1.50 per non-member. For further information contact the Secretary, Maureen Metcalfe, 4 Spilsby Square, Wigan WN3 5QP.

20 April

Probate Inventories
Fred Holcroft

18 May

The Burdekins of Hindley and Wigan
(cont)

Janet Clayworth

15 June

Skeletons in the Cupboard
Mavis Fairhurst
(preceded by AGM)

Childhood Revisited

(Part two)

by

J. Harold Smith

THINGS began to change at school. I vaguely remember certain names being called out one day and within a few days there appeared in the next classroom, Standard Three, a couple or so long trestle tables over which were spread white paper cloths. On a separate table, two large tea urns, normally locked away until a field treat or the Shrove Tuesday dance, were set in position.

Late in the morning of the following day, stacks of box loaves, cartons of margarine and large earthenware jars of jam were deposited on the long tables. As the mid-day bell rang, teachers from all the classes (including big sister) converged on the scene, armed with the appropriate utensils for the preparation of jam butties (always apple & raspberry which in later years, my sister remembered, always smelled like apple and turnip), thick enough to have scotched a tram, and pouring of tea into cups brought into school by the pupils who, we learned, were children of mining families who would be 'lunching' at school for some little time to come.

Just how long that went on I cannot recall, but the word strike seemed to be commonly used, quite often – a word that I had only ever heard connected with matches.

Then suddenly it was announced that we were to have a holiday, and that the school would be closed. But this was not like any of the statutory holiday, in that,

somehow, the atmosphere was different. Many changes to the normal way of life seemed to descend. In the local Co-op shop, for instance, gone were the three male counter hands, replaced by women, one of whom was my own mother – quite a novelty at first.

Dismembered bike

Long before these strange times, it was not uncommon to see a chap pushing the remains of a pushbike, remains meaning the bare essentials, two wheels, with or without tyres, handlebars, and a frame, in which it was possible to support a well filled bag of coal, salvaged illegally from a nearby slag heap. Gradually the scene became quite common as the numbers increased, the mode of transport varying from the aforementioned dismembered bike, to boxes on wheels, old prams and even those planks on wheels with rope steering, the pride and joy of some youngster, or any other form of wheelable container. All these multifarious oddments could be seen at any time of the day, piloted by either sex from the age of six to 60 or beyond.

For me, as a nine year old, there was something strangely exciting about the scene, the like of which I had never experienced before, so exciting that one day I tagged along with two much older lads who had a fairly large, two wheeled box with shafts. And so it was off to Stones's tip – for me a day's march away in Tithebarn Road.

The tip (slag heap) was a single, grey vein reaching

through the fields in a southerly direction, its end being just 30 or so yards from a hawthorn hedge which was a boundary of Billy Cliffe's field. The climbing over a five barred gate, plus lifting the truck, by the bigger lads was a little frightening at first, as even at that age, I knew we were trespassing. There was something reassuring though, about the spectacle of Stones's Tip which was crawling with coal pickers from end to end, not to mention my new view of Garswood as seen from such an elevated standpoint.

But then it was down to work, though not for long, as someone shouted "POLICE" and all eyes focused on the spot where we had entered Billy Cliffe's field. Approaching the very spot, along Tithebarn Road, were three policemen – on horseback, a spectacle never seen before in the village. One of them wore a white helmet – another *first* for the village.

'Devil incarnate'

Escape was a bit of a lottery. Even though the police were well outnumbered, they had a fairly escape-proof length of thick, hawthorn hedge in their favour, penetration of which was at the cost of blood, plus being caught anyway. Diametrically opposite, the only escape was via the railway line at the apex of the heap and this simply ran into the main, Liverpool to Wigan line sidings which only increased the gravity of trespass. Even if one negotiated that unscathed,

there was the unthinkable nightmare of being caught by the infamous Ernie Jones, Garswood Station Master, 'devil incarnate', who would not hesitate to lift his gouted foot to inflict a painful kick in the dorsal regions.

All I can remember was my totally confused, terrified state, pushed and dragged by two big lads who eventually found a safe escape route whereby I was more than happy to return home without, I might mention, a word of my escapade to anyone, least of all, mother!

In addition to scavenging the local slag heaps, people were doing their own prospecting in sundry places, digging holes which they called *strike holes*. Reference to an old map of the area makes me wonder if these had been used by the amateur prospectors, as the whole area for a number of miles around is dotted with old mine workings, suggesting that the remains of slag heaps could have been just about anywhere anyone decided to dig. This was certainly true of the floor of Monks (or Munks) Wood, where one day I latched on to three older lads armed with a pick and a couple of shovels, and me with mother's boiler shovel. Choosing a spot that seemed to have been used in the distant past, the lads started to dig, and hey presto, there was the familiar grey strata. After much hard work, the potato sack they had brought along was reasonably full of what they considered burnable slag. I suppose in monetary terms of the day, a coal merchant would have charged about 1s. (5p) for such dross.

Those days were certainly strange, especially to us children, ignorant of the



world of politics. At the time, I was friendly with the son of the landlord of the nearby pub, The Railway Hotel. That in itself provided the opportunity for much adventure without having to stray from the pub's premises. There were the old stables full of all kinds of interesting rubbish worth messing about with. Then there was the bowling green area, bordered on one side by a vegetable garden, and a covered area called the pavilion where, in the summer, people could sit and watch the bowlers while quaffing a pint of Greenalls best. And, if one fancied an end of bowls, providing there was a gap in the playing rota, they could choose their bowls from a tall rack on the inner wall of the pavilion.

Leonard's father

A four foot high perimeter wall ran round three sides of the bowling green area, but

the same wall on the outside tapered from about six feet to about 12 feet high, allowing for the gradient of the road and footpath which ran past the pub's front entrance. One day, whilst playing in the area, Leonard's father appeared on the scene and, with some urgency, announced, "Don't go outside, there's a mob coming up soon. They're bringing Jack S..... up". To us the message was somewhat cryptic, but we did obey the order. And sure enough, within a short time we heard booing and shouting coming from what we quickly recognised as Camp Lane bridge, the bridge where, for the sheer novelty, we kids loved to stand underneath and shout anything that came to mind just to hear an almost perfect echo.

Rushing to get beer crates on which to stand, we could peer over the top of the wall, thus enjoying a bird's eye

view of the proceedings. An unruly mob of 50 or more bawling, booing men and a handful of women seemed intent on lynching the frightened, crestfallen Jack S....., who was being protected by a few policemen. As the scene passed beneath us, we found the proceedings very, very frighteningly noisy indeed. To this day I, and I suppose Leonard Threlfall, if he is still alive, often wonder what was the eventual fate of Jack S.....

This strange 'holiday' atmosphere ended almost as suddenly as it had started, as whispers went around that the strike was over. A complete stranger in his 40's seemed to have taken it upon himself to act as town crier, as he walked along at top speed, shouting, "Strike's o'er, strike's o'er". Perhaps he was mindful of the fact that there were only about half a dozen wireless owners in the

village, and that hardly anyone owned a telephone.

So it was back to school, only a few weeks before the summer holiday – four whole weeks of unadulterated messing about to which, in those days and in that area, there was little alternative. Fishing for *cockies* (sticklebacks) with an elderberry stick, length of cotton and a bent pin skewering a wriggling worm was alright for a time, but it could get boring in the company of non-cooperative *cockies*. Face-or-blank with cigarette cards was alright, as long as you were on a good run. Ride-a-jiggy was alright, until it was my turn, with my matchstick like, collapsible frame, to be underneath!

Cricket

There was, of course, cricket or football (so-called) on the croft, a grassless pitch

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The Pension Service comes to the Libraries

Are you aged over 60 years? Do you have a benefit related query and would like specialist advice? You may be entitled to claim one of many benefits but are unaware; by asking our staff they will be able to identify potential income, which may be available to you and help you make that claim.

If so, the Pension Service has joined up with the Libraries and other partners to ensure we are in convenient locations throughout the borough to offer help to pensioners, their families and those who are planning ahead for their retirement.

Help is available for: -

- Completion of Minimum Income guarantee forms
- Completion of Retirement Pension forms
- Verifying Saving Documents, Birth/Marriage Certificates (no need to post off these items, handed back immediately!)
- Winter Fuel queries
- Signpost to other Pensioner Services

You can make an appointment at any venue convenient to you or simply drop in. **To arrange an appointment please ring 01942 758000 and ask for the Pension Service.**

Mon	Ashton Library Wigan Road, Ashton-in-Makerfield 10.00am-12.00 noon	Orrell Library Orrell Road, Orrell Post Orrell 2.00pm-4.00pm
	Age Concern Wigan 68 Market Street, Wigan 10.00am-12.00 noon	Hindley Library Market Street, Hindley 2.00pm-4.00pm
Tue	Standish Library Cross Street, Standish 10.00am-12.00 noon	Signpost Advisory Service, TCEC Building, Upper George St Tyldesley 1.00pm-3.30pm
	Atherton Library York Street, Atherton 10.00am-12.00 noon	Aspull Library Oakfield Crescent, Aspull 2.00pm-4.00pm
Wed		
Thur	Marsh Green Library Harrow Road, Marsh Green 10.00am-12.00 noon	Golborne Library Tanners Lane, Golborne 1.30pm-3.30pm
	Higher Folds Community Centre Stirling Close, Leigh 10.00am-12.00 noon	Abram Library Vicarage Road, Abram 2.00pm-4.00pm
Fri	Wigan & Leigh Pensioners Link 27 Charles Street, Leigh 10.00am-12.00 noon	Ince Library Smithy Green, Ince 2.00pm-4.00pm
	Shevington Library Gathurst Lane, Shevington 10.00am-12.00 noon	

Childhood Revisited

Continued from page 33

that vehemently defied the description of level, no matter from where the reading was taken. I remember a few cricket 'matches' which were taken fairly seriously, being played on the croft between the Garswood lads and Pewfall lads, scratched from teams of individuals who showed any propensity to any particular aspect of the game. Equipment was minimal, probably no more than four bats per team. As I remember, the wickets and bails (well some of them) were standard issue, probably at least two generations beforehand. The ball, usually a *corky* with some of the red paint still in evidence, was supplied by anyone in the village lucky enough to possess such a luxury.

I remember on one occasion that this happened to be me, though I was far too young to be considered as a player. Oh, the thrill when two of the Garswood team knocked on our door to make an 'official' request, via mother, to borrow MY new(ish) ball for the following evening's *test*. But oh, the despair and the tears when during the match, someone scored, with MY ball, the equivalent of a sixer, the trajectory ending in someone's overgrown allotment; my ball was never to be seen again.

There was also much fun to be had at two of the many farms in the district, but with hindsight, the word 'fun' might be a juvenile misinterpretation. At one of the farms, the pigsty was next to the farmer's coal shed and there, it was demonstrated by one lad what a healthy appetite pigs have for coal. It wasn't just the spectacle of

watching the pig eating, it was the sheer power with which they chewed an egg-sized lump of coal, with the same ease that we would have crunched a peppermint.

A well stocked Dutch Barn provided endless fun for us lads. At the same time, it must be said that it also concealed many dangerous hazards of which we were totally oblivious. One of the favourite games was tunnelling through the bales of straw, entering at the top, finally re-appearing at yard level. It took a little while for me to pluck up the courage, but after seeing the other lads perform, I took the plunge. How far I had penetrated I do not know, but I do remember panicking in a confined, black hole, having, presumably, taken a wrong turn and unable to find my way out. I seemed to be there for hours, but it was probably less than about 15 minutes.

Cavalier attitude

Looking back now to those days when we were allowed to play in almost any part of the farm premises, it can only be assumed that a cavalier attitude shared by both farmer and kids reigned supreme. It was not uncommon for the farmer or one of his labourers to delegate any one of us young lads to engage in some chore, normally performed by the adults officially employed.

One such occasion could have resulted in the most bizarre tragedy, with me as the central figure. I shall never understand the workings of destiny, least of all when asking why I was allowed to live beyond that day!

One of the farmer brothers, Fred, asked me to bring in the cows for milking, a request I could hardly believe at first. But childish ego prevailed and, in high jinks, I went through the drill I had often seen him or his brother perform. Starting with the opening of the five barred

gate to allow free passage of the home coming herd, I entered the field in the same pattern of rounding up I had seen before, whilst hollering the same sound, "Owp, owp" in, of course, a very much higher vocal register.

But much to my childish satisfaction, relief and amazement, it became quite obvious that every one of those cows had understood my perfect command of their bovine tongue – except one who seemed more concerned with the champing of the lush, green grass, oblivious to the departure of his (a gender discovered somewhat belatedly) companions. Long after the last of the cows had passed through the farm gate on the opposite side of the field, this awkward beast kept on champing, pretending, I suspect, not to know that I was there. A little persuasion, thought I, but with a healthy respect for that old adage about discretion and valour. A small stone, perhaps, of which there was quite an abundance by the cinder path which ran unfenced along the edge of the field. On the other side of the path was a stone wall of varying height behind which were the gardens of three cottages.

Trapped

Somewhere about midriff, thought I, weighing in the palm of my hand a stone that might register the reminder that, really, it was time he was moving. It worked, but in an alarming way that could have spelt sheer disaster. At first he let out a low, bellowing noise, reminiscent of the words of Marriott Edgar's *The Lion and Albert*. Thoughts of champing the lush grass became secondary and, alarmingly, transferred to those of what to do with the source of that stinging little dig in the ribs and how to eliminate it. Swinging with head down in my direction, he charged,

bellowing more loudly. Although I started to run, there was nowhere to go to except into a sharp corner formed by a high stone wall, in which there was a gateway and the side wall of an outhouse. Trapped there I just shouted and screamed whilst the bull, head down, (probably trying to decide with which horn to root me out, toothpick fashion) was no more than a few feet away, when suddenly an arm appeared through the gateway and I was dragged, quite unceremoniously but thankfully, by Mrs. Sylvester, the village postman's wife, into her yard.

Rumours soon spread through the village and, of course, truth and myth became almost inseparably synonymous. Some of the reports about my part in the drama would have done credit to our film idol of the era, Tom Mix. These included anything from a harmless stab in the leg by one of the bull's horns, to being tossed over Mrs. Sylvester's wall, an edifice which, in my long memory, stood at something like eight feet high. Childish preening, however, discouraged any form of refute, and there may even have been just a soupcon of embroidery on my part!

If I may, I would like, with the kind permission of the Editor of *Past Forward*, to convey through any descendant or anyone who knew Mrs. Sylvester, a most sincere though belated appreciation of what must have been a very brave action on her part.

But those summer holidays which we thought would last forever, regretfully ended with a suddenness with which we were not prepared, and so, it was back to school and in that era, back to a new class.

To be continued in the next issue in which Harold enters Standard Four and his father acquires his first wireless.



MORE ON THE MINER'S MENACE – COAL DUST

Dear Editor,

The article by Alan Davies (*Past Forward* 32, p18), on the dust in coal mines, excellent though it was, made no mention of the efforts made by the National Coal Board (now British Coal) to protect the miners from its consequences. In the late 1940's, I worked in tunnels at Golborne Colliery. Each man was provided with his own dust mask which, at the end of the shift, was left in the ambulance room to be disinfected ready for use next day. We wore them conscientiously and a visiting H.M. Inspector of Mines, noting this with approval, said that the NCB was willing to provide every miner with a dust mask but they were unpopular because inconvenient.

In the 1950's I worked in the Arley seam at Maypole Colliery. The coal was hand-filled, and at 10.30 a.m. a driller came on. He drilled holes about a yard apart in the fast coal. Following him were two men with a water pump connected to a supply in the return airway. Water was pumped into the first hole until beginning to trickle out of the next one. Water

was then pumped into that one and so on for the length of the face. When the coal was cut on the afternoon shift there was little or no dust. The miners looked askance at the scheme at first, believing that the water would damage the surrounding strata. As the Arley seam had a strong roof and floor there was no damage. So successful was this water infusion that one day when the pump broke down, the men walked off, saying the dust was intolerable. Yet these were the conditions they had worked in before infusion.

In the late 1950's, as a senior official at Bold Colliery, I worked closely with one of H.M. Inspectors of Mines introducing water infusion into one of the Wigan 4ft seams, the coal of which was now won by disc shearer. Unfortunately, in this case the shale roof and floor did suffer damage and the project abandoned. I have no doubt that water infusion was practised at other collieries, but I write here only of what I know and was concerned with. Later, a method of shotfiring was introduced which detonated the explosives under water, again minimising dust

production and eliminating the hazard of a blown-out shot.

Professor Galloway, in the 19th century, was the first to perceive that it was the coal dust explosion rather than that of the methane that was ravaging coal mines, earning for himself the ridicule of his contemporaries for the suggestion. Sir Henry Hall experimented in the disused colliery shaft placed at his disposal by the White Moss Colliery Company of Skelmersdale. From all over Britain samples of coal dust were sent to him and were ignited systematically by an

electrical device in the shaft. Sir Henry was able to show and substantiate that coal dust would explode if raised in a cloud, when the cloud was dense enough and there was a means of ignition. The dangers of a coal dust explosion were shown by him to increase with the presence of methane, the fineness of the dust and where the dust had a high volatile content.

A small local explosion of firedamp could raise the dust in a cloud and provide the means of ignition, as could a blown-out shot. What happened was that a particle of dust, once

ignited, would set off the next particle and so on in what we would now call a mini-atomic explosion. As Alan Davies pointed out, this eventually led to the introduction of an inert dust at strategic points which would mix with the coal dust and render it harmless. In 1932, an explosion at the No. 9 Pit, Garswood Hall Collieries cost 27 lives following a firedamp explosion. The official report stated that a coal dust explosion had been averted because the roads up to the coal face were well stone-dusted.

The article by Alan Davies was an interesting one and I hope that we can expect more of the same from his pen.

**James Fairhurst
Ashton-in-Makerfield
Wigan WN4 9TY**

It was with great interest . . .

Dear Editor,

It was with great interest that a few of the more elderly members of St. Michael's Church viewed your picture of Sunday School teachers and elders of the church, taken during the 1930's (issue 32, p41, and reproduced again below).

We were able to identify several of the people, and I name a few of them here.

1. Rev. A.M. Whitehead (centre) who was Vicar of the Parish for 18 years.
2. On his right, Mrs. Annie Frost.
3. On her right, Mr. A. Harris, former Headmaster and choirmaster.
4. Miss Beatrice Simm is on Rev. Whitehead's left.

5. On her left at the back, Mr. F.W. Hampson – Churchwarden.

6. Mr. Smith, Sunday School Superintendent, is stood on the far right of the picture.

7. Seated at the right on the end of the row, Mrs. Pollie Greene who was, incidentally, my Aunt.

There were others on the front row that we

managed to name, including Mrs. Grace Martindale, who was Brown Owl when I was a small Brownie.

Looking at the 'photo' reminded us of the very happy days we spent as children at St. Michael's Church, and all agreed your magazine makes very enjoyable reading.

**Norah Hall
Wigan**



THANKS AGAIN!

Dear Mr. Gillies,

Just a little note to thank you for publishing my Bonfire article, (issue no 32, p 28) and it had a lovely consequence – a customer came into Boots to collect some photowork, and recognised my name on my staff badge. He said, "we enjoy your articles so much – you're a very good writer". Can you imagine how thrilled I was? I was also rendered speechless (for once, my husband says!) by the letter on the last page from an old schoolfriend of mine, Julia McKie, saying how she looks forward to my articles – Julia lives in Warrington and I had no idea she even knew about *Past Forward*. What a lovely surprise!

Thank you once again and best wishes to everyone concerned with *Past Forward* – long may it continue!

**Mrs. I. Roberts
Abram Nr. Wigan**

Colin Bean writes:

Dear Alastair,

"Congratulations to all concerned for yet another admirable *Past Forward* – what a wealth of interest, local history and entertainment is herein."

He also adds the following identifications to the above: back row end (our right) Mr. H. Ratcliffe-Ellis.

However, Colin believes that the lady in white on the Vicar's left is in fact Mrs. Whitehead. Anyone prepared to adjudicate? Ed.



Quest for Volney Stephenson's portraits

Dear Sir,

I am hopeful that the readers of *Past Forward* may be able to help with our quest for information about Volney Stephenson's portraits – an example is enclosed (see right). Those we have are of our family, from his daughter-in-law's collection. He also photographed outside the family. We would

like to try and get some idea of how prolific he was and if possible date the photographs, as his address changed from time to time. The photographs are very distinctive with gold lettering on green backed card. Volney was born in 1870 and died in 1915. His photographic work covered the late 1800's to the early 1900's, although he was also a Colliery Clerk for much of his working life. Volney also took many comical self-portraits.

The second photo-

graph (below), not a 'Volney' photograph, was used as a postcard, and is presumably to do with Tyldesley Coal Co. Ltd. Volney's brother (where the photograph came from) was a Colliery Manager living at Tyldesley, but the back of the card is stamped "TYLDESLEY COTTON BRO6"!

Robin Smith
"15 Clwyd"

Northcliffe Penarth
South Glamorgan
South Wales CF641DZ

Email:
rrs.smith@ntlworld.com



A PIONEER OF 'TRAVELLING LIGHT'!

Dear Alastair,

Well another fascinating issue (no. 32) has been thoroughly digested, for which the ever growing group of kindred spirits must be in your debt. After so many instances of readers coming up with all kinds of answers to queries, I shouldn't be surprised at the powers of *Past Forward*, and yet still I am amazed.

May I use the letters page to thank Mr. Banks of Orrell for coming up with the words of the music hall song about the Boer War, and how well it tied in with Fred Holcroft's article on that subject. As I wrote in issue 32, my grandfather Jimmy Cain (known to some readers through the bakery in Ince) used to sing this song to my late father.

That leads me on to the enclosed photo (which appears on the cover of this issue) which you may deem of interest to readers. This shows a group of Wiganers, certainly some from Ince, at Lands End I think, in July 1948. My grandfather is immediately to the right of the Leyland badge on the bus radiator. Those in the know will no doubt confirm, or deny, my guess that it is a Leyland Tiger. The only other folk I know that are on the picture are the Milligans (Bob and wife 'Tiny'). Maybe other readers can add to that meagre knowledge.

Finally, note how, far from home, Wiganers have found a place where you can find a bar in either direction! Also, I believe it was on this trip that the driver called out "Mr. ? (name unknown), I don't seem to have any luggage for you". A voice was heard, "I'av it 'ere", and the gentleman concerned was seen holding up a tiny little bag. A pioneer of 'travelling light'!

Neil Cain
Northolt Middlesex



LEIGH BADGES WANTED

Dear Editor,

A friend recently sent me a copy of the latest edition of *Past Forward* and I was interested to read of the Centenary of Wigan Corporation and the rest of the contents. I then wondered whether any of your readers, particularly in the Leigh area, could help me with furthering my collection of cap badges from past municipal operators.

For some years now I have been attempting to obtain a badge from the old Leigh Corporation Transport Department which, as many of your readers will know, operated the blue and cream liveried buses around the town, until

1969 when the undertaking passed to SELNEC PTE who then gradually painted all the buses orange and white (shock, horror!) SELNEC in turn passed to Greater Manchester Transport in 1974 which then swallowed up Wigan Corporation Transport and eventually Lancashire United Transport in 1976 (double shock and horror!!).

The badges in which I am interested depict the Leigh coat of arms in chrome or brass and were issued up until 1969. Leigh was only a small fleet compared with its neighbours so there may not have been many issued, even though Leigh

Corporation had operated buses as far back as 1913. I would dearly like to hear from anybody who may have one of these items, or any badge from any other bus undertaking, which might be stuck at the back of a sideboard drawer and who may wish to donate or sell it to me in order to help complete my collection.

I hope that you can accommodate this item in your next edition of *Past Forward* since, despite making many enquires in the Leigh area and farther afield, I have failed to obtain what seems to be an elusive badge!

David Halkier
19 Howarth Street
Sunderland SR4 7UT



FROM A WAAF TELEPRINTER OPERATOR

Dear Editor,

Corporal Betty Bell (my mum) served as a WAAF Teleprinter Operator billeted at Winstanley Hall for three years from June 1943. The enclosed large group photograph (bottom) was taken in front of the Hall but unfortunately does not carry a date.

Betty can confirm that there was definitely a motor transport section at the base. This section occupied the courtyard of the Hall with some of the men billeted in the buildings surrounding the yard and others in the town. The smaller photograph has one of the cars in the background. There is an RAF roundel on the driver's front wing and the passenger door panel shows Type 1605 (or 1805).

Part of Winstanley Hall was used for officers' quarters and the Hall's own kitchen became the cookhouse. In advance of their night shift the girls were served a hot meal and were sustained throughout the rest of the watch by honey sandwiches. The WAAF girls sometimes made special visits to a canteen run by volunteers on

Wallgate, opposite Wigan North Western Station. On a good day this canteen served sausage, chips and beans, but often there were no sausages, just chips and beans. Betty remembers the grounds of Winstanley Hall being full of daffodils in spring, with the owners telling the girls to pick as many as they wanted. Also, there is a Christmas Day memory of Betty and her friend Mary Bridgewater warming mince pies on a shovel in the

Nissen hut's stove!

Many of the girls were from Merseyside, but others came from various parts of the country, including Durham and Scotland. Betty regularly attended the Methodist Church in Orrell and nights out were spent in Wigan and St. Helens. The cinema at Pemberton was an occasional treat. It was known to the girls as "the Fleapit" because one of them always came back to base with a flea!

The North Western Signals

Centre was on the St. Helen's side of the East Lancashire Road at Haydock, sited next to a slag heap and camouflaged by netting. There was nothing else of note nearby. Betty can't remember the exact location but we think the Slag Lane area a good probability. The base was a short walk down a lane from the trolleybus stop for St. Helens and Prescot. For security reasons the base was known as RAF Blackbrook and soldiers from the Royal Signals

Corps arrived there for training prior to the Second Front.

Towards the end of the War, when open-cast coal blasting began, the WAAF's were moved from Winstanley Hall to Sherdley Hall, St. Helens – but there was an interim period when the night shift workers were taken to a base near Chorley to sleep during the day because there was too much noise at Winstanley Hall.

Betty (now 80 years old) has been married for 56 years to Sam (now 81), and he has entirely different memories of the War. Sam served as an RAF Technician and spent all the war years abroad in India and South Africa. Of course, he insists the War did not end on V.E. Day (8 May) but on V.J. Day (15 August 1945).

**Carol Jones (Mrs.)
Hindley Green
Nr. Wigan**





'MEMORIES ARE MADE OF THIS...'

only for apartments; I hope to visit the area when all is finished!

**Violet Holden (Ex WAAF)
95 Coniston Avenue
Little Hulton
Worsley
Manchester M38 9NZ**

Dear Editor,

Re: Winstanley Hall WAAF Camp, please find enclosed a letter from Mrs. V. Holden, which you may wish to use.

I would like to thank the gentleman who called on me to confirm that the signals centre referred to eventually became RAF Haydock, which closed in the 1970's, I think. The area is now housing.

How things have progressed following a chance remark from someone I met whilst walking my dog in Winstanley Woods!

**Derek Cross
7 Chervil Walk
Highfield
Wigan WN3 6AR**

Dear Mr. Cross,

I have just received a copy of *Past Forward*. The letters referring to Winstanley Hall caught my interest, because I was there in 1942., the first batch of RAF to arrive. Here are details to put the record straight!

The Hall was used as a billet for the WAAFs. The large room on the right was the dining room and the left was the recreation area; there was a kitchen at the rear (I was one of the mess staff). In the grounds were nissen huts for the airmen, plus ablutions and stores.

The courtyard consisted of stables, a row of cottages for officers, and a sick bay. It became a Signals station operating from near the East Lancashire Road, under camouflage netting; it was not far from the Haydock Racecourse. I spent 18 months there before being sent to Norfolk to a Bomber Station for the rest of my Service time; I have many happy memories of Winstanley and Wigan.

I believe it became a derelict building (a tragedy) but is now being restored, if

Dear Sir,

Please find enclosed copy of photo (see opposite page) from Mrs. V. Holden (I believe she's been in touch with you) and some correspondence between Mrs. Holden and Ray Winstanley. Also extract from *Winstanley and Highfield - a Further History* by Ray Winstanley. There is a copy in the History Shop. Also possible photographs in the Winstanley collection deposited at the History Shop a few years ago.

Hope this may be of some interest. I spoke to the people involved and got permission to send these items along.

**Jim Waring
Hall Lane Cottages
Winstanley Park
Wigan**

Dear Mr. Winstanley,

I recently enquired through Wigan Heritage Service about Winstanley Hall, as I was one of the first WAAFs with the RAF to occupy it in '42. It was known as RAF Blackbrook then, I stayed there until '44, when I was posted to Norfolk.

I was sent some copies of your thesis that I found interesting about the Hall, except the paragraph on vandalism. I doubt this occurred during the occupation by the RAF as there were strict rules regarding the Hall.

I remember it as a lovely place, with grand views from our windows. It was used solely as a billet for WAAFs, with a kitchen at the rear, the large room to the right of the main door was the Mess Hall used only at meal times.

Nissen huts were erected in the ground for the men's sleeping quarters, extra huts provided washing facilities. Buildings round the courtyard were cottages for Officers, a Sick Bay, and the 'barn' was the MT Section for trucks etc., that transported personnel to Haydock, where the Signals Station was situated under camouflage (secret at the time).

I returned to see the 'old billet' about late '70's or early '80's and met the owner but was unable to go inside. It seemed that the Coal Board had done some open cast mining and subsequently the foundations had suffered. I felt really sad about this, my memories of a beautiful building had been shattered.

By the way, page 41 in your thesis "Winstanley Hall World War II" shows a picture of World War I, I have substituted it with my group photo on my own copy (must keep records straight)!!

Violet Holden

Dear Mrs. Holden,

Thank you so much for your recent letter and photographs regarding Winstanley Hall.

First of all "to keep the records straight" as you put it, the picture on page 41 of my book is certainly of World War I and shows men in **Army** uniform, not RAF. The picture refers to the text on page 40 which relates to the use of the Hall in World War I by the army and is therefore correct.

With regard to the vandalism. On one of the walls in one of the large downstairs rooms at the Hall, possibly the one you refer to as the Mess Hall, was painted a large RAF insignia about six feet across. This would only have been done by the RAF. I considered this to be vandalism in, as you say "such a lovely place".

Your information on why and how the Hall was used

by the RAF clears up some long standing uncertainty and is very helpful.

Captain Bankes was the last person to live at the Hall. He died some years ago. During his later years he lived alone in a small annexe to the Hall. It may be a bit pedantic but Captain Bankes was not the owner. The Hall and Estate came down through his wife's side of the family. His name was Banks but he changed it to Bankes, to fit with his wife's family.

There was both underground and opencast mining in the vicinity of the Hall and it is correct that some damage was done to the foundations. In fact, while you were there in the 1940's, the Estate was at that time being undermined from a pit some distance away. However, this would not have prevented you from going inside in the 1980's. Indeed I went inside several times during the 1980's. I suspect that Captain Bankes did not want you to see the extent to which the interior had become derelict.

The Hall still belongs to the Bankes family, but cannot be visited. I understand that part of the roof has recently collapsed and it would perhaps now be genuinely dangerous to be inside. It is indeed very sad that such a beautiful and important grade II* listed building, which has stood for over 400 years, should simply be allowed to fall down.

The buildings shown in your courtyard photo beyond the central fountain - brewery, laundry and another building not in the photo, but to the right - were used a few years ago as part of one of the sets for a TV Sherlock Holmes production. The fountain has suffered along with the other buildings. Bits are falling off Neptune and parts of the legs have fallen off the prancing horses.

Thank you for taking the time and trouble to write to me. I really do appreciate it.

**Ray Winstanley
Ivy Banks Preston Road
Charnock Richard
Chorley PR7 5LH**



Royal Artillery at Winstanley Hall, c.1914.

The Army at Winstanley Park during the Great War

MR. TOM JOHNSON of Langley Farm is probably the only living person in this area (1990) who has a good knowledge of the situation at the time.

During the Great War units of the army were stationed in Winstanley Park. According to Tom Johnson there were Royal Engineers and 16th and 17th Battalions R.A. – who went to Gallipoli. According to Kings Regiment DHQ in Manchester the 6th Battalion of the Manchester Regiment were there. It appears to have been a training and transit camp, as well as the hall being used for the wounded.

Tom Johnson used to take milk across every morning. Most of the men were in tents. The horse lines were in the fields between Lea Wood and Pemberton Road. Each morning the horse droppings had to be cleaned up and disposed of by taking them to Johnson's farm midden. This was seen as a very low grade job and usually had to be done by people who were on a charge for some infringement of the regulations. It was almost inevitably the same people, and had become a prized occupation. It is said that one soldier even pulled a

lieutenant off his horse so that he would be put on a charge. Of course there was a reason. When these men went over to the farm they got a decent meal and a few pints of beer, which Johnson's always kept in a barrel at the farm.

Bread was brought in by the cartload and was often distributed by throwing it off the carts into the tents – or somewhere near the tents. When the weather was bad, the bread would often fall into the puddles or into the mud.

Meat was also brought in by the cartload and again hygiene was somewhat

lacking. Tom remembers watching a cook hacking up lumps of meat on a rotting tree stump.

This same cook was known to prepare a Dixie full of sausages and then empty them onto an old sack spread on the floor. Not only that, he then rubbed round the inside of the Dixie with a handful of grass (and don't forget there were horses about) and then filled the Dixie and brewed tea. As can be imagined, the tea was a foul greasy mess.

Drinking water for the horses and for washing the men was provided in a trough about 15 feet in length.

The RAF at Winstanley Hall during World War II

ALTHOUGH this is more recent I have been unable to find out the exact reason why they were there. They were mainly WAAFs and it is said that they were simply billeted there and travelled daily to Haydock etc. I have made extensive enquiries through official channels but have not received one constructive piece of information. One can only speculate that there was more going on than met the eye, and it has been suggested that there was an association with ciphers, which in turn may have been associated with the radio equipment on Billinge Hill.

When the Hall was requisitioned the Bankes' family were given two weeks to move out. Apparently they refused, but were restricted to a small part of the Hall. The family spent much of the war away from Winstanley. Parts of the Hall were vandalised during the occupation.

At this time several Nissen huts and air raid shelters were constructed near to, and to the west of the Hall. Only the brick

and concrete bases now remain, and these are mainly overgrown. When the war finished in 1945 these buildings were vacated and then stood empty for some time. Just after the war there was a drastic housing shortage, and in August 1946 20 homeless families took over the Nissen huts which belonged to the Ministry of Fuel and Power. Because this was ministry property Bankes could not take any action. Furniture was brought in by motor lorry, by cart and by hand. The camp was equipped with a wash house with ordinary washing facilities, 10 large baths, 16 showers, and facilities for hot water. Each hut had a lavatory, electric power and running water. One hut had a telephone.

The squatters stayed for about a year. It was a severe winter. When they were eventually evicted, bulldozers were brought in and the buildings were demolished.

These two articles are extracts from Winstanley and Highfield by Ray



Mess Staff, Winstanley Hall, 1942. Violet Holden is second from right on back row.



'A picture is worth a thousand words'

Dear Mr. Gillies,

In my family tree research, I am seeking the following photographs:

My grandfather was the owner of a fish & chip shop opposite the 'Bamfurlong Hotel' on Lily Lane, Bamfurlong, 1959-1961; despite my best efforts I have been unable to locate a photograph of the property. Can anyone help?

340 and 377 Wigan Road, Bryn. Sadly both these terraces have been demolished for many years, yet both properties hold many

happy memories. Can any kind reader assist?

Likewise, I would gladly furnish interested parties with any copies of photographs I already have of the families listed below. (I can be contacted at my home address).

James & Ann Heaton (nee Clark), born 1820's, Billinge; Joseph & Mary Jane Aston (nee Harrison), 1860's, Haydock/St. Helens; James & Mary Anne Cartwright (nee Walkden), 1840's, Downall Green/Bryn; Peter & Sarah Ann Stirrup (nee Harrison), 1840's, Haydock/St. Helens; Simon & Margaret Hayes (nee Smith), 1850's, Ashton-in-Makerfield; George & Alice Heath (nee Harrison), 1860's, Ashton-in-Makerfield; Elias & Sarah Parry, 1850's, Ashton in Makerfield.

**Paul Heaton
8 Berrington Grove
Ashton-in-Makerfield
Wigan WN4 9LD**

A BIG THANK YOU!

Dear Mr. Gillies,

Could I please through *Past Forward* say a big thank you to the people of Wigan on behalf of the "Friends of Mesnes Park".

We now have £300 in our "Dedicate a Rose" account and have sold nearly 100 calendars with pictures of Mesnes Park. Money has come in from as far away as America.

With £25,000 from the Local Heritage Incentive and labour from the Leisure & Culture Services Department and the public, we hope to re-open the Alderman Pagett Memorial Rose Garden on 3 August 2003, to coincide with the original opening on that day in 1949.

I would like to request two things of *Past Forward* readers:

- (i) the names of any volunteers for community activities.
- (ii) any memories of the opening of the Rose Garden in 1949, or indeed thereafter, and any specialist information about original rose varieties/suppliers of the original sundial/plinth.

**Susan Turner
Secretary
Friends of Mesnes Park
31 Park Road, Wigan
Tel: 01942 247161**

**Kathleen Banks
Chairperson
Friends of Mesnes Park
42 Rylands Street, Wigan
Tel: 01942 36448**

INFORMATION ON PRESCOTT FAMILY IN LANCASHIRE WANTED

Dear Sir,

For many years I lived on Wigan Road, Rose Hill, Bryn. Two entire sides of terraces were compulsorily purchased and bulldozed to make way for widening the A49. I've since tried to find a photo of the house. Can any readers help? The family house, 386A Wigan Road, was originally a corner shop, on top of the brow, right-hand side as you faced Wigan. It always retained its huge window front and sill. As half the neighbourhood were in the habit of sitting on the sill I felt sure that somebody may well have a photo tucked away. The shop ended its life as a plumber's emporium, I believe. In the early 50's it was Prescott's Furniture Shop, where I was born. Prior to that it was Ramsdale's Ice Cream Shop, complete with an Ice Cream factory at the rear! Having checked with 'ice cream archivists' who have all ice cream outlets catalogued in 1937, it is not listed.

I also wonder if any of your readers recognise anybody on the photograph below of North Ashton Band? I am

clueless to the identity of anybody on it.

Further I am gathering family history information on the Prescott family in Lancashire, particularly Ashton-Hindley-Wigan areas, if anyone can oblige? I am especially interested in knowing more about the farming community of Close Lane, Hindley before and immediately after 1850, which numbered many Prescotts. This whole area off Hindley Green was eventually encroached upon and almost decimated by coal mining.

Your readers may be interested to know that as a specialist in images from 1850-1950, I have a collection of over 40,000 original items, all subjects and all areas, as photos and postcards. I supply individuals, family history societies, writers and the like. Demand for local material strips my supply five times over but I may be able to assist readers with other requests.

**Helen Prescott
'Alcedo Atthis'**

**17 Laburnum Grove
Horwich BL6 6HX**

Email: helenprescott@care4free.net



H.A.G.S./Park High Sports Trophies Final Appeal

Regular readers will have no doubt read of my search, now in its third year, for "lost" trophies. The originals, having been stolen, were all replaced plus additional ones, but so far I have only recovered one individual trophy.

Recent information suggests that the intermediate Boy Champion, the Senior Boy Champion and the Junior and Senior Cross Country Champion Trophies are still unaccounted for.

Of the three out of four individual trophies held, the others were for Inter-House Competition; the last winners of

the Intermediate Boy Champion of 1982 were S. Connor, L. Page and L. Buckley, while the Junior Girl Champion of 1984 was Tara Needham and the Senior Girl Champion of 1982 was D. Sheperd.

I feel sure that these ex-pupils or anyone else at the school at the time can provide the information I seek. I would thus be able to bring my quest to a satisfactory conclusion.

Robert Chadwick (1944-1949)

Tel: 0115 9334252:

Email robertchadwick@freeuk.com



Teenage war years in Orrell

Dear Sir,

Having read the letters in *Past Forward* no. 32 about WAAFs being stationed in Winstanley Hall, it brought back a few memories of my teenage war years in Orrell.

The last train on Saturday night was at 10.15 from Wigan Wallgate to Upholland. And I remember lots of WAAF's getting off the train at Orrell station and walking along Winstanley Road which led to Winstanley Hall.

Orrell was a quiet little village in those war years, and we were a good few miles from Liverpool where the terrible bombing was taking place most nights, but we did have a few exciting moments. In 1939 when I was 13, I lived in a little cottage at the bottom of Edge Hall Road within my grandmother's farm yard, and in the winter of '39/'40 a search light was positioned in the Orrell Brick and Tile Company quarry, which was just over the railway line from Edge Hall Road. The personnel operating the search light used to practice when darkness fell, and as the 'blackout regulations' were in force the powerful light used to illuminate the surrounding area. I can recall skating on the frozen farmyard duck pond by searchlight!!!

Then one summer evening a bomber plane

Wigan Carnival, 1928, 'Bohemian Girl'

Dear Sir,

I was very interested in the article in *Past Forward* 32 by R.D. Heaviside. As I was reading it I remembered some photographs that I have of the carnival in 1928. I believe the theme was 'Bohemian Girl'. The float belonged to William Hurst, fruit preservers of Wigan. He was my great-grandfather, who started the fruit preserving works in 1911. I believe that they always entered a float. My mother and aunt can be seen on the float. My mother and Arnold Hurst, grandson of William married in 1936.

If anyone has any information of the fruit preserving works I would love to hear from them as I am researching the family history.

Gwyneth Harrison
(nee Hurst)
8 Clough Grove Bryn
Ashton-in-Makerfield
Wigan WN4 0LP

flew over Orrell so low that the German markings could easily be seen. Next day we heard that incendiary bombs had been dropped on Billinge Hospital. Several landed on fields to the right of the Old Lane which ran from the end of Edge Hall Road along to Orrell Mount, now junction 26 of the M6 at Orrell. One unexploded bomb landed on a field near to what was called the 'Burgie' (now the M58). The bomb was eventually found and dug out by Prisoners of War.

Perhaps some readers of *Past Forward* can remember these events also and may be able to add a little more information.

Frank Winnard
Billinge Wigan



Wigan Carnival, 1928, when the theme was 'Bohemian Girl'. The lady second from right is my mother, Miss Winifred Hadley (later Mrs. Arnold Hurst). The lady at the back is Miss Ethel Hadley, my aunt.



Miss Ethel Hadley.



Miss Winifred Hadley.

THE JAMES HILTON SOCIETY

TO PROMOTE INTEREST IN THE LIFE AND WORK OF NOVELEST AND SCRIPTWRITER JAMES HILTON (1900-1954)

Dear Sir,

Further to my article on James Hilton (*Past Forward*, spring 2002), I understand that Hilton visited Leigh in 1954, only a few months before his death at the early age of 54. I would be interested to know whether any of your readers have any

memories of this visit, please. Any reminiscences of James's mother and father, Elizabeth and John Hilton, would also be gratefully received.

John Hammond
Secretary
James Hilton Society





Two or three of 'the best'

Dear Sir,

I have very much enjoyed Harold Smith's previous articles on Ashton-in-Makerfield where I was born, and the Grammar School which I attended from 1934 to 1941. His latest article brought back memories of my time at Downall Green Rectory School. My recollections are similar to his, especially standing at the bottom of the steps. I do not remember "Owd Stan" (Mr. Stanley Foster the Headmaster) ever asking

me why I had been sent. I simply went up the steps, held out my hand and was given two or three of "the best". And, of course, I hoped and prayed my father would never find out.

Perhaps some of your readers can remember Empire Day when we all paraded in the schoolyard in front of the Union Jack, or the hundreds of sums involving multiplying pounds shillings and pence by some horrible number. Howe we could possibly get the right answer remains a mystery!

What I do not remember are the names of all the staff – only Mr. Waterhouse, Harry Lowe and Miss Cross spring to mind. Can any reader help to remind me? And does anyone have any photographs of the pupils or the staff in that period?

Ron Gorner
22 The Woodlands
Lostock Park
Bolton BL6 4JD

COPY OF ASHTON SCHOOL PHOTOGRAPH WANTED

Dear Sir,

I attended Ashton-in-Makerfield Grammar School from September 1947 until Easter 1949, when I moved from the area. Would anyone have a copy of the school photograph taken, I think, in either 1947 or 1948?

J.D. Rawlinson
22 Breeze Hill Road Atherton M46 9HJ
Tel: 01942 876039
Email: denraw@jd200.freemove.co.uk

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COULDN'T BELIEVE THEIR EYES

When Edith Higham (nee Aindow) and her sister Charlotte Aindow saw the picture (below) in *Past Forward* No. 31, p36, they couldn't believe their eyes. Edith, now 91 years and Charlotte, now 89, had a birthday party in August 2002, with family and friends – including one who is also on the photograph. Charlotte has been able to put names to many of the children:



Back row (l. to r.): Janey Allen, Emma Banks, Edith Aindow, ?, Charlotte Aindow, Annie Moss, Doris Ralphs, Doris Wright.

Middle row (l. to r.): ?, Billy Jolly, John Allen, Robert Vincent, John Webster, Cyril Fallows, Jack Hitchen, Billy Allen, ?.

Front row (l. to r.): ?, Edna Ashcroft, Nellie Allen, Phoebe Derby, Gladys Ashcroft, ?, ?, Doris Green, ?, Fred Webster.

Pictured right: Three of the children in the school photograph at the birthday party in 2002 - Charlotte (89), Edith Higham (nee Aindow, 91) and Annie Moss.



A wonderful poem about Wigan

Dear Alastair,

A few years ago, I 'rediscovered' a wonderful poem about Wigan written by Donald Alexander Mackenzie whilst he was on the Western Front, 1918. It is entitled *Home Thoughts from France*. I am anxious to trace the author's family, both to find out what happened to him

and also to seek permission to publish the poem – I have an idea whereby it may be used to the benefit of the Hospice.

Any publicity you could give would be greatly appreciated.

Alan Kay
Haigh Nr. Wigan

Seeking the family of **Donald Alexander Mackenzie MA MC**. Born Wigan on 1 June 1889. Educated at Standishgate Wesleyan School, Wigan Grammar School, Victoria University, Manchester. Teacher: Carre's Grammar School, Sleaford, 1910-1913, Central Secondary School, Sheffield, 1913-1920. (Lt.C/317th {Northumberland Brigade} RFA TF for four years). Secretary Higher Education, Sheffield, Assistant Editor, Teachers' World until 1944, Principal of Gaumont British Education Division, 1944-1949. Last heard of in 1951 as a freelance journalist, living at 'The Grove', Greville Park Avenue, Ashstead, Surrey.

FASCINATED BY PHOTOGRAPH OF SOUP KITCHEN!

Dear Mr. Gillies,

I was fascinated by the photograph, in the summer 2002 issue of *Past Forward*, of the Abram Parish Soup Kitchen. Joe Southworth, Church Superintendent, was my grandfather and the photograph also shows three of my great-uncles. Mr. Molyneux, who sent in the photograph, has very kindly let me

have a copy.

Having lived in Abram for many years, I also followed, with interest, the journey on the Grand Central, but surely the drum-stick chimney was at Wigan Junction Colliery, not Maypole?

Marion Brown
Standish Wigan



As Shakespeare told our forefathers ...

Dear Alastair,

As Shakespeare told our forefathers, "All things taken at the flood, lead on to greater things"; we can certainly cite *Past Forward* as a splendid example of his maxim.

Even as I write this, I have received New Year's greetings from Ron & Judy Green in Australia, who write

with glowing tribute to Harold Smith of Sutton Coldfield, while other Australian friends write in a similar vein of Middlesex's Nein Cain.

What a contrast to those I met on my early travels who would say to me: "You **don't** come from Wigan, do you?" No doubt because they had read George Orwell's *The*

Road to Wigan Pier, and swallowed its teachings without further thought – even though we knew he only wrote it for the £200 he was offered so that he could marry his girlfriend. He only lived in Wigan for three weeks; I lived there more than 20 years, and visited frequently until my mother died a few years ago. So no doubt *Past Forward* readers can judge for themselves.

**Ernie Taberner
62 Westwood Road
Coventry CV5 6GE**

AN INTERESTING LIFE

Dear Sir,

Re the article on the Boer War. I just thought that this photograph might be of interest to you and Fred Holcroft. Where it was taken I do not know but I am sure that it was at the time of the Boer War. My grandfather, William Smith, lived in Higher Ince off Manchester Road, in Forge Street and also for a time in Victoria Street, where my dad was born, in 1904. He was one of four children, Margaret (1900), William (c.1906) and Charles (c.1909).

My grandfather is on the extreme right of the photograph, looking from right to left; he is the burly one with his hat on one side – quite a powerful man, so I was told. My Uncle Bill told me a story that at one time they used to come round the streets with a bear on a chain – the animal had been taught to dance on its hind legs, poor thing. My grandfather was challenged that he couldn't put his

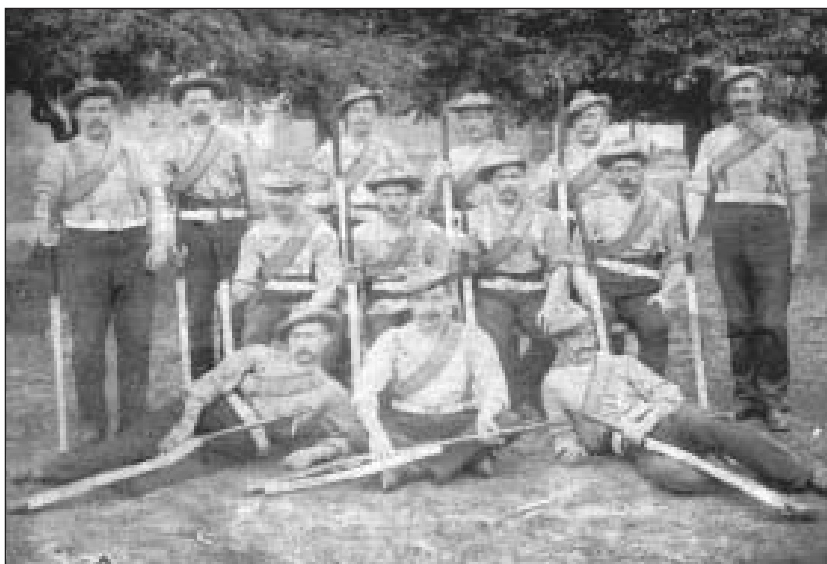
arms around the bear, but Uncle Bill said that he did without any trouble at all!

He had a very interesting life. He was born in 1869; according to my dad, the family came over from Ireland. He joined the army at a very young age, and would have been about 31 at the time of the Boer War. In all he served over 20 years in the army. My dad said that they did not see much of him – he was always away. He served in the Garrison Artillery in Gibraltar for a time, and went on to serve in the 1914-18 war again. When he enlisted, he gave a younger age and a false name to enable him to rejoin the army.

He died in 1923, aged 54 years; his wife, my grandma Barbara (nee Patterson) died just 12 months after him.

Thank you for all your help and kindness.

**A.E. Smith
Winstanley Wigan**



RAILWAY ANSWERS

Dear Sir,

I enclose a copy of letter I have sent to Mr. P. Allen answering the queries that he raised in *Past Forward* no. 32 (p42).

I have just been handed a copy of Past Forward. I will try and answer the points that you raised in your letter to same.

First, because it is an easy answer I refer to the brass token that you have. This is in fact a 'pay tally' which every member of the L & YR [apart from monthly paid staff] was issued with, so that they could prove who they were when it came to pay day!

In the case of a small establishment like Ince Station, the Stationmaster would know who they were, but in the case of LYR Horwich Works where thousands were employed it was a different matter. If somebody moved to a different location they had to hand in their pay check and were issued with a new one stamped with their new work place on their first day there.

Turning now to the scrap yard that you visited. This was the Central Wagon Co. Ltd. at Lower Ince, who scrapped many hundreds of locomotives in the 1960's, and

indeed, when these were all disposed of, they carried on for a long time afterwards cutting withdrawn railway wagons. You were fortunate on the day you went because 14 days later, on 17 August, the remains of Stanier Pacific 'City of Lancaster' that you saw were cut up. As well as local locomotives Central Wagon received locos from far away places including 15 GWR Pannier Tanks from Somerset, Middlesex and South Wales and 10 LNER B1 class from East Anglia.'

Turning now to the query raised by Mike Haddon concerning the green lights on the front of Wigan trams and buses, there were actually two small green lights either side of the destination blind aperture. These date from the trams and when lit indicated that the tram was heading towards Wigan Centre; and when unlit that it was heading away from the Town Centre. For some reason, that I have as yet been unable to find out, they were perpetuated on the buses, even though by that time they were fitted with full destination and route number blinds.

**Keith S.E. Till
Roby Mill
Upholland WN8 0SY**

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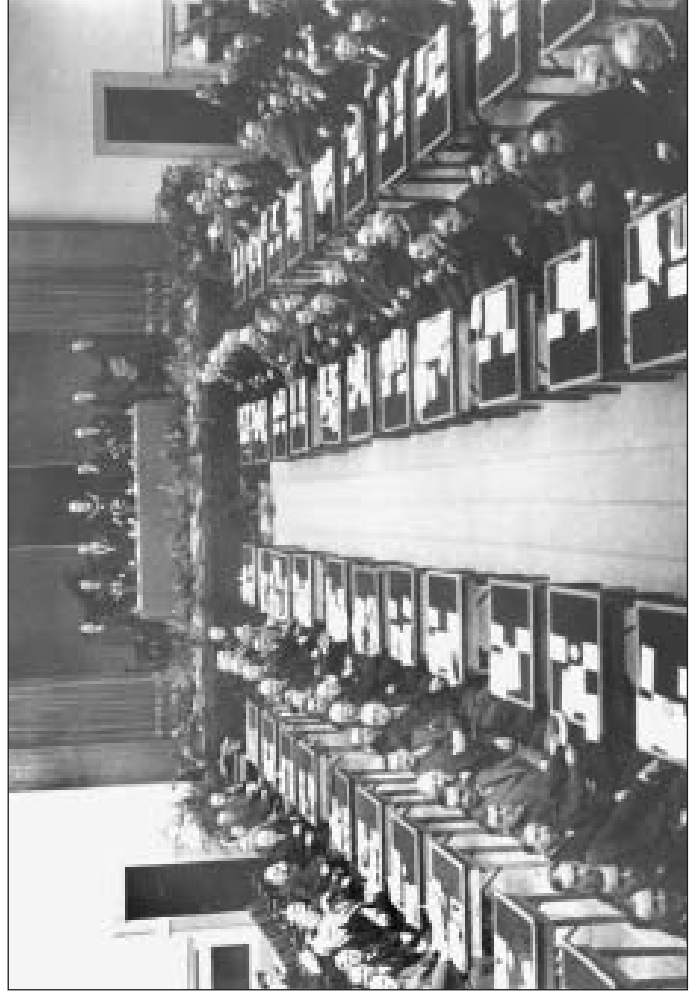
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T R U S T**

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Who? Where?



There has been a generally good response to the Who? Where? photographs in the last issue. The band has been positively identified as the Bedford Prize Band, bandmaster Alan Hodson; the photograph was taken in the Church School c.1980. The two photographs on the right produced a huge response, including a phone call from Australia! However, as there were so many conflicting suggestions, we will have to make some further investigations. Surprisingly, we are no nearer to identifying the war memorial photograph. If you can help identify any of this issue's photographs, please contact Len Hudson in Leigh Town Hall (01942 404432).

