

PAST FORWARD

Issue No. 36

March – July 2004

WIGAN
LEISURE & CULTURE
TRUST



Produced by Wigan Heritage Service

FREE

From the Editor

I'm pleased to report that the reaction to the re-vamped *Past Forward* has been good – and particularly with regard to the new Family History Section, which has produced some very positive comments.

There was also a good response to the quiz which we ran in aid of Wigan & Leigh Hospice, based on a drawing by Gerald Rickards. Unfortunately, the results are not yet available as we go to press, but they will appear in the next issue.

As you will see, there is a lot going on in the History Shop at the moment. You can read about our Events & Activities on p3, and our exhibition programme on p4. I would particularly draw your attention to *Phantoms of Delight*, the new exhibition in the Taylor Gallery. This is a fascinating display of books from the Dootson collection, beautifully presented. The Heritage Service staff involved have done a really splendid job here.

My thanks to all of you who have submitted articles for publication. I am delighted that this issue contains contributions from several new writers, as well as some 'old faithfuls'. As always, I will do my best to include all contributions, but I must make it clear that I can never guarantee publication – the magazine is heavily oversubscribed with regard to contributions, so inevitably, some will not actually make it. My apologies to all those who may have been disappointed not to see their name in print – as I have said many times, in this respect *Past Forward* is very much a victim of its own, huge, success.

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Wigan Heritage Service

The Heritage Service has three main outlets – the History Shop, Archives and Leigh Local History. Please note that all telephone numbers have a 01942 code. If no individual Email address is listed, please use leisureheritage@wlct.org

The History Shop

Library Street Wigan
WN1 1NU

Tel: 828128 (general enquiries)
828020 (local history desk
– research enquiries and
bookings)

Fax: 827645

Email: leisureheritage@wlct.org

Opening hours: Mon 10.00 -
7.00; Tues - Fri 10.00-5.00;
Sat 10.00-1.00



Archives

Town Hall Leigh WN7 2DY

Tel: 404430 (general enquiries)

Fax: 404425

Opening hours: Tues-Thur 10.00 - 4.30 (by appointment)

Leigh Local History

Turnpike Centre Leigh Library Civic Square Leigh WN7 1EB

Tel: 404559 Fax: 404567

Opening hours: Mon, Thur, Fri 9.30-7.00, Tues 10.00-7.00; Wed 9.30-5.00;
Sat. 10.00-3.30

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COPY DEADLINE

Please note that
the copy deadline
for issue no 37 of
Past Forward is
28 May 2004.

Cover: An illustration by Gustav Canton from the story of Reynard the Fox, currently on display in the History Shop as part of the splendid *Phantoms of Delight* exhibition (see p4 for further details).

Events and Activities

FOR details of all our future events, see the *What's On* booklet published by WLCT and available throughout the borough, or check our web site www.wlct.org. For further information about events and activities contact the History Shop on 01942 828128. For details of the Education and Outreach service please contact: Claire Hawkins, Heritage Officer (Community Outreach & Education) on 01942 828124 or email: c_hawk@wlct.org

May 2004: Museums and Galleries Month

This annual celebration of the best in the UK's museums and galleries takes place in May, when special events, workshops and special exhibitions are held in large and small museums. Museums and Galleries Month is organised by The Campaign for Museums and Engage (National Association for Gallery Education). It is an opportunity for museums and galleries to try out new events and workshops, to attract new and past visitors and to show off all the fantastic things they have to offer!

Here in Wigan borough the History Shop has teamed up with Wigan Pier and the Turnpike Gallery to bring you a variety of special events and activities throughout May. Look out for our leaflet for further details or visit the Museums and Galleries Month web site www.may2004.org.uk



Family Fun

The History Shop runs activities for families with children aged 12 and under in the school holidays. Activities are free and the finished product can usually be taken home (all children must be accompanied by an adult). The activities have become so popular that it is now advisable to book a place in advance. Families are still welcome to turn up on the day, but we cannot guarantee everyone a place without prior booking.

Our up and coming family activities include storytelling in the Easter Holidays, featuring fabulous favourites and new twists on old tales. Ever wanted a museum of your own? In June we will be creating miniature museums to take home (you can bring small objects of your own - details below).

Schools

The "Wigan on the Map" exhibition of Parish Maps is an ideal exhibition to visit with your class and has links to the National Curriculum for history and citizenship at KS2 and 3. We can send you a Teacher's Pack to enable you to get the most out of your visit, including follow-up activities. To request a free pack or to book a visit, contact Claire on 01942 828124 or email: heritage@wlct.org

Wigan on the Map

We can offer talks and tours of the Parish Maps (upon request), kindly given by the key coordinators of the original project. Available to groups and societies who wish to bring

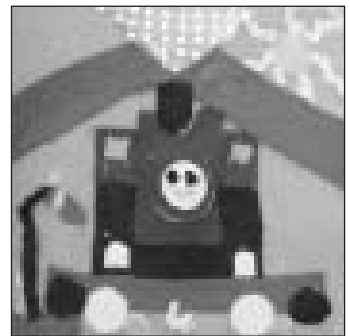
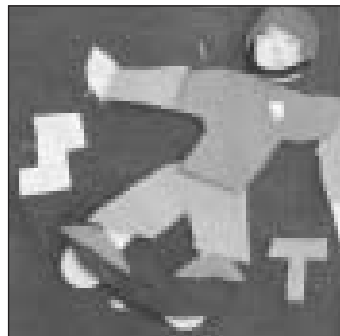


members to the History Shop for a visit, this service is free of charge but must be booked in advance (tel: 01942 828128 to book).

Free Family Fun at the History Shop Spring 2004:

Family activities run every Wednesday during school holidays at the History Shop. Sessions start at 2pm and 3pm and last about an hour. All children must be accompanied by an adult. To book your place call 01942 828128. Admission FREE

In February for example, children created some crafty Parish Maps in miniature to take home with them. These are some of the results.



Wednesday 7 April and Wednesday 14 April 2pm & 3pm Fantastic Stories and Tremendous Tales

Come and enjoy classic children's stories, and be gripped by some rather unusual tales as told by our talented storyteller. This activity accompanies the *Phantoms of Delight* exhibition of illustrated books from the Dootson collection.

Wednesday 2 June 2pm & 3pm Make a Miniature Museum

Far Flung Places is full of objects from our collection. What would you put into a museum? You can bring small objects (e.g. shells you collected on the beach) with you or make some new things for your very own museum.

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Events and Activities

Continued from page 3

Temporary Exhibitions at the History Shop

1 March – 24 April

Phantoms of Delight – Book Illustrations from the Dootson Collection

Many of you will be thinking what is the Dootson Collection? Well, it is a collection of books and paintings given to the borough of Leigh in 1952 by the widow of a Leigh local solicitor, Thomas Robert Dootson (1864 – 1951), who stipulated that it should be known as the T R Dootson Collection.



From *The Marvellous History of Jack the Giant Killer*, written and illustrated by Richard Doyle, published 1851. To find out the connection with Sherlock Holmes, visit the exhibition.

It is the books which are the subject of this exhibition. There are several thousand volumes, with particular emphasis on Lancashire publishers and authors, and the history of the county of Lancashire. However, there are a number of literary classics, especially children's stories and fairy tales, which contain superb illustrations, and over 50 of these will be displayed. In addition, nearly 100 other illustrations copied from the books will also be on show.

The illustrations have been selected by Local History (Leigh) Officer Tony Ashcroft, who looks after the collection. He chose them simply because he liked them, and remembered many of the tales from his childhood! I am sure you will too! We have '*Jack the Giant Killer*', '*Hans Christian Andersen*' and the '*Story of Reynard the Fox*'. There are also some scary ones like '*The Goblin Market*' illustrated by Christina Rossetti, and the tale of the '*Shadowless Man*'. The work of Kate Greenaway and Walter Crane also feature strongly.

There will be a drop-in story telling area set aside, with some well loved old and modern children's stories. Parents will be able to read to their children, or the children can read for themselves, and make up their own stories and pictures. We will display children's drawings in the exhibition. Even if you are

not so young, come and read a few fairy tales and relive your childhood! Special story telling events, with a professional storyteller, have been arranged for the Easter Holiday (see p3).

15 May – 24 July

Far Flung Places

National Museums and Galleries Month is a celebration of museums in Britain, and the theme this year is travel. We are celebrating with our temporary exhibition *Far Flung Places*.

What souvenirs have you brought back from your holidays? A Spanish doll, a donkey in a straw hat or a beautiful piece of indigenous craftsmanship?

Travellers in the past often collected 'exotic' items or wrote extensive diaries as reminders of their journeys, to show how well travelled they were, and for public education. Objects collected abroad in the 18th and 19th centuries, especially by the wealthy, often became the foundation of many of our museum collections, including the nationals such as the British Museum. There are many such items in the Heritage Service collections, which were brought back by people travelling and working abroad and in other parts of the country. These include archaeology from Egypt, ethnography from Africa and diaries by travellers to Australia and Europe. We will also be featuring some snaps of mountaineering in Switzerland taken by the Rev William Wickham on his honeymoon in 1892.

On a lighter note, there will be souvenirs and postcards from well loved holiday destinations such as Blackpool, and the Heritage Service staff will also be bringing in their favourite holiday reminders. Visitors will also have their chance to bring in items to pin onto our 'My favourite holiday' notice board (but only if you do not mind whether the items are returned or not!).

Children under the age of 12 can join in our holiday activity (see p3) and make a miniature museum using objects that they have collected on their travels.

If you have any queries, please contact Yvonne Webb (01942 828123).

New Exhibition and Events Leaflet

Have you seen our new leaflet? It gives information on all exhibitions and workshops taking place up until July this year. Again it has a handy 'how to find us map', lists opening times, telephone numbers and web and email addresses. It is available at the History Shop, Libraries and all the Leisure and Culture Trust outlets. Make sure you get a copy!

History Shop

January – July 2004



Phantoms of Delight, 1 March – 24 April



EXHIBITIONS & EVENTS

WHAT A MEMORY!

WE read of so many peoples' memories today and with the possibility of Alzheimers hovering in the background, I feel I should get something down on paper before it disappears.

In the 1930's and 40's I lived most of my life in Shaw Street, Swinley, and although the gang were not all from this street, they always seemed to congregate there.

Obviously it depended on what time of year it was as to what was in vogue. Dark nights, for example meant pictures - the *Palace*, *Pavilion* or *Empire* on a Saturday (*Flash Gordon*, *The Clutching Hand* or *Charlie Chan*). We used to get in to the *Palace* around the side (not having enough money for the front entrance). It cost 6d or less if you had jam jars or if you lied about your age.

Any time after tea it could be 'skilly', 'throw out can', 'call a ball' or 'hide and seek'. The blank wall we used to use was on a house that was lived in and the owners could get really annoyed! Then there was the necessity for some of the players to run along the yard walls so as not to be caught. This frightened a certain old lady who lived on her own, and naturally she told the local bobby who lived round the corner in Sandicroft Avenue; if he caught you, and he very often did, your ear would quite literally

During the summer and other days when it wasn't raining, there were all the usual goings on. Toys of the time included roller skates, bicycles, trolleys, marbles, top and whip. We played hockey on roller

skates using a golf ball or a piece of wood and walking sticks, or trundles (metal hoops), or sometimes even using an old tyre.

That reminds me of the time two of us were at a loose end, when we went into our yard and found an old tyre that had come off my father's lorry. I rolled it to my friend, intending for him to catch it, but it was too big and it was travelling too fast'!. It set off down the hill, and we held our breath in case a vehicle should be crossing Avondale Road. Fortunately nothing was. It continued on its journey, and as it passed a certain gateway a little girl was just coming out of the gate. The tyre shot past, continuing on its journey to Trafalgar Road. Probably quite a few of you will remember the pig bins that stood at the foot of many a gas lamp? The tyre made a mess of a pig bin (these used to stand at the foot of many a gas lamp), bounced through double gates and ended up at the foot of someone's trellis! Surprisingly, those two boys were nowhere to be seen!!

How about the trolley? A most adaptable machine, particularly on a hill where it doesn't require motive power. My machine, constructed by myself of inch thick timber and 10 inch diameter pram wheels, had a brake and a steering wheel! Not having a drill, the hole for the front axle had to be made with a red-hot poker!

Another story concerns a certain gentleman (who today has a chip shop) and a friend who, envying the other boys, made a trolley out of fruit boxes. One tea-time they decided to try it

out on the hill. I watched as they started off from in front of St. Michael's Hall; they were going fairly fast when the driver lost control, crossing Avondale Road! Now on this corner there is a well built brick wall, and the trolley and driver hit it right on the corner! There was blood everywhere - the trolley didn't survive either.

When it comes to roller skates, you can keep your skateboards and your inline skates (these I have tried even at 74!). There is nothing to beat a pair of Winchester double ball-bearing skates, bought from Oliver Somers. I can't recall the number of wheels I replaced. I ran over my fingers more than once doing the 'little daddy', and when we played hockey we didn't wear helmets, knee or elbow pads. Another great game on skates was to form a snake, and woe betide the person on the end when the leader decided to turn a corner!

Moving on to the other summer treats - damming the Whitley brook, daring pals to go through the tunnel under the railway, putting pennies on the line, collecting engine names and numbers, riding the bikes over the tips. And on to the Scroggs and the area below Kings Field. We played for hours, even venturing into the Plantations, although we expected the keeper at anytime.

One game was to hang a rope from a tall tree on the slope. Brave Hector, of course, had to go higher up the hill. It was all right swinging out over the 'Duggy', but when I swung round the tree and didn't

reach the ground I ended up hitting the tree with my back. I dropped like a stone winded and couldn't get my breath!

When it had been dry for a number of days on that hill, the grass became like glass, so that anything - cardboard, old trays, any sheet metal - would go like the clappers, in some cases even reaching the 'Duggy'. No suggestion of setting fire to it as they do today.

When the snow came (I remember drifts up to 10 feet deep in front of our house), the real fun could begin with sledges, snowmen and snowballs. Your fingers froze, and that was through your gloves of course (then you borrowed anybody's). With the empty pig bins in Avondale Road we made dugouts, from which we could surprise the other gangs. We would dig a hole in the snow and insert a pig bin, one of us would get in and then the others would cover us in snow. The opposing gang would be enticed down the road past the dugout, and would be surprised and pelted with snow. Then, at night, when all had gone home and you were left on your own, with the light fall of snow backed by the light from the gas lamp, silence all around. IT WAS MAGIC!

I also tried skating on the ponds at the bottom of Coppull Lane, using very old skates strapped to my shoes (not boots), with cardboard round my ankles for support. One year I tried them on Wrightington Fish Ponds when the ice was three inches thick in places.

Dare I say, "those were the days"?

**R.D. Heaviside
Standish Wigan**

THE GHOSTS OF UP HOLLAND

Miss Weeton's guests

by Alan Miller

Miss Ellen Weeton regularly recorded in her letters that Up Holland in the early 19th century was full of "ghosts, visible and invisible, some that let you see them, and others that are only to be heard". She maintained that "at least a tenth of the houses in this neighbourhood" were said to have such 'guests'. Miss Weeton went on to claim: "Scarcely a field, gate or stile is without its attendant spirit; and in some of the houses the noises these beings, or shadows, or spirites or whatever they are, are said to make, are terrible beyond anything".

The Mill house was "the terror of the whole neighbourhood" with its "horrid yells, looking glasses falling, furniture moving, tongs, shovel and poker dancing, raps at the door and window, windows being broken without hands or any living creature near, noises as if somebody were spinning, churning, dancing, or a mill going; and many other things not worth writing".

Ellen was conscious of ghosts in her own house in Church Street. "Some people say they should not like to live by themselves so near the Churchyard as I do. I don't find that I am any nearer the Ghosts for all that. I have at various hours of the night when I have been awake, tried to change a gravestone into one, but not all the exaggeration of a strained fancy would make it like a man, a woman, a cow, a dog, a dragon, or a monster of any kind". For years after the death of her mother, Ellen thought that she could hear sounds of heavy breathing from the room adjoining her bedroom. "I have got up and gone into the room, turned down the bed quilt...felt all about it, examined the curtains, but could find no one". She concluded that "it must be the owls in the Church steeple".

Unsolved mystery in 1904

About a century later another house, virtually next door to where Miss Weeton had lived in Church Street, was the location for an

'unsolved mystery'. On Sunday 7 August 1904 mysterious noises could be heard at the home of a widow, Mrs Winstanley, and her four sons and three daughters. The stone house, three storeys high, was one of the oldest in the village, with walls that were several feet thick and windows that had deep recesses nearly the thickness of the walls. The haunted bedroom, which was about four yards square, was accessed via a heavy old door "hung crooked on its hinges", and had a low ceiling strengthened by massive whitewashed oak beams.

The ghost "gets agate between 10.30 and 12.30pm" with the sound of trickling water, followed by knockings that seemed to travel from one side of the room to the other. The curtains were torn from the window and thrown over the beds. Paper was torn off the walls, patches of hard mortar were scattered about the room and large books were flung on to the beds. Stones 8 to 12 inches long and 2 inches thick were pulled out and thrown to the floor with a resounding crash. "The walled in window recess...was the scene of principal havoc, and this corner of the chamber

looked the very picture of wreck. The paper on the walls was tattered and torn and plaster was chipped to the stone, as though the wildest of furies had been at some vindictive play. The stones in the wall below the window seat had been wrenched out of their original setting and were all loose-jointed; the mortar that had cemented them, as well as the coating of plaster on the walls, having been used up by the mysterious agency in a fusillade of scraps. Two great books, which had been flung across the room from the window recess were resting on the bed, where they had alighted." One of the Winstanley boys was so terrified by the manifestations that he had to be restrained in his bed by his brothers.

Investigation team

The remarkable occurrences were kept quiet for some time, and then Councillor Richard Baxter was privately informed of the affair and he made preliminary observations. He believed that, with the exercise of a little "detective ingenuity", he would be able to "lay" the "destructive ghost" and with Councillors Bibby and Loneragan, he formed an investigation



Church Street, Up Holland, c.1920. The "alleged haunted house" is jutting out on the left, just beyond the 'White Lion' public house which was rebuilt in the early 1900's.



Front view of the "alleged haunted house" in Church Street, Up Holland, overlooking the grave of St. Thomas the Martyr, taken c.1904.

team. The three 'highly respected and reputable' gentlemen stayed in the house on a number of occasions, often until three in the morning, as part of their attempts to explain the eerie disturbances. The stone throwing continued unabated, one of the Winstanley sons being struck by flying plaster, not only in the haunted bedroom but also in the adjoining bedroom, the hard mortar being "thrown through the communicating doorway". In the course of their investigations, the three councillors often found stones scattered about the room. They repeatedly wedged them back into the wall, so tightly that they could not move them again. However, when the light was dimmed, the stones were again torn from the wall and thrown violently onto the floor. Samples of stones and mortar were collected and exhibited in a local shop window.

Councillor Lonergan, a man of 'religious propensities', was at first inclined to feel rather sceptical of the incidents and sought a rational explanation. However, on a particularly active night, when a box filled with stones flew across the room over the bed, Councillor Lonergan could contain himself no longer. He jumped into the middle of the haunted bedroom, clasped his hands together and cried, "In the name of the Lord, speak!" Councillor Baxter concluded: "there's something quare here" and invited anybody who had doubts as to what was taking place to "come and hear it tonight". It was suggested that

"some lunatic has got secreted in the chimney" or that "rats may have got into the walls" or that it was due to a "passing traction engine".

Councillor Bibby's theory

Meanwhile, Councillor Bibby, "a very matter of fact business man", continued his investigations. He described the knocking noises as being like the 'ticking' heard in a telegraph office. Of the stones and mortar that came from the far corner of the haunted bedroom into a connected room: "They had to describe almost a right angle in their flight, having to cross the diagonal of the haunted chamber, then turn in the doorway connecting the two rooms, and afterwards take the opposite diagonal in the communicating room." Mr Bibby could not see how a "human hand or human agency of any kind could so direct and control missiles". He used a pocket knife in an effort to remove paper from the walls of the haunted chamber but he found it difficult to dislodge even a small piece, so firmly was the paper stuck. "And yet no sooner has the flashlight been turned down, after the experiment, than strips of paper have been torn from the very place where he had been using his knife."

On another occasion, Councillor Bibby, without telling anybody else, tore off a small piece of paper and placed it on the very edge of a stone resting on the top of a bandbox in the window recess. When the light was

darkened the knockings began again and stones were thrown about. When the light was immediately restored, it was obvious that the box had been thrown into the corner at the farther side of the room, while the stone with the small piece of paper on its edge was lying on the bed. However, the paper itself had not been touched or moved, even though "the stone had been hurled with great noise and force from the window recess, and the bandbox actually thrown across the room!" Councillor Bibby, who had made "a considerable study of physiological and psychological phenomena", concluded that the strange manifestations were due to "some as yet unexplained and undiscovered natural law".

Crowds

The noises emanating from the house could be heard 60 yards away. Throughout August the approaches to Up Holland were thronged with people, as exaggerated rumours of the strange happenings in the 'haunted' house began to spread throughout the area and large crowds assembled in the village. Despite drenching rain on some days hundreds of people arrived in Up Holland, where the inns did a roaring trade. Each night "the multitude increased" and especially at weekends when there was "an exodus from the towns and villages for miles round" as far afield as Wigan and St Helens. So dense were the crowds that the police patrol had to be multiplied by ten.

On some nights the police had difficulty in abating the crowd's fury, which manifested itself in bottle throwing at the house and other actions "not far removed from rioting". At midnight on one Saturday night the police had to control a crowd of about 2,000. Many in the crowd could not hear the noises because they were 'tipsy' and made more din than the ghost.

The best view was obtained from the churchyard, just above George Lyon's grave. "Midnight at Up Holland with the clock on the ancient church striking, the horrible noise going on in the room in front of you, and the gravestone, with memories of years gone by, make up a weird and uncanny combination, by no means pleasant for any nervous individual". One girl fainted when she heard the first noise from the house whilst a local man confessed: "I'll never come past here in't dark agen". A Billinge

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THE GHOSTS OF UP HOLLAND

Continued from page 7

man was too scared to go home and “even the bobbies were trembling”.

Those who were brave enough were admitted to the house in twos and threes to view the chamber and to experience the “rowdy ghost” personally at close quarters. They climbed the “long, rambling, rickety staircase” with bated breath. Once in the bedroom they looked round fearfully, before departing “visibly impressed” by what they had seen in the candlelight. Some came to scoff but most went away with “awesome faces”. For most, the “eerie spectacle and ghostly scene” was sufficient “to freeze the laughter on their lips”.

Possible explanations

The house was examined by scientists, antiquarians and journalists who postulated and explored various explanations of the phenomena. The investigators concentrated their efforts on the walled up recess, the scene of the greatest damage. One theory was that an electric battery had been placed in the chimney and was worked from a discharge. Some attributed it to mines and underground passages beneath the house. A stonemason was called in to undertake a thorough examination of the walls and the chimney, but he discovered nothing that could account for the disturbances. The wall in the corner of the room was cemented up, but the mysterious agency responded by breaking into another part of the wall.

The police patrolled the district and Superintendent O'Hara, Head of Wigan Police, thought it was a hoax. One policeman brought his ‘bull’s eye’ with him into the chamber and as soon as the ‘blinker’ darkened, the stone throwing began. But when the constable flashed on his lamp “all was quiescent again”.

Some observers believed that the manifestations were due to one of the Winstanley boys exhibiting an “overflow of youthful honour”. But the general view was that it was “no lark” and that there was no way that the sons could have set it up. Indeed

one of the sons declared: “I’m going to stop no longer, I’m getting frickened.” Councillor Bibby was convinced that there was “no trickery or connivance” from the Winstanley youths. “They are quite willing for any person to sleep with them when the investigations are being made”. In fact, Mr Bibby advised the exhausted Winstanley brothers to escape the uncanny performances in the haunted chamber and to get some sleep elsewhere. Eventually, their weary mother stopped people entering the house declaring: “Folk will ...think it’s a money-making concern”.

John ‘Dolly’ Mills, the village prankster, was suspected of being involved in the events of 1904. But in Councillor Bibby’s view: “If by any possibility all this is the work of some trickster in the flesh then all I can say is that he doesn’t know his business. The commercial instinct is certainly lacking in him. He would be a fool who could perform so mysteriously and play the ghost night after night at such a place as Up Holland, and all for nothing, when Blackpool would only be too glad to have him as an entertainer, and pay him for his performances.”

More theories

Meanwhile the house continued to be “quite a Mecca for psychical investigators”. Colonel Taylor of the Psychical Research Society took up residence in Up Holland, to investigate the “weird and eerie drama”. One prominent spiritualist maintained that the manifestations were caused by “a dark spirit that cannot materialise”, and this “dark spirit” was most active in the presence of one of the Winstanley sons who was “very mediumistic”.

The *Daily Mail* employed the eminent ‘ghost buster’, Mr W E Garrett Fisher, to investigate this example of “one of the most characteristic and interesting types of ghost”. He outlined three possible hypotheses to explain the events. First, it might be a human agency or practical joker. But this would have required “so much skill on the part of the deceiver and of stupidity by the observers”. Second, a poltergeist or boisterous spirit was at work. “In the present case he tears paper off the walls and flings paper about the rooms (and) no doubt he will soon go on to more adventurous manifestations”. Finally, Mr Garrett Fisher hinted at a “still unknown force with certain human organisms... capable of excreting or concentrating

and which performs all these curious and meaningless tricks”.

Likewise, Mr S S Swithaine believed that if a nationwide search were made “it would be impossible to find a more ideal spot for the uncanny performances which have been mystifying the countryside for so long a time”. A haunted house was “never more weirdly situated” as the one in Church Street, Up Holland, “just above the grave of a notorious highwayman and within sight of an ancient abbey ruin”.

In his article entitled *The Haunted House of Up Holland*, Mr Swithaine quoted the widespread belief that the phenomena were caused by the ghost of the notorious George Lyon’s “visiting the scenes familiar to him in life, for rumour has it that Lyon, while following his profession on the highway, lived for some period in this identical house”. Lyon was executed at Lancaster Castle in 1815 for his crimes and was buried in Up Holland churchyard, directly opposite the haunted house in Church Street. However, many villagers were convinced that George Lyon’s ghost “would not resort to such pranks” in 1904.

The answer?

When the haunted house was demolished in 1934 there were hopes that something might emerge to throw some light on the strange events of 1904. However, no one ever explained the mysterious happenings of 1904. Any explanation of the Up Holland phenomena involves a combination of factors. Mr Swithaine characterised Up Holland as “a place that belongs to the past”. The houses “have crooked, bulging gables and fortress-like walls” and the narrow and winding streets were so steep that in some parts “a horse could not drag an empty cart up their precipitous ascents”.

Another journalist believed that Up Holland was ideal ghost territory: “Search England through and you could not find a more ideal spot to locate a haunted house than Up Holland”. In addition to the character of the historic village, the following were essential ingredients - the gullibility and superstition of the public, the ingenuity of well-known local pranksters like John ‘Dolly’ Mills, and the interests of village publicans and shopkeepers who did a roaring trade and had no reason to complain about the ghost and, indeed, for whom it was a blessing in disguise!

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Orrell

MINING TALES

RETIRED Assistant Area Mining Mechanisation Engineer, No.2 Wigan Area, Ken Pearce, now living at Harrogate, has sent us an amusing mining anecdote from his days at Bickershaw Colliery, Leigh.

“I WAS working in the coalcutter engineering shop at Bickershaw Colliery in the early 1950's when a young man on entering the colliery lamp room saw two attendants looking at him and arguing one with the other. They seemed to be discussing his physical ability. He heard one say, “I believe he can”, the other saying, “I bet you he can't”.

The young man was overcome with curiosity when the argument became a little overheated. He asked one of the men what the argument was about, sensing it obviously was about him. One of the lamp room attendants, pointing at the lamp room doorway, said, “he says you can't pull that cat across the canal”. The young man, already taken a little bit by surprise, was more surprised still to hear one of them say, “he would put money on it”.

The young man, whose curiosity was by this time boiling over, wanted to know why the lamp room attendant was so sure he could not do it. The attendant explained that, as everybody knows, when a cat sees water it goes mad and gains super strength, digging its claws in so that nobody can move it.

The lamp room man, on feeling the young man's arm muscle, said he would back this lad all the way and money started to change hands. The young man by this time was caught up in the challenge, and it was just a case of when and where. It was agreed that this should be kept secret and would have to take place outside the colliery premises. To this end a site was picked at the bottom of Bickershaw Street where the canal was slightly elevated above street level, the other side of the canal being level.

As I recall it was a lovely sunny afternoon, and even though it was supposed to be kept secret, quite a lot of people had gathered by the

ANYONE who has ever worked in coal mining for whatever length of time will have a selection of amusing stories to tell of their time below or above ground. The atmosphere amongst workmen at the pit was a unique one, and many natural comedians were to be found.

Joking and banter with officials were all part of making life down the pit bearable. One well known undermanager down Bickershaw Colliery many years ago had a very short temper and would scrap with men at the slightest excuse, a sackable offence. Five minutes later he would be sharing his butties with the man involved.

Many a young lad starting below ground has been sent half a mile away by an arduous route for a left handed screwdriver or been sent to an official to ask where the can was which needed to be carried!

Fairly ordinary occurrences could appear heightened by the surroundings and situations in which you found yourself at the pit. Often other men's misfortunes were fair game for ridicule. I'll never forget the man sat with three of us one miserable Monday morning on the manriding train down Bickershaw Colliery, describing in great sadness how his anthracite boiler in the kitchen had had a mini explosion on Saturday as he cleared the ash pan. Red hot coals shot out, showering his cherished brand new lino, each piece melting into it. After describing how he had also nearly lost his eyebrows we were in agony holding back laughter.

**Alan Davies
Archives Officer**

side of the canal, at the Bickershaw Street end, including the young miner's girlfriend. He duly arrived on the opposite side of the canal, dressed appropriately, including new boots and long gauntlet gloves. He started to get ready; a rope was thrown across to him on the opposite side, which the young man tied around his waist, placing the

knot behind him. This allowed him to lash the rope around his arm to get a better grip. He took his time digging his heel in the soft ground and, on turning his cap back to front, indicated he was ready.

On the other side of the canal, quite a large crowd had gathered, and the man with the cat in the bag was finding it difficult to sort out attaching the rope. The crowd was beginning to push forward, and the man with the cat was asking for a little more room, and for the spare rope to be thrown out of the way. The stage was now set and, as the man bent down to fasten the cat with a piece of ribbon round its neck, he shouted across to the young man to check that he was ready.

The young man, glancing over his shoulder, to see how far back he could run with the cat, shouted his agreement that he was ready. After that, he did not know what hit him because, having placed the knot behind him, which spun him round, he literally took off like a kite with arms and legs outstretched. He landed in the middle of the canal like a rocket, with the underwater speed of a nuclear submarine, just leaving v-type visual traces of his progress, with his cap slowly making its way down the canal.

On reaching the other side he made a very verbal appearance, which did not impress his young lady who rode away on her bicycle. The young man standing there wet through, looking somewhat in a daze at the cat's superior strength, was led off to dry himself in the blacksmith's shop. On entering the shop, he saw a cat sitting on the anvil, licking itself. The young man, unfortunately for the cat, immediately rushed across, grabbed it and drop kicked it through one of the square holes that let the smoke out of the blacksmith's shop, saying, “you'll never do that to me again”.

What the young man hadn't known was when he indicated he was ready and the man threw the spare rope out of the way, there were half a dozen strong young men ready to catch it and run like the clappers the length of Bickershaw Street. Incidentally, this was done on the young man's own command!

Tom Taylor's War

AT THE outbreak of War I worked for the L.M.S. railway in the Divisional Operating Superintendent's Office, Hunts Bank, Manchester. I immediately joined the LDV (Local Defence Volunteers), which was subsequently renamed as the Home Guard. This involved taking your turn at guarding the office buildings throughout the night. After 12 months of this I was then called up for Army duty. On 14 November 1940 I was enlisted into the Royal Engineers at Siddals Road Barracks in Derby, from where I was conveyed by Army truck to Castle Donnington in north Leicestershire for military training. This, my first night in the army, was the night of the Coventry blitz and in the distance the sky was fiery red from the German bombing.

After passing out in basic military training at Castle Donnington I was sent back again to Derby for technical training. This involved sorting everyone out into their respective trades and I was put down as Clerk (Railway). On arrival back at Derby we were all billeted out in private digs, and it was while I was there that Derby had its first air raid. I was sitting at the table writing a letter home to my wife Maggie when a bomb fell very close to the house. Fortunately I was at the front of the house and the bomb dropped at the back causing extensive damage to the back parlour. I can remember that close by about six people were killed.

From Derby I was posted to 156 Transportation Stores Coy, Apple Pie Camp Longmoor, Hampshire. Longmoor was the army's railway training centre and it had its own railway running from Liss to Bordon.

Dear Sir,

Some years ago my father, Thomas Taylor, was asked by my daughter to write down an account of his experiences of the Second World War. This was part of a school project set by her history teacher. I was not aware of this at the time, but following his death in 1995, at the age of 84, I came across a copy of this short, hand-written account of his wartime activities, which he had written for my daughter. Although it may be a bit sketchy in some of its detail, I thought it might be of interest to your readers.

Both during and after the war he lived at 39 Charterhouse Road, Lower Ince, until he moved to 35 Beech Walk, Winstanley in 1964.

Something that he does not mention in this account was the fact that he was in the army from November 1940 until being demobilised early in 1946. In all this time he did not get to see his daughter, who was born in January 1941 until he returned home, by which time she was a little girl aged five.

**Malcolm Taylor
Lowton Warrington**

Soon after arriving at Longmoor we were under embarkation orders and were issued with tropical kit. It was anybody's guess as to where we were bound. We had extensive battle training at nearby Blackmoor and then, one evening we were route marched to Bordon Station to join a special troop train. This train travelled overnight through the Midlands until about seven o'clock in the morning it stopped at a station. Looking out there was one of my old workmates in his Home Guard uniform. We were at Manchester Victoria Station, en route to Liverpool Riverside via Newton-le-Willows.

On arrival at Liverpool we were given a thick chunk of bread and had our enamel cups filled with tea, then we boarded SS Scythia, a Cunard Liner. It was by then about 8 a.m. on a sunny Thursday. The ship soon moved away from the quay and stayed all day in the middle of the Mersey before setting sail early in the evening. We slept in hammocks – all 4000 of us! – and when we woke on Friday morning we were in the River Clyde. There seemed to be ships everywhere, all anchored behind a chain boom that had been stretched across the mouth of the Clyde to keep out enemy submarines.

On Friday evening we set sail again, about 20 troopships in convoy protected by destroyers. We must have sailed half way to America before we double back towards Africa to pass through the Straits of Gibraltar at around midnight, more than a week after setting sail. We arrived in Algiers on a Sunday, after being at sea for 16 days.

It was quite peaceful at anchor off Algiers until about 7 p.m., when enemy planes from Sicily started to fly over. They came in to attack the convoy every quarter of an hour and when they flew low over the harbour all the ship's guns opened up. This went on continuously until 6.30 a.m. the following day, yet SS Scythia was the only ship to be hit. An aerial torpedo blasted a huge hole in at one end, but the watertight compartments prevented it from sinking. Several RAF personnel were killed. Next morning Scythia was given preference in docking, but by the time all the troops were off-loaded it was 9 p.m. and the bombing had started



again. We spent the first night ashore huddled in local gardens in the pouring rain and the second night in the grandstand of the local football ground. On the third day we route marched 16 miles in full kit, setting up a depot at a desolate placed called Oued Smar. We were the follow up troops to the North Africa invasion.

From here I was posted to HQ 141 Force, Ecole Normale, Bougarea near Algiers. I was picked up by a jeep provided especially to transport me to this place, which was very heavily guarded. It transpired that it was the joint Army, Navy and Air Force HQ from which the invasion of Sicily was being planned. I remained at Bougarea until June, when we all moved by train in box wagons from Algiers to Tunis. This was a four-day journey, including stops for meals, which consisted of corned beef for us and baked beans for the Yanks.

Eventually, in July 1943, we went across to Sicily in landing ships, which carried our transport. We landed at Syracuse, but as the fighting moved up the coast we moved to Catania. By then we were called the 15th Army Group. The Sicily campaign only lasted for six weeks but I was there for another five months, being left behind with an officer and a sapper to clear things up. I moved out of Sicily on New Years Day 1944 by army truck. We crossed the Messina Straits in an LST and after four days joined our colleagues at Bari in Southern Italy. I remained in Bari HQ No.2 District for 12 months.

My final move was to Transportation HQ in Rome, which was based in the Italian Railway Headquarters. The British Army had requisitioned the building, although American soldiers were also occupying the same building. I remained here for another 12 months, staying until after the end of hostilities.

Composed by Edward Flaherty

Dear Sir,

I found some poems whilst recently looking through the papers of my grandfather, Joseph Horrocks.

These were composed by Edward Flaherty, and I would like to return them to his family if possible. I think they were written in 1914 in Salford Royal Hospital, at the end of World War I. His regiment was possibly 76th FD. AMB and I think he was from Wigan. He mentions his daughter

'Maureen' who was nine years old at the time.

If any readers know of any relatives of Maureen Flaherty, (born c.1905), then please email or write to me so I can let them have the four poems.

Lynda Murphy
3 Horning Crescent
Burnley Lancs
BB10 2NT
Email:
epilepticmonkey@ntlworld.com

Maureen

*My charming daughter Maureen, I love most sincere;
 I feel the world is at my feet when she is standing near,
 She was born one winter morn, when the snow lay on the ground,
 God's gift to us, her parents, great joy we have now found.*

*I'll never forget those precious hours when teaching her to talk
 Into my open arms one day, she unsteadily walked.
 These first few steps her golden mile, I watched in admiration,
 Her chubby face was beaming at me, in adoration.*

*Rosy cheeks, dark brown hair, and pale blue Irish eyes,
 She is a vision of beauty, as an angel in disguise
 I take her on rambles, now, where flowers are growing wild.
 This is my heaven here on earth when I am with my child.*

*I recall so clear one certain day, she climbed upon my knee,
 Her eyes upturned she whispered softly; Dad, do you love me?
 When she spoke those golden words, I kissed her tiny hand,
 And sent a prayer of thanks for this wondrous love so grand.*

*When I was ill with fever, she sat by to comfort me;
 Her presence, there, beside me, seemed to set my body free!
 Of all the gifts I have ever owned, she is my greatest joy,
 A worldly love, inspired by God, I hope nothing will destroy,
 I pray she'll always love me, that we never have to part,
 Should great harm e're befall her, t'would surely break my heart.*

Edward Flaherty

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Family History



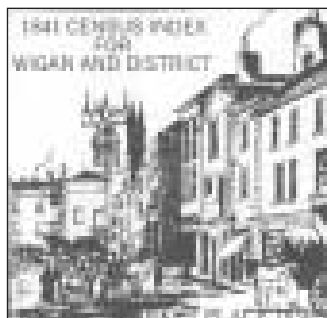
Recent Donations and Projects

Most readers of *Past Forward* will be aware of the recent issue of the 1861 census name index to Wigan and district, and of the huge efforts made by Friends of Wigan Heritage Service, especially Mrs Barbara Davies, to make this a success. A copy of this should have been received by now, by all who requested it.

Some readers will also be aware of the 1841 census indexing project, again by Friends of Wigan Heritage Service. This is now complete.

Most of our readers, however, will be unaware of the steady contribution of other unofficial Friends to this last project. These are primarily from the *LancsGen* website and Canada. Apart from assisting on this project, many have set up their own projects and these have ultimately benefited both local researchers and in some cases world wide researchers.

One such project has resulted in a donation of name indexes to the 1901 census for Ashton and Golborne, sent electronically by Frank Mitchell in Canada. Our dedicated Friends, Gerry Rigby and Alan Maloney have not only condensed these files into printed booklets for our use, but along with others in the



Upholland Family History Society, are steadily indexing the other sections of the 1901 census. So far we have received indexes for Upholland, Billinge, Pemberton, Winstanley, Orrell, Standish, Shevington, Aspull and Haigh. More recently they have tackled Wigan itself and have so far

completed RG13/3552- RG13/3556 inclusive.

Gerry Rigby's tireless contribution to genealogy also extends from the Wigan area to St. Helens. He and his cohorts, especially Harry Roughley, have been transcribing Roman Catholic Church registers for that area.

Another local project currently being undertaken is one indexing notices of birth, death and marriage, especially Coroner's inquests, appearing in the *Wigan Observer*. This is in addition to the project indexing *Wigan Observer* run by the Friends.

There are also people helping to make available the Wigan Register Office indexes online at www.lancashirebmd.org.uk. A gargantuan task. If you are interested in assisting with this one, please contact

the website.

One final project, the first stage of which has recently been completed, is that being independently undertaken by Gordon Cooke. This has been to index the burial registers for St Matthew's Church, Highfield. These registers can now be viewed in two ways, either in the Taylor Gallery using the CD Rom, kindly donated to us by Gordon, or by accessing the church's website at www.stmatthewhighfield.org.uk/registers. Not only are there alphabetical surname listings but also listings by grave number and a graveyard plan. In addition to this, on the CD ROM version there is also a link to an image of the actual register entry.

Gordon is considering adding baptisms at St. Matthew's next.

Websites

As I indicated above, Michael Fisher, one of our indexing Friends in Canada, has recently set up an excellent website for Standish, Shevington, Billinge Chapel End, Rainford and Upholland. He calls the site the Online Parish Clerk and as well as a few good photos he has made general information about the above areas available. The bulk of this consists of 1841 census data for the areas and directories. Where possible, he plans to add baptisms and marriages. Some areas also have 1861 census data. ➡



Book Review

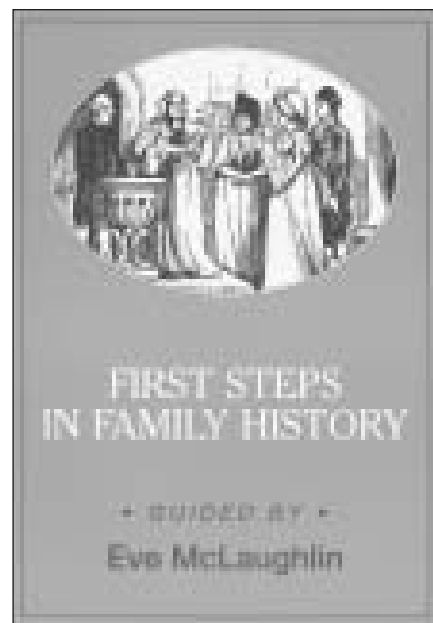
First Steps in Family History 5th ed. by Eve McLaughlin. Countryside Books £7.95.

First published in 1989 and now in its 5th revision, this very readable and simple guide to tracing your family history is written with the complete beginner in mind.

There is information concerning adoption, how to interview elderly relatives, how to track down long lost cousins and how to interpret and use the information that you find. In particular there is an explanation of the major sources such as census and civil registration.

There is advice for those who work and rely heavily on the post and for those who care for relatives and thus may have little time for hobbies.

All in all, a useful guide to keep close by.



Available from the History Shop

CHANCE ENCOUNTER

For instance, for Standish, you can find the 1841 census (also for Shevington), baptisms from Standish Hall Chapel 1742-99 and the Catholic census for 1764. For the future, he would like to include memorial inscriptions for St. Wilfred's and St. Marie's.

You can access the Online Parish Clerk and even join Michael Fisher by providing assistance with source material at <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/lancsopc/indexOPC%20Main.htm>.

www.nationalarchivist.com

The National Archives is the title of the newly combined archives of the Historical Manuscript Commission and Public Record Office.

The site will concentrate on providing online access to records in the National Archives itself. The first records are now available. These are:-

- Index to Divorce and Matrimonial Causes 1858-1903.
- Index to Death Duty Registers 1796-1903.
- Births, Marriages and Deaths at Sea 1854-90.
- Passport applications registers 1851-62 and 1874-1903.

And coming soon: Colonial Office Registry of Emigration Shipping 1847-1855.

This is a pay per view site. Registration and a brief search of the records' index is free but, as with the 1901 census site, credits must be purchased to view actual images of the records. The minimum purchase amount is £6 for 30 credits. These last for 30 days. As with other pay per view sites there are incentives to purchase greater numbers of units for example 65 credits for £12 and 120 for £20.

www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk

The above is the official government source of genealogical data for Scotland. The combined records of birth, marriage and death from the General Register Office for Scotland (1855 onwards) and Old Parish Records (OPR) (1553-1854) with the census records for Scotland 1881-1901, make this an exceptional site and a must for Scottish researchers.

Access to databases is again £6 for 30 page credits which are valid for 48 hours. However, it is possible during that period of time to advance your research by several generations since Scottish certificates give far greater details than those for England and Wales. These can also be downloaded to your printer for no further cost.

www.nationalarchives.ie. National Archives of Ireland www.proni.nics.gov.uk Public Record Office for N Ireland www.groni.gov.uk General Register Office for N Ireland www.groireland.ie. General Register Office Ireland

Unlike Scotland, the Irish websites supply pure information but nevertheless assist those researching from outside of Ulster or Eire, and especially when preparing for a visit to these countries in order to access records.

The National Archives of Ireland site has as yet no images of records to view online but it does have a wealth of indexes to databases such as those records belonging to the Famine Relief Commission and National Education Records. The indexes for the latter in particular are fairly detailed, listing school records available under county and then by school name, with the dates available per school.

The Northern Ireland sites and that for GRO Ireland have a similar set up. Lots of information on the records but no access online to these.

It is possible, however, to order birth, marriage and death certificates online for both areas of Ireland.

Six or seven years ago my wife and I were browsing round the exhibitions at the History Shop, and with time on our hands we wandered upstairs to the Taylor Gallery. The far end of the room was a hive of activity, people were sitting in front of screens, reading books, unfurling maps or looking in filing cabinets. I realised this was where family historians did their research. My brother Allan had already started work on our family tree but I had only taken a passing interest and couldn't understand what all the fuss was about. Curiosity got the better of me and so I booked a film reader for the following week.

With some trepidation, and feeling like the new boy in class, I returned with notebook and pencil in hand to the Taylor Gallery (with a surname like mine, an appropriate place to learn about family history). The staff at Wigan and Leigh are very helpful and patient (unlike some of the libraries I have visited) but they can only spend so much time showing newcomers the ropes. Soon I was fumbling around on my own and getting nowhere fast; the amount of sources available seemed overwhelming.

Enter Tom Bennett

Luckily for me help was close at hand - the elderly gentleman sitting next to me was none other than Mr. Tom Bennett. "How long have you been doing this?" he asked. "About ten minutes", I replied, "and I don't have a clue what I am doing! How long have you been doing it?" I asked. "Oh, I've done my family tree" he said, "I'm doing some research for a relative in Australia."

After asking me a few questions he wandered nonchalantly over to the St. Catherine's House cabi-

net, before commandeering an empty fiche whilst the owner was elsewhere. Soon he was thumbing through parish records, before re-appearing with a film in his hands. A few turns of the spool and, hey presto! There was the name of my grandfather, Francis Morgan Taylor, on the screen in front of me. It was all so smooth and well practiced, he made it look easy.

Soon Tom was unlocking the mysteries of the General Registry Office, census returns, the International Genealogical Index and Boyd's Marriage Index, as well as showing me how he recorded his information. He also warned me of the problems concerning Roman Catholic Church records, but with a wink and a smile he added, "I know a couple of friendly priests though".

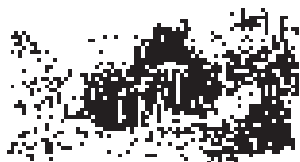
When it was time for Tom to go it dawned on me that he had spent all his research time helping me. Tom could smell a novice a mile off and later on I would give a wry smile as he helped some poor beginner or visitor from another town, just as he had helped me on my first day. He was so respected at the History Shop that when people asked the staff for advice they would often turn to Tom for confirmation.

I agree with Mary Ann Ashcroft (issue 35 p17) that Tom was indeed a kind, intelligent and generous man. He was also a brave man, as his wartime service record testifies (issue 33 p3 by Alan Davies). I hope that a fitting tribute or memorial can be arranged for him because he is gone but not forgotten. [See p24 Ed.]

Fascinated

Soon I realised that researching my family tree wasn't just about collecting

Continued on page 14



Continued from page 13

names and dates or buying certificates from the Register Office. It was a chance to weave together a story of my ancestors' lives and to better understand the social history of the times they lived in. I was fascinated by my new hobby and teamed up with my brother to continue the quest for our ancestors' story.

The central figure in our story is Isaac Fletcher Taylor (our great grandfather), because he is the one who introduced our branch of the family tree to Wigan in the 1870's, from his birthplace of Hale near Liverpool. For me, after hours sitting in front of a film reader, there is nothing more rewarding than to visit the birthplace of your forebears, to see the houses they lived in and walk the streets they walked. Hale is a lovely little village on the banks of the Mersey, close to John Lennon Airport, boasting thatched cottages, a light-house and a Norman church.

This church, however, had suffered a devastating arson attack in 1977, and the vicar warned us that, as the parish chest had suffered damage, there was a possibility that the Taylor records had been destroyed forever. A visit to Cheshire County Record Office, however, dispelled our fears - luckily, despite some damage, most of the pages of the Church register were still decipherable. Some missing information was found by visiting the Lancashire County Record Office at Preston to look at Bishops Transcripts. After this terrible event the Church hierarchy advised their parishes to have their

records microfilmed and stored in a safe and secure place.

Beware!

Historically, Hale, like Liverpool, belongs to Lancashire. The formation of the Metropolitan Authorities in 1974 - and the subsequent boundary changes that followed - brought Hale under the control of Merseyside. However, its registration affairs are looked after by Runcorn Register Office, which lies on the other side of the River Mersey in Cheshire. This is significant, so new researchers beware! Isaac's obituary in the *Wigan Observer* stated wrongly that he came from Hale in Cheshire, so we assumed that he had been born in the other Hale, southwest of Manchester Airport. Of course there had to be another Isaac, born in the same year and with a similar pedigree. Frustratingly, we spent time researching someone else's family tree, although some excellent pub lunches compensated for our error!

At the time of Isaac's birth on 24 September 1855, his father William fulfilled the busy role of village postmaster, grocer, shoemaker and Parish Clerk. Isaac's mother, Mary, died when he was only 10 years old; his father remarried only to die of kidney failure 10 years later, aged only 48. To his second wife, Sarah, was left the responsibility of running the shop and the upbringing of their five remaining children. Isaac had already left home to seek his fortune elsewhere and two of his siblings, Sarah and Arthur, had died in early childhood.

William is buried in the graveyard at St. Mary's, close to the church walls as befits his status and near to the grave of his parents Thomas and Mary.

Typically the first census of Hale Township, in 1841, shows Thomas's profession simply as agricultural labourer, but in the

early days of the Industrial Revolution that's what people did in rural England, they worked on the land.

The Hale Childe

On the other side of the church lies the massive grave of one of Hale's most interesting characters, the "Hale Childe". It is surrounded by railings and on the gravestone is written "HERE LYETH THE BODIE OF JOHN MIDDLETON THE CHILDE BORN 1578 DYED 1623 NINE FEET THREE". John was anything but a child, he was a giant of a man, 9' 3" in height, with hands measuring 17" in length and 6" in width. Sir Gilbert Ireland took Middleton to the court of King James 1 where he easily beat the King's champion in a pre-arranged fight. In the 18th century, to silence the doubters and sceptics of the Hale Childe legend, John's remains were exhumed and taken to nearby Hale Hall where his body was measured before being taken back to its final resting place at St. Mary's.

Ince

The census of March 1881 finds Isaac living in Ince and working as a goods railway guard at Springs Branch locomotive depot. He is married to Sarah and they have two daughters, Mary Elizabeth aged two, and Sarah Ellen who was only four months old at the time. Isaac's wife Sarah was born in the hamlet of Newland, in Gloucestershire. Isaac and Sarah's marriage certificate tells us that Thomas Morgan, Sarah's father, was a miner; presumably he moved his family north to seek employment in the vast Wigan coalfields.

By contrast, Isaac's younger brother, William, was living in London and employed as a footman for Lt. Col. (Hon) Henry W. J. Byng, Coldstream Guards, Hon. Col. Middlesex Militia

and Equerry to Queen Victoria.

On the Council

In 1895 Isaac was elected as the first ever Labour councillor on Ince Council.

On 27 February 1895 he was present at the very first meeting of the School Attendance Committee, formed to hear the excuses of parents on non-attendance of their children at school. During a meeting of the Highways, Streets, Tramways and Lighting Committee on 11 March he seconded a motion to pay the unemployed 3s. per yard for stone breaking and 2s.6d (later amended to 3s.) per day for street cleaning. On 1 May Isaac was appointed onto the committee that was instrumental in the construction of the tramway system through Lower Ince and onwards to Platt Bridge. Later he was foreman of Ince Public Health Department, until he retired in 1925 at the age of 70.

Isaac's son Francis, (my grandfather), served in the 1/5 Manchester Regiment (the Colliers Battalion) in World War 1. He fought in Gallipoli in 1915, ending the war as Company Quarter Master Sergeant and recipient of the Meritorious Service Medal. After the war Francis worked as a carter for Ince Council (hints of nepotism?). I have an old sepia photograph of him (see right) standing on Ince Town Hall steps with other dignitaries, proudly wearing his medals as he represented Ince ex-servicemen on Armistice Sunday, November 1932.

A military tradition

My father Jack and I were both regular soldiers and my eldest son Craig has carried on the tradition by being the fourth generation Taylor to serve in the army.

When I enlisted into the army in 1967, the recruit-





*Ince Ex-Servicemen's Armistice Day Parade, 1932.
(Pictured outside Ince Town Hall).*

ing office was located at the old Territorial Drill Hall in Powell Street, Wigan - the same building from which my grandfather had marched off to war 52 years earlier. After leaving the regular army I joined the T.A. and was based at the Drill Hall for many years until finally, in 1986, the old building was demolished in the name of progress.

It was a wonderful old red bricked Victorian building, constructed just after Isaac arrived in Wigan from Hale. Inside I always felt a strange atmosphere, a strong sense of history, and I could almost hear the ghosts of the old soldiers, my grandfather included, on parade for the last time before marching off to war. They were derided as being 'Saturday Soldiers' or 'Weekend Warriors', but many of them paid the ultimate price. They fought and died on battlefields that are now household names, such as Gallipoli, Ypres and the Somme.

Isaac's legacy

Isaac died in 1944 at the grand old age of 88, just before the allied invasion force struck across the channel at Normandy. He is buried in Ince Cemetery close to the railway track on which he once worked. His obituary in the *Wigan Observer* reports that "... council workers acted as

bearers at his funeral and the flag was flown at half mast at the Town Hall as a mark of respect."

Isaac left a fine legacy in Wigan. He would have been proud to know that his grandson, Robert Taylor (my uncle) also became a Councillor, and in 1965 was elected as Chairman of Ince Urban District Council. Amongst Isaac's descendants are Lisa Stansfield, the famous singer, one of his many great granddaughters, and a great-great grandson is Gareth Hock, one of the rising young Rugby League stars at Wigan Warriors.

My chance encounter with Tom Bennett inspired me to embark on a fascinating voyage of discovery back through time in search of my family name. Cheers Tom.

Graham Taylor
20 Lynton Ave
Wigan

STOP PRESS

The 1841 census indexing project has now finished. A first disc is currently being inspected for possible problems and when this stage is complete, the next stage of actually producing multiple copies will commence.

It is anticipated that this will cost the same as the 1861 census index.

More details in the next edition of *Past Forward*.

NOW IN STOCK AT THE TAYLOR GALLERY

Donations

PLUMB, Brian Arundel to Zabi:- a biographical dictionary of the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales 1623-1987
CD ROM - ST MATTHEW'S CHURCH, HIGHFIELD - Burials 1923-1989

Transcripts

LPRS Vol. 156 Prescott 1727-65

Fiche

ST BARTHOLOMEW'S WESTHOUGHTON Memorial Inscriptions
ST KATHERINE'S BLACKROD Memorial Inscriptions
ST LAURENCE CHORLEY Memorial Inscriptions

CD ROMS

LANCASHIRE CENSUS for 1861, 1871, 1901
1861 NAME INDEX
1891 NAME INDEX VERSION 3

Genealogy Books

COLLINS, A *Basic Facts About wills after 1858*
The Family and Local History handbook
MOORE, Susan T *Family feuds: introduction to Chancery proceedings*
PEACOCK, Caroline & Jonathan *Good Web Guide: Genealogy*
PHILLIMORE *Atlas and index of Parish Registers. New edition.*
RAYMOND, Stuart A *War Memorials on the web, Part 2, The Midlands, N. England etc.*
SMITH, Kelvin & WATTS, M *Records of Merchant Shipping & Seamen*
TITFORD, J *Writing up your family history*
TONKS, David *My ancestor was a coal miner*

Military Matters

355.1342 FEUYER, W H *The Distinguished Service Medal - 2 vols:- 1914-20, 1939-46 (Naval Awards)*
355.1342 McINNES, Ian *The Meritorious Service Medal: the Immediate Awards 1916-1928*
355.16 HURST, Sidney C *Silent Cities: guide to War Cemeteries and memorials to the missing*
355.31 COOP, Rev J O *Story of the 55th (West Lancs) Division*
355.31 DAVIES, Jane *The York and Lancaster Regiment*
356.1 DOWNHAM, J *East Lancs Regiment 1855-1958*
940.467 NATIONAL ROLL of the Great War, Section XI
Manchester
959.5104 BONNER, Robert *Jungle Bashers*

General Books

305.4 TURNER, Mary *The Women's century: a celebration of changing roles 1900-2000*
338.2724 RILEY, P *Pits and Looms*
338.2724 WINSTANLEY, Ian *Colliery scrap book 3*
338.4767721 HOLCROFT, Fred *The Lancashire cotton famine around Leigh*
352.042 TATE, W E *The Parish Chest*
362.1094276 KING, Stephen *Fylde country practice: medicine and society in Lancashire*
385.0942753 *Story of Merseyrail*
385.54 TOWNLEY, C H A and PEDEN, J A *Industrial railways of St Helens, Widnes and Warrington, Part 2 - St Helens coalfield*
388.322 PHILLIPS, Ron *The Leyland buses of Wigan Corporation*
388.322 SANDFORD, Geoff *St Helens trolleybuses*

Continued on page 16



Continued from page 15

The Roper family of Standish with Langtree

Seeking information about two sons of James and Elizabeth Roper who remained in the UK after their siblings John, Ruth and Joseph left for New Zealand in the early 1900's.

The descendants of Thomas William Roper, born 1876 and James Roper, born 1884 are sought by the grandson of John Roper (1880-1954). Where are you all?

Can you help? If so please contact Malcolm Smith; 138B Pembroke Street, Hamilton 2001, New Zealand tel: 07 8395708 or email: malcandace@clear.net.nz

Private E. Hunter

Dear Editor,

I have had *Past Forward* passed on to me recently. At an auction recently here in Liverpool I purchased a framed (easily detached) certificate presented to Private E. Hunter R.A.M.C. 7362256 in 1945, by the people of Norway for helping to liberate their country and signed Olaf (King!).

On the back of the frame Private Hunter's home address is given as 8 Bolton Street, Scholes, Wigan, Lancs. I would be willing to pass on the certificate (as a gift) to any relative who would like it.

**John Derbyshire
9 Boxdale Road
Liverpool L18 5EN**



'J. M. STAMPER WIGAN 1910'

Sir,

I wonder if any of your readers can help me. I have two beautifully hand painted cows horns at home (see left); one of the horns is signed J.M. Stamper Wigan, 1910 on the incurve.

I have been told they were given to my great aunt Alice Jane Burgess (b.1879 in 68 Albert Street, Pemberton) by a 'suitor' whom I guess was a butcher by trade – there were a couple of connections to butchers in the family. Her eldest brother, Henry Jolley Burgess (b.1874 in Wigan) was a journeyman butcher, while Henry's children, Gerald and Elizabeth, were both employed in McAvoy's Butchers in the Market Hall. (One of the McAvoy's was my form master at Thomas Linacre – circles within circles.)

I wonder if anybody knows who this J.M. Stamper was? There are no 'skeletons' – Alice went on to marry Arthur Murphy from Dublin.

I have also attached a family photo taken c.1897 (see above); Henry Jolley Burgess is at the back, centre left, with Alice standing to his right. I have done a fair bit of research on the family and have numerous bmd certificates etc. should anyone else in the family require them.

Thank you.

**John Burgess
13 The Brook
Grantstown Park
Waterford Ireland**

Continued from page 15

- 388.46094273 GILLHAM, J C and WISEMAN, R J S *Tramways of South Lancashire and North Wales*
- 394.26941 WATERS, Colin *Dictionary of Saints days, fasts, feasts and festivals*
- 709.427 CHILD, Dennis *Painters in the Northern Counties of England and Wales*
- 726.8 LEES, H *Exploring English churchyard memorials*
- 741.6 HOUFE, Simon *Dictionary of 19th century British book illustrators and caricaturists*
- 779 POLS, Robert *Family photographs 1860-1945*
- 796.3331 MOUNTFORD, Ces *Kiwis, Wigan and the Wire: my life and Rugby League*
- 929.1 GRUNDY, J E *History's midwives*
- 942.0823 HEY, David *How our ancestors lived: a history of life a hundred years ago*
- 942.736 ASHCROFT, Tony *Atherton and Tyldesley*
- 942.736 SMITH, M David *About Standish*
- 942.76 CHAPMAN, John *John Chapman's Lancashire*

A Wigan Family Album

BACK in November 2003 Mr. Scanlan got in touch with me from Hertfordshire, telling me he had an album of photographs, which had passed down through his family. They were taken in Wigan in 1905 of the photographer's home, family, patients and some general views. The photographer was Dr. Maurice McElligott, who practised in Wigan at the turn of the 20th century.

I thought they were so interesting, I asked Mr. Scanlan if we could share them with our readers in *Past Forward*. Mr. Scanlan was able to tell us some of the story and our own Local History Officers in Wigan and Leigh were able to put some more flesh on the bones of the story.

Dr. McElligott was born in County Kerry, Ireland in 1869. He qualified as a medical practitioner in 1894, taking up his first post in Coombe Hospital Dublin. Maurice

married Eleanor Malins in Dublin and moved to Belper, Derbyshire in 1896, as general practitioner and medical supervisor to the mid Derbyshire Isolation Hospital. His son Gerald was born in 1897.

About three years later Dr. McElligott moved to 23 Standishgate, Wigan, in general practice. A 1909 Wigan directory shows him in partnership as McElligott & Williams at that address. At the outbreak of World War 1 the Earl of Crawford lent 'The Woodlands,' a house he owned on Wigan Lane, as a military hospital for wounded soldiers to be run by the British Red Cross. According to a report in the of the first soldiers arriving in 1914, Dr. McElligott was one of the medical supervisors in attendance, on top of his other medical supervisory duties to the London & North Western Railway Company. He was a very busy

doctor.

In 1920 Dr. McElligott was appointed outdoor medical staff for Wigan, by the Ministry of Health, with an appropriate remuneration for his services.

In 1925 he moved to Sheffield with the Ministry of Health, and in 1933 he is found living and working in Hertfordshire. He retired in 1948 to his homeland of County Kerry where he died.

Dr. McElligott was an enthusiastic traveller; in 1912, for instance, he attended a medical conference in St. Petersburg, which must have been a long journey in those times, and holidayed on the continent most years. Some of his holiday pictures were also in the album. More than 25 pictures are of local interest; some of these we are pleased to share with you here.

*Len Hudson
Senior Technician*



Clockwise, from left: Mrs McElligott in drawing room; Mrs McElligott and son Gerald in drawing room; Joe Foster in the surgery; Mrs McElligott and Gerald with Bobby; No. 23 Standishgate.



Ephemera from the Archives

Historical background

From the beginning of New Testament Christianity the Church has baptised babies.

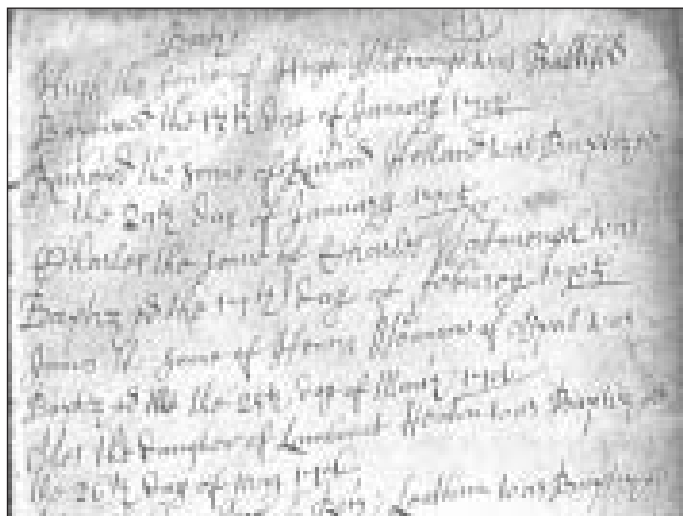
Polycarp (69-155), a disciple of the Apostle John, was recorded as being baptised as an infant. Similar expressions are found in succeeding generations by Origen (185 - 254) and Cyprian (215 - 258) who reflect the consensus voiced at the Council of Carthage in 254. The 66 bishops said: "We ought not hinder any person from baptism and the grace of God.... especially infants. . . those newly born."

Preceding this council, Origen wrote in his *Commentary on Romans 5: 9*: "For this also it was that the church had from the Apostles a tradition to give baptism even to infants. For they to whom the divine mysteries were committed knew that there is in all persons a natural pollution of sin which must be done away by water and the Spirit."

In the Augustinian period (354 - 430) specific directions, with detailed instructions, for the baptising of infants were given by bishops to pastors and deacons. Generally, the infant was baptised during the first week of life, but in cases of illness this took place on the day of birth.

King Ine of Wessex in 695 introduced ecclesiastical laws where a child had to be baptised within 30 days or the father had to pay the huge fine of

Baptisms and church registers



Early Baptismal Register, St. Katherine's C.of E., Blackpool (1701-26).

30 shillings. In 950 the laws of the Northumbrian priests shortened this period to nine nights

Show us your archive!

In the preliminary Articles of Visitation where churches were to be inspected (often by bishops) regarding the minutiae of their fabric, facilities and manner of services, drawn up by Cardinal Pole in Queen Mary's reign of 1553 - 1558, it is evident that the Church was expected to be maintaining a baptismal register. The relevant instruction states (*to ask*): "Whether do they keep the book or register of christenings, buryings or marriages, with the names of the godfathers and godmothers?"

It is very rare to find a birth as well as the baptism in registers until the Commonwealth period (1649 - 1653). Sadly during this period of Puritan

ascendancy many ancient baptism fonts were broken up and replaced with simple basins.

Many of you avidly working on your family trees will know already that the date in a church baptism register entry is not necessarily the birth date. Typically, before central registration of births was introduced in 1837, a child was baptised a few days or weeks after birth on a Sunday but this is not always the case. The ceremony could take place up to many years later, and sometimes not at all!

The registrar arrives

Between 1645 and 1660 many people did not have their children baptised because of the changing of the rite under the Commonwealth. During this period the date of birth was ordered to be entered in the christening register along with the parents' names. In

1653 the duty of registration was transferred from the clergy to an official called the Parish Register (the registrar of today).

Baptisms had to be paid for, the charge being one shilling initially. Thus many children were not to be baptised in poorer districts. After the Anglican Restoration of 1660 many of the unchristened babies were baptised as older children.

Other reasons for not being baptised can include the minister or clerk forgetting to record the event; registers being incomplete or damaged for periods; families falling out with the ministers; or people being members of other religious denominations. Because of this, in 1694 notification of birth to the Anglican incumbent (the vicar or rector) was made compulsory under penalty of a fine. Many clergy ignored this order, which was revoked in 1706.

During the late 17th and 18th century baptisms were often performed at home and often unregistered. In general baptism registers have not been as well kept as the other vital record events.

Rose's Act of 1812

A tax levied between 1783 and 1794 was to be another later deterrent. Rose's Act of 1812 led to the use of separate printed baptismal books, with space for names, occupations and parents home address.

Illegitimacy was also mentioned in the new registers, and termed in a



variety of curious ways such as; filia populi (son of the people), filius vulgi (daughter of an harlot), begotten in adultery, ye daughter of no certain man, a merry begot, a byeblow, lanebegot, and filia adulterina.

Foundlings and surnames

Abandoned children, or foundlings, had long been entered in baptism registers with the name of the parish or saint to whom the church was dedicated, or even the road or lane in which they had been found. All readers will know people with the names of localities. I personally have known a Joe Atherton, Phillip Hindley, George Haigh, Bert Tyldesley, George Bolton, Fred Worsley and Albert Walkden.

A word of warning, though; the presence of such names does not necessarily mean their ancestry contains such a sad event. Surnames first occurred between the 11th and 15th centuries. Previously people were referred to by their given names and the locality in which they resided such as Hugh de Hyndelegh (Hugh of Hindley). This was not as confusing as it might seem due to the small populations in the Borough's various villages.

The acquisition of surnames during the past 800 years has been affected by many factors, including social class and social structure, cultural tradition, and naming practices in neighbouring cultures. The poorer classes around Wigan Borough over the centuries have had little choice but to accept the mistakes of officials, clerks, and priests who bestowed upon them new versions of their



First Baptismal Register after Rose's Act of 1812, Lowton St. Luke's.

surnames.

Baptismal registers still continue to be of use for the genealogist until 1874, as fines for non registration were still levied until 37 years after the arrival of Civil Registration in 1837.

Enter Dr Perkins

Regular user of the Archives and long standing member of the Lancashire Parish Register Society, editor of the Ashton-In-Makerfield St Thomas and Prescott Church volumes of transcriptions to name just two, Dr John Perkins FRCP has decided to research one particular aspect of baptismal records. The former Leigh Infirmary doctor is comparing the registered dates of birth with the dates of baptism. To do this he is ploughing through all the volumes of the LPRS - over 150!

John is comparing the dates and noting how the time interval changed over the years. Apparently there is a noticeable gradual lengthening of the period until the arrival of a new bishop, who would often then tighten up practices regarding this source of revenue! The entering of John's findings onto computer will enable the

data to be analysed in a variety of interesting ways. Hopefully these will find their way into *Past Forward* in a future issue.

Baptismal trivia

In 1998, 2000 people were baptised at once in Charlotte, North Carolina, USA - by fire hose. Among those assisting with the service were church elders and several firefighters. "It's not the water," C. B. Gibson of the United House of Prayer for All People explained, "it's the belief you have in it."

Ken Taylor soldiers on

Much loved old campaigner Ken, veteran of Leigh St Marys, Wigan All Saints and Hindley All Saints transcriptions for the LPRS has now finished two more. His transcription of the Lowton St Lukes registers covering the period 1733 to 1837 now awaits checking by fellow member Michael Watts against the Bishop's Transcripts at Lancashire Record Office and probably by the time this goes to press Blackrod St Catherines will be ready for checking also.

Ken has found the Blackrod registers have a certain 'charm'. for want of a

better word - the person completing the early entries seemingly anticipated the arrival of text messaging 300 years later! He decided that vowels were not required quite regularly. A place of birth in the baptism register spelt Pnngtn becomes Pennington, for example.

As't bin t' Luntory recent?

One entry puzzled Ken and myself, down in the Blackrod baptism register as *Luntory*. Even Google, the massively powerful internet search engine, only came up with one entry, of somewhere in Finland where a global warming conference was being held. We both agreed this did not seem probable.

Initially I thought Luntory may be Llanthony in Wales, but when the word was actually spoken with a subtle hint of Lancashire dialect (some of southern extraction say I have more than a hint!) it emerged as Langtree! (near Standish).

Ken intends to take a well earned break soon to concentrate on family life. However, the lure of the register will, I am sure, draw him back sooner rather than later.

Alan Davies
Archives Officer

ST. JOHN'S BIBLE CLASS, PEMBERTON c.1913



Back row: R. Melling, J.E. Sell, J. Derbyshire, J. Lee, T. Sell, P. Fairhurst, W.R. Wright, E. Corless, J. Wilkinson, G. Fairhurst, H. Liptrot, T. Barton, P. Gee.

2nd row: J. Barton, W. Hesketh, C. Hesketh, J. Moorfield, J. Walsh, T. Liptrot, E. Wilding, J. Atherton.

3rd row: W. Green, J. Ashurst, T. Liptrot, R. Crompton, A. Cheetham, W. Rowbottom, W. Cuerden, J. Bradley, T. Gaskell, W. Glover.

Front row: T. Swift, J. Liptrot, F. Liptrot, J. Sharples, A. Billington, V. Winstanley, E. Banks, T. Tither, R. Rylance, J. Tither, (Secretary).

Centre: J. Liptrot, (Teacher 1893 to 1912)

MEMORIES OF HAPPY DAYS IN WIGAN

Dear Editor,

I am now 82 years of age. I lived in Fir Grove, Beech Hill, Wigan until the age of 16 when I moved with my parents to Plymouth when my father, Jack Cole, transferred from the Wigan 'Dole Office' to a job with the Admiralty.

A boyhood friend was Jack Fisher who then lived in Maple Grove and later became Shift Charge Engineer at Wigan and then Westwood Power Stations. Over the years we have kept in touch, and recently his widow, Kathleen sent me issue no. 34 of Past Forward. On reading through all the very interesting contents I was amazed to discover my name on p 40 in 'Blasts from the Past' – I was one of the pupils at Wigan Grammar School listed as having passed the School Certificate in July 1937. I remember being caned once by the headmaster, Mr. Whitehouse, and feel that a few of today's youth would benefit from the same treatment!

During this time I sang alto in St. Andrew's Church Choir and was present at the Rev.

Buckmaster's wedding. The curate, Mr. Picket, prepared me for confirmation and told me the facts of life, which I already knew, being the eldest of seven children!

In 1940 I joined the R.A.F. and trained as a WOP/AG. During my wireless training at Blackpool I visited Wigan many times and went to a dance at the Empress Hall with my friends, Ken and Kathleen Greenall, who later became Mrs. Doug Higham and ran a fruit and vegetable stall in Wigan market for many years. At this dance I met my wife Eunice Taylor and discovered



we had both been at Beech Hill Infants School (Headmistress Miss Roberts) and Senior School (Headmaster Mr. Glover). We have been together ever since and recently celebrated our Diamond Wedding Anniversary. On our Gold Wedding we visited St. Michael's Church where we were married during the war, and visited many old friends.

My wife was brought up in Gidlow Houses (colliery cottages in the countryside between Dunns Farm and Waring's Farm), and had an idyllic childhood. The 21 houses were all occupied by relatives and close friends and their doors were always open. The children played in the fields and constructed their own 'cocky pond' in the 'piggy field' containing frogs, newts and sticklebacks. We must have loads of relations in the area who do not know of our existence, as Eunice's cousins Bobby and Norman Taylor (both now deceased) were very prolific.

My wife's uncle, George Hulse, who lived in Gidlow



Lane, was quite a character. He drove a fruit and vegetable cart around Beech Hill, and the Wigan Observer reported that one day he was ill in bed and his horse broke out of its stable and trotted about a mile up Gidlow Lane to kick on his front door!

I enclose photographs of two of my own oil paintings. One of George Hulse with his horse and one of my wife when we first met. Perhaps you might like to include these in *Past Forward*.

Hoping my reminiscences are of interest.

**Cecil E Cole
Clevedon
North Somerset**

HISTORY SHOP NEWS

Family History workshops at the History Shop

THE Friends of Wigan Heritage Service will be holding more family history workshops during the spring and early summer, designed for beginners as a taster to get you started on the fascinating topic of genealogy. All sessions will be individually delivered by a member of the Friends of Wigan Heritage Service, with many years experience of researching their own family history. Please note the records at the History Shop are only suitable for the research of the Wigan Metropolitan Borough area.

Workshops to be held every second Wednesday from 21 April to 30 June 2004 inclusive.

Sessions run between 1.30 pm and 4.00 pm and last about one hour.

Charge £1.50 per person.

Booking essential.

NB Other arrangements can be made for those who cannot attend Wednesday afternoon. Please ring 01942 828128 for details.

Memorial Fund for Tom Bennett

IN the last issue of Past Forward we published a letter by Mary Ann Ashcroft from California suggesting that other readers may want to join her in contributing to a lasting memorial to Mr Tom Bennett who died at the end of 2002. We have had many offers of support for this idea since that publication, from people he knew here in Wigan and from those far away. He was indeed a good friend to the Heritage Service and we are just as keen as Mary Ann to ensure some sort of commemoration to him. The enthusiasm of Mary Ann, the response we have had since the last issue and our own desire to set something of this sort up has led to the Tom Bennett Memorial Fund being established. Already standing at over £250 we are aiming to raise as much as possible towards a combined film and fiche reader in the refurbishment of our study area next year. We think it would be a nice touch to put Tom's name on such a machine or even an area so that future researchers can be aided in their quest by this generous man. To that end the Heritage Service pledge to match the total raised in this way to put a sizeable sum down towards the refurbishment in his name.

If you knew Tom I'm sure you



would want to contribute, but it can also be seen as a way of helping future generations research their Wigan roots, and you may feel it worthwhile.

Please mark all donations clearly to the Tom Bennett memorial fund and make any cheques out to WLCT.

Thank you.

Please note the money you donate may be put up as match funding in a Heritage Lottery Bid, thus doubling (or more) it again. So every pound you donate could be worth at least three to us and four to the refurbishment scheme.

HIRE OF MEETING ROOM

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

SOCIETY RATE

£8.25

PER MORNING/ AFTERNOON SESSION

£12.35

PER EVENING SESSION

COMMERCIAL RATE

£20.00

PER MORNING/AFTERNOON/EVENING SESSION

If you are interested, contact Philip Butler

Tel (01942) 828128

Thank you Max and welcome David

IT SEEMS once again that much has happened since the last issue. A few final, final issues with the 1861 CD have been sorted out, (now available at £7 + pp from the History Shop); the 1841 Census index CD is nearly, but not quite, ready for burning; another series of family history workshops has been tremendously well attended at the History Shop; the indexing of the Wigan newspapers has carried on apace at the History Shop, while the project to index the historic Dootson collection of books at Leigh has also got into its stride.

More about each of these below; the main news for the Friends, however, revolves around meetings and our chairperson. Firstly if you are local, interested in Wigan's

Continued on page 24

This is the eighth composition by Gerald Rickards in the series that started in Issue No.29 with an Aspull drawing, planned for the cover of the book which the late Eva Turner had devoted so much time to and which hopefully will some day be published.

The drawings that followed in *Past Forward* have, of course, all been to a standard portrait or vertical format. Paintings, with colour prints, have now been done based on all the compositions – Aspull, Orrell, Standish, Leigh, the Town Hall, Ince and even the quiz design in the last issue. And incidentally, the results of the quiz will be included in the next issue.

The production of the Wigan drawing differs from all the previous work because it is based on a painting already completed – a painting, in fact, from the late 1990's, done along with three other Wigan compositions as well as a triptych in a similar style which was commissioned for the Library Street offices of estate agents Regan and Hallworth.

The Wigan composition contains many of the town's taller buildings, but there are some notable omissions. Several of the interesting churches and chapels are missing and neither of the two large Wigan and Leigh College buildings are represented. There is also no evidence of the old cinemas and no Makinson Arcade. The list could continue and it becomes obvious that there is more than enough material still available for further Wigan compositions.

As to future plans for the series, I should know from past experience that with so many other commitments it is foolish to make forecasts and promises. I have, however, whilst working on murals at the Hospice, been a frequent visitor to Hindley and have received more than one offer of assistance from people who know the area well. A greater challenge for the future is going to be the areas around Tyldesley; though offers of guidance from people living in the district have

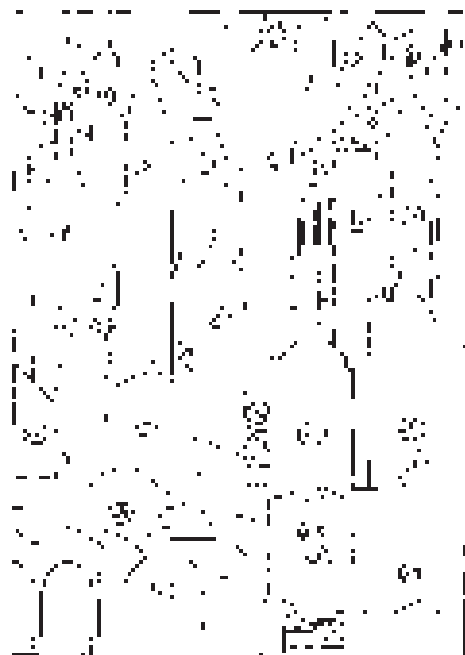
been received. However, Haigh seems to be a strong possibility because I have done so much work there in the past, even though most of my previous drawings and paintings have featured places in or near the Country Park. I wonder if any of my past pupils or students remember making sketches around Haigh Hall. It was following one such excursion that I decided to do my first study of the greenhouses and lily pond – and now I am approaching the thirtieth painting in the series.

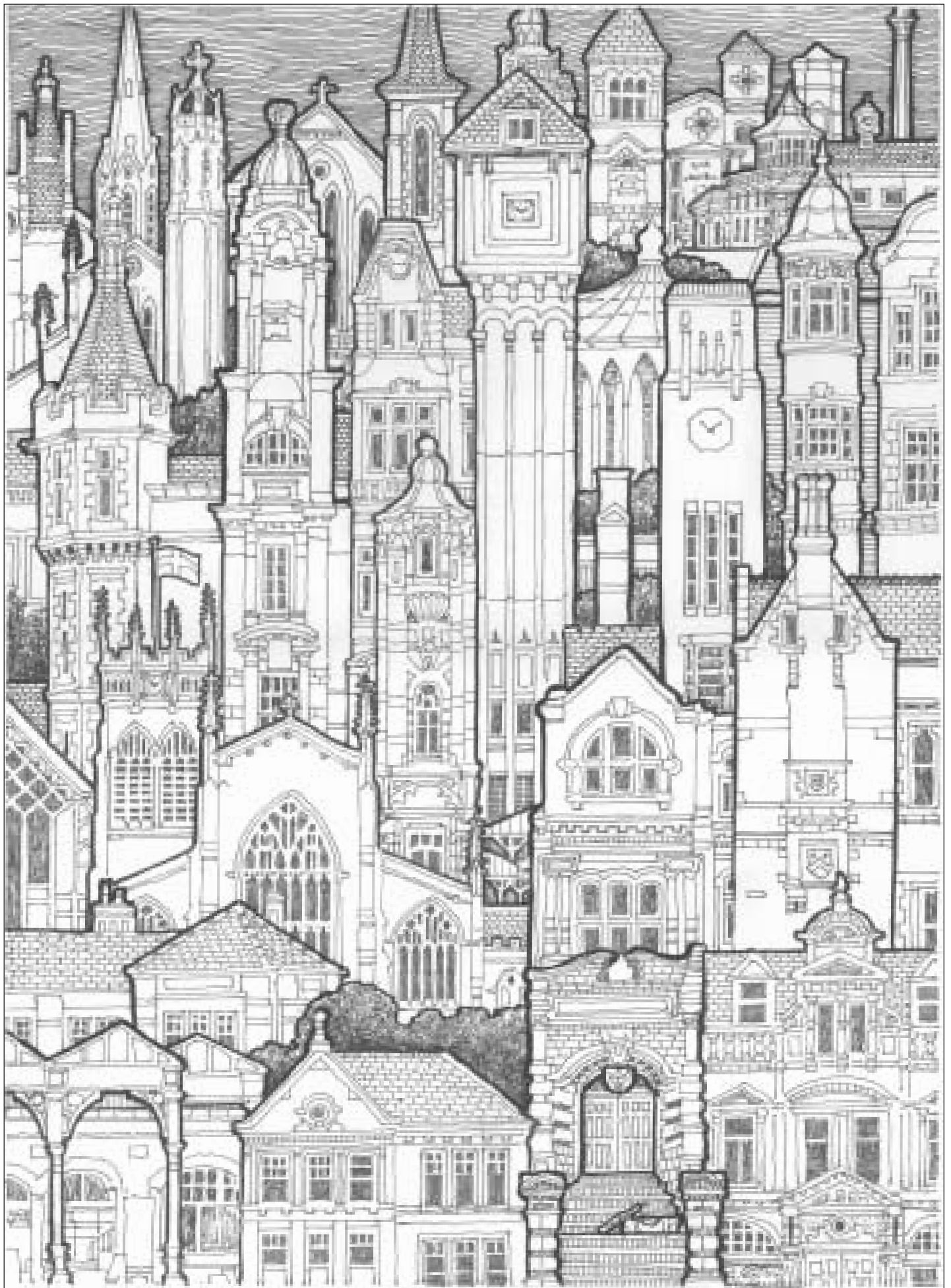
KEY

1. The Wiend Centre, built at the highest point on the hill.
2. St. Catherine's Church, where the spire outlined against a clear sky seems to lean a little more every year.
3. Cenotaph designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott, the architect for the Anglican Cathedral at Liverpool, who was also involved in the design of telephone kiosks.
4. Former Methodist Church in Standishgate, that became a restaurant and was re named 'Burridge's'.
5. The eye catching roof outline of Central Railway Station, in Station Road, which has long since been demolished.
6. Trencherfield Mill, which is now an important part of the Wigan Pier tourist area.
7. The Orwell at Wigan Pier, which was once one of the canalside warehouses.
8. Eckersley's Mill, as seen beyond Swan Meadow Road, looking from Trencherfield Mill.
9. Mill chimney, seen beyond the buildings in Swan Meadow Road.
10. Queen's Hall tower, with the main entrance leading to a re-styled smaller interior.
11. Former Barclay's Bank building, near the main post office, where 'Tote' replaced the original name above the entrance.
12. Galleries clock tower, standing on a spot where the open market used to be.
13. Pavilion at the top of the steps in Mesnes Park, with the rock like shape on which the Boer War statue used to stand.
14. Canalside office of North West Tourist Board, near to Bottom Lock on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal.
15. Magistrates Court building at the corner of King Street West and Rodney Street.
16. The bandstand in Mesnes Park.

WIGAN

17. Thomas Linacre Care Centre. Originally Wigan Grammar School it became Mesnes High School and now it has been re designed and become an important part of the Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Trust.
18. Building at the Wallgate end of Library Street, with the corner door entrance to the bank.
19. Cook's travel agents in Market Place, with solicitor's offices on the upper floors.
20. Marketgate; the passage way from the Market Place leading to the Galleries.
21. The Parish Church, with St. George's flag on the tower.
22. Market stalls in the enclosed open area of the Galleries.
23. Previously the Wigan Mining and Technical College but now the main entrance to the Town Hall.
24. History Shop, which was the former library designed by the Victorian architect, Sir Alfred Waterhouse.
25. Wallgate Railway Station, once known as the L & Y.
26. The town's main Post Office in Wallgate, next to the 'Dog and Partridge', which was re named 'The Bee's Knees'.
27. Heraldic crest of the Wigan and District Mining and Technical College.
28. Team cricket bag on the steps, as a reminder of the usual meeting place for College teams playing away fixtures.
29. Wigan Little Theatre, standing alongside one of the bridges across the River Douglas.





HISTORY SHOP NEWS

Continued from page 21

heritage, keen to support the work of Wigan Heritage Service and most of all have some spare time to offer, then we need you to come along to the regular meetings of the Friends. These are held quarterly, usually at the History Shop in Wigan, but occasionally in Leigh. At the meetings, progress on the various work projects is discussed and analysed, information is exchanged and ideas of all kinds are welcomed. It is your chance to have your say and support the Heritage Service at the same time. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 5 May 2004 at 12.30 in the History Shop. If you would like to come along please contact us first at the History Shop on 01942 828128.

We would like to extend our gratitude to Mr Max Finney, who for the past three years has been an excellent Chairman of the Friends. He has decided that now is the time for him to stand down, busy as he is with other commitments such as the Over 50's Forum and work with the Cultural Partnership. He hopes that someone can now work with the foundations we have laid with the Friends and push various projects and ideas along. He wants to remain a Friend and at this stage fully intends to continue coming to the meetings and support the group. Thank you for everything Max.

So at the Friends meeting of 12 February 2004 he handed over the role to David Lythgoe. We would of course like to welcome David and wish him well, although he is by no means new to the Friends, having been a constant presence since the very first meeting. Come along and meet him and the rest of the group at the next meeting on 5 May 2004 (12.30 in the History Shop).

Friends Project

THE volume of work being undertaken by the Friends, particularly in the field of family history, continues to impress, and indeed amaze us. As in previous reports we would like to thank Mrs Barbara Davies for all her hard work organising and compiling the census indexes. As already reported, the 1841 disk is nearly ready for final reproduction and will then be available alongside the 1861 disk from the History Shop.

There are a number of tidying up tasks on other census indexes; Mr and Mrs Davies are trying to put the 1851 onto a usable database, Mr Newton has agreed to index previously uncovered areas on the 1891 and Mr Rigby is developing the 1901 index. There is always work on the family history side if that's what interests you.

A very successful initiative has been the family history workshops, where newcomers to the subject just starting out on their search can benefit from a one-to-one session with an experienced researcher. We are about to begin our third series of these, this time with a fixed day and time. See the panel for information. If you are interested in helping, remember you will need to be an experienced researcher who is familiar with the layout of the History Shop and the records we hold. If you are interested in learning then anyone can come along, but remember we only deal with

local family history (from the existing Borough area) and it's aimed at getting people started.

Family history is not the only topic covered by the volunteer work projects. We have two projects under way at present on local history, one at Wigan and one at Leigh.

In Wigan we are currently indexing the local paper, the *Wigan Observer*, from around 1950 to 1990. We have a number of volunteers working through the newspapers at the moment, but if anything they are going too fast! Our administration section, the overstretched Heritage Assistants, are finding it impossible to keep up. We therefore need a volunteer to undertake copy typing of index cards here at the History Shop. Any takers please phone Christine on 01942 828020.

In Leigh the project is somewhat different. The Dootson Collection, bequeathed to Leigh Library in the last century, contains all types of old, sometimes rare but always interesting books. Tony Ashcroft, our Heritage Officer at the Turnpike Library in Leigh, is co-ordinating a project listing and cataloguing these books with the aim of making them more accessible to researchers in the future. If you think you might be interested, and can spare some time to work in Leigh, please ring Tony on 01942 404559.

FRIENDS OF WIGAN HERITAGE SERVICE

Name

Address

Interests

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

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

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

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)

7 April

King Edward VII, his Life and Loves

James Fairhurst

5 May

AGM and lunch

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)

20 April

Badges and Token of Bolton

Cliff Stockton

11 May

Helen Mitchell – Suffragette

Eileen Murphy

8 June

Steam Engines

David Lewis

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).

Hindley History Society

We meet in the Museum at Hindley Library, Market Street at 7.00 p.m. For further details contact the Secretary Joan Topping (01942 257361) or the Treasurer Norma Brannagan (01942 258668).

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 Easter 2004 for inclusion in the next issue. Thanks.

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)

9 April

Cornwall (also AGM)

Trevor Lucas

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.

Skelmersdale & Upholland Family History Society

Meetings are held on the 4th Tuesday of each month, except December, July and August, at 7.30 p.m., in the Hall Green Community Centre, Upholland. Beginners and more experienced family historians always welcome. For further details contact the Secretary, Simon Martin (01942 702594).

27 April

Bounds of Upholland

Dr. Audrey Coney

25 May

Workshop – Census Returns

22 June

Irish Repositories

James Firth

July (TBA)

Trip to Quaker Meeting House, St. Helens

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)

13 April

Experiences being a Volunteer at Wigan Pier

Jean and Graham Wilcock

(Preceded by AGM)

11 May

The Cross Behind Bars

Canon Noel Proctor

8 June

Haigh Hall and the People Who Lived There

Carol Banks

13 July

Summer lunch

Tyldesley & District Historical Society

Meetings are held on the third Thursday of every month from September to May at the Tyldesley Pensioners club on Milk Street at 7.30 p.m. We do not charge an entrance fee although voluntary contributions are always welcome. Refreshments available. Contact the Secretary Tony Rydings (01942 514271) or rydings@blueyonder.co.uk. Visit our website at www.tyldesleyhistoricalsociety.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 John Wogan, 678 Warrington Road, Goode Green, Wigan WN3 6XN. Email Johnwogan@blueyonder.co.uk. You can also visit our website at www.ffhs.org.uk/members/wigan.htm.

20 April

The Story of Wigan Railways

Philip Heyes

Memories of Old Wigan

THE History of Park Lane Chapel is now out of print,* but a copy lent to me by Mr. Harry Latham of Ashton-in-Makerfield contained the following: "In 1889 Mrs. Margaret Shaw at a meeting in the chapel in Wigan Road) Ashton-in-Makerfield, gave a description of the locality as he knew it 66 years before". [i.e. in 1823].

Park Lane, she said, "was then a small and pretty hamlet with its white cottages and gardens scattered about where you might hear the sound of the anvil from an adjoining smithy or the busy shuttle from a weaving shop. The light shone clearly from the cottage windows at night, unshaded by blind or curtain. Passers-by were not perhaps curious in those days. There was only one shop in the neighbourhood kept by Betty Neville or Betty 'Never' as she was called and she only sold provisions ... I fancy the farmers

* but see opposite for some good news! Ed.



Park Lane Unitarian Chapel, Bryn, Wigan.

supplied most of what was needed in food, such as milk, butter, potatoes and bacon. The price of butter was from ninepence to tenpence a pound [4p]. There was no way of getting to Wigan except by walking, there were no light carts, omnibus, no railway... women walked to Wigan on Saturday with large rolls of calico on their heads called 'cuts', as large as a hearth rug rolled up and containing

sixty or seventy yards woven during the week. Each carried back an equally heavy burden called a 'scarp' which was placed on the loom on Monday. Then there was a repetition of the weaving labour, hands and feet moving as one, the same monotonous round of toil week after week, from early morn until late at night...

The food was very plain, potatoes, buttermilk and a small piece of bacon for dinner; buttermilk porridge for breakfast and a 'jannock' [oatmeal bread] was provided as a treat and enjoyed as if it were plum cake ... To be sure, there was feasting when the cottager killed his pig but that was only once a year."

Benjamin Lowe, who died at an advanced age in 1857, said that in his youth the highway between Wigan and Warrington was little

better than a pack horse road, in some places so narrow that two vehicles could not pass each other. At Wigan, three miles away, the people were engaged in the manufacture of blankets, nails and machines. There were also bleachworks, brass and pewter works and iron foundries. Cock-fighting, pugilism, bowls, May Day observances and waits at Christmas were the common pastimes. The following article from the local press shows Wigan at Christmas in 1899.

Christmas in Wigan 1899

In 1899 Christmas was on a Monday but there was a subdued observance of Christmas because of the Boer War. However, on Christmas Eve, a great deal of the population were out in



The interior of Park Lane Unitarian Chapel.

Bickershaw Parish Church Centenary

5 July 1905 saw the new Church at Bickershaw open its doors at the consecration ceremony by the Bishop of Liverpool. Prior to this, the village was part of the parish of Abram and services had been held in the Colliery School, with weddings, funerals and baptisms taking place at Abram Parish Church.

The formation of a new parish and church fulfilled the wishes of the people in the village, and rapidly became an integrated part of their lives, providing a spiritual as well as social side. Indeed few villagers were not touched by it.

Next year, the parish will be celebrating its centenary, and is hoping to mount an exhibition of the church through those years, by way of photographs, documents and memorabilia which plot its history. Already a good amount of material has been loaned or given, but there are obviously other people, who might have left Bickershaw many years ago, who may have photographs or items which might add to the collection.



St. James and Elizabeth Church, Bickershaw

If anyone has anything they think may be of interest please contact Jackie on 01942 708484 or email on mcatterall@hotmail.com. For updates on our progress visit the church website on www.bickershawchurch.com.

the streets, even though the rain and the slush made the evening miserable. This didn't deter the band of singers which sallied forth under the sleeping townspeople's windows until Christmas Day came in, singing the usual carols. The staff at the Post Office were busier than ever, with an estimated 14% increase in the mail, and extra help had to be brought in for a Sunday delivery. From 2. o'clock until 10.00 on that day there was a constant stream of people sending cards and parcels, and when the night staff came on there was still an immense amount to be delivered. But delivery was made in good time and the work was satisfactorily accomplished. Great praise was due to Mr. Foot, the postmaster,

Mr. Magraw, the chief clerk and Mr. Heston, the assistant superintendent.

At the Court Theatre [Royal] the pantomime was 'Cinderella', played by Miss Nellie Merton; Prince Elegant was played by Miss Alice James and the wicked baron by Fred Frenham.

Christmas Day at the workhouse was always looked forward to with eager expectation. The Mayor and Mayoress, Mr. & Mrs. J.T. Gee, and members of the Guardians of the Poor were in attendance. Dinner, which consisted of potatoes, roast beef and plum pudding, was served hot at noon, and during the day oranges and other fruits were handed round while smokers were given an ounce of tobacco. In the evening entertainment

was given by officials and friends. The Mayor gave a short, appropriate speech, saying he had been through the rooms and thought that most of the inmates were far more happy inside than outside. At the conclusion a vote of thanks on behalf of the inmates was passed on a motion by one of the inhabitants. At the close the inmates sang 'The Soldiers of the Queen'.

There was good news for the children who were miners in Wigan.

The Act which raised the ages of boys working underground from 11 years to 12 years came into operation on 1 January 1900. But it was still possible for a child to work 54 hours a week in the coal mine. The mines inspector of Liverpool found that the old miners disagreed with raising the age. They spoke with a certain pride of the fact that they started work underground at the age of seven.

© James Fairhurst

Park Lane Unitarian Chapel

The History of Park Lane Chapel (1697-1897) by George Fox, has been reprinted, £19.50 per copy, A4 size.

Also:

In the near future Park Lane Unitarian Chapel will be open to visitors for a limited time during the week, in addition to Sundays.

Enquiries to: 01695 623676 or 01942 518629.

Brass bands and kind hearts

ONE day last summer our car was stopped by a policeman. No, we hadn't committed an offence – we simply had to wait whilst the **W a l k i n g - D a y** Procession passed by. I was amazed that we were on our way within 10 minutes – years ago we'd have been stuck there for an hour, and I was saddened to witness how the traditional walking-days have dwindled.

I can remember when Sunday-School attendance rose dramatically in the spring due to little girls longing to walk under the banners. Sometimes I walked with Ince Parish Church as I attended Ince C.of E. Primary School and sometimes with Rose Bridge Methodists, where I was christened. As soon as the light nights arrived the Sunday-school teacher would ask our mothers to send in a note stating how much material was needed for our dresses – usually about 2 and a half yards – and a job-lot of flocked nylon would be purchased from Hart's of Wigan. Our dresses were made by local ladies who were skilled with a needle; mine was made by a lady in Board Street and it had a big hem which could be let down as I grew.

'Dorothy Bag'

We always carried a 'Dorothy-bag' – this was a little drawstring bag made from a piece of left over material, and during the procession, relatives and neighbours would run into the road to give

Dear Mr. Gillies,

Congratulations on *Past Forward* issue 35 – as always, full of interest. I especially enjoyed "Saturday Morning", the very amusing article about the little lad queuing for a rabbit, and Mary Sayers' article on the Abram Vicar. Mary wrote to me about my Bonfire article, and we discovered we were at school together, and Peter and I visited Mary last week in her lovely home in Buxton. I have also met a lady from Preston who wrote to me about "The Dream", so that's two new friends, and all through *Past Forward*.

I enclose another article which I hope you might consider suitable for publication.

us threepenny-bits or sixpences to put into it. I loved the threepenny-bit – wasn't it a nice coin? – and after the walk it would buy a cornet with raspberry on.

The Walking-Day was held on both a Saturday and a Sunday in June, followed by the 'sermons' the following Sunday. On the Saturday morning my man and I would walk down Ince Green Lane to collect my posy; the lady who made it had a white lamp over her door saying 'Lilian – Florist', and the scent of fresh flowers in her home on Walking-Day morning is something that will stay with me forever. Then back home to get ready – oh, the excitement! A good wash at the sink to top up my bath from the previous night, (in a tin-bath – we had no such luxury as a bathroom), and my hair was combed and tied with a ribbon. Some girls had a pony-tail – do you remember the round plastic pony-tail clips with interlocking teeth? (long before 'bobbles' and 'scrunchies') – and some girls had ringlets made by tying their hair tightly in rags overnight. . . .

Forgive me for going off the tale, but I must tell you this. Last Boxing-Day my son and

his wife came from London, bringing with them costumes for what seems to be a rather nice tradition in Wigan pubs on Boxing-night – everyone celebrates wearing fancy-dress. Well, Jamie was to be King Arthur and Beccy his "Guinevere". When their car pulled up outside, Beccy looked very odd with her hood up and strange white things sticking out of it, and it turned out that her mum had put her hair into old-fashioned curling-rags, and by the time she emerged from our bathroom as Guinevere, she had the loveliest curls.

'Amami Night'

Anyway, back to the past. Once we little girls were in our finery it was time for the older girls to get into theirs; they used to hold the guide-ropes on the banners whilst we held the ribbons, and how we loved to watch them getting ready! They had set their hair the night before with 'Amami' setting-lotion – the advert for it went 'Friday Night's Amami Night'. Which my mam, (who always got her words wrong), pronounced "Am-am-ey night", and it was a common sight then to see women out shopping

with headscarves covering their hair-rollers. Anyway, we little ones watched, fascinated as the rollers came out and the back-combing began, with special combs with little bobbles on the teeth which created the 'beehive' look.

Then came the hair-lacquer, which in those days was bought as a liquid and poured into a spray-bottle, and the smell was enough to strip paint! We gaped in awe as 'pan-stick' make-up was applied, followed by 'Miner's' mascara, which came in a solid block in a little box; the girls used to spit on it with gusto before applying it with a little brush. Cheeks were given a dab of 'Bourjois' rouge and fingernails were painted with 'L'onglex' nail polish; then, leaving us runny-eyed and coughing in the wake of their hairspray, off they went to change into sticky-out dresses supported by net underskirts, 'Bear-Brand' nylons, stiletto heels and 'pop-it' beads from Woolworths.

Remember 'pop-its'? – they were plastic beads, each of which 'popped' into the next one, so you could make your necklace as long or as short as you liked.

And now it was time to leave for the assembly-point in the schoolyard. How exciting it was to meet up with our friends, and we messed about on the schoolfield, chattering and holding buttercups under chins "to see if you liked butter" (chance would be a fine thing – it was 'Summer County' margarine for most of us!) Meanwhile church ladies

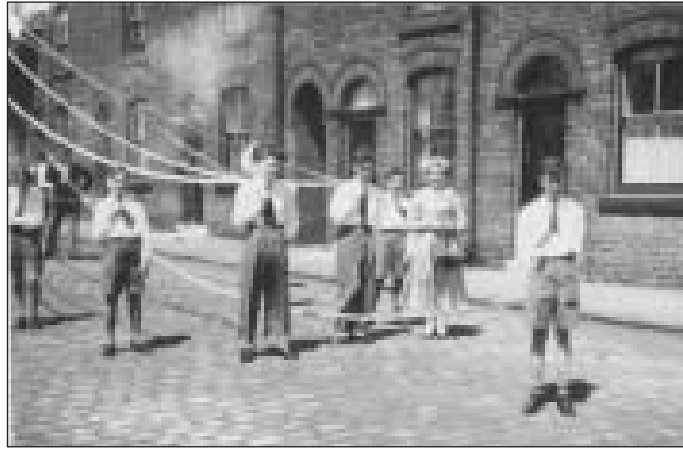


bustled about with lists, organising the various Sunday-School classes under the banners.

'Actin' t'Mick'

At last all was ready and, just before we set off, the Brass Band always played 'The Church's One Foundation', which never failed to fill me with a strange, inexplicable sadness. Then off we marched, under a blue Lancashire sky, with the local Bobby out in front, followed by the Vicar and leading churchmen, and then came the beautiful, richly-coloured banners and the Brass Bands. Next came the Boys' Brigade with the Captain twirling the mace and expertly throwing it into the air and catching it. Then came the 'Life-Boys' – little lads in short pants and cricket-belts, playing imaginary trombones to the strains of the Brass Band in front, much to the amusement of the crowd on the pavement: "Ey, look at this lot actin' t'Mick!" (of course they were ten times worse once they realised they had an audience, and obligingly crossed their eyes and adopted a comical walk to accompany the 'trombone-playing'!) The Choir came next, then the Brownies, Guides and Scouts, followed by the Mothers' Union, each lady proudly wearing her best hat and a matching skirt and jacket, which in those days people called a 'costume' or a 'two-piece'.

Along the procession-route, chairs had been set out on the pavement and neighbours sat gossiping long before the banners appeared. Reputations were shredded as they discussed who was "Livin' o'er t'brush", or who had



A 1950's Walking Day.

"Done a moonleet". My Aunt Mary could gossip for England: "Ee, 'e didn't! Well, ah'll go to t'foot of eawr stairs!" she spoke in an exaggerated manner as she was used to "mee-mawing", (making herself understood above the clatter of looms in the cotton-mill), and she tended to put on a posh voice as the Vicar's contingent passed by, but she always got her 'H's' in the wrong place, and ended up saying, "Oh, 'ello Vicar hisn't it 'ot?", then back to "Ee' 'e didn't! ger-away!" Suddenly she would spot some high-up church lady's little lad 'leading out', carrying a beribboned crook, and would comment archly, "Ey-up, ah thowt yon mon ud a't t'be a shepherd!"

Beer in hand

Perspiring bandmen looked on enviously as men strolled out of the pub, beer in hand, to watch 't'scholars', and overalled shop-assistants stood on the Co-op step, enjoying the sunshine and happily waving to the children who were, on other days, the bane of their lives, dashing into 'T'CWorp' shouting "'Ave yer any Wild Woodbines, missis? – well, tame 'em!" before dashing out again in fits

of giggles! Toddlers sat on the kerb waving red, white and blue 'shakers', and shopkeepers proudly flew Union-jacks, held in place by the upstairs sash-window. Apart from one old lady who sadly took great delight in slamming her front door as the opposing denomination's procession passed by, we C. of E's and Methodists happily waved to our pals in the Roman Catholic Walking-Day; they waved to us and, if possible, we all 'snaked into' each other's field-treat afterwards. Like Bonfire Night and Easter Sunday, Walking-Day had its own unique atmosphere. An air of expectation filled the streets – ice-cream vans vied for the best 'speck', and Aunt Mary brought us up to date with the latest gossip as we enjoyed a special Walking-Day tea of boiled ham, lettuce and tomatoes, followed by jelly-and-custard.

By the second Sunday, Lilian's beautiful posy, which had been kept in water all week, was beginning to wilt. This was the Sunday when we had the 'Sermons' – an outdoor service with hymns and prayers, and we always seemed to have a guest speaker who didn't know when to stop – "Owd mon" tha corn't porr 'im

off!" muttered my dad – but we listened politely because afterwards came the 'Field-Treat' – games and races on the school field, with tea and buns, or pop and crisps, and prizes.

First tasted coffee

I can remember I first tasted coffee at Rose Bridge Methodists' Field-Treat. One year I won a little autograph-book; what a nuisance I was to the neighbours with it! – "Will yer sign me book, Mrs. Shaw?" I must have driven them mad! I had that little book for years, and never once did it contain the autograph of anyone rich or famous, but I wouldn't have swapped it for one that did, because mine contained the names of the people who **mattered** – the neighbours who were unfailingly there for you in times of happiness and sorrow, the Bookie's wife, and the corner-shop lady who let my mam have things 'on tick' when money was scarce. Even our coalman signed it with a sooty flourish, as well as the smiling lollipop-man, and the road-sweeper, who always had a few toffees in his pocket for the children.

The simple, warm-hearted, ordinary people who shaped our young lives and who shared with us the special times – the Christmases, the Carnivals, the Weddings, the Walking-Days, the laughter and the tears. Those were the things that memories are made of how full of humour they were! How generous with what little they had. And oh, how our troubled world could do with them now.

**Irene Roberts
Abram
Nr. Wigan**

This unusual article, submitted by Eric Winstanley of Ashton-in-Makerfield, has been taken from his dad's scrapbook. It tells the story of two skaters, John and Thomas Hill, father and son, in the 1880's and 1925.

“Eau’r Nell’s Jack”

Skating in the Old Days

“ARE THE old-fashioned winters a thing of the past?” A satisfactory answer to the much-repeated query should be found in the recent wintry conditions which we have experienced. Subject to correction, it must be at least nine or ten years since Eccleston Mere was so solidly frozen over as it was last week. Yet the invigorating hours spent on the ice during the first few days of December will be remembered by the kiddies, long after the wet and muggy days have been forgotten, and in the years to come they will tell their children of the “good old-fashioned winter of 1925”.

Even in the comparatively short spell of skating which we have enjoyed, there has been a quick revival of interest in ice-skating. Skating matches were quickly fixed up, and a St. Helens skater figured in a race at Sefton Meadows. It is interesting to recall that he is a son of a Lancashire champion skater of nearly 50 years ago, John Hill, a miner of Billinge.

The Father . . .

John Hill became prominent as a skater in the winter of 1878-9, when he was 17 years of age. His first 10 races were with young men about his own age, for sums varying from 2s. 6d. to £1, and all of these he won easily. He then began to challenge more important men, got on a match with one Brookfield, of Windle, a distance of 300 yards, for £2 a-side, which he won by about a yard. Brookfield was not satisfied with the defeat, so tried again the day after, over the same distance, and for the same amount, but Hill again was victorious. His next opponent was Thomas Taylor, of Billinge, who started favourite, but never showed in front during the whole of the race.

Hill next defeated Thomas Derbyshire, of Billinge, in a 400 yards race, for £2 a-side, Derbyshire starting favourite. James Gaffaney tried conclusions with him next in a 400 yards race (Hill receiving three yards start) for £2 a-side; the

betting was 6 to 5 on Gaffaney, who was beaten. Gaffaney not being satisfied with his defeat, another race over the same distance (both starting from scratch) was run; Hill started favourite, and won easily.

Henry Liptrot (alias “Goody”) in a 400 yards race, for £10 a-side, was defeated by Hill, who started favourite. A flyer named Balmer, from Platt Bridge, next tried to defeat Hill in a 400 yards race, for £10 a-side. Hill, again favourite, won, after a gallant struggle, by about two yards. Thomas Gee, son of a well-known Lancashire champion, now met Hill in a 300 yards match, for £10 a-side; Hill again started favourite (betting, 6 to 4) and won quite easily. This was the closing match for the season 1878-9.

Hill’s first match in the season 1879-80 was with David Baines (alias Das Duff) of Haydock. The course was, as usual, 400 yards, and for £10 a-side, and skated on Sefton Meadows, near Liverpool. Betting at start was 6 to 4 on Duff, but the non-favourite won easily. The Haydock and Parr people, not being satisfied with “Duff’s” defeat, brought another great flyer, Martin Mannion, nicknamed for his speed the “Irish Mail”, against Hill. The match was over 400 yards, for £10 a-side. Betting was 5 to 4 on Hill, who won easily. On the same day a Sefton Meadow’s champion named Tunstall (alias Whalebone) was beaten in a race of 300 yards, for £5 a-side, by Hill, who won with ridiculous ease.

Christmas Day brought Edward Hurst, one of the West Leigh notables, to skate Hill a quarter of a mile, for £25 a-side. Hurst was very confident, but like the rest of Hill’s opponents, he had to suffer defeat.

On 28 December the village was taken by surprise, and filled with great excitement, by hearing that “Fish” Smart, brought to Lancashire at great expense by a well-known sportsman and publican of Haydock, had come to defeat the village champion. A quarter of a mile race,

for £25 a-side, was arranged to be skated at three o’clock the same day on Carr Mill Dam, Billinge; the crowd was from 15000 to 20000, and betting 6 to 4 on “Fish”. After two false starts they got off the mark, making an even start, but the renowned “Fish” found that he had come to meet a faster man than himself, and at the end of the race was 20 yards behind Hill.

“Fish” Smart, about this time began to telegraph to Mr. John Marsh, of St. Helens, wanting to skate for a mile and a half or upwards, for £50 a-side. Marsh sent word to Hill that he had received these telegrams. Hill and a few backers then proceeded to Cambridge in the hope of finding “Fish” Smart, and of racing him again. Not finding him at Cambridge, they proceeded to Welney, his home, but “Fish” was absent.

From Welney they went to Manea, where one, George Green, a publican, took them in his trap to Little Downham for the purpose of finding “Fish”, but could not there see him. Being challenged by the “Irish Mail” to skate 100 yards for £10 a-side, a match was arranged. The “Mail” was, however, upset about 20 yards after starting.

This was Hill’s last match, being the 24th he had skated and won, until his defeat on Thursday 13 January 1881, when the long-talked of match with “Fish” Smart, for £50 a-side, at Welney, over a quarter of a mile. Both got off to a good start, but Smart at once went to the front, and at the half-distance, was leading by a yard. About 50 yards from home Hill made an effort to get on even terms with his rival who, however, got away, and won by six yards.

There were compensations, of course, and if during the present winter it is noticeable that the elder people are the better skaters, it is probably due to the practice they got in the winters of the 1880’s. Those were the days when John Hill (“Eau’r Nell’s Jack”) sprang into fame. ➡

Barm Cakes in the Pantry

by Neil Cain

NOSTALGIA isn't what it used to be, or so some wag is supposed to have said. Why is it that with the confidence of youth most of us deride our elders when they reminisce about days gone by, '30'Fs a strange change begins to take place?

Despite the claims of global warming we become convinced that our early summer memories exist only in days where the sun blazed down, flags cracked, and seaside donkeys wore straw hats. Suddenly policemen become gangly youths instead of giants with hands like car hubcaps. Then comes the day when you realise it's been years since getting on a bus brought on an adrenalin rush, and everything falls into place – nostalgia has you in its vice-like grip and you will never escape. Grown men will rush lemming-like across busy roads to see a Vincent motorcycle, or a Norton. A whiff of smoke from a preserved steam engine leaves one dewy-eyed and your soul belongs to the god of the Past. It's wonderful.

Without the benefit of a 1960's in a flash. Every time machine I can be August dad would load back in Wigan in the car to the maximum,

. . . and the Son

Carr Mill Dam was the scene of an interesting skating match on Sunday afternoon, when a crowd, estimated at between four to five thousand persons assembled. The contestants were Thomas Hill (Billinge) and William Greenall (Haydock). Large crowds of supporters came from Billinge, for their representative is the youngest son of a former champion, Mr. John (Jack) Hill, widely known to the sporting fraternity as "Eau'r Nell's Jack", who won numerous matches 25 to 30 years ago.

The match was for £10 a-side, and plenty of money changed hands, both men being in request at evens. The distance was 300 yards, starting from the boat-house, and finishing at the station end of the dam.

A good start was effected, and there was plenty of excitement as both men laid down to their work, viewed from behind the winning post, young Hill (he is about 22 years of age), who was on the left, was soon in front, and maintaining the lead throughout he raced home an easy winner by about four yards.

Mr. Hill, senior, who was present, must have been a proud man, for the son bids fair to become a champion, being a well set-up youth. He was warmly congratulated by his many friends on the victory he had gained without much effort. A word about the vanquished, "Billy" Greenall; he took his defeat like the good sportsman he is, and remarked to a party of friends that they had backed him 20 years too late. Greenall is about 15 years the senior of Hill.

even before squeezing my mother and me aboard, and off we would go – destination Wigan. A Regent petrol station would proclaim 'last petrol before motorway'. What the National station two miles up the road thought of this we never knew, nor cared; in those days we didn't have half-baked pedants from Brussels poking into things like that! Mile after mile of M1 motorway rattled away beneath the tyres of the Hillman Minx until the Midlands; then came a succession of small towns, or signs to them – Newcastle under Lyme, Eccleshall, Stone and Congleton, until a magic moment that, even at a tender age, I knew meant something special. It simply said A49. The air smelled different, a wonderful smokey smell, houses were a rich red colour and their bricks shone, side streets were made of big stone blocks not tarmac. We were there and to confirm it a sign by the side of the road told us so.....'Wigan'.

Wonderful smells

Grandfather Cain lived in Holt Street in Ince which, in those days, hadn't been made up, so the car would rock and roll its way down the street as dad veered to avoid huge pot holes, sometimes unsuccessfully, until we pulled up outside no. 38. Grandad toiled for over 30 years in the heat of the famous Top Place ironworks, before managing to buy a small bakery business at the

lower end of Belle Green Lane, which I know some readers still recall. His slightly stooping figure would appear at the gate and he would usher us into wonderland. An enormous grandfather clock gently tolled the passing quarter hours; a blazing fire in the hearth, alongside an oven with a big knob on the door and a little cubby hole where he kept his kindling dry, dominated one side of the room. A big pot in the form of Winston Churchill's head, complete with cigar and naval cap, stared down in the corner, but I longed to get out to the back kitchen. Wonderful smells lingered there, and in a small cupboard there was a block of Harvo cake, which we never saw down south. The real crock of gold lay in the pantry, however; Eccles cakes, barm cakes, Chorley cakes, vanilla slices – even now I can smell that pantry.

Outside grandad's stood three funny little cars that belonged to his next door neighbour's sons. I know now they were Morgan three wheelers, but to me they were things that belonged to the stories of Noddy. Sometimes in the evening the Insurance Man would call. He rarely seemed to transact business, but my dad and grandad would join in heated debate about the merits of Wigan Rugby League Club. The Insurance Man had decided that someone by the name of Dave Bolton stood in the wrong place at the scrum and this was a sin beyond forgiveness as far as he was concerned. No amount of argument would sway him from his view, and a glass of Myer rum

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Barm Cakes in the Pantry

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proffered by granddad did nothing to dampen his urge to bring his message to the people of Wigan, that Mr. Bolton was hoodwinking folk into thinking he was a good player by some satanic power. Once he had left, life resumed its tranquil air and granddad turned the table top over and produced a big box of dominoes. I loved the look and feel of the dominoes, happy to just hold them and none too caring of the fact that we were playing 'fives and threes'.

Exciting

Sometimes dad and I would get off the hook and go into Wigan without anyone else in tow. This was as exciting as it could possibly get because dad knew where there were toilets buried underground, right in the heart of town too! I couldn't understand why the Market wasn't in Market Place. I put it down to the fact that things were different in Wigan and that was what was so special about it! The market itself was one of the Wonders of the World. Two huge bulls' heads stared down at me from one stall, their dark eyes hypnotising me until I was dragged back to reality by the memory that on another stall you could buy things a small boy couldn't live without.....tatty plastic guns that fired plastic sticks with suckers on the end, or an Indian

warbonnet that belonged to a tribe that roamed the plains of 'Hong Kong'. Just as my eyes lit on a bag of jacks, dad would assure me that back at grandad's he had a game of 'put and take' which was better, or a thing called a 'Tommy Talker'.

Steer a course

Dad would cleverly steer a course through the streets so that he 'accidentally' came to a gents' outfitters at the top of Library Street (Collins?). Then we would go down Wallgate to another. Somehow dad managed to steer what I know now was a rather devious route back to the Market Square via Central Park. From the age of about four I realised that this place held a certain spell over him. Later in life I discovered he once stood gazing through the locked gates on a day when all sport throughout the Country was frozen off, willing a match to miraculously occur. Somehow this visit to Central Park seemed to satisfy dad, more so if he recognised a Wigan Director that he could buttonhole about likely Welsh Rugby Union players he had spotted when their teams played in London.

Our return route invariably involved one, or more, arcades. The 'Legs of Man' or 'Makinsons' were favourite with me as we ended up near two ice-cream carts outside the Market Hall. One belonged to Cassinellis, the other to Lewis's. Most people, of a certain age will recall the man with the weighing scales in the 'Legs of Man' arcade, and I seem to remember a newsagent as well. Maybe the memory is playing tricks with me, but back then it seemed that Station Road, leading off

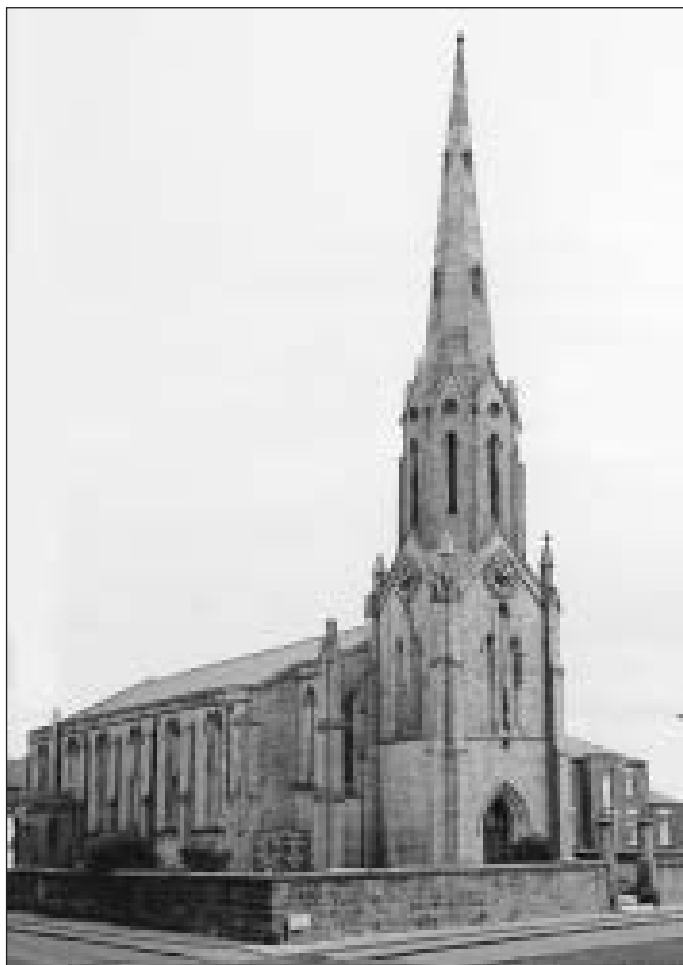
Market Place on the opposite side to the arcades, was not the tatty thoroughfare it later became. I think there was a jewellers selling good German clocks, and perhaps a haberdashers, amongst other shops.

After our ramble around the town, we would return to the Market Square – surely the most convenient

such as Leigh. Smartly uniformed conductors would hop aboard and graffiti was pleasantly absent, both from the buses and the station waiting stands.

Top Lock

Many evenings after tea we would wander up the



St. Catherine's Church, Wigan.

parking place a town ever had. Various companies used the bus station on the square and I loved to see their richly painted liveries. Why do bus colour schemes today look as though a child of three devised them and used only primary paint? Back then you had the lovely Wigan Corporation fleet, together with that of Ribblesdale serving points north; or Lancashire United which seemed to serve towns east of Wigan

Leeds and Liverpool to Top Lock. As I doubt we ever did this on a bad day, my memories are naturally of golden light colouring the land, with the spire of St. Catherine' church rising into the setting sun to the west. The wind blew through the long grass in a manner so peaceful that it seemed to mock the area's industrial past. The slag tips were still there back then, from both the Rose Bridge pits and Cheshire



Hole/Roundhouse coler-
eries, as well as the ones
associated with the
Ironworks higher up the
canal. The Westwood
Power Station was still
going then, so it was possi-
ble to see a coal barge
negotiating the locks.
Jumping a by-wash was a
necessary rite of passage,
and even though you knew
you could do it there was
always that last second
doubt as you reached the
take off point.

As I mentioned earlier,
granddad worked at Top
Place, on the furnaces
closest to the canal bank.
What little remained in the
way of brickwork became a
playground for me. Little
bits of chimney footings
still stuck up then and
solidified slag lay in huge
blocks, often precariously
balanced on the edge of the
canal. Dad would tell me
how his uncle got trapped
under an engine when it
overturned on a tip, then
he would recite the strange
names carried by the little
locomotives – Achilles,
Balneil, Lindsay, Juno etc.
When we reached Top Lock
the water stretched away
into the distance. Having
followed its course all the
way up the flight of locks,
this point seemed like the
equivalent of a national
boundary, a marvellous
place where time seemed to
change to a slower pace
and a more rural
atmosphere prevailed.
Maybe if we got back in
time, and before the
obligatory dominoes
began, I might get to heave
grandad's coal to and fro in
the shed, or see the frog in
his greenhouse.

Radio-alarm clocks were
unknown back then, so my
daily wake up call came
from a canal boat whistle,
hens kept by Mr Blackledge
next door, or if I'd slept in,
from Rappaports factory
whistle across Manchester
Road. This road is now a
pale shadow of its former
self, when each side was



'Top Lock', Leeds and Liverpool Canal.

lined with terraced homes
and shops. Every corner
seemed to have a pub, with
the 'Cases Arms' being on
Holt Street corner, opposite
a little shop that seemed to
sell everything from an
area the size of a
handkerchief. Rows of
glass sweet jars rose to the
ceiling and bottles of pop in
a bewildering variety
tempted this small boy. Oh
that granddad would pick
up that lovely dark
one....dandelion and
burdock, a treat for the
tastebuds unknown back
home. Grandad in his
working days at the bakery
had carried the daily
takings home in an old
bag, the same route each
night. He was never
mugged in all the years he
did it! Now he travelled
that route to visit the
Ashurst family that now
ran the bakery. I well recall
going one day and seeing
the hive of industry it was.
A huge treat was being
allowed to turn the potato
washer on. I was Jamie
Olive and Gary Rhodes
rolled into one that day!

Uncle Jimmy

Naturally we spent some

of our holiday with
grandad in visiting. Dad
had an Uncle Jimmy at Old
Pepper Lane in Standish –
everyone had an Uncle
Jimmy then. Even now, 40
plus years on I would
imagine, I can remember
how Jimmy and wife
Martha gave me a rubber
spade all colours of the
rainbow. Dad's Auntie
Maggie (every one had one
of those too), lived at New
Springs in Withington Lane
with her daughter, also
Maggie, and son-in-law
Jim. The great treat here
was to be allowed to run up
their path which ended on
the canal bank. How I
longed for our house to
have boats sailing by, or a
railway running behind it
like Ince Cemetery had.
Tending grandma's grave
was another holiday ritual
and in that oasis of peace,
with rabbits running about
and birds singing, there
would suddenly come a
steam train shot by Springs
Branch. Oblivious to my
newly purchased holiday
shoes I would scramble
madly, trying to get a
foothold on the big blocks
of stone that formed the
wall of the cemetery, and

grazing my knees in the
process. Dad would finally
arrive to hoist me those
last few feet, but by then
the train was just a distant
hazy blur.

Well, they tell us that
children today have
nothing to do, poor things.
Will their memories of
Disneyland or Spain
compare with Top Lock or
Haigh Hall? Will Leisure
Centres or purpose built
five-a-side football pitches
come close to kicking a ball
on Rose Bridge schoolfield
after homework? For their
sakes I hope so, but
somehow I doubt it. A dear
friend reminded me quite
recently of the poem
Granchester by Rupert
Brooke, and particularly
that poet's hopeful longing
that there would still be
honey for tea. For me,
when I shut my eyes and
find it's once again a
sunny day in Wigan years
ago, I am wondering
similar to the poet.....are
there barm cakes in the
pantry?

*Note: Since writing this
Ince Cemetery wall has
collapsed. To Wigan
Council I say, "nothing to
do with me!"*

Garswood – The old village

I THINK readers of *Past Forward* would agree that a popular contributor over the years has been J. Harold Smith, who has written many very interesting articles on Garswood, its village life and some of its characters.

I refer especially to his articles in issues 32 and 33. I consider myself to be an 'old Garswooder', having been born there and lived until the age of 25 firstly in Station Road and then in Victoria Road with my parents, brother Leslie and sister Joyce. In fact we lived just three doors away from Harold, but because he would seem to be about 12 years older than myself, I don't remember him. Also as he 'lived away' according to his mother, he perhaps moved to find greener pastures. I doubt whether he would have found any greener than those around Garswood. I knew his mother well and she always seemed to take an interest in my career. At the age of 25 I 'emigrated' to Orrell.

Our age difference meant that our years spent living in Garswood had resulted in different personnel being in charge, although other facets of village life were the same. Mrs. Hampson's deputy was Mrs. Elliott and Rev. W.W. Williams had changed to Rev. W.H. Hall. The age at

which one transferred from St. Andrews to the big school in Rectory Road was the same and Owd Stan still administered the same form of punishment, although he may have mellowed over the years.

Rabbits and Hares

The 'new road' was the dirt footpath which connected Garswood with Downall Green and along which the children would walk to the Rectory School from the age of seven. It also had its share of wild life. Rabbits and hares were a common sight, as were the antics of the water rats at the sewage works. If the development which took place 40 years or so ago was to happen today there would be a hue and cry to save the environment.

My first realisation of the extent to which Garswood had changed was when I had need to visit a house in Hamilton Road and I had to ask where the road was. Garswood used to comprise four roads, Station Road, Victoria Road, School Lane, and the Oaks (Garswood Road). In the middle of these roads was the Croft. It was never referred to as the village green but this was the place where all unorganised games took place. A favourite Sunday afternoon game was 'piggy'.

It was a sad day for the village when a local coal merchant acquired the Croft for his coal bagging business. The

first thing he did was to erect a 10 ft. fence all round the land. I vividly remember one occasion when some of the lads climbed over the fence to retrieve our ball but were caught trespassing by the owner, who took off his leather belt and used it to thrash one of the boys; no explanation was acceptable to him as to why we were there. Although I would be about 12 at the time I felt very annoyed that we were being deprived of the use of the Croft, and surely it could not be right for the village to have lost such an important aspect of village life.

Idyllic landscape

The Tiledsheds is aptly described by Harold as an idyllic landscape of sloping field with a cottage by the pool. The cottage has been demolished and the pool filled in. It was probably thought that since Tom Taberner had passed on there would be no fish in the pond, and since the swans no longer visited Garswood it had out-served its purpose. During the war years, however, the cottage was rented by Mr. & Mrs. Moughan and their four children even though it had neither gas nor electricity. The family home was in Liverpool and had been damaged during the bombing. Mr. & Mrs. Moughan travelled daily from Garswood station into Liverpool to continue the family business of ladies

and gents hairdressing. Emily, the eldest of the children, stayed in the cottage to look after Frank, Maureen and Teddy. The children attended local schools. I still keep in touch with the family Maureen told me of catching the bus in Ashton and booking to Lone Eend. For the uninitiated this is Sims Lane End, a place she had never heard of. The children regarded these years as the happiest ones of their childhood. Before the family returned to Liverpool they commissioned Arthur Turner (see *Past Forward* no.18) to do a pen/ink drawing of the cottage. This still has pride of place in Emily's home in Solihull.

Next to St. Andrew's school in the Oaks is the parish hall. Not only was it our Sunday School but our changing room. As youths this was the hub of our village life, it enabled us to have a football team. The team was ably looked after by Billy Ralphson. We were taught to respect our elders on all occasions; they had to be addressed as Mr. or Mrs. There appeared to be only one exception, in that we were permitted to refer to the man who commanded the respect of the football team and village as 'Billy'.

Comradeship

The team played in the under 16 Sunday School league and our



OUR LEGACY

THE over 50's Forum, Wigan Borough, working in conjunction with Age Concern Wigan, and the Social Services Department, is about to commence working on the above project, and will be seeking the help of all residents. The project, which has the approval of the Council and Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust, will open with a publicity campaign encouraging members of the public to root out any old photographs, posters, postcards, menus, recipes, memorabilia, or other items of local interest, depicting any of the events, personalities, tragedies, anniversaries, memorable and not so memorable occasions, in fact anything of the slightest interest that has taken place over the years, in the various townships. By the various townships, this means that the project covers the entire Borough – not just Wigan, but also, for example, Leigh, Ashton, Standish, Ince, Atherton etc. Residents would be asked to

A COMMUNITY HISTORY OF WIGAN TOWNSHIPS

bring the articles to a designated point, where two copies would be made, one for the donor, with the other one being retained by the Trust. Details required from the Donor would be:

- What was the item about?
- Why did it take place?
- When was the occasion?
- Where did it take place?
- Who were the people involved?

and any other information that could be of interest. These details and the copy of the item would be fed into a computer. In addition, it is intended that a tape recorder will be made available, so that any residents that are housebound, could be visited in order that they could describe past events or experiences that they

remembered. Thus this would be the beginning of a visual and oral history of the whole of the Wigan Borough.

The project is about recording experiences of life in the Wigan Borough. It could include traditional stories of local life, including the 50's, 60's and 70's; they don't necessarily have to be Victorian or Edwardian. Also included could be input from the black or ethnic minority, asylum seekers residents stories and their history, and records of people who have previously lived in Wigan, but have moved away (migrated) to other areas or countries.

Age concern has already carried out a pilot scheme, and in order to attract people's interest to the project, it is intended to have a small exhibition of the photographs that they have received, at various sites in each of the townships.

Max Finney
Over 50's Forum

ground was Garswood Rec. All our players attended the Sunday School not by compulsion but rather a feeling of comradeship. Our Superintendent was Mr. John Pendlebury who, when the attendance was low, would tour the village rounding up any lads he could see. He was a very imposing person, about 6' 5", always carried a cane type walking stick. When he was searching out the absentees the word "Johnny's coming" preceded him faster than he could walk, hence it became another game to let him see you and then

run.

The football team was very successful. Over two years we lost one game, winning one game away from home 36 : 0! We cycled to every away match and our playing strength was 12 players. At the end of two years we had to be disbanded due to lack of players.

Other vivid memories of a happy childhood are of during the long school holidays when a group of us would 'go up the Turpin' with bottles of water as our source of refreshment and climb trees in Monks wood. When the water bottles were empty we would go

to a spring where an isolated cottage would draw its water. We would cup our hands and then sup any water we had managed to retain.

Odious smell

Today there are no signs that J & R Stones colliery ever existed. The odious smell of smouldering coal dirt which used to percolate through the village and the glowing coals that illuminated the 'stuff rook' have long since gone. Smock Alley has changed its name to Smock Lane.

Garswood did not

escape its fatalities and damage to properties during the war. Two local young men were killed whilst investigating an unexploded bomb which had dropped in a field next to Garswood Rec. and a land mine exploded in Lord Gerrard's Park damaging windows in Victoria Road.

The new residents of Garswood refer to Station Road, Victoria Road, School Lane and the Oaks as The Old Village, but whether the village life is still as rapturous I cannot comment.

Frank Cunliffe
Orrell Nr. Wigan

Ashton-in-Makerfield Male Voice Choir

ONE SUNDAY evening sometime in October 1944, a number of men were chatting together outside the Chapel after the service, when the question was raised by one of them, about the formation of a male voice choir. As a result a meeting was called for all those interested, at which it was decided to form a male voice choir, to be called the 'Ashton Male Voice Choir'.

A committee was elected, and I believe the officials were as follows:- Chairman Mr. William Greenall Senr., Secretary Mr. Robert Pomfret, Treasurer Mr. Fred Greenall, Conductor Mr. Tudor Trevor Jones and Accompanist Mr. Raymond Gill.

Rehearsals were held in the Stubshaw Cross Independent Methodist schoolroom, and the first concert was given in the nearby Independent Methodist chapel. Our first engagement was at Spring View Methodist Church, where we rendered a 'Service of Song'. As time went on our membership increased in number, and we gradually became more known around the district; as a result, we received more engagements.

We entered our first competitive Festival at Wigan in October 1945. Sir Hugh Robertson was the adjudicator of his own composition, the test piece 'Over Here', and we were the only choir to appear on the platform. Nevertheless, Sir Hugh considered our effort as being worthy of the prize.

In 1947, we moved to the Ashton-in-Makerfield Lecture Hall for our rehearsals; soon afterwards, Mr. Tudor Jones resigned the Conductorship, and was succeeded by Mr. Handel Jones. We continued to give engagements in various churches throughout Wigan and district and also further afield, as far as Eccles and Burtonwood. We also gave concerts in aid of various charities as well as entertaining patients in various hospitals, including Winwick, Salford and Wrightington. At Christmas for a number of years we have visited the local hospitals, where we have always been well received and also,

by Alfred Hughes
(written in the 1960's)

I may add, well rewarded for our efforts, in helping to add a little festival cheer to those less fortunate than ourselves.

We entered for more musical festivals, and were successful at a few of them. In 1953, however, we had one costly experience, which some of the old members will well remember. Our membership at that time was around 45, and we were singing well. We had entered for the Choir Festival at Rhyl; there were two set pieces, one being 'Sound an Alarm' and the other a very nice quiet piece (I think it was 'Quiet Sleep'). Prior to this we had gained the 2nd prize at Llandudno for singing 'Sound an Alarm' ('Swing Low, Sweet Chariot'). We practised, of course, on both pieces, but more so on the soft one, as we had already competed on 'Sound an Alarm'.

The day of the Festival arrived and we listened to the other choirs singing before it was our turn to go on the platform. Imagine our surprise, and shock too, when we heard one of the other choirs singing another setting, different to ours, of 'Sound an Alarm'. We made enquiries and, very much to our disgust, surprise and 'alarm', found out that we were about to sing the wrong setting. O yes, they allowed us to sing it, but it did not count in the competition; we were adjudicated on both pieces, but only counted on one. We gained 97 and 95 for our effort but, nevertheless, we had sound the wrong 'Alarm' for which we gained more publicity than if we had won. It was reported in all the newspapers, along with our photographs, which we had taken outside the Rhyl Pavilion after the festival, but oh, what a lesson!

The following is the list of Festivals at which we have competed:

1945	Wigan	Awarded Prize
1951	Llandudno	2nd Prize
1953	Rhyl	See above

1954	Blackpool	No Prize
1954	Liverpool	No Prize (Golborne)
1955	Lytham	1st
1957	Leyland	1st
1958-59	Freckleton	1st 1st
1959-60	Newton	1st 1st

We also competed at Carmel Eisteddfod about 1945-1946, when Haydock won.

Of the original choir, when newly formed, the following are still members: Mr. Handel Jones, Conductor 14 years, Mr. Alfred Hughes Treasurer 13 years, Mr. W.M. Green, our present Chairman has been on the Committee for a good number of years, Mr. Dennis Tunstall, Vice Chairman, Mr. David Wood, Mr. Joseph Wood, Mr. Derek Woods, Mr. Albert Pritchard and Mr. Arthur Garlic. Also Mr. John Clayton, up to his leaving for Australia, and the late Mr. Enos Banks up to his recent passing.

We had grand service rendered to us by Mr. Robert Pomfret, who was for eight years our Secretary, and I pay tribute in appreciation of his services to the choir. Messrs. Eric and Ronnie Tunstall were members up to their moving to Eccles. As I have already mentioned, we have had a membership of 45 but now it takes us all our time to muster 30. Mr. Fred Partington, formerly of Hindley, who is now away in College studying for the ministry, was a member, and I think we can claim some merit for having assisted in encouraging him to the quality he achieved as a soloist, as well as our own Harry Pennington, who is still with us.

Before I close, I'm sure you will agree that it would be greatly amiss of me if I forgot to pay tribute to our accompanist, Miss Barbara Roberts, for her faithfully and grand service. I say in all sincerity, and without any flattery, that she has been a great asset, along with Mr. Jones, to whatever success we have achieved in recent years. Thank you Miss Roberts.

© Glenys McLellan



Apprenticeship memories, 'Top Pit', Dalton

Dear Alastair,

The article on Donald Anderson in the last issue brought back memories of my apprenticeship at the 'Top Pit' at Dalton 1960 to 1965.

There were three partners running the coal mines, Donald Anderson who ran Quaker House Colliery, Bill Gorton who ran Dalton 'Top Pit' and John Goodier who managed the accounts and wages etc; John was based in the office on Lees Lane Dalton which was the site of the original Dalton mine. A lot of fireclay from the 'Top Pit' was milled and bagged at the Lees Lane site.

At 18 years of age I was officially made electrician in charge of the mine, probably the youngest ever! I still have the certificate with mine and Bill Gorton's signatures on it.

I have many happy memories of those times, including one of the ghost coal drilling machine which vanished from Ince Moss coalboard workshops at Ince, materialized at Dalton 'Top Pit' only to vanish and rematerialize in the grass at Ince Moss Cemetery. Some months later it again vanished from the cemetery only to rematerialize at Dalton 'Top Pit'! Happy days.

I could relate a few stories of those days working for the Dalton Coal and Fireclay Company, including taking my girlfriend, now my wife, down the mine one weekend; she had on Her Majesty's Inspector of Mines Wellington boots over her own shoes and was continuously looking for any rats or mice in the mine.

Keep up the good work on *Past Forward* – it's a great magazine.

Frank Goodwill

As promised in the obituary to Donald Anderson in the last issue of Past Forward, here is a full list of Donald's published works:

Published works by Donald Anderson:

Blundells Collieries, Progress of the Business, Parts 1,2 & 3. Historic Society Lancashire and Cheshire 1965 to 1968.

The first serious study in the Lancashire Coalfield by the unique combination of a local historian and mining engineer to document the history of a colliery concern.

Orrell Coalfield, Lancashire 1740-1850. Moorland Publishing 1975.

A true classic in mining history. The definitive work on this once very important coalfield. Donald's all encompassing research approach in this work was to be much copied by future mining historians.

Mines and Miners of South Lancashire 1870-1950. D.Anderson and J. Lane. Published by Donald Anderson 1978.

The first ever photographic record publication on the Lancashire Coalfield, now long out of print and highly sought after. Donald's detailed captions make this study an important reference source.

Coal - A Pictorial History of the British Coal Industry. D. Anderson.

Published by David and Charles 1982.

Meant for a general audience, Donald's extensive wider knowledge of the British Coal Industry came to the fore in this highly readable account.

The Standish Collieries, Wigan, Lancashire 1633-1963. D. Anderson, Lane and A.A.France. Published by Donald Anderson 1984.

A truly monumental work of mining historical research and the definitive work on this area's coal industry. The enormous wealth of knowledge brought together and steered by Donald resulted in a work the like of which had never been seen before, and probably might never be seen again.

Life and Times at Haigh Hall (Eight Hundred Years of History). Donald Anderson. Published by Smiths of Wigan 1991.

Another first bringing to the fore Donald's fascination with ancient estates, especially local ones. The Haigh estate's 700 year mining history had always held a special interest for Donald. The definitive work so far on the Haigh area.

Wigan Coal and Iron. D. Anderson and A.A. France. Published by Smiths of Wigan 1994.

As befits the once greatest coal concern the world has ever known, another monumental work by Donald and Tony. The published work, although very extensive, was intended to be nearly twice as large! The final word on Wigan Coal and Iron.

Superb Tradesman and Gentleman

Sir,

I read your obituary of Donald Anderson (issue 35) with great interest. In April 1955 I was interviewed by Donald's electrician Tom Taberner, who had worked in a Haydock colliery and came from Ashton-in-Makerfield. He was a superb tradesman and a thorough gentleman, who also played the organ at a church in Ashton. I was taken on in April 1955 and had a wonderful time serving my apprenticeship under Tom. Donald had two partners, Bill Gorton, who looked after the 'Bottom Pit' on Lees Lane, Dalton and John Goodier, who did the books at the office on that site, and looked after the stores. John was as tight as the proverbial! Donald himself looked after the 'Top Pit', which was in the fields below Ashurst Beacon, and also Quaker House which was close to Simms Lane End, North Ashton.

Many people will wonder why

there is a wonderful stand of poplars on the left hand side of Lees Lane as you go towards Parbold. These had been planted to hide the 'Bottom Pit', and this was my first sight as I went to work on my first day. The 'Bottom Pit' was a dry pit and easy to work, the hardest job was catching the pony that hauled the tubs out of the mine. It was put out to grass every weekend, and come Monday morning everybody joined in the chase to harness it up. I helped put in the haulage engine and the pony was retired.

The 'Top Pit' worked the middle mountain seam, which was about two feet of coal on top of three feet of fireclay. With the support bars lowering the effective height, you walked in a permanent stoop, which was very tiring. But the worst thing was the water, which was everywhere – dripping from the roof, under you feet (we had to wear Wellingtons), everything

was always wet, which played havoc with the electrical equipment and kept us busy.

The pit worked a three shift system. Day turn was 8.00-4.00 and was when the filling was done. Joe Fairhurst was deputy (or Bill Ashcroft, as they worked weeks about) and usually four gangs of men in the stalls. They consisted of two fillers and a drawer. Of the 20 or so men who worked there most came from Upholland or Roby Mill; indeed the Murray family from Roby Mill were some five or six strong in the late '50's.

Transport was on Ronnie Bank's wagons from Roby Mill or from Hall Green, Upholland. Little Norman Farrimond drove the Upholland wagon, as he parked up every night just below the Stanley pub on Ormskirk Road where he live. It was no joke going up Mill Lane in winter, but most of the colliers preferred the easy going life at Dalton to the N.C.B. The hours were more sociable, and best of all you could smoke down the pit as it was a 'flame free mine'.

Continued on page 38



IN THE SAME CLASS AT GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Dear Sir,

In the last issue of *Past Forward* there was an article entitled 'The Memoirs of John Vincent Gorner' (p 28) which had been submitted by his son Denis Gorner. I immediately recognised the Gorner family referred to in the article, and wrote to Denis in America, who replied by e-mail to my snail mail.

My memory was correct, Denis's older brother Vincent and I were in the same class at the Grammar School, Ashton-in-Makerfield. Denis gave me Vincent's address in London, so I wrote to Vincent and received a very appreciative reply.

So after 59 years a contact has been re-established, thanks to *Past Forward*.

Denis also passed my letter

on to other extended members of the Gorner family. I have received an e-mail from Andy Yates in the USA and a long letter from Ron Gorner, who was also at Ashton Grammar School, but about five years older. Ron mentioned several names who I also remember, one in particular being Frank Finch, who was his close friend at school and was my house captain when I started there in 1939.

Denis and I have now exchanged several e-mails, and he suggested that I send you a copy of my letter to him, as he feels that other people may be interested in the correspondence. Hence I enclose a copy and please feel free to publish if you so wish.

**Alan H. Wright
Gosforth
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Email:**

a.h.wright@btinternet.com

Dear Denis,

I have just read the article in the new issue of *Past Forward* re 'The Memoirs of John Vincent Gorner' which I found most interesting as I am an Old Ashtonian, and I immediately recognised the connection with the Gorners.

I started at The Grammar School, Ashton-in-Makerfield in September 1939 and soon afterwards we had a new boy join us, he came from London, one Vincent Gorner, who I am sure is your brother. As far as I can remember "Vinny" was with us until 1944, and then he returned to London. I would be interested to hear how Vinny progressed.

My father, Frederick T. Wright, had the grocers shop "Nathan Wright & Son" in Wigan Road nearly opposite the grammar school, and knew your father quite well. I remember them chatting on Wigan Road when I think your

father was walking from Bryn Station on his way home to Osborne Road, after working in Liverpool, I think. No doubt they had known each other from their youth, and both old soldiers, Fred was shot up on the first day of the Somme July 1916.

I left Ashton in 1955 and have only returned there a few times; I am more depressed at each visit with the state of the place, it is nothing like the Ash'n I remember and certainly not as interesting as the utopia your father so ably described.

After school I was in the Royal Air Force, followed by a degree in engineering, and then worked at Leyland Motors, Manchester Corporation and finally to Sunderland where I was General Manager and Engineer of the Corporation Transport department.

Alan H. Wright

Worked at Maypole Colliery

Dear Sir,

Thank you, most sincerely, for printing my query relating to No. 1 shaft at the Maypole Colliery, and for publishing the photograph I sent to you.

I have had three letters from readers who worked at the Maypole Colliery. They do confirm that there was a second shaft, plus an underground winder.

Re the photograph, I did receive a letter from the Mr. Bennison, I referred to. He now lives in Nice, France. His sister sent *Past Forward* to him. He was the principal surveyor, for the Victoria, and Albert Collieries. He left the coal industry in 1960, and made a career in show-business, working mostly in London. He did put a show on at the Wigan Little Theatre in the 1970's. He still writes plays.

He did not realise that he knew my wife well – she lived not far from the Bath Springs. He said his jaw just dropped when he read the few lines she had written to him.

Thank you once again.

**Albert E. Short
Blackpool**

Continued from page 37

I remember so well the telephone system we had between the 'Top Pit' and the 'Bottom Pit'. This consisted of ex-army telephones, with wind up handles on that rang the bell at the other end. The cable was strung up between trees in the fields between the two mines and I spent many hours repairing that cable, shinning up trees with a hammer and some staples. A wonderful job in summer! Afternoon shift was the cutting shift; this comprised two brothers from Parbold, Joe and Gordon Unsworth, a deputy who did some shot firing, and was from 2.00-10.00.

Night turn consisted of a night watchman, Jack Fairhurst, whose sole purpose in life was to keep an eye on the pumps and water. When it rained hard, it took about a week for the rain to seep through the soil/rock and then into the pit. I spent many soaking and tiring hours moving pumps and equipment back to stop them from being flooded, as the water became too much

for the pumps to cope with, and rose back up the drift.

It was after one such horrendous night shift that Joe and Jack Fairhurst and myself went into the Prince William at 8 a.m. for a "warmer". It really was home from home and I had my first taste of whisky that morning. It tasted terrible, and just goes to show what a difference 50 years makes! We were all regulars in the Prince, and in fact Donald built the retiring landlady's bungalow some years later practically opposite the pub. Was he thinking of branching out I wonder? He didn't as it happens

Quaker House mined the King seam. This was a good height of solid coal and bone dry. It was at Quaker House that the Holland family worked. Ernie, the father, was a good 6' 4" and big with it, and all the four sons were of similar build. When they all walked out of the pit it was a sight to behold. It was also at Quaker House that I met Donald's father. Jim had been a joiner originally, and even though retired, was still

out and about making do and mending. In the workshop Roy Walmsley was the blacksmith who sharpened the Siskol cutter picks every day, and Dick Aspey was his striker. Roy came from Goose Green and Dick from opposite Pemberton station. I can still hear the roar of the forge fire and the clang, clang of metal upon metal.

Things I remember so well. Going home 'in the black' – much to my mum's annoyance – as we had no baths. John Goodier querying if I really did need two rolls of insulating tape. Riding out of the pit behind the tubs on the drag – slightly dangerous and highly illegal, but it saved walking. Going to Mrs. Ratcliffe's for sandwiches for our tea if we worked late – why did they always taste so good? Going to scrap yards to buy up ex N.C.B. electrical gear to refurbish because money was tight. But most of all, I remember what a wonderful time I had as I started off into my working life.

**Arthur Penny
Billinge Nr. Wigan**



THE MEMORIES OF A MASTER BUTCHER

Dear Sir,

First let me say thank you for the article about my Aunt Doris Wood (*Past Forward* no. 35, p38). I may be wrong but, ironic as it may seem, the photograph on the back page (bottom left) is of the Standishgate Methodist Church, demolished a few years ago; this was the church where my Aunt Doris went all her life and where her funeral service was held.

I recently read an article about the delights of finding a traditional butcher' shop. Being a retired master butcher, this set me thinking of how, when I started in the trade, there was a butcher's shop on every main road and even in side streets; and there were even butchers

who used to go round hawking with their horse and van.

I also think that with the decline of these shops, we have lost a lot of characters who worked in them. Marshes used to have a shop on Ince Bar and their own slaughter house in Anderton Street, Higher Ince. Every Monday after the cattle had been bought at the Ship in Wigan Castle Market, they would drive them on Manchester Road from Wigan into Anderton Street; all the animals walked it back in those days. I remember being frightened by the cattle with their huge horns – they were mostly Highland breeds, as only Scotch beef was sold in Marsh's shop. Mr. & Marsh Marsh and their son Jack ran the business. I worked with Jack for a while. His father, also Jack, always had the nickname of Moggie Marsh; he was quite a character, I also worked with Jimmy Whittle

who, with Jack senior, worked for Ben Turners Butchers Ltd.

I started my first job with Mr. Binks, a manger for J.H. Dewhurst on Ince Bar. I remember leaving school on the Friday and expecting to start work on the Monday, only to be told "what's up with tomorrow (Saturday)".

I never though at that stage in my life that one day I would have my own shop in Ashton-in-Makerfield – for more than 20 years, until I retired; and even after that I did another 10 years helping another butcher. But I think I finished at the right time – when supermarkets started to open and it became a one-stop-shop way of life. It was sadly the end of an era. The man I started with did 50 years in the one shop, took ill in the shop on the Saturday and died on the Sunday – a good way to go. It wasn't a job, it was a way of life.

Later on in life I became a part time student minister; a

friend used to say, "watch what you say in this shop or else he will use it in the pulpit next week!" I must say that there was a lot of truth in this – some of my best sermons came out of everyday things and still do.

Who can forget Green's in the old Market Hall, with old Dick Green giving out his orders? McAvoy's, Coward's. Berry's, King in Market Street, Ben Turner's Ltd in Woodcock Street, Dewhurst's in Market Place and Makinson Arcade, Sawbridge's, Marsden's, Mark William's, Hurst's, Smailes, Highton's, Billy Seddon and his dogs in Darlington Street, Webster's, T. Melling, Crabtree's, Billy Crook, John Horrocks, Lowe's. Starkie's, Hindley, Johnny Cowburn, the West Brothers and Bobby Burns. The list is endless, but they all made a living in there own way. Sadly, most have long gone.

A.E. Smith
Winstanley Wigan

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The Way We Were – And Hope We Shall Be

MAY I offer my thanks to *Past Forward* for the information given concerning old friends of mine in former issues (Mr. G. Yates issue 35 p38 and Rev. R. Taylor issue 33 p9). As a result of this by your kindness I have been able to contact both of these gentlemen and we now correspond with each other. Geoff was a friend of mine at the old 'Wigan Tech', whilst Roger and I worked together in Wigan, where he lived in the Poolstock area. Thoughts of long ago caused me to write about past events in Wigan.

We would never buy our Christmas cards in August – the real preparations started with Advent. I remember as a little boy my parents taking me to Wigan Market Place where the crowds were like a Manchester United Football Match, as they all awaited the coming of Father Christmas. He was brought from Wigan Infirmary to Lowe's Store, where he went up a ladder to the chimney top and disappeared into the store, where he remained for visits from children like myself right up until Christmas Eve.

In my youth, I would travel from Platt Bridge to Wigan Station each day, and on my return, whilst waiting for my local train, The 'Coronation Scot' thundered through the station promptly at 5 o'clock, on its way to London. It was never delayed. In those days there never seemed to be disputes with Wigan Bus Corporation or the Railways. I myself always seemed to be

on time. Why have we lost some of these things?

At the old Empress Hall, I learned a lot of my dancing at the 'tea dances' on Saturday afternoons. There was never any rowdiness or commotion. In the evening, King Street teemed with the cinema-goers – there were the County Playhouse, Court Cinema and Hippodrome. In those times 10.45 p.m. seemed normal as people got various buses – and no one seemed to be afraid of coming out for the evening.

Of course I had to leave the area during the War for my service in the R.A.F. but before I did this, I remember being in the Market Place on Sunday 3 September 1939, just after 11.00 a.m.

After the War, many improvements were made in the town. In more recent days, when The Queen and Prince Philip opened Wigan Pier, we certainly took away the smiles of those who thought of Wigan Pier as a music hall joke. It certainly put the smiles on our faces – and put them in their place.

Again I thank the Editor of *Past Forward* and his staff for helping me to contact old friends. And in conclusion may I remind all readers of *Past Forward* as to what a citizen is required to do.

As we think of our town, let us all be physically and spiritually minded and say, "It all depends on me – and I depend on God". As we think of Wigan 'Ancient and Loyal' from past ages, may its meaning stand in our minds as we look forward to the days which are to come.

**W.L. Grundy
Hindley**

HAPPY DAYS – BUT TOUGH

Dear Sir,

After reading J.V. Gerner's memories in issue 34 of *Past Forward* I am enclosing this photograph of what I have been told is Bryn Central in the hope that someone will know if it is correct.

My father Peter Shaw is the 4th back row and the 7th back row is Evans, commonly known as "Mowie".

I can relate to most of what Mr. Gerner says, as I lived at Bryn Cross – 6 Downall Green Road (not there now). I also went on the Smethurst trip to Blackpool; it was the highlight of the year – a ride on the train, free entrance in the town and

one ride up to the very top. It was frightening but a great thrill! It was the first time I saw the sea – unbelievable, and all this free.

We also had a Christmas Concert in Garswood Hall Institute. We sat on the floor in the beautiful ballroom and were given a big bag of sweets. I though I had been given the Sovereign toffee works as I had not seen or held so many all at once, except in Owd Kane Ridgeway's shop at Bryn Cross where we spent a lot of time playing guessing games.

Happy days but tough.

**Ida Fairhurst
Billinge Nr. Wigan**



This photograph was submitted by Mrs. Ward of Leigh (nee Foster, of Wigan). She asks if it is Standishgate Methodist School 1940 (Sir Ian McKellan's old school), or, perhaps, Butts C.E. School, Leigh, 1950's-60's?



Were 'excessive hours' to blame?

Dear Editor,

Re article on Rev. Twemlow in issue 35, his September 1910 observations that long, shift hours worked by engine-winders in the coal mines could have disastrous consequences, brought home to me the circumstances of my great-great-grandfather's death 50 years earlier.

In 1859, at about five in the morning, James Barker, aged 62, descended the pit shaft at Cheshire Holes Colliery, Ince, with eight other workers. They were in two groups of four. James was the last man out, at the bottom level. He was in the process of climbing over the safety bar – the usual exit – of the cage when it was raised up with the correct all-clear signal being given. He was severely crushed between the bar and the roof of the pit. After being carried home, he died the following morning.

Perhaps the engineman on duty that morning had worked the excessive hours as quoted by the Rev. Twemlow. Made me view my great-great-grandfather's death in a different light.

The Inquest Report stated that "the deceased, James Barker, came to his death in consequences of the winding-up by the engineman of the cage by which deceased descended before the proper signal had been given, as described by the rules." There was no mention of how many hours the engineman had been on duty! No compensation for great-great-grandmother either!

**M. Aldred
Southport**

St. Thomas's Infants School, Caroline Street, Wigan c.1948

Dear Sir,

I have enclosed three prints taken in 1948? At St. Thomas's Infants School, Caroline Street, Wigan. I taught there for eight happy years. When I came to live at my present address, my neighbour was Mrs. Holme (Miss Burton) who taught me at the High School. When she moved, my next neighbour was someone I taught, Audrey Atherton, now Loughnane.

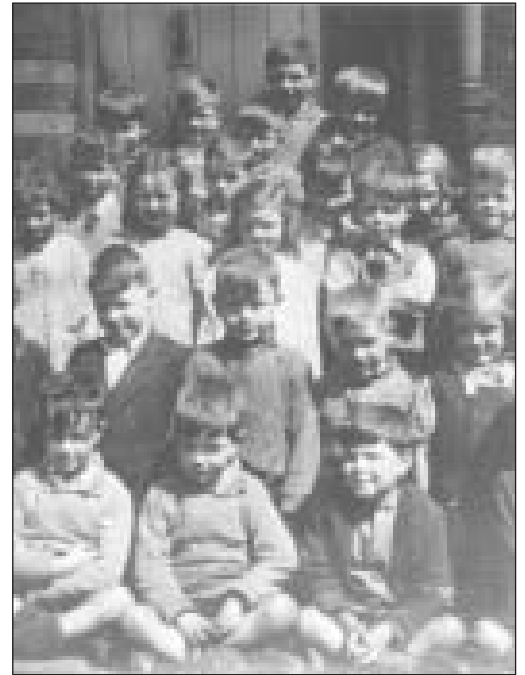
We have looked at these prints and have remembered some names. It would be good to have more. I was Miss Davies, the headmistress was Miss Anderton. The other members of staff were Miss Ellison and Mrs. Sheargold. The ones we remember are Tony Grimes, Eric Lamb, Peter Molyneux, Harry Bretherton, Clifford Parry(?), Alan Hibbs, Joyce Bailey, Robert Dawber, Tom Cutler, Anita Holland, Edward Austin, Tommy Blinkhorn, James Fairhurst, Joyce Green, Raymond Atkinson and Audrey Atherton. Where are they now?

Thanking you in anticipation.

**Joyce Dennis LRPS
Wigan**



L to R: Miss Anderton, Mrs. Sheargold, Miss Ellison and Miss Davies (behind).



I remember Irene

Dear Mr. Gillies,

I have just received my copy of *Past Forward* and was thrilled to read about Irene Riley. I remember Irene when I lived in Downall Green Road and all the people she mentioned, except, of course, the nurses at Wigan Infirmary. Irene's name was Liptrot and her father had a garage in Soughers Lane.

Tommy Liptrot, her father, was very good to my father and leased him a plot of land to put up a workshop. He was returning a favour to my dad. Tommy was badly burned when repairing a car which caught fire and dad dressed his wounds.

There was also an article about Dame Doris Wood. I remember her well as my Uncle, Arthur Nicholson, used to accompany her on the piano sometimes. She visited my Uncle's home along with other

singers and musicians. My Uncle used to play in the Orchestra at the Hippodrome many years ago.

I look forward to the next *Past Forward* – it's always a great day when it arrives. Keep up the good work and thanks for all the interesting items.

Kind regards.

**Joyce Riddick (Pendlebury
nee Nicholson)**

Email: joyce.

riddick@btinternet.com

www.joyceandgeorge.co.uk



It was Holy Trinity Church

Dear Sir,

With reference to the back page photograph (bottom left) in issue no. 34, this is Holy Trinity Church, Downall Green. It was taken by Mr. Harry Lowe, Organist and Choirmaster (later Headmaster of Rectory C.E. School) from the vantage point on top of Jimmy Moore's bay window.

The occasion was on the completion of the newly added tower (1938-39), when a new photograph was required for the front of the parish magazine.

Rev. W.R. Hall was the rector at the time and H. Stanley Foster was headmaster of the school.

Bill Mitten
(Ex Pupil & Chorister)
Ashton-in-Makerfield

PLEA FROM THE EDITOR

I greatly value all contributions to *Past Forward*, and if you don't have access to a computer, don't let that put you off sending me your article - preferably typed, but again, if you can only manage handwritten, that's fine.

Best by far are electronic contributions, ie by Email (a.gillies@wlct.org), or on CD ROM or floppy disc together with hard copy printouts. And it would help the production team and myself even more if articles were double line spaced with one inch (25mm) margins and a word count included. Many thanks.
Ed.

RIGHT IN THE FIRST PLACE

Dear Alastair,

After many a long look at the picture on bottom left of the back page of *Past Forward* no. 34, I gave up the ghost in sheer perplexity, having decided that it could not have been Holy Trinity Church, North Ashton, more colloquially, Downall Green or even more locally, Denya Green, though depicting an uncanny resemblance.

Then along came a letter from Mrs. Edith Ducker of Keighley, Yorkshire, daughter of Mr. Leonard Waterhouse mentioned more than once in my *Childhood Revisited*, and then a letter in no. 35 from Irene Riley, not to mention *Past Forward's* publication of the correct solution, all proving that I was right in the first place.

Ironically, it is well within the realms of possibility that no one, dead or alive, could be more familiar with the inner structure of the belfry, as illustrated. Twice, and sometimes thrice on the Sabbath during my teenage in the 1930's, exactly 15 minutes before the appointed time of service, I would have climbed the open wooden staircase running from the front area at the rear of the church, up to a spot behind the rows of forms in the balcony. There hung a length of wire crudely fashioned into a hoop. One downward pull and there

commenced, rhythmically controlled by yours truly, 15 minutes of monotonous clanging in the service of calling the worshippers to prayer.

Come the hour, the clanging would cease, the operator clomping his way down the wooden staircase, with measured stride, make his way along the north aisle of the church, disappearing from the congregation's view via the door leading to the vestry. Assembled therein would be the choir, all cassocked and surpliced, ready to make their way, followed by Rector W.R.H. Hall, to their various places in the choir stalls, to a voluntary, I should add, played by the diminutive Miss (Hetty) Crompton on the aging church organ, wind supplied by the pumping of yours truly in his dual role of bell ringer and organ blower (though I could never understand why the word "blower" was chosen).

The rest of the church service was spent in solitary confinement in a dark recess of the vestry, immediately behind the organ's screen, the only comfort provided being an armless form on which to sit, plus a backrest provided by a solid wooden screen.

That was the pattern of every Sunday throughout many of my teenage years. But, in all those

15 minutes, locked away in the belfry, never once was I aware of a clock ticking. Surely the photographer could not have superimposed a clock face just to fool long term absentees like myself. If not, it would be interesting to learn just when the clock was installed.

It may interest the reader to learn that for the sterling service provided throughout that period, I was paid £4 annually, paid in eight increments of 10s. (50p) in new (sometimes) 10s. notes - a rare spectacle and a quite ephemeral one in my case, as within little more than an hour it would be deposited in mother's purse, never to be seen (by me) again!

J. Harold Smith
Sutton Coldfield
West Midlands

P.S. Sometimes following Thursday night practice, two or three of us choirboys would engage Miss Crompton in conversation and sometimes escort her through the quiet path through The Dell to the large house she shared with her sister. She had one inclusion in her repertoire of voluntaries which I particularly liked; it was by an almost unknown composer, Easthope Martin, and was entitled 'Evensong'. Can any reader cast any further information?

CALLED TO THE COLOURS

Dear Sir,

It is with interest that I read the articles written by Fred Holcroft relating to the conditions and circumstances under which our troops had to fight in the Boer War. One of these brave men came from Skelmersdale (a small village then).

Private Richard Brighouse, who served with the South Lancs. Regiment, was my grandfather. He was born 2 August 1868 at Aughton, near Ormskirk. He left school aged nine years and was sent to do odd jobs on farms. In his early teens, when he left home to join the Army ('Prince of Wales Volunteers') He was out of the army but on 'Reserve' when

the Boer War broke out; he was called to the colours, and was very soon sent overseas.

He was wounded and won the D.C.M. for bravery at the battle of 'Spion Cop'. The official citation referred to "Pte Brighouse's great coolness and resource under heavy fire; when severely wounded in his side he insisted on removing his own accoutrements and attempted to dress his own wound while remainder kept up rifle fire". He was presented with his medal at Buckingham Palace by Edward VII in 1901.

The bullet which wounded him came out through his buttock over four years later. The doctor who attended him gave it to him as a souvenir; he

put it on the watch chain which had been presented to him by the British Legion in honour of his winning the D.C.M.

After the Boer War Richard Brighouse married Ellen Alty, but having a restless nature, he did not settle in one place for long - the couple had 11 children, nine of which were born in different towns, or villages. My grandfather continued with his farm and market garden work until the 1914-18 War broke out, when he enlisted; he was demobbed however, after it was found that he had given his wrong age.

In the last years of his life, he was Standard Bearer for Skelmersdale British Legion.

H. Brighouse
Orrell Wigan



The reason for the gathering?

Dear Sir,

This photograph (**below right**) was found by Ernest Woodcock amongst some family photographs. Ernest and I both lived in Dawson Avenue, Beech Hill as children, and later he became my brother-in-law.

We have located the place as the garden of no 17 Dawson Avenue where Ann Diblin used to live and the date of the photograph as c 1946/7. I am standing on the right at the end of the first row and Ernest is sitting next to me with his hands on his knees. The photograph seems to be a mixture of children who lived in the street at the time, and others who like me attended the Wesleyan School in Wigan.

I would particularly like to identify the people and the occasion. We are intrigued by the tall young woman who looks much older than anyone else, but seems too young to be the mother of one of the children. It would be good to be able to identify everyone and the reason for the gathering.

I really enjoy *Past Forward*.

Audrey Sherrington
(nee Hughes)
Colwyn Bay
North Wales

Can any reader help?

Edmund Waddelove has sent in this photograph. He would like to know if anyone can supply a few names. He has been told his mother is on the photograph so the date is c. 1900 and is possibly St. Joseph's R.C. School, Leigh.



Intriguing incident

Dear Mr. Gillies,

Thank you for another excellent issue of *Past Forward*.

Can any of your readers provide information on an intriguing incident which happened in the early 1950's? In my book "Lancashire United" (Transport Publishing Company, Glossop, 1974), there are pictures (pp. 73 & 74) of a Lancashire United Transport bus submerged to the top deck and being recovered from what appears to be one of the local 'flashes', sunken areas where old mine workings have subsided and become filled with water. Another picture has recently come to light showing the vehicle from the front with pit head gear in the background. The destination blind shows 'Nook Pits'. The location was originally said to be Pennington Flash.

The LUT timetable for 1963 shows a workpeople's service between Atherton (Punch Bowl), Tyldesley (Johnson Street), Nook Colliery and Astley Colliery, which suggest 'Nook Pits' is between Tyldesley and Astley. I should like to know the location of the incident, the date and any other details which readers might remember.

The bus was LUT No. 40, TF 7378, a 1932 Leyland TD1 Titan with Leyland body rebuilt with a more modern front. It was subsequently rebodied with a second-hand body and continued to serve until 1956 when it was sold to AMCC, a London dealer. Any information will be much appreciated.

Rev Eric Ogden
40 Burnedge Lane
Grasscroft Oldham
Lancs OL4 4EA

YOUR STORIES PLEASE

British Waterways needs your help! They are preparing an Interpretation Plan for Wigan Pier and would like to know about any stories, characters or fables relating to the canal, nearby buildings and the towpath. Can you help with any interesting tales that you think should be told about Wigan Pier?

Please send any information to Sarah Douglas, at Pearcroft, Pearcroft Road, Stonehouse, Gloucs GL10 2JY or tel: 01453 822013 or email: douglas@pearcroft.demon.co.uk

Many thanks.

Published by Wigan Heritage Service, Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust, Market Suite, The Galleries, Wigan WN1 1PX

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T R U S T

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Who? Where?

The photographs in the last issue proved rather elusive. One suggestion for the restaurant (top left) was the *Red Lion* at Haigh. The building being demolished may well be in Station Road, Wigan, around the turn of the 20th century, while the bottom right photograph was possibly taken in the Golborne area. If you can identify any of this issue's photographs, please contact Len Hudson in Leigh Town Hall (01942 404432).

