

PAST FORWARD

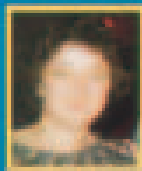
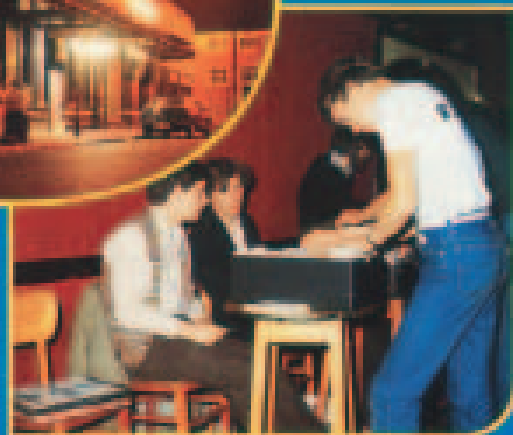
Issue No. 38

November 2004 – March 2005



WIGAN Casino Club 1973 ALL NIGHTER 1980

WIGAN
LEISURE & CULTURE
TRUST



Produced by Wigan Heritage Service

FREE

From the Editor

Firstly, a very big thank you to so many of you who have played your part in our recent consultation process. Your feedback has been invaluable in helping us improve our services and plan for the future (see p20 for further details). The response to the questionnaire which appeared in the last issue of *Past Forward* was particularly gratifying, both with regard to the number of forms returned and all the encouraging comments which you had to make about the magazine. It's so good to know that we have a product which is so much appreciated by so many. It's not perfect, of course, and a few readers did have some constructive criticisms/suggestions to make; we will, certainly, be taking a close look at these comments, and a more detailed analysis (along with the result of our prize draw!) will appear in the next issue.

Also in the next issue, we hope to bring you some exciting news to do with the History Shop – watch this space.

We have a wonderful exhibition at present in the History Shop. *Wigan Casino: the Heart of Northern Soul* has proved immensely popular (see pp3,19). A particular word of thanks to Claire Hawkins who curated the exhibition; unfortunately, however, this was to be her parting legacy to us, as she has now returned to her previous authority, Warrington (see opposite).

As Christmas rapidly approaches, I would like to remind readers that the History Shop has got some very special Christmas presents with a difference – I can assure you that you will not be disappointed. It only remains for me to wish all our readers – throughout the world! – a very Happy Christmas and prosperous New Year.

COPY DEADLINE

Please note that the copy deadline for issue no 39 of *Past Forward* is 1 February 2005.

All comments and correspondence should be addressed to:
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Goodbye and Good Luck!

WHEN our popular Community Outreach & Education Officer, Claire Hawkins, left us at the end of September it was hard to believe that she had been with us for over 18 months. These were months of hard work, yet the time had simply flown by. We are very happy to report, however, that much was achieved during this period. Anyone who witnessed the holiday activity sessions in the Wickham Gallery (the collage footballer, the Halloween creepy-crawlies or the miniature museums) or indeed has visited the *Wigan Casino - the Heart of Soul* exhibition in the Taylor Gallery, will have first hand experience of some of her work and influence on the service.

In October Claire took up her new post of Local Heritage Access Officer at Warrington Museum. As this is her hometown and where she continues to live, alas we could not compete. We would all like to wish Claire well in her future career at Warrington and thank her for her time here in Wigan.



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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Cover: Wigan Casino Club 'All Nighter' Poster, 1980.

History Shop Exhibition Review

Wigan on the Map – on now at the History Shop

A highly colourful and creative 'map' (28 giant panels featuring embroidered, painted and knitted images) was made by community groups from all over Wigan Borough to celebrate the new Millennium. The images reflect the best loved aspects of each area, whether it is the local church, pub, legends or community organisation.

Talks and tours available by advanced booking for groups and societies (tel: 01942 828128).

Review - A Feast of Photography!

Our annual celebration of photography and its valuable contribution to local history and culture was, as usual, a great success. We began by showing some of the fascinating pictures in our own extensive archive collections, illustrating the milestones of our daily lives with events such as christenings, marriages, first day at school and our first seaside holiday! This was followed by work from two local photographic societies, Wigan and Atherton. The creative and diverse photographs on display represented the culmination of a year's hard work by society members. It is always intriguing to see the world through the eyes of someone else! Visitors once again, had the opportunity to vote for their favourite picture in the Wigan show. The result will not be revealed until next year's show, so make sure you are there!

Still on the theme of photography, the Heritage Service is currently investigating the possibility of digitising part of our photographic archive and making it available on the world wide web for all. We would be interested to know what you think, so if you have a view, contact Yvonne Webb (01942 828123).

Current exhibition - Wigan Casino: The Heart of Soul - Until 26 February 2005

Our final exhibition of the year. This exhibition explores and celebrates the history of a local dance hall credited by many as the birthplace of Northern Soul. Built in 1915 the building firstly named the Empress Ballroom (known in Wigan as the *Emp*) became world famous in it's later incarnation as Wigan Casino. From 1973 to the early 1980's the scene was massive, with soul fans travelling across the country for the regular "Allnighters". Dancers from the Casino appeared on *Top of the Pops*, American musicians jetted in especially to perform and the venue won the accolade "best disco in the world" from the American music magazine *Billboard*. Eventually demolished in 1982, Wigan Casino is now the subject of books, paintings, a touring play, regular articles in the press and television documentaries. Soul DJs and their network of fans continue to "keep the faith" with many events, fanzines and radio programmes. Many local people have memories of the "Allnighters", the atmosphere, the unique style of dancing, the record traders, and the rare 1960's soul records re-discovered for a new audience.

The exhibition is proving to be a favourite, especially with those of you who remember dancing the night away to the sounds of Northern Soul (see review of the exhibition launch by Visitor Services Manager Philip Butler on p19). We will be organising an oral history recording day in conjunction with experts from the North West Sound Archive to capture memories of the old Empress Ballroom and Wigan Casino. The tape recordings will be preserved for future generations at NWSA headquarters in Clitheroe Castle, and copies kept for reference at the History Shop. Keep a look out in the local press for details, and please come along. Otherwise, valuable information could be lost forever.



The life and death of Wigan Casino.

The Indians Are Coming!



LEIGH, OCTOBER 1904. Reports abounded in the district that a party of around 100 Sioux braves and warriors from other allied tribes was active within a ten mile radius of the town.

Witnesses described attacks on cabins in St. Helens. Stagecoaches were pursued and even a cavalry regiment was defeated and its troops massacred. Anticipation ran high as the Indians were expected to arrive at the town soon.....

And arrive they did on Sunday 2 October 1904, by three special trains. The famous *Buffalo Bill's Wild West & Congress of Roughriders of the World* made a tour of Britain in 1904; it had been at St. Helens on

Dear Mr. Gillies

I enclose an article which I would like you to consider for publication in *Past Forward*, celebrating the centenary of the visit of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show to Leigh.

**Colin Blake
Wigan**

Saturday 1 October before moving on to Leigh on the Sunday to present the show the following day (3 October).



Col. William F. Cody (Buffalo Bill) as depicted on the poster for the Leigh performances.

The show featured the re-enactment of 'Custer's Last Stand' as well as attacks on 'the Deadwood

Stage' and a 'Settler's Cabin', which are the incidents referred to in the opening paragraph.

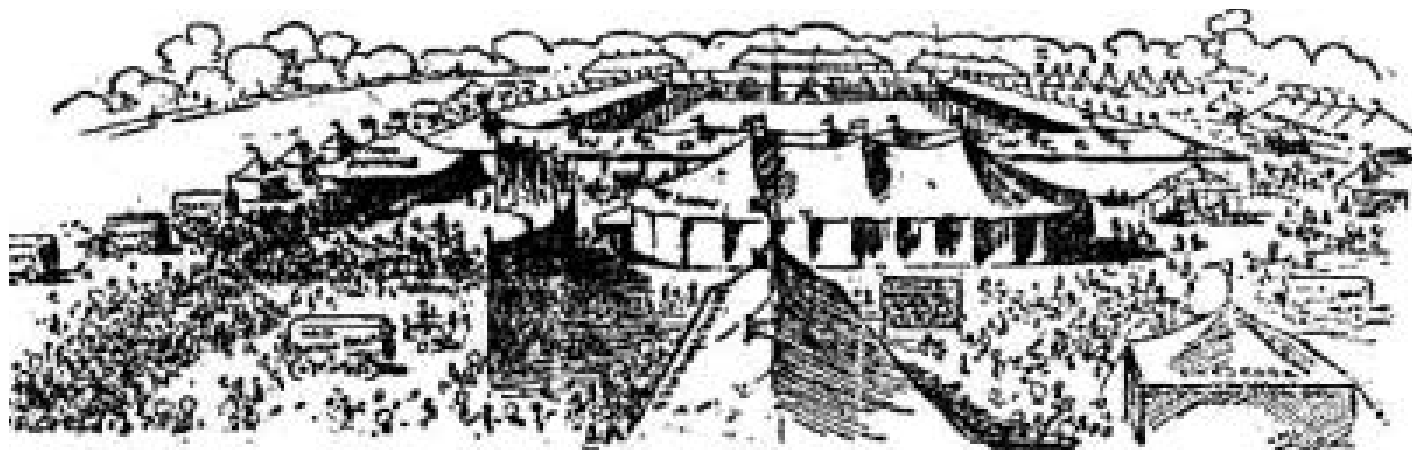
Other examples of life in the Wild West were shown but the show did not confine itself to depicting these, as the *Congress of Roughriders of the World* demonstrates.

The local press tells us that little was done on the day of arrival except to make provision for the horses, but on the Monday, a tent to hold some 12,000 people was erected with other sideshows.

The afternoon show drew an attendance of 6,000, but in the evening, special trams were laid on to bring people in from Atherton and Tyldesley, many of whom could not be accommodated.

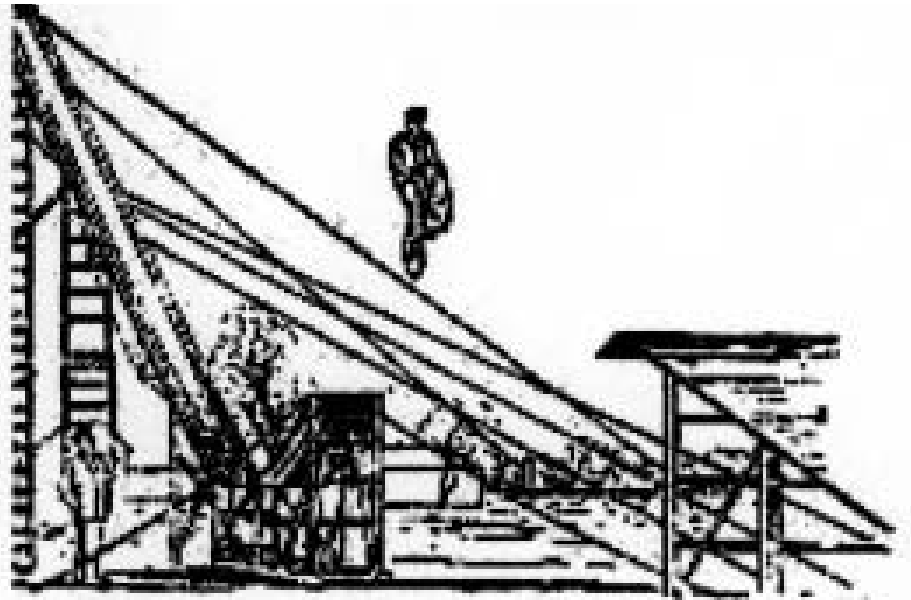
The Show

The show which the thousands came to see had changed in many respects. Annie Oakley was no longer with the show and the famous Sitting Bull had been killed some years earlier. His son, young Sitting Bull, however, did appear, at least according to the *St. Helens Reporter* of Friday 30 September 1904.



An artist's impression of the Wild West showground which was set up on the Buck's Farm Estate in the area, between present day Bonnywell Road and Pennington Brook, Leigh.

However, those attending still got their money's worth. The show started with a grand parade of all the company, led by Buffalo Bill himself. Apart from the Indians and Cowboys, the parade included horsemen from all over the world. Mexican Vaqueros rode with Arab spahis. The U.S. cavalry rode alongside British lancers. Gauchos from the Argentine featured, along with the Cossacks of Russia and horsemen from Japan. The appearance of the last two was particularly remarkable as the two countries were at war with each other at the time!



Newspaper illustration of the bicycle leap across 40 feet by 'Carter, the Cowboy Cyclist'.



According to the *Leigh Journal* of 7 October 1904, all the performers ".....are genuinely what they represent and not actors" It was even claimed that some of the Sioux Indians had actually participated in the Battle of the Little Big Horn. Be that as it may, the various riders put on displays that were worthy of the cultures they represented.

The equestrian events were not the only features on show. They were followed by the various re-enactments of life on the American frontier and then by various speciality acts. One of these was the spectacular 40 foot leap through space by Mr. George C. Davis, who performed under the name of 'Carter, the Cowboy Cyclist'.

The Site

So where in Leigh did this great spectacle take place. The report of the show in one paper says:

"it was located in the large field on the east side of St. Helens Road, between the railway and the brook". The brook is Pennington Brook. The railway line used to cross St Helens Road just above Lightbourne Avenue on the west side and present-day Bonnywell Road on the east side. This would put the site of the show somewhere along the line of Pennington Road between the sewage farm and St. Helens Road. The latter occupied the same site in 1904 as it does today.

Nothing marks the site today but, if you are lucky, you may see some horses grazing in the field and



imagine them to be Sioux war ponies as they were on that day 100 years ago, when the Indians came to town.



The fields between Pennington Road and Pennington Brook, Leigh. Sioux Indians grazed their war ponies at (or very near) this spot in Leigh 100 years ago.

Marylebone Village 1900-1950

Messrs. Ball & Birchall & families, owners of Marylebone Stores

LONG forgotten family papers have come into my possession referring to *"the sale of valuable freehold residences, shops, dwelling houses, ground rents and other properties, including eligible building sites, situate in Wigan district to be sold by auction at the Clarington Hotel, Wigan, on Wednesday the 5th day of September, 1923, at 20'clock prompt, and being the estate of the late Herbert Spencer Woodcock, Esq."* Having lived all my 80 years, apart from war service, on part of this estate at Marylebone and Milton Grove, I will endeavour to recall some of my earlier recollections and current comments on life from 1923 onwards.

In September 1923 my grandparents, who came originally from a farm at Tunley, Wrightington, must have gone along to the sale of these properties and land and successfully bid for Lot No.6, being six dwelling houses and shop and post office.

Family enterprise

A big decision was made in the family that, in order to make a success of this newly acquired business and post office, it would be a good idea to get family members involved in the enterprise and for all to live in the adjoining cottages to the shop.

So, it came about that my family moved from Halifax, Yorkshire, to live in one of the cottages. My father had been badly gassed in the First World

War and was finding it difficult to keep to his trade as a cabinetmaker because of ill health; this move obviously solved the problem of caring for his family. He did not work in the family business but was able to find light work locally. My mother, on the other hand, was skilled at dressmaking and tailoring, and managed the drapery department at the shop.

Influx of workers

All this happened c.1925, with my mother, brother and myself settled in the end cottage, which had frontage onto Wigan Lane and was surrounded by trees and gardens; conversion from privy to water closets had taken place by the time we arrived. One can assume that the cluster of cottages and school at Marylebone had been built some 40 years previous (c.1883), when privies were part of village life, to house the influx of workers to the mill quite near to Marylebone at the bottom of Leyland Mill Lane.

In those days the famous Laxey Wheel was made near the river and had to be hauled up Leyland Mill Lane by a team of horses straining on the cobbles, and with ropes pulled through rings fitted into the walls of the lane to haul various parts up to Wigan Lane for transportation to Liverpool, and then by ship to the Isle of Man.

Marlyebone Stores

Marlyebone Stores, meantime, was starting to expand into quite a big

store with a post office, grocers, butchery, fruit and vegetables, pottery and drapery department.

Two lady assistants helped my two uncles, my aunt and my mother in the store. My uncles took it in turns to run the butcher's shop and deliver orders to the surrounding districts. Business and family pressures were great and often, as children, we had to scuttle away from raised, angry, tired voices.

Apart from my father, good health prevailed in the family, and late nights were spent on the many chores such as filling basins with cooked meat and gelatine, boiling hams, keeping accounts and equipment in good order and clean.

Sunday Parade

On Sunday summer evenings the butcher's shop was scrubbed down and opened, to sell homemade ice cream, sweets and chocolates to throngs of young ladies and gentlemen who paraded up and down Wigan Lane, from Swinley to the Cherry Gardens, in their Sunday best clothes in the hope of attracting a suitor.

As there were few motorcars or garages, this promenading did not create any problems and reasonably good behaviour was the order of the day. Most of the throng had spent part of the day at a religious service or Sunday school, as we did. The religious festivals were a yearly pattern to life, with Walking Days and outings connected to the church enjoyed by many families; an arranged charabanc outing to the seaside was a special treat.

Daily life

Meanwhile, the surrounding cottages and our school were a hub of activity as families got on with their lives, with the menfolk following their trades and the women cooking and keeping their families and houses clean with the limited appliances and cleaning materials available at this time - rubbing boards, dolly tubs, squeezers (used to remove water from washed clothes and bedding) - and all having to be worked by hand power.

Wigan Town seemed a long way away from the



close-knit community at Marylebone, with the mining, cotton and engineering industries developing at a great pace in Lancashire as a whole. Lots of workers who had worked on the land got employment in the mills that had begun to change the landscape around Wigan. Men also found employment in the many mines being sunk in the area, as coal had long since been found to be plentiful and was now needed for the industries and homes. Work was also available on the railways and canals, with apprenticeships opening doors to advancement in most of these industries.

As the professional families moved into the area, there were plenty of jobs in their houses for the local women.

Electricity had not come to our cottages in the early 1930's and I remember that gas with fragile mantles was the means of lighting in the home and on the streets. A man came round at dusk to turn on the streetlights and came back again at dawn to turn them off. Coke and coal were used for heating and the air outside was far from fresh, especially in the winter. This led to many chest complaints and spitting in the streets with spittoons, and sawdust being used in public places.



School

The school at Marylebone had a cross-section of pupils aged 5-11 years. Fields and woodlands nearby were being bought by Wigan Corporation and speculators to build houses for doctors, solicitors, dentists, skilled and semi-skilled workers, and many other professions, and some of their children came to the school.

The school had a headmistress and two other teachers who were dedicated, unmarried and talented. They were strict disciplinarians in a pretty parochial environment, but with lots of music, play acting, country dancing and singing on the lighter side.

Health

One family in the cottages developed TB and it swept through the family members shortening their lives. Also, the fever hospital at Whelley was a busy place and not a favourite hospital to be contemplated by young minds.

Around this time most children in Wigan were vaccinated against smallpox and if you wore a red ribbon on your arm it meant, "keep off, I've got a sore arm". Payments had to be made for doctors' visits and medicines – it was also quite normal for families to use herbal

remedies that had been passed down for generations to cure their ills.

Marylebone Stores was well placed to cater for the nearby residents and beyond, and to share their griefs and joys.

The daily confining chores of looking after a family also created a niche for home visits by my aunt to collect weekly grocery orders; as children we were sometimes allowed to go along with her on these visits and watch as the little attaché case was opened to take out the order book and see the display of new lines of convenience foods that had come on the market and on the shelves of the store.

The normal diet at this time was basic and wholesome, with lots of potatoes, vegetables and meat in the winter, and greens and fruits in the summer, usually grown and delivered to the store from the surrounding countryside.

Survival of the fittest

On reflection, I suppose an accurate description of these early days was 'survival of the fittest'. But one marvels at the dedication and good character and thoroughness of the men and women who worked on the various committees, planning and deliberating to take Wigan and its surroundings through these challenging times – particularly as regards health, schooling, housing, and the obvious need for mass entertainment which came with the expansion of the town.

On the roads

In the early 1900's trams were well used, and ran past the rows of

cottages on Wigan Lane on their way to and from Wigan and Boar's Head; later these were replaced by buses.

One day, out of the blue, a young man appeared on a pedal bike with a box on the front, and we children were introduced to our first 'Stop me and buy one' ice cream man. Massed produced ice cream had arrived and it was well worth saving or begging pocket money to 'buy one'.

Horse drawn wagons were still widely used to transport coal and other goods around Wigan, and milk was brought round by a farmer with his milk float pulled by a horse. Ladling the milk from a huge churn was not very hygienic; nevertheless, we used to put the milk jug on the doorstep, cover it, and wait for the daily pint to arrive. Refrigeration in the home was a long way off, so means had to be found to keep food and milk as cool as possible, in the shape of big earthenware pots kept in the cool pantry.

When the tram service was replaced by buses, the walled brick road was replaced by the present wide boulevard – which is still a very attractive gateway to Wigan town.

Bank House was demolished and Marylebone Park created. Mr. Woodcock's old house, 'The Elms' still stands and is now used by the NHS. Also, many of the trees around Marylebone Park and Milton Grove belonged to his estate and are still standing.

Like me, I'm sure many Wiganers love this part of Wigan and we old ones remember, with great affection, all the grocers and merchants who served our town so conscientiously.

Mrs P. Rowe
Wigan

The Battle of Howe Bridge 1881

THOSE interested in military matters will be well aware of the Battle of Wigan Lane in 1651, during the Civil War. Apart from that skirmish and other even less important events in the dark and distant past, we cannot claim to have many important battle sites within the borough. Many readers, perhaps, will not know that the numbers involved in the Battle of Howe Bridge in 1881 probably exceeded those involved at Wigan Lane, yet the 'battle' was of a totally different nature.

Events leading up to the battle

In 1872 the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners Permanent Relief Society (LMPRS) was founded with headquarters at Wigan. Regular payments guaranteed compensation to the men and their families after injuries or death occasioned at the pit. The men paid in 75% of the contributions but the coalowners made up 99% of the board. This displeased the men no end, yet they had no alternative.

In 1880 the Employers' Liability Act arrived, forcing employers to compensate workers for accidents where the employers were negligent. The coalowners were furious as the mining industry traditionally suffered massively, on a daily basis, serious injury and death. Wigan coal owner John Knowles, MP for Wigan told the House of Commons in 1876 that the Act "*would lead to nothing but carelessness and idleness among miners*". He was obviously being very wary, as are today's employers of 'compensation culture'!

Miners could opt out of local schemes such as the LMPRS, if they so desired. The coalowners told their workers that unless they stayed in the LMPRS they would be sacked on 1 January 1881. As a result approximately 50,000 men and boys in the Lancashire Coalfield went on strike.

Reluctant strikers

Atherton miners working for the caring Fletcher Burrows and Co had already locally negotiated a better wages agreement than those in nearby mining districts, and had even achieved the current pay demand. The company also had embraced with open arms the Employers' Liability Act. Atherton's miners still stopped work, thinking



Medal struck after the Battle of Howe Bridge (see p10)

of the wider union cause, but by 26 January the pits were reopened and most of the men went back.

Meanwhile, angry mobs of miners roamed the mining districts aggressively picketing those working. On 25 January 1881, at Wharton Hall Colliery, Tyldesley, 18-year-old collier Samuel Findlay of Atherton died during fighting.

As things worsened the military in the form of the 18th Hussars and the 18th Regiment of Infantry were called in and sent to Leigh. The Atherton miners return to work had infuriated the strikers, and on 28 January 1881 thousands of miners from Ince, Haydock, St. Helens, Wigan and Hindley attended a mass meeting in Leigh.

A jolly romp

The events which took place after the Leigh meeting are detailed in the following extracts from the curiously written account which appeared as a supplement to the *Leigh Chronicle* on 5 February 1881. The account is a strange mixture of fact, humour, sarcasm about miners' character and seeing the event as one great adventure, plus journalistic licence. Very much, in fact, how a *Sun* reporter of today would approach the event!

Edited excerpts from the *Leigh Chronicle* supplement of 5 Feb 1881

The journalist responsible for this

colourful account is not known. Due to the length of the piece, only the more interesting sections are transcribed below.

"Friday 28 January, 1881, will be long remembered in the annals of Howe Bridge. The air was full of rumour as to coming events, and the presence of Infantry at Atherton and of the Hussars at Leigh suggested many terrible forebodings in the minds of the more fearful. Great excitement prevailed in the whole of the district, especially as crowd after crowd poured into Leigh from all directions, many of the lads and younger men openly brandishing sticks and carrying stones, and loudly cheering, bands of music adding not a little to the din.

So alarmed were the tradespeople that shortly after noon most of the shops in the town (Leigh) were closed, but before this was done, numbers of men availed themselves of the opportunity to collect aid in money and kind, some of them rather demanded than appealed for it. In two or three cases they behaved in the most cowardly and disgraceful way.

A gang waited upon Mrs. Atkins, who kept her confectioner's shop in Lord Street, and asked her to contribute to the relief fund. She gave them some coppers, saying that she could not afford more, but not content with her contribution, they coolly set about plundering her shop of the confectionery it contained, the bulk of which they carried off. Much of the remainder got scattered on the floor and trampled upon.

In the meantime the neighbourhood of the Police Court was not entirely free, many idlers standing about waiting for 'something to turn up'. Here were assembled in the buildings several of the magistrates for the division, among them being Jabez Johnson, Caleb Wright, T. Lee, T.T. Hayes, Abraham Burrows and Ralph Fletcher Junior. Captain Allison, the Assistant Chief Constable for the County was also present with Supt. Jackson, and the available force numbered 50 stalwart men, armed with truncheons and cutlasses.

At the Courts Hotel the troopers were paraded and intelligence being brought that one of the bands of



Engraving from the *Leigh Chronicle* of the 'gallant' charge of the Hussars. Top left corner shows the police waiting to take action, with local magistrate Ralph Fletcher Junior seen holding a pistol.

music had gone towards Atherton heading a mob, the Police and Hussars immediately followed, amidst a very babel of groans and hootings and more unpleasant manifestations of dislike in the shape of stones and sticks. At Howe Bridge the police turned up the road on the left leading to the pits, and awaited events. There were here not only the Hussars but a Company of the 8th Regiment Infantry, under the command of Captain Egerton and Lieutenant Mellor, from the Salford Barracks.

As many of the mob were gradually creeping up the road it was decided by the authorities to endeavour to disperse the people before they came to close quarters. Sergeant Dunn and his men thereupon charged at the double down the road, amidst a shower of stones, and did terrible execution among the flying mob, using their staffs most vigorously. The troopers simultaneously rode into the fields, and thus perhaps unintentionally drove many of the mob into the arms of the police, by whom they were warmly received.

Many, in order to get out of the way, took refuge in the closets and outhouses behind the neighbouring cottages, from which they were hauled by the police and hammered. The stones flew in all directions, many of the police being hurt. Some in the mob indeed showed a reckless indifference worthy of a better cause. Having dispersed the crowd from the colliery road, the constables returned for a rest, but it was soon clear that

the mob was bent on mischief, a large number of men taking the road leading to the Lovers Lane Pit by the side of Kemp's public house.

Another charge was thereupon made, the police clearing the main road driving the 'enemy' across hedge and ditch into the fields, amidst some very discreet stone throwing from behind the cottages. In spite of these determined charges by the police, the crowd kept closing up as soon as their 'natural enemies' retired to the road, and after a lull stone throwing was renewed and the excited crowd again became defiant. Captain Burn and Lieut. Van-Notten Pole, in command of the Hussars, urged the reading of the Riot Act, as several of the troopers had been struck by stones.

Several of the magistrates took the same view, and at length Mr. Jabez Johnson, accompanied by Mr. Burrows and Mr. Marsh, magistrate's clerk, left a cab, and advancing into the highway, faced the crowd in the field, and turned to the mob which blocked the highway on each side. "Go away" said Mr. Burrows; "the Riot Act is going to be read." What the do we care," was the reply, followed up by stones. Mr. Johnson then read the short Act in bold and measured tones. The last word was scarcely uttered before the Hussars, drawing their swords, charged in all directions.

The scene that followed cannot be described. The strategic movements of the crowd, east, west, north and south, anywhere out of

the way, became a subject of general conversation. The crowd were driven far and wide but so soon as the troops returned, the mob began to creep quietly up again, and for at least an hour little rushes along the road were necessary to keep down the lawless spirit of some of the mob.

Shortly after three o'clock, when those working in its pits were ready to leave for home, the row recommenced. About a score of men with black faces made their way from the Crombouke Pit. They were hailed as 'knobsticks' and freely stoned. The police then hurried after them using their truncheons, but the mob were still threatening, and the 'knobsticks' took refuge in the cottages. The Infantry were then called out, marched through Howe Bridge and back again, and the 'knobsticks' were escorted home in a cart, guarded by eight troopers.

The Yankee who treated everything he came across as a joking matter is reported to have drawn the line at a mule's hind legs after some practical experience at close quarters. Some of the choicer spirits at Howe Bridge were more determined. Out of the painful experiences of the miners' strike they drew a supply of good, bad and indifferent humour, which was a credit to their inventive genius. It is probably that in no other locality could such original wit and good 'story telling' have been set a-going as there was in Howe Bridge after the 'Battle of Howe Bridge' was fought.

The incident is not, in itself, pleasant to dwell upon. In fairness to the colliers it should not be forgotten that the disturbance was caused by comparatively few out of a large community, most of the few being young men and boys, and nearly all strangers from Wigan and St. Helens. The charge of the Hussars over hedge and ditch nerved many an old competitor at the Athletic Sports to run as in the olden days. As told with panting breath, after all danger was over, the story was like that of the Highlander: -

Some say that we ran
Some say that they ran
Some say that we both ran away,
man.

It may be safely asserted that they did run. The flashing sabre of a Hussar charging at point is a wonderful incentive to rapid

Continued on page 10

The Battle of Howe Bridge 1881

Continued from page 9

progress. Space would fail to tell.....

*Of most disastrous chances;
Of moving accidents by road and field;
Of hair breadth 'scapes.
Of being taken by the insolent foe.*

How one amateur rioter boldly stood his ground and braved the danger of being made a 'bored man' by some luckless thrust of trooper's sword. How he escaped because of his intimate acquaintance with the Hussar, who had marked him for his prey.

How an ex-volunteer ran at dangerous speed across three fields only to have recalled to his mind that 'the wicked flee when no man pursueth'. How an active member of 'Our Own', and until April 1880, a bold exponent of advanced jingosim, pitifully pleaded on the lines of the doctrine of non-intervention, and claimed immunity from attack on the score of his long and distinguished services for Queen and Country. How yet another took two hours in travelling from Howe Bridge station to Atherton Mill, and eventually returned to Kirkhall Lane via Chowbent, Little Hulton, Tyldesley and Little Hulton. How one braver than the rest ran his head into a convenient haystack and defied the world, whilst his less sensitive companions crept beneath amongst the rats. How in fact, everyone was very brave, but very discreet, and, after running as though for their lives, returned to Howe Bridge, and have since narrated long and well digested descriptions of their experiences.

From the pit brow much could be seen, and at times it was vastly amusing. The troopers made playful exercise around the heads of those in their way, and frightened many scores to the verge of despair. In one case a man hurrying over a stile was about to receive a blow from the flat side of a sword, but swerving at the moment of attack, received in addition, a slashing injury to his garment and a slight cut to himself,

sufficient to compel him for a few days to 'sit standing up'. It was, however, singularly to mark how uniformly uninjured were those who displayed the greatest bravery.

This account would not be complete without mention of the war-service medal of bold proportion and goodly pattern, which was presented by the ingenious inventor and designer to the officers of the Hussars, and a few of the more active participators in the affray. The medal bears the inscription: 'Chowbent Battle of Howe Bridge 1881'. Another decoration [a lead version later to be made at Gibfield Colliery, AD] is still wanting to suitably reward those distinguished non-combatant members of local society who can conscientiously declare that they were not frightened, and that in telling the story of the retreat from Howe Bridge, they have kept within the limits of strict facts."

In conclusion

The events of 1881 at Howe Bridge were repeated in most mining districts in the latter years of the 19th century. Atherton's miners had good reason to be content with their lot and were the envy of miners in other districts. They were a fair workforce though, who did not oppose strike action in every conflict. That workforce was to show, in 1893 for instance, that they were prepared to suffer great hardship for sixteen weeks when they thought their cause fair. Amazingly Fletcher Burrows and Co supported their action and helped them with additional non-mining work and food. The majority of Atherton's miners supported the 1912 minimum wage strike, and they also supported the 1921 and 1926 strikes (albeit being virtually the first in the country to return to work!).

On another note the supplement to the *Chronicle* is a good example of how the researcher should be very careful of relying on newspaper accounts. Within the account lies fact, waiting to be extracted from the journalistic colouring. Whatever your archive source always think of the context the writer is in and his or her relationship to the events recorded.

(Thanks to Ken Wood of Heaton, Bolton, author of *The Coalpits of Chowbent* (1984) for allowing the use of his transcription of the *Chronicle* supplement)

Alan Davies
Heritage Officer (Archives)

I have sent this message to a relation in the U.S. I thought you might like to have it for *Past Forward*.

**Bob Heavside
Standish Wigan**

*When do you say that it's worth it
For future generations to hear
When do you think it's interesting enough
And to hear it from this volunteer.*

*I've been around now for a few years
And what I have seen I could tell
All about Queen and her country
And some here at home as well.*

*We had a war and it was bloody
Though I didn't stray too far from home
Filling sand bags, wrapping bandages at
the infirmary
Don't worry this isn't a tome.*

*With V.C.s, D.S.O.s and such like
The war soon came to an end
And you coming straight from the U.S.
Of course there was Roosevelt and Lease
Lend.*

*And now if we disregard T.V.
And getting older we can spout
"What did you do in the war dad?"
Is that what we hear the kids shout?*

*It's not the war that matters
Getting on with others, that's the thing
How we all jell together
And "how long is a piece of string".*

*So sit the young ones on your knee pa
And tell them just what's going on
Don't let them think we don't care now
Speak up, you've done it all my son!*

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

Another War in Iraq

THE invasion of Iraq during early 2003, together with its subsequent occupation by British and American forces, still fills our daily newspapers. During that conflict many comparisons were written with the British invasion of Iraq during World War I, made in order to liberate it from Turkish occupation. Most stressed the disastrous surrender of British forces at Kut, and not too many the triumphant occupation of Baghdad two years later.

Even less prominently remembered are the events which occurred during the British occupation of Iraq which covered many years following the collapse of the Turkish Empire, as the victors strove to bring government, law and order to the region previously held down under a tyrannical regime (who says that history doesn't repeat itself?) If you look deeply into every great historical event you will find human stories which have been overlooked by the larger picture but which mean everything to those involved.

William Moore DCM

On the Basra Memorial which commemorates those British servicemen who died in the Iraq (Mesopotamia as it was then known) theatre of operations who have no known grave can be found the name William Moore DCM. Moore lived in Newfold, Orrell, then a cluster of small cottages in a small lane near the present Upholland High School, now replaced by modern housing. As a boy he attended St Lukes Elementary School before starting work at Bispham Colliery as a drawer.

In June 1915 William, only just 18 years old, volunteered for the Army. His service records contain three numbers: 3513734, 201290 and 89029, indicating that he was reallocated to different units; but in March 1918, when the Germans launched their final frantic attempt to break through the allied lines, he was



Photograph of William Moore, Wigan Observer, 23 Nov 1918, after his presentation with a gold watch at Bispham Colliery.

signaller in a service battalion of the Manchester Regiment. Outnumbered by swarms of attacking storm troopers and battered by the enemy artillery, the British defenders held on and the line was saved.

There were many individual examples of heroism over those few days, and on 3 September 1918 the *London Gazette* recorded a citation which read:

"201290 Pte. W Moore, Manchester Regiment (Wigan). For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty when he remained in an open trench at a visual signal station under heavy bombardment and by this action maintained communication."

He had been awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, an honour second only to the Victoria Cross.

Local people in Newfold and Billinge Higher End held a collection and, on Friday 25 October 1918, presented William with a gold watch in appreciation and recognition of his

DCM. In February 1920 the Upholland District Council presented gold medals to Moore, and also to the families of two soldiers, Lance Corporal Fred Latham and Corporal Joseph Calderbank who had been awarded medals for military distinction during the war but had been subsequently killed in action.

Mesopotamia

After the war William was unable to settle down and re-enlisted in the Army, this time being posted to the 2nd Battalion of the Manchester Regiment. His regiment was transferred to Mesopotamia where, under the terms of the 1918 Armistice with Turkey, a British force was to remain in possession. Then, as now, Iraq was an unruly place where some tribes were friendly towards the occupying powers and some were hostile.

On 4 June 1920 an uprising of dissident tribes took place and a force was sent to put it down. On 20 July 1920 the 2nd Manchesters were ordered to Hillah, on the railway line 70 miles south of Baghdad, to relieve 500

Indian troops and to reassure the friendly natives in the area. They marched in temperatures over 120F in the shade - although there was no shade! - and the Medical officer insisted on a 24 hour recovery period for the men.

The Manchesters dug in but four days later they were surrounded and attacked by several thousand well armed Arabs. After some fierce fighting the Manchesters attempted to withdraw. The noise and confusion panicked the transport animals; the enemy closed in, resulting in fierce hand-to-hand fighting. Although the Arabs were beaten off, the defenders lost 20 killed, 60 wounded and 300 missing, of whom only 79 were later confirmed as prisoners.

Lance Corporal William Moore was among those killed. He was just 23 years old, and one of 40,000 British and Indian killed between 1914 and 1921, during the period when Iraq was liberated from Turkish rule. Just one story from the wider picture.

Fred Holcroft
(research by Carol Littler)



William Moore is standing on the left of the back row in this photograph dated 27 April 1918 (location unknown). Written on it are the words "Go one better boys", the motto of the 42nd Division, coined by its General Officer Commanding, Major General Arthur Solly-Flood CB, CMG, DSO.

Family History



Additions to The Taylor Gallery

Donations

St Anne's C.E., Shevington; Index to Burials 26 July 1889 – 22 August 1914

St Thomas, UpHolland; Marriage Index August 1837 – February 2004

1901 census index, Hindley RG13 3562-4

Hawthorne, Ian *The Ghosts of UpHolland* 133.129

Hayes, G *Collieries and their Railways in the Manchester Coalfield* 385.54

Hilton, John *The Empty Plinth: Wigan's Missing Boer War Memorial*

Matrix Archaeology Nos 1-3 Sandy Lane, Orrell: photographic record 942.736

Genealogy

Grenham, John *Tracing your Irish Ancestors* (2nd ed.)

Ward, Margaret *The Female Line*

CD ROMS

Nadin *The Chronology of British Coal Mining* (including *The Price of Coal*)

General

Aspin, C *The Water Spinners* 338.4767721

Dell, S *The Victorian Policeman* 363.2

Shannon, Paul *British Railways Past and Present – Manchester and South Lancs* 940.5

Holwell, Colin *David Brown Tractors: a British Legend* 629.2252

Nowell, David *Too Darn Soulful: the Story of Northern Soul* 781.644

Clays, J & S *Wigan Journey* 82

King-Clark, Rex *Forward from Kohima* 940.5

Griffiths, Trevor *The Lancashire Working Classes c.1880-1939* 942.7

Shaw, Dave *Casino* 942.736

Project news

Local researchers never cease to amaze me with their energy and enthusiasm for indexing local records.

Recently completed by Freda Chorlton is a much needed street index relating to all our filmed areas of the census for 1871. Freda has now turned her energies to indexing Wigan Lower Ince Cemetery registers. Since these cover 1856-1976, even with the help of another Friend, Gerald Marsden, Freda's time should be well taken up for quite some time. Anyone with time, energy and the inclination to assist Freda and Gerald should contact Christine Watts on 01942 828020.

As usual Gerry Rigby and his cohorts continue their dedication to indexing the 1901 census and we have now received the name index to piece RG 13 3564 (Hindley).

Local researchers have also been heavily involved in indexing the marriage registers held by Wigan Register Office for *Lancashirebmd*. I am told that an untold number of mistakes exist in the local marriage indexes and more importantly, complete omissions from the listings. Uploading the actual data will take a while but I am assured that they will all be online very soon.

Wigan Websites

Visitors to The History Shop often ask what local websites are available to assist them in their researches, whether this is local or family history. I am happy to say that where once we had little to report, there is now a growing number of sites devoted to life in the Borough in the present and past. Most are by local people, some highlight local churches and others, census records. But all are noteworthy.

www.wiganworld.co.uk

This magnificent site has grown considerably over the past year and is steadily amassing a staggering amount of information. Currently there are over 5,200 local photos, in both colour and black and white, illustrating life from the Victorian era to the present day. Added to these is a fairly large selection of local directories. Also of interest are the forums for genealogy and for Wigan ex-pats in general wishing to make contact locally.

Other delights include a section for local walks, complete with photos, and local events (currently St. George's Day Parade). There are also three new linked pages for The History Shop, Wigan Family History Society and Fred Dibnah! This last page has a link for Astley Green Colliery Museum.

The pages for The History Shop, besides showing wonderful colour photos of the building, inside and out, also list our microfilm holdings for local churches, whilst those for Wigan Family History Society give members' interests and contact details, plus a name index to the 1841 Census. There are also links to our own web-site at www.wlct.org (see below)

Brian Thurston and his son Richard are to be congratulated for the quality of their photos and the web site. If you haven't already done so, take a look at *wiganworld*.

www.wlct.org

This is Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust's own website and gives the usual details of opening hours and contact details. More to the point, clicking on culture and then heritage brings up the Heritage Service page and lists sources available for research at our three venues along with details of exhibitions at the the History Shop. There are no original sources on the site, however, and the site needs updating a little. ➡

www.cmhrc.co.uk

This is Ian Winstanley's coal mining deaths data base and lists 90,000 names for those who were killed in mines (also women and men who were killed on the surface) during the years 1850-1914. New material, recently added in 2003, has updated Lancashire and other Northern counties up to 1946. There is a list also of Ian's publications available for purchase. A must for coal-mining ancestor research.

www.communicate.co.uk/lancs

A lovely site for those interested in Abram with information on the Maypole Pit disaster and coal mining in general in the district alongside Abram's traditional Morris dancers, directories for the area and old Abram Charities, plus lots more.

www.billinge-history.com

www.standish.org.uk

www.standish-history.org.uk

The above three sites concentrate on the history of Billinge and Standish and in the case of the Billinge site have a phenomenal number of photographs of the area in black and white and colour, ready for downloading to your computer to save or print. All sites are by local people, ie Billinge Local History Society and for Standish, Steve Bradburn in association with Standish Community Forum. Congratulations to all concerned.

www.a2a.org

This much underused site gives researchers, as its title suggests, Access to Archives online. The site indexes archive collections throughout England and Wales, and especially Wigan's own Archive at Leigh Town Hall, Lancashire and Cheshire Record Offices and of course other smaller local archives.

You can search the whole database or, region or specific archive, by subject or even for an individual name or family name. The site will then load all references to the subject requested and since Quarter Sessions papers and wills are held by local archives, the details given can illuminate an area, possibly not explored previously.

A major site for all researchers (see also p18)

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

Who Do You Think You Are?

The new series of Family History Workshops will begin at the History Shop on 26 January 2005. As in previous seasons the workshops will take place on Wednesday afternoons every fortnight. Additional sessions can be arranged at other times for anyone who finds the dates/times inconvenient.

Date	Time	Location
26 January 2005	1.30 & 3.00pm	History Shop, Wigan
9 February 2005	1.30 & 3.00pm	History Shop, Wigan
23 February 2005	1.30 & 3.00pm	History Shop, Wigan
9 March 2005	1.30 & 3.00pm	History Shop, Wigan
23 March 2005	1.30 & 3.00pm	History Shop, Wigan
6 April 2005	1.30 & 3.00pm	History Shop, Wigan

There will be slight changes to the format and delivery, but in essence the principle of each participant on the workshop getting one-to-one attention from an experienced genealogist and advice as to the next steps will be continued. The general sessions are aimed at beginners, but more advanced workshops can be arranged, please ring with your requirements. Other changes include booking and payment (£2.50) in advance (now essential) and the issuing of a Family History pack before the session.

As always a big thank you to the Friends of Wigan Heritage Service for agreeing to run these for us; without them we would not be able to offer the service. For more information on the Friends, see p20 or contact the History Shop.

For further information and booking please ring the History Shop on 01942 828128.

Information received from Mrs Doris Crook of Higher Ince

After seeing the letter '*Some of the Best*' from A E Smith in the last issue of *Past Forward* Mrs Crook wanted to tell us about her father Jack Alker.

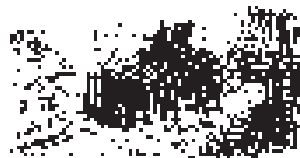
Jack was born in Little Darlington Street, off Manchester Road, at Higher Ince in 1907. His claim to fame was winning a Lonsdale Belt in the middleweight division in the 1930's. Doris did have a photograph of her Dad with the belt, a prized possession indeed, but unfortunately it went missing within the family and she now has no clues as to who may have it. The only photograph she does have is reproduced here of the wrestler in a typically imposing stance.



Linking in with the letter from Mr Smith, Doris knows that her father used to wrestle and train at Belshaws, travel to wrestling matches at Belle Vue and Hardwick, and was possibly trained for a while by Burgie Ben himself.

Jack became something of a local celebrity and a popular local character. We can only guess at the number of drinks earned through his party piece of showing the belt to interested regulars at the *Engineers Arms* or the *Belle Green Hotel*.

Note from Ed. If anyone reading this does know the whereabouts of the photograph of Jack with the belt please let us know, Doris would be delighted to see it again, and we would love to print it.



Continued from page 13

The Wright family

RESEARCHING my family tree, I was fortunate to find two particularly interesting newspaper cuttings.

Stalwarts of Methodism

The first of these was from the *Daily Telegraph* in 1924 under the headline "Brothers Proud Record - Stalwarts of Methodism." The article went on to print a remarkable record of service in the Primitive Methodist church held by six Lancashire brothers named Wright whose combined ages at that time were 432 years.

The brothers who were born in Glazebury were my great uncles and my maternal grandfather. The eldest, John Wright, had been on the church plan for over 60 years and was one of the most popular preachers and lecturers in South Lancashire. The Rev James Wright began his ministerial career as a missionary in Queensland where he served for 10 years. On his return to England he became Superintendent Minister in several indus-

trial areas of Lancashire. Peter Wright, professionally employed as foreign correspondent with Pilkingtons, had been a local preacher for over half a century and filled all the offices in the church open to a layman.

Joseph Wright served the church in various ways including that of choirmaster for more than 34 years, while David Wright was Superintendent of the Methodist Sunday School at Glazebury. William, my maternal grandfather, served as Sunday School Superintendent, Church Treasurer, Circuit Steward and Society Steward.

Gardner's band

The second of the two newspaper cuttings, dated 31 May, 1935, showed a photograph (top right) of a father and mother and their eight sons who comprised what was claimed to be my home town's first orchestra known as "Gardner's Band." The family were responsible for the foundation of orchestral music in St. Helens, home town of Sir Thomas Beecham and where I was born in 1922.

The Gardner family were reputedly musicians of high standing. They had more than a local reputation in St. Helens as their musical performances were frequently acclaimed in Birmingham and Manchester. The father, my paternal great grandfather, played the clarinet; his sons John, Joseph, and William played the violin;



Benjamin played double bass; Thomas, the flute and Jim the cornet.

My father, Edmund Gardner Wright, the younger son of Walter and Mary Jane Wright, only daughter of the Gardner family, was a well known and respected tenor singer in St. Helens and district. He frequently gave individual singing recitals as well as being a member of the choral group known as the Good Comrades Songsters, a leading tenor in the St. Helens Amateur Operatic Society, and deputy conductor of his church choir, thus carrying on the musical tradition of the Gardner family.

His father, Walter Wright and his wife and their three children immigrated to America in 1893 where my paternal grandfather thought he could make a better life for himself and his family. He was a glass-blower by trade and they ended up in Fisher's Patch, about half-way between the two Pennsylvania cities of Shendoa and Mahanoy. It was here that my father was born in 1896.

As there was little or no glass industry in the immediate vicinity, my grandfather went to work in the local coal mines. Tragically he was kicked by one of the mules in the mine, receiving a head injury rendering him epileptic and unfit for work again. He died in 1901 at the age of 39 after returning to St. Helens.

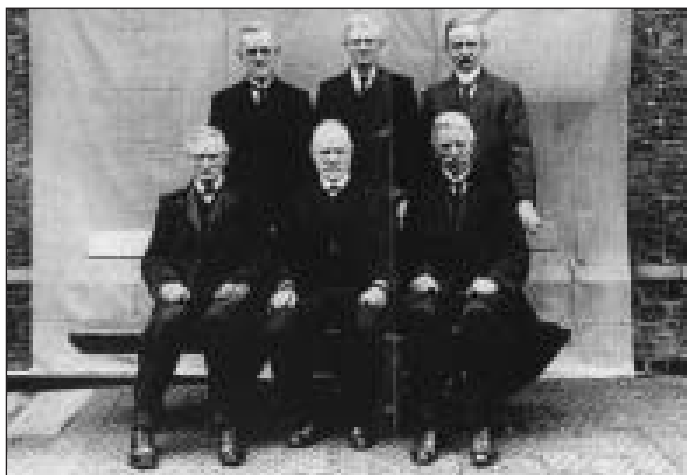
Unfortunately I never met my paternal grandfather, who died

before I was born. I met my paternal grandmother on only one occasion that I recall, when I was very young. My memory is of a small woman dressed in black and wearing a black bonnet in the house. She presented a somewhat forbidding appearance to a small boy.

Love of the theatre

Although I won several singing competitions as a boy soprano, my life-long love has been of the theatre and after retiring from my professional employment with BlCC Ltd, in Leigh, I gained the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) gold medal. For many years I was a member of Wigan Little Theatre, and also performed in theatres in St. Helens, Leigh and Bolton.

Eric S Wright
Lowton Warrington



The six Wright brothers outside their church in Glazebury.



Edmund Gardner Wright in one of his many operatic roles.

Grounds Family Newsletter

Extract from

Issue No. 7, September 2004

Pit Brow Lass

I first came across Ellen Grounds a few years ago when her photograph appeared in an edition of *Past Forward*, a free publication by Wigan Heritage Service. Although I had many Grounds names on my database it was a while before I built up a family tree for her. A little while ago Alan Davies, Wigan Heritage Service's Archivist, based in Leigh, informed me about a diary of Arthur J Munby, which was in Leigh Reference Library and contained some information on Ellen. Tony Ashcroft, Local History Officer for Leigh, let me read the book that Derek Hudson had written about Munby.

Ellen came into the world at lam (according to her birth certificate) on 12 November 1849 and she was the 5th daughter and 10th child of Richard Grounds and Ellen Clitherow. Her parents had been married at Wigan All Saints on 13 February 1837 and resided at Birkett's Bank, Scholes. The baptism of Ellen was at St. Catherine's Church, Scholes on 25 November 1849, and a month later her mother registered her birth at Wigan. Various other members of the family were christened at St. Catherine's, which is on a hill above Birkett's Bank. Her father, Richard, was a labourer

Dear Editor

About two years ago a photograph appeared in *Past Forward* of a pit brow lass named Ellen Grounds and, since this is my own family name, it made me search my own database to see if I could piece together something about her. I have attached the details I have and with some acknowledgements, I hope you find it of some interest. Note that the photographs are taken from a book and I am not sure where the originals are held.

**Jack Grounds
Atherton Nr Manchester**

and coal miner at various times during his lifetime.

Little is known of her early childhood and we next come across her when she comes into contact with Arthur J

Munby (1828-1910). This gentleman kept a diary during his lifetime and Derek Hudson wrote a book titled *'Man of Two Worlds'*. Munby was an educated man, a civil



Ellen Grounds, aged 17, a collier at Rose Bridge Pits, Wigan 1866.

servant, artist, author and poet. His role as a civil servant brought him into contact with Ellen in the late 1860's and mid 1870's, when he was looking into the role of working women, especially in the coal industry, and he travelled the country in this work, some of which led to changes in the employment of women.

On p343 of the book is the following report of one such meeting of Munby and Ellen who at this time was living as a boarder with the Green family at 7 Coldwell Fold Scholes Wigan.

"Thursday 11th September 1872 Wigan I [Munby] was lodging at the Royal Hotel Wigan and I went to see Mrs. Little, photographer and cab owner's wife. I inquired about Ellen and was informed that she had arrived. Ellen herself came out of the kitchen and she was dressed in her pit clothes as she had promised. She looked vastly bigger in her working clothes than she had done last night in her Sunday clothes. She wore her wadded bonnet, the front part tied tight over the forehead and the hood encircling her head like an aureole, her loose blue patched cotton bedgown made her full bust and broad shoulders look larger still, below it came her striped skirt,

Continued on page 16

Grounds Family Newsletter

Continued from page 15

gathered up around the hips and under that her breeches, the pair she showed me last night and with her iron shod clogs on, Ellen had forgotten to bring her topcoat, and first tried on a coat belonging to Mrs. Little's son, a big lad, but it was too small for her. Mrs. Little coat, a rough one like her own was tried and it fitted her well.

Then she was furnished with a spade, to represent her great coal shovel. She shouldered the spade in a workmanlike fashion,

buttoned her coat and stood readily and well as I posed her, and she was first taken in that guise and then without the coat. I standing beside her, to show how nearly she approached me in size. Indeed the bigness of this bonny Ellen struck me more than ever and she seemed to fill the lobby and the Portrait shed with her presence. She was as big as Mrs. Little and her daughter together and she strode about the room in her sounding clogs and laughed and chatted with the two women in a kindly and respectful way, but with the air of a strong man speaking to feeble folk. She did everything just as she was told and enlivened the proceedings by jest at her own expense, and



Ellen Grounds in her Sunday dress.

hearty good humoured talk".

The photograph above is of Ellen in her Sunday best and previously referred to in the narrative.

The photographer was a Robert Little situated in Clarence Yard, just off Wallgate, Wigan, and there is still a place with that name yet. The *Royal Hotel* was on Standishgate. Her parents had continued to live in the Schofield Lane area of Scholes, and were still living there when Ellen married Charles Hanson at All Saints Wigan on 22 March 1875, although she herself was living in Hallgate, and still a colliery labourer. Both Charles and his father were gunsmiths according to their marriage certificate.

Ellen's mother died in 1885, but not before seeing Ellen's first three children. Richard, her father, died in 1893 and he was alive for two more grandchildren. Their children were Elizabeth (1880), Richard (1883), James (1885), Sarah E (1888) and Samuel (1893). By the start of the 20th century the family were living at 6 Cumberland Street, Wigan; Ellen was no longer working at the colliery, and Charles was a Blacksmiths striker, as was their son Richard. James was a labourer in the coalmine and Elizabeth was employed as a cotton spinner. At present I have not found out when she died, but it would be interesting to find out how her family fared.

PARISH VIDEO STANDISH

presents

The History of Coalmining in the Borough of Wigan

Titles include

Nothing Too Serious?

(The last working year and closure of Bickershaw Colliery)

Blue Scars, Black Diamonds

(A History of Mines and Miners in the Wigan area)
(in two parts)

Also available

The Standish Chronicles

Part 1, Part 2

(A General History of Standish)

For more details: 01257 422108

THREE WIGAN FAMILIES

THE COLE FAMILY

My parents, John (Jack) Cole and Miriam (nee Pardoe) were both born in Warrington, as I was, but moved to Wigan when I was four years old - first Fir Grove and then Guildford Crescent, Beech Hill. I have many old documents concerning my father in World War I. After he was commissioned, he served in Mesopotamia where he caught dysentery and malaria before being transferred to India. He worked in Wigan dole office until I was about 16 when he transferred to the Admiralty in Plymouth.

When World War II started, the whole family, except me, was in Malta. I joined the RAF and my mother, brothers and sisters were evacuated from Malta to Camborne in Cornwall - the ship containing all their furniture and belongings was sunk. My father remained in Malta and donned uniform again, helping to man the anti-aircraft batteries.

Eunice Taylor and I were married in the middle of the war at St Michael's, Wigan which was the Taylor's church (see photo below). Our best man should have been Ronnie Walker from Guildford Crescent but unhappily he had been shot down over Holland and I believe was killed fighting with the Dutch Resistance. Our son David was born in Wigan the following year. Four of my parent's eight children were born in Wigan including a son, David, who died aged two in Wigan Infirmary - our son is named after him.



THE HULSE FAMILY

The group photo (centre top) is of the Hulse family during World War I. The eldest son, Charlie, was not on it as he was away in the trenches. In the centre-rear is George and extreme

Dear Sir

Thank you for printing my letter in *Past Forward* 36, p20. As a result, I have been contacted by several Wiganers. I enclose some illustrated articles for your consideration, relating to three Beech Hill and Gidlow families - the Taylors, Hulses and Coles.

Cecil E Cole
Cleveland Somerset

right is my wife's mother, Edna. The youngest, Jack, was at Dunkirk in World War II. Mr. Hulse worked at the Plantations at Haigh.



The photo below was taken at Wigan Carnival in 1911 when Mrs. Hulse, her sister Elizabeth and a lady called Seddon (dressed in men's clothes) won first prize. The Hulse's house in Gidlow Lane was opposite the top of Fir Grove where I lived as a boy. At that time there was a large area



containing a pond between the Hulse's house and a row of three shops - a butcher's, a chip shop and Ashton's Confectioners. Beyond this area was a large field where I used to play cricket with the Hulse boys and others. Since then, that whole area was taken over by a Tupperware factory - good for jobs but bad for the kids.

THE TAYLOR FAMILY

Mathew and Edna (nee Hulse) Taylor lived in Gidlow Houses, alongside other members of the Taylor family, from the time when they were built. Gidlow Houses were called by some in those days Brimelow Houses - we don't know why!

When my wife Eunice's mother Edna was expecting her, Mathew was buried by a rockfall - I think it was at John Pit. His face was badly disfigured, and he suffered from it for the rest of his life, but received no compensation in those days. He never ventured underground again. Below is a photograph of Coal Board employees - Mathew is second from left on the back row. The locomotive behind them used to travel from Taylor Pit and Giant's Hall to a coal wash on the other side of Gidlow Houses.



My wife had two sisters - the middle one, Brenda and her husband, who was on submarines when they married, eventually joined the diplomatic service. This led to a very interesting life for both of them, travelling and living all over the world. Her younger sister, Avril and her husband immigrated to Canada. She recently put her name and address on the Internet and received a reply asking if she was the Avril Taylor who lived in Gidlow and had a dog called Belle. It turned out to be her cousin Dorothy's son, Tony Wyatt, who had lived in Gidlow and used to play with our son David when they were little! Tony's father, Jack Wyatt, was a Wireless Operator/Air-gunner like me but unfortunately did not survive the war.

Ephemera from the Archives

A2A unlocks the Nations and (more importantly) our Archives

Where are the Leigh - Worsley canal records held?

Most users of our archives think that all local records will be held by us at Leigh. Far from it! Many people without special knowledge would never expect, for instance, Northampton Record Office to be holding records related to the building of the canal from Worsley to Leigh or land in Tyldesley and Pemberton.

Thomas Egerton of Brackley, Northamptonshire was the Lord Chancellor 1603-1617. His son John, the 1st Earl of Bridgewater, inherited the Brackley (Northampton) estate from his father-in-law the Earl of Derby in 1594. The Earls and Dukes of Bridgewater held estates in Brackley Kings Sutton, Syresham and Crowfield, Wollaston, Tyldesley and Worsley and Stetchworth (Cambridgeshire). So through this family connection at Northampton Record Office, in the Egerton family of Brackley deposit, we will find material relating to Tyldesley, the Worsley to Leigh canal and Pemberton.

Enter A2A

A major initiative by the Public Record Office and regional archives agencies called *Access To Archives* (or **A2A**) has been in progress since 2001. This involves Archives Services all over England copying their paper catalogues and sending them off to be transcribed by typing slaves chained to computers. Once that information is on computer, it can be searched instantly using keywords, printed out, emailed, or used

in other documents. Compare how long the process of searching took back in the days of only having the paper catalogues. Since 2001 a staggering 5 million searches and over 10 million catalogue downloads have taken place!

A2A allows you to search and browse for information about archives in England up to the present day which are held in local record offices and libraries, universities, museums and national and specialist institutions across England. The long term aim is to get all catalogues held by repositories online, plus there are projects in hand to tackle the many uncatalogued collections archives held.

Until recently, to find out whether archives held are of interest to you, it was necessary to consult a paper catalogue or other finding aids such as index cards written by archivists with illegible handwriting similar to doctors! **A2A** allows you to search across catalogues from over 340 repositories in England. The database is regularly updated as more and more catalogues are copied and sent into the **A2A** transcription team, so you need to revisit the website often to include newly added catalogues in your search.

Because the overall task is so enormous, depending on the region and locality, specific aspects of the area's archives are currently being asked for first under project titles. We have just copied all our church, parish and local government catalogues for the current 'Community Spirit' project, being co-ordinated by Greater Manchester County Record Office. As many of our

older catalogues had nearly faded away, with no masters to fall back on, they had to be overwritten to be legible. This process took nearly three weeks. Access to catalogue descriptions of this type from all the repositories around the North West will soon be possible.

Browsing for coal

Go to the website www.a2a.org.uk and click on the phrase "search the catalogue". Here you can type in keywords or names or localities. This search will access all the catalogues currently on **A2A**, so it is better to go into "extended search" after you have opened "search the catalogue" and in the dialog box "location of archives" bring up Wigan Archives Service. Your search will now only include our catalogues. Type in coal and see what comes up.

You can now see how useful **A2A** is for us at the Archives. I can now answer a query on coal, coalmining or the coal industry and email back all the catalogue references on the subject instantly, or better still tell the enquirer how to access them! No archivist, no matter how enormous his or her brain power, can hold in their memory a collection of millions of documents. The cross referencing power of a computer unlocks the collections in a way never possible before. Unless a person was prepared to plough through all our catalogues over a period of weeks on the off-chance of spotting a reference to coal, they only scraped the surface potential of our collections.

Don't go mad!

Please be careful when using **A2A**. You may be

researching, for instance, the Davies family (a very worthy cause!) and, after going on **A2A**, you find 3500 references to Davies's in our area in all manner of sections of the collections. A request for photocopies of all these entries from the original documents would not be welcomed for obvious reasons, and would also cost you £52.50!

The information on **A2A** more often than not will be adequate for you and a copy will not be required. Some of the documents **A2A** brings up may be very fragile or of great age and importance, so a large order would mean the Archivist spending a great deal of time checking the condition of many documents beforehand.

Limitations

A2A is a great step forward, but only as good as our catalogues and index cards - some of these are very basic, while others are very detailed, and some even illegible! We were unable sadly to include our Wrightington Deed collection index cards, as many were virtually illegible to both us and the **A2A** team. This is such an important collection, with over 3000 documents dating back to the late 12th century. Very long term the answer will be searchable digitisation of archives themselves. A computer 'anorak' friend of mine tells me that already there are programs which can scan archives or illegible index cards, even archives in obscure early hands and by a learning process convert the content into text. This may happen sooner than we think.

Alan Davies
Heritage Officer
(Archives)

HISTORY SHOP NEWS

The sound of Wigan Casino at the History Shop

On 21 October the History Shop was the venue for a party to mark the opening of the exhibition, *Wigan Casino – The Heart of Soul*. It was actually a private view of the exhibition by invitation as a thank you to all those who had contributed to its development and supported the History Shop in its execution. The party did get started though, in a real way, later at the *Last Orders* in town when everyone from the opening event was invited down to Russ Winstanley's regular Thursday evening Northern Soul disco.

It was a great turn out for the private view with over 80 people in all coming through the doors, some still arriving as the doors were about to close at 8pm. Saying a few words about the Casino club were the Radio 2 DJ and TV personality Stuart Maconi and DJ Russ Winstanley.



DJ's Russ Winstanley and Stuart Maconi listening to some Casino favourites at the exhibition launch.

The exhibition features the story of the Empress Ballroom in Wigan, opened in 1915 and destroyed by fire in 1982. It also charts the development of the Northern Soul movement at the venue from the first *all-nighter* in 1973 to the last in December of 1981. The story for Northern Soul goes on with the dedication to the music and the friends made being now as strong as ever. For the 'Emp', though, Wigan's greatest dance hall and the world's best disco, the story came to a sad end.

Come and relive those youthful memories or take a look at what your parents really got up to in the '70's. The exhibition continues at the History Shop until 19 February 2005.

A CD, 'Wigan Casino Soul Club - 30 Years of Northern Soul Memories' - is on sale from the History Shop @ only £9.50 plus p&p.

Black History Month

A big event occurred at the History Shop on 8 October 2004, when the Council wide 'Black History Month' was launched. This was combined with a meeting of the Community Cohesion Forum, a specially prepared multi-cultural buffet featuring some truly wonderful food, and exhibitions from the Rafiki group and the 'Kick Racism out of Football' campaign. The speakers included our own Council Chief Executive Steve Jones, the Mayor Cllr. John Hilton, and Milton Brown and 'Afrikan' from Huddersfield! The event went extremely well and showed just how many people could be catered for at the History Shop with a lot of organisation and hard work.



Exhibition Programme 2005

Planning for next year's programme is well under way. We start the year with a travelling exhibition from the National Coal Mining Museum, and if your ancestors were coal miners, you have just got to visit it! *'Routes to Your Roots'* looks at ways to trace the family history of coal miners and the more general history of coal mining itself. It will be supplemented by material which is specific to our local area. It is aimed at beginners, but the more seasoned researcher will also find it of interest.

We continue with Wigan and Atherton Photographic Societies exhibitions - *A Feast of Photography!*

Finally, we end with an exhibition that looks at the people who have come to live and work in the Wigan area from other parts of Britain and the world, since the 19th century to the present day. We will explore the reasons why they came, what happened to them and the effects of the resulting mix of culture and peoples. We will also look at how this is represented in the historical record, which could be useful for those with ancestors from distant parts of Britain or overseas.

As always, workshops and events will accompany the exhibitions, so watch out for our new leaflets, posters and press releases. See you next year!

**Yvonne Webb
Collections Development
Manager
Wigan Heritage Service**

HISTORY SHOP NEWS

Friends

Over the summer work has continued on our indexing projects. The subjects covered are wide ranging and should appeal to most people wanting to get involved in heritage work in Wigan. This includes the indexing of census returns, church records, local newspapers and important local book collections. There is always more to do; in the past we have worked on indexing maps, and in the not too distant future we plan to tackle the huge task of cataloguing and indexing our photographic collection while making the images more accessible in a digital archive. We are still looking for people who can spare time to devote to these Friends projects. If this does not appeal, then voluntary work can be organised through the Heritage Service and not the Friends, helping with the Archive collection in Leigh.

Focus Groups

At the last Friends meeting one of the many items covered was what the Friends, all regular visitors, thought of the History Shop. Those present were asked the questions on the current History Shop visitor survey and their answers were quite revealing. Take a look at their comments and then please let us know what you think.

- Better signage, both to the building from the town and once in the building
- Better access to the first floor, some sort of lift

- Upgrading of the equipment, the need for new readers
- Acquiring more resources, wider GRO coverage
- More consistent staff training and knowledge
- Earlier opening times, 9.30 or even 9.00am

Their conclusions were very focused on improvements that could be made to the venue and the facilities. As this group is made up of regular visitors this is much as you would expect.

Elsewhere in this issue you will find other results from our surveys, the Citizens Panel and interim reports from the last *Past Forward* questionnaire and History Shop visitor survey. What do you think, do you agree or disagree? All views are very welcome, please send to P Butler at the History Shop, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU.

Citizens Panel

As I'm sure interested residents of our borough reading this will know, Wigan Council prides itself on being one of the more progressive local authorities in the country. As such over two years ago a 'Citizens Panel' was set up to gain the thoughts of a broad range of residents on varied issues. The panel, consisting of 1500 people drawn at random from the voting list and changing over on a regular basis, was asked in April 2004 questions relating to the Heritage Service.

The main findings were as follows:

- 52% of respondents had heard of Wigan Heritage Service
- 21% had used the service in one form or another
- of these 82% found the staff friendly and/or knowledgeable
- in total 88% wanted to visit the History Shop
- 71% wanted to see temporary exhibitions on local history, 62% about family history

This survey also made some effort to find out about the general accessibility of the service:

- 79% agreed with the statement that the venues were easy to access
- 74% agreed they were easy to find
- 70% agreed they were welcoming
- 74% agreed they were easy to get around

Some of these results are quite surprising, especially in relation to the History Shop. The project to improve and refurbish this venue should improve these figures further.

When asked about opening times 'what opening times would you be likely to make most use of?' the panel gave some interesting responses:

- Afternoon visits represented the most cited visiting time but only slightly
- Saturday afternoon was seen as the most likely, 38% for the History Shop and 35% for the archives
- Sunday was seen as the least popular day, 20% for Sunday mornings and 33% for Sunday afternoons
- Sunday also got the highest number of respondents saying they wouldn't visit on this day 20%
- Evening openings were not given a high status with 27% for weekday evenings and only 8% for weekends

Factors suggested to increase use of the service included:

- 54% Family History Workshops
- 38% Local History Talks
- 35% Guided Tours
- 31% Children's Activities

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.



HISTORY SHOP NEWS

Visitor Survey – interim

Any regular visitors to the History Shop will have noticed that there is a survey being held there too! All we can say is we do hold great store by public consultation and surveys are a great way of getting your views. We promise that this apparent overload on surveys will not go on forever and once the current questionnaires are all in we will spend time analysing the results. As with the *Past Forward* questionnaire the final date has not passed on this survey, so the following results are just a taster prior to a full report next time.

The questionnaire covers all Heritage venues and these figures are combined. However, over 75% of respondents visited the History Shop.

- 74% of visits were for research purposes
- of these 91% visited for family history, 16% for local history
- the most used resources among this group were the microfilms at 75% and the microfiche at 30%
- 77% of this group rated their visit as excellent
- 96% of all respondents rated the venue, the facilities and the staff either good or excellent and a similar figure rated their satisfaction with the visit as good or above
- 68% rated the staff excellent
- demographics show that 88% are in the over 40 age brackets while 51% are over 60
- 67% of visitors from within WN postcodes, with 91% from the wider North West region

These results are very encouraging, but do indicate that so far we have only reached the research visitors. It is far more difficult to consult with exhibition viewers and general browsers through this sort of passive survey. However, we have visitor books and comment books in the venues and visitor comments from specific shows, such as 'Wigan Casino', are likely to be valuable feedback sources.

A Big Thank You

Thank you to everyone who replied to our consultation in the last issue of *Past Forward* by returning the questionnaire, we were quite literally overwhelmed. As the currency of the survey actually extends beyond the copy date for this issue, we are only able to publish a few highlights from your replies. In the next issue hopefully we will have a full analysis of the results ready so will share them with you.

Despite the fact that all the questionnaires are not yet in, we have looked at each and every one so far submitted. The overall picture is extremely positive. It seems you do genuinely love the *Past Forward* magazine and look forward every four months to its arrival. You find it difficult to fault either the format, layout, legibility or content, surely there is something we can improve upon!

Comments from some of the forms so far include:

'I have found it a wonderful reminder of my youth...'

'Excellent – a credit to the town/community'

'Past Forward and the History Shop are a credit to the Borough'

'The Past Forward magazine is unique, a winner for any Heritage Service'

'Excellent value'

'Through it (Past Forward) I am now in contact with an old work mate of almost 70 years ago and through her receiving news of yet another. My annual fiver to you is well worth it!'

'I derive a great deal of pleasure from reading Past Forward'

'The Heritage Service is great'

'I forward the magazine to friends in New Zealand, who also pass it on, the feedback and compliments you receive is quite extraordinary'

'Wonderful memories of Wigan and people, keep on printing'

'Thank you all at Past Forward and the History Shop'

'Keep up the good work'

'Past Forward is a delight'

'Congratulations on producing such a first class magazine'

'A super publication. Always welcome in this house'

And we have many, many more.

However we are not perfect and not all the returns are without criticism, and we will take on board where we can any suggestions for further improving the magazine.

As you can see we had more than a few comments on the History Shop and the Heritage Service in general. Another vital reason for us reading every single returned questionnaire is to make sure that any requiring an answer were dealt with promptly.

For example Mr Miller from Bristol returned his questionnaire (thank you Mr Miller) and took the opportunity to ask about an enquiry he had made some time earlier regarding a book we have for sale. We replied and received a very nice thank you letter from him with an order for the book included. Mrs Lawton from Walton-le-Dale returned her questionnaire (thank you Mrs Lawton) and whilst saying she enjoyed a recent visit to the History Shop, found it 'great and very interesting', she was not satisfied with the service she received while trying to get some information. A letter supplying the information she had been seeking was dispatched and again solicited a very complimentary reply.

We feel that this part of the process is very important. If you have put anything in the comment section that we feel merits a reply we will get back to you.

Thank you again for your response, and look out in the next issue for a full report.

Christ Church Pennington

is celebrating its
150th anniversary

A booklet, which provides a brief history of church is available from both Leigh Library and the History Shop.

The title is
'150 YEARS OF SERVICE'
and costs £2.50.

25 Doorways

A DRAWING AND QUIZ FEATURING 25 DOORWAYS IN WIGAN by GERALD RICKARDS

Gerald's centre spread for this issue is one with a difference. A number of historic cities in the British Isles have already produced well-known posters illustrating their doors, so here is Gerald's contribution for Wigan. Better still, it's done in the form of a quiz (a very challenging one, ideal for pondering over the Christmas holidays); and best of all, it will also help an extremely deserving cause. Gerald hopes to resume his popular series of local drawings in the next issue. Ed.

THE QUIZ

The drawing of 25 'Wigan doorways' is presented in the form of a quiz. Most of the doors are in the centre of the town. The area covered stretches from the edge of Mesnes Park to the Wallgate and Chapel Lane railway bridges. Number 23 is the only door on the out of town side of the dual carriageway Riverway and Central Park Way.

Hopefully it will give enjoyment to all and at the same time raise money to help the Hospice.

ENTRY FORMS

These can be sent in several ways; by submitting the question page (or photocopy) as printed in *Past Forward*; handwritten answers or on one of the question sheets available at various centres, including the History Shop, the Hospice, Hospice Shops, several libraries, the artist and at CCArt picture framers and gallery in Hallgate, Wigan.

HANDING IN OF FORMS

Entry forms can be sent to Wigan and Leigh Hospice, Kildare Street, Hindley, Wigan WN2 3HZ or handed in at the History Shop, Hospice Shops, some libraries, the artist, or CCArt in Hallgate, Wigan.

THE PRIZES

Prizes will be of signed prints in frames (alternative if desired of two signed unframed prints).

One prize will be for the highest number of correct answers, with question 26 as a tie breaker if required.

The second prize will be for the most apt and original answer to question 26, with this prize awarded irrespective of answers given or ignored from all the other questions.

THE PRINTS

Prize winners will be able to select

from a large collection of the artist's prints taken from many series of paintings. Local subjects include public buildings, churches, streets, Formby houses, parkland, canalside three views of Central Park. Decorative compositions have been developed from designs printed in *Past Forward* centre spreads Aspull, Haigh, Ince, Leigh, Orrell, Standish, etc. Subjects further afield include limited editions of Thomas Hardy properties and places linked with his writing; English Cathedrals and Cathedral Close buildings, National Trust properties, waterside buildings, windmills and Oxbridge Colleges.

CLUES

With numbers given in five rows, reading from left to right, top to foot of design.

1. I'll bet you get this one
2. Eat and enjoy the view
3. First a pharmacy, later a bank. Now?
4. Next door is more genuine
5. Handshakes no longer here after a 100 years
6. A musical instrument can sing like Bing Crosby
7. Not the main entrance
8. Looks like a door but it isn't
9. Two white roses
10. The door that leads to an aisle
11. Definitely Italian
12. Blithely climb we up the hill'
13. Said to be the grandest building in town
14. Two occupants come from another house
15. Queues outside before 9 a.m
16. No longer furnished
17. Through the door and open wide
18. Go in here for a break
19. Lengthy history to this place
20. Next door is not quite so genuine
21. Do they still serve 'Barkers' here?
22. Some choices limited here.....
23. Plays a part in entertainment
24. Now bricked over for Tender Loving Care
25. Bigger than the other one

26. **Extra prize and tie breaker:** Suggest another doorway with appropriate clue (no more than 10 words)

.....
.....

NAME

ADDRESS

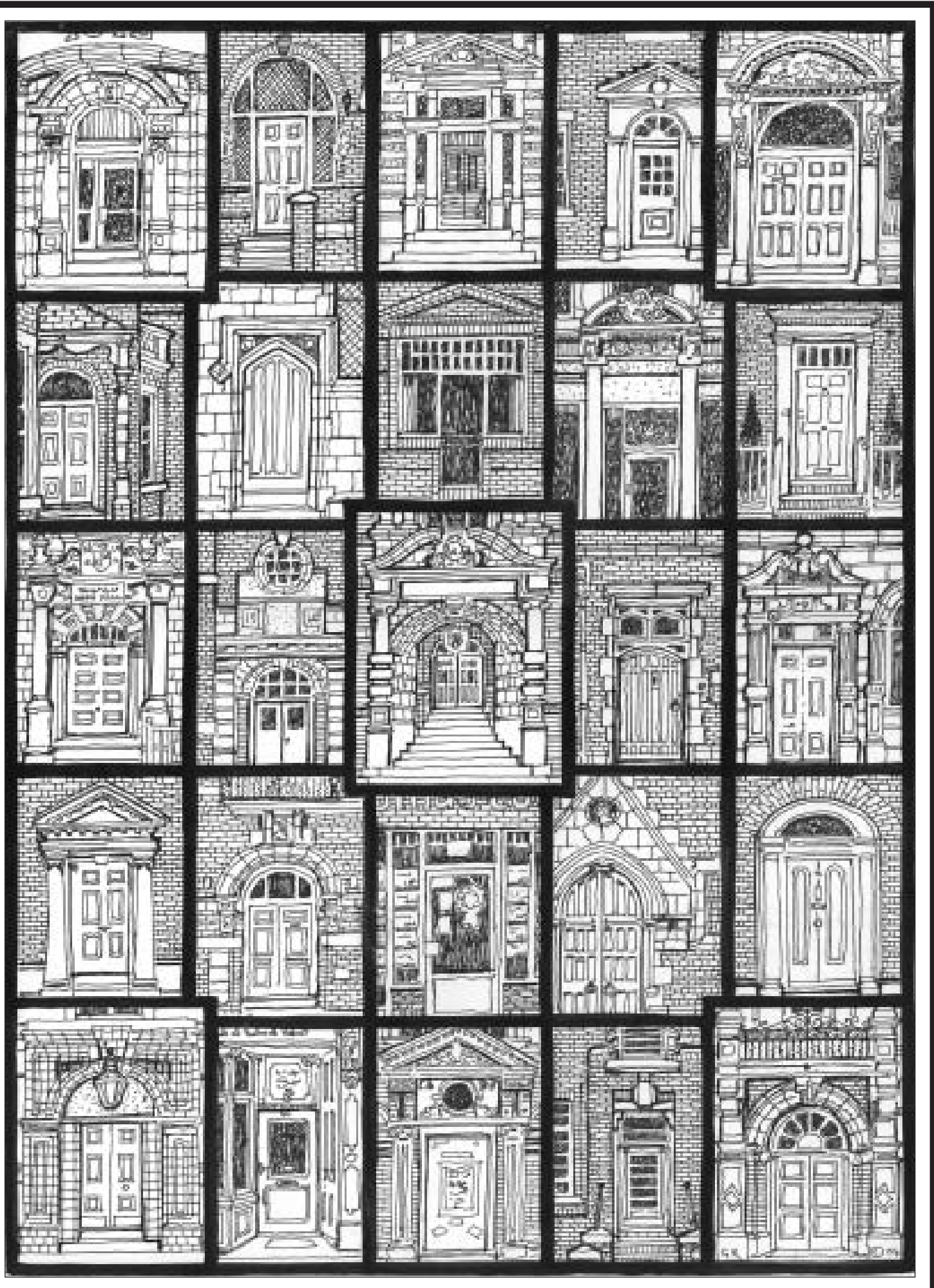
.....

Telephone (optional)

PLEASE 1) tick here if donation (not less than £1) is enclosed

2) tick here if donation given when sheet purchased.....

and place where purchased



Holocaust Memorial Day

"I had many illusions when I was liberated. I thought that generations to come would be free from prejudice forever. Alas, I was wrong."

Anita Lasker Wallfisch
survivor of Auschwitz and Belsen

Thursday 27 January is the date for the commemoration of Holocaust Memorial Day in 2005. This will be a particularly significant event, as it will mark the 60th anniversary to the day of the liberation of Auschwitz, in 1945. The theme for 2005 is 'Survivors, Liberation & Rebuilding Lives'.

As with the past four years, Wigan Council will be holding its own programme of commemoration, on and around the day itself.

Ceremonies

There will be two ceremonies of commemoration, in Mesnes Park, Wigan at 11.00 am and in Civic Square, Leigh at 2.00 pm. Pupils from Hesketh Fletcher High School will once again be taking part, in drama, verse and music; various civic dignitaries will also be present.

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The Lessons of History

Stephen Lythgoe, Wigan Library Service's Reader-in-Residence, will be giving some more *Lessons of History* – readings and music to commemorate the Holocaust. Details are as follows:

Golborne Library
Thurs 20 Jan 1.30 pm

Derby Room, Leigh Library
Sat 29 Jan 1.30 pm

Standish Probus Club, *The Owls*, Standish
Tues 8 Feb 10.30 am

Two additional sessions will be held in Wigan Town Centre and Hindley Museum – see publicity leaflets for further details.

Exhibition

An exhibition featuring material from the Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre, the Anne Frank Educational Trust and others will be mounted in Leigh Library during late January and early February.



Everyone is encouraged to come to one or more of the above commemorations. If you can, please make every effort to attend. For more information about Holocaust Memorial Day contact Alastair Gillies, Heritage Services Manager on 01942 488468 or visit the website www.holocaustmemorialday.gov.uk.



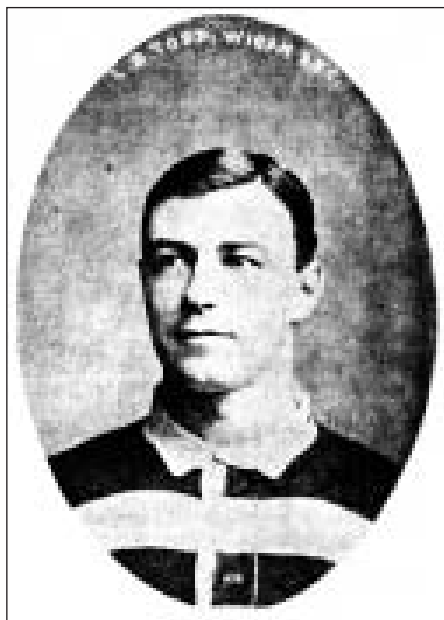
Lance Todd: Memories of a Rugby League Legend

THE people of Wigan were shocked on 14 November 1942 to learn that Lance Todd, a popular Wigan Rugby player, a successful manager and an outstanding broadcaster on the game, had been killed in a car accident in Hollinwood near Oldham. The car had crashed into an electric tram standard; Todd and another passenger were killed instantly.

Wigan Record

Lancelot Beaumont Todd was born at Otuhu, Auckland, New Zealand, in 1883. As a boy he played scrum half and made first grade rugby in 1905. He represented Auckland in the Australian tour in 1906. In the 1906-07 season, he accepted an invitation to tour Great Britain with A H Baskerville's New Zealand team. At the end of the visit, during which Todd scored eight tries, he was approached by Mr George Taylor, Wigan's secretary and Mr James Henderson, a committee member, and signed for Wigan.

His first match was against Oldham on 14 February 1908. 'Toddy', as he was known in Wigan, although only 5ft 7ins tall and weighing only ten stone, was an ideal centre three-quarter, and quickly established himself in popular favour at Central Park. The following season was the best that the club had ever had and Wigan topped the league, winning 28 out of their 32 games. They beat Oldham in the final of the Lancashire Cup and reached the final of the Northern Union Cup (now the Rugby League Challenge Cup). Todd became a member of the



renowned three-quarters line up of Leytham, Jenkins, Todd and Miller. In that season, he scored 23 tries. His record for Wigan was to be 128 tries and six goals in six seasons.

War Record

He played many brilliant games for Wigan and won every honour with the exception of the Northern Union Cup medal. In January 1914, there was uproar when Todd transferred to Dewsbury, despite the first ever special meeting, held in the Cooperative Hall in Dorning Street which closed with no tangible resolution being put forward. However, the Yorkshire Club did not have his services for very long, for when World War I broke out in the August of that year, Todd joined the ANZAC forces, served overseas, attained commissioned rank and was mentioned in dispatches.

After the War

After the war, he became the full time secretary for the North Shore Golf Club in Blackpool, and was in

business as a tailor in the firm of Todd and Gibbons; later he managed the *Silver Grid* in King Street and the *Ship* Hotel in Millgate. In 1928 he was appointed secretary/ manager of the Salford Rugby League Club where he signed many young players who later became famous. Under his management, Salford won every possible honour and became one of the leading clubs in the league. Todd married a Wigan girl, Miss Samuels, whose father was the licensee of the *Crofters Arms* Hotel, Wigan and had been a well-known rugby player and a famous sprinter in his time.

Lapse of Concentration

At the inquest into Todd's death, a verdict of 'Accidental Death' was recorded. The coroner said that as there were no skid marks on the road and no other vehicle had been involved, he could only suggest there had been a momentary lapse of concentration. Rugby players who were colleagues of Todd's 30 years before and officials of the Wigan Club were present at the Wigan Cemetery, where interment took place in a family vault of Mrs Todd's forebears. As the cortege passed, a detachment of Wigan's Home Guard, in which Todd was a captain, presented arms. The coffin was draped with a Union Jack and the bearers were members of the Home Guard.

* * * * *

The Rugby League world ensured that Lance Todd's fame would live on by naming the Challenge Cup 'Man of the Match' trophy after him in 1946.

**James Fairhurst
Ashton In Makerfield**

An Apple for the Teacher

IT WAS the hottest day of the year – 9 August 2003. I had awoken from a strange, vivid dream of childhood to the reality of my son's wedding day, and as I stood in the cool haven of a lovely old London church, it was hard to shake off the past.

Images of my own wedding day, together with thoughts of my parents and my childhood home, drifted in and out of my senses. It was a day for dreams, and as we sang the majestic *'Jerusalem'*, I'm sure that every member of "our side" of the congregation sent a thought winging 200 miles through the sunlit afternoon to the "dark satanic mills" of our native Lancashire. Earlier in the year, Beccy's parents, on their first visit to Wigan, had enjoyed a lesson in Wigan Pier's Victorian school room, where they had to sing *'All Things Bright and Beautiful'* under the stern eye of the schoolmarm.

As a reminder of their visit, that lovely, childlike hymn was also chosen for the wedding, and as we sang, my thoughts travelled once more – not across the miles this time, but across the years to the Babies class at Ince Central school, where I first sang it. The school was in the old building then, as the present school was still being built. We had to take 3d. every week to pay for a brick, our payments being entered onto a little pick card – do any Ince readers remember that? My memories of the old school are naturally hazy, but I can see high windows, and

a coal fire surrounded by a huge fireguard on which wet gloves and mittens steamed gently on winter afternoons. In the schoolyard stood two rows of smelly toilets, the seat of each one consisting of simply a board with a hole in it. Mrs Sandiford and Miss Ashurst presided over the "Babies" and they used to read Milly-Molly-Mandy stories to us just before home time, which was at 4 o'clock then.

Road safety talks

Sometimes, "Bobby Beacon" came to give us road safety talks. He was a big, kindly policeman, with black hair and rosy cheeks, and he would hang a sheet over the blackboard, depicting a road scene. To this he attached a character called "Little Tommy", demonstrating what would happen if careless Tommy didn't follow the kerb drill! During lessons we sat round a table, in the middle of which stood a sturdy cardboard 'Tidy Box', which housed our pencils and crayons. Sometimes we played with clay on little boards – I can still feel the clammy coldness of it – and sometimes we made pictures with Fuzzy Felts, or played in the sand tray. That first Christmas, I made a spill-holder complete with paper 'spills' for my dad to light his pipe with, but I got measles and Miss Ashurst delivered it to our house. I can remember my family crowding to the door to see "our Irene's teacher", as she walked away – such was the awe in which teachers were held in those days!

Then came the day

when the new school opened. How modern it was, with light, airy classrooms, and child-size indoor flush toilets – pink for girls and blue for boys. Best of all, behind the infants playground was the Wagon Works where my dad worked, and he would often wave to me at playtime. Every child had a small bottle of milk to drink each morning, the milk-monitor having removed the foil top with a little gadget shaped like a flying saucer. Do you remember buying 'Cheesettes' from the biscuit-monitor? She counted them directly from her hand into ours from a big box, (no one bothered about plastic gloves in those days). If I had 3d., I would buy 24, and wolf the lot – (oh, happy days! – I only have to walk past a Cheesette now and I put 2lbs on!).

Outside in the playground, little Ince lads miraculously turned into Wild West cowboys and Indians, whilst girls linked arms and walked round chanting "who's playin' skilly?", whereupon other girls joined the link until there were enough to warrant a game. Next day, someone might bring a sheet of 'transfers' to school. These were little stamp-sized pictures of, perhaps, a Union Jack, a boat or a doll. We stuck them face-down on our arms by licking the backing paper, which we carefully peeled off after a few minutes, leaving the picture behind like a tattoo.

As the contents of our classroom nature-table changed with the seasons, so did the games we played. There was a craze for hula-hoops, and we played 'two-ball' against

the wall, singing "Nebuchadnezzar, the King of the Jews, bought his wife a pair of shoes", or skipped in a rope being twirled by two girls singing, "Queen, Queen Caroline washed her hair in turpentine". We played "The Farmer Wants a Wife" and "What Time is it Mr Wolf?". You could always hear young voices somewhere, chanting the age-old rhymes – we were allowed to be children in those days.

"Nitty Nora, t'bug explorer"

At the end of playtime, the teacher blew the whistle, and we formed 'lines' before leading into school, hoping "Nitty Nora, t'bug explorer" wasn't waiting to examine our hair for unwanted guests! The teacher heard every child read from their "Janet and John" book daily, and in arithmetic (which we called sums), we chanted our times-tables in a sing-song: "One two is two, two two's are four". It wouldn't be considered the correct way to learn these days, but it certainly stuck!

On a cupboard in the infants' corridor stood a pottery rabbit which held a strange fascination for me – oh, how I loved him! One day, I spotted an identical one on Baileys Pot stool in Wigan Market Hall, which remained there all through my school days. When I started work, I bought him with my first week's wages. He had been there for so long that I can recall the assistant shouting to her colleague, "Ey, somebody's buyin' t'rabbit!" He is looking down at me from my kitchen shelf as I write,



and the little girl who loved him loves him still.

“Real writing”

How nervous we all were when the time came to move across to the juniors school! The top class seemed like adults, and we dreaded the ‘nowty’ teachers we had heard about. It was here that girls were taught to knit and I can remember the simple bonnet I made. We learned to do joined up writing - “real writing” we called it - and I suspect we were the last generation to use the old scratch-pens, which we dipped into a porcelain inkwell in the desktop. My friend Christine and I used to buy shilling fountain pens from Tommy Enty’s (Entwistle’s) shop on Ince Bar, but they always leaked within a few days. Our exercise books came in different colours - blue, say for English, red for sums and so on. Do you remember the ones with shiny covers which had conversion tables on the backs? Ounces into pounds, inches into feet, and strange measurements like quarts and bushels and furlongs.

I had (and still have) a passion for stationery, and I would spend hours in Starr’s or Wilding’s on Wallgate, buying daff things like telephone memo pads, when nobody I knew possessed a telephone, or packets of gold stars like the ones the teacher stuck into our books for good work. Sometimes, we listened to ‘Radio Broadcasts for Schools’, via a mesh fronted wooden speaker on the classroom wall and, once a term, we had a film show, in exciting, giggle-inducing semi-darkness on Friday afternoon. Games lesson usually meant ‘rounders’ on the school field, where we wore team bands in red, yellow, blue or green. For a treat, if it was very hot, the

teacher took us outside to listen to a story. How we enjoyed such diversions from the usual time table, and we sat on the grass making daisy-chains as the bees droned in the clover flowers, (which we called ‘sucky-bobs’), and the distant playground shimmered in the heat. The actual story probably went in one ear and out the other, but the memory of those golden afternoons remains as clear as a bell.

Eleven-plus exam

Eventually, we reached the top class, where we sat the eleven-plus exam - “t’scholarship” - which marked the end of our primary school days. I remember the day the letter came to say I had passed for the grammar school, along with two boys - oh, if only another girl had passed! I was a very shy child who found it hard to mix, and the thought of going alone to a new school terrified me to such an extent that I decided to go to Rose Bridge Secondary Modern with my friends. However, my teacher talked to me about the chance I was throwing away, and I was made to understand that a grant was available for the uniform, which I was aware my parents couldn’t afford. Very reluctantly, I resigned myself to becoming a pupil of Hindley and Abram Grammar School come September, but I felt like an outcast from my class from that day onwards.

On the last afternoon, desks were emptied, inkwells washed and cupboards tidied. Then the teacher called for “Hands together and eyes closed” for our final prayers before the whole school whooped and yelled its way out into the sunshine, free for five whole weeks. I hung back alone, by the railings. How I envied those who were

returning! Even the top class would still have ‘story time’ in the afternoon, and playtime, (which would now become ‘break’ at the grammar school). In the Babies class, a new generation of children would play in the sand-tray, and would see my little rabbit every day.

It is hard to put into words, the overwhelming isolation and dread that I felt, but I can feel it yet.... A sudden jangle of keys heralded the arrival of the caretaker and the spell was broken. I turned and ran, only vaguely aware of every day sounds: the chant of the skipping-rhyme: “On the mountain stands a lady, who she is I do not know”, a snatch of television from an open doorway: “You’ll wonder where the yellow went when you brush your teeth with Pepsodent”. I would be home in time to hear Leslie Crowther announce, “It’s Friday, it’s five to five

and it’s CRACKERJACK!” from our black and white television, but today I would stare unseeingly at the screen.... Oh, I didn’t want to go!

But I went (and survived!), and now school days are far behind me, and their sights and sounds are long gone from our streets - the paper lads whistle and his cry of ‘Chronicle!’, a game of marbles on the cobbles, the clip-clop of the rag-bone man’s horse and children’s shrill voices echoing down some back entry: “Oh the big ship sails up the alley-alley-o”..... they exist only in memory now, but once, on a sad summers day long ago they were all around me - real and vibrant and alive. But my eyes were blind to them and my ears closed to everything but the poignant clang of the school gate as it closed behind me for the last time.

Irene Roberts
Abram Nr Wigan

Girls from Ince Central School

I took this photograph on our last Sports Day in summer 1964, just before we left Junior School. The girls are: Back Row (L to R): Valerie Hayes, Barbara Bates, Susan Walsh, Freda Ramsdale, Susan Grundy, Lynda Gaskell. Front Row (L to R): Pat Lowe, Karina Lowe, Pat Orrell, Shelia Shawcross, Jean Miller. The building in the centre background was Smith’s Dairy in Belle Green Lane - a well-known but long-demolished Ince landmark.



'Very nearly an armful'

THIS immortal phrase, penned by scriptwriters Galton and Simpson, was spoken by Tony Hancock in the 1961 programme, 'The Blood Donor', from the long-running series called 'Hancock's Half Hour'.

By the time of the broadcast, the Blood Transfusion Service was already well-established. Donors generally attended a local centre voluntarily to give blood, which was then stored in blood banks for later transfusion to people in need. As early as the 17th century, blood transfusions had taken place on animals only, but it was only in the 20th century that it became possible to undertake it on humans. This was made possible by the discovery of the four main blood groups (A,B,AB, and O) in 1900; the leading Viennese doctor, Karl Landsteiner, made the breakthrough in identification. Further new developments occurred during World War I when there was a need to relieve pressure on those attempting to save lives. It was discovered during this period that blood could be prevented from clotting once it had been removed from the body if it was mixed with sodium citrate. Also, it was ascertained that blood could last longer once it had been refrigerated. By 1921, members of the British Red Cross decided to give blood at Kings College Hospital, in London, thus establishing the first voluntary Blood Donor Service.

Leigh Blood Transfusion Service

Locally, a Leigh and District Blood Transfusion Service was inaugurated in December 1933, and formed in February 1934. It was set up to be a self-contained organization to serve Leigh Infirmary. A meeting to establish the service had taken place in the Mayor's Parlour, Leigh Town Hall, convened by the then Mayor, Cllr. William Rowland Boydell J.P. at the instigation of Leigh Rotary Club.

During the first year of the new service, 25 volunteers (all male), were ready to donate their blood. They had been accepted as donors after they had been examined medically, and their blood categorized into the relevant groupings.

Full particulars were kept at Leigh Fire Station, where the Chief Officer

was Francis Annan. When a blood transfusion was deemed necessary, a request was telephoned to the Fire Station and an ambulance was sent at once for the donor, who was conveyed to the hospital. During its first year of operation, six calls were made for donors. The first appeal had been made in June 1934, when a Mr. T.A. Bigland was the volunteer donor. A Mr. Middlehurst, another volunteer, had twice given blood, both times at Manchester, as he was on both the Manchester and Leigh panels.

Financed help towards the cost of the service was provided by subscription from Leigh Rotary Club, Leigh Corporation, and Lancashire Council.

The End

After 17 years, Leigh and District Blood Transfusion Service voted for its own extinction in April 1952. It felt that, in view of formation of the National Health Service in 1948, and the establishment of a Regional Transfusion Service based in Manchester, which supplemented local supplies, its usefulness had come to an end. A further change in practice had enabled donors to attend local centres where a mobile team of specialists from the Regional Transfusion Service were on hand,

rather than being transported to Leigh Infirmary.

40,000 Donors

In 1952, some of the original 25 donors were still on the register. In this final year blood contributions included 112 bottles from Sutcliffe, Speakman and Co., as well as 95 bottles from Mather Lane Spinning Company. There was due to be a presentation of bronze badges to five qualifying donors, but unfortunately, the said badges did not arrive in time for the ceremony. Those eligible for the badges included;

Mr. K. Brooks, Holden Road, Leigh.

Rev. C. Crawshaw, St. Peter's Vicarage, Leigh.

Mr. R. Ellis, Plank Lane, Leigh.

Mr. G. Gatley, Canal Bank House, Leigh.

Miss V. Powell, Newton Road, Leigh.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Mr. B.K. Barker, Regional Organizer of the service, estimated that from its small beginning the service had increased to 40,000 recorded donors, with running costs totalling £65,000. It was estimated that an average one pint of blood was required every four hours.

Tony Ashcroft
Local History Officer (Leigh)



A rare photograph of the mobile Blood Transfusion Service in operation. In May 1953, as part of their work, they visited Astley Green Colliery where they can be seen taking samples of blood from donors.

Percy Leslie Moxey

Wigan (& Llanelli)

PERCY MOXEY was born in the Welsh valleys in 1915, just as the horrors of World War I were beginning to impact onto the lives of everyday folks and families, such as his mother Lily and father William. Like all such youngsters growing up in the valleys, their sporting heroes were rugby players, not footballers. So young Percy was no different and he gravitated to the famous 'Scarlets' of Llanelli where, as a powerfully built youngster, he was ideally proportioned for the rigours of the rugby union scrum. He was a prop, a work horse!

Moxey could truly be named the 'nearly man' of rugby. True he did make the first team at Strady Park and impressed with his scrummaging power along with his footballing ability. He must have impressed people outside Llanelli also, for in the 1935-36 season at the tender age of 20 he was selected to play in the trial games for the Welsh National Team, though he failed to gain selection for his country. The following two years it was a similar story - selection for the trial matches but no caps. He must have felt that he was always going to be the bridesmaid, never the bride.

Code switch

Other eyes, however, were also watching the ever maturing young Moxey, and they were not from within the ranks of the Rugby Union. Rugby League scouts from up north had been alerted to this strong running, powerfully built young front row forward. They had also noted that he had been unable to force his way into the national team. The scouts knew such disappointments made a player more willing to listen to the offers made by Rugby League clubs, and especially when that club was the world famous Wigan.

And so it was that in 1938, following his latest disappointment at not gaining his first cap, Moxey went north. He signed for the Wigan

club, which at the time was a very powerful outfit - they had just won the Lancashire Cup - and had two of the best prop forwards in the game. George Banks was a 'tough as teak' Yorkshireman whom the club had signed from the struggling and soon to be extinct London club, Streatham and Mitcham; he would go on to play



246 times for Wigan. On the other side of the front row was Ken Gee, a local player destined to become a legend in the game, winning every honour and playing a staggering 559 times for the club. It was formidable opposition that confronted Moxey at Central Park.

War looms

But not only was Moxey going to struggle to make the team, let alone make any sort of mark - as his first season drew to a close, the threat of war with Germany was looming ever larger. This was to curtail his career. As war broke out, Moxey found himself moving from Wigan to Norwich where he was employed as

a policemen/fireman on the city force. His brother was a senior fire officer at Yarmouth and this may well have influenced him to move south. During the early years of the war it was not uncommon for Moxey to find himself doing an eight hour shift on the beat as a bobby, only to return to the station house and be on call as a fireman.

But he was equally keen to do his bit in the war, feeling that whilst his work as a policeman and a fireman was worthwhile, there was a war on and he should be fighting the Germans rather than crime and fires in Norwich. So it was that, in 1941, he successfully joined the RAF as a volunteer reserve. His rugby career at Wigan was firmly on the back burner, although the war at least brought him some representative honours in the game, if only via the services. Between 1940 and 1942 he represented the RAF in the inter-services matches which had been organised to boost morale. On enlisting for active service he was assigned to Bomber Command, and moved to Upper Hayford where he joined 16 Operational Training Unit as a pilot officer. There he trained as a navigation officer with a view to eventually joining a squadron on active service over Germany. Sadly, however, like his sporting career, fate was to take a hand and ensure he remained a 'nearly man'.

Ill-fated flight

At this time the RAF needed all the men it could get, and Moxey's flight crew were on night flying duties prior to being assigned to an operational squadron. On the evening of Thursday 6 August 1942, Pilot Officer Maura and his crew were briefed on the night exercise they were about to undertake. Maura's navigation officer was Percy Moxey. Briefing over, the crew went to eat and prepare for the night's 'sortie'. By 10pm the crew were aboard Wellington bomber IC R1075,

Continued on page 30

Percy Leslie Moxey

Wigan (& Llanelli)

Continued from page 29

completing the final checks prior to take off. It was to be a simple training operation, flying at night in preparation for the real thing, when they would be flying over Germany rather than the English countryside.

At 10.07. the Wellington flew off into the gathering darkness of the summer night. For the first three hours the flight went according to plan; but just after 1.00am Moxey's aircraft strayed from its designated navigational flight path and unwittingly entered the Birmingham City Barrage Balloon defences. At 1.32am it clipped a tethering cable

and Maura lost control; the aircraft crashed at Erdington, east of Birmingham. The pilot and two others managed to bail out of the aircraft as it twisted and spun out of control, and survived; but the other three crew members did not. According to a former colleague, Moxey, once it became apparent that the aircraft was in difficulty, began to assist the crew members to get out. He himself did actually manage to bail out, but sadly he had left it too late; his body hit the ground before his parachute could open.

Accidents such as this tended to be kept quiet so as not to affect the morale of the population, and were not as uncommon as one might think. Young inexperienced aircrews needed to be trained. This training - preparation for night 'sorties' over Germany - was usually done over towns as well as the countryside. Occasionally inexperienced navigators under training would veer

off course and stray into the air defences of major cities. Given that such cities were subjected to the blackout restrictions, once over them pilots and navigators would have no idea where they were. Moxey's aircraft suffered the same fate as many before had done, and many after him would also.

* * * * *

Pilot Officer Percy Leslie Moxey's body was returned to Great Yarmouth and buried at Gorleston cemetery (ref: Sec. U. Grave 121). Once more he was the 'nearly man'. He never made it into the war, just as he never made it into the Welsh National Rugby Union team or Wigan Rugby League team! So often he was almost there, but sadly, this time the stakes were considerably higher. Moxey never got to fulfil yet another ambition - to fight the Germans - and paid with his life.

Tom Mather

THE BALLAD OF BILLINGE HILL

*Some talk of Himalaya, Everest and K2
But there's a hill from which, when young, I marvelled at the view
No need for clumsy ice boots or such impediments
Just light array to keep at bay, climatic elements*

*The journey to the summit, betrayed the eventual prize
A legacy of human greed and so-called enterprise
Torn from nature's timeless grip, vast tracts of stone had found
A niche in architectural whim, in a totally alien ground.*

*On that site of dereliction ugly items took the eye
Here and there, lay rusting hulks, like bodies left to die.
Abandoned by their masters with higher things in mind
Such indifference ruled the day, ne'er thought to be unkind.*

*Thankfully, there still remained, true signs of nature wild
Large tracts of landscape to the west lay mostly undefiled
Reaching heavenwards to the base of that haunting bower of
stone
Devoid of windows opening door, just the edifice alone*

*Oft I shuffled round its plinth, each facet to explore
The carvings deep in weathered stone by those who'd gone before
Some depicting hallmarks of the true stone mason's art
while others in their crudity, vowing feelings from the heart.*

*But that was not the purpose of the effort I'd donated
Like Defoe's hero I now surveyed, a vision that God created
Reducing Man's temporal boast, to the limits of derision.
Only He within six days could create such glorious vision.*

*On a clear day when the sky above, was painted azure blue
Perhaps a woolly cloud therein, drifting lazily through
I could only stand and marvel at that map, spread in relief
The memory of that spectacle, still a thought beyond belief*

*Though the aspect east and north, bound by the Pennine's frame
Could not be termed idyllic but an area steeped in fame
A plethora of industrial hives as far as the eye could see
The legacy of an apiary, when ENGLAND was Queen Bee*

*Changing now the picture as I turned my gaze due West
There lay a carpet stretched beyond, humanity's behest.
Sixteen counties I was told, was the scope of human vision
Were visible from that very point, without change of position*

*The backdrop now is the western sky, dipping into a silvery sea
Lapping the coast from Cumbria's fells, to the Isle of Anglesey
On spotting Blackpool Tower, there goes a childish dream
Of endless sands and donkey rides, candy floss, ice cream*

*Turning back the centuries, such pleasures were unknown
Save for the sweetest victory, England has ever known.
When Billinge played a vital role, relaying Drake's command
Not by E mail, telephone or the swiftness of scout's hand*

*But by a beacon system, from the days when time began
Messages by fire from hills, relayed from man to man
In that very thought alone, Billinge may take a bow
Frustrating Spain's Armada's dream, condemned in history now*

*But the scene of which I eulogise, is but a jewel in my dreams
No doubt today quite vandalized, by man's ambitious schemes
And so until my judgment day, I hope God in his will
Has kept a place where I can see, THOSE VIEWS FROM BILLINGE
HILL*

**J.Harold Smith
Sutton Coalfield West Midlands**

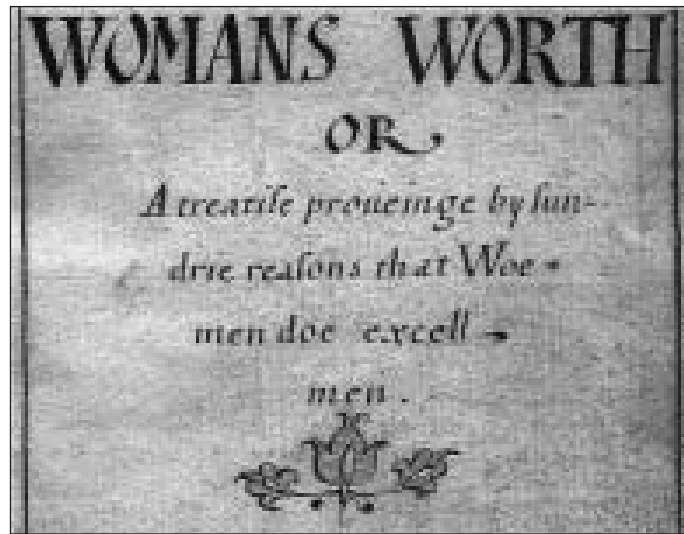
G.P.O. BEWARE!

Transmission by the beacon system was capable of covering a distance of 60 miles in 11 minutes.

Womans Worth Three

LAST year, I wrote in these pages about the early 17th century treatise 'Womans Worth: or a treatise proveing by sundrie reasons that Woemen doe excell men' that had been discovered by Alan Davies in the Wigan Borough Archives in 2002. I am working on an edition of that work to be published by the Medieval and Renaissance Text Society, the first time the treatise will appear in print. In last year's article, I reported that a second manuscript of the tract had turned up in the Bodleian Library, where it was attributed to William Page (1590-1664), fellow of All Soul's College, Oxford. I wasn't sure then whether that attribution was correct or not.

I had hoped that the book would be in press by now, but during a research trip to the British Library in London last year, I discovered yet a third version of the book. Information on that title page affirms William Page's authorship of the tract and makes it all but certain that he did, indeed, write 'Womans Worth'. An epigraph on the title page reads, "Authoris nomen pagina qu[ae] probat / collegiae



Omnium Animarum," ie "The name of the author (of All Soul's College) is shown by every page"—a pun on the name Page. In addition, the scribe has written at the bottom:

OXFORD
Imprinted as yet
never,
onely a M-S in the
Library
of that famous uni-
versity
1638

So the British Library version confirms the existence of the Bodleian *Womans Worth* – indeed, the BL version seems to have been copied from the Bodleian version. And our earlier guesses about the date of *Womans Worth* is confirmed by a date of 1638 (though it remains unclear whether the date 1638 refers to the date of the tract's composition or the date the BL version

was copied).

None of this helps solve many of the puzzles surrounding the Wigan 'Woman's Worth' – when it was copied and by whom, or who was the original owner. The Wigan manuscript's scribe has taken more care with that version than any of the other copyists, rubricating (ie writing in red ink) the names of the famous and holy women mentioned there. The BL manuscript, on the

other hand, is quite sloppy, with more than a few words scribbled out and other words inserted. It was evidently copied very quickly.

The discovery of this third manuscript version of 'Woman's Worth' is very exciting, but it delays publication of the book. I must now integrate all the BL variants into the text, as I have already done the Bodleian variants. The bonus is that I have yet one more source for checking confusing or unclear words or phrases, and the final book will be better for it. I look forward to the day in the near future when I return to Leigh and present Alan Davies and the Archives with a copy of 'Womans Worth', finally in print over 450 years after it was first written.

Prof. Kari McBride
Arizona USA

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Wartime Blitz on Atherton

In 1941 Atherton, 12 miles from Manchester on the railway line to Liverpool, was an industrial town producing coal, iron, steel and cotton. 7 May 2004 was the 63rd anniversary of the town's devastation by a German air attack, part of the wartime Blitz. Hundreds of homes and places of work were severely damaged or destroyed. During that first week of May and beyond, Manchester and Liverpool and the docks area were turned to rubble by continual bombing. Thousands of people were killed and thousands wounded over this period. The two cities were close to ruins.

My family and I were living at Cox's Farm in Atherton, which had been our home for four generations. On the night of 7 May the house was completely obliterated by a land mine. Our herd of cattle and three Shire horses were killed, along with the Air Raid Warden, Arthur Shaw, Firewatch Mr Grundy and a third person whose name I don't remember. Many others were severely injured, among them a young man of 17 whose face was badly scarred by flying glass. Happily, the surgeons at Bolton Infirmary were able to save his sight; his name was Jack Edge, and after the war he managed Stirlings furniture shop in Leigh.

Also among those seriously injured was the Reverend Glyn Evans, the Unitarian Minister. Surgeons at Leigh Infirmary wanted to amputate his legs but he refused to have the operation; in time he recovered and was able to walk with the aid of a stick. His home, Harrison Parsonage, which was next-door to Cox's Farm, was devastated

Dear Sir

Please find enclosed my personal account of the Wartime Blitz on Atherton, 7 May 1941. I had just turned 18 at the time; I am now 81 and retired for 20 years. I still have family connections in Wigan. While I was living at Red Rock I met Marjorie Stringfellow who was working for the Wigan Treasurer's Dept; her family owned the well-known coach and removal firm of the time. We married in April 1947 and had a great partnership lasting 55 years.

**James Speakman
Abergele Conwy**

but eventually rebuilt, and he and his wife were able to return home. But the house at Cox's Farm was completely destroyed. My parents and I survived by taking refuge in the cellar but we were covered with debris. My sister was blown the full length of the hall and also survived, though badly shaken. My parents were evacuated to Park End Farm and I spent the summer sleeping in the air-raid shelter. It was quoted at the time

of a visit by our MP, Mr. Tinker, that the actual bomb hole was large enough to hold ten double-decker buses.

Fellow members of my section of the Home Guard helped to clear the debris from the road to the farmyard. Within a few weeks we had erected temporary buildings to house cattle for the retail milk round, which was delivered by a Morris Minor and trailer. For several weeks the car was minus a windscreen. Dentist J Wynn, Dr Kathleen Hanby, and police detective W Bolton all lost their cars; the Cleggs' car and egg trucks were destroyed and all these people also lost their homes. In the last week of May 1942 my family moved to a new home - Waterworks Farm, Red Rock, Worthington near Wigan, on the Haigh Estate of the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres.

Throughout all this, one thing particularly sticks in my mind - a hen turkey, sitting in the corner of the barn which had been completely demolished around her, unharmed, along with the large clutch of eggs she was protecting.



Cox's Farm House, Atherton, summer 1912. The home of the Speakman family for four generations, it was destroyed by a German land mine on 7 May 1941. The young man is Herbert Edge, father of Jack Edge, born May 1923.

Memories of the old 'Top Place' ironworks

THESE are some of my memories of the works from almost 80 years ago (I am in my 85th year now). My very first memory is sitting with Hubert Bradshaw, who was in his early teens, waiting to give my father who worked on the steel furnaces his lunch. We were sitting on a form behind the wooden shed that was attached to the works offices, only about 30 or 40 yards from the base of the biggest chimney in England, 520 feet tall. As we sat there a huge shower of sparks came raining down from somewhere at the front of the shed; it was so big that we got under our bench for shelter, and my father came running to see if we were safe.

'Jack Shine, Whistle or Shout'

The next encounter with the 'Top Place' which I remember was a few years on when, at the age of nine, I used to play with the rest of the boys and girls at a game called 'Jack Shine, Whistle, or Shout', a glorified hide and seek but ranging over a mile square of woodlands, fields, a partially used railway line and a brook. Standing towering above our play area was the slag tip where molten slag was tipped down from a height of about 200 feet; we needed a dark night to play the game, so the gang split into two teams and a piece of slate was spit on one side and thrown into the air. "Wet or Dry" was shouted and the team that chose the correct side showing as it reached the ground moved off to hide; thus the shout "Jack Shine, Whistle or Shout" - you had to do any of those things when shouted to do so. However, many of the most exciting games were stopped when a bogy of slag was tipped down the 200 foot slope; invariably it would burst on its way down and, the inside being molten, it would light the sky and area as bright as a full moon, making it impossible to hide.

I lived in Gidlow House then with my Aunt, Mrs Hesketh and her family. She told me that, when she

was a young girl, she saw the tip starting to grow; it started in a hollow where a farm house was and saw the sometimes cooled lumps of slag crushing the house walls. In the daytime it was possible to watch the bogy being pushed to the top of the 200 foot tip; the driver must have had nerves of steel being so close to the edge. The method was to lock the bogy wheels and the engine pulled a tipping rod to get the slag to tumble out; sometimes several tugs were needed to get the partially cooled slag out. It was just as spectacular in daytime as at night; in fact, looking up at what seemed a tiny model engine running along the edge of the tip 200 feet in the air could be fascinating!

Built on rock

A major shareholder in the Wigan Coal and Iron Company, who owned 'Top Place', was The Earl of Crawford & Balcarres who, in a fit of pique, sold his shares to a rival company, the Lancashire Steel Corporation's Irlam steel works. This caused the end of steel making in Wigan on a large scale, as everything that would move was taken to the Irlam site. Many years later the derelict site was handed over to a Bolton firm who used it to store bales of cotton. Around 1950 my brother Ernest, who lived at Kirkless Hall and had originally worked at 'Top Place' then at Irlam, was told by some of the former management that they regretted not bringing the Irlam works to 'Top Place'; this seemed logical, as 'Top Place' was built on a rock foundation and Irlam on sand and water.

Big chimney comes down

When production of steel finally came to an end in the early '30's, there were several chimneys to be felled around the site, but the big chimney, over 520 feet tall, was left to last. When it fell, around 1935-36, I was standing on the lower slag tip

which lay to the south of the works, far enough away to be safe when it fell; when it came down I witnessed the scramble for the lightning conductor tip which I believe was made from a precious metal, platinum. I don't think they ever found it.

From then the area became derelict. Ernest bought the shed I had sheltered behind and made it into a green house. Coming home from the RAF I took a job on the steelworks site, now a cotton storage depot run by Mason's of Bolton. Nothing was ever done with the site, however, and for the next 20 or 30 years it was a waste ground. Living in Kirkless Hall within close view of the site, I heard rumours from old hands who had worked at the steel works before World War I that nickel bars were stacked alongside the railway on the site, but had sank into the ground and were never recovered; also that the blast furnaces were counterbalanced with hundreds of tons of lead.

Zeppelins over Wigan

Many times I have walked to Belle Green Lane from Kirkless Hall - through the old workings when they were in full swing as a boy and through the desolated site in my teen years until I was 27 years old, then past large stacks of cotton in the late '40's. But in my mind's eye I can see the blast furnaces almost along side the Leeds and Liverpool canal, throwing their glow to the night sky - in World War I the blast furnaces throwing their light suddenly to a dark night sky may well have interrupted bombing by Zeppelins over Wigan - and the clank of steam engines shunting wagons about. Looking back, these works could still have been in full swing today but for selfishness of the 'get rich quick' class; and where could you find a site with a waterway along side, railways all around, and built on rock to help make the best steel?

George Victor Wadeson
Wigan

Developing Treasures

SOMETIME ago I was given some old negatives to add to the collection; however, with the amount of new material coming in, these were left for a rainy day. Can you imagine my delight when such a day finally arrived and I started to print them, only to discover reappearing in the chemicals images of people and events around the Atherton area from the 1920's, which had not seen the light of day for over 70 years. The Editor of *Past Forward* agreed that some of these should be shared with our readers.

With the help of our Local History Officers and the

picture collection at Leigh, we were able to identify and date nearly all of the new prints, and came to the conclusion that the photographer probably had his own studio and certainly supplied pictures to the local paper and other local publications. Among the negatives were some family pictures, and it may well be that some readers will recognize the family or be able to tell us who the stringer for the local paper could have been.

Len Hudson
Senior Conservationist
Wigan Heritage Service



Studio portrait of an unknown Atherton Soldier.



Atherton Collieries Carnival & Gala Rose Queen 1927, Miss Alice Hewitt.



Studio portrait of an unknown Atherton family.



Atherton Collieries Carnival & Gala Float outside Atherton Central Station.



Atherton Collieries Carnival & Gala Rose Queen 1928, Miss Mary Crudden.



Atherton nonconformist processions forming up, July 1930.



Atherton Collieries Carnival & Gala, June 1927



Studio portrait of an unknown Atherton family.



Studio portraits of three unknown Atherton girls.



SLT trolley bus at the inauguration of the Atherton-Ashton bus service, August 1930.



The interior of the newly opened St. Richards RC church, Atherton, May 1928.



Howe Bridge Congregational Mission Bazaar, March 1928, with the Rev. D. Thomas in the picture.



Hesketh Fletcher school, Market Street, Atherton.



First May procession leaving St. Richards church, seen on Cambridge Street. Leading the procession is the banner to our Lady, followed by the Queen Miss Evelyn Parks. May 1928.



Girl Guides forming up on High Street, Atherton, to march to Howe Bridge Spinning Co. sports ground for the Divisional rally, May 1929.

The Workman Train

I have recently been reminded of my childhood days before World War II, when a week's holiday was beyond our wildest dreams - a day out on the school trip to Ainsdale beach was the highlight of the school year.

Outings to Gathurst

My Dad was out of work, as were many thousands more - they couldn't buy a job, as they used to say, for love or money. So our Mother, like a lot more at that time, had very little money to spend. But she always seemed to take the initiative to put the spirit of adventure into our lives, and especially during our four weeks holiday from school in the summer.

There were outings to Gathurst for the day - a bus took us to Martland Mill, and we walked down the canal banks out into the field, to the small fair ride and shop. We would call at Aunt Lily's on the way back at Beech Hill for a cup of tea, and then sometimes walk back to Aunt Rebecca's at Caunce Road in Scholes.

Then it was back to Bird Street, tired but happy. My mother loved to take us out to Broad Acre wood. We would walk up Belle Green Lane past

the golf course into the woods; as we came out of the woods there used to be three houses, one of which was a toffee shop, where we could choose to spend our halfpenny, and walk home, calling at Ince Park on the way back.

Trip to Southport

But the highlight was our trip to Southport on the Workman train. If you caught it before 8.00 am the fare was cheaper. Our Dad used to come with us, even though he wasn't very keen on the idea. We would walk to Wallgate Station, and once we had managed to board the train, we all wanted a window seat to spot trains all the way. Windows would be shut firmly at Appley Bridge because of the smell from the bone works.

Then finally we arrived in Southport, and walked straight down to the beach and the tea café and children's playground (all gone now), buckets and spades at the ready, to make pies and castles and, of course, knockthemhem down. Buckets of water to put around the moat dried up as fast as you put it in.

Then one of us would go for a jug of tea from the café, and out would

come the butties, a bit sandy and dry but who cared. If we were lucky Mother would go and get a penny worth of chips, which always tasted good. Our Dad never used to stay with us on the beach - when we were settled down he would go for a drink somewhere on his own. Then came the treat we had been waiting for - down at the Peter Pan play ground where, for a penny, you could go on all the rides for as long as you wanted. About three or four o'clock Dad would be back after he had something to eat, asking us if we were ready to go home.

Of course we then had to make our way back to the station - I think there was a time limit attached to the Workman's ticket on the train you caught back. We didn't need much rocking to sleep that night after our day out but we all used to ask when are we going again.

Just to end, my Mother's youngest brother, Tommy Westhead, was quite funny at times. He told us this story of him and his mate, Billy Sherrington, going along to the station and asking for two half-Workman tickets to Southport!

**A E Smith
Winstanley Wigan**

The news media of recent weeks has contained more than a few reminders of the days of World War II. But I wonder if any of our (much) older readers, especially those of Pemberton origin, have any memories of the years leading up to those dark days and how many of them are able to link any of their experiences to their imminence?

Peter Steinbracher

Though not a Pembertonian myself, I shall always treasure the indelible, though brief memory of my connection with a young German chap by the name of Peter Steinbracher who, in the mid 1930's, came to live in Pemberton to join, so I understood at the time, his brother, already established in Pemberton as the owner (?) of a cycle cum radio shop, a fairly common combination in that period.

Before we were enemies

At the time, I played drums in a four piece dance band, the pianist of which was baker's son Harold Whittle from Sims Lane End with whom I became very friendly. Though I was not aware of the fact, Harold was also the pianist in an amateur light orchestra in Haydock, under the baton of Mr. (Daddy) Forshaw. Imagine the pleasure of my surprise when one day, Harold announced that I was invited to accompany him and the brilliant cellist, Peter Steinbracher, a recently joined German member of the Forshaw orchestra, on an evening at a roller-skating rink in Liverpool, transport via Harold's father's family Austin Ten saloon.

The likelihood of anyone from Garswood, especially a teenager of questionable origin, actually meeting up with a live

German would be almost nil. The fact that Peter's presence in our company was connected with the occasional newspaper picture of a little man, sporting a micro, black moustache and permanently raised left arm never entered the equation!

The trip to the roller rink at Liverpool was to include Harold's showing off of the brilliance of the newly opened East Lancashire Road which was navigated in hitherto unknown freedom of traffic interruption. When asked by Harold what he thought of it, Peter, in fairly good English, replied, "'tis a loffy street" - some street, thought we.

Though I met Peter on a few more occasions, usually at rehearsals in Haydock, destiny decreed the parting of our ways and I never saw him again. Sadly, Harold, in pursuit of his

other hobby of motor cycling, was killed in 1937 during morning practice for the Whit Monday meeting, ironically, at Park Hall, Oswestry He was only 27.

Incidentally, I did have another brief encounter in Pemberton during the early years of the war when I enrolled at his terraced house for a series of German lessons. Both Mr and Mrs Hellman appeared to be a typical, late middle aged English couple. It never occurred to me at the time that the reason for their presence in Pemberton was in parallel with that of Peter Steinbracher's, until one day Herr Hellman announced that he and Frau Hellman were to join their son who, on leaving Germany, had found a safe haven in U.S.A.

**J Harold Smith
Sutton Coldfield
West Midlands**

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 1st Wednesday of every month at 11.00 a.m. New members welcome, details from Alan Bradshaw (01942 726493)

5 January Open meeting

2 February TBA

2 March *The City of Bath*

6 April *"Hot and Cold"*

Aspull & Haigh Historical Society

We meet in Our Lady's R.C. Church Hall, Haigh Road, Aspull on the 2nd Thursday in the month at 7.30 p.m. Details from Barbara Rhodes (01942 222769)

Atherton Heritage Society

Meetings are held on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7.30 p.m. at St. Richards Jubilee Hall, Atherton. Details from Margaret Hodge (01942 884893)

14 December

The Brownings in Italy (plus Christmas buffet) Lizzie Jones

11 January

"Stand Up the Real John Hogan"

Dan Muir (Genealogist)

8 February

On the Home Front Len Hudson

8 March *Northumberland* Margaret Curry

12 April

"Shades of the Past" Steve Abbott

Atherton Probus Club

This is a non-political and non-sectarian Club for retired professional/businessmen, who meet in St Richard Parish Centre, Mayfield Street, on alternate Thursday afternoons at 1.30 p.m., from 30 September until May 2005. New members welcome. Details from Ron Collier (0161 790 1819).

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

Meetings are held at Golborne Library on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7.00 p.m. Non-members are welcome. Details from Derek Briscoe (01942 747366) or Jim Scotson (01942 206820).

Hindley History Society

The Society meets in the Museum at Hindley Library, market Street at 7.00 pm on the second Monday of the month. Details from Joan Topping (01942 257361) or Norma Brannagan (01942 258668). The museum is open three times per month on either Friday or Saturday mornings; please ask in Hindley Library or phone as above for further details. The Museum has also been open three times per month – two Friday mornings and one Saturday. Future dates are: 6, 20, 21 August; 10, 24, 25 September; 8, 22, 23 October; 12, 26, 27 November; 3, 18, 19 December.

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 summer 2005 for inclusion in the next issue. Thanks.

Leigh & District Family History Society

Meetings are held on the 3rd Tuesday of every month at 7.30 p.m. in the Derby Room of Leigh Library. Details from Olive Hughes (01942 741594).

Leigh Literary Society

Meetings are held in the Derby Room at the Turnpike Centre, on alternate Monday evenings at 7.30 p.m. Details from Tony Ashcroft, Local History Officer, Leigh Library (01942 404559)

13 December

"Everything in the Garden's Lovely"

Agatha Brown

10 January

Luxury Travel Anne Ongley

17 January

Ladykillers Alan Hayhurst

31 January

History of the Music Hall David Hill

14 February

Ancient Iraq and its Civilization

Rev Chris Byworth

28 February

Frances Hodgson Burnett Liz Williams

14 March

The Natural Heritage of the Pennines

Gordon Yates

4 April

Traditional Lancashire Recipes (plus AGM)

Fred Holcroft

Leigh Local History Society

Meetings are held in the Derby Room, Leigh Library, on the last Wednesday of the month. Details from Norma Ackers (01942 865488)

26 January

Roman and Turnpike Roads in SW

Lancashire Mike Atty

23 February

Lord Leverhulme and Rivington

Martin Brownlow

30 March

Building Barton's Bridges Glen Atkinson

27 April AGM and video

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. Anyone wishing to join should contact Tom Kelly (01942 608787).

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. Details from Maurice Hilton (01942 223107).

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 welcome. Details from Simon Martin (01942 702594).

Standish Probus Club

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 2nd Tuesday of every month at 10.30 a.m. New members welcome. Details from Bryan Shepherd (01257 424994)

11 January

The Leeds & Liverpool Canal in the Wigan Area Sue & Trevor Lucas

8 February

Funeral Customs Tony Ashcroft

8 March

An Evening with the 'Mary Rose'

Harry Eatough

12 April AGM

Tyldesley & District Historical Society

Meetings are held on the 3rd Thursday of every month from September to May at the Tyldesley Pensioners club on Milk Street at 7.30 p.m. Refreshments available. Contact Tony Rydings (01942 514271) or rydings@blueyonder.co.uk. Visit our website at www.tyldesleyhistoricalsociety.co.uk.

Tyldesley Probus Club

Members of the Club meet at Tyldesley Methodist Church, Eliot Street, on alternate Thursday mornings at 10.30 a.m., from 7 October until May 2005. The Club is for retired business/professional man and is non-political and non-sectarian. New members welcome. Details from Cedric Evans (0161 790 5166).

Wigan Archaeological Society

The Society meets at the BP Centre (Scout HQ) in Greenhough Street on the 1st Wednesday of the month at 7.30 p.m.

Wigan Civic Trust

The Trust meets at Drumcroon Education Arts Centre, Parsons Walk, Wigan, on the 2nd Monday of the month at 7.30 p.m. Details from A.J. Grimshaw, 6 Bridgeman Terrace, Wigan (01942 245777). New members always welcome.

Wigan Family & Local History Society

Meetings are held on the 3rd 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. Further information from John Wogan, 678 Warrington Road, Goose Green, Wigan WN3 6XN or email Johnwogan@blueyonder.co.uk. You can also visit our website at www.ffhs.org.uk/members/wigan.htm.

More on the 'Petty'

See *Past Forward* 37, p43.

I was born in June 1922, in Bolton Road, Ashton-in-Makerfield which, like Wigan, was a mining town then. The house had a front room called a parlour used only for special occasions, a living room and a little back kitchen used for washing clothes and cooking. Above these were two large bedrooms and a small bedroom. Lighting and cooking was by gas, heating by an open coal fireplace with an oven next to it, and we washed ourselves in the back kitchen in a bowl in the slop stone with only cold running water.

At the bottom of the bricked yard was an oblong outbuilding serving two houses. At each end was a toilet called the 'petty'. The petty board had a round hole about 18 inches in diameter and underneath was a large can about a yard in diameter and a yard deep. In the 'backs' as we called them, there was a wooden flap which was lifted whenever the can was removed with rakes and replaced with an empty can suitably disinfected by sprinkled pink powder.

The loaded can was placed on a horse-drawn vehicle by the men we called the 'muck miners' and taken away to the sewage. I had heard of the can being taken away when people were on the 'petty' doing their business. Toilet paper was past copies of the *Daily Dispatch* cut into squares and impaled on a nail in the petty wall. A person leaving the house to avail themselves of the 'petty's' facilities would say that they were "gooin' dahn t'yard", and if lingering too long would be asked, "duss waant t' oil can?"

The intervening space between the two 'petties' was a midden into which was thrown the household rubbish. Periodically it was emptied by the midden men who had to spade the rubbish out on to the floor of the backs and load it again into a garbage vehicle. Bolton Road was an extremely long street and every terraced house was the same. Years later, a water toilet replaced the 'petty' which we called a water closet and dustbins replaced the midden.

None of the sources I have consulted can throw any light on the meaning of the word 'petty' as in toilet. The common dictionary meaning gives it as a Middle English word meaning 'small' as in 'petty cash'. One can only deduce that it was adopted to mean 'the smallest room in the house'. An interesting point is that when anyone dealing out cards to a school in a club dealt the cards in an extremely small circle, it was called 'a petty board deal'. This was because youngsters, having nowhere to play cards, would use the 'petty' for that purpose, gambling for money being illegal. Other information suggests that the can contents were delivered to neighbouring farms for use as manure. Also the 'muck' miners wore sacking around their waists to protect their clothing. Housewives who could not afford aprons did this, referring to the sacking as 'rough brats'.

It was well into the '50's before we saw the last of the 'petty'. In 1954, requiring a reference, I called upon a town councillor, George Lockett, later a Mayor of Wigan, for that purpose. He was living in a house off Bryn Road and wrote out the necessary reference by the light of a storm lamp on his table, no other lighting being available. The houses were demolished shortly afterwards.

James Fairhurst
Ashton-in-Makerfield Wigan

A tribute to all those gallant men and women who took part in the D-Day Invasion on the 6th June 1944 - 60 years ago

*What were their thoughts,
Those gallant men.
As they left our English shore.
Will I return to family and friends
And meet them all once more?*

*As they sailed across the channel
Heads bowed in silent prayer
Did they wonder what their fate would be
And what would face them there?*

*We at home could only sit and wait,
And pray all would be well,
And think of fathers - husbands - sons,
Who faced that living hell.*

*Many never reached the land,
Lives ended there and then,
A foreign shore their resting place,
No homecoming welcome for them.
We must remember to, all those men
Who came from lands afar
To help us fight for freedom
And end this wicked war.*

*And women to, they played their part
At home - on land and sea
The nurses, WAAFS and helpers
Who served endless cups of tea.*

*For months men fought in battles
To set the people free
And help those persecuted
Regain their dignity.*

*At last the war was over
And peace returned once more
We owe a debt we can never repay
To the men who left these shores.*

*There are rows and rows of crosses
As a reminder for all to see
There lie the men who fought and died
In that land across the sea.*

*Does war teach us any lessons?
Only time will tell
So to all those heroes in that foreign field
Goodbye - God Bless - Sleep well.*

We who are left remember them.

Rose Burns 2004



Nook Colliery

Dear Sir

I was interested in the letter from Mr. Greenhalgh (*Past Forward* 37, p43) about the bus in Nook Pit Lodge, Astley. This happened in the 1950's, and a photograph of the event appeared in the *Leigh Journal* at the time; the same photo is also in *The Wigan Coalfield* by Wigan Heritage Service's Alan Davies & Len Hudson.

In the photo the double-decker bus is standing in the lodge with the water up to the upper-deck level, the destination board showing NOOK PITS with LUT below, just above water level. The caption to the photo gives the story: "Nook Pit bus in the lodge, 3rd August 1950 with

No.4 Arley Pit behind. The LUT Bus had started back after dropping off 60 miners, hit the kerb, the driver lost control and the bus crashed through the lodge railings. Miner Fred Canning and others ran back, diving in to rescue unconscious driver Harold Sydall from the submerged cab. The conductress had managed to jump off."

It would be most interesting to learn how the LUT garage staff managed to get the bus out of the lodge and on to the road!

The Nook Colliery consisted of five pits, named 'Arley' and 'Jubilee' respectively; the complex was served by North Coal Pit Lane and South Coal Pit Lane, both from Manchester Road, Astley and now shortened to North and South Lane. A railway line ran from the site down to and across Manchester Road at Marsland Green and on to a coal tip on the Leeds & Liverpool canal bank for loading into barges; this survived up to the late 60's and early 70's.

**A Oldham
Astley Tyldesley**

Remember the JCS?

Dear Sir

In 1931-1932, Gladys Woodward (nee Farrimond) and my friend Edith Green attended the J.C.S. at the Mining College in Wigan. Our headmaster was Charles H.Kirton. Other members of the staff were:- Miss Witton (famous for her long beige cardigans, from which she was never parted), Arthur Roberts, 'Flambard' Mr Bradshaw, Mr Blears, Mr Gillibrand, Mr Parr and Mr Smith.



Gladys Farrimond

We also remember the boys in our class: - Albert Harris, Maurice Haddock, and Ronald Pendlebury (famous because he always sat with only two legs of the chair on the floor, with occasional disastrous results), Harold Marsh, James Winstanley and Thomas Harvey (choir boy in Wigan Parish Church).

The most notable girl in our class was Gladys Fletcher who joined the Navy and was sadly torpedoed in the Indian Ocean during the 1939-45 war. One lunch time she decided to climb out of the classroom window (on the top floor of the building) and walk along the parapet to the next classroom. This was thwarted by the arrival of a member of staff; and Gladys climbed into the classroom much quicker than she climbed out! Other members of the class were:- Alice Hubbard, Dorothy Higginbottom, Kathleen Millard, Ellen Lowe, Annie Shannon, Teresa Kerwin, Edith Peet (a brilliant scholar), Audrey Armitage, Kathleen Jones (now deceased) Norah Tongue, Elsie Scott, Margery Clarke, Helen Calderbank, Marian Green, May Anderson Gladys Cavey and Marian Calland.

We are still in touch with a few of the pupils; however, it would be interesting to know how the others are faring.

**Mrs Gladys Woodward (nee Farrimond)
Tel: 01942 884253**

Request for Pedicure

*Ah wish thi'd cut thi tonenails
Tha's ruin't awl thi socks
Tha's two new pair on't bedroom chair
(Reet next t'beddin' box)
Ah wish thid cut thi tonenails
Thi scawp't mi leg last neet
Ah turn't iin't' bed mi ankle's red
Thi catch it wi thi feet
Ah wish thid cut thi toenails
Ah skenn't round bathroom door
Ther long 'n white gi' dog a fright
Wer curling on t't floor
Ah wish thi'd cut thi toenails
Tha's such a lot fo't loose

Thi'v grown such size bi' no surprise
If tha needs smaller shoes*

**Elene Humphreys
Treuddyn Mold**

Brought together

Dear Alastair

Thank you for the message from Ian Dibblin from Bournemouth, re my article in *Past Forward* 36, p43. The name does ring bells with me, I think he was the sister of Ann Dibblin in whose garden the photo accompanying the article was taken. I'll get in touch with him.

As a result of the photo I am now in touch with a cousin in Cornwall (last heard of over 30 years ago) who receives *Past Forward*, a girl in the photo (now aged 64) who also subscribes and lives in Australia, and also another one who lives in Bristol.

Thank you for bringing us all together.

**Audrey Sherrington
Colwyn Bay North Wales**

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.



Dear Mr. Gillies,

The most interesting last edition of *Past Forward* (no 37) contained a letter from Mr Henry Collins about 'Burgie' as waste sand beds at the Pilkington Glass Works. Perhaps I could clarify the origins of the Orrell 'Burgy', with the aid of Donald Anderson's most readable book, *The Orrell Coalfield, Lancashire 1740-1850* and old OS geological maps, reinforced by some personal knowledge as a resident of Orrell for some 40 years.

The locality in Orrell known as the 'Burgy' is the site of a former coal mine now adjacent to the motorway bridge in Moor Road, Orrell. The Bone or Burgy seam of coal, some 13 to 20 yards above the Orrell Five Feet seam, outcrops on or close to the site now known as the 'Burgy', and is described as a "thin seam of indifferent quality". This thin seam was also apparently worked sporadically in the Orrell area between 1870 and 1930 by small companies. The principal workings were by Holt and Scott at the site now referred to as the 'Burgy' between 1872 and 1887. The site was connected to the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, close to Orrell Station, by a mineral tramway, evidence of which was visible up to 1939.

Many readers of *Past Forward* will doubtless remember the 'Burgy' old pit site being occupied from time to time by local undertakings: Barton & Danson, Coldman's haulage contractors and bus operators, and others.

So, the Orrell 'Burgy' takes its name from the coal seam which outcrops in the vicinity and was worked by small operators over 130 years ago there.

**Robert Wright
Kirkby Stephen Cumbria**

The Burgie

Dear Sir

I read the letter by Henry Collins in issue 37 p42, in which he expressed his interest in the word 'Burgie' which I had used to describe the area where the unexploded bomb landed during the last war. He stated that the word was also used in St Helens and that it described a process at Pilkington's glass works.

From being born and spending 30 years of my life in Edge Hall Road and up to the present day, the word 'Burgie' was the name of a pathway, and meant nothing else to me. However, after Henry Collins's letter I decided to look further into the meaning of the word. The Burgie path ran from the Old Lane (the Old Lane was a dirt road that connected Edge Hall Road with Orrell Road at Orrell Mount) to Moor Road, passing through arable land for about 300 yards, but about 30 yards from Moor Road the arable land ended and the ground became rough and covered with lots of coal dirt.

After looking up some local history I learned that Orrell was on a rich coalfield in the 17th century and that a good many mines were sunk around the area; one must have been where the Burgie Path met Moor Road.

I also looked up the word 'Burgie' in an old Reference Dictionary and found the spelling was a little different - 'Burgee'. The definition, however, was interesting - "small coal used mainly for furnaces and kilns".

So the 'Burgie Pad', as my Grandmother called it and long before her lifetime, was the 'Path to the Burgee Coal Pit'

**Frank Winnard
Billinge Nr Wigan**

Dear Mr. Gillies

Further to the letter from Henry Collins in *Past Forward* 37 and a previous letter from Frank Winnard (Issue No.33), re the 'Burgie' in Orrell, perhaps the following information may be of interest.

The location is referred to in Donald Anderson's *The Orrell Coalfield, Lancashire 1740-1850*, p16. Writing about the Orrell Five Feet coal seam, he mentions that between 13 and 20 yards above it was the "bone or Burgy Mine, a thin seam of indifferent quality which was worked sporadically and in small areas by small companies

between 1870 and 1930, although never during the great days of Orrell." It is further stated that the principal workings were those of Holt and Scott from the 'Burgy' pits, at the site of the motorway bridge in Moor Road, which operated from 1872 to 1887, and who also built a railway to the sidings at Orrell station.

Mr. Peter Easton of Orrell has kindly loaned the photograph below. He explains that it shows German prisoners-of-war from Huyton Camp who were sent to excavate the unexploded bomb, which was dropped on the 'Burgy'. Also pictured is the



Dear Sir

In the last issue of *Past Forward* (no37) Mr Smith of Winstanley writes about a wrestler named Burgie Ben. As a youngster growing up in Ince in the 1930's I recall his named being mentioned many times. Ben's opponent was definitely Japanese; his correct name was YOKIOTANI. Tani was an expert in the Japanese art of Ju Jitsu, which made Ben's win more praiseworthy.

Another wrestler lived in Ince; his name was Alan Lathom, who wrestled under the name of Francis Sullivan. Alan lived in Park View, close to where I was born. He appeared on TV when wrestling was shown on Saturdays. There were some more from Wigan who probably trained at Billy Riley's Gym whose names I can't remember.

I look forward to your next issue.

**Alf Boyd
Marsh Green Wigan**

British army bomb-disposal engineer who defused it, and all surround the retrieved 'trophy'! In the background can clearly be seen the craters left by other bombs which did explode and the council houses in nearby Linden Avenue. Further homes appear to be in the process of construction on the extreme right of the picture. The reverse side of the photo is stamped 'T. MARSH, ELECTRICAL STUDIOS, PEMBERTON'.

Mr. Easton's sister later married one of the German prisoners and it was he who passed on the photo upon his return from Germany.

**Carol Littler
Orrell Wigan**

Sand

Dear Alastair

Re letter from Henry Collins in the latest issue of *Past Forward*, I suspect the connecting factor is SAND, as in my youth we played in the sand quarry that existed in the Burgie. Sand martins even nested there.

**David Parkinson
Orrell**



Record attendance in Wigan

Dear Sir

I am currently writing a book on Wigan Borough Football Club, founder members of Division Three North in 1921/22. I think one claim to fame they have is that they hold the record attendance for an Association Football game in Wigan, when 30,443 watched their 3-1 defeat by Sheffield Wednesday at Springfield Park in an FA Cup game on 12 January 1929.

I would love to know if any of your readers have any memories or memorabilia of this football club who, on 26 October 1931, became the first club to resign from the Football League in mid season, just 2 days after a 5-0 defeat at Wrexham.

**Mark Iddon
Tarleton**

Email: markiddon@aol.com

Dear Editor

I read *Past Forward* for the first time when the latest issue (no. 37) was passed on to me by John Lonsdale, who had provided some information about the Lonsdale Egg distribution business for your local history project. It was a surprise to find a photograph of my father, Frank Lonsdale, with the raest of the family (p5).

The family photograph was taken to commemorate the final get-together before Frank and Eddie left to serve

Hall Lane Tollgate

Dear Sir

I recall being taken through the Pennygate tollgate in Hall Lane, Hindley by an uncle who was charged a few pence for the gate to be opened to allow his car to pass through. This would have taken place in the early 1930's.

Following the demolition of

the farm and the projecting porch from which the toll-keeper, usually a lady, (presumably the farmer's wife or daughter) would emerge as required, the surrounding fence along the lane was also removed and the area alongside the roadway rendered fit to walk on by



Toll-Bar, Hindley, c.1900.

flagging and the addition of kerbstones.

I would have been about six years of age at the time, so the date of the photograph would be early 1920's. It may have been taken by another relative, Tom Gerrard, who took many photographs of historic interest. He was also for many years official photographer to Wigan RFC.

In pre World War II times, Hall Lane was almost impossible for motor vehicles because of the enormous potholes in the un-metalled surface, but was an excellent 'dirt track' for young cyclists. Because there was hardly any traffic, it was a safe play area all the way from Hindley to Aspull St Elizabeth's Church.

**Norman Spooner
Oswestry Shropshire**

Skeletons in the Cupboard

Dear Sir

Since retiring I have been researching my family's history. I have been intrigued with the recent article in the local papers about skeletons found in Lord Street, Wigan.

My great great grandmother, Jane Dicconson, lived at St Domingo Farm, between Duke Street and Swinley Lane (now occupied by St Michael's Church). She kept a few cows and had a milk round. My great grandfather, John Valentine, his wife Margaret (nee

Dicconson) and children went to live at St Domingo Farm for a brief period. The family were terrified because they believed the place was haunted. Father Gradwell from St Johns RC Church blessed the house and gave the Valentines a statue, which is still in the family.

If anyone has any information about St Domingo Farm, I would be delighted to hear from them.

**Muriel Sage
Euxton Chorley**

A Pleasant Discovery

in the Army in 1914.

My father was wounded in October 1918 and had a leg amputated. For many years afterwards he gave much time and energy to his voluntary work for BLESMA (British Limbless Ex-service Men's Association) and for the British Legion, with hospital visiting during World War II a high priority. As a child I was sometimes allowed to accompany him on these visits, taking cigarettes,

soap and other 'comforts'. The youngest of my father's family, Teresa, now 96, is the only one remaining of her generation.

Another entry in your magazine was of interest. My Sister Teresa and I share with Margaret Hurst the memory of time spent in the Wigan Sanatorium. My sister and I, when seven and four years old, were dispatched to the Sanatorium with scarlet fever. Without telephone or car, our

parents had an anxious time of it. My mother pushed my baby sister in her pram from Kenyon Road to Whelley in order to wave to us through the window of the ward on visiting days. Things have certainly improved since then!

Now living in Upholland I am a little less in touch so I shall seek the opportunity to read your magazine in future. Best wishes for its continuance.

**Winifred Lonsdale
Upholland Wigan**



A Local Enigma

Dear Sir

I am trying to obtain information of work that was carried out during World War II at the Lancashire Electric Power Meter (later Norweb Electricity) Testing Station at Mountain Street, Walkden near Manchester, on copies of the German ENIGMA coding machines which were built, modified or rewired there.

I started work at the Meter Station in 1959, and in the 1960's, discovered in the cellars of the building several machines, together with a box full of change wheels. In 2001 I saw a television programme about Bletchley Park, home to the breaking of the Enigma Machines, where I recognized that the seemingly useless pieces of equipment I had seen many years before were actually Enigma Machines, probably the last undiscovered examples remaining in the world. These machines and change wheels could have represented the surplus build material and/or faulty machines in a part of the cellar that had been kept locked up since the war.

In May 2001, I wrote to Bletchley Park Trust to tell them that I knew of the location of some 8-10 Enigma cipher machines, along with a box full of Enigma wheels. Eventually John Gallehawk from Bletchley Park Archives and Museum contacted me; he was very interested in obtaining this equipment. However, before he arrived, I heard that the roof of the Meter Station was off and demolition was underway. And so it was that John Gallehawk and I found to our dismay that the section of the building containing the partial cellar had been flattened and all the contents dumped into skips. The skip onsite was examined and

TELEPHONISTS REUNION



Ex Telephonists Reunion 2004

Dear Sir

The reunion of the ex GPO/BT telephonists on 25 May 2004 at the Tudor pub on Mossy Lea Road, Wrightington, Wigan was voted a huge success. Telephonists from as far back as the 1940's, together with the younger

found not to contain the precious equipment; nor did we have any success in our search of the scrap metal reclamation yard for where the skips were destined.

However, as a result of my sister going on a ramble recently in the Walkden area, the guide referred to the fact that the famous Enigma machines were assembled at the nearby Meter Test Station during World War II. He went on to say that, apparently, one Saturday morning, the upstairs test room was cleared of meters and test racks, in preparation for the construction or modification of the Enigma machines.

I am writing to you in the hope that some readers or local history societies may have some more information, which I could pass on to the Bletchley Park Trust, and help to put our area on the annals of Britain's best kept secret – 'Ultras Base at Bletchley Park'.

Robert Mather
6 Millbrook Avenue
Atherton M46 9LL

generation who were at the telephone exchange in Dorning Street Wigan until its closure in 1992, were there. The atmosphere was electric and it was difficult to be heard above the hubbub as approximately 89 ladies laughed, joked and reminisced. It was unanimous

that there must be another reunion in the not too distant future and anyone wishing to receive information can call Pat Cotton on 01942 832564 or Muriel Fox on 01257 453062.

Muriel Fox
Wrightington Nr Wigan

Abram Ladies



Hello Alastair

Following on from my article in *Past Forward 36*, is there any chance that you might be able to publish the enclosed photograph of Abram ladies, c.1907? I would love to be able to identify at least some of the women on the photograph. The only person whose identity I am sure of is Revd Twemlow; I imagine that the women may comprise the membership of the Mothers' Union. There is one lady who may be my great-grandmother, Mary Walls (sitting in the second row from the front, next to the intriguing lady who looks Indian).

Mary Sayers
Buxton Derbyshire
Email: hca00mms@shef.ac.uk



Lewis Bradley

Dear Alastair

I was delighted to see the article on Lewis Bradley in *Past Forward* no 37. I had come across his name while researching the names on the Wigan War Memorial. He was one of 21 playing members of Wigan Northern Union RFC who enlisted, and the only one killed, although C Molloy was permanently blinded.

His obituary in the *Sporting Chronicle* and reproduced in the *Wigan Examiner* brings tears to your eyes.

"Quick off the mark, he

was often past his opposing three quarter back before the latter realised that Bradley has the ball. Fireworks were always evident in his game, he could get up pace in a stride or two. Inside or outside mattered nought to him. He could feint and dodge with a shrewdness picked up in Welsh football. Shall we ever forget this speedy wing three quarter at Central Park? He was the idol of the crowd and it only seems like yesterday that he was dashing down the touchline, his long flowing hair blowing in the wind, those long raking strides and that final natural swerve".

It is wonderful that Tom Mather's article in *Past Forward* means that he is not forgotten.

**Fred Holcroft
Winstanley Wigan**

See Fred's article on Iraq on p11. Ed.

ARGYLE STREET SCHOOL

Dear Sir

Perhaps you can find a little place for this photograph in your wonderful *Past Forward*. It shows a class from Argyle Street School, Hindley. My daughter is on the front row, second left. She is 56 now; perhaps some of the pupils can recognise themselves.

My teacher at All Saints School, Hindley was Mr Darling, I think he became a councillor at Wigan and married Miss Sharrock. Thank you all very much for the memories.

**J Bowery
Hove East Sussex**



Wiganers at Rorke's Drift

Dear Sir

I read with interest Fred Holcroft's article in *Past Forward* No 37 on the two Wigan lads who fought at Rorke's Drift. Private William Neville 1279 was born in Warrington Road, Abram in February 1858 and baptised at All Saints Parish Church, Wigan on 2 July. He died of heart failure in August 1895 at the age of 52 at Brown Street Ince-In-Makerfield. (I have not been able to locate where Brown Street was, and I would be grateful if any reader could help me). Neville is buried in Ince

Cemetery, Church of England section C, grave 478; there is no headstone on his grave.

Private John Smith 1005 was born in Chapel Lane in December 1851, and was baptised at All Saints Parish Church on 29 February 1852. At Rorke's Drift he was wounded in the stomach by an assegai, the only soldier to receive such a wound while fighting at the Barricade. He was examined by a medical board on 6 August 1879 and sent back to England.

**Clifford Storey
Whalley Wigan**

THE DAVIES SISTERS

Dear Sir

I would like to thank James Fairhurst on his contribution 'A Pit Brow Girls Story' in issue no 37. Charlotte and Mary Ann Davies are my great grandfather's sisters and it was nice to hear something about the way a member of the family lived than just the dates and information I gather whilst doing my research.

Linda Veasey

St Thomas's School

Dear Mr Gillies

I have read with interest the letter from Joyce Dennis in connection with St Thomas's School in the 1948 era. I attended St Thomas's School 1944-1949 and can recollect a number of pupils within that period; Joyce Bailey, Audrey Monks, Anna Hulse, Betty Highton, Thomas Purdam, Joe

Atherton, Joyce Hall, Nora Kay, Brenda Hart, Phyllis Hinds, Pat Mosely, Marian Marsh, Joe Higham, Janet Butler (whose Aunt was Miss Butler, a teacher at St Thomas's Juniors), Joyce Dagnall, Sally Gregory and Pat Monaghan.

**Doreen Bolton (nee
Forshaw)
Whalley Nr Clitheroe**

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Who? Where?

As usual, there was a splendid response to the Who? Where? feature in the last issue; only the bottom right photograph remains unidentified. The church (top left) is Glazebury Primitive Methodist Church, Warrington Road, while the building (bottom left) is Collinshay Farm, off Garswood Lane. The top right photograph shows Eckersleys Chimneys, Wigan, 1926-27; there was even a suggestion as to the identity of the person climbing the chimney - Walter Halliwell. Thanks to the many readers who responded.

The photographs in this issue are all relatively modern, and within the living memory of most readers. If you can identify any of them, please contact Len Hudson in Leigh Town Hall (01942 404432).

