

PAST FORWARD

Issue No. 43

August – November 2006



New exhibition at the History Shop – Historic Buildings in Wigan and the Douglas Valley (The work of the Heritage Trust for the North West)

Learning with the History Shop - family craft activities for 5-11 year olds



Produced by Wigan Heritage Service

FREE

WIGAN
LEISURE & CULTURE
TRUST

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Will the person who recently mailed us a collection of postcards relating to Haydock Race Course, please contact the editor. You omitted to include your name and address.

Letter from the Editorial Team

Dear Readers,

The team are currently reviewing *Past Forward* and hope to bring in some changes in the December-March issue (44) and in subsequent issues. Our plan is to improve the layout and content of the magazine, so that it is an even more informative and enjoyable read. We cannot do that without your help, and so we would greatly welcome your suggestions.

Looking ahead to December, we would like Christmas to feature strongly in issue 44. Do you have any photographs, stories or snippets of information (all of a local or family history nature of course) with a Christmas theme? We would like to hear from you.

We have received a number of comments about our editorial policy, and in view of these, will be making some changes. When it is finalised, we will print it in a future edition of *Past Forward*.

Finally, we have introduced a new feature, a contents panel. We hope that you find it useful.

Any reader wishing to contribute on any of the above, please contact the Editor, in writing, by email or telephone (see our contacts list below).

Are you interested in advertising in *Past Forward*?

Our rates are £100 for a full page, £50 for a half page and £25 for a quarter page. For further details contact Sarah Challender, Marketing and Communications Officer on (01942) 486931.

The editorial team apologise to David Lythgoe for printing his name as Daniel in Issue 42 p.12 (*Wigan Born and Bred and Other Poems*). The book incidentally is still available (£6 + p&p) from David on 01695 555190. Monies raised will go to Wigan & Leigh Hospice.

Wigan Heritage Service

You Contact Us

Carole Tyldesley	Heritage Services and Wigan Pier Manager	01942 323666
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At the History Shop

Email: heritage@wlct.org

Reception

Philip Butler	Visitor Services Manager	01942 828128
Yvonne Webb	Collections Development Manager	01942 827594
Chris Watts	Family and Local History Officer	01942 828123
Mike Haddon	Industrial History Officer	01942 828020
Dianne Teskey	Community Outreach and Education Officer	01942 828121

At Archives - Leigh Town Hall

Email: a.davies@wlct.org

Alan Davies	Archivist	01942 828124
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At Leigh Local History - Leigh Library

Tony Ashcroft	Leigh Local History Officer	01942 404430
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Notice to Contributors

Copy should be sent to The Editor, Wigan Heritage Service, History Shop, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU. Email y.webb@wlct.org

It would help us greatly if copy could be submitted electronically, either by email or disk. However, if you can only manage hand or type written, that's fine too. We reserve the right to edit material for publication.

Copy deadline for issue 44 is 17 September 2006

Cover: StoneHall, Dalton by Garry Miller

Exhibitions at the History Shop

Keep a look out for our new exhibition and events leaflet due out shortly!

19 June – 19 August 2006

Historic Buildings in Wigan and the Douglas Valley - The Work of the Heritage Trust for the North West in Greater Manchester

The aim of the Heritage Trust for the North West (HTNW) is to find new uses for buildings of architectural importance, and through renovation encourage good design and craftsmanship. They are currently surveying at risk buildings in Wigan. The exhibition (created by the HTNW) is in two parts, and looks at their work in our area.

The first part features panels with photographs and plans of buildings in all the districts of Greater Manchester. In Wigan the HTNW own 25 Wallgate and 1 Rowbottom Square, two back to back 18th century buildings, typical of those they rescue. These were a major eyesore until they underwent refurbishment.

The second part is based on a book by Garry Miller, *Historic Houses in Lancashire – The Douglas Valley 1300-1770*. Many of these are of course in our area, and Standish Hall, Ackhurst Hall and Worthington Hall are amongst those discussed.

Finally, there is a small display on Bank Hall, Bretherton, including examples of decorative plaster, stone and wood work. Readers may be wondering what the connection is to Wigan Borough? The hall is in the ownership of the Powys family, and has been



Stone Hall, Dalton by Garry Miller.

since 1860. The head of the Powys family is better known as Lord Lilford, and was the former Lord of the manor of Atherton. Readers may remember the TV programme, 'Restoration', where viewers voted for a building to receive Lottery funding. Unfortunately Bank Hall did not win, and the Bank Hall Action Group, a registered charity (No.508300) set up to save the building, are reliant on donations. These may be sent to, The Chairman, Bank Hall Action Group, Hall Green Farm, Hall Carr Lane, Longton, Preston PR4 5JN. Cheques should be payable to Bank Hall Action Group.

26 August – 9 September

Wigan Photographic Society Annual Show

16 – 30 September

Atherton Photographic Society Show

We celebrate the creative talents of our local photographers once again. The photograph featured is by Eddie Prescott of Wigan Photographic Society, whose picture 'Winter Mist Over Bradburn's Farm' was voted 'best in show' by our visitors last year.



16 October onwards

'Bloomin' Lovely'

How does your garden grow? The cultivation of plants has been essential to man since Neolithic times, first for food and medicines, then for pleasure. In the 19th century, parks and gardens also became a source of civic pride. Our exhibition looks at the history of horticulture in our lives, and the life of the borough.

Yvonne Webb

Collections Development Manager

CAN YOU HELP?

Photograph Reunited with Rightful Owner

In issue 42 p5 we published a picture of a baby which Stuart Pilkington was offering to give to the child or its family. Well, good news! A Mrs Sandra Green (formerly Hill) of Ashton-in-Makerfield has claimed the picture. It is in fact herself. She lived in Lily Lane, Bamfurlong until she was four years old.

Mrs Green would like to thank Mr Pilkington for his generosity. Editor.

Sydney Lamb - Ashton's Library's First Librarian

Dear Editor

Sydney Lamb was the first librarian at the Ashton-in Makerfield library, he was my father's, Harry Lamb, uncle, but I never knew him for he died in 1939 before I was born. On mentioning this fact when I was last in the library, the librarian said that several people had commented, after reading the leaflet 'A Brief History of Ashton's Public Library Service 1906- 2006' by Tony Ashcroft, that they remembered him.

I was wondering if any of them would be good enough to contact me on 01925 810929, and enlighten my cousins and I, as we are trying to put together a family history of the Lamb family of St Helens.

No matter how small the piece of information, it would be gladly received. We do not know if he was married and had a family of his own.

The article said that he lived at Briarden in Pretoria Road, but all of the houses at present only have numbers. So if anyone would know which house it actually was we would be glad to hear from them. I've wondered if this is how my mother, Marie Rimmer that was, and my dad got together.

Looking forward to hearing from anyone who has any information, and especially photographs, about either of my parents.

Rosemarie Howson

Dear Editor

I am trying to trace descendants of a family from Leigh for my daughter's mother-in-law. She knows very little about her family, but believes there may be descendants from her father's first marriage.

I would like to hear from any descendants of the following:

- a marriage between **Wilfred Webster** and
- **Margaret Dyson**, who married in 1941.
- **Francis Webster** (brother of William) who died on active service in Thailand in 1943.

Colin Whitfield

020 8657 1972

colin@colinwh.freeserve.co.uk

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

£8.75

PER MORNING/ AFTERNOON SESSION

COMMERCIAL RATE

£21.65

PER MORNING/AFTERNOON SESSION

If you are interested, contact Philip Butler

Tel (01942) 828128

Parks Regeneration

Do you have any old photographs or press cuttings of Wigan's parks and countryside?

Maybe you attended an event or enjoyed a family day out and have captured it on film?

If so, Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust's Parks Regeneration Team would love to hear from you.

With over two thirds of the borough made up of green spaces, the Parks Regeneration Team are keen to ensure the history of our fine parks remains documented and recorded, an important consideration as we look to further improve and develop each of our sites.

If you think you could be of assistance please contact the Parks Office on: **01942 828828**

Or alternatively, please send any photographs/ press cuttings to:

1/3 Worsley Terrace, Standishgate, Wigan, WN1 1XW

All photographs/ press cuttings will be returned in the condition they were provided, together with the latest copy of Greenspaces- a leaflet providing information on all forthcoming park and countryside events.

Learning With the History Shop

WE all know that learning can be fun, and this has certainly been the case with the creative learning activities at the History Shop. There has been a constant stream of people coming in to visit us, and take part in the workshops that have been on offer.

It is high on the agenda for many families to find something for children to do over the school holidays. At the History Shop, we certainly like to cater for enthusiastic families whose children want to explore history, and in doing so, make something special to take home. So what have we been up to?

During the Easter holidays we had two workshops which were fully subscribed. Week one saw us making Easter greeting cards and bunny covers for that special boiled egg for Easter Sunday. Week two was spent making felt animal finger puppets, and to our delight the children all became famous as they had their photograph taken for the local newspapers!

With summer in mind, our half term activities took the form of canal art and its origins, which had proved very popular as an outreach workshop for the May Words Festival in Leigh Library. Families were able to find out more about the history of the canal and the diamonds and stars that decorated the short boats used on the Leeds to Liverpool navigation. Not content with leaving it there, we further tested our artistic abilities by painting roses and castles. This proved messy but very productive and enormous fun!

In conjunction with the exhibition *The Secret Life of Textiles* that ran from the 6th March to the 27th May, I created a workshop on fabric printing using potatoes to make printing blocks. This was great fun, and even with plastic aprons, we still managed to splash about in lots of brightly coloured paint. It was an amazing experience and everybody was able to create their own piece of hand printed fabric to take home.

One of the highlights of my job, is that our numerous friends and their carers from the community day

centres were able to join us for both canal art and textile printing. I am very pleased that groups from Mayfield and Selkirk, Church Street and other outposts visit us regularly at the History Shop.

Our aim is to facilitate more outreach workshops, which are always popular. I hope that eventually we will be able to take more of these workshops out and about in the local communities within the borough. Pensioners Link at Leigh took advantage of this idea, and together we were able to take a trip down memory lane by using our wonderful pictorial archive, and some of our vast collection of primary sources.

So what is happening next? Families are invited to join us this summer at the History Shop in our Wickham Gallery, as we explore animals and nursery rhymes through our Victorian art collection. Also, catch us out and about in local libraries during the summer holidays for some virtual travel to other countries, proving that it really is a small world.

All our activities are suitable for children aged 5 - 11. All children must be accompanied by an adult. Booking essential on (01942) 828128.

Summer at the History Shop - Animal Art - Charge £1.00

Animal crackers? If you are, come and find out about the paintings on display, which all feature animals.

August 2

Ride a Cock Horse - decorate a hobby horse

August 9

Puppy Dog Tails - create a mosaic picture

August 16

All Creatures Great and Small - craft activities

It's a Small World - Summer in the Library - Free

Come join us and take a magical journey to far away places.

August 1

The First People (America) Ashton Library

August 8

The Beautiful People (Hawaii) Leigh Library

Half Term at the History Shop - charge £1.00

October 25

Mines and Mills - explore Wigan's industrial heritage and make a fabric picture

Dianne Teskey

Community Outreach and Education Officer.



Children with their Easter Bunny finger puppets.

Family History



News Roundup

Our loyal and industrious band of volunteer indexers have as usual been working overtime on their various projects and have once again produced a bumper crop of goodies for family history researchers to relish. The main theme is burials, one of the most troublesome and time-consuming areas for research. How many of us have ancestors that we have still to find in burial registers? Like most people I have come to believe that some of my lot disappeared into thin air or were buried in the back garden, since so may stay frustratingly 'unburied'. Hopefully, your stubborn little 'problems' will be solved by the latest cemetery record contributions from Freda Chorlton, Gerald Marsden and Keith Openshaw as listed right.

Gerry Rigby and his friends have also been busy. Once again, a burials register has been produced but this time for Skelmersdale St Paul which, though not in our Borough, is a church regularly requested. Finally, Gerry and Alan Maloney have concluded the indexing to the 1901 census for Leigh. Copies will soon be going over to Leigh Local History also.

One fascinating donation, is the admissions register for Bryn Gates Council School covering the years 19 April 1909 up to roughly 4 March 1927. The head teacher not only lists the child's name and date of birth, but also parents' and step parents' names, the highest class achieved, previous school and when left or moved to another school, as well as the name of the school moved to. More importantly if the family moved to another district, that also is given along with the date. There are lots of notes saying gone to Platt Bridge, gone to Golborne, but there are also a good many saying gone to Canada or Shetland Islands.

Finally, last, but very definitely not the least donation for mention is a lovely little booklet donated by the Vicar of St Mary's Church, Ince. This neatly plugs a gap in our coverage of that particular parish and contains some great photographs. Those of you wishing to know more about the church could also look at the website at www.geograph.org.uk/search. There are approximately 100 colour photos on the website for you to see, taken by David Long, Vicar of St Mary's, who incidently, is also Chairman of the Sankey Canal Restoration Society.

To all our donors, many thanks.

Recent additions to the family and local history collections (reference only).

Donations

Atherton Cemetery names index 1900-24 K.Openshaw. Cd-rom and transcript.
Brockbank, M. A Lancashire Childhood 942.736
1901 census index RG 3593-3598 for Atherton and Tyldesley. A.Maloney and GP Rigby. Transcript.
Orrell St James RC Marriage index 20 January 1847-18 June 1941. Transcript. GP Rigby.
Skelmersdale St Paul Burials 4 December 1822- 10 Sept 1975. Transcript. GP Rigby.
St Mary's Church, Ince in Makerfield : a millennium album. 283.42736. D.Long.
Wigan Lower Ince Cemetery Index vol.8. 13 May 1908-19 March 1915. Cd rom and transcript. G.Marsden.
Bryn Gates School admissions register. Photocopy.
Miller, Erin. Infant health in Wigan during the First World War (Dissertation).

Genealogy

Unitarian Church, Astley Marriage registers August 19 1988-22 March 1998. Photocopy.
Sacred Heart RC Hindsford, Atherton Marriages 29 August 1998-7 August 2004. Photocopy.
Chambers, P. Medieval genealogy : how to find your medieval ancestors.
Gibson, J. Land tax and window tax assessments. New edition.
Hull, Lise Tracing your family roots; the complete problem solver.

General Books

282 Gilley, S. Victorian churches and churchmen.
282.42753 Doyle, P. Mitres and missions in Lancashire.
364.1523 Fielding, S. Lancashire tales of mystery and murder.
726.7 Marshall, Brian. Lancashire medieval monasteries.
745.40942 Armstrong, B. The Arts and Crafts movement in the N W of England.
796.425 Hill, Ron. Manchester marathons 1908-2002.
942.7 Taylor, Henry. The ancient crosses and holy wells of Lancashire Rev.ed. Volume V West Derby Hundred.
947.6 Smith, MD About Coppull.

Other Material

Working Class Movement Library. Children of the Industrial Revolution 1750-1914 Cd Rom.

Websites

Lately it has become obvious from the many email enquiries I receive that many family history researchers using the internet are unaware of some of the basic and



more important sites. I thought it might be useful therefore to go over one of the best ones.

www.familysearch.org

One of the oldest and best known web-sites for genealogy and still one of the most important. More importantly it is free. Owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints or Mormons, this site has arguably the largest genealogical database on the internet. Comprised of the combined databases of 1) the International Genealogical Index (IGI as it is most commonly known) 2) Ancestral file 3) Pedigree resource file 4) 1881 census of Britain and Canada and 1880 census of USA. 5) Vital records index and 6) US social security death index.

The purpose of the IGI was to aid Mormon Church members in identifying their dead ancestors and performing LDS Church ordinances by proxy. Church members believe that family relationships are continued beyond the grave. Entries in this section are taken from 2 sources that is, the controlled extraction programme whereby the church films and indexes sources. (In the case of Britain, this means local parish records of christenings and marriages.) And the second type of information which is submissions by Church members collected as a result of their researches in order to carry out church ordinances. This can be anything from information contained in their family Bible, to "estimated" information, which may or may not be accurate. Coverage is worldwide. It is therefore possible to research most countries from this website and

also to see most of the actual original entries concerned at the LDS church's family history centres if the original is not available in your own local town history centre. Local church parish registers indexed by the site include:- Wigan All Saints parish registers 1580-1852, Hindley All Saints 1698-1879, Leigh St Mary 1558-1839, Astley St Stephen 1724-1844, Atherton 1778-1849, Billinge 1696-1856, Standish 1558-1861, Winwick 1563-1890 and Upholland 1600-1879. The dates covered are for christenings and marriages. Few burials or deaths are included.

Ancestral File is a global database of linked pedigrees of around 35 million people and are usually the submitted research details of those who wish to share their family history and make it available to others. As with all indexes, mistakes are often made and all genealogical information found on the site ought to be checked in the original document. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints is presently making ambitious plans to make all of its' films available online in a digital format and linked to the present index. Let's hope their progress in this respect is as prodigious as the site itself .

www.lan-opc.org.uk/Wigan/index.html

An update on this site, previously reviewed (in PF 39). An email from Maggie Gardiner, the Lancashire Online Parish Clerk for Wigan, tells me that Wigan All Saints burials 1779-1818 are now online and are searchable. Maggie has also recently become a published author. See the book review section for more on this.

**you're never
too young or old
to explore your
local library**

**and now you can visit them
for a whole lot more!**

- * Free computer and internet access
 - * CD, DVD and Video hire
- * Quiet reading areas with newspapers and magazines
- * Reading and Poetry Groups
- * Family events and activities
- * Wide range of learning opportunities including **'First Time On Line'** - free courses on how to use the internet, contact your local library for details.

explore
wigan libraries
www.wlct.org/libraries

Abram Ashton Aspull Atherton Beech Hill Colborne
Hindley Ince Leigh Marsh Green Orrell Shevington
Standish Tyldesley Wigan Children's Wigan

Family History Workshops 2006

The family history workshops will recommence after the Summer break on September 13. As usual there will be two sessions available per date listed, at 1.30 pm and 3.00pm. The cost is £3.50. A family history pack is included in this cost. Please ring 01942 828020 or call in at The History Shop, Library St, Wigan to book your session. **Please note that these sessions are for beginners only.**

September 13 & 27
October 11 & 25
November 8 & 22
December 6

Offer of Newspaper Cuttings

I have a collection of 1873 newspaper cuttings from a Wigan Paper, which are crime and social conditions related. I did intend to use them as basis for a book, but other projects have taken over, and I now want to give them away to some group or individual who will put them to good use. If put into book form, quite easy with the computer, I will consider publishing it. I would prefer that they passed into public ownership. Please contact me at the address below.

Bob Dobson, Landy Publishing, 'Acorns', 3 Staining Rise, Staining, Blackpool FY3 OBU, 01253 895678

Books Received

Authors have brought the following to our attention.

Allan Brackenbury, *Railway Passenger Stations in Greater Manchester: a chronology*. Published by the Railway and Canal Historical Society.

A slim but very detailed account of the opening and closure of stations throughout the area, including Wigan, of course.

Eric Ogden, *Lancashire United : a centenary celebration 1906-2006*.

Published by Venture publications. Price £18.95.

Full of excellent photographs and on sale at The History Shop. Look out for the review in Past Forward 44.

Susey Nuttall *The Haswell Chronicles : web of treason*.

Published by Troubadour Publishing Ltd. This fictional account of one family's involvement with Tudor intrigues makes exciting and enjoyable reading. Written for children by local teacher Maggie Gardiner (pseudonym Susey Nuttall) for children. There is also a website at www.haswellchronicles.com



Gifts Galore!

If you are looking for a special gift why not take a trip to Wigan Pier or the History Shop. A treasure trove of novelty items, both attractions have a well stocked gift shop, selling everything from historical books and paintings, to toiletries, confectionery, cards and figurines.

Shop Opening Times:

The History Shop

Monday: 10am - 7pm
Tues - Fri: 10am - 5pm
Saturday: 10am - 1pm

Wigan Pier

Mon - Thurs: 10am - 5pm
Sunday: 11am - 5pm

Volunteers

Come and get involved – discover your Heritage and help others do the same.

Across the Heritage Service we are now off the ground with our new volunteering scheme. Essentially we need you to set time aside to follow your interest and help out at any of our venues or with our borough wide outreach activities.

If you have time on your hands and have an interest in the heritage of the borough (as evidenced by you reading this) then we would love to hear from you. We are not asking for specialist skills, or experience in the field, just the desire to contribute something to your local community through heritage.

The role we require could include assisting with genealogical and local history enquiries in the History Shop; helping with listing and indexing projects on the collections at Wigan (History Shop) or Leigh; assisting with the learning programme with groups of all ages either at our venues or in the community; guiding groups and visits around the History Shop; or just general housekeeping, tidying of books, bookshelves and store rooms at Wigan or Leigh.

In return for you telling us what times in the week you can commit to, we will treat you as an essential part of the team, offering training and development where appropriate, and offering you the unique opportunity to contribute to your Heritage.

Please contact Christine Watts or Philip Butler at the History Shop in the first instance – tel. 01942 828128. As the scheme is now formalised you will be issued with our volunteer policy and a volunteer agreement for you to sign.

We hope to hear from you soon

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.

Heritage Customer Charter

At the Heritage service we have pledged to you our customers a certain level of service. This is contained within our Customer Charter, last circulated in issue 37. We constantly monitor our performance against these standards, and are in

the process of reviewing them at the moment. So that you can see how well we are doing in keeping our commitment to you through this charter, here is our performance table for last year, 2005/06.

2005/06 Customer Charter Update

Visitor Services		
Provide an efficient, friendly and customer focused service	From our survey 96% of you rated our services good or excellent	√
Offer a range of services, both educational and recreational, designed to meet the needs of all our visitors	Last year the Heritage Service put on 45 educational or outreach based activities. That's up from 33 the previous year	√
Consult with existing and potential users and partners for their views to help us improve our service	Our surveys themselves generated 110 responses last year. That is not counting the visitor comments in our books, or suggestions.	√
Respond to your feedback and enquiries as speedily as possible, and certainly within 10 working days	Our record for the year April 2005-March 2006 was 97% answered within ten working days, up from 96% last year	√
Collections		
Ensure that all artefacts and archives within our trust are cared for to national standards	Wigan Heritage Service continues to be a registered museum under the Museums Libraries and Archive Council and an authorised repository for church records.	√
Ensure that they will be made available for your enjoyment, inspiration and education, subject to availability	During the year the History Shop was open for exhibitions and family history study for 301 days. The Archive search room was available 147 days an increase of 8 days.	√
Facilities		
Ensure your safety by complying with all Health & Safety policies and procedures	We have had no complaints	√
Endeavour to make your visit a pleasant and comfortable experience by ensuring that our facilities meet acceptable standards of quality and cleanliness	No really, we have had 0 complaints!	√
Seek to provide reasonable physical access to our outlets	The ground floor of the History Shop is fully accessible. As an alternative to History Shop access to the first floor a ground floor study area is provided. The Archive search room is already served by a lift.	√

Shopping at the History Shop!

New Books Available To Buy

Haigh Hall and the Bradshaigh Family

By Peter Riley
£3.00 (plus 50p p&p)
32 pages

A fascinating, illustrated account of the Bradshaigh family who lived in Haigh Hall for centuries, and whose lives and loves have been responsible for the growth and development of Wigan. Their involvement with the English Civil War, their battles with neighbouring landowners, and their ultimate decline, which saw the estate pass to the Lindsay family, all adds up to an intriguing story.

Lancashire Mining Disasters 1835-1910

By Jack Nadin
£12.99 (plus £2 p&p)
170 pages

Our need for coal was achieved at a very high price. Thousands of men and boys perished in the coal mines of Lancashire and other coalfields. Initially, mining accidents occurred as isolated incidents where one or two men died in small explosions. As the pits got larger and the demands of the Industrial Revolution increased, then so did the number of fatalities, with dreadful consequences for local families and communities. This book chronicles the mining disasters in the Lancashire Coalfield from the 1830s through to the greatest single colliery explosion in English mining history, the Pretoria Disaster of 1910.

Walks into History, Lancashire

By Brian Conduit
£7.99 (plus £1 p7p)
95 pages

This lively and informative book features routes which take the walker on a journey through history. Beginning with the Romans at Ribchester, travelling through the medieval period, as seen at Clitheroe Castle, the dissolution of the monasteries at Whalley Abbey and ending with the opening up of trade with America and the Caribbean from ports along the Lancashire coast.

Other routes cover the move of Wycoller's spinning and weaving cottage industry to the early factories in Lancashire towns, the draining of Martin Mere to reveal fertile land fit for growing vegetables, the advent of the Lancaster Canal and the birth of Blackpool as a Victorian seaside resort.

The sixteen circular walks vary in length from three and a half to eight and a half miles and explore some of the most beautiful countryside in England. Besides clear route instructions and fascinating historical notes, this volume also provides practical information on how to get to the start, where to park and where to stop for refreshments.

Lancashire United, A Centenary Celebration 1906-2006

By Eric Ogden
£18.95 (plus £2 P&P)
144 pages

January 2006 marked the centenary of the inaugural meeting (after the formation in December 1905) of the original Lancashire United Tramways Company, which developed to become Britain's largest independent bus operator.

Since the publication of his

previous work on this subject in 1985, the author has undertaken further research into the company's antecedents. Papers at Company House, transcripts of the company minutes, various legal and business directories and other papers, trade magazines and year books have all thrown new light on the subject.

There is more to tell than can be contained in a celebratory publication of this nature, but enough of the story has been included to whet the appetite of all who are interested in road passenger transport history in South Lancashire

Northern Counties, A history of the Company and its products from 1919 to 2005

By Bob Rowe
£27.50 (plus £4 P&P)
192 pages

This comprehensive history covers in detail the formation of the business in 1919, including its South Wales connections, up to the closure of the Pemberton premises in early 2005. The story follows the rapid expansion of the 1920s and 1930s, through the demanding war years leading to the post-war heyday. The account also includes a look at Massey Brothers of Wigan, who were taken over by Northern Counties in 1967. It is copiously illustrated throughout, with over 230 illustrations, 64 in colour.

If you would like any of the above titles by mail order please contact the History Shop (01942) 828128 in advance to ensure that we have adequate stocks available. Cheques should be made payable to 'WLCT' and sent to The History Shop, Library Street, Wigan, WN1 1NU.

A REFUGE IN WIGAN

LIFE in wartime Wigan settled down to the everyday tasks of earning a living and complying with new regulations on just about everything. Wiganers of course also had to cope with their families dispersing to all corners of the globe. As far as the evacuees and refugees were concerned, they had little choice but to make the best of their current situation until safer times returned. Following the Battle of Britain and the exodus from major cities throughout the country to safer areas, life returned to a more even keel. Hitler was far from done however with the major cities and a major bombing campaign began in summer 1944, resulting in wholesale destruction of parts of London, Liverpool and Manchester and other British cities. Because of the loss of housing and life evacuation once more became a necessity.

The Civil Defence Emergency Sub-Committee in Wigan started to receive evacuees from the devastated areas, particularly Liverpool and London from 10 July 1944. 680 unaccompanied evacuee children arrived on that day from London and were dispersed to rest centres in the town. By the evening of 11 July occupants of 4 of the centres were re-evacuated to Farnworth and Westhoughton. In all 459 of 469 were billeted that day and by the 12th all had been housed. Upon arrival all children staying in Wigan were taken to the Baths in Millgate and given a medical examination and a bath.

On the 15th a further contingent of 202 mothers and 401 children was received. Once more Westhoughton and Farnworth, and in addition Atherton, received 237 of them. However by 28th July there were still 28 persons in rest centres (21 at Crompton Street Spiritualist Hall and 7 at Whelley Methodist School). Some families had returned to London. All of which serves to demonstrate the difficulty of finding accommodation for the evacuees. Billeting allowances had recently been raised for unaccompanied children. For a child under 5, 10 shillings and sixpence was offered, between age 5 and 10, it was 11 shillings and sixpence, age 10-12 it was 12 shillings, with the largest allowance being for a 17 year old at 17 shillings and sixpence. Trying to feed an extra mouth or two cannot have been easy, however, with the meagre allowances on offer due to rationing as well as a general lack of clothing.

Because of this, it comes as no surprise that the Civil Defence Emergency Sub-Committee at their meeting on 20 July was forced to consider compulsory billeting, since 1600 more evacuees were expected imminently. The Committee finally concluded that they would take that step as soon as it became impracticable to find billets within a reasonable time.

Part of this pressure of numbers occurred because of the refusal of certain towns in the country to take in strangers. National press coverage of the evacuation of children to the North and to Wigan in particular

PART 2 by Chris Watts

highlighted this. As the trains came North so too did the reporters. Their praise of Wigan as against their vilification of Blackpool and St Anne's makes emotive reading.

Ronald Camp, reporter for the News Chronicle wrote that "Wigan has a warm heart but in Blackpool business is business". He went on to say:- "This is the story of Wigan and Blackpool. The "pier" at Wigan has made plenty of laughter, but never any money; at Blackpool, especially now, the turnstiles on all the piers are clicking busily, helping to make this resort the richest in wartime Britain. To industrial Wigan the authorities in London sent 700 young children, refugees from the flying bomb. They were a weary, rather scared crowd of children. Their mothers, who watched them go, did not want to part with them, had no desire to inflict them on any strangers; but they sent them away to safety from Britain's civilian front line...This is what happened in Wigan. Everyone there, from girls with heavy clogs, to Mayoress with heavy gold chain, gave the kiddies a welcome that will make Wigan a place to be respected always." In contrast, a Roman Catholic Sister born in Lancashire told the reporter of certain incidents in Blackpool and St Anne's. She said " There are so many good people in those places, honest Lancashire folk. But there are so many who have souls of brass". A poem appearing in the Daily Mail on July 11 seemed to sum up the sentiments expressed.

Boom

*For generations, when the comics spoke
About your town we always laughed, I fear.
Forgive us Wigan, for that little joke
Relating to your pier.*

*Kind hearts were always more than esplanades,
And open arms than prospects dearly bought—
Let's not forget how you became (in raids)
A popular resort.*

H.R

Amongst the evacuees was a Mrs Wills with her 11 children, ranging in age from 2 months to 13 years.

Evacuated children's educational needs were seen as a priority and the children were placed in local schools. The school meal service was extended to them and even in some cases to their mothers and younger children.

Mr E G Savage, Education Officer to London County Council, wrote to the Town Clerk of Wigan on the 17th July, to express the thanks of the London County Council to Wigan's householders "who had shown kindness and hospitality" to the evacuees. Details for clothing arrangements for the children were also given. However, with a third consignment of evacuees being expected in the town before the end of July, the Town Clerk protested to the Regional Office of the Ministry of

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Health at yet more evacuees being sent to this “already overcrowded working class town” and suggested that they should be sent to other outlying districts. The Civil Defence Committee had even made the suggestion that camps such as Butlin’s and hostels could be used. It has to be said also that towns were having to cope with the compulsory billeting of essential war workers.

Despite his protest on the 8th August 1944 the Ministry of Health rang the Town Clerk at home to tell him that 800 evacuees would be arriving from the London area on the Tuesday. The Town Clerk registered further protest at evacuees coming on Wigan Holiday Week, which was also Holidays at Home Week. As a result it was agreed with the Town Clerk of St Helens that 350 would go there (later increased to 500) on the Wednesday morning, on the understanding that Wigan would return the favour at a later date.

Meanwhile, anticipation of having to house even larger numbers of evacuees, Wigan Council began requisitioning property. Various houses in Upper Dicconson St, Silver St, Whelley, Poolstock Lane, Gidlow Lane, Hornby St, and Bridgeman Terrace were requisitioned, and houses in Standishgate and Pemberton Colliery were loaned for free. Even vacant shops were considered for conversion into housing. Meanwhile more praise was received from London Boroughs and the Chairman of the London County Council, Dr Somerville Hastings, and his wife went so far as to visit Wigan to thank the people in person.

By the beginning of September 1944, however, the picture had changed somewhat. The Civil Defence Emergency Sub-Committee was reporting that there

was a wish by evacuees to go back to London. Some 407 had returned leaving 1381 persons still remaining in the local area. More were asking to return, fuelled in part by the Government’s statement that the Battle of London was over except for “a few stray shots”. One unusual case was featured in the News Chronicle of September 2 1944:-

Wigan won a boy’s heart

Wigan has won the heart of a runaway London boy. He was sent from Chelsea to the North of England in charge of a probation officer. He eluded the officer and reached Wigan, where he mingled with evacuees, and was billeted with a woman in the town. He was brought back to London on a warrant. Yesterday the probation officer told the Chelsea juvenile court “Strangely enough, he has developed a soft spot in his heart for Wigan, and is emphatic that he wants to go back”.

The officer added that the woman with whom the boy was billeted had been told all about him and was willing to have him back. The magistrate agreed to vary the previous supervision order, and the boy will return to Wigan.

Others also had decided to stay and were requesting a meeting place for London evacuees where they could perhaps make drinks and chat especially with winter approaching. The Queen’s Hall was the original designated place but the cost of rental made the Committee reconsider their venue. The Spiritualist Church in Crompton Street was therefore chosen. The mothers and their children met there weekly and it was a great success.

By December, preparations were being made for Christmas treats for the evacuated persons and at the same time the Government announced that those children who had been evacuated from the Kent coastal resorts could now be safely returned home. It was hoped that this would be complete by mid February 1945. It would seem the tide had finally turned.

Finally in April 1945, upon receipt of the Government’s decree that it was now safe for London evacuees to return home, arrangements for the assembly and despatch of all refugees and evacuees by the Social Welfare Officer was requested. The return was scheduled for the 187 remaining children and 30 mothers who were living in Wigan as well as the others living in the various out districts, on or a day or two before 31 May. Eighty-eight of these had returned home before August but 54 remained from Guernsey, 8 were alien refugees, 27 were homeless Merseyside persons, and only 10 remaining from London. Many of these of course remained in the area, since relationships made with the people and town became more important than returning home and some had no one to go back to. Some of the links made between the towns concerned still endure with even marriage between former evacuees and those they were lodged with.

In June 1990 the then Mayor of Wigan was presented with the Guernsey flag as a token of thanks from the Islanders. Perhaps you were witness to these events or were even one of those who stayed.

Black Friday 13th 1886 - Bedford Colliery Explosion

FRIDAY 13th August was indeed a 'Black Friday' when an explosion of firedamp caused the death of 38 miners at the Crombouke Seam, Woodend Pits, Bedford, Leigh.

The disaster took place at a 10.45am, and within the hour the news began to spread in Bedford, that "a mine was on fire at *Speakman's colliery*". John Speakman, the proprietor, lived at Bedford House, adjoining the colliery. He was confined to bed, but his son, Harry, joined the manager, W Horrobin, the underlooker, James Callend, and others to go down to investigate. All men had already been withdrawn from other parts of the mine. The Mines Inspector, Mr. Joseph Dickinson of Pendleton, had been telegraphed and arrived mid-afternoon. Exploring parties from the locality were called in to help. Among them was James Tinsley, underlooker, from the Abram Coal Company. In difficult and dangerous circumstances they had to explore, and the contemporary press referred to them as 'Explorers'. They had no idea what they would find. Would there be another explosion? How many dead? Would there be the need to move tons of rock in order to get to bodies or survivors?

Immediate aftermath

By the time officials and explorers began to arrive, crowds had gathered and the grave news had circulated that there were fatalities. Amongst the first to be brought to the surface was John Woolley, badly burned, who had, remarkably, escaped from the very place where the explosion began. The conclusions and recommendations of the subsequent inquest and Inspector of Mines Report were strongly influenced by

by Helen Holmes

his eyewitness account of events leading up to the disaster. Next, two boys, aged 14 and 17 were brought to the surface and pronounced dead. Local doctors arrived on the scene and used their carriages to ferry the injured to hospital. About a dozen more bodies were brought to the surface that night. Officials remained at the surface until the early hours, including the clergy, doctors, police, and Miners' Relief Union representatives. By Saturday, there were a total of thirty-six bodies. Two further missing men were located, they, too, were dead. Reports gave thanks to Mrs. Dickinson of Tyldesley, who performed the awesome task of washing mutilated bodies, and laying them out.

Reports

For thirty-eight miners to be killed in a small community like Bedford, was indeed a major disaster. Contemporary newspaper reports, including the Times, provide a compelling picture of the suffering caused. We have used these, and an interpretation of the Coroner's Inquest and the Mining Inspector's Special Report for the Home Office, to try to explain what happened on that fateful day, and why.

The Coroner heard the evidence of John Woolley at the postponed inquest on September 23rd. Of those men working in the "place of ignition", he alone had survived the explosion, and it was vital that he had recovered sufficiently to give evidence. He described himself as a 'dataller', and had begun work at 5.30am, spending the morning helping Henry Parsonage remove props. Alongside them, William

Brown and Alfred Mort were filling tubs. As you read how Brown had put his lamp on the top of a tub, you are reminded that these men were in complete darkness, apart from the quite feeble light from their lamps. Woolley then gave a description of the events, relating how, shortly before the explosion occurred, the flame in his lamp had developed the ominous "blue cap", a sure sign of the presence of explosive gas. Mort made the remark, "There was a bit there, Jack". Woolley said, "Aye", and instead of stopping work and reporting their finding, as the regulations required, they carried on with their work. The fatal explosion happened some ten minutes later, and is vividly described in the Inspector of Mines' Report "...and while they were joking Brown about the time he was taking (to fill the tub), Woolley noticed flame in Brown's lamp - it was blazing, all of a glow, a white heat. He called out instantly, "Look at your lamp, Brown!" Brown dropped his spade, took hold of his lamp and commenced blowing at it, then shook it, and the flame ignited outside. Woolley saw the flash and was burned, and suddenly knocked down, and all the lights were blown out. By getting his mouth to the rail he sucked at it as a means to become revived. He went down the place in the dark, and when passing Mort he said, "Don't, Alf, stop here", and received the reply, "Oh, Jack, I'm done!" He made his way out, meeting Callend about 120 yards from the bottom of the gig-brow, to whom he related briefly what had occurred..."

Callend was the colliery underlooker, and on the morning in question he was also acting as fireman, the usual man being

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Black Friday 13th 1886 - Bedford Colliery Explosion

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absent. He was thus responsible for ensuring that the workings were safe (in particular, free of gas) before the miners went in. He had explained that he had not any fixed daily course, but varied the order of his rounds. It was whilst he was doing these rounds that, at about 10.45, he heard a report and felt a wind which came from the west. He concluded that something was wrong. He said that he first sent all the lads out from the pit eye, and that persons from the east workings made their way out.

It was reported that other miners disbelieved Woolley's description of what happened, and they felt that it was impossible for him to have travelled so great a distance. This was before the days when a more thorough inspection of every detail underground could have been recorded. As his watch and lamp were found at the scene of the explosion that confirmed that he actually at the scene. It is also worth noting here, the role of the miner's lamp. Sir Humphrey Davy had tested the first 'Safety Lamp' in 1816, and the miners called them Davy lamps. At Bedford Colliery, the men used safety lamps, with tinned plate shields encircling two-thirds of the lower gauze, but not up to the cap gauze at the top. They were known to be insecure in fast currents of air and explosive gas. A lamp which was waved about, or blown at, as Brown's was at the scene of the explosion, produced just that situation.

The Coroner's Verdict

The verdict of the Coroner, was Accidental Death, caused by an explosion of firedamp. He recommended that the firemen should take more time to examine

the workings before the men commenced work, and that greater care be taken in the examination of the lamps. He also regretted that the presence of gas was not reported by the prop-takers.

The Mine Inspector's Verdict

The inspector gave his official version of what happened underground. There was an issue of gas from the strata where a large number of props were being withdrawn. The lighting of it was attributable, first to the men not ceasing work and reporting the gas when it first appeared, and secondly, to the miner, Brown, losing his presence of mind when gas blazed in his lamp. Instead of lowering his lamp to the floor, taking it steadily into fresh air, and not attempting to blow it out (as the rule required) he raised the lamp, shook it, and blew at it. This caused the flame to pass to the outside, and ignite the gas.

It seemed that it was human error which caused the massive explosion which was to kill all but one of the miners working in that area of the mine. The Inspector reported that Woolley, although contravening the rule by continuing to work and not reporting that gas had appeared, *'was not, however, the principal offender'*. He was commended for having given evidence against himself, and the Inspector commented that it would be a hard case to prosecute in such circumstances.

The Inspector also stated his opinion as to the danger of drawing a large number of props, when men were still working near the edge of a goaf which might contain fire-damp. He said the owner of this mine was not alone in allowing the use of the Davy lamp without a shield, but it is interesting to note that when the Inspector presented his report to the Home Secretary, the lamps at Bedford Colliery had been replaced by Marsaut and bonneted Clanny lamps, which were considered much safer. His report concluded, *"The explosion teaches a*

terrible lesson to miners to observe the rule which requires them to give information if they notice any fire-damp or any circumstances likely to produce danger, and that they ought not to think the danger insufficient to report; also to owners and managers to have such lamps as will not pass the flame in the event of a miner losing his presence of mind."

The explosion at Bedford Colliery had certainly hastened enquiries and better legislation regarding the use and safety of lamps in mines, but whatever the cause, dead is dead, and thirty eight men had died in the biggest mining disaster ever to occur in Leigh. Half of them were under thirty years of age. The Lancashire and Cheshire Miners' Permanent Relief Society existed to aid the bereaved, but it seems amazing to read that the coroner, at the September inquest, had suggested that the widows and orphans were amply provided for with three shillings a week. A committee of local 'gentlemen' was formed, and an appeal was launched, *"to aid those widows in the rearing of their children who had been left fatherless"*. It is not until the unveiling of the memorial, that one reads of the 'comparative failure of the appeal'. It would be interesting to hear from any descendants of those families.

The explorers received an award for bravery at a splendid presentation, which is described in detail in the Leigh Journal of February 11th 1887 "The Presentation To Explorers". Ninety-seven local men received a beautiful framed address.

Memorial Stone Unveiled

The memorial to those who lost their lives, unveiled in March 1887, was paid for by public subscription and cost £70. It can still be seen in Manchester Road Cemetery, Leigh. It is much higher than surrounding gravestones and is in the form of an urn monument. The lower plinth of Aberdeen granite supports a square pillar of polished white Carrara marble. The names, lettered in lead,



of the dead, are displayed on the front and right sides. Above the names, the monument is enriched by carvings of the miners' tools, picks, hammer, lamps, shovels, which are surrounded garlands of wreaths and flowers.



Memorial to those killed in the Bedford Colliery Explosion.

It is interesting, in 2006, to note the deference paid to the committee in 1887. They are referred to as 'Gentlemen Of The Committee' and all six of their names are on the front of the memorial! Due respect was also paid to the Burial Board, for allowing this ceremony to take place! It was a very grand, if sombre, occasion and St. Thomas's Brass band headed the parade which had formed at the Leigh Liberal Club, and processed along Church Street, Market Street, Chapel Street and along to the cemetery. This was quite some distance from the centre of Leigh. A temporary platform was set up and lengthy letters of apology for non-attendance were read and long speeches made. It can have brought little comfort to the bereaved, though perhaps in that Victorian age of 'respectability', there was

some solace in the large attendance which the occasion drew "*profound evidence of their sympathy*". It was said that a collection was being made for the purpose of maintaining the memorial and, 120 years later, the present cemetery authorities keep it in pristine condition.

What were the bereaved left with? Very little, one imagines. A black-edged funeral card survives in the Local History library at Leigh.

In Loving Remembrance of
THE UNFORTUNATE
MEN AND BOYS

Who lost their lives by the terrible
Explosion, at Woodend Colliery,
Leigh, August 13th, 1886.

Their names are listed, and a poignant poem is added

*In health and strength they left
their homes*

*Not thinking death was near
It pleased the Lord to bid them
come,*

And in His presence to appear

*When they arose at early morning,
Full of health, all blythe and gay
They little thought it was the
dawning*

Of their last and dying day

*Oh, what a loud and fearful crash
And what a sudden cry
And what an awful place was that
Wherein to droop and die.*

*With hearts so light they left their
homes*

*Upon that fateful morn:
And little thought upon the road
They never should return*

Thanks to Tony Ashcroft, Local History Officer, Leigh, Alan Davies, Archivist, and staff at the History Shop.

Glossary:

Underlooker more easily interpreted as undermanager.

Dataller a day wageman.

Gig-brow a self-acting inclined track used to lower filled coal tubs and raise empty ones.

Pit eye area at the bottom of the shaft.

Goaf the area behind the coal face where props have been withdrawn and the roof has been allowed to fall in.

Cannel a bituminous coal burning with bright flame and used in making coal oils and gas.

Fireman an official who is in charge of a district in the mine

The Galloping Parson

Dear Editor,

Can anybody help to locate the whereabouts of a painting of 'The Galloping Parson', the Rev. Richard Prescott, who was the Reverend of St Thomas, Upholland from 1767-1797. This portrait had been in the possession of Rev. G F Wills, Vicar of Upholland in 1907, and was thought to have been hung in the Old Refectory. The literature gives a number of references to this portrait, but where is it now?

A number of people, myself included, are trying to locate this piece, but nobody at Upholland Church can throw any light on to its whereabouts. So what has become of it and indeed does anybody know what it looked like or have a copy of it in a church magazine or other publication?

As the church is celebrating its 700th anniversary next year, it would be useful to locate such a worthy, historical article. My enquiries, which have drawn a blank all round have led me to believe that it has been thrown out! But I hope that this is not the case.-

**Helen Prescott
Horwich
01204 418791**

Student Days at Gidlow Secondary Modern School for Girls

by Jean Markland

I WAS born on 8 February 1942, and in 1953 aged 11, I commenced my secondary education at Gidlow Secondary Modern Girls School, Buckley Street, Wigan. At that time, the classes were divided into A and B, four of each, eight classes, with around 20-25 girls in each class. There were also two large kitchens and a hall, which divided the male and female sections of the school. Also dividing the sections was a rather large sundial, beyond which neither sex was allowed to go, talk or even to meet. Despite walking to and from school with boys who lived close by, contact of any kind during the day was forbidden. The hall was used as an indoor gym on alternate days and also for assemblies, two days girls and two days boys. On Friday mornings a joint assembly was held, where again, the no talking rule applied.

It is interesting to note that whenever outside games, such as rounders or netball were played by the girls, we had to wear just a blouse and the navy blue school knickers with elastic in the legs, which ended just above the knee, and were in full view of the whole of the boys school!

Uniform consisted of a navy blue gymslip, white blouse, red tie, red sash tied at the waist, black shoes and white socks. Since most girls only had one white blouse, this would be washed half way through the week, dried in a bathroom cupboard, or ironed dry, although on occasions, I can remember going to school in a damp blouse. We also had to wear a red beret when out on school trips, although in my four years at the school, we only actually went on one, to Chatsworth House and cost I think, 2s 6d (12.5p). In the fourth year we were also taken to Eckersley's cotton mill in Wigan as an encouragement to apply for employment in the factory. I think one or two of the girls did begin their working life there some time later.

On entry into the school, we were allocated to a House system, Raleigh, Drake, Nelson (and I cannot remember the fourth). I was in Raleigh, and at gym or games classes, wore a yellow sash. There was also a red/black mark system, and these marks were added at the end of the week, and the name of the 'top House' displayed on a board in the hall. There was great competition to ensure your 'House' came out the best each week.

The classes held were

cookery (well before domestic science came in) sewing, English, maths, games and PE, history, geography and divinity (later RE). Sewing classes were taken by Miss Hesketh and all the girls had to make a pale blue flared skirt, which was the summer uniform to replace the gymslip. Most of the sewing was by hand, although there were one or two sewing machines, but mainly the work was manual, and needless to say, the stitches had to be re-done several times until the teacher was satisfied. Having made this first piece, we could then choose the next one. I chose to make a three tiered very full skirt, which I think took me the next two years, at one class per week! We were not allowed to take the work home, and we also had to pay a small amount weekly towards the cost. We could only take the garments home when they had been fully paid for.

Miss Doris Barr taught English and drama, and many a play was performed during her classes, all greatly enjoyable. She also taught Scottish dancing! Mrs Charlton was in charge of games and PE, which were held weekly, and we had one cookery class each week with Mrs Peacock, commencing with the old favourite rock buns! In the fourth year each girl made a Christmas cake, and the whole of the school came class by class to look at these works of art! In my fourth year, we also invited the boys across, but had to hide one or two boys under the cloth covered tables, because the headmistress, Miss Carrington, did her rounds at the same time, and would not have approved!

Miss Dickson taught divinity, and her love of the Bible and Bible stories really were an inspiration. She was also music teacher and choir mistress. We had a choir of

around 30 girls at that time, and would sing in assemblies and also prize days. I met Miss Dickson 26 years ago when she was verger at St. Andrew's CE School in Wigan, where my daughter commenced her education at the age of four and a half.

Mrs Cooke was responsible for teaching maths, Mrs Boot taught history and Miss Ball geography.

Each Christmas we had a party, and all the staff would join in. In my final year we asked if we could have a joint party with the fourth year boys. Initially this was



Class of 1956, l to r Christine Dobson, Carol Talbot Jean Clements, Olive Seddon, Dallas Peach (kneeling).



VOLUNTEERS WEEK

Volunteers Week is a national event, where organisations and groups from all over the country hold various different events, activities, and celebrations to highlight the enormous

contributions made by those who choose to volunteer.

Wigan's Heritage Services have volunteers working at Wigan Pier, The History Shop and at the Archives in



Volunteers receiving their certificates from Philip Butler (back row last on right) and Debby Hill (front row last on right)

Leigh and chose to recognise their hard work and enthusiasm by holding a special celebration at Trencherfield Mill.

Against the backdrop of the magnificent mill steam engine, volunteers enjoyed afternoon tea, complete with special 'Volunteers Week' cake. They were thanked publicly for their tireless commitment, and presented with certificates in recognition of their services. Debby Hill, Learning & Volunteer Officer at Wigan Pier and Philip Butler, Visitor Services Manager at the History Shop awarded these certificates.

The Volunteers were also treated to a 'close up' of the steam engine and in-depth presentation by Mike Presho and John Westwell the Engine & Machinery demonstrators.

Volunteers are wanted to help with the maintenance, upkeep and interpretation of the Trencherfield Mill Steam Engine. Interested? Please contact Debby Hill on 01942 323666 to find out more.

turned down, but eventually permission was given, and the girls brought in a record player and some sausage rolls! However, the headmistress left the school early that day and would have nothing to do with the revelries!

The standard of teaching at Gidlow was excellent. The staff were very supportive of the girls who, because of failing the then eleven plus, were made to feel somewhat inferior by those girls who were destined for the local grammar and high schools. In those days, secondary modern girls were considered to be 'factory fodder', and as I mentioned earlier, the only option given career wise was the visit to the cotton mill! I had failed my eleven plus, and although in the A classes, was still not considered to be career material. On leaving school, I became a junior in a local solicitor's office, and eventually a legal secretary for many years. I also worked at Granada TV and the BBC in Manchester as a PA for freelance broadcaster Peter Wheeler. My commencing wage at the law office was £2 per week. On my marriage in 1966, I was earning £8 per week, which I think was the same amount that the girls working in the cotton mill had commenced with!

There were no external exams at Gidlow Secondary Modern, but each year there was a form test in each subject, with marks allocated. Each year also, there was the School Prize Day, when rewards were given to those pupils who had obtained the highest mark in any subject. I received the English Prize two years running, and also the Music Prize one year. We were instructed to visit the local bookshop in town and choose a prize to a certain value. A small certificate would be attached to the book by the school, stating the subject for which the award

had been given. Prize Days were always very special, parents and families were invited and the choir would give the performance of its life. A very proud evening for everyone concerned, not least the teaching staff, as they saw the outcome of yet another year's work amongst the girls.

My time at Gidlow Secondary Modern Girls School was a very happy one. I was so sad at the thought of leaving, and on my final day spent the whole day in tears! I stayed in school until the very last minute, and then made my way home to begin the next phase of my life. I was then 15 years of age. I am now 64, but remember with great affection the staff of the school who showed their care in so many ways, and who did such a good job in instilling values into us, as well as the normal curriculum. They were a terrific group of ladies.

Eventually Gidlow School became a middle school for 11-13 year olds, but when that system became obsolete, the school was demolished and the site is now a housing estate. Often, when driving past, I recall the happy times at the school and remember the staff who were always so very kind to the girls they taught.

Jean Markland (formerly Clements) is trying to arrange a reunion for the class of 1957 to mark the fiftieth anniversary since they left the school. She would like to hear from any 'old' girls who are interested in joining her. She can be contacted on 01257 401628.

We also received a letter from ex pupil Mrs Betty Bayliss of Salford, with some of her memories of the school. She sent us a photograph of her class of 1943 but unfortunately, it was too poor to print. Editor.

The Wigan Observer's Royal Scoop

by Austin Lyons

IN the early part of 1938, things were beginning to look better for Britain, we now had a new King, George VI and his ever smiling Queen, Elizabeth. The country was trying to adjust to some semblance of normality following the turbulence of the abdication period. The powers that be felt then was an urgent need to re-establish the monarchy within the heart of the nation. With this in mind royal tours were quickly organised and by May 20th that year, Wigan found itself included in one for the North West. Someone at



the 'Observer' office had made a rather imaginative suggestion as to how best we could mark the occasion. This is where I as free-lance, came into the scheme. Briefly, I was to take photographs of the event, rush over to the 'Liverpool Echo' office, have the plates developed and printed and suitable blocks made and then return with them in time for publication that same Friday afternoon, the usual publication day – quite a feat! At this point Fred Dove, picture editor, spelt it out for me. The boss's nephew had a fast sports car - this would be the means of getting me to Liverpool and back in double quick time. A detailed schedule was worked out – it was tight – but feasible. Right from the outset there were rumblings of disapproval from the commercial staff. "Can't be done – a complete waste of time and money", was the gist of their objections. The way they looked at me as I made my way to the editorial department during this time, made me feel like a conspirator from Shakespeare's 'Julius Caesar'. Oblivious to all this criticism was Ralph Wall, the always well groomed bespectacled and bow tied proprietor of the 'Observer'. Cocooned in his glass-walled office overlooking Rowbottom Square, he seemed aloof from all that was going on. I suspect

that he and the paper's old editor, Tom Meadows, had a quiet word about it and things had moved ahead with their mutual connivance . meanwhile, Fred Dove had contacted the police to obtain my Royal Press Pass. He then told me of the final arrangements. Immediately the Royal party had left the Market Square, I was to meet the boss's nephew t the side entrance to the Grammar School and then speed off to Liverpool. Wigan's Royal day was blessed with spring sunshine and blue skies – the Market Square, suitably boasting a lavishly decorated Royal dias, was thronged with hundreds of excited Wiganers.

I presented my pass and soon found myself with about ten other photographers, mainly from the dailies. The police moved us three times – finally one of the older lads said "If they leave us here we'll be fine, we're only a few yards from the invalid chairs and the Royals always come down to greet them" He was later proved correct. At precisely 11am the Royal car entered the Market Square to the deafening cheers of the awaiting crowd. After the usual civic introductions, their Majesties left the



dias and moved straight to the invalid chairs. I opted for a kneeling position, and quickly secured a few good shots, within fifteen minutes it was all over. A small box had been thrown over from the crowd and quickly mounting this, I was able to take a very good general view just as the Mayor Alderman Earnest Ball was raising his ceremonial hat and asking for 'three cheers for their Majesties', before they drove away.

I quickly left the scene and hurried through the vast crowd and down to the Grammar School, where as planned, my driver had parked his open sports car. "Can you manage at the back there – I've first to pick up my girlfriend" he said. My heart sank "this is going to mess up the time schedule" I thought. Anxiously we drove to Upper Dicconson Street, where thankfully, his girlfriend was awaiting us. In a matter of a few minutes we had made it to Pemberton and Orrell and were now speeding along the East Lancs Road. Then the trouble started. The faster we went, the greater the vibration. My 'seat' was a wooden structure covering the axle. No matter how I tried, I couldn't stop the metal slides containing my precious glass plates from bouncing about in the camera case. I'd visions of them all being smashed to bits long before we got anywhere near Liverpool.

Soon however, we were speeding down Victoria Street and screeched to a stop in front of the 'Echo' office. I bounced up the steps at the trade entrance and knocked on the door. A face peeped out who I recognised at once as one of the lads in the camera pack. I handed him my slides with a few instructions and went for a cup of tea. I returned within thirty minutes to be told that I had a very successful set of negatives which included a good close-up. Thankfully, none of my slides were broken on the journey. I made a careful scrutiny of them and rang the 'Observer' office. Fred Dove answered and as soon as he had my report cried "Good lad". He told me to order two blocks about 8 x 6 inches, one of the close-up, and one of the general view. By the time these were made, my driver and girlfriend had returned on time and off we went on our way back to Wigan.

We breezed into Rowbottom Square around 2.30pm and hurrying into the office with the precious blocks – heaved a sigh of relief. Within the hour the paper was on the street, the presses were still rolling as I viewed with some pride and satisfaction the Royal page. I vividly remember the headline "Sunshine and Blue Skies greet the Royal Visitors" then a sub heading "Queen thinks Wigan is a lovely town". Fred Dove confided in me later that when he received this quote made by the Queen to the Mayoress, he said "I nearly went up and kissed her" – the Mayoress of course!

As I made my way out of the 'Observer' office

that momentous day and hearing the rolling presses, I recalled that these machines had once been used by the 'Post' and 'Echo' themselves. By a strange irony, we had as far as Wigan was concerned . scooped the lot of the evening papers, even the 'Echo' who had made the blocks. As the train bringing in the Liverpool and Manchester papers didn't arrive in Wigan before 4.00pm. The contents bill announcing the Royal pictures was as usual placed in front of the old Minorca Hotel shortly after 3.30pm. The commercial staff had said we couldn't do it, but we had. When they saw me that afternoon, they gave me a wry smile, not a word of congratulation. Now it was all over, we had achieved the seemingly impossible. The following year we were at war with Germany. Eventually, Fred Dove, who late became editor of the 'Observer' found himself in the army and myself as a photographer in the Royal Air Force.

Woodford Street



Dear Editor

I took this photo in 1996. Hindley police Station was probably built in the 1880's. What is unusual about this Lancashire Constabulary Station – Hindley was not then in the borough of Wigan, which had its own police force – is the street name alongside the station. Woodford Street is the only street in Lancashire to be so named, and it commemorates Lancashire's first Chief Constable, Captain John Woodford. He served as Chief Constable from 1839 to 1856, when he left to become Her Majesty's (first) Inspector of Constabulary with responsibility for the Northern counties.

Whoever was responsible for the planning that went into the police station and surrounding streets, saw fit to commemorate this exceptional man.

I hope your readers who pass along Woodford Street will be pleased to learn who Woodford was.

**Bob Dobson
Blackpool**

We know of another street by Pemberton police station with this name Editor.

ROBERT SETTLE – ATHERTON OVERSEER OF THE POOR

by Robert Evans

ROBERT SETTLE served as the Atherton Overseer of the Poor from May 1802 until the end of April 1808. His period of office is particularly note-worthy for two reasons. During these years the cost of the relief that he provided was half of the amount paid out both by his predecessors, and those who followed him. Secondly, what is so distinctive, is the manner in which he describes his work. Whereas all other overseers provide the briefest reasons for relief payments, he often gives detailed and lengthy accounts of the many journeys he had to make to fulfil his duties and of the conditions in which he found the recipients. As will become apparent from the extracts that are quoted, these sometimes rambling accounts of his activities, indicate little concern with presentation or grammatical correctness and can on occasions be difficult to decipher.

His reduction in the amount paid out for relief may have been the result of guidance from a book dealing with the administration of the Poor Law that persuaded him to apply stricter criteria to appeals for help. The purchase of this book was one of his first actions after appointment.

"May 31st Paid for the New Complete Parish Officer or a perfect guide to Church Wardens 0-3-9"

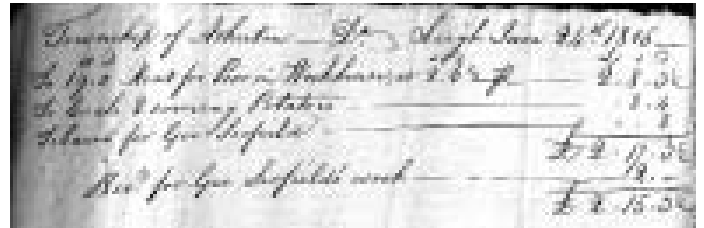
Copies of this book still exist in several national libraries and the catalogues describe the contents as:

"A perfect guide to churchwardens, overseers, constables, headboroughs, tithingmen, sidesmen, borsholders, beadles, and other parish officers of every denomination : explaining, in easy and familiar terms, the substance of all the Acts of Parliament, with the modern and established decisions respecting parochial business, including a complete library of parish law, down to Trinity term, 1805"

Nevertheless, his accounts show that he continued to provide all the varied types of relief, as did his predecessors. People, who perhaps because of age or a permanent disability were incapable of any form of work, received small weekly payments and these are listed in the first column of the monthly accounts.

Atherton Poor expenditure				
Weekly Payment Name	Weeks	£	s	d
John Robinson	23	5	10	0
Richard Wood	12	5	8	0
Robert Wood	12	5	17	4
John Wood	12	5	10	0

The workhouse in Leigh was an alternative for those who were physically able, but who would not accept, or perhaps could not benefit from home-support. Here supervised work could be provided in return for a basic level of care. Many monthly receipts for the costs incurred in the workhouse still survive.



However, most of the relief that all the overseers provided, was directed to helping people in their own homes, so that they were able to continue working to earn sufficient to support themselves and their families. If this objective was to be achieved then help was fully justified to pay rents, provide clothing, fuel, medical aid during sickness and give people machines such as looms necessary for work. Even when satisfying some of these basic needs, Robert, in his unique style considers it necessary to elaborate on the circumstances for individual payments

Relief paid to the family of John Wood who is sick with the stone	2	-	-
John Wood relieved with	1	-	-
John Wood relieved with	2	-	-
Relief paid to the family of Robert Wood who has been hit with the stone	2	-	-
Relief paid to the family of Robert Wood who has been hit with the stone	2	-	-
Relief paid to the family of Robert Wood who has been hit with the stone	1	-	-

This individual style is most clearly illustrated by his accounts of journeys he made to examine and verify the need for help. The time and effort he spent doing this may partly explain how he was able to bring down the cost of relief no doubt to the satisfaction of the ratepayers. This lengthy unpunctuated account of a visit to Manchester in December 1802 is just one of many other similar journeys that are described in his accounts.

"8th To my Journey to Manchester on Towns business 0-3-0 and to seeking James Peak up and down Manchester, but could not find him until ten o'clock at Night then I found him at an Alehouse but money I could get none of him for he said he had none, but his Wife is ill of the Asthmatic Complaint and wanted me to relieve her with something during this day I at intervals sought for John France but could not find him that day I also sought for Mathias Brandwood, and after a great deal of trouble found him at No 6 in ? Street Ancotes Lane & I relieved him with 4 weeks pay at 2/- p Week & examined the State of his Family & he has a daughter that has had her Scull Cloven sometime since & seeming



can do little or no work & he has 2 Grand Children to keep their Mother being dead & their Father a Scotchman on the island of Jamaica but that the said 2 Children belong to the Township of Atherton and that the Township of Atherton will not pay him 15/- p quarter towards his rent he will make them to pay him at least 4/- p week on account of his daughter and two Grand Children mentioned before 0-8-0

Dec 9th sought for John France and after much trouble and two hours seeking I found him in a Cellar under 20th Cornwell Street Newton Lane and after a great deal of talk he promised to pay to the Township of Atherton on account of his Wife and Family 2/- p Week and after much ? I got promise 8/- and he promised to pay a Guinea more after Christmas.

To my extra expenses on account of my being in Manchester great part of two days and a Night 0-2-0"

The purpose of journeys such as this appear to have been to check on the entitlement of people to help from Atherton, or, as in the case people such as John France, to persuade them to support wives and families they had left in Atherton.

The following months accounts include payments from John.

Handwritten account summary for John France, dated 1802, showing a total of 21 shillings and 2 pence.

They were not maintained, and when Robert again visited Manchester in the following October he could not find John and he recorded:

Handwritten note recording the search for John France in Manchester, stating he was not found.

One way to reduce the cost to the ratepayers was to apply the Settlement Laws to ensure that money was not spent on people who had come into Atherton and then for some reason become incapable of supporting themselves. Overseers could apply to the Justices for their removal to their original home township. In October 1802 Martha Foster had become sick and was taken to Wigan to be examined to ascertain which township should be responsible for her relief.

Handwritten account summary for Martha Foster, dated 1802, showing a total of 21 shillings and 2 pence.

The actual removal certificate still exists and reveals that Martha had in fact been abandoned by her husband and for that reason she should be returned to Pennington.

Official removal certificate for Martha Foster, dated 1802, signed by the Overseer of the Poor.

She was moved later in the month.

Handwritten account summary for Martha Foster, dated 1802, showing a total of 4 shillings.

The township relief bill could be further reduced by ensuring that the fathers of children of unmarried women paid maintenance. Many journeys were made to neighbouring towns to identify such men and obtain the necessary statements from the mothers naming them. While in Wigan in November 1802 he:

Handwritten account summary for George Boulton and George Boulton, dated 1802, showing a total of 15 shillings and 12 pence.

Each monthly account summary shows a deduction from the overseer's total bill for money received from those who were willing to pay.

Handwritten account summary for George Boulton, dated 1802, showing a total of 10 shillings.

Continued on page 22

ROBERT SETTLE – ATHERTON OVERSEER OF THE POOR

Continued from page 21

These efforts to reduce the township's liability for providing aid could give rise to legal disputes as was the case when Robert went to Warrington in October 1806 to ask the Justices to decide which township was responsible for Mary Johnson. However, the documentation which they issued to confirm settlement in a Cheshire township must have been flawed and his account continues:

My journey to Tarvin & Hockmell with a very short stay and 2 or 3 days expenses and when we got there the removal order was made for Tarvin instead of Hockmell and they would not receive her at Hockmell and at Tarvin (at Tarvin) if they received her they would then give me notice of appeal against the order on being an innocent man when

He then referred the problem to magistrates there who advised that on the basis of the evidence submitted by Stephen Johnson and his daughter, Hockmell should accept Mary.

Innocent Joan Wilton went to 2 Magistrates at Hockmell over which after spending great part of a day Hockmell by the recommendation of the Justices was wanted to take her in

To bring the issue to a closure he then seemed to be faced with the option of paying the extra costs involved, or there would be an appeal and he would have to return to Atherton to begin the whole process again.

of Mary Johnson with the copy of the Order and the Examination of Stephen Johnson and his daughter signed by two Magistrates stated if I would pay the expenses of the day which was 10 or otherwise they would appeal against the Order and I must have paid to get a new order made to my journey there and 12 8

We must not assume that he was insensitive or unsympathetic to the plight of the many he was called upon to help. He describes some distressing conditions in which people had to eke out a bare existence. In September 1806 he undertook a journey extending over three days, first going to St Helens on the 21st where he:

"Viewed and examined the state of James Stocks Family James is very poorly in health & the Family are very ragged & Poor"

He paid rent arrears and then went on to Windle to pay money due to the Overseer:

"for the late Mary Stocks 2 Children"

He stayed the night there and the following day was in Sutton:

"22nd To My Journey to Sutton Viewed and examined John Hilton's Family John is very poorly having a bad cough and frequently sick"

His account, part of which is difficult to follow, continues:

"he looks very poorly and the Doctor gave him Castor Oil and other Physic and I gave him a Shilling to buy Castor Oil.....I examined their Bed and Bedding which are very poor one and they have 4 young children I then bought them 9 yds of Bed (Ticking?) At 10 1/2 per yard and one New Blanket at 7s-3d"

He concluded:

"from thence I went to Liverpool to collect Militia Money and back again to St Helens and staid there all Night and on the 23rd came Home To my Journey of 3 days and two nights and expenses 14s -"

Many of these journeys were made to assess the needs of families of people who had originated from Atherton and for whom the township was still responsible. In July 1802 he visited the family of Ann Blackburn in Hollingwood and he found them:

"almost naked"

He went again in April 1805 and recorded:



To my Journey to St Helen
 to find the state of the
 Blacksmiths in the District
 had 22 Dec 1803 at 16.0
 and 20 Dec 1803 at 16.0
 4 Dec 1804 at 16.0
 from the 5th of May 1804 to
 the 10th of May 1805 two
 of the said children being
 had the Fever and
 some of them at
 present very feeble
 and weak

Poverty could be the result of an industrial accident as was the case in April 1803 when he visited John Stock and his six children in St Helens.

"To my Journey to St Helen to Examine Jn Stocks Family and Examine the 3-0

state of their Family & they are in Number six Children & the old Man is lame & ill in Bed he having had his foot Crushed in the Coalpit by a fall of Coals it is very black & much Disabled? & his oldest Child is turned of 12 yrs old but is at present not well but lives with a relation ye. Next is a lad about 11 yrs old & another near 7 Years old and ye. Next about 5 yrs old & ye. Youngest is something more than 3 Years old and I could not get ye. Business done that night but was obliged to stop all night Expenses 2-0"

There were occasions when he failed to provide the help that was judged to be necessary. In September 1806 the magistrates must have considered that he was treating Matthew Allred too harshly.

"Relieved Matthew Allred by Order Mr Fletcher who says the Town must either allow him 2/- per Week or he will make a monthly order for him from time to time"

The previous May he had allowed Betty Laithwaite 3s. She must have appealed that this was insufficient but the Bolton magistrates agreed with a compromise payment of 4s.

"29th To my Journey to Bolton about Betty Laithwaite to face the Justices if I would not agree to give them seven shillings but got him of with 4s"

He was equally concerned with conditions in the workhouses to which Atherton people were sent. In February 1807 he saw that conditions at the Leigh workhouse required improvement.

Examined the Workhouse
 found the Bedding so bad
 that I bought them a pair
 of New Blankets & 13-0

On the other hand his concern with the efficient management is reflected in his view of conditions at the Newton workhouse.

1800
 14th June 1800
 I have been to the
 workhouse & find the
 provisions of the
 the state of the
 other things
 I will add in some degree
 6

Because of his work he became involved in a trial held at Lancaster in the summer of 1806. The records do not give a clear explanation of the circumstances. There is what appears to be an incomplete account in Robert's handwriting that describes how he found lodging for Sarah in Warrington.

1st June 1806 I got a
 Drift
 at Luke Ivison's in
 Old Street Warrington where she
 had been and she had her
 then I left her apprehending no danger
 the house I left her was between
 the street and the
 street

Several days later he discovered that Sarah was not there and this seems to have raised suspicions about Luke Ivison and his wife who had been charged with her care.

and on Monday the 1st of June I myself
 went to the
 Ivison's and asked Mr Ivison the wife
 of the said Luke Ivison how and
 in what manner the said Sarah
 had left her Lodgings her husband

An account sheet lists legal fees for defendants charged with responsibility for the death of Sarah Smith.

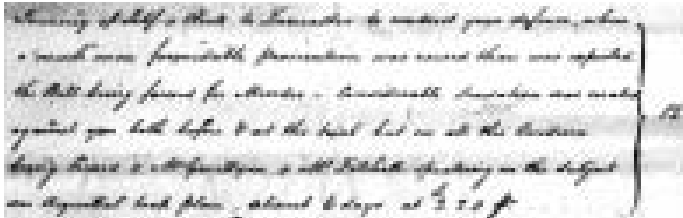
1806
 I have been to the
 workhouse & find the
 provisions of the
 the state of the
 other things
 I will add in some degree
 6

During the course of the trial the charge became the much more serious one of murder, but eventually arguments provided by the defence resulted in acquittal.

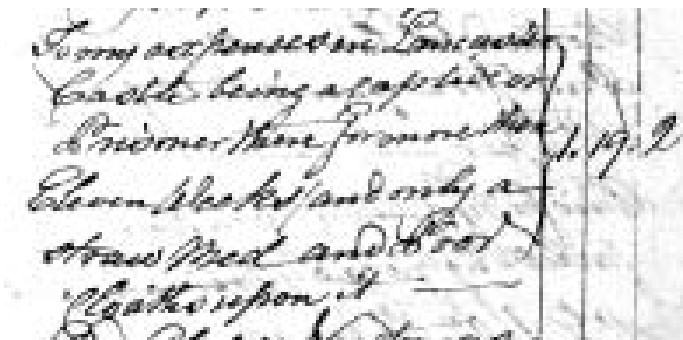
Continued on page 24

ROBERT SETTLE – ATHERTON OVERSEER OF THE POOR

Continued from page 23



Robert Settle was not unfamiliar with Lancaster and its prison; only a month earlier he had visited it.



No other overseer has left such a vivid and detailed account of his activities. These extracts are just a sample from his accounts providing a picture of conditions 200 years ago and the harsh reality of the poverty that many had to endure. From them we are able to appreciate the dedication that Robert must have given to his duties. The time and physical effort required when travelling all over south Lancashire are well summed up by the words he wrote after leaving Sarah Swift in Warrington



The writer acknowledges the co-operation of Alan Davies, archivist, Wigan Heritage Service, for making these records available for study and in contributing much background information and advice. Most of the extracts are from documents in the Overseer's Accounts in folder TR Ath/C/2/16. The workhouse bill and the documents for the Lancaster trial are in folder TR Ath/C/2/47- Vouchers. The removal certificate for Martha Foster is in folder TR Ath/C/3/4.

New Website: www.wigangrammarschool.co.uk.

This site covers the history of Wigan Grammar School founded in 1597 and closed in 1972. Over 150 photographs can be viewed and a flexible search facility allows you to find former pupils and staff by several categories: era, sports. Current activities are included of the Wigan Grammar School Old Boys if you want to get in contact.

A Wigner

*A Wigner's a chap who con scrunch Uncle Joe's
Who ne'er goes t'sleep beaut pickin' 'is toes
Sups 'is ale fr' a pint dimpled glass
An' casts 'is een o're every young lass.*

*A Wigner's a mon who's strung an' brave
Frickerent' er nowt except 'is own empty grave
'e ses beeg 'an powrk pies bowoth 'ave ther' place
An' 'e allus dribbles gravy awe deawn 'is face.*

*A Wigner's a fella wi a great 'airy chest
Darns in 'is socks an' 'oles in 'is vest
Who goes eaut wi 'is mates on a Friday neet
An' after 'is cuery goes wom t'sleep.*

*A Wigner's a character wi a wide op'n face
'is good will an' frindship owd pride o' place
a mon who 'as kindness in an abundant supply
an' as 'annky an' a showder fer them wi'ot needst 'cry.*

*A Wigner's a mate who tha' needs by thi side
A mon who tha knows has nowt tha needst'ide
A fella who's 'onds that would trust wi thi life
A chap tha mon never, let near thi wife.*

Any comments from our female readers? Editor.

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Gidlow House, Petticoat Lane, Higher Ince

THIS big house was my home through the formative years of my life, from being nine years old in 1928 to 19 years old in 1938. I first came to live there with my mother's sister, aunt Mary Elizabeth Hesketh, my own mother dying of cancer in 1925. This was a wonderful home for a young boy. The house was surrounded by woodlands, with a small brook running through, and a huge field, where I could run riot playing every game imaginable. Along with my best friend, Cyril Aspinall, we were cowboys and indians in turn. Also on this field were two pit shafts, one with a normal head gear and the other with tri-poles standing over it.

The house was big, warm and comfortable. One of my favourite places was the sitting room, which was very big, with two piano's. The one in the corner by the window had a Pye radio on top of it, and since radio stations had only started in 1922, all the programs were new. In fact, most of mass entertainment was new, films in Ince Picture house (The Bug) were silent, but the songs we heard came from the radio, these were mostly dance bands, playing at famous hotels in London, and the BBC's own, first Jack Payne then Henry Hall. All the songs of the day were played, firstly at 5-15pm to 6pm, and again late night around 10pm. Whilst living there I heard the first around the world broadcast by the BBC, then the first opening Christmas broadcast by King George V, plus plays that frightened the living daylights out of me! One I remember was 'Sweeney Todd the Demon Barber', but mostly I listened

by George Wadeson

to Henry Hall and the New BBC dance band,

The kitchen was in the cellar, but since the house was built on a slope the kitchen opened to the back yard. It was entered from the back of the hall through a door under the stairs, down some steps, which led on the right to the kitchen and to the left a very dark cold cellar. This had a cold slab of stone, hooks in the ceiling and a metal rail from which hung chickens and slabs of cured bacon. It was a place to be avoided, at least by me. When going down those steps, I literally flew down and shot into the kitchen, where my aunt always seemed to be cooking. She was a super cook, as well as baking all the bread for her big family, she was a wizard with herbs and made many herb drinks.

On the newel post at the bottom of the stairs which led up to the bedrooms, was a very big cast iron statue of a woman with flowing dress holding up high a make believe torch (this probably had a gas mantle in it, gas being the only source of light in the house at that time) but it was too high for me to reach. The stairs were also wide, as I recall, with a very big banister rail. At the top of the stairs was a big landing, with one of the doors leading off to the attic. At the top of the stair to the attic was a small window, all of 30 feet from the ground outside. I would often lean out through here, shouting for Cyril, who live opposite in the end house about 100 yards away!

Besides having a large tract of woodlands and a stream, it also had a railway running past on the north side. Not a main line, this was a line for goods trains to by pass Wigan Station, and for holiday trains in the summer going to Blackpool, it joined the main LMS line at Boars Head. Wagons were also shunted here on the slope, for Top Place Iron works. They stopped level with our field and the brakes applied. The engine would uncouple, and go up to the top place area, and change line, coming past its own wagons on the opposite line, then back to the end of its wagons and away to another destination. The interest I and Cyril had was sitting on the fence watching the brake man trying to hold the wagons from running away!

One day, whilst walking up the slope from the garden to the field belonging to the house (carrying a bucket of water for the chickens) the ground suddenly shook, making me lose all the water. On looking up, I saw a mushroom cloud, and running to the source, found it was the old pit down which I had many times I dropped stones, to a count of eight. Now, when I got there, it was a huge hole with lumps of clay the size of a moderate house sliding down. The opening was about 50 yards across, moving all the time. Gradually a crowd gathered, but I kept well away. To think I had thrown myself down on those covering planks to drop stones!

The reason I write about this house, is that through all the years of going to Hindley down Manchester Road, I have looked upon it as a red jewel (it was made of red stock brick) standing high up. However, one day, after doing my shopping at Morrisons and standing where I used to play, the house had been pulled down. This pulling down of our past is not all to the good. I also once lived in another old house, Kirkless Hall, New Springs. There, on the wall by the front door is a stone which says 'Built 1663', but luckily, this house is protected by law.

Bay Horse Hotel

I am in urgent need of a photograph of the Bay Horse Hotel at Whelley. Also any information regarding the George Lodge of the AOAB (Bufs) whose meetings were held at the Bay Horse Hotel. Does anybody have any old Whit Walks photographs that might have this building as a backdrop?
Please write to or telephone Dianne Teskey, Education & Outreach Officer, The History Shop, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU (01942) 828128

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The final part of Glyn Jones' fascinating insight to life as the first head teacher of Higher Folds County Primary School

Magic Moments

AT dinner times one could have an informal relationship in which pupil-teacher barriers were broken down. At Higher Folds, it was the practice for table monitors to come into the hall before the other children, and I often made a point of being in the hall early, quietly doodling on the piano. This at least gave a semblance of calm to the proceedings. A group of children would gather round the piano often asking me to play one of the pop tunes of the day. At such times one gained a rapport with the children one would not get in a classroom situation. Sometimes we would start the meal not by saying grace but by singing it. Equally enjoyable were the informal chats I would have while doing my 'rounds'. I particularly remember one group of lads who sat at a table near the serving hatch. These half a dozen boys were rugby crazy. It was at a time when Leigh was having its halcyon period under the charismatic Alex Murphy. They discussed with me 'man to man' the merits of various players and teams.

One of the boys later had a successful career in Rugby League before he decided that his ambition lay in another direction. He captained Great Britain Schoolboys and played as a professional with Leigh. He must have remembered that my love of cricket was even greater than my love of rugby. One evening in July 1995 I received a surprise telephone call. As a gesture of appreciation of his schooldays at Higher Folds he invited me to a day

out at Lords to see the Lancashire v Kent, Benson and Hedges Cup Final. Then in July 2002, I received through the post a small package with the following note. *"Enclosed find some cricket memorabilia. These are from a visit my brother and I made to the England v Sri Lanka match at Headingley."*

It contained a Test and Cricket Board tie commemorating the match. This was particularly pleasing for me, because from 1942 to 1946 I was in the RAF stationed in what was then known as Ceylon, but is now called Sri Lanka.

Travel broadens the mind

In 1976 Mrs Kirton and Miss Durose replaced Mrs Andrews and Mr Sharples. This was to be a year of much travel. There were trips to Tatton Hall, Fleetwood and Martin Mere. Then in May, Mr Fisher, Mrs Mills, Mrs Newman and myself took 34 children for one week to Edinburgh. Fortunately the misfortunes of the Oxford trip were not repeated, and everything went according to plan. We were lucky enough to be on the esplanade of Edinburgh Castle when there was a parade for the opening of the Scottish Assembly, and we were also there for the 21-gun salute. We had glimpses of Scottish history, with Robert Bruce, Dunfermline Abbey and Bannockburn looming large. The high point for many was Stirling Castle with its association with the television series 'Colditz.' We had a day in the Trossachs, and a trip to Edinburgh Zoo. By the time we were having our picnic in Cumbria on the way home, we had accumulated a host of pleasant memories. Again, the children were very well behaved. A week's residential holiday is often worth many a week in the classroom. Later in the year Mrs. Mills left, and

Mr Wallace and Mr. Ferguson were appointed.

Nursery unit opens

One of the high points of the year was the opening of the new Nursery Unit. Mrs. Angela MacQuiban was appointed teacher in charge, and Miss Carol Unsworth as a Nursery Assistant. They got the project off to a good start. Unfortunately, I was still having post-operation problems which meant more hospital visits. I was absent during November and December. I returned in January 1977 but the New Year brought little relief. Little had been learned from the past and the new Nursery Unit had all the heating problems, which had plagued the school since its beginning. Angry parents demanded a meeting with the school managers and myself. Subsequently two parent representatives were appointed who would be informed of developments as they arose.

Early retirement after a lifetime in teaching

My ill health, plus the continual frustration of school progress being continually hampered by matters beyond my control, meant that I became mentally as well as physically exhausted. In spite of the excellent support of Mr. Cooley and the staff, as well as the sympathetic understanding of the Director of Education, I decided to take early retirement.

The school log book for Aug. 31st. 1977 read:

"Meeting held to mark the retirement of Mr Jones. Those present included Mr. Hopkinson, Director of Education, Miss Cryer, Primary Schools Adviser, Mr. Bratt,

Continued on page 28

Magic Moments

Continued from page 27

Chairman of Managers. Gifts were received from parents, children and staff. A retirement present was also received from the staff of neighbouring school of St. Gabriel".

After a lifetime in teaching it was not the sort of retirement I had envisaged. I left with a feeling of disillusionment and personal dissatisfaction with my achievements.

The journey back to normality was greatly helped by personal contact, letters and visits from former pupils, parents and teachers associated with Higher Folds. Only the evening before writing this I received a phone call from a former Higher Folds pupil who would like to pay me a visit. He is now head of a University Department.

Former pupils of Higher Fold

include a psychologist, a university lecturer, and a number of graduates, teachers, nurses and local government workers. Some boys have entered the Police Force and one became a Chief Inspector, achieving an Open University degree en route. Two brothers help run a family business which employs some former pupils. In the field of sport, former members of the school rugby team include one who captained Great Britain schoolboys, one who is the proud possessor of two Wembley Cup winners' medals, and others who have played either amateur or professional rugby with Leigh and Wigan teams.

I would like to share some extracts from former pupils and members of staff.

"I just thought I would drop a line to the first person to have a big influence on my schooling. As I was thinking of you the other day I thought I would write and let you know that I have reached the final step to becoming a teacher, as you can see from the following address."

"At the moment I am working

hard at school for my O' levels. I am hoping to be a teacher in a junior school. My friend and I teach in a Sunday School in St. Matthews. We really enjoy it and think it will be a good help to our careers."

"I felt I had to write to you for giving me such a good training when I was at Higher Folds. During this holiday I have been catching up with my reading and looking through the 'Head Teachers' Review' I came across an article written by you. I am now head of a remedial reading centre and a lot of my time is spent working with teachers in schools and running in-service courses. The more schools I visit the more I am indebted to you for your guidance and wisdom when I was a young teacher."

"Believe me when I say you are not forgotten. What I learned from you was of real value to me. Often when I am dissatisfied with something I have done, I think thank goodness you weren't there to see it. On the other hand I've done many things I have been proud of and wish you had seen."

Remark Of A Five-Year-Old Boy
- "I wish you was me grand-dad."

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National Heritage Open Days

Chowbent Unitarian Chapel, a Grade 2* listed building situated on Bolton Old Road, Atherton, will be taking part in the National Heritage Open Days in September. The Chapel will be open to visitors on the following dates:

Friday	September 8	1.00-5.00
Saturday	September 9	1.00-5.00
Sunday	September 10	12.00-5.00

An exhibition of archive material can be viewed in the adjacent Chowbent Hall, where refreshments will be available.

Information on the Chapel is available on the Chapel website:

www.chowbent-unitarian-chapel.org.uk

Memories of Millgate

by Graham Parkinson

GROWING up in Wigan for the first 20 years or so of my life has left me with an indelible stamp of being a born and bred Wiganer, even though my accent has somewhat 'mellowed' over the years. A single visit back to the old Town is sufficient to bring back those early traces of the northern accent I used to have. I left Wigan in the early 1970's to live in Shropshire, so although I am only a couple of hours drive away, my visits are now restricted to visiting my mother, who still lives in the family home.

Reading issue 41 of *Past Forward*, I read with particular interest the short piece (p11) about the changing face of Millgate, due to the current developments taking place to create the new shopping centre.

My particular memories of Millgate go back many years to when my maternal grandmother, Sarah (Sally) Cunliffe, had a small shop at the top of Millgate, almost opposite the entrance to the Wiend. Imagine if you can the sheer delight of a young boy whose Nana had a sweet shop! And what a sweet

shop it was! I have vivid memories of the layout of the shop itself, with its rows of sweet jars, trays of sugary sweets and confections, lollypops and toffees, which all gave out the most delicious aromas. Just releasing the lid of one of the jars was enough to fill the shop with exciting, tantalising smells. It was the favourite haunt of many a young schoolboy on his way back from the baths at the bottom of the road. Having swum up and down the lengths for an hour, what better way to revive your sugar levels, than by filling a small, white paper bag with sweets. What you could buy for a few pence in those days is beyond belief today!

There were two windows, one of which was crammed full with all sorts of sweet smelling delights, and the other was given over to groceries and other products. I remember in particular, the huge piece of ham on the slicer, which always seemed to be permanently on display on the counter. There were food tins, teas, bread and of course cigarettes. In fact, it was everything that comes to mind when you think of the typical corner shop.

Now the sad part of the memories. Unfortunately, as is happening even now in parts of old Wigan, the shop had to make way for 'progress' and development, and my Nana had to give up the shop when it was designated as part of the site of the 'new' Civic Centre. The shop was demolished, and along with it went all those childhood memories. As well as being a business, it was my Nana and Granddad's home (as well as my mother's). I also know that for the first year of my life, I lived there with my parents until they bought the family home in Wigan Lane. What I regret of course, is that I have no photographic record of the shop at all, other than a very old and barely discernible one that shows the old Woolpack Inn that was next door. My uncle Eddie, who before he died, did many fine drawings of Wigan, did a pen and ink sketch, again of the Woolpack, and the shop is clearly visible. However, searching through other books of old Wigan with pictures, I can find nothing that shows this part of Millgate. I feel sure that at sometime in the dim and distant past, someone, somewhere must have taken a photograph of the shop. Maybe that link with my childhood past is lying in someone's photograph box, and I would dearly love to see it!

So, do you remember Cunliffe's shop? Did you buy sweets there as a youngster? Have you any photographs that you would be willing to share?

If anyone has any material they would like to share with Mr Parkinson, please let me know. Editor.



WOW

**Wigan One World
Multicultural Festival**

Mesnes Park, Wigan on
Sunday 6th August 2006 from 12noon-5pm
Don't miss out on WOW, the greatest
free event for the whole family in Wigan!

For more information telephone
01942 486929
www.wowfestival.org

Atherton Heritage Society

Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month at 7.30 pm, St. Richard's Hall, Mayfield Street, Atherton. Contact: Margaret Hodge (01942 884893)

8 August

The Eden Valley by Margaret Curry

12 September

My Dive to the Titanic by Steve Rigby

10 October

AGM followed by Civil and Ceremonial - the Mayoralty by Stephen Sanders (toastmaster)

14 November

The Accrington Pals by J. Turner

19 December Christmas Buffet

Aspull & Haigh Historical Society

Meetings are held in Our Lady's Church Hall, Haigh Road, Aspull on the 2nd Thursday of the month at 7.30pm. Further details from the secretary Mrs Barbara Rhodes (01942 222769).

14 September

A Photographic Presentation by Colin Balls.

12 October

An Off-beat Record by Marjorie Holt

9 November

Dave Guest – BBC North West Social Affairs Correspondent

14 December Christmas Party

Wigan Leisure Club

Wigan Leisure Club (formed by the Rotary) meet at St John's Club (St. John's Church, Standishgate, Wigan) every Tuesday from 2.00 - 4.00pm. We hold lunches, lectures and visit places of interest. So come and join us.

Contact Mr T Rigby (chairman) 01942 245601 or Mr B Diggles (secretary) 01942 235543.

Hindley & District History Society By Norma Brannagan

Hindley & District History Society members were not prepared for the sight that met us when first opening the door of Hindley Museum. At the Inaugural Meeting of our Society in January 2002, we had agreed that our initial aims were to re-establish the museum and generate greater interest for the local community.

Opening the door to this magnificent room left gasps of shock, not only at the racks and racks of boxed-up artefacts filling the room, the display cases lining the left hand side, empty of course and the partitions dotted around, but the pièce-de-résistance - the giant oak bookcase at the bottom end of the room which could not, on that first visit, be viewed in all its glory. Several of our members were speechless at this bookcase and its contents. Of course many of you will remember the museum when it was open, the bookcase was the first thing to take your attention as you entered the room.

SOCIETY NEWS

To all Secretaries

Would Secretaries please note the copy deadline on p2.

For those of you who are not aware, this is the John Leyland Bookcase and all the books in the top part of the case at the present time actually belonged to him. John Leyland was a well-known Hindley benefactor. He was unmarried and when he died in 1883 he left all his estate to Nathaniel Eckersley who built the Library and Museum and dedicated it to the memory of his friend. The Leyland Library and Museum was originally opened in 1887.

The Hindley & District History Society was formed in 2002 and is responsible, on Licence from the Local Authority, for the room that had previously been the Hindley Museum. We agreed to restore the area and provide facilities for the benefit of the community.

After many months of work by Society members with the help of the Local Council, the room was emptied of the artefacts and racking and the area cleaned and painted. Electrical and security systems were updated with the aid of funding from The Brighter Borough Fund and display cabinets were purchased, funded by the Eckersley Trust. Displays were set up with the help of Wigan Heritage Services plus privately donated items and our Opening Ceremony took place in December 2003.

All society members plus invited guests and local dignitaries attended the ceremony and Mr Roger Lowe, son of local historian Mr Jack Lowe, was invited to declare the museum open.



Roger Lowe, son of local historian Jack Lowe, at our opening ceremony.

Our displays include artefacts of local interest, many relating to openings of churches and schools and personal possessions of the Eckersley family. We have a display on mining in the area, another on toys of the last century and one set up showing tools belonging to Walter Hurst, a well-known local clogger, donated from his shop which has now closed down.

Other current projects include displays on local churches and pamphlets on the many churches that sprang up during the 19th century which are no longer in existence. Our most recent project is a Hindley Town Centre Trail giving historic information and photographs on places and buildings in the town that have either been demolished or are now almost unrecognisable in their present form. Copies of the Trail leaflet are available from either the Museum or the Library.

The Museum also has a research area with local resources and maps available for inspection either for dedicated local research or simply for personal interest.



The Museum today.

We recently welcomed children on a visit from a local primary school when members of our committee gave various talks on local history. This is something we hope to extend in the future. If any other schools are interested they should contact our Secretary.

The Museum is open to the public on either a Friday or a Saturday morning. Details available from the Library or by contacting our Secretary.

The Society Committee meet on the second Monday in the month in the Museum at 7.00 pm. On alternate meetings we have a speaker. Non-members are very welcome for a small charge.

With our special festive meeting in December and an annual summer outing we are an active, fun society.

If you would like to join our society or for further details on any of our activities please contact our secretary, Mrs Joan Topping on 01942 257361.

Walker Brother's Wartime Nursery

WE RECEIVED a very interesting response from Mr Atty, who was able to identify one of the nurses in the photograph published on page 35 issue 41 of Past Forward. He also supplied us with two other photographs of the nursery, and another of a play performed at Wigan Little Theatre by employees of Walker Brothers. The play 'Memories of Yesterday' was performed for charity in December 1961. The nursery pictures look as if they were taken on some special occasion. If anyone has other information, please contact me. Editor.

Dear Editor

Regarding the photograph in Past Forward (group of nurses at Walker Brother's employee nursery WWII). The young lady in the centre of the group of nurses was then Miss Marion Hall, soon to become my wife, Mrs Atty. They were at the Rectory in Frog Lane, and as you said, the women and men who worked in the shell shop, left their children at the house while they were at work, some were actually there all week, and some just for the day. There were three shifts, two during the day and one in the night. My wife said it was very scary at night, but they were on the beat of a policeman, named Don Black, who often called in about one o'clock in the morning.

Marion Hall was actually the daughter of Mr John Hall who was well known at Walker Brothers as foreman joiner and his brother, Jimmy Hall, was also well known. I myself was employed at Walker Brothers before being called up to the army in 1942.

There was also another picture in the same issue (Should the Invaders Come! Pp18-19) of some young ladies

lined up on Market Square. It's not the ladies that caught my eye, but the sign on the shop behind, J J Broughton, which was the forerunner of what is now JJB owned by Dave

Wheelan. This shop was the envy of all young people when I was young, as it sold all the best sports goods

Lawrence Atty,
Liverpool.





“A Chink of Light”

Dear Editor

Some readers may remember an article published in the local paper some time ago entitled “A Chink of Light”. The article referred to the wartime evacuation of the Channel Islanders and particularly the Guernsey children of the Vale School. As this year will be the 60th anniversary of my first visit with my family, I thought that it might be a suitable item of interest for your publication.

It was apparently a dark night late in July 1940 when my father was on his way home from his Home Guard duties. On passing our local chapel and adjoining Sunday School building in Loch Street, Lamberhead Green, he saw a chink of light showing through the blackout curtains of the schoolroom. As the time was close on midnight, he went to investigate, and found the schoolroom full of children and grownups.

These were the children, teachers and some mothers, who had come by train to Wigan. Grandfather, who was caretaker, had been roused by

the local bobby to open the building where they were to spend the night.

Following this, my father managed to acquire a small terraced house in Fleet Street, Pemberton, and two mothers with their five children stayed there for the duration. They had been evacuated on the only boat available. One sister obtained work, and the other looked after the children. They used to travel to either Bolton or Bury to the Channel Islands Society meetings, to try and get news of occupied Guernsey via the British Red Cross organisation. The children all attended Lamberhead Green School, and were members of the Loch Street Chapel. They remained together until the Islands were liberated in 1945, and left Wigan North West station following a tearful goodbye, and not knowing whether we would ever meet again.

However, father, who was in a war-time reserved occupation at Cammell Laird's ship repair yard, Birkenhead, decided to draw his war savings, and in 1946, we as a family went to Guernsey to see them again. A huge adventure for me, but of course not all the beaches and surrounding areas had yet been cleared of mines.

Since those days we have been back many times along with my children and grandchildren, a lifelong friendship still as strong as ever.

**Frank Moss
Upholland**

Little Bit of Heaven

Dear Editor,

Having lived in Shevington for forty-five years, we were surprised to read F Morris' account (A Little Bit of Heaven issue 42) of Elnup Wood's demise (referred by him as John Pit Wood) since he left the Parkbrook Lane area some years ago.

Happily, we have some good news for F Morris. The wood (now a Community Wood managed by Wigan and Chorley Groundwork Trust) has not been, “Ruthlessly torn-up to make way for a housing estate”. Not a twig was removed and an abundance of wild flowers still thrive there.

The waterfall created by the Old Mill Dam also continues on its merry way, and was not “All smashed up and diverted” as he contends.

The wood still is a “Little Bit of Heaven” though its tranquillity is occasionally shattered by “brain dead” motor-bike riders, who have obviously no appreciation of the threat they pose to its beauty.

**Barbara and John O'Neill
Shevington**

‘Do you Remember’

Dear Editor,

Many thanks for all the effort that you and your staff put in to making *Past Forward* so interesting.

The article ‘Do You Remember’ (issue 42 p31) has prompted me to write. I read it and was immediately transported back to the forties and fifties. Myself and my mum would catch the Ribble Bus in Upholland to go shopping on Saturday afternoon. Two things came to mind straightaway. The advertisement on the bus inviting the people to go for a sail on Lake Windermere on one of four boats, The Swan, The Swift, The Teal and The Tern. Also there was a warning notice against spitting and that one could be fined £5.

Just like Mr Heaviside, I too remember Lowes, but I must admit, I cannot remember a restaurant in the store. What I do recall, is seeing the ‘mannequins’ walking around in the latest fashions that you could buy on the first floor. This must have been just after the end of the war, and I have often wondered just who were these ladies.

I remember the lovely smell of coffee that came from Makinsons, the shop at the end of Makinson Arcade, where staff would grind the coffee beans of the customers' choice.

I remember going to a small shop in the Royal Arcade that sold baby clothes. The Viyella name seemed to be on every article, and I used to think that was the name of the shop, but I think I am wrong. It was here that mum would buy nappies, vests and liberty bodices for my new baby brother.

Sometimes, we would go across Mesnes Street to Taylor's drapery shop to buy my dad his bib and braces. He was a maintenance fitter in the mines, and had not only to buy his own protective overalls, but mum had to wash them every Monday. No washing machines, just a dolly tub and hard work. I remember the shop assistant carefully folding then wrapping them in brown paper and tying the parcel with string. No plastic bags in those days.

I loved going down the old arcade with my pocket money to stand and stare at the comics and magazines that were on offer. Would it be the Beano, the Dandy or some other enticing comic? I remember sitting on a chair, being weighed by the gentleman who owned the scales that was opposite the paper stall.

Redman's stall in the market would have to be visited for some of their smoked bacon. I can smell it now, and of course a quarter pound of boiled ham “Cut on the bone”. Or perhaps a ham shank to make pea soup. No pre-packed food in those days, and we never had food poisoning.

Santus's toffee stall next. Quarter pound of their treacle toffee, all for me. Watching the assistants breaking it up with their little hammers, weighing it out and putting it into paper bags. Oh yes, they sold other sweets, but treacle toffee was my favourite.

Perhaps if we had time, we would pop into Laces cake shop on Standishgate for a cream cake for tea.

On Market Square stood Baker's Jewellery shop, where mum and dad bought me my first watch.

I remember Parkinson's furniture dealers on the Wiend. I don't know when they started the business, but it was where my parents had bought the furniture for their first home in 1934, which consisted of bedroom suite, bedstead, mattress and cover, bolster and pillows, extending table and a cowhide three piece suite for the princely sum of £38 16s 6d. I believe that the shop has now gone.

Market Place was one hive of activity, with people queuing for Wigan Corporation and Lancashire United buses, and the Market Square would be just as busy with people queuing for Ribble buses.

No doubt other readers will be writing in with their memories, but these are just some of mine.

**Joan Barron
Wilmslow
Cheshire**



Bay Horse Hotel, Ince

Dear Editor

On reading several issues of your magazine, I cannot find any articles on Ince. I was wondering if you have any history or articles on the subject?

I grew up in Ince, at the Bay Horse Hotel, Manchester Road. I am considering writing a piece on life in the district, centred on

the pub and possibly the Clarington Forge. My parents were licensees of the Bay Horse from 1935 until 1970, and were very well known and respected in the area.

Their names were Stanley and Cissie Hocking. Stanley was related to the famous author Silus Hocking from Cornwall (moved to Liverpool). Cissie was related to James Bullough of the RFC / RAF from WW1.

I have numerous photos and letters (from the WW1 front etc.) of the period.

**Mrs. Elsie Alker
(nee Hocking)
Blackpool**

I, and all our readers, look forward to Mrs Alker's article. Any other readers out there who think Ince is under-represented in Past Forward, please send in your articles. Editor.

Wigan Memories

Dear Editor,

Although I have enjoyed *Past Forward* so much over the years, I have never written to you before. However, the wealth of memories that came flooding back on reading the letter from Mr Heaviside (issue 42 p.31) has prompted me to send some of my own.

My mother was a tailoress, working from home, and as a very young girl, I used to go into the basement at Pendlebury's (now Debenhams) for flax, canvas and pipe clay, which was a kind of white chalk used to mark the places for buttonholes etc on men's suits. One day I asked for clay pipe instead of pipe clay, much to the amusement of the immaculately dressed gentleman assistant. I remember being in tears on seeing the devastation that the fire at Pendlebury's had caused in later years

At Meesons Sweet Shop in Market Street, one could buy a quarter of sweets and get another quarter free!

I remember the wonderful aroma of coffee coming from Makinsons Shop in the Makinson Arcade (now Thorntons).

What about the Maypole Shop, where the assistant would pat lumps of butter into a perfect half pound shape, using two wooden paddles. No pre-packs in those days. This was fascinating to watch.

As children, watching Father Christmas arriving at Lowes was the highlight of the year. When he got halfway up the ladder on his way to the chimney, he would 'accidentally' slide down a few rungs, as if he was going to fall, and we held our breath. Great stuff!

The years rolled by, war came and we had to grow up fast. I was drafted into munitions as a teenager, working on a capstan lathe in the men's tool room, doing twelve hour night shifts. Those days were very hard times, but peace eventually returned.

Thanks for the memory Mr Heaviside, and thank you editor for the great *Past Forward* publication

**Joyce Glover
Ince**

Windsor Family Refugees

Dear Christine

Recently I was at my parents house in Shevington, and I came across *Past Forward* issue 42, for which there was an article headed 'A Refuge in Wigan'.

This article was about my family. They were part of the 709 refugees that arrived from Guernsey in the Channel Islands. They were the Windsor family (10 members) my mother was the youngest. They were

Dear Christine,

I respond to your request to provide you with information I have concerning the arrival of evacuees from Guernsey in 1940.

A number of them were taken to St. Paul's School in Goose Green. One boy named Frank Rowe was "adopted" by Mr and Mrs Catterall who lived in the terraced house on the corner of St. Paul's Avenue in Warrington Road Goose Green (they have since been demolished and new ones erected).

Frank was enrolled at St. Matthew's CE School Highfield and he joined my class. We became very friendly and the friendship continued until he went back home immediately after the Islands were liberated. He was very well cared for by Mr and Mrs Catterall. She is still alive and lives with her sister in Upholland. She is in her mid 90's. Frank and his wife Hazel visit her as often as they can.

I went in the forces in February 1946 until August 1948. Frank and I corresponded during that period especially whilst I was in the Middle East. He invited me over to Guernsey on my demob and along with another school friend (Bill Maddocks) we had a week at Franks parents' home in Vale. This is the connection with the school mentioned in your article. Frank's mother and baby brother were sent to Bolton and it was a long time before Frank found out that they had come to England. His father and elder brother did not get away from the Island and were there for the duration of the German occupation.

Guernsey Refugees

You mention 343 Ormskirk Road, Pemberton. The house is on Spring Bank and one of the families who lived there was the DeLa Mare's. (I am not sure of the spelling)

One of them, Ronnie, was in my brother's class at Highfield School.

Another family, named Poole, lived at 260 Ormskirk Road near the area called Union Bridge. There were two girls named Kathleen and Brenda. Both parents were with them so far as I can recall.

DANCE IN TIME

I can empathise with all that is said in the article by Fred Darbyshire, although I do not know him. I was going to many of the places he mentions and listening to the bands he danced to. I was 14 in 1941 and became a great fan of the Big Band sound. I have to confess that my favourite was Glen Miller. He always put me "in the mood"

I recall the farewell concert of Reginald Dixon. He did a tour of the British Isles. In Wigan he appeared at the Queens Hall and the place was packed. From memory it was in the late 1970's. He had his own instrument to play on but during the performance he was asked to play the Church organ. He played the hymn Crimond.

The whole audience joined in and as there were many people from church choirs in the audience the effect was uplifting. He commented about the quality of the Wigan choir.

I hope these memories are of interest to you.

Harold Wood

Dear Christine Watts

I saw your article in Issue 42 on the refugees from Guernsey. I was interested to read about the Windsor family as one of their sons, Derek Windsor, is married to my sister, Rose, and now lives in Whelley, Wigan. His parents and his sister, Wilma, and brother, Ken are now deceased, but they continued to live in Wigan until their deaths. My brother-in-law, Derek, often told us stories about their arrival in Wigan. Thank you for an interesting article.

Pearl Pennington



Robert Ogden, Gone But Not Forgotten – Generous Gift

Dear Editor

Following the publication of my article on my Great Uncle in *Past Forward*, issue 42, I received a telephone call from the Wigan History Shop. Apparently a gentleman in Leigh had read the article, and on checking his collection, had discovered he had in his possession a medal that had been presented to Robert Ogden when he was on HMS Nelson in 1932. Not only that but he was willing to hand-over the medal free of charge, which he duly did. I had presumed, quite wrongly as it turned out, that he was a collector and that he had purchased the medal. The truth was that it had been found in Leigh around 33 years ago. How it came to be there is a mystery! Another mystery is what the medal was presented for. It is inscribed "Kings Cup Winner H M S Nelson A B R Ogden 1932". I have had various suggestions but nothing that I can be absolutely sure about.

I presume that all Richard's medals were presented to him during his lifetime, but I have written to the Ministry of Defence to clarify the situation and, all being well, I should receive a full list of all his honours and possibly discover all about the Kings Cup. Until next time!

Paul Ogden

The very generous 'gentleman' was in fact Mr John Taylor of Leigh. Editor.

Dancing and Rugby

Dear Editor

Your photograph of the Madhatters dance band (Issue 42 p26) brought back a flood of memories. I wonder if many of your readers know that the band was effectively the musical wing of Shamrock Rovers Amateur Rugby League Club, though I don't remember if many of the bandsmen played rugby or the rugby men musical instruments for that matter. The Initials THYC on the music stands stood for the Tudor House Youth Club and the club was founded around the Shamrock Rovers team which, as its name might suggest, was a breakaway from the Saint Patricks Club. I have no idea what the reasons for the breakaway were, but the club was formed and run by Mr and Mrs Aldred who worked hard to raise funds to keep the club going. The drummer in the photograph was their son Kevin, hence the initials KA on the drum.

The clubhouse was in fact the long since closed down Gibraltar Public House at number 223 Scholes, "t'Gib" as it was still known locally. I can just remember my Dad's family living at number 227 until they moved across the road to the corner shop at the end of Coop Street around 1938. After the Gibraltar closed I think it became a lodging house for some time. Anyway Mr and Mrs Aldred, with the help of the lads, made a decent job of making it habitable as a youth club, where the band could practice and the rugby players get together. Mr Aldred had plans to make a workshop in the cellar and in fact our star wing threequarter at that time, Bob Adamson, actually built a canoe down there.

In its early days, Shamrock Rovers competed on level terms in the local league and produced some very good players, most famously the popular Wigan forward Frank Collier and loose forward Harry Myers who played for Blackpool Borough.

In my day the team was coached by several wonderful men, particularly Jack Connah and George Snape. These fellows took us to our most successful result, beating St. Helens B team, including at least five professionals and coached by the legendary Jim Sullivan, by 21 points to 20 at Knowsley Road in the league final. Rugby League was no softer then than it is now and I will always thank Jack Connah for his simple philosophy of life. I painfully remember walking off the field clutching a damaged wrist. Jack took one look at it and said "I think tha's brokken it, get back on and keep gooin wit yed dehn". X-rays at Wigan Infirmary later confirmed Jack's diagnosis. I always remember this whenever things get tough. Referees also seemed to show a similar way of thinking. Referee Lol Macyntyre on one occasion, after inspecting a badly frozen pitch, previously churned up by grazing cows, declared that it was a bit on the hard side but would be alright if we tackled carefully! No Health and Safety or Risk Assessments in those days.

In our early days at the Cale Lane ground at New Springs our changing room was the old, door-less stable on the canal bank at the rear of the Commercial Inn. No showers of course but in the warmer weather a swim in the canal was

a reasonable substitute. On more than one occasion I remember several of us covered in mud, washing all visible parts of the body, putting on our best suits, including collars and ties and going to catch the "Passion Wagon" train from Wigan North West station for a night's dancing at Blackpool's Tower Ballroom or Winter Gardens (4/6d for train and ballroom ticket). No, I don't remember the girls at Blackpool being all that welcoming, I wonder what we were doing wrong?

We were later provided with a Nissen hut with showers, but by this time local amateur rugby league was in long term decline, due in my opinion to neglect by the Wigan club who, at a time when they were attracting crowds of over 40,000 spectators at Central Park, put so little back into the amateur game; a game that was producing players of world class such as Dave Bolton, Norman Sherrington and others too numerous to mention. The lads had discovered that they could go up to the local Rugby Union Clubs, have a game of rugby and then enjoy all the facilities of the clubhouse to follow. The days of canal baths was over. A number of us Shamrock players who worked at the De Havilland Aircraft Company's factory at Lostock went on to start a Rugby Union Club at the factory. The team, some may remember, went over to the South of France and convincingly beat a team in Figeac composed mainly of French first division players. Happy days!

**Tom Heaton
Telford
Shropshire**

Jack Fulton, New Springs ARP Group

Dear Editor

My sister and I were interested to see the photos of air raid wardens in issue 41 and spotted our late dad, Jack Fulton, standing on the right in the New Springs ARP group. We recognise some of his colleagues as Mr Telford, Mr Rutter, Mr Collier, Mr Lloyd and Mr Baker. All of these gentleman are, sadly, no longer with us. Their photo was taken at the New Springs ARP post at the old Coal Board Offices (known locally as "Top Place") at the top of Cale Lane. The buildings are now part of Kirkless Industrial Estate.

Issue 42 featured Coops & Co Ltd's plaque

dedicated to employees who lost their lives serving their country in the Great War. Our uncle, Norman Fulton, was one those soldiers. We remember our dad telling us that his brother joined the Royal Field Artillery as a very young man. Sadly he never came back. When passing Wigan parish church we often pause to look at Uncle Norman's name on the cenotaph. Norman had continued a family tradition at Coops as his dad, our granddad William Fulton, had worked there as a tailor.

**Clarice Bithell & Alma Hampson
New Spring**



Reminiscences of Farming

Dear Editor,

Several months ago, in the History Shop, I was browsing through a collection of notes by Ray Winstanley (Winstanley and Highfield – Further History, 1998) when I came across the following :-

Reminiscences of Farming

“The small farms were not mechanised and relied entirely on horse power and manual handling (in 1940’s). The only exception was the thresher which came round once or twice a year to local farms. This was driven by Billy Berry and at about this time was still powered by a steam traction engine.”

This instantly brought back a host of memories since Billy Berry was my father. The cry “Thresher’s comin’” would be passed on by small boys playing in the streets of Lamberhead Green near to John Alker’s Chapel Street farm and my childhood home in Redwood Avenue. The puffing of the traction engine would then be heard, and the procession of engine, threshing-machine, straw-baler and straw-binder would slowly appear, to the boys’ delight and awe and to the indignation of passing dogs and cats.

I remember as a small child being taken to see the engine in Alker’s farmyard and at that time being rather frightened of it. However, over the years I developed a fondness for the sight, sound and smell of the traction engine which I still have, frequently nourished by trips to open-air steam shows in the summer months.

My father had a wealth of stories he used to tell of the

farming times he knew which covered the end of the centuries-old farming methods and the establishment of full mechanisation. He died in 1992 at the ripe old age of 86 years.

I intend in the not too

distant future to put on record what we, the next generation, remember of our father’s stories as a tribute to the people of this past era for, as they say, we shall never see their like again.

Tony Berry
Ashton-in-Makerfield

Who? Where?

We have had a number of identifications for the photographs in issue 42, some of them conflicting, but some, where there is a good degree of consensus. Editor.

Picture 1 - Group with trophy and a man wearing a (mayoral?) chain. We have had three different id’s for this, anyone know who’s right?

Mr Kevin Hayton of Whelley thinks it is Wigan Boys Brigade Battalion Athletics Team at Mesnes Playing Fields. Another reader thinks it is a sports presentation (annual games) of Wigan Grammar School. Finally, Mr Rob Richards – Pupils of Thomas Linacre School who joined in 1954 aged 11.

Picture 3 - Walking Day.

Mrs Grundy of Leigh thinks it is Chapel Street Leigh and St Joseph’s Boys.

Picture 4 - Man with horse.

Everyone seems agreed that this is Arthur Telford who lived in Heeley St, Swinley, Wigan, and his horse (named Timbo!) was kept in Toddy Telford’s garage.

Picture 5 - Building

Everyone (Mrs Barbara Carter, Alan Wright and others) agrees that this is the Isolation Hospital on Bryn Road, Ashton.



Throughout the Summer and Autumn Parks across the borough will be hosting a wide range of activities and events including:

- Health Walks ● Bat Walks ● Craft Activities
- Orienteering ● Family Fun Days ● Free Music Events
- Conservation Days ● And much more...

For further information, and to receive your copy of Greenspaces - our free guide containing complete listings of all Park events, please contact:

01942 **828828** or visit

www.wlct.org/greenspaces

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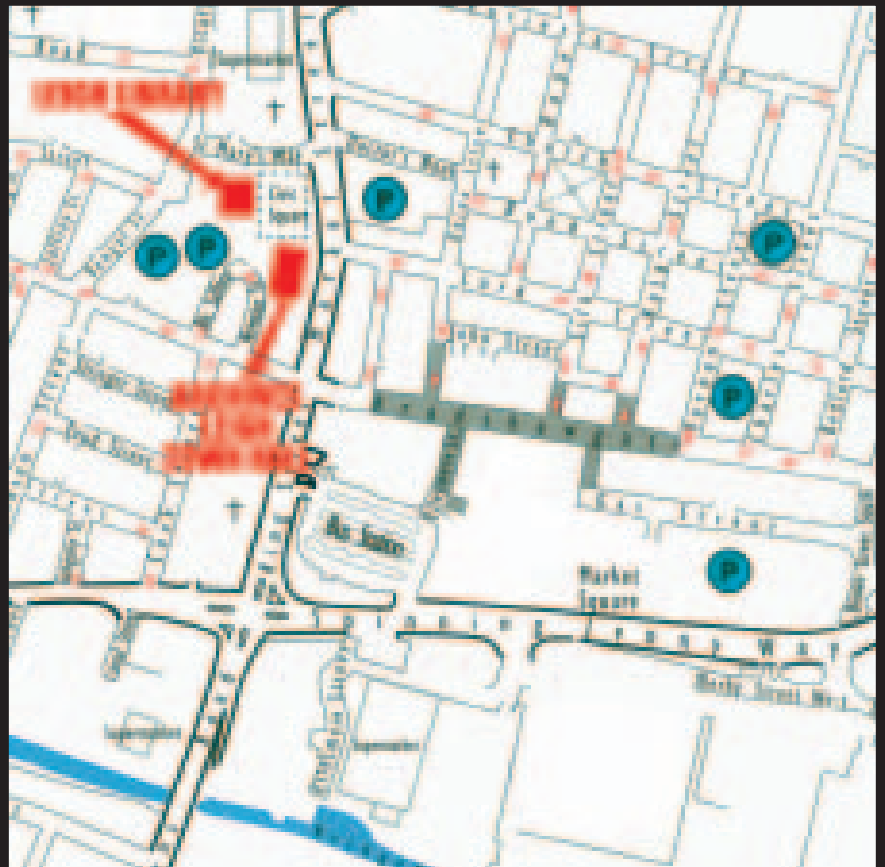
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