

PAST FORWARD

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T R U S T

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FRONT COVER PICTURE

Mayor Eunice Smethurst with Rainbows at the opening of the Girl Guiding exhibition at The History Shop (see page 7).

Letter from the Editorial Team

The editorial team have had many favourable comments about the new look **PAST FORWARD** so thank you for your encouragement and positive responses. One or two of you made us aware of points you did not like about the change and suggested further improvements we may like to consider. We will be looking at ways to work your suggestions into future editions so you may notice a bit of 'tweaking' here and there.

This is the first issue where we have levied a £1 charge. The money we raise will contribute to the cost of production and enable further improvements. It is hoped that it will also cut down on wastage and from what most of you have told us, you think it is reasonable, still considered good value and well worth the nominal charge. We have extended the places that you can obtain a copy which are listed below. Remember that **PAST FORWARD** is also available by subscription to the Friends of Wigan Heritage Service, and you may find it useful to consider this option (see coupon below).

We hope you continue to enjoy reading **PAST FORWARD**.

Carole Tyldesley – Head of Heritage Services

Your next copy can be purchased from: The History Shop, Archives Leigh Town Hall, Tourist Information Centre, Haigh Hall and all the borough's libraries.

Friends of Wigan Heritage Service

- I would like to become a member of 'Friends of Wigan Heritage Service' and receive copies of Past Forward through the post.

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Contributors please note the deadline for receipt of material for publication.

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17th September 2007

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Requests to Pass on Information

Please note, that if you wish us to pass information on to contributors, you must include a stamped envelope. We will add the address label, see opposite for our policy on this.

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Amendments

In issue 45 it was stated that Florence Broomfield had written a book of poems entitled 'Spirit of Wigan'. This is not the case. Her poem the 'Spirit of Wigan' has been published in a book of poetry entitled 'Awakening of the Mind'

In issue 45 the illustrations which accompanied the article on the Roman bathhouse in Wigan were wrongly attributed to Oxford Archaeology North. In fact they were the work of David Horrocks of Wigan Archaeological Society.

We apologise for any inconvenience or offence.

Editor.

Information for Contributors

Contributors often ask questions about submitting articles for publication. We have listed some useful information below. It is rather dry reading, but hopefully will help you send in your article, and let you know what to expect.

Publication

Publication of articles is at the discretion of the editorial team, who cannot guarantee publication, and reserve the right to edit material submitted.

Material selected for publication will remain on file until published, after which date it will be disposed of.

Rejected material will be disposed of immediately.

Submission of Articles

Contributions are preferred in electronic format, however, type and handwritten submissions will be accepted. The maximum length should be about 1500 words. Articles are much more interesting if they are accompanied by illustrations, so if you have them, send them in. If you wish to be published in a particular edition, please ensure that you submit by our advertised deadline.

Your submissions must include your name and address. Anonymous articles will not be published, nor kept on file.

All contributions received, will be acknowledged.

We cannot return material, with the exception of photographs, unless requested and accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope.

Requests for Information to be Passed to Contributors

We occasionally receive requests from readers or other contributors to pass information on. We will not pass on your contact details unless you have given us permission to do so, eg published on our 'Can You Help' page. We will ask if you wish to receive such information, but of course you are under no obligation to do so.

Contact Details

y.webb@wlct.org or The Editor, **PAST FORWARD**, History Shop, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NQ.



From Counter to Checkout in Wigan

By Dr Adrian Bailey

It seems that we are no longer, as Napoleon once described, 'a nation of shopkeepers'.

Following the Second World War, Britain saw a transformation in the way people shopped for food and places like Wigan are no exception. Traditional counter shops were gradually replaced by self service stores, which evolved into supermarkets. The supermarket had a massive impact on shopping, revolutionizing the layout of the shop and offering a dizzying array of new goods. But little is known about how consumers reacted to these new spaces in the north of England.

Leigh old boy Gareth Shaw, Professor of Retail Management at the University of Exeter, is carrying out a nationwide research project to learn more about how the supermarket

transformed everyday life in twentieth-century Britain and would like to hear a selection of readers' memories about this.

In the 1940s, Wiganers purchased rationed goods from counter service shops typified by 'Maypole' and 'Meadow Dairy', located in Market Place, or the more up market 'Valentines' on Mesnes Road. Shopping took place on a daily basis and was supplemented by fresh produce from market stalls and home grown fruit and vegetables grown on the allotment. Most shops delivered weekly orders to customer's homes, and many are the stories of delivery boys stumbling upon families undertaking their weekly scrub in a tin bath by the kitchen range.

The first self-service shops were introduced to Britain during the 1940s by the Co-operative Society. The first successful Co-op had been established by the Rochdale Pioneers Society in 1844. By 1938, there were 1,100 co-operative societies and 24,000 shops throughout Britain. The Co-op's eventual conversion to self-service was a successful experiment designed to reduce queuing. The Co-op had a disproportionately large number of customers registered for rationed goods, compared to other multiples, both during and after the Second World War. Adapting store designs observed in America, the Co-op had converted around 600 of its shops to self-service by 1950.

The first self-service food shop in the North West opened in St. Helens in November 1948. In December, *The North Western Co-operative News* reported that "to the St. Helen's housewife the changeover was bewildering. She left the shop on Saturday lunchtime with its old counters, wall fixtures and decorations, and on Monday morning found herself in a world of smart cream and silver display gondolas".

The Co-operative Societies were not the only pioneers in the

North-West. Following a career ending in injury in the 1960s, the Blackburn Rovers football star, Dave Whelan, used his £400 compensation payment to buy a small grocery business operating from Blackburn Market. The business expanded and he eventually opened a branch in Hope Street, Wigan. Barrie Heaton recalled that "Whelan's shop bears no comparison with a modern supermarket. The store used to be an ordinary shop and had been converted to self-service without any major changes to the building. The aisles were very narrow to accommodate all the goods and there was no room for trolleys. Shoppers' had to use baskets. Whelan's was typical of supermarkets in the town centre, because there was no car parking attached to the store. That part of town was a real bottle neck for traffic and most people shopping at Whelan's would catch the bus from over the road."

Another pioneer was William Morrison, who began his career in Bradford as a wholesaler selling eggs and butter. By the 1940s, his business had grown to support a number of counter service shops. The major change occurred in 1961, when Ken Morrison, then company chairman, bought an abandoned

theatre in Bradford and converted it into Morrisons first supermarket. The new store had over 5,000 square feet of floor space and parking spaces for customers looking to conduct a one-stop-shop. Morrisons expanded into Lancashire in 1978, when it purchased Whelan's Discount Stores for £1.5 million.

Wigan had its own more unusual shop conversions to boast about. Many readers may remember Princess Cinema on King's Street. Founded in 1923, the cinema closed in 1972 and was converted into a Tesco self-service store. The cinema had an imitation white marble façade and a blue tiled interior, which made collecting those Green Shield Stamps much more attractive. Readers may remember that Tesco eventually dropped Green Shield Stamps when it embarked on its Operation Checkout campaign in 1977.



Latimer Delivery Boys.

Wherever you live in Britain, if you can remember shopping for food and groceries between 1945 and 1975, researchers at the University of Exeter would like to hear from you. The Arts and Humanities Research Council are funding Professor Gareth Shaw and myself to carry out a nationwide survey, using questionnaires and interviews.

We want to know what frustrated and excited you about your past shopping trips. What did you first like or dislike about self-service shopping and supermarkets? What did you buy, from where, and why? If you would like to participate in the survey, or find out more about the project, please visit our website at www.exeter.ac.uk/sobe/shopping or call on 01392 262 523.

FAMILY HISTORY

New edition of Genealogical Sources

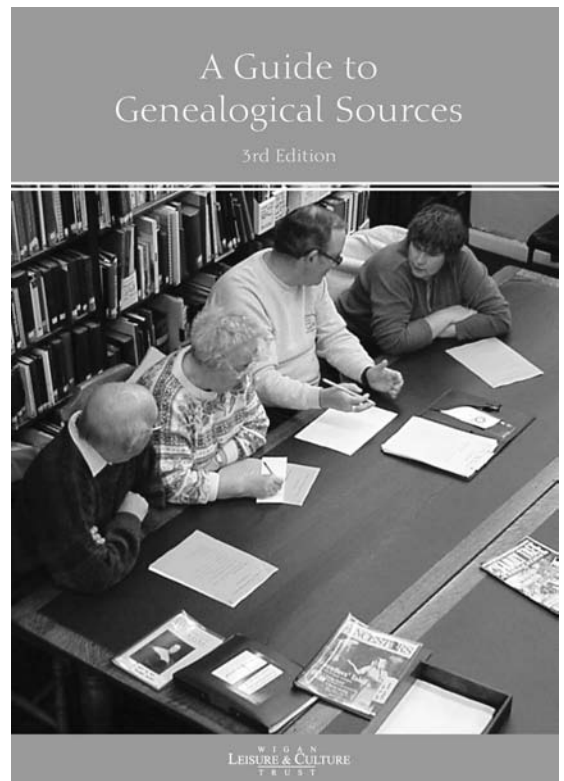
The third edition of *A Guide to Genealogical Sources* was published at the end of March, and is available from The History Shop, price £3.95 (mail order add £1 p&p, and make cheques payable to Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust).

It is an invaluable guide to the reference materials we hold, and no family history researcher should be without it!

Family History Workshop Dates 2007

There are two sessions per date, at 1.30pm and 3.30pm in The History Shop. The cost is £3.50, which includes a useful information pack and personal tuition. Booking is essential - 01942 828128. Please note, in order to be certain of a place, packs must be paid for and collected prior to attending a session.

September 5th
October 3rd, 17th, 31st
November 14th, 28th



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Contact Wigan TIC for available dates.
Places on all tours are limited. Tickets required.
Coming this Summer, Guided Walks along the canal.



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EXHIBITIONS AT THE HISTORY SHOP



Girlguiding
Lancashire South

Exhibition Opening The History of Girl Guiding in Wigan Borough

The History Shop played host to over 140 (and we lost count after a while!) rainbows, brownies, girl guides, guide leaders and their parents on the 16th April, when the exhibition celebrating the 20th anniversary of the foundation of our local guiding county of Lancashire South was opened by the Mayor, Mrs Eunice Smethurst. We have never seen such a lively, loud and colourful event!

The exhibition, put together by senior Girlguiding officials, Susan Heyes (Lancashire South Archivist) and Susan Knowles, is fascinating and nostalgic. There are lots of badges and uniforms on display. There is also a 'memories book', where ex-guides can record their guiding experiences (this will be added to the archive). The organisation is also anxious to recruit volunteers (did you know that it is the most popular girls organisation in the UK?) you can leave your details at The History Shop. There is just time to catch the exhibition before it closes on 11 August.

THE
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EXHIBITIONS

FORTHCOMING EXHIBITIONS AT THE HISTORY SHOP

The History of Girl Guiding in Wigan Borough

A celebration of 20 years of Girlguiding Lancashire South
We are proud of our roots... but look at us now.

On 1st April 2007 Girlguiding Lancashire South celebrated its 20th birthday. This exhibition traces the history of Girlguiding locally from its introduction, first in Leigh and then in Wigan, to their current position as part of the UK's leading organisation for girls and young women.

ENDS AUGUST 11TH FREE TO ATTEND



A Feast Of Photography!

Talented local photographers display their award winning work. You will be able to vote for your favourite produced by the Wigan Society, and wonder at the digitally engineered images for which the Atherton Society is justly famous.

WIGAN PHOTOGRAPHIC ANNUAL SHOW COMMENCES
25TH AUGUST - 8TH SEPTEMBER
ATHERTON PHOTOGRAPHIC ANNUAL SHOW COMMENCES
11TH - 25TH SEPTEMBER



FREE TO ATTEND

OPENING HOURS:

MON/TUES: 10.30AM - 3PM, WED: CLOSED
THUR/FRI: 10.30AM - 3PM, SAT: 10AM - 1PM

VENUE: HISTORY SHOP, LIBRARY ST, WIGAN.



EXHIBITIONS

Tel: 01942 828128
www.wlct.org/heritage

Scholes Remembered

By Tom Ollerton

I was born in 1925 at Number 5 School Lane next to the Old Bluebell Pub. We were a family of 5, my mother, Janet, father, James William, sister, Jenny and older brother Herbert (now deceased) who will be remembered for contributions to Past Forward. Number 5 was a typical small row house heated by coal and coke from the gas works, and lighting supplied by a single quirky gas mantle

My most vivid memories cover the time when I was around seven or eight years of age. I am sure that age my inner feeling was that Scholes was the capital of Wigan. Of course, this was not true, but at that time, Scholes still had a Dickensian feel about it.

The Bluebell was brought to life each morning around five, when the miners clogs could be heard coming down Scholes to meet the Bickershaw or Abram bus. Whilst waiting for the bus, the men would squat against the wall. They would return at return 2 or 3 in the afternoon with blackened faces.

Coming up Scholes from the crossing was a variety of small shops, starting with Jim Livesey's News and Tobacco shop, remembered for the ounce of thick twist for my father. Continuing up was the cobbler shop, where I was "fitted" with my first pair of clogs. This was followed by Fairclough's, supplying household pots, pans and more. Above the "entry" was the Butterworth Bakeshop, a treat for all youngsters' eyes and ably attended to by the two or three of Butterworth's good looking daughters. Still higher up was the butchers shop (Marsden?) and a ladies hat shop, (Norcliffe?) followed by a pottery shop, that sold things like cups, saucers and teapots. Here, a delightful lady with a pronounced lisp, sometimes served, and the young children would try and imitate - once they got outside!

On the other side of Scholes, I believe the Cusani's had a good fruit and vegetables business on the corner, almost immediately followed by the mysterious Moy Toy laundry, where I would take my neighbour's shirts to be starched. I preferred to have a friend go in with me because we both scared stiff of the owner. Immediately next door was every man's barber, Joe Foster. My next door neighbour was James Higson who had



*Whelley Senior Schoolboys 1938-39
with the Daily Despatch Cup and Shield - Wood Cup.*

been blinded in the First World War. I used to guide my next door neighbour, James Higson (blinded in the First World War) to Joe's place, and of course would sit and listen to all the conversations, war, peace, money and rugby. The place next door to the barber's was unusual, it had quite a wide frontage with no name on it, but had the saving grace that at certain times you could knock on the door and buy broken biscuits for halfpenny or a penny a bag. Not to miss out on the gem of Scholes was Bolton's, herbalist and purveyor of the good tonics of life including the vile tasting Senna Pods. A friend said, "if you have never had Senna Pods you've never lived!" One time when I wasn't well my Aunt Martha said, "it's very good stuff and will work you." I only found out later what she meant! Completing this part of Scholes was the "Fleece", a good looking pub and Lace's the confectioner.

Later on I attended Whelley Senior School from the age of 11 to 14. Nothing special here, except that in the final year we had quite a decent rugby team and our successes included the local Wood Cup, The Daily Dispatch Cup followed by the Lancashire Shield. This covered other schools in the country. Apart from winning a small cup and three medals, the biggest treat was that each presentation was held at Vose's Café next to the Old Lowe's building. Those magnificent meat and potato pies served up in their own fancy oval earthenware dishes were the next best thing, and I'm sure our first introduction to haute cuisine! An interesting aside to our match played against St Pats on the "Chemic", a pitch made of fine black cinders, was that at the end of the match, some of the boys sat



WHELLEY SENIOR SCHOOL (WIGAN), winners of the "Daily Dispatch" Schoolboys Rugby League Competition last night. Left to right (back row): H. Brindle, T. Ollerton, N. Brown, F. Bolton, J. Bridge, T. Norris, J. Grindley; (front row) R. McGleave, F. Halliwell, P. Turner (captain), W. Breakwell, K. Bland, A. Winstanley. Below: The Mayor of Wigan, Alderman T. Ramsden, presenting the Shield to the Whelley captain.



WIGAN BOYS' TRIUMPH IN RUGBY SHIELD FINAL

Whelley S.S. (Wigan) 9pts., Rivington-rd. S. (St. Helens) 3pts.

WHILE the final of the Daily Dispatch Schoolboys Shield Rugby League Competition at Central Park, Wigan, last night did not produce the high standard of football shown in last season's final, when Wigan St. Joseph's had such a wonderful team, the keenness of the struggle kept interest alive until the last few minutes.

Rivington-road were handicapped through the failure of their forwards in scrummaging. In this department and at full-back, Whelley had a big advantage. It was only on rare occasions that the Rivington-road forwards heeled out, and consequently their backs were defending for the greater part of the game.

There was little opportunity of seeing how Ball, the diminutive 11-year-old scrum-half of Rivington-road, would shape, but in Kenyon, the left winger, the St. Helens school had a brilliant raider. Every time he got a pass he ran brilliantly, and he scored his try with a grand aprint.

Fairclough, at full-back, was rather faulty in his fielding, although he kicked very well and made one sparkling run. O. Critchley was a strong forward.

FINE FULL-BACK

Winstanley, Whelley's full-back, was outstanding. He fielded feintlessly and kicked a good length. Ollerton, however, was not in his usual form at centre, and apart from the magnificent run which produced Whelley's third try he was rarely prominent.

Bland was well watched at scrum half, and Turner, too, was not allowed much scope.

Whelley's best attacking back was Norris, and he made full use of his one real chance to score in the face of formidable opposition.

In the first half there was only one try scored, Turner crossing for Whelley from a five-yards scrum.

Ten minutes after the interval Rivington-road drew level when Kenyon crossed for a great try at the corner, but Norris responded with a try for Wigan, and Ollerton got a third.

A crowd of 4,000 saw the game.

Mr. J. Finagan, of Leigh, chairman of the Lancashire Schools Rugby League, presided at the presentation ceremony, and he said that Wigan schools had won the Shield nine times in the 14 seasons of the competition. Whelley previously won it in 1934.



Wigan Schoolboys. Lancashire Champions. 1938-39

Whelley Senior Schoolboys 1938-39

astride chairs while the coaches picked cinders from our backs with a needle followed up with a dab of the usual iodine!

A coincidence and certainly quite a surprise occurred about 16 years later to one of the St Pats players, Bruce Taylor. As an engineer on the old Queen Mary, I was coming home on leave and met Bruce's sister, Barbara, on the train to Wigan. Later on, Bruce's surprise was evident when he saw us coming out of the Old Court Hall one evening. Barbara and I have been married

55 years and having lived in Vancouver for over 40 years, now live in Victoria, the province's capital. Our son, Mark and daughter, Lisa, were both born in Vancouver. Lisa thinks of Wigan as the greatest and married David McCarthy, an ex-Pemberton man, some 25 years ago. Their son, Sean, at Brentwood College, aged 15 is playing well at Rugby Union and hopes to get into St Andrews University. Their daughter Laura is to be studying at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts in London this fall.

And so the wheel comes full circle.

Copperas

By Bob
Blakeman

a lost local industry

**“A long
and noxious
process”**

such are the words used to describe the manufacture of copperas in an important recent work on the neglected history of this industry: an industry that was of considerable national importance for over two and a half centuries.⁽¹⁾

Copperas, sometimes known as green vitriol, was a chemical (ferrous sulphate), which, when applied to cloth, acted as a fixative to prevent the dye from running. This was necessary because natural dyes do not automatically adhere to cloth. It had other uses and applications. It was used in the manufacture of gunpowder and ink, and, combined with oak gall, could be used to make a black dye. In addition, a by-product of copperas production, namely sulphuric acid, was used in the textile bleaching industry, and in the production of certain dyes such as Prussian Blue and Saxony Blue.

Given the connection of copperas production with the textile industry, it is not surprising that there were several copperas works (or copperas houses as they were sometimes called) in the Wigan district. The approximate location of two or three of these can be determined by the surviving place-names Copperas Lane (Haigh), Copperas Close (Shevington) and Copperas

House and Copperas Lane (Blackrod).

The origins of the industry, however, do not lie in the north of England, but in the Thames estuary, especially the Kentish side. This was because Kent was an important centre for the cloth industry in the sixteenth century (when copperas production began in this country) and also a source of the raw material from which copperas was made.

This raw material was iron pyrites, a hard, brittle, yellow mineral, consisting of iron sulphide in cubic crystalline form. It is commonly called “fool’s gold”. Pyrites-bearing geological strata outcropped along the shores of the Thames estuary, and it was here that Flemish copperas manufacturers, invited into the country by Queen Elizabeth I, established their copperas works. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries copperas increased greatly in economic importance, and at the end of this period had become one of this country’s major exports under the name of “English green vitriol”.

However, as the textile industry had begun to be concentrated in Lancashire and Yorkshire during the early stages of the industrial revolution, the centre of copperas production gradually moved northwards, and the south-eastern copperas industry gradually declined during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. A document containing a list of all the copperas works in Great Britain (forty-two in all) compiled

between 1759 and 1765 lists the following works in the Wigan district:

Wigan Copperas Works⁽²⁾

Proprietors: James and Robert Nicholson, Peter Holmes Esquire and John Crawford of Liverpool, producing 130 tons a year.

Shevington Copperas Works

Proprietor: Peter Livesey Esquire, of Manchester, producing 100 tons a year.

Blackrod Copperas Works

Proprietors: Messrs David, Kennion, Halliwell and Williams of Liverpool, producing 60 tons a year.

These were small-scale establishments compared with those near London. Rotherhide Copperas Works was producing 340 tons a year, and the Deptford works 296 tons a year. It has been suggested that a mid-eighteenth century works manned by 20 men could produce about 100 tons of copperas in a working year. (In reality this would have been longer than a calendar year, because there would have been slack periods when part or all of the workforce would have been laid off).

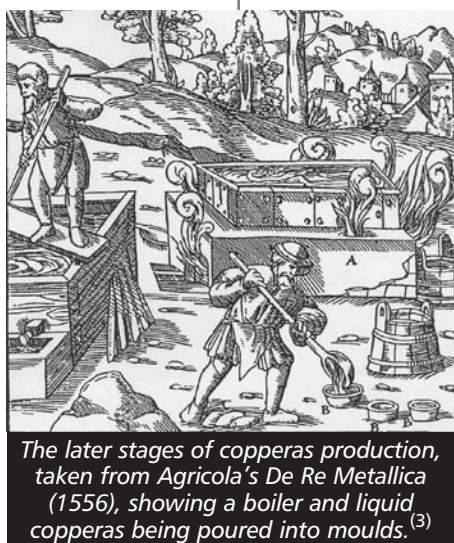
Apart from the increasing concentration of the textile industry in Lancashire and Yorkshire, two other factors encouraged the establishment of copperas works in the region. They were the need for large quantities of fuel in the manufacturing process, and the fact that iron pyrites could be found in the coal measures.

A copperas manufacturer in Lancashire could therefore have his raw material, his fuel and his customers no great distance from his works. (A directory of 1824 lists nine dyers in Wigan town alone).

The method of production varied slightly according to location, but was generally as follows:

Rocks containing pyrites were transported to the works and laid out in "copperas beds". These were pits about 100 feet long, 15 feet broad and 12 feet deep, dug into the side of a gentle slope. The sides were supported with shelving timbers, and the floor was covered with rammed clay. On top of the clay was a layer of crushed chalk and limestone. Shallow troughs, boarded on all sides, ran from the top end to the lower end of the beds. The rocks containing the pyrites were left in the beds for any time between six months and several years, depending on the quality of the "copperas stones". Eventually, weathering and bacterial activity caused the stones to swell and burst, creating a downy efflorescence on the surface. During this period the stones were turned over several

times with shovels to ensure that as many as possible were subjected to weathering. Towards the end of the weathering period the stones began to produce a large quantity of liquid (a weak solution of hydrated ferrous sulphate and sulphuric acid) which ran, via the troughs mentioned, from the beds into several butts or tanks made of strong chalk-caulked oak boards.



The later stages of copperas production, taken from Agricola's De Re Metallica (1556), showing a boiler and liquid copperas being poured into moulds.⁽³⁾

The liquid was then pumped from the butts into a lead tank or "boiler". This tank was positioned over a furnace consisting of a grid made of flat iron bars set at right angles over twelve inches thick cast iron bars; the whole being supported by brick walls. Underneath the grid was a fire. Copperas boiling was a highly dangerous occupation, as it involved working with gallons of boiling liquid containing a considerable amount of sulphuric acid in a hot and smoky atmosphere.

The liquid was boiled for a period of between a week and 20 days, during which time some of the water evaporated and the liquid thickened. During this period a certain amount of scrap iron was added to the liquid. This prevented the sulphuric acid from becoming too strong and raising the boiling point of the solution to the level at which the lead

container would begin to melt. To produce a ton of copperas, about one sixth of a ton of scrap iron would be needed to be added to the liquid.

When the liquid was considered to be strong enough it was directed into a cooling tank. As the liquid cooled the copperas crystallized on the base and sides of the cooler to a depth of five inches or so. Sometimes ropes or branches were placed across the cooling tank to increase the surface area with which the liquid

was in contact, and thus aid the process of crystallization. The solidified copperas was then returned to liquid by the

application of heat. The liquid was poured into moulds where it solidified into pale green cakes. These cakes were then taken to the dyers in barrels.

The dyers who bought the copperas from the manufacturers converted it back into liquid, and applied it to cloth as a dye fixative. The marketability

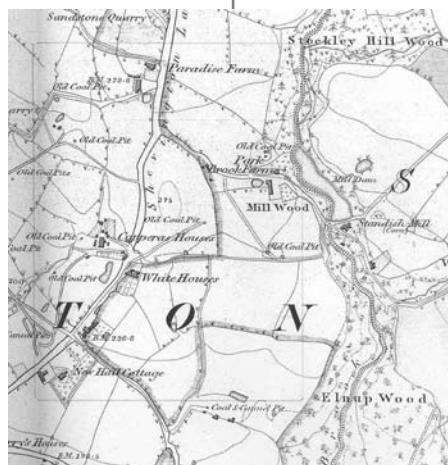
of a cloth was dependent upon effective dyeing. There was a saying, "The colour makes the cloth".

The chief manufacturers of copperas locally, during the first half of the nineteenth century, were the Shevington Copperas Works near Paradise Farm, Shevington Lane; the Aspall Copperas Works, Withington Lane, New Springs; and Harrison's Meadow Chemical Works, near the present Robin Park Arena.

The demise of the copperas industry began after the British chemist; William Henry Perkin discovered the first synthetic dye in 1856. Later developments in chemical synthesis led to the production of many new dyes that adhere strongly to many different types of substance.

Footnotes

- (1) Allen, Tim; Cotterill, Mike and Pike, Geoffrey (2004) Copperas: an account of the Whitstable Works, and the first industrial-scale chemical production in England. Canterbury Archaeological Trust Ltd, from which much of the information in this article has been taken.
- (2) Unfortunately a specific location is not given.
- (3) For information about this important book see Alan Davies' article in **PAST FORWARD** No. 42 April – July 2006.



Shevington Copperas Works as they appear on the first edition of the Ordnance Survey's 6 inch map of Lancashire (enlarged). The works were connected to a network of industrial tram roads that ran from local coal pits to the canal at Appley Bridge.

The Church of Christ

Rodney Street, Wigan

by Mrs G Lloyd

The Church of Christ in Wigan was founded in 1841 by Timothy Coop, the clothing manufacturer and temperance worker. From a Market Place cellar with two or three people, it progressed to the Rodney Street Chapel and a full-time evangelist 17 years later. The church, part of a worldwide movement with many distinguished members, was started to plead for primitive Christianity and emphasised the Lord's Supper and adult baptisms. The members addressed each other as brother and sister.



My own research into the documents, mainly minute books, commenced with the 1880's when the Barr family came to Wigan. This is not their story, but a summary of the events and issues which concerned the church officers for the next hundred years.

In the late nineteenth century the chapel was thriving, with several others in the district. Despite a healthy membership, a good deal of time was spent in rounding up those who hadn't attended for a while. Strays who failed to return to the fold had entries marked against their names, such as 'fallen through drink', 'guilty of gambling' or 'joined the Wesleyans'. The last would not

have been considered very serious, for the brethren opposed denominational rivalry, but the campaign against betting and excessive drinking was maintained constantly. Another important task was the election of elders, deacons, committee members and others. At that time some people still needed help to read the names.

Expansion continued in the twentieth century. At Rodney Street, it was necessary to use some rooms in the Quadrant Buildings next door for the Sunday school. Some neighbours proved irritating. Trespass by local publicans must have been particularly galling for the temperate brothers and sisters. In

1905 the secretary wrote to the Friends of the Hippodrome Mission about the disturbance to Sunday evening meetings caused by their singing. The musical theme continued in later years with complaints about hurrying the hymns and the quality of the singing, and problems with the piano. One unfortunate lady needed hospital treatment after the piano fell on her.

In 1914 The Medical Officer of Health proposed that the Sunday school should be closed to pupils under 13, owing to the epidemic of measles and scarlet fever. Though the First World War must have been discussed informally at meetings, there were few allusions to it in the minutes. The church

supported Lloyd George's suggestion for curtailing drinking facilities and accepted resignations from a couple who joined the Anti-War brethren. After the war Brother Alex Brown formed a young men's class with ex-servicemen.

In the twenties and thirties there were references to industrial unrest and depression and 'those in urgent need', and the accounts often showed deficits. Repairs and maintenance were mentioned frequently, particularly in the twenties. Everything from floor to roof, including heating, lighting, sanitary arrangements and even window cords and umbrella brackets required attention. Finance was a perennial issue. Apart from the expenses of minister, chapel and manse, money had to be raised for many other purposes. These included the Overdale Theological College in Birmingham, the General Sunday Schools Committee, missions at home and abroad and international disasters. Local causes were Wigan Infirmary, the coal strike back in 1893, the Miners' Fund of 1928 and the Mayor's Distress Fund in the following year.

By 1928 there were about 200 British churches, all with active Sunday schools. Locally children were encouraged to attend school with prizes, a tennis club and a Children's Day at Easter. They also participated in the June Flower Sunday, Harvest Thanksgiving and Christmas festivities. The year ended with a Watch Night service, a social evening with a period for quiet prayer. This would have been too late for the scholars. For them, the annual highlight was the picnic. Early in the year a suitable site was chosen, often a farmer's field, such as that offered by Brother E H Monks at Priorswood Hall Farm, Parbold in 1925. Months of preparation followed and the outing must have been especially enjoyable in those hard times.

Discussions turned eventually from such concerns as sweepstakes and the Sunday opening of cinemas to wartime matters like the black-out, a shelter scheme and fire-watching. A stirrup pump and water containers were bought and arrangements made for water to be kept in the baptistery. A rest centre was established with Brother McMillan as the billeting officer. In 1941 a welcome break from the strains of war was provided by centenary celebrations for the first Wigan church. This took several days and attracted extensive coverage in the Wigan Observer, as well as best wishes from Lloyd George, a member of the Churches of Christ.

Though the outlook at the conclusion of war was 'distinctly more promising', the effects lingered for some years. The Young People's Guild was still sending parcels to those on service in November 1945 and parcels of clothes and food came from Canada and Australia. Rationing continued and an application was sent to the Fuel Controller for an increase in the allotment of coal and coke.

Rodney Street benefited from the addition of a coke stove and furniture when the Leigh church closed in 1950. The closure itself was a worrying sign and further problems occurred in the fifties. The Spring Mission of 1953 was an important event, but failed to attract as many new members as anticipated. In 1958 'feelings of sadness were mingled with the celebration of 100 years of worship in the Rodney Street church' when the minister, Nelson Barr, died suddenly.

The late fifties and sixties were times of change. Gone were the days of a full-time evangelist and Wigan had to share with Southport. To help the minister, an anonymous benefactor gave him a Ford Anglia and the church contributed towards the running costs. In 1965 women ran a service

entirely by themselves. The use of 'brother' and 'sister' was dropped gradually in favour of more modern address and Sunday was substituted for 'Lord's Day' in newspaper advertisements. Sunday school outings no longer took place in farmers' fields. The favourite spot now was Walton Hall Gardens, Cheshire. Christmas and New Year entertainment was more sophisticated with visits to The Little Theatre for productions such as 'The Happy Wizard'.

None of these efforts to keep up-to-date halted the decline in membership, which dropped from around 200 in the sixties to 88 in 1978. Of these under a half attended on Sunday morning - a tiny gathering in a chapel designed for 400. This situation could not continue indefinitely. In 1981 the unification of the reformed Churches of Christ and the United Reformed Church took place in Birmingham. By 1985 the property needed a great deal of attention, but taking into account various factors, including the number and age of the members and the cost of repairs, the Elders recommended leaving the premises as they were and concentrating on fellowship. A spate of vandalism and break-ins occurred, causing the transfer of important documents to a safe in Trinity Church, Milton Grove. The last service was held on December 3rd 1989, but the building remains, now nearly 150 years old.

I would like to thank the staff of the Wigan Heritage Service, and Ted Humphreys for their assistance. Ted would be pleased to receive any information about the Barr family, who were tireless supporters of this church. The men were builders, joiners and timber merchants, whilst Doris was a teacher.

Editor - anyone wanting to get in touch with Ted, please contact me.

READER'S PHOTOGRAPHS

These photographs were sent in by Mrs Goulden of Platt Bridge. Her husband, Harry Goulden features in both.

The school class is at **Spring View Central School, 1931**. Harry is on the back row (4th from left). The teachers could be the headmaster, Mr Middlehurst and a Mr Williams. Which one is which is not identified, but we suspect that the teacher with the starched, stand-up collar could be the headmaster!

The choir is that of **St Mary's, Ince, 1932**. Harry is on the 2nd row from back (1st from right).



Sent in by Mr J Rimmer of Hemel Hempstead

All Saints Junior School, Hindley 1938/1939. We had won the Cup by defeating St. Nathaniel's School, Platt Bridge by one goal to nil. The match was played on St. Peter's Recreation Ground, Wigan Road, Hindley. We had lost in previous matches to St. Nathaniel's, as had all the other schools, - as they had the one and only Mr Samuel Davenport as their teacher and coach. It was a great victory, and our teacher and coach, Mr Harold Dowling filled the Cup with Tizer for a toast.

Front Row: Bates,??, Paxford,??.

Back Row: ??, Rimmer, Lees, Fred Ashton, Howson, Roy Ashton.

Middle Row: Headmaster, Mr J. Richardson, Wyke, Wogan, Hepworth, Mr Harold Dowling; Games Master and Coach.

All Saints Parish Church, Hindley, Girls Brigade. Pictured after their success at Belle Vue Championship in the 1950 era I believe.



Memories of Old Hindley

By Sheila Spinks

I thought I would write this poem and rhyme,
To take you back to a place in time,
To remember how it used to be,
To live and grow up in Old Hindley.

St. Peter's School with its' Memorial Hall,
The schoolyard and the old school wall,
Reading and Writing and 'Rithmetic.
Saturday afternoon matinees at the Palace
and The Vic.

In front of The Rex, our other cinema,
A café was built; they named it 'Bert's Bar.'
You could drink frothy coffee and play the jukebox,
Meet up with your friends and wear bobbysox.

You went to Rudd's Printers for your pens and ink.
Next door was the paraffin shop, we called'
Billy Stinks.'
Harry Hurst would mend your clogs and shoes,
With Irons or rubbers, whichever you choose.

Harry Whittle would fit you with vest, ties
and socks,
While Mr Hull the Ironmonger sold nails,
keys and locks.
Mrs Watkiss sold fish, chips and peas,
With a 'few scratchings on, if you please'

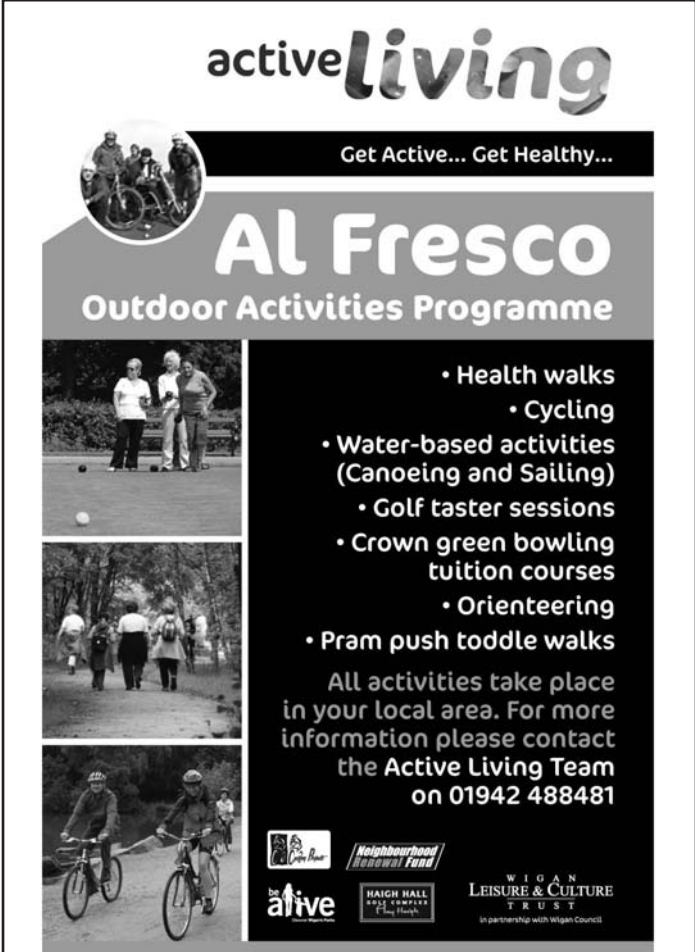
Savoury ducks and black puddings at the Tripe
shop we bought,
Pigs trotters and brawn which cost next to nought.
At The Maypole best butter, and bacon on
the slicer,
Excel bread from the bakery, what could be nicer?

Each May and September, Hindley Fair came
And we all made our way down Derby Lane.
On the dodgems, The Waltzer and Swing-Boats
we went,
Then feasted on black peas in the Fairground Tent.

We had a Woolworth's and a Penny Stall,
Parish Dances at the Public Hall.
On Sunday evenings we would 'Parade,'
Then into the Temperance Bar for a lemonade.

We would go for walks in Raynor Park,
Listen to the brass band until it was dark,
Then off home and so to bed,
Until next morning, and the weaving shed.

Now, Hindley Town is not the same
But these happy memories still remain.
Memories I will always treasure,
Of days gone by that were filled with pleasure.



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Wiganer's at Gallipoli

By Derek Holmes

Among the first things that people think about when the Great War is mentioned are the battles of the Somme, Passchendaele and Ypres (or 'Wipers'), life in the trenches and the resulting huge losses in life. In fact there are many anomalies to be found among the statistics of casualties, both between and within the various theatres of war. How many have heard of Yilghin Burnu, (Chocolate Hill) or Achi Baba?

Much of the following is based on the Battalion Diary of the 6th Battalion of the Border Regiment concerning the period leading to relatively insignificant action ninety-two years ago, on the 9th August 1915, at Gallipoli. On this day 135 men, 114 of them privates, lost their lives. To some extent surprisingly, only three were killed on the 7th, one on the 8th, three on the 10th and only five others in the next week. Many officers also lost their lives. What happened on the 9th?

Most of the men of the 6th (Service) Battalion of the Border Regiment hailed from Lancashire, Cumberland and Westmorland with strong contingents from Wigan, Carlisle and the Workington-Whitehaven area. Some of them enlisted in August-September 1914 and then began their training. By April 1915 they were at Grantham, from where they transferred with the 11th Division, to Frensham, near Aldershot, to undergo more strenuous work.

On the 30th June, they were ordered to prepare for active service at Gallipoli. That night, the Battalion went to Liverpool and embarked on the 'Empress of Britain'. They sailed with a destroyer escort on 1st July, docking at Malta for three days and then to Alexandria where they had much work to do. They then sailed for Mudros Harbour on Lemnos Island, which was reached on the 18th. They were next transhipped to Helles and attached to the Royal Naval Division, to relieve troops who were greatly in need of a rest. They landed on the 21st under cover of darkness. An officer wrote, 'When dawn broke we looked about and found ourselves on a flat plain about 3 miles from Achi Baba in some shallow dug-outs very much exposed to view ... fatigue



parties were sent down to the beach to load them (water, ammunition and war stores) on the Indian transport carts. We had at least 50 Turkish shells landing in an oblong about 100 yards long and 50 wide.'

On the 25th they moved up to the Reserve line. The companies' disposition from left to right was 'C'- Major Marsh, 'D'- Capt. McAuley, 'A'- Capt. Cuninghame, with 'B' under Capt. Rutherford in Reserve. The trenches needed much work, especially wiring; this was a delicate operation as the opposing trenches were only 150 yards apart. Our line was, 'within hand-bombing range, (of the Turkish line) ... Lieut. James was in charge and spent many days cheerfully bombing.'

On the 31st they embarked for Imbros and were in a rest camp for a few days but 'it was apparent that some big operation was in prospect.' An order from the Commander addressed the *'...soldiers of the new formations, you are privileged indeed to have the chance vouchsafed you of playing a decisive part in events which may herald the birth of a new and happier world. You stand for a great cause of Freedom. In the hour of trial remember this, and the faith that is in you will bring you victoriously through.'*

On the 6th August, they again embarked on destroyers and were landed south of Suvla Bay. On the following day they dug in behind Lala Baba where they were shelled. At 5.00pm the Battalion moved out to support the Lincolnshire Regiment in an attack on the Turkish entrenched position at Yilghin Burnu (Chocolate Hill). 'A' and 'B' Companies were on the brow of the Hill in

support of the charge of the Lincolns up the Hill which they took.

At 9.00am on the 8th, the Borders were ordered back to the beach. An officer wrote, 'The men were wonderfully fresh on the top of Chocolate Hill and were dreadfully depressed at being sent back to the beach.'

Sunday the 8th was passed on the beach but a severe ordeal was awaiting them. In the evening orders were issued for an attack on the 9th, commencing from under Chocolate Hill. The 6th Battalion left at 1.45am and although difficult in the dark, reached the starting point in time for the attack at 5.15am. 'C' and 'D' Companies were respectively right and left in the firing line with 'A' and 'B' in reserve. The advance continued until after 6.00am and the firing line reached the ravine near Ismael Oglu Tepe. There was exceptionally heavy machine gun fire and the firing line split into isolated groups. The left had to retire but a new firing line, formed along the road, was held until 5.00pm. There were many casualties and another retirement, of 150 yards, to an old trench where they dug in. The Turks did not attack but fired on any parties sent out to bring in the wounded.

The 9th August proved costly. At the start of the action there were 22 officers and 696 other ranks in the Battalion. Of these, 13 officers and 135 men were killed. Nearly all the casualties occurred in 3 1/2 hours between 6.00 and 9.30 in the morning. The next day was spent consolidating the trench along the line and the only casualty was one man wounded. As stated above, these figures are insignificant when compared with those on the Western Front. However the loss of a father, husband or son is just as great whether he be one of a hundred or one of thousands.



The following is a list of casualties from the Wigan area:

	<i>Born</i>
11225 Sgt. John Thomas BOLDEPERSON	Abram
11461 Pte. James BROWN	Wigan
11143 Pte. Charles COYLE	Wigan
11275 Pte. Henry FARNWORTH	Ince
11444 Pte. Samuel GASKELL	Wigan
11379 Pte. James HALLADAY	Ince
11511 Pte. George HAMILL	Wigan
11515 Pte. Michael HIGGINS	Loughlyne
11388 Pte. Albert HILTON	Newtown
11371 Pte. Richard HOLLAND	Lower Ince
11123 Sgt. Samuel MARTINDALE	Wigan
11390 Pte. Thomas MEEHAN	Wigan
11374 Pte. William PLATT	Wigan
11141 Pte. John TOCKER	Wigan
11445 Pte. Samuel WOODWARD	Marsh Green

Charles Coyle lived in Higher Ince. John Bolderson enlisted in Carlisle, James Brown in Blackburn and all the others enlisted in Wigan. Nine days later, 11382 Pte. John Thomas Hilton, born at Crawford and recorded as residing in Newtown, Wigan, died of wounds. Were he and Albert brothers?

Looking at the Battalion numbers of these men, we can imagine that some of them enlisted on the same day, perhaps some of them together. Presumably they did their training together, went home on leave together and embarked together. There must have been many interests that they had in common. What would they discuss, particularly en route to Gallipoli or on days ashore when not in direct action? If the topic of conversation was 'home', did they pass round photographs of their families, did they talk about children? Did they talk of Mesnes Park on Sundays and Central Park on Saturdays? How many of them played football or rugby in Wigan? Did they meet up with any Anzacs to talk of the 1914 tour of Australia, in which four Wigan players took part? In the 1914-15 seasons, Wigan finished in second spot in the table and played in their 8th successive

Championship play-off semi-finals, only to lose in the final to the team of all talents, Huddersfield. They also lost to Huddersfield in the semi-final of the Challenge Cup. Rochdale Hornets beat them in the final of the Lancashire Cup, but Wigan finished top of the Lancashire League. Surely they would be hoping for more success when Rugby (Northern Union) competitions resumed, which should have been in a few weeks time.

Pte. Richard Holland left three small children. The youngest, Thomas (Tommy) Holland, captained the Ince Central School rugby team that won the Daily Dispatch shield in 1927 and he later played for Swinton. He served in the Durham Light Infantry in WWII and sadly was killed, like his father, in the Mediterranean region, dying at the Mareth Line on 22nd March 1943.

It is not known how many of the others were married but it would be interesting to know if any readers are related to them.



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Growing on up Ashton Heath

By Tom Anderton



At 197 Heath Road I was born and bred.

At 195 lived my Auntie Maggie, Cousin Nora
And Uncle Fred.

15 Glebe Avenue just up the road, lived Auntie Jessie and Uncle Joe.
Small terraced houses with shiny white steps, not much
To look at, but filled with the best.

Two rooms below and two rooms above, no space on the inside but bursting with love.
Down the yard was the Petty and the Midden too
You had to use newspaper if you wanted a two.

Across Ashton Heath was Haydock Park

We would play all day to the song of the Lark.

"The little school" St Thomas we would all attend

My mum said we were war babies so I had plenty of friends.

Two numerous to mention, but these names spring to mind

Roy Heaton very best of all, he is one of a kind.

Kenny Cawley, Dougie Hughes, Brian Thomas

And me, Tommy Miller and Jeff Hilton, would play out till Tea.

We'd explore the boundary and the old German prison camp.

The Skitters wood and Haydock Park or up and down the Plant.

Jimmy Gillet came round his fresh fish to sell

He would shout, "Cod, Mackerel, Finny Haddock". Ringing his bell.

By Mesnes Shop under the gas lamp we'd play

There was no television it was better that way

On many a long hot summers' day, we'd help Joe Hope

The farmer bring in the hay.

The Heath was our playground what more could kids ask.

Getting us home in the evening was always a task

We had a little hill at the bottom and a big hill at the top.

There was sand hills in the middle right under the race course clock.

There was a donkey pond and a great big stone just across from Nora Gees.

About four doors down from Horace Hunt's and up from Frances field.

At the back of our house was Ogdens Pen, there was old Tom the horse and
some pigs and hens.

It's all now new houses with plenty of show,

Their all filled with newcomers, but what would they know?

They wouldn't know the Plunkets at the Eagle and Child,

Or that just up the road lived Johnny Wild.

Across the Heath lived the Blinstones and Bostocks.

Three doors up from the pub lived Norman, Betty and Doreen Prescott.

Then came Derek Eden and the Rouen's, if we ever got hurt there was Mr Adamson.

If we wanted shoes fixed there was Anthony Dowlings Dad,

Mr Bailey got killed, that made us all sad.

The Cunliffes lived next too Dootson Shop and their son Clive.

Went out with Betty Prescott for quite a long while.

Nobody had much money but they had kindness galore.

Every house on the Heath was an open door.

Fond memories abound of my childhood days

They have stood me in good stead for all of my days.

I'm a Grandfather now to two little boys

Life has been good for me, filled with joy,

My life on the Heath stood me in good stead

If they have the same I, I'll rest easy in bed, for then I will know

That their lives have been filled.

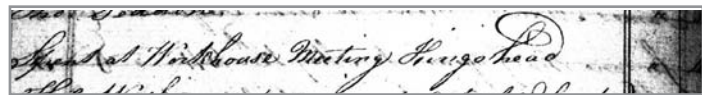
With the things that have meaning, not just money and frills.

The Atherton Workhouse

By Mr R Evans

The Atherton Workhouse

Just before Christmas 1811 William Winward, Atherton Overseer of the Poor, noted the cost of a meeting at which, one must assume, the townspeople agreed that there should be a workhouse in the township.



What is clear is that immediately after Christmas he paid 1s, the cost of transporting bedsteads, chairs, a couch chair and cushions and two tables "to Hagfold Workhouse". No reason is given for this decision to have a workhouse, but it may be that the ratepayers had become concerned about the cost of maintaining local people in workhouses in other townships, particularly in Leigh and Aspull.

There is no continuous description of the work that was done to make any existing buildings at Hag Fold suitable for use as a workhouse. This can only be inferred from information contained in the accounts of the overseers from the end of 1811 and throughout 1812 and into 1813. During this period they record payments to convert, extend and equip what had been a typical farmstead to serve its new purpose. The August 1812 accounts include a typical extract:

12 th days work by John Brown	3/6	2	3	12
Timber for Well frame	1/6	5	6	
116 Feet of Boards at 1 st 1/2 Foot	1	18	4	
the above carriage from Wigan	1	2	3	

Other expenses are listed for building materials including flags, latts, bricks and sand. Quantities of lime were obtained from Wigan and 2s was paid for "Thos Allred Cart going to Atherton Hall for Lime for Workhouse". In September timber came

from the then semi-derelict early manor house on the banks of the Chanters Brook.

James Partington for Carting of Timber	1	2	6
from old all to Workhouse			

The payment for a "Well frame" in the August account indicates the provision of a reliable source of water and in the following month 5s was paid for a "Bucket for Workhouse Well". As the site was some distance from the centre of the township communications were improved.

Wharm Lee a day leveling Road	1	2	6
to Hagfold			
James Smith 2 nd day Work at	1	2	6
Workhouse at 3 rd day	1	2	6
Robert Woodward 2 nd day at 1/6	3	8	9

As the building was improved, more household goods, many presumably Atherton's possessions in neighbouring workhouses, were brought in. Bedding was brought from the Aspull workhouse in February. In January the overseer had been "to Tilesley Inspecting Workhouse Utensils" and he went to Leigh in March "to take Acct of Bedding, Looms etc". Goods from these two places were transferred to Hag Fold in May.

John Layland Casting goods from Leigh	4	6
to Workhouse Hagfold		
Roberting pair Looms for Field	1	
Roberting Duck oven & grate	1	

Local people provided some of the requirements. Richard Hatton gave two tables and three chairs and John Smith supplied mugs. The accounts also refer to the purchase of mops and washtubs and, as can be seen above, an oven grate.

As well as obtaining the domestic items essential for the care of inmates, provision was made to provide them with employment. The previous extract refers to looms brought from Tyldesley and Leigh. In the following November James Hodson was paid 4s "for Fetching 2 pair looms from 4 Gates to Workhouse". As building work progressed more machinery could be installed as in August 1813.

✓	To Pair of Looms for Workhouses	1	11	6	✓
✓	To Journey to Pilkington		5		✓
✓	To 16 Looms to Bolton		3		✓
✓	To Winding-Wheels, for Workhouse		10		✓

Additional equipment was obtained to provide the opportunity for employment in the traditional local trade of nail making. A pair of bellows was installed together with weighing equipment. A list of workhouse possessions in 1834 includes articles related to this type of work such as weights, bores, hammers and a pair of nailors' bellows.

The first admissions in March 1812 were people who up until then had been placed in the Leigh workhouse.

Expenses at Leigh in Removing Workhouse	"	"	"
People to Hag Fold	"	3	11
Winding Wheel for Workhouse	"	"	9

The June accounts include the first payment of £17-3s -61/2d for their maintenance in Hag Fold. However the facilities were not sufficient to provide for all Atherton's poor and a small payment was still being made in June to Aspull and in August a bill for £4-8s -11d was paid for the Leigh workhouse. From this date onwards the Overseers accounts show regular monthly payments only for Hag Fold. By March 1813 the accommodation must have been sufficiently increased to consider admitting poor people from neighbouring townships.

Expenses at Workhouse meetings	"	"	"
Respecting Astley joining Atherton	"	2	11

In the following August an agreement was made to accept the poor of Farnworth and by 1819 quarterly account summaries of Overseer, William Fildes, show that Atherton was also receiving payments from Middle Hulton.

Later records however indicate only the link with Astley continued.

1819	Per Contra	Cts	£	S	D
Jan ^y March	By Bill of Work done for Atherton	12	14	10	1/2
	By Astley, for Board &c	5	5		
Feb ^y	By Bill of Work done for Atherton	11	2	5	1/2
	By Astley for Board &c £5.12.11 1/2 Salary 25/-	6	17	11	1/2
March	By Bill of Work done for Atherton	9	12	2	1/2
	By Astley for Board &c	6	15	8	
	By Astley for one yr's rent of the W ^h ouse	5			
	By D ^o for D ^o of Looms 20/ Bedsteads	1	5		
	By D ^o for D ^o of Addition to Garden		7	6	
	By Farnworth for 10 yr's rent of the W ^h ouse	2	10		
	By D ^o for D ^o Salary to Governor	2	10		
	By D ^o for 1/2 yr's Allow ^{ance} for Looms & Bedsteads	12	6		
	By Middle Hulton for 1/2 yr's rent of W ^h ouse	2	10		
	By D ^o for 1/2 yr's Salary to Governor	2	10		
		69	13	2	1/2
	Balance - - Fourth Quarter	46	6	3	1/2
		115	19	5	1/2

Life in the Workhouse

A Governor was placed in charge of the workhouse and a "warning", a public notice, was given in January 1812 that one was required. A month later a meeting was called to make an appointment.

Warning Meeting by Bell man for Gov ^{ernor} for W ^h ouse	"	"	8	4
Expenses on choosing Governor	"	3	4	

To carry out his administrative duties he was provided with a "Book for the Workhouse 8s-6d", a "Bottle of Marking Ink for Workhouse 2s-0d" and supplies of paper. The person who was initially appointed is not named but documents for the 1820s name William Bent as workhouse governor and in the 1830s salary receipts were signed by Thomas Mclure. In March 1814 the governor's salary was £20 per year paid by Atherton. When people from other townships were also being accommodated the records indicate that this cost was shared.

The records of the 1830s provide an incomplete daily record of the number of people in the workhouse together with the names of those who were admitted or left on a particular day.

1835		Atherton Township	
April	23	Number	30
	24		31
	25	Betty Fearnhead & 3 Children	1.6
	26	out	2.6
	27	Betty Fearnhead & 3 Children in	3.0
	28		3.1
	29	Betty Fearnhead & 3 Children out	2.6
	30	William Gregory	in 2.7
May	1	Mary Kay	out 2.6

None of these people have left an account of their experiences, the conditions under which they lived or their daily routine and resultant quality of life. The content of the documents suggest that the residents were not subject to the harsh regime which later became associated with the Dickensian workhouse, the purpose of which was to dissuade all except the most desperate from entering and becoming a charge on the poor rate. Those admitted during the period of this account were members of a small local community who through harsh circumstances of life were not able to fend for themselves. Under the Elizabethan Poor Law System the more fortunate leaders in the community knew many of these people personally and accepted they had a responsibility to provide them with at least a basic standard of care. Yes, they were expected to work to contribute to domestic running of the workhouse and to assist with the support and care of the least able. Those fit enough were expected to undertake productive work to defray some of the costs and the many monthly account sheets record the value of their work.

1850		
Bill of Earnings for Atherton S.P.		
By Thomas Barrington	0	16 0
By John Tharup	0	14 6
By James Jameson	0	14 0
By John Makin	0	10 0
By Jane Tharup	0	12 6
By Charlotte Jameson	0	10 0

In return people received shelter, a bed, food and basic care. From the many hundreds of individual bills and receipts the reader can judge to what extent the inmates were provided with a quality of life possibly little different from that available to those outside. There were frequent purchases of potatoes but many other receipts list a wide variety of foodstuffs such as treacle, sugar, tea, meat, bacon, milk, pepper and mustard. Household goods that were purchased included soap, soda, starch candles, mops and mop rags. Straw was obtained for beds and bolsters. Coal came from local collieries. Clothing and footwear, particularly clogs, were provided. Medical aid was available, though sometimes involving the more questionable techniques common at the time.

Betty Charlson as such John hope by Samuel Newton and doctior woodwards orders with 12 leeches at 2 halfpence each 5 7 halfpenny
 Oct. 4 1829

To what extent were the inmates deprived of anything that was not essential to basic subsistence must be judged from other expenses? There are bills for supplying tobacco. Payments were made for personal care such as shaving and haircutting and, perhaps not always for medical reasons, gin and ale were supplied. A bill for March 1820 includes - "To 1 Gill Best Gin for Mary Clowes £0-1s-1d" and "April 1st Paid the Barber 30-6s- 4d".

Outside the walls land was rented to provide a garden.

To Tho. Ridgway for One Yrs Rent of W. House 13. 6' 8"
 To Wm. Shakeshaft for --- of garden 6 13 4
 To Tho. Ridgway One Yrs Rent for Addition to 1 10 ---
 115 19 5 3/4

Here food crops could be cultivated to provide a more varied diet and reduce the expense of outside purchase of foodstuffs. As early as 1814 there is reference to purchase of "Cabbage plants for the Workhouse 9 bunches 0-0-9d." A bill made out in 1829 indicates the range of crops that were grown, including onions, turnips and long pod beans.

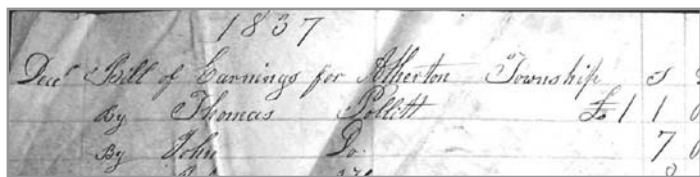
The concept of retirement did not exist. All that most people could hope for was to remain fit enough to continue working and earn a living until death intervened. But even the poorest, including those in the work-house, could die in the knowledge that the parish would ensure they received a decent burial and that there would be a wake to mark their passing. No name is given for the deceased in April 1813.

Drinks for Funeral at Workhouse	1	6
John Gray Bill	6	3
Workhouse Bill for April	9	12 4

Closure

The townships direct responsibility for providing relief came to an end with the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 which gave the responsibility to Poor Law Unions This legislation reflected concern at what was considered an unacceptable rise in the cost of providing relief and a view that under the existing system many of the recipients were not making sufficient effort to find employment to support their families. The Guardians of these Unions were charged with the duty to reduce the cost of relief by discontinuing out-relief and instead to maintain workhouses where standards were set at a level no higher than what was considered sufficient for bare subsistence. In 1837 Atherton became part of the Leigh and District Union and the decision was taken not to continue to place people in the Atherton premises.

The last page of the notebook containing the audit of workhouse goods lists the names and ages of the 35 people who were in the workhouse in February 1837. The final accounts were submitted by the Atherton Overseer in December 1837. John Hay and Joseph Charlson were both aged 9 and Mary Watkinson was 51.



Acknowledgements

This account has been based on the Atherton Township Documents in the archives in Leigh Town Hall. The Overseers' Accounts for the period are in folders Tr Ath C/2/18 to C/2/27 and the vouchers related to these payments are in Tr Ath C/2/48 to C/2/61. The 1834 inventory of furniture and inmates is Tr Ath C/7/17 and the daily record of people in the workhouse is TR Ath C/7/31. The writer would like to express his thanks for the help provided by Wigan Heritage Service archive staff.

From Coniston to Leigh: A Ruskin Connection¹ By J. A. Hilton

John Ruskin (1819-1900) began his career as an art critic; the champion of the paintings of Turner and the Pre-Raphaelites and of Gothic art and architecture, but his belief that art reflected society led him increasingly to advocate social reforms that inspired the founders of the Labour Party and of the Welfare State.²



In the municipal cemetery of Leigh in south Lancashire there stands a replica of Ruskin's tomb at Coniston. The Leigh version commemorates the Johnson family: it seems to have been first erected, within ten years of Ruskin's death, to the memory of Alfred Johnson, who died in 1910, aged twelve, followed by his mother Annie, who died in 1923 fifty-six, and then by his father Henry, who died in 1940, aged seventy-nine. Also commemorated on the cross are Alice Johnson, who died in 1978, aged eighty-nine, and Harold Spedding Johnson, who died in 1950, aged sixty-three.

It is possible that a precocious Alfred Johnson had developed a youthful interest in the works of Ruskin, but it seems unlikely. It could have been his mother, Annie, who was the student of Ruskin, but there seems to be no record of any such interest. More is recorded about the father, Henry Johnson. He had been born in Seaforth, near Liverpool, and began work as a bricklayer for a Liverpool firm. About 1890 he went to Leigh and set up as a builder, building between five and six hundred houses there. He was a member of the Leigh Master Builders' Association and of the Leigh Football Club and of the Leigh Cricket Club. Significantly he was not a member of Leigh's flourishing Literary Society, which was founded in 1878 and celebrated its jubilee in 1928.³ It would seem, therefore, that the interest in Ruskin was not Henry Johnson's.

The monument was the work of Johnson's wife's nephew, Richard Spedding, a monumental mason, born in 1884 in Penrith.⁴ He belonged to a family of stonemasons: he was the nephew of Thomas and William Spedding, stonemasons of Penrith (and of James Spedding, bricklayer, who married Martha Ellen Wilkinson of Leigh in Leigh), and he was also the grandson of James Spedding, quarryman of Penrith.⁵

Ruskin's tomb was carved by H. T. Miles and designed by W. G. Collingwood, Ruskin's secretary and the author of *Northumbrian Crosses*, whose designs for memorial crosses were exhibited at the Coniston Exhibition of 1906. The carvings on the cross are symbolic of Ruskin's

books. Working in Penrith, Spedding seems to have come under the influence of the Lakeland Arts and Crafts movement, inspired by Ruskin and continued by his disciples, such as Collingwood and Rawnsley, who organised local craft schools and exhibitions, which flourished from 1880 to the 1920s and beyond.⁶ He may have seen Ruskin's tomb to copy it for his aunt's family and/or he may have used Collingwood's pamphlet on the cross.⁷

Notes

- 1 This article first appeared in *The Friends of Ruskin's Brantwood Newsletter*.
- 2 See for instance Kenneth Clark (ed.), *Ruskin Today* (London, 1982).
- 3 *Leigh Journal*, 6 December 1940; *Leigh Chronicle*, 6 December 1940; I am grateful to Mr Tony Ashcroft, Heritage Officer (Local History) of the Wigan Heritage Service, for supplying me with copies of Johnson's obituaries; it was on a tour of Leigh Cemetery, led by Mr Ashcroft, that I noticed the Johnson monument. John Lunn, *Leigh: The historical past of a Lancashire Borough* (Leigh, no date), p. 268.
- 4 I am grateful to the *Leigh Reporter* for carrying my appeal for information on Henry Johnson, and to Mr Alfred Johnson for responding with the information that the monument was the work of Richard Spedding.
- 5 Census Returns, Penrith, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891, 1901, Leigh, 1901; Leigh Register Office, Marriage Certificate of James Spedding and Martha Wilkinson; I am grateful to Mr Phil Smith and Mrs Lin Smith, Family History Tracers, for providing me with the details of the Spedding family.
- 6 Barrie and Wendy Armstrong, *The Arts and Crafts Movement in the North West of England: A Handbook* (Wetherby, 2005), pp. xi-xv; Sara E. Haslam, *John Ruskin and the Lakeland Arts Revival, 1880-1920* (Cardiff, 2004), passim.
- 7 I am indebted for this latter suggestion to Mr J. S. Dearden.

Platt Lane Weaving Mill (The Prospect Mill) the only surviving cotton mill in Hindley. For many years used by the Keystone Paint Co., now serves as Hindley Business Centre.



Billy Rigby's MAGIC

By Austin Lyons

This is a story of when Hindley was a much noisier place than it is today, when the early morning hours resounded to the clanking of clogs of hundreds of miners and mill workers. Whilst the town was surrounded by coal mines, it had also at this time (around 1900), five cotton mills within its boundaries. It is on one of these, the Platt Lane Weaving mill, that this narrative is based. Weaving was one of the noisiest in the cotton industry, so much so that any form of conversation was impossible. Workers, who in the main were women, had to resort to lip-reading for any sort of communication whilst working their looms. Female gossip became a case of 'seeing it without being heard'. Suddenly, one morning, when all this

factory noise was at its crescendo, all the machines stopped, everyone at once looked in the direction of the Engine Room. The mill engineers were quickly on the scene, while the mill girls just gathered around inquisitively. After about an hour of investigation and checking the engine, it was obvious the engineers were making no headway. It was then, a lone voice from somewhere called out "Send for Billy Rigby!" The mill manager must have been in earshot because that is what actually happened.

Billy, the local handyman cum engineer, whose workshop was just a few minutes away behind the Bird l' th' Hand hotel in Hindley town centre, arrived,

carrying only a large hammer and a couple of screw drivers. He entered the engine room, took a quick look at the machinery, then ordered everybody out of the place, including the mill engineer who eventually left rather reluctantly. No-one ever knew just what precisely Billy did that day, all they heard was a lot of banging with his hammer, steel against steel, - which continued for the best part of an hour. Finally he opened the Engine Room door and called in the engineer to start up the engine. It roared into action at once- its oily pistons pushing its power to all parts of the factory, whilst the mill engineers just stood there looking on in sheer amazement. Meanwhile Billy, satisfied with his efforts and having sorted things out to his satisfaction with the management, just picked up his tools and left the noisy factory.

We move now through 'the arches of the years', and come to 1946. After five and a half years as a photographer in the RAF, I have just been de-mobbed and now have to face the arduous task of trying to re-establish my business, which I had to close down when I enlisted. I desperately needed amongst other things, a contact printer

for half-plate negatives. To buy one would have cost the earth, so I decided to design and make my own. Everything went well in the construction, but I needed one vital part to complete the job, a piece of spring steel to fit under the handle of the printer. This had to be of a precise length and width in order to exert the correct pressure. I tried over a wide area to obtain one. but they said more or less the same thing "You'll have to have that specially made." I was at the point of admitting defeat when someone said "Have you tried Billy Rigby?" I hadn't, what had I to lose? So for the very first time

I ventured into Billy's domain, a small workshop dwarfed and darkened by mountains of scrap metal of all shapes and sizes. He was now 'getting on a bit,' but still active enough to do the odd repair jobs that came his way. He listened; with a genuine interest as I spelt out the details of what I was beginning to think was a hopeless request. He then said, "just wait a minute," and went into the scrap yard. He was back almost immediately, holding up a piece of metal. "Is this what you are looking for?" he asked. I stared at him in disbelief, I thought he must have come straight out of Aladdin's cave, as

it was exactly what I needed. The correct length and width, even to a small hole already drilled out in the centre, which made it easy for me to simply screw it into the handle of the printer. I was overjoyed to put it mildly, and it only cost me a few shillings. I used that contact printer for the whole of my forty years plus as a photographer in Hindley. In fact, because of the way it was illuminated, it also served as a negative re-touching desk. It never occurred to me, in view of the first part of the story at the Hindley Mill, that I would myself experience something of 'Billy Rigby's Magic'.

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For more information on how to get involved contact Christine Watts at The History Shop in Wigan on 01942 828020.

A "WORLD'S FIRST" FOR HOWEBRIDGE

The Mines Rescue Station, Howebriidge, Lancashire
Operational from April 1908 until November 1933.

By Les Hampson

It's a known fact, that for something like 800 years in Britain, coal has been systematically worked for profit, but at a huge cost in human life and untold suffering for many thousands of mining families, but for only a relatively short period of that time has there been an organisation to help those victims in the form of a Mines Rescue Service.

The village of Howebriidge, in the Metropolitan District of Wigan was the site chosen to rectify this, when in 1908 the World's first Central Mines Rescue Station to serve a group of collieries was built in the village. Coal was in production in many other countries throughout the world at this time, but rescue facilities for them had yet to arrive. The Howebriidge Station was unique in the history of coalmining. It was built and governed by, the Lancashire and Cheshire Coal Owners Association, five years before the requirement of Rescue Stations came onto the Statute Books and some 7 years before the Service was established in some other coalmining districts in the UK.

From its early beginnings the progress of mining was slow but by the middle of the 19th century, coal mining had evolved as a major industry and output was booming. There were thousands of collieries working, employing hundreds of thousands of men, women and children. In 1842, laws were passed, restricting the underground employment of women, and children under 10 years of age but for some

time, these laws were disregarded by many Coal Owners and it was difficult for the authorities to enforce. Mechanisation was introduced, shafts were sunk to even greater depths and workings were extended further from the shafts. Ventilation of the workings became more important because, as the output increased, more and more "firedamp" was released into the mine atmosphere. This was a serious problem as firedamp is a very inflammable gas and will explode at certain mixtures with normal atmospheric air. It also has the capacity to initiate a more violent coal dust explosion.

During this boom period, it is fair to say that there were some coal owners in the country that had little regard for the safety, health and welfare of their underground workforce. There were hundreds of underground workers killed annually from various causes such as fires, explosions inrushes of water, outbursts of gas and roof falls etc. In addition, many more received serious injuries. There was little genuine thought for the possibility of providing a Rescue Service, in fact some of the top mining engineers of the day were of the opinion that no useful purpose could possibly be served by having such an organisation. Until the late 1900's, there were no such things as breathing apparatus as we know them today and some of those same mining engineers could not appreciate how anyone could enter the mine workings after fires and explosions and be protected against the prevailing lethal gases. Amongst those early breathing apparatus, many were primitive in design and totally unsuitable but some had potential and were developed. Progress was slow and little enthusiasm was shown by some coal owners. The Government however, was becoming deeply concerned about the annual death rate and serious injuries in the mines.

At the turn of the Century, a Royal Commission on Mines was set up to investigate the overall general safety including the provision of a rescue organisation. The Commission's Report was eventually published in

1906. In that same year, the Lancashire and Cheshire Coal Owners Association, made up of 27 different colliery companies, held a Special General Meeting in Manchester mainly to discuss the formation of their own Rescue Service to cover the local group of collieries. Not everyone was fully committed to the idea and disassociated with the project but the motion was carried. Later, other owners, not already members of the Association agreed to join the scheme.

One of the main supporters of the concept was the Fletcher Burrows Group of Atherton, who suggested the Lovers Lane site for the new station and undertook to supervise the construction work. Mr. Charles Pilkington, a leading mine owner and glass manufacturer from St. Helens, performed the opening ceremony on Thursday, 2nd. April, 1908. In the following months, training galleries within the Station were constructed to represent lengths of mine roadway and a short section of coalface. There were low and constricted parts that could only be negotiated by crawling. Heavy obstacles were placed in the roadways and steel tubs and flat-bottomed carts were included for the transportation of material along metal rails. There were also a number of 56lb weights to be carried around and a dummy body weighing 150lbs on a carrying stretcher. There were wooden props of varying lengths; filled sandbags for the erection of roadway seals and a large dump of pit rubble and small rocks so that the rescue men could use picks and shovels to represent the clearance of a roof fall. All these tasks were carried out wearing the apparatus for the full 2-hour duration whilst the training galleries were filled with thick smoke and fumes. The Station also included offices and storage rooms, an apparatus re-charging and re-servicing room and a garage for the two emergency rescue vans. Each rescue van contained a full compliment of equipment that would be required in the early stages of an underground emergency incident. There were also changing and bathing facilities and domestic accommodation for the Superintendent and his family.

At the time of the official opening, the owners had still to decide the type of breathing apparatus to be used. There were many types on offer but they selected just six to perform working trials at the station premises. Four sets of apparatus were of the compressed oxygen type, one of liquid oxygen and one of compressed air. The set of apparatus that performed the best was the one submitted by Siebe Gorman of Chessington in Surrey, a firm World renowned for its deep sea diving gear. The apparatus had been given the name "Proto" (meaning 'first in time'; 'earliest' or 'original'). Over the years the Proto apparatus underwent several improvements and was widely used throughout the World. It was used extensively by, the British Mines

Rescue Service until the late 1980's. Following the selection of the Proto apparatus, Siebe Gorman now had to step up production to meet this new demand and in the summer of 1908 six colliers from the Atherton and Leigh area was sent to Chessington for one month to be trained in the wearing, re-charging and re-servicing of the apparatus after use. On their return, they helped to train other volunteers from the local collieries.

Soon after the six men had returned, the Station received a call for assistance from Maypole Colliery in Platt Bridge where, 78 men lost their lives in an underground explosion. Obviously, as far as rescue and recovery work was concerned, only the six trained men could take part and it was very limited what a single team could achieve. In the following two years more and more men were trained at the Station and it demonstrated the genuine resolve of the local coal owners for the Howebridge project when, on the 21st December 1910 an explosion occurred at the Hulton Bank Pit No.3. (Pretoria) at Over Hulton and more than 200 trained rescue workers, wearing the Proto apparatus took part. Almost the whole of the underground workings were affected and 344 men were killed with only 3 surviving, This event took place three to five years before some of the other British coalfields enjoyed the facilities of a Central Rescue Station.

Five years after the publication of the 1906 Report, the Coal Mines Act of 1911 was passed by Parliament, which required all coalmines to be affiliated to a Central Rescue Station, situated within a radius, not exceeding 15 miles. Following the Act, General Regulations were made in 1913, which stipulated how Rescue Stations should be managed, equipped and operated. It also specified a deadline in 1915 when all collieries had to be covered. To comply with the limiting radius of action, it was necessary to open additional Stations at Denton, St. Helens and Burnley. The four Rescue Stations in Lancashire continued to be operational until superseded by the new rescue complex at Boothstown in 1933.

The first Superintendent to be appointed at Howebridge was an ex-regular army man who was referred to by everyone as "Sergeant Hill". He remained in post until he retired in 1932 to be replaced by Francis H, Wilson, a mining engineer from Bickershaw Colliery, who organised the changeover to Boothstown the following year.

The station premises are situated in Lovers Lane, about 40 yards from the junction with Leigh Road (B5215). The building is now used as a vehicle repair and maintenance garage.

YOUR LETTERS

A Taste of Wigan in South Africa

Dear Editor

My wife and I were invited to stay with our son in Randburg, South Africa for a holiday. During our stay we all talked about the things we had done and food we used to eat at home. When our son said he always loved Lancashire Hot-Pot, his Mum said if he bought some 'hot-pot' chops she would make him one.

We then met up with our son, who took us to a butcher's shop, which he informed us was a really good one, with lots of various meats. It was well set out and situated in a complex.

Two girls were serving on the counter. My wife asked one of them "Have you any 'hot-pot' chops?" the girl looked at her with amazement and replied "What are 'hot-pot' chops?"

We were just about to go out of the shop, when she decided to go and enquire from one of the butchers in the back. No sooner had she gone through when a little chap in a striped apron dashed out shouting "Who is asking for 'hot-pot' chops?" He told us then that the last time he had been asked for those was when he lived in Wigan!

Ken Harrison
Ilfracombe.

Bay Horse Hotel, Whelley

Dear Editor

I am writing about the article on the Bay Horse Hotel that used to be on Wallace Lane, Whelley (Past Forward 45). I was born in Wallace Lane and my father, Harry Owen, used to go in the pub to play dominoes with his friends.

I would like to know if anyone can help to identify the two men in the photograph, as I think the one on the right is my father. We left Wallace Lane when I was a year old and went to live in Derby Street (now demolished). Sadly, my father died in 1948, he was just 39 years old.

Margaret O'Neill (nee Owen)
Scholes

School Days

Dear Editor

Just a line to say that I attended Wesleyan Methodist Day School. I was born in 1935, and went to school in 1940 at the age of five years. My name was Alice Rotheram, and I lived at 32, Queensway, Wigan. I have found an old school report dated 17th July 1944. I have many memories. The days were hard but happy. I can remember some things about the nursery. It had fold-up beds then, and a warm fire with a large fireguard. I was sent to the nursery when I was caught talking. We got really dirty cleaning out the cupboard at the top of the landing. There was a low, damp playground.

Mrs A. Hutton
Orrell

Bedford Colliery

Dear Editor

Your articles about Bedford Colliery bring back memories to me, as I was the last N.U.M. Branch President, and also the last employee to be transferred. One of the Branch Committees' last jobs was to place a stone at Leigh Cemetery Memorial from us all. In 1986, as Deputy Mayor of Wigan, I had the monument and its surrounds cleaned, and organised a Centenary Service which was attended by several ex-employees, Clergy and Radio Manchester on the day of the centenary. I have a complete dossier of all employees at the time of its closure, with all

details of lists to where they were transferred, and also redundancies.

Many more memories come to mind, and if any old colleagues, or workmates would like to contact me I would be pleased to meet or telephone them. I am from 'the 'old school i.e. have no email or computer, my heating is still solid fuel and I won't allow gas in my house! Just an old pit- man.

Alderman Jimmy Jones
Leigh

If anyone would like to contact Alderman Jones, please get in touch with me. Editor.

Have No fears for Wigan Speak!

Dear Editor

If I could have a word in the ear of Mr T K Clitheroe, apropos his most interesting article in *Past Forward* 45, I would say, "Tha's nowt to worry abeyt lad".

For nigh on seventy years I have been exposed to Britain's most unattractive drone, the Brummie accent, and yet I still came through your 'Wiggin Speak' with flying colours, admittedly with a start of about 21 years in that university. It is still music to my ears, when someone says to me "you're not a Brummie, are you?"

Only once in my 48 years in the West Midlands have I heard anything even approaching the lingo which was my daily portion

until departing from my native Garswood in January 1939. About two years ago, I was engaged in a general chit-chat with a few male neighbours, spreading, I must confess, onto the adjoining pavement. Along came this lady who, in jocular terms, remarked in an accent which resurrected a long interred tongue "Ah thought it were only women us could talk". On enquiring the origin of such a gem, she replied "Billinge!" in the apparent confidence that no one in that little group would have the slightest idea what the heck she was talking about. Little did she know that she was rubbing shoulders with a long departed near neighbour and, I must hasten to add, a successful introducer to *Past Forward*.

On a more serious note, I strongly recommend the late Simeon

Potter's *Our Language* last published in 1959. In my 1956 edition, Mr Clitheroe find an excuse for self preening, when reading that from 1150 to 1500, there were just five dialects, including, would you believe, Northern (presumably including Wigginese).

In 1896, a chap named Joseph Wright from Windhill in the West Riding, like Mr Clitheroe, was worried that the advance of technology tolled the death knell of dialect and so, with a little help from his wife, composed *The English Dialect Dictionary*, which ran to six volumes and was published in 1905. Many thanks for raising such an interesting subject.

J Harold Smith
Sutton Colefield

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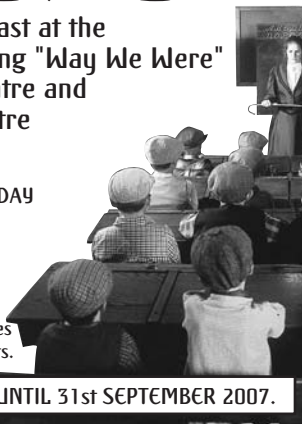
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YOUR LETTERS

Wigan Telephone Exchange

Dear Editor

This morning we received our copy of *Past Forward* (45). I was delighted to see St. Thomas's Church on the cover. I lived at 54 and 56 School Lane, Up Holland until I was 22 (65 years ago) when I joined the ATS along with my friend Marion Atherton. Before this, I worked at the Telephone Exchange in Wigan. After that, I was back at the Exchange for a year before leaving for Australia to marry my husband. We met in the forces. He had been involved in the invasion of Borneo, and, although he was a captain in the British Army, he had to join the Australian Army to take part in the landing. After a year in Australia, we returned to England.

I attended the Church School in Up Holland. Mrs Chadwick was the Headmistress, and then Mrs Gaskell at the Infants School in Higher Lane. Mr Bamforth was the Headmaster at what we called the 'Big School'.

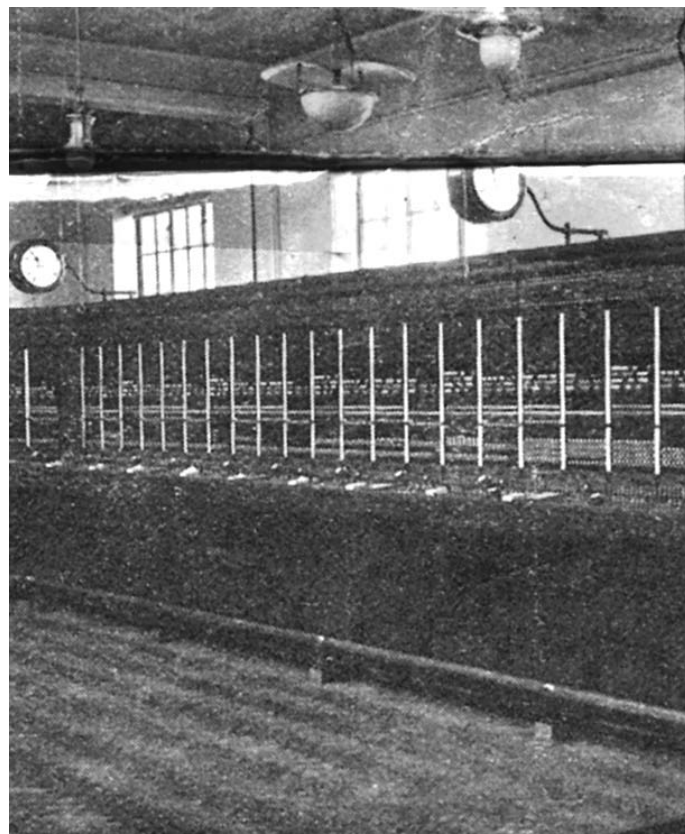


The old exchange - last day of service

My great-grandfather John Baxter lived in School Lane, followed by my Grandfather (his photograph is on p31 of Mr Allan Miller's excellent book of Up Holland history) who was a clogger, and whose shop was over the road from number 56. He was a well-known figure in the village. He died when I was six years old. Even so, I have strong memories of him taking me over the road to his shop and sitting by a roaring fire while he got on with his clogging. Many old men came in, but their conversations about politics and religion was beyond me. The butcher's shop at 54 School Lane was run by my father and uncle. I have a photograph of them in front of the shop with various birds and other foodstuffs. My father died soon after my grandfather. Even so, I have happy memories of my childhood and teenage years in a village which has such a long history.

**Mrs Kathleen Monks
Orpington, Kent**

Editor – Mrs Monks has enclosed some interesting pictures of the old Wigan telephone exchange.



Wigan - new exchange switchboard



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Wigan Archaeological Society

Meetings held first Wednesday of the month at the District Scout HHQ (Baden Powell Centre) at the bottom of Greenhough Street, starting at 7.30pm. Admission £2 members, £3 guests.

- July 'Dutton's Farm Excavations' Ron Cowell
- Sept 'Roman Cavalry Tombstones' Ben Edwards
- Oct 'Society Projects Review' BA
- Nov 'Wyre Archaeology Group' Neil Thompson
- Dec 'Recent work of Oxford Archaeology North' Ian Miller

Secretary, Bill Aldridge 01257 404342,
Wiganarchsoc@blueyonder.co.uk

Atherton Heritage Society

Meetings are held in St Richards Parish Centre, Mayfield St. Atherton, 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm. Admission £1.00 members, £1.50 non members.

- Aug 7th 'Ladykillers' A lighthearted look at crimes and criminals. Speaker - Alan Hayhurst.
- Sept 11th 'The Story of Eddie Stobart'. The story of the famous North Country haulage firm. Speaker - Sheila Dale.
- Oct 9th Annual General Meeting followed by - 'The Golden Road to Samarkand'. Travels along the famous Silk Road. Speaker - Agnes Brown. Please note 7p.m. start.
- Nov 13th "Victorian Circus"- The Liverpool Connection. Speaker - Dr. Turner.

Aspull and Haigh Historical Society

Meets the second Thursday in the month at 7.30pm in Our Lady's Church Hall, Haigh Road, Aspull.

- Oct 11th Geoffrey Scargill 'The Last Day of Peace, The First Day of War'
- Nov 8th Lizzie Jones 'A Dramatisation'

For information contact the secretary Barbara Rhodes (01942) 222769.

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WIGAN
LEISURE & CULTURE
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1926 And All That

By George Wadeson

Being 7 years old in 1926 and having just lost my father and mother, (my father absconding and my mother dying of cancer), I was living at 4 County Police Street, Higher Ince then with my Uncle Billy and my Grandmother. Before that I had been living at 5 Jeffrey Street from under one year old to 5 years old.

The country at that time, 1926, had gone off the rails after the First World War, and a general strike had been called. Although I was well fed, there was no coal to be had to keep warm, but being in an area where there had been plenty of coal mines, the waste tips provided enough picked small coal for some people to sell to buy food and provide enough heat for their homes.

My uncle Billy, being a coal miner out on strike, was very good at picking coal - he had borrowed a barrow from someone, and when he went to pick coal from the Rose Bridge Colliery spoil heaps, I was usually carried on the empty barrow on the way there. I tried to do what my uncle did, who by the way was William Winrow, (someone in Higher Ince may have known him) and I was George Victor Wadeson, 7 years old at the time. When he filled the barrow there was no room for me so coming home I trailed behind, and the lane we went down was Careless Lane. Running down the left hand side of this lane was the water pumped out of the Rose Bridge coal mine. At that time the water was clear, later it was to become

ochre water as we called it, this was water coloured with iron rust, dying all around with a yellow rusty stain.

But back to my going down the lane, I would get a long stick and a short one, the short one being my ocean liner, and throwing the liner down in the water at the top of the lane, I would follow it down guiding it through the obstacles, and all along one side of that brook were gates in the fence that led to pens as we called them (they were allotments where people either grew vegetables or kept hens or pets). To cross the stream a 3 foot length of 12 inch diameter drain pipes had been laid down to drain the water through and make a footpath; under these "bridges" I would guide my "liner", the only trouble was, to watch it, meant throwing myself down to see the liner go under and with a quick turn round on my stomach watch the twig (liner) come out the other end. Clay being all around, I would go home covered with it, but at least the stream was too small for a boy to drown in.

On the opposite side of the lane were more pens or allotments;

one of them belonging to Police Sergeant Bradshaw. He lived a few doors from my grandmother's house in County Police Street, and had two sons one named Hubert and one Harry. Also he had a daughter Kitty, and she was my best friend, both of us being about the same age, but Kitty was a very bad cripple. It was Kitty who took me to see the rabbits they kept in their pen, and they had a lot, almost every type or breed of rabbit you could think of. Despite her disability, Kitty was the leader of the children in our area, and she organised the May Queen and made our guy for fireworks night. Youngsters in those days, having no radio in their houses or reading matter, played all sorts of games in the street until dark, mostly organised by Kitty. Tragically, Kitty died around 7 years old, and that took the life out of our area for some time, but by that time I was moving to Gidlow House.

One of the enjoyments of a young boy was catching fish; one of the ponds that held gudgeon and sticklebacks etc was on the railway side of the spoil heaps, and to get to these you had to go between the colliery spoil heaps and farm fields at the top of Careless Lane and Pennington Lane. This Pennington Lane leads one way to Belle Green Lane, and the other way to Rose Bridge Colliery. Albert Longworth had a Farm on the opposite side of the Lane to Careless Lane and on the

left of that, spoil heaps from Rose Bridge Colliery; these ranged from Belle Green Lane to the Leeds and Liverpool Canal, and bordered at the top by the bypass railway line from Hindley.

The pond there was named the Poison Lodge; it was full of green weeds, but armed with a 6 foot tree branch and a match tied to the cotton line as a float, and a worm tied below that, I caught my fish, which then went into a two pound glass jam jar. They were usually sticklebacks but very occasionally I had two gudgeon; one on each end of the worm, but being young I couldn't understand why they died very quickly - I didn't know it was lack of oxygen in the stagnant water in the jar.

When coming down the lane and you came to the last house, the brook, being on the opposite side to the houses, turned and ran under the fence and into the first pen; this was opposite the last house. Standing on the pavement by that last house in the lane you could see over the fence and across the field beyond to the path or drive belonging to the old Ince Hall; an area generally supposed to be haunted by a "Miss Kitty" (no connection to my friend Kitty!). On dark nights, when amongst the gang of children someone said "Let's go and see if we can see Miss Kitty the ghost", there would be a dozen or more of all ages, and at some moment when everyone was tense, someone would point and say "Look - Miss Kitty!" and not bothering to really look they all flew away like drifting snow in a high wind. That made it so we didn't go near that area for a long time in the dark, but in daylight it was different.

Top and whip was another game played in the light of day, and "murps" (marbles) was a game

readily played even on the road sets in the middle of Manchester Road - no motor traffic - only an occasional horse and cart with a tramcar every half hour. Bobby Dazzlers were a collectable glass alley and I always had my pockets bursting with them. Sometimes I would exchange for a cigarette card, and although some marbles or "Murps" were plain glass, these I got from where the broken bottles were dumped behind the Bartons Pop works, since a plain round glass marble was held in place as a stopper with the compression from within the bottle. The pop works had their pop making plant at almost the last building on the left hand side at the beginning of Careless Lane, and facing County Police Street just where Careless Lane began at Manchester Road.

My grandmother Dorothy Winrow, being in her early eighties, became eligible for a pension and I remember her with tears in her eyes holding a 10 shilling note and saying "I can buy my food AND pay the rent with that!". My mother before she died had to give up our home in Jeffrey Street because my father had left us, and had come back to live with her mother. Grandmother, and I remember my mother lying on a stretcher in the kitchen before being put on an ambulance to take her to Wigan Infirmary.

Putting her arms around me and saying "Be a good boy, Victor" I didn't know she would be going away for ever. I learned much later that she had breast cancer, and in those days with any sort of operation there was only a 50/50 percent chance of pulling through. Cancer was the end then, as it is today in a lot of cases.

My life there was for a short time, in which I played Murps, or

pulled Harry Bradshaw on his roller skates. We had a new asphalt road laid in Engineer Street - very smooth to roll on and he had the only pair of roller skates - and we attended Ince Picture House "The Bug" on the penny rush. There we saw silent films, some of them classics, for instance "Desert Song" with John Boles (but that may have been when Pennington who owned the cinema had talking pictures installed), and another film, "Shepherd of the Hills".

But what we enjoyed most were the serial films like "The Clutching Hand" or the scary films like "Mystery of the Wax Museum", Boris Karloff in "Frankenstein", or Bella Lugosi in the "Undead." Cinemas those days being in their infancy, all us young ones thought they were real or nearly, so much that girls even teenaged ones would run past the cinema screaming or go past on the other side of the road if a scary film was being shown, and I have to admit feeling shivery when passing the cinema myself, being 6, 7, or 8. These films were shown in a corrugated building with wooden floor so that when the film broke down (and that was often) and the film being made of celluloid, it was pieced together with bits being cut off and thrown through the side window of the projection room, where I used to collect them. Being highly inflammable, I made stink bombs out of these pieces rolled up in paper, lit and then blown out, ending in clouds of acrid smoke. When the breakdown occurred the children stamped their feet so hard that Pennington got a man with a bucket of water to run down the centre aisle; he with a mop on the end of a long cane and would slosh the culprits until they stopped (with stamping, the floor could collapse), and the corrugations made such a

deafening noise when anyone ran down the side of the building with a stick (usually when a quiet or tense part of the film had arrived).

Then there was the petrol engine that generated the electricity to run the cinema at the back of the cinema and the exhaust outlet was under a big stone flag there that was another place to stand, because when the engine backfired it actually lifted the flag. Another thing I remember is that on days of the penny rush, usually on Saturday afternoon, children would come from all around and queue from up to an hour before starting time, so that there was quite a large crowd of jostling kids. Pennington was a Showman of the first division, so when he came around the corner of Humphrey Street in his French open car with tall back seat and him sitting on high with tall hat, and silver topped cane, he drew up the front of the cinema and the driver put a foot stool for him to step down. Then Pennington rapped three times on the cinema door which was flung open and the kids would crowd round, pushing their way through out of turn, so Pennington then turned into a wild person thrashing about with his cane. This is from my memory and may be either right or wrong, but that cinema was a major factor in our growing up, and we were seeing things our parents never saw, opening up our education.

That was another thing – education. I went to Inca Central Infants and Junior School, having been taught to read at an early age (3 or 4 years, I'm told), at home. I know I used to read the Teddy Tail in the Daily Mail at a tender age on the pegged rug in front of the coal fire.

When I was around 7 or 8 years old and contracting all the children's ailments and ending in bed with Pneumonia, that laid me low for a long time, I lost most of my schooling at Inca Central, including any chance to go to Bindley Grammar School. Scholarships were very few and were strongly contested to get there, though if you won through not many could afford the school uniform anyway.

So I was to go to Rose Bridge Secondary Modern; this was a new school only built in 1928, certainly one of the best laid out schools in the whole of the Wigan area with large classrooms with opening windows to the ground level, making glass everywhere. As I remember, the order was "No Running in the Quadrangle". Being late one morning I ran, and the teachers in classes on that quadrangle came out and said "Report to Mr

Stately, the Headmaster" – well, just waiting at the bottom of the semi circular stairway leading to his study was agony itself. I would have done anything to get away from having 6 strokes of the cane, but my name was called - "Wadeson!" and I got my punishment; three strokes on each hand. Now I can say for sure it's the only thing to knock sense into a young head, I never ran again in that Quadrangle or in fact anywhere where glass is in quantity, and at 87 years old with two greenhouses I still treat glass with respect.

Not much more comes to mind except Walking Days. This was to parade round the streets and being paved with setts with coal tar run between the setts, tar melted on a hot day and days seemed hotter than now. When this tar melted, it was certain to ruin white socks and pumps, but the walks ended at Ince Park where pop and ice cream made up for the discomfort of the long walk on young legs, then there were races and chasing girls with canes - really a day looked forward to.

From there I moved to Gidlow House and you have had my stories of a period of my life in "Gidlow House", 9 years old to 19, and my "Going to War" at 20 years old.

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GALLERY

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CRAFT CIRCLE

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Wednesday 21 November, 7.00pm-9.00pm

This is not a taught class, but it is an opportunity to improve your drawing skills in a relaxed environment. The sessions will take place in the Derby Room and places are limited. Tickets cost £3.00 per session and must be booked in advance at the gallery office or by calling **01942 404469**. Drawing boards will be provided, please bring your own materials.

For more information tel 01942 404469
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Leigh & Culture
arts
FACTORY

Have you a family or local history query you think our readers can help you with? Please write to the editor.

If there are no contact details with individual letters, please send information to the Editor, and it will be forwarded.

Editor

Sheargold

Dear Editor

I recently came across a reference (**PAST FORWARD 36**) in a letter from Joyce Dennis LRPS, to a "Mrs Sheargold", who was a teacher at St Thomas's Infants School, Caroline Street. My brother-in-law, Geoffrey Sheargold, is a keen family historian and a grandson of Frank Sheargold (mentioned elsewhere on the Heritage website as one of Wigan's "musical celebrities") but he can't place this "Mrs Sheargold" in his family tree. He would love to know which Sheargold she married! If any reader can help, please contact me.

Margaret J Leonard
23 Sandhurst Road, Stockport SK2 7NY
email m.leonard23@ntlworld.com

Ball

Dear Editor

I have been trying to trace my family tree. I have some way back on my great grandmother's side, but I keep hitting brick walls with her husband, my great grandfather. His name was John Ball and was born in 1867, Hanley, Staffordshire (his father was Matthew Ball). He married Jane Challoner, also born 1867, from St Helens, but they married in St John's church, Pemberton, Wigan on June 30 1888, and they lived the rest of their lives in Wigan. That is about all I know and cannot trace him any further back. Could any readers out there help?

Jayne Ball
Wigan

This interesting photograph and research, was submitted by Ann Ashcroft of Pemberton and it shows a very unusual (possibly one of only two existing at that time) glass headstone in Ince Cemetery taken in the early 1980's. Sadly, it has since been destroyed by vandals.

Ms Ashcroft says that it relates to Robert Gregson and family, who lived at Pemberton Cottage, Pemberton. His first wife, Elizabeth, died in the late 1840's. His second wife was named Mary Ann, and they had four children, three of whom died young, Robert aged 18 months, Catherine aged 15 weeks in January 1856 and Benjamin in 1857 aged four years. Mary Ann herself died in October 1856 aged 29, shortly after the birth of baby Catherine. Robert married for a third time, another Elizabeth, who died aged 36 in 1865. His son George died in 1873 aged 23.

Robert Gregson was a man of many trades. The Wigan Directory of 1869 lists him as painter, plasterer, plumber and pertinently glazier. He was also a manufacturer of green copperas, with premises in the Wiend and the Aspull Copperas Works. Finally, Robert himself dies in 1882.



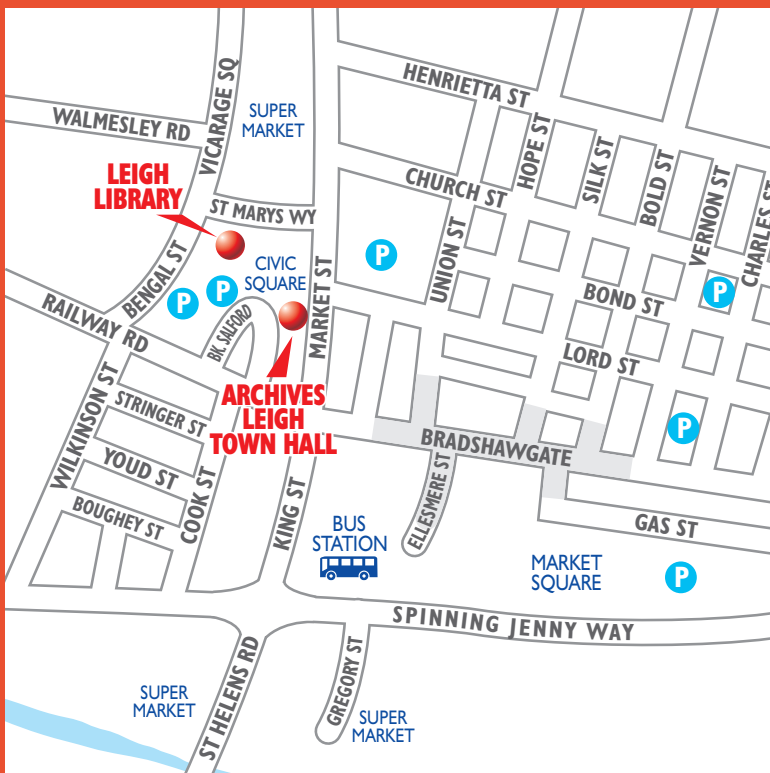
Unusual Glass Headstone

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