

PAST FORWARD

Produced by Wigan Heritage Service

Issue No. 47

December - March 2008



£1

WIGAN HERITAGE SERVICES
discover
YOUR HERITAGE

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

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FRONT COVER PICTURE

*Robin on snowy branch
by Derek Swift.*

*Wigan Photographic Society.
Voted Best Picture 2006
Exhibition.*

Letter from the Editorial Team

It is that time of year again! We wish all our readers a very merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

We would also like to say how much we appreciate all your contributions, and their value for the social history of Wigan. Please keep writing to us, for without you, there would be no **PAST FORWARD**.

Both the magazine and the service have undergone a number of changes this year, including the introduction of a charge for **PAST FORWARD** and a change in opening hours at our various venues. Needless to say, all changes have been made so that we can progress our work to ensure that, in the long term, we can provide a better service for everyone who uses the Heritage Service and all its resources.

The New Year will bring more changes to the History Shop. No doubt most of you will have seen the press releases detailing our recent Lottery Fund award. We are very excited (see page 23) for it will enable us to take the service forward, and enable us to deliver the 21st century service that local people, and all our customers deserve. We will keep you informed of progress.

New Heritage Service Opening Hours

Readers will remember that in issue 45 we promised a review of the current opening hours at our venues (introduced to facilitate work on a number of improvements to the service) in December 2007.

Substantial work has already been undertaken, and we are pleased to be able to report that opening hours will increase in the New Year.

The new hours will come into force from the 28 January 2008, and are as follows.

HISTORY SHOP

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday
10.00-4.00
Wednesday Closed
Saturday 10.00-1.00

ARCHIVE SERVICE

(Leigh Town Hall)
By appointment only
Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday
10.00-1.00 and 2.00-4.30

LEIGH LOCAL HISTORY

(Leigh Turnpike Centre)
The local history desk will be open as normal during library opening hours.

The Local History Officer will be present at the following times.
Alternate Mondays 9.00-5.00
Thursday 9.00-7.00
Alternate Saturdays 9.30-4.00

Deadline for Issue 48
Contributors please note that the deadline for receipt of material for publication is 21 January 2008.

The Editor
Wigan Heritage Service
The History Shop
Library Street
Wigan WN1 1NU
y.webb@wlct.org

Errors

In issue 46 the author of "Wiganers at Gallipoli" was stated as Derek Holmes. In fact, the author is a Mr D Huntington. We apologise for any inconvenience or offence caused.

Editor.

A new family history service has also been introduced at Leigh, working in partnership with Leigh & District Family History Society.

They will be providing a help desk every Monday between 1.30 and 3.30. It is free, no appointments are necessary, just turn up.

The new opening hours give visitors an extra 11.30 hours per week between the History Shop and the Archive.

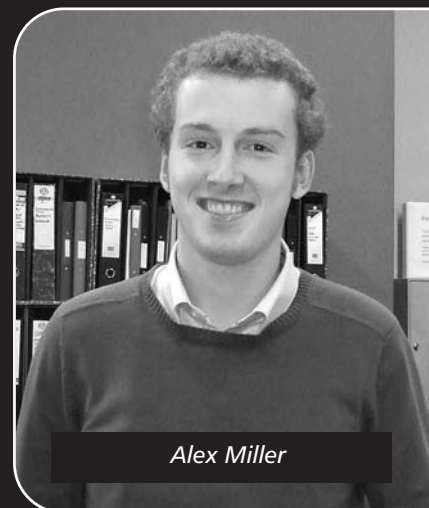
Staff will also be able to carry on with the exciting and innovative work on the collections and the HLF bid, which feed into the Heritage Vision and long term plans to improve the services on offer.

New Staff for the Heritage Service

The Heritage Service has three new members of staff, Rachel Orme, Alex Miller and Jennifer Broadbent.

Rachel (Learning and Outreach Manger) previously worked in voluntary sector management, and before that she managed widening participation, lifelong learning and accessibility through ICT projects for Education and Cultural Services at a Local Authority level. She says "I am really excited about my new role here at the Heritage Services as it is all about increasing learning opportunities and activities; this will be implemented in part by the engagement of and participation by new and existing learning groups throughout the Borough in heritage-focused projects. I would be really interested in speaking to anyone who is directly involved in widening participation/increasing activity in the Borough's communities."

Alex took up post as archivist at the beginning of October, having previously worked as a volunteer at a number of repositories including the West Yorkshire Archive Service, Leeds and Unilever Archives in Port Sunlight. He has recently completed his formal training and has a Masters Degree in Archives and Records Management. Alex says "I look forward to learning much more about the collections in Leigh and meeting all of the researchers and historians who use them." He will also be giving regular updates about the archive service in future editions.



Alex Miller



Jennifer Broadbent

Jennifer joins us for nine months as Collections Assistant to work on the Museum Collections Project. An Oxford graduate (Modern History), she also has extensive volunteer experience at Colchester Museums, the Wordsworth Trust and the Hat Museum, Stockport. She too has just completed a Masters Degree, but in Museum Studies, and has a particular interest in the contribution museums can make to mental health and well being. Jennifer's work will enable better management of the collections, re-direct resources where needed most and ensure increased public access.

We are very pleased that they have joined the team, and look forward to reaping the fruits of their labours, which will also have many benefits for all who use the Heritage Service.

Editor

HERITAGE SERVICE

Heritage Vision

To engage people in their own and Wigan's heritage through creative management and use of archives, collections and heritage resources.

Our Customer Charter

Wigan Heritage Service offers a museums, archives and local history service for Wigan Borough. It operates from three main outlets - The History Shop in Wigan, Archives in Leigh Town Hall and Leigh Local History in Leigh Library. The service also has responsibility for Astley Green Colliery, and produces the popular newsletter Past Forward. Wigan Heritage Service aims to:

- promote its services for the Borough of Wigan in an interesting, educational and enjoyable way.
- provide all sections of the community with ready access to their heritage
- offer a quality service that gives best value

Visitor Services

We aim to:

- provide an efficient, friendly and customer focused service
- offer a range of services, both educational and recreational, designed to meet the needs of all our visitors
- consult with existing and potential users and partners for their views to help us improve our service
- respond to your feedback and enquiries as speedily as possible, and certainly within 10 working days

Collections

The Service collects, safeguards and makes accessible artefacts, archives and local history resources, which it holds in trust for the Wigan community. We will ensure that:

- all artefacts and archives within our trust are cared for to national standards
- these will be made available for your enjoyment, inspiration and education, subject to available resources

Facilities

We will:

- ensure your safety by complying with all Health & Safety policies and procedures
- endeavour to make your visit a pleasant and comfortable experience by ensuring that our facilities meet acceptable standards of quality and cleanliness
- seek to provide reasonable physical access to our outlets

Contact

We are keen to continually improve our service. The Heritage Service staff would welcome any comments, compliments or complaints which you may have. You can give us feedback via complaints forms, comments books or suggestions boxes at any of our venues, or email us at heritage@wlct.org

W I G A N
LEISURE & CULTURE TRUST in partnership with



the fifth annual Leigh & Wigan
Words Together
LITERARY FESTIVAL '08

Words

Monday 24 March - Saturday 5 April 2008

W I G A N
LEISURE & CULTURE TRUST in partnership with
Wigan Council

The poster features a stack of newspapers on the left and a fountain pen on the right, both made from folded newspaper pages. The word 'Words' is written in a large, bold, pixelated font. The background is a dark, textured grey.

2006/07 Customer Charter Update

VISITOR SERVICES

Provide an efficient, friendly and customer focused service.	From our survey all of you rated our services good or excellent (100%) with over 80% 'very satisfied'.
Offer a range of services, both educational and recreational, designed to meet the needs of all.	Last year the Heritage Service put on 74 educational or outreach based activities. That's up from 45 the previous year.
Consult with existing and potential users and partners for their views to help us improve our service.	Our surveys themselves generated 98 responses last year. Also we got a response from over 100 people during our opening hour's consultation in January '07.
Respond to your feedback and enquiries as speedily as possible, and certainly within 10 working days.	Our record for the year April 2005-March 2006 was 98% answered within ten working days, up from 97% last year.

COLLECTIONS

Ensure that all artefacts and archives within our trust are cared for to national standards.	Wigan Heritage Service continues to be a registered museum under the Museums Libraries and Archive Council and an authorised repository for church records.
Ensure that they will be made available for your enjoyment, inspiration and education, subject to availability.	During the year the History Shop was open five days per week for exhibitions and family history study. The Archive search room was available by appointment two days per week.

FACILITIES

Ensure your safety by complying with all Health & Safety policies and procedures.	We have had no complaints about Health & Safety and no incidents.
Endeavour to make your visit a pleasant and comfortable experience by ensuring that our facilities meet acceptable standards of quality and cleanliness.	Visitors satisfaction rating was 96% for the year, whilst comments from visitors helped with improvements to our toilets.
Seek to provide reasonable physical access to our outlets.	The ground floor of the History Shop is fully accessible. Plans are being pursued to create full access to the first floor. As an alternative to History Shop access to the first floor a ground floor study area is provided. The Archive search room is already served by a lift.

Volunteering with the Heritage Service

**Do you love history?
Want to become involved?
Have a few hours a day to spare each week?
Then why not become a volunteer with the Heritage Service?**

There are opportunities to work with the public (on the local and family history desk, working with community groups) and on 'back-room' tasks (research and indexing).

In particular, we are looking for volunteers to work with our learning and outreach team, helping to develop and deliver our learning activities. Specifically;

- Delivery of educational sessions based on heritage
- Directed research for educational materials
- Basic IT - data input, working with text and images for presentations and slideshows
- Data collation/interpretation
- Assisting with preparation of educational materials

For more information contact the History Shop on 01942 828128.

FAMILY HISTORY

Recent additions to the Reference Collections

Donations

Abram St John C.E.

Monumental inscriptions, 1838-2006. CD-ROM.

Ashton in Makerfield Tithe map (Fiche).

Blackbrook St Mary RC Marriage Index 9 January 1836-27 November 1920.

Census index for Skelmersdale and Lathom for 1891.

Guild of One Name Studies Register of names 2006.

Hindley Tithe map (fiche).

Orrell St Luke C.E. Baptism index and register 8 February 1903 - 26 August 1979.

Orrell St Luke C.E. Burials and cremations 19 October 1929 - 14 May 2007.

Orrell St Luke C.E. Marriage index 2 April 1923 - 14 October 2006.

St Mark C.E. Newtown, Pemberton. Marriage index 16 September 1892-29 September 1962.

Wigan All Saints. Marriage index 10 November 1594 - 19 April 1958 in 3 vols.

Wigan Cemetery indexes 27 April 1932 - 16 January 1956 vols 11-13.

Wigan Cemetery 24 January 1976 - 29 June 1988 filmed pages and index.

Genealogy

Lancashire Parish Register Society. Volume NCI- Mitton All Hallows 1610-1812 CD-ROM.

Overseas births, marriages and deaths 1761-1994. CD-ROM.

Herber, Mark Ancestral trails. 2nd edition.

General

282.42761 Marsh, V. A history of the church of St Joseph at Wrightington.

283.42736 Hindley Green St John the Evangelist. Golden jubilee 1899-1949, souvenir handbook.

287.142736 Centenary souvenir of the Methodist Church, Shevington Vale, Appley Bridge 1859-1959.

287.142736 Whelley Methodist Church Centenary celebrations 1868-1968.

287.542736 Arrowsmith, J.L. A brief history of Ashton in Makerfield Congregational Church 1824-1980.

306.4812 Borsam, Peter. A history of leisure.

320.531 North West Labour History Group. Journal No. 32. 2007-08

338.2724 Davies, Alan. The pit brow women of the Wigan coalfield.

791.43028092 Williams, P.M. Wired to the moon (Frank Randle).

796.33406 Jones, Ed. Northern Soul (Wigan Athletic FC).

828.08 Collection of poems and stories to celebrate International Women's Day 2007.

914.270486 Maconie, Stuart. Pies and prejudice.

929.1 Bali, Karen. People finder.

942.05 Walsham, Alexandra. Charitable hatred; tolerance and intolerance in England 1500-1700.

942.7 Higham, N.J. A frontier landscape: the North West in the Middle Ages.

942.736 Miller, Allan. Up Holland Church 1307-2007.

942.76 Freethy, Ron. Lancashire v. Hitler: civilians at war.

942.76 Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire volume 142. Jacobites and Jacobins: two eighteenth century perspectives.

Project News

After a slow start to the summer, we have received an amazing amount of donations and completed projects. Thanks are due to Gerry and Shirley Rigby for publishing the excellent work produced by the Pimbo group which has managed to complete the indexing of Orrell St Luke's registers. Since these registers are unfiled the transcripts are our only record. Throughout the summer they have also tackled Wigan All Saints marriages from 1594 to 1958. This has entailed a great deal of checking and revision and because of the great numbers of entries involved the work is bound in three enormous volumes. But that is not the end of their industry. Just last month I received 3 more indexes, including notably the marriage index for St Mark's Newtown.

Thanks go to all indexers involved in the project. To Barbara Davies, Barbara Hodgson, Alan Maloney, and Marianne Humphreys and of course, to Gerry and Shirley.

Meanwhile the indexes to Wigan Lower Ince Cemetery have been progressing apace.

We now have an almost complete set of indexes running from 1856 to 1988. Work has also started to correct and update the indexes. The earlier volumes produced did not include grave numbers. Freda Chorlton has now begun to remedy this oversight. Freda has also photographed and indexed the one register remaining with the Cemeteries Office. This is available to search on CD ROM at The History Shop, as are all of the other completed indexes. Thank you Freda.

Finally, a big thank you to Leigh Family History Society, for donating the memorial inscriptions to St John Abram on CD ROM. Copies may be purchased from the Society.

Family History Workshops

Who Do You Think You Are?

New to family history? Have you wanted to explore your family tree for ages but don't know how? Why not enrol on one of our Family History Workshops and have a one to one with one of our volunteers! These workshops are intended however for your Wigan and Leigh area relatives only. If your ancestors were from other areas you will need to visit that area.

New classes starting on the following dates in 2008.

JANUARY	9th, 23rd	MAY	14th, 28th
FEBRUARY	6th, 20th	JUNE	11th, 25th
MARCH	5th, 19th	JULY	9th, 23rd
APRIL	2nd, 16th, 30th		

Ring 01942 828128 for more details. There is a charge of £3.50 per session payable in advance.

Before attending please take the time to gather information together about your family and bring this along to the sessions. Bring along any certificates that you may have.

Coming Soon - Group workshops, keep a look for more details.

THE HISTORY SHOP

THE PERFECT GIFT THIS CHRISTMAS...

Who Do You Think You Are?

Stuck for gift ideas this Christmas? How about a trip back in time?!

Visit the History Shop and pick up one of our special **Family History gift packs**.

Each pack provides all the help you'll need to trace a family tree including a one hour session with a trained researcher, useful tips and guidance, a tree chart to set out your findings, and a book list of all the genealogical sources we hold at Wigan Heritage Services. Beautifully gift wrapped, the pack includes a Christmas gift certificate which is valid for twelve months. **Cost £5.**

If your ancestors didn't come from the local area you can still find an unusual and inspiring gift in the form of one of our range of books which will guide you on how to trace your family tree. **Prices start from £6.**

Attractions include:

- Programme of family activities and events
- Art Gallery
- Calendar of exciting exhibitions
- Local & Family History research centre
- Gift Shop



For further information
Tel: 01942 828128 or visit
www.wlct.org/heritage

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

WIGAN
**LEISURE & CULTURE
 TRUST**
 in partnership with Wigan Council

WIGAN HERITAGE SERVICES
discover
 YOUR HERITAGE

VENUE: HISTORY SHOP, LIBRARY ST, WIGAN.

Genealogy on the Web

www.bmdregisters.co.uk

This new site is a result of The National Archives (TNA) teaming up with S & N Genealogy Supplies to enable family historians to view some 5,000 Nonconformist registers online. There is an initial free search with a charge for advanced searches and the downloading of images. TNA's collection online covers RG 4 and RG 5 with the project aiming to digitise further records of birth, marriage and death from RG 6-8, 32-36 and BT 158-160.

Before the introduction of civil registration in 1837, church registers were important sources of information on births, marriages and deaths. Non-conformists, that is, Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians, at this time often kept detailed registers and were particularly keen to have a civil system of registration. The site covers the years up to 1840 and some registers included start in 1567. Local Methodist churches are covered by RG 4.

www.open2.net/historydetectives

If like me you religiously watch BBC 2's The History Detectives programme on Friday evenings, you'll be interested to know about their website. For those of you who have as yet not cottoned on to this brilliant programme, let me give you a taste of what the programme has in store. A small team of "detectives" comprising,

archaeologist Neil Oliver, engineering heritage expert, Claire Barratt and international historian Dr Jeevan Deol, examine treasures found in viewers' attics or their family heirlooms. They use a variety of techniques, including family history, to explore and explain the object in question. As a result there have been some fascinating programmes. One particular programme explored why a Lancashire man would have a copy of a Catholic Bible dating from a time when it was not advisable to own up to having a copy. An intricate story unfolded involving Stoneyhurst College and France. Another story involved finding out about an army uniform and its' owner.

The website has tips on researching your own topics as well as an interactive feature enabling you to follow a history trail along a virtual high street.

www.ancestry.co.uk/military

Yet again this wonderful website has added important data sets to search and download. This time it's British Army World War 1 pension records, Irish marriages 1771-1812, Irish immigration lists 1833-39, Irish passenger lists 1803-06, Irish immigration to New Brunswick, Canada 1841-49 and Australian convict transportation registers 1787-1868.

The Australian transportation registers can be searched by name and year. Details include ship name, names of convicts, where convicted, date and term served.

There are some particularly poignant entries in the Irish immigration lists for Canada. For instance a Thomas Martin aged 71 born County Cork was taken into the Poor House at St John in 1842 and was stated to be lame and destitute. Not all of the data sets are for ships sailing from Ireland. Importantly there are lists for emigrants from Liverpool. The Ann Hall sailed from Liverpool and arrived at St John in Canada in July 1848. The Grimes family from Monaghan, who travelled on this ship, were admitted to the Poor House in September, October and December of the year following and discharged soon after. If you have Irish relatives who emigrated this is another site to check out.

The main interest in these new additions is of course the World War 1 pension records. Few service records have survived from the First World War, ironically due to bombing during the Second World War, so these records are particularly important. However, the main point of these records is that the soldiers have to have survived to be awarded pensions. The service records of those who died in the war will still, in the majority, be lost to us. Details from these records include when and where enlisted, parents' names, addresses, occupation at enlistment and service details during the war, including injuries and discharge details. If like me your direct relative was killed and no records survive for him, why not try a brother or other relative's name. These may be viewed free of charge at The History Shop and in all Wigan and Leigh Borough libraries.

Last Chance to See 'The Way We Were'!

Wigan Pier's 'The Way We Were' closes on Thursday 20th December. To entice old friends and new visitors for a final visit 'The Way We Were' is offering entry at a special discounted rate of just £2 for all visitors. Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust's Executive Director for Heritage Pete Gascoigne said: "The Way We Were has been a hugely successful heritage attraction, and we would like people who haven't been before to enjoy the experience for themselves before we move on".

Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust is currently working in partnership with Wigan Council and Drumcroon arts education service to finalise plans for a new arts and heritage learning centre at Wigan Pier Quarter. Pete continued: "We are looking to the future with determination and enthusiasm. The spirit of The Way We Were will live on in the new developments at the Wigan Pier Quarter. We will continue to offer an educational experience that will enhance the excellent reputation synonymous with the name Wigan Pier."

A project team is currently finalising plans for the new £4 million plus facility which will include the world famous Trencherfield Mill Engine as its heritage centrepiece. Plans for the new centre also include a large gallery space, workshops and artists

studios. In addition, a flexible 106 seat theatre space will give performers the opportunity to work in a professional space that could also be used to show local films or art-house cinema. This will complement Wigan Council's partnership with Wigan and Leigh College who are planning to create a 300-plus seat venue at The Linacre Theatre. Following closure, the building housing The Way We Were will be handed back to Wigan Council who is currently seeking expressions of interest from prospective new tenants.

'The Way We Were' at Wigan Pier is open Monday to Thursday 10am to 5pm and on Sundays 11am to 5pm. The £2 offer extends to all visitors with the exception of special activities and entrance to the Trencherfield Mill Engine. Call 01942 323666 for further details.



LAST CHANCE TO SEE THE AWARD WINNING WAY WE WERE MUSEUM!

Special Offer – Discounted Entry
£2.00 per person*

For a family day out with a difference. Take a step back in time to the 1900s.

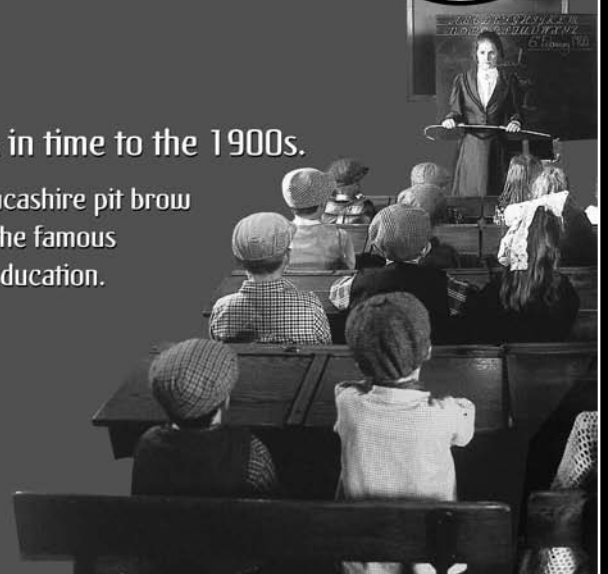
Experience life below ground at the coalface; see how the famous Lancashire pit brow lasses lived, and feel the horrors of the Maypole Colliery Disaster. In the famous schoolroom you can also experience the rigours of a strict Victorian education.

OPEN

MONDAY-THURSDAY 10.00am-5.00pm

SUNDAY 11.00am-5.00pm

*Valid on production of this advert, from 1st October-20th December 2007.
Excludes activities and events. Opening hours correct at time of print.



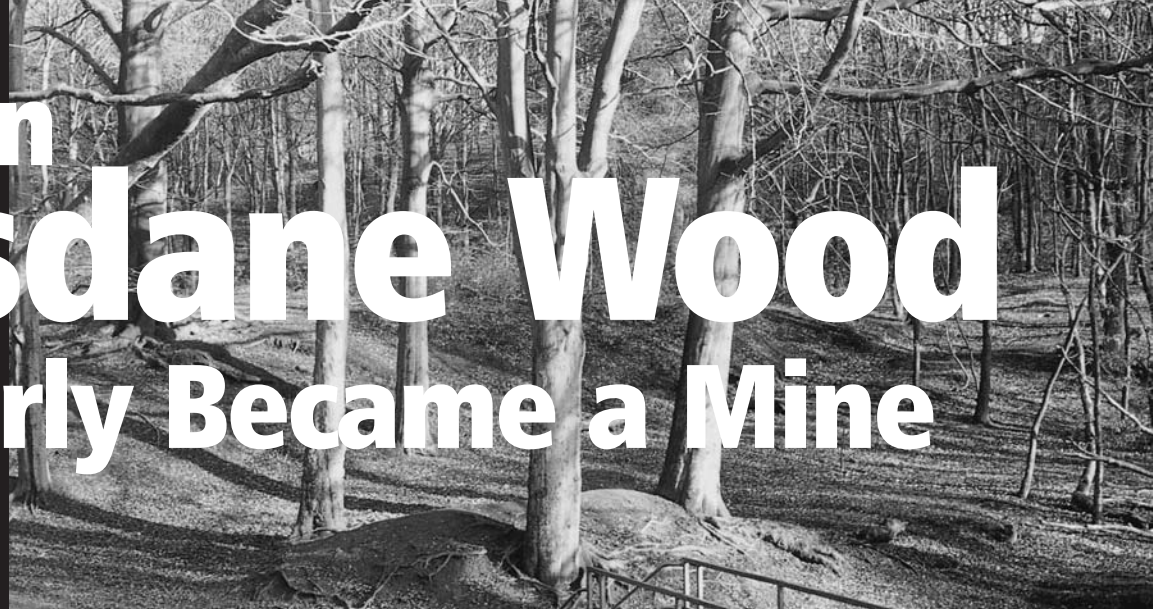
Wallgate, Wigan, WN3 4EU
www.wiganpier.net wiganpier@wlct.org
Telephone 01942 323666

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

Ref: Past Forward

When Borsdane Wood Nearly Became a Mine

By Austin Lyons



It's not much to look at, but certainly a powerful reminder of what might have been - a large mound of earth, blended over the years into the rest of the terrain - not exactly a grave but a fitting memorial all the same.

It was around 1926-27 that an enthusiastic mining prospector, Mr Bartly Davy, started his excavations at the Hindley end of Borsdane Wood - only a few yards from the brook. The father of a large family from Liverpool Road, Hindley, he had the good fortune of having a ready-made labour force in his several sons. It was whilst making one of my boyhood excursions into the Wood at this time, that I was able with youthful excitement, to witness some of this activity.

All the usual mining and lifting equipment was there - the lads shoring up the hole with wooden planks with each bucketful of earth lifted. It wasn't long before they had penetrated the clay and were now hauling up quantities of grey slay - a positive indication of the near presence of coal. It was at this point, which has always remained a mystery, that after a few days, the prospecting suddenly stopped. They at once set about dismantling their equipment and then refilled the hole. This completed, there still remained a residual amount of earth which formed the mound in question. Eighty years on, by a strange quirk of nature, the trunks

of four stout trees now dominate this scene, standing like sentinels guarding a tomb. What is more remarkable is that one of the latest foot-bridges to be placed over the brook looks directly to the area in question. It is doubtful, if those involved in this task, had the slightest idea, that they were responsible for directing people to an incident of such historical interest. This short lived excavation occurred, long before the Wood came under the control of the three Urban District Councils of Hindley, Westhoughton and Aspull. Meanwhile, Mr Davy continued his mining career and eventually became the manager of one of the collieries in the Bickershaw area. In more recent times, there has been speculation about the possibility of coal mining, once again in the vicinity of Borsdane Wood, but this was rejected by the local authority.

This natural park is one of the largest in the Wigan conurbation and in addition to its being a firmly established bird sanctuary, has in recent years become home to the grey squirrel. Its springtime profusion of bluebells and daffodils, attract photographers and artists alike, both amateur and professional. During the school holidays, the Wood becomes an adventure playground for children of all ages. Herbert Evans, the former forester in charge, faced the problem of how best to deal with some of the more exuberant

youngsters. Shortly after his retirement (how many years ago?) I was making my exit from the Wood, using the gradient path leading out to Hall Lane, when, on the boundary fence I noticed some graffiti there, in white chalk was boldly printed "Bring Evans back". What a compliment - almost written with affection, to the old and rather rotund wood-keeper. The new forester, younger and more agile, gave the mischievous rascals a more scaring "run for their money". A resident in Hall Lane, Hindley, taking his daily stroll through the wood recently, said he came across a deer - a rare sight indeed - but we shouldn't be too surprised, after all Hindley's name means "hind-lee" and a reclining hind features prominently in the town's old coat of arms.



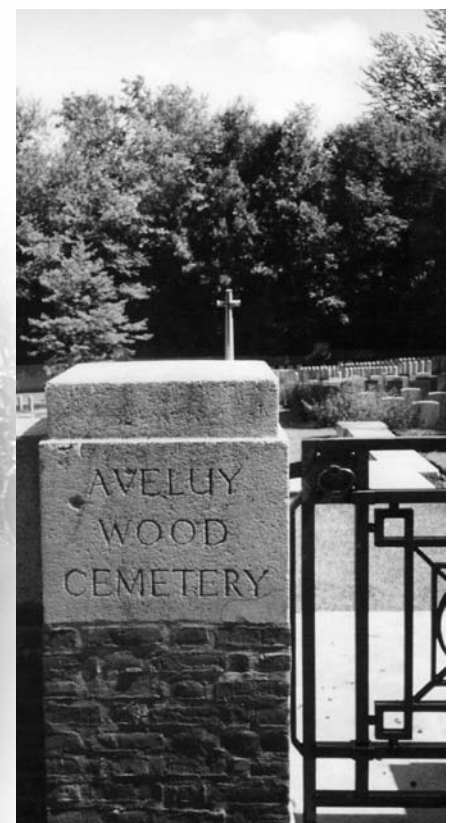
The World War I Battlefields of France

Vera Howarth of Abram has kindly offered to share with readers her extensive collection of photographs of World War I cemeteries and graves in France. The death of her husband's grandfather near Arras in 1917, has led to a great interest in the subject, and they frequently visit these sites and photograph them.

Occasionally, they come across the graves of other Wiganers, and they have sent these photographs. The grave is that of Gunner J Hoyle of the Royal Garrison Artillery and the cemetery is Aveluy Wood on the Somme.

If any reader wants to contact Mrs Howarth, please get in touch and we will pass your details on.

Editor



A Portrait of my Grandmother

By Lilian
Yates

Lillian Gorner 1892-1963

Everyone called her “mother”, even the neighbours if my memory serves me correctly, so I did too, never grandma or nan.

She was the product of her times, restricted, superstitious, in constant fear of what the neighbours might think. The fact that she never passed beyond the boundaries of her front gate or further than the “back yard”, (estate agents call them courtyards now, but they’re back yards all the same) suited me just fine. It meant she was always in. Reliability is a good trait in a grandma. Children like to think those they depend on, live in cupboards. Mine did. It was so reassuring to know where mother would be at any given time. Much later, of course, I realised she suffered from agoraphobia, but people weren’t so ready to stick labels on conditions then. In mother’s day, personal foibles were accepted. It was as it was. Mothers just didn’t go out.

Apparently, she did venture to shops and even as far as Blackpool when I was very small, but by the time she’d been appointed as ‘mother’ in my eyes, she was well and truly fixed as firmly as the furniture into 376, Downall Green Road, Bryn, Wigan, Lancs. We lived there for a while awaiting the tenancy of our council house, my parents and I, and when we moved, not far away, I still constantly went ‘up’, probably motivated by a need to perpetuate the familiar in the first instance, then by food. Not mother’s cooking, for everything she touched was converted to mush or fried crispy black. To replace the taste which was entirely cooked out in their pans on trivets over an open fire then later on a cooker in the lean-to (called conservatories now), she added lashings of pepper and salt. The food joy came from Uncle Jimmy’s bakery

in Hindley. Its wares were second to none. Aunts Marjorie and Dorothy worked there and they all lived with mother in their little terrace house. They brought home pies, fruit tarts, custards and chocolate cakes, especially at the weekend.

Mother limited her use of fresh food, not so much correlated with availability, but more to do with her suspicion of anything not a potato, a carrot or an apple. Those beyond the norm were deemed exotic, so a risk. It was also compulsory for any vegetation that entered the house to be semi decayed. Fermenting wrinkled apples tasting of cider and soil bore no resemblance to anything I had at home. De-seeding was essential (appendicitis) as was peeling (indigestion). The time limit on fruit consumption was 6pm (insomnia).

But those cakes!

I was eighteen before I realised I liked tea, away from home for the first time at teacher training college. Incidentally, mother was horrified when I mentioned my ambition to go to college. She didn’t believe I could ‘do it’ to begin with, but her main objection was that girls got married, so education was a waste. The future was prescribed in terms of shop work or the respectability of an office or a bank, and there was I, getting ideas above my station, “peas above sticks”, “too big for boots”. Mother’s greeting to me on my numerous visits was, “Have a cup of tea so you won’t get headache”, and I did, treacly stuff over stewed and sweetened, a blend unique to our family, for she passed those tea making skills on to my father, Stanley.

I never doubted mother’s delight at seeing me when I ‘went up’. I’d give one sharp rap on the front door and walk in with, “it’s me!” Then I’d

shower her with news I knew would enthral her. She kept copious supplies of Victory V lozenges which I loved. Sometimes she fed me with so many in such a short space of time I was virtually chloroformed, probably when she needed a bit of respite from the banter that enchanted her so much.

There’s no need for a woman in her fifties to be dowdy now, but then they all looked ancient. Mother did to me, with her long dark garments of thick material covered over by an apron, wrinkled ‘Nora Batty’ lisle stockings and usually a hair net over her pulled back hair. That outfit reflected a state of mind. It was a uniform to the convention of daily chores. The image of Terry Jones in “The Life of Brian” looms. But it was the slippers that live on most, check wool with the front turned over in off-white cuffs with a ginger pom-pom in the centre, that I called a bob. The landmark of old age, worn by those who wish to signal that they’ve given up on joy.

I must have been about eight when over a cup of tea she said, “You’ll not know what worry is yet but I do”. She was right. I hadn’t a clue. Not that I recall her ever having a jolly good laugh or letting her inhibitions slip. She never played with me. I can’t remember any physical affection. She was cold. The strange thing is that so many years on I’m writing about her, because despite her foibles, I felt and still feel a strong bond. Being an only child, mother’s home provided a much-needed extra dimension to my life. Jimmy, Dorothy and Marjorie would return from the bakery at the end of the day on the bus. Then the house would be full with mother at its centre in her apron and ‘beddies’, slicing a cob of bread on a board in the middle of the table, a reassuring ritual to precede dishing out the mush

and the black fried bits. It might have been the eccentricity that I liked. But I think mostly it was the reassurance of the sameness of things.

She wouldn't open windows (lest any joy might drift in by accident on a breeze). Draughts were lethal things. Neither would she allow wild flowers in the house, a fact discovered in a very hurtful way. My friend, Jean Daniels and I had picked some from a copse on a beautiful sunny evening. It must have been May, for I can picture hawthorn blossom spilling out, bluebells and something pink, campion perhaps. I gave mine proudly to mother as the perfect gift. Having left some item behind, we returned a little later to find the drooping bouquet on top of the dustbin. I felt utterly violated. The reason? They bring bad luck, even death!

It was decreed from on high that Monday was wash day. It took place in the lean-to with a tub, rubbing board, hard blocks of soap and a wringer. Marjorie and Dorothy didn't go to the shop that day. It would have been a crime for any socks to hit the suds at any other time. And after it, the rubbing stone was applied to the steps, and lobby was made from the left over Sunday meat. She can't have had a hand in that for I recall it was pretty good. But she did do the steps. What would the neighbours think if by tea-time on a Monday there were no bold white stripes across? You were nobody if you didn't rub stone your steps. My own mother purposely flaunted these time-honoured traditions. No wonder she and 'mother' never saw eye to eye. It didn't help that she was an Austrian, personally responsible for the machinations of the second world-war, who brazenly entered England in 1948. Mother never liked foreigners, and foreigners were anyone not born in North Ashton. My father's antics had always exasperated her. He clinched it good and proper when he brought home a Germanic bride and a German speaking child. No. I'm not bilingual. Mother wouldn't allow it.

Not that mother and I always saw eye to eye either. On the very rare occasion I showed dissent, it would be, "Ee, she's a madam, just like her mother!" One such incident took

place when my mother was in hospital and I was staying at 376. Though she thought it unnecessary, mother begrudgingly allowed me a bath in a tub, after which I was expected to wear the same clothes as I'd had on the week before. I refused and sat naked and cross-legged, arms folded on the stairs until mother gave in and provided me with something clean. She relented mostly to spare Jimmy the vision of naked flesh, in utter despair. Prim and proper beyond measure, I fail to comprehend how she ever came to have four children of her own.

Most bizarre of the mundane tasks that marked out the passage of her days was the ritual sweeping of the back room, that I frequently witnessed in bewilderment. The front room or parlour was for best so very rarely used. Mother plied a sweeping brush across the threadbare carpets, over runners and rugs, gathering bread crumbs and fluff in a pile whilst preaching the merits of maintaining a clean home to me sitting watching with my legs tucked up. Then she'd lift up the big rug in front of the coal fire and sweep the lot underneath where it formed a small hill. It was only when there were too many hills to manipulate that a dust-pan and hearth brush would emerge to deposit them in the bin. Then the whole process would begin again.

Jimmy bought a black and white T.V. We didn't have one. It fascinated me. And there were always colourful magazines and television guides. But the only item I remember playing with was a tin of buttons that I treasured. I don't recall any other residual toys. Yet boredom can be very beneficial. I read 'Oliver Twist' at the age of ten because there was nothing else to do after Sunday lunch, (accompanied by the sound of 'Family Favourites' on the radio), but to get a book from the cabinet in the parlour while Jimmy slept and quiet was essential for an hour. Lunch was always followed by rice or sago pudding with a thick, gold, spicy skin, which Jimmy got because he was the favourite and also the man of the house. Grown ups' needs came first and I happily accepted that fact. Drawing upon internal resources because there was little else on offer

was a skill that stood me in good stead.

Christmas meant Dorothy bringing rich fruit cakes home to ice and they were exquisite works of art. She made intricate trellises in royal icing over moulds, piped filigree patterns, white on white, and she never made a mistake. My love of cake decoration began there. I never formally trained and have never matched that expertise, but if you ask what Christmas meant to me as a child, I'd say Dorothy's cakes. They should have been exhibited, not eaten. I hope I told her so. Probably I didn't. The whole package was just there, taken for granted just as sure as night follows day. Christmas also meant two sets of gifts. At mother's they'd be laid out on the parlour settee. I think their generosity to the only child in the family gave them a lot of pleasure. Iced giant Easter eggs, pocket money from a purse in the bottom right hand dresser drawer and nice clothing given with obvious enjoyment were received with great respect. I was not materialistic. Such gestures were seldom and more meaningful for that. More than anything was the knowledge that I could visit any time, largely unaccompanied, for freedom to move about in safety was then a normal way of life. The first time I went alone though was beyond the norm, I was just four, slipping out unseen, with, I'm told, the snow going over my boots.

I was sixteen when mother died. Austere, thwarted by the narrow minded impositions of the times, puritanical, mother wore some inner sadness, but she helped shape my childhood in her own strange way. I now understand her situation, early widowhood and abject poverty, failing health, her own and her youngest daughter's. Perhaps it's a sign of age to hark back to the past and I do think of her and my aunts and uncle a lot. Perhaps it's because I'm a grandma now. I often dream of them, and I have a burning desire to knock on the door of 376 and ask its current owners if I can take one more look around, sit a while and remember mother in her 'pinny' and bedroom slippers pottering about.

READER'S PHOTOGRAPH



Up Holland Moor School, 1954.

The teacher on the left is Mr Bentham (headmaster) and the teacher on the right, Mr Bradshaw.
Sent in by Mr D Dickinson, New Zealand.

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TRENCHERFIELD MILL ENGINE NEW VISITOR PROGRAMME

Even though the 'Way We Were' exhibition will be closing on 20 December, the 'star' of the soon to be developed Wigan Pier Quarter will still be open to the public.

The mill engine re-opens in February, after substantial refurbishment work. Visitors will be able to view the engine free of charge every Sunday. An AV show and a talk from the engineers about the role of the engine, the power behind the mill machinery, and how cotton was spun at the mill, is included

in the visit. There will also be the opportunity to question the engineers, and share in their extensive knowledge.

Groups will be able to book visits on Mondays and Tuesdays, and participate in a range of activities including guided talks, theatre productions and educational sessions. There will be a small charge of between £2.95 and £5.00 per person, dependant on the programme chosen. Activities can be tailored to individual group needs, especially schools.

Those on group visits will have

the added bonus of seeing the engine in steam. This is a truly exciting experience, with the smell of oil, the sound of the pistons and the whirr of the fly-wheel as it gathers speed.

It is essential that all visitors contact the engine house to check opening times and availability. The Wigan Pier Quarter site is still undergoing development, which could possibly affect opening hours.

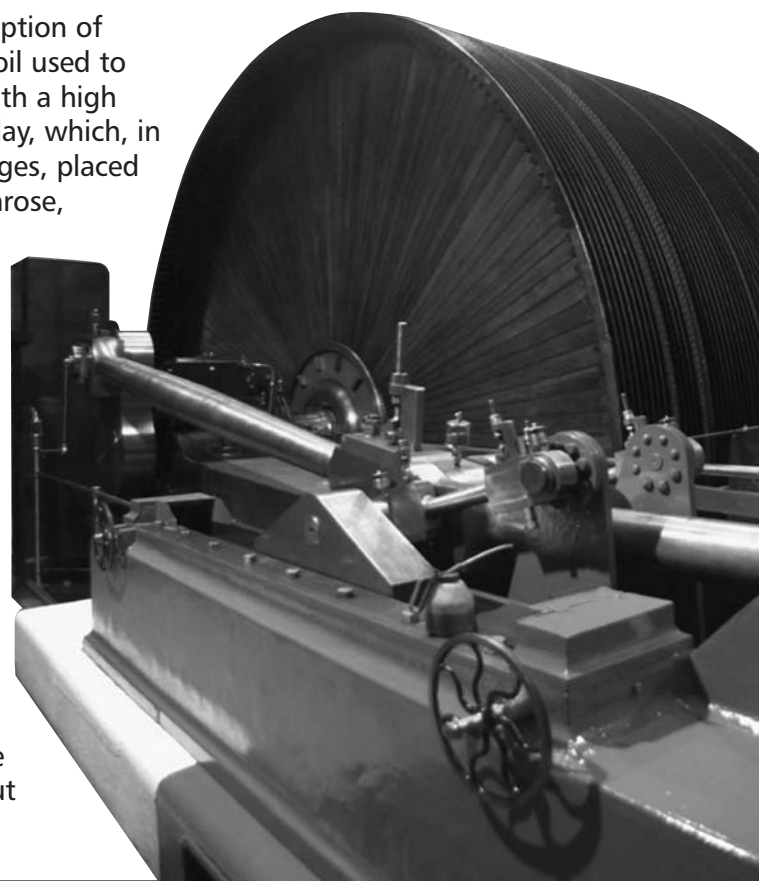
**Telephone Wigan
(01942) 323666 for details
and group bookings.**

Trencherfield Mill Engine Goes Green

In order to reduce its carbon footprint, and reduce consumption of fossil fuels, the Heritage Service has abandoned the heavy oil used to drive the 2,500 horse power mill engine, and replaced it with a high tech Biofuel. The engine can use up to 400 litres of fuel a day, which, in the face of global warming and its associated climate changes, placed a duty on us to find greener alternatives. The opportunity arose, when a new efficient steam boiler was installed. The new fuel is clean and comes from a renewable source. Not only does it help the environment, but also saves money on running costs.

The engine now also has an 'energy recovery system' which creates extra electrical power when turning, and which can be re-used. As the engine does not actually power any machinery, the extra energy is harnessed to pre heat the feed water to the boiler which supplies the engine at no extra cost.

The engine staff is hoping to develop an apprenticeship in engineering. In the meantime, the engineering team is always on the look out for volunteers. If you are interested in working with this magnificent piece of machinery, please contact Wigan Pier on 01942 323666. You can also find out more about the engine at www.wlct.org





STONE HOUSE PENNINGTON

By Tony Ashcroft

The property known as Stone House (now demolished) which was situated at the corner of St. Helens Road and Etherstone Street was built by John Fairclough in 1825. It then passed on to his son John in (a flour and stone dealer) in 1836. He died in 1867. His son John, born in 1854 at Stone House, was to become Leigh's first mayor.

Between 1890 and 1918 the house was occupied by Dr James Hayes, son of John Hayes JP, master cotton spinner who lived at The Limes, Orchard Lane. He was a member of the Royal College of Surgeons and a Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians, who held practices at

both Church Street and Stone House. He left Leigh in 1919 and moved to Crofton Lodge, Tunbridge Wells. He died in September 1939 aged 83 at another of his residences, Craig Gowan, Carr Bridge, Inverness.

Following the 1918 Maternity and Child Welfare Act, Leigh Council set up a sub-committee to look into all the services the Act dealt with, the main object being to preserve the life and health of mothers and children. Dr. Clay Beckett, who was Medical Officer of Health at the time, reported back to the Council in June 1919 that these particular services were inadequate. A Dr Beckett, on behalf of the council, approached Dr Hayes to see if he would sell

the property at a price which could enable it to be a substantial gift to the town.

Dr. Hayes indicated that the sale price of Stone House on the open market would probably be in the region of £4000, although he would accept approximately £3000. The estimated value of the premises to the Inland Revenue authorities was £2,700. Dr Hayes met the Council's proposal generously, selling it to them at £1,700. On the lowest estimate, it was a gift to the town of at least £1000. By 1920, the property was being used as a Maternity, Child Welfare Centre and School Clinic. Prior to this the clinic had been held in the old Town Hall.

During its' first year as a Maternity and Child Welfare Centre, an Infant and Mothers Clinic was held every Monday afternoon, where mothers brought babies to be weighed. During the first year, 324 babies were entered onto the books, with 1610 visits to the centre, at a cost of £261-0s-0d.

In addition to the normal work covered, the following articles of clothing and food were allocated at a small charge, or free to the deserving cases:

3,569 pints of new milk
 316 tins of dried milk (given)
 4,688 tins of dried milk (sold)
 44 4oz pots of Virol (given)
 1,642 4oz pots of Virol (sold at 6d each)
 247 tins of Nestles milk (sold)
 11 maternity bags provided
 Over 6 articles of clothing were supplied

By 1921 work at the Centre had expanded, and attendance by infants had increased to 1,922.

The Child Health and Welfare Clinic eventually closed in October 1968. The building itself was demolished in 1970. The site is now occupied by the Early Years and Family Resource Centre.



The day nursery. 1948.



Weighing time for babies.

Book of Ages

By
Christine
Banks

*Its relatively pristine volumes finally stored away
 After years and years on display
 Having adorned many a bookcase in their day
 They still show little sign of decay*

*The strongly-bound volumes, a testament to age
 Recall amazing facts on every page
 Like soldiers on parade they detail wars
 Sturdy and reliable, they are mouthpieces telling all*

*This edition has become a victim of technology and time
 Who would believe it was published in the sixties
 Nowadays it can be found online*

*The relatively pristine volumes finally stored away
 After years and years on display*

*These historical vessels are now being celebrated
 As yet another era comes to an end*

*But it will not be long till another chapter is written
 In the unceasingly dependable Book of Ages*



The Other Side of the Heath

By Marlene Williams (Bostock)

Tom Anderton's poem about life on Ashton Heath brought back a great host of memories for me. Why can I recall them so clearly when I can't remember what I did yesterday?!

I was one of the Bostocks mentioned in his poem. Our house faced Tom's across The Heath so here is the view from the other side. I lived next door to my cousins Raymond, Mary and Philip Bliston. Two doors further down were my cousins Margaret and Norman Bostock. At the top of Ashton Heath, in a tiny house next to France's farm, was my other cousin, John Hayes. I clearly recall us standing on the railway bridge at the top of the Heath waiting with great excitement for the next steam train to arrive and screaming with delight when we were completely covered in steam, as it roared underneath us - all except for cousin John, who always ran away in sheer terror but later became a passionate train spotter.

Summers seemed long and hot with most of the time spent sliding down the 'big hill' in a cardboard box begged from the Co-op. My Grandma took us kids for regular picnics up to the 'top heath' with banana butties and a dandelion pop bottle filled with water. Then there was 'top and whip' time. We decorated our tops with coloured chalk and whipped them the length of Heath Road, never disturbed by any cars. I remember the Coronation Day when Ashton Heath was the scene of great festivity and excitement. I recall enjoying Punch and Judy but not having a clue what all the fuss was about. Like Tom, I recall Jimmy Gillet, the fish man, and his cry of 'never had nicer' and the way he always dressed his horse in paper flowers on May Day. I also remember Sam Boardman who came round every week in a van selling everything from scrubbing brushes to paraffin. We kids sang a song behind his back which started with "Sam, Sam the bogey man, washed his face in a frying pan" and ended with

"scratched his belly with his big toe nail." I can't recall what came in the middle! I remember the 'rag and bone' man who brought his cart round and exchanged old clothes for a rubbing stone, which my Mum used to make a lovely white edge when she mopped our front door step.

Across the road from us was Ivy Dootson's shop where I would go for a quarter of pear drops or a packet of Spangles. A few doors from the shop lived James Speak, the local herbalist, and I was frog-marched there at the first sign of a cough or sniffle. His awful brown medicine always had the same foul taste, no matter what the illness, but it seemed to cure everything.

Monday was washing day on Ashton Heath. Each house had two clothes posts on the Heath and washing of every size and colour was pegged out as far as the eye could see. Some of the items gave endless amusement to us kids. Great care had to be taken, when pegging out, to avoid the many cow pats left behind by Mary France's cows which grazed there daily. My other vivid memory of Monday morning was the 'pail men', who came to empty the toilet pails and I would do my best not to 'go' when they were in the backs.

I went to St Thomas infant school, which was about 200 yards from our house. I was scared stiff of the headmistress Mrs Cummins, daughter of the even more terrifying Mrs Rose, but we had the nicest dinner lady called Mrs Dawson.

We had to have a sleep every afternoon on tiny canvas beds which I thought was the most awful waste of time. The school yard was next to the graveyard and whenever a funeral passed by, we would stand still with heads down and the boys would remove their caps as a mark of respect.

Holocaust Memorial Day

24 January 2008

Once again, we will be commemorating all those who have lost their lives and suffered as a result of conflict. Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust (Libraries, Heritage and Arts) in partnership with Wigan Council, local civic bodies and diverse faith groups have organised ceremonies in Wigan and Leigh.

WIGAN - 10.30am in the Atrium at the New Town Hall, access through the Hewlett Street entrance. Art work from Orrell Holgate School will be on display.

LEIGH - 1.30pm in the Council Chamber, Leigh Town Hall. Coursework from year 9 pupils at Bedford High School will be on display.

The ceremonies will be attended by the Mayor, Peter Gascoigne, Rodney Hill and other guests. Members of the public are welcomed, but please arrive early, as seating is limited to 90 at each venue.



I went to Sunday school a bit further up Heath Road at 'Cave Browne' Church and to the Wednesday night 'Sunshine Corner' - now called 'Baseline.' On the annual Walking Day, we walked round Ashton accompanied by a brass band and ended up on Ashton Heath in front of our house, with the preacher standing on Arthur Arnold's coal wagon. Across from the Church was the Scala Cinema, with a lady taking tickets, that waved to us kids knowing we could never afford to go in. Next to the Church were 'C Court' then Sudworth's toffee shop and then Horace Hunt's cobblers shop. Even today, the smell of leather can take me back to the dark, mysterious depths of his dimly lit shop.

There was no such thing as a locked door. Everywhere was open house and I have no knowledge of anything ever being stolen. As kids, we roamed the length and breadth of Ashton Heath, playing Cowboys and Indians and making bows and arrows from tree branches.

My Mum still lives in the same house on Ashton Heath where I was born and I am happy to say I'm still in Ashton too, for that's where my roots are.

o exhibitions
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WORKSHOPS & EVENTS FOR ADULTS

CRAFT CIRCLE



Fridays 1.00pm - 2.30pm
7 December
4 January
1 February
7 March
Meet in the Gallery.

Whatever your interests - card-making, knitting, embroidery or any other crafts - the Craft Circle is the place to meet like-minded people and share tips and ideas. It's free and there's no need to book, just turn up on the day. Please bring something your working on.

PAINTING WITH ACRYLICS FOR ADULTS



Wednesdays 16, 23 & 30 January
6 & 13 February, 7.00pm - 9.00pm

Our regular tutor Paul Brotherton returns to lead this intermediate course in acrylic painting techniques, exploring the possibilities for this versatile medium. Suitable for anyone who has attended our beginners course or who has previous experience of working with acrylics. All materials will be provided. Cost: £15.00 for all five sessions. Places are limited so please book in advance.

WORKSHOPS FOR ADULTS



PRINTMAKING FOR ADULTS
Saturday 8 December, 1.30pm - 3.30pm
Led by artist Adela Jones. Suitable for beginners. Tickets cost £3.

CALLIGRAPHY FOR ADULTS
Saturday 29 March, 10.00am - 1.00pm
Led by artist Brian Whitmore this workshop will explore the richness and rhythm of the written word on paper. Suitable for beginners. Tickets cost £3. Programmed as part of the Words '08 Leigh & Wigan Literary Festival.

For more information tel **01942 404469**
Turnpike Gallery, Civic Square, Leigh WN7 1EB

LEIGH & WIGAN LITERARY FESTIVAL
a partnership with Wigan Council

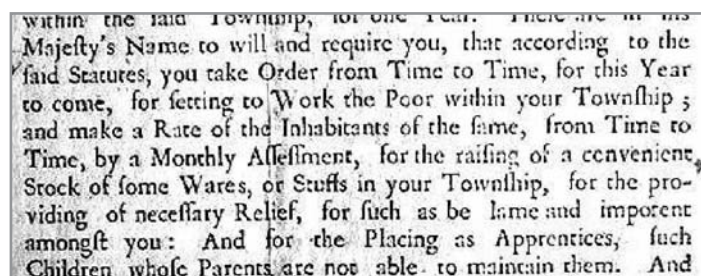
The Leigh Poor Law Union

ATHERTON – 1837

By R. Evans

The Pressure for Change

For over two hundred years local Atherton men had been chosen to serve as Overseers of the Poor, entrusted with the provision of assistance to the poor of their community. Under the supervision of the Justices of the Peace they gave relief under the terms of the 1601 Elizabethan Poor Law Act, the requirements of which are summarised in the order appointing John Baxter in 1746. (1)

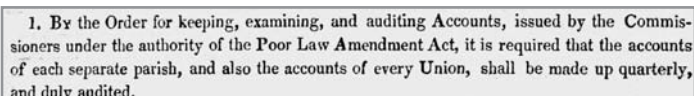


within the said Township, for one Year. There are in His Majesty's Name to will and require you, that according to the said Statutes, you take Order from Time to Time, for this Year to come, for setting to Work the Poor within your Township; and make a Rate of the Inhabitants of the same, from Time to Time, by a Monthly Assessment, for the raising of a convenient Stock of some Wares, or Stuffs in your Township, for the providing of necessary Relief, for such as be lame and impotent amongst you: And for the Placing as Apprentices, such Children whose Parents are not able to maintain them. And

By the third decade of the 19th century the Government decided that action was required to halt the rising cost of poor relief. There was a belief that overseers were granting relief far too easily and not exerting sufficient pressure to force people to seek work to support themselves and their families. In addition there was a suspicion that money raised by the Poor Rate was being used in ways that had no lawful basis. Concerns such as these resulted in the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act in 1834. Small townships were to be grouped into much larger units known as Unions and the responsibility to provide relief was transferred from local overseers to Guardians. Their ability to grant aid was to be closely controlled by centrally appointed Commissioners. Pleas for help were to be examined much more closely and, rather than awarding payments to subsidise people in

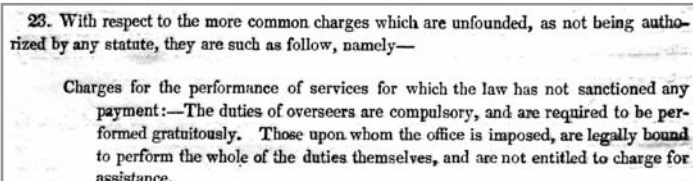
their own homes, anyone claiming not to be able to support themselves was to be given the option of entering a workhouse. There, in return for a bare subsistence standard of living, they would be required to work to help defray the cost of their keep.

How these changes came about as far as the provision of relief for the poor of Atherton can be traced from records in the archives in Leigh Town Hall. In 1836, even before the formation of the Union, the Atherton overseers received orders to be much stricter in the management of their accounts. (2)



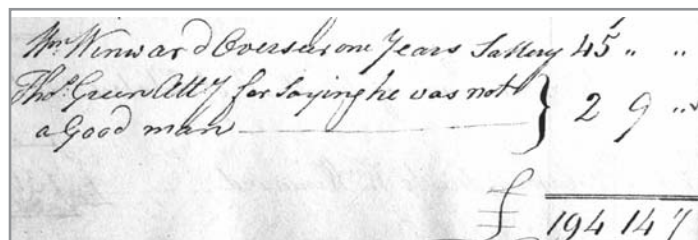
1. By the Order for keeping, examining, and auditing Accounts, issued by the Commissioners under the authority of the Poor Law Amendment Act, it is required that the accounts of each separate parish, and also the accounts of every Union, shall be made up quarterly, and duly audited.

Legitimate uses of the poor rate were listed together with examples of payments which were frequently made but which had not been sanctioned by legislation.



23. With respect to the more common charges which are unfounded, as not being authorized by any statute, they are such as follow, namely—
Charges for the performance of services for which the law has not sanctioned any payment:—The duties of overseers are compulsory, and are required to be performed gratuitously. Those upon whom the office is imposed, are legally bound to perform the whole of the duties themselves, and are not entitled to charge for assistance.

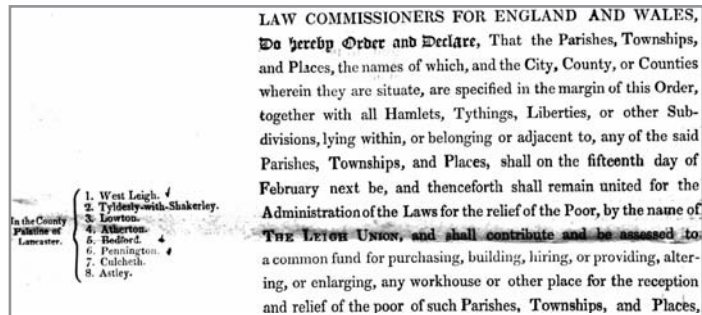
This criticism appears justified as many of the Atherton Overseers, such as William Winward in April 1814, did receive a salary. (3)



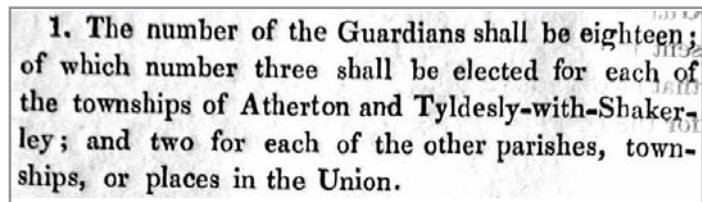
Mr. Winward Overseer one year Salary 15 " "
The Guardians for saying he was not a good man } 29 " "
£ 19/4/14

The Formation of the Union

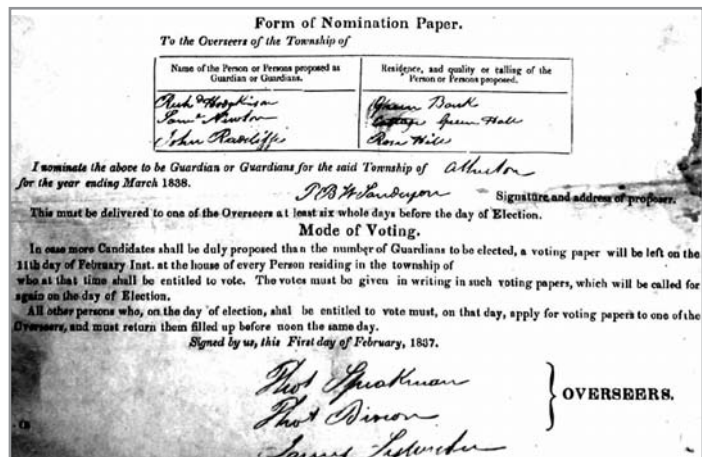
In January 1837 Atherton received the official document requiring the formation of the Leigh Union comprising the townships of the Leigh parish together with Lowton and Culcheth. (4)



It laid down the form of administration, the responsibilities of Guardians and how and when they would be chosen.



The nomination form for the Atherton Guardians survives. (5)



The minutes suggest that not all the townships were properly represented at the first meeting which was to be "at the principal Inn, Leigh, on the eighteenth day of February and shall commence at eleven o'clock in the forenoon". Not until after advice had been received from an Assistant Poor Law Commissioner, were the principal officers finally elected on 31st of March. The four Guardians from Atherton were Mr B.H. Sanderson (ex off), Mr Samuel Newton, Mr Hodgkinson and Mr Thomas Hope. Rev. John Topping was appointed Chairman and Mr Pownall Vice Chairman. It was agreed that

meetings would be in the Pennington workhouse at 11 o'clock on Thursdays. Prior to this meeting, on March 18th it had been decided to divide the Union into two areas; - the Lowton District including Lowton, Pennington, Bedford and Culcheth with a population of 11,957 and the Atherton District made up of Atherton, Tyldesley, Astley and West Leigh with a population of 14,743.

In addition to poor relief administration the Guardians were also entrusted with the introduction of the present system for the registration of births, deaths and marriages. For this, on the 4th of May, they divided the Union into two districts - later three districts - and, on the 10th of November, made provision for separate registration to be done at Bedford Catholic chapel, Tyldesley chapel and the Presbyterian chapel in Chowbent. Applications were sought for District Registrars to undertake this work Thomas Sale was appointed for Atherton.

Administration

Meetings during the summer were largely concerned with establishing the administrative structure. The initial intention was that the Guardians would meet in rooms in the Pennington workhouse. When the suitability of this location, was questioned by the Commissioners, the Guardians initially defended their decision by passing a resolution on June 23rd:

"that no place appears to them to be so proper as the Workhouse in Pennington for the Register Office for the Union as it is not intended for the present Workhouse to be continued as a Workhouse but as a general School for the Pauper Children and in order to take or erect any other premises so convenient it would cause considerable expense to the Union"

Two weeks later they rescinded their decision and agreed to consider:

"a house situated in Pennington belonging to Mr Smethurst be taken...at the Rent of Fifteen pounds per annum...Mr Smethurst agreeing...to make the necessary alterations for Safety subject to the approval of the Guardians and the Registrar"

Having agreed on this location decisions were taken regarding the furnishing of the office. For the storage of paper records they originally considered obtaining a "Deal Box" but eventually decided on an "Iron Safe". On the 14th of September they agreed:

"that a Bay Wood Table about one yard on Breath and one Yard and a half in length be ordered for the Board Room, Also twenty four Arm Chairs of Bay Wood, a Green Cloth to cover the Table"

Maybe this was rather extravagant as two weeks later they modified the requirement to:

"a table nine feet long and four feet broad covered with Green Baize and also two dozen of common serviceable chairs"

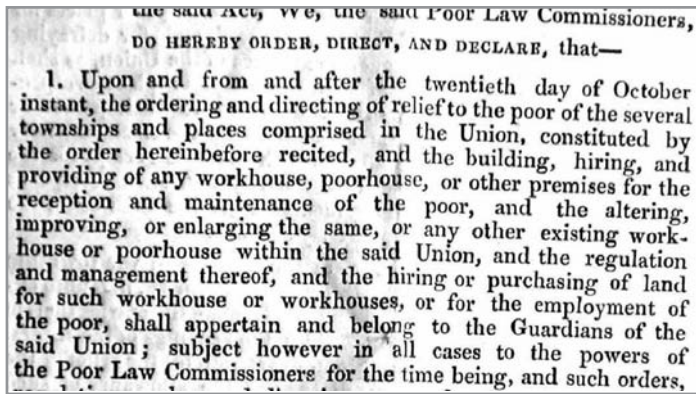
To ensure security they decided to spend:

"Thirty Shillings for the putting up of an Iron Door to the repository with Door posts Locks and Inges"

Work Begins

In October the Commissioners provided a timetable for the Guardians to assume direct responsibility for administering relief. Until the end of November the overseers could continue to provide relief as in the past, but after that they were informed that:

"from and after the thirtieth day of November next, the relief of the poor of all townships and places in the Union, shall be brought under the control and direction of the Guardians". Initially however they were to make decisions about the workhouses. (6)



On October 20th a committee of five was formed to meet at the Chat Moss tavern and recommend:

"which of the workhouses it will be most advisable to retain for the Union"

On November 10th they presented their decision:

"that Twenty five pounds be offered to the Overseers of Culcheth and Forty five pounds be offered to the Overseers of Lowton as a Rent for the Use of their respective Workhouses for the Poor of the Union"

The minutes do not record the names of other existing workhouses, including that in Atherton, and no reason is given why these two were

retained. The remainder were to be closed and a committee was formed on 8th December to:

"examine the Furniture in all the Workhouses and take such as may be found necessary for furnishing the Lowton and Culcheth Workhouses at a valuation and give the necessary Direction therein"

At the same meeting they served notice to:

"the Townships having Poor in the Workhouses of Lowton and Culcheth to provide for the maintenance and Lodging of their respective Poor on or before the 25th day of December next"

Tenders were also requested for:

"Provisions for the Paupers in the Workhouses of Lowton and Culcheth namely Wheat, Potatoes, Oat Meal, Beef, Milk, Groceries, Coals"

The salary for the workhouse masters and matrons was set at thirty guineas per annum.

Advertisements were placed in the Manchester Guardian and Bolton Chronicle and the posts were filled by the end of the month by Thomas Clune and his wife for Lowton and Richard Withington and his wife for Culcheth. At this final meeting of the year on December 29th it was agreed:

"that the masters and matrons this day appointed take possession of their respective situations and that the Paupers be removed to their separate stations on or before the fifteen day of January next"

The End of the First Year

The Guardians now had sole responsibility to decide to whom and where relief should be granted. They met weekly, first to consider the "applications of paupers", and then to approve payments made by the Relieving Officers and the Treasurer. The Guardians charged each township for the relief they provided for people for whom the township was responsible. The Atherton records contain a list of such people who were in receipt of such help in March 1838. (7)

SINGLE UNION.		Townships of Atherton PAR.	
A List of Paupers belonging to the above Parish who have been relieved during the Quarter ending 25th March.			
Name	Age	If not in the Workhouse, where resident.	Amount of Relief out of the Workhouse.
Edward Roger	70	Hosley Lane	5
James Mary	69	Sayles Brook Bolton	4
Frances Mary	56	Samuel's Square H. Mary	12
Mather Betty	71	Red Street	4
Whittle Henry	74	Chorley	4
Fearnhead Betty	29	Atherton	4

At the close of the first year it is clear that in all the Union townships the majority of the payments were still for out-relief and not for people taken into the workhouses. (8)

Leigh Union		
Balances due to Townships March 25 th 1846	Astley	104 3 3/4
	Wharfedale	198 3 9
	Fyldeley	9 6 6
	Westleigh	38 14 2
	Golborne	65 12 -
	Benyon	30 18 - 1/2
Balances due from Townships March 25 th 1846	Bedford	62 17 -
	Culetheth	100 9 3 -
	Louton	30 - 2 1/2
	Pennington	25 18 10
		676 6 1/2

The township overseers' duty was now limited to ensuring that the poor rate was collected and that

the proceeds were sufficient to meet the cost of relief. They received end of year statements, such as one dated March 1846, showing which townships were either in credit or owing money. (9)

Acknowledgement and Sources

This brief summary of the sequence of events in 1837 is based on records in the archives in Leigh Town Hall. The writer is grateful for the assistance of the staff there for making the records available and for providing valuable advice. The principal source is the first year's minute book of the Union meetings - G LEI/1. The dates of the meetings are given for extracts from this. Other illustrations are from Atherton Township documents indexed as below:

1. TR Ath/C/7/2/4
2. TR Ath/C/7/27/1
3. TR Ath/C/2/21 -
4. TR Ath C/7/25
5. TR Ath/C/7/33
6. TR AthC/7/26 -
7. TR Ath/C/7/32/9 -
8. TR Ath/ C/7/32/1
9. TR Ath/C/37

£500,000 Lottery Funding for the History Shop



As many of you will have seen in the press, the History Shop has been awarded £500,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a total refurbishment, including a lift, new educational facilities, new exhibitions and state of the art computer and micro-form readers and printers. Wigan Council has matched this sum with £405,000 to be spent restoring and re-roofing this fine historical landmark and listed building. The total scheme is £1.3 million, with contributions of £325,000 from Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust and £100,000 from other sources.

As well greatly enhancing visitor experience, the grant will allow the Heritage Service to develop the History Shop as a hub for heritage in the borough and enable us to work more closely with all our local communities. Our aim is to ensure that our local heritage plays a key role in the cultural life of the borough, and that all citizens who want to participate in their heritage can do so.

The History Shop will need to be closed at various times to enable building work, refitting, and the installation of the new exhibitions. Work schedules are currently being finalised. News of closures and the grand re-opening will be made available as soon as dates are confirmed. This is a very exciting time for all of us!

In the meantime, keep a watch on the local media and our website for further updates.

HINDLEY GREEN SPRINGS COLLIERY DISASTER

EIGHTEEN SIXTY EIGHT

BY KEITH WOOD

After reading an article in a book called 'Pictures of Hindley and Hindley Green' edited by J Lowe (a local historian and my past headmaster, sadly no longer with us) I was inspired to do some research on the Springs Colliery disaster. Most of my research was carried out at the History Shop, using the old mining newspaper 'The Colliery Guardian'. I would like to share with you what I found. The more I learned, the more I related the disaster to my own past mining experience and the reasons for modern mining laws and regulations being enforced in today's mining industry. I hope that anyone reading this article will gain an insight in to the history of the mining industry in the Wigan area, and realise what a dangerous occupation it was. It was due to inquests and investigations carried out after such disasters that the mining industry became a much safer place to work.

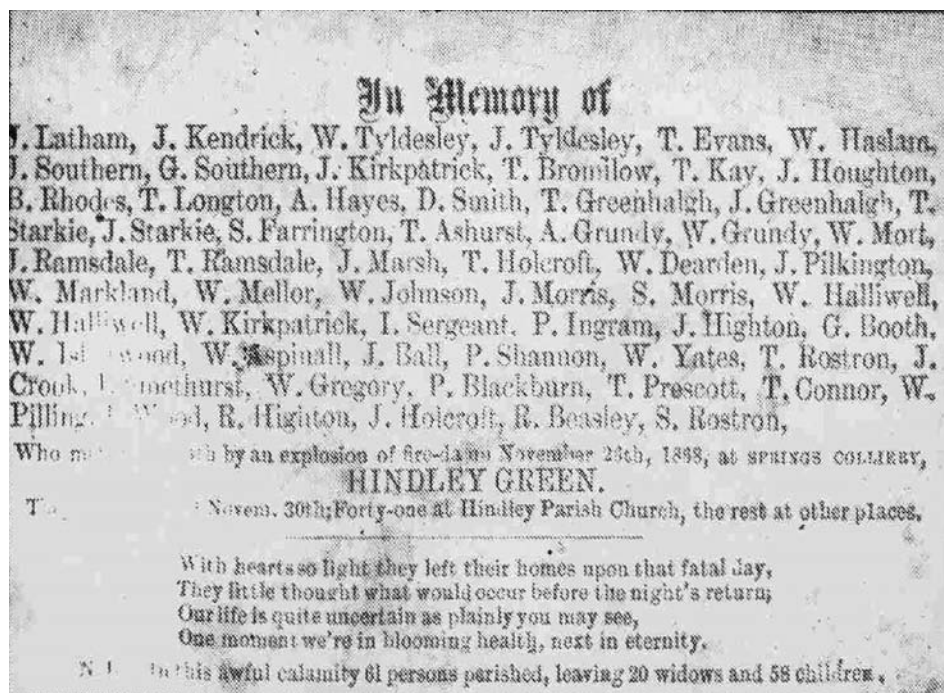
This Memorial card commemorates Hindley's worst colliery disaster. On the 26 November 1868 an explosion occurred in the Arley mine at the Springs Colliery, Hindley Green. Sixty-two people were killed. Their average age was 23, 19 were aged 17 or below and the youngest was aged eleven. There were three instances of fathers and sons and four of teenage brothers being buried together.

Local Newspaper Report

The following account is taken from one of the local newspapers.

"On Thursday morning, at about twenty minutes to nine o'clock, an explosion occurred in the Arley mine of the Hindley Green Colliery, near Wigan. By this disaster fifty-seven lives were lost, and several cases of serious injury sustained. Hindley Green Colliery is one of the oldest mines in the neighbourhood, but the particular sections where the explosion occurred had only been working for the past for or five years. The downcast shaft is twelve feet

in diameter, and three hundred yards deep. At the pit bottom there are workings extending in three of four directions through the seam of coal, which is a level one, and about four and one half feet thick. Nearly three hundred men and boys are employed in the mine and were at work there on Thursday morning. Of those, fifty-nine were in the workings in the west side where the explosion happened. Soon after the explosion occurred Mr Thomas Southworth, the colliery manager, and an active band of volunteers at once commenced the painful task of ascertaining the extent of the disaster. The first who were found to have suffered were some persons who had been at work near the up-cast shaft:



They were burned owing to the flames from the furnace being driven along the workings. The labours of the explorers were both tedious and arduous, for the explosion had so completely destroyed the ventilation it was necessary to proceed with great caution, and of course every delay only increased the fears for those walled in by the deadly

Inquest on the bodies of 61 men killed

The inquest opened on the Monday following the accident at the Victoria Inn, Hindley Green. The inn is still open today and is situated on the corner of Atherton Road and Long Lane.



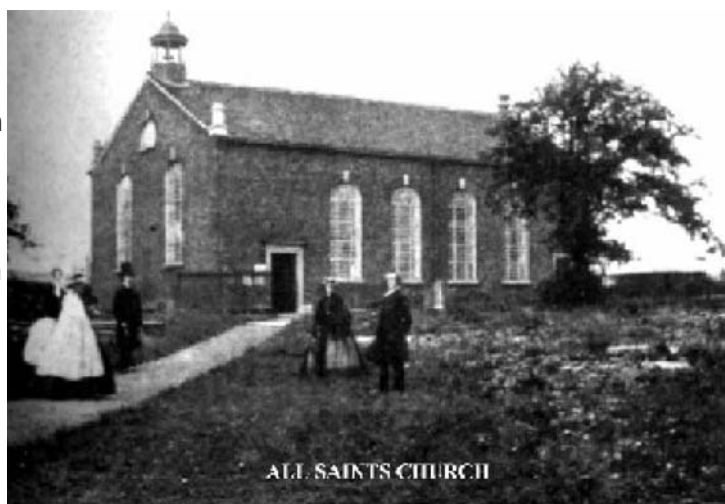
chokedamp. A few had succeeded in penetrating the suffocating vapour and escaped with their lives. As the explorers proceeded, they were joined by a number of gentlemen from adjacent collieries. It was six hours after the explosion when the last body was found, and the extremity of the workings had been reached. Most of the deceased had left their working places and were found in the main pony road along which they had evidently been trying to escape. The condition of the corpses varied considerably. Many of the boys who had been killed had clean faces, and the features were as placid as if the healthy looking lads were merely slumbering. Some of the men were dreadfully wounded, others were much burned. Many of the deceased were related.

Mr Drillfield, the coroner, stated that purpose of the proceedings was mainly to make formal identification of the dead, so that they could be released for burial. The inquest was frequently interrupted by conferences between the government inspector, the police and the relatives of the dead. It was said that friends and relatives had grown impatient due to a supposed delay on the part of the coroner in opening the inquest; this had resulted in a delay in releasing the bodies to the families, which had caused some upset. On several occasions, the police had to hold back a

number of angry men who had gathered outside the inn. A list of the identified deceased was produced and death certificates issued to the families. The inquest was then adjourned until the Thursday.

The Funerals

The funerals took place on Monday, 30 November. Forty-two miners were buried in All Saints Hindley Parish Church, and there were several cases of farther and son being buried together. The scene at the funeral was very memorable and affecting. Despite the fact that the afternoon was very cold and wet, admissions to the graveyard had to be restricted. Many hundreds of spectators had assembled around the church walls and hundreds more gathered outside the gates. It was planned to hold the funerals on a staggered basis between 10.00 am and 4.00 pm, but due to the inquest being late, the first hearse did not arrive until 2.45 pm. Shortly after 3.00 pm one melancholy procession after another began to arrive. The first 16 coffins were borne into the church, until they completely surrounded the interior walls, relatives crowded the rest of the area and the galleries. The vicar of All Saints, the Rev. C.H



Newbold, his curate the Rev. G.H Gillan and the incumbent of Pennington Green church, the Rev. O F Pigot, met them. The organist meanwhile played the solemn notes of the 'Dead March' from Saul. The Rev C. H Newbold was so overcome by the sadness of the occasion that he could not take part in the service, which was read by the curate and the Rev C. H Pigot. After these bodies had been consigned to their graves 16 more were again taken into the church and the service repeated. The third set of funerals took place at about 6.00pm in a pitch-dark night by the light of a few lanterns. This added to the eeriness. One grave had to be re-dug after collapsing due to the weight of the on lookers. Many of the crowd remained outside during the services, even though only the mourners could see anything of what took place. It was nearly 7.00pm on a misty wet and dreary night when the church bell, which had been employed for nearly four hours, ceased tolling and the last mourners left the graveyard.

The jury's verdict

On Thursday morning the inquest resumed. The coroner opened the meeting and began by asking Mr Southworth, the mine manager, for his evidence. Other mining officials, mine workers, rescuers and Mines Inspectors also gave evidence, and the inquest lasted several days.

After a short consultation, the jury returned the following verdict

"The jury felt convinced that an awful explosion has taken place, through the agency of which sixty-two human beings have

lost their lives. How or by why what means that explosion was caused we are not prepared from the evidence produced to say, as in all probability those who could have furnished the requisite information, along with others, have perished."

In reply to a question from the coroner, as to whether the jury had any recommendation to make, the foreman said the jury recommended that the blasting of powder in the getting of coal should be done away with, and that the ventilation of the particular workings in which the accident took place should be improved.

Probable cause of the explosion

The following is a copy of a document containing the opinions of the coroner and jury as to the probable cause of the explosion. The remarks could not be officially appended to the verdict, although prepared at the time:

"During this painful inquiry the jury have been ably assisted by the two government inspectors, Messrs. Higson and Dickinson, and by the other witnesses practically acquainted with mining matters. The few remarks we wish to make as to the probable cause of the accident are of course merely conjectures, and as such, we wish them to be taken. It is evident that in a seam like this, where gas is freely generated, the occurrence may have been brought about in various ways.

1. By damage to lamps, from falls of roof or coal, or by the accidental piercing of the gauze by the point of a workman's pick.
2. By the wilful or accidental ignition of powder stored in

bags, cans, or bottles, or by the ineffectual firing of shots, whereby flame might be produced, and come into contact with gas which as accumulated in the working place.

3. By the relighting of the extinguished lamps in unsafe or insecure places where gas prevailed.

4. By men or boys tampering with lamps - if such could be the case - by taking the tops off and otherwise exposing the flame.

5. By the recklessness or indiscretion of individuals using pipes or matches, and thereby endangering not only their own lives, but also the life of every individual in the mine.

Several of the instances named above are strictly forbidden by the rules of the company, and where persons are found to be guilty of breaking the rules, we would advise that the offenders be brought to justice. The jury now would like to make a few remarks about the probable state or condition of the workings at the time of the explosion. They think that, from what has transpired, that nothing has been withheld by the proprietor that could have added to the safety or convenience of those employed. It is also believed that an opinion has prevailed amongst the people living in the immediate neighbourhood that the works had been well conducted, and the lives and comfort of miners studied and well cared for. As subscriptions are set for the relief of those unfortunate people (parents, widows and orphans) it is hoped that the country generally will respond to aid those who have suffered so severely by this deplorable accident.

Ghostly Tales from a Policeman

by A Berry

My grandfather, Robert Berry, was born in Skelmersdale in 1872, the only child of William (born in Up Holland) and Ellen (nee Ashcroft, born in Rainford). At some date between 1881 and 1891, the family moved from Skelmersdale to Wigan, living for a while in Oldfield Street, Poolstock, then moving to 6, Sandon Street, where Ellen had a grocer's shop. Robert married Esther Bown (from Alfreton, Derbyshire) in 1898 at St James', Poolstock. My father William Henry and his sister, Elizabeth Ellen, were born in Sandon Street in the early 1900's, and christened at St. James'. When Ellen died in 1912, aged 63, all the family moved to 30, Mill Lane, Up Holland (back to their rural roots) a little lower down than the old windmill.

During grandfather Robert's life span of 74 years his employment occupations were many and varied, including assistant in a chemist's shop, railway porter, police constable (of which more later), wagon repairer, colliery labourer, cooper, carpenter, coal miner, and agricultural labourer. Included among his talents were the ability to do "copper plate" handwriting, violin playing, violin making, and the ability to "see" ghosts. He was also a spell-binding story-teller.

When he joined the police force at around 20 years old he was a strapping young man, 5 ft 11 ins tall, and possessing great physical strength combined with a quick temper. The family had moved to Wigan by that time, and according to the existing police regulations he was not allowed to serve in his home area. Consequently he was posted to serve in the Nelson and Colne area. Since he was unmarried he was accommodated in an army style barracks which was the equivalent of the current day police section house.



Robert Berry as a young policeman in the early 1890's.

He was asleep in the barracks one night when he awoke to find a figure dressed in a butcher's apron standing at the side of his bed. His gaze naturally travelled upwards but he was unable to make out the head of the figure. Having witnessed several apparitions in his life previously he was not alarmed and drifted back to sleep again. In the morning he was ordered by his sergeant to go to a shop where a suicide had been reported. On arriving at the shop, a butcher's, he found the butcher, wearing an apron, hanging by the neck from one of the meat hooks in the ceiling!

Another tale my grandfather Robert used to tell was that of a man who used to terrorise the street where he lived whenever he took to drink. One of the times this man was "on the spree" Robert was sent by the sergeant to investigate, without "back-up" (as they say these days). When he knocked on the man's door it was opened slightly by his wife, who tried to close it again on seeing the uniform, but Robert had already stuck his boot in the gap and now barged his way in. The

"terroriser" was sitting by the fire and, on seeing Robert, picked up the poker. Robert focussed his eyes intently on the poker and, as the man tried to strike him, grabbed his wrist and with a powerful twist made the poker fly out of harm's way! Robert then grabbed the man and hoisted him across his shoulders, with one arm around the man's neck and the other around his legs. Every time the man struggled Robert tightened his grip around his neck. Robert carried him out of the house and down the street, to cries of "Good lad, Wigginer, tha's bested him!" from relieved neighbours. On reaching the police station, Robert dumped him on the floor and turned him over to the station staff. These were policing methods mostly alien to modern thinking, but highly effective! This incident probably had a happy ending in that the "terroriser" appeared to turn over a new leaf. Certainly Grandfather reckoned that the man became friendly and did his best to co-operate with him afterwards.

My grandfather possessed an unusual combination of great physical strength and psychic sensitivity. He attributed his ability to "see" and sense things to the fact that he was born in "the twilights"- that period in June and July in this part of the world when the nights are never completely dark, there being a slight vestige of light in the northern sky on clear nights. This belief possibly has a Scandinavian origin since the plain to the west of the Billinge-Ashurst ridge was settled by Norwegian Viking/farmers, as evidenced by the preponderance of Norse village names from Formby in the west to Skelmersdale in the east.

There are more tales of my grandfather and his family that I have collected which are perhaps better saved for another time.

Edward 'Teddy' Cain

Dear Editor

It may interest readers of 'Past Forward' to know that one of Wigan's 'oldest sons' passed away in late July aged 101.

Edward 'Teddy' Cain was born in Ince in November 1905, educated at Hindley & Abram Grammar School and worked at the Roburite works at Gathurst until moving initially to Chesterfield, then to Scotland. He worked for ICI as a chartered secretary until retirement and was active right up until his passing away in Dumfries after a short illness.

His sharp and wide ranging memories formed the basis of a number of articles in earlier 'Past Forwards' and I know a number of readers recall his parents bakehouse in Belle Green Lane, Ince. He retained a deep affection for Wigan until the end and followed the efforts of both the rugby and football teams closely.

I personally will miss his tales of a long gone Wigan, its' hardships, humour and characters, but all who knew him agree he was a gentleman of the old school and a credit to the town of his birth.

Mr N Cain, Northolt.

Runaway Horses

Dear Editor

I thought to write to tell you of an event in my life in the summer of 1931. I was then 15 years old and working as an errand boy for Mr. J.R. Peterkin, High Class Grocer, of 10/12, Market Street, Wigan.

I was working at their branch shop at 19 Orrell Road, Orrell. Each Wednesday we delivered groceries, by van, around Orrell, Gathurst (near to where the Heinz, Kitt Green factory is situated) and Up Holland (Up Holland is, incidentally, mentioned in The Domesday Book, and St. Thomas's Church is celebrating its' 700th Anniversary). Every second week the town of Billinge was included as well. One Wednesday morning, on the journey to Middlehurst potato farm, over Billinge Hill, I was delivering groceries to old Mrs Charnock's small bungalow, half way up a very narrow cobbled road, when, walking back to the van, heard shouting and the noise of what turned out to be a large empty potato vehicle, with very high sides being pulled by two large shire horses which had taken fright in front of Billinge Hospital about half a mile away. They were furiously galloping along the cobbles, and the driver was shouting, unable to jump out! There was hardly any time to think, but I remembered learning either from school or from my weekly 'Rover' magazine that if you stood in the middle of the road with both arms outstretched upwards, you could stop them. I did this, and sure enough, the two horses DID stop.

The very scared driver jumped, or should I say scrambled out of his potato vehicle, and returned to the side of the road. Off galloped the two horses over Billinge Hill. I'm not sure what happened to them. I am not sure if they were severely injured, or even possibly killed.

Mr J Houghton,
Southport.

Rodney Street Church

Dear Editor

A friend from Wigan kindly forwarded to me an article from the 'Past Forward' magazine regarding the history of the Rodney Street Church written by Mrs. G. Lloyd

I am a great-granddaughter of Elias Ranicar of Wigan, formerly from Leigh. I am also related to the Marsdens, who in turn are related to Timothy Coop. This I found very interesting.

My great-grandfather Elias Ranicar and his son Arthur (both well known shop owners in Wigan in the past, Ranicar & Son and Bon Marche) were intimately involved in the founding of the first churches. (I know nothing of the Barr family).

I have a copy of 'The Wigan Observer' which outlines the 'death of a Wigan Magistrate' (Arthur Ranicar, J.P.) and also a copy of 'The Christian Advocate' and 'The Bible Advocate' which record the death of Elias Ranicar.

These papers with the obituary of Elias are very interesting in that they give a history of the founding of the 'Churches of Christ' and the dedicated involvement of the Ranicar family and Marsdens, etc. My father, James Stanley Aspinall, attended the 'Churches of Christ' school.

Christine Aspinall,
Canada.

Maypole Colliery

Dear Editor

Regarding the article on Howebridge Mines Rescue Station (issue 46) I would like to point out that the Maypole Colliery was in Abram, not Platt Bridge.

I was born at the end of the lane leading up to the colliery, and my father was checkweighman there from the age of 20, until he was 70, when all the mines were nationalized. He was given the job as compensation after losing a leg in an accident on the surface, when he was 19. He had a cabin close to the top of the shaft, and was there when the explosion occurred in 1908. His cabin came down around him, but fortunately, he wasn't hurt.

I grew up on the tales of the explosion, and now have a great fear of gas. Next year it will be 100 years since the explosion.

**Mrs Margaret Lange
(nee Wolsey), Abram.**

Ida Norcliffe's Corset Shop

Dear Editor

In the summer edition, a feature on Scholes said that it was thought that Ida Norcliffe's shop sold hats. The shop was in fact a very traditional ladies corset shop.

Soon after my 16th birthday (1953) my mother decided I should have my first real corset. Up until then I had worn a suspender belt just to keep my stockings in place. Mother took

me to Norcliffe's to be measured and fitted.

The sales lady decided that, although my waist measured 24 inches and my hips just 36 inches, I should have a steel-boned lace-up back corset. She explained that if the lace was tightened and knotted at the back, it would stop me from trying to undo the corset myself. After being pushed, prodded and made breathless, the garment was laced at the back. I could not bend down and could hardly breathe. I also now had 6 wide suspenders with metal adjusters to contend with. The lady advised mother to keep it on me for 36 hours to get me used to the corset. I never slept that night. Whichever way I turned the steel bones ran into my flesh.

Next day at work (in a Standishgate shoe shop) I had a real problem just picking up shoes from the floor. The manager and our one male shop assistant realised what was happening and laughed out loud every time my corset bones creaked. There was no pity at home. Every morning before I went to work, mother laced me into that garment of torture, and I, a sixteen year old girl with a job, did not dare complain.

However, it is amazing what you get used to, for I have worn that type of corset all my adult life (I am now 70). I can no longer buy them in the shops, I have to be measured and I have them made to order at a very expensive price. I now have the lace at the front so that I can release myself at night.

**Anne Naylor,
Southport.**

Memories from Pool Street

Dear Editor

I come from a large family born and bred at 59, Pool Street, Poolstock. My grandparents Annie and Joseph Wright had 4 sons, Tom, Joe, Bob (my dad) and Frank, and 4 daughters Lily, Annie, Alice and Betty.

In the early years I believe that Pool Street was known as "Wright's Row" as lots of family including great-grandparents all lived there, within yards of one another. My Auntie Annie was the last girl remaining at home, and looked after my grandma in her older years. She was well-known in the area as she was a talented tailor and used to make dresses and other outfits for St. Joseph's crowning groups and walking days.

I vividly remember the front 'parlour' with dresses hung all around the room on the dado rail, and tribes of children coming for fittings - I wonder if anyone remembers her?

My Uncle Joe was a Manager at Eckersley's Mill until he retired - he was a lovely man and I'm sure anyone who worked under him, and remembers him, would agree. My Uncle Frank was a well-known Pub landlord in the town centre - The Transport Club, the Adelphi Inn and the Fleece Hotel being some of the pubs he ran - none of them still standing unfortunately.

My dad was a bus driver in the fifties and I remember him taking me to the Transport Club in Grimes Arcade, to visit my Uncle

YOUR LETTERS

Frank - I can almost smell the damp uniforms and dense cigarette smoke, as I sat and drank my club orange.

It's sad to see parts of your past disappear - St. Joseph's School, the terraces of Poolstock, the Adelphi and the Fleece and Notre Dame High School (my old school) and some of it falling to ruin - St. Joseph's Church in Caroline Street and Eckersley's Mill. That's why I think it's so important to have magazines like Past Forward, where we can share our nostalgia with others and keep these families and areas alive in people's memories.

Barbara Mitchell,
Shevington.

Gallipoli Campaign

Dear Editor

I was inspired by the item in issue 46 on the casualties from the 6th Border Regiment, which featured Private Richard Holland who is commemorated on our church, St Mary's Ince, War Memorial, to check through the list for others killed in the Gallipoli Campaign.

I knew from when I have been entering details of the names listed, that a high proportion were lost in the campaign, but the numbers surprised me when I collected the names together. Of the 124 names on our plaque, I have so far identified, with a fair amount of

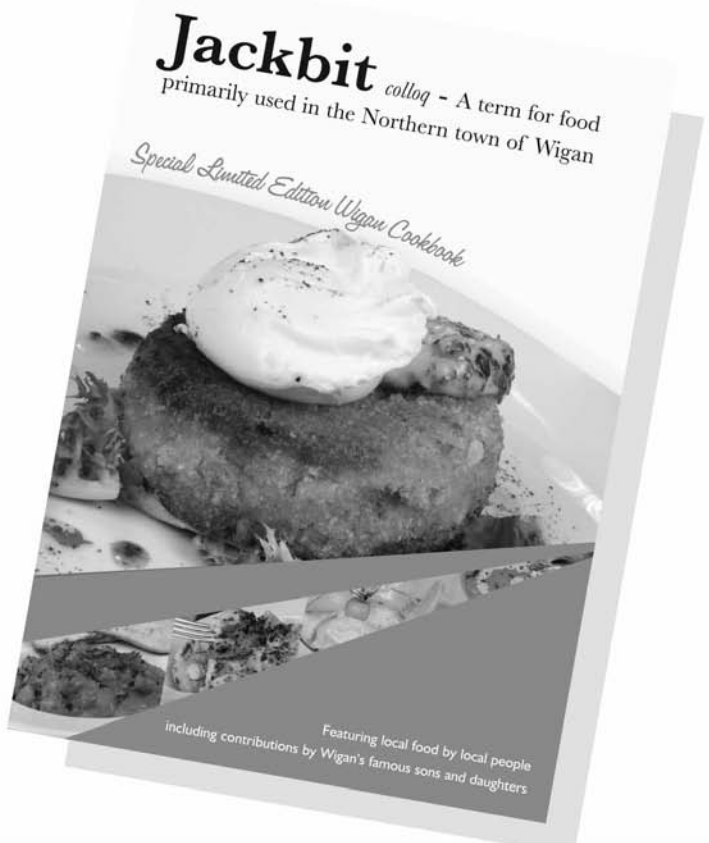
certainty, 109 of those listed. Of these, 20 died at Gallipoli. Further analysis revealed that 14 of them were from a single battalion of the Manchester Regiment, the 1st/5th. Of these, five died on the same day, Saturday, August 7th. Apart from Pte. Holland, three others died on Monday 9th August, all from the 6th Battalion of the Loyal North Lancashire Regiment. The other two casualties, both from the 1st Battalion of the Lancashire Fusiliers, died on the same day, 25th April.

Moreover, when I was double-checking these facts using the list in the late Fred Holcroft's "Just Like Hell - Local Men at Gallipoli", I discovered a further seven men who definitely came from Lower Ince but who are not listed on



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our memorial. Of these, five were from the 1st/5th Manchesters, and four of them were killed on August 7th, making a total of nine killed that day. In all, 27 men of Lower Ince were killed at Gallipoli, and 13 of them died within two days of one another on the 7th and the 9th August.

When you look at the street names of those who died and realise how close they all lived to one another, it is not difficult to imagine the misery that must have hung over the parish that summer. The majority lived around the corner from one another in a cluster towards the Britannia Bridge end of Warrington Road.

Again, looking at the Service numbers of the men from the 1st/5th Manchester Regiment, most are quite close together, and there are two sets of pairs of consecutive numbers, including two from opposite sides of the road at Britannia Bridge.

Wigan is not credited with having a 'Pals' Battalion, but, on this evidence, it didn't need one - the men had already enlisted in the 1st/ 5th Manchesters.

David Long

Hindley Green

Dear Editor

I have always been a satisfied reader of Past Forward and do not mind paying for it. I am originally from Westhoughton, but married a lad from Hindley Green, forty-seven years ago, and have lived in this same house for forty-five of those. My husband is now disabled, after being one of the fittest young men of his day. Every Tuesday an old friend of his, who was brought up with my husband in Pauline Street which is no longer there, comes to visit him, makes him laugh, and talks about old times. Neville Gregson is his name. He is always writing poems, some of which are really good.

I always wish that there was more in Past Forward about Hindley Green, so I am sending you one of the poems, which Neville has written, hoping you will publish it. He now lives in Bolton, and has done for 25 years, but still classes himself as a "Hindley Greener"

**Mrs Lucy O'Connell,
Hindley Green**

Memories of Hindley Green

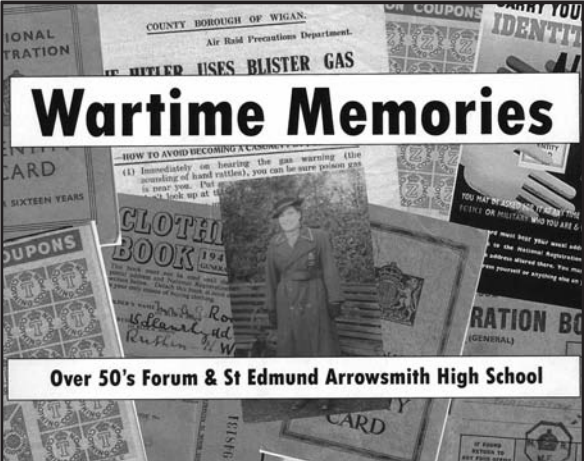
Hindley Green, can I just say,
where I was born, and used to play.
It's not the same as it used to be,
there are houses built, where trees used to be.

The little pub, Railway Hotel,
was the bowling green,
has gone as well.
Why couldn't they leave them as they were
instead of putting houses there.

The Railway Station
always took first prize,
it's derelict now,
a sight for sore eyes.
Oh! What I would give to turn back time,
open that station and bring back the line.
Oh! What I would give for the old railway track,
Blackpool, Southport,
memories are flooding back.

It's not the same,
you know what I mean,
without the trains and all the steam.
But like they say,
life must go on,
In my eyes, Hindley Green
is still number ONE.

**Neville J. Gregson
19.08.07**



Wartime Memories

Over 50's Forum & St Edmund Arrowsmith High School

This booklet details the result of a very rewarding project recording WWII memories, undertaken jointly with the Over 50's Forum and St Edmund Arrowsmith High School in 2005. The school received a grant from The Home Front Recall Project, to ensure that the part civilians played in the war is represented.

On sale in the History Shop now price £4.00

Reunion **Gidlow** Secondary Modern School for Girls

by **Jean Markland**

Back in autumn 2006 (issue 43) Jean Markland invited her 'old' classmates of 1957 to attend a school reunion to mark the fiftieth anniversary since leaving. Here is her account of the 'do'
EDITOR.

Friday 20th April 2007 saw several weeks' hard work culminate in the Gidlow School Reunion at the Wigan Cricket Club. What began as a Reunion purely for girls who had attended Gidlow from 1953 to 1957 became a Reunion for both 'boys' and 'girls' from 1953 to the early sixties. What a night we had - some had not met for 50 years or more but it was like yesterday as everyone shared memories of schooldays. When I first booked the Cricket Club for the Reunion it was in fear and trepidation because I had no idea how many, if any, would come. It was great to see that 64 people turned up, some travelling quite a distance - one lady even gave up the final week of her holiday in Spain to be with us.

To commence the evening, Mrs Irene Cunliffe, who attended Gidlow School from its inception, gave a little background information.

"It seems almost unbelievable that it was 75 years since I first went through the gates at Gidlow School - I was one of the first pupils. I had previously attended the National Blue Coats School, which was the feeder School for Wigan Parish Church, and all my friends were moving

on to All Saints School, which is now the Deanery High. Sadly I was not allowed to go to All Saints because I wasn't Church of England! I was a Methodist! Today, of course, times have changed and the Churches work together. Gidlow School was a lovely red brick building, very large with gardens at the front. My uniform consisted of a navy gym slip, white blouse and long black stockings, with a red beret which was left in the cloakroom on a peg. I remember the Headmistress instructing us to learn the school motto and to remember the most important words - "It Can Be Done!" I can still quote it today, as can many others. The School was made up of four Houses - Raleigh, Nelson, Gordon and Scott, which made us quite competitive as we tried to ensure that the House we were in won the most marks each week. Some 26 years after leaving school I moved to a house in Norbreck Crescent, where I still live. Of course Gidlow School no longer exists, and there are now houses on the site. My garden backs on to what were then the playing fields and as I look out of my window sometimes I can still see in my mind's eye, girls playing rounders and boys Football. I hear the blast of the school whistle - playtime has ended - girls and boys march back to their classes. Gidlow School may no longer exist, but it will never be forgotten - memories linger on."

Mrs Betty Bayliss, who left the school in 1944, and attended



throughout the war years, shared her memories with us. "In 1993 when the War started I was at Beech Hill Junior School, and to our delight the school was requisitioned to be used as a First Aid Station. Consequently we had to be fitted into Gidlow School and for some weeks attended on a part time basis until eventually we were all squashed together into large classes of 40 or more children.

Each day we took our gas masks in their little square brown boxes to school and regular drill was held to make sure we could get them on quickly. We also had air raid drill using the shelters built at the front of the school, although I cannot remember any actual air raids."

Everyone was very appreciative of the comments made. The evening reached a rousing finale with the singing of "Auld Lang Syne" and also the setting free of several balloons in the school colours over the Cricket Club Playing Fields. Friendships were renewed and arrangements made for another get together early in 2008.

Altogether, a "magical" evening was had by all.

Atherton Heritage Society

Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm in St. Richard's Parish Centre, Mayfield St. Atherton. Admission £1.00 members. £1.50 non-members. Annual membership £3.00.

2007

Tuesday, December 11th
"Our Gracie".

Recordings and anecdotes of Rochdale's own Gracie Fields. Speakers - Joyce and Ray Holmes. This is followed by the usual Christmas buffet and drink!

2008 Speakers

Tuesday, January 8th
Badges and Tokens (Part 2)
Speaker - Cliff Stockton.

Tuesday, February 12th
Traditions In The Role Of Toast Master. Speaker - Steven Sanders.

Tuesday, March 11th
Excavations Of The Wet Earth Colliery. Speaker - Alan Davies.

Contact Tel: 01942 884893.

Wigan Family and Social History Society

We meet at the Lady Bowes Lyon pub on Gidlow Lane Wigan every third Tuesday at 7.30pm

Why not come along to the next meeting, we have a speaker each month who gives approx an hours talk on various subjects. We do charge a small admission charge of £1.50 to non-members and £1.00 to members. We provide

sandwiches after the talk and drinks can be purchased from the bar.

2007 Speakers

Tuesday, December 18th
Cotton comes to Lancashire
Speaker - Paul Cross.

Hope to see some new faces at our next meetings.

Hindley & District History Society

Meetings are held in the Museum at Hindley Library on the second Monday in the month. Admission £1.00 for members and £1.50 for non-members.

2008 Speakers

Monday, January 14th
An evening with Monologue Joe

Monday, March 3rd
A talk on Lancashire Dialect and Humour
Speaker - Brian Clare.

The museum is open to the public on Saturday 24th November, Friday 7th December and Wednesday 12 December between 10.00am and 12 noon. Admission is free. For Museum opening dates after the new year please contact Mrs Joan Topping on 01942 257361 or Mrs Norma Brannagan on 01942 258668 or contact Hindley Library staff.

Leigh & District Family History Society

Chairman: Tel 01942 743428
Secretary: Tel 01942 729449
Monthly meetings held in the Derby Room of Leigh Library at 7.30pm on the third Tuesday of each month.

Weekly family history Help Desk run by members of the Society each Monday from 1.30pm to 3.30pm, in the Local History Section of Leigh Library.

2008 Speakers

Tuesday, January 15th
AGM and Ellis Island Film

Tuesday, February 19th
Using Family Tree Maker
Speaker - Peter Joliffe

Tuesday, March 18th
Members' Help Evening
Bring an item that has helped with your research..

Tuesday, April 15th
The Story Behind a Grave in Prescott Church
Speaker - Neville King.

The Douglas Society

Meets at Shevington Methodist Church at 7.30pm every third Thursday, except for July and August. The annual fee is £8.00, and there are no charges for individual lectures. Free tea, coffee and biscuits.

2007 Speakers

Thursday, December 13th
Rufford Hall
Speaker - Lynne Mills

2008 Speakers

Thursday, January 17th
The Sahara
Speaker - Agatha Brown

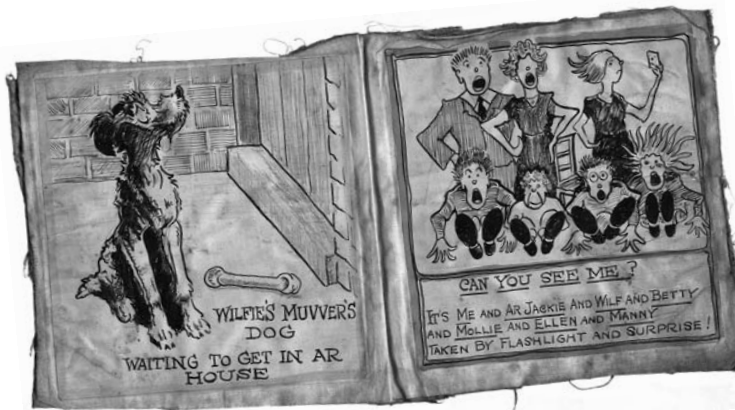
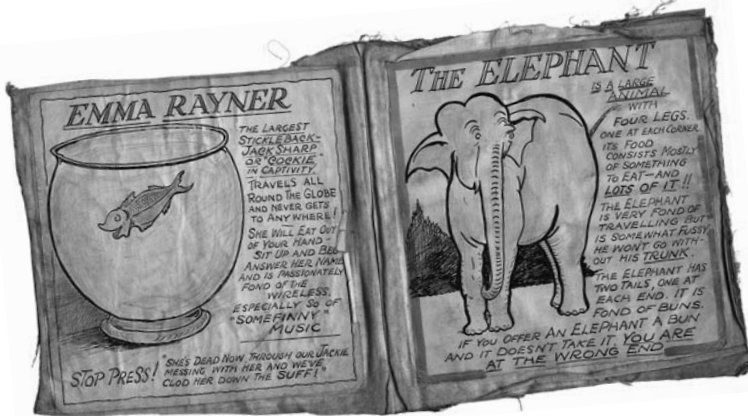
Thursday, February 21st
Greater Manchester Mounted Police Unit
Speaker - Chief Ins. L Roby.

Thursday, March 20th
The Isle of Scotland
Speaker - Michael Fisher.

George Barl Foster

Readers may remember that last Christmas (issue 44) we published an article on George Barl Foster and the delightful little booklet that he produce for his nephew, Donald Raynor of Standish, in 1933. We promised to show you more of this, because of its wit and charm. Well here are a few more images, and we hope you enjoy them as much as we did.

Editor



Mr Unsworth

Hamish Hunter would like to make contact with Gordon Unsworth who wrote about the memorials of Wigan Old Boys Rugby killed in WWII (issue 41). His uncle, whom he is named after, was mentioned in that article.

Would Mr Unsworth please contact the editor.

Fairhurst

Eugenie Turton is trying to find information about her uncle, Jack Fairhurst, who was killed at the battle of Potsangbam, India on 14th May 1944. His parents (her grandparents) were John and Edith Fairhurst of the Westwood Hotel, Poolstock. She would also like to make contact with Reverend Roger Taylor from Ipswich, who wrote on Wigan Grammar School in issue 33.

If anyone can help, please contact heritage@wlct.org

Vizard & Martlew

Dear Editor

I wonder if any of the readers of Past Forward can assist me with my family history research regarding Samuel Vizard and Gouter Martlew?

I know Samuel Vizard was the parish clerk in Wigan and that he died on the 8.11.1837 aged 74 in Wigan (death certificate) and that his wife was Ann Stevenson (information gained from a birth certificate for their daughter) but I have not been able to ascertain details as to where and when Samuel Vizard was baptised and married.

Regarding Gouter Martlew, I have found several of his children born in Dalton and that he died in Dalton on 19.03.1683 and that his wife Margaret died in Dalton on 15.10.1671, but I have not been able to find details of their births or marriage.

I should be very grateful to receive any information that would assist me.

Thank you all in advance.

Mr W Pilkington
Wizard View, Alderley Road,
Mottram St. Andrew,
Cheshire. SK10 4QN
email wmp43@btinternet.com

Harrison

I would like to draw your attention to a new Wigan-centric family history website that we launched last week.

My grandfather, Henry Harold Harrison, was born in Poolstock, Wigan in May, 1886. His father, Henry Harrison, was for a number of years the proprietor of the Honeysuckle Inn in Poolstock (located next to the Swan Meadows Mill) which is still in business today. Henry Harold Harrison apprenticed as a joiner and upon completing his apprenticeship emigrated to Canada, married, and raised a family. About sixty of his descendants, myself included, now reside in the Toronto area.

Our website traces Henry Harold Harrison's ancestors back as far as the 17th century. For the most part the early ancestors were farmers in places like Upholland, Standish, Chorley and

Skelmersdale. Some hailed from as far away as Garstang and Barton. All were from Lancashire. Their 19th century descendants moved to Wigan, mainly to find work in the coal mines, textile mills and foundries. In all 181 ancestors are referenced on the site of whom we have so far compiled biographies for 34. We are still working actively on many branches of the family tree.

One of our objectives in creating this website was to establish contact with our Wigan cousins of whom there must be hundreds. There is a complete surname index on the site for those who are interested.

Brian Harrison

I invite you to visit our website at www.henryharoldharrison.name

Walking Days

Kayleigh Wiggins is appealing for anyone who has memories of walking days between 1950 and 1980, and who would be willing to be interviewed for an oral history and walking day research project.

She can be contacted on 077527 10166 or kayleigh.wiggins@hertford.ox.ac.uk

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.

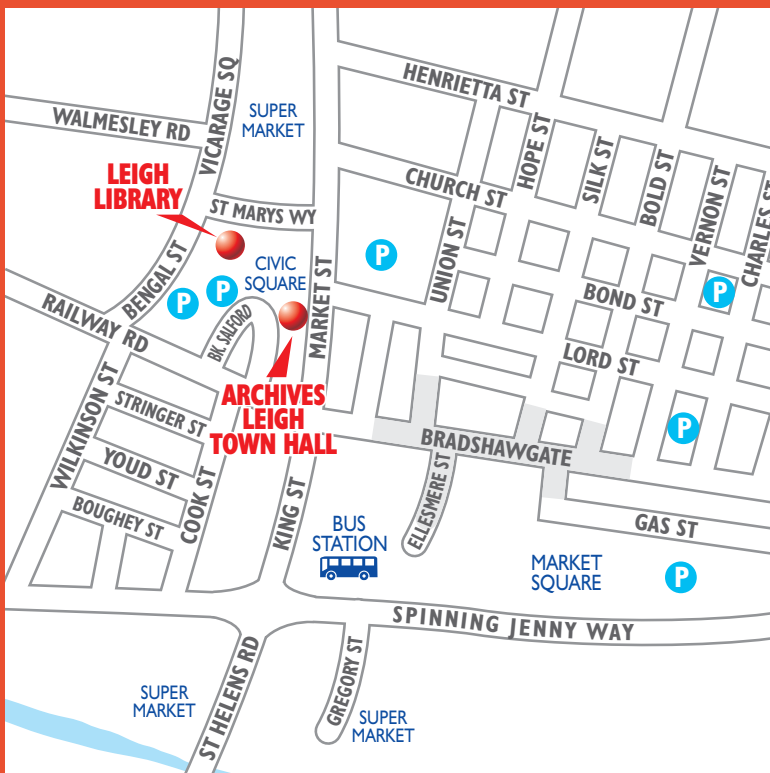
Editor

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