

# PAST FORWARD

Produced by Wigan Heritage Service

Issue No. 51

April - July 2009

**CROWNED  
WITH THE  
STARS  
CELEBRATING  
THE  
INTERNATIONAL  
YEAR OF  
ASTRONOMY**

**NEW  
FEATURE:  
COLLECTIONS  
CORNER**



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**FRONT COVER PICTURE**  
*Charles Hogg wearing his war medals. Turn to page 34 to find out more!*

## Letter from the Editorial Team

These are exciting times for the History Shop. You can read all about progress on the opposite page.

We've introduced a new feature called 'Collections Corner' which can be found on page 34. Each edition the Collections Team will select an interesting object to share with you and tell you more about. This issue we've chosen to focus on the war medals of Charles Hogg gained for service in the frontier wars in India, the Boer War and the First World War. We hope you enjoy this new feature!

By popular demand, we've brought an old friend back! Some of you may remember an old **PAST FORWARD** feature which sought to find out information about some of the photographs we have in our collection. As we are currently undertaking a project to make some of these photographs available online, we are finding lots of images that we need to know more about! Turn to page 35 to find out what this issue's photograph is.

Finally, the next issue of **PAST FORWARD** will commemorate 25 years since the Miners' Strike of 1984 and we would particularly welcome your contributions around this theme.

### COPY DEADLINES FOR ISSUE 52

Contributors please note that the deadline for the receipt of material for publication is 19 June.

## Information for

If you would like to submit an article for **PAST FORWARD**, please note that:

- Publication is at discretion of Editorial Team.
- The Editorial Team reserve the right to edit submissions.
- Submissions will remain on file until published.
- Submissions may be held on file for publication in a future edition.
- Published and rejected submissions will be disposed of.
- Articles must be received by the copy deadline if inclusion in the next edition is desired.

# HISTORY SHOP UPDATE



*Top: The 'chain gang'.*

*Bottom: Empty shelves near the Local History Enquiry Desk.*

Work on the History Shop refurbishment is in full swing. Contractors are due to start the building work in the next few weeks and the new exhibition designs are well underway. The Parish Maps and reference material have been securely removed in order for building works to begin and new homes have been found for most of the maps within Township schools and community centres.

Chris Watts, Local & Family History Officer who coordinated the removal of the reference material had this to say: "The interim service started in Wigan Library on 5 January. The following day work started on the long process of packing up all the remaining book stock and machinery and sending it off into storage. Volunteers were heavily involved in this arduous task but as usual they managed to make light of it in their inimitable way through their willingness and unflinching cheerfulness. Wigan Heritage Service and in particular myself, are eternally grateful for their tremendous efforts on our behalf. The 'chain gang' in just under four weeks managed to pack and carry down four flights of stairs and load into cages, the total of 1054 boxes and 358 parcels! Special thanks go to Barbara and Charles Miller, Les Norburn, Kate Irvine, Nick Howell, Barbara Lambert and John Wogan. Of course it will all have to be brought back at the end of the year. My muscles are groaning already in anticipation!"

We'll keep you posted as work progresses! You may like to take a look at our website to keep up to date with progress.

*The interim service at Wigan Library.*



## Contributors

### Submission Guidelines

- Electronic submissions are preferred, although handwritten ones will be accepted.
- Maximum length – no more than 1,500 words.
- Include photographs or images where possible – if you wish these to be returned, please include a stamped addressed envelope.
- Include your name and address – we will not pass on your details to anyone unless you have given us permission to do so.
- Anonymous submissions will not be published.

We aim to acknowledge receipt of all submissions.

### Contact Details

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

## Your Archives

First things first, we are pleased to announce that the Archives Service has been recognised as a 2 Star service in the recent self-assessment programme carried out by The National Archives. The nationwide assessment commented that the service is one of those “we believe... is likely to improve further.” We would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the ongoing work of the service, staff and volunteers alike, and hope for further success next time around.

## Recent Acquisitions

Recent months have seen a number of important collections of local records accepted into the archives. Recent accessions include:

- Additional records of St Andrew’s Church, Wigan (DP/25)
- Records of Our Lady of the Rosary School, Heath Lane, Leigh (Acc. 2008/55)
- Additional records from the Royal Albert Edward Infirmary (Acc. 2009/1)
- Records of Stotherts Ltd., Atherton, manufacturer of medications (Acc. 2009/3)
- BICC Company Magazines, 1936-1970 (Acc. 2009/5)
- Records of Leigh Literary Society (Acc. D/DS/84)



*Leigh Literary Society Conversazione Programme, 1896. The cover was designed by J.C. Prestwich, a local architect who designed Atherton & Leigh Town Hall.*

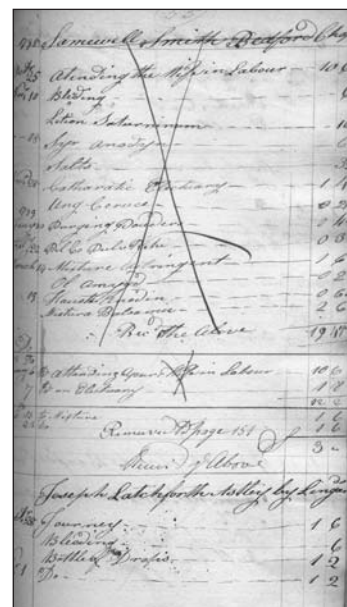
Details of the collections listed above are available from the Archives Service, as is further information on other recent acquisitions.



*BICC Newsletter cover, 1937.*

## Medical Records

As a place of deposit for Public Records, the Archives Service cares for the records of a number of hospitals and welfare homes across the borough. These include the records of the Wigan Dispensary, established in 1798 and which was to later develop into the Royal Albert Edward Infirmary, and the Leigh Infirmary from 1906. But these are not the only records in the collection with a medical theme.



*Account Book of Leigh surgeon John Yates.*

Between 1798 and 1832 we are allowed a glimpse into the world of medical practice by examining the records of the Leigh surgeon, John Yates. Yates’ account book, compiled in the course of his professional duties offers detailed evidence of the state of medical treatments in Lancashire during the Georgian and Regency periods.

The first entry in the volume is for a James Rigby of “Leatley Common”, charged 6 pence for the administration of an emetic and “Cortex Peruvian” (Peruvian bark), at 1 and 6, for the treatment of a fever; the next entry is for the treatment of a dislocated elbow, at 5 shillings. The surgeon attends a wide variety of patients, including women in labour, men injured in agricultural accidents, and many traditional treatments remained commonplace, bleeding (6 pence) amongst them.

At the time, Yates’ professional contemporaries were gaining an ever increasing knowledge of medical science, the volume beginning two years after Edward Jenner’s experimental use of vaccines against small pox in 1796; by 1815, Yates himself is administering inoculations to children. Yet, it was not until later in the mid-nineteenth century that sustained advances in chemistry, bacteriology and virology brought great leaps forward in medical treatment with the development of general anaesthetics (James Simpson, 1846) the principles of antiseptics (Joseph Lister, 1865), and patients benefitted from a true revolution in medical understanding.

# LEARNING AND OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

## ARCHIVES & LOCAL LIVES

### *Discover the past through Wigan's local resources*

A new 10-week course at Wigan Archive Service will explore local ordinary people's lives through primary source documents such as journals, letters and records.

The course is open to all abilities – no local history knowledge required!

The cost of the 10-week course will be £20.00 per person and £5.00 concessions. Please feel free to come to the first session if you would rather 'try before you buy'. However, please book a provisional place by phoning (01942) 828128.

The course will take place on a fortnightly basis taking into account Bank Holidays and tutor availability – the dates the course will run will be as follows, and all sessions will run from 2.00-3.30pm:

Monday 2 March	Monday 1 June
Monday 16 March	Monday 15 June
Monday 30 March	Monday 29 June
Monday 20 April	Monday 13 July
Monday 11 May	Monday 27 July

## FAMILY HISTORY

### *Family History taster sessions in your local library*

If you are interested in researching your Family Tree but don't know where to start, come along to our Family History Taster sessions in your local library. Sessions last for 1 hour 30 minutes and include information on primary sources and use of the internet. Places are limited so book early by calling (01942) 828128.

Friday 3 April - 10.00am	Aspull Library
Thursday 7 May - 2.00pm	Standish Library
Wednesday 24 June - 10.00am	Wigan Library
Friday 31 July - 10.00am	Hindley Library
Friday 31 July - 2.00pm	Ince Library
Wednesday 16 Sept - 10.00am	Leigh Library

## FAMILIES AT WAR

### *A call for wartime memories*

Do you remember what life was like when we were at war?

Did you have an Anderson Shelter near your house?

Did any male members of your family serve in World War II either overseas or at home?

Did any female members of your family have to work for the war effort?

Do you remember any of the home front campaigns such as Dig For Victory?

I am collecting memories of life during Britain in wartime for an exciting Big Lottery Fund project. I would love to hear your memories if you are willing to share!

Please contact Rachel at Heritage Services: [r.orme@wlct.org](mailto:r.orme@wlct.org) or phone (01942) 828121.

## CURATING IN THE COMMUNITY

As part of the Vision for Heritage, Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust have developed a Curating in the Community programme. The aim is to support local organisations in the borough develop heritage activities and promote heritage in communities.

Applications for support from the Trust, whether through expertise, advice or funding, are being sought.

Projects should have clear aims, objectives and outcomes. They should show how they will enable and empower local communities to 'curate' their own heritage. This could mean, amongst other things:

- Conserving or exhibiting local heritage artefacts;
- Undertaking research into local heritage which can be exhibited to the community;
- Running local heritage events;
- Undertaking training to enable local groups to develop their own skills and knowledge to deliver heritage activities to their community.

Curating in the Community grants to date have been awarded to a variety of exciting and participative local projects including:

- A gala day held by the Red Rose Steam Society;
- A heritage garden developed in partnership with other funders by the Stubshaw Cross Resident's Association;
- The Civic Trust's 2008 Civic Trust Awards;
- A Dig for Victory schools/Adult Services project run by Groundwork Trust;
- Turnpike Theatre Company's production of Westleigh's Glorious Past;
- Wigan Archaeological Society's Roman Road Pattern around Wigan Project.

For further information, or to request an application form contact Rachel Orme on: [r.orme@wlct.org](mailto:r.orme@wlct.org) or telephone (01942) 828121. You can read more about some of the funded projects on our website: <http://www.wlct.org/Culture/Heritage/curating.htm>

**PLEASE NOTE: the next round of funding closes Friday 10th April 2009.**

# LOCAL AND FAMILY HISTORY UPDATE

By C. Watts

## Books recently added to the Reference stock of The History Shop

### Donations

Hollows, Derek As I recall: a Bevin boy's story 622.334

Williams, A S The Lowes of Wigan in 3 vols

### Genealogy

Chambers, P Early modern genealogy: researching your family history 1600-1838

Lancashire Parish Register Society Newchurch in Rossendale St Nicholas Part 2 1723-1772 DVD format

Lancashire Parish Register Society Volume 168 The registers of Todmorden 1813-1837

Lancashire Parish Register Society Volume 169 The registers of Stretford St Matthew 1598-1837  
Raymond, S A Genealogical jargon for family historians

### General

282.4276 Hilton, J A The artifice of eternity: the Byzantine Romanesque revival in Catholic Lancashire

283.42736 800 years of Christianity in Standish

320.531 North West Labour History Journal No. 33 2008-09

631.2 Miller, Garry The stable at Forest Fold Farm, Shevington: a draft historical report

681.113 Davies, E Greater Manchester clocks and clockmakers

711.40942736 Wigan Council Wigan Eastern Gateway development framework

784.90941 Newsome, Roy  
The modern brass band  
942.7612 Sands, Nigel  
The Skelmersdale story 2nd ed  
Victoria County History of East Riding of Yorkshire volume 8  
Record Society of Lancashire and Cheshire volumes 135, 136, 139  
Catholic Record Society volume 81

Due to our refurbishment programme, the books listed above will not be available for browsing until we return to our full service sometime early 2010. Meanwhile, we have few local history books accessible through our interim service at Wigan Library. We have managed to make all our microfilms available along with local parish register transcripts. We have also squeezed in 4 microfilm viewers and a reader printer, for any copies you may wish to make, into the small area that we are now occupying. Booking is essential before any visit. The machinery may be booked on our normal phone lines - 01942 828020/828128.

### 1911 census

The other long awaited event in the calendar is of course the unveiling of the 1911 census online at [www.1911census.co.uk](http://www.1911census.co.uk). Due to public pressure this census has appeared 3 years earlier than the stipulated 100 years. The only details omitted are those from the column naming mental and physical handicaps. Apart from several of the smaller counties which have as yet not been fully uploaded, these are the only issues. Brightsolid, the company which owns the excellent Scotlandspeople website as well as Findmypast, was awarded the contract by The National Archives to digitise and index the census. The 1911 website does not disappoint and they have produced yet another excellent site. It is possible to search both on name and address if known.

Any miss-spelt or miss-transcribed entries can be corrected with the minimum of fuss and the image quality is excellent.

This is the first census to show the actual handwritten forms filled in by our relatives. The questions asked on previous census have been expanded to include not only the occupation of each person but to requiring the actual industry worked in to be named. In some instances, the actual firms have been stated. Another useful piece of information added has been as a result of the married women of the house being required to state how long they have been married, how many children they have borne and how many have survived into adulthood.

The cost of viewing a household page is 30 credits (between £2 and £3.48 depending on the package bought) for an actual image, and 10 credits (costing between 83 pence and £1.16 depending on the package bought) for a transcript of the household. Packages are £6.95 for 60 credits, £24.95 for 280 credits and £49.95 for 600 credits. Unused credits may be used on [www.findmypast.com](http://www.findmypast.com)

The high cost of the images is explained as being as a result of the high cost of the project. There was no public subsidy for the work and because individual household entries are used as opposed to multi-household entries for a street, this has meant that the census has 16 million entries more than the 1901 census. Since launch day, the site has conducted 15.8 million searches and produced over 70 million page impressions.

Local studies units and record offices may be given the opportunity to purchase digitised county datasets from The National Archives in 6 months time. Watch this space!

## Projects and donations

As usual we have received the amended discs for the Wigan Lower Ince Cemetery indexes from Freda Chorlton. The indexes online at [www.wiganworld.co.uk](http://www.wiganworld.co.uk) have also been updated. The Lancashire BMD project has recently finished bringing the births indexes for Leigh and Wigan registration districts up to 1950 and in some cases beyond that. The project has now moved on to getting ready to start the burials which up until recently were not to be added to the site.

Finally, the Lowes of Wigan in three volumes recently presented to The History Shop by Mrs Susan Williams (pictured), sees the end of a long and well researched project. The 3 handsome volumes tell the story of the family of particularly James Lowe, of the blacking shop

in Wallgate and his descendants throughout the world. However, having found out yet more about the family, she is contemplating a fourth volume.



## Family History Workshops

If you are just starting out on your family tree and need help, why not book onto a family history workshop with an expert? These

are temporarily held in our new site within Wigan Library and are now available every Wednesday at 1.30 and 3.30, availability of volunteers permitting until June.

Booking is essential. Cost is £2.50 with starter pack.

Please phone 01942 828020 or 01942 828128 to book or simply call in at Wigan Library and speak to Heritage Service staff stationed there.

## New Workshop

Hit a brick wall with your family research? Don't know where to go next? Book in with an expert to try and solve your problem.

Wednesday afternoons in July and August. Contact details as above. Please state the problem when booking. Cost £2.50.

# JOIN WIGAN HERITAGE SERVICES FOR A PACKED PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

## At Work with the Wiganers

26th May, 1.00pm-3.00pm

Join us at Trencherfield Mill and discover what it was like to work there. See the mighty engine in steam and take part in a fun craft activity. £3.50 per child.

**Venue:** Trencherfield Mill, Pottery Road, Wigan.



## Get your Hands on the Past

29th May, 1.00pm-3.00pm

Do some investigation work with some of our treasured historical documents. Session includes a tour of the Archives and fun drawing and writing activities. £3.50 per child.

**Venue:**

Wigan Archives, Leigh Town Hall, Leigh.



## Cotton, Canal and Cream Cakes

12th May, 16th June, 14th July, 11th August, 2.00pm-4.00pm

Take a tour of Trencherfield Mill and see the mighty steam engine, then relax and enjoy the scenery with our canal boat cruise and high tea. £6 per person, £10 per couple, £4.50 concessions. Further discounts available for group bookings, contact for details.

**Venue:** Trencherfield Mill, Pottery Road, Wigan.



## At Home with the Victorians

27th May, 1.00pm-3.00pm

Discover what life was like for the Victorians and how they used to live? Peep into the Victorian kitchen and have a go at pegging a rug! £3.50 per child.

**Venue:** Hindley Museum, Hindley Library, Hindley (next to Tesco).

WIGAN HERITAGE SERVICES  
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**BOOKING ESSENTIAL CONTACT: 01942 828128**  
[www.wlct.org/heritage](http://www.wlct.org/heritage)

# Crowned with the Stars

By Tony Ashcroft

**2009 sees the commemoration of a number of anniversaries including the International Year of Astronomy. This is a global celebration of astronomy and its contribution to society and culture.**

It was 400 years ago that modern astronomy was born. Galileo has been credited with this event because he was the first person to study the night sky by glimpsing through a telescope.

Well, you may ask what has this to do with the Wigan Borough? Although I am not aware of any local astronomical societies now or in the past (I am certain that some person will let me know if I am incorrect), there have been individuals from the area who have strong connections with the subject.

## Harry Rigby

In March 1930, the ninth planet, Pluto was discovered by the American Clyde Tombaugh, a leading astronomer of his time. Tombaugh attended Burdett High School in Kansas. His Mathematics Master whilst he was there was a Harry Rigby from Leigh.

Harry was born in Plank Lane where his father Simeon carried out his business as a greengrocer and fruiterer. Harry received his early training at Plank Lane R.C. School. Eventually he became a certificated teacher and held an appointment at Bolton before returning to Leigh where he held teaching positions at Plank Lane Methodist School and then Leigh Council School. He emigrated to Kansas in 1909 and retired from teaching in

1941 after 25 years work in Kansas Schools.<sup>1</sup> Should any reader have further information about Harry Rigby I would be pleased to hear from them.

## Professor Vincent Cartledge Reddish

Professor Reddish, the only son of Mr and Mrs W. H. Reddish, was born in Leigh before moving to Culcheth. He was educated at Wigan Technical College and London University. By 1954 he had become Lecturer in Astronomy at Edinburgh University. Whilst at Edinburgh, Professor Reddish was appointed one of five assistants to Professor Lovell at Jodrell Bank where he spent three years. Five years later, in 1959, he was appointed lecturer in Radio Astronomy at Manchester University. Following on from this in 1962 Professor Reddish became Principal Scientific Officer at the Royal Observatory, Edinburgh. Four years later he had become Deputy Chief Scientific Officer. On 1 November 1974 he was appointed by Royal Warrant to the position of Astronomer Royal for Scotland, a post which he held until his resignation on 30 October 1980.

The title Astronomer Royal for Scotland was created in 1834 and formerly linked with the post of Regius Professor of Astronomy in the University of Edinburgh. The position itself is one of the two senior posts within the Royal Household of the Sovereign of the United Kingdom, the other being the Astronomer Royal. Between 1991-1995, the title was in abeyance, during which time the decision was made to separate the post of Regius Professor



of Astronomy at the University of Edinburgh and the Director of the Royal Observatory at Edinburgh. The traditional ties also existing between the two posts was severed.

During the years 1981-1997 Professor Reddish was Governor of Rannock School. His heir was the author of numerous publications including: Evolution of the Galaxies, 1967; The Stella Formation, 1978; and The D-Force, 1993.

## **James Ludovic Lindsay, 26th Earl of Crawford (1847-1913)**

James Ludovic, whose family home was Haigh Hall, represented Wigan as an MP from 1874 to 1880. He was a trustee of the British Museum, President of the Camden Society as well as being a prominent Freemason, having been a Past Senior Grand Master of England and Master of the Wigan Lodge of Antiquity and the Lindsay Lodge, Wigan.

He had also been President of the Wigan Literary and Scientific Society which had been formed in 1877. James Ludovic was an ardent bibliophile like his father Alexander. He added many literary and historical documents to the fine library at Haigh Hall. In fact the Bibliotheca Lindesiana was considered to be one of the greatest private libraries in Britain. Through his interest in science and astronomy in particular, he was responsible for the erection of an observatory at Dunecht. At the age of 31 James Ludovic was elected President of the Royal Astronomical Society.

David Gill, a fellow astronomer who lived at the Dunecht Observatory became Astronomer Royal of South Africa. In 1872 he accompanied Ludovic who had financed a private expedition to view the transit of Venus from the Island of Mauritius. It was from here that Ludovic contracted Mauritius fever.

In 1886 Ludovic bought back the Balcarres property from Sir Coutts Lindsay son of General Lindsay, his uncle. Not long afterwards he presented all his telescopes and other astronomical equipment at Dunecht to the Observatory in Edinburgh and sold the Dunecht estate.

James Ludovic Lindsay, as William Bamford states in his excellent paper, read before the Institution of Electrical Engineers in 1986 'became an enthusiastic experimental scientist and astronomer with his own laboratory in London'.

His first laboratory was in Eaton Place, then he moved to 48 Greek Street, Soho. Shortly

before his death in 1913 his grandson David Lindsay visited him and 'saw his laboratory in the garden at 2, Cavendish Square, full of instruments and lathes'.<sup>2</sup>

After the Government suggested that the Royal Observatory of Edinburgh be abolished due to its state of disrepair, Lord Crawford offered to donate his whole collection of books and instruments on astronomy from Dunecht Observatory to the Nation. His donation was accepted and resulted in the opening of the Blackford Hills Observatory in 1896.

The Royal Observatory for Scotland now houses the astronomical book collection in its Crawford Room and is regarded as second only in the world to the one in Russia. It includes around 400 photographs of comets on which Lord Crawford became an expert.

## Leigh Literary Society

The Society was established in 1878. Since its inception it encouraged speakers from outside the geographical area of Leigh to lecture on a wide range of subjects including science.

On 19 October 1887 a large number of people attended the Liberal Club Lecture Hall to hear S.J.Perry a Jesuit Priest from Stonyhurst give a lecture on 'Solar Eclipses'. A Londoner by birth, Stephen Joseph Perry (1837-1889) studied at St Acheul, Stonyhurst as well as at London and Paris. In 1860 he was put in charge of the observatory at Stonyhurst where he also taught physics and maths.

In 1863 he went to St Beunos in Wales. Three years later he was ordained, after which he returned to Stonyhurst. Here the observatory became noted for its studies in Meteorology and Solar Physics. He engaged in numerous surveys and made trips all over the world to observe solar eclipses. Like Lord Crawford he went to Madagascar to observe the transit of Venus. He died on 27th December 1889 in the Salut Islands off French Guiana whilst on an expedition to study a solar eclipse.

A second lecturer from Stonyhurst who gave an astronomical lecture for the Leigh Literary Society was the Rev. Father Aloysius Lawrence Cortie. He appeared at the Co-op Hall on 7 October 1901, to talk about 'The Age of the Sun'.

Cortie had studied astronomy under S.J.Perry at Stonyhurst. He was a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society and served for many years on the Council. Between 1900-1910 he was Director of the Solar Section, British Astronomical Society. As President of the Manchester Astronomical Society, he travelled widely to places such as Vinaroz, Spain to observe a total eclipse and also to the Tonga Islands and Sweden. Cortie was distinguished in solar and stellar physics as well as well as terrestrial magnetism. He taught Physics and Mathematics at Stonyhurst for twenty seven years and was also Director of Music and a Gilchrist lecturer.

One publication in the Dootson Collection at Leigh Library by Cortie is entitled 'Father Perry, the Jesuit Astronomer.' It was published by the Catholic Truth Society in 1890 and includes a list of Father Perry's Scientific Papers as well as Perry's Observation on Faculae and Veiled Spots.

### Notes

1. Leigh Journal 8th November 1946
2. Donald Anderson. Life and Times at Haigh Hall. Smith Books (Wigan) 1991

**Editor's Note: If you want to find out more about the International Year of Astronomy, please visit [www.astronomy2009.co.uk](http://www.astronomy2009.co.uk)**

# FRIENDS OF THE HISTORY SHOP



## FRIENDS OF THE HISTORY SHOP

### Helping with Local and Family History in Wigan and Leigh

#### Christmas Get Together

On the 19th December the friends and volunteers from Wigan and Leigh were invited to Trencherfield Mill to see the steam engine for our annual Christmas thank you. Chief Engineer Bill Rowley gave the friends and volunteers a talk about the engine and showed an AV presentation about the mill. Unfortunately the main engine was under repair and waiting for a valve, but the auxiliary engine was used to turn the rope race and run it at a slow speed.

*Friends and volunteers in front of the rope race wheel.*



#### Archives at Leigh

At the Archives volunteers have been assisting Lisa Keys to select 5,000 images from the photography collection to be digitised and put online. At Leigh Library the Leigh Family History Society provides a workshop each Monday.

#### History Shop

Once the History Shop closed for refurbishment volunteers sprung into life! Under the supervision of Christine Watts volunteers began the hard task of moving thousands of books out of the Taylor Gallery. Tasks included the erection of boxes and lids, filling the empty boxes with books, bubble wrapping larger books and manuscripts, labelling boxes/books and bar-coding them. The full boxes of books also had to be manually moved down three flights of stairs, into seven cages each holding 16 boxes! Hopefully there will be a lift in place when the books return after refurbishment!

#### Family History Workshops

Although the History Shop is closed Family History workshops are still going ahead and will be held every Wednesday afternoon at Wigan Library. Workshops take place on a one to one basis with an experienced

volunteer. Sessions are at 1.30pm and 3.00pm and there is a nominal charge of £2.50. To book a place please telephone (01942) 828128.

#### Ongoing Projects

Indexing of cemetery records of St Aiden's Billinge and Holy Trinity Downall Green. Plus St William's RC baptismal records.

#### Things to be Addressed

The constitution needs to be updated and a meeting is being planned for this purpose. Volunteers and Friends currently have separate identities, but it is hoped to bring them together under the same umbrella terms in the future.

If you have any queries about the Friends please contact me at [johnwogan@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:johnwogan@blueyonder.co.uk) or John Wogan, c/o The History Shop, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU.

*John Wogan "Friends" news co-ordinator*

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Basil Joseph, Michael Joseph, myself  
Mary Philomena and Veronica Mary

# Weaving Memories Together

By Philomena Morgan

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From the mid 1940's through the 1950's, an ordinary family lived in a terraced house surrounded by an extended family in the nearby streets.

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But this was no ordinary family, this was 'The Tierneys of Dicconson Crescent, Wigan'. Husband Basil, wife Veronica Mary Margaret and their four children, Basil Joseph, Michael Joseph, myself Mary Philomena and Veronica Mary, all good Catholic names for a 'good Catholic family'.

With half a dozen Catholic churches within striking distance of our house we had no excuse to miss Mass on Sundays and we often went during the week. Maybe this was out of duty or just to be sociable but I like to think it's because we wanted to go. Dad once went to 11 o'clock Mass the day after he'd had all his teeth removed, sitting on the back

bench with a basin to spit out the blood into. I'm sure I didn't imagine that memory.

We lived on the north side of town off Standishgate but not far enough up Wigan Lane to call ourselves posh. We were far from posh. We were brought up to be polite and 'to be good', whatever that meant.

We were in St. Mary's Parish and Mummy was a teacher there. I started nursery school when I was three and often went on my own asking someone to put me across the main road. For a short while in the infants I was in Mummy's class and was made fun of for calling the teacher Mummy, it was difficult to call her Miss. In school we had lots of toys to play with and an indoor slide. There was a big open fire surrounded by a

large brass guard-rail and heavy water heating pipes around the large room with radiators. All the floors were polished wood and had a wonderful smell.

Every day we were given a gill (a third of a pint) of milk to drink through a straw, on cold days this really made the roof of your mouth ache and on hot days it tasted dreadful. Michael, one of my brothers says he used to be a milk monitor; I wonder if this was to give out and collect the bottles or just made sure everyone drank it? In school we were encouraged to think of others less fortunate than ourselves and were given 'prick cards' to take home and collect money for the Black Babies, pushing a pin through a square each time a donation was given. We were only babies ourselves and each afternoon little camp beds were put out for us to take a nap. I have an excellent photograph of myself and my friend, Josephine Russell, taken as we are kneeling on a mat during an activity session, I think we are playing musical bells. Josy was, in the years to come, one of my 'best friends'.

Woolworths, the famous store was up at the top of Standishgate in

the middle of Wigan. Not quite the middle, that was Market Place where a policeman would be on point duty standing on a small platform at the road junction conducting traffic. He would be wearing large white gauntlets and blow a whistle. I suppose his job wasn't that dangerous and maybe a little boring as there wasn't much traffic. The big double-decker buses would have to pass close to him as they parked near the underground lavatories.

Anyway back to Woolworths. The store was famous for selling everything and when I was about three years old I also thought they sold babies due to the line up of prams outside. Here I thought the mummies could take their pick of the babies left in the prams. Our pram was rather dumpy, I think it was yellow with small wheels and had a false floor under the plastic covered mattress. It was possible to find old crusts of bread or a leftover Farley's rusk to suck on if you delved down far enough. Parked alongside our pram outside Woolworths were quite a range of prams, some similar to ours and others much grander coach built prams on spring frames with

enormous wheels and ornate handles. On summer days the larger prams would have fringed canopies which would sway in the breeze as the pram rocked along effortlessly. We had a hood to protect us from both the rain and the sun.

At an early age I remember being taken to the clinic in Millgate to have an injection in my arm, this was probably a polio jab. I was told to look at pictures on the tiled walls while the needle went in and then I really cried. On the way home I was bought a 'humming whistle' to pacify me, which it did. Mummy used to take us in the old pram to this clinic to get our supply of orange juice, this came in small glass bottles and was wonderful. We were also given a regular spoonful of cod liver oil and malt to keep us healthy. The after taste as you sucked the spoon was delicious.

Generally I suppose we were quite healthy except for the regular colds everyone would get. I remember Basil once being bandaged up all round his head with only his eyes showing. This I found out later was impetigo which was very common in children. It was treated with Gentian Violet, whatever that is. Veronica was the one often ailing with something, at the age of seven she had her tonsils removed.

During the War years Daddy was at the Munitions factory at Beech Hill and a member of the Constabulary. He was a tall man and I was proud of him being a policeman. He had dark wavy hair, wore glasses and had a strong voice which I never remember being raised in temper. Later he worked as a cutter at the Bleach Works at Red Rock. Some of the ends of the material would be brought home and put to good use. The blankets stamped with the utility sign came in very useful and lasted years.

Mummy was of medium height with dark hair which during those



**The Little London Gang 1953** Left to Right  
**John Siney, Michael Tierney, Bernard Siney , ? , Mrs. Kearnes,**  
**Veronica Tierney, Michael Siney , ? , baby Linda Priestley,**  
**Julie Siney, Dennis Kearnes, Mrs. , ? , Morris Myers,**  
**Jean Priestley, Mrs. Priestley, sandy the dog, Philomena Tierney,**  
**Photo by Basil Tierney jun.**

War years she wore long and held back with combs as was the fashion. She was always very calm and her sister Winifred told us that Veronica never grumbled at anything or anyone. It was lovely to sit quietly with Mummy. I have a distant memory of each day around two o'clock in the afternoon settling down with her near the big old radio to 'Listen with Mother'. The first thing we heard was "Are you sitting comfortably? Then I'll begin...". When the children's programme had finished we'd get ready to go out. It was always sunny and I would have my face washed at the kitchen sink with a flannel and the golden light coming through my eyelids. It was either a walk up town to Woolworths to see how the babies were selling, or the other direction up Wigan Lane towards the Little Park.

Our Mummy was always busy sewing and knitting. The Singer treadle sewing machine was always in use making clothes for her children or hemming curtains or tablecloths. She did some beautiful embroidery, some of which I still have. Mummy was a wonderful knitter and produced sweaters and berets worked in intricate 'fair isle' patterns and even made covered buttons for the many cardigans she knitted. One such cardigan can be seen on a photograph of myself when I was about three. The photograph was taken by Uncle Hubert, one of Daddy's brothers who lived at Bryn near Ashton-in-Makerfield. Daddy took me there, about five miles away, on his bicycle. He tied a cushion to the crossbar for me to sit on. As he cycled down the street Mummy called after him to remind him to remove my cardigan for the photograph as she had made a special dress for the occasion. He forgot but even so it's a lovely photograph. Mummy made all our dresses usually with smocking worked across the chest or frills going lengthwise down the bodice. They would normally have a white Peter Pan collar, which would sometimes be removable for

washing. She would also make matching summer bonnets with a brim over the face and at the back to shade the neck. We had winter bonnets which were really warm and tied under the chin. I remember a beautiful artificial furry coat with matching bonnet and muff that Veronica had when she was little. It was brown and we called it her teddy coat. I had a white fur trimmed coat once also with a muff and I loved it.

So far we weren't too different to most of the families around and this stayed like this for a while. Our house in Dicconson Crescent was rented and every Saturday morning the money and rent book were taken down to Hilton and Leylands office on the corner of Greenough Street. 17s 11d a week

On the 18th June, 1949 when I was coming up to seven I made my first Holy Communion at St. Mary's. I had reached the age of reason, so they say. We had practiced a lot and preparing for the real thing we had been given 'pretend' Communion bread. A few days earlier we had made our First Confession. Going into the Confessional box was quite daunting, but we were told exactly what words to use, "bless me Father for I have sinned, it is...weeks since my last confession and I accuse myself of these sins". We then had to list the sins we had committed. I can only remember confessing to telling lies, a venial sin, which got quite boring, maybe if I'd missed Mass one Sunday which was a mortal sin it would

have been more interesting, or better still to have stolen something or even committed murder. You would then listen to the priest, who was behind a trellis screen, mumbling in Latin and then in English he would tell you what you had to do for your penance, it was usually to recite three Hail Marys. Before leaving the confessional box you would say an Act of Contrition. You had the choice of this prayer being the long or the shorter version, I always went for the shorter as, by this time, I was so worked up and nervous about forgetting my lines that I wanted to get it over with and get out. On getting out I always felt so happy, spiritually, I mean with my soul shining within me. Or so I thought.

The May Day procession was an important event in the church's calendar and Grandpa was very involved in its organisation. The statue would be surrounded with flowers and an arc of light bulbs. The congregation would sing hymns and as the May hymn "Bring flowers of the rarest, bring blossoms the fairest" was sung. The 'Queen' would climb a ladder and hold the crown over the statue then when the words "Oh Mary we crown thee with blossoms today" she would place the crown on the head of the statue. Grandpa would flick the switch and all the electric light bulbs would light up. He never failed to do it, just at the right moment and it always sent shivers down our back and, in later years, bring a tear to the eye. Real theatre.



Morgan P 1949 crowning group St Mary's Wigan



# Do you Remember?

**MR DAKIN SHARES MEMORIES OF HIS YOUTH WITH US**

By Mr  
E Dakin

**Do you remember the days before diets? I do. We, the working-class folk, even in those penniless times of want, tried to keep a good table.**

Good thick broths made with plenty o' vegetables, and left to simmer for ages with a good size bone from t'butchers, just to give it plenty of goodness; mopped up with chunks of Mam's home-made white bread. By 'eck, just remembering makes me slaver.

Home-made steak and kidney puddings that you sliced open the pastry of, to let free a flow of meat and rich gravy, that made you dizzy with anticipation.

There were always plenty o' spuds. The ubiquitous potato. How can you survive without potatoes? Boiled, chipped and mashed or made into a belly-filling hash.

And what about those thick beef dripping butties? Finish up with plenty o' rice pudding or Mam's currant cake smothered in butter. All good body sustaining food, full of stodge. Lovely! Those were the days when no one dieted (only sick folk). Your Mam cooked the grub, put it in front of you and you scoffed the lot.

There were just folk, thin folk, and in between folk, and that was it. There were no keep-fit clubs or health clubs or dieticians. We just got on with living, and being ourselves. Our main exercise was walking. To the shops, work, pictures, pubs and clubs. Even our leisure time was spent walking at places like Haigh Hall, the park and along the canal towpath. If you saw someone running, you knew he'd done something wrong. You didn't run unless you were in trouble.

Grandparents were always stern and grim and always lived just a spit away.

My paternal grandparents lived just around the corner from us, and granddad, a retired canal boatman, spent his retirement on his allotment behind the house. If Mam sent me round there on some errand or other, I would be handed a hammer or a spade and

get roped in for a couple of hours hard graft. Excuses weren't accepted. My reward was some unforgettable advice on how to do a good job, and perhaps, just perhaps, a butty smothered with jam or margarine. One or the other, you couldn't have them both. They weren't made o' money, you know.

Back then, growing up in times of poverty, possessions, even clothes, amounted to almost nothing. Those were the days when a best suit meant just that. Best, was worn on Sundays for church, visiting relatives and for weddings, funerals and christenings. Things weren't bought because you took a fancy to them, they were bought because they were essential to your needs.

Your parents, especially your Mam, gave a great deal of thought as to how the family budget was to be allocated.

Sunday was our posh day. Best suit and tie, clean shoes, newly baked bread and cakes and pies. Tinned salmon for tea, or plates of Lancashire hotpot with red cabbage.

## Standards Success

The History Shop, with Trencherfield Mill, has been successful in achieving Visit Britain's Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme (VAQAS), an increasingly recognised quality and standards endorsement.

The assessment involves a mystery visit by an independent assessor looking at the quality of the visitor experience from pre arrival onwards and evaluates all aspects of service, including interpretation. We aim to continue to provide this high level of service when The History Shop reopens next year following refurbishment.



# Trades Council to Labour Representation 1906-1908

by Yvonne Eckersley

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On 9 October 1908 the Leigh Chronicle records 'The Leigh Labour Party have definitely selected Mr Thomas Greenall for their candidate'.

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A deceptively simple statement. One that marked the end of a remarkable journey by a group of determined working men that formed the nucleus of the Leigh Trades Council. Men like George Brown (Secretary) and Charles Aubrey (President) and many others, had the foresight and tenacity, in the face of stiff opposition, to develop a group of local trades union representatives into an independent political party with its own prospective Parliamentary candidate. This is the story of that journey.

Leigh became a Parliamentary Division in 1885. From then until 1922 it was represented by Liberal MPs. In 1885 the electorate was extended to include working men (no women and not all men). In 1901, 35.4% of men worked in the mining industry (53% of the electorate), 7.5% in general engineering and 13% in the production of textiles. There was a whopping 67% of female workers employed in the textile industry! By 1906 there were 13,625 male voters (population approximately 40,000).



*Cllr Charles Aubrey*

Historically the Liberal party in Leigh was a sympathetic supporter of social reform. C.P. Scott Leigh's MP from 1895 to 1905, who had a leading role in Manchester politics and Parliament, was a radical Liberal. He was also editor of the Manchester Guardian. This daily paper, priced to facilitate a working class readership, championed social reform. However upon Scott's retirement, the next Liberal MP for Leigh was not as sympathetic. Often Mr Brunner was perceived to be the reverse.

When the Trades Council first floated the idea of joining the Labour Representation Committee in 1903, one opposing argument was that the interests of Leigh workers were well represented by the Liberals. Given Scott's high profile in radical politics it would have seemed so. However in Leigh, as nationally, the power of organised Labour was in the ascendancy, many were becoming disillusioned with Liberal politics and saw independence from the Liberals as the way forward.



The pioneers of the Leigh Labour Party working within the Leigh Trades Council, had the task of persuading this group of Union Representatives - whose priority lay with improving the pay and conditions of working men - that their task would be better served if Leigh had independent Labour representation in Parliament.

The leaders of the Socialist Democratic Party and the supporters of the Liberals were the two most powerful opponents to the Trades Council officials' attempts to form an independent Labour Party. The Socialists saw themselves as champions of the working classes. Indeed they were very active in local politics. At that time the Trades Council was actively trying to organise support, the Socialists were holding many high profile debates and public meetings in Leigh. The local press covered the proceedings in detail.

Unfortunately for the Socialists many of their political aims alienated the ordinary working man. Their vision for Britain could be interpreted as Communist. Mr MacCartney Conservative MP for Manchester speaking in Leigh voiced this. It was said that the Socialists' policy was to 'nationalise or socialise the whole means of production, distribution and exchange', and by Socialism the Socialists 'meant communism and that means the complete reversal of the way in which they lived' (Chronicle 17 Jan 1908).

The same press also recorded the struggle, often vociferous, between members of the Trades Council particularly Mr J Gregory and Mr A Lees, (Socialist activists) and the exponents of independent labour representation particularly George Brown and Charles Aubrey. The Chronicle of 13 September 1907, notes that there were 'two antagonistic

elements both striving for supremacy'. A week later it was reported at the meetings there was 'worldly warfare'. On the 15 Nov 1907 the Leigh Trades Council found it 'hard to keep order at the meetings'. Again on 13 March 1908 it is commented 'in the Leigh Trades Council there was always a passage of arms between Socialists and Labour'. The particular actions of Lees and Gregory who were 'always alert to come down on any mistake in the Trades Council' were noted.

From June 1908, after Lees and Gregory left the Trades Council, the ethos of the meetings were reported thus, 'Trades Council more peaceful', by July the Leigh Trades Council meeting was 'of a very humorous nature' whilst in August 'the LTC meetings have become more businesslike and peaceful'. By this time the Trades Council had formed a Labour Party and was well on the way to selecting an independent prospective Labour MP for Leigh.

What makes the achievement more astounding is that the members of the Trades Council were all working men who had only minimal formal education. They worked hard and for long hours, brought up families, were trades union representatives, some became municipal councillors and still found the time, energy and motivation to apply themselves to the enormous task of setting up a political party!

At each stage these far sighted men were required to convince their fellow members of the benefits of the actions they were proposing. They adhered to the recognised procedures of their organisation, ensuring all its branches were fully informed and involved in making decisions. They coped with scepticism and direct opposition, explaining themselves as they went along. For many, particularly the miners,

the interests of labour in Leigh appeared adequately covered by the Liberal party. Mr C. Walkden was especially keen to retain the status quo and of course the Socialists thought they represented labour interests best.

A significant problem for the budding Labour party's independence was this identification of their members with other political parties. Action was required to break this pattern.

As early as January 1906 the Chairman of Trades Council started the ball rolling telling the Trades Council 'It would be better for the Labour Party if every man connected with it kept themselves clear of the Liberal and Conservative parties'. Many Trades Council delegates had canvassed for Liberal or Socialist candidates in municipal and Parliamentary elections and this it was felt was hindering the election of the Labour candidates.

However there was nothing in the Trades Council's constitution that prevented this collusion. Changes needed to be made. The debate was raised, 'In the absence of a Labour candidate should a Labour man take any part in party politics?' This prompted the resolution forwarded by George Brown 'That no Official of this council shall identify in any capacity with any political party in any municipal or parliamentary work, whether it be Liberal or Conservative'. But before this resolution could be voted on, the term 'official' needed to be clarified by each branch.

By this time the Trades Council had made its political intentions clear. In February 1906 the Trades Council became the Leigh and District Trades and Labour Council or Labour Representative Committee. Accordingly there were subtle changes in the

constitution. Branch delegates decided the term 'official' applied to the president, secretary, treasurer, auditors and the executive of the Council, delegates were members, and that the Labour Representation Committee constitution stated that 'members strictly abstain from identifying themselves with the Liberal and Conservative parties'. This theoretically left just the Socialists to be dealt with.

However this was going to prove difficult. At the meeting of 27 April 1906 a resolution was moved by Tyldesley Spinners Association 'that no official shall identify himself in any capacity with any political party during any municipal or parliamentary elections neither shall any official of this Council hold office in any political party ie Liberal, Conservative or Socialist parties'. The resolution was lost 12 votes to 8. Trade Council members who were opponents of the resolution were led by the vociferous Mr Gregory and Mr Lees and the pro-liberal Mr C Walkden. This resolution was again debated in late August resulting in 8 for and 9 against. A Leigh Spinners delegate defended the Socialists and Tydesley Gasworkers delegate said 'they should leave well alone' whilst at the same time raising a resolution condemning Mr Brunner's opposition to Sir Charles Dilke's amendment to the Trades Disputes Bill. The Engineering delegate stated 'the Socialist party in his opinion was a conglomerate of artists, poets and every class of people under the sun, any of whom could not possibly belong to a trades union' (Chronicle 31 August 1906). Clearly it was a divided Trades Council.

By 1907 the campaign for local recognition of an independent Labour party developed further. Increasing numbers of municipal seats were being fought and won. Many, including Charles Aubrey's, were fought on a 'straight Labour ticket'. As Aubrey stated 'to dispel

confusion he wanted to say they belonged to the Independent Labour Party' (Chronicle 23 Nov 1907).

However before a Parliamentary candidate could be selected the vexed question of independence needed resolving. On 17 January 1908 it was mooted that Socialists should be removed as Trades Unions would withdraw if they did not. A statement in the Socialist Standard had said 'We now declare War on existing trades unions and their leaders', and had alienated their Trade Council colleagues.

On the 13 March the Miners jumped the gun and a poster announced that that Tom Greenall, the miners candidate, was to be the 'Labour Candidate for the Leigh Division', this led to some confusion. The Trades Council, jealous of its independence, denied they had adopted him.

In May a decision was made formally to form a Labour Party. A Resolution 'that the Trades Council should form a Labour Party with a view to the adoption of a labour candidate for the Division' passed 12 votes to 10 (Chronicle 15 May 1908). At this meeting the Socialist delegate was not re-elected. In June the affiliation to the National Labour Party was agreed on unanimously. In July it was announced that where

branches had no provision for joining the Labour Party they should join through the Trades Council. Mr Gregory and Mr A Lees did not join.

During the summer of 1908 George Brown produced a detailed draft for a Leigh Labour Party constitution. It was circulated to the branches for debate and approval. Approval duly received and the first meeting of the Labour Party was held on Tuesday 23 July 1908 in the Cooperative hall, Ellesmere St, Leigh. At that meeting nominations for municipal and parliamentary candidates were requested before the 21 September. The adoption meeting was to be held on 5 October.

By October 1908 then the vexed question of a completely independent candidate for the Leigh Labour Party was resolved. The affiliation the Miners Federation of Great Britain to the National Labour Party and the agreement of the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners Federation's to fund Mr Tom Greenall's campaign facilitated his adoption as Leigh Labour Party's first Parliamentary candidate. The funding was a major consideration. Mr Greenall's election expenses in January 1910 were £1,349 1s 0d whilst the Leigh Labour Party's first balance sheet (March 1910) recorded £27 5s 3d cash in hand.



Trades Council Coop, Leigh

# The commercial hub of post World War II in Wigan

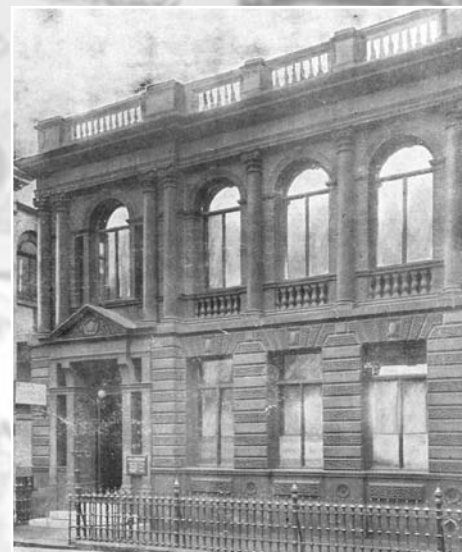
By Joyce Churchill

All around the town centre, the financial affairs of Wigan's commercial life took place in the banking institutions.

The monetary activities of the grocers, florists, gents' outfitters, cafes, gown shops, tobacconists, bakers, butchers, fishmongers, hotels and pubs were all attended to by familiar, friendly bank staff. They were well-trained on the premises, to deal with all customers, including many manufacturing companies, and even the local dealings of the mighty National Coal Board, with huge income and outgoings. Remember the 'Big Six' banks in Wigan? There was Westminster in Standishgate, Williams Deacons and Barclays in Wallgate - and their smaller branch in Mesnes Street, District Bank at the top of King Street - with its County Bank Branch at the top of Library Street. Immediately opposite was Midland, with Martins situated on Market Place. The honourable Trustee Savings Bank, near to Wigan Hippodrome, was favoured by many small savers, like my dear late Granny, happy to invest there, and take pride in the balance in their Savings Book. Many other Wiganers used the Post Office, to suit their needs at that time.

I was duly appointed as a member of staff, after signing the obligatory 'Declaration of Secrecy' document, by District Bank Ltd at No1, King Street. A splendid, solid building to work in, as was our County Bank Branch nearby. We had four other sub-branches at Ashton, Hindley, Pemberton and Upholland - which was only open on Thursdays. A member of staff, Mr Fred Wardle lived in a flat above the Pemberton Branch, situated by the Police Station, with its living quarters too. The opening hours of Banking were from 10.00am-3.00pm, Mondays to Fridays, and on Saturdays from 9.30am until noon. The daily routine of District Bank Ltd had to be strictly observed. All staff had to register by signing into an Attendance Book before 8.30am, after that time, they used red ink for Mr John W. Mason, the accountant to check.

The staff side entrance was supervised by the janitor/porter, a Mr Daniel Rafferty, a character as solid as the Bank's pillars. Before the main doors opened there was much activity and preparation for the day's business. Vast amounts of post had to be opened, recorded, checked, and generally dealt with. The phone-lines were frantic, the cashiers prepared all their tills, the cash was brought up from the vaults, ready for withdrawals. The task of the Junior was to fill all ink-wells, to change all the pen-nibs (pre-Biro days then!) and to fix fresh, pale green blotting paper in the main body of the bank. Thus prepared - let business commence! More to report later!



Wigan Savings Bank,  
King Street, 1936



Manchester and County Bank, Market Place Wigan

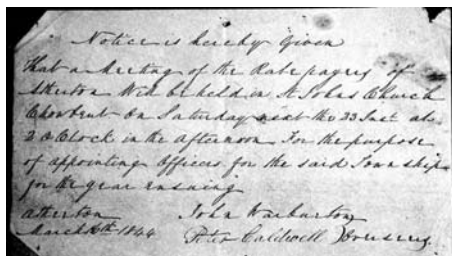
# The Parish Vestry

By Bob Evans

## The Latter Days of the Parish Administration Atherton 1839 to 1864

Until the second half of the 19th century the administration of local affairs was still based on legislation enacted in the 17th century and even earlier. Responsibility still lay in the hands of prominent ratepayers appointed each year by their fellow townspeople. Separate sets of records show that until this date the principal officers, the Overseer, the Highway Surveyor and the Constable, were appointed at different dates during the course of the year to serve for different twelve-month periods.

In July 1838 notice was posted that "a public Town's Meeting will be holden at the Town's Office in the old School at Chowbent ...for the purpose of considering and adopting Measures for the Management of the Parochial Affairs of the Township of Atherton." From the following year a single book contains the minutes of Annual or Vestry Meetings at which the Officer appointments were made at the same time for one administrative year, extending from the end of one March to the next. The ratepayers and others were summoned to attend these meetings on specific issues, by notices posted on the Chowbent chapel door.



Meetings began with acceptance of a resolution to adjourn to either the Bear's Paw or Queen's Head. Once reassembled, and no doubt suitably refreshed, those present proceeded with an agenda comprising the approval of the previous year's accounts followed by the selection of the principal officers, Overseers, Highway Surveyor, Church Warden and Assessors of Taxes, for the coming year.

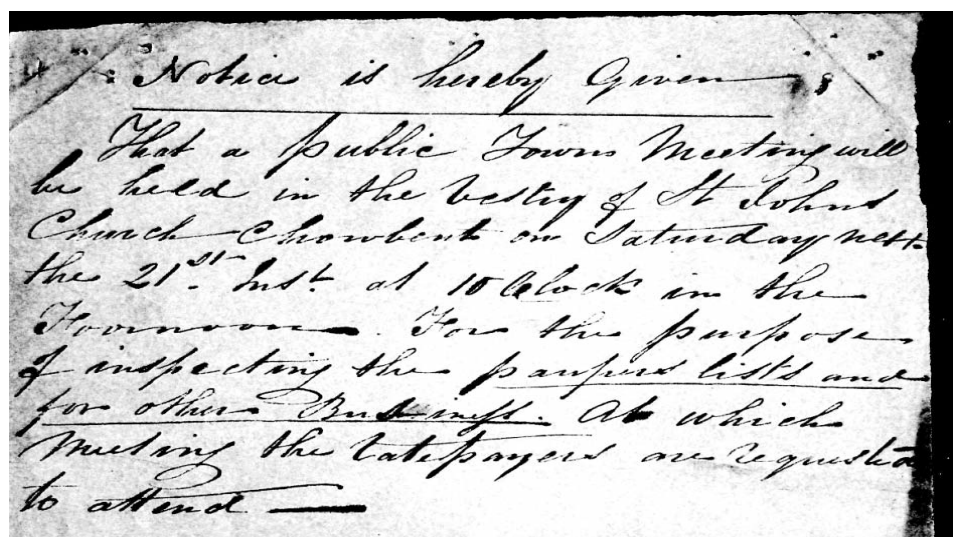
By this date the responsibility for actually providing relief had been transferred to the Union Guardians and the overseers were only responsible for collecting and passing on the poor rate to the Union. They, however, continued to make public the names of all who received relief who were thus labelled as paupers.

*expenses each day they attend the Board & be paid out of the Highway Rate..."*

A notice dated 23 November 1839 appears to indicate that initially the Constable's year still followed the traditional pattern beginning and ending in the late autumn:

*"Notice is hereby given that a Meeting of the Inhabitants of the Township of Atherton, being ratepayers, will be held in the Towns Office, Chowbent, on Thursday, the fifth day Decr. Next for the purpose of...laying before the said Inhabitants the Accounts of the Constable of the said Township for the last year...."*

In the autumn of 1842 ratepayers were called to a meeting to respond to an Act of Parliament requiring them to



In 1844 the selection of three Guardians to represent the Township was included in the agenda and they were, "...allowed 2s for their

appoint more Parish Constables. From 1843 onwards, prior to the Annual Meeting and following receipt of notices from the Justices, 15 constables were appointed.

# TOWNSHIP OF

THE Overseers of the Poor for the said Township of *Atherton* having received a Precept under the Hands of two of Her Majesty's Justices of the Peace, directing them within fourteen days from the receipt thereof, to summon a Meeting of the Inhabitants of the said Township, for the purpose of making out a List in writing of *the Township* men qualified and liable to serve as Parish Constables, according to the Provisions of an Act passed in the 5th and 6th years of the reign of Her present Majesty, intituled, "An Act for the appointment and payment of Parish Constables."

THE SAID OVERSEERS THEREFORE

## DO HEREBY GIVE NOTICE,

The names of those appointed, as in 1856, include their occupation and appear to allocate each to one area of the township.

<i>John Anderson</i>	<i>Victoria Place</i>	<i>Smiths Cottage</i>
<i>John Hartley</i>	<i>Market Place</i>	<i>Smiths</i>
<i>Thomas Hildes</i>	<i>Gate Field</i>	<i>Hammer</i>
<i>William Ashburn</i>	<i>New Farm</i>	<i>Green Dingle</i>
<i>John Heaton</i>	<i>Market Street</i>	<i>Hammer</i>
<i>James Bottling</i>	<i>Over Hill</i>	<i>Hammer</i>
<i>William Tomlinson</i>	<i>Widow's Gate</i>	<i>Hammer</i>
<i>James Marsden</i>	<i>St. George's Farm</i>	<i>Hammer</i>
<i>John Hunsworth</i>	<i>St. George's Lane</i>	<i>Smiths Cottage</i>
<i>John Carr</i>	<i>Widow's Field</i>	<i>Hammer</i>
<i>John Cullum</i>	<i>Greenbank</i>	<i>Hammer</i>
<i>George Hunsley</i>	<i>Widow's Street</i>	<i>Hammer</i>
<i>John Cragwell</i>	<i>Widow's Street</i>	<i>Hammer</i>
<i>James Spaldman</i>	<i>Market Place</i>	<i>Smiths Cottage</i>
<i>William Smith</i>	<i>Market Place</i>	<i>Druggist</i>

A small payment of twenty-five shillings is recorded for this duty.

Payments were also made to the Highway Surveyor. In 1840 William Fildes received £15, paid quarterly, but in 1843 Jonathan Hesketh was only granted £10 to be paid at the end of his year of office. Neither the minutes nor the surveyor's account books that survive provide much information about the work that was actually undertaken. For reasons not explained, when Peter Wood was appointed in 1850 he was informed "*..that the Surveyor of the Highways is not allowed to employ either his own sons & or Horses in repairing or amending the said Roads or work himself..*"

Existing legislation limited the ability of the vestry and appointed officers to use income they raised from local rates to paying the annual revenue costs of their duties.

This financial restriction limited any ability to address many of the problems facing an increasing population particularly the spread of diseases such as cholera and

typhoid which resulted from the lack of sanitation and clean water. In 1849 a committee was appointed to meet the requirements of the Sanitary Act "*..for the removal of nuisances in the Township.*" In 1856 Mr. Selby became its chairman and John Manley was appointed Sanitary Inspector with a salary of five pounds. Again there is no record of any work he did.

Little space remained in Church or chapel burial grounds and the Vestry was able to take advantage of an Act of Parliament that permitted the use of money from local rates to establish public-funded cemeteries. During 1854 and 1855 decisions were taken to form a Burial Board and to purchase three acres of land for a cemetery. The cost was set at £2100, later increased to £3000, for laying it out and building chapels. This cost was to be met from a loan from the Loan Commissioners to be repaid by "*..charging the future Poor Rates of the Parish with the payment of Such Money..*" It was stipulated that two thirds of the land was to be used for Church of England burials and the rest for dissenters. There was no mention of Roman Catholics. In 1856 Mr. George Marsland was appointed as clerk to the Board with a salary of £20 and provision was made to hold annual meetings of the Board in February each year. In 1863 there was a meeting at which "*..the Burial Board be requested to procure an estimate of the probable expense of a Hearse and Hearsehouse with harness for one Horse also the probable receipts that might be expected per annum..*"

By the second half of the century it was clear that the Vestry administration lacked the powers or resources to provide an infrastructure and range of services to meet the social and economic needs of an expanding local community. In 1863 the decision was made to adopt powers provided by the 1858 Local Government Act and form a Local Board to give the township an administrative system based on a greater degree of professionalism, continuity and access to central funding for capital schemes to provide sanitation, drainage, clean water and road construction.

The Vestry however continued to meet annually though with very much reduced functions, principally only retaining the duty to appoint Overseers and Guardians to the Union and express views about rating issues. Its powers to supervise the Burial Board and cemetery were transferred to the Local Board in 1876. However, later minute books continue to record meetings until the end of the second decade of the 20th century when its remaining duties in relation to the provision of poor relief were assumed by County and Borough Councils.

### Sources and acknowledgements

The account is based principally on the minutes of the Vestry meetings 1839 to 1885 (A/1/3) in the Atherton Township records together with illustrations from associated miscellaneous documents. (A/2/1). Brief reference is also made to the contents of A/1/3 Minutes of Vestry Meetings 1886 to 1897 (A/1/3) and Vestry Meetings 1899 to 1927 (A/1/4).

As always grateful thanks is due to the archivist for making documents available and for help in suggesting additional sources.

# WELCOME

# FLOODS

By Bob Blakeman

**Flooded fields in winter were a welcome sight to the medieval peasant. The layer of water protected the soil from frost, and stimulated the grass into early growth once the floods had subsided. In addition, rivers and streams in spate carried particles of rich minerals from the uplands, and deposited them on the flooded land, increasing the fertility of the soil.**

Livestock were prevented from grazing on the grass when the floods had subsided. In June the luxurious growth was cut and dried, and stored as hay to provide food for livestock in winter. Without this animals would have had to be slaughtered.

Land that was used for the production of hay was called 'meadow'. The best meadows occurred where the action of running water over a long period had produced a fine-grained fertile soil known as 'alluvium'. However, where the valley floors were filled with acid peat, the surface would be covered with coarse vegetation unsuitable for use as hay.

There is a strong correlation between deposits of alluvium and field and street names containing the word 'meadow' where the River Douglas wends its way around Wigan. Beginning in the Haigh Plantations, where the valley of the Douglas is too narrow to contain any sizeable fields, the valley opens out at Bottling Wood. Here there is a flat piece of alluvial land called Hermitage Meadow. The valley suddenly narrows again as far downstream as the present Tesco supermarket where it opens out, and there is a large area of alluvium as far downstream as Darlington Street. Just downstream from Tesco, and on the same side of the river were the Pillitoff Meadows. On the other side of the river, where the Quality Hotel now stands, were the Water Heyes (i.e. water and fields); near the Wigan Little Theatre was Pennington Meadow. Mill Meadow, named after the Rector's corn mill, which was situated at the bottom of Millgate, occupied land near the present Derby House high-rise flats. A little further downstream was Pepper Mill Meadow, which extended to the present Darlington Street.

Downstream from Darlington Street there is only a very narrow strip of alluvium, and there are no 'meadow' names until we come to Poolstock

Lane. Here there is a large area of alluvium extending approximately from Pottery Road in the north to Keats Avenue in the south. In this area current names are Fourteen Meadows Road (about which more later), Swan Meadow Road, and Parson's Meadow. Swan Meadow Road may sound idyllic, but it is more likely to be named after a landholder named Swan, than the bird. Swan is a not uncommon surname in the Wigan district. This may also be the origin of Swan Lane, Hindley, where, until recently, there was no large body of water. Parson's Meadow, lying behind the present Halfords and McDonald's retail outlets was glebe: it belonged to Wigan Parish Church.

Following the Douglas further downstream, on the site of the present Robin Park Arena was Harrison's Meadow. On the other side of the river near the present Meadows Street was a freehold estate called simply 'The Meadows'. Further to the west, on the canal, is a lock called El Meadow Lock. This is derived from Elbow Meadow, so called because the River Douglas used to take a very sharp bend here until its course was altered.

Not all meadows were found on the flood-plains of rivers: these were simply the best. Away from the flood-plains any patch of

grass more luxurious than that surrounding it might be reserved for meadow. An example appears in the Legh Terrier of 1466. This is a detailed register and description of lands held by the Legh family. These lands included the sub-manor of Norley (Hall) in Pemberton, and here we find mention of "The Parkfield, containing eight acres and more of land, with a small parcel of meadow in [it]".

Flood-plain meadows were valuable: two or three times more valuable than arable land, and manorial lords whose manors were on higher land were eager to acquire them. So it was that Bruggemore Meadow, situated between Warrington Road (A49) and Parson's Meadow, became part of the sub-manor of Norley, but separated from the main body of the estate by the properties of other landholders.

Meadows could be held individually, collectively, or as 'parson's freehold'. In this last case such meadows belonged to a church, but were considered to be the freehold of the parson during his incumbency. Parson's Meadow, mentioned previously, was part of the church lands or 'glebe' of All Saints' Church, Wigan. Individually-held meadows included Harrison's Meadow and Swan Meadow. Fourteen Meadows Road refers to some collectively-held meadows. In such cases the meadow was divided into strips called 'doles'. These strips were allocated in rotation to those persons who had the right to farm them. Originally their boundaries would have been marked by lines of stakes, but they seem to have been enclosed and made permanent fields by the time the area was surveyed in the late 1840s.

Although the construction of reservoirs at Worthington in the mid-nineteenth century reduced the amount of water in the River Douglas, flooding was still a frequent occurrence in the area between Poolstock Lane and Wigan Pier (see photograph). Improved flood prevention works after the Second World War reduced this threat; but recent increased rainfall, as part of wider climatic change, has once again meant that former meadows are subject to flooding. In January 2008 flooding occurred at the bus depot near Pottery Road, and later in the year emergency sandbagging had to be put in place further downstream. More permanent flood prevention schemes are in the offing, including the construction of a dam at the bottom of Coppull Lane; so once again Hermitage Meadow will be flooded as it was in the past.



Pottery Lane Flooding, 1931

By  
Elizabeth  
Fairclough



# Looking Back and Looking Forward

So far the year 2009, even in its early stages seems to be a time of new beginnings and anniversaries of note.

Firstly, in January 2009 came the Inauguration of President Barack Obama and the 50th Anniversary of the Tamla Motown music label. February brought the 50th Anniversary of the untimely death at 22 years of age of American singer Buddy Holly. At first glance it may seem that these events have little

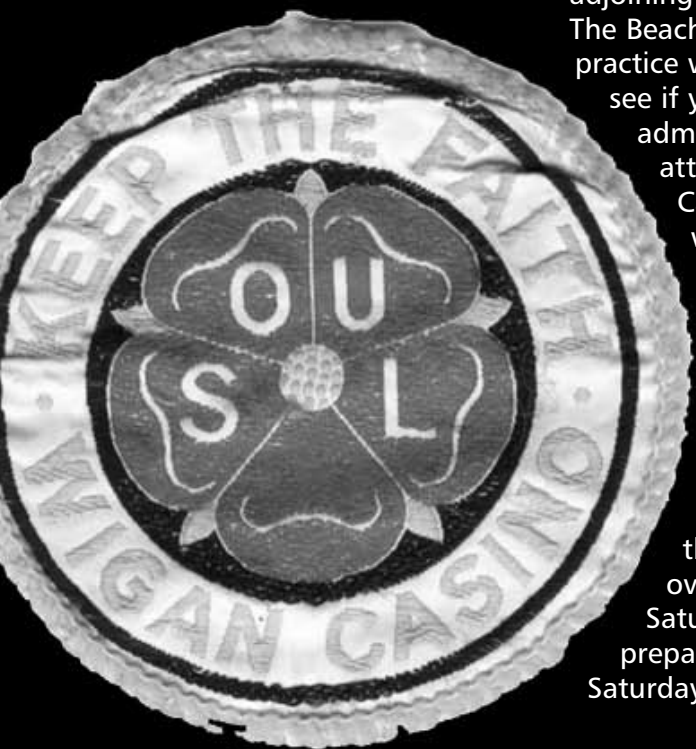
connection with the town of Wigan. However, Buddy Holly did play on 18 March 1958 at the Ritz Cinema, later known as the ABC, which was situated on Station Road, and is now long gone as part of the redevelopment for the Grand Arcade Shopping Centre.

The World War One building in Station Road, (again no longer there) which was originally named the Empress Ballroom and Billiard Hall, with the 2nd floor adjoining known as The Palais, was later better known as Wigan Casino. It also had an adjoining ground-floor building, The Beachcomber Bar, where the practice was to try your luck to see if you could gain admittance there before attempting the actual Casino. Wigan Casino was one of the most pivotal places for music and dancing in the 1960s and early 1970s, and indeed for decades earlier. Who can forget the mill girls wearing their brightly coloured see-through headscarves over their spiky rollers on Saturday afternoons, preparing to go dancing on Saturday nights in the 1950s

and early 1960s! Often it feels that these earlier periods are eclipsed somewhat by the 1973-1981 period of Northern Soul/All-Nighter period.

Over in the USA, Detroit, Michigan, was the hub of the car-manufacturing industry and was known as Motor City. For years migrants had moved to Detroit from Southern states to settle and work there. It was from this background that Berry Gordy, a black former car assembly-line worker had the idea of creating a universally appealing presentation of black music which could break down cultural and class barriers and be accessible to the rest of America and indeed the world. The music that was bursting forth from Detroit, Gordy named Tamla Motown, short for Motor Town and he named his studios Hitsville USA. It seems barely credible to us now, but in the early 1960s in America, black music struggled to be heard on radio, with many stations refusing to play any.

However, as the Civil Rights Movement began to gather momentum, the music labels of Tamla Motown, Stax and Atlantic provided the soundtrack. As I watched the footage from the





Tamla Motown Revue from March 1965 on TV last night (shown on BBC Four on Saturday 21 February) I was transported back to being 13 years old whilst seeing and hearing a brilliant blind boy introduced as Little Stevie Wonder playing harmonica on *Ready, Steady, Go!* I could not believe the amount of talented artists that were assembled together in one place, The Supremes, The Four Tops, The Temptations, Smokey Robinson & The Miracles, Martha Reeves & The Vandellas, Mary Wells and Marvin Gaye. There began my perpetual love affair with Tamla Motown in particular and music in general. The show was put together at the insistence of Britain's most prominent female artist of the time, the marvellous Dusty Springfield, who was a great fan of Gordy's stable of Tamla's artists and who herself appeared at the Empress Ballroom in Wigan.

The Tamla Motown Revue had played extensive dates throughout Britain, including Wigan in April 1965, at half-empty venues. The members of the tour were understandably disappointed and resigned to returning to the U.S. without much success. On this same tour was a local lad Clive Powell, from Cotton Street, Leigh near to the Sportmans Pub (Georgie Fame of Georgie Fame and The Blue Flames) who was riding high in the UK charts with a hit single 'Yeh Yeh'. Martha Reeves told reporters that though the Motown artists were all used to the harsh, cold winters of the US, and they were all from housing projects (or estates as we would say) they were used to central heating, iced beer and soft toilet tissue. England in 1965 was still largely a land of coal fires, no central heating, warm beer and hard, shiny toilet paper!

After Dusty constantly badgered TV bosses they agreed reluctantly to air The Tamla Motown Revue. The TV show was an immediate

success. The polished professional performances, immaculate and glamorous outfits and choreography struck a chord with the British people. It seemed so colourful, vibrant, exciting and uplifting. The music after that TV show seemed to be everywhere in the years to follow and Wigan Casino became the main place to be if you wanted to hear it and dance to it on its fabulous sprung floor.

Favourite live local bands of the time were Edward John Concern and Harlem John's Reshuffle who played blues and souly stuff. But who can forget the queue to get in right down the steps at the Casino! With the pulsating beat of 'Nowhere To Run', 'Road Runner' or 'Just A Little Misunderstanding' coming from inside! Once inside, the music just defied you not to dance! It was impossible NOT to! You just did not want the night to end. The feeling was that you were there in the midst of something special.

Saturday afternoons after finishing work at 12 were often spent choosing a pair of ear-rings from the Market Hall, and maybe a top from Margaret Razaq's or Ali Khan's stall. If it was just after pay-day you may even buy an item at Chelsea Girl and some Miner's make-up from Woolie's as well! Then the luxurious bit, a pot of tea in Lowe's Tea Rooms on the top floor of the store (now Barclays Bank). After discussing the night before and making final plans for the next one we would try to squeeze a third cup of tea out of the silver pot and then be on our way home.

The Highland Room at Blackpool Mecca was another favourite with Wigan Motown and Soul



fans from about 1968 to 1970, with full coaches leaving Wigan Market Square on a Saturday night. More locally, other favourites were The Cromwellian in Bolton, Leigh Casino, The Monaco at Hindley and Wigan Rugby Club at Central Park. The last two places were places that people normally walked home from. No-one seemed to bother about taxis then!

The Tamla legacy lives on and many contemporary artists in the UK and around the world admit how much it has influenced them. Paul Weller is a great example.

Although there may not seem outwardly to be many parallels with black working-class kids from Detroit and white working-class kids from Wigan, the music they listened and danced to may in some way have helped to bring a greater understanding and awareness of other communities. We all hope that 'A Change Is Gonna Come', that the late Dr. Martin Luther King prayed for, will happen. We do know that the music that was brought over in that Revue in 1965 is still enjoyed extensively, probably more than ever, whether you are from Detroit or Wigan. Long may it continue!

# Hidden in Haigh

By Mr Neil Cain

**Most Wiganers know of and enjoy, the wonderful amenity on their doorsteps that is Haigh Country Park. Joggers, ramblers and dog-walkers all benefit from having access to its pathways through magnificent woodland, but just how many realise that they are walking through one of the cradles of the Industrial Revolution?**

Over the past year I have become fascinated by the history of the Haigh Estate during the years in which modern Britain was being forced, quite literally, along the



Old drainage tunnel near old pits

Douglas Valley. Traces of these important developments still exist, often hidden in vegetation or converted into today's broad walkways. They can still be found quite easily; knowing where they are may add to the enjoyment of a walk in the park.

One of the earliest references to the use of Haigh Estate in a commercial sense comes from 1538 when John Leland wrote in his itinerary 'Mr Bradshaigh of Haigh hath found much cannel, like sea coal in his ground, very profitable to him'.

Cannel was famous for its property of burning with extreme heat whilst leaving virtually no ash. The Great Haigh Fault threw the cannel to the surface under the Haigh Estate, so early mining was at a relatively shallow depth. Other seams, like the Ince Four Foot seam were easily mined. Coming down from the impressive gateway on Wigan Lane, opposite the Infirmary, and turning left at the bridge over the Douglas, will give the walker the chance to see some of these

lost workings. Continue along the river until the path climbs sharply and bends to the right. At the fork turn left off the main pathway. Opposite the boulder marked 'Devil's Canyon' you will see a high bank on your right. An easy walk up onto the top of the bank puts you above the Ince seams of coal and a circular depression near the drop into the valley marks the site of an old shaft.

Return to the fork in the paths and notice two mouldering sets of steps. These lead up the 'lost' canal of the 1790s which ran for about half a mile from Haigh Foundry at the foot of Leyland Mill Lane, to Marsden's Farm in Bottling Wood and conveyed coal to the Foundry. The clearest impression of the canal is between the steps and the big pond. John Lewis of Montgomery cut the canal for Alexander Haliburton, the Manager for the Earl of Balcarres. It is shown on the first Ordnance Survey map of around 1850. It was soon superseded by another advance in technology.

Return to the main pathway up from the Douglas Valley and walk with the valley on your right. You are now walking along an old railway line parallel to the canal, dating to 1856, linking Haigh Foundry to the Lindsay Pits at Whelley. This railway only lasted until about 1869 when the Whelley Loop-Line, which ran under the large green bridge on the main drive to the Hall, was built. As you walk the old track-bed, you will see a cutting on the left which once carried the railway and probably the earlier canal. It exposed the Ince Four Foot seam again and was the site of an illegal 'day eye' pit of the General Strike of 1926.

The path finally runs out at the intersection of the main drive with the path up to Whelley. Drop onto the main path and double-back to the wooden bridge over the 'Yellow Brook'. Today the Yellow Brook is rarely yellow, since the ochre-laden water from the pit workings is cleansed in the newly constructed settling ponds.

This area was once the site of scientific pilgrimage and was called 'The Eighth Wonder Of The World'. View this by crossing the wooden bridge, then turning left along the bank for a few yards. Opposite you will see a rusty metal grating - the entrance to the Great Sough. This tunnel was two thirds of a mile long and six by four feet. It took 18 years to cut it by hand without any blasting powder, at an average of 66 yards per year! By constructing



*Sandy beds pit sunk to the great sough*

this tunnel Sir Roger Bradshaigh drained a large area of coal on his land and set the seal on the profitability of the Estate inherited by the Lindsays.

Return to the main drive and up to the Hall, walking to the green railway bridge. Take the narrow woodland track to the right and one may see the old shafts that were sunk at the time the Sough was built. The easiest to see are to the left of the track and quite close to it - 4th Pit and Sandy Beds Pit, with the protective metal fencing.

At the beginning of this piece I mentioned the early shallow pits of Haigh. One such is a collapsed bell pit in Bottling Wood where the roof has fallen in after a circular chamber was worked in the coal at a modest depth. Retracing one's steps to the wooden bridge over the Yellow Brook and climbing the pathway up the facing bank will lead you to a point where the paths level out. Here on the left is a quite noticeable deep circular pit that marks the site.

From here return to the main drive and go down to the Douglas Bridge. In this area occur clays that were used to make bricks. More interestingly, in the 1670s and 1680s John Dwight of Millgate, Wigan, patented the first English-made porcelains made from the Haigh clays taken from the area close by.

The circular walk is now virtually complete, but no



*Tail race of Old Brock Mill Forge*

mention of Haigh's industrial history would be complete without mentioning Haigh Foundry and Brock Mill Forge.

Many early pumping engines for mines were made at Brock Mill, now a new housing estate. Haigh Foundry was engaged in similar work as well as manufacturing over 100 locomotives for use in local pits and for the famous Great Western Railway, for French use and for the 1850s Crimean war. What a sight it must have been to see huge teams of horses dragging heavy machinery up the steep incline of Leyland Mill Lane to Wigan Lane before the railway system was established!

So why were the two works founded here? Water power from the Douglas for the hammers and local coal were prime influences. In addition, ironstone occurs in the river banks. Between the main drive bridge over the Douglas and Haigh Foundry orange ironstone nodules may still be found in the streams running into the Douglas.

This brief walk over some sections of the Park can only hope to scratch the surface of Haigh's hidden past. There is so much more, but next time you are enjoying a walk in the lovely grounds of Haigh Hall just keep an ear cocked and you may hear an anvil ring, or a horse whinny as it pulls a barge on the lost canal, or even the thud of a pick, such is the legacy of the past.

***Thank you for kind assistance to:  
Jenny Metcalfe, Geologist at  
Haigh Country Park, Wigan  
Leisure & Culture Trust***

# YOUR LETTERS AND QUESTIONS

## Dear Editor

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I am keen to support your efforts to engage readers in a wide-range of activities in Wigan & District. I am moved to offer the attached photograph to see if you feel it might provoke some interest and response.

I believe it depicts several of the local Rugby League referees of the time probably in the 1950s or 1960s. Whilst I can recognise the faces I am having difficulty naming them all.

The one on the right is definitely Tommy Monks who served at one time as Mayor of Wigan. My own father Willie Ainscough is squeezed in at the back centre of the photo.

Yours faithfully,  
**Roy Ainscough**

PS I wonder if the seated figure on the left was Tom Watkinson/Wilkinson and the seated figure on the right perhaps Norman Railton? But these are just guesses.

## Dear Editor

---

We make reference to the 'Can you Help' letters, article Joseph Houghton page 34 (issue 50)! Could you please make a correction to the email address. Please note that the email address l.battersby80@ntlworld.com is no longer in use! Our new email address is lamfell@sky.com

Thank you!

Yours sincerely  
**Mrs Betty Battersby**



## Dear Editor

---

Hindley & District History Society recently acquired the big drum used by St Benedict's Catholic Boys' Brigade some 60 or 70 years ago. The drum was found under the stage in St Benedict's Club and now resides in the Museum at Hindley Library. It was very dirty, not surprisingly after all these years, and there is some damage to the paintwork by the St Benedict CBB sign. Mr Jimmy Batley, a member of the History Society undertook the task of returning it to its former glory. Jimmy removed the ropes and two outer rims to give the drum a careful but thorough clean to remove the grime. The rims revealed gold paint on the insides, the skins look much cleaner and, although fragile, sounded healthy enough. After washing, repairing and

replacing the ropes and cleaning up the original gold, green and red paint, the drum now looks magnificent and is on display in Hindley Museum.

We at the History Society are trying to gather as much information as possible about the drum. If any readers remember seeing the drum in action, or have paraded behind it with the Catholic Boys Brigade, we would love to hear your stories and see your pictures.

Any information readers have that will help us piece together the history of the drum or St Benedict's Boys Brigade it would be much appreciated.

**Please write to Norma Brannagan, Hindley History Society, c/o Hindley Library, Market Street, Hindley.**

## Dear Editor

In a clearing in the Burmese jungle in 1945, we, RAF photographers, were responsible for showing feature cine-films to the lads. The screen was a large piece of canvas stretched between two tree trunks - not very 'professional', but our efforts usually kept everybody happy. One day I suggested we could make the screen similar to those in cinemas, if we painted a black band around the edges. This would obliterate the jagged edge surrounding the projected picture. Naturally, having suggested it, I was given the job. I set about making a ladder- using two trunks of slender trees, with cross-pieces nailed as required. With a can of black paint from 'the stores', I climbed my ladder and started work. I was rounding off the corners to make my efforts look more like the real thing, when someone called up to me in a strong Wigan accent which I recognized immediately, "Can you show me the way to the canteen chum?" As I turned - the shock nearly brought me off the ladder. Looking up at me was Bert Ball, formerly chauffeur to the Mayors of Wigan. I scrambled down the ladder and almost landed on top of him in the excitement as we fell about laughing and joking with each other, over our remarkable encounter. Now an Army Transport driver, he was here looking for spare parts. Before the War, Bert and I met almost weekly on the various Mayoral engagements in and around the Wigan district, which I covered as a local press photographer. What a transformation for Bert with his formerly large, gleaming and always immaculate limousine to the dust covered, camouflaged Army truck he was now driving. I'm afraid I couldn't direct him to the canteen as requested as we didn't enjoy

such a luxury here in our RAF camp. After such a million to one chance meeting, we had to say our "Cheerio's" without even sharing a mug of char (tea). At least the Army it would seem, had a canteen! Apart from a small report in the local paper recording our rare meeting in Burma, we lost touch with each other after the War.

Sometime in March 1946, my 'demob' came through at last. My time in Kuala Lumpur, Malaya, was almost ended. I duly went for my medical and started packing my bags. A few days later saw me joining the RAF demob contingent for the long, hot and dusty train journey down to Singapore. Here, after the usual checking in at the Transit Camp, we were allotted temporary billets to await the arrival of the troop ship, which, according to the song, 'would take us home to Blighty'. After a week or so, we were called out on parade with orders to move out. We were transported to Singapore docks, and there she was, a beautiful sight, the 'Winchester Castle', our floating abode for the next 28 days or so. This time it would be a solo performance, no need for a naval escort as before.

Everything then seemed to happen so quickly. The gangway was lowered and we prepared to board the ship. Struggling with our full kit we were met with an Army Division coming into Singapore on the other flank. Just as both columns levelled out on deck, a voice cried out above all the noisy activity "Austin, Austin, hello there" and kept this up for some time. Eventually, I saw a hand waving in a sea of kit bags - and there he was - George Fallows, a near neighbour of mine, who lived only a short distance from my home on Chapel Green, Hindley. Neither of us could stop, so we both kept up shouting and frantic waving until we lost sight of each other. This indeed, was surely a remarkable coincidence. Thousands of miles from home and here the two of us, pass within a few feet of each other, going in opposite directions on a troop ship.

Considering we both lived in Hindley, we met up again after the War and now we meet frequently at Tescos and have a friendly chat, usually both struggling with a loaded food trolley and certainly not a heavy kit bag.

Mr Austin Lyons

## WiganLife<sup>♥</sup>

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# TRIPS ON THE BARGE

By Barbara Anderston

I am looking forward to meeting Uncle Bob who has a barge along the Leeds & Liverpool canal based at Crooke Village. I can't wait for the holidays and the weekend when I am able to go with Uncle Bob and help him with taking coal to Wigan Power Station. Some days we change route and go to Burscough, and take flour to a corn mill at Parbold through to Burscough. If the flour wasn't ready to be collected, Uncle Bob would take me and my cousin back on the barge.

It was August, the potato-picking season; my cousin and I would go to Valentine's Farm at

Appley Bridge, near Wigan, to help with picking potatoes. We would both get half a crown, which seemed a lot of money to us, and of course we would spend it on raspberry pop and Smith's crisps which only cost us threepence, leaving us plenty of change. I would like it when my cousin and I would go to the drift mine at the John Pit colliery at Crooke, where the big coal wagons loaded with coal would go down the railway lines to be weighed on the roundabout. The coal would be released down a chute in the barge and some coal would spill over from the barge and fall into the canal. One old villager thought up an idea on how to get the coal

from the canal. He would get a big shovel butt, put thick wire mesh over the shovel, and tie rope over the shovel which could then be thrown into the canal. Slowly they pulled out pieces of coal, this method was called 'cebbing'. This coal was then put into wheelbarrows in some old flour sacks; the full sacks of coal then placed into wheelbarrows. These were then taken around the village and old-age pensioners were asked if they would like to buy some cheap coal and slack.

I met some interesting people and heard sad tales along these trips; there used to be some shops along the village of Burscough where they sold Indian brandy out of a tap. It was in the time of the 1940s with old-fashioned shops where you could smell polish when you opened the door. On returning from Burscough we would go back to Crooke, where on a Sunday it was time to clean the barge down; clean the coal grates, brush the carpets and wash all around the barge ready for Uncle Bob's next trip down the winding, peaceful canal.

Living near the railway and canal was very nice but sometimes things would go horribly wrong. One time I came home from school and remembered my mother telling



*Crooke Coal Tip Pier, 1938.*

me that a big coal wagon had slipped its brake and was slowly going from the drift mine and gaining speed down the line. There was a big stone house really close to this line where the tipping used to take place. Mrs Barlow, the lady who lived at the house, collapsed with shock at the sight of the coal wagon overturned at the end of the tipping near to her house. Everyone in the village was saying that it was a wonder no one was in the way of the runaway wagon. This incident was reported in the Wigan Evening Post newspaper. The villagers were left a bit frightened after that, but I don't remember anything quite like it happening again.

Sometimes the lads next door would go into the wagons and get a shovel of whatever was left. Helping with coal would provide fuel for winter and I remember many people would cycle from Springfield and Beech Hill, bringing their families with them on bikes, so they could watch the tipping off the barges.

In the school holidays, people would spend all afternoon at Crooke Village when the barges were going to Wigan Power Station and Burscough Corn Mill. When it was sunny, and always on Fridays and Saturdays, my cousin and I would sit in the garden of the pub alongside the canal. Sometimes Uncle Bob would sit outside with us, or sometimes stay inside. He liked to get chatting to other barge owners and discuss what they had heard or seen during the day. One time, a family with two boys were walking down the canal bank when some motorbikers came along; a stone was accidentally thrown up by their wheels which hit the small



*Old Windmill and Canal, Parbold*

boy's leg. The impact of this drew blood and his shoes became covered in blood. The motorbike rider had not realised what had happened. The family took the little boy to the nearest pub along the canal bank where his wound was cleaned up and dressed.

Another favourite pastime was having fish and chips at Burscough, as there was no fish and chip shop at Crooke where I lived. The nearest was the one at Burscough which was six miles away. We loved these fish and chips and raspberry pop. We like going with Uncle Bob on the barge, and each barge had its own name; Uncle Bob's was called 'SHELGA' (I think the name is an Indian Queen name, meaning 'Keep Faith Within Me'). We also enjoyed cleaning the brasses around the fireplace on the barge, as Uncle Bob liked it to shine. At first, my cousin and I were scared when we approached the canal locks and we would ask to be left at the side of the bank until we became used to the big, wide locks. It took us a while to get used to them, and we believed what helped us was finding a stray mongrel dog who became our friend. We named the dog 'Poker', and Uncle Bob told us

that if Poker wasn't afraid of the big locks then we should not be either. He said we should hold Poker and try not to look down at the big walls inside the lock. We did this, remembering what we had been told; we thought of Poker being fearless and our reward of fish and chips afterwards, and so did not think of the danger!

After that first time of staying on the barge as we went into the locks, we became less frightened and soon got used to the locks and the big keys. Sometimes it would be raining and cold, so we would stay below in the cabin, having our 'Oxo' drink with our butties of sliced bread, cheese and pickle and an apple and a pear. We would read our comics; 'Beano' and 'Dandy' – which we had just bought from the shop down the way to Burscough, just off the canal. Sometimes Uncle Bob wanted to go further than Burscough, but we needed the right key for every lock, because if not, the locks could not be opened.

Uncle Bob would sometimes go to the pub at Parbold with the other barge owners, and we would sometimes meet other children from nearby Wigan.

They would sometimes tell us of drunken men fighting over who had won at card games. On trips to Wigan, the Summer Fair on the Market Square had candy floss, toffee apples, lollies and cups of black peas; my cousin thought they were delicious, Uncle Bob told us they were called 'pigeon peas'. They certainly made us feel warm and ready for the walk down Wallgate, where 'SHELGA' was moored with all the other barges, their owners and families.

Some of the old people around the Wallgate canal area would sometimes ask Uncle Bob to get them some Indian brandy from the shop at Burscough; they believed it had a strong flavour because it came from the barrel. Other requests would be to bring back paraffin from the barrel, and bottles of 'LANRY' bleach which was stronger and more powerful than other makes. When the old people from the Wallgate canal basin area went shopping, they would repay Uncle Bob by buying

him pigs' trotters and black tripe, or would give him five shillings for getting their items of shopping for them.

Uncle liked to tell us there was some treasure at the bottom of the canal, because of the drunken men who had fallen in wearing expensive watches and rings. Our last night on the 'SHELGA' was always a Sunday, as we were at school on Monday; but we were always excited and couldn't wait until Friday when we would back on 'SHELGA'.

It was Uncle Bob's dream to retire and settle down in the old lock house at Appley Bridge, with 'SHELGA' moored at the side, ready to use for barge trips once the tipping of coal was finished. We would still go on 'SHELGA' up and down the canal, but not carrying coal. Uncle would get talking to other barge owners, who, at first, had horses pulling the barges. These horses worked hard pulling barges filled with coal and flour; they would be tethered

near the barge tucking into their sacks of oats. Sometimes Uncle would be asked to save the horses' shoes and the old people in the cottages would nail them onto their coal sheds to promote good luck around the cottage. Some would ask for the horse muck to put on their gardens to help the roses and fertilise the soil; this would get good Burscough potatoes and carrots. Everyone in Crooke liked it when Uncle brought back Burscough vegetables, saying they tasted better than Wigan Market produce. They could tell the difference as chips from Burscough's Fish and Chip shop tasted better than ones from Wigan. Perhaps it had something to do with the rich soil from the horse muck!

Our barge trips were lovely down the Carfell tow-path on the Leeds & Liverpool canal. 'SHELGA' got too old and sadly ended up in a boatyard in Wigan.



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## Aspull and Haigh Historical Society

Meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month at Our Lady's RC Church Hall, Haigh Road, Aspull at 7.30pm. All are welcome, contact Barbara Rhodes (01942) 222769 for further details.

## Atherton Heritage Society

Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm in St Richards Community Centre, Mayfield St., Atherton. Members £1.00. Non Members £1.50. For further information contact (01942) 884893.

Tuesday 14 April  
'The History of Real Chocolate',  
Speaker - Michael Clarke

Tuesday 12 May  
'Where Does Time Go?,'  
Speaker - Peter Watson

Tuesday 9 June  
'WW1 - Our Boys' (The story behind a WW1 Memorial Plaque in the village of Hawkshaw, Nr. Bolton),  
Speaker - Jonathan Ali.

## Billinge History Society

Meetings are held on the first Tuesday of the month at Billinge Chapel End Labour Club at 7.30pm. For further details visit [www.billinge-history.com](http://www.billinge-history.com)

## Hindley & District History Society

Meetings are held on the second Monday in the month at Hindley Museum in Hindley Library 7.00pm to 9.00pm. Admission is £1.00 for members and £1.50 for non-members. Everyone is welcome.

The museum is open to the public at least once a week and entry is free. Contact the library staff for times and dates or telephone our Secretary, Mrs Joan Topping on (01942) 257361 or Mrs Norma Brannagh on (01942) 258668

## Leigh & District Family History Society

Chairman: Tel 01942 743428  
Secretary: Tel 01942 729559

Monthly meetings held in the Derby Room of Leigh Library at 7.30pm on the third Tuesday of each month.

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

## Local History Federation Lancashire

The Federation holds several meetings each year, with a varied and interesting programme. For details visit [www.lancashirehistory.org](http://www.lancashirehistory.org) or call (01204) 707885.

## Skelmersdale & Upholland Family History Society

Meetings held at 7.30pm on the 4th Tuesday each month at Hall Green Community Centre, Upholland. For more information visit [www.liverpool-genealogy.org.uk](http://www.liverpool-genealogy.org.uk)

28 April  
'Irish', Speaker - James Firth.

26 May  
'Breaking down the Brick Wall',  
Speaker - Peter Jolliffe.

23 June  
'How I researched my family',  
Speaker - Alma Harrison.

No meeting in July or August.

## Wigan Civic Trust

If you have an interest in the standard of planning and architecture, and the conservation of buildings and structures in our historic town, come along and meet us.

Meetings are held the second Monday of the month at 7.30pm. The venue is Drumcroon, 2 Parsons Walk, Wigan. Contact Mr. A Grimshaw on (01942) 245777 for further information.

## Wigan Family & Local History Society

Meetings are held at the Caledonian Hotel on Bolton Road, Ashton-in-Makerfield, Near Wigan, WN4 8PF on the third Monday of each month (7.30 for 8.00pm). Attendance fees are £2.00 per meeting for both members and visitors. For further information call (01942) 727875 or visit [www.wiganworld.co.uk/familyhistory](http://www.wiganworld.co.uk/familyhistory)

20 April  
'A torurous jumble of title deeds and Family History',  
Speaker - David Lambert.

18 May  
'Lancashire the Black and White County', Speaker - John Mackie.

15 June  
Annual General Meeting.

No meeting in July or August.

## Wigan Archaeological Society

We meet on the first Wednesday of the month, at 7.30, at the Baden Powell Centre (District Scout HQ) in Greenough Street, Wigan, for lectures and discussions on topics of historical or archaeological interest. Admission is £3. For more information call Tom Glover on 01695 624372 or Bill Aldridge on 01257 402342. You can also visit the website [www.wiganarchsoc.co.uk](http://www.wiganarchsoc.co.uk)

4 April  
Roman Settlement at Walton-le-Dale,  
Speaker - Peter Iles.

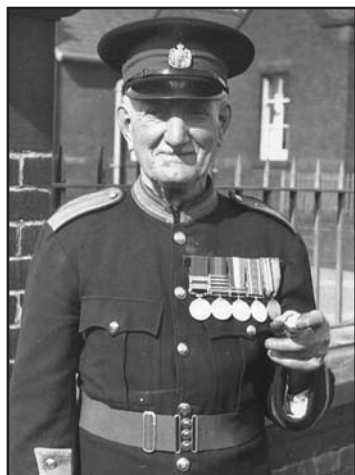
6 May  
Ancient Footprints on Formby Beach,  
Speaker - Ann Worsley.

20 May  
Committee Meeting.

3 June  
Star Carr - A 10,000 year old site in North Yorkshire, Speaker - Ian Trumble.

1 July  
Fora and Fana - Meeting place and temples of the Eternal City,  
Speaker - Bill Aldridge.

## The War Medals of Charles Hogg



Welcome to a new Past Forward feature 'Collections Corner' which will focus on items that are part of the museum collections. In this edition the spotlight is on five war medals that belonged to Mr Charles Hogg.

Charles Hogg was born in Standishgate, Wigan

on the 7 September 1871. He enlisted into the 18th Hussars at an early age and served in the frontier wars in India receiving the India Medal. He also served in the Boer War receiving the Queen's South Africa Medal and the King's South Africa Medal. When the First World War broke out he had reached the age limit for active service so he enlisted in the Royal Engineers under a false age. He went on to earn the British War Medal and Victory Medal. Mr Hogg himself donated the medals to the museum collection in 1963 when he was 91 years old. He died in Wigan on the 29 October 1966 aged 95.

The first medal on the left of the picture is the India Medal. It depicts an Indian and British Soldier supporting a flag with the inscription 'India 1895.' Charles was awarded clasps for service on the 'Samana 1897' and the 'Punjab Frontier 1897-1898.'



The second and third medals from the left are the medals Hogg was awarded for service in the Boer War. The Queen's South Africa Medal was awarded between 1899-1902, in addition to the medal Charles gained five clasps for his service, they were 'Cape Colony', 'Transvaal', 'Orange Free State', 'Defence of Ladysmith' and 'Talana.' On one side of the medal is a bust of Queen Victoria. The other side shows a coastal landscape with battleships standing offshore and an advancing army heads toward the main figure of Britannia.

The King's South Africa Medal was awarded between 1901-1902. It recognised service in the difficult latter phases of the war, and was to reward those who by their long service in the field had brought the campaign to a successful conclusion. The obverse has a bust King Edward VII, the reverse is the same as the Queen's South Africa Medal.

The final two medals, the British War Medal 1914-1920 and the Victory Medal 1914-1919, were awarded to commemorate service in the First World War, and to record and celebrate victory. These medals are probably more familiar than the others; this is because these medals were issued in unprecedented numbers with virtually all service personnel. Those civilians who served in an officially recognised organisation qualified for at least one of these medals.

The British War Medal has an effigy of King George V on one side; the other side depicts a male figure mounted on horseback, trampling underfoot the eagle shield of the Central Powers and the emblems of death, a skull and cross-bones. Above is the risen sun of victory. The Victory Medal depicts the classical figure of Athene Nike, the goddess of Victory on the obverse and the reverse has the inscription 'THE GREAT WAR FOR CIVILISATION'. Both medals were struck by the royal mint.

Charles Hogg's name, rank, service number and unit are stamped on the bottom edge of the medals.

The Exhibition Team is currently designing new displays for the History Shop. It is hoped that Charles Hogg's medals will be on display when it re-opens following refurbishment

## The photograph feature is back!

Take a look at this picture - all we know is that it was taken in Scholes, Wigan. It possibly dates to 1900. Can you tell us more about who is in the picture, what the occasion was, what the street name was or anything else?



### *On the look out*

*Do you have any old photographs of children playing games? We're interested in finding a photograph of children playing 'Piggy'. If you think you might be able to help us we would be very pleased to hear from you! Please contact Lisa Keys on 01942 404080 or email [l.keys@wlct.org](mailto:l.keys@wlct.org) if you can help.*

## Finding out more

If you would like to find out more about British war medals there are several websites you can use:

Imperial War Museum

'British Service Medals of the First World War' - [www.iwm.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.986](http://www.iwm.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.986)

North East Medals 'The Guide to British War Medals' - [http://www.northeastmedals.co.uk/britishguide/british\\_index.htm](http://www.northeastmedals.co.uk/britishguide/british_index.htm)

Ancestry - [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) - Ancestry contains many army service records and pension's records that you may find useful. You can access Ancestry for free in any of the libraries in the Borough.

**If you would like any assistance or advice you can contact our local history helpdesk currently located in Wigan Library on (01942) 828128.**

# How to Find Us

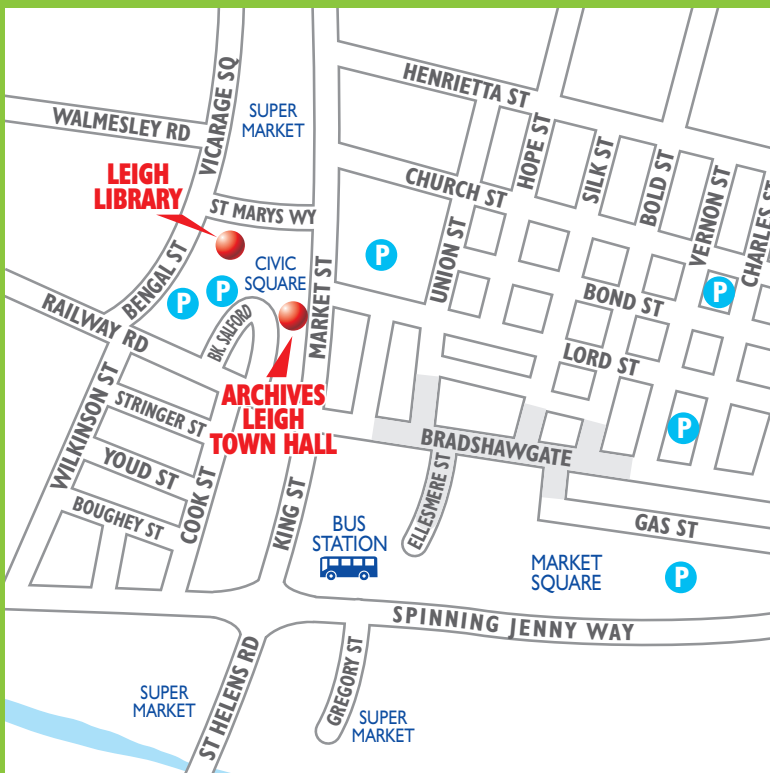


## History Shop

Library Street,  
Wigan WN1 1NU  
Telephone 01942 828128  
[heritage@wlct.org](mailto:heritage@wlct.org)

## Interim Service at Wigan Library

College Avenue (joining  
Millgate and Library Street),  
Wigan WN1 1NN



## Leigh Local History

Leigh Library,  
Turnpike Centre,  
Civic Square,  
Leigh WN7 1EB  
Telephone 01942 404559

## Archives

Leigh Town Hall,  
Leigh WN7 1DY  
Telephone 01942 404430  
[a.miller@wlct.org](mailto:a.miller@wlct.org)