

PAST FORWARD

Produced by Wigan Heritage Service

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25th Anniversary
Miners' Strike
1984



£1

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LEISURE & CULTURE
T R U S T

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FRONT COVER PICTURE

Banner of the National Union of Mineworkers as depicted on a commemorative plate. Turn to page seven to find out more!

Letter from the Editorial Team

The History Shop restoration project is gathering pace. You can read all about progress on the opposite page and visit our new online 'blog' at www.wlct.org/Culture/Heritage/hsblog.htm

This issue of **PAST FORWARD** commemorates the 25th anniversary of the 1984 Miners' Strike. On page eight two local miners share their memories of the strike. Collections Corner turns the spotlight on two objects from the museum collection related to the strike and Archives News focuses on mining records.

In the last issue we reintroduced the Probing Pictures feature and had a great response from our readers. This issue we are introducing another new feature the Puzzle Page, we hope you enjoy it! We plan to develop this feature further in future issues.

PAST FORWARD now has its own e-mail address pastforward@wlct.org. You can use this to send in your articles, letters and comments.

Finally, Tyldesley Library will be celebrating its centenary in December. **PAST FORWARD** issue 53 will commemorate this anniversary with an article about the Library and its benefactor Andrew Carnegie.

Information for Contributors

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 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 date if inclusion is desired in the next issue

Submission Guidelines

- Electronic submissions are preferred, although handwritten ones will be accepted
- Maximum length – no more than 1,000 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- Anonymous submissions will not be published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: pastforward@wlct.org or The Editor at **PAST FORWARD**, The History Shop, Library Street, Wigan, WN1 1NU.

History Shop Update

On 6 April contractors began work on the refurbishment of the History Shop. The architects appointed are Bradshaw Gass and Hope from Bolton, a firm with a long history in the area. The contractors involved are William Anelay Ltd, a firm of heritage builders specializing in restoration of public buildings. They recently worked on the Victoria Baths project in Manchester.

Outside the building, the slow but steady process of putting up scaffolding took six weeks. During this time work within the building, such as stripping plaster and lifting floorboards was also completed. All the timber that needed attention, including our magnificent roof, was exposed and treated during July.

Inside the building a new fire exit has been formed at the Library Street entrance. This is central to the design of the new staircase and lift, giving access to the first floor local studies library. The windows throughout the building have been removed, refurbished and replaced. The intention is to re-use material rather than replace wherever possible. When the windows were inspected quite sophisticated catch mechanisms were found to be incorporated in the sashes. It is hoped that enough of these can be saved to return a proportion of the windows to full working order. This will allow better ventilation in the study library during the summer.

The History Shop project is supported by Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust, the Council and the Heritage Lottery Fund. There will be another update in the next issue of Past Forward. In the meantime, if you want a more regular and detailed update please visit our 'blog' at www.wlct.org/Culture/Heritage/hsblog.htm

Copy Deadline for Issue 53

Contributors please note the deadline for the receipt of material for publication is 16 October.



Pete Gascoigne, Executive Director for Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust and Gary Shea, Site Manager from William Anelay



Can you see the History Shop underneath the scaffolding?

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July 2009*

Your Archives



The Archives Service is pleased to announce that it will be involved in the forthcoming Archives Awareness Campaign, 2009. The theme this year is

Take Flight. An Archive exhibition and talk will be running alongside the Heritage Weekend events in September. The exhibition is entitled Movement, Migration and a WWI Fighter Ace. Visitors will be given an opportunity to get hands-on with collections and see some of the work we do behind the scenes to preserve archival records for the future.

The latest stage in improving the Archives Service strong rooms is now complete. We would like to thank researchers for their patience in waiting for access to material whilst the work was ongoing in Leigh Town Hall. Our storage areas have now been upgraded and damp-proofed, allowing us to better care for the collections.

Recent Acquisitions

A great deal of work has been completed since the turn of the year in making catalogues of new accessions available. Recently accepted collections include:

- Leigh Town Hall, Architectural Drawings, by J. C. Prestwich, c.1905 (Acc. 2009/20)
- Nathaniel Eckersley, cuttings book, 1741-1876 (D/DZA/145)
- Records of The Duodecimal Society, Leigh, 1901-1991 (D/DS/86)
- Records of Leigh Christian Holiday Association (D/DS/87)
- Wigan & District, Mining & Technical College, prospectuses and calendars, 1902-1989 (SR/111)

Details of the collections listed above are available from the Archives Service.

Archives Corner

Mining records

Mining records are an ever popular research resource at the Archives, and the collections provide a rich variety of material for those interested in the borough's industrial heritage. Some of the oldest

records relating to the mining industry in the area are the pit order books of the estates belonging to Roger Bradshaigh of Haigh (D/DZA/13/34). The volumes date between 1635-1698 and detail the day to day instructions given to the 'Hewers Drawers Winders Treaders Takers of Cannell at the pit Eye'. They also reveal wage payments and directions for ensuring that Roger Bradshaigh received the correct number of baskets of cannell due to him as the owner of the land.



Haigh Colliery Order Book, 1636.

With the growth of the industry through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, so grew the volume of records produced by the prospering mining companies and those manufacturing businesses that developed alongside the trade. Local solicitors' collections contained file after file of legal documents relating to the sale and purchase of land, and the mineral wealth beneath the surface. Many engineering drawings and order books survive for companies such as Walker Brothers (D/DY/Pag) and Park Webb Ltd. (D/DY/PW).



Maypole Accident Sheet, 1948.

At the level of individual mine workers, it is sometimes difficult to trace a specific person, but powerful accounts of working life underground do survive. Collections that allow readers to make this personal connection into the miners' world include the diary of a colliery apprentice in 1838 (EHC/192), records of the Lancashire & Cheshire Miners'

Permanent Relief Society and even the accident report sheets of the Maypole Colliery in the 1940s.

Unfortunately, the Archives hold few records that relate to the industry, especially in 1970s and 1980s. If you have any documents, posters or photographs that you are interested in donating, even if simply to be copied, please contact the Archivist, and help us preserve these important sources for the future.

LEARNING & OUTREACH NEWS



Representatives from Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust, Lamberhead Green Community Primary School, Mayfield Training Centre and Groundwork Trust at the Dig for Victory Exhibition Launch on 17th March.

LOSS OF FACE PROJECT

Call for Local People to Get Involved!

Parsonage Colliery, Leigh closed in 1992. It was the last pit in Wigan Borough to shut. In partnership with Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust, we are producing a documentary and exhibition about the impact the loss of the mining industry has had on our communities.



The last coal tub at Chanters Colliery Atherton. The pit closed in 1966 bringing to an end an era of deep coal mining in Atherton.

We are looking for people who have links with the local collieries, and who would be willing to be interviewed.

You don't need to have worked down the mines yourself – your connection may have been through a family member or a friend. We are also looking for anyone who did any voluntary work during any of the miners' strikes. Did you collect money or signatures? Did you help with soup kitchens?

Any experiences or stories are welcomed.

Thank you, Paula Keenan and Dave Meehan.

Paula and Dave can be contacted through Rachel Orme at Heritage Services. Email r.orme@wlct.org or telephone (01942) 828121.

CURATING IN THE COMMUNITY UPDATE

Community Grants for Community Projects

The 'Curating in the Community' programme supports local organisations in the Borough to develop heritage activities and promote heritage in communities. Since the programme's pilot phase in late 2007, ten local projects have been supported with five more project awards in the pipeline this summer.

All projects have used innovative approaches to heritage. Wigan Archaeological Society's Roman Roads project included a 'time team' style dig at a school playing field in Ince. The dig uncovered some remains of the Roman Road between Manchester and Wigan. Other projects have included Turnpike Community Theatre's research and production of 'Marsh Fever', and Stubshaw Cross Resident's Group's Heritage Garden.

'DIG FOR VICTORY'

The 'Dig for Victory' project was a partnership between Groundwork Trust, Wigan Council and Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust. Year Five pupils from Lamberhead Green Community Primary School and adults from the Mayfield Training Centre in Orrell took part in a series of practical food growing and art sessions on an allotment site at Norley Hall. These sessions explored the themes of wartime self-sufficiency, evacuation, families, propaganda and the role of the Women's Land Army.

The project culminated in an exhibition at Wigan Library in March 2009. The exhibition featured a series of photographs charting the progress of the three month project. A genuine WW2 Anderson shelter was also erected on the allotment site as a permanent feature.

For more information about the Curating in the Community scheme, or if you would like to discuss an application, please contact Rachel Orme at Heritage Services. Email r.orme@wlct.org or telephone (01942) 828121.



Miners at Bickershaw Colliery, undated.

LOCAL & FAMILY HISTORY

Books added to the reference stock of The History Shop

Donations

388.34233 Ogden, E Shearings

Genealogy

Lancashire Parish Register Society volume 170 Ormskirk 1715-1770

929.342 Hawkings, D. Railway ancestors: guide to staff records of the railway companies of England and Wales 1822-1947

Local interest

338.7094273 Wigan Borough business directory 2008

385.0941 Sweeney, D Wigan branch railways

General history

365.66 Higgins, PM Punish or treat? Medical care in English prisons 1770-1850

388.122 Johnson, WM The motorway achievement

936.27601 Barrowclough, D. Prehistoric Lancashire

940.412 Barker, S. Lancashire's forgotten heroes, 8th (Service) Battalion East Lancashire Regiment

942.733 Hollingworth, B The diary of Edwin Waugh: life in Victorian Manchester and Rochdale 1847-51

Transactions of Lancs and Cheshire Antiquarian Society volume 104

The History Shop is currently closed for refurbishment. An interim service is operating from Wigan Library.

If you would like to view any of these titles please call 01942 828020 or 828128 in advance.

Project News

A long running project has been completed during the past month. Freda Chorlton has finished the revision of the indexes to Wigan Lower Ince Cemetery registers. We now have a full set of indexes on CD ROM in addition to the online indexes at www.wiganworld.co.uk. Freda has now moved on, by popular demand, to indexing the registers for Ince UDC cemetery.

One new website to bookmark into your favourites is www.stmatthews1914-1919.synthasite.com. The website is devoted to the men of Highfield, Pemberton who were killed in the Great War. The site is beautifully illustrated with photos of the local memorial and men's graves, whether in the locality or abroad, along with some obituaries taken from local newspapers. Of interest also are the details and diagrams of the battles in which they died. Altogether a very interesting site.

Family History Workshops

Hit a brick wall with your family history research? Don't know where to go next? Don't forget our 'problem solving' workshop starting on Wednesdays throughout July and August. There are two sessions at 1.30pm and 3.00pm. Booking is essential. Please phone 01942 828020 or 828128. Cost £2.50.

Monumental Inscriptions

The Leigh & District Family History Society recently completed the recording of the monumental inscriptions of the Lower Ground Churchyard belonging to St. Thomas' CE Church, Ashton-in-Makerfield.

This churchyard was opened in 1893 when the original churchyard near the church had become full.

Recording of the monumental inscriptions

has taken several years and was updated in 2008. If the grave had no gravestone, the original owner's name has been included to help researchers locate the position of the grave. These have been copied from the original grave plan, and the names of those buried in the Common Graves have also been included. Many of those in the Common Graves included patients from the Haydock Lodge Mental Hospital which was located near the Church on Warrington Road, now the site of the Holiday Inn Hotel, Haydock. Many of the patients came to this hospital from all over the country as it included private patient facilities often used when an unmarried mother was sent away from home to have her baby and never returned to her family.

There are also many Welsh graves complete with Welsh inscriptions, as there was a large number of Welsh coalminers who came to the Ashton-in-Makerfield area in the 1880-90's.

A bound copy of the inscriptions was recently presented to the Vicar of St. Thomas's Church, Rev. M Greenwood, by those who had worked on the project.

Copies of the inscriptions are available in CD format from the Publications Officer of Liverpool & SW Lancashire Family History Society at www.liverpool-genealogy.org.uk

Editor's note: A copy of the inscriptions is not currently in stock at the History Shop but will be purchased in the near future. Please call to check before you visit.



Members of Leigh & District Family History Society with Rev. M. Greenwood.

old Town Hall, the Mining College and the Wigan Savings Bank, and changes to Market Place over the centuries.

The town also has many places of entertainment with fascinating histories like the Palace Cinema and the Hippodrome. We will explore how the town has changed and what lies beneath the pavements. **Booking essential. Cost £2. If you are interested phone 01942 828128.**

TOWN WALKS

From Sunday 6 September and throughout September, October and November we will be offering Wigan town centre walks. These will take place fortnightly on Sunday afternoons at 2.15 and on Wednesday evenings at 6.00.

Points of interest will include major historic buildings such as the

COLLECTIONS CORNER

In keeping with this issue's theme, Collections Corner is focussing on two items related to the 1984-85 Miners' Strike. One is a plaque, the other is a plate.

Plaque

The plaque was donated to the museum collection in 1994 by Councillor T. Sherratt. It is made of wood with a walnut effect finish. A brass plate attached to the wood bears printed text and images. It has a plastic stand.

At the top of the plaque are the words 'NATIONAL UNION OF MINeworkERS GOLBORNE COLLIERY'. There are pictures of a pick axe, shovel, helmet and headgear in the centre. The motto 'UNITY IS STRENGTH' is below. This principle of worker solidarity was especially important during strikes. The text continues:

GOLBORNE STRIKING MINERS / WISH TO THANK YOU FOR ALL THE / HELP YOU GAVE US DURING OUR / HISTORIC MINERS STRIKE FROM / 6TH MARCH 1984 TO 5TH MARCH 1985 / THANK YOU ALL / GOD BLESS YOU ALL / ON BEHALF OF THE COMMITTEE AND MEMBERS / GOLBORNE COLLIERY STRIKING MINERS.

Golborne Colliery opened in 1880 and closed in 1989. In 1979 there was a large explosion at the colliery, ten men were killed.



Plate

The plate was produced to commemorate the Lancashire Miners' Strike of 1984-85.

The motto 'BLOODIED BUT UNBOWED' stands out boldly. It sums up the miner's view that they had been harmed but were not defeated.

The centre of the plate depicts the red rose of Lancashire along with a banner. Banners were often used in miner's marches and demonstrations. The banner says 'NATIONAL UNION OF MINeworkERS - LANCASHIRE AREA'. In the banner centre is an image of a miner's pick and hat, with a colliery and colliery head gear in the background. Underneath the image the motto 'UNITY IS STRENGTH' is again used.

The plate lists the names of the collieries participating in the strike. It also includes the names of craftsmen and winders organisations that supported the miners. Craftsmen repaired mine equipment and winders operated the colliery cages.



Those listed on the plate are:

E & B North Wales
Golborne
Ashton & Haydock
Plank Lane
Kirkless - Craftsmen
Pendlebury
St Helens - Craftsmen
Cronton
Sutton Manor
E & B Winders
Parkside
Leigh - Craftsmen
Billinge
Walkden - Craftsmen
Parsonage
Clifton & Pendlebury
Bold



Further Information

You can see other examples of other miners' plates and banners on the NUM website www.num.org.uk. Other mining related museum collections can be seen on the National Coal Mining Museum's website www.ncm.org.uk/onlinecollections.

Wigan Heritage Service would like to collect more items related to the 1984-85 strike in the Borough. If you have any such items then please contact Jenny Broadbent on 01942 827404 or j.broadbent@wlct.org



Miners at a picket line during an earlier strike in 1972



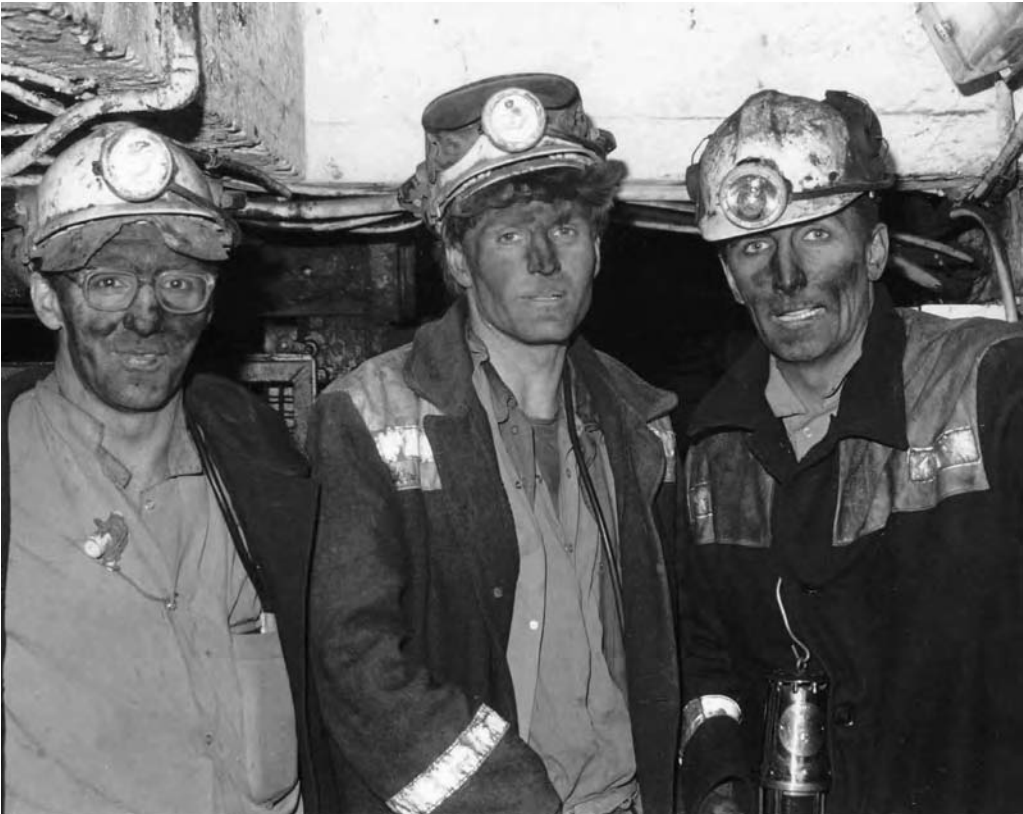
Head gear at Parsonage Colliery, Leigh in 1981

THE MINERS' STRIKE OF 1984

By Jenny Broadbent

On 5 March 1984 the Miners' Strike began. The strike continued until 3 March 1985. Twenty-five years on from the event two former miners share their memories and experiences with PAST FORWARD readers.

One of the interviewees, Terry Meehan, now works as Technician for the Heritage Service. At the time of the strike he worked at Parkside Colliery, Newton-le-Willows and went on strike for nine months. Keith Wood is the second interviewee, he currently volunteers at the Heritage Service. Keith worked at Bold Colliery in St Helens and did not go on strike. Though Parkside and Bold are outside the boundaries of today's Wigan Borough, many local people worked at these collieries.



Left to right: Deputies Terry Balmer, David Duckworth and Keith Wood at Parsonage Colliery Leigh in 1991.



Terry Meehan

Parkside Colliery

What was your job at the time of the strike?

I was a Coal Preparation Person (CPP) Fitter's Mate. I assisted the Fitters and Welders to install machinery and complete repairs. I also carried out maintenance activities such as oiling and greasing bearings.

Did you go on strike?

Yes.

Why did you go on strike?

We were fighting for our livelihood rather than just a wage increase. It was something I personally and all the other men believed in. We were fighting for the British Coal Industry. We knew if we lost, Thatcher would decimate the coal industry.

How long did you strike for?

I was on strike for nine months. I didn't come out at the beginning although some strong union men at Parkside did. I came out after hundreds of Yorkshire men came to picket at the colliery. After that the majority of men came out on strike.

How did your family feel about the strike?

I was married with two young children at the time of the strike. My wife was very supportive because her father was a retired miner. She knew we were fighting for our livelihood but we still struggled tremendously. I could claim some benefits for my wife and children but it didn't go very far. My parents and my wife's parents helped a lot. We couldn't have survived without their assistance.

Did local people support the miners?

Most local people I spoke to were supportive of the strike. The Union and local Goose Green Labour Party provided food parcels and some local people donated items. There was sometimes Polish food in the parcels. I think Polish miners sympathised with the strike and sent the food.

When did you go back to work?

People started to drift back to work at different times depending on their own circumstances. I went back before Christmas 1984. Many people I worked with had already gone back and I needed the money for my family.

How did your colleagues react to you going back to work?

No one was horrible to me personally. In many ways people were indifferent, we'd all had different circumstance to contend with. There was no picket when I returned. I think the managers had been told to accept people as they came back and to carry on as before.

How did you feel returning to work?

I was glad to get back to work for financial reasons. I was relieved but also felt a bit guilty because there were miners on strike around the country for the next three months.

What job did you do after the pit closed?

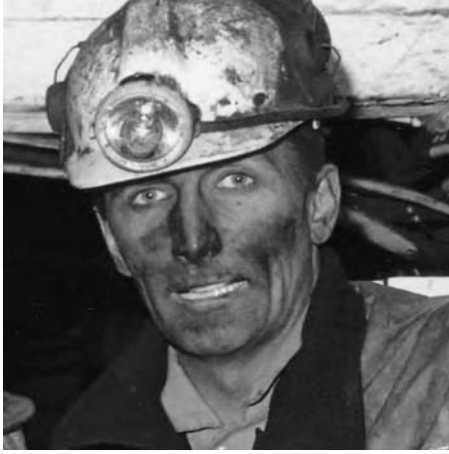
The pit closed in 1993, I left 12 months before. I knew it was going to close and made the decision to find another job before it did. A vacancy came up for a School Caretaker at a nearby school. I started the job in summer 1992.

How do you feel about the strike today?

It is sad that there is not much left of the coal industry today and that all our coal is now imported. Lots of people were put out of work through no fault of their own. I think the majority of people in the industrial parts of the country were supportive of the miners. But eventually the country as a whole was against the miners and the government of the day was definitely against them. The government got what it wanted, which was to close the coal mines and decimate the coal industry. Lots of people ridiculed Arthur Scargill with his estimates of how many pits the government would close. But I think even he was surprised how they decimated the industry.

I liked working in the coal mines and might still have been working there today if they hadn't closed. It wasn't the best job but I met a lot of good people there. I don't tend to talk much about the strike but I'm proud of what I and other men did.

"We fought for our livelihoods."



Keith Wood

Bold Colliery

What was your job at the time of the strike?

I was a Deputy which was a middle management position. I was responsible for supervising the operation of the pit, maintaining the coal faces, health and safety and shot-firing.

Did you go on strike?

No.

Why didn't you go on strike?

I was a member of the National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers (NACODS) union. Members of NACODS voted against strike action. Most of the miners who went on strike were members of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM).

Because of my responsibilities, I felt that if we went on strike there would have been no pits to go back to. The coal faces needed maintaining. It was hard when doing my daily inspections to see them deteriorating. It took lots of work, money and investment to

open a coal face. I felt what I was doing was right but of course you felt for the people who were out on strike.

What was it like going to work during the strike?

Every day I had to report to the picket and explain who I was. It was scary all along, but particularly at the beginning when almost 100% of the NUM miners at Bold were on strike. There was always lots of screaming and shouting. People who were on the picket line from Bold Colliery were generally ok. The flying pickets, who travelled in from other collieries, were more hostile. There was a large police presence when the flying pickets came.

How did your family feel about the strike?

I was from a mining family. My brother also worked at Bold but was a member of the NUM. He went on strike. I did argue with him once but I could understand his position and the huge amount of stress he was under.

My father worked at Parkside. He was a member of the NUM but chose not to strike. Parkside was a much more divided pit than Bold. My father just felt it was right to work and that was it.

When did people start to come back at Bold?

After several months miners started to come back to work. Then it got nasty again. The pickets tried to stop them coming back. Miners would tell you stories about bricks being thrown through their windows, being followed and threatened. I remember the first person who came back to Bold. He

had a really rough time but he was adamant he wanted to work to look after his family.

I was glad when people came back. But it was very difficult to see other miners being brought in by police escort, being heckled and the buses pelted with stones.

What was it like after the strike ended?

It was a while before things were right again. There was an 'us and them' attitude, not in relation to us NACODS members but between the NUM miners who had lasted the whole strike and those who came back early. I don't remember any violence but some people wouldn't talk to each other, sit near each other or work together.

When did the pit close?

The pit closed in 1985. I then transferred to Parsonage Colliery, Leigh for a few years. When Parsonage closed in 1992, I went into Warehousing and onto other middle management positions. It was strange to move out of the collieries because I didn't know anything else.

How do you feel about the strike today?

Both sides were at fault. It would have been nice if negotiations could have settled it and the mines could have remained open. Something important to this country was lost. We could have carried on mining for ourselves and wouldn't be relying on other countries for energy resources. We can never get the industry back. Too many skills have been lost. It takes a lot of skill and effort to sink a pit.

"If we went on strike there would have been no pits to go back to."

Heritage Open Days & Leigh Heritage Weekend

11 – 13 September 2009

There is a lot going on this year to mark Heritage Open Days and plenty to see and do within the Borough.

Heritage Open Day – WIGAN TOWN HALL TOUR/GOING NORTH Friday 11 September

Take a tour of Wigan Town Hall. See the stained glass windows in the Council Chamber which depict



Going North by George Earl

different trades associated with the Borough. View the painting 'Going North' by George Earl, one of the Borough's foremost art treasures.

Wigan Town Hall started life as

Wigan Mining and Technical College. It was opened by the Countess of Crawford in 1903. In 1990 it was transformed into the Town Hall and was reopened by the late Diana, Princess of Wales.

Times: 11:00am & 3:00pm.

Price: FREE to attend, booking preferred contact - 01942 828128.

Heritage Open Day – TRENCHERFIELD MILL ENGINE Sunday 13 September

View the restored 100 year old Trencherfield Mill Steam Engine, one of the largest and finest examples still in its original setting. See the engine in steam and enjoy talks by the engineers and an exciting audio-visual show.



See Trencherfield Mill Engine in steam

Times: 11.00am, 1.00pm, 2.00pm

Price: FREE to attend.

LEIGH HERITAGE WEEKEND Friday 11 September & Saturday 12 September

Fun for all the family - join us for a weekend of events and activities based around the main square in Leigh.

Highlights include - Tours of Leigh Parish Church and Leigh Town Hall, a special tour and talk on Wigan's Archives, a guided walk around the town square and town centre, a vintage car show, family friendly activities, music, outdoor arts, and much more!



Take a tour of Leigh Parish Church

LEIGH PARISH CHURCH (ST MARY THE VIRGIN)

Open for tours throughout both days between 11.00am & 3.00pm.

LEIGH TOWN HALL

Open for tours Friday and Saturday 11.00am, 1.00pm & 3.00pm.

HERITAGE ARCHIVES – LEIGH TOWN HALL

Archive Tours Friday and Saturday 11.00am & 3.00pm.

GUIDED TOWN WALKS

Friday and Saturday - 12.00pm-2.00pm.

For further information and the full programme of events contact: 01942 828128 or visit www.wlct.org/heritage

Wigan Environment and Heritage Network

Are you interested in the local Environment & Heritage? If so, join the Wigan Environment and Heritage Network to get regular updates and support from like-minded people in Wigan Borough.

This community network was set up three years ago. Individuals and members of organised groups or societies are welcome to attend meetings, held every six weeks. Regular business will include presentations, information exchange, networking and joint projects.

For more information please go to www.wiganheritage.co.uk and follow the links or call **Joe Taylor 01942 700060**.

The Network provides a vital link between local groups and societies, Wigan Leisure and Culture Trust and Wigan Council. It is a great forum for local people to voice opinions and to share opportunities. We look forward to seeing you at the next meeting.

VANISHED DEER PARKS

by Bob Blakeman

In the early decades of the fourteenth century chaos ruled in Lancashire.

Thomas, Earl of Lancaster, rose in rebellion against King Edward II, but some local knights fought those who supported the Earl, ostensibly on the side of the king, but actually with their own agenda.



Fig. 2 - Deer in front of Haigh Hall c.1820.

Murder, wounding, burglary and cattle rustling were rife. Among other crimes committed was the killing of deer and the theft of their carcasses.

Eventually the king was able to restore order, and the surviving records of a judicial court held in Wigan in 1323 mention the locations of some of the parks in which the deer were kept. Here are a few extracts:

- "Ithel de Hindley and others entered the king's park at Upholland and took venison".
- "Robert, son of Thurston de Norley [Hall] and others are habitual wrongdoers in Pynbowe [Pimbo] park, and took the lord king's venison there."
- "Thurston de Northleye [Norley Hall] killed William Smert in the

park of Northleye in the sixteenth year of the king's reign."

Other surviving documents from the Middle Ages tell us that there were also deer parks at Standish, Haigh, Haydock, and Newton-le-Willows.

Deer parks were introduced into England in the tenth century. They were made for the king and magnates in order to conserve deer and provide a tract of land for hunting. Such parks were large; the royal one at Windsor was about seven miles in circumference. As time passed park ownership moved down the social scale. By the fourteenth century even the most insignificant manorial lord aspired to own one, although of course their parks were much smaller. At the same time rising population levels

resulted in a shortage of productive land and land within parks came to be used for additional purposes. This included cattle grazing, peat extraction, the feeding of pigs on fallen acorns and beechmast (known as pannage), and the pollarding of trees for the wood needed for handicraft industries. The rights to such usages were sometimes let to individuals as at Haigh in 1324:

'.....manor of Haigh this year let to farm by John Travers and Robert de Nottingham for a term of three years with the herbage [ie pasture] in the park saving to the king pannage when it happens vert [ie greenwood] and venison for £20.9s yearly to Henry de Atherton and Adam de Bradshagh.'

At this time the manor of Haigh was

held by the king, who had confiscated it from the Earl of Lancaster, who in turn had confiscated it from Sir William de Bradshagh, the husband of Lady Mabel of Mab's Cross fame. Sir William regained Haigh, but was afterwards killed in a fracas outside the deer park at Newton-le-Willows. Centuries later Parkside Colliery was sunk in this area.

The chief function of the park was always the supply of venison, even where small size or intensive management made the highly-ritualised sport of hunting impracticable. Venison was the high-status food par excellence. It was used as a gift to cement allegiances, and served at feasts to impress the guests.

Medieval deer parks had curved boundaries, whereas other field boundaries were more or less straight. One way of locating the sites of medieval deer parks is by finding curved field boundaries on old maps, especially if they are found near features with such names as Park Lane or Park Farm. An example occurs around Westleigh Lane, Leigh.

Here, on the first edition of the Ordnance Survey's six-inch maps of Lancashire (1849) are shown a Park Lane and a Park Farm, and field boundaries which sweep round in a great arc to the east of Pickley Green (fig. 1). It is noticeable that the Westleigh and Atherton township boundary follows this line. This feature (of logical township boundaries diverted to conform to the boundary of a park) usually indicates a very early park, one that was in existence before the township boundaries were fixed. However, it may well be that in the sparsely-populated area that became south Lancashire, such boundaries were not fixed until later than usual. The boundary between Standish and Langtree was not fixed until 1357, for example.

There was a park at Standish mentioned in a deed of 1336. It extended into Shevington. However, Standish Park as it appeared on maps from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards, did not extend into Shevington, and was rectangular in shape. Post-medieval parks were

rectangular or irregular in shape. This suggests that the medieval park was abandoned, and a new one created at a later date, perhaps on a different site.

Post-medieval parks were not intensively farmed, so there was sometimes room for hunting. So Nicholas Blundell of Crosby wrote in his diary or 'Diurnall' (1702-1727), 'We hunted and killed a very fat white buck in my lord Gerard's park.' This would have been the Gerard's deer park at Bryn, which survives in the names Park Brook and Park House, and indirectly, in the new Park Hotel. Park Lane Farm and Park Lane Chapel were located on Wigan Road, Ashton-in-Makerfield, which was formerly known as Park Lane.

In the middle of the eighteenth century the Gerards moved from Bryn Hall to the first Garswood Hall, situated near the present Garswood Hall Farm. They abandoned the deer park at Bryn, and created a small one in the valley of the Goyt, near Carr Mill. This was too small for hunting in, and must have been used as a game preserve.

However, the general trend in the eighteenth century was for deer parks to be seen, not as a place for hunting, but as an amenity that enhanced the beauty of the immediate surroundings of a great house. The parkland was designed to come right up to the house, and the deer were seen to be as much a part of the view as the replica classical temples, man-made lakes, and perfectly straight avenues of trees. Wrightington Hall was a local example of this on a small scale, with its Old and New Ponds separated by an ornamental bridge, and its deer park that came virtually up to the walls of the hall.

Deer were considered to be a necessary part of the fashionable landscape. When some great

landowners commissioned paintings of their mansions, they would make sure that there were deer in the picture, whether they were there on the ground or not. There exist at least two illustrations of Haigh Hall showing deer in the grounds. One is an eighteenth-century engraving by Kipp, the other a watercolour by Thomas Whitehouse painted about 1820 (fig. 2), but whether the deer were drawn from life, or were a product of the artists' imagination is a matter of conjecture.

Whether there were emparked deer at Haigh during this period or not, there are certainly wild deer in the vicinity today. But these are the small native roe deer, rather than the larger fallow deer (introduced into this country by the Normans) which are the breed of deer usually kept in parks. The number of deer has increased dramatically in recent decades because current tree-planting schemes are providing them with cover. There is also less disturbance by humans in the countryside than there was formerly. Now a dozen men and women at work in a field have been replaced by a single man hidden inside a covered tractor.

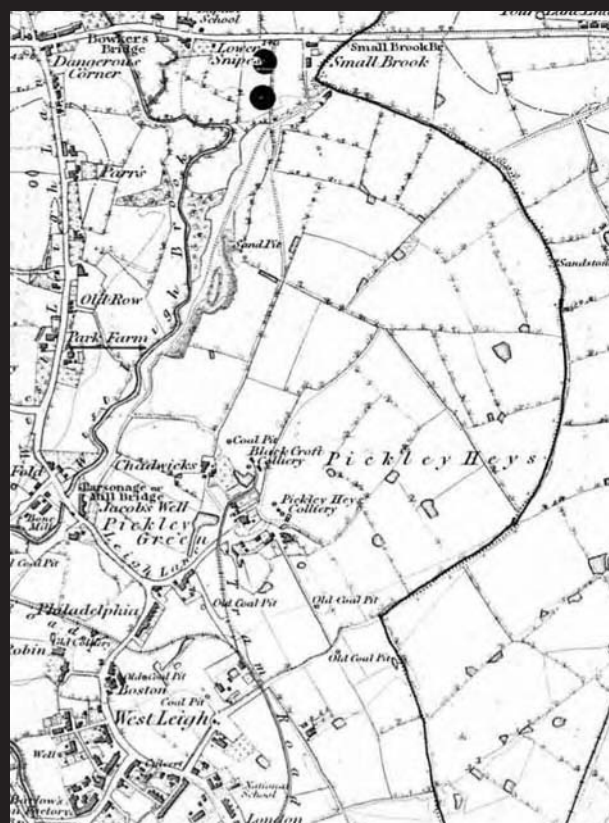


Fig. 1 - The site of a medieval deer park at Westleigh (administrative boundaries accentuated).

My

Mother's Eyes

*A bottle of the dreaded
purple Gentian Violet*

By Mrs
Irene Roberts

You always knew, Mam, my fear of hospitals. It's a silly, irrational fear because people get better in hospital, don't they? And yet it is a fear I know I share with many people.

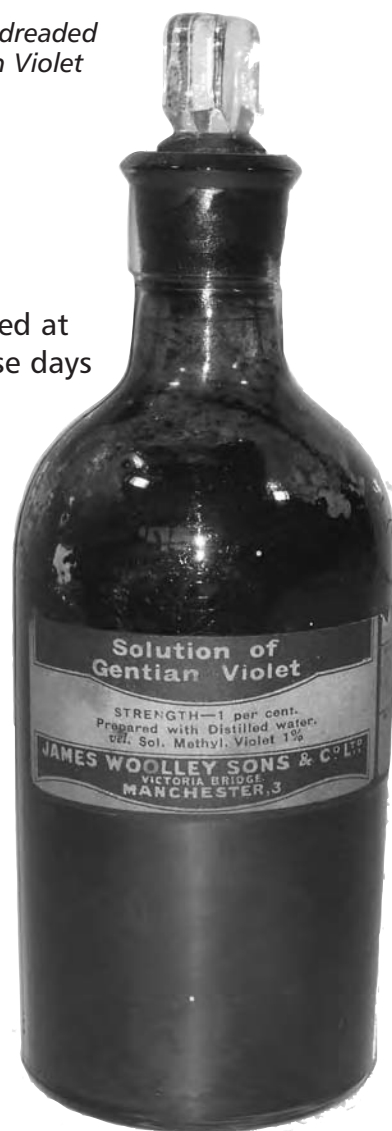
I am aware that I will be summoned there soon, and I have a strong feeling that I might see your dear face once more. In my mind I can see you, 'Sidin' t 'table' as I twiddled the knobs on the big wireless which produced whistles and whoops and snatches of music as I tuned into Jimmy Clitheroe and his daft side-kick, Alfie Hall. Oh, did they make me laugh!

Occasionally I would be off school with some childish ailment and how I loved those quiet afternoons alone with you. You would be humming to yourself as you ironed, dabbing at stains with something called 'thawpit'. I would switch on our black-and-white Rediffusion telly, waiting for the set to warm up before Rag, Tag and Bobtail or The Wooden Tops appeared. In the evening you loved to watch No Hiding Place, Rawhide and Wagon Train, but your favourite of all was Robin Hood. We couldn't help but laugh as this quiet, gentle lady shouted "Go on Robin, lad, 'IT ' IM" as he fought with the Sherriff of Nottingham! We never questioned why Richard Greene, who played Robin, living rough in Sherwood Forest always looked so immaculate, with his 'Brylcreemed' hair and spotless clothes! Together we watched Armchair Theatre and Sunday Night at the London Palladium, and I had to sleep with the light on after watching Outer

Limits. Television finished at about 11.30pm in those days and after the National Anthem was played it was time for everyone to switch off their sets and the picture became a tiny dot before disappearing.

I still have the shawl you carried me in as a baby. You told me of the day your own dear mother died, when I was just ten months old. Just after the funeral, you were in the house alone with me when you heard footsteps upstairs. You flung the shawl around your shoulders and with me held snugly in its folds, you stood trembling at the top of the yard awaiting Aunt Mary's daily visit. "Ee Polly, mi mother's upstairs!" you sobbed, and Aunt Mary who was afraid of nothing bounced in to find the dog had managed to get locked into the wardrobe and was thumping his tail on the floor to attract attention in order to get out!

Our house never saw a fitted carpet, we had oilcloth covered with odd rugs. Do you recall how people would cover lovely old panelled



doors with hardboard trimmed with beading for a 'more modern look'? Bedroom walls were covered with distemper and pages from Post & Chronicle or Tit-Bits hung on a nail behind the door of the outside toilet. We had no such luxury as a toilet-roll, but you could sit and check what was on at the 'pictures'! The 'flicks' were a popular night out, and next day you would hear someone in the butcher's queue saying, "Ee, It were a lovely picture, Nellie, Ah Skrieked Aw T' Road Through!"

As I await my summons to the hospital, I recall our Medicine Chest, it consisted of a tape of Aspro and some Milk of Magnesia in its distinctive blue glass bottle. We used to get Welfare orange juice and we had an old National Dried Milk tin filled with marbles that my grown-up brothers had played with as children. I loved sorting them into colours on the rug by the fire, wondering how they got the coloured bits in the middle. Little lads don't play marbles on the flags any more Mam.

In the winter, 'Jack Frost' came and painted beautiful icy fern patterns on the insides of bedroom windows! We children would make huge slides in the school playground, taking turns to slide along in a crouching position; a manoeuvre known as the 'little woman!' Coal fires were the norm and there was always the excitement of seeing someone's chimney on fire.

But it wasn't all good, was it, Mam? There were little children with callipers on their legs due to polio, and others with Gentian Violet painted onto sores on their faces. Why, oh why did the medication have to be such a vivid purple colour and not something much less conspicuous? Surely they must have realised that the children would be taunted as well as feeling self-conscious?

People also used expressions that are never heard now. If a man took a few days off work, he was said to be 'Playin' 'im' and if a woman's underskirt

showed beneath her dress someone bellowed helpfully across the street, "You're slatin' Missis!"

Our world was one of hen-pens, pigeon-lofts and night-watchmen's huts, of temperance bars, tin-baths and corner shops. You were unfailingly there, Mam, in the centre of it all; waiting to tie a hair-ribbon, or dry a tear, always with those, patient gentle eyes. I watched the light go out of them when Dad died. Perhaps I will see them again soon. Anyway, God Bless both of you for a safe and happy childhood.

I am summoned to the hospital on a beautiful sunlit day of blossom and birdsong, a 'happy-to-be-alive' day. My family is aware of my phobia, and my son is waiting for me by the hospital entrance. We walk through those dreaded doors and my legs turn to jelly as I try to shut out the antiseptic hospital smells along endless echoing corridors. Past wards and bustling nurses, then my son touches my arm "We're here, Mum."

For the past few months, Mam, I have felt as though I might soon see your face once more. Here now, in this quiet room, I learn that I was right. For a moment I am blinded by my tears, but through them I begin to see your features and I'm filled with a joy that I have no words for. For there in front of me, like a miracle, I can see your high forehead and gentle mouth. Then I see your eyes, Mam, looking straight at me from the dear sweet face of my brand new grand-daughter.



Children playing marbles in the street

Walter Hurst

By Elizabeth Fairclough

– 'Mr Hindley'

It was whilst enjoying an early Spring break in County Kerry, on 24 March 2009 that I received the very shocking and unexpected news of the sudden death of my cousin, Mr Walter Hurst of Hindley. Walter was a larger-than-life personality who really did fit the description of 'Mr Hindley'.

For many years he ran the clog shop at 4 Wigan Road, opposite the Bird'lth Hand pub, at the crossroads in Hindley. The business of clog-making was begun there by Walter's grandfather, also named Walter Hurst, who was born in 1872 in Darby Lane, Hindley. Walter senior originally worked from a small room in a property at Poolstock, Wigan. In 1898 he moved to the premises at 4 Wigan Road. In old Trades Directories the property is numbered 166 Market Street, Hindley. There were at the time three mills in Hindley; Lowe Mill, Worthington Mill and Castle Hill



Walter Hurst & Son shop in Hindley.

Mill, and eight mines in the surrounding area. The demand for clogs was always very high and Walter senior employed several men to help in the shop.

On 1 January 1902 Walter senior married Elizabeth Lawton, daughter of well-known Ince grocer Peter Lawton. They began their married life living at the grocery shop in Manchester Road, Ince opposite Wigan Wagon Works, along with Elizabeth's father and her five surviving brothers.

Walter senior and Elizabeth's eldest son, Peter (my dad) carried on the tradition of his mother's side of the family, working as a grocer at the busy shop on Manchester Road, Ince. Their youngest child and only daughter, Esther, was a gifted pianist, and became a music teacher.

When old enough, Walter senior's second son, Harry, (Walter junior's dad) learnt his craft by working

alongside his father and became a distinguished clogger in his own right. Harry became a well-loved figure in Hindley, and served as a Conservative Councillor for Hindley UDC for several years. Harry

took over the reins of the clogging business when it became too much for Walter senior.



Walter Hurst senior and his wife Elizabeth.

Walter junior, Harry's eldest son, was born in July 1939. It was almost by default that Walter came to be one of, if not the most famous, Lancashire cloggers. In 1957, his mother Alice became very ill. Walter was asked by his father to look after the shop whilst he looked after Alice. His younger sister

Audrey and brother Philip were still at school. This of course, was in the time before care packages were even heard of, let alone put into place. Walter had just completed 'A' Levels at Hindley and Abram Grammar School, and had been accepted by Sheffield University to study Law, but did not hesitate in taking charge to help out in the shop. Walter soon settled down into the role and enjoyed meeting customers and getting to know people. He had a genuine interest in all people and took pride in remembering their names and faces, their likes and dislikes and it was these extra touches that always had people coming back to him at the shop.

Walter relished general knowledge and was an active quiz team member. He appeared on several television programmes, and only last year was a team member on the BBC One quiz show 'Eggheads'. He was an avid cricket

fan and player and was heavily involved with St Peter's Cricket Club from his pre-teenage years throughout his life.

Walter married Pam in 1971. After his marriage he continued his work at the Wigan Road shop. As the old traditional industries died out the demand for work clogs waned, but Walter had orders from other more unexpected directions; clog-



Walter junior demonstrating at Wigan Pier.

the demonstrations and exhibitions there, and had a regular slot working at the site. The Wigan Road shop with many of its

dancing groups, festivals and from abroad.

When Wigan Pier opened in the 1980s, Walter was delighted to be involved in

original fittings still intact had its centenary celebrations in October 1998, with a steady stream of visitors from near and far attending. When work at the Hindley shop finally wound up around 2002 Walter continued to work on a part-time basis at Rickard's shoe repair shop in Hallgate, Wigan. More recently, though, Walter had enjoyed working delivering prescriptions for his pharmacist son, Philip, who has a shop in Standish. He jokingly referred to this as his 'drug-running'.

Last summer Walter was proud to see the opening of the new St Peter's Pavilion situated off Wigan Road, fittingly enough in Hurst Street. A lounge at the new pavilion has now been named The Walter Hurst Lounge in honour of Walter's unwavering commitment and long service to St Peter's Cricket Club.

It is impossible to think about Walter without a smile beginning



A pair of clogs made by Walter junior.

to spread across your face. He was such a lovely and warm personality, always ready with a laugh and a joke. Walter's funeral was held at St Peter's Church, Hindley. The church was filled to capacity and hundreds more people stood outside, paying respects to a man with a big heart, who was the heart of Hindley.

'MR HINDLEY' indeed.

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August 1966 – A Nostalgic Tour in the Dying Days of Steam

By Mr T Morton

By 1966, steam engine numbers in the North West were rapidly dwindling and closure of lines and withdrawal of passenger services was proceeding apace. There was a plethora of special steam hauled trains to cover the last rites of these locomotives and services.

One such excursion took place on Saturday 13 August that year, organised by the Wigan Area Railfans Society. This tour with the lengthy sounding title Wigan Area Goods Lines Brake Van Tour was novel in that passengers were to be conveyed, as the name implied, on goods brake vans. The intention was to cover some lines which were then only used for freight. It was a method that had been used successfully elsewhere in the country. The aim was to cover as many of the local lines as remained usable at that time. It was thus a last opportunity for enthusiasts to travel on many local lines.

A party of about 60 people gathered at Springs Branch depot shortly after nine in readiness for departure, scheduled for 9.25am. The brake vans were hauled by an ex-London Midland and Scottish (LMS) Railways Stanier Class 5 2-6-0 42968 locomotive, then allocated to Springs Branch. A word about that engine would be opportune at this stage. This locomotive, intended for mixed traffic purposes, appeared from Crewe in January 1934 and had two spells at Springs Branch, the first between June 1964 and May 1965, and the second from January 1966

until withdrawal on 31 December that year. It was not scrapped, however, and is now preserved on the Severn Valley Railway in Shropshire, where it still bears the 8F (Springs Branch) shed plate.

Departure was on time and the train backed out of the depot as far as Crompton's Sidings signal box on the Tyldesley line, before proceeding north towards Wigan North Western station. After crossing the goods line and proceeding on to the slow lines with Springs Branch No.2 box on the right, a stop was made at Wigan station to pick up more passengers at 9.35am. The trip continued northwards past Rylands Sidings which closed in 1963, up the 1/116 gradient to Boars Head Junction. Until then it was used to transport coal from the Giants Hall Colliery and Robin Hill Drift mine both at Standish. There the route over the ex-Lancashire Union Railway/Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway (LUR/LYR) joint line was taken to Adlington Junction on the Bolton – Preston line, crossing the Douglas valley on the 86' high viaduct almost immediately. A speed limit of 20mph operated over the junction for this route and again at Haigh Junction, just before the site of Red Rock Station. Red Rock Station closed in 1949, but the station buildings were still intact and used privately.

The line then passed under the aqueduct carrying the Leeds and Liverpool Canal near Wigan Golf Club. On entering the Adlington area a glimpse was obtained of the preserved ex-LYR 0-6-0 engine 52322, dating from 1895, languishing in the premises of Leonard Fairclough. Withdrawn in August 1960, it was in rather a poor state of repair. At the closed White Bear station the signal box was still in use, as was the box at Adlington Junction. Regular passenger traffic over this line had ceased on 4 January 1960, when the local service between Wigan North Western through Chorley to Blackburn was withdrawn. However, a daily train operated to take workers from Wigan to the Royal Ordnance Factory (ROF) factory north of Chorley, until about 1965. A dwindling freight service lingered

on until the line finally closed on 25 May 1971. The engine detached at Adlington Junction to run round the train. It then continued south through Adlington Station to Blackrod Station in order to take the branch to Horwich at Blackrod Junction. Here the signal box was still in operation, so were the Horwich Loco Junction and the Horwich Station signal boxes. The train arrived at Horwich Station 17 minutes behind schedule, but nobody really minded. The occasion was the nostalgia of the journey rather than an adherence to timetable and every moment was to be savoured. Horwich Station had closed less than 12 months earlier on 25 September 1965.

Another run round was necessary at this point. After a photo stop, the train went back along the branch, this time taking the spur to Horwich Fork Junction from the Loco Junction. The train then went onto the Bolton – Preston line again, albeit for a very short stretch, as the 1869 LYR route to Crow Nest Junction was then taken. This was constructed as part of the overall deal with the LUR at that time, for rail connections between the Wigan coal field and East Lancashire. The train trundled along passing Hilton House signal box, near the site of the former station of that name. Dicconson Lane and Aspull Station, both of which had closed in 1954, were also passed. The 1889 link to Dobbs Brow Junction at the clumsily named Hindley and Blackrod Branch Junction was then taken. The signal box still functioned. Dobbs Brow Junction was reached at 11.24am, 29 minutes behind schedule. This link had been constructed by the LYR primarily to run their morning and evening residential 'club' trains from Manchester to the Fylde coast avoiding Bolton. These trains had ceased to run in September 1965. The entire line closed in 1968.

It was necessary for the engine to detach here and run to Atherton to cross tracks. Nineteen minutes had been allowed in the original schedule for this purpose. The engine was reattached and the trip moved off in the opposite direction towards Hindley. The train was on the slow lines. The fast lines to the left had closed on 11 September 1965 but were still in situ at that time. More new ground for many of the passengers was to follow.



An LMS steam engine at West Leigh Station.

After passing Crow Nest Junction, Hindley North station and Hindley signal boxes Nos.1, 2 and 3 (all still in operation) the Westwood (Pemberton Loop) line was taken. This line, then in the throes of redundancy, was once the route of the LYR 40 minute expresses between Liverpool and Manchester. It was opened by the LYR in 1889 to improve services between the two cities and to compete with the rival London and North Western (LNWR) and Cheshire Lines Committee's lines. However, by 1966 only two passenger trains, the 8.30am Liverpool Exchange to Harrogate and the 6.30pm Liverpool to Leeds, survived along with a few freight trains. The line crossed the Leigh Branch of the Leeds and Liverpool Canal near Scotman's Flash. Before Pemberton Junction gradient posts of 1/39 and 1/61 were noted showing how subsidence had affected the line. This was one of the reasons for its complete closure three years later. The halfway stage of the tour was now almost reached. The train was scheduled to stop at the Pemberton Station but instead proceeded to Winstanley Colliery Sidings further towards Liverpool. Here it detached once again giving further valuable photo opportunities.

There was some drizzle as the train restarted in the direction of Wigan passing Pemberton Junction once again and joining the Southport line. Wigan Wallgate Station was passed at a fair speed on the fast line. On the way to Ince Station we crossed the ex-Great Central Railway (GCR) line. On the left after passing Ince Station, we glimpsed the condemned locomotives in the grave yard of the Central Wagon Works. The next objective was the Whelley line which was accessed from Hindley No.2 Junction via the spur to De Trafford Junction, again a detachment and run round was needed. The drizzle ceased. On reaching the Whelley line, Roundhouse Sidings (gradient 1/221) and the site of Whelley station (gradient 1/160) were seen. The original station building was still standing and used as a dwelling house. At Whelley Junction, the left fork towards Standish was taken crossing the viaduct over the Douglas valley. This impressive viaduct comprised thirteen arches and six iron spans at a height of fifty feet. This viaduct is still standing today albeit in a crumbling condition. The main West Coast line was accessed by first passing underneath the line on a single track and then proceeding up a steep gradient of 1/70. This brought the single track line level with the main line at Standish Junction.

To enable the return trip along the Whelley line, it was necessary for the train to carry on to Coppull Hall Sidings to cross over. These sidings were still in use at the time to serve Chisnall Hall Colliery, but closed in 1969. Retracing the route to Standish Junction, the train then entered the short single line section at the junction, before rejoining the down

line and re-crossing the viaduct. At Whelley Junction, a photo stop enabled some of the eager passengers to persuade the driver to run onto what was left of the original line to Haigh Junction. The line had closed to traffic in April 1965. This was the first time any passengers had been on the line for many years and it certainly was the last!

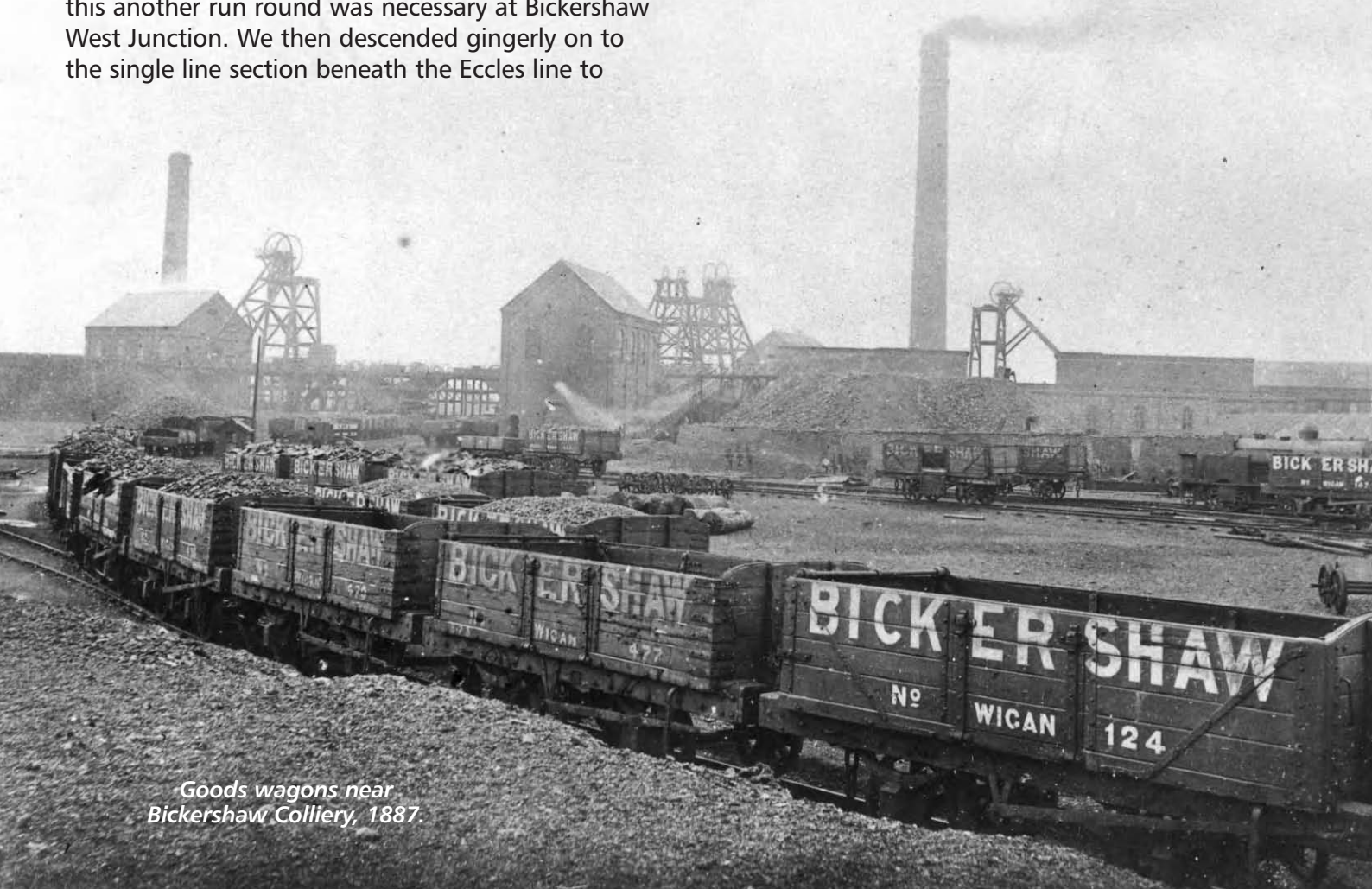
The official tour then continued to Bamfurlong Sorting Sidings past De Trafford, Amberswood East and Amberswood West and under Platt Bridge Junctions. All but Amberswood East had working signal boxes at the time. The entire 'Whelley' loop, from Standish to Bamfurlong, was officially closed in October 1972. Prior to that date it had been used extensively during the electrification of the main line. The loop was used from time to time after the official closure, until about 1976. At Bamfurlong Junction yet another detach and run round manoeuvre was necessary before traversing Siding No.17. At Ince Moss Junction the engine detached and ran round in order to gain access to the Tyldesley and Eccles line. Crossing the main line at Fir Tree House Junction, the train took the right fork to Platt Bridge Junction, which had been passed under a short time previously. It then continued on to Bickershaw Junction.

Some careful work was now required by the crew as it was the intention to go on to the ex-GCR section of track to Wigan Central Goods depot. To achieve this another run round was necessary at Bickershaw West Junction. We then descended gingerly on to the single line section beneath the Eccles line to

Hindley South. Trains had ceased to run on this line three months before on 16 May. We continued through the disused Hindley South and Lower Ince stations and passed the site of the former Lower Ince GCR engine shed to Wigan Goods Signal Box. The final stretch of line to the closed Wigan Central station was in the course of being taken up. A final photo stop was taken here. It was now homeward bound and back to Bickershaw Junction, taking the other single line section from Hindley South. A final reversal was needed to convey the tired but happy trippers back to Springs Branch and North Western Station, along the Eccles line through the disused Platt Bridge station.

The total mileage, not allowing for the unauthorised deviation at Whelley Junction, was only 46 miles 45 chains and had taken over six and a half hours. But it was well worth it. Most of the lines travelled had closed completely within a few years. The line from Ince Moss Junction to Platt Bridge Junction closed in May 1969. The line from Bickershaw to Wigan Central Goods Depot closed in November 1967. The section of the Wigan, Tyldesley and Eccles line to Bickershaw colliery continued until the colliery closed in 1992.

This had been a unique opportunity to say farewell.



Goods wagons near Bickershaw Colliery, 1887.

Hindley's Bell-man

By Austin Lyons

We've all seen them on TV ringing their bells and shouting their heads off. They are Town Cryers, drawn from all parts of the country, dressed in their colourful costumes, to compete in a nationwide contest. Town Cryers are still to be found in the larger cities and towns. Though nowadays mainly a tourist attraction, they still participate in their town's civic ceremonies and processions.

The smaller District Councils never had Town Cryers, but here in Hindley in the 1930s, we had a very interesting counterpart. He was someone independent of the local municipality, yet performing a more social function. We called him, quite simply-the Bell-man. His name was Ike Scott (I believe 'Ike' was short for Isaiah). He lived on Atherton Road, Hindley, only a short distance from the Independent Methodist Church, at the lower end of Argyle Street, which his family attended. Ike, worked in the mines, was of average height, but was what some would describe as 'thick-set' with very broad shoulders. His deep resonant voice was an important asset in this freelance task he had undertaken.

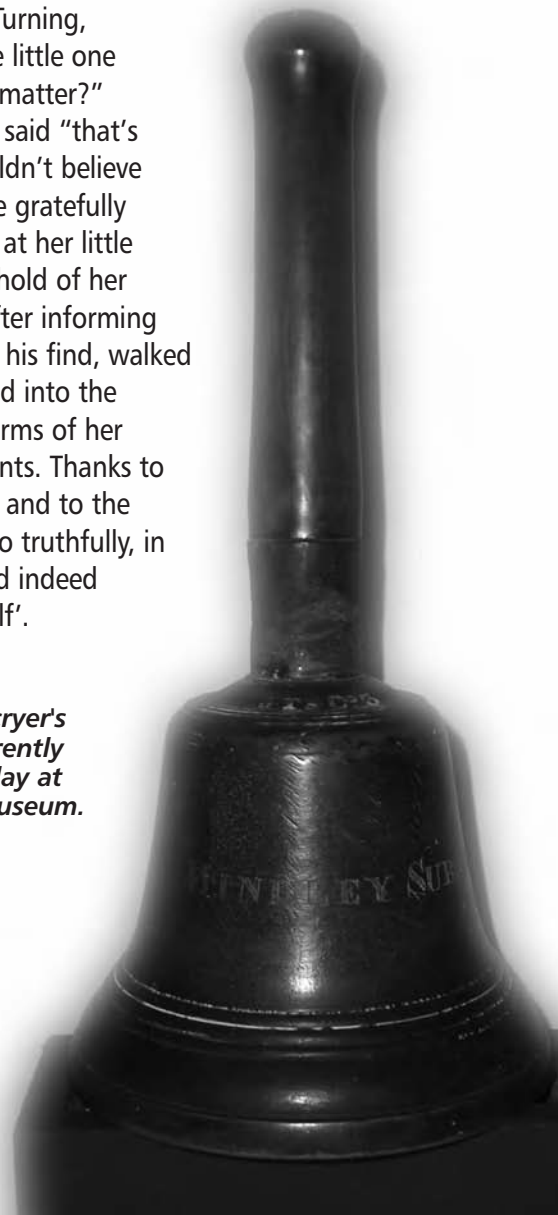
He wore no special clothes for this job, just ordinary attire complete with a cloth cap. Ike had his own clarion call. After ringing his large bell for a few minutes and waiting until a sufficient number of heads were now looking out of their doors, he would loudly call out "Please take notice-please take notice" and then deliver his message. He would then move to the next selected street and so on throughout the town, usually with a number of small children trailing behind. He undertook a variety of assignments, but these consisted mainly in announcing meetings, searching for lost children and cinema programme changes. The Palace cinema used him most frequently. Mr and Mrs Wright were in charge there, although Mrs Wright was officially the boss. Her husband, who was of a very quiet disposition, usually checked the cinema tickets on entry. I remember chatting to him one day and he started to tell me how he came into show business.

Something like 30 years of his life had been spent as a violinist in the old music hall orchestras. "I've the scars to prove it" he said, and showed me the tips of the four fingers on his left hand. They were as hard as leather, each having a lined groove in the middle,

worn there by constant fiddling. "It was a six days a week job," he continued, "twice-nightly performances, sometimes a mid-week matinee, not forgetting the customary Monday morning rehearsal by that weeks' visiting company." As a student violinist myself at the time, I found this very disturbing. His wife, on the other hand, was extrovert, boisterous and very forthright. She knew how to keep the show on the road, hence the frequent use of the Bell-man, when things went wrong in the film distribution world and programmes had to be changed.

I well remember the case of a lost child, the more so, because the little one in question was a near relative of my wife, Mary. The little girl, about four years old, had wandered off shortly after breakfast. Her parents were panic-stricken as they searched in vain to find her. The police eventually were called in, but still no sign of the child. In desperation they sought the services of the Bell-man. Off he went on his usual rounds, calling out the relevant details of the child. Ike had almost come to his last street call and had just finished announcing, once again, the lost girl's description, when a little girl behind him, gave a tug at his trouser leg. Turning, Ike asked the little one "What's the matter?" "Mister" she said "that's me." Ike couldn't believe his luck as he gratefully gazed down at her little face. Taking hold of her hand, and after informing the police of his find, walked her home and into the welcoming arms of her anxious parents. Thanks to the Bell-man and to the little one who truthfully, in this case, had indeed 'found herself'.

A town cryer's bell, currently on display at Hindley Museum.





Do you **WIGAN'S TOWN CENTRE CINEMAS** Remember?

By Mr
E Dakin

Do you remember how many picture houses there were in Wigan's Town Centre? They've all gone now, leaving happy memories. Memories of a golden age of entertainment.



Ritz Cinema, circa 1938

Remember the Ritz in Station Road? It was probably the poshest of the lot. It was there that I first saw *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, with the dashing Errol Flynn as Robin. I think it was 1938, the same year it was released. Seventy years on, I think it is still the best Robin Hood film ever.

Just a short walk from the Ritz, tucked away up a narrow passageway (Cooper's Row) just off Market Place, was the Empire. I think this was the smallest cinema in town. If you wanted a seat in the 'gods' upstairs, you had to climb an iron fire-escape on the side of the building to get there.

Another short stroll down Wallgate to the rear of the Clarence Hotel was the Princes, which today goes under the mystical title of Club Nirvana. I recall once, it must have been about 1941, because the blackout was in force, I and a couple of mates saw *The Curse of Wolfman* a horror picture, starring Lon Chaney Jr, at the Princes. On our way home one mate ran on ahead and hid in a dark corner of Wallgate Bridge, and as we drew level he jumped out screaming like a demented dervish. Mam nearly had some extra washing that night!

Walk down King Street, and on the right-hand side was the County Playhouse, built in 1916, and now the Ibiza Club. I think it was this cinema which first introduced a back row of double seats for courting couples.

A few yards down, on the opposite side of the road was the Royal Court Theatre. The Court to us peasants, and now another club, The Hub. The biggest treat for the patrons of this cinema, was the electric organ, (and, I seem to remember, an organist with one leg) that would rise majestically a few feet as he played some favourite tunes before the lights went down.



Hippodrome Cinema, King Street



Cross the road again, to what was Lewis's Milk Bar, and down King Street past the Hippodrome to the Palace. As I recollect the first entrance to this cinema was like a wide entry with a sloping 'walkway' that was divided by a brown painted handrail. The walkway on the right took you to the booking office, and tickets for the downstairs front and back stalls. The walkway on the left led to the exit. To buy tickets for upstairs, you went past the walkways to the main entrance at the top of some marble steps. These seats were more expensive, but I always preferred a balcony seat, because down below I was always unlucky enough to be seated behind tall men or women with elaborate hair styles.

At the Palace, I remember a certain usher who roamed the aisles with a torch that would have put a wartime searchlight to shame, spotlighting people in a passionate clinch, and shouting out loud and clear, "You can cut that out, mucky devils, or I'll have you thrown out!"



Pavilion Cinema, Library Street

Just around the corner, at the bottom of Library Street, was the Pavillion Picturedrome, now Wigan Baths. Who can ever forget that splendid ornamental frontage?

But our world of entertainment, the silver screen, was slowly, irrevocably, eclipsed by the technological advance of a square box in the corner of everyone's living room. Television! Some TV is outstanding, whether specially made for the small screen, taken from the silver screen or adapted from classical novels.

But it's not the same. Good films, well plotted and acted, were common.

Along King Street you entered another world, a world of drama, humour, romance, horror, Cowboys and Indians, song and dance.

No more, alas. But the memories of us 'owd uns' live on. 'Binge' Street will always be King Street. The clubs, the shopping centres, the swimming baths, will always be picture houses. And while there are still some of us still around, they will live on.

Editor's note: *Both the Court Cinema and The County Playhouse had organs. It seems that it was the County that had 'the mighty Christie organ' which rose up and the Court where the organist with one leg played. This organist was in fact John Willie Abbot, who also played at The Pavilion. He lost his leg following an accident involving a bus and his disability did not impair his considerable skill as an organist. He retired from the Court in 1951.*

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FRIENDS OF THE HISTORY SHOP



FRIENDS OF THE HISTORY SHOP

Helping with Local and Family History in Wigan and Leigh

History Shop

Although the History Shop is closed for refurbishment the work of the Friends does not stop. In our temporary home in Wigan Library, volunteers are indexing church records, newspaper reports and cemetery records from microfilm. The volunteers involved with the Learning and Outreach team are constantly busy helping with school visits and canal trips.

Workshops

Family History workshops are 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.

Don't forget that until the end of August we are also offering special one to one advanced workshops for those who have hit a brick wall with their research. Session times and booking details as above.

Leigh Family History Society provides a drop-in family history help desk at Leigh Library. This is held every Monday at Leigh Library from 1.30pm to 3.30pm.

Archives at Leigh

At the Archives volunteers are still assisting Lisa Keys to select 5,000 images from the photography collection to be digitised and put online.

Ongoing Projects

Indexing:
Cemetery Records (ongoing)
Billinge St Aidan's (completed)
Holy Trinity Downall Green (completed)
St Paul's Skelmersdale (completed)
St Mark's Newtown (in progress)
St Wilfrid's Standish (in progress)
Ashton St Thomas (in progress)
St Williams Ince (in progress).

Births and marriages 1837-1950 and registered deaths 1837-1870 for all Wigan and Leigh districts are now online. Deaths 1871-1950 will follow. Go to www.lancashirebmd.org.uk

Things to be Addressed

The constitution needs to be updated and a meeting is being planned for this purpose.

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



Friends of Wigan Heritage Service

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

Please state which issue you wish your membership to begin.

Please find enclosed my cheque for £5.00 (made payable to Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust)

Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Tel:

Signed:

Date:

Please return to the Heritage Service desk in Wigan Library or via post:

Past Forward, Wigan Heritage Service, The History Shop, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU

WHELLEY HOSPITAL *by Phyllis Robinson*

Recent proposals to close Whelley Hospital made me remember its' past as a fever hospital. I started thinking back to when I was eleven years old and had diphtheria. In that particular year 1941, in the months of July and August which used to be the driest, there was an epidemic. I was admitted to Whelley Hospital.

I think if my memory is correct the Doctor's name was Doctor White. He would inject you in your buttocks with a needle that used to feel it was coming out the other side. Then the day after, you had an injection in the other side. This went on for three days, and you had to lie down all the time, for meals if you could eat them and for everything else as well. After

two weeks you had a swab taken of your throat and if you were getting better, you were allowed to sit up. After another week, another swab was taken and you were allowed to get up. After three weeks in bed the muscles in your legs were very stiff when you tried to get up to walk again, and I mean very stiff.

For breakfast we used to have syrup butties cut into quarters. The syrup had soaked into the bread because they were prepared during the night. The ward had a big chimney in the middle with a fire at each side. Visitors were not allowed in, but had to look through the windows.

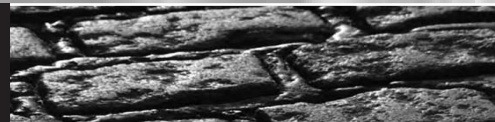
We used to live down Marsh Green before the estate was

built. Mum and Granddad came to visit me in hospital. They had to walk up Scot Lane, catch a bus to Wigan, then to Whelley, then walk down Bradshaw Street and the same going back. There were no cars or phones, for working class people then, they couldn't afford it, but there was lots of love. Granddad used to have two pet names for me then, one was 'Sparrow' and the other 'Betty Blister.'

I was one patient who got better, but at that particular time lots of children died.

I wonder what we would do today if we had an epidemic with the Wigan Infirmary bursting at the seams?

Clogs on Cobbles *by A Rigby*



The sound of clogs on cobbles of the mill girls rushing by to a busy noisy factory where looms and shuttles fly machines they clap like thunder so they me maw through the room that was back in yonder when the heart of Leigh did boom

The mines they numbered many and miners, thousands more they filled the streets with noise you could feel the steady roar until the cages rattled and they vanished underground the coalface they did battle, when the heart of Leigh did pound

On nearly every corner stood a thriving, welcome pub night after night throughout the week, there was a constant hub through the smoke and beer they chatted face to face and in this realm of cheer the heart of Leigh did race

The picture house was here to stay, as they flourished in the town and every couple ventured out to see the silent clown the good guy and the villain, and the weepies made us sob the seats would shake with laughter, when the heart of Leigh did throb

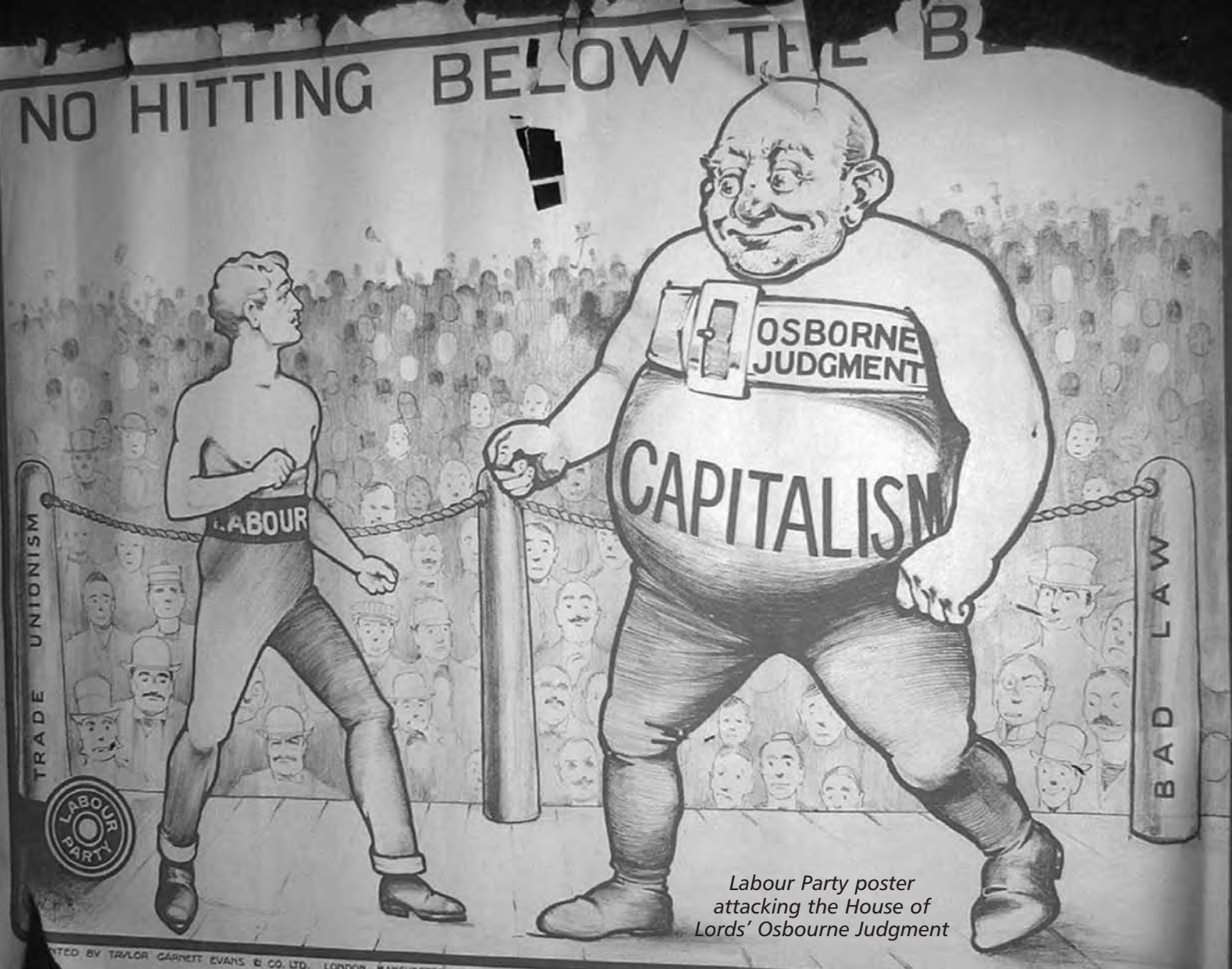
All the parks and garden's with their picture postcard look the music of the band and the babble of the brook immaculately kept every tree and every bush willow trees they wept when the heart of Leigh did rush

And everyone remembers where they stood in seventy one vantage points were taken to glimpse the trophy won standing on the balcony to face the fevered crowd Murphy lead the hero's and the heart of Leigh was proud

But all these things are of the past, in history they lie factories are all but gone no more the shuttles fly the pits and all its miners, have vanished into dust mill girls just a memory, now the heart of Leigh does rust

Nowhere left in the town to watch a film on screen pubs and clubs, the good ones, are few and far between like the silent movie star, who never got to speak our voices can't be heard now the heart of Leigh is weak

All the parks are ruined the shops are all but shut Hilton Park demolished the lifeline has been cut the town seems to be dying, I hope it never will but if you listen carefully the heart of Leigh is still



The Leigh Labour Party, Tom Greenall and the Battle for Working Men's Vote

By Yvonne Eckersley

There were two General Elections in 1910. Records show that Thomas Greenall JP stood as parliamentary candidate for the fledgling Labour Party in January. But neither the Leigh Labour Party nor Thomas Greenall fought the December election. Why not? What happened?

Leigh was an industrial town with mining and cotton manufacturing providing employment for the majority of the electorate. During 1910 these industries were suffering from a trade depression and consequent unemployment.

Nationally the Conservative and Unionist Party had revealed a reluctance to legislate to alleviate the poverty caused by

unemployment, this created the perception that they were anti working men. During 1910 the Leigh Conservative and Unionist Party's politics were increasingly associated with this negative view, encouraged by both Liberal and Labour electioneering. A Leigh Labour Party had been formed. On the 9 October 1908, a Parliamentary candidate had been selected, membership was

increasing and they had the support of the National Labour Party and the miners' unions. Its reason for being was to alleviate the conditions of working men through political action.

Unlike the neighbouring constituencies of Wigan, St Helens, Newton (including Ashton) and Ince, whose Liberal Parties were weak or defunct, Leigh Liberals had a strong popular base and loyal electorate.

Nationally there was a constitutional crisis brewing. The Conservatives dominated The House of Lords to try to scupper the Liberal Government's attempts to find sufficient money to fund its social reform and military programmes. Lloyd George's 'People's Budget' of 1909 had amongst its aims, a proposal that would lead to a land tax. This would impact on the members of the House of Lords most. The Lords demanded an election on the issue. For them the Budget was 'an excuse for adopting the first instalment of a Socialist Budget', the very reason the Leigh electorate supported it.

The Liberals accused the Lord's of blocking 'further and fuller developments of a policy of Social Reform' by rejecting the Budget. By the December election reform of the House of Lords became their priority. They claimed the 'whole future of Democratic Government...hangs on' a Liberal victory. Labour questioned whether 'Peers or the People are to rule this country?' This was to become the battle-cry for Liberal and Labour politicians during 1910.

Leigh Labour Party's candidate Thomas Greenall's credentials as a 'progressive', workingman's candidate were undeniable. He had begun work at Thatto Heath Colliery, St Helens at eleven years of age, rising to become an official.

He was a Lancashire and Cheshire Miners Federation agent for twenty years, serving on the Federation Executive and the Conciliation board. In 1909 he was President of the Lancashire and Cheshire Miners Association. He had been active in Labour politics in Salford, Pendleton and had stood as Labour candidate for Accrington.

Throughout 1909 Greenall's claim to be the most progressive candidate was given credence by Liberal MP John Brunner's less than radical politics. However, Peter Wilson Raffan replaced Brunner three weeks before the January 1910 election. For Leigh's mining community and its Liberal history his pedigree was exemplary. His origins in Newport, Monmouthshire, a town with a large mining community, gave weight to his claims to be a 'miners candidate' and pro-workingmen. According to the Chronicle he had 'considerable influence among the Monmouthshire miners', for them 'a more suitable Progressive candidate could not be found'.

Leigh miners, the largest enfranchised occupational group, traditionally looked to the Liberals to look after their interests. But now Leigh had an enthusiastic Labour Party and a Labour parliamentary candidate supported by the miners' unions. The Labour Party had a programme of social reform similar to the Liberals'. The problem for Leigh's miners lay not only in divided loyalties, but the fear that by opting to vote Labour they would risk a Conservative victory and jeopardize further social reform.

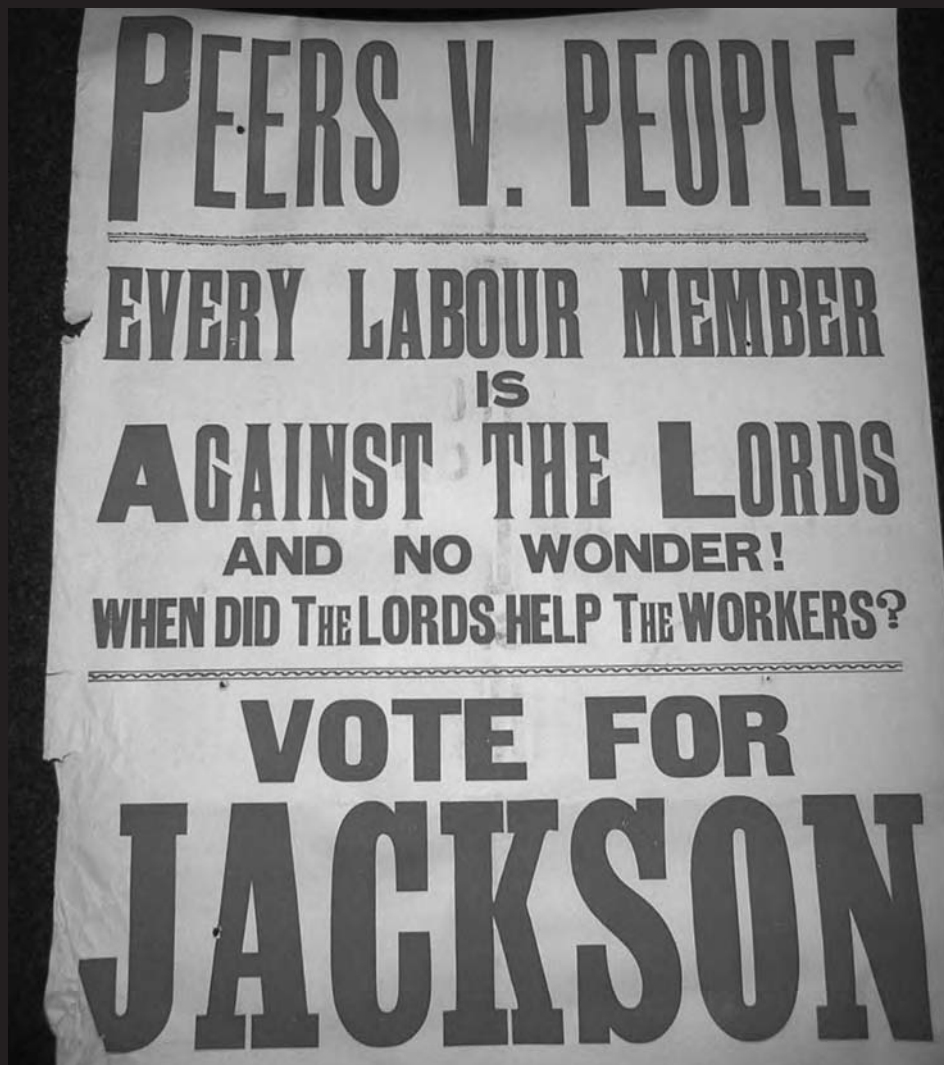
It was Raffan and the Liberal Party who were successful in January 1910. After this election there was a definite feeling that the miners had let the Labour Party down. The Leigh Journal reported 'one could not help but think that the miners wanted a great deal of educating in

the principles of the Labour Party'. But it was not just the Leigh miners whose loyalty was in question.

At the Annual Lancashire and Cheshire Miners Federation meeting the debate centred round the failure of Stephen Walsh (Ince) and Harry Twist (Wigan) to visit Leigh to speak on Greenall's behalf in January 1910. Self interest seemed to be at the heart of this. Harry Twist claimed it would have caused 'a revulsion of feeling in Wigan' to have intervened in Leigh. Harry Twist won Wigan in January but lost it in December.

Similarly at the Labour Party Conference at Newport, Mr Brown tabled the question, had any Labour politician 'given any facilities that were used against Mr Greenall'. Stephen Walsh was very quick, 'up jumped Mr Walsh', to deny any guilt on his behalf. Walsh, speaking in Hindley, had stated 'it was folly to fight seats where there was no hope and might assist in jeopardising other seats.' In his opinion, neither the Liberals nor Labour were doing their best to avoid three cornered fights. He issued a plea not to divide the progressive forces, saying the common good should override Party. The feeling they had let Greenall down continued throughout 1910. In Leigh it was put to Labour speaker Reverend Bull "Why did Stephen Walsh and Harry Twist refrain from coming here?" In December Tom Glover (St Helens) Arthur Henderson (Labour Leader) and Philip Snowden (Blackburn) spoke, Henderson and Snowden spoke again in January but Walsh and Twist were conspicuous by their absence. They did speak to support Labour's municipal candidates.

All was not what it seemed. Labour candidates were vulnerable. They did rely on the Liberal Party's goodwill which could be withdrawn. Antagonistic Liberal



Labour Party poster circa 1910 - 'Peers V People

supporters at a public meeting in Tyldesley had expressed a threat, 'What...was there to prevent the Liberals from endangering the seats of Mr. Stephen Walsh in the Ince Division, Tom Glover at St Helens, [and] Mr Seddon, Newton?' if Greenall opposed Raffan. The overriding priority for many was to avoid splitting the progressive vote allowing the Conservatives to win the election and reject the Budget.

By 1910 the potential power of the votes of workingmen could not be ignored. In November 1910 pragmatism can be discerned in the Conservative choice of W.T. Oversby to replace Mr. Cuthbert-Smith. Cuthbert-Smith had been a Barrister, called to the Bar in 1890, he Matriculated in Roman Law and was Worshipful Master of the Liverpool Masons. His political stance was traditionally Conservative, he supported Tariff

Reform, Church freedom, the House of Lords' veto. By 1910 the National Conservative Party was founding and funding Workingmen's Conservative Associations and promoting workingmen candidates. W.T. Oversby was one such candidate. He had begun work at eight years of age in a cotton mill where he was educated as a half timer and before he was eleven years old he was working from 6am until 6pm. He declared himself a workingmen's candidate who had their interests at heart.

Central to any analysis of the 1910 elections is the question of finance. The miners' unions had provided much of the campaign expenses for the Labour Party. The miners' Newcastle Conference in Feb 1903 decided that a penny per member be paid annually into a political fighting fund. In 1909 the right to

do this was challenged. In what was to become known as the Osborne Judgement, the collection and use of this money was deemed illegal. Throughout 1909 this Judgement was subject to appeal. In December 1909 the House of Lords upheld the Judgement thus starving the Labour Party of Funds. This 'iniquitous Osborne Judgement' (Labour Manifesto, December 1910) was interpreted as an example of the immensely rich Conservative Party abusing its power to silence opposition.

The Judgement compounded Leigh Labour Party's dire financial situation. As each vote in January had cost 8s 3d their £27. 5s. 3d cash in hand was woefully inadequate. Throughout 1910 the local miners' leaders attempted to sidestep the Judgement. Reverend Bull advocated breaking the law, saying the leadership was willing to go to prison. Stephen Walsh's rhetoric was rather more fanciful, 'as the Martyrs of Christianity underwent punishment and death so would the leaders of the Labour Movement'. New funds were initiated. Nationally Ramsay MacDonald established the 250,000 sixpences fund. At a Special Conference in Wigan the Lancashire & Cheshire Miners Federation formed a new Political Association. It was not enough.

Throughout 1910 there had been speculation surrounding the probability of Labour fielding a candidate in Leigh. In May the Leigh Chronicle reported the Yorkshire Post's assertion that Leigh was considered a lost cause whilst at the same time reporting the Labour Party's denial. Claims and counterclaims continued until the 25 November 1910 when the Executive Committee of the Miners' Federation published a list of Labour candidates for the December election and Leigh's Thomas Greenall was not on the list.



Who, What, Where, When?

Who was Mayor of Wigan from 1882 until 1887?

What is Jannock?

Where would you find the hand of Edmund Arrowsmith?

When did King George V and Queen Mary visit the Borough?

Answers can be found on page 32

Wigan Boys' Club Band, 1953

Can you spot?

Can you spot the member of Wigan Boys' Club in the photograph above who grew up to be a multi-millionaire?

VIEWS OF HINDLEY GREEN



Atherton Road, Hindley Green



Leigh Friendly Co-operative Society,
Atherton Road, Hindley Green



Hindley Green Hall

CAN YOU HELP?



Roburite Factory

Dear Editor,

Could anyone help to date the accompanying photograph, taken of a group of lady employees at the Roburite factory at Gathurst? I think it may have been taken sometime around the First World War, possibly just after. If anyone knows the names of the ladies on it, it would be of great value to me in a family history search. The lady second from left on the back row is Beatrice Speakman from Roby Mill, and her elder sister Minnie (Amelia) is seated in the middle.

Many thanks
Alex Darbyshire

E-mail: christopher.darbyshire@mypostoffice.co.uk
Postal Address: 48 Tennyson Drive, Billinge, Wigan, WN5 7EJ

Winstanley Hall

Dear Editor,

I am a history student at university in the United States. I am working on a research project on British country houses during the Second World War. I am interested in learning about the experiences of people who lived, worked and were stationed in Britain's stately homes during the war. I am also interested in learning how country houses adapted to their new roles as schools, hospitals, homes for evacuees and military centres.

In particular I have been researching Winstanley Hall. Past editions of PAST FORWARD have contained some articles on this topic. Do any readers have any further information about Winstanley Hall during the war? I would be very pleased to hear from any readers who do.

Johnnie Manckiy

Address: 4000 Serenity Lane, Greenwood, Arkansas 72936, USA • E-mail: jmanckiy@cox.net

Editors notes: Articles featuring Winstanley Hall were published in PAST FORWARD Issues 32 and 40. Past editions can be viewed at www.wlct.org/Culture/Heritage/pforward.htm

Hindley, Hilton and Parr

Dear Editor,

I live in Sydney, Australia and I have recently become interested in our family history.

My father's family originated in Aspull and Leigh, and are descendants of the Hindley, Hilton and Parr families. My great grandfather was Robert Hindley, born 1852 in Wigan. He married Mary Hindley, born 1852 in Leigh. Her mother was a Parr. They and their five children emigrated to Australia in 1889, sailing on the Oroya. His first appointment was the Under-Manager at the Greta coal mine near Newcastle, New South Wales. His half brothers, Joshua and John William Hilton followed him to Australia in the early 1900s and also worked in the mines.

I recently came across a family photograph from Wigan, probably taken between 1860 and 1890, featuring eight family members standing with their home in the background. Do any readers recognise the house or the people? My cousin Elspeth and I believe they could be Hiltons or Hindleys who were miners, residing in Pennington Green.

Dianne Hindley
Sydney, Australia



Hornet

Dear Editor,

Has anyone else noticed the 'Hornet' nameplate in Roy's Rolls Café in Coronation Street? It looks exactly like the one I remember being on the shunting engine at Garswood Hall Colliery, Ashton-in-Makerfield. I remember watching the 'Hornet' when I was 10 years old. It took coal from the colliery to the shunting lines at Bryn, for connection to the main line. I got my first job at Garswood Hall Colliery when I was 15 in the mid-1950s. I worked at the Colliery until it closed in 1958.

Do any readers know if the 'Hornet' nameplate seen on our screens in Roy's Rolls is the same one from the shunting engine from Garswood Hall? I would be very interested to hear from anyone who knows anything about it.

John Goulding

Bretherton and Sharrock

Dear Editor,

Following the death of my friend Mr Bretherton, I purchased his garage from his widow. In the garage I found two plaques engraved with the names 'Thomas Bretherton' and 'Thomas Sharrock'. The plaques are also inscribed 'Died for honour and freedom.'

I recently contacted the Heritage Service to see if they could tell me anything about the plaques. I found out that they are called 'Next of Kin Memorial Plaques' or 'Dead Man's Pennies.' They were presented to the families of all service people killed in World War One.



I assume Thomas Bretherton was my deceased friend's father. I don't know anything about Thomas Sharrock. Are any Past Forward readers relations of Thomas Sharrock? I would like be interested to hear from you if you are.

Mr Andrews
Swinley

Editors note: For further information about these plaques visit -'Dead Man's Penny'

www.tameside.gov.uk/museumsgalleries/mom/objectfocus#Dead_mans_penny or 'The Next of Kin Memorial Plaque'
<http://www.iwm.org.uk/server/show/ConWebDoc.992>

Haigh Locomotives

Dear Editor,

I was very interested in the feature by Mr Neil Cain (issue 51) about the industrial history of Haigh Country Park, particularly the reference to Haigh Foundry and its connection to the Great Western Railway (G.W.R.).

In 1938 the G.W.R. received two locomotives from Messrs. Hawthorn, engineers from Newcastle Upon Tyne. These were of a most unusual design. At this time locomotive design and technology was still in its infancy and Brunel was pushing for speed on his 84.25 inch gauge railway. The two locomotives, 'Thunderer' and 'Hurricane' consisted of a leading frame which contained the engine parts including cylinders, motion and driving wheels. This was coupled to a second frame on which was mounted a boiler and firebox. Flexible steam tubes protruded from the front of the smokebox to the cylinders on the front frame. There was a tender at the rear. 'Hurricane' had ten feet single driving wheels, plus four small carrying wheels in its front frame. 'Thunderer' had four six feet coupled drivers only on its front frame, but importantly, it also had a 3:1 gearing connected to the driving wheels. Detailed drawings and accounts are well documented of these locomotives.

Reports in various sources of the time suggest that two more 'geared engines' were purchased from the Haigh Foundry Company, Wigan. No names or works numbers are quoted, but two locomotives, 'Snake' and 'Viper' are known to have been supplied to the G.W.R. about that time. Unfortunately, I have been unable to find further information about the design of these two particular engines. However, later reports suggest that engines built by the Haigh Foundry were not, in fact, cog-g geared but instead used a four-eccentric valve gear developed at the Foundry. I don't know whether this was patented.

I am sure that amongst your readers there are some with a great knowledge of our local industrial heritage. Can any readers help to resolve my query about Haigh Foundry and type of locomotives supplied to the G.W.R.?

Yours Sincerely
Brian Liptrot

CAN YOU HELP?



Hall Lane Spinners

Dear Editor,

I would like to share this photograph with Past Forward readers. The man in the white jacket is my Grandfather, Frederick Livingston. He worked at Hall Lane Spinners and the picture was taken in the mid-1930s. With him are members of the Scouts. Do you recognise any of these young men? What were they doing at the mill? If you can shed any light, please get in touch!

Mr Peach

PUZZLE PAGE ANSWERS



Can you spot?
The multi-millionaire on the picture is Dave Whelan, local business man and former owner of JJB sports.

Who, What, Where, When?

Who? Henry Park was Mayor of Wigan 1882-1887.

What? Jannock is a type of oatcake that was said to have been eaten in Leigh more than any other part of Lancashire. A recipe for Jannock from 1900 is: 1lb (450g) coarse oatmeal, 6oz (175g) lard, 2 tablespoons water and a good pinch of salt.

Where? The hand of Saint Edmund Arrowsmith is preserved in the Catholic church of St Oswald and St Edmund Arrowsmith in Ashton-in-Makerfield. It is believed to have healing properties. The hand was kept by his family after he was executed in 1628 for preaching to Roman Catholics.

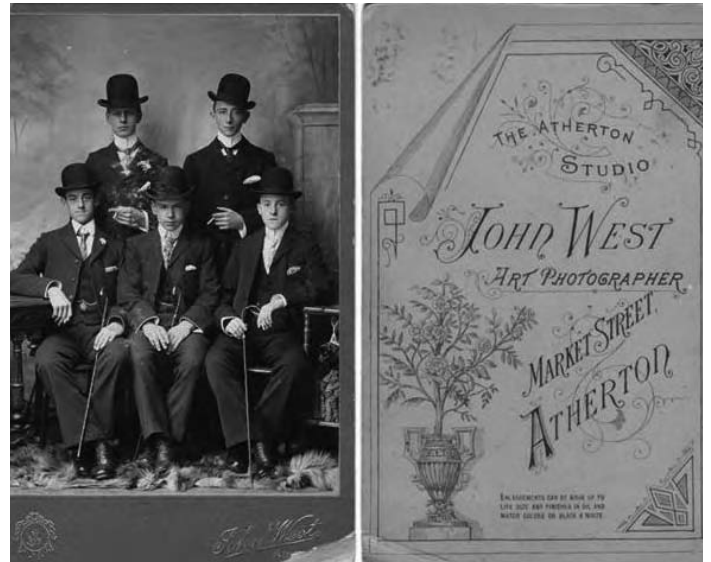
When? George V and Queen Mary visited the Borough in 1913. Queen Mary described Wigan as "a lovely town".

Samuel Arthur Butler

Dear Editor,

Does anyone know the occasion, date and identity of the people in this photograph? My Grandfather, Samuel Arthur Butler, known as Arthur, is seated on the left in the front row. He was born 16 April 1881 and lived at Mealhouse Lane, Atherton with his parent's Robert and Jane Butler. He married Jane Ellen Liptrot (Nellie) from Bolton on 1 September 1906. Jane and Arthur then lived at 8 Leigh Rd Atherton until they emigrated to New Zealand in 1913.

Arthur appears to be the eldest gentleman of the group. The other two men in the front I consider to be related as their



features are so similar. Could the occasion be a wedding? Two of them have buttonholes, one of them being Samuel Arthur. Arthur's sister, Edith Butler married John Worthington 29 October 1904 at St John's Atherton, so this is a possibility.

The photographer was John West, of Atherton. He is mentioned in Slater's Directory in 1898 and 1901 at 108 Market St, Atherton. In Kelly's Directory for 1905 he is at 108 Market St, Atherton and in 1909 at 98 Market St, Atherton.

Any help is very much appreciated.

Barbara Pritchard

Have you got a family or local history query you think our readers can help you with? If so, please write to the Editor.

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

Editor

Dean Woods, Gathurst

Dear Editor

I was most interested in P. Clarke's letter about Dean Woods at Gathurst. I spent my early years at Gathurst in the early 1940s.

My late father was a coach builder in Manchester's Trafford Park. He bought three buses and converted them (one at a time over two years) into caravans as a family holiday home. Bus number one was for his parents and that was put onto the farm site owned by Mr William (Billy) Ball at Gathurst. The site was chosen by my aunt Edith who was post mistress at Gathurst Post Office on Gathurst Lane. My parents were married in 1938 and his new wife thought that they should have a van of their own. So bus number two became theirs.

My mother's other brother (she had three) got the bug, and he bought a 'Travellers style' caravan near the swings in Dean Woods. He only had it for a year or two, as it was falling apart, before bus number three came into use. John parked his van next to the lock keeper's cottage on the Leeds-Liverpool canal, as he liked fishing. At that time the canal was very good for fish, and was used by the local fishing clubs for matches. The war years were very good for us as far as food went we could get eggs, meat etc. from the farm. We could also get coal from the barges that plied the canal. We would take home to Manchester 'gifts' to other members of the family who otherwise would have found it hard to feed their families. My mother would take me and her younger sister to the top of the hill near the farm. From there in the night sky you could see the glow of the bombing raids on the big cities and the searchlights looking for enemy airplanes.

As I got older I would help with the hay making, and potato picking on the farm lands. The Land Army girls would sometimes give me sweets, after all at five or six I was a handsome chap. Not quite so now. Happy days were spent at Gathurst, what's happened to all those years?

I believe the North West Museum of Road Transport (formerly St Helens Transport Museum) is hoping to restore the buses. I must thank Jean for passing her copy of **PAST FORWARD** onto me.

Mr W Greenhalgh

Thank you

Dear Editor

Could you please insert a 'Thank you and appreciation' on our behalf to Mr John Medling. He kindly contacted me following my 'Can you help?' appeal in issue 50. My letter was with regard to Joseph Houghton who was born in Warrington in 1824, I am still trying to find out where and when he died.

Thanks and regards
Betty Battersby (Mrs)

EDITORIAL APOLOGY

In the last issue the photograph on page 18 was labeled 'Trades Council Coop Leigh'. It should have read 'Cooperative Hall, Ellesmere Street, Leigh'. Apologies from the Editor for any confusion.



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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 held on 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.

No Meeting in July

Tuesday 11 August

'The Peterloo Massacre'
Speaker Maureen Gilbertson.

Tuesday 8 September

'The Crystal Palace and the Great Exhibition: The Prince Consort's Dream come true.'
Speaker - David Hill.

Tuesday 13 October

'Annual General Meeting' followed by 'Exploits of a Plain Clothes Policewoman'
Speaker - Barbara Hurst.
PLEASE NOTE 7pm start.

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

Hindley & District History Society

Meetings are held on the second Monday in the month at Hindley Museum in Hindley Library from 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 Brannagan 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.

Tuesday 18 August

'Getting Started'

Tuesday 15 September

'Manorial Records'
Speaker - David Lambert

Tuesday 20 October

'Members Help Evening'

Tuesday 17 November

Maps for Family and Local History
Speaker - Paul Hindle

Tuesday 15 December

To be arranged

Local History Federation Lancashire

The Federation holds several meetings each year, with a varied and interesting programme. For details visit www.lancashirehistory.org or call 01204 707885.

Skelmersdale & Upholland Family History Society

Meetings held at 7.30pm on the fourth Tuesday each month (no meeting in August) at Hall Green Community Centre, Upholland. For more information visit www.liverpool-genealogy.org.uk

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 on the second Monday of the month at 7.30pm. The venue is Drumcroom, 2 Parsons Walk, Wigan. Contact Mr A Grimshaw on 01942 245777 for further information.

No meeting in August

Monday 14 September

'Mesnes Park Restoration Project'
Speaker - Mr A Bond

Monday 12 October

'Roman Wigan'
Speaker - Mr I Miller

Monday 9 November

Annual Dinner

Monday 14 December

The History and production of Uncle Joe's Mint Balls
Speaker - Mr J Winnard

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

Wigan Archaeology 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

August TBA

Society Trip

Wednesday 2 September

The North West in the Iron Age
Speaker - Alastair Vannan (OAN)

Wednesday 7 October (TBC)

Viking Hoard
Speaker - Robert Philpot

Friday 23 October

Committee meeting

Wednesday 4 November

Roman's advance into Scotland
Speaker - David Woolliscroft

Wednesday 2 December

OAN update
Speaker - Ian Miller

'Sam's Rick'

This issue's picture is called 'Sam's Rick'. We found it in our collection filed under 'Leigh'. But can you tell us who Sam was, why was his 'rick' was so important, where might his 'rick' have been, who were the people in the picture and what date was it taken? If you can help please contact Lisa Keys on 01942 404080 or email l.keys@wlct.org



From the last issue

Thanks to all those who sent in a response about the 1900 scene in Scholes. Tram tracks, shops, lamp posts and cars all provided clues to the content of the picture. It seems that the picture was taken on Market Street in Wigan after 1906. Around this time, motorists were trying to dispel prejudices about the motor car. They wanted to show that they could be used for pleasure and enjoyment as well as by the army. The car in the distance is a Darracq, a popular French make at the time. In the back seat is General Booth, Head of the Salvation Army. In August 1906 he set off on a 'Pilgrimage by Petrol', stopping to preach in all major and some smaller towns.



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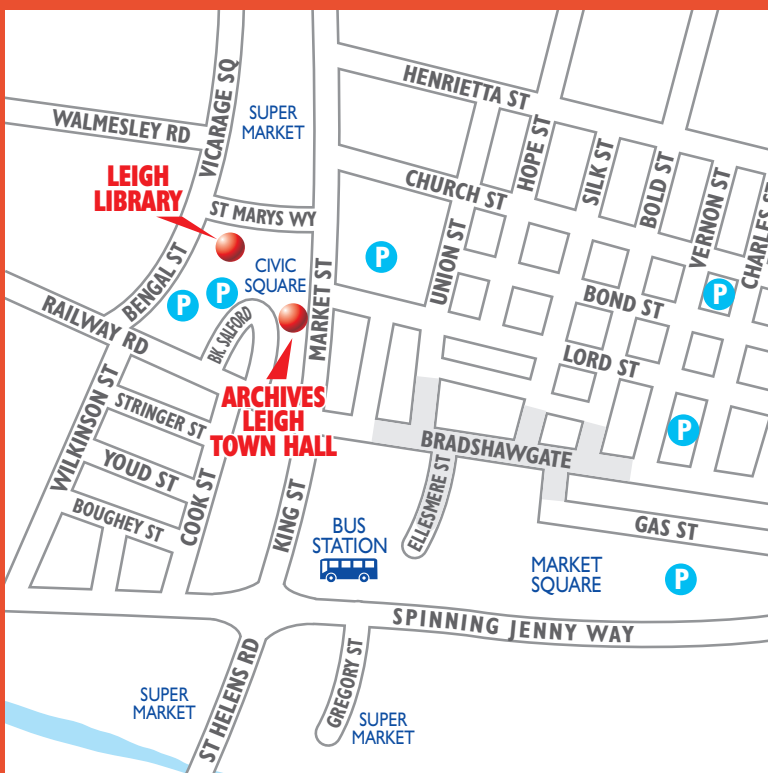


History Shop (currently closed for refurbishment)

Library Street,
Wigan WN1 1NU
Telephone 01942 828128
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