

PAST FORWARD

Produced by Wigan Heritage Service

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Olympic Mania

£1



WIGAN HERITAGE SERVICES
discover
YOUR HERITAGE

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

museum
of WiganLife

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FRONT COVER

The Olympic Torch passes the Museum of Wigan Life, 30 May.

Letter from the Editorial Team

The Olympics are here! The Olympic Torch generated huge excitement (*captured on our front cover*) as it passed through Wigan town centre on 30 May. Many spectators deemed this a 'Once in a lifetime experience'. The borough has a proud sporting past and if you want to find out more, come along to our new exhibition 'From the Word Go!' A definite highlight is the 1928 Olympics memorabilia from Ada Smith and Hilda Smith, members of the Leigh Gymnastics Club who trained at the Marsh Gymnasium. This includes the bronze medal won by Ada and the Olympic blazer badges and passports of both women. Also featured is the current crop of Wigan Olympic hopefuls. We wish them good luck, although as we go to press, we've heard the sad news that Jenny Meadows' place in the British team is in doubt.

Throughout the summer and into autumn, the Arts and Heritage Service has lots of exciting and fun events for you, your children and grandchildren, including the aptly named Super Summer: Olympic Mania (£2.50 per child). We imagine that Coffee, Cake and Culture (a trip on the canal) should also not be missed! See a full calendar on page 35.

Information for Contributors

We always welcome articles and letters for publication from both new and existing 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 may edit your submission
- Published and rejected submissions will be disposed of, unless you request for them to be returned
- Submissions may be held on file for publication in a future edition

- Articles must be received by the copy date if inclusion in the next issue is desired

Submission Guidelines

- Electronic submissions are preferred, although handwritten ones will be accepted
- We prefer articles to have a maximum length of 1,000 words
- Include photographs or images where possible – these can be returned if requested
- Include your name and address – we will not pass on your details to anyone unless you have given us permission to do so

We aim to acknowledge receipt of all submissions.

CONTACT DETAILS: pastforward@wlct.org or The Editor at **PAST FORWARD**, Museum of Wigan Life, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU.



Young people at the launch of the exhibition 'From the Word Go!'

From left to right: Ruby Uttley YHAT, Abbie Johnson YHAT, Cameron Foster Charity Fundraiser and Olympic Torchbearer, Oliver Walkden YHAT and Larnar Taylor YHAT. The Youth Heritage Action Team (YHAT) researched and helped design the exhibition. We are always looking for new members. Would you like to join, or do you know someone who would? Contact the museum on 01942 828128.

PAST FORWARD Subscription Form

Copy Deadline for Issue 62

Contributors please note the deadline for the receipt of material for publication is Friday 26 October 2012.

Past Forward Subscription is £5 for three issues. Payment by cheque (payable to Wigan Leisure & Culture Trust), postal order or credit/debit card (telephone 01942 828128).



Please state which issue you wish your membership to begin

I am a registered blind person and would like the CD version

Please tick here if you would like to receive information regarding Wigan Leisure & Culture activities and events. We do not pass your details to other organisations.

Return to: The Museum of Wigan Life, Past Forward Subscription, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU

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Editor's Note

The article 'The Eckersley Sword' issue 56, was based on research by Andrew Lomax and Jennifer Broadbent.

*Railway arches,
Queen Street, Leigh*

This article is, in part, a response to Dennis Sweeney's expressed regret that this tunnel may get forgotten.



Leigh's Railway Tunnel

by Yvonne Eckersley

Bedford Wharf Tunnel formed part of the final stretch of Fletcher's (Atherton Collieries) mineral railway that carried coal from Howe Bridge and Gibfield Collieries to their wharf at Bedford Basin on the Bridgewater Canal at Leigh.

The entrance site lies behind high fencing to the rear of the junction between Church Street, Platt Fold Street and Brown Street North. From Brown Street North it ran under the road junction with East Bond Street, near where the LNWR's Goods yard was (later Timms' Ford Garage) under Queen Street in the vicinity of the prefabricated buildings of what was Jackson's Bazaar on one side of the street and Melody House/Quality Furnishings (now the new car park) on the other; under the railway arches (not then built, now demolished, currently the said car park); continuing under Chapel Street to emerge where Lidl's Supermarket is. The remains of the track bed are still discernable, along the fence between Tesco's and Jim Stones' Bus Garage and Bedford Basin, which is still in use as a marina.

But why was the tunnel built, why did the railway need to go underground, why under Queen Street? I have discovered that the stimulus behind the drive to build the rail system was financial; the decision to go underground practical and the choice of location seems to have been political.

By the 1850s, the combination of increased production at Atherton Collieries' new deep pits and the inadequacy of existing provision for the transportation of coal provided the impetus for change. Until the tunnel opened in 1857 Fletcher's coal had been carted from the terminus of their horse-drawn tramway at Stocks Platt (now Platt Street) along the turnpike road through Leigh centre to Limerick Wharf near Leigh Bridge and onto barges on the Bridgewater canal. This transshipment had a negative impact on Fletcher's profits. The price of coal was determined by the size. Larger cobs could be sold at a greater profit; the more the coal was handled the more it broke which reduced its market value. The cost of transshipment in terms of worker's wages, provision of horses and carts and the necessary infrastructure reduced profits further. Importantly the resultant damage to the road was creating conflict between Fletcher's; the turnpike company

responsible for its maintenance; and Pennington Township councillors responsible to Leigh's inhabitants. The solution to these problems was remarkable. Fletcher's commissioned the building of a steam railway, the tunnel and a new canal basin.

The engineers' priority was to construct a rail and loading system that would prevent the coal from breaking. The main focus was the process by which the coal was loaded onto barges. Their solution was to minimize the height of fall during the unloading of coal trucks. To achieve this, Bedford Basin (150ft by 90ft and 6ft deep) was excavated on the Bridgewater Canal and a new pier head was constructed between Henry Street and Wharf Street with an ingenious loading device replacing the normal tipler system.

Given that Leigh was densely developed and existing buildings prevented the construction of a surface railway, a tunnel was the only feasible option.

The 889ft long tunnel was not bored, the ground was excavated, the tunnel was constructed in brick, and the trough was backfilled and levelled. As it was low roofed and narrow, the specifications of the two locomotives that hauled the coal trains, Ellesmere and Lilford, had to be particular to the tunnel. They were narrow, had no cab over the driver and the chimney was much shorter than normal, yet they conformed to the standard gauge wheel arrangement.

Which leaves the question, why under Brown Street North and Queen Street? The answer here is a little more complex. This part of Leigh was at that time in Atherton, almost all Fletcher's mineral railway was in Atherton. There was a history of conflict between Atherton and Pennington (Leigh as a local authority did not exist at this time). In 1839 an unsuccessful legal appeal had been brought by Messrs Fletcher and Langshaw against payment of the Poor Rate which resulted in Atherton having to pay arrears and expenses to Leigh Union. By mid-century Pennington and Atherton councils were at loggerheads again. This centred on which Council should pay to clean-up the stream which was the boundary between the two, Stocks Platt Brook, which was described as 'filthy', and an 'open sewer'. Each town was reluctant to fund work paid for by their own ratepayers. Fletcher's were large Atherton ratepayers, Ralph Fletcher was on the local council and perhaps paying rates for the railway to Leigh did not suit them. Add to this the friction created by damage to Leigh's roads mentioned earlier, and we have a likely answer.

During the Second World War transporting coal from Bedford Wharf ceased, consequently the

tunnel fell into disuse. In 1947 it became incorporated in the new National Coal Board. The track was lifted in 1952 and the tunnel mouths were bricked up. Lilford was sold as scrap and Ellesmere was returned to Leith in Scotland where it was built, and where it has pride of place in Leith Steam Museum.

There is no evidence that the process of building (in 1863) the twenty two railway arches to carry the LNWR to Bedford-Leigh Station (later the Leigh and Bedford, eventually Leigh Station) had any adverse effects on Fletcher's tunnel. Neither it would appear did the demolishing of three of the five remaining arches in late 2011. Several people are of the opinion that there was a partial collapse in either the 1950s or 1960s and that tons of ash or slurry were pumped into it, but unfortunately to date, I have found no written evidence of this.

References

Pennington, Bedford and Atherton Council Minute Books.

Leigh Union Minute Book 1837-42

Dennis Sweeney. 'A Lancashire Triangle Part One'.

Alan Davies 'Atherton Collieries'.



By Tony Ashcroft

Major Tom Hunter

Surveyor to Leigh Urban District Council

Major Hunter was born at Maryport, Cumberland, and came, on his mother's side, from an old yeoman family by the name of Leesrigg. Major Hunter's great uncle, Captain Harrison, was master of the 'Great Eastern'. This leviathan of the seas was noted for the laying of the first Atlantic cable. After serving his articles as a civil engineer, he attended Glasgow University to study engineering. Afterwards, he was engaged as a contractor's engineer on public works, sewerage, waterworks and railways. He eventually joined Barrow Corporation as deputy Borough Engineer, a position which he held for about ten years. During his time at Barrow he was responsible for the carrying out of various works including the new reservoir at Harlock. He came to Leigh in 1897 as a Surveyor to the Leigh Urban District Council, and had a strenuous time in carrying out improvements in the town, particularly in their street widening scheme and construction of new streets. After the First World War, he devoted himself to preparing a housing scheme under the 1919 Housing Act.

1919 Housing Act

The end of the First World War in 1918 created a huge demand for working class housing in towns throughout Britain. In 1919 Parliament passed the ambitious Housing Act (known as the Addison Act after its author Dr. Christopher Addison, the Minister of Health) which promised government subsidies to help finance the construction of 500,000 homes within three years. This was a highly significant step forward in housing provision. It made housing a national responsibility and local authorities were given the task of developing new housing and rented accommodation where it was needed by working people. Unfortunately, as the economy rapidly weakened in the early 1920s funding for the

scheme had to be cut and only 213,000 houses were completed under the provisions of the Act. Leigh was amongst one of the first boroughs in the country to have a scheme approved under the Act. However, one of the earliest schemes where houses were built and laid out on modern lines was in Warrington Road in 1913-14, before this Act was passed. Major Hunter, with support from the chairman and vice-chairman of the Leigh Highways Committee agreed to build 250 houses. Unfortunately, with the collapse of the Act only 72 of them were erected. After this he resigned his appointment as Borough Engineer to take up his private practice as surveyor.



Military Career

From early manhood Major Hunter was connected with the Volunteers, and afterwards the Territorial's. In 1874 he joined the 10th Lancashire Rifle Volunteers as a private. By 1894 he had obtained a commission, and on coming to Leigh transferred to the Manchester Regiment. On the retirement of Major Selby, he took over the command of the detachment, the Volunteer Decoration being conferred upon him in 1908. He resigned his commission in 1911 with permission to retain his rank and to wear the uniform. On this occasion he was presented with a silver cigar case (supplied by Mrs. Winstanley of Bradshawgate) by Alderman Smith on behalf of the non-commissioned officers. On the outbreak of the First World War, Major Hunter took responsibility for organising the National Reserve and afterwards took command of the Volunteer Citizen Corps. In March 1915 he rejoined his old battalion (5th Manchester's) and served as Major in command of the depot. He relinquished this in 1917 to take charge as acting commandant of the Prisoner of War Camp, Stanton, Dalton in Furness. He was always interested in the welfare of ex-servicemen. He was the first president of the Leigh branch of the British Legion, a member of the Bolton, Leigh and District war Pensions Committee, the United Services Fund, the King's Roll Committee and chairman of the Unity Relief Committee.

At one time Major Hunter took an active role in Freemasonry, being Worshipful Master of a Barrow lodge and provincial officer in 1924. He was also an active member of Christ Church, Pennington and for many years was church warden.

Family Life

Major Hunter married Eileen Atkinson in 1890 and had four children who all participated fully in local life. They lived at Leesrig, Beech Walk, Leigh.

His eldest son James Kenneth, became his assistant at Leigh, but was killed on 6 September 1917 whilst serving as an officer in the East Lancashire Royal Engineers during the First World War. In June 1918 a memorial window was unveiled to his memory in Christ Church, Pennington by his sister Eileen.

Oswald, like his father, became a surveyor. He was a former pupil at Leigh Grammar School.

At one time he had been producer for the Leigh Amateur Dramatic Society and was a former member of both the Leigh Cricket Club and Leigh Golf Club.


Dorothy Eileen was an accomplished singer, elocutionist and pianist, appearing in concerts for Christ Church, Pennington. She was also a member of the Leigh Amateur Dramatic Society and the Leigh Literary Society.

George, after attending Leigh Grammar School, joined the staff of Leigh Journal before being transferred to the head office at Bolton. He represented the Lancashire Evening Post at Blackpool. He also held the post of chairman of the Blackpool and Fylde Branch of the National Union of Journalists.

Major Hunter died at 14, Winmarleigh Gardens, Leigh. The Reverend Murdoch, Rural Dean of Leigh and Vicar of Christ Church Pennington, conducted a service prior to his remains being taken to Blackpool Crematorium.

Museum Shop

museum of WiganLife



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Find unusual gifts and games, cards, prints and other items inspired by our collections and exhibitions plus local books and maps.

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Your Archives

The Archives Service has bravely entered the world of social media. We now have a facebook page at the link below and will be using the site to keep you up to date about new collections, new catalogues and any events and activities at the Archives. Our volunteers will also be contributing snippets when they come across interesting documents or images, so if you'd like to learn more about what we do day-to-day at the Archives, have a look.

You can view the page here <http://www.facebook.com/WiganArchivesService> and can do so without having an account with facebook.

As part of the annual Heritage Open Days in September, we will be running an event called The Archives Big Clean as well as opening the strongrooms for members of the public to come and see behind the scenes. Archives staff and volunteers will be demonstrating the cleaning techniques we use to remove dirt from the Victorian quarter session court records, and there will be opportunities for you to have a go, as well as more learning about the realities of Victorian crime and punishment in Wigan and Leigh.

And finally, I'd like to say well done to Joanna Badrock, on gaining a place on the Archives Masters Course at the University of Liverpool. Joanna has volunteered at the archives since 2010 and we wish her every success in her future career.

Recent Acquisitions

New listings continue as usual thanks to the work of Archive staff and volunteers. Collections accepted or listed in the last few months include:

- Golborne Colliery photograph album, c.1949 (Acc. 2012/1)
- Leyland Collection and Hindley Library Records, 1727-1970 (Acc. 2012/11)
- Wigan businesses, photographic collection, c.1980 (Acc. 2012/16)
- Inner Wheel Club of Tyldesley records (D/DS/129)
- Eckersley Mayoral Presentation Photographic Album, 1873 (Acc. 2012/18)
- Crooke Village images, Paul Green Collection (Acc. 2012/25)
- Fred Holcroft Papers (D/DZA/301)
- Lane Head Methodist Church, Lowton, records (D/NMM/3)
- Sydney Clough and Marian Baron Collection (D/DZA/298)

- Shevington Township Records (Tr/Sh)
- Tyldesley and Astley Aerial Photographs (Acc. 2012/9)

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

Collections Corner: Clubs, Pubs & Privies - Building Control Plans

From 1858 local councils were granted the power to enact bye-laws for controlling the erection of new buildings and alterations to existing buildings. The powers granted, were however, limited and by the 1870s further legislation was necessary.

The Public Health Act of 1875 gave authorities the power to tackle the public health threats posed by poor housing and the lack of appropriate sewerage.

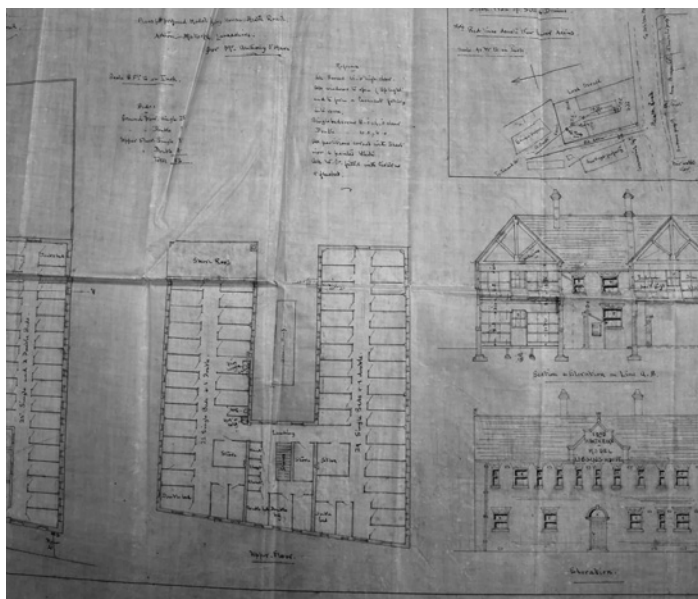
As councils began to regulate the construction of buildings, so records began to be kept. Most authorities kept a register of plans, giving brief details of the location and ownership of the land, and the nature of the proposed scheme of work. Alongside the register, plans were submitted by the owners of the land.

These plans are detailed drawings usually with sections, elevations and a ground plan of the site. They are often beautifully rendered and demonstrate the skill of the architect or surveyor responsible for the design. Equally often they were produced by the contractor or builder, particularly for smaller and more functional structures. Some of the plans amount to several pages, with full colour drawings that are as vibrant now as when they were produced.

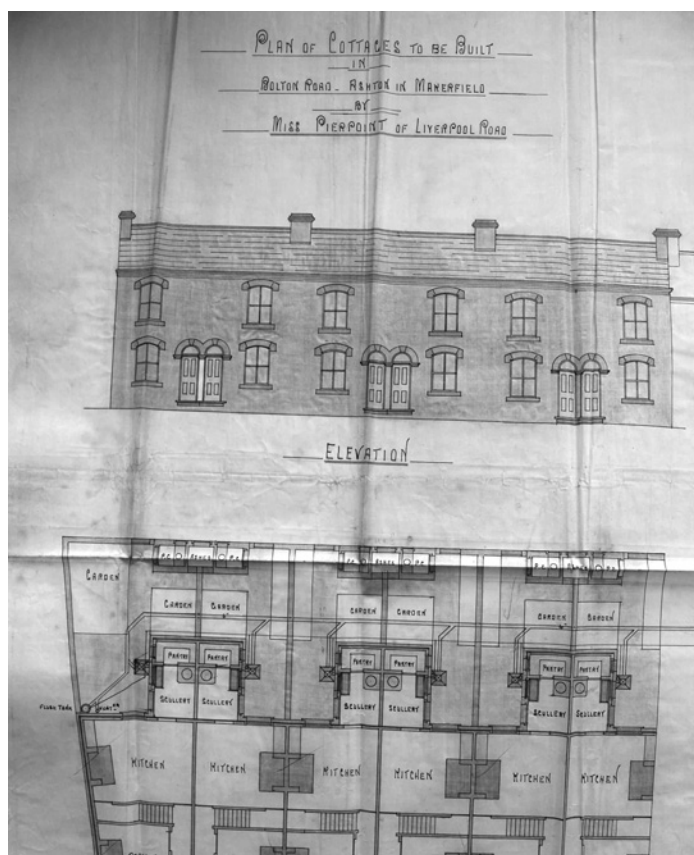
The drawings feature public houses and hotels, showing the large ornate designs commissioned by the breweries. Middle class houses are occasionally shown in enough detail to allow you to imagine the original interiors of Edwardian properties. By way of contrast, there are dozens of plans for less sophisticated constructions, privies and piggeries, depicted as no more than simple line drawings.

Dozens of registers and hundreds of plans survive for the Wigan area, although many have been lost or destroyed over the years, prior to the establishment of the Archive Service. As such, some districts have large collections such as Ashton and Leigh, whilst some have very few or plans that only survive on microfilm.

Volunteers at the Archives Service are now starting to catalogue the building control plans and make them more easily available for researchers. We also plan to start digitising some of the plans of important buildings in the borough and you will be able to see these as we progress on the Archives Service facebook page.



Ashton Model Lodging House, c. 1908



Cottages on Bolton Road for Miss Pierpoint, 1890

80s Day at Wigan Library

Thursday 16 August 2012

In aid of the Mayor's Charity

Help Wigan Library celebrate the 1980s, and raise some money for Wigan and Leigh Pensioners Link.

Join us for karaoke, staff fancy dress, dance performances, raffles and a trip down memory lane.

All displays and exhibitions will continue throughout August.

As part of the event we are looking for people to help us create a display of their memories of Wigan during the era.

If you would like to share your memories of the Wigan Borough during the 1980s, please let us know before Tuesday 14 August.

Contact Michelle Johnson or Steve Jones at:

Wigan Library, Wigan Life Centre,

The Wiend, Wigan WN1 1NH

01942 827621 wigan.library@wlct.org



Basil Tierney

BY PHILOMENA TIERNEY MORGAN

Basil Tierney was born in 1908 in St. Helens and came to live in Wigan as a young boy. He attended Sacred Heart Catholic primary school and when he left aged about 16, he worked as a grocery order boy for Stringfellow's in Wigan, before owning his own grocery shop in Park Road and later on the corner of Dicconson Street and Upper Dicconson Street. He married Veronica Williams who became a teacher at St Mary's. They had four children, but sadly when Veronica was aged 42, she died leaving Basil to bring up his children who were then between the ages of four and 12. This he did wonderfully and kept them all together making a very close, happy family. They lived at 1 Dicconson Crescent.

When Veronica had been ill Basil took her to Lourdes, the place of Pilgrimage in the Pyrenees of France, and this seems to have been his saving even though Veronica didn't get better. He decided to help other sick people to go on pilgrimage there, many of them too poor to be able to afford it themselves. He set up the Wigan branch of the Lourdes Sick Fund affiliated to the Liverpool Pilgrimage Association and together with other members John Charnock the headmaster at St Mary's, Frances Ramsey and Joe Gormally, arranged fund raising events such as dances, talks and an annual raffle. They also set up the Marion Operatic Society. He became a well known, well loved person in Wigan and the surrounding areas and always had a smile and helping hand for everyone. Each year he would go on the pilgrimage as a brancardier, a person who helps the sick. This was the miracle that had come out of his visit to Lourdes in 1949, as the good works fully occupied him. Where he found

the time as he brought up his children single handed we will never know. He made himself a large circle of friends and was left no time to feel sorry for himself. When they returned from Lourdes most of the sick pilgrims would have never left their homes again if it wasn't for Basil who used to organise outings for them.

As well as living for his children he lived for Lourdes. He always had a story to tell about the place and the people associated with it. One year when the pilgrimage boat arrived at France one of the sick ladies, Mrs Brozofski, wasn't allowed to disembark because she was Polish and didn't have a visa. Basil chose to return with her to England to get the visa and then continue on, making their own way to Lourdes to join the pilgrimage. Nothing was too much trouble for him and he was always so cheerful. Another story was about once when he was in Lourdes and was late getting back on duty in the hospital, probably due to him stretching the rules to help someone, he had to climb over the railings to get into the grounds. Yet another was when his false teeth plate broke and someone gave him a lift on their scooter up into the old town of Lourdes to find a local dental mechanic. Basil didn't speak a word of French, or maybe just 'allez allez' when pushing the bath chairs, but he managed to get what he wanted and make lots of friends on the way.

There maybe just the odd ones now in Wigan who remember the work Basil Tierney did but for us, his children (Basil, Michael, Philomena and Veronica) we hope that he is never forgotten.

Alina

By Edna Stephenson

The Recluse of Wigan

In the early fourteenth century, Wigan had a recluse whose name was Alina. She was not simply a lady who wished to keep herself to herself or someone who had been hidden away by family. She was a person, who had very deep religious beliefs, which she felt could best be expressed by having herself enclosed, to enable her to lead a solitary life of simplicity and devotion.

Occasional references to recluses can be found in Bishops Registers, but is not known how many such recluses there were, scattered across the country. Typically they lived in small cells, attached to the wall of a church, where the occupants had been quite literally walled-in. The cell wall would have had one or two small openings, one into the church to allow the occupant to watch the celebration of Mass at the altar, the other to the outside world to admit air, light, food and drink, and, presumably to remove waste.

We do not know who Alina was, but she is likely to have come from the landed gentry who had studied books about faith and how it could be expressed. She would have been accustomed to comfortable conditions, which makes her decision all the more remarkable.

Nowadays, a person wishing to take part in the London Marathon has to be checked to ensure that he or she is capable of facing the challenge and is likely to finish the course. In a similar way, in the Middle Ages, a prospective recluse needed to be assessed for suitability on both the spiritual and practical levels. The Bishop or his local representative would have assured himself that her faith was strong enough to sustain her solitary existence for the rest of her life. The other consideration was that proper provision had been made for her bodily needs, and this required a servant who lived nearby. An endowment was necessary to cover the costs, and this is how we know about Alina.

In 1323, her endowment dried up and all efforts to have it reinstated had failed, so she sent a petition to the King, Edward II, appealing for his help. That is not as extraordinary as it may sound. Medieval kings seemed to act as 'ombudsmen' in cases where usual channels had failed. It is Alina's letter which has survived in our National Archives. In it, she explained that she had been enclosed in 1317, funded by the grant of rent from land at Shevington and a dwelling in Wigan which had been held by Sir Robert de Holland, Lord of the Manor of what is now known as Upholland. All went well for six years, but then Sir Robert was imprisoned and his lands confiscated by the King and Alina's grant ceased. Appeals to the administrator of the confiscated lands, John de Lancaster, had been of no avail, so as a last resort she turned to the King. Prompt action followed, first an enquiry to check that her case was genuine, then a writ issued to John de Lancaster to reinstate the grant.

And there the trail goes cold: we can only assume that Alina's income, 29s 6d annually, was restored and that she was able to continue her contemplative devotions until the end of her life.

**museum
of WiganLife**♥

Room Hire

With the backdrop of the Museum's architecture and exhibitions the Discover Room can provide the ideal venue for a host of events including small group or community meetings. For further details call 01942 828128.



A Tale of Two Brothers and Oldfield Brewery

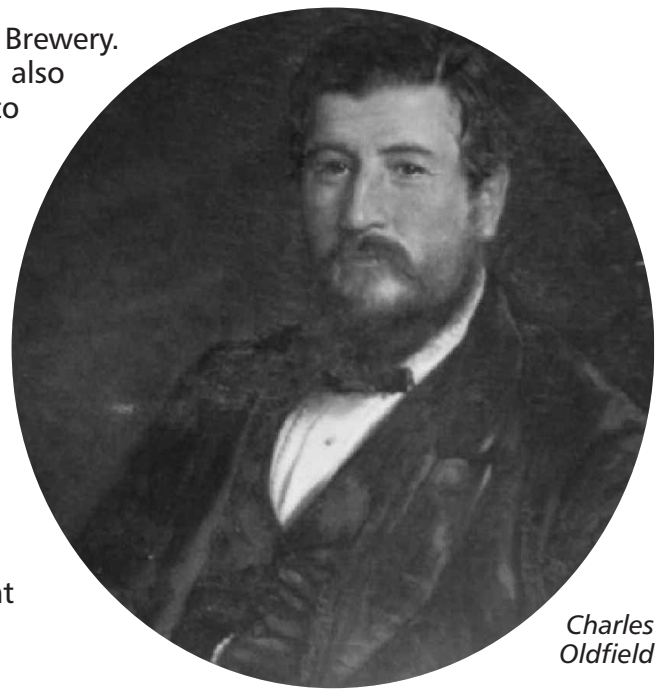
by Ken Bowden

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times" Dickens' words could have been written to describe the lives of two brothers, Charles (b 1826) and John Oldfield (b 1832) in Victorian Wigan. Their father, James, died in 1836 aged 36, leaving their mother Christiana to bring them up along with their brother Thomas (aged 11) and baby sister, Margaret (aged 21 months). With the 1834 Poor Law Act recently passed through Parliament, there was a real threat the family would end up separated in the workhouse in Frog Lane. Instead, Christiana struggled on by taking in washing and sending the boys out to work at the newly opened Victoria Mill in Wallgate.

The cotton industry held little attraction for the brothers. Charles became a 'hammer-man' at Wigan Forge in Brock Mill Lane, and John went 'down the pits'. 1854 brought significant change to their lives. In March, Charles slipped off to Liverpool for an 'out of parish' marriage to his pregnant bride, Elizabeth Blundell, the landlady of the Rose public house in Standishgate. The couple returned to Wigan to take up the tenancy of the Wigan Arms on the corner of Wellington Street and Hardybutts, a move that lead eventually to the

creation of Oldfield's Brewery. John, like his brother, also slipped out of town to Hindley to marry his pregnant bride, Margaret Farrell in the October. Unlike his brother, the couple immediately left Wigan to live in Monks Coppenthal, Cheshire where John also became a 'hammer-man'. They were not to return to Wigan for at least five years.

Charles' happiness was short-lived, as Elizabeth passed away in 1856, leaving him with two young children to raise, probably with the help of his mother. He provided a roof over the heads of Christiana and her third husband, Thomas Atherton, a handloom weaver, until their deaths in 1857 and 1860 respectively. Like many Victorian widows and widowers, Charles married again. His bride in 1861 was Martha Dawber, the widowed landlady of the Bear and Staff on Wallgate. Once again it was off to Liverpool for another 'out of parish' marriage before returning to the Bear and Staff for the birth of their daughter. Two pubs with brewing on the premises,



Charles
Oldfield

Charles' business was underway! John returned to Wigan around 1860, changing his trade to draper like his father-in-law. His timing could not have been worse. 1861 saw the start of the American Civil War and with it the cotton famine. By 1862 only two of the town's mills were working and 7,000 of Wigan's 9,000 cotton workers were out of work and John was out of business. He went onto the streets as a hawker of 'soft wares' to try to support his family. Sadly, by doing so he probably ruled out any help as the first rule of the Manchester Relief Fund was 'no relief to be

given to persons whose earnings could not be ascertained ie handloom weavers, hawkers and home tailors'. John and his family struggled on until Charles helped out with rooms in the yard of the Wigan Arms. The end of the cotton famine saw John back in business, first as a draper, then as a tobacconist and beer seller in Wallgate, more than likely selling Oldfield's ales.

Charles' business was beginning to grow as he acquired more pubs, including the Legs of Man, the Red Lion Inn on Chapel Lane and the Foundry Inn on Warrington Lane. He also entered politics, becoming a councillor for All Saints Ward in 1868 with, as the Wigan Observer reported, 'no votes being cast' when his opponents withdrew. Such withdrawal, the Observer noted, was probably influenced by the fact that 'fifty men were lodged in a stable on Sunday and supplied with drink until Monday morning, and there is no doubt every means would have been employed on both sides to secure the return of the candidates.'

Whilst Charles celebrated his continuing success by opening the brewery in Poolstock in 1874, John's marriage was in trouble. In 1875, after 30 years of marriage and eleven children (only four of whom were still alive) he and Margaret separated.

Bear and Staff is the light coloured building under Wallgate bridge



The following year, John slipped off to Liverpool like his brother, this time for a bigamous marriage to Elizabeth Leigh, the widow of William, a servant at the Wigan Arms. Charles helped out yet again by providing the tenancy of the Shamrock on the corner of Wellington Street and Scholes. No sooner had John and Elizabeth settled in, than they gained new neighbours. Margaret also slipped out of town in 1878 to Bolton for a bigamous marriage to Thomas Bennett, a collier, and they returned to live in School Street, not far from the Shamrock. This unusual and illegal domestic situation was rocked in 1881 when John's 'wife' was found dead on the floor of one of the rooms in the pub. Although the inquest found her death was from natural causes, the investigation and publicity must have caused John, Margaret and Charles some sleepless nights.

The next few years passed uneventfully until 1887 when, some months after the death of his wife, Charles sold his interest in Oldfield's Brewery to James Smith, his longstanding partner. His retirement, however, was to be short-lived. In 1888, Charles travelled to London on business but was taken ill in his hotel. Sadly, after a couple of weeks of continuing illness, he developed gangrene in a leg, necessitating its amputation. He died shortly

Wigan Arms



afterwards in his hotel bedroom at the Covent Garden Hotel. Charles' funeral was a very formal affair with a carriage procession followed on foot by some 30 dignitaries including the mayor of Wigan. The Observer also reported that 'the ringers of All Saints Parish Church ascended the tower and rang a touch of grandsire triples, consisting of 672 changes with the bells deeply muffled in memory of the late Mr Oldfield'.

John continued to work for Oldfield's Brewery as a beer-house keeper at the Sir Robert Peel on Wigan Road in Hindley. In 1891, he married bigamously again, this time to Ann Scotson, the 29 year old daughter of a local miner. The couple soon moved away to live in Lymm, Cheshire, where John died in 1904. In his will, John charged his sons to pay Ann an income for the rest of her life. He made no mention of his legitimate wife, Margaret.

Margaret Oldfield outlived John by some eight years to become one of the first old age pensioners, dying suddenly in 1912. The inquest found her death to be from natural causes but noted she had been reluctant to see a doctor as she was frightened of ending up in the workhouse.

Oldfield's Brewery continued to trade successfully until 1927 when the business was taken over by Peter Walker and the brewery closed.

The church in 1950 shortly before demolition.

TH'OWD GIDLOW TIN CHAPEL

BY DAVID LYTHGOE

On Saturday 2 October 1897, The Wigan Observer and Advertiser recorded the opening of a new church and school in these words 'On Sunday last, this church was opened for public worship. In the afternoon the Rev Owen Davies conducted a dedicatory service and preached from the text 'We have thought of Thy loving kindness O God in the midst of Thy temple. The collection amounted to £4 7s (£4.35). This iron church is situated at the corner of Barnsley Street and Buckley Street near to the railway arch leading to Messrs Ryland's. It is intended for the development of the mission work which was carried on in the old school close by, the same workers conducting the services and the Sunday school. The building will seat 200 persons and the entire cost amounted to £200. Next Sunday the harvest thanksgiving services will be held.' The preachers on that occasion were to be, at 2.30 Mr WT Gee and at 6.30 Mr Joseph Trickett.

So began the life of what was to become affectionately known, until 1950 when it was demolished, as 'Th'Owd Gidlow Tin Chapel'. There had already been a worshipping community locally, known as the Gidlow Community Mission, for on 29 May 1895, the Wigan Observer recorded that the Sunday School Anniversary services in the afternoon and evening respectively were led by the Rev JW Dickson of St Paul's (Congregational) and the Rev H Wilson of Ashton.

In addition to Sunday services, other meetings were held in the building. On Wednesday 15 February 1902, the Gidlow Congregational Church Mutual Improvement Society held its first meeting chaired by its President, Rev L Crookall. Mr F Birch read a paper on 'Why I am a Socialist' dealing with nationalisation of the land and nationalisation of the railways and developing an education system

'to enable any working man's child to win its way to the highest university.'

To enlarge the premises, they were jacked up in 1904 and a large room built underneath for use as a Sunday school and for social week day meetings. The Wigan Observer for October 21 1911 records that the building was to be offered for sale by auctioneers Messrs Green and Trickett at the Dog and Partridge Hotel Wigan. With the building was also offered the plot of vacant land which was surrounded by a brick and stone wall, as well as the heating apparatus and other fixtures in and around the premises. However, the property was withdrawn as negotiations had been proceeding meanwhile and it was sold by private treaty to Mr Jacob Gorner of Wigan.

So you may imagine yourself walking to the church on a dark winter night in the early years of the twentieth century. There are few, if any street lights and the gas lamps that you pass give only a small greenish yellow pool of light before you pass into darkness again. The church (or chapel) itself is lit by gas mantles and the hissing of the gas is a constant backdrop to the hymns and choruses that you sing from Sankey's 'Sacred Songs and Solos' to the accompaniment of an ancient harmonium. Condensation trickles down the windows and the treacle varnished wooden panelled interior, as the congregation waits for the arrival of its minister, the Rev Owen Davies. He lives in Ashland Avenue off Freckleton Street and receives a small income from his private school there, but his help to the Gidlow Mission Church is freely given. Every Sunday evening in winter he makes his way on foot across the fields between his home and the chapel by the aid of a paraffin storm lamp. You and the congregation wait until you see the light of his lantern appear through the arch of Buckley Street Bridge, where the branch line leads to Ryland's mill. Woe betides the luckless cyclist, whose wheels become entangled with the rails that slant across the road here. The Rev Davies will have come by way of Swinley Lane and the colliery waste lands that are now replaced by Walkden Avenue and the buildings of Wigan College adjacent to Mesnes Park.

Rev Davies died in 1931 leaving the church without a pastor, so the leaders had of necessity to find someone or other to care for and maintain the property. Eventually, the Station Road Primitive Methodist Circuit agreed to accept responsibility. The building was also in need of repairs, and hopes

and dreams of a new building began to arise. Fund raising events were held, concerts, sales of work, social events and regular mid-week meetings. Sadly, the outbreak of the Second World War slowed the rate at which funds were accumulating, to be resumed after the cessation of hostilities. To secure the necessary funding the members worked tirelessly for many years, ably led by the minister the Rev WH Dixon and the senior Steward Mr H (Harry) Hughes, a well known grocer whose business was conducted from two shops on Gidlow Lane. The chapel was subsequently demolished and the present flat roofed brick building opened to great rejoicing on 24 June 1950. The Sunday school was then about 100 strong and run by Mr Robert P Watson, who co-incidentally lived in Ashland Avenue. A generous philanthropist, he arranged for the morning Sunday school members to be transported every Sunday morning to, and returned from, Douglas Bank Methodist Church by one of Messrs Stringfellow's furniture vans. Not an activity of which the Health and Safety authorities would approve today!

Origami

By Marjory Myers

Life starts as smooth as sheets of paper
You fold and unfold and mould it
Try to follow valued patterns
But it's not real as you hold it.

Try once a change of formulae
You kick the traces just to see
Created from the worst mistakes
Unfolds the best that there can be.

Cream full moon in a navy sky
When she held her baby girl new
Flawless peach skin, rosebud pink mouth
Could the beauty really be true.

Baby's warmth in a cream cosy wrap
Mum wrapped in sweet stillness of time
Paper's reshaped by winds of change
But for now, this magic is mine.

Editor's note: Marjory Myers is a member of Pemberton Pens. The group made origami doves of peace which were displayed in the Holocaust Memorial Day commemoration in January, hence the poem.

Upholland School Days

BY TONY BERRY

My father, William Henry Berry, was born in Sandon Street, Poolstock, Wigan in 1906. He was the second child of Robert and Esther and apparently a weakly baby. Esther, discouraged by neighbours' comments, feared for his life probably since she herself had been baptised at home at the age of a few months in what one would assume were similar circumstances. Her mother-in-law Ellen, however, revived her spirits with the words "Tek no notice o't'neighbours. He'll not dee; his eyes are too bright!" That she was correct in her observation was amply borne out by the fact that he grew to be, in his prime, a fourteen stone six-footer capable of sustained periods of heavy physical work, apart from having many other talents.

In 1912 the family moved to 30, Mill Lane, Upholland, one in a row of old stone cottages, which was to become their permanent family home. William and his sister Nellie were enrolled at St Thomas' village school, and his first memory there was being brought to the front of the class to recite poetry that he had learned at his Wigan

school, probably St James', Poolstock. Having come to Upholland from foreign parts he was involved in fights with would-be playground bullies for, although of a generally amiable disposition, he could become angry when faced with injustices, which I suppose were typically English characteristics.

During the First World War the school was allotted a plot of land to cultivate in the nearby Abbey grounds to assist in the war effort. The pupils were also involved in knitting scarves for the soldiers. I suppose the receipt of these would have brought some comfort to the servicemen, especially in the trenches, and also perhaps a touch of much-needed humour when the results of the children's efforts were examined, particularly the rough and ready attempts of the boys!

William recalled that while the boys were engaged in their gardening endeavours they came across a buried cache of old coins. Unfortunately, the find was probably not reported and the boys amused themselves by throwing the coins at each other! One is



William Henry Berry in his early teens (about 1920)

tempted to speculate that the coins may have been hidden away by one of the impoverished Abbey friars centuries before or perhaps by a Civil War Royalist supporter when Cromwell's men were at large in the district.

Although William's first place of worship in Upholland was the old Methodist chapel near the bottom of the brow in School Lane, a few years later he became a choirboy in St. Thomas' parish church. No doubt due to the fact that his headmaster, John William Bamforth, was also the organist and choirmaster. William used to tell how 'John Willie', as he was affectionately known, once described the boys' efforts at choir practice as abominable. Then, apparently feeling a twinge of pity at their downcast faces, made the pun "a bomb in a bull" to lighten up the proceedings!

Music in the church at that time was provided by means of a

water-organ which was powered by an underground spring of water. Although I have not, to date, found any reference to this particular organ, I should think that suction drew the air through the organ pipes. Mr Bamforth was able to control the flow of the air by means of some kind of valve. Lightly touching this valve produced a peculiar, distinctive sound which he used to great effect as a warning to any misbehaving choirboy during church services!

The school-leaving age in those days, for pupils not proceeding to secondary education, was 13 years. William had attained the required academic standard by the end of his penultimate year and, consequently, found himself at something of a loose end during his final year. He reckoned that a substantial part of his time was occupied in running errands for Mr Bamforth. His slim, long-legged build at that time meant that he would literally have accomplished this with great ease.

My mother Elizabeth, who was two years younger than William, attended St John's primary

school at Lamberhead Green and, in contrast to his experience, was entered for the Scholarship examination (the old version of the eleven plus) and passed. Unfortunately she was not allowed by her family to take advantage of this success and left school at 13, becoming a cotton weaver a few years later. I have no doubt that, had both my parents been born into the present generation, they would have had no difficulty in gaining entrance to university with regard to natural ability, as would many of their working-class contemporaries.

Another of William's memories was of summer bank holidays blessed with fine weather when many people would stroll up Mill Lane heading for Ashurst Beacon. Grandma Berry would make quantities of nettle pop to sell by the glass on these occasions. Also there would be hot water simmering in a large kettle on the ancient coal-fired range in the kitchen. This would be for brewing purposes for those walkers who carried tea-cans with them. William

once put up an enterprising sign which stated 'FOR SALE, WATER, READY HOTTED'

After leaving school at 13, William was employed for a few months as a labourer at Finch's quarry in Appley Bridge. Whilst he was there, he was 'head-hunted' by his future long-term employer, Herbert Marsh of Blackledge House, Hall Green, Upholland. Mr Marsh was an agricultural contractor who, doubtless, had noticed William helping out whenever his threshing-machine set was employed at Heaton's farm, which was across the road from the Berry's cottage. Also, probably being aware of the size and strength of William's father Robert, he would have regarded his employing of the lad to be an excellent investment for the future. Mr Marsh was himself a big man.

Thus began William's lasting relationship with agricultural contracting machinery in general and, in particular, the traction engine.

Heritage Open Weekend

Our activities this year will take place between Friday 7 and Sunday 9 September.



Leigh for All,
Civic Square, Leigh

Between 11.00am & 3.00pm on Friday 7 and Saturday 8
Programme highlights include classic car rally and brass band music, guided tours of St Marys Church, Leigh Town Hall and Wigan Archives and walks and talks.



Museum of Wigan Life

11.00am-3.00pm on Saturday 8
'What a Building' Super Saturday with tours, displays and craft activities



Trencherfield Mill Engine
Wigan

Sessions at 11.00am, 1.00pm and 3.00pm on Sunday 9
See the magnificent Steam Engine and meet the Engineers.

For further information please ring 01942 828128 or visit www.wlct.org/heritage

Mike Haddon Slide Collection

This issue we are looking at images taken during the early 1980s by Mike Haddon, former Industrial History Officer at the Heritage Services.

Mike completed a fascinating record of the district, recording hundreds of buildings of historic interest, and in particular many industrial sites that have since been redeveloped or demolished entirely.

Volunteers at the Archives are now cataloguing the slide collection and hope to digitise some of the best images.

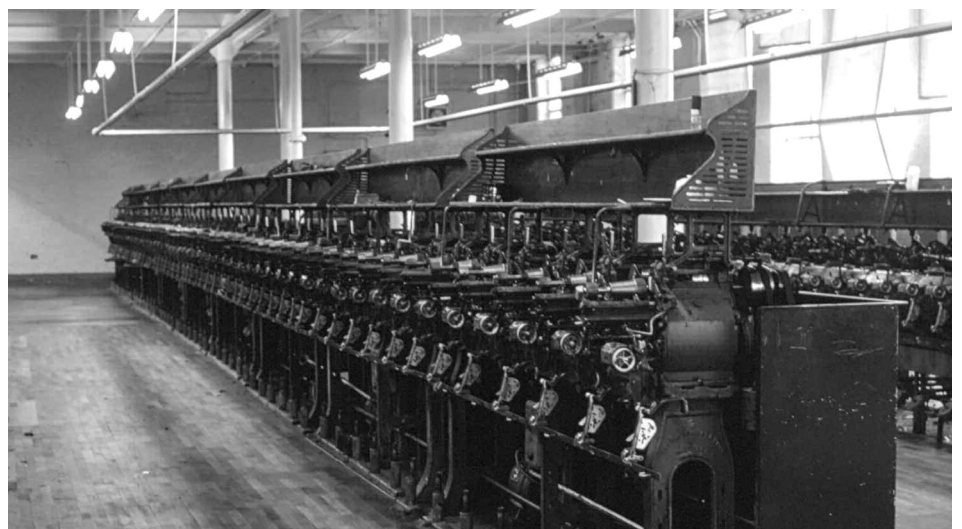
Archives Volunteer, Nic Howell, working on the slide collection



Hurst's Grocers Shop, Wallgate, Wigan



Top Lock, Leeds and Liverpool Canal



May Mill, Pemberton



Silcock's Fair, Mesnes Terrace, Wigan



Savoy Bingo, Atherton



*An unknown building
in Pemberton if any
readers can help?*



Famous products containing Ellsey's vinegar

ELLSEY'S AT 80

After 80 successful years in the business, supplying hundreds of millions of litres of vinegar all over the world, contending with a compulsory purchase order, a forced demolition order, change in direction, location, and over 1,000 satisfied customers, Wigan based vinegar brewers, Ellsey's, certainly can say that 'Nobody else is like Ellsey's!'.

Ellsey's vinegar originated in 1932, when Walter Ellsey started brewing malt vinegar at a factory in Goose Green. With five successful years under his belt Mr Ellsey left the company to serve his country in the Second World War. Like many other businesses at that time Ellsey's was left in the hands of a female colleague, in this instance Walter's secretary, Mrs Tinsley.

Ironically Mrs Tinsley ran the company like a military operation and ensured its continued growth and success in Walter's absence. She also had a fantasy that she was Walter's wife, telling customers so, on a regular basis and eventually banning Mabel, the real Mrs Ellsey, from visiting the factory at all.

Ellsey's could never be accused of not making its presence known, with the smell of brewing vinegar wafting down and lingering in many

neighbouring streets near the Goose Green factory. In fact, whilst at the Goose Green premises, the company's 15 employees were banned from the local bus services, after other passengers complained of the smell they brought with them.

After hanging up his brewing boots in 1960, Walter's nephew, John Williams, took charge but just six years later, Wigan Council hit the vinegar brewers with a real blow! Ellsey's famous brewing tower and a large section of the front of the factory would be knocked down to make way for a new dual carriageway. Ellsey's were faced with a tough choice, pack up or find a new direction, new premises were never considered.

With a dedicated, long serving work force and over 30 years of successful business under their belt, already supplying household names such as St Helen's based Barton's Pickles, John decided it had to be the latter. John took the company in a new, exciting direction as Ellsey's focused on supplying different varieties of vinegar to wholesalers, moving away from what had been the company's bread and butter – malt vinegar.

With things on the up, Ellsey's still had their downs, one in particular being the retirement, in 1995, of well-loved, and longest serving member of staff, Vic Arthur, who worked as the company's boiler man for 63 years.

Walter Ellsey, founder of the company



Following Vic's retirement, members of staff were convinced that they could see the ghost of Vic's father a previous employee, loitering in the building's cellar.

Taking over from his dad in the late 1990s Tim Williams saw Ellsey's need for more space, both internally and externally. Following a forced demolition order,

Tim upped sticks and took the Ellsey's brand, along with its passion, motivation and ambition, to a design and build premises at Tetbury Close at a cost of £350,000.



An operative filling bottles with Ellsey's vinegar

Thanks to a good reputation and an even better work ethic, Ellsey's retained and continue to retain, a large proportion of loyal customers. Well-known brands such as Fiddler's Lancashire Crisps, Del Monte producers of canned fruit and vegetable products, Wing Yip, Mrs. Darlington's, Cottage Delight and Womersley, all knew where to get the best vinegar for their products, and still do.

Today Ellsey's remains as driven as ever, looking to expand the brand and product lines, with dessert vinegar, vinegar flavoured ale, chip shop vinegar, including chilli and garlic flavours, and dried vinegar flavours. A book is also being written about the company's history and is expected to be finished later this year.

The company have also just launched a search to find 80 people called 'Ellsey', first or last name, to join them at Wigan and Leigh Hospice's annual garden party on the 11 August. The 'Ellseys' will be treated to a VIP experience in Ellsey's marque, refreshments and complimentary goody bags are just some of the things the 'Ellseys' can expect to receive on the day. To thank the hospice for holding the event, Ellsey's are also the official sponsors of the garden party this year. Here's to another 80 years!

If you are called 'Ellsey' spelt any way, first or second name, male or female and would like to be a part of history, enjoy an afternoon of tea and good company please get in touch with Freedman Brown Communications on 01942 527030.

Editor's note: This article was submitted by the company.

Wigan: Home of Gerrard Winstanley and Socialism

*By Derek
Winstanley*

Who do you think is the most famous and influential Wiganer of all time? Billy Boston, who holds the Wigan try scoring record? Perhaps Sir Ian McKellen, star of 'Lord of the Rings' and 'The Hobbit' or George Formby, the ukulele player? Well, I don't think it is any of these! I can't provide a photo of him, as he was born in 1609. We don't even have a painting of him. In fact, most people in Wigan have never heard of him. His name is Gerrard Winstanley. Winstanley, of course, is a very common name in the Wigan area.

People like Sir Isaac Newton and Galileo are famous because they did things that changed the world. But new ideas often upset the apple cart. Existing institutions, powers and beliefs are threatened and people in positions of authority often take steps to repress and sometimes obliterate people with new ideas. Joan of Arc was burned at the stake for heresy, and later made a saint. Gerrard Winstanley wasn't burned at the stake, but he did challenge established authorities and propose a new order. He and his band of followers were quickly squashed, but his ideas have lived on through his writings that have endured through the centuries. Researchers and political leaders in many countries have analyzed his work and used his ideas to promote social and political agendas. Today, he is recognized worldwide

as one of the most impressive figures in early modern European history and the foremost radical of the English Revolution.

It is important to recall conditions in England 400 years ago. The seventeenth century was a period of upheaval, a world turned upside down. People were dissatisfied with the Monarchy, the Church and the social hierarchy. Huge differences between the haves and have-nots created inequalities and a class struggle. Members of Parliament were chosen by a select few and most Englishmen and all English women were not allowed to vote. There was radical questioning of the status quo and revolutionary hope was in the air. Civil war started in 1642 and for about ten years Englishmen fought Englishmen. Oliver Cromwell overthrew and executed King Charles I and set himself up as Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England. But despite the hopes of many, Cromwell turned out to be no better than the Monarchy he had deposed. He protected his own interests and many say he was a dictator. In the turmoil, many cults and religious and political groups were formed.

Gerrard Winstanley was baptized in Wigan Parish Church on October 10 1609. His father was a cloth merchant. He must have come from a relatively well off and influential branch of the Winstanley family that was well connected to the Rector and the burgesses of Wigan. The burgesses were the select group that managed the affairs of the town. In fact, his father probably was a church warden and a burgess himself. Gerrard most likely went to Wigan Grammar School. When Gerrard was 21 he became an apprentice at the prestigious Merchant Taylors' Company in London, no doubt through connections that the Winstanleys had fostered. After he became a Freeman at Merchant Taylors' he married Susan King and did well in London as a cloth merchant until hard

times struck in 1643. An economic depression caused him and many others to become bankrupt. From a quite privileged position he lost almost everything and hit rock bottom. He became a cowherd. So in his lowly position what did Gerrard do? He certainly did not sit back and wait for others to change things. He developed a clear understanding of the problems and grievances he and his countrymen were facing, articulated what he believed to be everyone's rights and created nothing less than a vision and a strategy for a new world, a New Commonwealth.

He saw how the Church, Monarchy and Aristocracy represented their own interests and not the interests of the masses, for most of whom life was degraded and unjust. He pulled together the spiritual, economic, political and social aspects of the human condition and wrapped them up in a radical theology and philosophy. He identified what it meant to be human and got down to what he called the 'natural state of man' the state he wanted to restore. This was a bloke born and raised in Wigan who dared to take on Cromwell and the rest of the world! But it was no good just developing ideas and keeping them to himself, he had to get the support of others and take action. One of his guiding principles was 'Action is the life of all and if thou dost not act thou dost nothing' or, as a Wiganer might say, 'If tha' does nowt, tha meet as weel be deud'.

So he founded a group called The True Levellers, also known as The Diggers. They were called The True

First Wigan Diggers Festival on the Mesnes Playing Field, September 2011

© DW photo



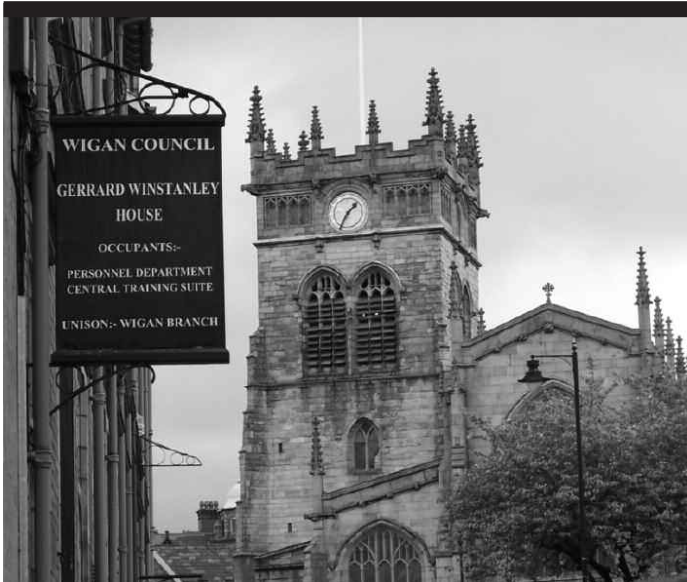
Levellers because there was another group called The Levellers, influenced by the writings of John Lilburne, who also wanted change; but, as usual, they wanted change to benefit themselves, while leaving the masses impoverished. The True Levellers wanted fundamental or true change that would benefit the impoverished masses. One of the first things the True Levellers did was to dig and cultivate common land in Surrey in 1649. They believed that the Earth was a 'common treasury' for all, not just for the privileged few. Other groups of Diggers formed in other parts of the country, but they were all put down by Cromwell's men and the magistrates by 1651. The digging stopped, but the fight had only just begun. Gerrard Winstanley began to write profusely.

Here is a summary of the key grievances The Diggers held against the way things were and the vision they had for changing all that:

- Monarchs and aristocrats took land from the common people by force and murder and they exert unjust power and authority.
- Monarchs and the aristocracy use the Church and Church leaders to help enforce their illegitimate power and authority.
- This upper class and a growing middle class exploit the masses in the lower class.
- The lower class has lost its rights as human beings (dignity, liberty, independence, happiness, well being and the right to vote and participate) and are exploited, impoverished, persecuted, oppressed and bereft of meaningful religion.
- The entire social, political and economic system is immoral and unjust.

Vision

- Equality of power, liberty, happiness, representation and opportunity for all men and women.
- Social organisation for the welfare and security of all.
- Common ownership of land and resources.
- Free distribution of products of the land to meet needs.
- Free medical services.
- A well informed citizenry resulting from free and compulsory education.



Gerrard Winstanley House in Crawford Street and Wigan Parish Church

© DW photo

- Public servants responsive to the needs and wills of the people.
- A legal system based on reason and equity.
- Recognition of the ecological interdependence of man and nature.
- Knowledge of nature and its laws is knowledge of God.

And here are some of the strategies they developed for achieving their vision:

Strategies

- Do as you would be done by.
- Take non-violent, humanist action.
- Abolish private ownership of land and resources.
- Show love and humility.
- Elect all public servants through universal suffrage and limit the length of tenure.
- Support scientific research.
- Satisfy your needs by honest labour and share the results of your labour.
- Adopt a legal system based on reason and equity.
- Abolish institutional religion and professional lawyers.

Academic researchers have failed to explain where Gerrard Winstanley's radical ideas came from. But if you know David Sinclair's and George Bridgeman's histories of Wigan, it is not difficult to fathom.

In Wigan, there had been for many years a major power struggle between the Rector, burgesses and common people concerning land rights, ownership and distribution of resources. Gerrard's formative experience in Wigan would have revealed to him the questionable motives and practices of organised religion and public disdain for and contempt of the Church. He was also exposed to the almost vice-regal power and abuse of power by the Rector, who also was Lord of the Manor. Although probably part of the middle class in Wigan Gerrard undoubtedly would have been acutely aware of the poverty that most Wiganers suffered. In Wigan it was a class society with labourers at the bottom, burgesses in the middle, the Rector and Lord of the Manor above, and the Aristocracy, Church and King at the top. Through radical collective action, Wiganers rose up to challenge the established order and were successful. 'The inhabitants formed a sort of clan'.¹ For the Rector 'The weeds in his baronial garden were more numerous than the flowers, and he was at his wits end how to uproot them... Many [Wiganers] put on the garb of conformity for the sake of peace and security. There were thousands of wolves in sheep's clothing. Many who believed not in the justice of the law conformed to its letter, but had no faith in the spirit of its creed'.² Wiganers wanted the rights that the Lord of the Manor claimed.

The success of Wiganers must have set the precedence for Gerrard Winstanley to claim the right to dig and cultivate common land near London and provided the stimulus for him to lead The Diggers in radical action. In 1649 Gerrard Winstanley elevated the demands of oppressed Wiganers to the national level and declared that 'the earth was not made purposefully for you, to be Lords of it, and we to be your Slaves, Servants, and Beggars; but it was made to be a common Livelihood for all, without respect of persons.... we have a free right to the Land of England, being born therein'.³ Gerrard Winstanley's national appeal 'to set us free from the kingly power of Lords of the Manors',⁴ echoes the same appeal by Wiganers in Gerrard Winstanley's home town.

It was through soul searching at the bottom of an abyss that he suddenly came to understand Wigan, Wiganers and a real God. In his own destitution he became a true Wiganer, no longer in a privileged position, but now with the advantage of education

and experience. We find that 'Winstanley in addressing those in power – Fairfax, Cromwell, the Army, the Parliament, presents himself not simply as a private citizen but as a poor man, dressed in humble garments, working with his hands, one whose language is simple, unadorned and direct, and who speaks the truth on behalf of those, like him, who can hardly get bread'.⁵ He became the national crier for radical reform.

Gerrard Winstanley is described by many as a founder of socialism, communism, pacifism, green activism and maybe a founder Quakerism. In 1918 Lenin carved Gerrard Winstanley's name on an obelisk in Moscow, but The True Digger would probably have been horrified by the dictatorial and totalitarian regimes that came to power throughout the world in the name of communism. His was a much gentler, human form of socialism emphasizing equality, freedom, liberty, dignity, love and sharing.

It is likely that Gerrard Winstanley learned much and was greatly influenced by his upbringing in Wigan. Indeed, I conclude that socialism has its roots in Wigan and socialism was given firm expression by a Wiganer in London. Sir Christopher Hill, the great historian of the English Civil War, refers to 'the backward north' and it is this erroneous perception among many academics that has stifled any other conclusion other than Winstanley's brilliant perceptions and profound insights must be a product of his experiences in London!

The Wigan Diggers' Festival was started in 2011 to remember and honour Gerrard Winstanley's life and ideas. That was a great success and it has become an annual event (<http://www.facebook.com/#!/groups/diggersfestival/>). The old Social Services Office in Crawford Street is named Gerrard Winstanley House, but the organisers of the Diggers' Festival want to establish an appropriate, permanent memorial to Gerrard Winstanley in his home town.

Memorial Obelisk for the Great Socialist Thinkers and Revolutionaries in Moscow
<http://travel.thegughupf.net/europe/russian-federation-2009-1/moscow/photo-galleries/inside-the-kremlin>

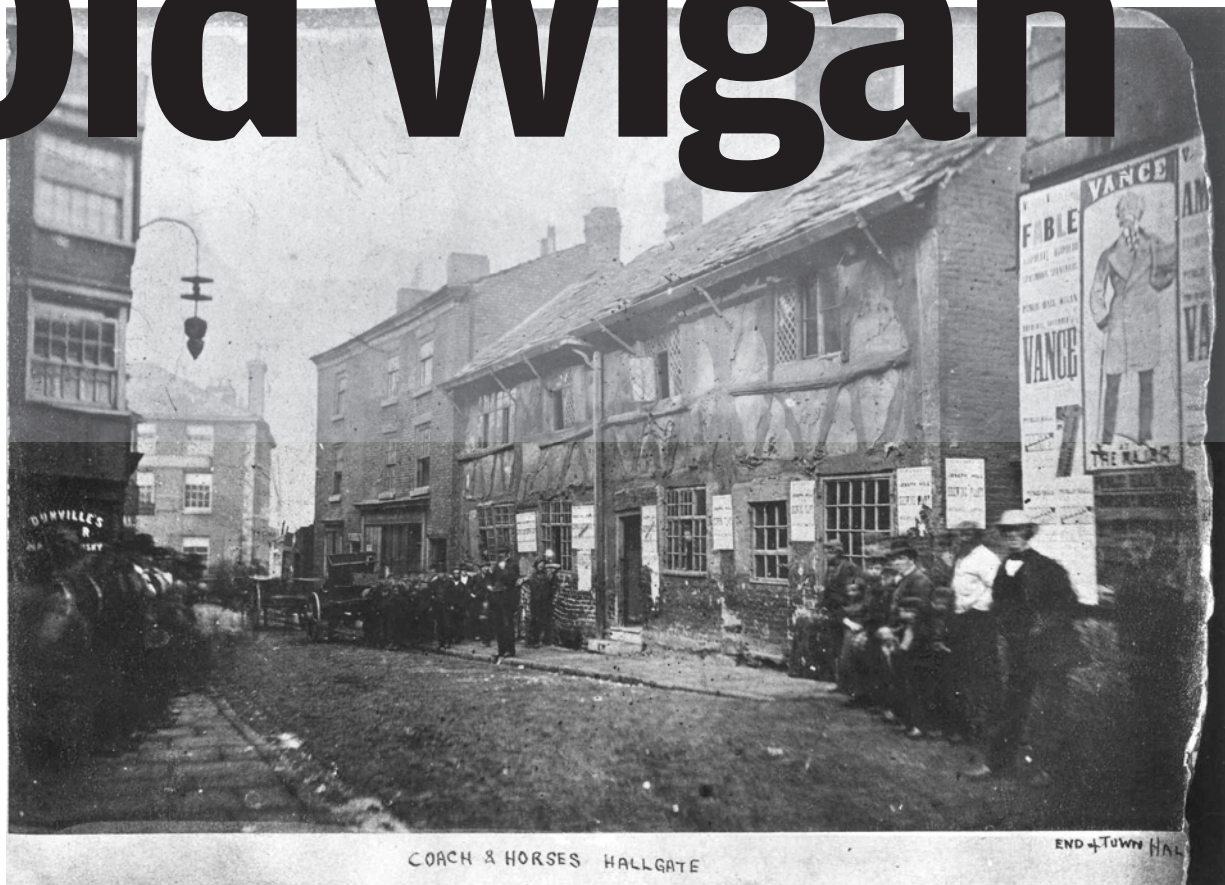
NOTES

- 1 *Sinclair, David 1882 The History of Wigan vol 1*
- 2 *As above*
- 3 *Winstanley, Gerrard 1649 Digger pamphlet*
- 4 *Petegorsky, David W 1999 ed Left-Wing Democracy in the English Civil War: Gerrard Winstanley and the Digger Movement*
- 5 *Chernaik, Warren 2000 Civil Liberty in Milton, the Levellers and Winstanley in Bradstock A (ed) Winstanley and the Diggers 1649-1999*



Old Wigan

Hallgate before it was incorporated into Market Street in the 1870s, with the Coach and Horses Inn on the right



'The study of place-names is a study which yields probable rather than certain results' wrote local clergyman and historian T C Porteus in 1925.¹ That statement is as true today as it was then, in spite of recent advances in place-name studies. However, a probability is worth something, and an investigation into the origin of some street-names in Wigan may prove interesting.

It is noteworthy that the names of several roads that meet in Wigan town centre end in the suffix 'gate' for example, Hallgate, Millgate and Wallgate. The Old Norse word 'gata', meaning 'road' is the origin of this suffix. What this means in terms of the scale of Scandinavian immigration in the town is difficult to say, for we

have, in this district, a cluster of place-names with Celtic elements (such as Wigan, Ince, Bryn and Pemberton) but the principal settlement, Wigan, has street-names with Scandinavian elements.

However, we can at least determine which part of Scandinavia these immigrants came from, because there is a street-name in Wigan which gives a clue. That name is Scholes. The word 'skali', from which it is derived, originally referred to temporary huts situated on high-altitude pastures used for summer grazing in what is now Norway. A common variant of the same name is Scales. In this connection it may be that Summersales, surviving as the name of an industrial estate in Highfield, Pemberton, is of similar origin.

Place-names of Norwegian derivation are not uncommon in west Lancashire (for example Skelmersdale, Ormskirk and Kirkby) and recent research into the DNA of the local population there has confirmed this ethnic pattern. These proto-Norwegians, popularly known as Vikings, maintained a cultural presence in the lands around the Irish Sea for several centuries and even established a kingdom encompassing the later counties of Lancashire and Yorkshire, which lasted from 850 to 954.

Standishgate, then, simply means 'the road to Standish'. Hallgate connected the market place with Wigan Hall (now known as The Rectory) a moated manor house that was the seat of the lord of the manor, who was also the rector of the parish. Later the upper part of Hallgate was

incorporated into Market Street when that street was laid out in the 1870s. Millgate connected the market place with the lord's watermill on the River Douglas, where all the inhabitants were required by law to bring their grain to be ground, and to pay a fee known as multure. Many manorial lords leased their mills to tenant millers, and this was the case in Wigan. Wallgate means 'Well Street'. In March 1903 workmen erecting poles for the new electric tram system unearthed a sunken, arched well-pool, the spring for which had dried up, on that plot of land in front of the present Post Office. Wall is ultimately derived from the Old English (Anglo-Saxon) word 'wella', meaning a well, spring or stream. In those areas controlled by the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia it developed into wall. The Wigan district was possibly absorbed into Mercia as early as the reign of King Penda, who died in 655. Occasionally the name of a road would be changed, and we have an example of this in Manchester Road, Higher Ince, which used to be known as Highgate.

Some thoroughfares, having names of apparently Scandinavian origin, have almost disappeared and are shadows of their former selves. Stairgate was a right of way consisting of a flight of steps that lead from Millgate to the River Douglas. It survives, in part, as that passage below the Civic Centre, that leads to the Grand Arcade. Previously the distance from Millgate to the River

Douglas was much shorter, and the gradient steeper, but at the end of the nineteenth century the course of the river was diverted, and a man-made embankment created, on which Wigan Central Station was built. Years later, part of the Grand Arcade was built on the same site.

Turfgate survives as the passage that leads over the footbridge from King Street to Wigan North-Western Station. A clue to the origin of this name may lie in the fact that it led to a piece of land called the Faggy Lane Fields. 'Faggy' was a dialect word for a type of tough, coarse grass. Mesnesgate (not to be confused with Mesnes Street) survives as that passage leading from Standishgate (opposite the present Marks and Spencer's) through The Galleries to the Market Hall. It was so called because it led to a large field called The Mesnes. 'Mesnes' is a shortened form of 'demesne' that is land that was held directly by the lord of the manor, and not let to tenants. Much of the former Mesnes Field is now occupied by Mesnes Park. By the eighteenth century Mesnesgate had become Mesnes Lane; and by the early nineteenth century Hope Street. Hope Street disappeared in the 1980s when The Galleries and the Market Hall were built.

Once the practice of naming streets in a particular way became established, it came to be copied in later centuries. Bishopgate, Wigan that short

street connecting Hallgate with the churchyard, will not have been so named until at least 1619 when John Bridgeman, Rector of Wigan, was consecrated Bishop of Chester, the first of several clergymen to hold both benefices concurrently. Marketgate, in the Market Place, was previously the Wigan Arcade. It was renamed as an expression of the popular interest in heritage in the late twentieth century.

Over a thousand years of Wigan's history are reflected in the town's street names. In the absence of archaeological and documentary evidence, the origin of place-names and street-names points in the direction of a pre-Conquest occupation, and brings us closer to answering the great unanswered question of Wigan's history, "Was there a continuous occupation of the site between the Roman period and the date of the compilation of the Domesday Book?"

NOTES

1. Porteus, T.C. (1925) Travellers' tales of Wigan. Wigan. The Author.



Contact the secretary Joe Taylor for more information **01942 700060** or info@nwcan.org or www.wiganheritage.co.uk

Wigan Borough Environment & Heritage Network

'Our local environment and heritage matters'

If you agree, groups and individuals are warmly invited to join our network which provides

- Regular meetings • Advice and information • Workshops
- Site visits • Grants • Speakers
- Partnership working with Wigan Council, Wigan Lesire & Culture Trust and other relevant bodies

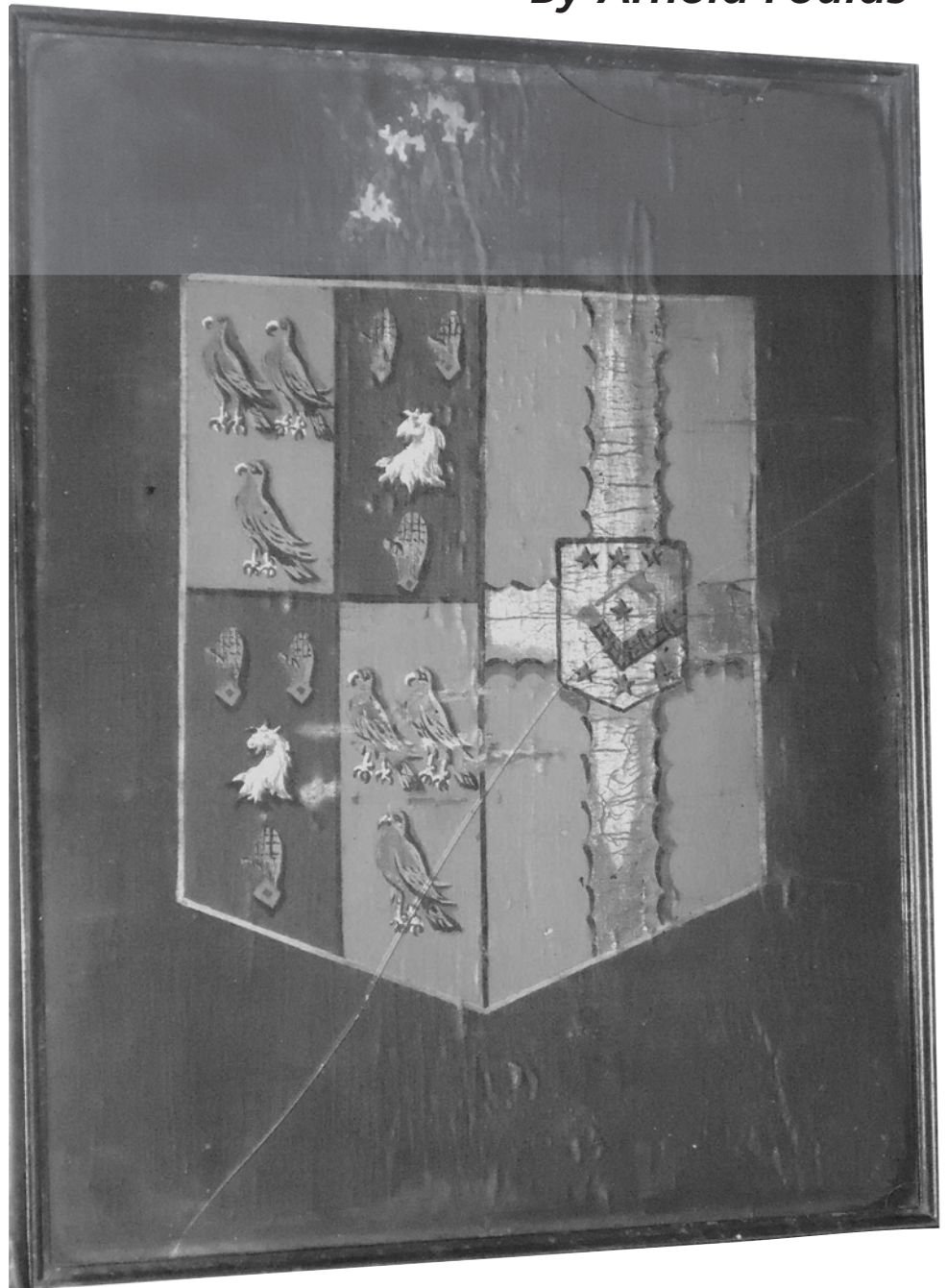
'The Bloody Hand'

THE FOULDS FAMILY COAT OF ARMS

By Arnold Foulds

Coat of arms, or family crest, what exactly is it? Those were the questions my family were asking as the framed cloth on a wooden background had been handed down for at least four generations. My grandparents had always referred to it as "The Bloody Hand" and grandma had taken it to Leigh Library in the 1950's in an attempt to unveil the mystery of what it was and what it meant. The Library suggested it was something to do with Lord Lilford, but could not offer further ideas, so the painting lay dormant, somewhat sinisterly, within the family.

My interest in family history and similar matters began about eight years ago after attending a short course in Salford. I became impassioned with the family surname Foulds, successfully tracing many families back to the early 1700s in Chesterfield. Typically, the male members were cloggers and coalminers with the females, predominantly, finding employment in the cotton mills, or silk weavers before the mills sprang up. No surprise there. I then got lucky, finding a direct descendent of my great x four grandfather living in America, obviously with the Foulds surname. Rick (Richard) now being an Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies, in a medical field, in an 'Ivy League' area University in the States. That branch of the Foulds family emigrated around the turn of the century and was described as professional swimmers involved in circus in Blackpool,



Dublin, Great Yarmouth, Paris and Madrid. My interest in the so-called 'Bloody Hand' was re-kindled.

Foulds family folklore in America had it that they descended from an illegitimate son of my

great (x four) grandfather, born in 1817 from an unmarried member of the Lord Lilford family. Conjecture, but why, subsequently was a grandson named Powys Atherton Lilford for his given names? (Powys being the Lilford family surname

at the time, and Atherton from the Atherton, family prominent in the late 1700s and Lilford for Lord Lilford).

I emailed the image of the 'Bloody Hand' to The Institute of Heraldic and Genealogy Studies in Canterbury, Kent. For a small donation to the charity, some fruitful research was undertaken on my behalf.

'The "image" is not a crest; it is a Coat of Arms. A crest is the heraldic figure that sits on top of a helmet in an achievement of arms. The Institute continued: The image is of a shield depicting conjoined coats of arms ... and would appear to be a funeral cloth probably taken from a pall that was draped over a coffin, or it may have been one of several depictions hanging round pillars in the church at the time of the funeral, often called hatchments. I would date it from about 1780 – 1810 in style ... and seems to be the work of a local artist specialising in funeral furniture and not the work of a professional herald.'

The shield is divided into two parts, the Dexter side (left hand as you look at it) is Quarterly, the first and last coats of arms Gules, three Hawks Argent beaked and legged, or for ATHERTON; the second and third quarters Sable, a Nag's head erased, OR, between three Gauntlets Argent lined Gules, for GWILLIM Impaling Gules, a Cross engrailed Argent, for LE(I)GH...

The shield represents the marriage of an ATHERTON (who has inherited a GWILLIM estate) with a LEGH.'

Richard Atherton (Mad Richard, who started the construction of Atherton Hall, as he became

known as) had an only daughter, Elizabeth, who married Robert Gwilym of Langstone Herefordshire. They had two sons, William Gwilym (who died in 1771) and Robert Vernon Gwilym who assumed the name of Atherton, certainly so that he could inherit the Atherton estate. That explains the Dexter (left hand) half of the arms showing Atherton quartering Gwilym.

In 1763 Robert Vernon married Harriet, daughter and co-heiress of Peter Legh of Lyme, which explains the Legh impalement. (Robert and his wife both died in 1783). Their daughter Henrietta-Maria married Thomas Powys, Lord Lilford.

Incidentally, the in escutcheon, showing an armoured arm grasping a flag, was the result of Sir Thomas Danyers (whose daughter married Peter de Legh) who rescued the Black Prince's banner at the Battle of Crecy on 1346.

It is my educated guess that we may have a new coat of arms made for Henrietta Maria Legh after her marriage to Robert Vernon Gwilym / Atherton. It seems to be English tradition to make a new coat of arms for the bride that combines her

husband's coat of arms on the Dexter and her father's on the sinister.

In any event, this belonged to Robert and Henrietta and had to have been made after their 1763 marriage and by 1783 when they both died. Their pictures are shown below.

So, if this was some sort of funeral cloth of Henrietta Maria Atherton, how would it have come into the Foulds family's possession? My Associate Professor cousin from America has an interesting theory. He found an article on the demolition of St. Mary's church in Leigh, prior to re-building in the late 1860's. It mentioned that much of the interior was carted off by local residents, this being a common practice, then, in England, thus finding their way into local homes. Since the coat of arms may have been related to a funeral item that was displayed in the church long after the burial it is a possibility that someone from the Foulds family helped to remove the article.

Editor's note: If any reader can shed light on Mr Foulds' family mystery please contact me.



THE ATTACK ON BIRKACRE MILL

By Bob Evans

Amongst the papers left by Thomas Grimshaw, Wigan Borough Town Clerk, there is a document which provides a vivid illustration of the tensions which accompanied the Industrial Revolution of the late eighteenth century. During this period the cotton industry was being subjected to rapid change with the introduction of powered machinery. Production rapidly increased and the industry expanded in Lancashire to supply a world-wide demand for cloth. Many of the innovators became wealthy, but those who previously had depended for their livelihood on the traditional methods for the spinning and weaving of cloth faced the prospect of poverty. Hand-operated spinning wheels and weaving looms in the home clearly could not compete either in volume or cost of production with the output of machines in large factories. One cannot be surprised that people who had previously depended on the traditional ways of working sought to protect their interests.

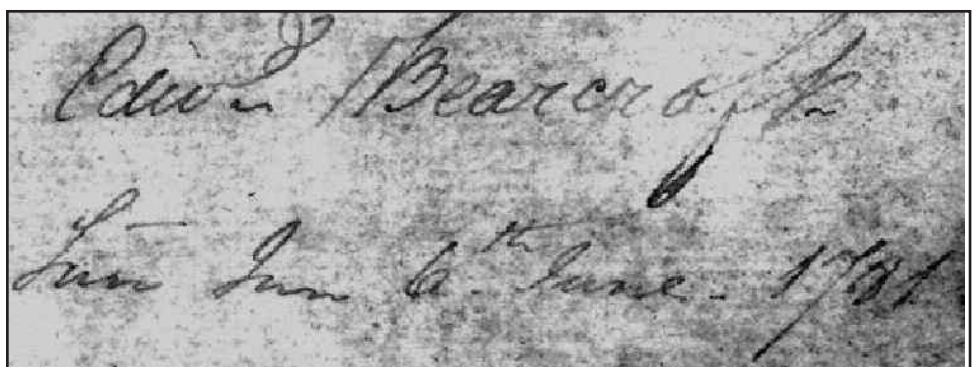
The Grimshaw papers include what appears to be a lawyer's brief, dated 6 June 1781. It was possibly written to

provide evidence to be used in a legal action to claim compensation. It contains an account of the response of local people to the threat posed by the new factories. The writer, Edward Bearcroft, begins with a description of Richard Arkwright's success in establishing his first water powered spinning mill at Cromford in Derbyshire "a place affording a remarkable fine stream of water & in a Country very full of Inhabitants vast numbers of whom & their small children are constantly employed in the works." This mill, Bearcroft observed, "very well answered however his Expectations not only in profit to himself but in making a much superior kind of thread or yarn than had ever been known in the County or could be made the Hand or any other machine."

He continues to explain that a "Mr Thomas a Welshman &

others" obtained patent rights for some of Mr Arkwright's innovations "and Erected at a very great expense a Mill at Birkacre near Chorley". This site was in Coppull, and is now within a country park surrounding what were the mill ponds fed by the River Yarrow descending from the Anglezarke moors. Park information leaflets confirm that a mill was built here in 1777 by the local land owner and leased to Richard Arkwright. Here, as at Cromford, water-powered machinery could be installed.

A description is provided of the buildings and their use "The machinery was worked by water & the Building constantly called the mill though in different Rooms it was performing process of picking Carding & Spinning & Reeling cotton. At one end of it was a Counting house & shops for Turners & some



Edward Bearcroft
June 6th June 1781



other Articles Employed there." Attached to the mill there was "a small Dwelling house in possession of the proprietors." In addition there was "another large new Building at Birkacre belonging to the same proprietors & which was intended for Reeling and picking cotton or Warehouses or if those were not wanted for dwelling houses but it was then appropriated to no particular use being only erected a very little time"

The threat to their livelihood was immediately apparent to all who relied on the traditional methods of production. Quotations from Mr Bearcroft's account describe how "the common people" including "a drunken Cabal of a few Weavers in the neighbourhood of Wigan" began "in a warlike manner destroying all such machines & Engines as were disagreeable to them. They continued their depredations for near three weeks & till a sufficient military force was ordered & got into there to suppress the mob."

He then turns specifically to events at Birkacre. "They had been embodied several days & done great damage before

they attempted the works at Birkacre but on Saturday the 2nd day of October they marched their forces thither. The proprietors however being apprised of their proceedings and intentions had armed a few servants & other persons to defend the place of which the mob were apprised on their Approach. They attacked the Building with great resolution & fury. They were however after a very obstinate conflict repulsed & some of them made prisoners. On the day following the proprietors got a party from Preston of about 60 Invalids, the only military force within any moderate distance, to assist in defending the place and suppressing the Riot. But the day afterwards viz. the 4th October the mob returned to the number of 4 or 500 with a considerable Quantity of fire arms & other offensive weapons & destroyed all the machinery then attacked the Building with pick axes Hatchets etc & to demolish it but at last as short method they set fire to & Burnt it to the ground."

In the final paragraphs Mr Bearcroft reviews the possible grounds which could have substantiated a claim for compensation by the mill

proprietors based on the failure of the County authorities to protect their property. He, however, appears to be of the opinion that existing legislation would only provide redress for damage to the types of properties which existed prior to the new industrial age, in this case "only that part which is said to have been Dwellings of the proprietors of those works falls within any act of parliament. I know of giving an action to recover damages against the Hundred" One can only speculate for whom this advice was intended. A faint side annotation following the author's signature at the end of the document may be suggestive.

"Mr R. Arkwright
Respecting the Birkacre
Manufactory being destroyed
By the Rioters"

SOURCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Mr Bearcroft's account has been taken from a document, as yet lacking a unique reference, in box "D/Dx/ApG/4 Additional" in the Wigan archives. Thanks are due to the archivist and staff for making the document available for study. Additional information has been taken from a Chorley Council information leaflet about the Yarrow Valley Country Park which contains a similar account of the attack on the mill and includes the information that some of the rioters "set off from the Blackrod area".

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 for further details on 01942 222769.

Atherton Heritage Society

Meetings held on the second Tuesday of each month in St Richard's Parish Centre, Mayfield Street, Atherton at 7.30pm. Members £1, non members £2, refreshments included. Contact Margaret Hodge for further information on 01942 884893.

14 August

A Tram Ride - Bolton to Leigh
Speakers - Mr & Mrs Lucas

11 September

Around Morecambe Bay (Part 1)
Speaker - Margaret Curry

9 October - AGM followed by
Wildlife in the Pennines
Speaker - G. Yates
(NB earlier start time of 7pm)

Billinge History and Heritage Society

Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month at Billinge Chapel End Labour Club at 7.30pm. There is a door charge of £2.

Committee includes - Mr Geoffrey Crank (Chairman), Dr Charles Mather (Vice Chairman), Mrs Jennifer Budd (Secretary) and Mrs Susan Mather (Treasurer).
Contact us on 01695 624411 or 01744 892430.

Hindley & District Family History Society

Meetings are held on the second Monday of the month at 7.00pm at Tudor House, Liverpool Road, Hindley. Please contact Mrs Joan Topping on 01942 257361 for details.

Leigh & District Family History Society

Monthly meetings held in the Derby Room, Leigh Library at 7.30pm on the third Tuesday of each month, except June and July.

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

For more information contact Mrs M Harrop (Chairman) 01942 743428, Mrs G McClellan (Secretary) 01942 729559 or email: leighfhs@blueyonder.co.uk

17 August - Getting Started

18 September - The Law and the Local in Leigh
Speaker - Phil Chapman

19 October - Help Evening and Members Talks

20 November -
Was Your Ancestor a Registrar?
Speaker - Tony Foster

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 at Hall Green Community Centre, Upholland. There are no meetings in July or August. For more information contact Sue Hesketh (Secretary) 01942 212940 or Suehesketh@blueyonder.co.uk or visit www.liverpool-genealogy.org.uk/SkemGrp/Skem

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 St George's Church, Water Street, Wigan WN1 1XD. Contact Mr A Grimshaw on 01942 245777 for further information.

Wigan Family & Local History Society

Meetings are held at the Bowling Green, 108 Wigan Lane, Wigan on the third Monday of each month (7.30 for 8.00pm). No meetings are held in July and August. Please note we do have a small charge for each meeting of £2 for both members and visitors. For further information call (01942) 727875 or visit www.wiganworld.co.uk/familyhistory

Wigan Archaeological Society

We meet on the first Wednesday of the month, at 7.30, in the Standish Suite at the Brocket Arms on Mesnes Road - on the first Wednesday of the month (except January and August) at 7.30pm. There is a car park adjacent on the left. Admission is £2 for members and £3 for guests. For more information call Bill Aldridge on 01257 402342. You can also visit the website www.wiganarchsoc.co.uk

YOUR LETTERS - CAN YOU HELP

Dear Editor

My great-grandfather, Henry Hall, was born on 18 October 1854 in Brown Street a stone's throw from Wallgate Station in Wigan. His parents were William Hall and Ellen Hall née Southworth and he had four siblings, Martha Hall born circa 1839, Elizabeth Hall born circa 1846, William Hall born circa 1848 and Hercules Hall born circa 1859.

I'm interested to know if his brothers and sisters have any descendants still living in Wigan, The North West or indeed anywhere they might have access to your magazine and if they'd like to get in touch?

Geoff Speak,
Warrington

Editor's note: If any reader has information, please pass it on to me and it will be forwarded to Mr Speak.

Dear Editor

In reply to your story about W J Critchley in Issue 60 I was flabbergasted to hear my grandma mentioned. I think it must be the same Mrs Barker. Her name was Sarah, and she lived 32 Sarginson Street. I also know Dickie Dawson, if that is the same one who married my Auntie Lil after his wife died. I, and all my brothers and sisters all went to Scot Lane School. We lived in Soho Street. My mam's name was Evelyn Barker and she married William Booth. Dickie Dawson and my Auntie Lil used to live at the bottom of Soho Street near Peak's or Burland's. I think those were happy days.

Dorothy Wooton

Editor's note: Mrs Wooton did send a photograph, but for technical reasons we were not able to publish it.

Dear Editor

I do enjoy reading your magazine and do find nuggets of useful information for my family research. Thanks to all who contribute to its production. I would also like to thank the army of local people who research, input and update records. I believe there are a lot of volunteers doing this all over Lancashire.

I, like so many family historians live far from where most of our ancestors lived. Therefore, I find the on-line websites a great help. For example the Lancashire Parish Clerks Project (PCP), Wigan World, Lancashire BMD indexes are fantastic sources for adding-to and updating my research. Maybe some people will not be aware that Lancashire BMD has added many more maiden names to its birth register indexed. Also dedicated volunteers continue to add records to the PCP website.

The motto for family historians is; even if you have used these sites (and others) before, revisit them again. You may find that you can now fill-in gaps in your family tree and new information may even help to solve your 'brick walls'.

If I lived nearer I would love to help. I assume that it can't be done from a distance. I hope that this letter will encourage particularly, the volunteers to continue the good work. Thanks again to all of them.

Barbara Barclay
Colwyn Bay

Write 1000 words Win £100!

Do you have a passion for local history? Is there a local history topic that you would love to see featured in Past Forward? Then why not take part in Wigan Borough Environment and Heritage Network's Local History Writing Competition?

We have announced the launch of the competition earlier than in 2011 as we know that it can be difficult to find the time to research and write a piece. We also intend to run a competition for school children and are currently liaising with teachers to find the best format for this competition. Details of the schools competition will be announced in Issue 61.

Local History Writing Competition Details for entrants

1st Prize - £100 • 2nd Prize - £75
3rd Prize - £50

Criteria

- Articles must be a maximum of 1000 words.
- Articles must focus on a local history topic within the geographical boundaries of Wigan Borough.

- By entering the competition you agree to your work being published in Past Forward. The winning article will be published in Past Forward Issue 62. Other submissions may also be published in Issue 62 or held on file for publication in a future edition. If selected for publication the Past Forward Editorial Team may edit your submission.

How to enter

- Articles must be received by e-mail or post by Friday 12 October 2012.
- Electronic submissions are preferred although handwritten ones will be accepted.
- You must state clearly that your article is an entry into the Local History Writing Competition.
- You must include your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address (if applicable). We will not pass your details on to anyone.

- It will not be possible for articles to be returned.
- You are welcome to include photographs or images however they cannot be returned.

Submit to

pastforward@wlct.org OR Local History Writing Competition, Past Forward, Museum of Wigan Life, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU

EVENTS CALENDAR

*Looking for a great day out?
Come and join in our events
and activities.*

For further details or to book call **01942 828128**.

Exhibitions

Date • Time • Venue/Cost

Until 10 November • MOWL/Free
From the Word Go!

Until 8 September • Tp Cent/Free
Beastly Machines

24 November 2012-6 April 2013 • MOWL
Make it, Spin it, Can it!

22 September-27 October • Tp Cent/Free
Open Exhibition

Regular Events

Date • Time • Venue/Cost

1st Monday of the month • 2pm-3.30pm
Palaeography Practice

Mondays 22 October-19 November • £15 for the course
**An Introduction to Old Handwriting:
Medieval to Modern Palaeography**

Friday 5 October • 2-3.30pm • MOWL £20 for course
Local history course: Victorian Wigan

Events for Families

Date • Time • Venue/Cost

1 August • 2pm-4pm • TF Mill/£5
Fun and Games Afloat

2 August • 1pm-2.30pm • MOWL/Free
Junk Modelling

6 August • 1pm-2pm • MOWL/Free
Super Summer: Tell Us A Story

7 August 1pm-2.30 pm MOWL/£2.50
Super Summer: Olympic Mania

8 August 2pm-4pm TF Mill/£5
Fun and Games Afloat

9 August • 1pm-2.30pm • MOWL/Free
Junk Modelling

13 August • 1pm-2pm • MOWL/Free
Super Summer: Tell Us A Story

14 August • 1pm-2.30pm • MOWL/£2.50
Super Summer: Olympic Mania

15 August • 2pm-4pm • TF Mill/£5
Fun and Games Afloat

16 August • 1pm-2.30pm • MOWL/Free
Junk Modelling

20 August • 1pm-2pm • MOWL/Free
Super Summer: Tell Us A Story

21 August • 1pm-2.30pm • MOWL/£2.50
Super Summer: Olympic Mania

22 August • 2pm-4pm • TF Mill/£5
Fun and Games Afloat

23 August • 1pm-2.30pm • MOWL/Free
Junk Modelling

8 September • 11am-2.30pm • Civic Square/Free
Leigh for All

8 September • 11am-2.30pm • MOWL/Free
Super Saturday: What a Building!

13 October • 11am-2.30pm • MOWL/Free
Super Saturday: The Big Draw

27 October • 11am-2.30pm • Tp Cent/Free
Super Saturday

29 October • 1pm -2.30pm • MOWL/£2.50
Witches and Wizards

1 November • 1pm -2.30pm • MOWL/£2.50
Witches and Wizards

3 November • 11am-2.30pm • MOWL/Free
Super Saturday: Lightshaw Family Festival

24 November • 11am-2.30pm • Tp Cent/Free
Super Saturday

Events for Adults

Date • Time • Venue/Cost

17 August • 10am-11am • Hindley Cemetery/£2
Carved in Stone: Hindley

21 August • 10am-12pm • Ince Cemetery/£3
Carved in Stone: Ince and Wigan

5-8 September • 10am-4pm • Archives LTH/Free
The Big Clean

22 September • 10.30am-12pm • MOWL/Free
Fascinating Family Histories (Family History Fair)

25 September • 10.30-12pm • MOWL/£3
Coffee, Cake & Culture

27 September • 12.45-1.30pm • MOWL/Free
Hungry Histories

2 October • 10.30-12pm • MOWL/£3
Coffee, Cake & Culture

2 October • 10.00-11.00am • Tyldesley Cemetery/£2
Carved in Stone: Tyldesley

4 October • 12.45-1.30pm • MOWL/Free
Hungry Histories

9 October • 10.30-12pm • MOWL/£3
Coffee, Cake & Culture

11 October • 12.45-1.30pm • MOWL/Free
Hungry Histories

16 October • 10.30-12pm • MOWL/£3
Coffee, Cake & Culture

18 October • 12.45-1.30pm • MOWL/Free
Hungry Histories

23 October • 10.30-12pm • MOWL/£3
Coffee, Cake & Culture

25 October • 12.45-1.30pm • MOWL/Free
Hungry Histories

25 October • 6.30-7.45pm • MOWL/£2.50
**An Evening with Glen Atkinson: What the papers said:
local news in Victorian newspapers**

30 October • 10.30-12pm • MOWL/£3
Coffee, Cake & Culture

8 November • 12.45-1.30pm • MOWL/Free
Hungry Histories

KEY:

MOWL = Museum of Wigan Life • TF Mill = Trencherfield Mill
Tp Cent = Turnpike Centre • LTH = Leigh Town Hall

What's in a Name? by Christina Banks

*William Shakespeare
Once proclaimed:
'What's in a name? That which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet.'*

*Mr Shakespeare would not have said that
If he had only known what a stink
Of withered, decaying and decomposed roses
Pervades at the mere mention of my forename*

*I suppose I am spared the name
My parents gave my brother
I always feel sorry for our Julius
Sorry for him but secretly grateful
That the name is not meant for me*

*I have always had my own cross to bear
From sniggers in the playground
To derision in the workplace
As colleagues scoff behind their hands
At the mention of my Christian name
which seems so much out of place
Here on the streets of Scholes*

*What were my parents thinking of
When names were dished out to us all?
I suppose the one which causes the least
Embarrassment is my sister Jo's*

*Jo's and my name are entwined historically
As our namesakes were husband and wife
My father known as Jim
Should have known better
A learned man who loves history so much
To the detriment of his children
Distributing names which do not correlate
With our Northern working-class background*

*Why have our parents decided to meander
Down unique and infrequently-trodden paths
When both maternal and paternal grandfathers
Were given the more ordinary names
Of Richard and Philip respectively?*

*Not only are we burdened by our Christian names
But also descend from Irish stock
We as a family endured riots in Scholes
Largely involving the Irish element in
the population*

*Illiteracy adds even more fuel to the scornful fire
My mother Ann felt so ashamed on
The eighteenth of December 1849 when
marrying Father
In All Saints Church of England church
in Wigan
She could not even sign her own name*

*My name is Napoleon Diamond
Son of James Diamond and Ann Ellison
Brother of Constantine, Julius Caesar
Hannibal and Josephine, amongst others
Living on John Street, Scholes*

*It seems our family has survived
The sequence of events we have endured
We may be burdened with such names
But perhaps Shakespeare's words ring true for us
Maybe it is not what's in a name
But the way one has to adapt to it and
To life in general that, given time,
Determines a person's gumption and traits*

How to Find Us



Museum of Wigan Life

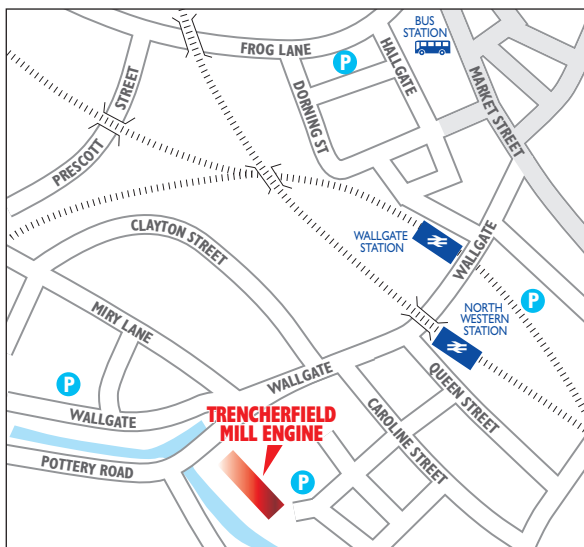
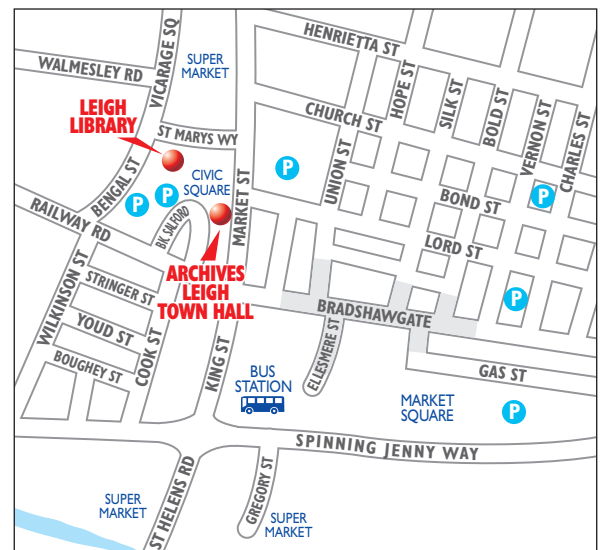
Library Street,
Wigan WN1 1NU
Telephone 01942 828128
heritage@wlct.org

Leigh Local History

Leigh Library, Turnpike Centre,
Civic Square, Leigh WN7 1EB
Telephone 01942 404559
h.turner@wlct.org

Archives

Leigh Town Hall, Leigh WN7 1DY
Telephone 01942 404430
a.miller@wlct.org



Trencherfield Mill Engine

Wigan Pier Quarter, Heritage Way,
Wigan WN3 4EF
Telephone 01942 828128
b.rowley@wlct.org