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PAST FORWARD

Produced by Wigan Museums & Archives

Issue No. 66

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FRONT COVER

Advertising poster for the Wigan Carnival, 1909, one of Wigan Museum's Top 50 Objects for the GMMG Connected History Project

Letter from the Editorial Team

Welcome to PAST **Forward** Issue 66. As usual, there are plenty of fascinating, informative and unusual local history stories to be told, from the story of a Wigan world champion, to Edwardian maternity care in Leigh, and memories of a big day in everyone's lives, the first day at school.

The temporary exhibition at the Museum of Wigan Life has proved a success and stimulated much debate, discussion and argument over pronunciation... Purring – Sport of the People, curated by Anna FC Smith, tells the story of clog fighting in the area and runs until 26 April 2014. Following this, we can look forward to a new temporary exhibition on music in the Wigan Borough, opening on 3 May 2014.

We're delighted to be able to announce that the new GMMG (Greater Manchester Museums Group) website has now gone live (see page 24 for more details), including a showcase of 400 objects from the region's collections, as part of the Our Connected History project.

Essay Writing Competition 2014

Last year's competition brought a wealth of new Past Forward writers and we're on the hunt for more. With this in mind, we are pleased to be able to promote the Wigan Borough Environment and Heritage Network 2014 Local History Essay Writing Competition – see page 20 for more information. If you're passionate about local history and preserving it... Get Writing!

The deadline for submissions to the competition is Friday, 3 October 2014.

Copy Deadline for Issue 67

Past Forward 67, Special Commemorative Issue – Contributors' Note

The summer/autumn edition of Past Forward this year will commemorate the start of the First World War in 1914. We welcome the submission of any articles on the subject of the conflict, from life on the home front, the effects of the war on the area, or the stories of local men and women in service.

For more information, please contact us at pastforward@wlct.org

Information for contributors, please see page 18



Past Forward Essay Writing Competition Winners

The three winners of the Past Forward Essay Writing competition receive their prizes from the Mayor of Wigan, Councillor Billy Rotherham. The overall winner of the competition was Denise Colbert,

second place was Alan Roby, and third place Tommy Heyes (pictured right). The competition was sponsored by Mr and Mrs O'Neil and the Wigan Borough Environment and Heritage Network.

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Wigan's Undeclared Champion of the World

BY TOMMY HEYES

Mention wrestling to any Wiganer and it will most likely bring to mind the show-wrestling they have seen on television. They may have no knowledge of the long history Wigan has with the Lancashire style of wrestling, or Catch As Catch Can, as it is better known the world over.

Catch as catch can dates back to the mid-1800s, with historians describing Wigan in the 1800s as the cradle of catch wrestling. Many may also be unaware that Wigan's Billy Riley became World Middleweight Champion by beating Carroll 'Pinky' Gardener at Albany, New York, in 1922, by two clear falls in a contest that lasted over two hours. Almost a decade later, in August 1931, Riley defended his world title in Wigan, against German Middleweight Champion, Karl Reginsky.

In July 1931, Reginsky was part of a team of international wrestlers touring Great Britain. Adam King, British manager of the team, posted a letter to the editor of a Wigan newspaper on Reginsky's behalf. The letter stated Reginsky, 23, was prepared to meet Billy

Riley in a challenge match for Riley's World Middleweight title and a side bet of any amount up to £100.

Reginsky, like Riley, was the undefeated Middleweight Champion of his country. Following his arrival in Great Britain he had done all that had been asked of him by his team coach, fellow countryman Peter Gotz, and remained undefeated.

King's letter brought a swift response from Riley. In a reply to the editor he informed him he was prepared to meet Reginsky at any time or place, for £100 in the Catch As Catch Can style. Riley stated that 'as undefeated world champion, I am prepared to uphold the honour and tradition of British wrestling, and as Lancashire is the hotbed of wrestling in this style, with world-renown wrestlers hailing from this county, I feel Lancashire should have preference for this match, as it will be an opportunity for the old-timers to witness such an imposing event'.

On the 29 July 1931, all parties concerned attended the signing of the Articles of Agreement at the offices of

the Wigan Examiner newspaper. These articles contained the rules governing the contest and gave the following conditions:

'William Riley and Karl Reginsky would wrestle at middleweight, for the Championship of the World, in the Lancashire style. The best of three pin falls in one hour to decide the winner. The contest and weigh-in to take place at the Empress Hall Wigan on Thursday 20 August 1931.'

Both contestants began their final preparations, Riley at his family home, the Crispin Arms public house at Birkett Bank, Scholes. Here he trained daily with a small group of experienced Lancashire style wrestlers from Wigan's wrestling circle, under the watchful eye of much sought-after coach and his mentor from the age of fourteen, Willy Charnock. Reginsky meanwhile based himself in Manchester and trained under his touring team coach, Peter Gotz.

The contest generated great interest across the North of England and the Empress Hall was the chosen venue.

Anxiously waiting to purchase their tickets, news that the championship was to take place in Wigan came to the delight of wrestling enthusiasts from across the northwest, who wished to witness which of the two undefeated champions was the better man. Within days of the news appearing in the local press, the ticket office at the Empress Hall was inundated with requests. Meanwhile the proprietors, anticipating a record crowd, had taken steps to increase the seating on the balcony, filling the venue to capacity on the night.

The evening's entertainment began with a boxing programme involving fighters from in and around Wigan. Then came the introduction of some notable wrestlers from the pre-war era, who received a glowing ovation from the knowledgeable crowd.

Following a brief interval, the master of ceremonies entered the ring and introduced the two contestants for the main event. With the formalities over, the wrestlers shook hands, the house lights dimmed and the contest began.

Reginsky's match experience was a combination of Greco-Roman and Lancashire style. Being the younger man by eleven years he tried to force the pace in the opening minutes. Riley, with his experience of the wrestling game kept his composure and began to turn the match in his favour. At one point early in the contest it looked as though he could score a fall, turning his

opponent amid calls of 'he's down' from spectators at ringside. However, displaying determination and brute strength the German broke free, and springing to his feet gave them a cheeky grin. With the first thirty minutes over and the pair dripping with sweat, the referee called a halt so that they could towel themselves dry.

The contest continued with the pair concentrating on the head. Riley saw his chance and took Reginsky down to the mat fixing him in the body scissors. There was to be no escape for Reginsky this time, as Riley turned him

with a half-nelson for the first fall of the contest.

Coming together for the third period, and with a draw possible, the strong and elusive Reginsky proved himself a worthy challenger. Despite this, Riley, after a brief exchange at the head, had his opponent on all fours. Seizing the advantage he forced Reginsky's arm across his back, leaving him with no option but to concede the winning fall.

After an encounter that had lasted 53 minutes, Wigan's Billy Riley was declared the winner and Undefeated Champion of the World!

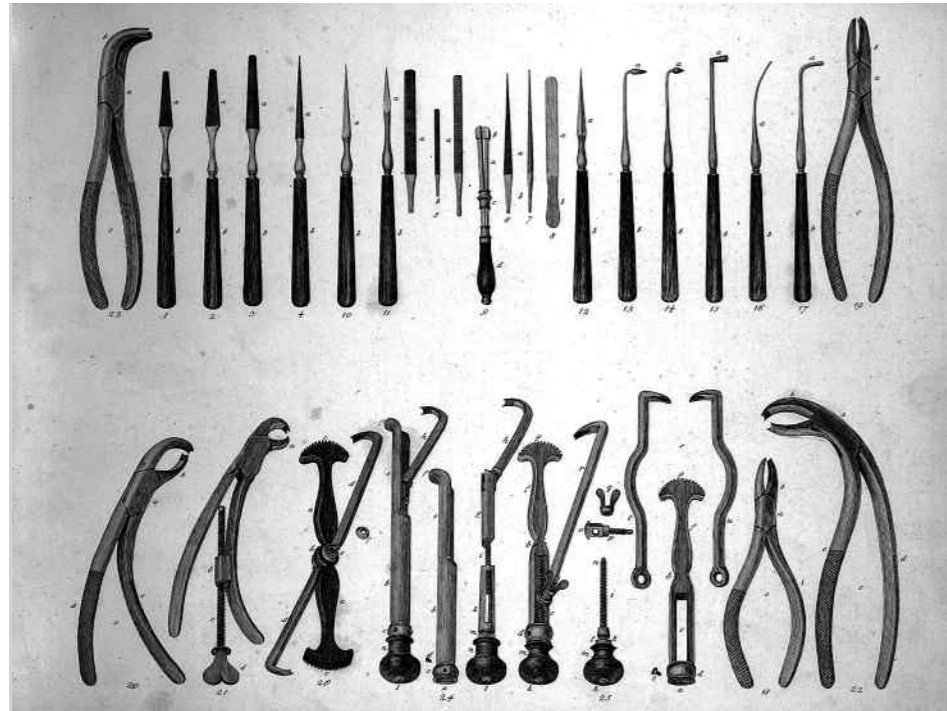
Billy Riley



Travelling Dentists:

Moseley, Gabriel and Eskell

by Hilary Thomas



Dental Instruments, Wellcome Library, London

In the Wigan Times, 1853, regular notices appear advertising that, 'Messrs Moseley, Surgeon Dentists established 20 years, will be attending at Wigan every Thursday at Miss Ainsworth's, confectioners'.

The Moseley family of dentists were part of several dynasties of Jewish dentists who travelled countrywide offering various dental services. Others included the Jones family (original surname Groomsfeldt), the Mallan family (original surname Milleman) the Alex family, the Crawcour family, the Eskell family and the Gabriel family. There was a great deal of intermarriage between these families.

Lewin Yehuda Moseley, born in 1807 in London, was the son of Benjamin Issachar Moseley and his wife Rose, nee Levy. Lewin, a dentist, married Lydia Alex in 1832 at the Great

Synagogue London. Lydia and Lewin had eight children, three of whom became dentists: Simeon, Benjamin and Frederick.

Ephraim and Charles, also sons of Benjamin Issachar Moseley, became dentists and both attended to the public in several Lancashire towns. Charles who lived in Preston, appears in both the 1851 Slater's Commercial Directory for Lancashire and Mannex's 1855 Directory for Mid-Lancashire. The Moseley newspaper adverts which were certainly not lacking in modesty, never name which particular dentist would be attending. In one of the adverts, Charles is described as Dentist to the King of Hanover, whereas their rivals Messrs Gabriel describe themselves as Dentists to Prince D'Ottojanno, who purported to be Ambassador Extraordinary to the King of Naples!

The Wigan Observer of 21 March 1856 carries a large advertisement by Messrs Gabriel of 113 Duke Street, Liverpool and 79 Fenchurch Street, London. They were advertising Artificial teeth from four guineas a set and single teeth from 3/6d each. They also advertised products for Filling and Scaling teeth. On receipt of 30 postage stamps, Messrs Gabriel would send a packet of their newly invented 'White Stopping' for filling decayed teeth. In the Wigan Observer in 1858, regular adverts appear for Messrs Gabriel's chemically-prepared 'White Gutta Percha Enamel', priced 1/6d a box. It was claimed that this was the 'best stopping extant for decayed teeth and toothache. The agent for the product was Mr Wall, Postmaster at Wigan Post Office.

By 1862, Messrs Gabriel were advertising their services in Wigan. In the Wigan Observer of 10 January they announced that they would be in attendance in the town. A further newspaper announcement on 21 February 1862 stated they would be in Wigan on alternate Fridays at the premises of the Misses Peck on Standishgate.

The advert stated that, 'Messrs Gabriel of Liverpool, London and Birmingham held the patent for indestructible mineral teeth and flexible gums without palates, springs and wires... the best in Europe.' The firm advertised in the Burnley Advertiser and Preston Chronicle stating they were attending regularly in Bolton, Preston, Southport and Wigan and the company claimed to have been founded in 1815.

One could purchase a complete set of American Mineral teeth for £4.4s

in 1860. By 1863, the cost of the mineral teeth was £5. According to the advert the teeth were prepared in the laboratories under the personal supervision of Messrs Gabriel. Lyon (Leon) Gabriel was born in Amsterdam in about 1785. His wife Adelaide was some 19 years his junior. They appear in 1841 census living in the Sculcoates district of Yorkshire together with their nine children. Lyon's occupation is given as dentist. By 1851, they had moved to London and in 1861 were in the Ludgate area. His eldest son, Maurice was a dentist and three other sons, John Adolph and Solomon, all born in Liverpool, were pupil dentists. Lyon, founder of the dental dynasty died in London in 1866.

A notice in the Wigan Observer, 10 January 1862, announced that Eskells, Surgeon Dentists, would be attending every Friday in Wigan at 14 King Street, the premises of Mr J. C. Moss, brush-maker.

Frederick Abraham Eskell, Surgeon-dentist, appears in 1851 living at St Peter's Square, Manchester, with his wife Sarah and daughter Ann. His brother Louis, also a dentist, was living with them. Frederick was born in Scotland, as was Sophia, his mother. His father Philippus Eskell, was born in the Netherlands. Philippus, who later became

Advertisement for Messrs Gabriel, in Attendance at Standishgate, Wigan, 1862

REGULAR PROFESSIONAL ATTENDANCE, ALTERNATE FRIDAYS, FROM TEN TO FIVE.
WIGAN: February, 21st, and March 7th and 21st.
AT THE MASSES PECKS, STANDISHGATE, ALSO ATTENDANCE AT BOLTON AND WARRINGTON, BY HER MAJESTY'S ROYAL LETTERS PATENT.
MESSRS. GABRIEL'S PATENT
INDESTRUCTIBLE MINERAL TEETH and Flexible Gums without palates, springs, or wires, and without any operation. "One set lasts a lifetime," and are warranted for every purpose of mastication or articulation, even when all others fail. Purest materials and first-class workmanship at half the usual cost.
THE OLD ESTABLISHED DENTISTS,
154, DUKES-ROAD, LIVERPOOL. 27, HARLEY-STREET, GAVESDENE SQUARE, and 34, LUDGATE HILL, LONDON; 65, NEW-STREET, BIRMINGHAM.
American Mineral Teeth, best in Europe, 4 to 7, and 10 to 13 guineas per set, warranted.
STOPPINGS FOR TEETH.
More Teeth are sacrificed by the use of injurious Stoppings, having high sounding names, than by any other process. These Stoppings invariably contain quicksilver or some other injurious substance, which slowly but surely undermines the tooth it was intended to save.
GABRIEL'S CHEMICALLY PREPARED WHITE GUTTA PERCHA ENAMEL.
Is the best Stopping extant for Decayed Teeth and Toothache and no matter how far decayed, renders the injured member again sound and useful and prevents toothache. This preparation is entirely free from any metallic substance, and, as its name signifies, is specially prepared for this purpose. With directions for use, 1s. 6d. per box.
* * * Country Patients are informed that only one visit is required.
Complete Sets made in one day.

known as Philip was also a surgeon dentist. In the Wigan Observer of 14 March 1856 there is an advert from Frederick A. Eskell, headed by a Coat of Arms:

'Provisionally Registered - Petition recorded in the office of the Commissioners on 13 Nov 1855, FREDERICK A. ESKELL, Mechanical Dentist of 2 St Peter's Sq., Manchester. For the invention of an improvement in plates that are free from taste and prevent oxalation, which is occasioned by the soldering of gold plates together, as the solder is found to be of inferior metal to the gold plates. This splendid GOLD ENAMEL is the grand desideratum so long required by Dentists to make Dentistry of all artificial requirements, the most perfect in all its branches. LOSS OF TEETH, A NEW AND ELEGANT IMPROVEMENT connected with dental surgery has been invented by Mr F. A. ESKELL, surgeon dentist of 2 St Peter's Sq., Manchester.

It is the production of an entirely new description of artificial teeth which never change colour; nor decay; also without springs or wires and warranted for mastication and articulation. They so perfectly resemble nature that the practised eye of the dentist could not detect them from the production of nature. Mr Eskell returns his sincere thanks to Nobility, Gentry and Inhabitants of Manchester and its vicinity for the high and extensive practice he has had the Honour to be favoured with during his many years residence in Manchester.

FILLING DECAYED TEETH with ESKELL'S White terra paste which never changes colour. Single Artificial Tooth 10/-; Loose teeth fastened. F.A. Eskell's method combines all the Modern Improvements of Paris and Berlin.'

By 1861, Frederick and Sarah had six children and were still in Manchester moving to London soon afterwards. Frederick appears in 1848 Slater's Trade Directory as a dentist at 34 Cooper Street, Manchester and

in 1855 at St. Peter's Square. His son, Louis Benjamin Eskell, born 1855, also became a dentist.

Frederick Abraham Eskell was a founder member of the South Manchester synagogue in 1872 and was its first representative on the Board of Deputies. Prior to this he had been highly involved with synagogue politics in Manchester for many years. Frederick was president of a charity run by the Manchester Benevolent Society to supply poor Jews of the city with bread, coal and other necessities in the winter. Frederick was the author of several books on dentistry and took out several patents for the invention of improvements in beds or bases for artificial teeth. In 1862, Frederick published a book on the system of treating and fixing artificial teeth and in 1869, one on scientific and painless dentistry. Frederick died at Hanover Square in 1874 at the age of 58. His widow Sarah, carried on the business under his name but by 1881 it fell to bankruptcy.

Information and Sources

Margaret E. Macculloch and David J. Hall, Family History Research website;

Christine Hillam, Brass Plate and Brazen Impudence (Liverpool University Press, 1991);

Cameron Hawke-Smith, The Jones Dental Dynasty;

Bill Williams, The Making of Manchester Jewry, 1740-1875 (Manchester University Press);

John Cowell, Furriers, Glaziers, Doctors and others: A history of the Preston Jewish Community (privately published, 2009).

Author's Note

This article is part of my research into the Jewish community of Wigan which I hope to publish later this year, following the book I co-authored on Bolton's Jewish community in 2012. If you have any information on the Jewish community in Wigan that you would like to share, please contact the Editor.

BY BOB BLAKEMAN

The Thicknesse Family of Beech Hill

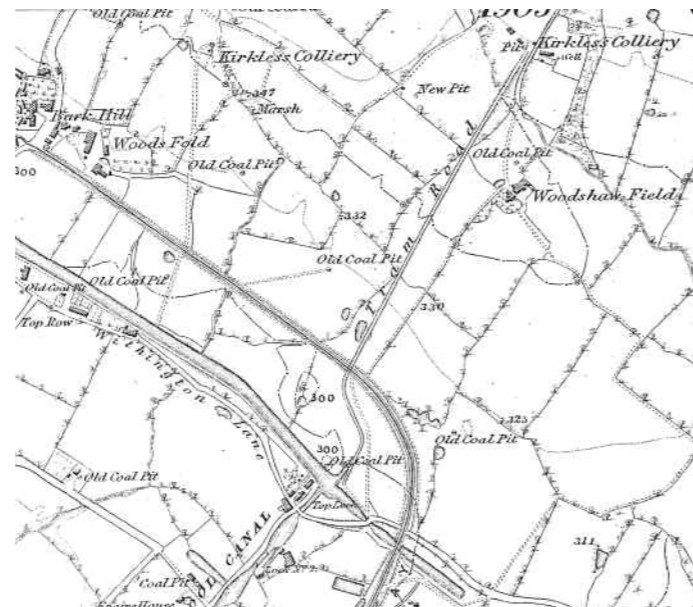
The Thicknesse family of Beech Hill played a major role in the economic and social life of Wigan for nearly two hundred years, but they were not native to the town.

Their connection with Wigan began in 1747, when Ralph Thicknesse M.D. sold his ancestral estate at Balterley in rural Staffordshire, and invested the proceeds in the Wigan district, including a 37 acre estate and a house at Beech Hill set in a little park. He set up practice as a physician and became distinguished nationally in the field of medicine. He died in 1790. His obituary in the Political Register stated that his sudden death was occasioned by his reading a newspaper article in which a physician named Ralph Thicknesse was described as 'an unreformed quack', but in fact the reference was to another physician of the same name.¹

Dr Thicknesse had an only son, also named Ralph. In 1792, in partnership with his brother-in-law Thomas Woodcock, he founded Wigan's first bank, the premises of which were situated opposite the present W.H. Smith's shop.

In 1810 Ralph Thicknesse and John Hodson took a lease of the coal seams near Kirkless Hall, Higher Ince, and sank a number of pits. Some time later Thicknesse also sank a colliery on the Woodfield estate (now Kirkless Wood), to the north of Top Lock, and had a tram-road constructed from the colliery to the canal. Canal enthusiasts may have wondered why at this point the former Lancaster Canal has been extended a few hundred yards

past its logical connection with the line of the canal ascending from Wigan. The reason is that the Lancaster Canal Company cut this extension in 1835 solely to inconvenience the proprietors of the Springs Branch railway line, because the line would have been detrimental to the canal company's business. It could have been used to transport coal from the collieries in Higher Ince, which indeed was its purpose.



Thicknesse's Kirkless Colliery, the Springs Branch railway and the bridge over the extension to the Lancaster Canal as shown on the 1849 O.S. Sheet 93.

It so happened that Thicknesse's pierhead was on the line of the canal extension, and the canal company's workmen destroyed it. Thicknesse took the canal company to court, but lost his case because under an act of 1772 the canal company

had the right to extend its canal to Westhoughton along that line.²

Ralph Thicknesse was active in politics. He was elected as a Whig in the general election of 1831; a year later Parliament passed the Great Reform Act.³ He was a founder member of the Liberal Party in Wigan, and represented the town in parliament until 1835. He died in 1842, leaving an only son, Ralph Anthony.

Ralph Anthony carried on the business of the bank and some cotton mills inherited from his father, but began to contract the colliery operations. He was of a philanthropic nature. He established a small free library in a house in Wigan, founded a school for the children of his employees, and paid for trips to the seaside for his workers. He was a Liberal M.P. for Wigan on several occasions between 1847 and 1854.

Ralph Anthony's life was not without tragedy. On 13 September 1853 his only son Ralph, and his nephew Thomas Woodcock were drowned in a boating accident on Lake Windermere. The Thicknesse and Woodcock families were at Waterhead for a holiday and the parents were travelling on a pleasure boat when a stranger shouted from the shore, 'Terrible news! There are two gentlemen drowned! The Woodcocks [sic] of Waterhead!'

Ralph Anthony never recovered from the shock. To lose a son was bad enough, but the father belonged to that social class for which the descent of property in the male line was important, and the Thicknesse male line had been in existence for six hundred years. Less than twelve months later he died at Harrogate, where he had gone to improve his health.

He did, however, have a daughter named Anne. She married Francis Coldwell, whom she had met when he was a curate at Wigan parish church. By royal licence he assumed the name and arms of Thicknesse. He rose through the Anglican hierarchy,



The arms of Francis Norman Thicknesse.



Cuthbert Thicknesse (far left) with dignitaries at the dedication of new bells, Wigan parish church, 1935

eventually becoming Suffragan Bishop of Leicester. His second son, Francis Norman Thicknesse became rector of the fashionable St. George's church, Mayfair. Francis Norman's second son, Cuthbert, was appointed rector of Wigan in 1922.

During the Great Depression, Cuthbert arranged for the provision of cheap meals for the unemployed, and campaigned for increases in child benefit, and vocational training for adolescents. He left Wigan in 1936, on being appointed Dean of St. Albans.

After Ralph Anthony died the family's house at Beech Hill was let to tenants. In 1902 the estate was broken up and sold. The house, which had decayed, was demolished about 1930 and soon afterwards Wigan Council built on the estate to alleviate the chronic shortage of working class housing.

There is a monument to the Thicknesse family in Wigan parish churchyard, in the shape of a Celtic cross. The plinth is slightly damaged, but the names of family members can still be read. However, a more lasting memorial exists in the name of a street on their former estate in Beech Hill: Thicknesse Avenue.

Notes

¹ A likely story! B.B.

² Townley, C. H. A., Smith, F. D. and Peden, J. A., *The Industrial Railways of the Wigan Coalfield* (1992), Cheltenham, Runpast Publishing.

³ For an account of this eventful election, see Bob Evans' article in Past Forward Issue 60.

Peter Peters: A life given to the London and North Western Railway

BY MARIANNE HOWELL

Community Heritage Manager, Lancashire County Council

When my husband, Nick (a volunteer with the Wigan Archives Service) and I moved into our house in Wigan, the previous owners left behind an indenture of 1925,¹ giving the history of the house from its construction in 1895 until that time.



This led me to want to find out more. By using a simple search online, I found the story of a previous occupant of the house, and his connection with the London & North Western Railway and what is now Wigan North Western station.

Peter Peters was born in Culcheth in 1855. The earliest trace I can find of him – in the 1871 census – shows he was living with the Setta family and was described as an assistant to the head of the household, Francis, who was a drysalter – a dealer in a range of chemical products used in glue, varnish, dye and foodstuffs.

The record of his career on the railway begins with his employment as an

apprentice on 22 April 1872 at Leigh.² To advance his career he later moved to work at Runcorn, Stafford, Lymm, Widnes and Edgehill.

By the time of the 1891 census he was married to Sarah [nee Moston], had three children and employed a servant. They went on to have five children in total – Thomas Moston, Ethel Banks, Peter Lewin, Mary Constance and George Maurice.

His employment record shows that he was appointed stationmaster at what is now Wigan North Western, on a salary of £150 per annum, on 1 October 1893. By the beginning of 1898 this had increased to £180.

The nineteenth century saw phenomenal, unstructured growth in railways following the opening of the first passenger service in the world, the Liverpool & Manchester Railway, in 1830. As early as 1832, the Wigan Junction Railway opened a line from a station in Chapel Lane to join the Liverpool & Manchester at Parkside Junction.

Six years later the station was relocated to its present position when the North Union Railway opened between Wigan and Preston. In 1846, as a result of continuing amalgamations, the London & North Western Railway was formed, allowing through trains from London Euston to Glasgow.

Between 1888 and 1894 the station was substantially enlarged and rebuilt. So Peter Peters was a witness to great changes and possibly oversaw some of the remodelling.



The visit of the Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) to Wigan on 18 May 1898

In 1898, a momentous year for Peter Peters, the Prince of Wales visited the town.

Later that same year, on the night of 31 August, Queen Victoria made one of her regular journeys north to stay at Balmoral, which was to have a dramatic outcome for the Wigan stationmaster. There is a detailed account of the journey from the court circular in The Standard newspaper.³

She set off from Gosport at 8.20 in the evening and was scheduled to arrive at Carlisle at 5.27 the following morning, so the train will have passed through Wigan between 3 and 4 in the morning on 1 September. For some

reason, Peter Peters was not present. He may well have been asleep at home, perhaps after a long day on duty – we shall never know.

He was immediately suspended, and his record of service shows that he was subsequently: 'dismissed 19/10/98 for not being on duty when Royal train stopped at Wigan...and paid 1 month in lieu of notice'.²

This will have been devastating for a man who had worked for the London & North Western Railway for 26 years and who had a family to support.

The Wigan Observer recorded the tragic event which followed:⁴

'Much excitement was caused in town on Thursday evening by the news that Mr Peter Peters, who up to a recent period was station-master at the London & North Western Railway Station at Wigan, had committed suicide in a shocking manner. Shortly after eight o'clock the deceased gentleman was found in the back yard of his home in Earl-street, Swinley, with his throat cut in a terrible way, the gash extending almost from ear to ear.'

This happened on 1 December. Shortly afterwards the paper carried a full report of the inquest. Sarah said that her husband 'had looked very low-spirited since he had left the station and had never spoken about it'. Her solicitor said that Peter had been a faithful servant to the company, and that some of his fellow employees had tried to bring about his reinstatement. The coroner recorded a verdict that Peter had taken his life 'whilst temporarily insane'.⁵

An explanation of why he was so severely punished was provided by another newspaper article:⁵

'...for the Queen's safety the station master at every station from Windsor to Balmoral is not only required to be on personal duty at the station when the Queen passes through, but he



In the very back yard where Peter ended his life, his son Peter Lewin Peters carved his name on a large slab in 1900 [Author's own image]

must fifteen minutes previously to the arrival of the royal train personally visit all the signal boxes within the limits of his station and satisfy himself that every signal is working perfectly, and failure in this duty is regarded by the railway companies as so serious an offence that it means immediate dismissal.'

It is possible to find out what happened to the family in the aftermath.

The 1901 census shows the family still living in the house – if the railway company had owned it the family would have had to move out. Sarah was able to stay there by becoming a boarding-house keeper, and had two boarders and a servant girl. Two of her children were also earning money – Ethel was 18 and a telegraph clerk, and 15 year old Peter was a telegraph messenger.

A Wigan street directory of 1903 shows Sarah as keeping, 'Apartments', although that was a rather grand way of saying that she let out rooms. By the time of the 1911 census, Sarah had moved to 122 Swinley Road. Her entry shows her simply as a widow, but (Mary) Constance is living with her and is a registration clerk with the Board of Trade.

It has been sad but fascinating to find out about a previous occupant of our house – and to feel that, despite his sad death, he doesn't haunt us!

A great deal of information to help with family history can be found in resources provided by museums, libraries and archives. For railway history, other useful sources are the National Archives, the National Railway Museum, Cheshire Archives and specialist railway societies.

Notes

- 1 Author's own
- 2 UK, Railway Employment Records, 1833-1956, on Ancestry Institution, via Lancashire Libraries <http://bit.ly/1itW45C> or Wigan Archives & Local Studies
- 3 The Standard, 1 September 1898, in British Library Nineteenth Century Newspapers, via Lancashire Libraries
- 4 Wigan Observer microfilms available at Wigan Local Studies
- 5 Reynolds's Newspaper, 4 December 1898, in British Library Nineteenth Century Newspapers, via Lancashire Libraries

BY YVONNE ECKERSLEY

Saving Leigh's Babies (1900-1925)

In 1917, 'It was more dangerous to be a baby in England than to be a soldier', said the Bishop of London. England's infant mortality rate was higher than that of its soldiers at war.

Something was undoubtedly wrong. Statistical evidence had, and was continuing to reveal an appallingly high infant mortality rate among the urban, industrial working class. As this coincided with a low birth rate, the perceived 'wastage' of the nation's babies became a major concern. Public, political and professional figures at all levels focused on why so many died, identifying contributing factors and instigating courses of action to protect babies.

Central and local government strategies were two-pronged. Before 1900, connections between the unsanitary nature of urban towns and high death rates had been established. Numerous Sanitary Acts required local authorities to address certain issues, such as unhealthy water supplies, inadequate drainage, poor sewers, overcrowding and unsanitary housing. However, environmental improvement, whilst a vital component for bringing down the town's general mortality, was a long term project, and one severely restricted during and after the War. It could not, in itself, reduce the high infant mortality rate. A more pragmatic and achievable strategy was required.

Consequently, the government identified three preventable conditions that led to infant death, namely, Epidemic Diarrhoea (Summer Diarrhoea) and Enteritis, respiratory diseases, and the generic 'wasting disease'. They placed mothers at the centre of their planned solution.

Mothers, it was reasoned, once informed, were in the position to be able to orchestrate change. Government introduced legislation, and more importantly provided money to help local authorities devise and execute schemes.

Provision of Services

Using Leigh's Medical Officer of Health Reports as my main resource I have discovered that these men and Leigh's Health Committee were committed to formulating, financing (supplemented by Government grants) and executing, realistic achievable services in line with and at times pre-empting developing theories and guidelines. Throughout, they were sensitive to the difficulties working class mothers faced whilst raising their offspring.

Provision of services of this kind was unprecedented; state, local authorities and mothers had no templates to guide them. Initially volunteer led, Leigh's embryonic child welfare service became increasingly professionalised with volunteers given a vital, but secondary role.

Health Visitors (HVs) were the linchpin of the service. Their primary role was to visit newborn babies, offer mothers support and report back to the Medical Officer of Health (MOH). As meticulous, investigative, data collection continually linked artificial feeding with infant death, HVs were to promote breast feeding.

Babies were most at risk from contaminated cow's milk. The source of Epidemic Diarrhoea was milk contaminated by faecal matter. Despite assiduous efforts to improve its purity –

'pure milk is as important as pure beer', said Dr Clay Beckett, MOH – Leigh's milk remained suspect. Eventually Clinics stopped supplying it for babies.

If mothers relied on artificial feeding, HVs were to stress the need for scrupulous cleanliness when preparing bottles, storing and protecting milk from houseflies. Houseflies were identified as transmitters of infection, moving from the faeces of diarrhoea sufferers to uncovered milk. Mothers were to be weaned from the use of the extremely unhygienic, flat bottle with a teat at the end of a long rubber tube from which the babies sucked, and encouraged to use the newly designed hygienic boat shaped bottles. Long tube bottles were advantageous to busy mothers as they could be left besides babies to suck independently. Consequently it took years to end their use.

Midwives were identified as a 'second line of attack'. Consecutive MOH reports emphasised the need to persuade delivering midwives to stress the importance of breast feeding, and/or the hygienic requisites of artificial feeding, plus the importance of personal hygiene to new mothers. Unfortunately, as no midwives were directly employed, midwives' co-operation depended on good will. In 1919 Leigh's midwives were distinctly antagonistic, by 1925 more compliant.

The Clinics

In 1912, Leigh adopted the 1907 Notification of Births Act. Utilising associated Government monies they centralised and expanded their

Maternity and Child Welfare service. Besides employing another HV, they established a Maternity and Child Welfare Centre in the Old Town Hall, King Street. There, the MOH monitored babies whilst HVs recorded their weight. In necessitous cases free dried milk and Virol was supplied; fresh milk was not, for fear of older siblings purloining it. As mothers' ability to breast feed was reliant on their nutritional state, malnourished mothers were offered free milk.

Maternity bags (layettes) were loaned, and frequently articles of clothing given. In the same venue a School for Mothers was instigated; initially periodic, by 1915 it became a regular feature. A paid Superintendent, School Nurse, and volunteers, ran the School. The School's first curriculum had three distinct themes; practical demonstrations of how to cook nutritious meals using coal fires (most homes had no stove); sewing classes, repairing, darning and making infant clothing (the latter aimed at eradicating the practice of binding babies, which restricted breathing); and related health lectures.

Further expansion was facilitated by the more prescriptive 1918 Maternal and Child Welfare Act. A Council Sub-Committee was created with two, later four, female co-opted members. Their sole responsibility was Maternal and Child Welfare. Helped by government money, Leigh's Maternal and Child Welfare Clinic was upgraded, moving to Stone House, St Helen's Road in 1919 and staffed by the MOH, two HVs, one School Nurse and two volunteers. In the 1920s problems of accessibility were addressed by the provision of branch clinics in Coal Pit Lane (1925) and Nangreaves Street (1927), each having their own HV.

Success

Due in no small part to the partnership between mothers and professionals, the incidences of death due to



Nurses weighing a baby at Stone House, Leigh

Epidemic Diarrhoea were significantly reduced. Identifying and preventing deaths due to wasting diseases was more complex and more difficult to address. Insufficient knowledge surrounding food values led to malnourished, sickly babies.

Mothers who could not breast feed were often dependent on commercially produced baby foods, many of which were not fit for purpose. The cheapest and most convenient baby food was condensed milk, incidentally, provided at the Clinics. Unfortunately, by the turn of the century, manufacturers had replaced full fat with skimmed milk, thus removing some nutritional value.

Some products were potentially harmful. Peptolaxa, a pain killer, targeted new mothers, declaring, 'An infant often needs a little medicine a day or two after birth'. Leigh's infant mortality due to respiratory diseases, despite concerted efforts to reduce it, remained comparably one of the nation's highest. Leigh's geographic and climatic location, low lying, with sandstone on clay soils in an area of comparatively heavy rainfall, created the damp conditions conducive to diseases of this nature, whilst damp, overcrowded houses exacerbated the problem.

Cinderellas

The illegitimate mortality rate, with a few exceptional years, was often around or over double the legitimate. Many unmarried mothers and illegitimate babies were associated at one time with the Workhouse and despite Guardians' efforts the plight of illegitimate babies remained dire.

Guardians acted on the precepts of the 1908 Children's Act and monitored fostered babies closer (most babies born in the Workhouse were illegitimate). They employed district Infant Protection Officers to search out unregistered fosterers (as per the 1909 Infant Protection Act) whose suitability was then assessed. From 1915, they informed HVs when a new-born left the Workhouse.

Unmarried mothers struggled against a system that although attempting to aid them, was based upon a strict moral framework that stigmatised and discriminated against them and sought to remove the children born to them from their care. In one case a woman was refused aid by the relieving officers entirely and some women took the hard decision to remove themselves entirely from the system and find their own way to raise their children. They were trapped in a vicious circle that in many cases put their babies at risk.

EDWARD HALL

Life begins at 40

BY BILL MELLING

We continue Bill Melling's exploration of the life of Edward Hall, the man behind Wigan Archive's famous diary collection (see Issues 63 and 64)

From the mid-1920s, Edward had suffered something of an identity crisis, with feelings of inadequacy and self doubt. His early years in a prosperous upper-middle class family and his experiences in the First World War as an officer had left him totally unprepared for a life of poverty. He also bitterly resented that he had been made to leave school at 14 without any formal qualifications, ruling him out of finding the type of job he thought suitable for someone with his upbringing and background. He was particularly conscious of this when working on the Bibliography at the London School of Economics when he felt he was looked down on by the academics he was working with.

1938, the year Edward turned 40, started very badly for him. His work on the Bibliography was completed and he was back on the dole. In August his father died a particularly painful death from cancer leaving Edward, his eldest son, only his gold watch (which he promptly pawned). The rest of his money went to Amy, the eldest daughter.

War clouds were gathering and he applied for and obtained a job as a temporary clerk in the registry at the Air Ministry headquarters at Adastral House where he started

work in October 1938. In June 1939, he applied to join the newly formed RAF Officers' Volunteer Reserve. Much to his surprise, two weeks after the outbreak of war, he received a phone call telling him he had been commissioned as a Pilot Officer. He was given a uniform allowance, told to get himself kitted out and to be ready to go to France within a week. On 1 October 1939 he flew to France and after a chaotic journey found he had been posted to Number 73 squadron at Rouvres. In September 1939 No. 73 was one of two Hurricane fighter squadrons that had been sent to France as part of the the Advanced Air Striking Force, the other being No. 1 Squadron.

Edward's first job was to act as liaison officer between the two squadrons but there was little for him to do and he was soon appointed to the much more important post of Adjutant to No. 73 Squadron. The Adjutant was directly responsible to the squadron leader for day to day administration of all non flying activities and was in charge of the Orderly Room (the squadron office). Prior to going to France, 73 Squadron had been training as part of a larger group and had not needed a full time Adjutant and they regarded Edward's arrival with some suspicion. However, they were now operating as an independent unit and after a shaky start Edward soon demonstrated his worth and was accepted as a valuable addition to the squadron. He was much

older than the other officers, particularly the pilots, and became something of a father figure, affectionately nicknamed 'Henry', after Henry Hall, the well known dance band leader. Given his aversion to modern music – 'Jazz', as he called it – this was rather inappropriate but it was a measure of the high regard in which he was held that his fellow officers introduced 'The Henry Hall Hour'. For an hour each evening Edward was given full control of the Officers' Mess radio to listen to classical music of his choice, an activity, which by his own admission, usually emptied the room.

At first the squadron had lived in tents but soon obtained more comfortable lodgings in Rouvres where they spent the winter of 1939-40, a period known as the 'phony war', during which there was little or no fighting due to the particularly severe winter. They were one of the few British units in that part of the front and were wined and dined practically every evening by neighbouring French Officers. In his letters home, Edward regaled Em, his wife, with details of the exotic menus and fine wines he had enjoyed whilst claiming that unlike his fellow officers, particularly the young pilots, he never over indulged himself or got drunk. He also got in some sightseeing in the neighbouring towns and wangled himself a new set of dentures, a process which involved several



Hurricane refuelling, Number 73 Squadron

round trips of over 100 miles through pleasant countryside, before they were finally fitted.

Prior to the onset of the bad weather the squadron had a few brushes with the enemy and on one day shot down four German planes, an event which attracted a lot of media attention. Edward appeared on the newsreels of the time, examining the wreckage of the planes along with the victorious pilots and he had to suffer some good natured leg-pulling from the young pilots on his new role as a film star. Given the lack of news coming from the front these events greatly increased both public and official interest in the squadron and brought a constant stream of visitors who Edward, as Adjutant, was often called upon to deal with. These included Anthony Eden (the Minister for War), the head of the R.A.F., delegations from the British and foreign press and the Duke of Windsor, who Edward had to personally show around the aerodrome in the absence of the Commanding Officer, Squadron Leader B.W. Knox.

Knox was a larger than life character who was far happier leading his men in the air than sitting behind a desk and when he found he could trust Edward to carry through his wishes, he was happy to leave him to deal with

was respected by the young pilots who accepted him as a valuable member of the team and treated him as an equal. Knox showed his appreciation by recommending him for promotion first to Flying Officer and later to Flight Lieutenant, moves which at long last meant that Edward and Em's financial worries were over.

The 'phony war' dragged on into December and as things were so quiet it was decided that home leave could be granted over the Christmas and New Year period. It fell to Edward to organise the leave rotas and also the Christmas festivities for those who stayed behind. This involved locally sourcing and arranging for the cooking of 32 turkeys, the distribution of 29,000 cigarettes and finding a last minute substitute for the plum puddings that got lost somewhere in the supply chain. At long last, he got leave and went home to his family a changed man. In the six months since the war started he had been transformed from a penniless clerk, who in his own words was 'scorned and rejected by the world outside my little circle', to a confident, well respected officer, on speaking terms with Royalty, Military Commanders and Cabinet Ministers.



On leave, 1940, Hall and family, (left to right) Bunk, John, Em, Joan and Edward Hall

Current Projects

Several important projects are underway as the anniversary of the start of the First World War draws closer and we would like to thank all our volunteers for their efforts. The index of Wigan Council Minutes, 1914-1918 is now complete and this new resource can be viewed at www.wlct.org/wigan/museums-archives/wals/collections/. The index is a useful tool for helping researchers interested in particular in the effect of the conflict on the home front and the people of Wigan.

At the Archives Service, Archives Volunteer, Tim Sen is digitising a collection of photographs from Wigan Borough Leisure Department from the early 1980s. The collection consists of over 300 images, everything from the RAC rally at Haigh, to the Haigh railway, darts tournaments at Formby Hall, visits from Michael Heseltine and Bobby Charlton, and the now somewhat dated Miss Leisure Services competition... The images will be going online during 2014, but if you would like more information or to view them at the Archives, please get in touch.

Wigan Metro Darts Championship, c. 1981



We are also in the process of transcribing Census Returns for references to inmates at Wigan Workhouse and the indexing of our map collection, to highlight places and buildings of interest. If you are interested in getting involved with any of our current projects, please get in touch with Rita Musa at r.musa@wlct.org.

Shadrach and Annie Critchley

Nearly 100 years ago a couple in Westleigh both made a pact to die together rather than endure the separation and horror of the First World War. The couple's names were Shadrach and Annie Critchley. Shadrach enlisted in 1915 but only a month later both him and Annie had killed themselves by asphyxiation whilst Shadrach was on leave. This story was discovered and researched by Susan Berry. Susan volunteers for Wigan Archives and Local Studies.

We need more volunteers like Susan to help research and collate a list of the fallen from the First World War by researching the stories of those affected. Volunteers will compile a list of names of those who are commemorated on memorials in the borough and research the individuals using our collections and online resources. For details of how to get involved

please contact Rita Musa / Hannah Turner on 01942 828020 / 404559 or email r.Musa@wlct.org / h.turner@wlct.org

To read more about Shadrach's story please see the GM1914 blog at <http://gm1914.wordpress.com/> or contact Leigh Local Studies on 01942 404559 / H.Turner@wlct.org

Recent Acquisitions and Accessions

Archives

- Mine manager's training papers of John William Ormshaw (Acc. 2013/80)
- Leigh School Sports Photographic Collection (Acc. 2013/83)
- Records of Ashton Recreation Society (Acc. 2013/86)
- Colin Mather Photographic Collection, 1980s-2000s (Acc. 2014/2)
- Wigan Pier Experience Archive, 1980s-2000s (Acc. 2014/1)

- Lowton St Luke Parish Records, parish magazines (Acc. 2014/7)
- Turnpike Gallery Archive (Acc. 2014/9)

Wigan Local Studies

- Atherton, David and Peyton, Michael P. Faith & Martyrdom: The Holy Hand of St Edmund Arrowsmith (271.53)
- Girls' High School Magazines 1937 – June 1962 (incomplete)
- Hulbert, Henry L. P. Sir Francis Sharp Powell Baronet and Member of Parliament: A Memoir (929.2 POW)
- Recusant History Volume 31, Number 4
- The SELNEC Standard Newsletter of the SELNEC Preservation Society January, 2006 – May 2013 (incomplete) (388.322)
- Shevington & District Community Association (942.736 SHEV)
- Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire & Cheshire, Volume 162, 2013

Your Museums and Archives Need You!



Would you like to help us care for your heritage? Do you think you have the skills and experience to help run a support group? The Museum of Wigan Life and Wigan Archives & Local Studies are looking for individuals interested in establishing a 'Friends of Wigan Museums and Archives' group.

The 'Friends Of' group would fundraise, raise awareness, organise events and encourage everyone to enjoy and use our services. We are looking for a wide range of people with the skills and enthusiasm to get active in promoting and supporting the service. The museum and archive staff would support the group by providing a venue and administrative support.

If you're interested or want to find out more, please contact Alex Miller (01942 404 430) or Lynda Jackson (01942 828128).

Volunteer Focus

Ian J F Mullins and the Wigan Borough Maps Project

Since May 2013 I have been examining, identifying, checking indexes and listing all the maps held at Wigan Local Studies. These are currently housed in map drawers and cabinets and there are others held on the premises that we are working to re-house. The maps cover Wigan and all surrounding areas. The information will be transferred onto spreadsheets and the project will move to Wigan Archives and Leigh Local Studies so that we will have one comprehensive catalogue of everything held and where it is located.

In identifying each map I have entered details of principal roads, farms, ancient buildings, schools, churches, woods, waterways, public houses, railways and places of interest that may help researchers to track down what they are looking for.

It has been a long, laborious task and the identification and listing is perhaps now four-fifths done but it may be some time before the final catalogue is ready.

Apart from normal Ordnance Survey Maps there are many interesting items including Geological Maps, architectural drawings of the old Market Hall and Haigh Hall, many local graveyards and even two battlefield maps of sites from the Second Boer War listing local casualties!

There are early and late Victorian Maps with an excellent scale enabling the researcher to study each individual item. An 1841 map shows the mineral line from Winstanley Collieries ending in the famous ramp on the Leeds Liverpool Canal that gave us our Wigan Pier! We can see where Wigan Boat and Ship Building Yards were located and where Roman Coin hoards and early artifacts have been found. It has been interesting to compare different editions of 1:2500 maps from the 1950s to the 1980s, noting the massive spread of housing development and the decline of manufacturing industries, coal mining and rail networks.

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.

Museum Collections Corner

By Carrie Gough, Collections Officer

A couple of objects which have caught my eye particularly in the last few weeks are these two beautiful death/coffin masks. The first is an Eighteenth Dynasty Egyptian gilded coffin face and has been described as an extremely rare example of it's kind (below).

An interesting comparison to the Egyptian mask is the Roman – Egypt Death Mask (above), circa early second century AD. This unusual object comes from Egypt, which was then a province of the Roman Empire. It would have been placed over a mummified body. The style of the mask shows how the two ancient cultures influenced each other. The Roman mask does show an idealized representation of the person but it is more realistic compared to the Egyptian one.

Both of these masks were donated to Wigan in the 1920s as part of the Sir John Scott Egyptology collection. They will both be featured on the website of the Greater Manchester Museums Groups (GMMG) on our forthcoming Our Connected History showcase, <http://www.gmmg.org.uk/our-connected-history/>



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

Take a closer look

at your local museum

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GREATER MANCHESTER
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Our Connected History
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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?

Local History Writing Competition

1st Prize - £100

2nd Prize - £75

3rd Prize - £50

Five Runners-Up Prizes of £25

The Essay Writing Competition is kindly sponsored by Mr and Mrs J. O'Neil.



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 68.

Other submissions may also be published in Issue 68 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 3 October 2014.

- 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

Stonemason's Mallet

returns to its Origins by Richard Sivill

The Chief Stone of St Michael and All Angels Church in Howe Bridge in Atherton was laid on the 5 July 1875. The ceremony was performed by Katherine Isabella Fletcher, wife of Ralph Fletcher (1815-1886). To mark the occasion the builder William Winnard of Wigan, presented her with a silver trowel and a stonemason's mallet.

The trowel remains within the Fletcher family to this day but the mallet 'disappeared'. However, in October 2013 it was put up for auction in Pimlico, London and purchased by Mr Conn White. On learning of the sale, Richard Sivill, a St Michael's parishioner and a member of the Wigan Borough Heritage & Environment Group, informed Robert Cornish, the great-grandson of Ralph Fletcher, of the sale. Robert, who lives at Hale Barns in Cheshire, subsequently purchased the mallet.

On Saturday 8 February 2014 St Michael's celebrated 137 years since the church was consecrated in February 1877 when it held its annual Open and Gift Day. In the afternoon Robert gave an excellent talk on the Fletcher family and ended by donating the mallet to the church.



Robert Cornish presents Richard Sivill with the mallet



The Stonemason's Mallet and presentation inscription to Katherine Isabella Fletcher

Wigan Collieries in 1923

Part One By Ted
McAvoy

I've been interested in mining around Wigan since I was a nipper in the 1950s. No matter how much you think you know, there are always surprises and mysteries just waiting to be uncovered.

Recently, I went through the official, 1923 List of Mines and many of the simple facts it contained threw a new light on the state of the industry soon after the First World War. A few of the little pits operating then are barely remembered at all and many of the larger pits were a lot bigger (or smaller) than you'd have expected. There's no clear definition of the Wigan Coalfield but, for this article, I've taken it to stretch to Upholland, Holland Moor and Skelmersdale in the west, Coppull to the north, Westhoughton and Westleigh in the east and Golborne and Haydock in the south. For many pits, I've given the numbers of men employed. There were still women employed in screening the coal but nowhere near as many as in earlier years, and the Mines Lists don't differentiate between the sexes!

Looking at the little pits first, it would probably be possible to pinpoint where they were from the Abandonment Plans but I haven't had time to look at those yet. Perhaps someone might remember Almond & Stone's Birchenheads colliery in Downall Green. It employed 41 working the King Seam and very close by, the Downall Green Colliery Company's Downall Green colliery employed 28 men. Over in Dalton, A. Ashcroft of Rogers Farm had just abandoned his Dalton pit on 21 September 1922. I have wondered where that was? A more successful colliery in Dalton was Elmers Green with 33 men still at work and J. Graham and J. Hope had a little drift mine on Ashurst Beacon called Stannanought Pit with just five men. They weren't the only ones. Martland & Martin Collieries, based at Woodlands, Appley Bridge, were working their own Dalton pit with 20 men.

I'd thought that Cheshire Holes Colliery, not far from Darlington Street had been closed in the nineteenth century but E. R. Bibby was still clinging on there with nine men. Meanwhile, the Bromilow Brothers were prospecting for coal at City Road pit in Kitt Green and a

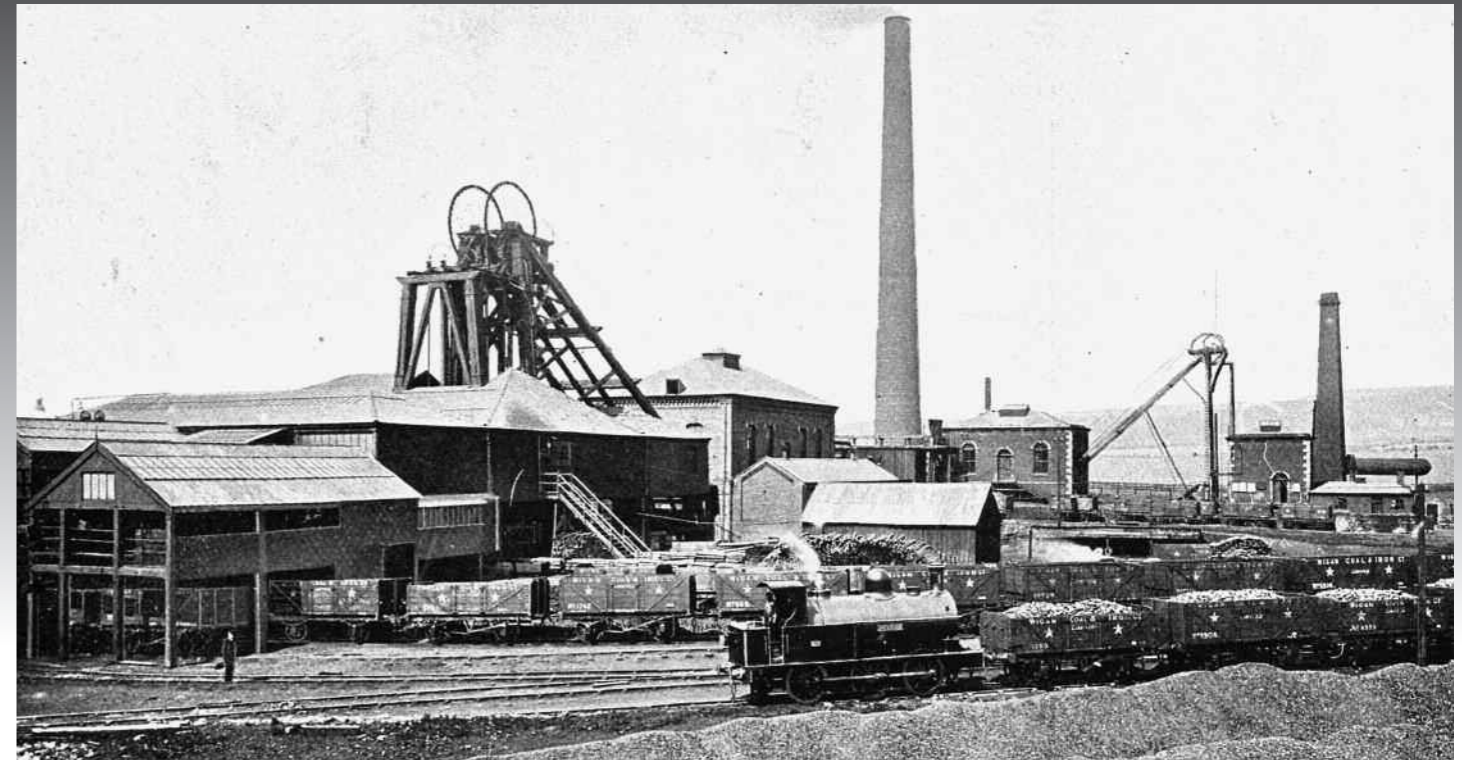
company with a very old name – Ince Hall Collieries Ltd – must have reopened one of the many old Ince Hall collieries with 59 men. Close to the centre of Wigan, Maloney Brothers employed 16 men at their Bottling Wood pit and W. Littler was mining coal at Hill Top, Whelley – wherever Hill Top was – but no employees were listed for this operation.

Billinge, Winstanley & Upholland were riddled with small collieries right up to the 1980s but only a few were active in 1923. Probably the most historic site was Dean Wood where mining was well established by the late eighteenth century. The Dean Wood Coal Company were working the Orrell 5ft seam here with 27 men in 1923, presumably having found a block of coal the 'old men' had left untouched. Alfred Allen's nine men were working the Newgate pit in Upholland and the still-remembered Laithwaite family had a mine on their Lawns Delf site employing 32. Littler Brothers were working the Bottom Mountain Mine. On the St Helens side of Billinge, the Carr Mill Arley Colliery Co had three Arley pits, Number 1 being recently abandoned but 2 and 3 pits keeping 31 men busy.

While all these little pits kept people at work supplying mainly market for coal within the home, they were insignificant in the greater scheme of things. Even in Upholland and Billinge, there were much larger collieries at work and they in turn were dwarfed by the big pits further east.

The big employer in the Upholland Area was the White Moss Coal Co. Their Holland No 6 and No 9 pits, adjacent to the Wigan-Kirkby railway and often said to be on its last legs by 1923, were anything but, and actually needed 596 men to handle their output.

Easily the biggest operations in the Billinge area were those of the Bispham Hall Colliery Co, allied to Bispham Hall Brick & Terracotta Company Limited, the remains of whose superb brickworks can still be seen up Smethurst Lane. The colliery company operated a shaft mine and a day-eye (drift), Gauntley No 1 and No 2 on the brickworks site, the Mountain mine away to the west and the Roger Shale drift somewhere near the



Alexandra Pit, New Springs

brickworks. Altogether, they employed 440 men, excluding the brickworks itself. Gauntley Number 1 pit continued in use, still with a steam winding engine, up to 1965. I was involved in moving the classic wooden headgear from this pit to Haigh Hall Plantations in around 1977 but it soon became a victim of weather and neglect and was demolished. We also capped the Gauntley shaft; the task of pouring the concrete cap was held up for 15 minutes while we rescued a frog!

The Orrell coalfield, a hotbed of activity a hundred years earlier, was all but worked out by now, though Orrell No 3 pit, by the Southport railway, still mustered 355 men. North of the Douglas were the Standish collieries, owned by the Wigan Coal & Iron Company. Working in 1923 were John & Taylor pits, Giants Hall, Victoria, Broomfield and Langtree plus a pumping pit in Robin Hill Lane. Together, they kept 2,655 people in employment.

In Coppull and Coppull Moor, there were four sizeable mines – Welch Whittle, Blainscough, Ellerbeck and the biggest and last surviving pit at Chisnall Hall. They employed no less than 3,196 people – remarkable when you think of the small size of Coppull in those days.

Like Orrell, Haigh and Aspull had seen better mining days and within ten years, collieries there would be virtually a thing of the past. In 1923, production at Crawford Colliery near the Finger Post was scaled right down, though Moor No 5 and Meadow were still working normally. In New Springs, Alexandra and Lindsay collieries were at work, Alexandra still with

thirty years life ahead of it. Scot Lane Colliery, nearer Blackrod, was a big producer as were the Westhoughton Coal & Cannel Company's Westhoughton and Starkie pits, but they were doomed through no fault of their own. They relied almost entirely on Wigan Coal's massive Aspull Pumping Pit with its fleet of beam engines to drain their workings and when the Pumping Pit closed in 1932, the Scot Lane and Westhoughton pits soon followed.

From Hindley and Hindley Green all the way down to Westleigh were more collieries, including Hindley Green Grammar & Arley, California, Swan Lane, Westleigh, Heyfield and the Wigan Coal pits Eatock and Hewlett. Each employed hundreds more men but there were two much larger collieries. Abram and Bickershaw were impressive operations with no less than 4,000 men between them and Bickershaw was destined to last until 1992, long after most of the others had been bulldozed out of existence. Around Abram and Platt Bridge were yet more substantial collieries which we'll look at in the next article.

Ninety years later, the Wigan area has been completely transformed and there are few clues to its heavy industrial past. Some mill buildings survive as does one of the ironwork's slag heaps at Kirkless but traces elsewhere have to be diligently searched for. It's hard to believe now that nearly 50,000 men and women worked in the collieries around Wigan in 1923!

Editor's Note

See Issue 67 for the second part of 'Wigan Collieries in 1923'

THE MUSEUM GETS CONNECTED

Lynda Jackson, Community History Manager

The Museum of Wigan Life team are excited to be part of a special project to bring together the rich and diverse collections of museums across Greater Manchester. Majestic museums, splendidly spooky halls, underground air raid shelters – Wigan and Greater Manchester have it all.

The museum in Wigan is part of a network of museums across Tameside, Bury, Bolton, Oldham, Salford, Stockport and Rochdale called the Greater Manchester Museums Group (GMMG). The group's most recent success was an international art exhibition which toured around China and included our very own 'Going North' (1875) oil painting by George Earl. The painting was originally exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1876 and today is regarded as Earl's greatest composition, showing a group of wealthy travellers departing from Kings Cross Station for Scotland and the start of the grouse shooting season (the 'Glorious 12th'). 'Going North' has now come back from 'going east', having returned from China at the end of 2013.

The GMMG are keen to showcase artworks and other important objects from collections in the region to the whole world via the web. Our Connected History on the GMMG website has recently launched and features images and text of 400 objects and art works from key collections. This selection includes 50 fantastic items from the Museum of Wigan Life and Trencherfield Mill. As well as high quality photographs and information, visitors can access videos of artists, local historians and museum curators providing a behind the scenes insight into the collections. Wigan and Leigh's footage includes Local Studies Officer Hannah Turner discussing the 1839 pike reputedly confiscated after the 'Leigh Feight' - a clash between Chartists and the authorities in King Street. The great steam engine at Trencherfield Mill is also captured on film on the website and with background information about it.

Artworks in the borough's top 50 objects include the famous painting of Sir Roger and Lady Bradshaigh (1746) in front of Haigh Hall by



A poster for the Grand Carnival at Central Park 9th September 1909

Edward Haytley. More recent works include J. L. Isherwood's portrait of his friend and fellow painter L. S. Lowry (1971) and The Wigan Arms (1973), the latter now on display at the museum. There are bleak industrial landscapes depicted in Theodore Major's works including Crucifixion and Houses in the Snow (1950s). Much loved Wigan artist Gerald Rickards is represented with his Charter Mural, also on display at the museum.

The Borough's manufacturing history is told through examples of seventeenth and eighteenth century pewterware, a long case clock (1710) made by John Burges of Wigan and a pocket watch (1775-1815) by James Coates. Industrial history is represented by a Walker Brothers industrial fan, an Ormerod

Detaching Hook and a pick axe belonging to a survivor of the Pretoria Pit Disaster (1910). The history of Leigh is well represented by a variety of objects, from The Spinning Jenny tile panel to the Albion No.5A reaper-binder (farming machinery) made by Harrison McGregor. The Spinning Jenny was originally on the side of a building on the corner of Spinning Jenny Street and King Street. It was installed there in 1911 to mark the contributions to the textile industry of the Leigh inventor Thomas Highs in the eighteenth century. It is believed that Thomas Highs invented the Spinning Jenny at a house on King Street. The tile panel is now displayed inside Leigh Town Hall.

As the First World War centenary approaches, the website includes items from the Borough's wartime experience. One example is an

enamel badge given to the children of those men fighting on the front. The badges were accompanied by 1lb of chocolate, given out on Christmas Eve 1914 and paid for through an appeal by the mayor of Wigan, Alderman Grimshaw. There is an example of the famous, Princess Mary's gift box, presented to British troops at Christmas 1914 after an appeal by the 17 year old daughter of King George V and Queen Mary. The reality of war is shown in the prosthetic arm and discharge papers of Robert Marsh who served in the machine gun corps; Marsh lost his arm, suffered damage to his eye and was gassed. Also featured online is a Pickelhaub helmet from the Imperial German Army, thought to be an 'ersatz' type (1916), and shrapnel from the bomb dropped by a German zeppelin in an air raid on the area in April 1918. The

shrapnel is engraved by William Chivers of Scholes.

On a lighter note there are objects chosen to reflect the everyday life of the borough including a railway sign, musical instrument and Carnival poster. There are stunning items from the museum's Egyptology and Roman collections, including a Gold Aureus of Vitellius found on Mesnes, part of a samian ware bowl, a death mask from Roman Egypt and an Egyptian gilded coffin face dating from the 18th Dynasty. The museum team are excited that such fabulous treasures can be seen by a wider audience and hope the website will improve access to collections for the people of Wigan Borough and beyond.

Visit GMMG at <http://www.gmmg.org.uk/our-connected-history/>

Abram Church Heritage Day

Abram Parish Church are hosting an open day as part of the national Heritage Open Days scheme in September.

The church will be open for guided tours, private prayer, refreshments, as well as for family history enquiries regarding the church's historic baptisms, marriages and burials, and help finding a grave in the churchyard.

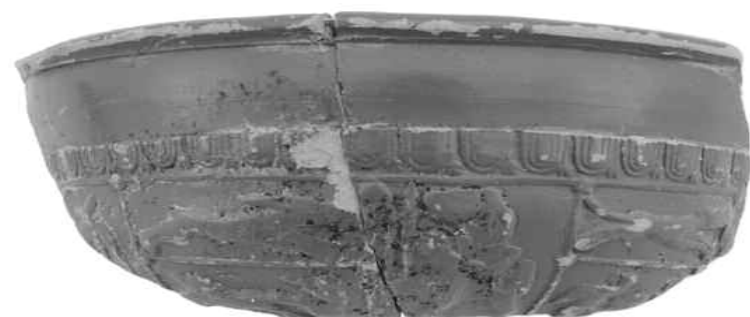
Come along and have a look inside this beautiful church building on Saturday 13 September 2014, 10.00am until 4.00pm, at Abram St John the Evangelist Parish Church, Warrington Road, Abram.

Please contact the church directly for more information.

The old parish Abram Church and Reverend Scott



Abram St John, Concert Party, 1916



Fragment of a Samian ware bowl featuring Diana the hunting goddess, a hare and charioteer, c. 70-85 AD. Found in the Weind in 1982.

Falling from Grace: Reverend Newbold and his Hindley Parish

BY DENISE COLBERT

The summer of 1873 saw scandal hit Hindley. Reverend Charles Hutchinson Newbold had been the parish vicar of All Saints since 1863, enjoying a happy and largely uneventful incumbency in this time. However, charges of drunkenness and immorality brought against him a decade later would rock the town and catalyse his journey down a pernicious path to desolation.

The son of a slave-owner, Reverend Newbold was born in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. He studied at St. Aidan's Theological College in Birkenhead, Merseyside and while there Charles married Charlotte Elizabeth Fennessey, the daughter of an Irish gentleman. His curacy was undertaken at All Saints Church in Wigan and in October 1863 he read himself in at Hindley parish church.

The charges in question were brought to the Bishop of Chester on 6 November 1872, by the churchwardens of All Saints, prominent Hindley businessmen John Leyland and William Marsh. Leyland wrote of the interview in his diary:

'We laid before the Bishop several unpleasant differences which had arisen between Mr. Newbold and his parishioners, and several irregularities which had marked his private life. To me it was a painful and unpleasant duty.'

On 8 July 1873, the case was reported in the Manchester Examiner & Times. The articles of impeachment accused Reverend Newbold of drunkenness whilst performing the offices of the

church, neglect of his duty to visit the sick, immoral and indecent conduct and conduct unbecoming a clergyman bringing great scandal upon the Church.

There were instances of alleged drunkenness in the months of January, March, October and November 1872. On New Year's Day of that year, the reverend apparently arrived 2 hours late for a burial and witnesses reported that he appeared to be 'for'ard in drink'. Later when people began to leave the church, he was overheard exclaiming 'I don't care a straw for one of them'. Various additional instances of Newbold 'labouring under liquor' and conducting himself inappropriately for a man of the cloth were described. Significant among them was the evening of 3 November, when he conducted an eventful service which brought things to a head.

In the week before, the wardens held a meeting called by a circular: 'To the congregation of All Saints, Hindley, - Mr. Newbold having announced his intention of substituting 'Hymns Ancient and Modern' for those now used in the church, without having once

mentioned the subject to us, or without, so far as we know, consulting a single member of the congregation, we therefore invite the congregation to meet us... to consider whether it is desirable to make the proposed change or not'.

John Leyland told the court that 'a resolution was unanimously passed condemning Newbold's manner of introducing that hymnal as arrogant and offensive'. The vicar demonstrated his outrage at the next service on 3 November, speaking unevenly and animatedly and once again considered to be under the influence of drink. He spoke of people 'calling meetings and getting the majority, and then going home, lying in bed, and calling themselves almighty'. He went on to exalt himself in the sermon by such expressions as, 'the parish priest, ordained by Jesus Christ himself'.

A witness relayed how upon realising that the reverend was drunk he wished to leave, but his wife replied, 'No, let's sit the service out. He'll very likely disgrace himself tonight and then we shall have done with him'. This highlights the vicar's reputation in the eyes of his parishioners; although it had been deteriorating it seems that this occasion decided Reverend Newbold's new status as persona non grata in the parish. The number of people attending church began to markedly decline and the churchwardens took their concerns to the Bishop just three days later.

Several witness told of times that the vicar had not attended their sick relatives, despite their desire and requests for him to do so. According to Elizabeth Bleakledge, Newbold had told her at her daughter's funeral that he was unable to visit as he had sprained his foot – although he was not limping. He said he would visit her when his foot improved, but later sent word that he would not.

There were also allegations that Newbold had made disparaging remarks about his church and parishioners and was not averse to threats of violence. According to Mr. Higham, a Hindley clothier, the vicar came into his shop to wish him a happy New Year, but during a conversation about why the witness had stopped attending All Saints', Newbold said, 'I don't care a flirt if no one comes to church', in a manner 'not becoming of a clergyman'. Another shopkeeper told of Newbold's threat to a drunk Irishman who wanted to smoke inside his shop: '... if you attempt to smoke here I'll kick you'. In both of these situations – as in most of those warranting complaint – the vicar was believed to be under the influence of drink.

Providing a damning testimony to Reverend Newbold's character, John Leyland commented that the vicar's reputation was affected by reports of being, 'unduly

intimate with a schoolmistress, and of bringing up his children badly'. He said that the Newbold children had not gone to school, went about with pipes in their mouths, went into beerhouses and pulled girls about in the streets. He also mentioned that '...Mrs. Newbold had once urged him to bring Mr. Newbold's conduct before the Bishop', but Leyland, 'did not wish to be mixed up in the painful matter at all'.

The schoolmistress, known to the court as 'Miss M', was referred to by several witnesses regarding a rumoured, clandestine affair which seems to have led to a temporary separation from Mrs. Newbold. Mr. Marsh (a churchwarden and one of the promoters of the trial) spoke of this and also alleged that the vicar seduced a girl who was Newbold's domestic servant in 1868. Another schoolmistress – Jane Inglefield – gave evidence against Reverend Newbold in this respect, citing many instances of inappropriate conduct toward her, on one occasion being accosted by Newbold on a dark stairway where he tried to kiss her. The vicar often sent notes to Miss Inglefield, inviting her to visit him at the vicarage, which she always declined. On one of these occasions she told Newbold that the reason was because of a shopping trip, and he sent her a Melton Mowbray pie with a note and a mocked-up marriage licence; both of which were read out in court. The letter made much of the "shopping" trip [his italics], likening her use of the phrase to mean that she was unwilling to visit.

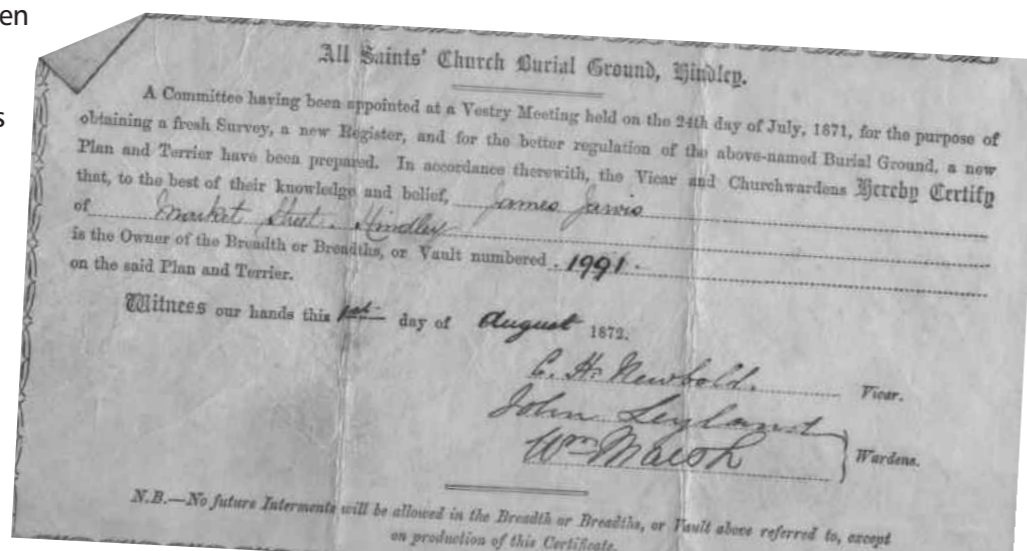
While the defence did a good job of countering the main points of the prosecution, the sheer number of credible witnesses and their corroborating evidence won out – Newbold was suspended from all clerical duties for three years and declared liable for the costs incurred by the proceedings. At the end of this period, he was required to provide references from three clergymen attesting to his 'good behaviour and morals'; failure to do so would extend his suspension.

John Leyland wrote in his diary on the day of the outcome, 'Sorry though I am for the misguided man, I nevertheless rejoice at the sentence, as he has brought grievous scandal on the Church of England and on religion generally'.

Charles Newbold died in May 1878 in Haydock Lodge Asylum, presumably never returning to his duties. One can only speculate on the intervening five years, but it is possible that he suffered a breakdown, fuelled by alcohol or otherwise, and paid the ultimate price for his transgressions.

Sources:

Hindley Library Papers [Wigan Archives, Acc. 2012/11/32]
John Leyland's diary [Wigan Archives, UD/Hil/E2/3]
Ancestry.com



Burial certificate signed
by C. H. Newbold



Postcard showing Wigan Lane looking north towards Greenhill, with the Wigan coat of arms.



High Speed Railways in Wigan: 1900 Style

The longer I work as a volunteer at the Wigan Archives the more evidence I see to support the old adage – ‘history repeats itself’. Time and again one sees old documents and reports of long forgotten events and happenings that are echoed in modern day situations and behaviour. Most people would regard ‘NIMBY-ism’ [Not In My Back Yard] as a modern phenomenon but I recently came across evidence of its existence in Wigan over a hundred years ago.

The document in question was a report, produced in 1906 by the Town Clerk and Borough Engineer, advising on what attitude the Town Council should take towards a Parliamentary Bill for the construction of the proposed Wigan and Heysham Railway. Just like the modern HS2 [High Speed Railway] project, the Bill contained draconian powers to ‘enter upon, take and use such of the lands delineated in the deposited plans and described in the deposited Books of Reference as may be required for the undertaking’.

In 1906, Wigan was served by three different railway companies, the London and North Western Railway (LNWR), the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway (L&YR) and thirdly the Great Central Railway (GCR), the company proposing to build the new line. The first two of these companies were long established in the town and their stations are still operating to the same destinations very much as they were in 1906. The GCR was a relative newcomer to the town, having opened Wigan Central Station in the appropriately named, Station Road (where the Grand Arcade now stands) in 1892.

The line to Wigan was a branch from their main line from Manchester to Liverpool, via Warrington. It left that line at Glazebrook and came north through Newchurch and Culcheth to Lowton St Marys where it divided with one branch going to Wigan, the other to St. Helens. Although the main intention for the line had been to tap into the lucrative coal traffic in the Wigan, Leigh and St Helens areas, the 1870s Parliamentary

Bill authorising its construction had included provision for it to extend beyond Wigan, possibly to Blackpool, presumably to get access to the holiday traffic to the Lancashire coast. This proposed extension had met with the approval of Wigan Town Council since it followed a route through an undeveloped area to the north-west of the town centre, described in the report as, ‘crossing Wigan Lane somewhere at the commencement of Swinley Road and proceeding across the vacant land to the east of Ryland’s Mill, crossing the L.&N.W. Railway [present West Coast main line] at a point between the mill and Boar’s Head bridge’. However, this extension was not proceeded with and the Parliamentary approval for it lapsed, hence the need for a new Parliamentary Bill when the scheme was again mooted in 1906.

To the dismay of the Town Council the proposed route north in this new Bill was completely different from that approved previously and the Parliamentary Committee of the Council actioned the Town Clerk and Borough Engineer to produce a confidential report on its implications. The new proposal was that the line should continue from the station, over Crompton and Greenough streets, through Central Park rugby ground and up the Douglas Valley between the river and Wigan Lane, where, to quote the report, ‘lies the best residential property in the Borough, and the houses there are of high rateable value and are occupied by the large business men of the town, and the carrying out of the scheme in question will undoubtedly ruin the neighbourhood in question for residential purposes with the probable result that these large ratepayers will have to leave the town before being able to find satisfactory accommodation’. The report describes in detail the effect the line would have on the various properties along its route, with their pretentious names and large gardens looking down on to the Douglas valley and the fields beyond. After crossing Coppull Lane it would pass close to ‘The Hermitage’, cross Lord Crawford’s carriage drive, and then enter a cutting through the grounds of ‘The Hollies’

and ‘Mariebonne’, passing close to each of the houses. It would then cross Leyland Mill Lane and proceed through the gardens and grounds of ‘Woodfield’, ‘Southworth House’, ‘Sicklefield’ and ‘The Larches’ to the boundary of the Borough. To add insult to injury it was also proposed to build a branch line, crossing Wigan Lane in the vicinity of Greenhill, to the Gidlow pits of the Wigan Coal & Iron Company.

The authors of the report pointed out that whilst new railways brought undoubted benefits to the town, in this particular case, the question had to be asked, were these being bought at too great a sacrifice – were they worth the loss of the rateable value of the wealthiest residential district and its residents, many of the most influential individuals in the town? They recommended that the Corporation should oppose the present Bill on the grounds that ‘the Company had not adopted the best route’ but if the Company were prepared to go back to the route proposed in the previous 1870s Bill this would have their support.

What action the Corporation took as a result of this report is not known, but after having its second reading in the House of Commons, the Bill was withdrawn and the line was never built. Wigan Central Station remained the terminus of a minor branch line, doing a useful job, particularly during the Second World War, transporting Wigan workers to and from Risley, Cadishead and Irlam. During the 1950s it went into decline and Dr Beeching deemed it to be uneconomic and his axe finally fell in 1968.

However, that might not be the end of the story. The recently published route of the HS2 shows that at its northern end, where it joins the west coast main line, the proposed route follows the course of the old Great Central line from Glazebrook, through Culcheth to Lowton St Mary’s. It then follows the branch of the old Great Central to St Helens to the point where it meets the main north-south line at Bamfurlong.

By Tom Walsh

My First Day at School

St Patrick's, 1949

My first day at St Patrick's School is etched on my memory as brightly as the moon on a clear frosty evening. My Mam takes me to the school door – as far as parents were allowed to go in those days – and I'm not at all nervous. On the contrary, I'm looking forward to my life as a schoolboy and my Mam had been telling me for several months that I'm a big lad now and would really enjoy it. New friends, learning to read and I've heard her say to my Aunties, 'He's ready for school', he of course being me.

Mam gone, a very large statue of St Patrick gazes down on me with what I convince myself is a disapproving look, not the hint of a smile. I in my childlike way try to reason why if our patron saint is in heaven he looks so glum. On the other side of the large hall is another statue of The Sacred Heart of Jesus. The expression on his face is only marginally more friendly. Maybe he's annoyed with St Patrick for not showing more joy at being in paradise. I soon avert my eyes from the residents of heaven and busy myself with my new class mates, some of whom I know from the adjoining streets, but the vast majority are completely new faces. Several of the new faces are much taller than me and much like the statues, don't seem overjoyed at my presence. I start to wonder if this school thing is such a good idea and I am sure my Mam will be lonely and missing me terribly. Tears are only held back by the fear that if I allow them to flow, I will be called a softie or worse still a sissy.

The atmosphere of the hall changes noticeably on the arrival of the Head Teacher, Miss Egan, whom I know by sight from seeing her at Mass on Sundays. She is welcoming and seems very pleased with her new charges. Miss Egan tells us that we are fortunate to be coming to the best school in Wigan and we ought always to remember that – both in and outside school. Miss Egan then introduces us to our class



Schooldays: Tom Walsh

teacher, Miss Dickinson, who is at least seven foot tall. She has a very friendly countenance and I think looks a lot like my Mam.

Everyone is delighted with her pleasant manner, none more than me. I'm sure she'll be particularly nice to me because of her striking resemblance to my Mam. As we make our way to the babies class – the first class was always referred thus – passing the aforementioned statue of St Patrick, I give a sideways glance at the saint. He seems to have the hint of a smile; no more than a hint, mind you. Statues, I ought to explain, are a feature of most Roman Catholic Schools, not of course to be worshipped as some people imagine but as a reminder of the saint to whom we may direct our prayers, asking for their intercession, perhaps as one might look at a photograph.

On reaching the classroom the first thing I notice is the very large fireplace and the equally large fire guard. After that my eyes dance round the classroom, little green chairs and desks, displays all over the walls and my eyes alight on a sandpit with buckets and spades.

At the back of Miss Dickinson's desk – yes, you've guessed – another statue, this one of The Virgin Mary, but smaller than her saintly companions in the main hall and looking in good humour with a definite smile on her face. On closer inspection I notice that her nose had been chipped more than once and repainted probably by Miss D. who in the following weeks I'm convinced can do anything. On her desk there's always a vase shaped jar of Gloy (water based glue) with which she seems able to make anything from birthday cards to little paper lanterns at Christmas time. I try to persuade Mam to buy a bottle of Gloy for home so I can show her how to make paper chains and all the other things Miss D. has demonstrated, but Mam says flour and water mixed into a thick paste is just as good.

'It's not as good', I protest, 'there's a little brush in the jar at school'.

'Well you can use the brush from your paintbox'. I realise I'm fighting a losing battle and content myself with the thought that when I grow up I will be able to buy my own.

The morning seems everlasting and I keep wondering how they are coping at home without me. I ask Miss Dickinson if it is possible to go home to make sure everything is as it should be. She assures me that all will be well. I'm not totally happy with her assurances. My mind is taken away from home by the announcement, Thomas (me), Brian and Martin, your turn at the sandpit, much more fun than learning new prayers, which had taken up the majority of the morning. Then at last, grace before meals and the realisation that Mam would be waiting at the school gates.

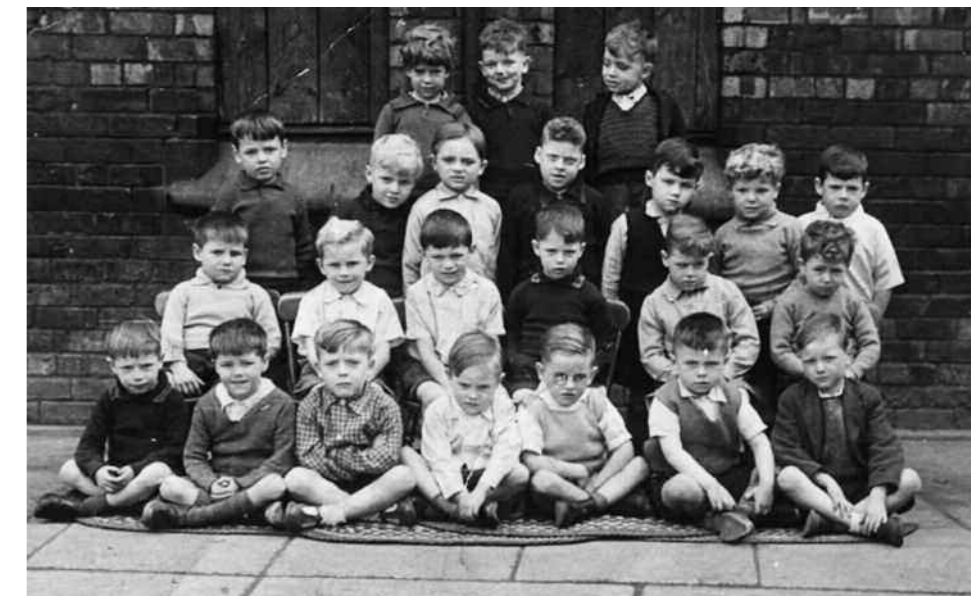
Mam seems overjoyed to see me. I knew how much she would miss me.

'Have you made some new friends? Is teacher nice?'. The questions go on all the way home. When we arrive, my Auntie Maggie's waiting

to welcome me, 'Here comes the big schoolboy!', she acclaims. We have a nice dinner with more questioning of course. Then like a bolt from the blue, Mam says, 'Wash your hands and face', time to go back to school. 'WHAT, twice in a day,' I sigh. After a lot of persuading we make the short walk to school. I'm not as happy as I was, only a few hours earlier on my initial journey to St Patrick's School for Young Gentlemen, as a sarcastic neighbour always referred to it. I'm not aware of his sarcasm and thought that was the full title of the establishment for many a long year. Thank goodness I never uttered it within the hearing of a teacher.

Grace after meals, the first prayer of the afternoon session. Prayers completed, Miss Dickinson reads a story and although I can remember almost everything of that day, I can't recall the contents, but I know I enjoyed it enormously and wondered for the rest of my school life why teachers didn't employ this method of teaching more often. I hope against hope for the call to the sandpit for a second time; alas, the call never comes. The afternoon passed much quicker than the morning. Miss Dickinson says, 'that we've all been very good', and she was looking forward to seeing us tomorrow; not if I can help it, I think. On the way through the main hall, I half look up at St Patrick and from that day to this, I'm sure he gave a wry wink.

Class group at St Patrick's School, 1947



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

Monthly meetings held on second Tuesday of each month in St Richard's Parish Centre, Mayfield Street, Atherton at 7.30pm.

Admission – Members, £1.00, Non Members, £2.00, including refreshments.

8 April
'The Hultons of Hulton', Part 2,
Speaker – Mrs Maureen Gilbertson.

13 May
'The Pretoria Pit Disaster',
Speaker – Mr Alan Davies.

10 June
'The Origin of Place Names',
Speaker – Mr Peter Watson.

Contact Details: Margaret Hodge, 01942 884893.

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.

Please contact Geoff Crank for more information on 01695 624411 or at Gcrank_2000@yahoo.co.uk

Hindley & District 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 information.

Leigh & District Antiques and Collectables Society

The society meets at Leigh RUFC, Beech Walk, Leigh. New members are always welcome and further details available from Mr C Gaskell on 01942 673521.

Leigh Family History Society

15 April
Abandon Hope – Life in the Workhouse – Peter Watson.

20 May
Catholic Ancestry – Allan Mitchinson.

June & July
No meeting.

19 August
Getting Started.

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.liverpoolgenealogy.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 Archaeological Society

We meet on the first Wednesday of the month, at 7.30pm, in the Standish Suite at the Brocket Arms on Mesnes Road - on the first Wednesday of the month (except January and August). 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.

Dear Editor

I wonder if you could help us. The Labour Party has a long history in Wigan, but very few records are available or seem to be in existence.

I would be grateful if anyone who has in their possession any documents, minutes or memorabilia regarding the Labour Party would contact me. My name is Sheila Ramsdale and I am Chairperson of Wigan Constituency Labour Party. My telephone number is 01942 244309.

We are trying to collect as much information as possible so that the records can be placed in the Archives for anyone interested in researching the subject in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Sheila Ramsdale

Dear Editor

Patrick Brennan was married to Winifred Regan on 11 October 1921 at the Church of St Oswald, Ashton in Makerfield. The Brennan Family had come to the Wigan area, from Ireland, at the end of the nineteenth century. As a descendant of this family I am aware that, over time, links between members have faded away. I am hoping to trace other descendants of this line of my family.

As background, I would mention that Patrick Brennan was an uncle of my mother, born as Catherine Towey at Ishlaun, Ballaghaderreen, County Roscommon. Also, I have come across the family story that a group of relatives, from Wigan, attended the funeral of Ann Carroll in 1991. This funeral was held in the Stretford area of South Manchester. Ann Carroll herself was also a niece of Patrick Brennan. I was not aware of the funeral at that time and I have found no record of the details of those who attended. Thus I would really appreciate help in tracing other family members, for instance cousins who may still be living in the Wigan area.

I can be contacted through the Editor of Past Forward or at 85 Berwick Crescent, Sidcup, Greater London DA15 8HU.

Bernard Catallo

Dear Editor

I have been working for some time on a project for Bedford High School (formerly Leigh Boys Grammar School) to find out some of the personal histories of the old boys who died in the First and Second World Wars. The two memorial plaques are sited at the main entrance of the Upper School.

Whilst the project is well advanced, I would be pleased to hear from anyone who has any details of any of the old boys listed in order to verify my research.

If you have any information on old boys of the school who served in the conflicts, please contact me through Past Forward at pastforward@wlct.org

With thanks,

John Medling



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or email info@knowyourancestry.co.uk

MUSEUMS, ARCHIVES & LOCAL STUDIES EVENTS

What's On at the Museum of Wigan Life

Please note that booking is essential for all events unless otherwise stated. Places are limited so book early to avoid disappointment by calling 01942 828128 or email museumofwiganlifebookings@wlct.org. Remember we are always adding more events so please visit <http://www.wlct.org/wigan/museums-archives/> for further details.

PURRING – SPORT OF THE PEOPLE EXHIBITION

Saturday 18 January 2014 -
Saturday 26 April 2014
Museum of Wigan Life
FREE

Be the first to see our new exhibition about the mysterious local sport of clog fighting or Purrin'. View artist Anna FC Smith's specially commissioned drawings and films revealing the rules, fighters and locations behind this hidden 'sport of the people'.

The museum is hosting a range of special creative events as part of the exhibition programme. Why not try something different and get those creative juices flowing?

No previous experience required!

ART MASTERCLASS

3 April 2014, 1pm - 3pm
Museum of Wigan Life
£2.50 including tea/coffee
Places are limited so please book on 01942 828128

A chance to meet the artist and guest curator behind our new exhibition. Anna FC Smith will be leading a special workshop discussing her findings which have made this show, and demonstrating how she created her ink drawings on display. This is a hands on workshop so be prepared to get involved! To celebrate Purring – Sport of the People exhibition.

PALAEOGRAPHY PRACTICE

7 April 2014, 2.00pm - 3.30pm
Museum of Wigan Life
FREE

Medieval to Modern Handwriting for Experts

Informal drop-in sessions for those with a basic understanding of palaeography styles over the ages, transcribing original documents from the archives in a group.

BUNNIES AND BONNETS

8, 10, 15 & 17 April 2014,
1pm - 2.30pm
Museum of Wigan Life
£2.50 per child

Places are limited so please book on 01942 828128.

Come along for some egg-cellent Easter fun at the museum. Make a bonnet or bunny ears and create your own springtime masterpiece to take home.

COFFEE CAKE & CULTURE - GOING OUT

11 April 2014
10.30am - 12 noon
Museum Of Wigan Life
£3 per person

Places are limited so please book on 01942 828128

Have you danced at the Empress Ballroom in Wigan or did you go to the Country Playhouse to catch a film? How did we entertain ourselves?

CARRY ON CLEANING @ WIGAN ARCHIVES

30 April 30 2014, 10.00am - 3.00pm
Wigan Archives Service,
Leigh Town Hall **FREE**

If you've ever wondered how we preserve historic records, come along to Wigan Archives to join in with our ongoing project to clean and document the records of Wigan's Victorian courts. Join our team of volunteers in revealing the stories of crime and punishment in Wigan and learn how to help preserve the Borough's history.

WIGAN MUSIC EXHIBITION

Saturday 3rd May 2014 - Saturday 29th August 2014 **FREE**
Museum of Wigan Life

Be the first to view our new exhibition exploring the rich sounds of Wigan Borough. Northern Soul, brass bands, jazz, choirs and pop – our Borough has it all! Do you remember Wigan Casino? Did you know that the Beatles played in Leigh? Find out more about this and local talents like George Formby, the Beat Boys, Georgie Fame and the Verve.

BANK HOLIDAY HERITAGE DAY

Heritage
5 May 2014, 11.00am - 5.00pm
Trencherfield Mill Steam Engine,
Wigan Pier Quarter, Wigan
WN3 4EF.

Some activities will incur a small charge. 01942 828128

Wigan's Trencherfield Mill will host a bumper Bank Holiday Heritage Day on Monday 5 May. Classic cars, traction engines, funfair rides, canal trips, vintage attractions, crafts activities and street theatre provided by the award winning drama school ALRA. This will ensure an action packed programme for all the family. Refreshments available at the Red Pepper Café in the Wigan Investment Centre.

ALL PARKING (FREE) WILL BE AVAILABLE AT THE WIGAN INVESTMENT CENTRE WN3 5BA.

MUSEUMS AT NIGHT

16 May 2014, 6.00pm - 8.30pm
Trencherfield Mill Steam Engine,
Wigan Pier Quarter, Wigan
WN3 4EF.
Tickets £2 per child, booking essential on 01942 828 128.

Join us for a truly monstrous Museums at Night experience! We will start with an out-of-hours tour of the mill, to see the giant Trencherfield steam engine, followed by some rank rhymes and terrifying tales (well, not too terrifying...)

If you are still not ready to run, we will then share what makes us shiver, and create our very own Mutant Mill Monster out of whatever we can find. We are all working together on this (including the adults!) and by the time our fearsome friend is finished, we will have written a poem about him, too. Then, when we all think it couldn't get more grisly, we will sit down and listen to award winning children's author Guy Bass, who will tell us all about his marvellous monster masterpieces and his brand new book, The Legend of Frog. All this and you can still be safe in bed by 9.00pm, as long as there isn't a monster hiding under it...

COFFEE, CAKE & CULTURE - SPARE THE ROD EXPERIENCE

20 May 2014, 10.30am - 12 noon
Museum Of Wigan Life
£3 per person
Places are limited so please book on 01942 828128

Love it or hate it, we all went to school. Did you enjoy your school days and is it true children were seen and not heard? An interactive workshop not for the faint hearted!

MAKING A RACKET!

27 & 29 May 2014, 1pm - 2.30pm
Museum of Wigan Life
£2.50 per child
Places are limited so please book on 01942 828128

Come down and make some noise with our half term activities inspired by George Formby. Music and craft for children of all ages.

CARRY ON CLEANING @ WIGAN ARCHIVES

28 May 2014, 10.00am - 3.00pm
Wigan Archives Service,
Leigh Town Hall **FREE**

If you've ever wondered how we preserve historic records, come along to Wigan Archives to join in with our ongoing project to clean and document the records of Wigan's Victorian courts. Join our team of volunteers in revealing the stories of crime and punishment in Wigan and learn how to help preserve the Borough's history.

PALAEOGRAPHY PRACTICE

Medieval to Modern Handwriting for Experts
2 June 2014, 2:00pm - 3:30pm
Museum of Wigan Life
FREE

Informal drop-in sessions for those with a basic understanding of palaeography styles over the ages, transcribing original documents from the archives in a group.

CARRY ON CLEANING @ WIGAN ARCHIVES

25 June 2014, 10.00am - 3.00pm
Wigan Archives Service,
Leigh Town Hall **FREE**

If you've ever wondered how we preserve historic records, come along to Wigan Archives to join in with our ongoing project to clean and document the records of Wigan's Victorian courts. Join our team of volunteers in revealing the stories of crime and punishment in Wigan and learn how to help preserve the Borough's history.

2014 FOOTBALL WORLD CUP

Museum of Wigan Life
Come and celebrate the 2014 Football World Cup at the Museum of Wigan Life. Get in the spirit as the matches kick off in Brazil during June and July. Further details coming soon.

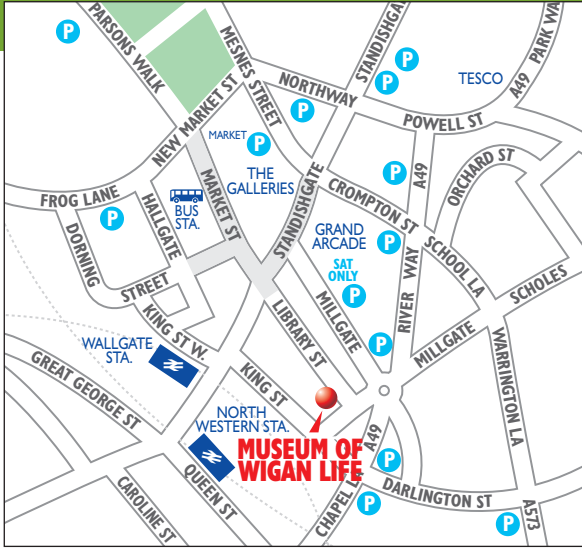
MEET THE ROMANS AND ANCIENT EGYPTIANS

Tuesday and Thursday 29th,
31st July, 5th, 7th, 12th, 14th, 19th,
21st August
Museum of Wigan Life
£2.50 per child

Calling all budding archaeologists! Look out for a summer of exploring with the Romans and Ancient Egyptians. Be inspired by real treasures from the past and try some activities inspired by our collections.

Free drop-in activities available everyday over the summer so come along and get stuck in! Plenty to keep all ages busy.

How to Find Us



Museum of Wigan Life

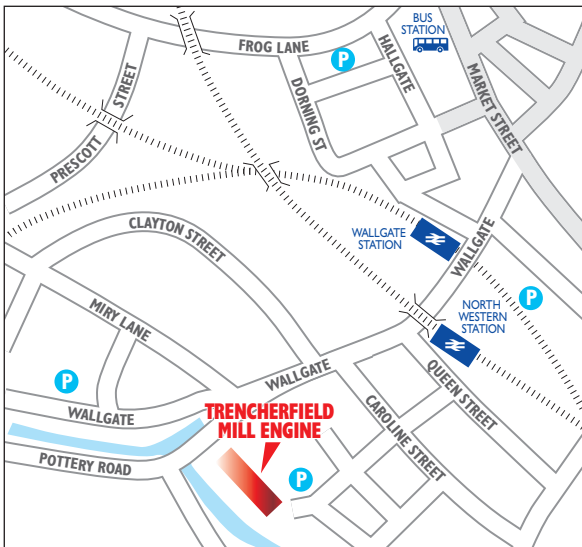
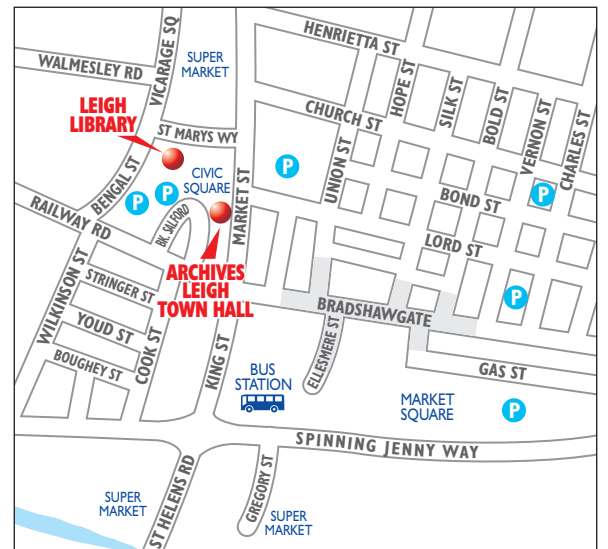
Library Street,
Wigan WN1 1NU
Telephone 01942 828128
heritage@wlct.org

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

in partnership with

