

PAST FORWARD

Produced by Wigan Museums & Archives

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December 2016 - March 2017

MISS WEETON

GOVERNESS

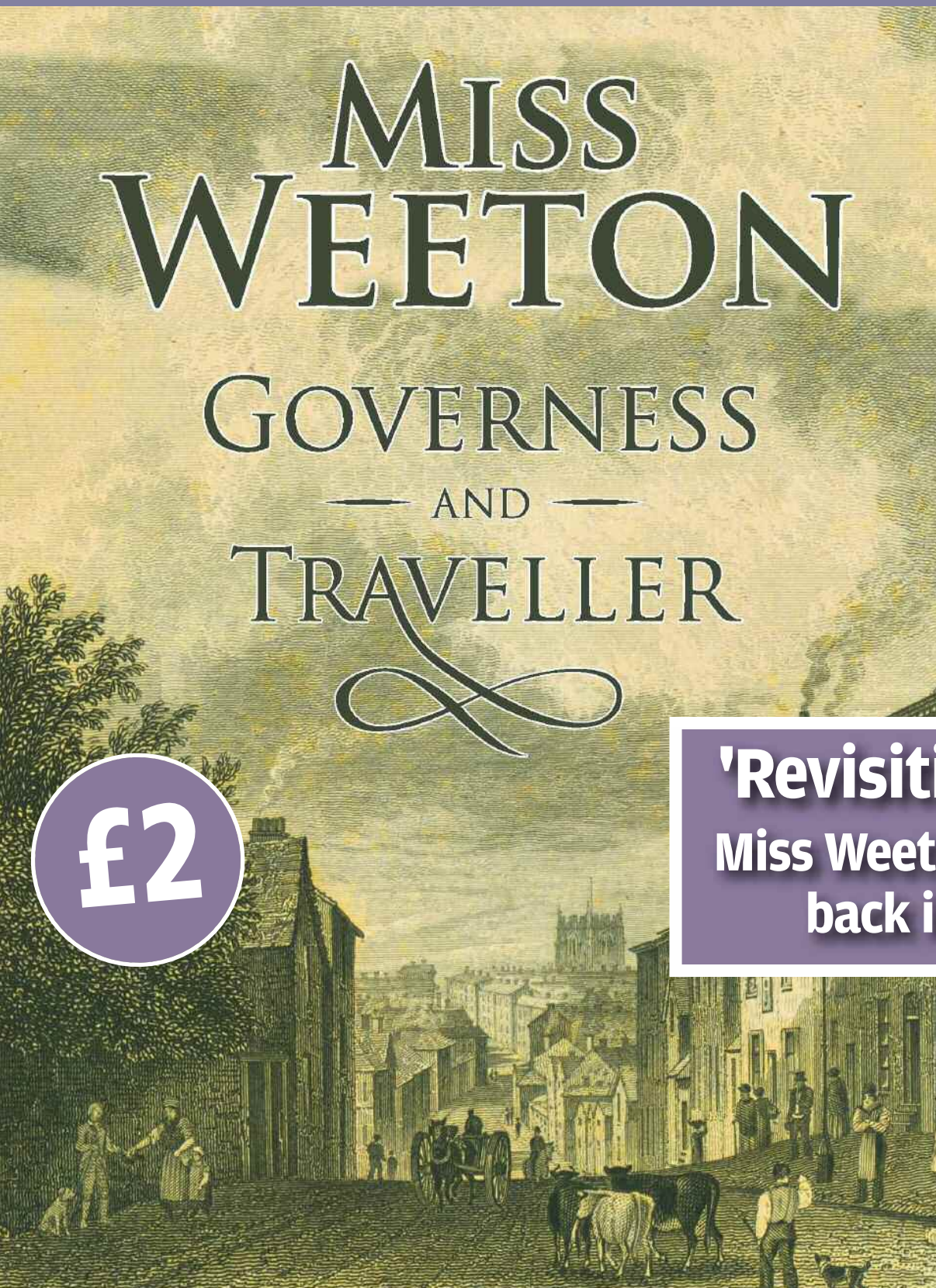
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**'Revisiting Nelly:
Miss Weeton's diaries
back in print'**



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FRONT COVER

Cover of 'Miss Weeton Governess and Traveller'

Letter from the Editorial Team

Welcome to **PAST Forward** Issue 74.

Congratulations to Paul Heaton, winner of 2016's essay writing competition. Paul's essay looks at his family history and is the first article to feature in this edition. Thank you to everyone who entered and congratulations must also go to Anthony Pilgrim and Brian Joyce who came second and third respectively. These essays will be featured in future editions of Past Forward.

Miss Nelly Weeton is the subject of the front cover. A prolific letter and journal writer during the Georgian period, Miss Weeton's work is recognised as having national significance. Her original writings were donated to the Borough by Edward Hall in the 1930s. A new up-to-date single volume has been edited by Alan Roby and published by Wigan Archives. This includes details of the end of Miss Weeton's life, unknown until the 1990s. Copies are available to buy at Wigan Archives in Leigh Town Hall. They are also available at the Museum of Wigan Life and online on Amazon.co.uk.

This edition also revisits Lawrence Cox and his experiences in the Indian Rebellion and the Battle of Howe Bridge; Ted Dakin reveals more of his family history; Trevor Owen explores the Royalists of the Pennington area of Leigh and former pit brow lass Rita Culshaw reminisces about her working days at Wigan Junction Colliery.

The 1st Astley Lions Scout Troop explores the history of Astley and the First World War whilst Bob Blakeman looks at schools in crisis throughout the borough during the nineteenth century. Be sure to keep time with Yvonne Eckersley and her essay on Dr Evans and the Leigh Time Signal.

Tributes are paid to local historian and Past Forward veteran Tony Ashcroft. Thank you to everyone who shared their memories of Tony with Past Forward.

The next edition of Past Forward will be a special edition on crime and punishment. If you would like to share your essays on crime in the borough please do contact us at pastforward@wigan.gov.uk

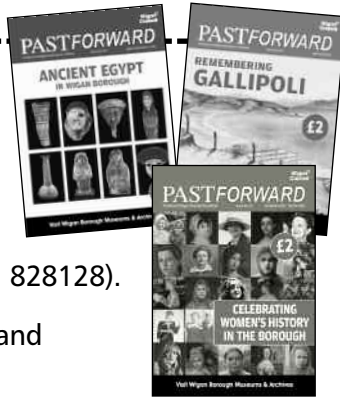
We hope you enjoy reading Issue 74.

Hannah Turner
Local and Family History Officer

PAST FORWARD Subscription Form

Copy Deadline for Issue 75

Contributors please note the deadline for the receipt of material for publication is Friday, 17 February 2017.



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Information for Contributors

We always welcome articles and letters for publication from both new and existing contributors.

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

- Publication is at discretion of Editorial Team
- The Editorial Team may edit your submission
- Published and rejected submissions will be disposed of, unless you request for them to be returned
- Submissions may be held on file for publication in a future edition
- Articles must be received by the copy date if inclusion in the next issue is desired

Submission Guidelines

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

We aim to acknowledge receipt of all submissions.

CONTACT DETAILS:

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Wigan WN1 1NU.

THE POWER OF PAST FORWARD

BY PAUL HEATON

Family history literature always emphasises the importance of using local societies, history groups and internet resources to aid research. I would like to illustrate an example where Past Forward, the internet site Wigan World and the incredibly helpful and patient staff at Wigan Local Studies helped me to further my own family history story.

I was bitten by the family history 'bug' at the age of 15. Having many long-lived relatives (including three grandparents) meant I was able to obtain a wealth of first hand anecdotal evidence. It is thanks to one of those anecdotes from my maternal grandmother that I am able to relate this story.

My grandmother, Eva Stirrup (nee Heath), was a lifelong resident of Ashton-in-Makerfield and like many other residents met her husband and spent her working life at 'Cromps' (Cromptons), located in the town centre. It is only now years later that I fully appreciate how accurate her memory was after spending countless Saturday mornings relentlessly pestering her to repeatedly tell me her memories of Ashton, family stories, and tales from her working life. Her memories, people's names and



The man in this photograph is believed to be George Heaton.

where they lived have proven to be unerringly accurate as I have researched over the years the stories she related.

One of these stories focused on her paternal grandfather, George Heath (born 1858). The story was that he had been a soldier and had been given a big military funeral which had brought the town centre of Ashton to a standstill. With the certainty of youth, I poured scorn on this tale replying that as far as I could tell all her ancestors had been colliery workers with, as the saying goes 'not two ha'pennies to rub together'. Grandma sagely shrugged her shoulders and

replied, 'well I'm only telling you what mi father told me!'.

Some 21 years later I was reading through an issue of Past Forward Issue 34 when I was amazed to come across an article submitted by Denis Gerner containing the memories of his father, Vincent Gerner, also a resident of Ashton-in-Makerfield but from an earlier time (circa 1900). The article detailed his time at St Oswald's Boys School, Liverpool Road, in 1903 when he remembered watching the funeral of George Heath from the school yard. George, he said had served in the Lancashire

Hussars, Imperial Yeomanry – known locally as the cabbage cutters due to their reliance on recruits from agricultural labouring backgrounds.

The article described how George's colleagues from the Imperial Yeomanry assembled outside his home, 18 Liverpool Road, in preparation for marching to St Thomas' graveyard. The description of the immaculate horse with George's boots in the stirrups waiting patiently for the procession to begin was especially evocative, providing an eye witness account of my ancestor's funeral. I subsequently discovered that having survived the horrors of the Boer War, George was killed in an accident whilst working overtime. A steel cable being replaced at Old Boston Colliery suddenly recoiled and hit him in the head causing fatal injuries.

The next stop was obvious – the microfilm archives at Wigan Local Studies. With the help of the staff I was able to find the Wigan Observer article relating to the funeral which described the funeral procession, the graveside gun salute by his colleagues and the fact that George was indeed a veteran of the Boer War. George was one of the 121 brave young men who formed the first draft of Imperial Yeomanry troops from the local area who sailed to South Africa. George had sent several articles back from South Africa which the Wigan Observer had published. They were written in the Lancashire dialect, one starts 'me dear owd pals in't gas yard' and continues to describe a skirmish with the Boer troops in which he was involved. I was delighted and fascinated in finding these articles.

Via regular visits to the microfiche archive (and with

MEDALS PRESENTED TO THE LANCA-SHIRE HUSSARS.

A large number of Lancashire Hussars who have served in the South African campaign were entertained at Ashton-in-Makerfield, the headquarters of the regiment, on Wednesday evening. A procession was formed at the District Council Offices, and accompanied by a band, proceeded to the foot of Gerard-street, where a platform had been erected for the performance of the ceremony of presentation, by Lord Gerard, of gold medals to the Ashton members of the Lancashire Hussars.

Mr. W. Valiant, J.P., the chairman of the District Council, delivered an address congratulating the returned soldiers and extending to them a hearty welcome. He hoped that the medal which would be handed to the men would be handed down to their sons as an incentive to them to follow their example of devotion to their country.

Lord Gerard then presented the medals, which bore a design commemorative of the men's services in the war. The following were the recipients:—Privates J. Holt, J. Moulding, A. Farmer, R. Lowe, T. Wood, P. Wilcock, J. Watson, F. Duxbury, J. Cusack, J. Barton, G. Heath, W. Shawcross, R. H. Bridge. Another medal is to be presented to Sergeant James, who was wounded at Kheis, and who is now in Brighton Convalescent Home.

After the presentation the procession reformed and proceeded to the District Council Offices, where a banquet was given to the Hussars and Reservists who have served in South Africa.

Lord Gerard, who presided, said he was sure if there were any persons in this world who deserved well of their country it was these brave men who had been fighting in South Africa. If they had seen them, as he had, going up to the Boer lines and trenches with shots dropping like hail they would think with him that there was no honour and glory which could be given them they did not deserve.



The medal presented to each man was a heavy solid 15-carat gold medal of very appropriate design, being a Saxon shield, with a rich border and scroll border, and a smaller shield in centre bearing the words "South African War, 1900-1901." This is surmounted by a very finely enamelled Royal coat-of-arms and crown, supported by two crossed Lee-Metford rifles and sprays of laurel. On the reverse side is a shield bearing the words:—"Ashton-in-Makerfield.—Presented to —, a Volunteer of the Lancashire Hussars."

*Lancashire Post article,
June 1901.*

the continued patience of staff) I pieced together George's war from embarkation at Langton Dock, Liverpool in January 1900 to his triumphant return in May 1901 (due to injury) when he arrived at Bryn Station and was proudly escorted into Ashton.

I obtained details of the welcome home banquets for the Imperial Yeomanry which Lord Gerard graciously attended, the celebration parades held to welcome the troops home, as well as the commemorative gold medal that each returning soldier was

presented with. Finally, I was also able to obtain details of how George was successful in drawing lots and received the Queen's South Africa medal from King Edward VII in London. The only disappointment was that I had neither a picture of George nor knew the whereabouts of his medals.

Satisfied with my research, I moved on to another branch of the family. Later in 2014, my cousin Dave Stirrup (who also has the family history 'bug') took up the George Heath story. Via a post on Wigan World he contacted another branch of the Heath family. Through this connection it was discovered that a handbag belonging to George Heath's daughter, Sarah (known as Cissie) had survived for 100 years and contained photographs of George, his wife and their parents.

Only one issue now remained unsolved – the medals! There remained one branch of the family as yet untraced. Dave was able to track down this family, now living in Shrewsbury. Alan Heath confirmed having seen a collection of medals when he was a child, belonging to his father (George Heath's son) who had served in the First World War. Alan confirmed that these medals had been sold by his mother many years before.

So with the help of Past Forward, Wigan World and Wigan Local Studies the story of George Heath comes to a close, we have a full history of George's military service and a picture of both him and the gold medal and know that his medals exist. How great would it be if with the help of Past Forward readers, we could locate these two missing medals.

By Trevor Owen

Pennington Cavaliers

Trevor Owen is a local historian who specialises in the Pennington area of Leigh. His research has led him to the royalist loyalists who once lived in the area.

Lawrence Hardman

On doing my research of Pennington farms I came across the name, 'Lawrence Hardman', shown as living at Buckfold. He could not have been at Buckfold itself as the Bucks were in residence at their ancient ancestral home. Three other properties were linked to Buckfold but were far too small for Lawrence, who was one of the largest land tax payers in the area. The only property possible, right next door to Buckfold was Round Ash, 51 acres.

After a little further research I thought Lawrence too sounded an interesting figure; I got sidetracked and left my Pennington farms list, so let's take a look at Mr. Lawrence Hardman,



Royalist Earl of Derby. Not from Pennington but who was reputed to have stayed the night in Leigh before his execution.

yeoman of Pennington. He had ten children all registered at Pennington. He lived till he had reached the ripe old age of a hundred and five years. In the burial records for Leigh Parish Church, Lawrence's burial has written by it 'the last of the old Cavaliers that I know of in Pennington', signed by the Vicar George Warde.

In Mr. Beamont's preface to 'A Discourse of the war in Lancashire', he describes Hardman as the nestor of the party – an honorific title – and says that he was at the storming of Bolton in 1644 and would have been killed having been struck down, but for the timely intervention of a friend named Scholefield.

The name of Lawrence Hardman occurs in several assessments in which he is amongst the largest tax and ley payers in the township. He acted in official positions; churchwarden, overseer, roads inspector and supervisor. His son James took over his father's duties for a few years and his name appears more in official notes.

Other cavaliers of Pennington include Captain Henry Slater, Lieutenant Richard Ranicars, Sergeant Roger Darrow, Drummer Thomas Unsworth, Roger Ranicars, John Urmston, Henry Mather and Richard Yates.

Captain Henry Slater

Captain Henry Slater lived at Lightoaks Hall in Bedford. Henry had taken over Lightoaks in 1626. The estate was valued at the enormous sum of £1668; there were nineteen rooms in the newly built mansion with two cellars, two milkhouses, a stable and an oxhouse.

Lightoaks Hall still stands on Light Oaks Road not far from Bents garden centre.

Richard Ranicars

Lieutenant Richard Ranicars owned Etherstone Hall. The family of Ranicars held Etherstone for a combined period of a hundred years, a large estate with lush pasture fields helping it to be renowned for the quality of its milk and butter.

On the 30 December 1642, the following military order was sent by Lord Derby from Wigan to Lieutenant Ranicars at Pennington:

'Leigh to be kepte with twenty men and two horses. There is already in Leigh twenty men Armed; victuals for VIII daies; £12 in money, vizt. xs a peece to the twenty men & XLS for the Lieftennante. And two dragooners appointed to so thither this day.'

Following the defeat of the Royalists, Richard Ranicars made open declaration of his estate. His cottage was worth ten shilling a year, and his corn and stock £25. He was ordered to pay a fine of 12 pounds 5 shillings and 10 pence, stiff enough to remind him and his family not to dabble in politics.

Roger Ranicars

Another of the Ranicars openly involved in the war was Roger the tailor, he fought for the Royalist cause under Captain Henry Slater of Lightoaks Hall. Like many other old and maimed soldiers he became poor. He never wavered in his loyalty to the King and following the restoration of King Charles II to the throne of England Captain Slater, Surgeon Will Gerard and Lawrence Rawsthorne signed a testimonial on the 30 January 1666 asking for a pension of 10s a year to be granted to Roger as he had become poor.

Thomas Unsworth

Thomas Unsworth, former drummer to Colonel Slater, was taken prisoner, suffering in purse and person. In 1662 he became parish clerk, a position he held until his death in September 1669.



Sir Thomas Tyldesley. Killed during the Battle of Wigan Lane and buried in Leigh Parish Church.

Henry Atkinson

Henry Atkinson junior of Pennington had been a trooper in Prince Rupert's horse, a soldier under Colonel Slater, and had fought in several battles. He had become poor and in great misery. In 1667 he appeared at quarter sessions with a testimonial signed by three Catholic gentlemen to seek relief, he was allowed 1 shilling a week, until the overseers saw fit to vary it.

During the Interregnum many of those who had supported the Royalist cause lost land such as in the case of John Urmston of Urmstons in the Meadows. He lost two thirds of his property in 1654. Also, Richard Yates of Yates House Farm, his farm was forfeited; his son James paid a fine of £20 to get it back to the family in 1652.

BY BILL MELLING

The Apprentice



View of the original Haigh Foundry building. Image courtesy of Wigan Archives.

One of the interesting rewards of being a volunteer at Wigan Archives and Local Studies is to see how our ancestors dealt with situations and problems that are still with us. A recent example of this was a document from 1820 dealing with the topic of the handing down of technical skills and knowledge from one generation to another, a subject that is very much occupying the minds of present day government and industry.

The particular document in question was an indenture (an agreement) dated the 1 January 1821, for a young boy to be trained as an apprentice. Under the indenture, 'The Masters', Joseph, Richard and John Rylands, promised and agreed to teach and instruct the apprentice in 'the Art, Trade and Business of a Manufacturer of Linen and Cotton Goods'.

The apprentice in this case was William Melling (no relation to the author of this article), the twelve year old son of John Melling, a Wigan blacksmith. The indenture, which was for a period of five years, laid down strict rules for the conduct of both father and son. Rules the apprentice had to strictly enjoin to were:

- 'faithfully serve his masters, their secrets keep and their lawful and reasonable commands obey at all times'
- 'He shall not knowingly do hurt or damage to his said masters or knowingly suffer the same by others but shall immediately inform his masters'
- 'Matrimony, without his Masters licence and consent should not be contracted'
- 'He shall not embezzle, waste, injure or destroy his Masters goods, chattels, money, securities for money, books, papers or accounts but on the contrary shall and will behave and demean himself as a faithful and diligent apprentice ought'

It was further laid down that the father 'should find and provide the said apprentice with good and sufficient Meat, Drink and Lodging, and with all sorts of wearing apparel suitable for a person in his degree and situation, and with the washing and mending thereof'.

'The Masters', on their part, as well as teaching William the 'the Art, Trade and Business of a Manufacturer of Linen and Cotton Goods', further

undertook to pay him a wage of four shillings a week for the first three years of his apprenticeship increasing to five shillings for the last two.

William presumably completed his apprenticeship satisfactorily as on the 2 January 1826 the indenture was returned to him endorsed and signed by Rylands & Sons. Rylands were an up and coming firm at the forefront of textile technology who went on to build the huge mill next to Mesnes Park in the centre of Wigan. There can be little doubt that when William completed his time he was fully conversant with all aspects of cotton spinning and weaving machinery and the engines that drove them.

He continued to work for Rylands for a further five years before he was head-hunted by the Earl of Crawford to work in his Haigh Foundry Company. Here, along with another William Melling (no relation) he played a significant role in making the company famous for the quality and variety of its products.

By 1835 the business had grown to such an extent that the Earl of Crawford felt he could no longer be involved in its day to day control so he let out the works, on a 21 year lease to three entrepreneurs, Evans, Ryley and Burrows. They decided to add a locomotive branch to their extensive engineering business and during the period 1835 to 1856 they produced 114 locomotives for railway companies and collieries both at home and abroad,

The two Williams, affectionately known to the workforce as 'Big Bill' and 'Little Bill' (our man), continued to very successfully manage the works and keep it at the cutting edge of engineering technology. Big Bill was the Works Manager and Little Bill the Commercial Manager. It was during this period that many of those who served their apprenticeships at Haigh Foundry went on to establish such famous Wigan firms as Walkers, Coopes and William Wilkinson of Holme House Foundry.

When the lease on Haigh Foundry ran out in 1856 and a new company took over the two Williams were asked to continue in their old jobs. However, they declined the offer and went into partnership on their own account and in 1856 they built and started Ince Forge which soon became a successful enterprise.

On the death of Big Bill a few years later, Little Bill took control of the company and brought his three

sons Thomas, John and Samuel into the business as partners. The company took over the Worsley Mesnes Ironworks in 1884 and continued as a family run business until it too was taken over by William Park & Co in 1943.

It was a family tradition that family members who entered the business should serve an apprenticeship before taking up a management position in the company. An apprenticeship changed little from the early 1800s until after the Second World War. As many as 340,000 school leavers a year would sign on to work alongside a craftsman for up to seven years in order to learn a trade.

However as time went on the system came under increasing criticism and a Royal Commission in 1968 reported:

'Apprenticeships is a farce and provides less training than a properly constituted course lasting only a few months. The fact that a man has completed an apprenticeship does not therefore of itself guarantee that he has acquired any particular level of skill, or that he has passed any form of test of ability.'

Since then government, industry and the unions have introduced a number of training schemes under the headings of 'apprenticeships'. These differ from the traditional in being shorter, having a formal written academic content, being better paid and being open to both sexes and to a wider age range. What they do have in common with apprenticeships in the past is that they all include a period of 'hands on' work experience.



Mill girl and male apprentice at an unknown Wigan weaving mill, about 1900.

John Street: Scholes 1850s to 1960

BY VERONICA BIGGADIKE

Little did I realise when growing up in John Street, Scholes that generations of my family before had also lived there. The street as I remember it was cobbled and at the foot of the street stood the Prince of Wales public house and Hardybutts ran along the bottom of it. I lived at the top of John Street in a three bedroomed terraced house, although the rooms were very small.

Two branches of my tree, the Sullivan and Cox families, also lived there during the late 1850s and early 1860s. Both families lived in various houses in John Street over the years.

The Cox family came from Leitrim, Ireland and my two-times-great grandfather Francis married Elizabeth Lea at St Patrick's Church in 1860. Francis was a travelling glazier and Elizabeth was a dressmaker. They had a daughter called Margaret Ann Cox.

Margaret married Levi Catterall, a fish dealer. Levi was the 'black sheep' of the family and once served a sentence of hard labour for stealing some chickens.



St Patrick's Church, Scholes, 1992.

Levi must have learnt his lesson and went on to sell fish and vegetables in his shop in Ince. Margaret and Levi had ten children including my grandfather Jack.

The Sullivans came from Mullingar West Meath and Louth. The family was headed by Hugh, a shoemaker, his wife Ann and four daughters I know of. One of the daughters, Jane, married a miner from Glamorgan in Wales called Thomas Morgan. Jane and Thomas had eight children; three of them became cotton operatives in mills including Mary Jane my grandmother. Mary Jane married my grandfather Jack and they had my father, William.

By 1926 Jack wanted to 'up sticks' and move to Doncaster, but Mary Jane would not 'budge'. She was very close to her sisters and could not envisage leaving them behind. However, Jack went and wasn't seen again for the next twenty years.

1946 was a fateful year, Mary Anne's sisters both died in January. Jack came back at this time, in the dead of night so I am told. My grandmother would not tolerate him in her bedroom so there was quite a bit of 'shuffling' about to make room for him. At this time my parents and I lived with them at 40 John Street.

My grandmother never recovered from the deaths of her sisters and died in 1948. I have no real recollection of her but I do remember being lifted up to see from the window heavy snowfall and a funeral cortege with lots of people watching the proceedings. She was buried in Wigan cemetery alongside both sisters. Such was the closeness of the sisters in life, it seemed appropriate for them to rest together in death.

Jack died two years later and I remember him being taken away on a stretcher to Frog Lane Institute. After his death he was buried in an unmarked grave which saddens me somewhat as he was a veteran from the First World War and answered the call when his country needed him. I always display his photograph in November. We stayed a further 16 years until the house was demolished. That was a sad time also.

I always remember that the house retained a Victorian style. Grandmother's old furniture was still in use and there was an old tin containing very old photographs from 1908 which is now in my possession.

The house had no electricity so there was no television. We had my grandmother's wireless. The wireless worked from accumulators and these had to be recharged every so often. The place to go for this was Lennegan's Electricals on Greenough St. The lady in the shop fascinated me as she had a habit of whistling softly. She was very handy at mending things and always had a screwdriver in her hands. I loved the pungent smell of the shop which seemed to smell of rubber, glue and the acid for the wireless batteries.

I do remember both next door neighbours entertaining us although I don't think they were aware of this! Old Mick Doherty played the fiddle with all the old rebel tunes, such as 'The Wearing O'The Green' – played with great gusto! A piano was practiced on at the other side by a daughter accompanied by her mother who had a fine contralto voice.

She often sang whilst 'pegging' out the washing. My mother would take my brother and me to the Scholes Picture House. Other than that I would sit and read or draw to my heart's content. It was safe to play outside then – the street was our adventure playground. Old ladies would ask us to run on errands. My mother would say not to take money from them for this but Mrs McKeenan always pressed coppers in my hand.

Another errand I went on was to Polly-do-out the Clogger. She had bright carrot coloured hair but could wield a hammer as good as any man. She was fascinating to watch. It was said that she could nail a



John Catterall.



Mary Jane Catterall.

clog iron to a balloon! I would wait for my dad's clogs to be mended and watch all the while wondering if she ever swallowed nails as they were fixed firmly between her lips till needed when handling the clogs.

Sometimes residents would be 'blessed' with a nickname such as Kitty Penman who was always known as Kitty Coalhole! Apparently her mother saw the rent man coming to the door and told Kitty to tell him she wasn't in. When pressed further as to her mother's whereabouts Kitty replied, "She's in the coalhole!" Unfortunately the nickname stuck through the years and long after her passing.

In the house, light was from gaslight. A gentle hissing sound could be heard when the mantles were lit. The mantles were made from a fragile substance and could be purchased in small egg like boxes from any corner shop. Candles were used to light the way to bed and they made eerie and ghostly shadows on the bedroom walls.

It must have been heart-breaking for my Irish ancestors to flee the land of their birth from poverty and hunger. In exchange they endured long working hours in mills and mines. It was no wonder they never forgot their heritage and yearned for Ireland. They spoke to one another in a secret language all of their own so I have been told. The street was full of characters descended from the Irish; they helped one another through all the bad times.

The Catholic Church of St Patrick was built for the Irish in 1847 and I suppose 'a little patch of Ireland fell out the sky one day and nestled in the shadow of that church not far away'... just around the corner from John Street.

By Michelle Lewthwaite & Karen Thorp

The 1st Astley Lions Troop and the First World War Centenary

The First World War profoundly affected the lives of the villagers of Astley as it is quite possible that many families had one or even more members serving in the armed forces. Even though Astley was far more agricultural a century ago, concern over a shortage of food grew as long queues were seen outside of shops and Chat Moss was overrun with potato hunters.

In peacetime, St. Stephen's Church raised a war memorial made from marble to men who served and never returned. Three Astley men named Herbert Hodson, John Ryder and Joseph Reade collected donations to pay for the construction of a memorial and it was installed on the wall of the church. The last post was sounded during the unveiling.

Most of those who are recorded on the memorial were infantry men because the machine guns are thought to have dominated the battlefields leading to one of the bloodiest wars of the twentieth century.

The marble memorial which paid testament to the lives of these Astley folk was destroyed in the fire which engulfed St. Stephen's Church in 1961. Luckily, the names of the men had been preserved and in 2013 the 1st Astley Lions Troops began research to their lives. The scouts used the newspaper archives at Leigh Local Studies and online research into create a display for the Open Heritage Weekend at Damhouse in Astley which showcased the articles and photographs of the men.



Private John Elsby.

Some of the stories the scouts uncovered included that of Thomas Sarsfield. Thomas' story brought home the harshness and the reality of the war to the scouts. Thomas was just 16 years old when he died on H.M.S. Invincible in May 1916 at the Battle of Jutland in the North Sea off mainland Denmark. The battle cruiser was rent in two by enemy fire and sank with the loss of 1026 lives.

Another man, John Elsby, enlisted in 1914. He lived at 36 Ellesmere Street, Higher Green, directly opposite the current Scout headquarters. John was a private in the King's Own Royal Lancaster regiment who died from wounds in France in 1916. His wife received this letter from



Astley Scouts holding a poppy wreath at the Menin Gate.

a nursing sister at the military hospital where he died:

'Dear Mrs Elsby, I am very grieved to tell you that your husband died in this hospital a few days ago. He was admitted very seriously wounded, and though everything possible was done for him, he was too ill to recover.'

Private John Elsby left a wife and two children; he had worked at Astley Green Pit before the war.

In April 1918 the local newspapers carried a story entitled 'Family's Heavy Sacrifice'. It referred to the Pendlebury family who lived at 122 Higher Green Lane, Astley and detailed the news that Mrs Pendlebury had just received a telegram on the previous Monday which advised her that her son, Signaller Harry Pendlebury, aged 20, of the King's Liverpool Regiment, had died of wounds in France on the 9 April. Harry had joined the army at the age of 17 and had been in France for two years before he was killed.

It was a tragedy indeed, however, it is important to note that this poor woman was already in mourning for her husband, Thomas, aged 47, and her younger son, Thomas junior, aged 19, who had both died as a result of the war. Thomas Pendlebury senior had enlisted in February 1915 and served with the Manchester Regiment. He had only been in France for six months when he met his death at the Battle of the Somme on the 1 July 1916. Thomas Pendlebury Junior died before his father. He had served with the South Lancashire Regiment and died of dysentery which he contracted whilst fighting at Gallipoli.



Astley Scouts visiting the Menin Gate.

Mrs Pendlebury had another son, Ernest, who had also enlisted and was serving at the front with a Royal Field Artillery unit. He was wounded, brought back to England and recovered in the Stanley Hospital, Liverpool.

Only a few of the Astley soldiers were commissioned. Hubert Holt of Withington Terrace, Cross Hillocks was a Lieutenant in the Royal Flying Corp who was shot down over enemy lines. He was 23 years old. Hubert received the Military Cross for his valour.

William Smith of The Lingards, Astley was a Lieutenant Commander in charge of an artillery battery at the battle of Ypres. He died from his wounds following the battle aged 20 years old.

Since carrying out the research, the Astley scouts have commemorated the centenary through representing the scouting movement of the North West of England at a service in Manchester Cathedral. Some of the members have also travelled to Ypres in Belgium to attend the Last Post Menin Gate ceremony.

The scouts uncovered many poignant stories which highlight the huge cost of war, faced not only by the soldiers themselves, but by the families waiting in desperation at home.

'At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we will remember them'.

The Astley Scouts have set up a Just Giving page to raise £7000 to build a memorial to all 60 men from Astley who lost their lives during the war. Currently there is no such memorial to these men because the original was destroyed in a fire.

If we can raise the money we are hoping to erect a memorial of black granite in the shape of a needle with the names of the men carved on it and we would like to have it in place by November 2018 to mark the end of the First World War. To donate please use this link:

www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/michelle-lewthwaite

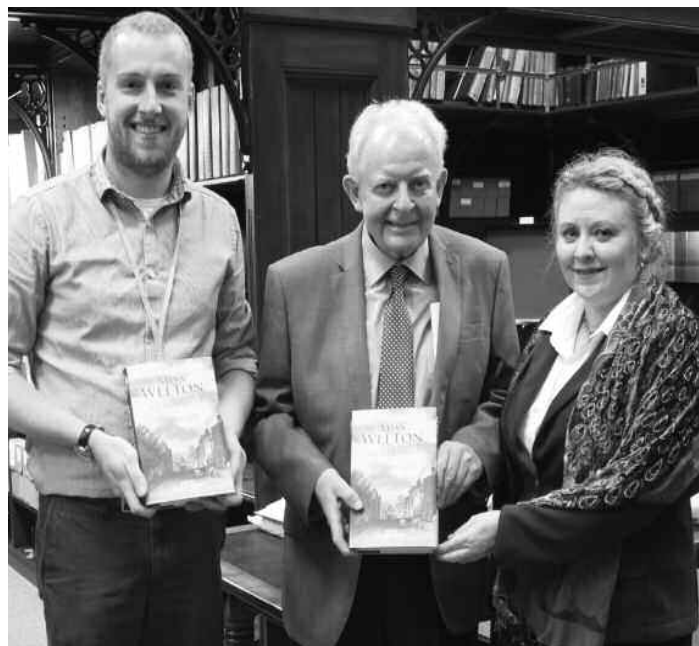
Miss Weeton: Governess and Traveller

The Archives & Local Studies are proud to be able to launch a new volume on the life and times of the famous Upholland and Wigan diarist, Nelly Weeton.

Edited by local historian Alan Roby and published by the Archives, the volume brings new research into Miss Weeton's life to print for the first time, updating the works of the diary collector, Edward Hall.

"We are extremely proud of the new volume and it is a testament to Alan's meticulous research – as well as his career in the printing industry, in producing such a high quality volume. It includes several wonderful colour reproductions and biographies of the key individuals in Miss Weeton's story. Crucially, we hear Nelly Weeton's life recorded in her own voice, giving us a near unique insight into Wigan and the North West (thanks to her extensive travels) in the Georgian period."

In Alan's words: 'Miss Weeton was an ordinary woman who was highly gifted. She learned the complete alphabet in three hours at little more



Alan Roby, middle, holding a copy of 'Miss Weeton' with Dr. Ruth Symes and Alex Miller.

than the age of two and her favourite toys were chalk, slate and quill. She was a voracious reader who seemed to have access to a bottomless pit of appropriate adjectives to describe people and events. Every word she used meant just what she wanted it to mean, nothing more and nothing less.'

We could not recommend it highly enough – a perfect Christmas gift for anyone interested in history!

The book, 'Miss Weeton: Governess & Traveller' is priced at £20 and is available from the Museum of Wigan Life and the Archives. We are happy to take postal orders (cost of £2.80); more information can be found on our blog at <http://missweetonbook.wordpress.com/> or please call us on 01942 404 430.

Regenerating Wigan Archives

The project to create new facilities for the Archives & Local Studies in Leigh is now well into the development phase. Funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), we are now engaging consultants to support us in working on the full scheme.



In the coming months our exhibition and interpretation consultants, Headland Design Associates, will be organising a range of forums and workshops for groups and individuals to offer their ideas on the project.

It is vital that we capture as many ideas as possible on a range of elements – including the activities you would like to see us deliver, the design of the new exhibition and the facilities offered in the new Archives & Local Studies searchroom.

If you would like to find out more or learn about how you can support the project, please have a look at the page or get in touch with a member of the Archives team,

www.wigan.gov.uk/regenerationproject. The dates for all workshops will be given on the project website and on our social media pages but if you would like to register an interest, please email us at archives@wigan.gov.uk or call the office.

New Member of the Archives Team

We are delighted to welcome a new member to the Archives team, Jane Williams. Jane is joining us as our new Digital Archives Trainee, in a post funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and supported The National Archives, Skills for the Future programme.

Jane will be working with the Archives for a year, engaging with a range of projects to promote digital access to the Archives & Local Studies collections. She has already begun work on the digitisation of historic photographs of Leigh as part of work to make more images available online, as well as taking charge of our social media pages. Jane has worked previously in local schools and will bring all her experience in education to her new role.

New Accessions and Collections

Wigan Archives

- Minute book for the Wigan and District Weavers, Winders, Reelers and Beamers Association, 1908-1918 [Acc. 2016/51]
- Wigan Little Theatre, photographs documenting the restoration and refurbishment of the Theatre, 1980s [Acc. 2016/56]
- John Sumner and Company, brewers, Haigh, rental ledger, 1921-1932 [Acc. 2016/58]
- Records concerning the Cunliffe and Goulding Families of Wigan, 1900-1960 [Acc. 2016/59]
- Poulson Family Papers, of Wigan, 1930s-1940s [Acc. 2016/66]
- Papers concerning Billy Flynn of Golborne, Lancashire and his military service during the Second World War [Acc. 2016/70]
- Pemberton Cottage Hospital, photographs, 1952-1953 [Acc. 2016/73]
- Gathurst Golf Club Records, 1933-2007 [Acc. 2016/75]

Wigan Local Studies

Wigan Local Studies new accessions

Hannavy, John Wigan Pier the facts and fictions of an enduring Music Hall joke 942.736
The "Wigan Pier Quarter" is part of a major redevelopment, this book asks how the legacy of the joke is being preserved.

McGreal, Stephen Wigan in the Great War 942.736
Compiled from newspaper reports and first-hand accounts, a look at the contribution to the war effort made by the people of Wigan.

Murphy, Brian St Cuthbert's Pemberton, Wigan Parish History 1871-2000 282.42736
A history of the church and school with photographs

Record Society of Lancs & Cheshire A Londoner in Lancashire 1941-1943: the Diary of Annie Beatrice Holness. An evacuee's record for Mass Observation, the social research organization.

Wigan International Jazz Festival
7th-10th July, 2016 programme. WML 25 W6

Wright, A.J. Striking Murder a detective mystery set in Wigan in 1893 during a miners strike, Arthur Morris a wealthy colliery owner is found brutally murdered in Scholes, a whodunnit set in Victorian Wigan.

Please check our online catalogue for more items available at Wigan & Leigh Local Studies, <http://capitadiscovery.co.uk/wigan/home>

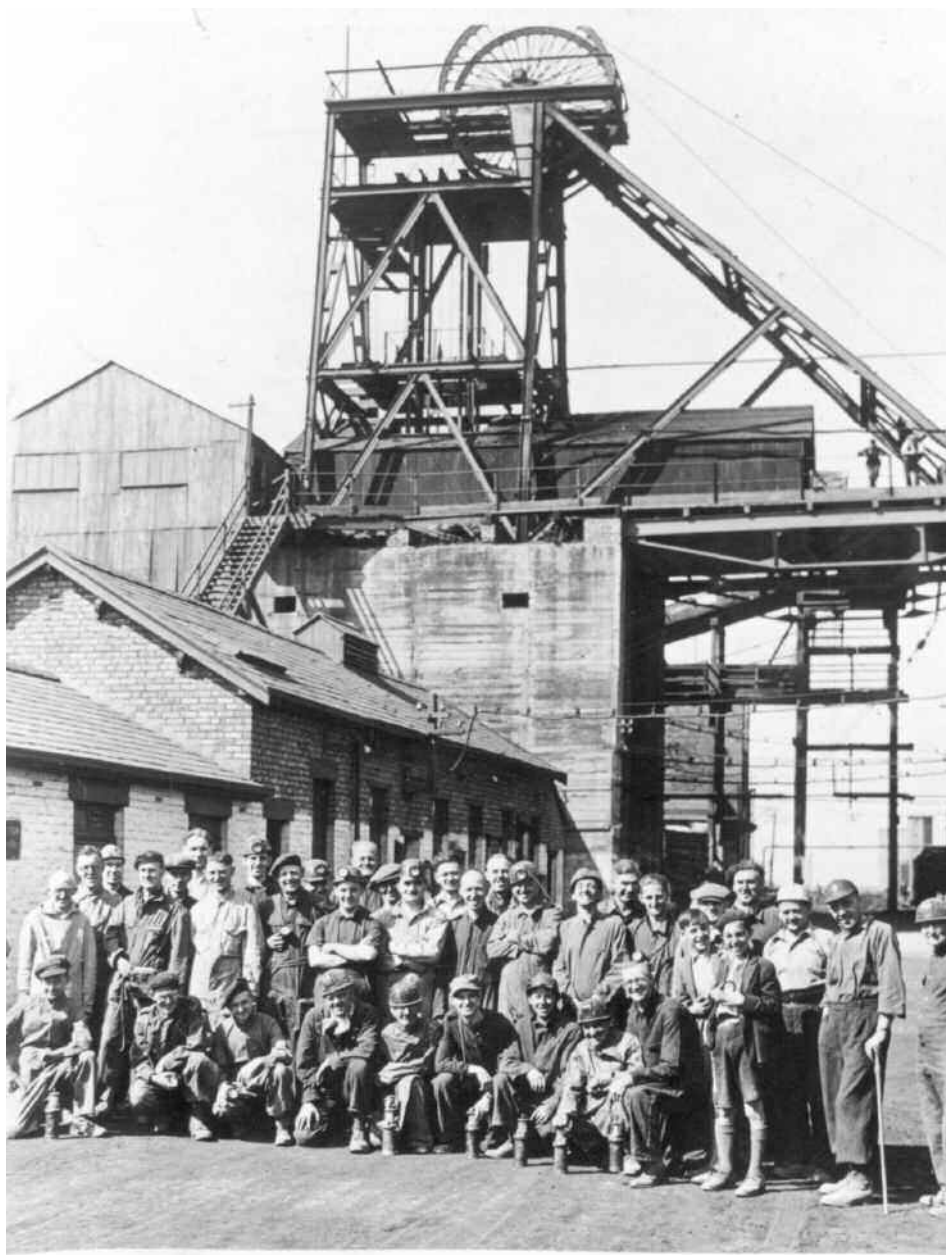
Memories of a Pit Brow Lass

BY RITA CULSHAW

Before I got married, my name was Rita Baldwin. I was born on the 29 December 1933 at 46 Millers Lane, Platt Bridge. My father was Edward and my mother was Mary. I had six siblings; Betty, Teddy, Peter, Muriel, Derek and Terence. My first memory is the start of the Second World War, my mother said to our next door neighbour, "it's started."

I went to St Nathaniel's School and then went to Moss Lane Secondary.

At 15 years old I left school. It was December 1948 and I was about four feet and ten inches and weighed about five stone. My older sister Betty worked on the pit brow at Wigan Junction Colliery. I started there at New Year. No interview just went with my sister. I would leave home at 6.00am to start work at 7.00am. It was about an eleven and a half mile walk to the pit, even in snow we had to walk, there were no buses. I went to the baths to change into my work clothes which were black stockings, clogs, skirt, man's jacket, turban and headscarf. We also wore fingerless gloves. We then went to the little canteen to wait for the hooter. When the



Wigan Junction Colliery. Image courtesy of Salford Mining Museum

first hooter went the foreman whose name was Evan Jones came in and said: "Right ladies time to go."

There were three sets of belts, one for small pieces of coal, one for medium and one for large.

The tubs came up in the cage to the checkweigh bridge, on the side of each tub was a number written in chalk. A man would shout the number to the checkweigh man called Arnold. The number referred to the collier who had filled them so that was the way he was paid.

The tub would then run on a tack to the tippler, it was then tipped onto the shaker which then sent it to the belts.

The shed covering the belts was open at each end, no heating and no talking either as the foreman stood on a gantry above our heads. It was a good way to learn to lip-read. The belts were link chain and when the coal came through a piece of 'bradish' – a partition used in mining, also known as a brattice – the girls stood either side and picked the dirt out. It was thrown on the floor and when you got a lot near your feet it was shovelled into a hole in the floor into a railway wagon underneath our feet. The rest carried on to drop into another wagon.

Around ten o'clock, my job as the youngest was to climb up about 100 steps to the checkweigh bridge. I then waited at the cage to collect the miners' tommy tins and tea cans



Rita Culshaw former pit brow lass from Wigan Junction Colliery

and take them to the big canteen to have them filled with sandwiches and tea. I then had to carry them back up the steps to the cage. This took about three or four journeys. For this job I got the princely sum of one pound and ten shillings per week. I had to tip up to my mother and she gave me two shillings and six pence or half a crown spending money.

In the summer of 1949 the miners went out on strike for concessionary coal which they won. In early 1950 it was decided to make a split shift making an afternoon shift starting at 2.30pm finishing at 10.00pm but it was decided to

only put single girls on it. I would have had no social life so my dad took me to see Ikey Webster, the union man. I was then taken to a meeting with Lol Unsworth. The Colliery Manager asked what he could do, Ikey said, "Fair play for these wenchies." The manager agreed but I gave my notice as I had got another job in a sewing factory with a wage of one pound, seven shillings and six pence which meant I got no spending money until I went on piece work.

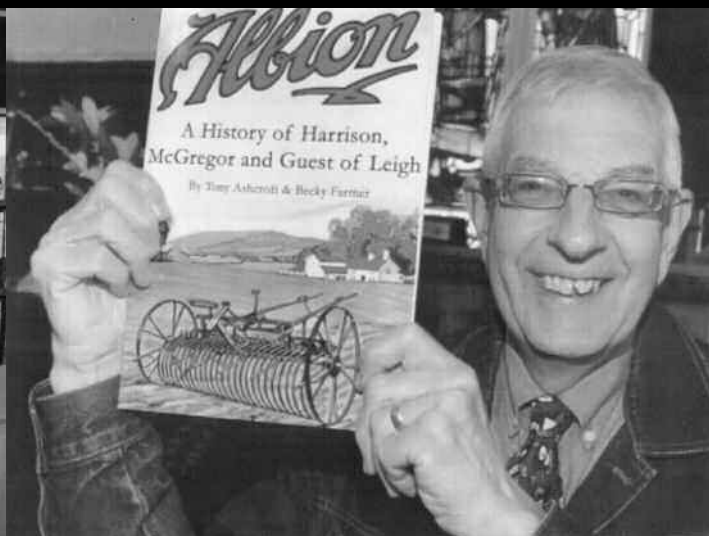
I can honestly say it was the happiest time of my life and would do it all over again if I could.

'Past Forward Issue 75 - Crime and Punishment in the Borough



We would like to hear from anyone who has stories which have a local link to the law or crime. If you have an article you would like to see published please contact pastforward@wigan.gov.uk

TONY ASHCROFT



In the last edition of Past Forward we announced the sad news of the passing of Tony Ashcroft, former Local and Family History Officer and Past Forward contributor. Over the next two pages customers, colleagues and friends share their memories of Tony. The next two pages are dedicated to him.

I've known Tony Ashcroft Leigh Librarian and History Officer for more than 20 years. From 1998 till 2009 Tony put up with my constant enquiries on information about the local history on sports. Through his knowledge and patience I eventually succeeded in publishing The Pictorial History of Leigh Harriers 1888-1971 in September 2009. A very fine person who I was privileged to know.

John Taylor

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I cannot recall the first time I met Tony... On reflection that is quite surprising - with his flair for wearing flamboyant ties and colourful jackets, his seemingly limitless knowledge about Leigh and the surrounding area, and his boundless energy and enthusiasm to get involved – I certainly remember most of our meetings since I joined the fledgling Heritage Service in Wigan as collection manager back in 1989 just after the departure of Tony's predecessor at Leigh Norma Ackers. Although at that time I had a strictly museum role I soon became aware of the new source for local history support at the Turnpike library for work on our display areas at Wigan Pier, the Wiend and the Turnpike gallery, Tony Ashcroft – a very helpful chap he was too.

Then in our big reorganisation prior to the opening of the History Shop in 1992 Tony was confirmed as the Local History officer (Leigh) for the Heritage Service, and I benefitted from being his manager, colleague and friend for the next fifteen years, until Tony's retirement and the next big round of changes within what was then the Leisure & Culture Trust. I got to know Tony well and learned something of his interesting story, including his previous career within the health service, his dedication to his new local history role, his role as a magistrate, his grown up son living abroad and of course his wife Pat. I also became aware of his love of painting and was honoured on the occasion of my own departure from the service to be presented with an original framed picture. It is wonderful to have such a tangible reminder of someone, of their energy and their creativity and it is something I will continue to treasure.

I am very grateful to have known Tony as he brought so much into my working life. I'm sure many many people will miss him as I will.

Philip Butler

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Tony with his long legs, bouncing into the search room, sheaths of papers flapping under his arm and a smile on his face. Always wanting to share what he was researching and he never failed to ask what you were 'up to'. A ray of sunshine who will be sadly missed.

Yvonne Eckersley

Tony Ashcroft was a kind generous man, very enthusiastic about his work. I received gifts from Tony of eminently readable and interesting books, some written by himself. It was always a pleasure to meet him at Leigh Library or at Pennington Flash.

John Marrison, Golborne Library

My Friend Tony Ashcroft

I first met Tony Ashcroft at Hindley Museum; he was there to deliver a talk on a home grown actress – Lily Brayton.

I attended various walks and talks that Tony delivered, but my professional relationship with him began when I started work at what was known then as The History Shop. Our work together included talks to schools on local history, and workshops.

We both had a deep love of history and study, and Tony was a very clever man, with a keen dry sense of humour, often reducing us both to uncontrollable giggles, the ultimate professional, caring and compassionate one of life's true Christian gentlemen, he was a friend to many.

The last time I was in Tony's company we were in Leigh, when he was telling me of his involvement with the U3A, inviting me to join, that night he sent me a text with full details of the group, sadly he died shortly after.

The funeral was a testament to Tony, full of people who wanted to be with him, albeit for the last time. It was not a sad occasion, I could feel Tony's presence, and knew he was with his Lord.

Tony Ashcroft, you will be missed.

Dianne Teskey.

I first met Tony when the new Heritage Service was set up in the early 90s, with Archives, Local History Libraries and Museums brought together under Alastair Gillies. Tony was appointed to look after the Leigh half of the local history library collections, succeeding Norma Ackers in that role. Tony was a delightful colleague, always ready to help. He loved delving into the collections in his care, often coming up with unusual items, and was keen to communicate his finds to colleagues and to a wider audience. He had a particular interest in the popular entertainers of yesteryear, especially the music hall and theatre. Above all, I will remember his enthusiasm, his cheerful nature, and his jokes and

puns: one of his little favourites that come to mind was that whenever the subject of exhibitions came up he would delight in announcing how we were "going to make an exhibition of ourselves..."

Best wishes

Nicholas Webb (Wigan Archives 1984-1999).

Tony and I met about twenty years ago when I was doing research about the Empress ballroom – we instantly became friends mostly through our interest in local history and of terrible jokes which we shared and groaned every time we met. He was a dear friend – I shall miss him

Peter Street, fan of Tony Ashcroft

Prior to his death, I knew Tony for many years having used both Wigan and Leigh Local Studies. He was always a willing helper, and had a memory of material which had not yet been catalogued down in the collection. The presence of many people at his funeral was indicative of the respect he inspired in others.

Tony was also archivist for Christ Church Pennington, and was regularly looking for items to add to the church archives. He contributed to the church magazine with an item entitled 'Snippets from the past'. In his final contribution, he had a four page section with snippets of events reported in the local press from 1856-1966. Typical entries include 1856 'Horlicks of Wisconsin offered the first malted drink to the public' and 1936 'St. Hilda's school, Orchard Lane closed down'.

September includes heritage day for many old buildings. Tony usually had a display at the back of the church of much of the archive material relating to Christ Church, which included many registers.

Together with Mrs Ashcroft, he was involved in running events at the University of the Third Age. Tony was also to be seen working in the Red Cross Shop on a Wednesday.

He will thus be missed by the latter organisations for his volunteer work.

In his leisure time he was proud of his roses, and was often in the audience of a local amateur dramatic company. He had been involved in the Literary Society before its demise

Eric Gregson

Lawrence Cox

Soldier & Policeman

by John Hesford

In the second of a two-part article, John Hesford continues to explore the life of Lawrence Cox during his time in India during the Indian rebellion and his life as a policeman in Leigh.

In May 1857 the Indian Mutiny broke out and for some months the empire that had been gradually built up by the East India Company was shaken to its very foundations. The mutiny encouraged rebellion by considerable numbers of Indian civilians in northern and central India.

The cause of the mutiny was the alleged greasing of cartridges with pig fat, forbidden in Muslim religion. The nation took up arms against the Government, and had it not been for prompt measures taken, the British would probably have been driven out of the country.

Lawrence landed in India on the 10 September 1857, at which time the mutiny was raging in Bengal. The monsoon had just set in, and the rain poured down in torrents, but nevertheless it was imperative for the British that troops were brought up to the front as early as possible.

Cox's regiment left Gorgo for the town of Ahlmedabad to assist a handful of soldiers based there. The soldiers had a very anxious time waiting for Cox's regiment to arrive. Every day they feared that the Indian soldiers known as Sepoys would break out in open insurrection. To keep them from doing so they sent a brass band down to the riverside, ostensibly for the purpose of meeting a British regiment. Day after day the brass band was sent down to the riverside to fool the Sepoys, but the brass band ploy was at last played out. The Sepoys had given up the fear that the Europeans would be relieved and planned to kill them the following night.

On the morning the plan was to take place, Cox's regiment entered the town with drums beating and colours flying. They wore the slate coloured uniforms that they had obtained in Africa, and the Indians not having seen the uniform, were surprised



Tantia Topee's Soldiery

as to who they were. The Europeans who had been in suspense for some weeks were excessively glad they had arrived and took strong measures to stifle the mutiny.

That night the ring leaders of the Indian regiments were apprehended and the next morning were tried for high treason and condemned to be executed. In order to let the people understand what punishment was to be meted out to them, their sentence was read out in English and Hindustani. The English and Indian regiments were called to arms and were marched to the spot where the culprits were to be put to death.

All of the criminals were executed at the same time. Accordingly three of the ringleaders were blindfolded and twelve men from the Indian regiment were told to shoot them. In case the Indians refused to shoot their officers, twelve British soldiers were told to shoot them. A further six men were tied to cannons and were blown to pieces from the cannon mouth.

All the ringleaders died bravely as they fancied themselves as martyrs for a just cause. Another twenty six men had been condemned to be hanged and these showed a more stoic indifference to the matter. As soon as the order was given they kicked off their slippers, ran their heads into the nooses and in a few seconds were dangling lifeless. It was

difficult to find pieces of those who had been blown from the cannons mouth, but what little there was, were picked up by the Indian soldiers and decently buried.

Cox now joined his regiment at Neemuch in the Malwar region where he remained for three months, then marched to Gwalior where they disarmed the East India Company's troops. The disarmament was occasioned by the transfer of the government of India from the East India Company to the Queen.

Cox moved back to Separee and remained there for twelve months, and then proceeded to Agra on the Juma, the hottest place Cox had been stationed. Here the famous pagoda or palace was guarded by British troops who allowed parties of Indians to enter and view the interior. Cox remained here for six months and then marched to Umballa where, to while away the time the soldiers planted beautiful avenues of trees.

Now the mutiny was over they were allowed plenty of relaxation. Cox used to go into the jungle shooting small game. He saw a tiger once and that was some distance away. They had gone out with lots of dogs, and as they were going along the cliffs, one of the dogs ran back with its tail between its legs. They looked over the edge of the precipice and saw a tiger. Cox gave it a wide berth.

With time on their hands they formed a cricket club in Umballa and played matches regularly. Cox was considered a very good player and often played in the first eleven. They also had athletic sports and on one occasion he won the long jump by leaping 18 feet 6 inches. The following year he won first prize in the 200 yards flat race.

From Umballa, Cox went to Mooltan where he was stationed for two years and it was here that he witnessed a shower of locusts. He saw a great black cloud in the distance. The living cloud of locusts came nearer until it was right overhead and the day turned into night. The locusts had hind legs like a saw and when they alighted on any greenery they destroyed everything in their path.

It was on the 5 March 1865 that Cox left India. He arrived at Portsmouth in June. A great crowd of people greeted the veterans. Of the 500 soldiers who landed at Portsmouth almost all were time served men, each sported one to three medals.

Cox proceeded to Fermoy, where he received his discharge in July 1865, he came over to Wigan



The old police station in Church Street, Leigh

where he married Mary Jones. In May 1866 he joined the police force at Preston. After training he was sent to Bacup and later to the Blackburn lower division. Lawrence was transferred to the Leigh division in July 1875 after being disciplined for an incident while on duty.

On that particular day Lawrence decided to take a drink. He became intoxicated and an altercation took place with John Duxbury, a tape sizer, who Lawrence tried to throttle. He then made an alleged unprovoked attack on three others who reported him to Superintendent Reid.

Meanwhile Lawrence entered a public house and drank beer which he refused to pay for on the grounds that he was a 'Bobby'. The landlord pressed for payment and Lawrence gave him a blow to the neck. A customer spoke up in defence of the landlord, saying his action was wrong for one who ate the ratepayer bread; he was then threatened by Lawrence and given a good kicking. He then turned his attention on to James Burke who had not spoken a word, and struck him over the head with his truncheon breaking the staff in two. He left the house, but returned at 11pm and demanded beer from the publican, who refused informing him that it had gone closing time. Lawrence threatened to strip him of his license. Police Constable Webb arrived and arrested Lawrence.

On the following morning Lawrence was brought before the borough Bench to answer charges of his assaults. The Bench heard a statement from Superintendent Reid who said that on the night in question Lawrence should have been at home with his family. For three years the prisoner had performed his duties without giving rise to a single complaint, and when he had taken a glass of beer it had driven him mad.

In answer to the charges against him Lawrence said he had been out all day serving summonses and had been without meat. He had taken a few glasses of beer, and it had driven him mad, chiefly because people had laughed at him for getting drunk.

The Bench in response berated the prisoner and said he ought to be a peace preserver and not a peace breaker. Had it not been for the good character given to him by Superintendent Reid he would have been sent to prison without a fine. Lawrence had to pay a fine of £5.



Two policemen stand in front of the White Horse Hotel in Leigh

Lawrence moved with his family to Coal Pit Lane, Westleigh and continued his work as constable there. In 1881 the battle of Wash took place at Wharton Hall about two miles from Tyldesley. From an early hour, gangs of men entered the town with the intent of compelling the 'knobsticks' (the men not on strike) from continuing work. Lawrence went with a detachment of police to put down any riots. It was a raw foggy morning in the depths of winter when they left Leigh and proceeded slowly through the snow. They got close to the pit shaft before the main body of rioters.

Soon a mass of colliers appeared near the pit brow and demanded that the knobsticks be brought out of the pit. Inspector Charnley promised the mob that if they would go away quietly, he would get the men to come up, but they refused, whereupon the Inspector got his men to charge the mob. The constables drew their truncheons and rushed forth. In one of the charges, Police Constable Kerr was knocked down and was in fear of being killed, but Lawrence and another constable went to his rescue, removing him out of danger. The combat was renewed, but eventually the police gained supremacy and drove the miners back.

Not long after the battle of Howe Bridge was fought, a meeting of colliers was held at Leigh and in the morning hundreds of men from surrounding colliery districts packed into the town. The police feared a riot and in the company of Hussars marched to the Market Place. The aspect of the mob became very threatening and in a few minutes snowballs and stones began to be hurled at the police. The order was given to charge and the police after a running fight dispersed the mob.

Hearing that another mob had mustered at Howe Bridge the Hussars and police marched in that direction. A crowd had assembled outside the Bowling Green Inn at the corner of Kirkhall Lane and Leigh Road, which opened up for the cavalry, but closed their ranks against the police.

A brass band belonged to the insurgents but as soon as the police charged, the bandsmen threw down their instruments and took to their heels. In the confusion the big drum was smashed, and a euphonium flattened. The police then marched to Howe Bridge, where they were divided into two parties. Lawrence's party went to Lovers Lane while the remaining twenty stopped with the soldiers in Leigh Road. After the riot act was read, the charge was made and the rioters dispersed.

Cox went through military campaigns with hardly a scratch, but he met with an accident during his career as a policeman. While stationed in 1870 at Pleasington he went out shooting in the company of a gamekeeper with a double barrel shotgun. He was lying on his chest firing the outside barrel, when the gun recoiled and the hammer struck him a severe blow on the bridge of the nose and broke it.

Cox had spent 14 years in the army and 23 years in the police force, 37 years of the best part of his life in the service of his country. When he left the army he was a full corporal with two conduct badges.

Lawrence retired in 1889. He was still in good health. By 1891 he was living in Gibbon Street, Great Bolton moving to Cannon Street, Bolton by 1901 at both addresses he still titled himself as a retired police officer. Lawrence passed away in Bolton in 1910.

*Sources: Leigh Chronicle 1890
The New Labyrinth of East London Lore
Encyclopaedia Britannica
Encyclopaedia.com
Australian Town and Country Journal 9 April 1881
Lancashire Telegraph*

Revisiting the Past

by Lynda Jackson



The team at the Museum of Wigan Life are refreshing the permanent gallery, bringing more collections out of store and onto public display. This is the first major redisplay of the museum since the building was redeveloped with HLF funding in 2010. The new displays are part of a phased plan to update the museum and provide better access to the collections.

The exhibits will cover a huge range of history from the Carboniferous (327-299 million years ago) right through to life in the 20th century. Displays will showcase the historic development of the area from fossilised plants to the earliest human axes and flint tools. Artefacts which show life for ordinary people over the centuries will be shown alongside those from major events such as the Roman invasion, English Civil War and Jacobite Rebellion. The museum's Natural History, Archaeology, Fine Art, Decorative Art, Geology and Social History collections will be on display – many artefacts for the first time. Don't miss out – visit us soon.

Contact us:

www.wigan.gov.uk/museum 01942 828128

wiganmuseum@wigan.gov.uk

@wiganmuseum

Facebook – Museum of Wigan Life

Not a Moment to Lose

Oil painting by George William Smetham-Jones, 1888

One of a number of late Victorian paintings in the museum's fine art collection, this was painted by Smetham-Jones (1864–1905).

Colonel Sir Roger Bradshaigh (1675–1747)

Oil painting by Bernard Garrison, about 1713

Bradshaigh of Haigh Hall was Member of Parliament for Wigan (1695–1747) and mayor five times.

The Balance of Power, 1801

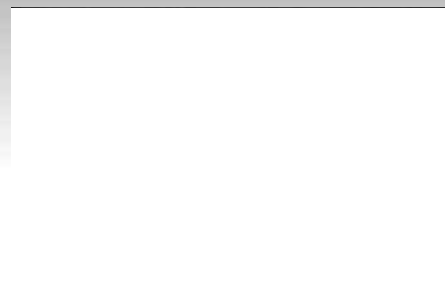
This satirical print is from the Crawford collection.

The scales show how Napoleon Bonaparte, holding with his sword, has the balance of power against British

politicians William Pitt the Younger and Henry Addington. Pitt had recently resigned as Prime Minister to be replaced by Addington.

Case of Jacobite Relics belonging to Ralph Standish of Standish

This precious collection of Jacobite relics came from Standish Hall, near Wigan. They belonged to Ralph Standish (1670–1755), Lord of the Manor of Standish, who participated in the failed Jacobite Rising of 1715. He was put on trial for high treason in London in 1716 and condemned to death but eventually reprieved through his wife's family, who had friends in high places.



The case is on display for the very first time in the Museum of Wigan Life along with two beautiful miniatures of Bonnie Prince Charlie and a selection of Jacobite medals and engravings.



Colonel Sir Roger Bradshaigh

A Changing World

The second part of Ted Dakin's recollections takes him through school to the comforts of home and the world at war.

My name is Edward Dakin, I was born into Mam and Dad's slow changing world on 23 March 1931, at 102 Miry Lane, Wigan. I was the last of the family brood. Photographs with my siblings, Tom, John and Kathleen, show me as a not very tall, snowy-haired, shy lad. I was the only one with blond hair and for years was often referred to as 'Blondie'. Apparently, I couldn't talk until well after my third birthday which prompted my paternal grandma, who lived round the corner, to say 'Thall never raise that, lad, Frances',

I do remember my first day at school. I was five years old and it was a warm, sunny morning. I don't recollect Mam mentioning school, but I do recall the special care she took in dressing me and the long walk to St Joseph's Catholic school, just off Caroline Street, the narrow corridor leading to Sister Veronica's office, the smell of sawdust and being seated on Sister's desk and kicking her in the stomach; and afterwards being shown to my desk in Miss Redman's class. I remember most vividly the next stage of what was to be a poor education, at a Dickensian-type school, with cane wielding teachers and a sadistic headmaster, who everyone feared. The school didn't have mixed classes so the girls were spared the sight of thrashings and the headmasters arranged boxing matches between misbehaving pupils. Many times I was witness to his twisted enthusiasm as he produced two pair of boxing gloves and his morbid delight as two unfortunates battered each other till blood ran. Absenteeism too was frowned upon and punishment followed. No one escaped.

My sanctuary was 102 Miry Lane; ramshackled it may have been, but this was my only escape from a school that taught me little. It was here at our humble abode, in front of our blackleaded fireplace, where Mam baked bread and cakes, that my sister Kathleen taught me to read and do simple sums.

Dad was an avid reader of library books and kept them in a cupboard near the fireplace. In a smaller cupboard he stored his shoe-last, a few tools, bits of shoe leather and clog irons, all cluttered up against the gas meter. Under the window stood Mam's second-hand Singer sewing machine, essential for tricky repairs and making my sister's dresses. Against a dividing wall was a big, highly polished dresser and two side cupboards with elaborately carved flower designs and smack in the middle, a large mirror. On either side of the fireplace sat two uncomfortable armchairs. In the centre of the room was our heavy, all purpose dinner table, that Mam also used for ironing, cutting materials, and patterns. In the far corner, near the door leading to the back kitchen, balanced on a rickety wooden table, was our only means of entertainment, a wireless. This ran on acid batteries that had to be topped up at regular intervals at Whittles, the ironmonger's shop a few streets away. We had family arguments about who wanted to listen to what. I enjoyed the 'Man in Black' stories read by Valentine Dyall, on Saturday nights. Over the mantelpiece, hung a print of Millias', 'Boyhood of Raleigh' and under that an alarm clock that also went to bed with Mam and Dad; there too was our safe deposit box, a tea caddy containing the family cash. In a recess on the left of the fireplace hung a picture of the Virgin Mary.

Our back kitchen was Mam's domain, where she ruled supreme. She spent hours in there. Mondays and Wednesdays she spent washing clothes. The boiler was housed inside a brick surround, with a wooden lid on top and with room for a small fire underneath. It was situated near the back window and close to a single, cold water tap. On the window bottom was Dad's shaving mug, a straight razor and his strop. Until Dad finally got round to making a bunker in the yard, our coal was dumped under the stairs. Also in the kitchen was our 'meat safe' a wooden box-like cabinet on legs, with a piece of mesh in the door to keep out flies and let air circulate. Milk, butter, meat and other foodstuffs were kept in there.

Our sleeping arrangements at Miry lane were simple, unavoidable and typical for that kind of decrepit property. In the front room there were two creaky, wire-sprung, iron bedsteads, with flock mattresses; one for our Tom, the eldest – John and I slept in the other. On cold winter nights, Mam would warm the beds with iron oven shelves or even house bricks wrapped in a piece of blanket. A small black fireplace was set into the chimney breast, but it never saw a fire.

Our Kath slept in the back room close to Mam and Dad's bed and because the outside lavvy was a short journey into the unknown there was a convenient chamber pot under each bed.

We always had visitors. Some welcomed, others not. Neighbours came and went at a steady rate. A knock, a warning shout and in they came, to enjoy a cup of tea, a wedge of Mam's cake and a good natter. Then there was Father Rimmer of St Joseph's church who called every Sunday afternoon, with his usual tap and enter routine and collection bag at the ready. Sometimes when the pennies were really scarce, Dad would lock the front door. He did this one Sunday, but our determined cleric came in through the back door and caught us all sitting there in petrified silence. Our most welcome visitor was Auntie Annie, Mam's sister, who lived at Shevington; she would turn up with baskets of food for the family.

Georgie, came from Liverpool and was from my paternal grandma's side. He lived alone and was a delicate effeminate man, with heavy horn rimmed glasses. He always arrived with a present for me, usually animals. Once it was a mongrel pup. Another time it was two baby rabbits (same sex, thankfully).

Every Friday night we had two callers. At teatime, it was our landlady, Miss Ballard, to collect her four shillings and sixpence, weekly rent. Later, about 7-0-clock it was the turn of 'The Doctor's Man' Mr. Harmer, a bowler-hatted chap who collected sixpences for his employer, Doctor Berry, to cover our family against mishaps or illness.

Grandad only lived round the corner, but never visited. Grandma did. With dangly, glass earrings, brushing against her still handsome, dark-skinned face and a shawl round her narrow shoulders, she parked her bottom on Dad's armchair and would produce two bottles of milk stout, Mam would put grandma's drink in a mug, stick a poker in the fire until it glowed red and plunge it sizzling into the liquid; which, according to the old woman 'will give it some body'.

Comics – the Dandy, Beano, Wizard and the Hotspur – kept us youngsters happy enough, but I wasn't satisfied. I began to borrow books from Frog Lane post office at the corner of Prescott Street. Like Dad, I joined the Wigan free lending library at the bottom of Library Street. In those days, in stricter times, once you entered those hallowed book-lined rooms, you left your normal conversing voice at the door and spoke in hushed tones, otherwise, the head librarian gave you a angry 'shush'.

Nothing kept us indoors for very long. We ran wild. With little traffic there was no danger of being run over. Street games kept us fit and healthy. A game of 'tick and run' was a favourite. Sprinting competitions and long jumps were enthusiastically played. Playing marbles, tying the handles of two doors and running off, leaving the occupants struggling to get out, was another favourite. Swimming in the canal in the summer holidays and weekends.

Between our house and Gallagher's was Constable Hart's brickyard, where bricks and paving stones were dumped, to be crushed into gravel in a massive stone crushing machine. This was one of our play areas and where we became a constant menace to the firm's watchman. After the war, sandbags used for protecting buildings were emptied to create a triangular sandy oasis from the brickyard to the canal and the railway line and where, every Sunday, James 'Daggie' Dagnall, a hard working miner, gave us unruly kids an hour of supervision in the manly art of boxing. What more could we ask for? A canal to swim and float our dodgy rafts; a brickyard, Gallagher's rat infested works, where we would lay traps, use dogs and dodgy air-guns to kill

them off, and later, while puffing on a furtive Woodbine, brag about the kills we'd made.

It was just after 11 o'clock on Sunday 3 September 1939 and Mam and Dad were shushing us up, listening to Neville Chamberlain announcing on our wireless, that we were now at war with Germany. The initial reaction among us young'uns, was confusion and fear. When would the bombs fall? When would the German army land in Britain? But all these questions were soon forgotten in the chaos that followed. Blackout precautions were put in force. Everyone had a torch. Gasmasks in square cardboard boxes were carried everywhere. Ration books and clothing coupons were issued. Mam had to join the long queues outside shops.

A brick air raid shelter was built on land at the bottom of Horsefield Street. There was also a shelter at Gallagher's. One night, during an air raid warning, a few neighbours made a dash for it, but the sight of scurrying rats and the oppressive stench made them wonder which was the best option; rats or bombs.

Some took in refugees from the bombed city of Liverpool. Our family never used the air raid shelter. When the sirens sounded and the drone of bombers could be heard heading for Liverpool the kids would crawl under our good, solid, all-purpose dinner-table, while Mam and Dad took refuge under the stairs.

On the up side, fish and chips were never rationed and the cinemas, including the Wigan Hippodrome, never closed and films gave us respite from fear. There was always the wireless; ITMA (It's That Man Again), amusing sketches with comedian, Tommy Handley and rousing patriotic wartime songs to give us cheer.

But the war years affected the Dakin family in other ways. Dad was a keen amateur herbalist and collected herbs on his walks to Gathurst and Parbold. Dad used to make herbal beer; using dandelion, burdock and stinging nettles he would brew them together very slowly until it had the appearance of lager. He'd sweeten the brew with sugar, bottle it and a few weeks later this nectar was

uncorked and greedily consumed. Then of course came the war and saccharine became the substitute for sugar – Dad's brewing days were over.

My eldest brother, Tom, was called-up in 1944, but never saw action; later, just before war ended, John went down the pit and became a 'Bevan Boy'. In 1947 our Kathleen married her boyfriend and left home. Tom found work at Taylor's cotton mill; our John found employment at Eckersley's cotton mill. I left school in 1945 and was taken on as an apprentice with a saddlery and leather goods business; my workplace was by the North Western railway station. I stuck it out for two years and hated every minute. Nevertheless, with Dad in work too, we became relatively better off. We already had instant hot water by means of an Ascot gas geyser. Mam bought bigger and better carpets, a Ewbank carpet sweeper and posher furniture. Eventually a new gas stove was installed. With money to spend we became better dressed too. Although he never completely gave up his flat cap, Dad even bought a smart blue trilby hat.

Slowly, our lives began to improve. Mam and Dad went on charabanc trips to Southport and Blackpool and into town on Saturday nights for a few beers. My brothers and I, in our different ways, got out and enjoyed ourselves. I remember one particular Saturday afternoon, I was 16 at the time, the three of us were walking to town along Frog Lane when, without warning, they each took an arm and ushered me in to The Pear Tree Inn and feeling about 10 feet tall, I downed two pints of best mild; a brotherly warning followed that if a passing bobby on his beat should walk in, I, them and the landlord would be in serious trouble and I was quickly ushered out again.

With everyone working there came the better times; the dire years of poverty were behind us. We weren't rich, but we were comfortable. Mam and Dad had steered us through and along the way had taught us good manners and the true meaning of neighbourly love and camaraderie. Job now done, there was only one way to go for Tom and Frances, and that was forward and into the future.

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 from 2pm to 4pm.

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, Non-Members - £2 including refreshments.

Contact Details: Margaret Hodge, 01942 884893.

13 December 2016 – 'The Saggy Bottoms' – four retired ladies who will entertain with wit and music.

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

Culcheth Local History Group

The Village Centre, Jackson Avenue. Second Thursday of each month. Doors open 7.15pm for 7.30pm start. Members £10 Visitors £2 Enquiries: Zoe Chaddock – 01925 752276 (Chair)

8 December 2016 – Moses Holden, Self Educated Genius

12 January 2017 – The Pretoria Pit Disaster – Alan Davies

9 February 2017 – Weavers' Cottages – David George

9 March 2017 – Culcheth Workhouse & the Pauper Apprentices – Zoe Chaddock

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 & District History

www.leighanddistricthistory.com
An exciting new, free, local history website, covering Leigh and the surrounding districts. Still in its infancy, it already boasts a list of births, marriages and deaths, 1852-1856, including cemetery internments, nineteenth century letters from soldiers serving abroad, a scrapbook of interesting articles, local railway accidents and an embryonic photograph gallery. There are also links to other sites covering historic and genealogical interest.

Leigh Family History Society

The Leigh & District Family History Help Desk is available every Monday afternoon (except Bank Holidays) from 1.30pm to 3.30pm.

There is no need to book an appointment for this Help Desk, which can be reached by lift.

Monthly meetings held in the Derby Room, Leigh Library at 7.30pm on the third Tuesday of each month (except July, August and December), contact Mrs G McClellan (01942 729559)

17 January – Magistrates & Malefactors : Lancashire's Criminal past – Dr. Alan Crosby

21 February – The Atherton Collieries – Alan Davies

21 March – Victorian Prostitution & The Contagious Diseases Act – Brian Joyce

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. 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.

You can also visit the website at www.wiganarchsoc.co.uk

Wigan Family and Local History Society

We meet on the second Wednesday at 6.45pm. Please contact wigan.fhs@gmail.com to find out more information.

Attendance fees are £2.50 per meeting for both members and visitors. Our aim is to provide support, help, ideas and advice for members and non members alike. For more information please visit, www.wiganworld.co.uk/familyhistory/ or see us at our weekly Monday afternoon helpdesks at the Museum of Wigan Life.

Wigan Local History & Heritage Society

We meet on the first Monday of each month at Beech Hill Book Cycle at 6.30pm. Admission to the meeting is £2.50.

For more information please contact Sheila Ramsdale at sheila.ramsdale@blueyonder.co.uk

Two Brothers and a Pit Disaster

by Jane Williams

Eliza Lee was born in 1861 in Wolverhampton to parents Richard and Mary. On the 2 February 1880, Eliza married a miner called George Saunders. Eliza and George moved to Atherton around 1885 along with Eliza's parents and large extended family. Why the family made the move is not known. The 1891 census shows the Lee and Saunders family living in three separate homes around Water Street and Cannon Street.

By 1901, Eliza and George had six children; Mary, Emma, Jane, Edward, Harriet and John. George was a coal miner, a vocation his two young sons would also take up in the future.

It was around this time The Hulton Colliery Company were sinking Bank Pit numbers 3 and 4 on the northern border of Atherton and Over Hulton, generally known as Pretoria Pit; Edward and John's future place of employment.

Nine years later and four days away from Christmas, Edward and John, now 18 and 13 respectively, began their shift. Edward was a haulage hand and John a lasher-on at Bank Pit No. 3. As a haulage hand, Edward would have been gaining experience on the sidings and shunts near the pit shaft before beginning his time working underground.

John would have probably worked underground hooking the coal tubs and materials going into the mine onto a moving haulage rope. A job that could result in the loss of a finger or two!

Also, on this day working at the pit was a cousin of the two boys, Josiah Lee, a drawer. His job was

to take full tubs to a shunt to be attached to a haulage rope so they could be taken to the pit shaft.

Over 300 men and boys including Edward, John and Josiah will have checked in for a 7am start on the day shift at the Yard Mine on Wednesday 21 December 1910.

At 7.50am, homes in the Westhoughton area had their foundations rocked and clocks fell from mantelpieces. As a mining community, local residents guessed what had happened and crowds soon gathered at Pretoria Pit. An official report blamed the ignition of gas from a recent roof fall by a damaged safety lamp. The exploding gas caused a coal dust explosion reaching a distance of almost a mile. Mr Gerrard, the Inspector of Mines was reported as saying 'there is not a single shadow of hope that there is a man in the pit alive'.

Miraculously, three did survive but a bleak Christmas was to follow for the families of the 344 men and boys who died, as over the coming days their bodies were recovered and buried. Funeral services began on Christmas Day and by Boxing Day 100 burials are believed to have taken place. Unimaginably, one lady from Tyldesley lost her husband, four sons and two brothers.

Eliza's two sons Edward and John were found on Christmas Day in the Plodder district of the mine, where the explosion had occurred. It was her heart-breaking task to identify the two boys. Eliza's nephew Josiah was found the following day and was identified by his older brother. Edward and



John were buried together in Atherton Cemetery on Thursday the 28 December. Their gravestone reads 'softly at night the stars are gleaming upon their silent grave, where they sleep on, without dreaming, those we loved, but could not save'.

By 1911 both Eliza and George were now both aged 50 and it was the two older daughters who were earning for the household. It is unclear why the family made the move from Wolverhampton to Atherton. However, it is reasonable to assume they must have asked the question 'What if...' on more than one occasion. The Pretoria Pit disaster is still considered one of the worst mining disasters in British history.

The Lee family continued to live in the area and work down the mines. The last of the miners James Lee, Eliza's Great Great Nephew, worked all his pit life at Bedford Colliery before it closed. James was a first aider and dealt with many a mining accident. He transferred to Parkside until his retirement in 1977 thus ending a family tradition spanning over 120 years of working in the Lancashire coalfield.

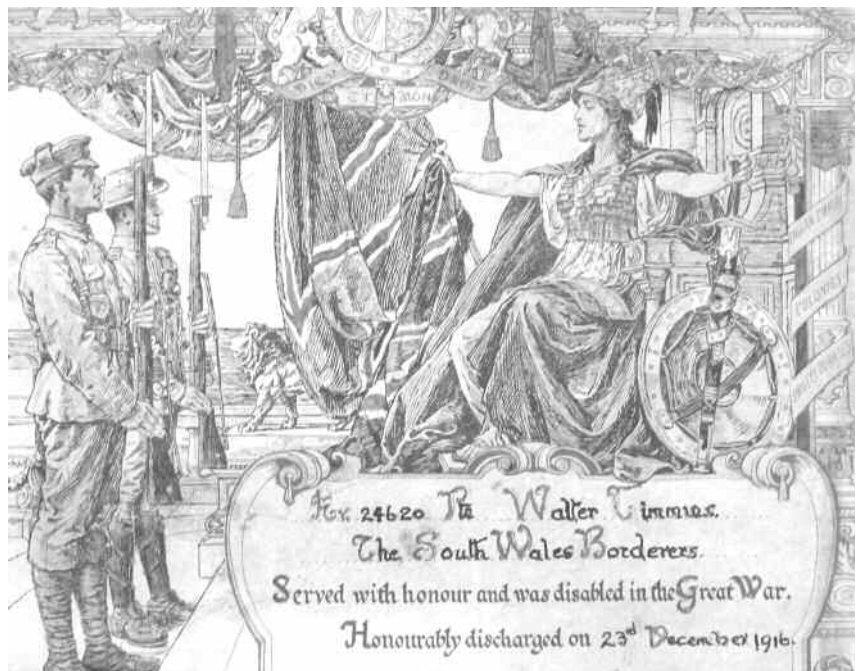
The First World War Centenary and You

Many local residents have been encouraged by the centenary of The First World War to share stories of their ancestors.

The first is from Derek Timmins from Hindley Green. Derek has shared his family's archives with Past Forward. His ancestor Walter enlisted into the Royal Field Artillery in January 1915. He later transferred to the South Wales Borderers. Walter served in Gallipoli at Sulva Bay and Cape Helles. His regiment was sent to Egypt where Walter became infected with Malaria. Walter later went to France and during the Battle of the Somme was wounded in nine places by shrapnel. Walter lay in a shell hole for 36 hours before being discovered. His arm was later amputated. Walter returned home to a 'royal welcome' in August 1916 and was honourably discharged a few months later.

Before the war, Walter worked at Nook Pits in Astley but he did not return there in peace time. After receiving treatment Walter became the postman in the Bedford area of Leigh for many years until his death in 1945.

Walter's discharge certificate dated the 23 December 1916.



Photograph of a group of soldiers. Walter is possibly the one stood on the far left.

Corporal Walter Timmins is standing in this studio portrait. The image was probably taken after Walter's experiences on the Somme as his arm from the elbow appears to be missing.



The second is from Alan Platt from New Zealand. Alan's ancestor, Gunner Joseph Platt, died from wounds in April 1918 and is now buried in northern France in Borre Churchyard with nine other casualties. Before enlisting, Joseph lived in Etherstone Street and worked as a baker for the Leigh Co-operative Society. He was married to Florence and they had a son. Joseph was a member of the Leigh Road Primitive Methodist Choir. Joseph had several brothers, two of them Harry and John (also known as Jack) are believed to have been in the army during the war. One of them John (also known as Jack) served in the Manchester Regiment. Both Harry and John were coal miners. After the war they returned to Leigh to live with their family at 2 Widdows Street.

Alan is especially interested in learning more about his family history. If you have any information please contact pastforward@wigan.gov.uk

Joseph Platt is standing on the right of the picture. His brother John (Jack) is sat in the chair



John (Jack) Platt is stood in the back row on the far left



Keeping Leigh Time

Leigh's Two Time Signals

BY YVONNE ECKERSLEY

Before it was legally adopted as British standard time in 1880, astronomers, by observing particular stars' celestial positioning, had identified an inaccuracy in Greenwich mean time. By using the sun to calculate its standard, Greenwich mean-time added a day to the year. Thus, in the late 1860s Dr. Evans, by using star (sidereal) time, introduced a system of recording time more accurately than Greenwich mean-time, to regulate Leigh's public clocks.

Dr. Evans' Signal

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Using a transit instrument, Dr Evans observed and recorded the time certain longitudinal (clock) stars crossed the sky. He then used an Almanac to provide the exact time they crossed the meridian. He later constructed a home-made chronograph that timed the transits electrically. This data was transferred to a regulator clock which interpreted the data to within two seconds of Greenwich mean time.



Dr Evans.

Initially fired by hand, the clock electrically triggered a series of mechanical operations which fired the shell. This shell could, conditions permitting, reach 430ft. before bursting into a white star. The shells were hand-made by Dr. Evans and his gardener, Mr Ratcliffe and stockpiled in Evans' garden shed. The 'Rocket' was fired from Avenue House, The Avenue, 70 yards from the Parish Church at 10pm every night.

Adoption as Local Time Signal

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From its inception the signal was an unofficial regulator of time for Leigh. In 1871, Dr. Evans approached the District Boards, to put it on a more formal footing. He asked the five local boards to share the £2 cost of the shells. Pennington, Westleigh, and Bedford Boards contributed, but not Atherton or Tyldesley, it was considered they were out of range. Yet Tyldesley used the signal.

Seconds before 10pm, a shell was launched. In Lowton, the watchman at Messrs J. Knott and Sons, fired a gun on sight of the shell burst. He was under strict instructions not to fire if it was not visible. To overcome problems of visibility, an electrical time signal was automatically telegraphed to Albion Foundry, and they blew their whistle. This proved inadequate. In 1879 his request, that all Leigh collieries and mills with steam whistles blow them for 4-5 seconds upon seeing or receiving the signal, was adopted. The signal continued as Leigh's marker of time until Dr Evans' death in December 1897.

The New Time Signal

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Courtesy of a newly unearthed archive of correspondence, we know more of the process involved in establishing the second time signal for Leigh. In October 1898, Mr Marsh offered to finance a new time signal, and was co-opted onto the Council's supervising Time Signal Committee.

The Time Signal operated from the new Technical School in Railway Road and William Banks and Company of Bolton, provided the signal apparatus. Fortunately, the signal's regulator clock has been



*Regulator clock on display in Leigh Library.
Once used for the Leigh time signal.*

saved, and is now on public display in Leigh Library. The choice of supplier may not have been the wisest. From the outset their expertise was questioned. Mr. Marsh needed guarantees concerning the accuracy of their specifications, not least as Banks' was a comparatively unknown firm, not as specialised as it could have been. The Committee sought advice from Mr. Plummer, the Astronomer at Liverpool's Bidstone Observatory. His appraisal of Banks' technical specifications was very critical. Throughout the design process, manufacture and implementation, Mr. Plummer, Mr Trevor (Bidstone's Director) and Mr. Walter Evans (Dr Evans' cousin) advised and undertook the arduous task of supervising and ensuring Banks' work was technically accurate. W. Banks subcontracted the manufacture of the signal's component parts to various companies nationwide then attempted to marry them all together in Bolton with disastrous results. The success of the time signal depended on each component working to its optimum efficiency in unison. Given that Banks and their subcontractors were, as evidence indicates, inept, the likelihood of that happening smoothly was slight. Each time Banks had to adjust their initial specifications and produce an amended product, a pattern emerged. Promises were made, deadlines missed, then a variety of excuses were given, before an often faulty instrument, was supplied.

The Transit Instrument

Mr Plummer detailed basic technical flaws in Banks' Transit Instrument. Banks promised to adjust it, communicated, that it was working, but, they had to wait for changes to the Chronograph, which they had made too light, before its final adjustment could be completed. Then, they wrote to say that the transit instrument had failed. Added to this, Banks' lack of

appreciation, that the delicate nature of a transit instrument required absolute immobility, led them to construct an unsuitable wooden transit house. Eventually, Banks' house was replaced. The Instrument was fastened to the white brick inner wall, of a newly built house.

The Rocket Launcher

Running parallel to this, Banks had problems constructing a reliable gun and shells. Despite the help of Dr. Evans' gardener and Walter Evans, Banks struggled to make efficient shells. When eventually the shells arrived, half were from a batch previously rejected. The gun barrels were wrongly sized, and a new trigger board needed.

The Saga of the Regulator Clock

Following the familiar pattern of poor workmanship, broken promises, and excuses, efforts to wrest from Banks a reliable regulator clock led to complete disillusionment and distrust in Leigh. To get the clock, they needed to pressurise Banks, who procrastinated. Then, after many false starts and threats to cancel, Banks announced a working mechanism was on its way. However, when it reached Bolton from Birmingham, it had a broken jewel, which had to be repaired. Furthermore, as Banks had sent incorrect measurements to the Birmingham casemaker the case was too small. As the July deadline was drawing near, an overlarge case, sawn shorter, was substituted, with the promise to replace it to Mr Marsh's specifications. Mr Marsh had precise ideas about its aesthetics. The case was to be in polished mahogany; have a plate glass front door; fitted with two locks, their keyholes to have brass escutcheons; the back door was to be panelled; the base to match; its moulds carried round the back and 'finished in the best manner'. Suitably impressive, to reflect Leigh's new Borough status. After missed deadlines and the expressed concern that 'there will be a riot in Leigh unless the rocket goes up on the Queen's birthday' in May, the time signal was launched on the 12 July 1899 in time for the Charter celebrations. As fitting for a statement of civic pride, it was a formal occasion. Invitations were sent out. People attended and the press were there to report. On the day, after two unsuccessful attempts to fire the rocket, the third was 'not a pronounced success'. By the 19 July the signal apparatus failed altogether. Between then, and June 1900, the time signal Committee prevailed on Banks to fulfil their obligations. The second time signal ceased to operate in 1939.

References.

Wigan Archives. Leigh Time Signal Correspondence Archive
Leigh Local Studies cuttings file – Dr Evans
Leigh Borough Council Minute Book 1900

The old Grammar School, Leigh. Access to the school was through the parish churchyard. The school moved to new premises in Railway Road in 1889, Wigan Archives and Local Studies.

BY BOB BLAKEMAN

Schools in Crisis

'The causes which prevent the grammar school of this town of more than 40,000 people being better filled and better taught are those which one finds more or less active for evil in all the manufacturing towns. Wigan is a very rough place; with a large population of colliers and poor Irish immigrants, as well as factory operatives..... the boys who come are rude in manners and quite undisciplined in mind. The masters have within the space of two or three years to civilize as well as to teach them, and in this difficult task find no support from the trustees, or other persons in the town, who, so far as it appears, are, rich and poor, wholly indifferent to education.'

So wrote James Bryce M.P. in his report for the Schools Inquiry Commission, which was set up in 1864. This parliamentary inquiry was one of several that took place in the nineteenth century owing to public concern about the condition of endowed schools and other charities.

Wigan Grammar School was an endowed school. Endowed schools were charities which originally provided a free or very cheap education for the children of lower-class parents. Some, such as that at Haigh, taught only basic reading and writing; while others, such as that at Leigh, taught mainly Latin grammar, a knowledge of Latin being necessary for entry into university. These latter schools became known as grammar schools. Most grammar schools took in pupils from their immediate locality, but the very best began to take in pupils from a wide area, and became known as public schools. With high demand came high fees, and eventually they became the preserve of the wealthy. They have maintained their charitable status to this day. Most endowed schools were founded in the seventeenth century, during a period of enthusiasm for education, and each was a separate charity with its own regulations. They were founded by wealthy local benefactors and/or local

subscription. The usual procedure was to establish a committee of trustees to oversee the administration of the school and also to create an endowment of land and/or money to maintain the school building and pay the salary of the schoolmaster.

For example, Lowe school, Platt Bridge (the forerunner of Hindley Grammar School) was founded when the lord of Hindley gave an acre of common land for the site; a wealthy widow gave a sum of money to be invested to pay the salary of the schoolmaster; and some of the inhabitants contributed money, materials and labour towards the construction of the building. However, other inhabitants refused to contribute. These had their names displayed in the schoolroom and their children and later descendants were debarred from being taught there.

By the middle of the eighteenth century there were endowed schools in Ashton,

Aspull, Astley, Atherton, Billinge, Golborne, Haigh, Hindley, Leigh, Lowton, Pemberton, Standish, Upholland and Wigan. With the passing of time, however, enthusiasm for these schools turned into inertia, and by the early years of nineteenth century many were in decay. Public concern resulted in several inquiries by central government, and the resulting reports painted detailed pictures of the conditions at individual schools.

By today's standards the school buildings of this period were very small: about the size of a single-storey cottage, sometimes with an extension to house the schoolmaster. Wigan Grammar School was larger than most, having been built about 1725. It was a two-storey building, with two classrooms on each floor. They were described as 'sombre and comfortless' in 1868. Leigh Grammar School was also a two-storey building, but with one classroom on each floor. Here, a commissioner complained, there were 'no outside offices' (i.e. toilets) and the first floor classroom was overcrowded, poorly ventilated and had a 'foul atmosphere'. Mort's school, Astley, was 'entirely unprovided with offices or conveniences of any kind'. This single-storey building was condemned by the Sanitary Authority in 1874, but no improvements were made for twenty years.

Some school buildings were in an even worse state. At Billinge Higher End the schoolmaster's house was in such a bad state of repair that he took up residence in the girls classroom. How this worked in practice is not explained. At Golborne, in the 1850s, the school building had decayed to such an extent that teaching had to be abandoned.

Few schools had a playground. There was one at Wigan Grammar School, but the surface was very uneven owing to subsidence caused by coalmines underneath. However, it contained 'a circular swing and bars for exercise'. At Standish, a large field adjoining the school was used as a playground. Physical education in the form of military drill was sometimes taught in these playgrounds. Again, only a few schools such as those at Ashton and

Leigh had libraries, and at Leigh there was a fee of sixpence per quarter of its use.

Holidays were longer in winter than in summer, presumably to save on the cost of fuel. At Hindley, each boy had to pay a shilling for fuel during winter. At Wigan, teachers were allowed to send pupils home when it became too dark to read by daylight.

The founders of endowed schools usually specified how many pupils were to be taught free of charge and that they should be residents of a particular locality. Four of the seven free scholars at Leigh Grammar School were required to be residents of Pennington township. At Haigh, an elementary school, all pupils were taught free of charge, but had to be residents of Haigh.

Sometimes the catchment areas of schools were limited by other factors. As late as 1908, no children from Abram attended Hindley and Abram Grammar School (in Hindley) because the condition of the road was so bad. As the years passed fees increased, and by the middle of the nineteenth century most pupils at grammar schools were of middle-class parentage. Parental occupations at Wigan Grammar School included a solicitor, a farmer, a clergyman, a shopkeeper and an engineer. But at Standish Grammar School, which a commissioner described as 'now practically an ordinary village school', the pupils were mainly the children of coalminers.

Nevertheless, a few were learning Latin. But generally, working-class parents wanted their sons to receive a commercial education to enable them to become clerks or artisans, rather than have a classical education and risk failing to get into university.

Religious influence was strong in the endowed schools. At Lowton anyone applying to be a master of the school had to be examined by the local curate. Usually both masters and trustees were expected to be bona fide members of the Church of England. This sometimes caused problems at Wigan where the mayor might be a nonconformist, but was also an ex officio member of the board of trustees.

There was an unusual case at Goose Green School, Pemberton, in the late 1820s. 'There were very few scholars', a commissioner wrote, 'The principal part of the inhabitants having long declined having their children taught there, on account of the character of the schoolmaster. It appears from the examination of Mr. Baker himself that he professes not to believe in the scriptures, nor any of the fundamental principles of the Christian religion and this circumstance is notorious in the township and neighborhood'.

Prayers from the (Anglican) Prayer Book were read in most endowed schools before and after lessons. A few schools such as that at Aspull required all pupils to attend the local parish church on Sundays.



The boys of Leigh Grammar School outside the school with Ralph Passe, Master 1863-1885, Wigan Archives and Local Studies.

Headmaster's pay packages varied from school to school. When the needs of an increasingly industrial society caused grammar schools to expand the curriculum beyond the classical languages, pupils were charged for new subjects and the fees added to the masters pay.

In the 1860s the master of Wigan Grammar School received each year 100 pounds from the endowment and 171 pounds from fees, plus 15 pounds superannuation. This was a sizeable income when one considers that 150 pounds per annum was considered the minimum amount required for a man to live like a gentleman.

At the other end of the scale the master of Haigh School received a fixed of income of 20 pounds per annum in the late 1820s. But a master might also have outgoings. At Hindley the master had to pay for the cleaning of the school and at Leigh the master paid the usher's (assistant master's) salary out of his own income. At Ashton the master was responsible for repairs, and had to spend five shillings annually on cakes and ale for the pupils at the end of the midsummer holidays. (Perhaps to encourage them to return to school).

However, as in many cases the precise functions and responsibilities of the masters were not laid down, opportunities arose for indolence, nepotism and irregular financial activities on the part of unscrupulous

masters. For example, some classically-trained teachers, such as those in early nineteenth century Leigh and Standish, refused to teach commercial subjects to the detriment of their schools as a whole. At Lowton the master was allowed to let the school's land as he thought fit. At Astley the estate owned by the school had been let on lease by the master to his son and son-in-law. At Ashton the master employed as usher his own father, a former grocer, who was completely deaf. At Upholland the commissioners found that instead of an usher being employed one of the boys of the upper school taught a lower school of twelve to fifteen boys who 'were sent up to the master for a few minutes daily to repeat their lessons'. At Golborne, in 1855, the school building had become dilapidated and the boys in attendance reduced to six due to the drunkenness and irregular attendance of the schoolmaster.

How had such a state of affair come to pass? Largely through neglect by the trustees. The problem was that the quality of endowed schools depended on the interest taken in them by the trustees and these were often men of a high social class who had little incentive to become involved in the management of a school. 'They have' a contemporary commentator wrote 'a fatal tendency to exclusiveness and they never seem to enjoy the full confidence of the communities which the schools profess to benefit'.

For example, the trustees of Wigan Grammar School included The Revd. Sir Henry J. Gunning Bart, Rector of Wigan whose address was given as Alton, Northamptonshire; Alexander Fowden Haliburton Esq. of Torquay, Devon; and Nathaniel Eckersley Esq. banker and M.P. for Wigan.

In addition, there was sometimes a lack of interest in appointing new trustees. In 1829, the Charity Commissioners reported that they could not find any persons having authority to act as trustees of Goose Green School, Pemberton. At Lowton, the schoolmaster resigned in 1867 and there being no trustees and no one qualified to appoint a master, the school was closed altogether. But things could be worse in other parts of the country. No local teacher was as indolent as the master of Whitgift Grammar School in Surrey, who for 30 years received the emoluments due to him without taking on a single pupil.

It has to be admitted however, that the picture was not all bad. Wigan Grammar School had a period of excellence in the middle of the nineteenth century under the excellent teacher and educational theorist the Revd. S. Doria. New schools were built at Haigh in 1843 and Hindley in 1856. In 1862, the London-based Charity Commissioners appointed new trustees at Aspull School with regulations to prevent negligence on their part.

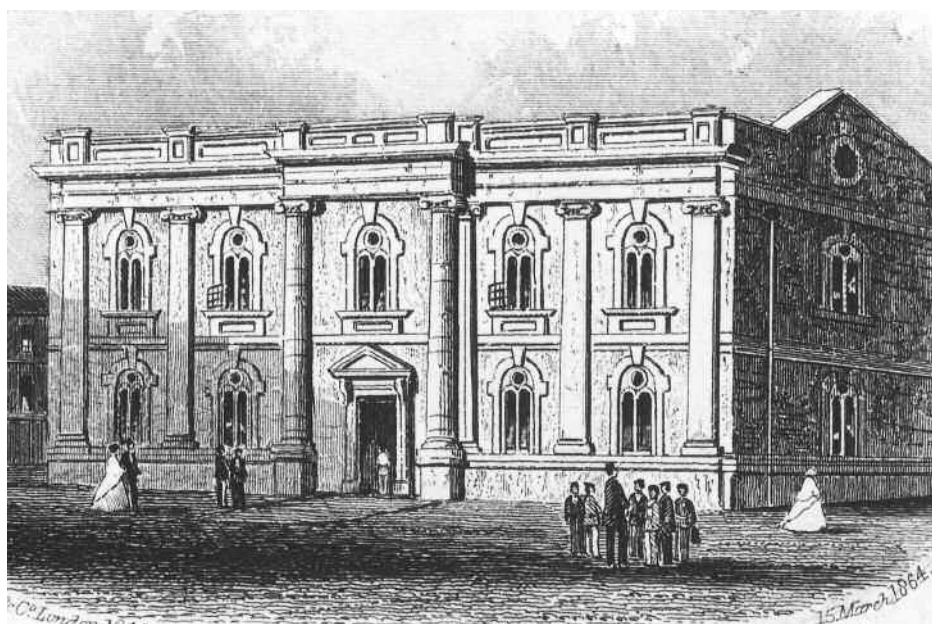
However, the overall condition of the endowed schools remained one of general decay, until later decades saw increasing involvement by local and central government in virtually all types of schools. Eventually every child was granted a free education, teaching standards were raised and local planning ensured that schools were built where required.

References

Archive http://spectator.co.uk/article/11_may_1872/9/the-endowed-schools-commission-report

Illustrations

1210/2 Wigan Grammar School, Rodney Street, 1723-1879 replaced a late sixteenth-century building near the present Mercure Hotel.



Wigan Grammar School, Rodney Street.

Events at the Museum of Wigan Life

There's lots going on for all ages at the Museum of Wigan Life in 2017. Don't miss out! Book your place by calling 01942 828128 or email wiganmuseum@wigan.gov.uk

Holocaust Memorial Day

Wigan and Leigh Town Halls
Friday 27th January 2017
FREE - No booking required but call 01942 828128 for further details.

Join us for this commemorative event to remember the millions of people killed in the Holocaust, Nazi Persecution and in subsequent genocides in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. Organised by the Museum of Wigan Life and Wigan Rotary Club.

Chinese New Year

Museum of Wigan Life
11am – 3pm Saturday 4th February 2017
2pm Finale dance
FREE - No booking required

An extravaganza of family fun as we celebrate Chinese New Year with music, dancing and traditional craft. Watch the fabulous Chinese dancers throughout the town centre before a special finale at the museum. Supported by Confucius Classroom, Wigan & Leigh College.

Chinese Celebrations

1-3pm Tuesday 21st and Thursday 23rd February
FREE drop in
No booking required.

Half term is packed full of family fun with our traditional Chinese craft and costume. Try your hand at painting, calligraphy and paper cutting then get dressed up in traditional Chinese clothes. Supported by Confucius Classroom, Wigan & Leigh College.

The Spanish Civil War and Wigan

12-1pm Tuesday 28th February
£2.50 incl tea/coffee

We mark the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Jarama when the International Brigades helped stop Franco's advance on Madrid during the Spanish Civil War.

What made local people up sticks and fight for democracy and socialism in another country? What was the background to this international conflict? Find out more about the passion and sacrifice of the young volunteers of the International Brigades and their supporters both here and in Spain.

Easter Eggstravaganza

1-2.30pm Tuesdays and Thursdays 4th, 6th, 11th and 13th April
£2.50 per child

Bring your little chicks for some crafty family fun as we celebrate springtime. Get stuck in with activities and trails then create your own masterpiece to take home. Its eggcellent for everyone!

WIGAN BOROUGH ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE NETWORK

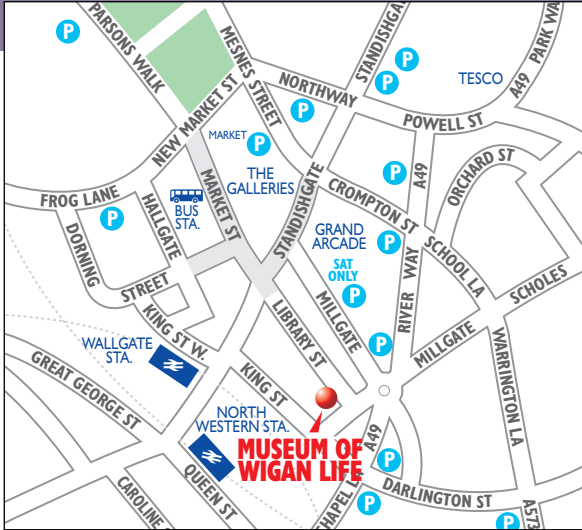
Wigan Borough Environment & Heritage Network is the representative body for all local societies, groups and individuals interested in protecting and promoting the Borough's Heritage and Natural Environment.

The network provides advice, speakers, site visits and partnership working with Wigan Council, Inspiring Healthy Lifestyles, Greenheart and other relevant bodies.

All are welcome to our meetings, held every six weeks at the Museum of Wigan Life.

For further details please contact the Secretary on 01942 700060, joe41@blueyonder.co.uk or visit www.wiganheritage.com

How to Find Us

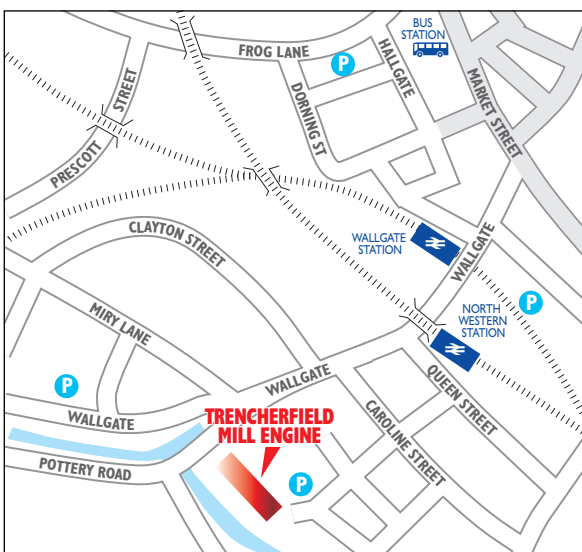
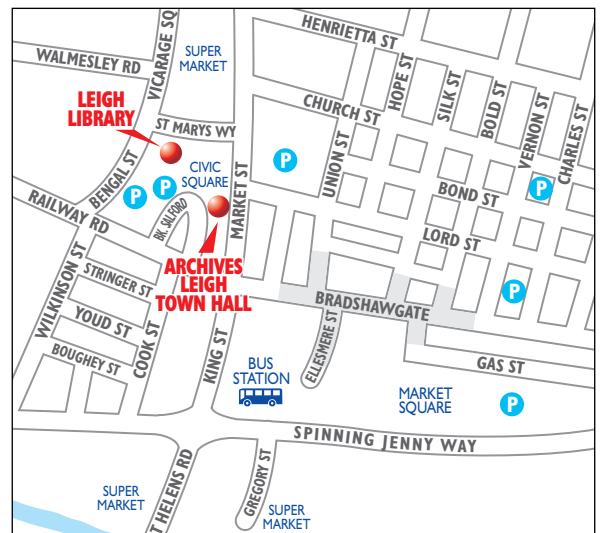


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