Wigan Council

PAST FORWARD

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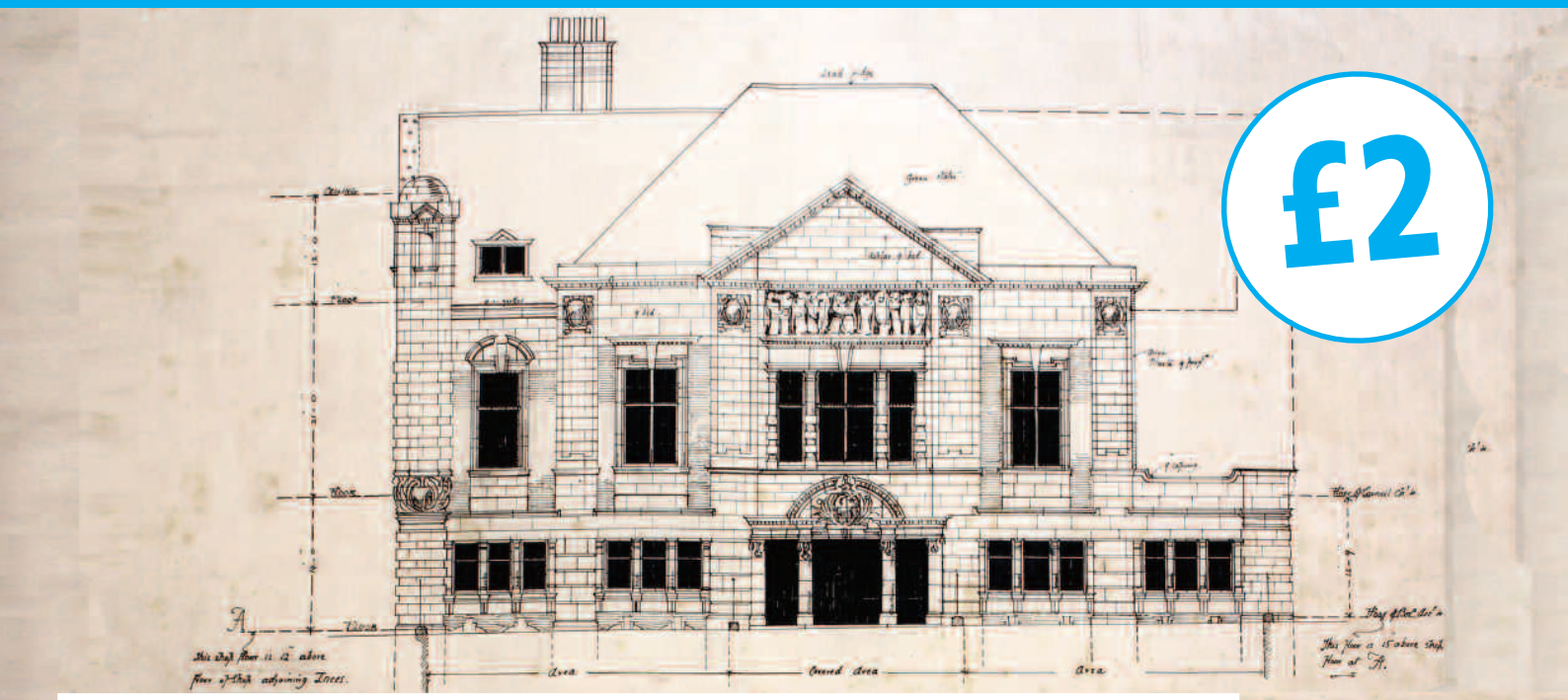

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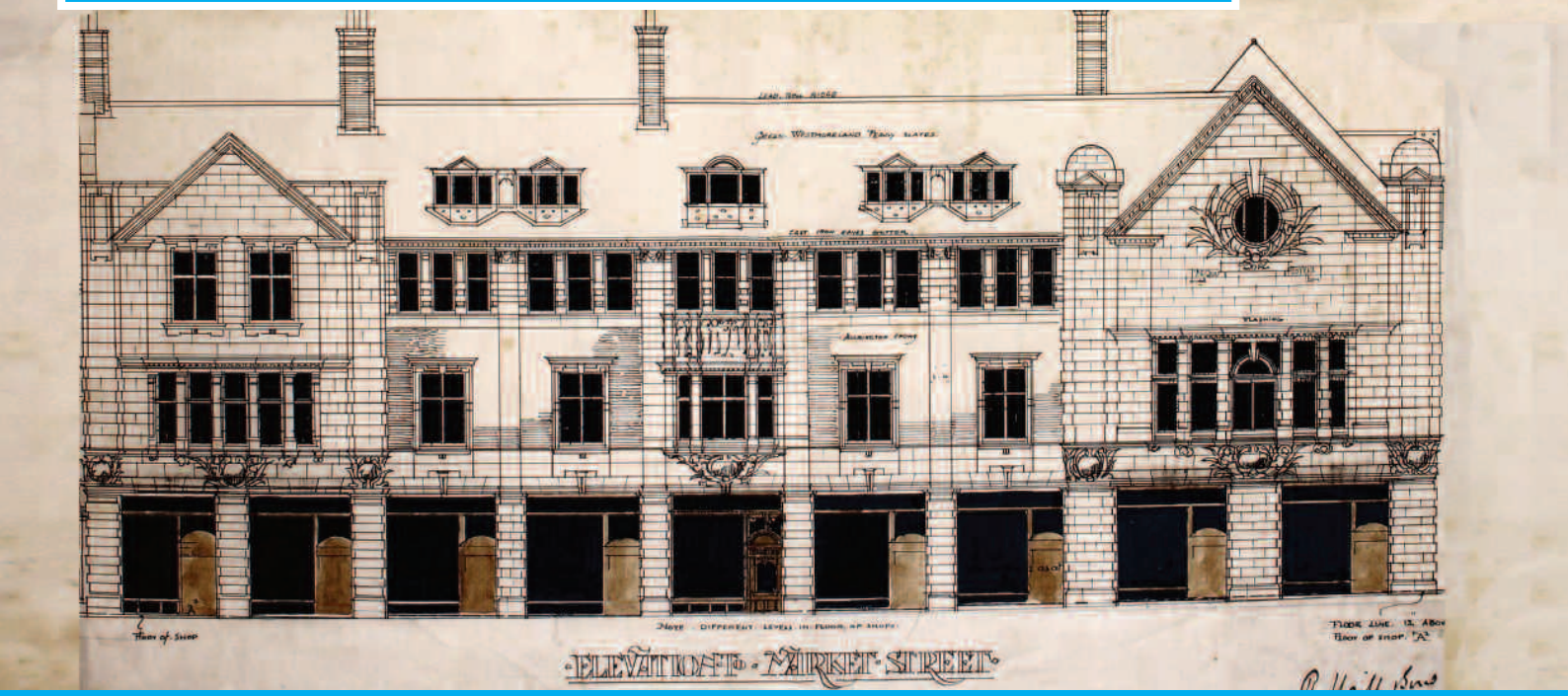
RESTORING LEIGH TOWN HALL



Wigan and Leigh's local history magazine

Contents

FRONT COVER
Original contract drawings for Leigh Town Hall.

Letter from the **Editorial Team**

Welcome to Past Forward Issue 82 and to our summer 'long read' edition.

We are always receiving fascinating local history articles into the PF in-tray and sometimes the stories need a bit more space to stretch out and tell the full tale. With this in mind the PF editorial team decided to run a special 'long read' issue, so whether you're sitting with the magazine in Paris, Prague or Pennington, you'll have some summer reading to enjoy.

Posters, Power & Parliament: The Wigan Borough 1910 General Election Collection

The Archives & Local Studies are delighted to reveal the completion of the Posters, Power and Parliament project.

With the kind support of The National Manuscript Conservation Trust and the Pilgrim Trust, it has been possible to have the posters professionally conserved and restored, to make them available to researchers for the first time.

The collection consists of 141 political election posters; 55 of the posters are directly linked to local constituencies – Wigan, Ince, Chorley, Newton – with the remainder part of nationwide circulation.

Whilst all the posters give a unique insight into the political in-fighting of the day, the most interesting part of the collection is a series of some fifty coloured pictorial posters, many in the form of political cartoons.

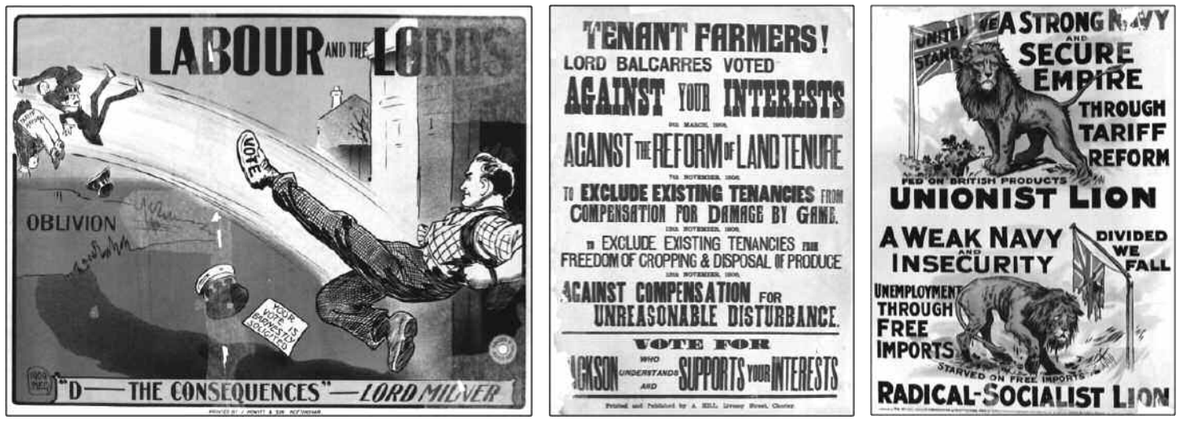
1910 was one of the rare occasions on which two elections were called in one year; the elections arriving as a consequence of the refusal of the House of Lords to pass Lloyd George's Peoples Budget of 1909. The main points at issue were reform of the House of Lords, Free Trade, the rights of working people and Irish Home rule – all of which are illustrated in the campaign posters.

The collection is of national as well as local importance, including electoral campaign material that does not survive elsewhere but helps to chart the history of British and Irish democracy and the changing nature of political representation in the period. Thanks to our generous funders and the conservation team at Archives+, Manchester, the posters are once again accessible to researchers.

Over the next few months all the posters will be digitised and made available online at Wigan & Leigh Archives Online – to keep track with progress visit **https://archives.wigan.gov.uk**

The Pilgrim Trust

Information for contributors, please see page 19



Posters representing the three main political parties contesting the 1910 General Election, the Liberal Party, the Conservative Party and the Labour Party (Wigan Archives & Local Studies)

Write 1000 words - Win £100!

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

Local History Writing Competition

1st Prize - £100

2nd Prize - £75

3rd Prize - £50

Five Runners-Up Prizes of £25

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

Winners from the Past Forward Essay Competition 2018

Criteria

- Articles must be a maximum of 1000 words.
- Articles must focus on a local history topic within the geographical boundaries of Wigan Borough.
- By entering the competition you agree to your work being published in Past Forward. The winning article will be published in Past Forward and other submissions may also be published.

  If selected for publication the Past Forward Editorial Team may edit your submission.

How to enter

- Articles must be received by e-mail or post by Tuesday 1 October 2019.
- Electronic submissions are preferred although handwritten ones will be accepted.
- You must state clearly that your article is an entry into the Local History Writing Competition.
- You must include your name, address, telephone number and e-mail address (if applicable). We will not pass your details on to anyone.
- It will not be possible for articles to be returned.
- You are welcome to include photographs or images however they cannot be returned.

Submit to

pastforward@wigan.gov.uk

OR

Local History Writing Competition,
Past Forward, Museum of Wigan Life,
Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU

The Reluctant Baronet

BY JIM MEEHAN

St Wilfrid's churchyard in Standish is the resting place of many distinguished people. I recently noticed the fairly modest grave of Sir Robert Clayton. I could see from his headstone that he was the Baronet of Adlington and had died in 1839 at the age of 93. I was intrigued and did some more research. I discovered he was the last Baronet of Adlington and didn't inherit the title until the age of 82 when his brother Richard died without a male heir. Although Adlington and Worthington Manors became his, he left them in the hands of his niece and her husband who were living there at the time. He continued to lead a relatively modest life in the Larches which was his home on Wigan Lane near the Boar's Head.

His early life was interesting. He was an army Major and fought in the American War of Independence. He was involved in many notable battles and held captive by American forces on two occasions.

On his return to England in 1786 he married Christophora Baldwin, the daughter of the local Rector. He remained a Major on half pay until he died. Dame Christophora shares his resting place in St Wilfrid's churchyard. They had no children, so the title became extinct. Following the death of his niece Henrietta and her husband, General Robert Browne, Adlington and Worthington Manors were inherited by more distant relatives and rented out. Wigan Corporation eventually became the owners of Adlington Hall and it was

Final resting place of Sir Robert and Dame Christophora

Sir Robert Clayton the last Baronet of Adlington

demolished in the 1960s.

Robert's reluctance to take on the Manor may have been an act of kindness towards his niece or perhaps he was reluctant to displace her husband who out-ranked him in their military careers. Or perhaps at the age of 82 he was simply set in his ways.

His funeral plaque which still hangs inside the church may give another clue to his nature. The moto reads 'Probitatem Quam Divitias' which translates as 'integrity rather than riches'. The inscription at the head and foot of his and Christophora's resting place reads: 'Not with our lips – but in our lives'. In other words, it is not what we say, but what we do, and how we live our lives that matters.

You can see from his picture that he was from a very different age. It is fascinating to think that the man buried beneath that stone was born in the year Bonnie Prince Charlie led the Jacobite rebellion and was someone who fought in the war that resulted in the birth of America as a nation.

Incidentally the gate lodge to Adlington hall can still be seen on Chorley Road between Platt Lane and the White Crow. Another remnant of the Hall are the plinths on either side of the driveway. These were once topped by Sphinxes. It is believed Henrietta's husband, General Robert Browne, built them. His distinguished military career included a period in Egypt which gave him an affinity with the country.

It is incredible the history we can find when we simply look around us.

Sir Robert Clayton's funerary hatchment hanging in St Wilfrid's Church, Standish

The inscription on the headstone

Entrance to Adlington Hall, circa 1905

The plinths remain today at the entrance on Chorley Road

Lookout Point, Transmission Station, Navigation Aid and Recreation Attraction:

By Dr. Stephen Craig Smith

The Ups and Downs of Billinge Beacon

Introduction

On the western periphery of the ancient ecclesiastical parish of Wigan, approximately five miles south west of the Parish Church, lies Billinge Hill. Upon this hill stands a stone tower ignominiously capped by a slab of concrete, known as Billinge Beacon. The appearance of this relatively un-prepossessing tower, covered with a patina of graffiti, belies its considerable historic significance. Both the hill upon which the tower stands and the tower itself enjoy an interesting past.

Confusingly, both the hill and the tower on top of it are known by the name Billinge Beacon, so what is meant by a 'beacon'?

Many English beacons were established during the sixteenth century as a national 'early warning system' in the face of imminent attack by the Spanish Amada sent by King Phillip II of Spain in 1588. His plan was to invade England and overthrow Queen Elizabeth I. 'Beacon' was the name given to any prominent hill commanding a clear view of many miles and visible to other beacons in a chain. This enabled messages to be transmitted by lighted bonfires along or across the country. Transmission by line of sight – one bonfire followed by another – was much quicker than a rider and a relay team of fresh horses.

A beacon required sufficient height to view distances of tens of miles, enjoy 360-degree visibility both to see and be seen from all angles, and have a summit large and flat enough to allow for a bonfire, surplus combustible fuel storage and room for lookout guards on duty in times of emergency. Billinge Hill fulfilled all these requirements: a clear view of the South Lancashire coastline and Mersey Estuary which could be threatened by possible foreign attack; relatively easy access by horse and cart for the transport of combustible material to its summit; and clear visibility to adjacent beacons to the south, the south-west and the north. Billinge Hill provides panoramic views across southwest Lancashire, North Wales, the Derbyshire Peak District, and Winter Hill to the northeast.

The map above based on the work of William Harrison (1897) shows the distribution of beacons (marked with a cross) and major towns (marked with a dot) across south west Lancashire.

By good fortune, poor planning on the part of the Spanish and much help from inclement weather, the planned attack was prevented and the ships of the Armada that did not flounder on rocky coasts, limped back to Spain with their mission unaccomplished.

A more recent military threat requiring good management and maintenance of English beacons arose following the French Revolution of 1789 and the war with Napoleonic France. It was around this time that Billinge Beacon experienced considerable interest.

The stone tower set on top of Billinge Beacon (and also known by the same name) was erected in 1788 at a height of 587 feet above sea-level. It is uncertain if any earlier structure predated the present one. The present beacon was originally a summer house belonging to Winstanley Hall and had a pyramidal roof. With its original roof capped by a small chimney the building looks more preposing than it does today.

William Harrison's map showing Lancashire beacons

There was originally a door on one side of the tower and recessed windows on the other three sides. The door and windows have long been bricked up and the original stone inscription above the door has also sadly disappeared. For many years the tower was used as a landmark for ships entering the River Mersey.

The use of beacons as signalling stations to warn of enemy maritime threats is long past, but the hill top along with many other beacons is still utilised on national celebratory occasions. It was on one of these occasions that serious and permanent damage was done to the tower.

To celebrate King George V's Silver Jubilee in May 1935 a massive bonfire was lit on top of Billinge Hill. This was part of a network of beacons extending from Land's End to John o'Groats.

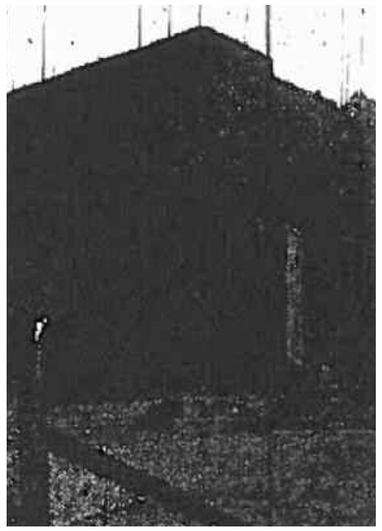
The Wigan Observer and District Advertiser reported on Saturday 11 May 1935:

'At exactly ten o'clock on Monday night a few minutes after the King had set alight the first Jubilee beacon in Hyde Park, Wigan's beacons burst into flames to form a connecting chain of fires across the country. Wigan's part in the beacon chain was an important one for few districts could claim as many as four burning bonfires within the one district. Thousands of people journeyed out of town to see them.'

'The Billinge Beacon bonfire contained 50 to 60 tons of timber and other flammable material all generously given and transported free of cost and had been in the process of erection for several weeks by Rover Scouts of St. Helens, Orrell, Pemberton and Upholland under the guidance of Mr. Mather (Group Scout Master, Orrell). The structure had a base 30 feet square and was over 30 feet in height.'

Billinge Beacon, c. 1925

'For half an hour after the lighting of the fire coloured rockets were fired by Col. Guy Pilkington. Many visitors from outlying districts were present including the Rector of Wigan Canon Thicknesse and members of his family. The crowd lingered until well after midnight.'



Billinge Beacon the day after the fire, May 1935

Unfortunately, the bonfire was sited too close to the beacon and the intense heat from the bonfire set the ceiling laths and roof rafters alight; the roof was completely destroyed, and the entire beacon became structurally unsafe. Although of very poor quality the photograph above shows the state of the beacon on the day after the fire – a roofless burnt out structure.

Subsequent repairs to the beacon have made the building structurally safe once more but the flat concrete cap replacing the original roof gives the building a less interesting image as can be seen in the photograph below.

During the height of the Cold War, Billinge Hill came into its own once more. In 1960 the Royal Observer Corps built a bunker 60 yards to the west and slightly below the tower. The bunker would have been used, had it been necessary, to monitor the location of nuclear blasts and the resulting fallout over Lancashire in the event of a nuclear war. The post opened in January 1960 and was closed as in October 1968.

Whilst the tower today lacks aesthetic charm it still deserves respect and the view, if not the building, is well worth the climb. Despite its unpromising appearance the beacon is still a popular destination. The view from the tower is second to none. Splendid views of the two Liverpool cathedrals, the Mersey Estuary, the Wirral Peninsula, the Dee Estuary and the Mountains of North Wales liberally reward the effort of a visit.

When you are next thinking of a summer evening stroll, walk from Crank Road through the beech woods of Billinge Plantation and up to the tower, something done by others for the last four hundred years.

References

Ancient Beacons of Lancashire and Cheshire by William Harrison, Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society, Volume 15 (1897)

Wigan Observer and District Advertiser, Saturday 30 March 1935

Wigan Observer and District Advertiser, Saturday 11 May 1935

Acknowledgements

Thanks to Kathryn Pass and Alex Miller of Wigan Archives and Local Studies

Billinge Beacon as it looks today, 2019

Remembering

By Ted Dakin

Miry Lane in the 1930s was a run-down, landlord owned place of jostling, hard up folk, who lived in a simple world devoid of advanced technology. Their world was a wall-to-wall existence of terraced houses, with wall-to-wall outside communal lavatories, somewhere up a cobbled backyard, whose good-humoured camaraderie and a 'Love Thy Neighbour' attitude helped them survive the continual hardship of poverty.

The tail-end of Miry Lane is still etched somewhere in the dusty memories of those who once lived there. Crammed within this 'Paradise' and just a spit away from those terraced dwellers, several places of work thrived, leaving indelible recollections of a past age.

Gallagher's glue and hide works, known locally as the 'boneworks'. This was a business that produced sausage skins made from pig guts, bonemeal to be used as fertilizer, and glue and cowhide for sheet leather; with this produce came an obnoxious stench, swarms of flies and hordes of rats, who drank their fill from a nearby pond called 'Owd Nicks'.

Thankfully they never strayed from their homes: a brickyard, with noisy, dusty grinding machines churning out fine and coarse pebble from discarded flags and cobbles; the railway sheds into which steam engines were shunted for maintenance and cleaning; and nearby, close to the shunting lines, where coal from local pits was dumped to await collection and distribution. Inevitably, for a poor, dole queueing few, the temptation was just too much. As quoted by Oscar Wilde, 'The only way to beat temptation is to give in to it', and that is what happened. Bicycles, barrows and prams commandeered by thankful Miry Laners, who took their chances. Some got lucky, others got collared by railway security guards or a bobby on his beat. But it didn't stop them.

Poverty and strife didn't diminish the lust for living. Camaraderie and community spirit were there, and broods of kids played street games and ran wild with the joy of freedom.

And there's no doubt about it, poverty and the hardships that come with it create robust and unforgettable characters, without whom life would have been bereft of humour and compassion. Luckily, the tail-end of Miry Lane in those early years had its fair share.

Leading the field was James 'Daggie' Dagnall. Daggie worked down the pit, but once above ground spent some considerable time teaching rough and ready local kids the manly art of pugilism. Every weekend Daggie dug out two pair of boxing gloves and set about giving essential lessons on self-defence, lessons that meant fitness and respect for other people that would stay with them for the rest of their lives.

In an age when gambling was illegal, the bookie's runner was the only place to turn for those who risked their hard-earned pennies on horses and dogs in the wild hope of making a little extra cash. One runner, whose alias title was 'Jack Dash', was the best. Jack was more elusive than The Scarlet Pimpernel. He toured the cobbled streets like a predator, in and out of houses, and down narrow passage ways with a speed that belied his years. Jack's only lament was legendary, 'I was only ever copped once and ended up wi' a life sentence, and mi wife's got the wedding ring to prove it.'

Ted Dakin at home at 102 Miry Lane

Father Rimmer was a Catholic priest and apart from delivering mass and taking confessions at St Joseph's Catholic Church, his other two missions in life were seeking out lapsed Catholics and Sunday afternoon house collections for the waifs and strays. He was like a bloodhound after its prey. A knock on a door, a lift of the latch and in he went, collection bag at the ready. If the door was locked (and many were) he'd go down the passage, through the back door and catch the occupants sitting there in petrified silence.

Mrs Clark had three sons, Bill, Tom and Peter and all of them were keen fishermen. Mrs Clark too had a hobby, a pastime she shared with everyone. Mrs Clark owned an organ (a pedal type one) which she played at regular intervals. On summer days especially, with her sash window down and the front door ajar, all the favourite tunes of the day were belted out with gusto and pomp, bringing joy and happiness to passers-by and neighbours alike, in an age when the simple things in life seemed to matter most.

Ted Dakin has written many short stories, all based on his upbringing, the locality and the many characters he encountered along the way. Ted is a member of Age UK and does readings taken from his books, 'Tales from a Dead-End Paradise' and 'More Tales from a Dead-End Paradise'. The books are on sale after the readings at £5 per copy with all proceeds going to the Alzheimer's Society.

Ted also makes oral history recordings for anyone wishing to record their lives for posterity. These are transferred on to CDs which are embossed with their names. The discs are £5 each and once again the proceeds go to the Alzheimer's Society.

Centenary Commemoration at St Peter's Church

St Peter's Church, Firs Lane, Leigh, will be holding a Commemorative Service on Sunday 29 September 2019 at 4.00pm in recognition of exactly 100 years since the War Memorial was unveiled in the beautiful Church Gardens. All are welcome to attend this poignant Service to pay tribute to the 129 men from the Parish who lost their lives in the Great War, 1914-1918, and in particular relatives of men who are named on the War Memorial. Many families have already come forward with information, photographs and artefacts concerning their loved ones and cataloguing of all these details has been undertaken by the Church.

For further details please contact Valerie Molyneux by email: valerie_molyneux@hotmail.co.uk

Family Histories:

The Worswicks and the Greens

By Tom Stanier

My wife's maiden name was Eleanor Worswick and her paternal grandparents – Worswicks and Greens – both came from near Wigan. When I did some research into their backgrounds, I found that I had stumbled on a rich seam – not just of coal, but of family history. Are there any Worswicks or Greens amongst Past Forward readers who have also been delving into their ancestors' histories? If so, I would love to hear from you!

The Greens

One of Eleanor's Green ancestors deserves a special mention. Jonathan Green was born in 1806 to a typical working class Lancashire family in Aspull, a township just outside Wigan.

Tom Worswick

He was a self-made man, as his obituary in the Wigan Observer (19 February 1891) makes abundantly clear:

'A week ago one of the most remarkable funerals ever seen in this neighbourhood took place at Aspull. The deceased was the late Jonathan Green who has been one of the most prominent men in Aspull for many years.

Starting life in a very poor and humble way, his shrewdness and foresight enabled him to overcome endless difficulties, and to realise a very considerable fortune. 'Old Johnny' was born at the corner of Cale Lane, Aspull, where his father kept a little grocer's shop, and at the age of ten Johnny found employment as a drawer in the local pit. Down the pit things were in a very primitive state, as there were no rails to un on, and Johnny had to run in front with a belt round him, and as he dragged at the tub, a woman pushed behind him.

A few years later found Johnny carting market stuff up and down the country for his father. His wages now were 10s a week, but he managed to save half a crown every week, his wife encouraging him in his carefulness by going out washing for 6d a day. On the death of his father in in 1842 he took over the business with energy and shrewdness. As evidence of this, the following true story is told:

Johnny, who baked his own bread, had just pulled a batch out of the oven, when he heard that a rioting gang of tub drawers were on their way form Wigan, plundering every shop as they passed. Johnny didn't like the thought of losing his bread, so when he heard the news, he put his bread on the bed, pulled his blinds down, put the shop shutters up, and wrote on the outside 'This shop is let.' Accordingly, the rioters went past in ignorance and left old Johnny and his bread in peace.

During his life he bought and sold a large number of houses, and actually built 81 buildings from scratch. Johnny's merits as an enterprising man were much esteemed by his neighbours, which is shown by the fact that for a long period of 28 years he was overseer for Aspull, 17 years guardian, and a collector of taxes for 12 years. His wife, who died a few years ago, bore him ten children, and at the time of his death Old Johnny left behind 78 [sic] grand-children and about 80 great grand-children, making a total of 168; and of these 118 attended his funeral. Old Johnny will be much missed, as he knew everyone in and out the place, and his advice was sought by young and old, rich and poor.'

One of Jonathan's sons, William, took over the building business, and enjoyed both prosperity and a happy marriage. He had announced that he and his wife were never going to leave each other, and sure enough three days after Martha died, William also died. The two of them were carried out of the house and buried on the same day and we recently visited their handsome gravestone in the churchyard at St David's, Haigh, which contains the touching inscription, 'In their death they were not divided'.

William's family household included my wife's Granny, Eveline Green, who had been born in 1887. The census of 1891 describes Eveline as William's daughter, but by the time of the 1901 census she is described as his grand-daughter. We tracked down Eveline's birth certificate and this explains all. Her mother was in fact not Martha, but Margaret, another of William and Martha's daughters (born 1866). The father was inscribed as John Taylor but a line had been crossed through his name, and presumably he had fled the scene never to reappear. Eveline was discreetly referred to as the youngest of the family. In days before birth control events of this sort were quite a common occurrence.

The Worswicks

The Worswicks lived in Bryn at 149 Wigan Road. My wife's great-great-grandfather, James Worswick, married Eliza Derbishire and they had twelve children who all survived infancy. Eleanor's grandfather Tom was the fourth child. James' elder brother, William, was a coalminer who was killed in the Wigan mining disaster of 1869. Poignantly his body was found along with the bodies of his two eldest sons aged thirteen and twelve, who had started work in the mine with him. The father had his arms round his two sons and they had awaited death together. James, understandably, refused to become a miner and instead worked on the surface with mining machinery. He was also a keen amateur gardener and propagated agapanthus plants. Amazingly, thanks to Eleanor's mother who retained cuttings from Eveline Green's plants which were in turn cuttings from the Lancashire garden, we have a descendant from the original.

A happier chapter in this family story is provided by Eleanor's paternal grandfather, Tom Worswick. Aged eleven he passed the exam for Ashton in Makerfield Grammar School but his parents wanted him to earn money and were minded not to send him. The local minister, one Mr Beresford, paced up and down the front room of the Worswick home for several hours untill the parents consented to Tom's taking up the scholarship. The youngest child, presumably born shortly after this incident, was named Beresford Worswick.

Tom shone at Ashton-in-Makerfield Grammar School especially in maths and he features in a memoir of a local writer, who as a young man had taught at the Grammar School while studying for his degree. The teacher's Achilles Heel was maths and, as the writer explains, Tom Worswick came to his rescue:

'I knew from the Head that a boy in the Sixth Form named Worswick whom I taught English – not his strong point – was brilliant at Maths. I used to invite some of the senior boys to tea and one Sunday afternoon it occurred to me that he might be

Memorial stone for William and Martha Green at Haigh St. David's Church

the answer to my problem. Most unusual, surely, for a schoolboy to coach a master! He was very diffident when I broached the subject but agreed to give me two evenings a week. It was soon clear that not only did he know his Maths, but the boy could teach. With his help, I actually grew to like quadratic equations, and in June of my second year, I took the London Matric and got through. All thanks to my colleague and pupil, Worswick.'

Tom Worswick would often speak affectionately of the Andrew Carnegie Library in Ashton-in-Makerfield. It was only a few minutes' walk from the Worswick home, and as there were over ten people living in their two-up-two-down, the library would have been an oasis of quiet for a studious boy who wished to pursue his studies. [Andrew Carnegie was the Scot who came from Dunfermline and made a fortune in Canada at the end of the nineteenth century; he used this wealth to endow libraries in Scotland and the north of England.] From Grammar School Tom won a scholarship to Liverpool University where he not only studied hard but played football so well that Liverpool Football Club wanted to sign him up.

At six foot tall, clever and good looking he was a catch, but he seems to have remained interested only in Eveline Green. Unusually for the time, they both graduated from university – Tom at Liverpool and Eveline at Manchester University. They met through the local church at Holy Trinity in Ashton-in-Makerfield and were married there on 25 March 1913. The courtship was not without problems. The Greens thought themselves a cut above the Worswicks but their efforts to dissuade Eveline from marrying were in vain, and Eveline was to have the last laugh as Tom's career went from strength to strength.

His first post was as a maths teacher at the Regent Street Polytechnic in London. The Poly (as the family always called it) was the brainchild of Quintin Hogg (subsequently Lord Hailsham). The idea was to give boys in London found sleeping rough an education on German lines, that is a technical education. The Poly was progressive in outlook and Tom was instrumental in starting the Poly tours to other parts of Britain and abroad. These must be the first ever package holidays for tourists and they proved very popular! Tom acted as a courier and would proudly say that he could travel all the way to Italy without having to show his passport, as he was so well known.

Before the tours took off, and as a simple maths teacher, Tom was poor. He paid for his lunch every day by winning a game of auction bridge with colleagues. But once he was Director of Education at the Poly his financial problems were over; indeed, he was as wealthy as any of the Greens, if not more so. Altogether it was a loving, prosperous and happy home.

Tom's life was, cut tragically short in 1931 when he contracted streptococcal meningitis and died on 26 March, leaving his family so bereft of his presence that they never really recovered. The obituaries are eloquent testimony to his vision and abilities. He was a much loved man.

Editor's Note: If you share any family history with Tom's wife and would like to get in touch with him, please contact us at pastforward@wigan.gov.uk

Carnegie Library, Ashton-in-Makerfield

'A Capital Example': The Case of John Wainwright

BY BRIAN JOYCE AND MARLENE NOLAN

As he stood trembling on the scaffold at Lancaster Castle in September 1826, 29 year-old John Wainwright was about to become what he had probably never been before – an example to others. His execution, for a non-fatal stabbing which he may or may not have committed, was intended to deter other labouring men from resorting to violence. As the Marquis of Halifax, a seventeenth century Lord President of the Council had claimed two hundred years before: 'Men are not hanged for stealing horses, but that horses may not be stolen'.

John Wainwright's downfall began at twilight on the evening of Friday 9 June 1826, the day chosen by the returning officer for the voters of Newton Le Willows to cast their votes in the general election. As a so-called 'rotten borough' (i.e. a town entitled to two members of parliament despite its small population, the great majority of whom were not entitled to vote anyway), there was not much at stake. The constituency was owned by Thomas Legh, who stood himself. The other candidate was Thomas Alcock. They had no rivals, so their election was a foregone conclusion. All the tiny electorate had to do in the absence of a secret ballot was to publically register their vote with the returning officer.

Despite this a borough election was a popular and colourful spectacle. This was street theatre with a backdrop of bands, flags and banners. It provided one of the few opportunities for the disenfranchised majority to participate in politics. The crowds lauded or mobbed candidates, cheering or booing them as they were paraded through the town raised high on chairs, frequently scattering coins at the excited crowds. Effigies of unpopular candidates were often carried through the streets and ceremonially burned. These frenzied rituals were usually accompanied by mass drunkenness; violence was commonplace.

The prospect of experiencing and participating in such rare and exciting events attracted a party of weavers from Culcheth to walk to Newton on 9 June. We do not know, but can reasonably guess, how they spent the day and the state of excitement and inebriation they were in when it was over. What we know for sure is that as twilight closed in at around 9pm they were on the road back to Culcheth.

It was then that a fight broke out, the causes of which are unknown, between one of the group and an agricultural labourer. The struggle took place in semi darkness and the participants may well have been drunk. It is hard to know what happened in the ensuing chaos, but a labourer named Ambrose Bate got the worst of it. He staggered back down the road to the Millstone public house where he knew his brother was drinking with half a dozen fellow farm labourers. After hearing of Bate's humiliation, the group struggled to their feet, swearing to seek revenge. Among this crowd of drinkers was John Wainwright. In court a few months later, a fellow avenger claimed that, as they hurried to catch the Culcheth men, Wainwright had said, 'If he could not manage with his hands, he should use his knife'.

When they heard the Millstone group approaching, the Culcheth men fled, but three were not quick enough, and were savagely attacked. The unluckiest of the trio was a young weaver named Thomas Pomfret. He was set upon and knocked to the ground several times. The last attack on him could easily have proved fatal.

In court he later claimed, "The man who knocked me down afterwards stabbed me and I bled very much. I did not feel the stabs until I began running ... I was bleeding all over. I was stabbed until my bowels came out. There were besides four stabs in my arm and four stabs about my neck and head ..."

Pomfret staggered to a nearby cottage and was unable to work or even stand for another month, his life hanging in the balance.

Ambrose Bate later claimed that, when the fight was over, John Wainwright had shown him a bloodstained clasp knife and had confided, "This knife, Ambrose, I have run into a man three or four times".

When he returned to his lodgings Wainwright apparently made the same claim, brandishing a bloody knife and boasting to another labourer, "This knife has been in a man's belly many times", although he did not specify the precise circumstances.

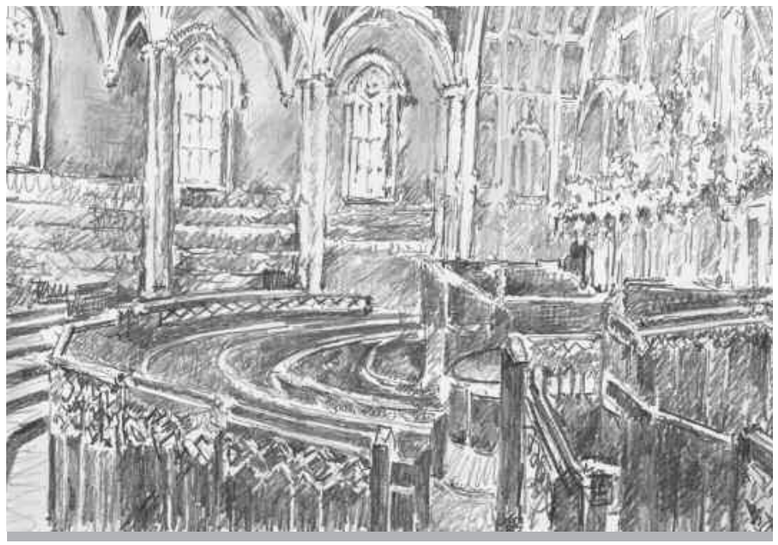
Lancaster Castle Tower

The following morning, Wainwright was arrested by Richard Owen, the part-time parish constable, who was probably the bailiff at the farm where Wainwright worked. Owen found a bloodstained knife in Wainwright's pocket, and the shirt he had been wearing the previous day covered in blood. He was charged with 'cutting and stabbing Thomas Pomfret with intent to kill, maim or do him some grievous bodily harm'.

Wainwright was charged under the Malicious Shooting and Stabbing Act of 1803, also known as the Ellenborough Act after the Lord Chief Justice who had proposed it. Among other aims, the law's preamble stated that it was 'for further prevention of malicious shooting and attempting to discharge loaded firearms, stabbing, cutting, wounding, poisoning ...' In effect, the Act introduced a new offence of attempted murder; those found guilty faced the death penalty.

Its context had been the unease felt by the middle and upper classes after the French Revolution of 1789, and the apparent spread of the alien values of Liberty, Equality and Fraternity among the lower orders. Industrialisation and urbanisation were leading to large concentrations of poor people. If they were not to become a threat to the established order, they needed to be disciplined and civilised. The attacks by the Yeomanry on protesting poor people at 'Peterloo' in 1819 may be interpreted as a symptom of this fear, as can attacks on traditional leisure pursuits of the labouring poor, which often involved drunkenness and violence. Harsh penalties for what seem to us comparatively minor offences were often imposed. In a case heard in the same court at which Wainwright appeared, a man received the death penalty for horse stealing.

If the poor, whether rural or urban, were to be civilised and prevented from causing violence and disorder, they must be deterred. Bloody affrays such as that which occurred on the Newton to Culcheth road in June 1826 must be dealt with by the full force of the law.



Lancaster Court House, by Morag Burton

John Wainwright was tried in early August at the Assizes in Lancaster. In order to get a guilty verdict under the Ellenborough Act, the prosecution needed to prove that Wainwright maliciously intended to kill, disable or inflict grievous bodily harm on Thomas Pomfret. In the past, defence lawyers had often successfully used drunkenness in mitigation because, they argued, alcohol made the violent perpetrator act irrationally and spontaneously. In these circumstances premeditation was less likely. In the late Georgian and early Victorian period, however, courts fearing the apparent threat to order and property stressed the need for discipline and self-control. The fact that Wainwright was probably drunk was unlikely to convince the jury to be lenient with him.

Besides, Ambrose Bate's brother William was able to prove premeditation by his claim that Wainwright had threatened to use his knife even before they had caught up with the fleeing Culcheth weavers. "I said it was an unlawful weapon and that there would be no occasion for it", claimed Bate, with perhaps a touch of self-interest.

Pomfret himself added to this claim of premeditation: "I asked the man if he was going to murder me; he said he would. I said I was a stranger and asked him to leave me alone. I don't know who the man was. I am quite sure I gave no provocation to any person to attack me". This was corroborated by George Dickinson, another of the Culcheth men.

The accused was an agricultural labourer; he had no defence counsel and called no witnesses. According to the London Courier newspaper, he simply denied everything and '... said in his defence that the Bates owed him a spite and that all the witnesses had sworn falsely against him'.

There had been more than a dozen protagonists in the affray on that gloomy stretch of road. None of them, including Pomfret himself, could identify Wainwright or anybody else as the knife-wielding assailant. The testimony of William Bate and John Killshaw, Wainwright's fellow lodger, together with the bloodstained shirt and knife, are what convicted him.

After summing up the evidence against Wainwright, the judge, Sir James Park, reminded the jurymen that to deliver a guilty verdict, they should be sure that the defendant not only wounded Pomfret, but that he intended to kill, maim or inflict grievous bodily harm.

According to the newspapers, the jury took merely a single minute to decide that Wainwright was guilty of wounding Pomfret with the intention of causing grievous bodily harm.

A second indictment was then read, charging the tearful Wainwright with a second offence, that of feloniously stabbing Joseph Moors, another Culcheth weaver, with a single knife thrust to his thigh. Again, the jury of Lancaster property owners delivered a verdict of guilty.

In accordance with the ritual associated with such proceedings, Mr Justice Park placed a black cap over his long wig, '... and then in an extremely solemn and impressive manner passed the awful sentence of Death on the prisoner, expatiating on the enormous cruelty and wickedness of his crime.' Park then urged Wainwright to prepare to meet his death, 'imploring the mercy of Almighty God upon his guilty soul.'

The same newspaper account claimed that '... the learned judge was much affected during this painful ceremony, which was rendered extremely impressive', but understandably Wainwright was affected rather more. 'The prisoner, who appears rather a weak man, wept bitterly and many persons in the court were melted to tears.'

Another account remarked that: 'He sobbed and cried aloud and begged for mercy on account of his wife and family.' This was to no avail though, and John Wainwright was led away still weeping uncontrollably.

Traditionally offenders had been hanged close to the scene of their crime to deter other local residents from committing the same offences. However, from the late eighteenth century, Lancashire's executions were concentrated at Lancaster Castle, the site of the county gaol and the only Assize town in Lancashire until 1835. Wainwright languished in a condemned cell there for the last remaining weeks of his life. The authorities could have put him to work on one of the recently installed treadmills which powered the prison's calico looms and helped draw water from the wells. More likely, they left him alone in solitary confinement to contemplate the wickedness of his crimes and to repent before it was too late.

What we do know is that Wainwright and other condemned prisoners attended a service for them in the gaol's chapel in mid-August. The newspapers reported that, 'one of these, Wainwright seemed completely overpowered with a sense of his awful situation and was in tears during the whole service.' The Chester Chronicle agreed, observing that, 'Wainwright ... wept like a child.'

At this time, there were no formal means to appeal against a conviction or sentence. Instead, individuals or those acting for them could petition the Home Secretary who, if he chose, could consult the trial judge, clergy and other interested parties about the details of the case and the fate of the prisoner.

In the Wainwright case petitions were sent to Sir Robert Peel, the Home Secretary, the most notable being from the Reverend Peter Legh and a Mr Powell. Legh was the curate of the chapel of ease at Newton Le Willows and a member of the Legh family who had been lords of the manor for centuries. It will be remembered that Thomas Legh was one of the candidates in the recent general election attended by Thomas Pomfret. The chapel was under his patronage, so it was he who had appointed the Reverend Peter Legh.

Powell was the keeper of the Bridewell at Warrington, where John Wainwright had spent the first nine days of his captivity before being taken to Lancaster for trial.

The petitions claimed that Wainwright was 'of weak intellect almost approaching insanity', possibly caused by a head injury in his youth. Furthermore, Powell had received certificates from a number of respectable people declaring that they had known Wainwright for several years and, 'that he has never given reason to regard him in any other light than that of an honest, kind-hearted and inoffensive man.' On this basis, Wainwright's life should be spared.

Peel and his officials gave short shrift to this plea for mercy. Had Powell consulted any doctors as to Wainwright's state of mind? Had he talked to anyone who had known the prisoner longer than the nine days Wainwright had been in his custody? 'If you did not, Mr Peel thinks you acted very improperly in sending up the certificates you have sent us.'

Peel's office sent the petitions to the trial judge Sir James Park, for his observations, stating that there was nothing in them to justify commutation of the death sentence. On the same day, 2 September 1826, a letter was written to the Rev Peter Legh as follows:

'I have received and considered the various papers relating to the case of John Wainwright now under sentence of Death in the Gaol of the Castle of Lancaster, which

Newton Street, Leigh and the Obelisk on Market Place (PC2009.138, Wigan & Leigh Archives Online)

accompanied your letter to me of the 30th ult. I regret that I see nothing in those papers which can warrant me in interfering with the discretion of the Judge by whom the Prisoner was tried, and who appears to have thought it fit that in his case a Capital example should be made.'

However, Peel's thinking went beyond Wainwright's case. Three years before, Samuel Horrocks, an MP and mill owner had been attacked and badly injured outside his home near Preston. His attacker had escaped execution for attempted murder under the Ellenborough Act after a plea of insanity. Peel clearly felt he had been deceived in that case; it was not going to happen again. The Home Secretary, who is often credited with liberalising the judicial system, was to show no mercy in this instance. He wrote privately to Sir James Park:

'I never felt more happy at not having been duped by lying certificates of imbecility of mind. It should have done irreparable mischief if I had respected this man for a day after the escape from execution on the ground of insanity of the man who attempted in open day to murder Horrocks of Preston. If this man had also escaped, we should have had plenty of imbecile murders in Lancashire.'

A week later, on the evening before he was due to be hanged, and with all hope of a reprieve gone, Wainwright was probably involved in an escape plot of a different kind. This was a conspiracy to enable the mass break-out of all the condemned prisoners including Wainwright and Patrick Rafferty, with whom he was due to share the scaffold the following morning. According to the Lancaster Gazette, a prisoner entrusted to read to the illiterate Wainwright had in fact made copies of the keys to the condemned cells. Meanwhile, Rafferty, who could read, had been allowed a candle by the light of which the cell doors would be opened. The prison chaplain had arranged to visit Wainwright. He would be overpowered and the keys to the outer door seized from the guard accompanying him. The condemned prisoners would burst out into the prison yard and scale the outer walls. This convoluted plot was uncovered when suspicious staff searched Wainwright's 'reader' and found wooden keys and a bundle of clothing.

'It is truly lamentable', claimed the Gazette, 'that Rafferty and Wainwright should have been employing their time in this way instead of preparing for that awful change they were in a few hours to undergo.'

Shortly before the would-be escape plot had been foiled, Mary Wainwright, John's wife of four years and the mother of his two children, had visited him at Lancaster Castle to say goodbye for the last time. According to the Manchester Mercury, '... their parting was extremely affecting.' Mary probably remained in Lancaster with some of Wainwright's friends for the next 24 hours or so.

At this time, executions were public affairs and tended to take place on Saturday afternoons, presumably to encourage as large a throng as possible. Wainwright and his fellow condemned prisoner Rafferty probably listened in fear all morning while the vast crowd of spectators was assembling. On this Saturday morning, 9 September 1826, the pair received Holy Communion at about eleven o'clock from the Reverend Joseph Rowley, the prison's chaplain. Rowley was at Lancaster from 1804 to 1858 and, in all, officiated at 168 executions.

Rowley would therefore have been well acquainted with the so-called Hanging Corner, a small round tower at the east side of the castle. The tower contained the so called 'Drop Room' on its ground floor. After receiving the Sacrament Wainwright and Rafferty were led from their cells into this room where Rowley led more prayers and the pair were tightly pinioned.

It was now about midday. The Drop Room's double doors were dramatically flung open and the condemned men were led out straight onto the scaffold. One can assume that there was a collective gasp from the thousands of people pushing and shoving for a better view. All this ritual was what the historian Clive Emsley has called 'didactic theatre'. It had been devised by the ruling class '... to provide lessons and warnings for other would-be transgressors of the law'. However, even at this stage, there was concern in some quarters that the entertainment value of these spectacles had become far more important to audiences than any possible moral lesson. Given the fear of what an excited crowd of

John Wainwright's funeral, by Morag Burton

thousands may do if it found leaders or became riotous, there were already voices calling for the end of public executions.

Not that any of this mattered to John Wainwright that September afternoon as the executioner placed the noose round his neck. All he could see were thousands of baying people, including children taken for an afternoon out, waiting to see him twisting at the end of the rope. The scaffold at Lancaster was surrounded by high railings, but spectators keen enough to have arrived early or bribed officials, could have got a few feet from the platform. No doubt some were disappointed that the black cloth draped over it would prevent them from gawping at his final kicking death throes. If he could not see the excitement in their eyes, he could certainly hear their shouts of encouragement or screams of hatred.

The accounts of Wainwright's behaviour on the scaffold make no mention of either a penitential speech or last minute bravado. Perhaps any reaction on his part was outweighed by what happened next.

Wainwright and Rafferty stood side by side on the platform, which was divided in the middle into two hinged halves. After some final prayers from Rowley, the executioner turned a handle which was supposed to release both halves simultaneously and hurtle the condemned men to their deaths. Unfortunately only the unoccupied half dropped noisily on its hinges. The portion on which Wainwright and Rafferty stood together shook under their feet but did not drop. The crowd gasped and then yelled abuse at the officials. John Wainwright and his companion stood rooted to the spot, petrified with fear.

Two workmen hurried to help the executioner before things got out of hand. They pushed and pulled and hammered at the platform under the horrified prisoners' feet until it finally crashed open and Wainwright and Rafferty plunged downwards.

The so-called short drop method of hanging was the standard technique used at this time. Wainwright would therefore have been strangled rather than suffering a broken neck or spinal column, and this would have taken between 10 and 20 minutes.

He was left hanging for an hour before being taken down. While Rafferty was buried within the confines of Lancaster Gaol, Wainwright's friends (and perhaps his wife Mary), were waiting to take him home. At 50 miles or more, the journey by wagon from Newton to Lancaster was a long one and would have involved unaccustomed expense. One is tempted to speculate whether the Legh family, which as we have seen was hugely influential in the Newton area, organised this rather than allowing Wainwright's remains to suffer the same fate as Rafferty's or, worse still, to be sold for dissection. He was buried in the graveyard of the chapel at Sankey in the parish of Prescot three days after his death.

Her husband's execution left Mary Wainwright, his widow, to bring up their three year-old son William and six month-old daughter Betty alone. As a widow with two infant children, she was likely to become a financial burden on Burtonwood, the township in which she was living. Fortunately for the authorities there, she had no legal right of settlement and was removed to Newton, which had to take responsibility for the widow and her dependents. Mary appears never to have remarried; the census of 1871 reveals that 74 year-old Mary was living with her brother George Warburton in Winwick. The enumerator listed her as an agricultural labourer.

Meanwhile, the weaver Thomas Pomfret appears to have fully recovered from his knife wounds, marrying Mary Garner at Winwick in 1832.

In the 1820s, the lower orders appeared to be escaping the control of their betters, becoming increasingly violent and undisciplined. As Sir Robert Peel had written in his private note to Sir James Park, deterrent examples were needed. If widespread disorder, whether in the countryside or the new towns, was to be prevented, the poor must be taught not to resort to violence. In this climate of fear, John Wainwright's execution was inevitable.

With thanks to Kath Graham

Leigh Town Hall and the Revealing Wigan Archives Project

The scaffolding is up, hard hats are on heads and work is now well underway on the Revealing Wigan Archives Project at Leigh Town Hall. Supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the project will create a new home for the Borough's archive collections.

Our main building contractor, Carefoot, are nearing the completion of the first stage of the work, removing out of date heating systems, stripping out many of the alterations and additions made to the inside of the building in the years since it was built, and getting the Town Hall ready to be restored and refreshed.

The project will not just focus on the Archives service, but the full renovation of the Grade II listed Town Hall structure. This will include work to the exterior of the building, including the shop fronts on Market Street. Little will change in the appearance of the building, but it will be carefully restored.

The Market Street shop units (numbers 2-6) will be the home of our new museum and archive

Numbers 4 and 6 Market Street, with new entrances linking the spaces to be transformed into the new museum exhibition area

exhibition space. We have now appointed specialist exhibition designers – Creative Core Group – to help realise our ambitions for our new museum space. Part of the work carried out by the Creative Core team will be to engage local groups, organisations and individuals in helping to shape the design of the space and the contents of the new museum.

Elsewhere in the building, new openings are being created in the ground floor entrance foyer to allow access into the exhibition space and new toilets. The historic details of the ground floor interior and first floor civic rooms have all be protected during the preparation phase and will be professionally conserved as the project progresses.

Archives & Local Studies searchroom under restoration

Our ground floor Archives & Local Studies searchroom will be opposite the exhibition area with space for over 20 researchers and volunteers, fully accessible with new equipment and more hands on access to local studies reference collections.

Down in the basement is where much of the progress so far has been made. The existing archive strongrooms have been stripped back ready for modern environmental control systems to be installed and new bespoke archival shelving designed to make best use of the spaces. In the Market Street shop units, numbers 8-12, the ground floors have been removed to open up a double-height space, ready to be converted into our new archives collections storage areas.

Shop units 12 and 8, showing the removal of the ground floor structures

Whilst much of the work on the scheme is happening behind closed doors at the moment, the full project includes events, activities and engagement work to promote the collections and share the Borough's heritage and the stories of local people. If you would like to register an interest in the community engagement work with the new exhibition space or get involved with volunteering opportunities on the project once we reopen, please get in touch at archives@wigan.gov.uk

HERITAGE FUND

Information for Contributors

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

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

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

Submission Guidelines

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

We aim to acknowledge receipt of all submissions.

CONTACT DETAILS:

pastforward@wigan.gov.uk or
The Editor at PAST **FORWARD**,
Museum of Wigan Life,
Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU.

Uncovering the Borough's Sculpture Collection

At the beginning of the year the museum collection was asked to take part in a nationwide sculpture cataloguing project, organised by Art UK. Based on the success of a similar scheme with oil paintings which ran a few years ago, this three-year plan aims to digitise all sculpture from the last 1,000 years held in UK public collections and outdoor locations. This will then be used to create an online database, capturing seldom-seen works from collections across the country and making them freely available to view online.

With our museum collection comprising of around 35,000 pieces, narrowing down suitable objects to fit in with the project's specifications was quite a task. In the end 39 sculptural pieces were identified for this initial stage, with the hope of adding more in the future.

These items range from traditional busts depicting national figures, for example, Shakespeare, Viscount Palmerston and Robert Burns to more local individuals, such as mill owners Timothy Coop and Thomas Taylor. In 1873, Thomas Taylor gave £12,000 to build Wigan Free Public Library and today this bust, created by French sculptor Jules Dalou, can be seen within that very building in Wigan Local Studies.

Other local pieces include wooden sculptures of a boy and a kestrel made in the 1930s by John Griffins, a miner and amateur wood carver, as well as a portrait of the Earl of Crawford and a bust of Henry VIII, both sculpted from cannel coal mined in Haigh. The bust was made by Robert Towne for the Earl in 1756, reputedly for one guinea.

Joan Livesey cleaning the Shakespeare bust ready for photographing

Official project photographer Derek with the Ikenga statue.

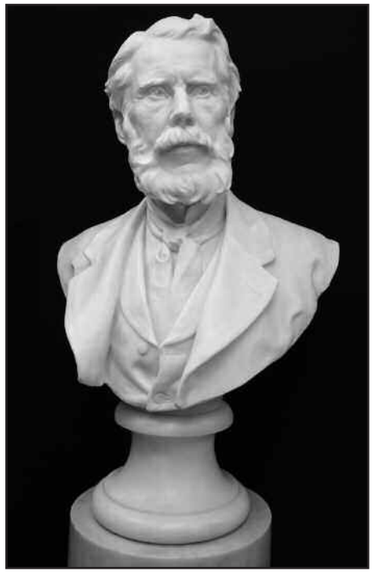
Further afield, we will also be showcasing some of our World Culture objects, such as a West African wooden Juju figure, a Ghanaian tribal statue and a carving of Ikenga and his wife. This horned deity is found among the Igbo people in South-eastern Nigeria and is a common cultural artefact.

However, the majority of the works to be displayed belong to the Drumcroon collection. This gallery, opened in 1980 at Parson's Walk in Wigan, aimed to give younger generations their first taste of visual arts. To do so they built up an extensive range of original contemporary art works. Ranging from paintings, prints and sketches to sculpture, ceramics and jewellery this included pieces from such artist as Patrick Hughes, Michael Rothenstein, Sir Eduardo Paolozzi and Lucy Jones. When the gallery closed in 2011 the vast majority of these artworks were transferred to the museum collection.

Some of the Drumcroon items to be showcased in this project include a ceramic chicken by Marjan Wouda, a bust entitled 'Pride' by Kevin Johnson, two pieces by British contemporary sculptor Glenys Latham as well as a large Northern Soul throne. Entitled 'Casino King' this piece was created by artist and educator Gaye Chorlton in 1999 and was inspired by the artist's love of Northern Soul music, in particular Wigan's legendary Casino Club and their All-Nighters which took place from 1973 to 1981.

Some of the Museum team's favourite pieces in this collection are the five sculptures by Ted Roocroft (1918-1991). Described by some as the 'Michelangelo of wood', this pig farmer turned sculptor's work often features detailed depictions of the animals he used to work with.

All pieces have now been catalogued and photographed and should be available to view later in the year. For more information visit https://artuk.org/about/projects



Marble bust of Thomas Taylor by Jules Dalou (A77.001, Wigan Museum Collection)

'Pride' ceramic sculpture by Kevin Johnson (C18.05/231, Wigan Museum Collection).

Bust of Henry VIII, carved in cannel coal by Robert Towne, 1756 (B83.110, Wigan Museum Collection)

Wooden pig sculpture, made from Lime wood, by Ted Roocroft (C18.05/231, Wigan Museum Collection).

Portrait of Earl of Crawford, carved in cannel coal (B30.020, Wigan Museum Collection)

'Barnacle' abstract stone sculpture by Glenys Latham (C18.05/237, Wigan Museum Collection).

IGNITING THE FIRE WITHIN

BY SALLY SMITH

If you caught the spring edition of Wigan Council's magazine, Borough Life, you will have read the article about the new cultural manifesto for the borough and the plans for its launch. A few months on and The Fire Within has well and truly been ignited with sparks of creativity and cultural excitement spreading across the borough like wild fire! This article explains what's been going on and what to expect for culture, arts and heritage in the next five years.

The cultural manifesto was launched with a spectacular Fire Within festival which saw six empty shop units in the Galleries Shopping Centre in Wigan town centre transformed into unique and exciting cultural spaces. Designed and choreographed by international artists and curators Al and Al from Standish, the redundant shop units took on a new role filled with a selection of items from Wigan Council's museum and art collection alongside inspirational work by local artists and exciting new work by Al and Al themselves. The innovative creation was a truly collaborative approach utilising a taskforce of council staff, shopping centre management, cultural organisations and partners. As well as exhibition displays The Fire Within spaces include a vibrant cultural hub featuring neon artworks and a 20 metre yellow stage in the form of two giant emojis and a catwalk! This former retail unit is now a magnificent performance space with regular events.

The festival launch day on 11 May saw the Galleries bursting at the seams with people who had travelled far and wide to celebrate culture, experience the spaces and watch performances from local groups such as Wigle Dance, Wigan Music Service, the Greater Manchester Police Orchestra and local band The Lynches. Since its spectacular launch the manifesto has raised the profile of culture in Wigan dramatically, not only locally but attracting attention from cultural leaders and organisations across the UK who are impressed with the installation in the shopping centre and the collaborative approach bringing together the many people and organisations dedicated to inspiring and creating high quality arts in the borough. Visitors have included George Orwell's son Richard Blair, Stuart Maconie, and Darren Henley, Chief Executive of the Arts Council England.

The Fire Within manifesto, developed through consultation with cultural organisations and partners across the borough, sets out a five-year strategy for arts, culture and heritage. Each year will have a different focus with 2019 being 'Wigan's Future Artists'. In creating The Fire Within new and emerging artists were engaged with and Wigan & Leigh College students studying art, film, photography and fashion design were worked closely with. Future years will focus on 'Digital Wigan', 'Health and Happiness', 'Every Community Needs a Stage' and 'A New Heritage'. One of the highlights will be the 'Revealing Wigan Archives' project which will see the refurbishment and upgrade of the archives facilities and state-of-the-art storage, an enhanced activity and volunteer programme, and a new archives-focused exhibition in Leigh Town Hall funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Wigan Council.

The new exhibition spaces at The Fire Within showcase some of Wigan Boroughs artefacts and heritage items owned by the borough's museum collection. The collection houses over 30,000 objects and the desire has been to get these on public display for a long time. Utilising the former retail space in a new and innovative way has enabled the council to bring the collection and some rare local film footage back to its people. The ICONS exhibition rediscovers five icons from Wigan's magnificent heritage including Sir John Scott,

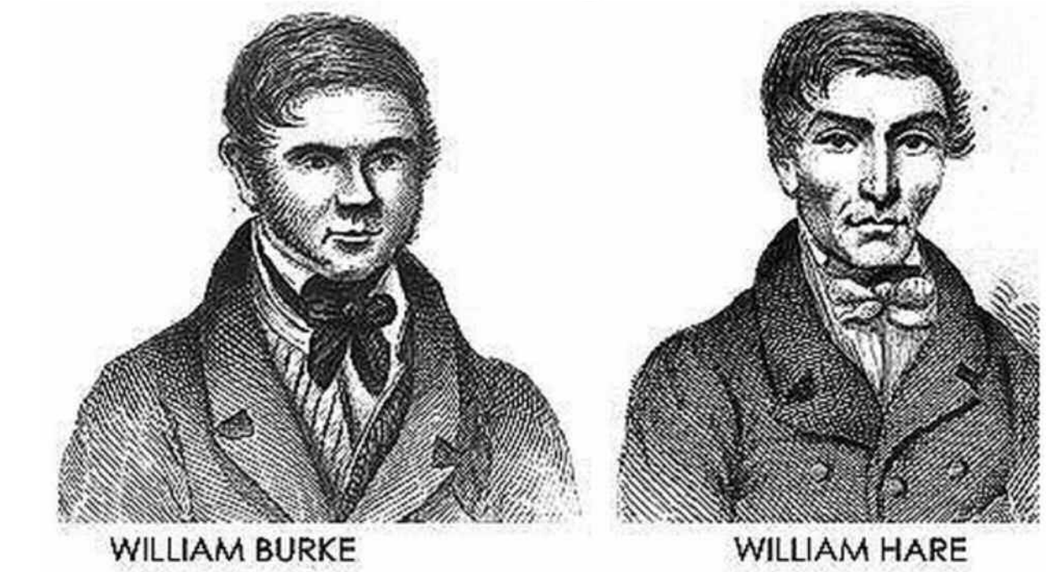
the Wigan-born judge who ended Egyptian slavery. His portrait is shown next to a glass pyramid containing the priceless Egyptian gold mask he gifted to the town's treasured collection. Kathleen Mary Drew Baker, the botanist born in Leigh, is worshipped as a Goddess in Japan for saving the sushi industry with her ground-breaking research. Kathleen is seen in a beautiful new portrait with her delicate sketches of seaweed. Theodore Major, one of the greatest artists of the 20th Century was born and worked his whole life in Wigan. The ICONS exhibition features a world premiere of his final vivid Monster paintings created in the last year of his life. Many people visiting have enjoyed sharing stories of him and his life in Wigan. The Fire Within also includes four newly curated exhibitions produced with works from over 25 local artists.

Another innovative aspect to the exhibitions is that they open debate about public use of space within The Galleries – leading to a meaningful conversation with residents about their needs and desires for the future of the town centre. In addition, a new business approached to host a café area during the launch event 'The Little Kitchen' has been highly successful and is developing further.

The public reaction to The Fire Within has been phenomenal with many residents, visitors and shoppers engaging with art, heritage and culture for the very first time, literally taking their first step into a cultural space, engaging with cultural experiences, and loving it! The team of Council staff and volunteers who have been manning the spaces have been inspired by the public's enthusiasm and thirst for more. There have been events and gatherings to perform and share music, poetry, dance, and a monthly children's film club showing free Disney films coordinated by Leigh Film Society, but this is just the start. Funding is being sought to extend and refresh the spaces in the next few months, however the emoji stage is here to stay for another five years, so watch this space…

By Kath Graham and Marlene Nolan (Culcheth Local History Group)

Did the Body Snatchers Come to Leigh?


WILLIAM BURKE

WILLIAM HARE

Most people have heard the gruesome tales of the 'body snatchers' who operated during the early part of the nineteenth century but what led to this macabre trade?

Hospitals had traditionally used the bodies of executed criminals for teaching anatomy to medical students but the Judgement of Death Act of 1823 had reduced the number of crimes punishable by death, which in turn led to a shortage of bodies which could legally be used for dissection.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century only 55 hangings were taking place each year and the anatomists required nearer 500. This shortage produced the so called 'resurrection men' who stole newly buried bodies from local graveyards. When this activity didn't fulfil the required number of bodies, some of these men, such as the notorious Burke & Hare, set about murdering people to sell bodies to the hospitals. In total they are said to have killed at least 16 people, although the real total is likely to be a lot higher. Eventually their killing spree came to an end and both men were arrested and tried for their crimes on Christmas Eve 1828. William Burke was found guilty and hanged on 28 January 1829 at the Lawnmarket, Edinburgh, in front of a boisterous, cheering crowd of over 25,000 and fittingly perhaps, after being put on public display, his body was donated to medical science. William Hare, after turning King's evidence, was released in February 1829 and escaped over the border into England, never to be heard of again. By 1831, the activity of 'burking' had ceased but it didn't put a stop to the stealing of newly interred bodies from graveyards.

While tracing my family tree I had come across a character called Major Robinson. He had such an unusual Christian name that I decided to investigate further and found that the name Major had been passed down through the family. I also uncovered the following story of a fatal accident and reputed body snatching in Leigh. Major Robinson was a stonemason and had worked on the restoration of Culcheth Hall in 1829. The house had been bought by the Withington family in 1824 and was currently undergoing a programme of modernisation overseen by Thomas Ellames Withington, famous in this area for having read the Riot Act at the Market Cross in Leigh in 1839 during the 'Leythe Fight'. The Withington family originated in Liverpool, which is where Thomas Ellames had been baptised in 1804, the son of Peter Withington and Ann Ellames. Peter Withington died within two years of buying the property, which passed to his son who completed the restoration just in time for the birth of his first son, another Thomas Ellames, in 1831. Culcheth Hall had undergone a number of restorations and in some parts the thirteenth century walls, four feet thick, were still standing in the 1950s.

Robinson, on his first day on site, was working with two other men, attempting to place the cornice stone at the top of the building, when the rope holding the stone slipped and Major fell heavily onto the grass below. He fell about ten yards and being a corpulent man he rebounded from the ground to a height of nearly a yard, dying instantly from hitting his head on a piece of brick. The Manchester Mercury reporting on his death describes Major Robinson as a 'respectable mason of Chowbent', who was, 'a useful and honest member of society and [to] his family a kind and affectionate parent'.

An inquest was held two days after his death on 22 May and the Jury brought in a verdict of 'accidentally killed' and commented that 'this is another accident arising from the want of due circumspection on the part of workmen'. However, no further recommendations appear to have been made. Major was duly buried at St Mary Leigh on 23 May along with a stillborn child of William Adamson from Bedford.


The Hanging of William Burke – Mary Evans Picture Library


Culcheth Hall

A month later two boys were playing in a culvert which passed under Manchester Road, at Rose Hill in Bolton. They found a sack which proved to contain a body and speculation was rife about the possibility of it being deposited there by 'resurrection men' to be recovered at a later date. The body was initially claimed to be that of the unfortunate Major Robinson, recently buried at Leigh. A Coroner's Inquest was arranged to verify this information and Major Robinson's coffin was duly exhumed and found still to contain his body but strangely no mention was made of the stillborn infant.

No one came forward to claim the body found in the culvert so it was interred in a pauper's grave. It was only in June 1831 that Mrs Elizabeth Hooper, having reported her husband John Hooper, a saddlemaker, missing, heard about the Rose Hill body. John had been employed by a Bolton saddler, Walter Paulson, and had disappeared on his way to Knutsford to sell some saddles two years before. She described him as 'broad set, with a prominent forehead, black hair and a missing front tooth' and upon the disinterment of his coffin the corpse was recognised from this description and he was formerly identified and re-interred in the Trinity churchyard in Bolton under his own name.

So how did John Hooper meet his sad end? Steve Fielding in his book 'Murderous Bolton' speculates that he was murdered in order to be sold for dissection by a man called Hannah, who

regularly appeared in the Manchester newspapers at that time.

William Hannah had been tried at Lancaster Assizes in January 1830 for having in his possession the body of one George Dean, aged 17, who had recently been buried in Bolton Parish Church graveyard on the 30 December 1829. At his trial evidence came to light that Hannah had made over £80 for the sale of seven bodies which had been sent to Dr Knox in Edinburgh. He never admitted to killing John Hooper but was sentenced to six months imprisonment for being in the possession of stolen corpses. The Court documents for William Hannah's trial record his use of an alias, that of James William Hulme or Holme, who is described in the newspapers as a 'genteel looking man'. An article in the Nottingham Journal dated 30 January 1830 reported that a man, using the name James William Hulme, had been arrested when police found him in possession of a dead body in Shudehill Manchester. He was the same 'genteel' looking man who had stolen the body of George Dean from Bolton a month before.

That same month he had again been tried for stealing a body, the trial this time taking place at the New Bailey in Salford. Hannah had visited a local hostelry and when leaving had left behind a box which, when opened, was found to contain the body of a female recently removed from the old church at Bolton. He had been apprehended

Resurrection Men by Thomas Rowlandson

outside the pub by a Constable Booth and later prosecuted by the churchwardens. No comment was made on his reasons for leaving the body behind so we can only speculate that he had been extremely drunk at the time.

When Hannah/Hulme was arrested in 1830, papers were found in his possession which indicated that he had supplied a good many 'subjects' to a Doctor Ferguson of Edinburgh, and to the celebrated Doctor Knox, of Burke & Hare notoriety. He had come south from Edinburgh specifically on a body snatching expedition and over the last few weeks had sent six or eight boxes containing six bodies each back to Edinburgh.

The same year the Manchester Courier reported the snatching of the body of 'Old Tom', a well known vagrant, who had two wooden legs and walked on crutches and who had died in Bolton in February 1830. After being found deceased in Deansgate his body was removed to an empty house while a coffin was procured. Three men arrived at the house who, although having the appearance of 'travelling tinkers', professed to be relatives of the deceased. After viewing his body these 'relatives' disappeared along with the body of Old Tom, no doubt to the dissecting table of Doctor Knox or even one of the local surgeons involved in teaching anatomy. Manchester's leading figure in anatomy during the 1820s was Dr Joseph Jordan who had a school on Bridge Street. When another anatomist named Thomas Turner opened a second school on Pine Street in 1824, the price of bodies in Manchester reached an all-time high.

Two years prior to this episode it had been reported that several attempts had been made to disinter the body of a young female from the graveyard at the Catholic Chapel in Bolton. A hole had been made in the grave and the Sexton, who had been keeping watch, pursued a man seen at the graveside but was unable to catch him. A further watch was kept on the graveyard and it was claimed that no one returned to collect the body.

John Massey, from Manchester, was tried that same year and sentenced to 3 months in gaol for stealing a body. On 2 May 1828, he had left his lodgings in Deansgate and with his three accomplices walked into the Quaker burial ground at Jackson's Row. The men quickly dug up and removed the body of a lady named Mary Howcroft, placing it in a trunk. Once the men returned to Massey's house, they loaded the trunk onto a horse and cart and left for the Star Coach Office, where they were planning to send the body to London. A clerk at the office became suspicious and sent for the police who quickly arrested the four men who were later placed on trial.

Four years later, in 1832, a missing body was again reported in Bolton. The body was that of Elizabeth Todd aged 69, who had been buried at the Ridgeway Gates Wesleyan Chapel. Her grave was found open with her coffin lid split and grave clothes left at the scene. Her body was never recovered.

Although cases of body snatching in Manchester and Bolton are extensively and well reported I have not found any instances of body snatching in Leigh. Perhaps the churches and individuals in the latter were much more proactive in preventing the taking of bodies either by keeping watch for a few days after someone was buried in order to make the body useless to the anatomists or using heavy stone slabs or mort safes to prevent the resurrectionists from digging up the coffin. We shall never know.

However, in response to the cases of Burke and Hare in Edinburgh and later the London Burkers, in 1831, Parliament was forced to debate the issue of supplying the hospitals with suitable bodies for teaching and research. A select committee reported that the solution would be to allow the bodies of paupers who had died in the workhouses to be used for teaching purposes. While this greatly increased the number of bodies available for dissection and made body snatching less of a financial incentive for resurrectionists, presumably no one consulted the families of the paupers on their feelings in the matter. The poor had no more right over the ownership of their bodies than those of criminals.

Sources:

Manchester Courier
Manchester Mercury
Bolton Chronicle
Ancestry
The History of Leigh by Dr John Lunn
'Murderous Bolton' by Steve Fielding.
'Foul Deeds and Suspicious Deaths in Bolton' by Glynis Cooper

Copy Deadline for Issue 83

Contributors please note the deadline for the receipt of material for publication is Friday, 18th October 2019.

All's Well That Ends Well:

The story of Standish Well and the arrival of piped water in the Township, Part Two

BY JOHN O'NEILL

Republished with permission from John O'Neill's history of Standish Well and Market House, and account of how piped water replaced the unreliable and polluted supplies obtained for centuries from local wells and pumps, including that from the town well in Market Place.

How Piped Drinking Water Reached Standish

The historic origins of the well are lost in the mists of time, but it is reasonable to assume that the discovery and use of fresh water from a spring brought close to the surface coincided with the birth of Standish as a settlement which, over many centuries, spread outwards from that spot.

Whether the founding of the Parish Church dedicated to St Wilfrid and first mentioned in records as early as 1205 came first, we shall probably never know.

However, there was a long-standing belief from pagan times that such sources of water contained special powers and where the worship of water deities took place. With the advance of Christianity during the Celtic period, wells were often re-dedicated to the service of local saints.

The founding in the middle-ages of churches close to wells was not uncommon and could have been an important factor in the choice of site for St Wilfrid's Church.

As the well was situated close to the main road from London to north Britain from earliest times until the construction of a new highway through the district from 1726 by the Wigan & Preston Turnpike Trust, it not only supplied limited local need, (the population had only risen to 300 by 1542) but also served to slake the thirst of peddlers, beggars, pilgrims, soldiers, monks, nuns and entertainers passing through the village.

From the end of the fourteenth century travellers could also have taken the opportunity to rest their weary limbs on the steps of the Market Cross and pass the time of day with any local resident unfortunate enough to have been placed in the stocks by order of the Manor Court sited to the rear of what later became the Eagle & Child Inn.

How the well itself was developed down the ages is far from certain. The immediate area was eventually approached by two shallow steps and a deeper third one and at some time the source was piped. The water flowed through an ornamental animal head (possible


WIGAN OBSERVER, Friday, January 7, 1977

Stonemason Jim recalls the time he helped to put roof on old Standish well

What Jim built up the Yanks flattened!

By Geoffrey Shryhane

Jim Evans, stonemason, Wigan Observer, 7 January 1977

that of a lion) fixed to its top through a stone wall and the unused water returned to source via a drainage channel. To assist those drawing water, a stone ledge was provided on each side of the entrance on which full containers could be rested.

Half the area covered by the Well-House roof, and just beyond the water supply, was used as a market area where the fish stone was situated for the cutting up and selling of fish.

Apart from the 'town' well as it became known from the seventeenth century following residents' reference to the Market Place area with its regular markets, stalls, fairs and later its shops, as 'the town' the only other sources of water were Smithy Well on Wigan Lane (now Wigan Road) close to the Horseshoe Inn and the public pumps in School Lane and Preston Road.

Otherwise, need was met from numerous private wells sunk within farm steads such as Bessie's Well in the Grove (Grove Lane) or those close to groups of dwellings which also caught rainwater flowing off their roofs into butts.

The availability of good quality water was rare and in times of drought when springs dried up and women stood patiently for hours at the town well to catch what they could, some turned in desperation to local streams, ponds and ditches with obvious risks to their health.

With the introduction of more effective local government from the 1830s together with the growing

The Yarrow Reservoir near Rivington, Lancashire (PopUpPirate at the English language Wikipedia)

awareness of the need for improved public health and hygiene, there was growing concern on the part of Standish with Langtree Local Board of Health, established in 1872, that the demands of the township's increased population from 3698 in 1871 to 5416 by the 1891 census and expanding mining and textile industries in particular, could not be adequately met by the existing water supply.

The Local Board had sought advice as early as 1878 on alternative and more reliable sources when the volume of water from the town well was obviously diminishing and its quality suspect.

Even so, at a special meeting of the Board in July 1882, a request from Wigan's Town Clerk, Mr Maskell William Peace of Ashfield House, to supply water to him and to cottages in the Grove and Engine Row from the Blackrod Local Board at a site in Arley was not supported on grounds of cost although he was later given permission, at his own expense, to lay a pipe from Smithy Well to Ashfield.

However, pressure from the Medical Officer of Health to the Local Board, Mr J A Marsden, who feared that the worsening situation would inevitably damage the health of local residents leading to the possible outbreak of a cholera epidemic, gave greater impetus to the search for a satisfactory solution.

Driven by that anxiety the Local Board, spearheaded by its forceful and enthusiastic Chairman Mr H W Hewlett, negotiated with Liverpool Corporation to supply water from its Chorley Reservoir at Rivington.

The reservoir was selected because it was sufficiently high to create a force of 33 feet of water in the centre of the village and capable of supplying 35 thousand gallons per day to satisfy the village's estimated consumption.

Following agreement by the Local Board to borrow the necessary capital expenditure and the effect that would have on the level of local rates, water was conveyed in 1892 over a distance of seven miles through eight-inch diameter mains iron pipes into Market Place adjacent to the old well. From July of that year, branch water mains were laid throughout all the principal roads and arrangements made for each dwelling to be fitted with its own separate water tap.

When the necessary engineering work had been completed the town well, often referred to as an "old friend", was virtually laid to rest.

Then on Saturday 8 October 1892 at 2:45pm Local Board members together with leading residents, assembled at the Board's Offices in Church Street passing as they entered that building under a motto placed over the entrance which said, 'Pure Water and Good Health'. To indicate their appreciation of the smooth way in which the whole operation had been completed, the Local Board presented Mr Hewlett with a solid silver flagon from which he was instructed to take the first draught of the piped water.

That flagon had been ornamented with the ancient Runic knot emblem of the Celtic tribe which had inhabited the slopes of the Rivington hills from which the new water had its source.

Then in pouring rain and headed by St Wilfrid's Brass Band, the Local Board members and their guests assembled on a platform close to the town well where an improvised fountain had been erected.

It seemed that the entire village filled Market Place to overflowing to witness the official ceremony and at a given signal and by means of a turncock, Mr Hewlett turned on the water.

The fountain it created took those standing at the front of the crowd by surprise and added to the flood already falling on them from the heavens!

Mr Hewlett sampled the water caught in the flagon and filled glasses handed around for that purpose. Then amidst great merriment and with the band in tow, he visited parts of the village to turn on the public taps for the first time.

That memorable day ended in the Wheatsheaf Hotel, (where Aldi Supermarket stands today) where Mr Hewlett entertained members, officers and friends to dinner.

In response to the toast, 'Success to the Standish Water Supply' the Rector of Standish, Reverend C W N Hutton said that the Board could not have conferred a greater boon upon the inhabitants of Standish than they had done that afternoon.

The Strange Tale of Edwin Lindsay

BY TOM MORTON

On 9 March 1786, Elizabeth Lindsay gave birth to twin boys at the family home at Balcarres, Fife in Scotland. Two weeks later the boys, Edwin and Richard, were baptised at the family's local Kirk in nearby Kilconquhar, on the Fife coast and overlooking the Firth of Forth. These boys were her fourth and fifth children, a sixth was to follow twelve months later. Elizabeth Lindsay was the wife of Alexander Lindsay, 6th Earl of Balcarres, who had inherited the title on his father's death in 1768 when he had just turned 16 years of age. In 1780 he had also come into possession of the Haigh estate near Wigan on his marriage to Elizabeth Dalrymple, as she then was and his cousin, who had inherited the estate ten years earlier, at the age of ten on the death of the last surviving male of the Bradshaigh family, Sir Roger Bradshaigh. This family had owned the estate since the fourteenth century.

Rumour had it that during her pregnancy, Elizabeth had fallen down a staircase. It is not clear whether this mishap occurred in Scotland or at Haigh. From birth it was said that both boys showed signs of erratic behaviour and physical deformities which may have resulted from this fall. Edwin was despatched, as a teenager, to act as a midshipman but deserted. Two years later he left to serve abroad as a soldier with the East India Company. Whilst in India, according to senior officers, he continued to display bizarre conduct which became increasingly violent, sometimes bordering on ill-discipline. Eventually, in 1807, he was returned to England 'in disgrace'. Although no official explanation for his behaviour has been published, Edwin later claimed that the reason was that he had refused to fight a duel. Whatever the reason, his father, now ensconced at Haigh Hall, was obviously both distressed and displeased by his son's actions, as well as becoming increasingly alarmed by his behaviour. Eventually he consulted two doctors who both affirmed that the behaviour amounted to insanity. However, no legal confirmation of this was sought.

His twin, Richard, had already been confined to the island of Shapinsay in the Orkney Islands where he was detained as insane under the supervision of the local minister, the Reverend Barry. A similar arrangement was proposed for Edwin, although, in his case, the destination was to be even more remote. Some of Edwin's conduct was attributed to the fact that for some time he had been demanding to visit his brother. On the pretext of visiting his brother he was sent to the isolated destination of the island of Papa Stour off the Mainland of the Shetland Isles, over seventy miles further to the north. This island, about two miles in length and one mile across, was two miles from the Mainland over the tricky waters of the Sound of Papa. There he was to remain for the next twenty six years, under the care of Gideon Henderson, a tenant there and a merchant in Shetland.

In 1825, Earl Alexander died at the age of 73 at Haigh Hall and his eldest son, James, became the 7th Earl of Balcarres. He had been resident there since 1822. About this time the Shetland Islands began to receive regular visits from various clergymen, missionaries and preachers as well as other travellers such as naturalists. On 2 June 1828, one such traveller, the Reverend James Everett, a Methodist preacher, found himself sharing the same pew with Edwin at the Methodist Chapel on Papa Stour and shook his hand. He found him to be 'somewhat depressed in his demeanour, and heard the sermon with deep attention, and apparently thoughtfully'.

In June 1831, a Quaker preacher, Maria Watson, spent six days at the 'only decent house on the island' at the invitation of the occupant, 'Edwin's keeper', Gideon Henderson. She described him as a 'much injured individual' and found him to be 'gentle, intelligent, and obliging to all those who had any intercourse with him'. She spoke of the alleged severity of his detention there, the neglect of his relatives and the fact that he was penniless. This last matter and the fact that the islanders lived in fear of 'their superior', presumably meaning Henderson who was supported by Edwin's brother the Earl of Balcarres, prevented any chance of escape.

Miss Watson had been on the islands since 1830 and attracted attention 'as a wandering religious enthusiast', having been prohibited to preach by the local Methodist minister. She met Edwin again May 1833, finding that he still suffered from the 'same vexatious treatment' and had been asked to plead on his behalf with 'Christian people'. She was later to champion his release from Papa Stour. In that year his unfortunate brother Richard died in Orkney 'in a state of the most complete imbecility'. Edwin never got to see him. Others encountered Edwin too in their travels and differing opinions were formed as to his mental disposition.

In June 1834 Edward Charlton, aged 20 and a medical student, who spent much of his time shooting birds, met Edwin about whom 'so much has been written and declaimed'. He also met Gideon Henderson and Miss Watson. He said Henderson had 'been so unjustly and so illiberally abused' making him 'a deeply injured man'. His opinion was that Edwin 'was a most dangerous lunatic' and Miss Watson was 'not a whit more sane than the man in whose behalf she exerted herself so much'.

Twelve months later in June 1835, Sarah Squire, a Quaker Minister from Huntingdonshire met 'the young man Maria Watson was much interested about' at Henderson's house and found him to be 'like one, whose intellects are not strong, but he does not appear insane'. Meanwhile Miss Watson had journeyed back to London and aroused interest of Edwin's incarceration among Quakers there. One month later, in July, while in London she was discussing ways of releasing Edwin with other Quakers when she met one George Pilkington. She explained her meetings with Edwin to him and that she was seeking his release. Pilkington immediately volunteered to undertake this mission, setting sail later in the month.

Pilkington had been in the army where he had served ten years 'arduous service' in the West Indies and where after that period his services were 'dispensed with' by the Duke of York, because, he claimed, he caused the prosecution of a senior officer for peculation. He then found employment in Sierra Leone, on the West African coast, in various civil engineering projects before succumbing to the climate. From there he travelled to South America where he hoped to make sufficient money to return to England; the boat was shipwrecked and his belongings were lost. Eventually he landed in Trinidad and obtained a job at the governmental quarter master's stores but 'through some misunderstanding with the Governor' he was dismissed and left for England with £90 in his pocket in November 1830. He settled in Devon where from being a 'soldier of bloodshed or the mercenary trafficker of war' he became 'the soldier of Christ and preaches peace and good-will unto all men'.

On arrival at Lerwick, the Shetland Island's capital, he gave a lecture on the evils of war. From there he headed west towards Scalloway, in company with another preacher whom he had met on his voyage to Shetland, where he again gave a lecture and stayed overnight before taking a boat across the bay named The Deeps to Reawick where another oration was given at the local Methodist chapel. That same evening he walked to Walls where he stayed at the house of another minister, who was friendly with Gideon Henderson and who gave him the facility to give yet another discourse at his chapel on the following day. Following the lecture he met Gideon Henderson who appeared to him to be 'well qualified to command submission' but who offered him accommodation at his house in Papa Stour that night where Pilkington was due to deliver a lecture. A six mile walk to Sandness was then made where Pilkington saw the island of Papa Stour for the first time. He had no difficulty in finding a boat to take them across. They were welcomed by Gideon's sister. The remainder of the household were still at the chapel. The rest of the family duly returned led by William Henderson, Gideon's son, followed by a 'tall, stout person, having long, red, curly hair, and an unshaven beard'. This person was Edwin Lindsay whose 'dejected countenance and shabby attire' confirmed Pilkington's opinion. He was later able to speak with him for a short period, some of the conversation being conducted in French.

The following day he met him again in private and according to Pilkington, Edwin expressed a desire and a willingness to flee Papa Stour. Pilkington and his travelling companion discussed how this could be achieved. Subterfuge was initially proposed, but later rejected and a direct confrontation with the Henderson family was agreed. A letter was prepared and signed by Edwin, duly witnessed by the two preachers. The family was approached with the letter. Naturally a fierce argument ensued. William admitted that they had no legal authority to detain him, and Pilkington's retort that any prolonged detention could well result in prison terms for the Henderson father and son, quickly sealed the argument. The party, which by mutual consent included William Henderson, left for Scalloway on Mainland, much to the distress of the Henderson family who obviously had a warm affection for Edwin. They followed the route on land and sea by which Pilkington had arrived. At Scalloway they managed to secure a passage to the Orkney Islands for the following day. Gideon Henderson arrived that night but was unable to speak to Edwin.

The sloop set sail for Orkney on the next day but the winds were not favourable and little progress was made. After a short time a boat approached and came alongside where one Lawrence Henry, the local Sheriff's Officer, clambered aboard armed with an arrest warrant for both Lindsay and Pilkington and with orders to convey them both back to Lerwick. Apparently this had been issued after Gideon Henderson had alleged that Edwin has been abducted illegally and so, after a five mile trudge over the Shetland moors, during which Pilkington quoted the gospels to the officer at frequent intervals, they were brought before the sheriff that evening. After hearing both men, the acting Sheriff Andrew Duncan concluded that he had no authority to detain either men of then and thus Edwin was now free to leave some twenty-six years after he arrived. Pilkington immediately made plans to sail the following morning. On the next day, Pilkington was to give another of his lectures before he departed. He had hardly got in to full flow however when a short message was passed to him. It said 'Mr Lindsay is in Mr James Mout's house drinking'. He hastily terminated his speech and hurried to the house of Mrs Mout nearby where he found Miss Henderson, who was the sister of both Mrs Mout and of Gideon Henderson, plying Edwin with wine. He appeared already to be somewhat intoxicated. Edwin tearfully informed Pilkington that he wished to retract his request to escape and so Pilkington reluctantly had to leave Shetland without him. Edwin returned to Papa Stour. On eventually arriving back at Edinburgh, Pilkington recounted the saga to Maria Watson who was in the city at this time. She expressed her anger and dissatisfaction at the outcome but she was not going to give up easily however!

By 27 August Maria Watson was back in Shetland. In a lengthy and somewhat self-serving pamphlet later published by The Society of Friends, the account explained, 'on this remote island, ragged, despised, and ill-treated did the benevolent Miss Watson discover the brother of the wealthy Earl of Balcarres, and from his lips did she learn the shocking and frightful truth that he was detained there against his will'. In that account Miss Watson, recalled how in an attempt to finally achieve his return 'some finesse was rendered necessary in order to accomplish it'. Lawrence Henry was dispatched to see Gideon Henderson in order to recover letters supposedly written to Edwin by herself but which he had never received. Henderson denied any knowledge and so Harvey then sailed over to Papa Stour in an attempt to recover them. He managed, on arrival, to snatch a short conversation with Edwin but it was enough for him to believe that Edwin was eager to return to Lerwick and eventually to go back to England. Henderson was said to refuse to let him go but the threat of another warrant persuaded him to let Harvey take him back to Lerwick, although he would accompany them. Once there Edwin requested that Harvey remain with him, and he agreed and 'never separated night or day'. Eventually they left for Orkney, a journey which took twenty-four hours, and from there to Leith and onto London, arriving in early September, Harvey accompanying him all the way.

On arrival in London legal proceedings were started at the instigation of Miss Watson although it appears that Edwin was reluctant to do so, whilst Pilkington showed outright objection. At her instigation, the story was conveyed to the press, and first appeared in the Birmingham Reformer and later in The Morning Post and The Times. The latter ran a particularly long report, mainly from the stories as narrated by her and by Pilkington. This in turn prompted an angry response from the Earl of Balcarres. Writing from Haigh Hall on 5 November in reply to 'a most libellous and false statement' made by the papers, he set out his narrative of the events leading up to the arrival of the brothers in the northern islands. The twin brothers, he wrote, had grown up 'without acquiring information' and as a result had both been sent by his father into both the navy and then the army where each had proved to be 'incompetent to remain in either'. As a result two 'celebrated' doctors, Willis and Baillie, were consulted and examined Edwin concluding that he had 'a malformation in the head which destroys intellect' and as both boys grew older the 'malady will increase'. He then went on to say that his father 'placed him with his own consent' with 'a most worthy and respectable gentleman' on Papa Stour and where 'he had full range and complete personal liberty', which 'he would not have enjoyed elsewhere'. On Papa Stour he resided 'perfectly happy and contented' and had been most kindly treated at the time of his father's death in 1825. When Miss Watson came on the scene some years later, she 'unsettled his mind' and later did 'wheedle him away', claiming she had since failed to reveal his whereabouts and further threatened legal action unless he agreed their terms to which 'he declined'. This letter was dismissed as an 'illogical, ill-conceived, and rambling epistle' by Miss Watson and her supporters.

Edwin replied, although whether the words were his own is open to doubt and referred to his plight as a result of a 'nefarious and wicked transaction'. He denied he was incompetent and that he had gone there of his own free will. He claimed instead that he was seduced to travel on the promise of seeing his brother and that during his sojourn on the island he had been 'struck, maltreated and abused'. Pilkington too wrote to the press on 23 November to say he found Edwin to be perfectly sane, that it was not true that Edwin was comfortable there and that Earl Balcarres was merely 'vindicating himself through the public press and by instituting legal proceedings'. At the same time Edward Charlton, who had visited Papa Stour in 1834, wrote to The Times to defend Henderson but his letter was not published. On 5 August 1836 Edwin Lindsay brought an action in the Chancery Court in London, although he did not appear himself. Neither did Earl Balcarres, who had paid £5,000 into court as a provision for Edwin's maintenance. He argued that Edwin was incapable of conducting his own affairs and was reluctant to release any money until he was made aware of his whereabouts which were still unknown to him. The court directed that Edwin receive the dividend from his annuity through his solicitor, subject to a receipt signed by Edwin being produced to the Accountant-General. Towards the end of 1836, the location of his residence was made known and Edwin moved to Rudgate Lodge, at Ratho near Edinburgh, the house of Dr James Craig and an agreed income was given to him there.

Maria Watson remained involved and made several attempts to communicate with him although it is not altogether certain that he welcomed her attentions. Eventually in 1838, an injunction was sought and granted against her communicating with him. It was even reported that she tried to marry him. As late as June 1843, she was taking proceedings against him in the Scottish Court of Session in an attempt to recover expenses she claimed was owed to her for being his housekeeper for 14 months after he arrived in London, which explained why his residence was not revealed during that period. The Honourable Edwin Lindsay lived with Dr Craig and his family until his death from a disease of the bladder on 20 October 1865 at the age of 79. His occupation was given as 'Officer latterly in the service of the East India Company'. He was interred at Greyfriars Cemetery in Edinburgh. He had never returned to Papa Stour, although it was said that he continued to correspond with the Henderson family, who had expressed such sadness at his departure in 1835. There is no evidence that he ever returned to Haigh Hall either, a place he had last seen in 1809.

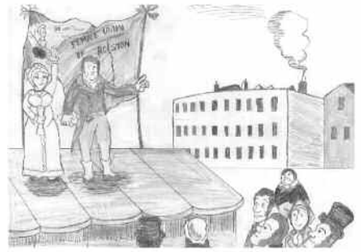
BY CHRIS MURPHY

PETERLOO

Past Forward's in-house cartoonist, Chris Murphy, shares his retelling of the events at Peterloo on 16 August 1819, as seen through the eyes of John Cook, from Leigh, who later described his experience in the Leigh Chronicle.

1. "William Ratcliffe and I went together.

2. We two got as near as we could get.



3. I saw Hunt taken off stage by Nadin.

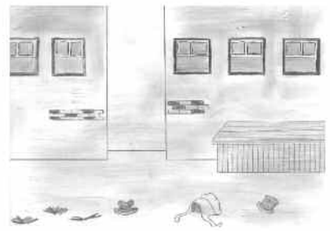
4. There were folks on the houses, and they cried 'soldiers is coming'.

5. We were so packed I could scarcely stir. It was a terrible scene.

6. The cavalry were slashing and cutting at the people with their swords.

7. I thought we could get out by going through the horses' feet…in thus escaping I lost my tall hat.

8. There were cart chest-fulls of hats and bonnets lying about, which had been left behind by the people in their hurry and scurry to get clear of the mad and drunken cavalry.



9. It was nearly 11pm when we got home."

Talks at the Museum of Wigan Life and Wigan Local Studies

Places are limited for our talks so please book by phoning 01942 828128 or emailing wiganmuseum@wigan.gov.uk

A Concise History of Coal Mining – From the formation of coal 300 million years ago to the recent end of deep mining

Alan Davies

With reference to the industry nationally, from the use of coal around 1450BC in South Wales, but as much as possible focusing on the Lancashire Coalfield, first documented in 1294. Illustrated throughout plus rare film records.

Thursday 14 November, 12.30pm – 1.30pm

Museum of Wigan Life, £3.00 (including tea/coffee)

From Cotton Bales to Canopic Jars: A Victorian woman's obsession with Ancient Egypt

Ian Trumble

150 years ago, a young girl dreamed of visiting the land of the pharaohs. 20 years later she sailed the Nile, rode a donkey across the desert, and dined in the sun with Sheikhs. Annie Barlow, daughter of one of Greater Manchester's largest textile magnates, devoted part of her life to preserving Egypt's ancient heritage. This story tells how her passion built up one of the country's best collections of over 10,000 Egyptian artefacts.

Thursday 19 September, 12.30pm – 1.30pm

Museum of Wigan Life, £3.00 (including tea/coffee)

Dead and Buried

Charlie Guy MA

Join us on Halloween to dispel the dark myths of the Victorian dead and shine a light on some of the forgotten, outdated and downright creepy funerary practices, traditions and superstitions of the age. From booby-trapped coffins and body-snatchers to photography and funeral souvenirs, come and explore the fascinating world of the Victorian dead brought back to life.

Thursday 31 October, 1.00pm – 2.00pm

Museum of Wigan Life, £3.00 (including tea/coffee)

Leigh and Wigan's Female Reform Unions and Peterloo

Yvonne Eckersley

On 16th August 1819, 60,000 men, women and children from the Manchester area walked to St Peter's Field in support of political reform. Within half an hour at least fifteen people sustained fatal injuries and many more were bludgeoned, maimed or crushed by horses. Join Yvonne on the 200th anniversary of the massacre to hear the story of how Wigan and Leigh radicals protested in the narrow streets of Leigh as well as the wide open space of Amberswood Common.

Monday 12 August 2019, 1pm-2pm

Derby Room at Leigh Library, £3, tickets available from Wigan Archives & Leigh Local Studies

AND

Friday 16 August, 12.30pm – 1.30pm

Museum of Wigan Life, £3.00 (including tea/coffee)

CAN YOU HELP?

Over at Wigan Local Studies we were auditing past enquiries to the service and came across an original birth certificate. We think the document was left behind by a researcher some years ago but was never subsequently claimed and returned to the owner.

The certificate is for Rachel Shepherd, born 10 November 1913. If you left the item at Wigan Local Studies or can shed any light on who might be the owner, please contact us at archives@wigan.gov.uk

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

Please note – From 2019 the meetings will be held on the second Wednesday of the month. Meetings begin at 7.30pm. in St.Richards Parish Centre, Mayfield St. Atherton. Visitors Welcome – Admission £2, including refreshments. Contact Margaret Hodge on 01942 884893.

Billinge History and Heritage Society

Meetings are held on the second Tuesday of the month at Billinge Chapel End Labour Club at 7.30pm. There is a door charge of £2. Please contact Geoff Crank for more information on 01695 624411 or at Gcrank_2000@yahoo.co.uk

Culcheth Local History Group

The Village Centre, Jackson Avenue. Second Thursday of each month. Doors open 7.15pm for 7.30pm start. Members £1 Visitors £2 Enquiries: Zoe Chaddock – 01925 752276 (Chair)

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 12.30pm to 2.30pm, at Leigh Library. There is no need to book an appointment for this Help Desk. 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 September, 'Princess Margaret' – Brian Joyce 15 October, 'The Manchester Drag Ball' – Thomas McGrath 19 November, 'Culcheth Characters – Marlene Nolan

Lancashire Local History Federation

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

The group meets at Upholland Library Community Room, Hall Green, Upholland, WN8 0PB, at 7.00pm for 7.30pm start on the first Tuesday of each month; no meeting in July, August and January. December is a meal out at The Plough at Lathom. For more information please contact Bill Fairclough, Chairman on 07712766288 or Caroline Fairclough, Secretary, at carolinefairclough@hotmail.com

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

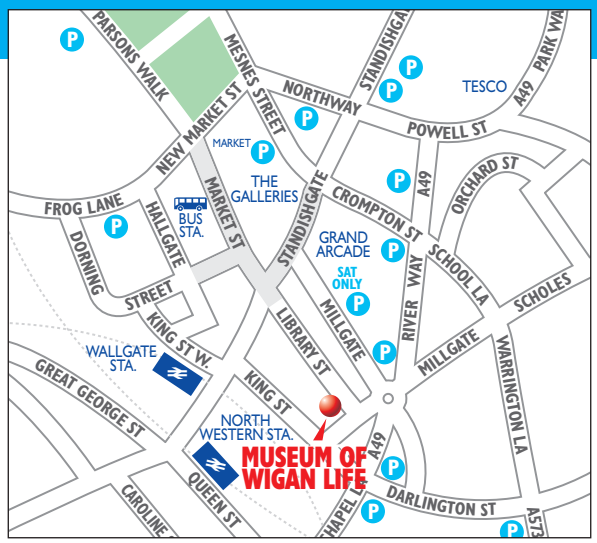
We meet on the first Wednesday of the month, at 7.30pm, in the Standish Suite at the Brocket Arms on Mesnes Road - on the first Wednesday of the month (except January and August). There is a car park adjacent on the left. Admission is £2 for members and £3 for guests. For more information call Bill Aldridge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

Wigan Family and Local History Society

We meet on the second Wednesday at 6.45pm, at St Andrews Parish Centre. 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 helpdesks at the Museum of Wigan Life.

How to Find Us

Wigan Council



Museum of Wigan Life & Wigan Local Studies

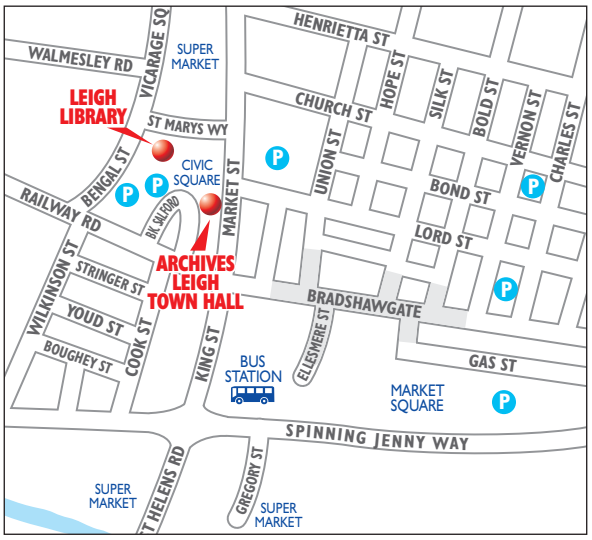
Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU
Telephone 01942 828128
heritage@wigan.gov.uk

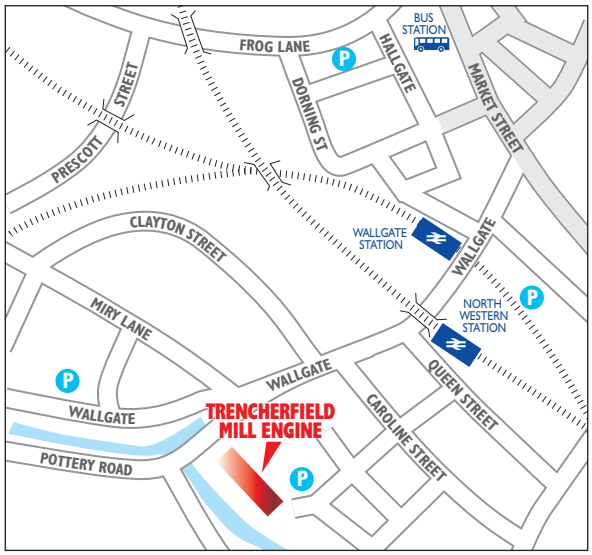
Mon-Wed 9am-2pm Thursday-Friday 12pm-5pm
Saturday 9am-2pm

Archives & Leigh Local Studies

(temporary location until 2020)
Leigh Library, Leigh WN7 1EB
Telephone 01942 404430
archives@wigan.gov.uk

Mon-Wed 9am-2pm Thursday-Friday 12pm-5pm





Trencherfield Mill Engine

Wigan Pier Quarter,
Heritage Way,
Wigan WN3 4EF

Please see website for details

YOUR LOCAL MUSEUM

Bolton Bury
Oldham Rochdale
Salford Stockport
Tameside Wigan

Take a closer look www.gmmg.org.uk

GM MG
GREATER MANCHESTER MUSEUMS GROUP

@WiganArchives Service @MuseumofWiganLife @WiganMuseum @wiganandleigharchives