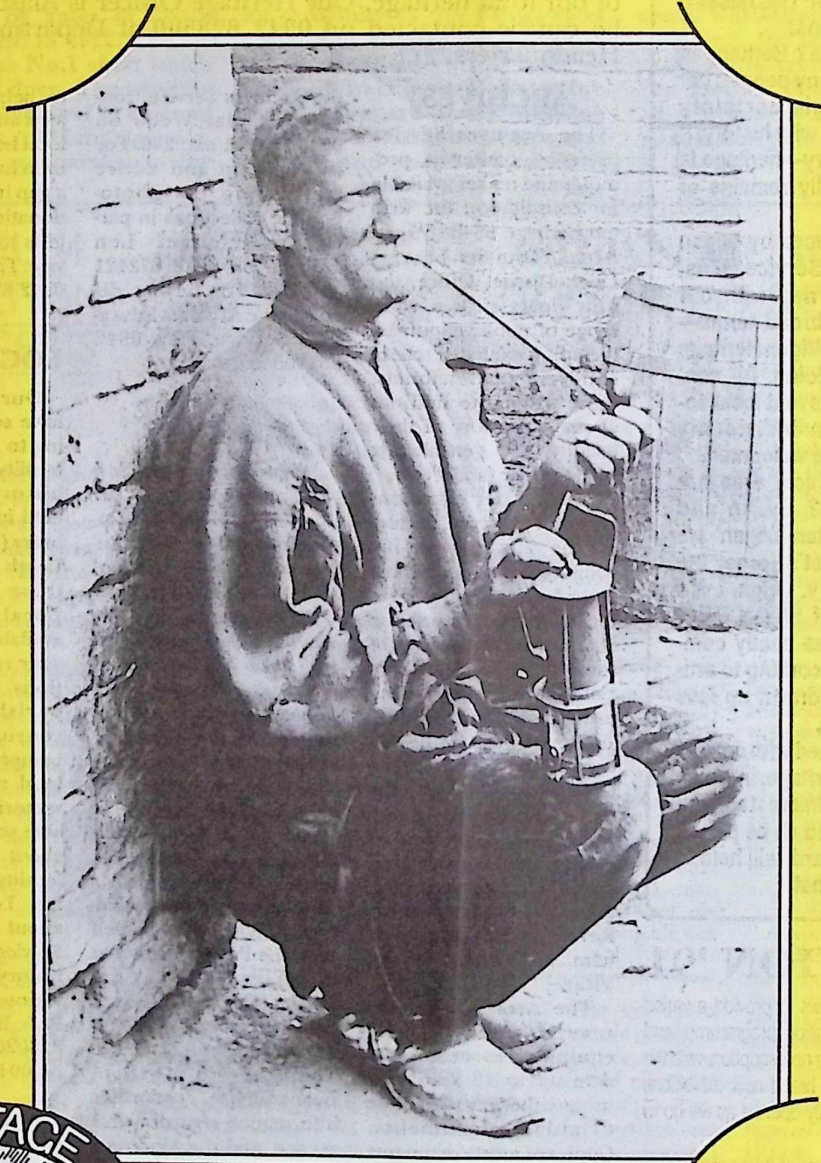


PAST FORWARD

ISSUE NUMBER ONE

SUMMER 1991



*The Newsletter of
Wigan Heritage Service*

FREE

From the Editor

THIS is the first issue of 'Past Forward', the Newsletter of Metropolitan Wigan's Heritage Service. It is hoped to publish the second issue in January, 1992, and thereafter, quarterly.

'Past Forward' is designed to promote 'heritage' in and around Metropolitan Wigan. This raises a number of questions:

What is heritage? Heritage is many things to many people; basically, although certainly closely connected with history, it is more than history—heritage is about what actually remains of our past.

Although produced by Wigan MBC's Heritage Service, it is, therefore, concerned with our local heritage in broad terms—not just with what Wigan Heritage Service may be doing. All contributions from relevant local societies and even individuals would therefore be welcomed.

What geographical area are we dealing with? By 'in and around Metropolitan Wigan' we mean just that—let's forget the politics of Wigan v. Leigh, even the boundaries of Wigan MBC. Heritage cannot be neatly compartmentalized according to artificial boundaries drawn up less than 20 years ago.

We are concerned with an area with a very rich heritage, in which we should all be interested, and of which we should all be proud. I hope 'Past Forward' will help to convince you of that.

EXHIBITION '91

THE Heritage Service seeks to provide a varied and comprehensive exhibition programme, and the second half of 1991 is no exception, with the opportunity to view three brand new exhibitions and one which has recently opened as we go to print.

For the dates and venues of these exhibitions, see 'What's On' (p7). For further details, pick up our Exhibition '91 leaflet, available at Heritage Service outlets or your local library. If you have any difficulty obtaining one, ring 0942 828122 and we'll send you one.

An Introduction to Wigan Heritage Service

INTEREST in our local heritage has never been higher. The Leisure Department has previously catered for this interest through three separate services—Archives, Museums and Local History. These services, however, have now been brought together to form one Heritage Service, so that their various resources can be co-ordinated towards the more effective preservation and interpretation of our local heritage. Our Heritage Officer is Alastair Gillies, and he can be contacted on 0942 828560 at Department of Leisure Headquarters.

ARCHIVES

The Archives Service preserves, conserves, promotes and makes available for consultation the written heritage of the Wigan Area. From its base at Leigh District Office, the unit deals with a wide range of public enquiries, including students, school children, professionals, those wishing to find out about the history of their locality, and genealogists tracing their family tree.

There is an enormous range of material, including the various Wigan Borough charters and court records, the parish registers of the local churches, census returns, archives of local businesses and societies, the papers of such prominent local families as the Standishes, the Andertons of Ince and the Crawfords of Haigh, the nationally important Edward Hall collection of diaries, and a vast collection of local photographs, including those taken by Reverend William Wickham, a Victorian Wigan Vicar.

The Archives Service search room is well equipped to accommodate up to 12 searchers, using either microfilms or original documents. Copies of most documents can be supplied, and there is an increasingly popular and comprehensive photographic service. For further information about

the Archives Service, contact Nicholas Webb on 0942 672421 ext. 266. For information and advice concerning the photographic collections in particular, contact Len Hudson on 0942 672421 ext. 265. For further details of the Archives Education Service, ring 0942 262100 ext. 4.

to help you identify objects and to interpret your local heritage. They will be even happier if you can fill a gap in our collections by donating an object or objects to the Museums Service. The number to ring is 0942 828122.

LOCAL HISTORY

Our various libraries have some material relating to the history of their locality, but the main local history collections are held in the old Wigan Library (Rodney Street) and Leigh Library. Both of these have a specialist Local History Officer available to help you with your research. The collections include copies of parish registers and census returns, maps, pamphlets, photographs, local newspapers and directories, which will enable you to find out more about the history of your locality or your own family. To find out more about the Local History Service including the local history surgeries held in various libraries, contact Bob Blakeman on 0942 828020 or Tony Ashcroft on 0942 604131.

Remember—YOU can be of service to the Heritage Service. If you have any items in which you think we would be interested, please do not hesitate to contact the relevant section.

MUSEUMS

Wigan Museums Service can lay claim to the largest working steam-powered mill engine in Europe, and with the help of some of the Museum artefacts on display in 'The Way We Were' and Trencherfield Mill at Wigan Pier, and Hindley Museum, you can imagine a day in the life of a 19th century coal miner, the sound of an early local brass band or the taste of wine from an 18th century goblet. In addition the Museums Service mounts various temporary exhibitions at Wigan Pier, as well as in the Powell Gallery at the Wiend Centre, the Stables Centre at Haigh Country Park and the Turmpike Centre, Leigh. There is also a School Loans Service. For further information regarding this service, and the Museums exhibition programme, contact Yvonne Webb, our Interpretation Officer, on 0942 828123. The Museums staff will be happy

Cover: The collier 'keawring' or squatting (probably derived from cowering), 1891—a typical collier's pose. (From the Rev. William Wickham photographic collection).

A COLLIERY LIVES AGAIN

ASTLEY Green Colliery, administered for the Leisure Department by the Heritage Service and operated by Red Rose Steam Society, is on Higher Green Lane, Astley, just off the A580. It opened in 1912 and closed in 1970. Although little of the original pit remains today, the Winding House retains the largest surviving steam winding engine in Europe—a horizontal, double tandem compound winder, built by Yates & Thorn Ltd. (Blackburn) in 1912. The engine served the No.1 shaft which was 2,600 feet deep. The winding drum has a diameter of 21 feet and weighs approx. 100 tons. In scale, the engine is comparable to the

more famous one at Trencherfield Mill.

Already, the Winding House has been restored by the former GMC, and much work has been done on the engine by Red Rose Steam Society. This devoted group of volunteers has worked wonders in restoring the engine.

Funds permitting, it is intended to develop this site as a major tourist attraction, especially in view of its proximity to the Bridgewater Canal and consequent access to other canal-side sites such as Leigh Wharf and Pennington Flash. Plans are under consideration for a Visitors' Centre and railway and canal access. It is

hoped that the 25th anniversary of the closure, in 1995, can be celebrated by turning the winding engine once again.

In the meantime, the site is open to the public on Sundays, 1.00-5.00, and the magnificent winding house and engine are well worth seeing. Groups are also welcome at other times, by prior arrangement.

In addition, certain special events will be held during the year, including, for the first time, the prestigious trans-Pennine Run. For further details of this and other events at Astley Green, see What's On (p7).

A MUSEUM COLLECTION MANAGER'S DIARY

A regular feature in Past Forward will be a report on recent acquisitions made by the Heritage Service. As a forerunner, here is a month by month rundown of the more interesting museum objects collected during 1990.

January and February saw typical donations when two large collections of domestic items were given to the museum. These included many ordinary household items from the first half of this century, from furniture through to food packages. Although unremarkable at the time, this sort of material forms the core of any social history collection.

In March a call was received from Hindley Remand Centre offering us an old piece of equipment out of the kitchens. A member of staff went along, to be faced with a Berkell & Parnell bacon slicer from the 1950's—the bacon slicer to have, by all accounts.

In April a visit to a shop basement in Golborne uncovered brushes and a set of stencils used to decorate Lowton Church in 1928.

In May more furniture and domestic items were collected from houses in Westhoughton

and Famworth, after Bolton Museum expressed no interest. In June the darkest corner of a cellar in Hindley revealed shop signs and records from a battery-charging and radio business of the 1930's.

In July an earthenware pot bearing a stamp from Johnsons, Smallbrook Pottery, Smallbrook Lane, was donated. Information from the donor later revealed that it had been used by his mother to pickle eggs, and probably dated back to 1920.

In August some record sleeves bearing the names of various Wigan retailers of many years ago were retrieved from a skip at the offices of the Wigan Observer.

In September some household games and fancy playing cards were collected from a house in Wigan.

In October the Courtaulds Spinning Company J & J Hayes at Victoria Mills, Leigh, donated a large free standing drilling machine.

In November a bedspread bearing an image of Pennington Church, Leigh, c.1926 in the centre was passed on to the Heritage Service by a local JP.

In December the Police contacted us to see if we were interested in two 19 century sporting guns and a Turkish Mauser bayonet that had come to light in a recent firearms amnesty.

The service also receives items already owned by Wigan MBC, but in need of a good home.

WIGAN MUSEUMS SERVICE TO SCHOOLS

DID you know that Wigan Museums Service has a large collection of objects which it loans free of charge to all schools and colleges in the Metropolitan Borough?

The collection, of over 2,500 items, provides an invaluable resource for both children and adults. Many of the objects are the 'real thing', that is to say originals, but there are also replicas, models, slides, posters and audio tapes. Wherever possible, material is related to the study of the borough.

Fascinating

The collection is divided into three categories, biological sciences, earth sciences and history. That means that teachers can borrow objects as diverse as a stuffed otter, a 250 million year-old fossil or a belt buckle last worn in 200 A.D. by a Roman soldier. That is what makes the collection so fascinating to use. Handling 'real' objects can provide a tangible link

with the past, a people or a wildlife habitat. It is much easier to grasp the idea or fact learned from a text-book, when an object associated with that idea can be held and observed. Museum objects are not just exciting to look at or touch. Their study provides us with the knowledge that is written down in books; this is especially true of the natural world. History, too, is not learned from books and documents alone. Neolithic woman could not read or write, so the only way in which we can get to know her is by the study of the flint tools, pots and burial chambers etc. she left behind and which survive to the present day.

Benefitted

Anyone engaged in 'educating' the community, provided their financial support comes from the Borough Council, is eligible to borrow. In the past, social workers conducting reminiscence therapy with older people, youth groups putting on plays and artists in residence have all benefitted from the collection.

If you would like to know more about the School Loans Service, contact Yvonne Webb, Interpretation Officer, on 0942 828123. Yvonne would particularly like to hear from you if you are considering donating material to this valuable community resource.

During 1900 these included a telephone box (painted green!), a table and chairs from Whitley High School, a tiled plaque of 'Spinning Jenny' from the Planning Department, and the wall clock and Carnegie plaque from the now closed Pemberton Library.

So think twice before you throw anything out and please contact our Collections Manager, Phillip Butler 0942 828124. He'd love to hear from you.

THE HISTORY SHOP

First in Britain

IN March 1992, in the Old Library, Rodney Street, Wigan, the Heritage Service will open the History Shop—which we claim will be the first of its kind in Britain. Not many people, then, will know what a History Shop is. Briefly, it will have four different aspects:

1. A state of the art display area in which we will tell the story of the Wigan area, from the earliest times to the present day. Only Hindley has its own museum, so this display will go a long way towards filling the gap.

There will also be a temporary display area for exhibitions 'in-house' or travelling exhibitions and also some space to display some of the Service's art collection.

It is hoped that there will be something here for everyone, including schools.

2. A study/research area, which will be of particular interest to the local historian and genealogist. The History Shop will incorporate the Wigan Local History collection, and offer a comprehensive resource bank of parish registers, census returns, etc., for the genealogist. The Leigh Local History collection, however, will remain in Leigh, as will the Archives Service.

3. A retail area, selling a wide range of Heritage-related merchandise, including local history and genealogical books, teaching packs, prints and photographs, and a wide range of high quality souvenirs.

4. A meeting/lecture room, where the Service will put on public lectures and displays; please note that the intention here is also to hire out this room to local societies and groups. So if you are a secretary unhappy with your group's venue, contact Alastair Gillies on 828560, who will be pleased to discuss terms.

The History Shop, then, will have something for everyone—young or old, local or non-local. It will be the flagship of the Heritage Service, the focal point for 'heritage' activities in and around Wigan. Based as it will be in the splendid setting of the former Wigan Reference Library, which is presently being given a thorough facelift, the History Shop is something for everyone with an interest and pride in our past to look forward to.

Another progress update in 'Past Forward' no.2.

Wigan Local History Service on the move again

DURING building work in the Old Library, Rodney Street, Wigan Local History Service has had to operate at a reduced

level, from the New Library. Prior to its integration into the History Shop, it is hoped that this service can return to

the Old Library at the end of September. Our apologies for all the inconvenience.

THE Public Libraries Act of 1850—the bill for which was promoted, coincidentally, by W. Ewart, MP for Wigan 1839-41—provided for the support of public libraries from the rates. This rate aid, however, was limited to one old penny in the pound—hardly an adequate amount to maintain a library of any consequence. When one considers that land, buildings and fixtures were dependent on private benefactors, it is not surprising that the town had to wait another 28 years after the passing of the Act, before it acquired a library.

The mover was Thomas Taylor, owner of the Victoria Cotton Mills, which stood in Wallgate opposite Trencherfield Mill. He offered the town £12,000 to pay for a library building. A few years later Dr. Joseph Winnard, a surgeon to the Wigan Poor Law Union, died at the age of 53, leaving a further £12,000 in his will to pay for books. The project for Wigan Library could now go ahead. Alfred Waterhouse, an

architect who often worked in the style of the Gothic Revival, and who is principally remembered for his educational and civic buildings such as Manchester Town Hall (1868) and the Natural History Museum (1873-81), was entrusted with the design.

The new library was built on the site of Wigan Grammar School in Rodney Street—the school was rebuilt near Wigan Hall, to the design of Waterhouse. The library had two main floors. On the ground floor was an entrance hall (decorated in the style of a mosque), a lending library and a newsroom. On the first floor was the reference library and a room to house the meetings of the Corporation's Public Library Committee. There was also a flat for the 'custodian' or caretaker-cum-security officer.

SUNDAY OPENING

The Library opened on 7 May 1878. The first librarian was 27 year-old Henry Tennyson Folkard, previously sub-librarian at the Royal Academy of Arts, and it was his task to acquire the books and organise them. From the first there was a determination to make the reference section far better than those in other



Wigan Public Library staff, 1898. In the centre is the Borough Henry Tennyson Folkard. Previously sub-librarian at the Royal Academy of Arts, Folkard was appointed as Wigan's first Librarian in 1878, at the age of 27. In the same year as this photograph, he became a Fellow of the prestigious Society of Antiquaries. He met an ignominious end after being hit by a runaway horse that had broken loose from a float that it was pulling.

WIGAN LIBRARY

The Early Years

owns the size of Wigan. Only books of rarity and quality were acquired. Specialists of national repute were consulted, and their advice taken in the selection of books. The result was a reference library that was representative of thought and knowledge in the last quarter of the 19th century, and which also combined a large number of books of bibliographical and historic interest. After the first eight months work there were 15,300 volumes in the reference library and 6,808 in the lending library. There was some criticism of imbalance, but this was stifled by the general enthusiasm for the status achieved by the Reference Library. In any case,

the most popular department was the newsroom, in which current newspapers and periodicals were held. This had to be extended in 1892 by having an annexe built on to the original building.

"an institution of which Wigan had every reason to be proud"

Interestingly, from the first, the Newsroom was open on Sundays. The Reference Library too was open on Sundays, from 26 January 1879, to persons holding special tickets issued by the Library Committee.

Wigan was always most unique in having its library open on a Sunday—only Manchester and Birmingham did likewise. Yet there would appear to have been virtually no opposition to Sunday opening in Wigan, as it was the wish

of the donor, Thomas Taylor. And Sunday opening was considered a great success—attendance in 1880, for example, totalled 10,472.

From the outset, however, there were financial problems (not an unfamiliar story!) The penny rate limitation was the cause of serious under-funding, and the Corporation was forced to adopt various ruses as a temporary solution. At first it adopted the practice of giving the library an annual 'present' from the borough revenues. Then, in 1882, it established a subscription department to which subscribers paid one guinea each, the whole of the income being used for the purchase of new books. These were reserved for the use of subscribers for the first year, after which they were available for use by the general public. In 1884 the Corporation introduced a voluntary rate to help support the library. Such was the enthusiasm for the institution that a good majority of ratepayers paid it.

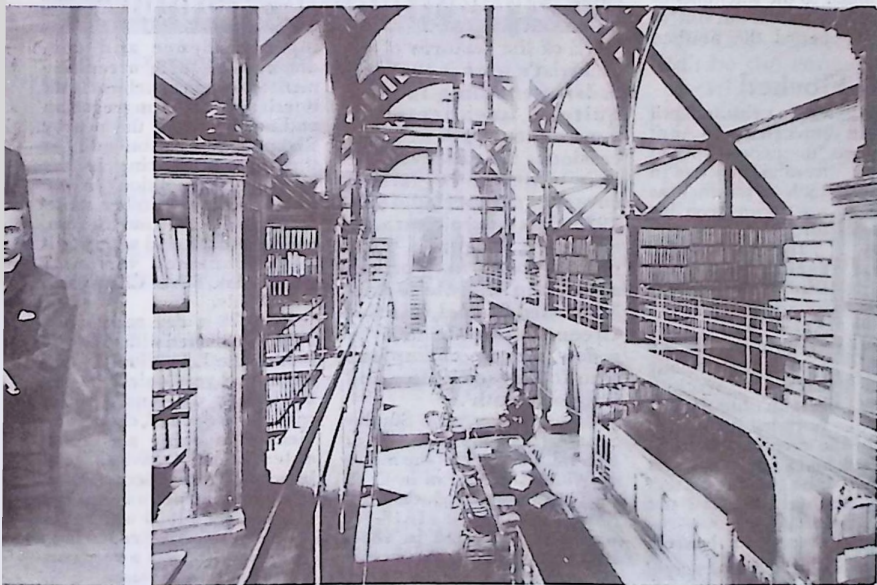
Nevertheless, in 1885 the special financial contribution towards Sunday opening of the Reference Library was discontinued, and this practice had to come to an end.

Four years later, however, such financial devices became unnecessary, when the Wigan Corporation Act allowed the Corporation to increase the library rate. With proper funding, Wigan Library was now firmly established and its future secure.

BIBLIOPHILIC

As the reputation of the Reference Library grew, donations, of manuscripts, prints, paintings and medals, as well as books, came flooding in, not only from wealthy local inhabitants such as the bibliophilic Ludovic, Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, but also from corporate bodies such as the Corporation of the City of London and the British Museum. Significantly, the latter gave to Wigan Library on an annual basis various publications such as its numerous catalogues of science and art—a privilege extended to very few libraries. Dr. Axon, President of the Library Association, declared that Wigan Library "was regarded in many ways as a model library... and an institution of which Wigan had every reason to be proud".

A further article on Wigan Library in the 20th century will appear in 'Past Forward' No.2.



Wigan Public Library reference department, 1898, with Wigan's first Librarian, Henry Folkard. The portrait above the door is of Thomas Taylor, who presented the building to the Corporation. Notice the original gas-lighting, soon to be replaced by electricity; Mr Folkard commented, "Judged by the experiences of other places, it [electricity] will assist materially in preserving the books".

Crimewatch!

ALL readers of Past Forward are asked to assist in the recovery of an important piece of Wigan history. An old regulator clock, by Thomas and J. Foster of Manchester, was stolen during the weekend beginning 10 May 1991, from the Old Library, Rodney Street, while building work was being carried out.

The clock is ornately carved with the old Wigan Corporation arms and the Moot Hall symbol.

It was apparently taken out over the roof-tops—a daring route in itself, made all the more remarkable by the fact that it was a long-case clock over 8 feet tall and extremely heavy.

Wigan Heritage Service is very anxious to recover this important historical piece but needs your help. If you feel you can be of any assistance, please contact the Heritage Service 0942 828124 or PC Stanley of Wigan CID 0942 44981. All information will of course be treated confidentially.

STANDISH AS IT WAS



Engraving of Standish Hall, 1828. The black and white timber-framed section is the surviving part of the Tudor house, dating from 1574; the rest of the Hall was rebuilt in brick in 1748. The chapel also dates from the 1740's, while the single-storey wing was added in 1822. Most of the Hall was demolished in the 1920's.

Wesley in Wigan

1991 MARKS the bicentenary of the death of John Wesley, leader of 'the people called Methodists'. Wesley is particularly appropriate to the Wigan area in view of its strong Methodist tradition and because of the number of visits he paid to the area—9 in all. Fortunately for us, he kept a Journal, the published version of which began in 1735 and continued right up to 1790, only a few months short of his death.

He recorded his first visit to the area, on 9 May 1759: "I rode to Downall Green, near Wigan, a town wicked to a proverb.... but in a short time the word of God prevailed and all their fierceness melted away". He visited Downall Green again in 1761, and Wigan itself on 13 July 1764; "at 10 I began to preach at Wigan proverbially famous for its wickedness. As I preach abroad [in the open] we expected some disturbance. But there was none at all. A few were wild at first, but in a little while grew quiet and attentive. I did not find so civil a congregation the first time I visited Bolton".

Wild

On his second visit to the town, on 6 April 1768, he records: "About 11 I preached at Wigan in a place near the middle of the town [the Wiend] which I suppose was formerly a playhouse. It was tall and very warm, most of the congregation were wild as

wild could be, yet none made the least disturbance. Afterwards, as I walked down the street, they stared sufficiently, but none said an uncivil word."

Wesley's 5th visit to the area was in 1775, when he preached in the shell of an incomplete chapel in Buck-i-th'-Vine Yard, Wallgate, Wigan. During the sermon "an impetuous storm of thunder and lightning and rain added much to the solemnity of the occasion". On his 6th visit, in 1776, he opened the finished chapel.

Flocked

He paid a flying visit in April 1786, and returned on 18 April 1788, when "the people flocked from all quarters in such a manner as was never seen before".

In 1790 Wesley, aged 86, paid his final visit to Wigan—he recorded for 9 April, "we went to Wigan for many years, proverbially called 'Wicked Wigan' but it was not what it was. The house in the evening was more than filled; and all that could get in seemed to be greatly affected, while I strongly applied the Lord's words...."

Less than a year later, he died. To commemorate the bicentenary of Wesley's death on 2nd March, 1791, a souvenir book has been written by Marjorie Swindlehurst of Shevington, titled *John Wesley and Wigan*. It is available from local bookshops, priced £3.75. In case of difficulty send cheque for £4.00 (including assisted p & p) to: Owl Books, P.O. Box 60, Wigan, WNI 2QB. Allow 10 days for delivery.



THROUGHOUT the Standish Festival, there will be another opportunity to view the Heritage Service's exhibition, 'Standish As It Was', which attracted considerable attention when it was first mounted last year.

Standish offers a rewarding area for historical study, for a number of reasons. It was the centre of one of the large ancient parishes of Lancashire, and the parish records are particularly rich. For example, the registers of baptisms, marriages and burials date from 1560. Unusually, for a brief period in the early 19th century, causes of death were recorded in the burial registers; the childhood deaths from croup, fits and teething reflect the high infant mortality of the time.

Standish is also interesting in that most of the township and the whole of the manor were included within the Standish family's estates for several hundred years. The estate records include a fine series of deeds between the 12th and 16th centuries, many of which throw light on former customs of landholding and agricultural practice. e.g. rights of housebote and haybote (taking wood for house and hedge repairs), and pannage (pig grazing) in the common woods of Standish, and turbary (peat cutting) in the mosses and moors.

The Standish family papers also include a series of letters relating to the 'Standish Plot' of the 1690s when a group of Lancashire Catholics were implicated in an attempt to restore the deposed James II; William Standish, then lord of the manor, was acquitted through lack of evidence. In 1757, the evidence which surely would have condemned the conspirators was discovered hidden in a wall on the estate; a bundle of papers including coded messages and blank commissions from the exiled James.

The importance of coal mining is illustrated not only by old photographs of Victoria Pit (opened in 1900 by Wigan Coal & Iron Co.), but also by a deed of 1350 which specifies mineral rights.

'Standish As It Was' can be seen in Standish Library, 7-12 October. There will also be guided tours of the church at 11.00 each weekday morning. A tour of this magnificent historical building is strongly recommended (it is the only Grade 1 listed building in Metropolitan Wigan).

News from the Archives

ONE of the features of an archivist's work is that records often come to light quite unexpectedly. Amongst recent accessions, the discovery of two baptism registers, covering the period 1886-1935, in a house clearance was quite a surprise. They turned out to have originated from the old Bethel Methodist Chapel, Hindley Green, founded in 1865 'by a few sturdy champions who fought for justice and religious truth'.

Bethel began as a Sunday School, following a meeting of like-minded men at the house of William Meadows in Coalpit Lane. These included William Kirkpatrick (1813-76) who was converted in 1838, became an abstainer and evangelised amongst the colliers. The school began on 10 September 1865 in an old handloom weavers' shop; the following year, the first proper school chapel building was opened. The part of Hindley Green where Bethel stood was then called Hindley Common or Top-o'-th'-sands. This building was soon damaged by min-

ing subsidence and condemned in 1873; a replacement wooden chapel was built hurriedly, the congregation and school using the nearby Kirkpatrick's cotton mill (at the time of writing in the course of demolition) in the meantime. This timber structure failed to keep out the rain, and had to be clad with tin; it was nicknamed variously Noah's Ark, Silver Chapel and Tea Caddy.

By 1879 a day school had been established with the sanction of the Education Department, and very quickly a new brick-built day and Sunday school was opened, chapel services also being accommodated in this. In 1883 the largest and grandest version of Bethel Chapel was opened at a cost of £1500 which, for trustees who were mostly working men, was a very considerable sum to raise.

The congregation seems to have particularly flourished in the 1880's and 1890's and unlike many other small nonconformist chapels, survived until as recently as 1969.

The site is now occupied by Hindley Green branch library and community centre.

Society News

Aspull and Haigh Historical Society

This society meets on the second Thursday of the month, in the Annex, Bolton Road, Aspull, at 8.00 p.m. In addition to a good selection of speakers, members enjoy various social activities.

Further details from Mrs. Dorothy Dootson, 5 Standcliffe Grove, Aspull. (tel. 831204)

Atherton Heritage Society

Founded to protect the threatened Alder House (1697), this society is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year. It is still campaigning for the complete restoration of the building, and indeed for the preservation of the town's heritage in general.

Interesting talks are given on local history topics and three outings arranged per year to places of historical interest. The programme for the second half of 1991 is as follows:

12 August 'Old Bolton' Mr. Parker

16 September 'Bess of Hardwicke' Mrs. Greenhalgh

29 September Outing to Hardwicke Hall

14 October 'Progress of Parish Church Repairs' Mr. Stott (AGM)

11 November 'Tripe—Memories of a Tripe Shop' Mrs. Houlihan

9 December Christmas visit for Carols and Supper

Meetings are held on the second Monday of each month in Atherton Library.

Membership £2.50; admission £1 (non-members) or 50p (members). If you are interested, contact Atherton Library (tel. 878369)

Leigh Civic Trust

Leigh and District Civic Trust is responsible for the Leigh, Astley, Tyldesley, Lowton and Golborne wards, and maintains a close working relationship with Atherton Heritage Society. The Trust's main aims are to stimulate public interest in the area, to promote high standards of planning and architecture, and to secure the preservation, conservation, development and improve-

ment of features of general public amenity or historical interest.

Current projects and concerns include:

- the restoration of the original Spinning Jenny Plaque, Leigh

- the provision of public access to Leigh Spinners Mill Engine

- the return of stone lions, originally from Lilford Estate Bridge

- the proposed Canal Wharf development.

For information on membership and our programme of activities for 1991/92, contact Roy Thomas, Secretary, Leigh Civic Trust, c/o Leigh Teachers' Centre, Windermere Road, Leigh, WN7 1HY (tel. 262100/492457).

Wigan Civic Trust

The Trust addresses various issues, including redundant buildings such as the Carnegie Library and Mesnes Park Lodge, traffic and parking problems, preservation of mining artefacts, and the restoration of the Tyldesley monument. 'The Galleries' is a far more pleasing and different outcome to what might have been without a prominent Civic Society.

The Trust has open meetings every second Monday of the month at Drumcroon Arts Centre, Parsons Walk, Wigan, at 7.30 p.m. The quality of speakers is high, the subject matter varied. Visits and other social events are planned.

For further information contact Anthony Grimshaw, Secretary, 6 Bridgeman Terrace, Wigan. WN1 1SX (tel. 45777).

Wigan Family History Society

This society meets to further the interest and skills of all those interested in tracing their family line back into the mists of time (two members have gone back as far as the 12th century!)

Meetings are held on the first and third Mondays of each month at 8.00 p.m. (except July and August). On the first Monday, there is an exchange of problems, discoveries, etc; the third Monday is Speaker's night. Forthcoming speakers include Nicholas Webb on Ancient Documents, Fred Holcroft on the Domesday Book, Miss Irene Brophy on the Thompson Family, and Mr. George Birtol on the River Douglas.

Further details from Len Marsden, Secretary (0942 217764).

Down at The Pier

TWO events at Wigan Pier will have a very definite Heritage flavour.

On Sunday 25 August (Bank Holiday weekend) there will be an Old English Sports Day, when teams representing various local hostelries will be competing in some traditional local sports and games. There will also be plenty of games and activities for the children to join in. With the added attractions of a childrens' entertainer, brass band and Victorian Music Hall, it promises to be a memorable day out for all the family.

On Thursday 10 October, the Mill at the Pier will host a Pasty Eying Evening, during which the popular local group 'Uncle Joe's Mintballs' will be in concert. 'Pasty eying' was a popular custom in the hostelries of the Wigan area, when the nights began to draw in. Each

public house would hire expert women cooks to bake large turnover-shaped pasties of chicken, pork or rabbit. Into some they put a small, jelly-baby shaped pot doll as a good luck charm; the 'lucky' finder was expected to pay for a round. Concerts were also a feature of these evenings, including various impromptu acts. A silk kerchief was the traditional prize for a star turn, and for the best comic costumes— bunches of black puddings!

So come and hear 'Uncle Joe's'—perhaps eat some as well, along with some delicious pasties especially baked for the occasion. You might even win a black pudding!

For further details of these and other events at the Pier, watch your local press, or contact the Piermaster's Office tel. 0942 323666.

Colliery Coup

ASTLEY Green Colliery will be the venue for the prestigious Trans-Pennine Run, on 3 and 4 August 1991. 300 commercial vehicles will be competing in what is effectively the commercial equivalent of the London-Brighton run.

Competitors will begin to assemble at Astley

Green from about noon on Saturday, and the public will be welcome to visit the site to inspect the magnificent vehicles and enjoy the accompanying displays and entertainment (admission only £1.50; children 50p).

From 7.30 a.m. on Sunday, the vehicles will begin to depart on their journey east; again, the public will be welcome to watch them leave, free of charge!

A wonderful opportunity for all the family to enjoy a truly magnificent spectacle. Don't miss it!

WHAT'S ON

EXHIBITIONS

Powell Gallery, Wiend Centre

A Woman's Place?—

21 September - 19 October

Stables Centre, Haigh Country

Park

On Wheels and Water—

20 July - 8 September

Dear Diary—

14 September - 10 November

Thought for Food—

16 November - January 1992

Wigan Pier

A Woman's Place?—

2 November - 5 January 1992

Standish Library

Standish As It Was—

7 - 12 October.

EVENTS

Astley Green Colliery

Trans-Pennine Run—

3 - 4 August

Fair Organ Society Rally—

6 October

Also, a steam-up on the first Sunday

of each month.

Wigan Pier

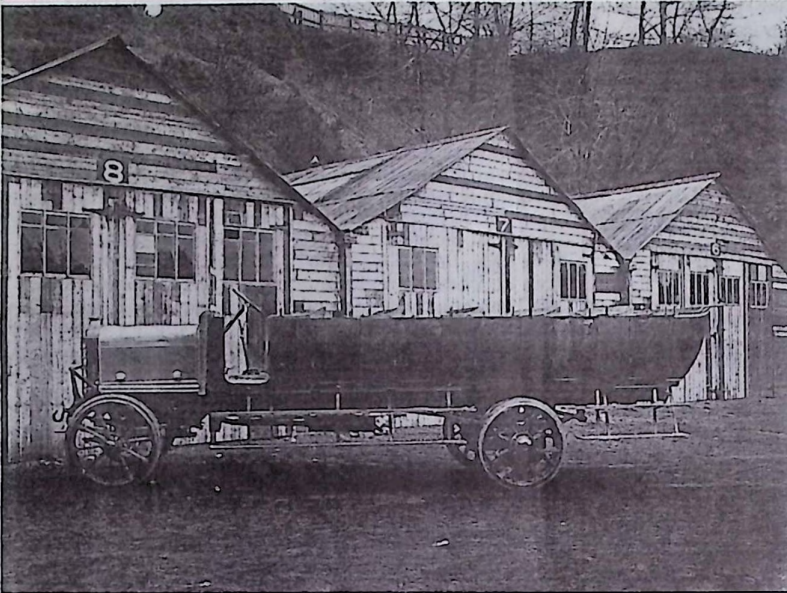
Old English Sports Day—

25 August

Pasty Eying Evening—

10 October.

Where is it?



These photographs were kindly loaned to the Heritage Service by Mr. E. Ramsdale of Hindley Green. Do you know anything about the firm that made this charabanc body, where the photographs were taken, or anything about the photographer, Fred W. Drew?

Where are they?



This scene showing pit women is thought to have been in the Haigh area. Any suggestions?

Who was he?



Has anyone any idea where this wall plaque to Richard Plumbley, tailor, is or was?

If you can help us with any information about these photographs, please telephone 0942 828122 or write to the Heritage Officer, Dept. of Leisure, Trencherfield Mill, Wigan, WN3 4EF.

If you would like to receive future editions of Past Forward through the post, please complete the coupon and post to:

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**METROPOLITAN
WIGAN**

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