

PAST FORWARD

ISSUE NUMBER THREE

AUTUMN 1992



*The Newsletter of
Wigan Heritage Service*

FREE

From the Editor

THIS is the third issue of *Past Forward*, the newsletter designed to promote 'heritage' in and around Metropolitan Wigan.

I must say at the outset that the second edition was even more successful than the first — there are very few copies left, despite a 50% increase on the previous print-run, as well as a 100% increase in the number of pages. Our mailing list has grown enormously, with coupons being returned from literally all over the world.

That's the good news. The bad is that we're in danger of becoming a victim of our own success. To produce more copies of a larger publication costs a lot more money, and it is now common knowledge just how short of money local authorities are at present. While I do not wish at this stage to institute a blanket charge for *Past Forward*, or even for everyone on our mailing list, I am sure you will appreciate that the more voluntary subscriptions we receive, the more pages we can print, and the more chance that we can continue to produce *Past Forward* at all.

All subscriptions towards production costs, therefore, would be greatly appreciated, particularly from those on our mailing list — and most of all from our overseas readers. For instructions regarding payment, please see page 7.

Enough of doom and gloom. The History Shop to date has been an outstanding success — read all about it on pp. 7 to 10.

Finally all contributions (whether written or financial!) will be greatly appreciated.

All comments and correspondence should be addressed to:
Heritage Services Manager,
Editor,
'Past Forward',
Department of Leisure,
Trencherfield Mill,
Wigan.
WN3 4EF

introducing...

NOW that the Heritage Service is becoming much better-known it is high-time that we told you who actually is behind the service, and where we are all based.

At Wigan:

Leisure Services Department, Trencherfield Mill—

Heritage Services Manager (and editor of Past Forward)

Alastair Gillies (0942) 828560

History Shop—

Visitor Services Manager

Philip Butler (0942) 828124

Education and Outreach Manager (and Local History, West)

Bob Blakeman (0942) 828020

Collections Development Manager

Yvonne Webb (0942) 828123

Heritage Officer (Industrial History)

Mike Haddon (0942) 828121

Heritage Officer (Social History)

Dawn Whitwham (0942) 828124

Heritage Assistant

Hilary Fairclough (0942) 828122

Heritage Assistant

Barbara Miller (0942) 828122

Heritage Assistant

Stephanie Tsang (0942) 828122

Wigan Pier—

Technician

Denise Whitter (0942) 323666

Technician

Roy Wareing (0942) 323666

At Leigh:

Archives, Town Hall—

Heritage Officer (Archives)

Nicholas Webb (0942) 672421 ext. 266

Senior Technician

Len Hudson (0942) 672421 ext. 265

Leigh Library—

Heritage Officer (Local History)

Tony Ashcroft (0942) 604131

If you have an enquiry, and are not sure who the most appropriate person is to contact, please ring the History Shop (0942 828128).

THE HISTORY SHOP

Rodney Street, Wigan. WN1 1DG
Tel: 0942 828128
Monday 10.00 - 7.00
Tues-Fri. 10.00-5.00
Sat. 10.00-1.00

WIGAN PIER

Wallgate, Wigan.
Tel: 0942 323666
Sun-Thurs. 10.00-5.00
(closed Fri. & Sat. until April)

ARCHIVES

Town Hall, Leigh. WN7 2DY
Tel: 0942 672421 ext. 266
Mon,Tues,Thurs,Fri. - 10.00-1.00, 2.00-4.30
(by appointment)

ARCHIVES EDUCATION SERVICE

Schools Centre, Wigan Pier.
Tel: 0942 323666

LEIGH LOCAL HISTORY

Turnpike Centre, Leigh. WN7 1EB
Tel: 0942 604131
Mon,Tues. 10.00-7.00
Wed. 10.00-5.00
Thurs,Fri. 10.00-7.00
Sat. 10.00-3.30

HINDLEY MUSEUM

Hindley Library, Market Street, Hindley.
Tel: 0942 55287
Mon-Wed. 9.30-7.00
Fri. 9.30-5.30
Sat. 9.30-12.30

ASTLEY GREEN COLLIERY

Higher Lane, Astley, Nr. Manchester.
Tues, Thurs. 1.00-5.00
Sun. 11.00-5.00
(School and party visits by arrangement)

Cover: Rev. William Wickham serving soup to his parishioners during the miners' strike in 1893. An exhibition of the photographs of Rev. Wickham can be seen in the History Shop from 21 November.

News from the Archives

THE recent official opening of the History Shop in Wigan witnessed the Archives Service further extending its visible presence there, with the establishment of an exhibition case devoted solely to documents from the archives. Already the permanent exhibition 'Founded on Coal' is based largely upon facsimiles of documents and illustrations, and the study centre makes available microfilm copies of popular records such as church registers and census schedules, but now a selection of original records will be displayed and interpreted in the case.

The initial selection is designed to show examples of different types of documents from the medieval period to the present century, and to illustrate the development of record keeping over the centuries.

From the records of the Standish family and estate are two early deeds. The first, dated 1317, records a grant of property in Wigan from William de Fulshaw to Henry de Fulshaw, including a 'toft with messuage' (house and land) in Hallgate. This deed is written in Latin, whereas the other, dated 1463, is an early example of the use of English for such a document, although many of the words and spellings used are very different from those found in modern English! It concerns a dispute between the brothers Gilbert and John Moody over the properties of their late mother Agnes.

The Marklands were a prominent family in Wigan during the 17th and 18th centuries, several Marklands being elected either mayor or member of parliament for the borough. From their papers now deposited with the Archives Service has been chosen an example of a private letter dated 1665. By this period the spread of literacy amongst the gentry and trade classes was generating quantities of personal papers of this kind. Written in the attractive 'secretary hand' of the time, the language and spelling show quite a change from that of the earlier English document. The letter concerns Michael Markland's attempt to obtain from the Heralds in London a bona fide coat of arms for the family, and is addressed to Ralph Markland via William Markland's house in Millgate. Millgate was

where many of the larger houses of the leading families were situated before the Industrial Revolution.

Also from the mid-17th century there is on display a document bearing upon the momentous events of the Civil War as it affected the Wigan area. This is a memorandum dated 2nd January, 1643 and signed by (among others) William Forth, then mayor, of orders made for the provisioning of the town, and for accommodating the soldiers on guard in anticipation of an attack by the parliamentary forces. It was decided to warn people of their approach by lighting a fire on top of the parish church steeple and by ringing the bells backwards. This was to be a signal to Sir William Gerard of Bryn that he should bring forces to the town's aid. These preparations proved to be in vain, however, for Wigan was attacked and taken in July 1643.

The third of the documents shown from this period is less dramatic but of great interest for social and economic history. Although few records of manorial administration in the district have survived (apart from those of Wigan itself), a good series has been deposited for the manor of Orrell between 1640 and 1785. The manor court book for 1651, now on show, records typical entries for tenants being presented for a variety of offences against manorial custom, such as encroaching on the common lands, the illegal erection of cottages, and the harbouring of illegal lodgers or 'innates' in their own houses or outbuildings. The last of these was the commonest offence and tenants were fined substantially for it, since the authorities feared that an influx of potential paupers would put an intolerable burden on the local ratepayers, and might be a potential source of disorder.

Moving further afield to Ashton-in-Makerfield, an example of a poor law document has been chosen to illustrate the system of pauper apprenticeship, which was an important element in the old poor laws between Elizabethan times and the 19th century. The indenture (so called because of the indented cut across the top edge of the paper) records the apprenticing of one John Greenough, an eleven year old Ashton boy, to a linen weaver from Billinge named John Fairhurst, in June 1781.

The basic principle behind the

poor laws was that each parish or township should be responsible for its own paupers, and one of the problems facing the overseers of the poor (the unpaid local officials responsible for relieving distress), was to look after the many children whose parents were either dead or unable to maintain them. A system was developed whereby the overseers would pay a premium to a householder within the parish or beyond, out of the rate-payers' funds, and in return the householder would be bound to keep the child for a period stated in the indenture, normally until the apprentice reached the age of twenty-one. In the more industrial areas, many of these reluctant apprentices were bound to tradesmen well outside their native parish. Children from the Wigan area, for example, were sometimes taken as far away as Manchester or Warrington. The apprentices received no wages, and many received little if any training for a proper occupation or trade, as with a genuine craft apprenticeship. In John Greenough's case, he was bound for eight years.

Over 80 of these apprenticeship indentures have survived for Ashton township, dating between 1747 and 1788. Several other townships in the Borough have similar series surviving.

The other items on display are drawn from more recent records. An extract from the licensing records dated 1833 shows how many public houses were in existence at that time - as many as 14 on Standishgate alone! The names of both the premises and their licensees are listed, so that patrons of today's hostelrys will be able to see just how many of the old houses have kept their names to the present.

The archives contain good holdings of hospital records, and as an example there is on display a rare early print of Wigan Dispensary's Annual Report, dated 1806, which claimed that some 396 patients had been treated in the year, of whom 275 were cured. The Dispensary had been founded a few years before. It was a typical charity hospital of that period, its objects being to treat the 'sick poor who are unable to pay for medicines, and who are properly recommended.' The Dispensary was funded by its annual subscribers, who were allowed to recommend patients according to the amount they contributed towards its upkeep - at this date one pa-

tient for each half guinea subscribed. This document is also an example of old paper which has been repaired and conserved in order to render it fit for use by researchers.

Business records are particularly vulnerable to loss and neglect, and an example from this group has been selected to show how interesting they can be. The firm of Henry Farr & Son, carriage builders, was established in 1852, and operated variously from premises at Commercial Yard, Market Place, Woodcock Street and Wallgate. On display is a book of specifications for the manufacture of carriages to order, the example shown being a wagonette for a Mr. Mitchell of Golborne in 1895. This was William Mitchell of Brook Villa (a large house on Park Road), who was a J.P. and industrialist of the Mitchell, Arnott wallpaper firm at Brookside Mill. With the specification book is one of the many hand-coloured plates used to illustrate designs of vehicles available to customers, in this case for a dog-cart priced at 50 guineas.

The last document on display is taken from the Archives Service's extensive holdings of school records, being the minute book of Leigh Grammar School's debating society during the year 1909/1910. This volume reflects many of the social and political preoccupations of the Edwardian period, besides helping to record the standard of secondary education available to the few who could afford it for their children. Among the topics discussed was the question of India's fitness for representative government; the debate concluded that she was indeed ready.

Anyone interested in pursuing research topics suggested by the items presently exhibited, or in consulting more extensively the types of records described above, should contact the Archives Service at Leigh Town Hall (0942 672421 ext. 266). The Archives Officer is also normally on duty at the History Shop every Wednesday (0942 828020).

The items exhibited will be changed from time to time, and it is hoped that more thematic exhibitions will be possible in the future.

WILLIAM PINK—

Leigh Librarian and Amateur Genealogist

William Duncombe Pink was Borough Librarian of Leigh from 1903 until 1922.

He was born at Hoxton, London, the son of William Pink, a London timber dealer. From an early age he took a keen interest in history, and was to write a complete history of the members of the Long Parliament, 1640-1653, biographies of Parliamentary men, 1529-1714 and a work of six volumes listing the Knights of England, 1485-1714. He also compiled several volumes of pedigrees, including that of the Pink family.

Move to Leigh

In 1869, at the age of 27, William Pink was persuaded to move to Leigh by the proprietor of the Leigh Chronicle, Josiah Rose. Pink already had a Leigh connection, as he had acted as the Chronicle's London correspondent; he continued to write leading articles for the paper, as well as historical 'scrapbooks'.

For many years Pink was a bookseller in King Street. In 1900, he retired and went to live in Lowton, only to be appointed three years later as Borough Librarian. He inherited custody of 8,000 volumes; within 16 years the number had grown to over 20,000. His extensive knowledge of books and writers helped to greatly improve the library and to make it suitable for all classes of readers.



William Duncombe Pink (1842-1923)

Debater

William Pink took an active role in the life of the borough. He was a member of the Leigh Literary Society from its inception in 1877, and had the honour of giving 50 lectures to the society (a record which still stands). He was a popular debater. On one occasion a debate took place at Leigh Congregational School in Newton Street, over three nights, on the subject of 'Napoleon the Great'; it was generally agreed that Pink's argument in defence of Napoleon carried the day. Pink also founded a branch of the Y.M.C.A. in 1872, and was its president for many years. In 1903 he was made a J.P., and

in 1919 he was awarded a Master of Arts degree by Manchester University.

Shortly before his death, he presented his library of some 5,000 volumes of chiefly rare historical works to the town, to serve as the nucleus of a reference library; his valuable historical manuscripts were donated to the Rylands Library, Manchester. William Pink died at his home, 'Windslade', Lowton St. Mary's, in 1923, at the age of 80.

If you wish to consult any of Mr. Pink's works or require any further information about them, please contact Tony Ashcroft, Local History Officer, at Leigh Library (0942 604131).

AS we approach the pantomime season once again, this 1938 poster (opposite) may bring back some happy memories.

The Grand Theatre and Hippodrome was opened in 1904, with a capacity of 3000! This capacity was reduced to less than half when it underwent major alterations in 1935, after which it was known for a time as the New Hippodrome.

Many of the most important music hall and variety artists played the Grand Theatre and Hippodrome. Charles Chaplin appeared there in 1906 as a member of The Eight Lancashire Lads and almost certainly he and Stan Laurel appeared as members of the Fred Karno and Will Murray Companies that played the theatre regularly before World War I. Harry Lauder, George Robey, Vesta Tilley and George Formby Senior were other pre-World War I visitors. Between the wars, artists included Sandy Powell, Will Fyffe, George Formby Junior, Dan Leno Junior, Gracie Fields, Tommy Handley and Elsie and Doris Waters. During the decade after World War II, Jimmie Clitheroc, Frankie Vaughan, Eddie Calvert, Tommy Trinder, Harry Secombe, Morecambe and Wise, Harry Worth, Norman Vaughan, Max Bygraves and Ken Dodd all played the Hippodrome.

On 21 April 1956, the Hippodrome was burned down — ironically after a red-hot production entitled 'We Never Clothed', advertised as 'the "Girliest" Show of Nineteen Fifty "Sex"'. In 1959 a supermarket opened on the site, which today is occupied by Kwik Save. The boilerhouse chimney, with the letters HIP, is all that remains of this famous Wigan institution.

Researcher Rewarded

A NOTE from Mr. John Barker of Wigan, a regular reader in the Archives Searchroom in Leigh for several years, reminds us that for many local history enquiries the careful researcher will often be rewarded by looking further afield for records relating to the Wigan area. John Barker's research into the history of local estates and land ownership has taken him to the extensive collections held by the John Rylands Library in Manchester.

There, he has been examining extensive series of deeds, letters and legal papers which relate to Pemberton, Billinge, Ashton, Hindley, Lowton and Leigh. Most of these documents form part of the archives of the Legh family of Lyme, now a National Trust property near Stockport. The Legh family had considerable property in-

terests in the district, and held the manorial lordships of Pemberton and Norley.

Many of the papers studied by Mr. Barker relate to the manor of Pemberton, in particular the problems arising from encroachments upon the manorial waste, which culminated in a lawsuit in 1835 apparently produced by popular resentment of attempts to enclose some of the common lands. Other items include a series of presentments at the manorial court of Lowton in 1784 of tenants for failing to repair roads and scour ditches, and papers documenting a lawsuit concerning the lordship of Billinge, with details of timber trees growing on the waste.

Mr. Barker is very generously depositing his transcripts and copies with the Archives Service for the future use of local historians.

NEW
HIPPODROME
 WIGAN

TELEPHONE 2394

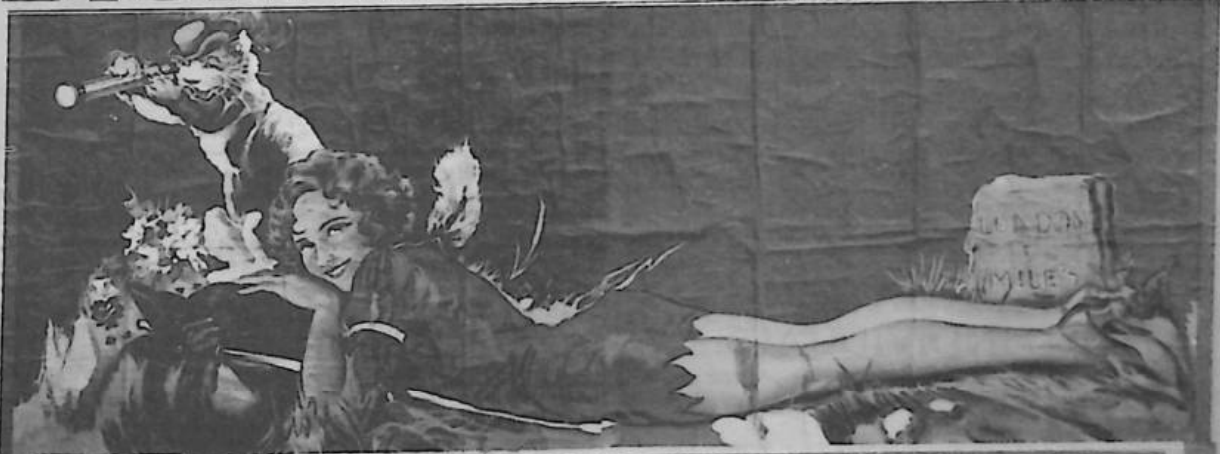
6.45 TWICE NIGHTLY 8.45 | MATINEE MONDAY AT 2.45

MANNIE JAY & SYDNEY MYERS
 PRESENT THEIR
MAGNIFICENT
 XMAS PANTOMIME

HIPPODROME
 WIGAN

MONDAY, DEC. 26TH 6.45 TWICE NIGHTLY 8.45
 MATINEES MON. TUES. WED. & SAT. AT 2.45
HALF-PRICE FOR CHILDREN AT EVENING PERFORMANCES ON WEDNESDAY, THURSDAY
 AND FRIDAY ON SUNDAY AND HOLIDAY EVENINGS.

DICK WHITTINGTON



TOM E. BRADLEY AS "IDLE JACK"

MATT LEAMORE as "Fitzwarren" | A CHORUS OF GLAMOROUS BEAUTIES | FREDERICK VERITY as "The Cook"

SYBIL DUNN AS "DICK" | BELL & DELL AS "Captain and Mate"

IONE FARULLI as "Fairy Queen Bell" | JADES' WIVES | NESIDE BABES | TINY RHODES as "The Cook"

THE BIGGEST AND BRIGHTEST MAGNIFICENT PANTOMIME TOURING COMPANY OF 45 ARTISTES | DON'T MISS THIS GREAT PANTOMIME

MARION LINCOLN as "Alice Fitzwarren" | EDGAR ALFONSO as "Sarah The Cook"

The Greatest Pantomime Act of All **MICKY MAX'S COMEDY ANIMAL CIRCUS**

MAGNIFICENT COSTUMES ORIGINAL EFFECTS BOOK EARLY TO AVOID DISAPPOINTMENT
 A PANTOMIME BUILT FOR FUN CHILDREN BRING YOUR PARENTS—PARENTS BRING YOUR CHILDREN

WARTIME RECOLLECTIONS

ERNEST TABERNER, a Wiganer, who was living in Coventry during the Blitz, has sent in a particularly interesting wartime recollection:

One of the earliest casualties in times of war due to vandalised telephone lines, bomb damage to buildings, railways and road is Communications. As an Exiled Wiganer living in devastated Coventry during the Blitz, I soon discovered how no letter to and from home could lead to low morale, and in an endeavour to improve this devised the

following scheme.

1. A letter addressed, in the normal way, but with an extra 2/6 worth of postage stamps, would be handed to the guard (cost 5d) of the next train to leave Coventry for either Birmingham or Rugby.

2. This would be handed to Railway Staff who would then hand it to the guard of the next train to leave either of those stations bound for Wigan.

3. On the address side of the envelope was an instruction as follows:

Mr. Railwayman:
Please post on arrival at

Wigan Station.

Thank you.

4. On the reverse side of the envelope was a further instruction as follows:

GPO: Please deliver
"EXPRESS MESS-
"ENGER" POST PAID
2/6.

Thank you.

In those days, 1940, Express Messenger meant personal delivery by telegram boy at a cost of 6d. per mile but because the letter had not been handed in over the counter there was a surcharge of 1/-. Since the delivery point was only two miles from-

the General Post Office the 2/6 extra postage paid covered both charges.

Thus it was that I could "post" a letter at 9 p.m. during an air raid and my mother would receive it at breakfast time next day. That was first class post indeed.

I wonder if there are any retired LMS or GPO workers still around who dealt with my letters?

If there are, 52 years later—ManyThanks.

E. Taberner
62 Westwood Road,
Earlesdon,
Coventry,
CV5 6GE

Once a Brewery Town

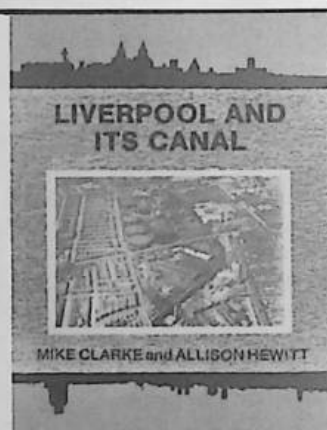
MOST people are not aware that Wigan was once an important brewing town. The oldest commercial brewery in Wigan was established c. 1780 by Henry Robinson, on King Street (on the site now occupied by Brocol House).

In 1894, the business was sold to Magee Marshall & Co. of Bolton—the then owner, Ellen Ann Robinson, had been declared insane, and therefore unfit to hold a brewing licence.

Magee Marshall already owned one outlet in Wigan, the Derby Arms—ironically, this was opposite Robinson's brewery! Magee Marshall was in turn taken over by Greenall Whitley.

LIVERPOOL AND ITS CANAL

by Mike Clarke
and
Allison Hewitt



ALTHOUGH principally concerned with the Liverpool/Bootle section of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal, this book will still be of interest to Wigan area historians due to the great importance the canal link had on the economic development of both locations.

The Wigan to Liverpool stretch was undoubtedly the busiest section of the entire trans-Pennine waterway, with the coal trade the dominant commodity involved. Vast quantities of coal were moved from the opening of the canal in 1774; railway competition was resisted far more successfully than on other canal routes and the trade did not finally cease until the early 1960s.

Chapter Four—'Industry and the Canal'—in particular emphasises the mutual advantage for both Wigan and Liverpool of the canal-borne coal trade. The relatively short distance involved meant that canal transportation costs were very modest, and as Liverpool grew, its increasing demand for the most significant fuel of the day benefitted the Wigan Coal-field enormously.

Coal was taken to Liverpool for outward shipping, particularly to Ireland, for bunkering the ever growing number of steam ships and the equally increasing domestic demand of the rapidly expanding city. A fourth very important demand was to supply local industries, some of which processed material such as sugar cane, imported through Liverpool's vast dock system, to which the

canal was directly linked from 1848.

The reviewer has found one or two slight inaccuracies. On page 55, for example, there is a reference to the Maypole Colliery at Abram as belonging to the Wigan Coal & Iron Company. From 1930 the pit was included in the Wigan Coal Corporation grouping, of which the W.C. & I. was the major constituent, and the author will not have been the first to be confused in differentiating between the W.C. & I. and W.C.C. The same passage also refers to Crooke Colliery. Crooke Pier was the canal loading point for the W.C. & I. Co's Standish Collieries, but there was no colliery in the tiny village of Crooke itself.

The above, however, are very minor details of inaccuracy and overall this is a well written and researched book, mainly the work of Mike Clarke, an acknowledged expert on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal. M.H.

Published in paperback by Merseyside Port Folios. (National Museums & Galleries on Merseyside), with its many illustrations, the book is reasonably priced at £3.95. Copies are available from the History Shop.

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OPENING SUCCESS

THE major event within the Heritage Service since *Past Forward 2* has, of course, been the opening of the History Shop.

On Monday, 11 May, the doors opened. The first visitors were some old friends of the Heritage Service — Donald Anderson, the local coal-mining expert and historian, and Evelyn and Norman Finch, who have close associations with local history in Lancashire. They were followed by a large turnout of visitors, some to see the new permanent display, 'Founded on Coal', others to make use of the splendid research facilities.

Thursday, 23 July, was doubly significant. The History Shop was officially opened by the Mayor of Wigan, Cllr. Arthur Wright, while our Committee Chairman, Cllr. Wilf Brogan, opened the first temporary display, of the paintings of well-known local artist, James Lawrence Isherwood. Over 100 guests were present, at what proved to be a thoroughly enjoyable and memorable evening.

One of the most encouraging features of the History Shop has been the visitor figures. In only four months, there have been well over 4,000 visitors. The Isherwood exhibition proved a good choice for openers — it was the first major show of his work since his death in 1989. Hopefully, 'The Homes of Football' and 'The World of William Wickham' will prove equally popular.

Another encouraging feature was the media publicity which the History Shop attracted. The week before the opening, it was given an excellent half-page coverage in the *The Guardian* (see page 10); and the local press as well did us proud. The History Shop also appeared on local television and radio.

These are, of course, early days — there is still a great deal to be done in fulfilling the History Shop's potential. We are, for example, hoping to attract school class visits, perhaps in conjunction with a visit to Wigan Pier.

Our Education and Outreach Manager, Bob Blakeman, would be happy to hear from any teacher who would like to bring a class to the History Shop (0942 828020).

These are also difficult days — once again, the Authority is faced with swinging cuts, and the Heritage Service will have to bear its fair share. We now have a splendid asset in the History Shop, but a lot of hard work lies ahead.

SO DO GIVE US YOUR SUPPORT. WE'RE DEPENDING ON YOU.



First visitors to the History Shop, Evelyn, left, and Norman Finch, right, with Historian, Donald Anderson and Heritage Services Manager, Alastair Gillies. (Photograph by courtesy of the Wigan Observer).

HISTORY SHOP RETAIL AREA

INCORPORATED into the History Shop is a small retail area which stocks a range of heritage related books and gifts. Please browse round next time you visit. We have on offer a range of History Shop souvenirs: mugs, bookmarks, pencils etc. We also stock greetings cards, postcards, stamps and unusual gifts. Our book selection includes publications relating to Lanca-

shire, publications useful to the genealogist and a range specific to Wigan, including our own Heritage Service publications: 'The Devil's Hill — local men at the Battle of Spion Kop, 1900', 'Murder, Terror and Revenge — the legend of Mab's Cross', and 'The Two Athertons'. We can supply books by post; examples of prices and postage below:

	Price	UK	Europe	Outside Europe	
				Air Mail	Surface
Murder, Terror and Revenge	£3.95	50p	£1.50	£3.00	£1.25
The Devil's Hill	£3.95	50p	£1.50	£3.00	£1.25
The Two Athertons	£2.99	50p	£1.50	£3.00	£1.25
Wigan a Century Ago	£3.60	50p	£1.50	£3.00	£1.25
Those Dark Satanic Mills	£2.50	£1.00	£3.00	£10.00	£2.00
Wigan Through Wickham's Window	£9.95	£1.50	£3.50	£10.50	£2.50*
John Wesley and Wigan	£2.50	50p	£1.50	£3.00	£1.25
Wigan and Wiganers	£3.95	50p	£1.50	£3.00	£1.25
Life & Times at Haigh Hall	£12.95	£2.50	£5.00	£17.00	£3.75*
Also available: white T-shirt with Heritage Service logo, sizes from:					
26" chest	£5.80	50p	£1.50	£3.00	£1.25
30" chest	£5.80				
Small	£7.30				
Medium	£7.30				
Large	£7.60				
Extra Large	£8.00				

*except Australia - air mail only.

If you require further details of any of our stock, please ring (0942) 828128 for information.

PAYMENT FROM OUTSIDE THE U.K. — We regret that, due to the high cost of currency exchange, no money orders/cheques can be accepted from outside the U.K., with the exception of Eurocheques. These must be made payable to Wigan MBC, in sterling,

with the Eurocheque card number on the back.

Payment can also be made by Visa/Mastercard, in sterling, quoting the card number and expiry date.

For mail order form, please refer to p16.

Exhibition Programme

THE History Shop's temporary exhibition programme opened in July with 'Isherwood—Local Artist, Local Life'.

The second exhibition is 'The Homes of Football', which can be seen until 31 October. This colourful display, described by the manager Lou Macari as 'a Football Fan's delight', captures all aspects of the game—the character of the fans, the pleasure and camaraderie of the crowd, the architecture of the stands. Included amongst the 57 images from football grounds around the country are scenes involving Wigan Athletic at Springfield Park.

The selection draws upon recent developments in football history, and the exhibition's compiler, Stuart Clarke, cites the Taylor Report as a source of inspiration. The exhibition, he explains, helps to satisfy the document's demand 'for a whole new ethos for football'—bringing the sport into new areas of culture.

The large-scale photographs are supported by various items of football memorabilia, including the neck-brace worn by Bert Trautman in the 1956 Cup Final, and a selection of local items.

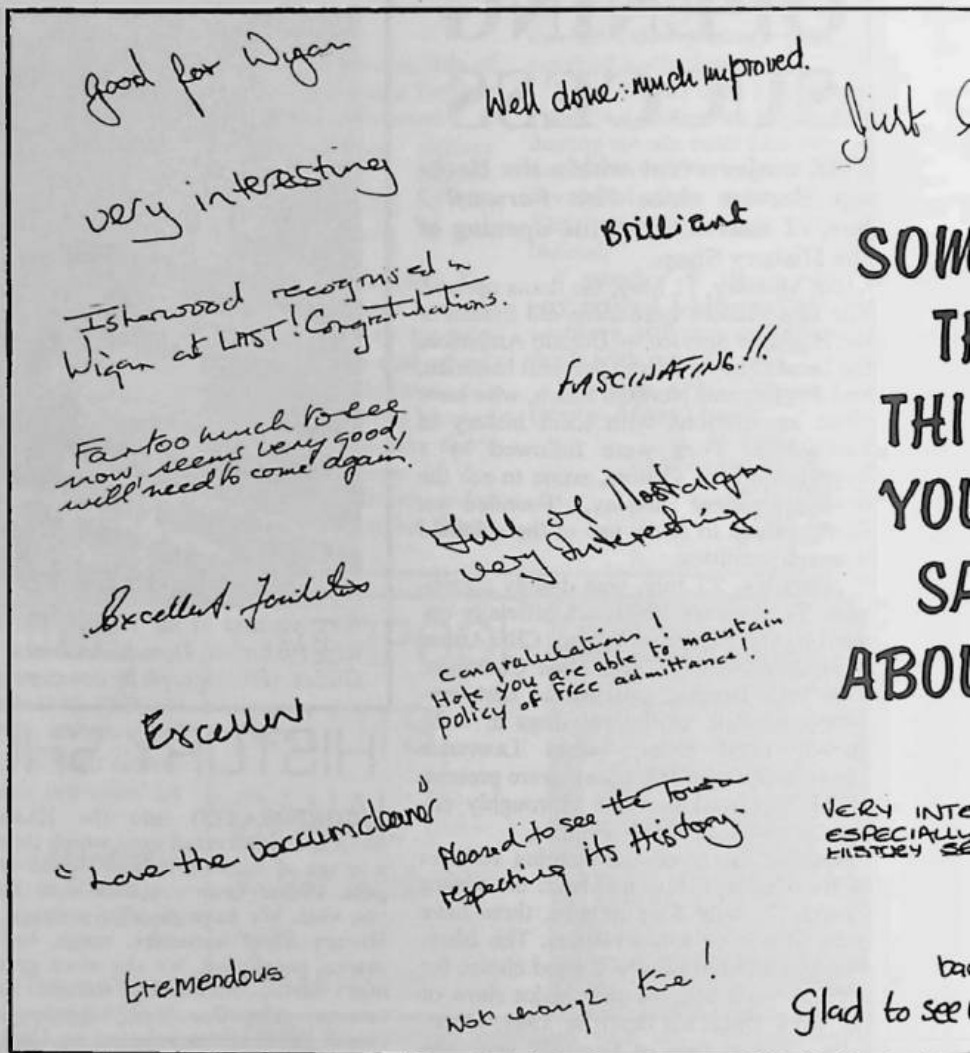
Lecture Programme

THE History Shop is the venue for the Heritage Service's brand-new lecture programme. This got off to a splendid start in September with a thoroughly entertaining talk by Mr. James Fairhurst on 'The Wigan Borough Police'—a sell-out, with 36 people and 2 dogs!

Lectures are held in the History Shop's meeting room on the second Wednesday of each month. Admission is normally £1.00. The 92/93 programme is as follows:

- 14 Oct. *The Sinking of the Titanic*
Mike Parsons
- 10 Nov. *The Atherton Collieries*
Alan Davies
- 9 Dec. *Local Men in The Boer War*
Fred Holerst
- 13 Jan. *Archaeology in Gr. Manchester*
Norman Redhead
- 10 Feb. *Dr. Prosser-White*
Dr. John Ashworth
- 10 March *The Pemberton Colliery Disaster*
Ian Winstanley
- 12 May *To be confirmed*
- 9 June *The Wigan Townscape*
Philip Powell

For further details, contact Bob Blakeman (0942 828020).



LOCAL HISTORY FOR YOUR BOOK-SHELF

TO coincide with the opening of the History Shop the Heritage Service has produced Nos. 2 and 3 in its publications programme. No. 1 was published last year—entitled 'The Two Athertons', it tells the story of Atherton in Lancashire and Atherton in California (for

yet another Atherton, see p12).

No. 2 is entitled 'Murder, Terror and Revenge in Medieval Lancashire—The Legend of Mab's Cross'. Handed down from generation to generation, this has become by far the best known legend of the Wigan area. Its two main characters, Sir William Bradshaigh and his wife Lady Mabel, were certainly real characters. But did Sir William actually take part in the Crusades? Did Lady Mabel, thinking him dead, take a Welsh Knight as her second husband? Did Sir William return from a long absence disguised as a palmer? And did he gain his revenge by chasing and killing the Welsh Knight? Did Lady Mabel actually do penance to the cross in Standishgate? Such is the stuff of legends, set against the background of one of the most savage episodes in the history of Lancashire—a story of

murder, terror and revenge.

The third in the series deals with a very different period of history. Entitled 'The Devil's Hill', its subject is local men at the Battle of Spion Kop, 1900. Football and rugby supporters are familiar with the name Spion Kop, or the Kop—a particular area of the terraces in a number of famous grounds, including, of course, Anfield, Liverpool and Central Park, Wigan. But how many realise the derivation of the name? The original Spion Kop is, in fact, a hill in South Africa. A battle was fought there on 24 January 1900, between the British and the Boers. Although the British were to win the war two years later, they lost this battle, and 1185 men (over 10 times the number of Boer dead) in what must rank as one of the biggest blunders in the long history of the British Army. The British assault was led by the

WHAT THE PRESS HAD TO SAY....

REMARKS such as 'brilliant', 'good memories' and 'a great treasure', can be read in a visitor book endorsing Wigan's newest window on the past - the History Shop. Already over 4,000 visitors have entered the unique Rodney Street development, acclaiming it as being 'great for the town'!

The History Shop combines local history, culture and learning with retail and commerce in Britain's first such Heritage venture.

An added attraction to the historical show case has been the temporary exhibits and displays. An opening exhibition which included 60 original paintings by Wigan born artist Lawrence Isherwood was extremely well attended, as is the current exhibition to visit the 114 year old building - 'the Homes of Football', which displays local soccer memorabilia and photographs.

After the closing of the 'Homes of Football' display, the next exhibition will feature the life and times of the town's revered Reverend - Mr. William Wickham. Opening 21 November the exhibition will run until April of next year.

Heritage Manager for Leisure Services, Alastair Gillies remarked on the exciting start to the newest feather in the town's already renowned Heritage cap. "The response has been incredible. The History Shop has captured people's attention not just locally but throughout the country. It is very much to the Department's credit that the project has come to fruition".

Mr. Gillies said that people are not just visiting to view the many collections of archives, records and exhibitions. An educational programme of talks and lectures on historical subjects is now also underway.

The Shop hopes to achieve even greater acclaim next year with the release of the news that it is to be entered into the Museum of the Year Awards for 1993, organised by National Heritage. Success in the awards will mean international exposure for the development.

"In recent years," explained Mr. Gillies, "Wigan has gained praise for its outstanding work on local heritage. Hindley Museum, Astley Green Colliery and, of course, Wigan Pier have all helped portray the town's former glories to the world. Hopefully the History Shop will follow the lead by doing well in the awards!"

Beautifully annotated and presented. Congrats!
 Great treasure
 Excellent! Very helpful!
 Well worth waiting for! Absolutely great!
 GORG. MEMORIES
 SUPERB FACILITIES & A GOOD DAY'S WORK!
 ESTABLISHING THE SOCIAL HISTORY
 in Wigan
 Roman remains

Roll Dove Every body
 An excellent use of this fine building.
 LOVE THE LOGO! BEAUTIFUL DISPLAYS!
 Wonderful
 VERY PLEASING NICE THAT THIS BUILDING IS BEING USEFUL
 Pleasant - helpful staff
 Interesting - even for the children
 Fantastic

Lancashire Fusiliers, who included many men from the Wigan area, and it was they who suffered the greatest loss of all the British regiments who fought on that fateful day. Nearly 100 Fusiliers died—tragically, in vain, as no lessons were learned before the ensuing carnage of the Great War. Small wonder that the men of Lancashire described this far-off hill in evocative terms—'the fatal hill', 'slaughter hill'—'the hill of the Devil'.

'The Two Athertons' was written by Heritage Service staff Nicholas Webb and Tony Ashcroft; it costs £2.99. The other two books were written by former Archives Education Officer and Teacher Fred Holcroft; they cost £3.95 each. Copies can be bought from the History Shop and other Heritage Service outlets, and from local bookshops. Details of mail order on p7.



STOP PRESS

NO. 4 in our publication programme, 'A Terrible Nightmare — The Lancashire Cotton Famine around Wigan', will be available in good time for Christmas. At only £3.95, it will make an excellent stocking filler. As with Nos. 2 and 3, it has been written by Fred Holcroft, and will be available from the same outlets.

No. 5 will focus on the Civil War in South Lancashire — it should be available in good time for Easter.

INFORMATION LEAFLETS

THE Heritage Service now has a series of attractive leaflets explaining the various aspects of the Service. These are entitled 'The History Shop', 'Museums', 'Archives' and 'Local History'. They are available at all Heritage Service and various other Leisure Services outlets. Alternatively they can be obtained by post - please ring 0942 828128.



Pause for thought... Wigan heritage officer Alastair Gillies on the elevated walkway barred to history shoppers on the orders of safety officials

PHOTOGRAPH: DON MCPHEE

History for sale as Wigan reopens a library without peer

Critical Comment

A LIBRARIAN, described as a Victorian time warp, next week as Britain's first History Shop.

The move represents a return to former glories for Wigan Reference Library, which once ranked alongside similar institutions in Birmingham and Manchester as a top grade database for knowledge-hungry citizens.

Wigan metropolitan council has spent thousands restoring the 111-year-old building's Victorian Gothic interior in anticipation of its new role as the county's first

History resource centre. The facilities will include 60,000 photographs, 10,000 books and "a real area" of interesting historical items.

There will be no Wigan "Peer rack". Alastair Gillies, heritage officer for the council, proposed yesterday.

The library, which was built two years ago, was built by Alfred Waterhouse, the Renwick architect responsible for Manchester town hall and the National History Museum. The History Shop's first customers arriving on Monday will have to negotiate an intricate network of lifts, an ornate, shadowy wooden staircase, glass-panned doors and an elevated

walkway of uncertain strength.

The light falling on a brutal-looking concrete direction gate is filtered through two stained-glass windows.

Mr Gillies was rather embarrassed by his 21st century third-catcher. "It's a sign of the age in which we live," he sighed. "Once it's painted black, it won't look too bad."

This is only the latest tribute to the integrity of Mr Waterhouse's Dispersal vision. Previous generations of librarians painted over the beams and whitewashed the decorated ceiling. The Health and Safety people, Mr Gillies admitted, have banned history shoppers from the walls

way in case anyone overburdened with bound copies of the Wigan Dispensary Rules and Reports plunges through its floorboards.

The first man in charge of the library, Henry Tennyson Eckardt, was killed by a runaway milk horse in 1916. He had built up the collection to the point where it had a national reputation attracting donations from institutions and bequests from bibliophiles. George Orwell used it when researching *The*

Road To Wigan Pier. His signature, in his real name, Eric Blair, is logged in the library's visitors' book, against February 13, 1936, sandwiched between J.R. and O.C. Lacey. "Many people thought he was a social security mark," revealed a Wigan press officer. The library's other prize possessions frequently reflect Wigan's history at the heart of a mining region that once boasted 300 pits. Browsers will find rare copies of O'Connell's Coal

and Iron Diary and Manual, and bound editions of the *Colliery Guardian*, stretching back to 1859.

"There's some very useful material for colliery historians here," said Mr Gillies, who admits he had had to tackle the prejudices of officers and councillors to rescue the library.

"Plenty of people wanted to sell it all off," he said. "That would have been an unpardonable sin and an insult to our ancestors."

This magnificent picture of the History Shop by Don McPhee headed The Guardian's excellent article on 7 May 1992. (Reproduced by courtesy of The Guardian.)



"POTTERIES" BORN AND BRED

I HAVE been very fortunate in having been loaned a copy of your magazine *Past Forward* 2. What memories it brings back, especially the letter from K. Riley about the "Potteries". I was born there in 1913, after which we moved to Douglas St.,

Newtown in 1925. Coming down Pottery Rd. you came to Swan Meadow Rd. which ran the length of the Pottery. Firstly Lettewre St. where I was born, then Pottery St., finally Sudworth St. whose backs adjoined the River Douglas. Incidentally I can still re-

call most of the family names in our street. In Cudworth St. lived a Mr. Goulding whose horse-drawn carts brought the coal for the local cotton mills. He then later became a motor haulage contractor, I remember them building his garage in Pottery Rd. Mr. Goulding's son Harry was organist at St. Thomas's Church in Caroline Street where I attended the school. My grandparents kept the chip shop by Pottery Rd., canal bridge for some years, there was stabling for canal boat horses behind the house.

Grandad was a maintenance pump man at Owd Nat's pit in Worsley Mesnes. There was an accident, he fell down the shaft and was brought up in a sack.

Re Mr Riley's letter, yes there was a boatyard where he said and it was Mayors, it was still there a few years ago, when I paid a nostalgic visit to my old haunts. Incidentally the top house in our street was occupied by Mr. Tom Bootle's family, one of whose daughters later became landlady at the Swan Meadow Inn following Joe Dear, Kenyons & Joe Hewitt. Mr. Bootle himself worked at Mayors boatyard. Jack Nicholson, Leyland, Lancs.

MEMORIES OF WIGAN'S PAST REVIVED

THANK you for sending the copy of *Past Forward* 2. The paper is very good, informative, interesting and fulfilling a need in the town.

The Library article is particularly interesting to me. I remember Arthur Hawkes; he lived in Dicconson Street West, near where we lived then in Eccleston Street. The picture on p.10 I think was taken near where the new Westwood Lodge Nursing Home now stands. I spent 3 weeks at the start of 1992 looking on that view of St. James' Church.

The picture of the Pavilion Picture House brought back memories. We were allowed as children to go to the Saturday



Miss Bamford is seated at the far end of the third row in this photograph of Dicconson Street Wesleyan Day School, 1913.

Rush, price 2 old pennies, when there was a Cherry Kearton animal picture on, a silent film of course. I liked the pictures but not the noise and shouting!

A friend very kindly took me to the Dear Diary Exhibi-

tion at Haigh Hall. I knew the Birch family. My eldest sister, 7 years older than myself, was a contemporary of Dr. Birch when they were late teenagers at the High School and Grammar School. He, Tom Shaw, Cyril Long and

others used to meet the High School girls in the passage behind Park View, it was called the 'Rabbit Run'!

Miss Joan Bamford,
MBE, LRAM, LTCC,
4 Golden Ways,
Wigan.

EDITOR'S NOTE

IN the article on Wigan At Play in *Past Forward* 2, we mentioned Tom Kenyon's claim to having introduced greyhound racing to Wigan. Mr. Sidney Smith tells me that Kenyon did not have this claim to fame — the Woodhouse Lane Sports Stadium (not Springfield Park) was, he states, holding racing before Kenyon opened the Poolstock track. Woodhouse Lane Stadium was originally built for trotting, and the chief trainer there, a Mr. Orgill, was training horses in Germany when war broke out in 1914; he was interned in that country as an enemy alien.

● Many thanks, Mr. Smith, for your continued interest and support.

Beautifully Displayed

ON a bleak January day my son and I made a visit to Haigh Hall to see the Dear Diary Exhibition, a display of diaries held by Wigan Archive Service. The first thing that caught my eye was a photograph of my father, aged 13, in his Boys Scout uniform, and beside it were photographs of extracts from his schoolboy diaries. The whole exhibition was of great interest and beautifully displayed. My son said, "Do you think Grandpa would be pleased?" and I said, "he would have been

thrilled". My father kept a diary continuously from 1915 to within a year or two of his death in 1983. As Wigan was his home town I contacted the Wigan Archive Service after his death to see if the diaries would be of interest and in due course copies were made for the archives. My father liked to keep papers and mementoes and all those that were relevant to Wigan I gave to the Archive Service. Seeing the Exhibition confirmed to me that I had done the right thing.

The material is not just safely stored, it is used.

Sue Stanford
29 Chester Road
Wrexham
Clwyd

● The Dear Diary Exhibition can still be seen in the Stables Centre, Haigh. Ed.

Letters should be addressed to:
The Heritage Services Manager,
Editor,
Past Forward,
Dept. of Leisure,
Trencherfield Mill,
Wigan WN3 4EF.

Mr. Lawrence Power, of New South Wales, Australia, has provided some fascinating information relating to John Atherton, who was born in 1837, the son of Edmund Atherton of Blackrod Farm, near Wigan. In 1844, Edmund and his family emigrated to New South Wales on the ship 'Great Britain'. In 1857, John moved north to Queensland, where he was to found the town of

Marceba. He died in 1913, his name perpetuated in the town of Atherton and the Atherton Tableland in North Queensland.

Mr. Power is also a Wigan man — he emigrated from Pemberton to Sydney in 1960. Our grateful thanks to him for drawing our attention to John Atherton, and for sending this extract from the Daily Mirror (Australia style!)

Cattleman opened up vast areas of North Queensland

As an overlander all his life, John Atherton saw little danger in moving his wife and seven children through a part of north Queensland where 40 Europeans had been killed by Aborigines in the four years before 1876.

With his two older sons, Edmund, 13, and William, 11, Atherton went first with 1500 cattle and 100 horses. Catherine Atherton and the five smaller children, with the family's household possessions in two covered wagons, followed.

The Herberton Range, inland from Cairns, was the expedition's first major obstacle. A bullock and tackle was needed to winch the wagons up the steepest parts.

The last wagon had just reached the top, when, with Atherton and the cattle well down the other side, half a dozen spears whistled past his ears.

The overlander had instructed his family in the tactics to be followed in the event of an Aboriginal ambush. Turning his mount sharply, he rode into the cattle, firing as he went.

The most panicked the mob, which stampeded back up the hill towards the wagons, which were beginning their descent.

Catherine Atherton knew exactly what she had to do. The moment she heard the shot, she pulled the buggy and wagons to one side, allowing the herd to thunder past.

By the time Atherton reached the scene, he found the wagons drawn up in the form of a square, with his wife calmly handing out rifles to the station hands. A volley of shots into the surrounding scrub quickly dispersed the ambushers.

Most of the early squatters were faced with such dangers in taking up new country. They expected to lose a certain number of stock to marauding tribesmen. If they got through without loss of human life, they counted themselves lucky.

TINAROO

John Atherton — the man who pioneered the Atherton Tableland and settled his family beside a stretch of rainforest which later became the centre of a rich agricultural and dairying community — was not only a cattleman.

Pastoralists in different parts of the interior needed more accessible markets for their cattle if they were to survive the heavy losses brought about by droughts, floods and Aboriginal depredations.

Something was needed to bring a bigger and nearer population to the northern cattle stations.

But it was that Atherton, the cattleman, turned prospector and discovered north Queensland's first big tin field, at a place soon to become famous as Tinaroo Creek.

"Tin Hurroo," he is supposed to have shouted as he crested the ore in a hollow stump and realised the significance of his find.

Tinaroo eventually led to

HISTORICAL FEATURE

the growth of Herberton, the centre of Queensland's early tin-mining industry. Herberton and adjacent fields provided the cattle market for which Atherton had been looking.

John Atherton, born at Wigan, in Lancashire, on August 9, 1837, came of yeoman stock going back centuries to that part of England.

He was the second of Edmund Atherton's nine sons.

enterprise ended with the Athertons joining many others in the great trek northwards.

"Everyone became so infatuated with the desire to possess a run in Queensland," wrote one squatter, "the rush north resembled a goldrush."

Another likened it to the tribes of Israel in search of the Promised Land.

The Atherton cavalcade of wagons, pack-horses, bul-

guerrilla fighter than an overlander.

On one of his rides, he was minding up cattle in a remote gorge when a stone axe, thrown by an Aborigine, caught him on the side of the head.

Half-blinded and completely blinded by the blood streaming from his scalp, he gave his horse its head and trusted it to carry him clear of the ambush.

For young John Atherton, it was a tough and often dangerous life. He was rarely out of the saddle from dawn till dusk, yet there were times when he could relax and enjoy himself.

A picture of central Queensland squatters relaxing after a day's toil is to be found in the journal account of one of John Atherton's contemporaries.

It noted that drinking went on into the small hours, with the party usually ending



Emerald End House, the Atherton's tableland homestead, was built of cedar and logs. It remains intact today.

Farmer Atherton had decided to try Australia as a possible home for his large and growing family.

So it was that the Athertons settled at Bald Blair, near Guyra, in northern NSW. They prospered so well that, 13 years later, in 1857, Edmund Atherton was still looking for land to accommodate his tens of thousands of sheep and cattle.

There was little worthwhile land left in New England, nor in the squatting districts of Moreton Bay and the Darling Downs farther north. So the Athertons decided to investigate the Fitzroy country, hundreds of miles farther north.

The older boys, James and John, led the way with 3500 sheep and were so impressed with this new pastoral district, they immediately took up Rosewood, a short distance north of Rockhampton.

While James remained at Rosewood, John returned to the bleak uplands of the New England Tablelands. It was winter again, and the young man was able to persuade his father to sell Bald Blair and move the whole family north.

While they were still preparing for the journey, the new colony of Queensland was proclaimed and what had begun as an individual

lock-drays and 2000 Short-horn cattle joined the procession in the region of Glen Innes and journeyed on in the midst of land-seekers from all parts of NSW and even farther afield.

The average journey took six months. And when it was over, the new arrivals pegged their runs, then rushed back to the nearest land commissioner's tent to register their claims.

with the stinging of sea shanties. To achieve the right searing atmosphere, one group climbed onto the pub roof, with armloads of ropes and empty bottles.

Those below then imitated the actions of sailors hauling in ropes, as they dragged each bottle down the side of the building.

But the good times did not last forever. A sudden slump

hit the pastoral industry in the mid-1860s.

For many of those who ventured north in search of the promised land, the end came when a bank or some large pastoral concern in Sydney or Melbourne foreclosed on their properties.

John Atherton, aided by the remarkable Catherine, the wife he had married in 1862, was one of the comparatively small number who survived.

The times were hard. While Catherine took care of the children in the isolation of Atherton's latest property near Emerald, John sought new and easier ways of getting cattle to the coast.

Then, in 1873, the goldrush to the Palmer River began



John Atherton, who braved droughts, floods and hostile Aborigines to pioneer great tracts of cattle country in North Queensland.

and he turned his attention to the far north.

His sons were almost grown-up by then, and they helped him overland one mob of cattle to the Palmer in 1873, and another to the Hodgkinson River in 1875.

The cattleman had become convinced that the far north would be the salvation of Queensland. In 1875, he took up Basal Downs, on the headwaters of the Burdekin River.

He was still too far from the goldfields, though, and the following year saw the most famous trek in the family's overlanding history begin.

Only the explorers, Edmund Kennedy in 1848-49 and the Jardine Brothers in 1864-65, had penetrated to the inland country, at the base of Cape York Peninsula.

The farther north they travelled, the explorers had reported, the fiercer the Aboriginal resistance had become.

"Large muscular men, with bullet-shaped heads and a repulsive cast of countenance," was one man's description of the peninsular tribes, following a series of clashes with them.

Atherton had had half a lifetime's experience of the untamed Queensland Aborigines and he believed he could get the family through unscathed.

Their first brush with the natives came before they reached the tableland. They lost nearly half their cattle when Atherton had no choice but to stampede the herd away from the Aboriginal ambush at Herberton Range.

They had kept going through a region of dry, stony hills which gradually gave way to a jungle. The

years ahead, Atherton put his stock losses to Aborigines at an average of a bullock a day for the first five years.

On those occasions when he went looking for the marauders, the family slept in the shuttered kitchen, Catherine and the boys taking turns to keep guard by the door.

The ceaseless patrolling of sub-inspector Alexander Douglas and his troop of black police gradually eased the problem. But the outlook for cattle was none too promising as the gold began to peter out along the Palmer.

John Atherton had always claimed to be a cattleman, pure and simple. One morning in 1878, however, he was exploring the headwaters of Emerald Creek when he came across a patch of alluvial tin.

KILLED

A minor rush followed, especially after a little gold was also found in the area. Then, in 1879, he made another find on the Wild River and this time the rush was more like a mass migration of miners from all over the north.

But John Atherton was not cut out to be a miner. "Stick to your mining, I'll stick to my bullocks," he told a party of tin-miners when they offered him a share in Herberton's Great Northern Mine.

Herberton tin was to have the same effect in bringing to life the sleepy little port of Cairns as Charters Towers gold had already achieved for Townsville. Before long, the teamsters and packers were flooding past Emerald End, en route to the tinfields.

Where the track crossed Granite Creek, Atherton built a store and a little, steep-roofed shanty pub, and the township of Marceba was born.

Then, in the 1890s, the Chinese arrived and began clearing the scrub for farming.

The newcomers chipped steadily away at the Great Scrub and by 1900 the homes of 300 Chinese maize-farmers had grown up around the thriving township of Atherton.

Heroic Catherine Atherton was killed in a buggy accident in 1902.

In the late 18th Century, Australians had carved an international reputation as being among the greatest scullers in the world — long before cricket put the nation on the world sporting map. The story of that golden age is recalled on this page on Monday.

John Atherton's heritage

Vast areas of unoccupied Crown land, from the NSW border to a new frontier along the Fitzroy River, was converted into privately-owned leasehold in just a few months.

The Athertons suffered a minor setback when they lost all their agricultural tools in a wagon which overturned crossing the Fitzroy.

AMBUSHED

It was the beginning of a new life for 22-year-old John Atherton. As he roved the countryside, a rifle resting on the pommel of his saddle, more firearms and a couple of long knives stuck in his belt, he looked more like a

A Letter from Nellie!



Miss Nellie Woods in the operetta 'Highwayman Love', performed in a Wigan church group, Springfield Road, in 1920. Nellie emigrated to New Zealand soon afterwards.

THANK you for your prompt reply to my letter, also for the Past Forwards. I am finding lots of things take my mind back. One in particular (issue 2) - the visit of King Edward VII (then Prince of Wales). He was leaving Wigan to spend the evening with Lord Gerard. My mother's brother James Melling belonged to Lord Gerard's household cavalry. This was before my time - I was born in 1905 - but I do remember a plume from the hat he wore, beautiful shades of blue. Sometimes we were allowed to take a feather from it for school painting.

I am sending a copy of myself as Queen of the Fairies, Dicconson Street Methodist day school, 1912. The teacher was Miss Munday, and the concert for parents over the road in the church

hall. I sang a lullaby. I was only 7 years old and to be the Fairy Queen with special wings that moved when I walked, well you can understand that I can still remember at 86 years. I hope you will like the photographs taken by (posh) photographer Cyril Foley.

Many thanks.

Nellie Leather (nee Woods)
Auckland
New Zealand.

It's a small world—only the other day, Nellie's neighbours, the Burns, dropped in to say hello, en route to Scotland. Ed.



Miss Nellie Woods as the 'Fairy Queen' with her band of fairies, performing at Dicconson Street Methodist Dayschool in 1912.

A DICKENS OF A CHRISTMAS



A MAJOR new attraction at Wigan Pier will be the opening of the Palace of Varieties, scheduled for Easter 1993. The emphasis here will be very much on flexibility, and it is envisaged that visitors will be able to enjoy such events as Old Tyme Music Hall, magic lantern performances and various classes/meetings.

Before that, however, you have the chance of having a Dickens of a Christmas.

Victorian Evenings

Experience a Victorian Christmas evening amid the sights and sounds (and smells!) of the time. Step back into the scenes which have enthralled over a million people. Start your evening at the seaside where you will be greeted by the Town Crier. Warm yourself with a glass of Hot Punch before journeying through the coal-mines into Victorian Wigan to meet the characters of the time. Join Mr. Savage in school. Travel by waterbus to the Parlour at the Pier. Enjoy a sumptuous Christmas Dinner followed by an entertaining Victorian Musical Melodrama. Your special evening will end with Christmas carols around the Christmas tree.



Dates—8,11,12,15,18,19 December

PRICE £24

Christmas Lunches

Enjoy a traditional Christmas lunch, numbers can be accommodated from 2—60, subject to availability. Wigan Pier makes an unusual venue for an organised Christmas lunch, and you may well receive a visit for our resident acting company during your celebration.

Dates—Monday - Friday, 1 - 18 December. PRICE £12

(Including a free day pass)

Sing for your Supper

Visit Wigan Pier and experience the sights and sounds (and smells) of 1900. Join in the Fun and Frivolity. Singalong for your supper at the Victorian Music Hall.

Dates—Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays throughout December. PRICE £10

For tickets and further details, please contact the Booking Officer, Wigan Pier, Wigan. WN3 4EU (0942 323666).

SOCIETY NEWS

Aspull and Halgh Historical Society

The Society meets in the Village Centre, Bolton Road, Aspull, on the second Thursday of the month, 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. (0942 831204).

Atherton Heritage Society

Interesting talks are given on local history topics and three outings arranged per year to places of historical interest. Meetings are held in Atherton Library on the second Monday of each month at 7.30 p.m. For further information, contact Atherton Library (0942 878369).

Leigh Civic Trust

The Trust is responsible for the Leigh, Astley, Tyldesley, Lowton and Golborne wards, and maintains a close working relationship with Atherton Heritage Society. For information on membership and our programme of activities, contact Roy Thomas Secretary (0942 606723/492457).

Leigh and District Family History Society

This Society meets in the Turnpike Centre's Derby room on the third Tuesday of

each month. The Programme for 1993 is as follows:

- 19th January
"Parish Register Workshop"
F. Holcroft
 - 16th February
"The Titanic"
S. Rigby
 - 16th March
"The Fletchers of Atherton"
Mrs. M. Gilbertson
 - 20th April
To be confirmed
 - 18th May
Annual General Meeting & Scottish Parish Registers
 - 15th June
Project Evening
 - 20th July
Visit to Chester Record Office
 - 17th August
Visit to Mining Museum
 - 21st September
Introductory talk and use of Society's I.G.I.
Mrs. E. Finch
 - 19th October
To be confirmed
 - 16th November
"The Crawfords of Haigh"
N. Webb
 - 21st December
Christmas Meeting - T.B.A.
For further details contact the Society's Secretary Mrs. G. McClellan (0942 729559)
- Wigan Archaeological Society**
The Society meets on a monthly basis with a guest speaker whose subject can

range from Egyptology to the Industrial Revolution. Field trips to archaeological sites as far afield as Hadrian's Wall and Caernarvon Castle are organised. Occasional excavation is carried out on local sites such as Roman roads, moated halls and watermills. For further details, contact Sharon Varley (0257 52986)

Wigan Civic Trust

The Trust addresses various issues, including historical redundant buildings, traffic and parking problems, preservation or mining artefacts and the restoration of the Tyldesley monument. The Trust has open meetings at Drumcroon Arts Centre, Parsons Walk, on the second Monday of the month 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. (0942 45777).

Wigan Family History Society

The Society meets to further the interest and skills of all those interested in tracing their family line back into the mists of time. Meetings are held twice monthly at the Seven Stars Hotel, Wallgate, Wigan. This season's speakers include Brian Clare on Lancashire Words and Dialect, Nicholas Webb on the Standish Papers, Diana Winterbotham on Old Lancashire Maps, Iris Sell on the Origin of Lancashire Surnames and Tony Lankshear on One Name Studies. Further details from Len Marsden, Secretary (0942 217764).

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BICKERSHAW MACHINERY MOVED TO ASTLEY GREEN

AS many of you will know, the recent closure of Bickershaw Colliery meant the end of coal-mining in the Metropolitan Wigan area. The good news, however, is that many of the artefacts have been transferred to Astley Green Colliery, including Peggy's Pump, a Victorian steam pump.

Not that the collection at Astley Green comprises only mining artefacts — there are now three boats on site, including the steam-boat 'Unity', 'Fred', and a 1912 Birmingham barge. The following events

have been confirmed for 1993:

APRIL

North West Stationary Engines Association Rally

Red Rose Steam Society Annual Rally

AUGUST

Historic Commercial Vehicle Society — Trans-Pennine Run

Astley Green Colliery is well worth a visit — there are plenty of artefacts to see, as well as the highlight of the visit, the magnificent cathedral-like engine house.

Admission is free (although all donations are welcome).

Where?

THE Wickham photograph in the last issue defeated virtually all of you. One suggestion was that it might be behind the Whitesmith's Arms, Standishgate. As we have no evidence that Rev. Wickham took any photographs near the centre of Wigan, however, we feel this is unlikely. Our guess is that it was taken by the canal near Crooke.

There are four mystery photographs this time, all of which should prove much easier to identify. We believe all were taken not too long ago, within the Metropolitan Wigan area. But where?

If you can help us to identify any of these photographs, please contact Len Hudson in Leigh Town Hall (0942 672421 ext. 265).



LEIGH RIDDLE

THIS riddle is certainly not easy to solve. There will, therefore, be a small prize for the first three correct answers—sorry we can't match the original reward! The answer will be given in Past Forward 4.

The following question was proposed in the "Diarian Repository" for the year 1740, by Mr. John Hampson, of Leigh:

*At Bedford Mill, near old Leigh town, is found,
In form triangular, a piece of ground,
Whose sides and area none can yet explain,
Tho' these subsequent hints may then obtain.
One angle makes degrees just seventy-nine
Which being as three to ten, cut by a line,
Of chains eleven, drawn to its sides opposed,
The area is the least can be enclos'd.
The miller thus "who best explains the truth,
Wins for reward our buxom daughter Ruth."*



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PHILIP BUTLER ON (0942) 828124

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**METROPOLITAN
WIGAN**

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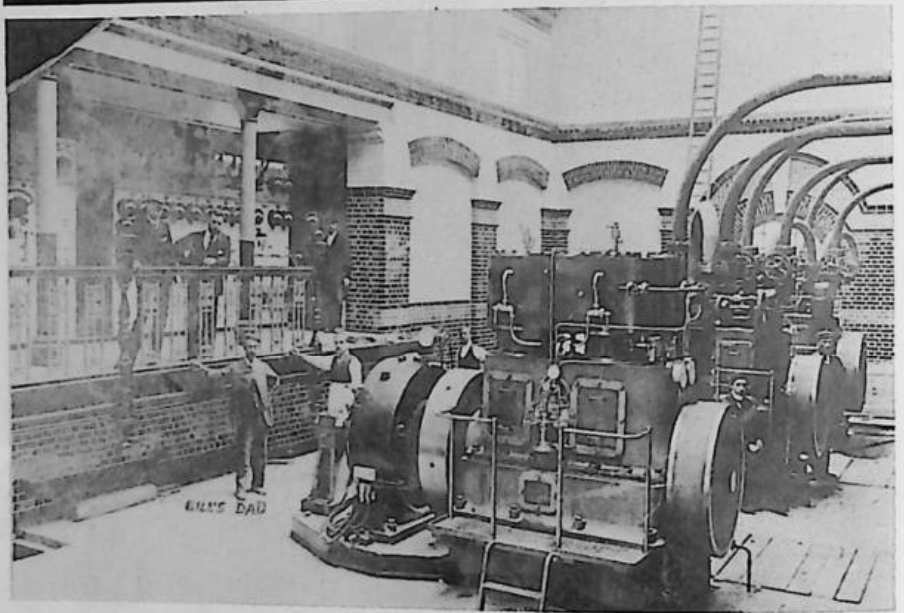
PAST FORWARD 15

Where and When?

These two views at a generator house were recently donated to the Service by Mr. D. Culshaw at Hindley. The top view shows a row of vertical steam engines directly coupled to dynamos, with associated meters and switchgear on the raised gallery. It was taken when installation work was nearing completion; the lower view is of the official opening of the facility.

But where is it? The number of VIPs present and the decorative architectural features of the building suggest municipal rather than a commercial or industrial ownership. We do know that it is not the original Wigan Corporation Power Station, nor is it the South Lancashire Tramway Co.'s installation at Howe Bridge. Could it be that some of the area's smaller local authorities established electrical generating stations for street lighting and to supply local domestic and commercial users, and that the photographs are of such an establishment?

The gentleman in the bottom photograph, identified as 'Bill's Dad', is Samuel Mort, a Walker Bros. employee; as he also appears in the other view, he was probably involved in the installation work, although none of the equipment is of Walker Bros. manufacture. It is likely that the views were taken between 1900 and 1910.



If you can help to identify these photographs, please contact Mike Haddon at the History Shop (0942 828121).

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