

# PAST FORWARD

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8th June, 1946

**T**O-DAY, AS WE CELEBRATE VICTORY, I send this personal message to you and all other boys and girls at school. For you have shared in the hardships and dangers of a total war and you have shared no less in the triumph of the Allied Nations.

I know you will always feel proud to belong to a country which was capable of such supreme effort; proud, too, of parents and elder brothers and sisters who by their courage, endurance and enterprise brought victory. May these qualities be yours as you grow up and join in the common effort to establish among the nations of the world unity and peace.

*George R.I.*

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The Newsletter of Wigan Heritage Service

FREE

## From the Editor

1994 was the Year of Drama – and highly successful it was too (see p.16). The drama theme is continued in this issue with a fascinating contribution by Colin Bean (Private Sponge in Dad's Army) and a conversation with Lily Brayton on p7.

1995 is the Year of Arts and Culture, and also, of course, the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. The History Shop will be mounting exhibitions to commemorate both VE and VJ Day, while 'Europe Today: The Ugly Face of Nationalism', an exhibition developed by the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, is particularly appropriate at this time (see p.16). The History Shop's May Lecture will be on 'The Home Front in Lancashire'. On p.10 you will find the first of three parts of an excellent contribution by Mrs. Fleming of Ashton-in-Makerfield, in which she recalls childhood days during the war.

Genealogists are well catered for in this issue, with some personal reflections by Wigan F.H.S. secretary Len Marsden on this page, and something of a genealogical detective story on p.14. 'Past Forward' has even acted in a private detective capacity, by helping to bring people together – see p.18.

I must thank all those readers who have supported 'Past Forward' in a variety of ways – financial (I have been particularly pleased to receive 'renewed' donations from a number of readers) or written (I have had to hold over so many contributions that I have sufficient copy already for the next issue!), not forgetting all those who have expressed their appreciation of the magazine. Many thanks to you all.

**All comments and correspondence should be addressed to:  
Editor, 'Past Forward',  
Wigan Heritage Service,  
Market Suite, The Galleries,  
Wigan. WN1 1PX**

## Continuous Wigan family connection from 1500's

I'M one of maybe only a few who can literally say that I am a Wiganer born and bred. Some years ago, I started to look for my ancestral relatives in the parish registers and census returns at Wigan Archives and was amply rewarded for my trouble, being able to follow my family's line of baptisms, marriages and burials back into the 1500's. I should add that I was very lucky that my Wigan ancestors had all attended the same church over this long period of time and so had their names recorded in these registers.

The Wigan All Saints parish register commences with Rauffe Smart, November 1580, and continues almost unbroken up to the present day; it was with much joy that I found each generation back to the baptism of Raph Marsden 24 March 1584. I then had to put some meat on the bare bones of these skeletal dates and their everyday names. For this information I went through Wigan's Court Leet Rolls and Kings Pleas records and found that my relatives were often in one Court or the other, sometimes sat on the bench, but more often than not, stood in front of it! In some instances details emerged that I didn't know – for example, James, Raph's brother, was a mercer by trade and after father William's death in April 1611, lived in his house in Hallgate.

When looking for one's ancestors, their in-laws also emerge of course, and I am still surprised at some of the families we were related to by marriage however long ago it may be. Alice Marsden, for instance, the first of the family to come to live in Wigan married Robert Markland around 1555/60, he being the eldest brother of the better known Matthew, tenant of The Meadows at Markland Mill Bridge (later known as Martland). The Marklands married with the Walthews of Orrell and Upholland, who married with the Banks of Winstanley and the Gerrards of Garswood. The Gerrards I am informed were related by marriage to the Bradshaighs of

Haigh – and which family are they not related to?

The ladies of the family marriages have the usual Wigan female names of Jane, Margaret, Elizabeth etc., but also include a Lydia (1707), Deborah (1710) and Sicelly (1588). In William's will, dated 1611, he names his sons and daughter and his cousins the Marklands and some of his friends, leaving the sum of 20s. to the poor of Wigan and a further 20s. to the 'Free Scoole' of Wigan.

My nine times great-grandfather and his aunt, Alice Markland (nee Marsden), were born at Crow Tree Farm at Toekholes, near Blackburn, William c.1558 and Alice c.1540; they were the grandchild and great grandchild of Christopher Marsden who gave the land in Blackburn on which the first Grammar School was built between 1490 and 1500. That, however, is another story.

The occupations of the family in Wigan have varied enormously – pewter makers, cordwainers, collenderers,

mercers, farmers, shopkeepers, weavers, overlookers, colliers, skimmers, vicars – we've had them all! Some migrated to New Zealand, America and South Africa and one or two went to Australia, not always as paying passengers – one (also a William) aged 16 years was transported for seven years, all for the theft of two black puddings valued at 1d!

All the parish registers have been copied on microfilm together with the 1841, 1851, 1861, 1871, 1881, 1891 census returns and are available for perusal at Wigan's History Shop. The census returns, trade directories, court rolls and other documents are available at the Archives in Leigh Town Hall. So why not spend an hour or two each week looking for your family ancestors? If they are from this part of Lancashire, they'll probably turn up in the local registers, and you don't know what surprises they will reveal!

Len Marsden  
Secretary Wigan Family  
History Society

For those readers who have not seen a previous issue of Past Forward, or have mislaid it, here once again is a list of those behind the Heritage Service, and where we are all based.

### At Wigan:

Market Suite, The Galleries— Heritage Services Manager (and Editor of Past Forward) Alastair Gillies.....	(01942) 827375 Fax: (01942) 827371
History Shop— Visitor Services Manager Philip Butler.....	(01942) 828124
Education and Outreach Manager (and Local History, West) Bob Blakeman.....	(01942) 828020
Collections Development Manager Yvonne Webb.....	(01942) 828123
Heritage Officer (Industrial History) Mike Haddon.....	(01942) 828121
Heritage Officer (Social History) Dawn Wadsworth (temporary replacement Jennifer McCarthy).....	(01942) 828124
Heritage Assistant Hilary Fairclough.....	(01942) 828122
Heritage Assistant Barbara Miller.....	(01942) 828122
Heritage Assistant Stephanie Tsang.....	(01942) 828122
Wigan Pier— Technician Denise Bryce.....	(01942) 828564
Technician Roy Wareing.....	(01942) 323666

### At Leigh:

Archives, Town Hall— Heritage Officer (Archives) Nicholas Webb.....	(01942) 404430
Senior Technician Len Hudson.....	(01942) 404432
Leigh Library— Heritage Officer (Local History) Tony Ashcroft.....	(01942) 404559
<i>Please note the new Leigh telephone numbers.</i>	

If you have an enquiry, and are not sure who the most appropriate person is to contact, please ring the History Shop (01942 828128).

Cover: Message sent to the country's schoolchildren by King George VI, 1946



Dr. George Evans J.P.,  
L.R.C.P., M.R.C.S.  
1833 - 1897

DR. EVANS, the son of John Evans, colliery owner and railway contractor, was born at Limeside, near Hollinwood, Oldham on 28 August 1833. His father had helped to construct the Bolton and Blackburn Railway. Although George did not follow in his father's footsteps, his brother William did. William helped to build the Conway tubular bridge by which the London and North Western Railway line crossed the Menai Straits, as well as being involved with the construction of the viaduct over the river Boyne near Drogheda in Ireland.

Dr. Evans was educated at Tulketh Hall near Preston and Croft House, Brampton, Cumberland after which he served his time at Darwen. His early medical education was received

## Dr. George Henry Evans and his Pyrotechnic Time Signal

at the Royal Infirmary and Manchester Medical School. Afterwards he entered the Navy and took part in the Baltic expedition of 1855-6 during the Crimean War. He was stationed on the Cornwallis under Captain Wellesley, nephew of the Iron Duke, and was present at the bombardment of Sveborg. He also saw action at Sandhem. During his war experiences he was never wounded.

### Moved to Leigh

After the war was over, the doctor accepted a medical appointment in London, but in 1858 moved to Leigh. His first residence was in King Street, before moving to Church Street and then finally to Avenue House in 1868. In the same year, on the recommendation of Mr. T.T. Hayes, he was appointed certifying surgeon for Leigh and district under the Factory and Workshops Act, a position which he held until his death in 1897.

He was active in the affairs of the Leigh Community, becoming a member of the Pennington Local Board for several years as well as being its first chairman. Dr. Evans was also instrumental in forming the Leigh Agricultural Association and was the second volunteer to be enrolled in the Leigh Corps; he was appointed surgeon by Lord Sefton in May 1860. In 1884 he was appointed a J.P. for the County of Lancaster, a position which

he is reputed to have filled with credit and distinction. He also took a deep interest in the Leigh Literary Society and contributed many interesting papers to their meetings. Dr. Evans was a Conservative and a P.M. in the Marquis of Lorne Lodge of Freemasons, holding the office of Worshipful Master in 1877. He was also P.P.S.G.W. of the West Lancashire in 1884 and a member of the Royal Arch Freemasons.

Although his death occurred in Leigh, Dr. Evans' funeral was a private affair at Royton Church. His body was interred in the Evans family vault in Royton Churchyard alongside 31 of his ancestors.

### The Pyrotechnic Time Signal.

Dr. Evans, who lived in Leigh for 39 years, was a very familiar figure to all. However, his most invaluable service to the town was a Rocket Time Signal. As a certifying surgeon for the area he was very much concerned that the various clocks in the district never gave the correct time, nor did they tend to show any agreement. He therefore decided to do something about the matter himself.

Although not a horologist he ordered a regulator clock from the Bolton firm of W. Bank and Co. to use as his standard time. In 1871 he arranged for a shell to be fired which would burst in the air at 10 p.m. precisely. After Dr. Evans' death in 1897 the time

signal ceased to operate for a time as the Council had no power to buy the apparatus, although many complaints were received about its loss.

Eventually Mr. W.E. Marsh paid £130 for the apparatus and rockets were once again fired into the air, this time from the Technical School on 12 July 1899. For obvious security reasons the rockets were not fired after the beginning of World War II and consequently the apparatus fell into disrepair. By 1947 the Town Council decided that modern conditions rendered the time signal obsolete.

An article by Charles K. Aked, C. Eng., M.I.E.F. on the time signal can be found in the Horological Journal of July 1975 (copy available for reference in Leigh Local History Library). This provides the reader with various technical pieces of information. Aked suggests that Evans' time signal system was one of the first public time signalling systems to be introduced anywhere in the world. Is Aked right about this? Was Dr. Evans' time signal unique?

The actual regulator clock is on display in Leigh Library. If anyone is interested in Dr. Evans or his time signal, please contact Tony Asheroft at Leigh Library (01942 404559) for further details.

T.A.

## Book Reviews

### A House Nigh Unto Heaven:

The First 150 Years of Bispham Methodist Church 1845-1995

by David Lythgoe.

Published privately, 1994  
[133p]

ISBN 1 873888 80 5

£10 (hardback),

£6 (paperback)\*

BISPHAM METHODIST CHURCH celebrates its 150th anniversary in 1995, and is fortunate to have seen its history set out by David Lythgoe in this splendid volume, which may be taken as a model for other churches wishing to publish something more substantial than the usual short pamphlet to commemorate anniversaries. Based

on oral testimony and the extant records of the church and circuit (now deposited with Wigan Archives Service), the book has been financed partly by subscriptions.

Bispham was founded in 1845 by William Holt, a small farmer from Millington in Cheshire, who had inherited the Bispham Hall estate four years previously. He is thought to have participated in cottage meetings in the Upholland area and to have brought preachers from Cheshire to Billinge for the benefit of the workmen at Bispham Quarry, Crank Road. It was in Crank Road that Holt chose a site for his new chapel. At first

Bispham was in the Wigan & Chorley Circuit (which extended as far as Hindley and Pendlebury), and by 1847 had 21 members. Holt himself was a class leader (the weekly class being the basic unit of Wesleyan organisation and worship), and by his death in 1852 the church was well established. In 1870, the year before the Bispham estate was sold to Meyrick Bankes of Winstanley Hall, the chapel site was given to the Wesleyan Connexion, and a trust formed to administer its affairs. The

early trustees included notable Wigan Wesleyans such as Joseph Meek, William Altham, and Henry Farr - proprietor of the Farr coach building firm.

The author gives a clear, straightforward account of the progress of Bispham which, by 1889, was one of 14 chapels in the new Wigan Circuit. The Wesleyan church was very successful in attracting support in the industrial areas, although both the architecture and worship in its chapels were often very close to Anglican practice. Of the seats in Bispham chapel, all but 25 were free of pew rent, and these were let at 3s. per year. Income was raised from activities generated by the Sunday School members. Annual teas and field treats, sales of work, jumble sales, 'Christmas Tree' and 'At Home' events, all raised funds that were vital to the expanding work of the membership.

The Sunday Schools were, of course, central to the success of the Methodist churches during their heyday in the relatively prosperous period before 1914. The Bispham school was established in 1875, and was described as 'one of the best in the

circuit'. It maintained a library, a sick club and a football team. The highlight of the year was the anniversary celebrations, whilst a moral example was provided by branches of the Band of Hope and the Wesleyan Abstinents' League, both formed in 1913. In 1926 it granted the customary annual tea free to all scholars owing to the poverty caused by the coal strike. As late as 1928 the Bispham school granted a loan of £300 to the trustees when the latter wished to acquire adjacent land.

Perhaps one could wish for more background on the history of the Billinge district to put its church life into context, but no doubt space did not permit the author to do this. Besides being useful for the light it sheds on the continuing role of Methodist churches in English and social life well into the present century, this book will also be a useful source of information for family history research, providing many lists of trustees and officers, and, in an appendix, transcripts of all the memorial inscriptions to be found within this Victorian church whose story is so well set out for the general reader.

N.W.

\* Available from the History Shop

# News from the Archives

NOTABLE amongst recent accessions has been the deposit of 32 lantern slides showing scenes of Edwardian Leigh. These photographs were generously made available by Rev. G. Wynne, rector of Broughton in Hampshire, grandson of the original photographer Frederick Wynne.

Frederick Edward Wynne (1870-1930) was born in Ireland, son of the Bishop of Killaloe. Educated in medicine at Dublin and Manchester, he held hospital appointments and was in the general practice before moving to Leigh in 1896. After a period in private practice Dr. Wynne was appointed by Leigh corporation as the Borough's first full time Medical Officer of Health in 1909.

In 1911 he took up a similar appointment for Wigan County Borough, until moving to Sheffield in 1921 where he finished his career. Whilst at Leigh he represented Lilford Ward on the Council between 1904 and 1907, was an active member of the Literary Society, founding its dramatic section and edited the short-lived Leigh Courier. He was also an imaginative writer, publishing several novels and writing a play 'Subsidence' which was produced at the Gaiety Theatre, Manchester in 1910. The play was set around the Pennington Flash area.

A selection of Dr. Wynne's photographic plates is published here. They date from around 1905.

N.W.

**Pictures** (clockwise): *Beech Walk*, Pennington, a country lane planted up with beech trees in the 19th Century. Even in Edwardian days the trunks were pock-marked by pollution and name carvers: *Ancient cottages* in Back Salford, Leigh, from the Conservative Club, with the Parish Church in the background. This row was demolished before the war, and is now the site of the car park behind the town hall: *Yew Tree Farm* (formerly Urmston's), Pennington. This is a rare view of a traditional Leigh farm yard, showing a wagon next to the tall hay rick on the right. The timber framed barn at left was probably of some antiquity. At this period the farm was occupied by James Lythgoe and family.





# GEORGE DERBYSHIRE

1919 – 1975

ANYONE researching military history will, sooner or later, find themselves referring to a “Wigan Military Chronicle”, written by Wiganer, George Derbyshire.

George was the youngest of four children born during the early 1900’s. Two others died in infancy and a great influence on his life was his older sister, Lily, who was born in 1910. Lily and George shared a passionate interest in local and military history and George soon had several exercise books full of the history of World War I, complete with maps and illustrations.

He was educated at St. Catherine’s School, Shorefield Lane and, at the age of 14, went to Wigan and District Mining and Technical College. Whilst there, he studied to become a Clerk and, subsequently, got a job at the Roburite Explosives factory in Appley Bridge.

He was already in the Territorial Army, having followed in his father’s footsteps before the outbreak of World War II, and was called up into the ‘Key Party’ of the 5th Battalion, The Manchester Regiment on 25th August 1939, immediately before the outbreak of war.

After a period of intensive training, the Battalion joined the British Expeditionary Force in France and Belgium. Like thousands of others, George was evacuated from Dunkirk and, like most of those people, he didn’t talk about it. The remainder of his service was spent in this country, where he was very involved in the

training of new recruits. He became a Quartermaster Sergeant, responsible for the Company’s supplies and equipment, and was awarded the Commander-in-Chief’s Certificate “in appreciation of good service”. The Regiment was very proud of the fact that they guarded the King, Queen and the Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret during their stay at Balmoral in 1944. By all accounts, the Royal Family was amused by the shows performed by the “Tha’ Wha’?” entertainers delivered in broad Wigan accents by members of the Regiment!

George married Florence Fisher in 1946, but was not demobbed until March of that year. He returned to his old job at Roburite but, in February 1947, started a year-long teacher training course at Alsager College in Cheshire. Upon successful completion of the course, he was appointed a teacher at Scot Lane School in Wigan.

Throughout this time, he was working on the first of four volumes of the “Chronicle”. It is entitled “The Yeomanry and Volunteers” and covers the years 1758-1902. It was published in September 1950.

The subsequent volumes are:-

Volume 2, The Territorial Force, 1907 - 1919, published October 1952.

Volume 3, The Second and Third Line, the Territorial Force, 1914 - 1920, published August 1957.

Volume 4, The Territorial Army, 1919 -

1948, published August 1973.

He also published “The 5th Battalion, The Manchester Regiment - The Colours”.

George was also very interested in the life of the First World War poet, Wilfred Owen, and was an acknowledged expert on his life.

There are only three copies of each book; one held by Wigan Archives Service, one at Lancashire Record Office and one held by the family. All the books were hand typed with carbon copies being made; George personally paid for the photography and bindings.

As an ex-serviceman, George became very involved with the Royal British Legion and the Battalion’s Old Comrades’ Association. At the time of his sudden death in January 1975, he was Head of Humanities at Pemberton Middle School. He was still working on his military history, was President of the Royal British Legion, (Wigan Town Branch) and was the Poppy Appeal Organiser. He had also spent many evenings giving talks to groups on local history, usually accompanied by slides of the town on his “Magic Lantern”. By all accounts, they were very informative and amusing.

Florence died in October 1993. Their son has moved away from Wigan, but their daughter still lives locally. Lily is now in her 80’s, is fit and well, and still enjoys studying military history.

Elizabeth Brown  
(Daughter of George Derbyshire)

## HIPPODROME WIGAN



'TIS SAID that dreams and memories go up in smoke; "reight up chimbley" as Owd Granny might have put it. The "chimbley" of some of my earliest dreams and memories still stands in Wigan today, down a gin-nel off King Street. Its brave white tile letters still remind us here in town, and those flashing through on the London-Glasgow express trains, that here stood "t'Hip", the Hippodrome Theatre.

It's history has been well written up in various 'Memory Lane' publications by *The Wigan Observer* so here we have only my own, personal, memories of this "Palace of Dreams". Early 1930's, being taken to a pantomime – and hearing the first "funny joke" I can remember. In a woodland scene (one of "10 magnificent scenes" it said on the posters) "Simple Simon" shouting up to a young lady on a bridge over "the Real Waterfall" (buckets and buckets of soapy bubbles running down a rubber sheet) "Who's that up there saying Who's that down there?" I thought that was hilarious; I wouldn't like to count the number of times I've used that when playing "Dame" in panto! The circus was another attraction – yes, circus ring and animals, acrobats and clowns all on stage. "See the great African Elephants on Sunday Morning", proclaimed the local paper's advertisements, "as they walk from the station goods yard to the theatre."

### Gags and Wheezes

In those days – and well into the 1940's and 50's – for most of the year there was a regularity to The Hippodrome's attractions – with the occasional "Special Attraction" to break the pat-

tern. As I grew older I began to notice that certain shows had their certain time of year for coming to Wigan. The Festive Season of course Pantomime – sometimes three weekly touring pantomime companies one after the other. "No you can't go again you've been to two already and they were more or less the same!" Well of course they were, all using the current popular songs and the latest topical gags and wheezes. Autumn, after the Blackpool Summer Season was time for Ernest Binns' "Arcadian Follies" with the, to me anyway, great pantomime "Dame" and revue artist Terry Wilson, or it might be Roy Barbour heading the cast. One year – for some "Special Anniversary" or something – we got both in one company, "Randle's Scandals", "Casey's Court", revue and variety shows headed by names such as Hatton & Maureen (the Lancashire Lass who always "got one up" on her know-it-all Cockney boyfriend), Morris & Cowley and their "Old Chelsea Pensioners", Big Bill Campbell and His Canadian Mountain Music, Troise and His Mandoliers, Macari and His Dutch Serenaders, The Ganjou Bros. and Juanita (as Pretty as Porcelain, Poetry in Motion) Wilson, Keppel and most of the Bettys (over the years) in "Cleopatra's Nightmare". The "direct from London" (via where else one wonders?) the "latest West End" sophisticated

revues of Connor & Drake. Vernon Drake served with me in the Walmington-on-Sea Home Guard from 1968 until 1977 and was "horrificed" when I told him that I was a young fan of the Connor & Drake revues in "nineteen frozen stiff". This lovely gentleman's reply, "Oh God, I must be as old as I look!"

With the late spring it was time to look forward to "t'Rep. at t'Hip", the annual long season of twice-nightly weekly repertory. One company, same actors, different play every week, sometimes with a "Friday Night Only" attraction – a revival of an old melodrama, probably remembered from the past by older members of The Company and "mugged up" as best they could by the younger members.

### Twice every night

This was really my "scene" – the Drama. I was too late to see The Denville Stock Company but I was taken, when quite young to see The Lawrence-Williamson Repertory Co. Names? Ah! "T.C. himself" – a true Actor Manager of The Old School (laddie!) T.C. Williamson, "Heavy and Character Leading Man" and Producer of the Play (the one we now call The Director), George Williamson who never "appeared" in plays but was often to be found in the theatre foyer "counting the house". He was credited as Company Director (in modern parlance The Producer – he was The Money Matters Man), T.C.'s wife, the pretty auburn-haired Margaret Carlisle – a "star" in Wigan, the stately Bessie Osborne who seemed very aware of the fact that she was "a dead ringer" for the famous West End Actress Dame Lillian Braithwaite, Lewis Nanton and, of course, the Juvenile Leading and Comedy Man Jerry Barton. In the big pre-war Wigan Carnival Jerry was usually enthroned, in a regal costume and jewelled crown, on The Hippodrome Float as "King of the

Carnival". Another memory is of the old classic "Thunder Rock" ("See the Real Lighthouse Lantern In Action – Special Attraction") with, at one point in the action of the play, T.C. frying some sausages on a stove and looking out into the audience to ask "Do they smell alright?" Not, I believe, a line in the script! To me this was Heaven! How envious I was of these actors. Not only did they do a different play every week – but they did it twice every night!! A very different feeling came over me many many years later when I worked in weekly twice-nightly repertory myself, when I found that the parts had to be learned. (A constant quest then was to ask the director how many lines could we 'cut').

### Presumptuous pomposity

In due course The Lawrence-Williamson Co. gave way to the Frank H. Fortesque's Famous Players – the whom, at first, we Regulars, we Affectionadoes, we Theatregoers were prepared not to like! Wigan people are famous themselves for "knowing what they like". One thing they don't like is presumptuous pomposity. "Who are they?" went up the cry, "Coming here from Manchester and calling themselves famous – never heard of 'em!" Given time the "Fortesks", as they became known, "settled in" and became well-liked in the town for a good many years to come. Under the leadership of the late Arthur Leslie ("Coronation Street's Jack Walker" later on) and his wife, Betty Morton Powell, they provided my drama-diet for quite a few years to come, their arrival in town each year "making the news" and occasioning enquiries "Is So and So with you this time?" Conjure with the names which spring to mind; Patricia Stewart, Iris Dimmock, Doreen Sutcliffe-Hudson (Oh quite a few "push" names in The

Fortesks!), J. Harrington Reynolds, Raymond S. Graham, Marjorie Mee-Jones, Maud Morton Powell (Betty's mother), etc. etc. (What a pity my late father, with his sense of duty, gave all the programmes which I had saved over the years to the Paper Salvage Collection when I went into H.M. Forces!)

### "On the boards"

Not only was I "Regular Pepper" (1st House Wednesday second row in the circle) but 'twas "on the boards" at The Hip I made my professional debut (i.e. my first paid theatre job). Probably because he got fed-up of my asking and hanging around backstage, supposedly "helping", Mr. Leslie gave me a walk-on part in a melodrama which needed a large cast – and "there's a war on". I was a "shady denizen of the underworld" in "The Face At the Window". Please don't ask me how I ever got past the Stage Door in the first place – I can't remember. Either because of the shortage of male actors due to war service or because I'd not done "too badly" as a shady denizen twice nightly – a couple of weeks later I was asked to be a footman in "Lady Windermere's Fan" (in modern dress? oh yes "It's the war you know!") My pay was a magnificent 10s. per week.

Incidentally, before I went into the Army in 1944 I still had time to fulfil one more engagement, upon Mr. Leslie's "putting-a-word-in-for-me" (probably glad to be rid of me!) with T. C. Williamson; his company was now firmly established at the Bolton Hippodrome. Very "up market" for these parts! Once nightly and a matinee 2.30 on Wednesdays. Pay? 15s. ("that includes your bus fare!")

### Last call

After Army service I was able to visit the dear old Hippodrome again before I went to, (and when home on holiday from) theatre school and until, tragically,

it took its last call with a curtain of fire.

Other names popping from the past; The Great Dante and his once-nightly Magic Show; almost two hours seemed to me like five minutes. The Old Vic Co. (Wartime evacuees in Lancashire) in "Macbeth", "Othello", and "Merry Wives of Windsor" with Frederick Valk (one of Czechoslovakia's greatest actors, a refugee from Miller) as both "Mac" and "The Moor", Bernhard Miles, Frank Pettingell and Irene Vanburgh amongst many other famous names. The Old Vic Director was Esme Church who, much to the Hip's Resident Stage Manager's consternation, insisted that the Old Vic's set on. The Vic-Wells Opera Co. came and introduced us to "proper op'rer" with Janet Hamilton Smith and John Hargreaves in a very funny (and solidly booked out) "Barber of Seville". Esme Church was director of the Theatre School I went to in 1948.

Richard Taubers musical operetta "Old Chelsea" visited from the West End. Tauber himself, alas, was "Exhausted" and unable to appear for just a week in Wigan when he had had a long tour. His understudy, Warde Morgan, was excellent in the role the great man should have sung.

"Hit the Deck", "Rio Rita", and I wonder how many times John Hanson shook sand out of his shoes?

The Dear Old Hip – and the little "Artists Bar" at the back of the Shakespeare Hotel next door – where one could slip in from the stage door for a swift gill or a quick nip between Houses! (I wonder what happened to the dozens and dozens of photos of The Famous, The Not Quite so Famous and the now Quite Frankly Forgotten which once adorned the Bar's walls?)

So, all that's left now is "The Hip Chimbley"; ah well, we can still dream and remember.

Colin Bean

LILY BRAYTON was featured in 'Past Forward 7'. Born in 1876, the daughter of Dr. John Grindall Brayton, she made her first stage appearance in 1896 in Manchester. In 1900 she first appeared on the London Stage

– at the Lyceum Theatre, as Alice in Henry V. She continued to 'tread the boards' until 1932, and died in 1953. The following article was printed in the *Wigan Observer* of 27 November 1901:

## A CHAT WITH MISS LILY BRAYTON

"BELLE", in her notes in the *Manchester Weekly Times*, entitled 'Women's World-Domestic and Social' says:-

Dearest Phyllis,—It is highly probable that you were among the numerous band who were charmed with Miss Lily Brayton's impersonation of Viola during Mr Beerbohm Tree's recent visit to Manchester. Miss Brayton is evidently one of Fortune's favourites. To be pretty, popular, and successful is naturally the ambition of every actress, and Miss Brayton, who is only just out of her teens, has been gifted by the fairies with all three delightful attributes. I lighted upon Miss Brayton just as she was entering the stage door of Her Majesty's Theatre, where 'The Last of the Dandies' is having an enormously successful run.

"I can give you a few minutes", said Miss Brayton, in answer to my inquiry whether she could spare an hour for a chat. "I don't appear at the very beginning of the first act, and if you like to come with me in my dressing room while I get ready I shall be very pleased".

Miss Brayton who was looking exceedingly pretty in a heliotrope frieze Eton and skirt with a gold belt, and a heliotrope felt hat trimmed with flowers, tripped along up two flights of stairs, then down a long corridor, until she reached a dressing-room, on which was inscribed her own name.

"I've just been vaccinated", she said, as she divested herself of her coat. "So you see I have to wear a vaccination shield to protect my arm. No, I don't know that I'm at all nervous about infection. Still, as I happen to be a doctor's daughter, naturally I've been brought up to believe that it is my duty to be re-vaccinated, so I went through the ordeal the other day. Am not robust, in health? Well, I don't know that I'm a giant in strength, and I may as well say that I have to take care of myself, and I lead a very quiet life. I am not fond of outdoor exercise, and I don't indulge in any kind of athletic pursuits, and I'm afraid I don't even care for much walking. I like reading better than any other form of recreation, but I'm not in the least partial to the modern novel! I much prefer the stan-

dard works".

Miss Brayton had now begun the fascination process of 'making up' and I could not refrain from complimenting her on her deftness in this art. Her large expressive eyes seemed to gain additional lustre and her own pretty, complexion was now accentuated by the pink and white tints of rouge and powder.

"You see, I have to dress my hair in the early Victorian fashion", she said taking down her own hair which she wears in an original fashion of two plaited braids artistically disposed round her head. "The designs of my dresses and coiffure were all arranged by Mr. Percy Anderson, and in the days of D'Orsay, girls wore their hair plainly banded over their ears and simply looped up in two plaits behind. I don't know I consider it picturesque, but it is certainly quaint and seems to accord with the frocks worn at that period".

Here Miss Brayton, to whom this Victorian style of coiffure proved most becoming, proceeded to don a simple white muslin frock, the skirt made very full and pleated on the bodice, which was cut V shape and had a muslin fichu arranged round the shoulders. A pink waistbelt and a pink rose were the only other adjuncts to the gown, and an old-fashioned gold chain and crystal cross round the neck formed her sole ornament. Thus attired, Miss Brayton represented Miss Henrietta Power in 'The Last of the Dandies'.

"This is really my first appearance in a modern play, with the exception of Trilby, a character I rank by itself", said Miss Brayton. "Altogether, I have only been four years on the stage, and my work has entirely been confined to Shakespearian parts. Perhaps you know I come from Wigan, and I don't suppose I should have been allowed to go on the stage in my father's lifetime, as my family had a great objection to the theatrical profession. I had always a craving for the stage, but really never thought of adopting it as a career. I determined, however, to learn elocution just for my own pleasure, and I took lessons from Miss Morden Grey in Manchester. It was not until later, however, that I made up my mind to go on the stage, and then I

wrote to Mr. Benson and asked him for an engagement. Mr. Benson was very kind, and consented to see me, and finally I started in his company by 'walking on'. After three months of this I was given a part and during the three years or so that I was with Mr. Benson I played almost every leading role in Shakespeare. When Mr. Benson revived Coriolanus in Manchester I played Virgilia when Miss Geneveive Ward was Volumnia, and I remember how delightfully kind she was to me".

"And how did you come to act in Mr. Tree's company?" was the next question.

"Well" said Miss Brayton "I suppose I was lucky enough to please one of Mr. Tree's representatives who chanced to see me while I was playing with Mr. Benson. Mr. Tree then engaged me to play Viola and I have remained with him ever since. I toured with him round the provinces and took the part of Trilby, a character I have never seen performed, and I also played in 'The Red Lamp'. I am now under contract to remain with Mr. Tree until next autumn; but of course I have no idea what parts I shall play".

At this point the usual knock was heard as the door from the call-boy, and Miss Brayton intimated that she would have to leave in a few minutes.

"I certainly prefer to play Shakespeare rather than modern comedy, though, as I said before it is perhaps rather premature for me to judge. But naturally all my stage associations have been with Shakespeare and I always spend my holidays at Stratford-on-Avon. I had a most delightful time there recently, and as I am very fond of punting you may imagine I spent a large portion of my time on the river. No, I have never been abroad. I hope some day I shall be able to go to America, but that hope, of course, cannot be realised at the present. Yes, my sister has also just gone on the stage, and, in fact, is walking on in this play. We are both very busy at present furnishing my new flat, as, of course, I have now settled altogether in London. And now I must say goodbye, as I am due on stage".

# Memories of Hindley

IT is a source of disappointment to me that I cannot get up to Wigan, because you seem to have a great set-up there.

I would like to share with you some of my memories of the Hindley area. I was born in 1922 at Liverpool Road – opposite the White House. I lived there until 1941, then moved to 236 Castle Hill Road – opposite the cemetery. I married in 1944 and moved to Lincolnshire in 1947. My maiden name was Marjorie Rowe. I went to Sacred Heart School, Hindley Green, where my mother's cousin was headmistress (Miss Catherine 'Kitty' Baron whose father kept a butcher's shop on Chapel Green). My parents and myself lived in the shop at 20 Liverpool Road with my grandparents James & Annie Ratcliffe.

## George Formby

My mother went to St. Benedict's School at the same time as George Formby Jr. She described him as "the daftest kid she'd ever met". My grandfather, at that time, was a farmer at Hall's Lane Farm, Hindley Green and he had a brush with George Formby Snr. who was also an entertainer, but not as well-known as his son was to become. George Formby Snr. had a valuable horse and he asked my grandfather if he would stable the horse and look after it, while he went on a tour in America (a theatrical tour, I believe). He was away for far longer than anticipated and my grandfather had no idea where he was – he hadn't even sent the cheques that he had promised for the horse's maintenance. Alas! the horse became ill (not because the cheques hadn't been sent!) and my grandfather sent for the vet. The vet said that the horse had some incurable disease and would have to be put down. My grandfather didn't like to have to put down a valuable horse

without the owner's consent, so he sent frantic telegrams to various parts of America trying to trace George Formby Snr. He got no reply, the horse got worse and the vet said it would have to be put down to avoid further suffering, so my grandfather reluctantly agreed. When George Snr. eventually returned, he was furious and threatened to take my grandfather to court. However, the vet told him that the horse had been perfectly well looked after, along with my grandfather's horses and that it was nobody's fault that the horse had fallen prey to the illness that caused its death. That was the end of dealings with George Formby. Incidentally, he did pay his debts and the vet's fee.

When my grandfather retired from farming, he bought the Off License and Grocery Shop in Liverpool Road, which my mother (Nellie) managed

for him. There is a funny story about a man, who shall be nameless, in Liverpool Road, who was a well-known drunk. When a barrel of beer was getting to the bottom (draught beer, I mean, brought up from the cellar

by pumps) my grandfather used to sell five pints for 1 shilling instead of 2½d. a pint (thus saving ½d. on five pints).

The beer couldn't be consumed on the premises, so some-

times people brought a jug for one pint, went outside and drank it, and returned for the second pint, etc. One pay-day (Friday) the aforementioned man had his five pints, then staggered off home. They were very poor and to help out, his wife took in washing. When he staggered in his wife was 'mangling' a great pile of washing on an old-fashioned, heavy mangle. It was very dark and she

had two candles burning, one on each end of the 'mangle'. The man was infuriated when he saw the two candles and bawled: "What are yo' doin' brun-nin' [burning] two candles for, when I'm ver-near brastin' [bursting] me'sen [myself] trying to save a hap-ny [half-penny] at Ratcliffes?!"

When I started going to school at Hindley Green, about 1930, I went by tram. There were double-decker trams going to Leigh, Hindley, Ashton etc. and single-deckers to Wigan. Then the double-deckers were changed to trolley buses – that caused great excitement! The Wigan trams became buses.

## Peal forth

During the war, church bells could only be rung to warn people of invasion, so St. Peter's Church bells were silent. Previously, they had had long practices once a week, nearly deafening the people in the vicinity. When the war was over, I remember going with my grandfather, with crowds of other people and standing all round the Bird i' th'Hand on New Year's Eve, then on the stroke of midnight, the bells would peal forth loud and clear. That happened for years.

Another vivid memory of childhood is Hindley Market, held on Friday afternoon and evening, the stalls lit by flares, people shouting their wares, and some people selling small squares or rectangles of material, about 4" x 3"

*"... the daftest kid she'd ever met ..."*



called 'fents', off-cuts from end of rolls in the mills. People bought the fents, made them up into patchwork bed-spreads either for themselves or hopefully to sell. One thing about the market always made me very sad, even as a child – there were men from the 1st World War, who had lost both their legs, often up to their hips, who used to balance themselves on little trolleys and propel themselves along with their hands on the ground. The trolleys were just a piece of board on two low wheels. They used to beg on the outskirts of the market, especially in Cross Street leading up to the side of the library.

Billy Clegg was a properly qualified dentist and he and his brother, Joe (Joe was un-qualified but had been taught by Billy) had their surgery in Cross Street. It was the first house down on the right-hand side, the side entrance facing the back of the library. I preferred to have Joe attend to me, as a child – he was gentler,

although there was nothing very gentle about dentistry in those days – I remember having eight teeth filled at one sitting and there were no injections in those days!!

### Mill whistles

Another feature of life in Hindley in those days were the mill whistles. They went off at various times to summon the employees to work – one early in the morning, one at 1 o'clock (p.m.) and one in the evening, when work finished.

They could be heard all over the town.

I must mention one character, well-known in Hindley: Miss Veronica Ryan, headmistress of St. Benedict's School. She was a small, formidable, Irish woman, whose dog, Paddy, accompanied her everywhere, round school

and even to church. He always sat on the pew next to her. She was always eccentrically dressed in shabby clothes, with an old hat and a huge hat-pin. She never removed this hat, not even in school. When "Walking Day" came along and the schools and churches, dressed in their best, walked round the streets, Old Ryan (as she was called) marched beside the top-class boys (14 year olds in those days) calling "Left, left" all the way round. On

Pancake Day, we had a half-day holiday and the children used to chant:

"Pancake Tuesday's a very happy day, if you don't give us a holiday, we'll all run away".

"Where will you run?"

"Up Platt Lane, waiting for Old Ryan with her big fat cane".

### Young men called up

I became a teacher and taught at Argyle Street School, in the Senior Boys' Department. Before the War, only men taught in that department, but with the young men called up I and a Mrs. Valentine were sent there. It was pretty tough. Once a week we had to do fire-watching. We had to go to the school at dusk, patrol at intervals during the night, looking for incendiaries or other suspicious objects, and go home at day-break. We put up camp beds in the staff-room and cat-napped in those. It was no joke. Having got home, there was usually about 1½ hours to rest and then back to school for another day's work. After leaving Argyle Street, where the Headmaster at the time was Mr. Lawrence Gregory, I taught at St. Patrick's Senior Girls' School in Wigan.

Marjorie Bryden  
Eastbourne  
East Sussex

“ . . .  
Pancake  
Tuesday's  
a very  
lovely  
day . . . ”



Bird l'th' Hand, Hindley, early 1900's.

# Observations of Ashton-in-Makerfield

**AT the outbreak of World War II, I was almost twenty months old. Needless to say, therefore, I remember nothing of its beginning, its causes or its implications.**

Ashton-in-Makerfield was a sleepy little town. We were a parochial people. Everyone knew everyone else. In St. Oswald's School most of the pupils were related to each other in some way.

Stories of World War II always portray the violence and the heartbreak of divided families but there is another view – my view. Ashton was a backwater, rarely touched by the tides of war, or so it seemed to me. Husbands and fathers did go off to fight but as this was predominantly a mining area with a few scattered farms the majority of men were engaged in work deemed vital to the survival of the nation, so I and my friends were fortunate enough to have our fathers at home. My own dad worked at British Insulated Cables in Prescott. He was involved in "Operation Pluto", a pipeline across the Channel, taking oil and fuel to the troops in Normandy.

## **"France has fallen"**

I had my first realisation of war when I was two years old...

It was the summer of 1940. I kept hearing the grown-ups say "France has fallen". At that time I did not even know that France was a country! I thought it must be a person who had fallen and hurt himself but what it had to do with us I could not imagine. Those

three words, however, were to have a great impact on my life as we shall see.

I spent my childhood at Lily Farm, Bolton Road, a rambling farmhouse built in 1734. There were ten of us altogether – my old grandad who was in his seventies, his son, my Uncle Billy, with his wife and a son and daughter, his daughter Lily, his youngest daughter (my mother) with her husband and a son and daughter. That summer was rather desperate on the farm. There was a harvest to be gathered in and Uncle Billy was ill, very ill. He must have been because when I sat on my mother's knee to say my prayers I always ended with the words "God bless Uncle Billy and make him better". He was not able to work, grandad was too old to do all the work on his own and my brother James and cousin Joe were still at school. So Joe's mother, Auntie Nellie, had a bright idea ...

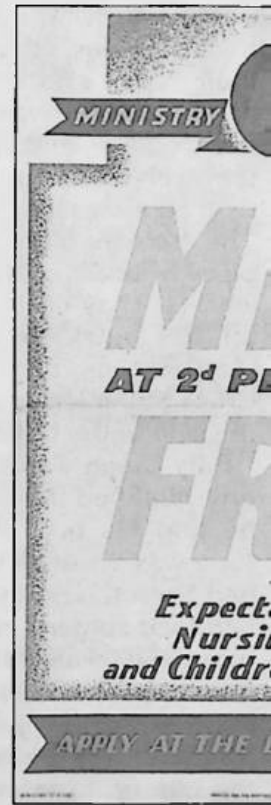
## **Help with the harvest**

At the fall of France all French ships were ordered to make for the nearest allied port in order to escape capture by the Germans. So it was that certain ones arrived in Liverpool, the crews being taken inland. Some were brought to Haydock Park racecourse where they lived under canvas for the duration of the summer. In Auntie Nellie's eyes they were heaven sent. Here was a supply of able-bodied manpower to help with the harvest. So off she went, armed with no more than grim determination, to the camp. Quite what the officers thought

she wanted I dare not imagine but eventually she must have made herself understood for two French sailors volunteered to help. They were Louis from Brest and Emile from Cherbourg. Emile, whom my family insisted on calling Emily, was 19 years old. Louis, in his twenties, was married with twin daughters. Every day they would arrive dressed in their striped jerseys and their sailor hats with a red pompom on top. We have a photograph of them taken in the fields during haymaking, each armed with a pitchfork. They worked hard despite the opinions of the locals.

## **Slopstone**

At the end of the day they came into the farmhouse. As we had no hot water at the farm my mother boiled huge kettles over an open fire. These were carried into what was known as the back-kitchen and in a bowl placed in the kitchen sink, which in old houses in Lancashire was known as a slopstone, they washed off the day's grime. Afterwards my mother cooked something for them – egg and chips was a great favourite. This meal was served up in a small room set aside for their use. Here they changed into clean clothes before going back to camp. Here they would sit and chat in their native French. I think the only attempt they made at English was to say "Thank you" (which they pronounced "Tan choo") and "Promenade" to signify what they would do if the weather was too bad to work. Sometimes they used sign lan-



World War II M

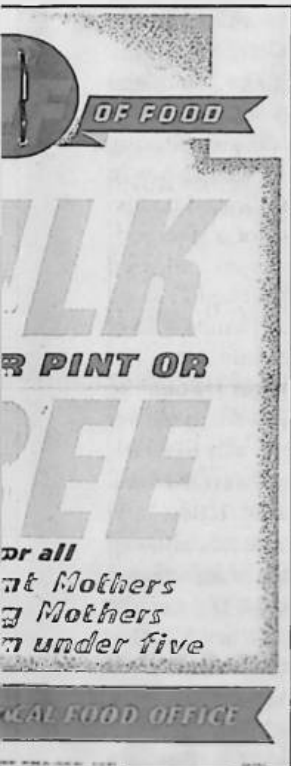
guage to show, for example, which part of a frog was eaten in France. My eyes popped out at this!

## **Feminine wiles**

I think I was a little in love with both of them. I badly wanted to get into that little room yet courage failed me. I used to creep along the tiled lobby and knock at the door but before they could open it I fled into the kitchen. One day I overcame my fear and waited. The door opened and I was led in. Even a little two-year old is endowed with feminine wiles and I did everything to charm them. I climbed on Louis's knee. I remember I was wearing a pair of adult sunglasses, much too big for me of course. I twined my

submitted a delightful article which will be published in three parts:

# life as a child in during World War II



Ministry of Food poster

on Remembrance Sunday. Indeed I have even thought of trying to trace them but I am reluctant in case they really did die.

"France has fallen". Those words and their aftermath led me to my chosen profession as a French teacher.

### *Down on the Farm*

The French sailors left in October 1940. The winter of 1940-1941 was severe. At the close of 1940 heavy snow fell. I awoke one morning to find the farm under a blanket of deep snow. Everyone on the farm had been busy from early morning digging paths through to the cowshed and stable. No matter how deep the snow we had to get through to the cows which could not be left un-milked.

I remember I could not be kept away from the back-kitchen door from where I could look out. The snow was too deep and I was too small to be able to go outside and play. To keep me warm my mother dressed me in knee-length socks. I was outraged. "I'm not wearing these, they're lads' socks", I shouted, and stamped my feet and screamed. Oh, I could scream as a child. Well, I got my just deserts. The knee-length socks were replaced by long, brown, woollen stockings held up by a liberty bodice and suspenders. My generation will remember the liberty bodice, a sleeveless, fleecy-lined garment with rubber buttons on the lower edge. These buttons were used to attach suspenders. An even more fiendish garment was a pair of woolly com-

binations, an all-in-one contraption making visits to the lavatory a contortionist's nightmare. All this was in addition to a vest with sleeves. Our mothers did not believe in glamour for children!

### *Anderson shelters*

Quite early on in the war we were issued with Anderson shelters. These were made from sheets of corrugated iron bolted together. We were also given sandbags with which to protect the entrance. Ours was erected in the farmyard. We covered the roof with clods of earth and fixed a crucifix on the top. As the sirens wailed a warning of an impending air raid we were supposed to go into the shelter but my grandad had more faith in the thick walls of his farmhouse and so we stayed put. The frogs enjoyed the shelter, though, and raised many a brood in the rainwater which flooded it.

Children who were considered at risk in the big cities were evacuated to county areas. Most from Liverpool went to Wales. Some British children were shipped across the Atlantic. Our evacuees came from London. They were lodged with a lady called Mrs. Lysons, a kindly soul, who would adopt anyone in need. Sometimes they would come to play at the farm. The one I remember was called Peter Kydd and, with an eye for the boys even at that age, I thought he was gorgeous. My friends, Eileen and Pat, dared me to kiss him so, much to his consternation, I did just that, after a chase of course. Not long

after this his mother came to visit and he pleaded to go back home with her. I did not realise it was because he was homesick. I thought it was all my fault and my two "friends" encouraged me to believe that. So ended my experience with the evacuees.

### *To New Brighton*

We used to go for the day to New Brighton. We would catch the trolley-bus to Ashton and then a maroon Wigan Corporation Bus to Bryn Station to catch the train. Even now I can name all the stations between Bryn and Liverpool. Steam trains they were and the windows were opened or closed by means of a thick leather strap. Once we arrived at Lime Street in Liverpool we made our way down to the landing stage at the Pier Head. On the way we passed underneath the overhead railway, long since demolished. To cross the road you had to stride over the water pipes which lined the road. These were used to put out the fires caused by the bombing raids. (Night after night grandad used to say "Liverpool's catching it again" as the bombers flew overhead). As we sailed across on the ferry I used to look at the grey barrage balloons floating overhead. They were, I believe, some sort of protection for the ships in the docks.

As children we made up all kinds of songs appropriate to the war. One we all sang at home went as follows:-

*/continued on p.12*

*"It's raining, it's pouring,  
There was a man named  
Goering,  
He went to bed with a bump on  
his head  
And never woke up next  
morning."*

Every adult had to do something for the war effort. There was no problem with my family as we lived on the farm. Mum worked in the fields, Auntie Lily and Auntie Nellie took out the milk. We had a milkfloat pulled by Captain, the most docile of our three horses. The milk churns were loaded on the float, the milk being measured out with long-handled pint or gill measures into cans which were then taken to our customers and poured into jugs. Generally speaking farmhouse milk did not come in bottles. Our milk round started off at the farm and ended just beyond St. Luke's Church.

One day we were on our way back and had reached the

Rams Head on the corner of Golborne Road when a military vehicle back-fired. Docile old Captain was scared out of his wits. He set off at a frantic gallop, milk cans flying in all directions and Auntie Lily frantically trying to control him with the reins. She was wondering where it would all end when Captain pulled up sharp. Our last call was at Gladly Griffiths' shop and she always gave him a titbit, so frightened or not he had no intentions of missing out!

### **Dad's Army appeared**

Life went on during the War. Dad's Army appeared on the farm from time to time, practising hand to hand fighting around the farm buildings. I believe a stray bomb dropped in the Skitters Wood. James, Joe and Mary were allowed to watch the dogfights between our planes and the odd German ones which had been intercepted after a bombing raid.

It was not all so exciting. We did the usual childhood things like organising an annual May Queen procession. Marjorie was always the Queen as she had the most beautiful clothes. I was always the train bearer. We were cheeky little kids, going round all the houses begging for something for the tea-party afterwards and that was when everyone was on a weekly ration. We always got something, however, and after the procession we would have our tea in the garage belonging to Chamberlains. One year Eileen, who was the dominant member of our little group, suggested that I could be queen. My delight was short-lived, however, as, when we compared the dresses we would wear, hers was in ivory satin so that gave her the right to be queen. Yet again I was the train-bearer. Eddie McDermott decided to dress up as an A.R.P. warden and very convincing he looked too.

### **Dandelion and Burdock**

In the summer holidays we had a wigwam, pitched in the farm yard. It was a homemade affair of bleached calico and constructed by my dad. We played all sorts of games in that wigwam. Picnics were enjoyed there with copious glasses of Dandelion and Burdock drunk through straws which really were straws picked up from the fields. We were forbidden to camp out at night for fear of air raids.

At Christmas there was generally a visit to the pantomime at Wigan Hippodrome. I went to my first pantomime aged four. I have no idea what pantomime it was but I do remember the hit song of that year which the audience was invited to sing:-

*"Don't sit under the apple tree  
With anyone else but me  
"Til I come marching home.  
Don't go walking down  
Lovers' Lane" etc.*

It was a memorable pantomime – too memorable, I came home with measles!

### **V. E. Day**

I had the usual childhood illnesses, but one day, towards the end of the war in 1945, it was more serious. I was diagnosed as having scarlet fever and so had to be taken off to the isolation hospital along Bryn Road. As we had a farm and a milk-round everything at home had to be fumigated because I was suffering from a contagious disease. During the three weeks when I was in hospital I was allowed no visitors, at least not at the bedside. Visitors were allowed twice a week but had to stand outside at the window. My mother came only once because she thought I would be too upset. I did want to see her but there was no way to let her know as letters were banned. My friends sent letters and comics but I was not allowed to write for fear of infection.

At last I got out and the war was soon over. When V.E. Day was announced many of us went into Ashton to walk around in celebration. I had a red, white and blue ribbon in my hair. Of course there were street parties everywhere. Ours took place in Chamberlain's allotment with a huge trestle table and lots of fizzy drinks and sponge cakes. We must have been bloated. Towards the end things got a little exuberant and one cup was broken. When second helpings of Tizer were poured out guess who, according to my bossy friend Eileen, had to go without because she had no cup!

*To be continued. In  
Past Forward 10,  
Mrs. Fleming re-  
members wartime  
school life and  
rationing.*

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# Remembering 'Daisy', 'Delia' and 'Dorothy'

When I was a boy, "Maypole" was a glorious playground for me; I rode on the locomotives "Daisy", "Delia" and the ill-fated "Dorothy", and the colliery machinery i.e. winding-engines, fan-engines, the "Slack Wash" provided me with a constant source of fascination and I spent many happy hours roaming round there.

Incidentally, I got the story from my mother as to how the "Maypole" got its name. If you look at the O.S. map you will see a small area by the colliery level-crossing in Park Lane marked as "Morris Dancers' Ground"; it would seem that this small patch of ground had for many years been used by the local Morris Dancers to dance

round the maypole and the owner of the land made a stipulation that this bit of land was kept intact for that purpose and so it remained; what truth there is in this I would not know but, true or otherwise, it does make a nice local legend.

I remember being told of a tunnel that ran between Abram Hall and Bamfurlong Hall which was used by priests escaping the religious persecutions, and it was said that two of the lads who lived at Abram Hall had tried to open it up but had to abandon the idea as it proved to be too dangerous; again I cannot verify this story, as I was only a schoolboy at the time, but true or not it did provide us with a good adventure yarn.

(Anon)

## Requiem for a Colliery\*

*Gone are the miners' footsteps  
That echoed along the lane,  
Now the colliery that employed them  
Is nothing but a name.  
The tall chimney smokes no longer,  
It mutely points to the sky  
A monument to the madness  
Of those who condemned it to die.  
The boilers are cold and silent  
There's a rust on the fire-hole door,  
And the voice of the "six-o'clock" whistle  
Is stilled for evermore.  
Dead too are the winding-engines  
And the pulleys have ceased to turn,  
For men no longer go there  
Their daily bread to earn.  
The once chattering screens have been silenced  
By a rule that fools imposed,  
They too are now part of a chapter  
Of a book that is written and closed.  
Yes, the heart of a village is dead now  
For the wheels have all run down,  
And the chimney watches in silence  
O'er its brothers all around.  
How long will they go on smoking  
Ere meeting a similar fate?  
Will men never realise their folly  
Before it is too late?  
For there's coal down there for the taking  
And men would welcome the toil,  
But the coalfields and their workers  
Have been sacrificed for oil.  
Yet, perhaps in the hidden future  
King Coal will assert his reign  
And once more the miners' footsteps  
Will echo along the lane.*

(Anon)

\* Maypole Colliery, c. 1960

## LOCAL LIMERICKS

'A pleasant young lady from Orrell,  
Whose beads were a nice plastic correll,  
Now gets'ome wi' t'milk,  
Dressed i' diamonds an' silk;  
Folks is startin' to wonder if she's morrell.'

If you enjoy limericks and especially if you hail from Lancashire, here's a book for you – the above is just one of 104 Lancashire Limericks written by John Sephton, complete with equally amusing cartoons. South Lancashire is well represented, by such places as Ashton-in-Makerfield, Atherton, Billinge, Haigh, Hindley, Leigh, Standish and Wigan.

At only £3.50, I'm sure this book will prove to be very popular. Copies are available from the History Shop (please add

50p for postage). Or you could win a copy by sending in your own limerick, which contains a Lancashire place, to Bob Dobson at Landy Publishing (see p.12 for address). Three winners will be chosen from 'Past Forward' readers – so be sure to mention 'Past Forward'. Closing date is Easter 1995.

Ed.

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John Sephton.

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Not everyone agreed with the sentiments of Mrs. Evans regarding Bamfurlong which appeared in 'Past Forward 8'. To redress the balance, here is a contribution from a resident of Bamfurlong.

### THE OTHER SIDE OF THE TALE

Bamfurlong is a village Not picturesque or sweet Just a little place where gradely folk Treat each other 'reet'.	The flora and the fauna Really are quite nice And the old outdated houses Have finally paid the price
New t' Councils done a 'daycent' job Straightenen' up this place A pit village 'weer' dirt rucks 'Wer' once a big disgrace.	So let the lady from Bickershaw Who seems Bamfurlong, to detest Stay at home where she belongs And settle for second best.
So here's this little village Just comin' into its own Where once there 'wer' slag heaps Now trees and grass have grown.	Mr. E. Pugh 12 Winstanley Road, Bamfurlong.

All family historians will sympathise with the frustrations which Mr. Haimes of Guildford shares with us here. Ed.

# NOTES ON SARAH CRANK\*

UNTIL about ten years ago, when I seriously took up the business of researching my family history, I was under the impression that my considerable family had been born and bred in and around Birkenhead in Cheshire. I certainly was born there and I lived there until my parents moved to the south of England early in 1935 when I was eleven. We left behind the platoons of parents, uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters and cousins, in Liverpool and Birkenhead, many of whom now have surnames different from mine because girls and their daughters have married and changed their surnames.

Consequently I was very surprised to discover several years ago that, according to the 1841 census my great great grandfather was not a Cheshire man at all. He had, in fact, been born at Donhead in Wiltshire, a place I had never heard of. It turned out that he had moved to Storeton on the Wirral to become a gamekeeper and small farmer on the estates of the Stanley family at some time before 1837.

## First appeared

Sarah Crank first appeared on our horizon around 1988/89 when I discovered that she was the second wife of my great great grandfather, John Haimes of Storeton. They married at St. Oswald's Chapel, Ashton-in-Makerfield, near Wigan, in 1838. She gave her father's name as Richard Crank, miller, of Downall Green. She is my great great grandmother - her son William John Haimes (a publican in Liverpool) was the father of George William Haimes (a plumber in Birkenhead), my grandfather.

Since I had had no trouble finding the record of her marriage in Ashton, and I knew her father's name and trade in Downall Green, I didn't anticipate much trouble in tracing

Sarah Crank's birth and baptism. After all, there can't have been all that many millers in Downall Green. I was mistaken!

When she got married in 1838 Sarah Crank gave her age as 33. Assuming that she was telling the truth, she was therefore born in 1805. That is more than 30 years before official registrations of births, marriages and deaths began so there are basically two sources of information which ought to give her place of birth. One is the parish register of baptisms, if one knows which parish she came from. I assumed that she had been born in Downall Green but I wouldn't know until I found the parish register.

## Not easy

But parish registers around Wigan are not easily consulted if you live 200 miles away in the south. Since I was working from Guildford in Surrey the most obvious source, therefore, was the Mormon's set of IGI microfiches in Guildford Library. This turned out to be no help at all. The IGI is notoriously random in its coverage and there was not a single Richard or Sarah Crank in the IGI for Lancashire. Nor, as it happens, is there a single Haimes in the IGI for Cheshire or

Lancashire although four separate branches of my family (migrating from Wiltshire) established themselves in Birkenhead, Liverpool and Manchester between 1837 and 1850 and there are scores of their births, marriages and deaths recorded in the General Register Office. Some Cranks have appeared in more recent editions of the IGI but they have nothing to do with us and there is nothing about Sarah Crank born in 1805 whose father was Richard Crank.

\* \* \* \*

There was, however, another possible source of information available about Sarah Crank and her family in the census records of 1841, the first useful set of census records. She herself wouldn't be in the census record for Downall Green in 1841 because she had got married to my great great grandfather three years earlier in 1838 and had gone away to live in Storeton under her married name as Sarah Haimes. On the other hand it was perfectly possible that her father and mother were still living in Downall Green in 1841 since there was nothing on her marriage certificate to say that her father Richard Crank, the miller, had been dead when she got married. Indeed there might have been brothers and sisters still at Downall Green.

## Faded scrawls

I decided to search the census in London at the Public Record Office in Chancery Lane. The business of searching census records has been made simpler and much more efficient over the past 10 years. Now you can quickly

look up the number of the microfilm which carries the census information for any address in the country. Then you simply get the film out of a numbered locker and put it on the reader which has been allotted to you when you arrive at the Office. But even with the improved methods of getting at the census records it would still try the patience of a saint to go through the faded scrawls of handwritten records which are now 150 years old.

I found no trace of Richard Crank, but there in Downall Green in 1841 was Susannah Crank, miller, aged 65. There was also Thomas Crank, aged 40, evidently living with Susannah Crank although there was no address given and he wasn't described as a miller. There was no proof of any relationship to my Sarah Crank but it seemed perfectly feasible that Richard Crank was the father of Sarah and had died; that Susannah Crank was his widow and the mother of Sarah Crank, and had carried on her husband's trade; and that Thomas Crank was Sarah's older brother, born in 1801. But how many mills had there been at Downall Green and where were they? And where was the record of Sarah Crank's baptism in 1805 - assuming, of course, that she had been baptised. I thought there was a fair chance that she had been because it seemed likely that she had been a Catholic, as was my great great grandfather who married her, but that doesn't necessarily follow either.

## Seriously motivated

The Cranks were put in abeyance until 1991, when we went to North Wales to try to trace the birth of my Welsh great grandmother. We came round through Birkenhead and Liverpool on our way back and while we were there one of my first cousins took us along to a family dinner at

the home of her brother Gerard in the Roby district of Liverpool. Another cousin at the dinner was John. I had never known any of this family well. Consequently I was astonished to discover that John lived in Ashton-in-Makerfield, and had been married at St. Oswald's Church which he still regularly attended. He was equally astonished to discover that his great great grandfather had the same name as he had, and had been married in the same church 150 years earlier. This seriously motivated me once again to discover all I could about Sarah Crank.

\* \* \* \*

A year later we managed to return to the North West, and there was no sign of a mill but on the map there was a Mill Farm in the south east corner of Downall Green. This was a very suggestive name so we presented ourselves to the farmers who turned out to be Mr. and Mrs. Lyon. They told us that the farm had been there since 1750 and that the old mill might have been down the hill at the bottom of Rectory Road and Downall Green Road where Crompton's Hinge and Lock Manufactory later stood. The Lock Manufactory building was still standing but it had become a garage and repair shop. They were exactly right about the location of the mill although we didn't find that out for several more years. During our stay we also attended a meeting of the Leigh Family History Society. I bought a copy of their Leigh Register Guide, which provided some old maps, lists of the churches and also showed where all the parish records are to be found.

In July 1994 I paid another visit to Lancashire. I rang up Wigan Council and was referred to the History Shop which sounded a weird title but they said it was the best

place for any local records. We spent the afternoon in the History Shop looking at records but we found nothing new - somehow we didn't happen on the right records.

### Wrote to History Shop

On my return home, I wrote to the History Shop to ask whether they would put a paragraph in *Past Forward*, asking if anyone anywhere had ever come across the family of Richard Crank, the miller of Ashton-in-Makerfield around the year 1800, his wife Susannah, who apparently succeeded him, and his daughter Sarah who was my great great grandmother. To begin with I spoiled my whole approach by putting their address at the head of the letter instead of my own. I must be getting senile! However, about a fortnight later I decided there was some other occasion to write to them and this time I got it right!

Meanwhile my query had attracted the interest of Heritage Officer Mrs. Dawn Wadsworth who must be a very charitable soul. She decided to check my searches and to look into some things which I hadn't had time for. She scored one bull right away. I had thought that the map in the Leigh Society booklet was probably the oldest there was but Mrs. Wadsworth had no trouble turning up an older one. A really old one. And there, exactly where Mr. and Mrs. Lyon had said it might be, was a circle, clearly marked as Downall Green Mill. "Corn" it said underneath so that we could be in no possible doubt. Mrs. Wadsworth had also looked up an 1834 directory which showed Thomas Crank, corn miller and flour dealer, Downall Green.

### Pet name for Sarah

Moreover, Mrs. Wadsworth had followed things even fur-

ther. She had had the wit to look at the records of St. Thomas's Church (Church of England). I'm not quite clear yet what records exactly she looked at. She perhaps found the parish registers, which I didn't, but she certainly found a Sally Crank, daughter of Richard and Susannah Crank, born and baptised in 1805. Sally is a pet name for Sarah and the date was exactly right for a woman who got married 33 years later and said she was 33 years old. Moreover her father was Richard and her mother (from the census) had seemed likely to have been Susannah. Mrs. Wadsworth didn't find Thomas but, as she said, she had searched only a narrow time span (1807 to 1809) and Thomas would have been born in 1801 if his age at the census of 1841 was correctly given as 40.

\* \* \* \*

I find the evidence about Richard, Susannah and Sarah pretty convincing. I think it is probably as near as I will get to certainty in my lifetime. So where does it leave us? I am writing this on 19 September, 1994. The day after tomorrow we are off to Liverpool University for yet another conference. We shall go via Wigan because if Sarah was baptised at St. Thomas's (wherever that may be) it is at least possible that her father Richard and her mother Susannah were married there. So the next thing I have to do is to look up the marriages in the parish registers to see if I can find a record of marriage. If Thomas Crank was aged 40 at the 1841 census then he was born around 1801. If he was her eldest child it seems likely that she may have been married in about 1800. If she was, say, 25 when she got married, she would have been born in 1776. Her age on marriage is a pure guess on my part but I notice that it match-

es exactly with an age of 65 at the 1841 census. That gives me an approximate date to look for a record of her birth and/or baptism.

These records should give me the names of my great great grandfather who will presumably be a Crank and, with luck, the maiden surname of my great great grandmother which will presumably be quite different. It may also give me some indication of the names and provenance of their parents and then I shall be home and dry, more or less.

**Whether I strike it lucky there or not I shall always be extremely grateful to Mrs. Wadsworth for taking the time and trouble to search out these vital bits of my family and for sending me photostats of the map showing the mill, and several other relevant documents. I promised her, as a very modest return, an essay on the subject of my family which it might be possible to use in *Past Forward*. This is it and I suspect that it is far too long but perhaps she can cut some bits out of it. I shall deliver it in a couple of days if only to show that there is at least one southern family which now has some idea of what has been going on north of Watford.**

*\*According to P.H. Reaney's Dictionary of British Surnames, p.81 the name Crank or Cronk first appears with Goderic Cranc at Bury in Suffolk. Reaney quotes the New English Dictionary for a first appearance in 1398. The Middle English version is Cranke. It means lusty, vigorous, in high spirits, or merry, which is odd when you think that in German it means sick!*

*The Connoisseur for 1922, volume 64, pp 199-208 has an article on "James Cranke the elder a forgotten Lancashire painter, 1707-1780".*

# EXHIBITIONS IN THE HISTORY SHOP

The Year of Drama 1994 celebrations in the History Shop finished in grand style by 'Bringing the House Down' – the Heritage Service's history of local theatre. This splendid exhibition was opened by Colin Bean, alias Private Sponge in Dad's Army (see p.6 for Colin's fascinating recollections of the famous 'Wigan Hip'). A travelling version of the exhibition can be seen at the following venues: March - Ashton Library, April - Standish Library and May - Shevington Library. 'When Push comes to Shove' – an exhibition to celebrate the centenary of Rugby League – also kicked off in grand style on 6 February with some readings from the book of the same name (available from the History Shop, £9.95), and guest appearances by Wigan R.L.C. players and the World Club Challenge Trophy. This exhibition runs until the end of March.

No fewer than three exhibitions will be mounted in the History Shop during 1995 to commemorate the cessation of hostilities in 1945. 'Wigan at War' looks at life at home, culminating with V.E. Day. Later in the year, we will commemorate the peace brought about by Victory in Japan, August 1945, and look at the subsequent threats to peace in Europe in 'Europe Today: The Ugly Face of Nationalism', an exhibition developed by the Anne Frank House and seen by over 300,000 people during its display in Amsterdam.

## 6 February - 31 March

'When Push Comes to Shove' – A Celebration of the Centenary of Rugby League.

## 24 April - 3 June

'Wigan at War' – A Commemoration of Victory in Europe, 1945.

## 6 June - 15 July

'Baskets for Business' – A Look at Baskets (Old and New).

## 31 July - September

A Commemoration of 'Victory in Japan, 1945'.

## 31 July - 25 August

'Europe Today: The Ugly Face of Nationalism' – An Anne Frank House exhibition.

## October - November

An Exhibition of New Works by Local Artist Gerald Rickards.



To mark the dropping of the curtain on the Year of Drama, Wigan Council's Heritage Service mounted a spectacular exhibition featuring a host of stars. Local stage and screen star, Colin Bean, best remembered for his role as Private Sponge in Dad's Army, opened the exhibition.

## LECTURES IN THE HISTORY SHOP

This year's lectures to date have been extremely well attended – with often a full house. Lectures are held on the second Wednesday of the month at 7.30 p.m. (except in March - see below). Tickets are only £1, including coffee, and can be obtained in advance from the History Shop (01942 828128)

### 9 March (Thursday)

'The Formation of Rugby League, 1895 – Myth and Reality'  
Mike Lathom

### 12 April

'The Natural History of the Wigan District'  
Charles Owen

### 10 May

'The Home Front in Lancashire, 1939-45'  
Stephen Bull

### 14 June

'The Settle and Carlisle Railway'  
Keith Naylor

## HERITAGE ON THE MOVE

Heritage Service Education and Outreach Manager Bob Blakeman will be leading two conducted Heritage walks in late Spring.

### 21 May

2.00p.m. – Wigan Town, Mesnes Park, Swinley and Standishgate

### 18 June

2.00p.m. – Red Rock, Arley and Worthington

THE HISTORY SHOP'S MEETING ROOM IS AVAILABLE FOR HIRE BY LOCAL GROUPS AND SOCIETIES, AT VERY REASONABLE COST:

£5.00 PER MORNING OR AFTERNOON SESSION

£7.50 PER EVENING SESSION

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED, PLEASE CONTACT  
PHILIP BUTLER

(01942) 828124



# SOCIETY NEWS

## Aspull & Haigh Historical Society

The society continues to grow, with a number of new members joining in 1994, not all from Aspull. A new book is planned, with stories of Aspull in the past. Meetings are held in the Village Centre, Bolton Road, Aspull, on the second Thursday of the month at 8.00 p.m.

### 9 March

*Annual Meeting*

### 13 April

*History of Water Mills*

Mr. P. Gee

### 11 May

*The Titanic*

Mr. S. Rigby

### 8 June

*History of Wigan Borough Police*

Mr. J. Fairhurst

Further details from the Secretary, Mrs. Dorothy Dootson, 5 Stancliffe Grove, Aspull. (01942 831204)

## Atherton Heritage Society

All meetings are held in Atherton Library on the second Monday of the month at 7.30 p.m.

### 13 March

*Salford Quays – Past and Present*

Miss Lee (Salford Quays Museum Heritage Centre)

### 10 April

*Robbie Burns*

Mrs. Flo Greenhalgh

### 22 May

*The Jacobites in Lancashire*

Mr. F. Holcroft

### 12 June

*Coins (Party II)*

Mr. Prescott

Further details from the Secretary, Mrs. P. Madden, 22 Butterfield Road, Over Hulton, Bolton BL5 1DU. (01204 651478).

## Golborne & Lowton Local History Society

Founded in 1984, the society now has an average monthly attendance of over 20. Meetings are held at Golborne Library on the second Tuesday of the month at 7.00 p.m. Non-members welcome. Further details from Ron Marsh, P.R. Officer (01942 726027)

## Leigh & District Civic Trust

For details contact the Chairman, Betty Isherwood, 7 Pennington Mews, St. Helens Road, Leigh. (01942 672058)

## Leigh & District Family History Society

For details contact the Secretary Olive Hughes (01942 606156)

## Tyldesley & District Historical Society

Meetings are held at Tyldesley Pensions club, Milk Street, Tyldesley on the third

Thursday of the month at 7.30 p.m. Entrance is FREE.

### 16 March

*The Photograph Collection of the Lancashire Mining Museum*

Mr. Davies

### 20 April

*The Paupers Palace – the history of Bolton General Hospital from its opening as a workhouse in 1860 to the present*

Mrs. Connor

### 18 May

*Annual Visit – a guided tour of Wet Earct Colliery surface features (7.00 p.m.)*

Further details from the Secretary (01942 893241)

## Wigan Archaeological Society

The Society meets in the History Shop on the first Wednesday of the month at 7.30 p.m. New members always welcome.

### 1 March

*the Jacobite Rebellion*

Fred Holcroft

### 5 April

*The Age of Stonehenge*

David Hunt

### 3 May

*The Mary Rose*

Lucy Pile

### 7 June

*The Valley of the Kings, Part II*

Video

### 5 July

*Vikings in the North West*

Ben Edwards



*Following the outstanding success of the Victorian Christmas at Haigh Hall, there will be a*

## Dickensian Midsummer Ball

*at*

*Haigh Hall*

*on*

*Friday 23 June 1995*

*The evening will comprise dinner, dancing and entertainment*

*Tickets 19 Guineas (£19.95) available from Haigh Hall (01942 832895) or TIC (01942 825677)*

*Further details from Alastair Gillies, Wigan Heritage Service (01942 827375)*



## ASTLEY GREEN COLLIERY

1995 marks the 25th anniversary of the closure of the colliery, and it is appropriate that in this year the recently erected new entrance gates should be dedicated. This will take place on Saturday 22 April, as part of the annual spring crank up. With celebrities and musical entertainment, this should be an enjoyable day out for everybody.

Members of the public are welcome to visit this fascinating attraction at other times as well - the Colliery is normally open Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1.00-5.00 and Sundays 11.00-5.00. Schools and Party visits by arrangement.

You may even consider joining the Red Rose Steam Society, a splendid group of volunteers who have kept the site going as a tourist attraction since it ceased to be a working mine.

### 2 April

*North West Stationary Engine Society Rally*

### 22,23 April

*Red Rose Crank Up Vintage Engine Rally (Dedication of new entrance gates, Saturday, 2.30)*

### 4,5 August

*'All our Yesterdays' Rally and Transpennine Run*

Further details from Harry Potts tel: (0161 790 7805)



## Some unexpected results

Dear Mr. Gillies,  
The last 'memory' of mine that you published had some most unexpected results - it re-united me with old school-friends who I have not seen for many, many years, one of whom now visits me fairly often - in fact I had a quick visit from him this morning. It also brought a letter from an old neighbour who emigrated to America many years ago and who I have not seen for more years than I care to remember. It is a real bonus when the publication of a small article can bring about such happenings right out of the blue, and it brings so much pleasure to renew old contacts, especially when the separation has spread over so many years. Looking forward to

the next issue of Past Forward.

Anon.

A further 'memory' and poem from the same correspondent can be found on p.13.

Ed.

## 'A Letter from Ernie'

Dear Sir,  
In the spring of '94 I wrote to you asking if you could give me any details of Ernie Taberner. After reading his book, "A Lancashire Upbringing", I remembered that as a child, I knew a boy by the same name and wondered if it could be the same person. You very kindly printed my letter in the number 7 issue and sent it to me with a letter. I thank you for your kindness and for the address of Ernie Taberner. I did write to him and was very happy; when, one day the mailman brought a letter for me from Ernie. He wasn't my long

Past Forward has been instrumental in bringing people together, not only from different parts of the country but also the world! On this page are two examples:

## NATHANIEL ECKERSLEY CONNECTION

Dear Sir,  
Lying under the shade of a coconut tree on Western Samoa, I was surprised to find a picture of my old primary school on page 20 of issue No. 8, Past Forward.

The top photograph, showing men seated at tables about to eat a meal, was taken in the main hall of the Wesleyan Methodist Primary

School, Dicconson Street, Standishgate. However, the photograph would appear to be a non-school function. I was a pupil at the school from 1959 to 1966.

I was also most interested to read the article about Nathaniel Eckersley. As a Wigan Grammar School pupil in the latter half of the 1960s and early 1970s my school house was

Eckersley yet I had no information regarding the biography of this man until reading Issue 8 of Past Forward.

Howard G. Nichols

Mr. Nichols, who now lives in Australia, wrote this while on holiday in Western Samoa! Past Forward really is read world wide.

Ed.

## 'Lost Family' rediscovered

Dear Mr. Gillies,  
After many years of promising to do so, I recently set off to Kemble,

lost friend, but I was so happy that he had written to me. I thought you would like to know that we have become good friends through our letters and we exchange news of Wigan from our earlier years along with present day news. My husband and I really enjoy his wonderful letters, they are a real tonic to us. I wish everyone involved in 'Past Forward' a very "Happy New Year" and once again, a very big "Thank You" for a job well done. Please accept my contribution.  
Mildred Prescott (Mrs.)  
10 Front St. North Apt. 101  
Thorold, Ontario, Canada

Gloucestershire, birthplace of my maternal grandfather, armed only with scant knowledge and his old birth certificate. I stayed at an old Inn at Ewen, made a few enquiries, but no one knew the name. So disappointed and only a little wiser we did a little touring and returned home.

Just before last Christmas my sister rang to say a cousin who was researching my maternal grandmother's family had a year before picked up copies of your 'Past Forward' magazine but had been unable to contact me. In these editions was amazingly most of my family tree!! This was contained in a letter and two part article 'Migration from the Land' by Mrs. Gladys Carson of Deal, Kent.\* It featured the Nurdin family from

Gloucestershire, my grandfather being George Nurdin and my mother Eva his daughter. I myself was born at 192 Woodhouse Lane, one of the family homes.


I am now in contact with Gladys (Mrs. Carson) as Eric, her late husband, shares the same family tree. She has been a great help in my search for what I could say is my 'lost family'. I never met them as they, my mother's elder two sisters and brother, left Wigan and continued the family's seemingly nomadic ways so I'm hoping to eventually trace their families and return once again to Gloucestershire in the hope one day to come face to face with my distant relatives.

Brian Rigby,

Kitt Green, Wigan.

\*See Past Forward 4,5 and 6

94

Certified Copy of  an Entry of Marriage.

Subjunct to the Act for the Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages, in England, 1836 to 1838.

No.	When Married	Name and Surname	Age	Condition	Rank or Profession	Residence at the Time of Marriage	Father's Name and Surname	Rank or Profession of Father
1911	27 June 1911	George Nurdin	46 years	widower	Colliers Under Manager	37 Beech Hill Avenue, Wigan.	Charles Nurdin (deceased)	Coachman (Domestic)
		Pellen Harmer	28 years	spinster		41 Holly Street Woodhouse Lane Wigan.	Matthew Harmer (deceased)	Coal Miner

Married in the Register Office

This Marriage was solemnized between us

George Nurdin  
Pellen Harmer

in the Presence of us,

Henry Parkell  
Ann Jane Parkell

Witnessed by

George Nurdin  
Pellen Harmer

Register of Marriages for the District of Wigan in the County of Lancashire

Witnessed by me this 27 day of June 1911.

So hereby Certify

George Nurdin

10/6/11

The marriage certificate of Brian's maternal grandfather, George Nurdin, born 1864, at Gloucestershire, and married 1911, at Wigan.

# The luck of the Irish

The enclosed photograph is the one mentioned in our phone conversation. The location is possibly - Blackrod, Aspull or Westhoughton.

I would like to find out the name and location of the pub, and also the brewery which appears to be 'Rushtons'. There may be some connection with the Rushtons of chain store fame but I can find no reference in local books.

One of the men in the photograph is reputed to be the winner of a small fortune on the Irish Sweepstake, a man named Garlick who subsequently bought a coal delivery business.

I hope that this is of some interest to you.

R. Grimshaw  
56 Hillside Avenue, Blackrod  
Bolton. BL6 5BS



❶ CAMRAS's directory 'Where have all the breweries gone?' lists only one Rushtons's brewery in Aston, nr. Birmingham. One can see what looks like the final 'o' and 'n' of Aston in the notice in the lower part of the window, which makes me think that this may not in fact be a local photograph - unless breweries at that time delivered to a much wider area than I imagined. Any suggestions?

Ed.

# The entrepreneurial Christopher brothers of Ireland ... and Wigan

Dear Mr. Hudson,

The photograph in Past Forward 8 at the bottom of page 20 (Who, Where and When?) is a picture of my great grandfather Gerald Christopher and was taken outside of his father's shop on Darning Street, Wigan in 1913. The shop site was taken over in 1922 for conversion into The Grand Hotel which it still remains today.

Christopher Brothers had branches in Blackburn, Bury, Preston, Oldham and Liverpool. They were principally Tea Merchants and specialised in clocks of German manufacture. Before they set up a new branch of the business it was necessary to obtain samples of the drinking water from the districts to be served by that branch in order to produce a blend of teas that would make a quality 'cuppa' from the different water types. Consequently the teas sold at The Blackburn branch would not be the same blends sold at Wigan.

The Christopher Brothers were Gerald, James and Thomas who came from Dungarvan, County Waterford, Ireland in 1878 and opened their first branch in Blackburn. James Christopher was the father of Gerald who was born in Blackburn in 1898. Shortly after this photograph was taken Gerald Christopher was in France with the Royal Irish Regiment in the midst of World War I where he was

seriously injured and returned home to Wigan and convalescence in Wigan Infirmary. Gerald lived with his father James, sister Kathleen and mother Mary (Swift) at 4 Park Road, Wigan and was educated at the Catholic College of Mount St. Mary's, Spinkhill, Sheffield.

His mother Mary was the daughter of Thomas Swift a Wigan born man who ran a successful business in Blackburn producing beer engines and other products for the brewery industry. He also patented one of the early water closets (flush loo) and was responsible for the installation in hotels and railway stations of those magnificent and elaborate Victorian Ladies and Gentleman's conveniences.

His sister Kathleen married Joseph Baron, a well known Leigh butcher.

James Christopher was a vigorous and vocal campaigner for Home Rule in Ireland and was presented with an inscribed silver pocket watch by the Sarsfield Branch of the Irish National League in Blackburn in 1894 (General Patrick Sarsfield was prominent at the Battle of the Boyne).

Nathan Christopher  
(Aged 9)  
29 Elizabeth Drive, Spring  
View, Wigan,

❶ Many thanks, Nathan, for your excellent contribution.  
Ed.

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NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

I enclose a contribution of £.....towards production costs.  
(Please make all cheques payable in Sterling to 'Wigan MBC')

# Who, Where and When?

The large mystery photograph in 'Past Forward 8' produced the biggest response yet – definitely the Old Wesleyan School, Dicconson Street. But no suggestions as to the actual function. The church has been tentatively identified as Whelley Methodist. As for the view at the Mayor and Boys Brigade .... one reader identified the person to the right of the Mayor, as we look at it, as none other than the Duke of Gloucester! This was enough for Heritage Service staff to track down the photograph to the Manchester Guardian of 20 January 1934. The Duke and the Mayor, Cllr. James Horne, were opening the Junior Instruction Centre for Boys in Harrogate Street, Wigan. We weren't quite expecting such a positive identification! As for the fourth photograph see page 19.

If you can identify the photographs shown here, please contact Len Hudson in Leigh Town Hall (01942) 404432

