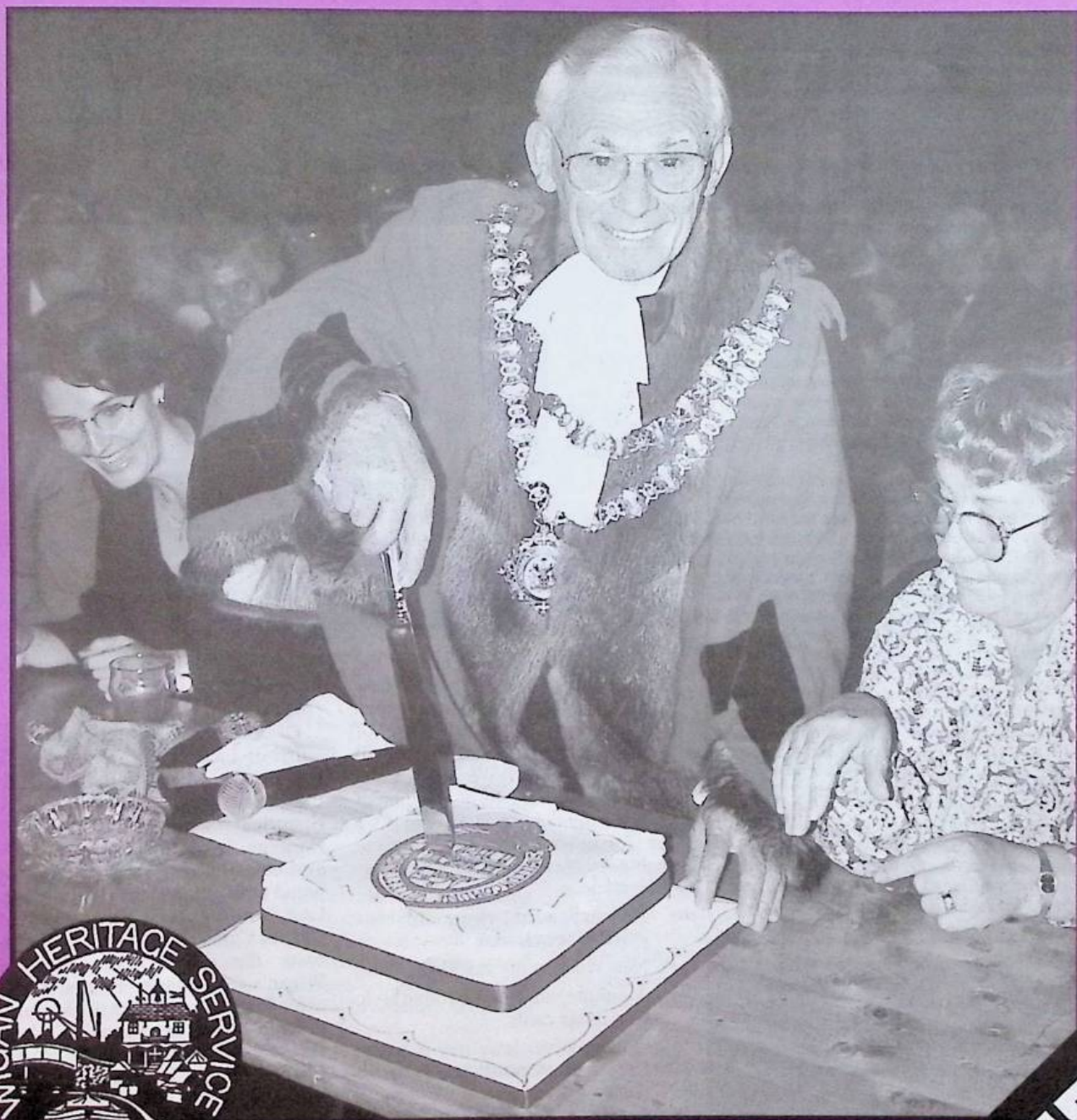


PAST FORWARD

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The Newsletter of Wigan Heritage Service

FREE

From the Editor

As I write, 1996 is fast approaching its end – the end of Charter year, in which I and the Heritage Service have been very heavily involved. It has been a memorable year, during which a great deal has been achieved on a very limited budget.

The highlight of the year was, of course, the August Bank Holiday weekend, when celebrations included a fun day in the town centre, a service of thanksgiving, the Charter Banquet, the Charter Gala, the Charter play and Fireworks display, culminating with the opening of the Charter exhibition in the newly expanded History Shop (see p10).

But there is a great deal more to look back on. Over 2000 local schoolchildren took part in charter projects and workshops, including dance and music (I will never forget the expressions of happiness and delight on the faces of the children from Mere Oaks Special School). Adult workshops on the visual arts and literature were held.

Of course, the biggest achievement for Wigan Heritage Service itself during 1996 was the opening of the Charter exhibition in the new Wickham Gallery of the History Shop. The exhibition is superb – and I am not alone in saying that – see p10. The Charters can now be seen in their full glory. The exhibition has already proved to be a valuable educational resource. Many requests have been received to purchase a video of the audio-visual presentation – and now you can! It is wonderful to have a traditional art gallery, at long last. The Charter Mural looks magnificent. I am deeply grateful to Heritage Service staff and all those who have worked so hard to make all this possible.

A further fruit of Charter year was closer cultural links with Wigan's twin town Angers, which by pure coincidence was the town of Henry II, who granted Wigan's first Charter in 1246. The Heritage Service is very grateful to our friends in Angers – and particularly Gerard Pilet and Sylvain Bertoldi – for the loan of some of their archival treasures until the end of Charter year. I was delighted that Gerard and Sylvain were able to join us for our celebrations in August.

Nor is that all. The publication of this issue of 'Past Forward' coincides with 'Wigan – A Historical Souvenir' and the Heritage Service's first video (see p12). And the year's celebrations conclude in style with the ever-popular Victorian Christmas at Haigh Hall on 21 December.

So it is with confidence and enthusiasm that we look forward to 1997. My thanks to all readers of 'Past Forward' for their support, in whatever form. A very Merry Christmas and Prosperous New Year to you all.

All comments and correspondence should be addressed to:

Editor, 'Past Forward',
Wigan Heritage Service,
Market Suite,
The Galleries
Wigan, WN1 1PX

Charter a Souvenir for Christmas



With the opening of Phase II the History Shop 'shop' has a new ground floor location, a smart green livery and an expanded range of heritage related goods, to suit all ages and pockets. We are a good source of unusual gifts at any time of year, so why not pop in and see if we can solve your Christmas present problems. New lines for Christmas '96 include:

- An expanded range of our popular pewterware
- New wooden toy stocking fillers
- A unique range of Victorian style Christmas cards
- Quality silver jewellery (Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Victorian designs)

- Mining souvenirs (plates and cast models)

Of course we still stock our wide range of local history publications and by December will have Bob Blakeman's new book 'Wigan – A Historical Souvenir' and the Heritage Service's very own video available. Both are a must for anyone proud of their town and its traditions. Last but not least our range of Charter China commissioned to celebrate the 750th anniversary of Wigan's first charter is now available. Prices range from £1.50 for a thimble to £15 for a boxed 10" plate. Please contact Dawn on 828124 for further details. Mail order can be arranged for any item.

Cover: *The Mayor of Wigan, Councillor Bernard Coyle, cuts the Charter Cake kindly baked for the occasion by Waterfields, during the Charter Banquet at Haigh Country Park.*

For his latest 'I Remember When', Ernie Taberner returns to a motoring theme – highly appropriate, as 1996 is the centenary year of the motor car. Ernie remembers driving the bakery van on Saturdays in 1925, at the age of eight! (provided there was no beat bobby about).

I remember when . . .

ONLY affluent people owned motor cars and since 1996 is the centenary year of the car, and more than 60 years of my own life has been connected with them, perhaps it would be fitting if I recalled for readers of 'Past Forward' some of my own memories of the early part of the century. It has long been my experience that older motorists enjoy my reminiscences whilst younger ones love to hear what went on in their grandad's motoring days, even if they don't always readily accept some of the things recalled.

In the 1920's motorists didn't need road maps when planning a motoring outing, because a journey of 20 or 30 miles was an adventure planned often weeks in advance, and anticipated with enthusiasm by all the family! The chosen route was often that which father had covered in his cycling days or remembered from his Sunday School outings by charabanc (the predecessor of the modern motor coach). A popular venue for the early season was The Delph Tea Garden at Parbold, with stops at Wrightington Fish Pond and the summit of Parbold Hill en route, roughly a 20 mile tour. After a long winter in the garage and several weeks preparation of the car, this trip was an ideal initiation for the coming season, usually starting at Eastertime. If all went well the next venue would be even more adventurous – a trip to Southport, a round trip of some 45 miles or so!

Seasonal Evils

Almost all privately owned cars were taxed for only six months of the year, ending on 30 September when they would then be given the season's final wash and polish, the wheels jacked up and the car lowered on to makeshift axle stands of bricks or wooden blocks to prevent tyre depreciation. At the time being reviewed, the tax was £5 annually but the quarterly tax was only £1.50 for three months. As there was no Anti-freeze, nor thermostats fitted to cooling systems, the owner had two seasonal evils, if

he re-taxed after September – the cooling system would freeze up and burst the hoses and a possible cracked engine block would result or, since heaters were not yet fitted, draughts through the loose floor boards would freeze his toes. Even if one drove through a deep puddle on a rainy day the swish of water would dislodge the floor boards and every one got wet feet.

On the plus side, however, there was no compulsory insurance, nor were there any parking fees nor time limits – and some of the places I have parked include all the well known streets in all the major towns and cities of Britain, including outside the Tower at Blackpool and even outside the gates of Buckingham Palace all afternoon!

In this centenary year perhaps it would be appropriate to recall some early product names in the industry, now only to be found in motoring annals. Names like Clyno, B.S.A. and Rudge among many others, often built by engineers who started their careers making cycles and later motor cycles, although in the case of B.S.A. they were initially gun manufacturers trading as The Birmingham Small Arms Co., hence B.S.A.

Most manufacturers in the early days would build models to special order in ones and twos, until Henry Ford conceived the idea of extending his mass production methods from U.S.A. to Dagenham, England in the mid/late 20's,

quickly followed by Chevrolet to Bedford. Early products produced here were initially named Bedford Chevrolets; when car production was introduced the name Vauxhall was adopted, and the name Chevrolet abandoned, whilst Bedford was retained as the name for all vans and trucks and buses when they were later introduced.

Simultaneously, both Bill Morris (later to become Lord Nuffield) at Oxford and Herbert Austin (later Lord Austin) at Birmingham were laying the foundations for mass production in both these areas, whilst in nearby Coventry mass production lines were laid at the Humber and the Hillman plants. Both Armstrong-Syddelly and Daimler, catering as they did for the more affluent motorist, had a more leisurely approach to production volumes, as did the S.S. (Coventry's import from Squires Gate Blackpool) under Bill Lyons (later Sir William) and his team later creators of the world famous Jaguar range.

'Standard'

This review of the motor industry in Coventry would be incomplete without a mention of The Standard Motor Co. Ltd. whose founder and Chairman Captain Jack (later Sir John) Black conceived the idea of producing a car, every part of which was inter-changeable with its contemporary and therefore 'Standard'. Previously many parts were cut out and shaped 'in situ' by skilled craftsmen as the car progressed slowly along the production line, and therefore were costly to manufacture and difficult to service, since the component was virtually a 'one off' each time. His idea was to create a few at once, all identical, so that whether the part was being renewed in Portugal or Plymouth, every one was Standard and (within very fine tolerances) each identical.

It is interesting to note that, since specialist car body builders have emerged, they all apply Sir John's idea of pressing out in batches and using on an 'as required' basis in production. The name Standard was dropped from the Company trading title after the Vanguard range of models ceased production in favour of the name Triumph for Renowns, Mayflowers, Heralds, Spitfires, Dolomites etc. because (I was told) the word Standard in America equates to 'basic'.

Rolls Royce

In conclusion, I am sometimes asked the question 'Which is the best car you have driven?' The answer has to be the Rolls Royce – but the one I have in mind is an extra special one, with solid silver door handles and various solid silver attachments. This was the car once owned by the Emperor of Ethiopia, Haile Selassie, who was driven from his homeland in 1938, having been defeated in battle by Mussolini and offered asylum in Britain as a refugee, along with his chauffeur. The car was sold soon after his arrival in Britain and I was privileged to have a private inspection. Guess where? **Across the road from Wigan Pier!** Messrs. Middleton and Woods (1919) had purchased it to add to their fleet of wedding cars, and its arrival at their Miry Lane yard coincided with my routine call on service business.

I am sorry to disappoint any older Wigan ladies who might think they had been driven on their big day to church in a Rolls with solid silver embellishments – They were not! Unfortunately a condition of sale stipulated that all silver fittings were to remain the private property of the Emperor, and were to be removed and returned to him prior to the car commencing service with the new owner!

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News From the Archives

THE big news since the summer edition of *Past Forward* has of course been the opening of the 750th Anniversary Charter Exhibitions on the ground floor of the enlarged History Shop. All the extant charters are thus on display in beautifully lit cases at the beginning of the exhibition, and a new brochure containing transcripts of the charters of 1314 (1246) and 1662, together with historical background, is available at only £1.95.

However, an equally new departure has been the mounting of an exhibition of some of the archival treasures of Angers, Wigan's twin town in the Loire Valley. These are now on show in the original temporary display area on the first floor of the History Shop. It has been a rewarding experience to help set up this exhibition, which is one of the first official cultural exchanges between the towns since the twinning ('Jumelage' in French) began in 1988. Wigan's Heritage Services Manager and Archivist were able to visit Angers in order to negotiate for the exhibition, and when the History Shop re-opened its doors in August were able to welcome their counterparts from France to see the finished display, together with the rest of the Charter Exhibition, and the Archives in Leigh.

The documents have been selected carefully to illustrate aspects of Angers' history and to show links with England. Pride of place goes to the original charter by which Louis XI created the mayoralty and town hall of Angers in 1475, following his grant of borough status in 1474. His purpose was to gain control of Anjou for the crown. A constitution comprising mayor, 18 aldermen and 36 councillors, together with a public prosecutor and clerk, was prescribed. The charter was confirmed by subsequent monarchs and remained the basis for Angers' privileges

THE FRENCH CONNECTION

until the Revolution. Also on show are the earliest accounts (dated 1367) of the 'cloison' which was a local tax to raise money for fortifying the town during the Hundred Years War, and the first minute book of the borough beginning 1479.

These treasures come from Angers' own borough archives service which is located in the Town Hall. However Angers is also the home of the archives of the Department of Maine-et-Loire, roughly equivalent to our smaller counties. This is housed in a purpose built repository on the other side of town and, like the municipal archives is much better staffed and funded than the average British archives office. The documents loaned from here consist of four charters granted to the famous Abbey of Fontevraud, burial place of Henry II and Richard I 'Lion-Heart' of England and Henry's wife Eleanor of Aquitaine, dated c.1160 and 1234. Three were granted by Henry III of England who of course granted Wigan's first charter in 1246, and who continued to use the title Count of Anjou on his documents even though the English possessions there had been lost. Fontevraud had several dependent monastic houses in England.

Later items include a drawing of the original bronze statue of Marguerite of Anjou (who married our Henry IV in 1445), which was melted down by the Nazis in 1942, and a striking poster proclaiming the celebration of Anglo-Angevin relations (an early 'twinning' festival) in the fateful summer of 1939.

Another link with England and Wigan archives is shown by a menu for the reception in Angers of the deposed English Stuart King James II in 1692. He was then in exile in France, trying in vain to regain the throne with Louis XIV's connivance. Coincidentally amongst the Standish family papers held by Wigan Archives are documents

relating to the attempts of the Lancashire Catholic gentry to put James back on the throne at precisely this time, including blank commissions to raise forces signed for James in St. Germain's in the summer of 1692. For students of old French cookery the menu included partridge, veal and morel stew, salads and fruits; Angers has similar culinary delights awaiting English visitors today!

There are three maps of Angers from 1638, 1883 and 1996, showing the growth of the town, the latter being a magnificently detailed plan issued by the tourist office. In 1638 the population was 30,000 in an essentially medieval town bristling with church towers. Stagnation followed and the Revolution left 2,000 killed. By comparison Wigan's population by this time was about 14,000 in 1811 on the eve of its industrialisation. Angers enjoyed a renaissance and economic growth in the mid-1800's, the present town centre being laid out at this time, and has flourished in modern times, with a large industrial, service and cultural base providing employment and a good life for its citizens.

Angers is now the 20th town in France by size, but many of the important buildings of the past have been cared for, and anyone who walks round the massive moated chateau walls, or gazes up in wonder at the dizzy heights of the Gothic Cathedral by night, will be struck by Angers' past. Boasting theatres, museums, libraries and archives, a school of fine art, centres for textile art and for dance, a philharmonic orchestra, and cinema festivals, the town's regional role is enhanced by a university and centres for horticultural research and landscape design.

The art treasures of Angers are also represented by a colour poster of the priceless Apocalypse Tapestry (14th century) which is in the chateau, and other items. For the inner

man there are some items showing local produce: Cointreau, red wine, electronics and Scania trucks!

The Angers exhibition runs until the beginning of January; it is hoped to retain photographic copies of items on show for use after the originals have been returned. The Heritage Service is indebted to M. Tobie, Chief Executive, and M. Pilet, Councillor in Charge of Cultural Heritage, for enabling the project to go ahead; to M. Bertoldi and Mme. Verry of the Municipal and Departmental Archives respectively for permission and encouragement to use their documents, and for their interpretation; to Wendy Callaghan, Wigan's Twinning Ambassador for 1995/96 and Sandrine Weber, Angers' Ambassador in Wigan, for their translation services; and to the people of Angers whose hospitality has made the project so worthwhile.

There are in fact quite a few documents either written in French or with a French connection, amongst the Wigan Archives. The Eckersley papers (D/DZ A 74), for example, contain several such items. Nathaniel Eckersley (1779-1837), was born at Hindley and enlisted in the army as a private in 1795, quickly gaining promotion to Lieutenant in the 1st Dragoon Guards. He took part in Wellington's Peninsula campaigns, earning praise from his commander, and bringing back two duelling pistols from the battle of Vittoria. Promoted Captain in 1810 he served in Canada and again with Wellington in 1815, but missed Waterloo. He remained in Paris with the Army of Occupation until 1818. He served as Brigade Major of the Manchester District after the Peterloo riots from 1819 to 1827, Inspector of Yeomanry Cavalry, and finally in the West Indies.

Retiring to his native Hindley he died at Laurel House and was buried like other members of the family, at All Saints. Nathaniel was the brother of James and William who founded the famous Eckersley cotton spinning firm in Wigan in 1814. The most influential Eckersley was James' son, also Nathaniel (1815-1892), whose life is another story (see *Past Forward* 8). Most of the first Nathaniel's papers concern his military career. One of the most important French items is a volume of Orders of the Day, Regulations and Conventions for the Allied Army of Occupation in France, dated between 1815 and 1819.

Amongst the Standish family papers, there are several other French items including a passport issued in 1815 in Paris, and several family letters written in French during the early 1700's. There are also some non-local documents with French associations in the Edward Hall Collection of diaries. Notable amongst these is the journal by Abbe de la Fontaines recording his travels to Rome in 1683, and a travel diary by Sissy Awdry of Chippenham, recording her visit to Paris in 1867. The latter is illustrated with contemporary coloured prints of the city, and for students of the history of travel by English people is, like many such diaries in the Edward Hall Collection, an invaluable source. In fact French connections can turn up in the most unlikely places. For example amongst some unlisted records of Wigan Grammar School is a series of theatre programmes for 'La Troupe Francaise', apparently a touring group of French actors who performed at many venues in the north west during the 1950's under the auspices of the Modern Language Association. The plays they staged at the School included *The Barber of Seville* in 1954 and *The Imaginary Invalid* in 1958.

N.W.

The following article has been submitted by Mrs. Marion Martin of Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, who moved to Shevington Hall as a child of eight in 1937 with her parents, when they were engaged by the then tenant of the hall, Mr. T.M. Dixon, as cook-housekeeper and gardener-handyman. Mrs. Martin's account recalls a way of life in what then was a quiet rural community that has since vanished almost without trace, and is a valuable piece of local social history.

Shevington New Hall

IN 1936 life for a coal miner was hard. My father worked as a coal cutter on the coal face, and being therefore rather a skilled man, he earned a relatively high wage. Still, even with the extra time, which was known as 'turning round', we were poor in that there was no luxury in our lives. To add to our troubles my father had sustained an eye injury and had an idea that the onset of nystagmus was evident.

By 1937 he had become interested in gardening, and indeed had a sizeable garden, largely reclaimed land in Hindley, and several greenhouses. This not only supplemented our income in a small way, but it gave him an alternative way of earning his living.

My mother had always been a capable housekeeper. My grandmother had always set a high standard of thrift and household management, so that my mother was a good, capable if unimaginative cook – there was not much room for experimenting on a wage of £2 or £2.10s. per week.

Remarkable Courage

So finally my parents decided to apply to an Agency whose job it was to find domestic servants for those who could afford them. This showed, on my parents side, a remarkable courage and a spirit of adventure. Generally speaking the urban dweller considered it very 'infra dig' to enter domestic service. At the same time my mother and father were leaving the security of having a job, however low paid, for the prospect of unemployment if their venture failed.

After several abortive attempts to 'get a place', (I, a child of eight, was the usual reason for their unsuitability), they received a letter from Mr. T.M. Dixon of Shevington Hall. It seemed that providence had at last taken a hand in our affairs.

The day on which Mr. Dixon had decided to call was auspicious.

My mother had a clothes rack on which hung nicely laundered linen and clothes and the smell of newly baked bread filled the room. She had just taken a batch from the oven. Since my father was at work it was arranged that we should all go to Shevington the following Saturday.

Rhubarb and Ginger Jam

As far as I know Mr. Dixon saw my father on the Saturday and then we were entertained to tea by the retiring housekeeper and her husband, a Mr. and Mrs. Davies. They had been with Mr.

Dixon for 25 years. I do remember that we had rhubarb and ginger jam for tea. We also had china tea. At the time I did not like it. I thought the grounds vast and was a little overawed by it all. Mr. and Mrs. Davies told my parents what their duties would be, in the event of their getting the post.

A few days later Mr. Dixon wrote to say that he was willing to engage my parents as cook-housekeeper and gardener-handyman at the weekly wage of £2 plus keep. So on my mother's 34th birthday, 4 September 1937, we set out for our new life in Shevington.

Impressive

My father went ahead with the few items of furniture that we were taking, so my mother and I travelled by bus. The first part of the journey from Hindley to Wigan was nothing new, and uneventful. However the second part, from the moment we got onto the Shev-

ington bound bus, was of a magical quality to a child of eight. We must have looked a forlorn pair, my mother and I; I clutched a doll whose arms were wrapped pegs. My mother was silent and at the time I did not miss the conversation since everything was new and interesting. Years later my mother told me of the feelings of loneliness and apprehension which filled her thoughts. Had she done the right thing? Her home had been got together bit by bit and even if it did not have a great monetary value it was still her home. Now it was gone.

We alighted at 'The Plough and Harrow' at Shevington and made our way to the Hall. The Hall stood in some 21 acres of land. Through the already semi-bare trees, whose autumnal tinted leaves scrunched under our feet, we could see the house that was to be our home. It looked impressive and very large.

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Shevington Hall c.1930. (Wigan Heritage Service)

Shevington New Hall

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We entered through the front, main gates. These were large wrought iron gates and I do not remember them ever being closed. From them the main drive, bordered by rhododendrons and azalea bushes led in a fine sweep to the side of the house on which was the main entrance. But once inside the main gates an immediate turn to the right hand led one along a tiny path which was known as 'The Postman's Path'. Indeed that was the purpose it served.

The other entrance which we were later to use and find more convenience was lower down Shevington Lane. Here was the entrance though which the carriages had passed, to and from the coach house. The massive wooden gates were never opened in our time; we entered through a small wicket gate. Through here were the former stables and coach house with a loft above each; beyond this area the other outbuildings used as wash-house, hen house and the place where the apples were stored. Now it was all grassy and the curb stones marking the former drives and paths just visible.

Sweetest Smelling Flower

The main entrance to the house was, as I have said, at the side of the house. You passed through a conservatory, and then through the large front doors into a long narrow hall. The conservatory was quite impressive to me; fancy a greenhouse attached to your house. In it were the tiled and gridded floor through which grids the heating was supposed to diffuse its warmth, though I think it did not work efficiently. The plants were also new to me, familiar as I was with quite a lot of unusual flowers. My father was very interested in trying out the most unusual of plants inspired by Seed Merchants' catalogues. On the walls grew a plumbago – a pretty plant with large blue flowers. I also remember that agapantha lilies grew in here and the sweetest smelling flower of all heliotrope, or as Mr. Dixon called it "cherry pie". I never see or hear the name but my mind goes back to it.

The hall was long and narrow. It was filled with the most fasci-

nating of things. The two largest pieces of furniture comprised a hall-stand and a long, large settee. These were, I suppose, Victorian, as was most of the furniture. In the hall-stand drawer was a collection of prayer books and hymnals, some so daintily backed and bearing dear little clasps on them. In the place for umbrellas was also a shooting stick and some walking sticks. On top of the hall-stand was a miniature brass table, such as apprentices make when learning their craft, and by it my mother put a little rocking chair which my grandmother gave to her.

It was on the walls that most of the treasures were. They were chock-a-block with pictures and prints. I remember a very fine



Mr. Dixon photographed in the grounds of Shevington New Hall in the late 1930's, and with his grand-niece Caroline Todd. (Photo kindly donated by the author.)

Narwhal 'tusk', ivory coloured and some eight feet in length. It was twisted like a giant piece of toffee rock, but whether this was hand-done or as in nature I do not know. A large barometer hung at the far end and above this, and also above and between the doors were two fishing prints. Five doors led off to the dining room, the drawing room, the boot room, the stairs and the servants quarters. The house gave the impression of a Georgian house. The rooms were almost square and nicely proportioned.

From the bay window in the dining room French windows led down a small flight of wooden steps with a hand rail on either side to the front lawn. A small ditch divided this from the rougher ground and was crossed by a tiny foot bridge. From here once had access to the poultry yards etc. But the view from the dining room was lovely. It looked out over the 16 acre field and here

cattle grazed peacefully. Beyond that the church was visible, and at the time we were there a few houses could be seen but in former days it would be a view unspoilt by traffic, houses or any man-made thing.

Smelled of Woodsmoke

The dining room was used extensively, except when there were visitors. It was completely masculine; it smelled of woodsmoke, cigars and a lovely spicy smell. The furniture was heavy and solid. The large mahogany table was covered by a thick, bobble-fringed cloth; at meal times it was spread with a snowy white one even if Mr. Dixon dined alone. The two sideboards were likewise mahogany

the writer snuffed out his candle, having melted his sealing wax and put his seal upon it.

In the bootroom was the telephone, a store cupboard for tinned foods, and shelves with an accumulation of stuff, including old copies of "The Field" etc. The shoes were cleaned on an enormous double knee-hole desk in whose drawers were kept the various polishes etc. It was from this room that, in preparation for receiving evacuees, Mr. Dixon found a musical box. It had a lovely inlaid lid, on the underside of which was its 'repertoire', including part of the William Tell Overture.

Butlers Pantry

The last of the five doors in the hall led to the servants quarters. There was a butler's pantry in which were kept all the dining room crockery. My father washed those dishes – this was his domain. Here he also hid tasty remains of the dishes sent into the dining room; then when he took in the coffee I used to ransack the cupboards and eat these morsels before he came back!

Two corridors divided the butler's pantry from the main kitchen. A food store cupboard, with a tiny brass knob, stood in the lobby. In it stood the breadbin with its supply of home-made bread.

The main kitchen was very big. Three of its walls had plate racks on them. The windows were big and had wooden shutters which folded back. Cooking was done on a big open range – very hot work in the summer. Coal was plentiful and the expense never queried. The grate had to be blackleaded except where the great steel bars led to the handles of the oven doors. There were two ovens, one a hot oven and the other, below the hob on which stood the kettle, a warming oven. The warming space above the fire and ovens had the inevitable blackleaded sheep, and the whole was topped high up by a wooden mantleself on which stood the brass jam pan.

Behind our living room cum kitchen was a scullery from which stairs led to our two bedrooms. These were sloping and had open treads so that we became adept at coming down backwards; it was much easier. Here was a much older sink; what used to be called a 'slop-stone'. It was brown and rather

and heavy. On them stood silver coasters and I believe a wooden tea caddy, the sort that is divided for Indian and China tea. By far the most important thing in the room was a writing desk which stood in the window, towards one side. It was the perfect place for a letter-writer to sit.

The drawing room had a more fusty atmosphere since it was little used. It looked out on the same view as the dining room. In this window stood a Georgian silver table. In it was a delightful collection of coins and small objects of vertu. On the wall facing the window were two long oil painting of pheasants and chicks. A large settee and two easy chairs took up most of this room. On the wall onto which the door opened was a writing table, with a silver topped blotter, of the type you roll across the ink. But the object which I liked best was the small pair of silver scissors with their little box but by which

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shallow. It reminded one of a dairy, because where the pots were put to drain was a slab of stone. We kept the huge flour bin in there, and vegetables and fruit. Here the pans and kitchen dishes were washed.

Our bedrooms were very plain, mine led off my parents room and was in a way a landing room.

My Parents' Room

A door led from my parents' room to the rest of the house. You went down two steps passing one side a toilet and opposite to it a linen cupboard, then up two more steps and you were on the floor on which were the bedrooms for the household. Mr. Dixon's room was very masculine and furnished with massive mahogany stuff. The guests' bedrooms also lacked the feminine touch. They were adequately furnished but in no way pretty.

Above the rooms were attics, approached by uncarpeted stairs. These had formerly been the maids' bedrooms, but now housed jams and jellies, all home-made, and round-topped trunks, containing rolls and rolls of old wallpaper.

Finally, to complete the description of this 19 roomed house, a look into its cellars. There was a wine bib, or perhaps tow, but most of the cellar space was taken up by slate slabs supported on brick pillars or the two which had been made into meat safes. In here was kept the daily milk supply. We had two quarts and a pint per day. Any game which came as a gift to Mr. Dixon was hung here for up to three weeks. This idea did not appeal to us at first, but we learnt that poultry and game were nicer to eat after being hung. A whole cheese, usually a stilton, also resided in the meat safe in those cool cellars. On one occasion when my mother was out Mr. Dixon had an unexpected guest; so he asked my father to bring on some bread and cheese. Alas my father was not prepared for the unexpected and produced the breadboard, bread and butter and the whole cheese, much to Mr. Dixon's amusement.

For those who have never been in service there is often an idea connecting and confusing it with drudgery or of being a lackey. We never received anything except extreme courtesy from Mr. Dixon. We each had a role to play in the running of the household. We addressed him as 'Sir', and he was as courteous to

my mother as to his guests. Weekly she took her house-keeping accounts to him. He never quibbled over money and the only time I remember him reprimanding her was on the occasion when he told her not to buy margarine for the kitchen, but to buy butter. She was spending his money and he had a right to know on what, so that if she could account for it he was satisfied. He never entered the kitchen, but knocked and waited in the passage outside.

My mother worked very hard. It was a very large house to keep clean. She was the *châtelaine*, as it were, of this small country mansion. She baked her own bread, and did her own washing. Each season brought the extra work that is typical of life in the country. The wash-house was a long way from the house; then she would put on her clogs to negotiate the hen yard. She and my father took turns in feeding the poultry.

Pigeons were roosting in the outbuildings and sometimes we'd have pigeon pie, with delicious gravy. The cockerels which we reared were culled out as soon as one was big enough to roast.

Cooking Prowess

My mother need have had no qualms about her cooking prowess. She made the sort of food that Mr. Dixon loved – good home cooking. She cosseted him in a way that neither would have admitted. If he was feeling a bit off colour then she'd make him gruel, and he loved it. Like many affluent people he lived simply and amongst his favourite dishes were ox-tail stew; he called the little gristle buttons 'shillings'. He also loved a marrow bone cooked in pastry, and then the marrow spread on hot buttered toast. On Sunday evenings he would have a simpler supper and for sweet he'd have a mould made from the rice pudding from lunch time, topped with a little raspberry jam and cream.

The orchards and garden supplied us with ample crops. The trees were old and gnarled. In full fruit their boughs were propped to support the weight. They were grown espalier fashion. We had old varieties now obsolete in the seed merchant's catalogue. One old pear was called "A Swan Egg". It was as round as a ball and as hard as flint. But about Christmas time then it was as juicy as could be. We had rasp-

berries, blackcurrants and gooseberries. They all had to be picked and jammed or made into pies or some other confection.

Potatoes and carrots were grown, of course, and stored in the old loose boxes in the outbuildings. Tomatoes, cucumbers and lettuces and all salad veg. came from the greenhouses or the cold frames. Indeed it was a land of plenty.

Strict Instructions

My parents worked in harmony with Mr. Dixon. My father had strict instructions when apple gathering was the job. Each apple was handled with such care and were stored carefully. At such times Mr. Dixon became more garrulous and would tell my father anecdotes of his youth. He would get very excited too at the times of the local Flower Shows. He'd wait up for us to come home, and was as excited as a boy with the prize tickets. The prize money went to my father. Mr. Dixon would be dressed in a smoking jacket and old slippers; his oldest trousers and a bright yellow bandana round his head. He was a wonderful old man, and a great character. When occasional guests came to luncheon then he would greet them and immediately take them to the greenhouse and show off his flowers. He usually sent the visiting lady away with an arm-full of chrysanthemums. It was his gallant way with his guest and his obvious pride in his gardener.

His 'piece de resistance' in entertaining came when he entertained for the four or five days which led up to 'The Grand National'. Before the guests were due all would be bought in. My father would accompany Mr. Dixon on a shopping spree to Wigan. Mr. Dixon did the buying and selecting and my father would carry the two large straw bags home. In all during these few days, and bear in mind that the guests were at the race meetings in the day-time, there would be food in abundance. A large sirloin usually came on the first dinner menu. Two ducklings, a chicken (home produced), 14 lbs. of fresh salmon and ham followed as main courses. In addition there were delectable puddings, such as Imperial Pudding – a rich pudding with wine sauce – and apple pies whose pastry was made with butter and the top decorated with a rose and leaves and the whole

glazed with egg. Breakfasts for the gentlemen were old fashioned too! There'd be cold stuff in addition to fried chicken legs, bacon and eggs, kidneys, and of course porridge and cream. Fruit was there, compote or fresh; the ladies would have their breakfasts in bed – a simple affair of toast, marmalade and coffee.

Infectious Excitement

But it was the infectious excitement of it all that thrilled me; the old house came alive and at last had a feminine quality brought into it. The smell of perfume wafted through the rooms, the drawing room was in use. And all day, preparations for the dinner at 7 p.m. were underway. I would accompany my mother on her round of bed-making and dusting the usually unused bedrooms which had suddenly come into their own as guest rooms instead of being shrouded in dust sheets. Then the delight of seeing the beautiful evening gowns, pretty slippers and scent – to a little girl was like a trip into fairy land!

Shevington Hall may not have been one of the great mansions of the country, nor Mr. Dixon and the people who lived there among the great landowners; but they were the 'petite noblesse de la campagne' from whom this country has drawn unpaid service in local government and justice. World War II put an end to their existence. These lesser houses are going and no records left. It fills me with sadness. I am proud to have lived for that brief spell in that way; from it my horizons were widened.

My parents had the courage and ambition to leave their poor security and they never cast a backward glance. To them I dedicate this article with my love and gratitude; without their foresight I would never had been able to write these recollections of the past. On them my future was built.

Mrs. Marion Martin,
Ogilvie House,
Lindway Road,
St. Ishmaels,
Haverfordwest.

● *Editor's note: 'Shevington in Old Photographs and Documents' was published by Wigan Heritage Service in 1994, with assistance from Shevington Parish Council, who have also published Maurice Allen's account of the village, 'A Century Recalled.'*



Book Reviews

POLICING WIGAN

The Wigan Borough Police Force 1836-1969

James Fairhurst



Policing Wigan: the Wigan Borough Police Force 1836-1969 by James Fairhurst, (Landy Publishing 1996, pbk. pp.86 plus illustrations £6) ISBN 1 872895 29 8 (Available from the History Shop - please add 50p for postage and packing).

JAMES Fairhurst is well known as a popular authority on local history in the Wigan district, mainly through his many engaging articles in the newspapers. He has a long-standing interest in law and order in Wigan, and this book is a good introduction to the subject of Wigan's police force, based upon the files of the *Observer* and *Examiner*, and the minutes of the

old Watch Committee held in the Archives.

The Wigan force, as in other boroughs, was established after the reforms of the Municipality Corporations Act of 1835, being under the control of the council's Watch Committee. From just six men in 1836 it grew to 188 men and women by 1969, when amalgamation with the county constabulary came about. Based until 1867 at the old town hall in Market Place, Wigan like other towns experienced a high turnover of men, all but one of the first officers being dismissed within a year: the first head constable John Whittle was dismissed for misconduct with a woman while on duty.

The author mentions the many challenges faced by the police in Victorian times. Quelling the riots of 1853 which followed industrial disputes required military assistance; in similar disturbances in 1880 the police were better prepared. Officers drinking on duty was a big problem for the chief constable. Various licensing duties became onerous. Brothels in Wigan were not suppressed until Chief Constable Webb claimed to have put an end to them in 1886. Scholes became difficult and dangerous for police to patrol due to the Fenian disturbances. Accommodation for

officers and prisoners was only temporarily improved by the opening of the Borough Courts and Offices in 1867. The cat o'ninetails was still used until 1892.

In the present century the outstanding figure was Chief Constable Thomas Pey, the longest serving officer in the force. He was faced with the troubles of the miners' strike in 1921, the General Strike in 1926 and the Means Test protest in 1931 when five men were prosecuted for unlawful assembly and Pey himself was involved in a fracas at the Town Hall. A separate study of Pey in the context of the grim inter-war period would be very interesting. Modern problems such as the growing menace of motor traffic, the acceptance of women in the force (Pey refused to countenance them), and the emergence of a properly trained constabulary are all touched on briefly by Mr. Fairhurst.

N.W.

[See James Fairhurst's article on the 1926 Miners' Strike on p16. Ed.]



The Finest of All - Local Men on the Somme 1 July, 1916 by Fred Holcroft.

1996 marks the 80th anniversary of one of the most infamous battles in European History. The 4½ month long Somme Campaign, which began on 1 July 1916, was to claim over 1,000,000 casualties (420,000 of them British) and result in a British advance of a mere 12 km at most. The bulk of the British forces involved were the raw recruits of 'Kitchener's Army', volunteers who had answered the call to arms.

Fred Holcroft's book tells the story of local men involved in the battle of the Somme and is the second in his World War I trilogy. The first section of the book deals with the build-up to the battle of the Somme and uses extracts from letters home from the troops, to give a first hand account of conditions:

"After Thursday nights fighting I am lucky to be alive.... Talk about an explosion! It lifted the ground from under us. It rained on our

trench all sorts of things, mud, sods and even German haversacks. The bodies of three Germans, legs and arms lying apart, were blown over the fir trees 10 yards behind us..." (Lance Corporal Rogers)

The first day of the battle is then described in a similar manner and the voices of local men give some idea of the carnage.

"We had not even a sporting chance. At this time the battle developed into an inferno. It was simply raining with shrapnel and bullets were singing everywhere". (Private Barton)

The middle section of the book deals in detail with individual Corps attacks on the first day of the battle and then follows the remainder of the campaign. Again letters of local men are used to describe conditions, their feelings towards those who did not volunteer, and acts of bravery by local men, e.g. Sapper George Walsh, who dug out three men from a collapsed trench and dragged them to safety, working for eight hours under continual enemy fire.

Fred concludes that whilst analysis of the Somme campaign is dominated by the unimaginable slaughter, the battle was a turning point and had a profound effect on the remainder of the war. The real tragedy was that many lessons which could have been learned, were not.

The book will appeal to both those with an interest in military history and readers interested in local, social history. Falling into the latter category I found the section on the individual Corps attacks a little daunting but found much in the remainder of the work to compensate. The list of the hundred plus local men killed on the first day of the battle alone was of particular interest. By giving personal details such as former occupation, (mainly colliers), and family circumstances, it is a timely reminder of the human cost of war which mere figures cannot illustrate. My main criticisms of the book concern the lack of a bibliography to facilitate further reading and the fact that the photographs are not described on the facing page - indeed, the list on the back page in many instances contains the wrong page number, which is a little irritating.

However, these are criticisms of style rather than substance and do not detract from an interesting survey of Wiganers' contribution to this momentous battle.

The book is available from the History Shop, price £4.99 (plus 50p postage and packing). D.W.

A further Book Review is on Page 13

The History Shop has a Meeting Room, with a capacity for 36. This is available for hire by local groups and societies at a very reasonable cost:

£5.00 PER MORNING OR AFTERNOON SESSION

£7.50 PER EVENING SESSION

REFRESHMENTS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE

If you are interested, contact Philip Butler (01942) 827594

The Wickham Gallery

An Insider's View

IT finally dawned, Tuesday 27 August 1996, a day that had been chosen months before to be the official opening date for the Wickham Gallery at the History Shop and the all new Charter exhibition. Preparations had begun last year, designers had detailed briefs. It all seemed so far away then, late summer Bank Holiday plenty of time for all we had to do.

Arriving at the History Shop on that Tuesday morning I couldn't help but feel relieved that this was it. Although everything was not ready for the official opening of the exhibition at 4 p.m. by any means, the knowledge that the next time I arrived at work the new two floor History Shop would be finished had a surprisingly calming effect on me. The thought that I might be finished if we didn't get it ready in time must have been subconsciously suppressed!

This was obviously the calm before the storm, for that Tuesday saw me up step ladders installing the Charter mural, charging round with an electric drill and screws putting up signs, finishing off dressing the Charter cases, organising the catering and hoping that nothing had been forgotten.

In the event all the months of hard work came together and 4 p.m. on that Tuesday did see the opening of the new History Shop. What's more we enjoyed universal praise from those assembled and were even quite pleased ourselves.

Our thanks do go out to all the people who worked on the project, even though we are still trying to get all the annoying little faults rectified. Lights above the exhibition panels began to go out after the first week, but these lasted longer than one of the charter cases which was dark after three days, but both were put to shame by our new glass display cabinet in the shop whose lights spontaneously extinguished themselves during a speech in French by our guest from Angers during the opening itself. Possibly a comment on the speech, or on Europe, who knows?

Looking back now it was definitely worth all the effort. Even working through the Bank Holiday weekend no longer seemed so bad – many thanks to the rest of the team who kept me company.

So what's next? The great Millennium exhibition of course! But in the meantime if you haven't already seen it, please come and see the splendid Charter Exhibition. It was done for you.

P.A.B.



(Above): The History Shop's new Art Gallery. (Below): The Mayor of Wigan, Councillor Bernard Coyle, admires the portrait of Joseph Winnard in the History Shop's new Art Gallery. Looking on are the Mayoress and from left, Monsieur Pilet and Monsieur Bertoldi from Angers, and Councillor Wilf Brogan.



Some of the things you said:

enjoyed the picture show all of interest

SMASHING!

Fascinating!!

Awesome

Wonderfully compiled

GREAT A.V. SHOW

Very impressed with the new look. Very good!!

Breathtaking

really amazing

Interesting and we have Wigan a lot. Thanks.

A GEM.

WELL WORTH THE VISIT

Well Done Wigan Council.

WELL DONE! A FINE TRIBUTE TO A FINE TOWN.

Brilliant!

Very Educational

VERY ENJOYABLE.

EXCITING

Theatre was good. Didn't have enough time

Most Impressive and well put together.



Some views of the Charter 96 Exhibition, opened by the Mayor of Wigan on 27th August 1996.

Christmas in the History Shop

DURING the week before Christmas, two very special events will be held at lunchtime in the History Shop.

On Tuesday, 17th December, the Scherzo Dance Company will perform:

'SIGNATURE'

a new dance choreographed specially for the Charter 96 celebrations and

'THE VERY SOUL'

a journey into the many aspects of life with coal, once THE VERY SOUL, now the vanished centre of too many communities.

On Thursday 19th December:

Dick Hatch

(formerly of GMR)

will be visiting the History Shop to perform some

traditional Christmas Readings.

Both events begin at 12.30, and will finish at approximately 1.15p.m.

ADMISSION FREE

For further details ring (01942) 828 128.

The Demon Drink

FROM 27th January you can take to drink in the History Shop's Taylor Gallery.

THE DEMON DRINK

will be the first exhibition for the New Year in the Taylor Gallery, following

LOOSE THREADS

(the Charter Patchwork exhibition)

The Demon Drink tells the history of the production, distribution and consumption of alcohol within the Metropolitan Borough.

Medieval Merrymaking and Mirth

Guests at the Charter Banquet at Haigh Country Park, 25th August 1996.



Temporary Exhibitions in the History Shop

AMIDST all the euphoria of the Charter Exhibition in the new Wickham Gallery, an exciting temporary exhibition has been maintained in the first floor Taylor Gallery.

An excellent response, for example, was received to the Children's Charter '96 project work - the exhibition even went on twice (June-mid July and late August-September)!

Between these two shows the annual exhibition of Wigan Photographic Society was staged. This very successful exhibition was opened by Mr. John Smith, President of the Lancashire and Cheshire Photographic Union. A large number of prints and slides were exhibited, and these were much enjoyed by our visitors.

The Calligraphy exhibition, which ran from September until 16th November, has been an excellent addition to our Charter celebrations. Subtitled 'The Writing of the Charters' the presentation is both different and educational, giving historical context as well as examples of different hands. This, coupled with a number of free workshops, has offered our visitors an insight into one aspect of the Charters not covered downstairs.

Currently showing in the temporary exhibition gallery, rounding off 1996 as Charter year, are a number of community charter projects. These include two multi-media patchwork hangings created by local people with the help of artist Liliane Taylor, as well as a host of works created during summer workshops at Marsh Green, Scholes/Whelley and Drumcroon. These will be shown until the New Year, so why not come and take a look?

A Victorian Christmas at Haigh Hall 21st December 1996

7.00 for 7.30 pm

Carriages 12.30 am

Five Course Dinner

Musical Entertainment

including

The City Waites

'Welcome, My Lord Sire Christemas!'

Victorian costume to be worn.

Tickets 26 Guineas (£27.30) available from

September from:

Haigh Hall (01942) 832895 or TIC (01942) 825677

Credit Cards Accepted

Further details from

Alastair Gillies,

Wigan Heritage Service (01942) 827375

Charter Mural

Gerald Rickard's splendid Charter Mural has proved an outstanding success. The mural looked impressive enough in sections in Gerald's lounge - but when it came together in its final position in the History Shop, the result was quite magnificent.

Nevertheless, the work is not quite complete - Gerald still needs to apply those finishing touches which can only be made 'in situ'. Visitors will be able to see Gerald at work in the History Shop each Tuesday between 14 January and 25 February inclusive during opening hours.

Gerald will also be talking about the production of his mural in the History Shop on Wednesday 8 January at 7.30 p.m. (tickets £1 from the History Shop), when he will announce the winners of the Charter Mural competition. Incidentally for those readers who are able to visit the History Shop, there may still be time to enter - the closing date for receipt of entries is 14 December.

LECTURES IN THE HISTORY SHOP

11 December

'Victorian Wigan' James Fairhurst

8 January

'An Evening with Gerald Rickards' - the artist talks about his work, and presents the prizes to the winners of his Charter Mural competition.

12 February

'The Lady of the Garrison' Charlotte, Countess of Derby and the Siege of Lathom House, 1643-45' Lizzie Jones.

12 March

'The Pennine Way' - An illustrated talk by Dave Cookson.

STOP PRESS

The Heritage Service has now produced its own video!

Due to unprecedented public demand, the audio-visual presentation currently being shown in the History Shop, telling the story of Wigan's 750 years as a Royal Borough, is now available on video, along with the other three presentations produced by the Heritage Service and C B (AV) Ltd. of Chorley.

Wigan and World War II (produced for the History Shop's celebration of the 50th anniversary of VE Day, 1995)

The Story of Wigan Pier (produced for Wigan Pier's Heritage Centre)

Rev. Wickham's Magic Lantern Show (an authentic Victorian lantern slide show)

In all the video lasts for a full hour and is excellent value at only £10.99 (plus 50p postage and packing). Available from the History Shop from Wigan Pier and also Smiths of Wigan.

The Charter Quiz

This challenge has been taxing many visitors to the History Shop. If you have not yet entered, there is still time to test your local knowledge. Entry forms are still available from the History shop - but don't delay. The closing date for entries is 14th December.

School Song

There has been a good response to my request in the last issue for the tune of Wigan Grammar School's song. A number of readers remember it, and I am particularly grateful to Mr. Eric Hinton of Heskin, who called in with a tape he had made of the song - although he had not sung it since he left the school over 60 years ago!

William Woolstencroft, a Leigh worthy

LEIGH born William Woolstencroft was the son of Ned, a hairdresser and tobacconist whose premises were in Market Street. He attended Leigh Parish Church School and received his education under R.M. Gornall. After leaving school he entered the employ of the Leigh Corporation Gas, Water and Electricity Department where he stayed for ten years and where he became wages clerk. It was during this period that he helped to form a sickness benefit club.

He left the corporation in December 1908 to become the first secretary and manager at the new Grand Theatre and Hippodrome when it opened on 14 December 1908. Eventually he was to become a manager and director of the company. In 1918, after the Hippodrome company took over the Theatre Royal from the late John Williams Cragg, Mr. Woolstencroft was appointed manager of both premises and in 1937 he was appointed to the board of directors. During his long connection with the

world of theatre and cinema he met many of the stars that he engaged for the Leigh Theatre. Also at one time he had been president of the Lancashire Cinema Old Boys' Association (South and East Lancashire Branch). During



William Woolstencroft

his period of office he had also attended London as a delegate to the General Council.

Mr. Woolstencroft was always keenly interested in the welfare of the town and people of Leigh, and during his 45 years at the Hippodrome he promoted or loaned the premises to those organisations appealing for help. In 1917 he helped raise £1000 for a fund to supply prisoners of war comforts. For 33 years he was involved with the work of the Leigh branch of the British Legion and organised Armistice Day concerts annually, helping to raise over £3000 for the Legion. He was also a founder member of the Leigh and District Arts Council. In 1939 he was elected to the Borough Council as Liberal Representative for St. Mary's ward. He was appointed Mayor for the period 1951-52. In June 1955 Mr. Woolstencroft was elected as an Alderman of the Borough. In September 1958 he died in Astley Hospital at the age of 73.

Book Review

Pagefield Motor Vehicles by Tom Meadows

Avid readers of Past Forward will recall that issue 6, Spring 1994, included a centre page spread on Walker Bros. (Wigan) Ltd., one of the area's foremost engineering firms until the Pagefield factory closed down in the 1980's. In addition to giving a brief history of the company, the two articles in that edition were aimed at publicising a History Shop lecture on the firm and a reunion for former employees. Both events were extremely successful, the lecture being a sell-out and the reunion being attended by over 100

people, including one person who timed a visit from Australia to coincide with the event. Also present at both events was Mr. Tom Meadows, who worked in Walker's 'Pagefield Motors' department from 1935 to 1960 and who had long been of the view that Walker's significant contribution to the development of the diesel engine commercial vehicle and the mechanisation of refuse collecting has been virtually ignored by historians. For many years Tom has been gathering information on the firm to compliment his personal working experience, and which he developed into an illustrated talk given to transport professionals and enthusiasts alike. Now he has gone one better and achieved a long term ambition by writing and publishing a book on the company he has so much affection for.

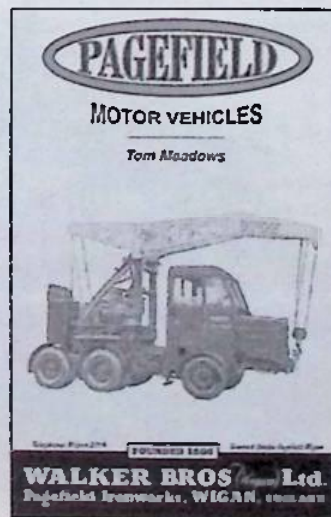
The soft-backed book, entitled PAGEFIELD MOTOR VEHICLES, comprises 127 pages and is profusely illustrated with over 100 photographs and drawings. Although, concentrating on the motor vehicle side, the author also records the origins of the company in the 1860's and the development of an extensive range of mining machinery, including its world renowned ventilation systems and air compressors. There is also a feature by his friend and fellow employee Alf Donaldson on the last steam winder to be built by the firm, for a Scottish colliery, as late as 1954.

Although concerned with the work in and products of an engineering company, the book is a very easy read, with technical aspects explained in clear uncomplicated terms. This book then is a must for anyone with an

interest in Wigan's industrial history of the development of the British-built commercial vehicle.

The book is available at the History Shop price £6 (plus £1 postage and packing).

M.F.H.



Following on from her 'Memories of Hindley' in issues 9 and 12, here are Mrs. Marjorie Bryden's [nee Lowe] recollections of her schooldays.

HINDLEY & ABRAM GRAMMAR SCHOOL

I wonder how many of you went to Hindley & Abram Grammar School (H.A.G.S.) in the 1930's? I was there 1933-1940. The headmaster was W.S. Fairbrother (Ferb.), who was strict but fair and the school had a formidable academic reputation, vying with Manchester Grammar for the number of State & County Scholarships it obtained.

It was a Lancashire County School, as opposed to the Wigan Borough Schools. Children attended from miles around - Bamfurlong, West-houghton, Ince, Blackrod, Haigh, Gathurst, Orrell etc. There were three streams admitted each year: the A stream was for children who had passed the 11+ on the 1st examination, the B stream for those who had had to attend an oral exam after the initial 11+ written one, and the C stream for fee-payers, who had passed the entrance exam. All the way through the school, it was possible to go up a stream or down, but mostly one remained in the same stream.

It was a mixed school, and I smile now, when I sometimes read how girls are supposedly neglected in mixed classes -

usually written by people who have attended a one sex school. No such discrimination existed at H.A.G.S. We were all treated the same and helped and encouraged to the same extent.

Burst into Tears

Because it was a mixed school, we had a headmistress too - Miss Craig - to whom we could go for help, if necessary. She was a very lady-like person, who taught history, and made it a living subject. She didn't have a nickname. She was once telling the story of the impeachment of Robert Clive of India, and she became so engrossed in detailing the unfairness of the impeachment, in her opinion, that she burst into tears. Strangely enough, although we were a very spirited class, nobody sniggered, as we had all been caught up in the story.

The 1st Master, I suppose one would call him the deputy head these days, was James Taylor (Jimmy), who was Senior Maths

Teacher. He had his own room, and he and other masters took the boys camping at Grasmere every summer. Mr. Griffiths (Grippe) taught Maths excellently too: he taught me for five years. Miss Naish taught some maths, mainly arithmetic, and some science in the lower school. She spoke with a Cockney accent, and was thus considered somewhat of a "foreigner". She was called Emma by some: she could lose her temper fairly easily, when she would go red and stamp her feet. I'm afraid that sometimes the boys deliberately provoked her, to see what the effect would be.

Miss Nicholas (Nick), tall and formidable, with her pince-nez, was the senior English teacher, and we seemed to have a succession of others - principally Miss Redhead, who stayed a number of years.

Miss Thomas (Tommy), a Welsh lady, taught French admirably, as many Welsh people do. I suppose that the Welsh lilt lends itself well to the French language. The other French teacher, and I believe, the senior one was "Doggy" Barker, a small gentleman with a limp.

Mournful, Taciturn Man

Latin was taught by Mr. Healy (Sol), a rather mournful, taciturn

man, who peddled slowly to school each morning on an old bike. He came from one of the places through Platt Bridge. I don't know why he was called Sol; he certainly wasn't a ray of sunshine, nor extremely wise. It was, perhaps, because he looked so solemn, with his heavy eyebrows and his rare smile.

L.W. Topham, (Johnny) was the most eccentric master in the school. He was a brilliant man. He taught geography, but rumour had it that he had also a degree in maths and that he was also a lawyer and he certainly had great historical and classical knowledge. He was way above the heads of most of us in the lower school, but he was excellent in the VIth form. I think that I gained more general knowledge from him than from anyone else in my schooldays. Many girls in the lower school tended to be afraid of him, as he shouted, but his bark was worse than his bite, and he considered that if a piece of work wasn't worth half marks, it wasn't worth anything at all. He would furiously tear it up, much to the discomfiture of the person concerned!

Afraid to Ask

I remember that I once presented him with three maps, which he considered were not up to standard. He tore them up viciously into several pieces and bellowed at me "W.P.B." (waste paper basket). I didn't know what he meant and I was too afraid to ask. There was only one place where I thought one might use small pieces of paper, so I made for the door! He asked me where I was going with a great bellow. Too embarrassed to spell it out, I said "Just down the corridor". "The W.P.B." he roared, theatrically pointing to the receptacle.

He had been in the army, I think, at one time, and tended to use army expressions, which one had to learn fast. If he was dictating notes and he wanted to correct himself, he'd say "As you were", and if he wanted you to stand up, he'd bark "Hind legs".



Hindley and Abram Grammar School

He also had a rather disconcerting habit of telling a joke, which was far above our heads, but we would all dutifully laugh; then he'd jump on some unfortunate and say "Explain the joke", and woe betide the individual if he'd laughed, and then didn't know what he was laughing at!

"As You Were"

In the geography room, a huge globe of the world was suspended by a pulley from the ceiling. When he wanted to point out some place, he would pull the globe down, and then push it up again, when he'd finished his explanation. One day, he pulled it down, and did not replace it, as was his wont. Then he started dictating notes, pacing in front of the class, with his hands clasped behind his back, and his head down, his eyes on the floor. He crashed, with his bald head, right into the globe: it swung back, hitting him again on the forehead. We all expected ructions, and, of course, nobody had dared to laugh, but he just replaced it, said "As you were", and continued dictating.

We were not supposed to talk in the corridors. One year, we had a new gym-mistress (Miss Bartlett). I think that she must have been newly out of college, as she looked very young, and she wore a gym-slip, like the girls. Soon after she arrived, she was walking along the corridor, talking, when along came Johnny Topham, who gave her a sharp slap on her bottom, and said "Silence!"

My father had attended H.A.G.S. before me, and two members of the staff were still there in my time, one of which was old "Daddy" France (Ellis), who was also organist at St. Peter's, Hindley. He must have been well into his 70's or 80's, but I'm afraid that he was led rather a dance by his classes. Sometimes he would be conducting and looking at one half of the class, then some of the other half purposely sang out of tune. When he swung round, the pattern would be repeated the other way round.

Detention Sheet

One person in each class was put in charge of the Detention Sheet, and a new one was issued each day. When somebody gravely misbehaved, their name and offence was written, by the teacher giving the detention, on the sheet, and the person in charge had to hand it to the school secretary each night. Before going into



Some of today's grandmothers at Junior School in 1932.

The photograph was taken in the summer-time, and in the girls play-yard area of Ince C. of E. Central Schools, Ince Green Lane, Higher Ince.

The class was almost certainly that of the Third Standard (of four) and was led by Miss Miller, showing standing on the extreme right of the back-row, and clad in her light blue gown. This lady lived locally, in a sweet-shop on Manchester Road, not many yards from the existing Fox Tavern, on the Hindley side, i.e. the petrol station now covers the old area.

The third girl from the left in the second row down from the back (standing) is Joan Lloyd,

whose people kept a grocery business just over Rose Bridge on the Manchester Road to Wigan, and across from the existing erstwhile Methodist Chapel.

The girl on the extreme right of the front row is Hilda Lovatt, who lived in Keble Street, just behind the school.

At least one of these 28 young girls went on to experience a highly successful career in the business field; yet it must be remembered that the fruits and responsibilities emerging from World War II fell into the hands of their generation.

How many are left to recognise themselves today, one wonders?

Arnold N. Other
Ince-in-Makerfield

Daddy France's class, a fake detention sheet was always made and when he demanded somebody's name, they would give the name of a film-star or some such - Clark Gable or Mae West. Poor Daddy didn't realise and on leaving the class the sheet was just torn up.

Discipline was good in the school, and I never knew a case of bullying. The punishments were writing lines and detentions, but if a boy got three detentions in a term, he went to Mr. Fairbrother for the cane. If a girl got three detentions she had to go to school for three hours one Saturday morning, and sit in the hall with a teacher on duty.

The girls did cookery and the boys did woodwork - there was no dissension about these arrangements in those days. Everyone was happy! Mr. Davis was the woodwork master until about 1936 and Miss Moody the cookery teacher. She was a nervous highly-strung, sensitive spinster, but excellent at her job. We all got a thorough grounding in basic cookery. Nearly every lesson, Mr. Fairbrother used to walk into the classroom to see what was cooking. He would then get into a real twitter, I sometimes

wondered if he did it on purpose to see her reactions. He never entered other classrooms. Occasionally, she would prepare a tray of beautifully baked and presented cake covered with a snow-white napkin, which one of the girls had to take to Mr. Fairbrother.

Mr. Fielden (Len), one of the pleasantest and most even-tempered people I have ever met, taught Physics and Mr. Atherton (Archie) taught Chemistry. He was very fond of the girls.

Rather a Dogsboddy

There was also Mr. Cockcroft (Cocky). He seemed to be rather a dogsboddy, filling in here and there. He taught Scripture, some History - mainly Ancient History - and some geography in the lower school. He had two little tins, which he kept in his pocket. One contained some kind of throat pastilles, which he was prone to suck, from time to time, and the other contained small pieces of chalk. There was one unforgettable occasion when he inadvertently opened the wrong box and popped a piece of chalk into his mouth!

The school was divided into four Houses - Tritons (yellow), Gryphons (blue), Minotaurs (red)

and Centaurs (green). The girls wore ties and girdles in their house colour, along with gym-slips, but the boys wore the school tie - light blue and dark blue stripes, with a button badge in their buttonhole in their house colour. Three or four teachers were allocated to each house, and the houses competed for the Work & Sports Shields.

I never heard or saw any religious discrimination, but ecumenism had not been heard of in those days. Every morning James Taylor took the Catholics for morning prayers in one of the classrooms, whilst the rest of the school assembled in the Hall with Mr. Fairbrother. Then the Catholics joined the others in the Hall for the notices.

The lady teachers invariably wore their academic gowns all the time, but not their mortar boards, but the men only wore them on special occasions, such as prize day.

The school motto was Prodesse - do good - and the crest was a hind-symbol for "Hind-ley", the meadow of the hind. My grandfather could remember hinds in Borsdane Wood. We wore the crest on our navy-blue blazer pockets.

A Long Haunted Summer

THE 1926 miners' strike ended the battle between capital and labour that had gone on since the end of World War I. The 1914-18 years were eventful for the miners and great efforts were made to produce more output when the industry came under State control (which was virtually nationalisation) at the end of February 1917, although the first charge on the industry was always the coal owners' profits. As the end of the war approached, a new organisation comprising the miners numbered 800,000, the railwaymen 270,000 and the transport workers 200,000. This Triple Alliance as it was called was seen as a defence against the attacks of capitalism on trade unionism.

A threatened miners' strike in 1919 was averted when Lloyd George, the Prime Minister, set up a Royal Commission with Sir John Sankey as Chairman. The Commission gave the miners a pay rise, a seven hour day and recommended public ownership of the pits. When these were handed back to the coal owners in March 1921, a twelve week strike ensued which was ended by a £10 million subsidy. The main feature of the strike was the refusal of the railwaymen and the transport workers to back the miners. Stephen Walsh, MP (Ince) and miners' agent

for Wigan deplored this 'direct action' strike threat. A temporary boom eased the situation, but by 1925 export markets had been lost, coal prices were falling and the coal owners asked for a wage cut and a return to the eight hour day. A further strike was put off by a £10 million subsidy (which became £23 million) until midnight, 3 May 1926.

General Strike began

'Despite Stephen Walsh's warning that a General Strike would destroy all the charters of constitutional government and be inimical to trade unionism, a General Strike

began which lasted until noon on 12 May after which the country went back to work, leaving the miners to fight on alone. The railwaymen and transport workers again refused to back the miners, although this seemed to be the lesson to be learned from the 1921 strike. Some families had savings to fall back on. The majority had to manage on the Guardians of the Poor Relief Fund, which was given on loan, half in kind - bread, groceries, vegetables - and half in money. Meat had to be bought out of the money. Children were given a midday meal at school, seven days a week, and the diet varied each day, barm cakes, pressed meat, hot pot and so on. However, school meals were only given to children from homes where no one was working and some of the miners' wives and daughters worked in the mills until the coal shortage closed them down. One teacher said, "In ordinary times, the children have chips too often. The varied diet suits them better."

In various parts of Wigan, chalked on the pavement underneath the figure of a miner's lamp was the saying, "This lamp only burns seven hours". Another phrase in common use was, "Not a penny off the pay, not a second on the day". The strike was remarkably good-tempered. There was coal-stealing, relief benefit frauds, intimidation and coal-picking on private land, but no real violence. Early in the strike, Mr. Pey, the Chief Constable of Wigan brought two brothers from Newtown before the magistrates for intimidation. "There is no law that says a man has to go to work", said Mr. Pey. "But if a man chooses to follow his gainful employment he shall have the protection of the law". Saying that he did not

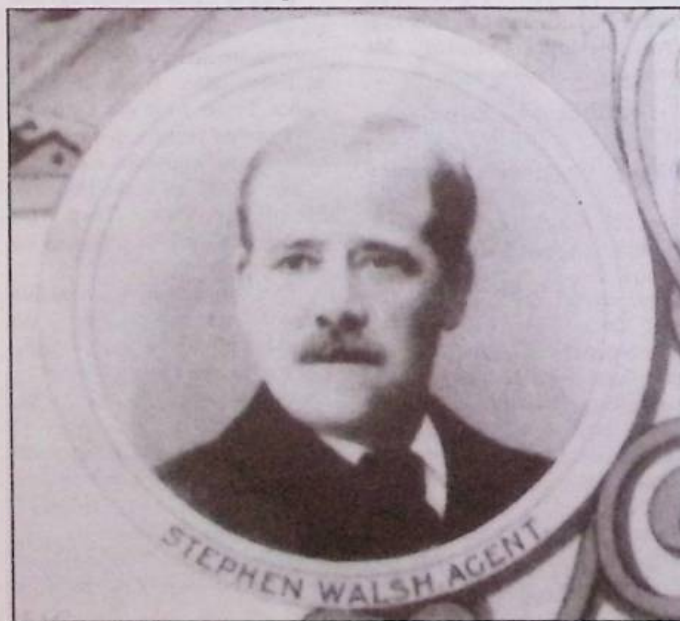


Tom Pey, Chief Constable of Wigan (1921-46)

wish to see a penalty imposed, Mr. Pey said that he wanted it to come from the Bench that such conduct as this would not be tolerated. The men were bound over to keep the peace.

Harsher penalties

But as the strike advanced, harsher penalties were inflicted. Both men and women were fined and a man was jailed for making a speech at Ince that was calculated to "cause disaffection among the civilian populace". As the long summer drew to its close there was a slow but sure drift back to work as the miners realised that the fight was lost. Police relations with the strikers remained remarkably amicable until almost the end of the strike. On Wednesday 13 October, an incident occurred which became known as "The Battle of Enfield Street". A crowd of some 2,000 had gathered at Pemberton Colliery, waiting for the men who had gone back to work to come up from the day shift. Sensing trouble, Chief Constable Pey ordered them to disperse and, when the crowd made no move, instructed his officers to make a baton charge. Several people were injured but none required hospital treatment.



Stephen Walsh, MP (Ince) and Miners' Agent for Wigan

Wigan MP, John Allen Parkinson, later made allegations in Parliament that the crowd had only been given 60 seconds to disperse. He also claimed that the police had not only hit demonstrators but had also struck women who had only come to their doors to see what the fuss was about. The Home Secretary, Sir W. Joynson-Hicks, denied this strongly and read out part of Chief Constable Pey's report. There can be little doubt that for years afterwards those involved held bitter feelings against the police.

By December, all the coal-fields were back at work on the owners' terms. It was reported that the total indebtedness of the Board of Guardians was £220,000. While it is certain that no one starved during the strike, the long summer was haunted by the spectre of privation. One revealing Watch Committee minute instructed Chief Constable Pey to prevent rotting vegetables being picked up on the Market Square. In 1927, Mr. Pey received the OBE for the way he had deployed his officers during the long-running strike.

The Ballot Box

The 1926 struggle has been seen as many things according to the perception of the observer. Earl Asquith, a former Prime Minister, described it as "...the gravest domestic event of my life." It was regarded by the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin as "...an attack upon the British Constitution". Cardinal Bourne, the RC primate of Great Britain said, "It is a direct challenge to lawfully constituted authority..." "We learned", avowed J.R. Clynes, a Labour leader, "that a national strike could not be used as a weapon in a trade union dispute... There is one way and one way only to alter unfair conditions in Britain. It is through the ballot box and not through violence or resistance". Philip (later Viscount) Snowden who held the same view was taunted by Arthur Cook, the Miners' Secretary

with "They make a desert and call it peace".

A Trades Dispute Bill introduced in 1927 contained four axioms:

- That a General Strike was illegal and no one should suffer for not taking part in it;
- That intimidation was illegal and no man should be coerced to work or not to work;
- That no contribution to a political fund should be compulsory;
- That Civil Servants owed undivided allegiance to the State.

An appeal was made to Sir Winston Churchill to repeal the act in 1940, but his mind was on the outside threat to the State. It was repealed by the Attlee administration in 1948. In 1920, the membership of the Mining Federation of Great Britain was 945,487. By 1930 this had fallen to 529,958.

James Fairhurst

A first for Lancashire and Wigan

AS most readers will already know, Metropolitan Wigan is at the centre of Great Britain! Appropriately, therefore, Wigan is featured on an exciting new game, Centre Spot G.B., with the actual finishing square at Haigh Country Park.

Designed on a large format, the game joins together the natural elements of Lancashire with the best of the many interesting locations in this historic county. It includes question cards with 90 possible questions to answer. It can be played by 2-6 people, aged from 8 years to 80 and over, and is a must for people who like to try something exciting and different.

Centre Spot G.B. is unique to Lancashire, and costs only £9.95 (plus postage and packing) from the History Shop - an ideal gift for Christmas.

SOCIETY NEWS

Aspull & Haigh Historical Society
Meetings are held in the Village Centre, Bolton Road, Aspull, on the second Thursday of the month at 8.00 p.m. The new Secretary is Mrs. R. Naylor, Pennington Green, Hall Lane, Aspull, Wigan. (01942 256145)

Atherton Heritage society
Meetings are now held in the Methodist Church Hall opposite Atherton Library usually on the second Monday of the month, at 7.30 p.m. Members £1, Non-members £1.50. Everyone welcome. Further details from the Secretary, Mrs. P. Madden, 22 Butterfield Road, Over Hulton, Bolton BL5 1DU. (01204 651478).

16 December 'Gradely Yuletide' - When Cromwell cancelled Christmas.

Lizzie Jones
Admission £2 (inc. buffet supper)

13 January 'Footpaths'.

D. Taylor

10 February 'Lady Anne Clifford'.

Margaret Curry

10 March 'The Jacobite Trail'

Flo Greenhalgh

14 April 'Monasteries in Lancashire'

Maureen Gilbertson.

Golborne & Lowton 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

New members are always welcome. For details contact the Vice Chairman, Betty Isherwood, 7 Pennington Mews, St. Helens Road, Leigh. (01942 672058).

Leigh & District Family History Society

Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of every month in the Derby Room, Leigh Library. The programme for the coming months is as below:

17 December 'An Evening with Lizzie Jones'.

Leigh Local History Society

For further details contact the Secretary, Mrs. Norma Ackers (01942 865488).

Tyldesley & District Historical Society

Meetings are held at Tyldesley Pensions Club, Milk Street, Tyldesley on the third Tuesday of the month. Entrance is FREE. Further details from the Secretary (01942 893242).

Wigan Archaeological Society

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

Wigan Civic Trust

The Trust meets at 7.30 p.m. on the second Monday of the month, at the Drumcroon Arts Centre, Parsons Walk, Wigan. For further information contact Anthony Grimshaw, Secretary (01942 45777).

9 December Christmas Dinner

1997

13 January 'The Leeds and Liverpool Canal'

Mike Clarke

10 February 'Wigan and District Cinemas and Theatres'

Tony Aschroft

10 March 'The Pond Life Project'

Jane Plumtree

Wigan Family History Society

Meetings are held on the first and third Monday of each month at 7.30 p.m. at the Seven Stars Hotel, Wallgate, Wigan.

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Who and Where?

Last issue's five mystery school photographs produced a mixed response. Three of the photographs have been positively identified:

Top left

St. Thomas More, Pemberton

Mid left

John McCurdy Hall (opened by the Queen in 1954, an event which features in the new video presentation in the History Shop. The building is now part of Wigan College).

Bottom right

Pemberton Secondary Modern, Rose Hill Avenue, c.1962.

Surprisingly, no suggestions so far for the other two photographs.

Thanks to all those readers who have contributed their suggestions.

If you have any ideas about these four local 'band' photographs, please contact Len Hudson in Leigh Town Hall (01942 404432).

