

# PAST FORWARD

ISSUE NUMBER FIFTEEN

SPRING 1997



The Newsletter of Wigan Heritage Service

FREE

## From the Editor

In many ways this has been one of the most difficult editions to produce. I'm delighted to say that I've been inundated with contributions from readers - but I just cannot fit them all into 20 pages. So my apologies to those who are disappointed not to see their articles in print - please be patient, and I will do my best to include them in a future issue. But don't let this put any potential contributors off - I am always delighted to receive articles from readers, and obviously would rather have too many than too few to choose from.

I have also been greatly encouraged by the number of letters and phone-calls from readers near and far. The article in 'Past Forward 14' by Mrs. Bryden on Hindley and Abram Grammar School, for example, brought back memories for many readers and attracted a great deal of correspondence. And no photograph has produced such a response as the Boys' Brigade band on p20.

On a sadder note we have lost a very dear friend in the last few months. Harry Potts, Chairman of Red Rose Steam Society, died very suddenly at the end of the year. I had the privilege of working closely with Harry for many years - he was a gentleman and thoroughly dedicated to Astley Green Colliery. He will be greatly missed, but his legacy lives on in the exciting plans for the future of the site. A tribute to Harry appears on p18.

As always, many thanks to you, the readers, for your continual support, in whatever form, which has enabled 'Past Forward' to go from strength to strength.

All comments and correspondence should be addressed to:

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

## Farewell, Roy

The Heritage Service and Wigan Pier have bade farewell to a very dear friend, Roy Wareing. Roy has worked as a technician for the Heritage Service, based at Wigan Pier, since 1989, but unfortunately has had to retire due to ill-health.

But his association with Wigan Pier goes back much further. Roy's speciality was canal art, which he demonstrated in the Heritage Centre at the Pier from its opening in the mid 80's. Roy loved the Pier, and his appointment to the staff there was a natural progression - his dedication and enthusiasm were infectious.

Roy will be sorely missed at Wigan Pier. We wish him well in his new life at home, in which he will no doubt be fully occupied, with bows and arrows (making and shooting), painting and being a grand-dad. We wish him a long and happy retirement.



## HERITAGE SERVICE CONTACTS IN WIGAN AND LEIGH

### 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) 827594

Education and Outreach Manager

(and Local History, West) *Bob Blakeman* .....(01942) 827580

Collections Development Manager *Yvonne Webb* .....(01942) 828123

Heritage Officer (Industrial History) *Mike Haddon* .....(01942) 828121

Heritage Officer (Social History) *Dawn Wadsworth* .....(01942) 828124

Heritage Assistant *Hilary Fairclough* .....(01942) 828122

Heritage Assistant *Barbara Miller* .....(01942) 828122

Heritage Assistant *Stephanie Tsang* .....(01942) 828122

Fax: (01942) 827645

Local History enquiry desk .....(01942) 828020

#### Wigan Pier-

Technician *Alex Walsh* .....(01942) 828564

### Leigh

Archives, Town Hall-

Heritage Officer (Archives) *Nicholas Webb* .....(01942) 404430

Senior Technician *Len Hudson* .....(01942) 404432

Turnpike Centre, Leigh Library-

Heritage Officer (Local History) *Tony Ashcroft* .....(01942) 404559

**If you have an enquiry, and are not sure who the most appropriate person is to contact, please ring the History Shop, Library Street, Wigan. WN1 1NU (01942 828128).**

**NOTE** - Two members of the Heritage Staff are or soon will be on maternity leave. Technician Denise Byrne is currently looking after her new son Harry. We welcome Alex Walsh as a temporary replacement for Denise. Heritage Officer Dawn Wadsworth will be on maternity leave from April, for the birth of her second child.

Cover: We don't know any details about this photograph - except that it was taken somewhere in Wigan, probably in the 50's. I wonder if any readers can provide some background details to this delightful and evocative picture?

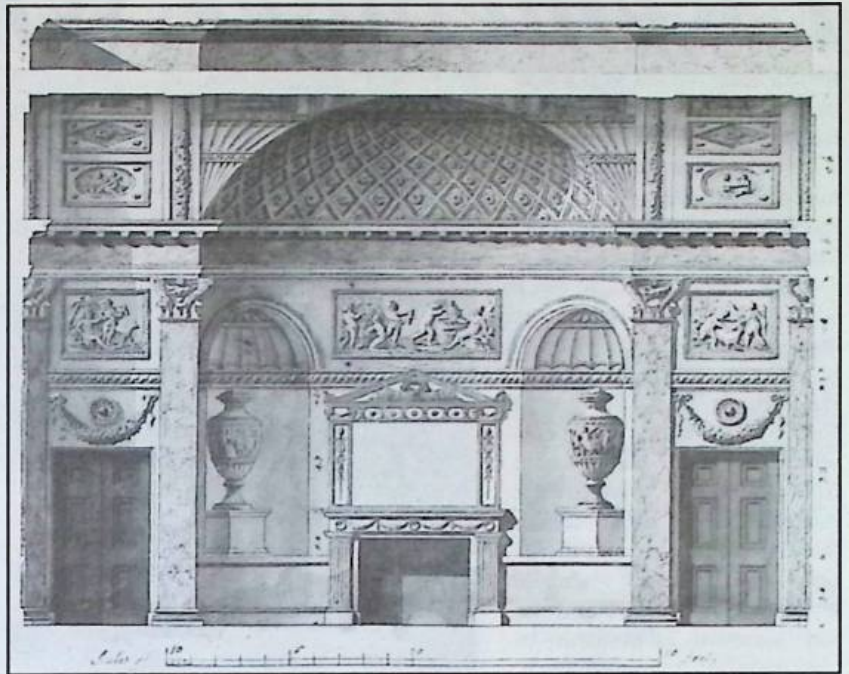
# News From the Archives

AMONGST recent accessions are several items of great interest ranging from medieval times to the present century. A notable donation has been that of a 13th century deed, measuring just 5½" x 2", beautifully written in a tiny medieval Latin script, the parchment as clean and bright as the day it was made. The deed is a quitclaim from William de Sankey to Jordan de Kenyon of his land in Hulresnapcroft (in Kenyon), in exchange for land that Jordan gave to him in the northern part of Woodcroft (also in Kenyon). This transaction does not seem to have been referred to in published histories of the area, and adds to the early examples of local place-names. The Victoria County History records 'Windycroft' and 'Snapcroft' as being granted to William de Sankey, and that in c. 1270 Jordan de Kenyon had been granted 'the whole vill of Kenyon' at the rent of 1d. or a pair of white gloves. Like many early deeds this one does not bear a regnal date but has to be dated from the names of parties and witnesses. In this case we know that Jordan was active c. 1256-1300 and William c. 1272-1298. Witnesses include Henry de Tyldesley (1242-1265), Richard de Middleton (1212>>), and Gilbert de Southworth (c. 1260). A likely date for this deed would seem therefore to be c. 1270, which makes it one of the earliest in the Archives, certainly for that part of the Metro area. The earliest local deed we have is a grant of land in the woods of Ince dated c. 1230 (Anderton Papers).

Amongst a pile of miscellanea recently being sorted at the Archives Office was a crumpled architectural drawing, dirty with the soot of ages but recognisable as something of importance. It is inscribed 'chimney-side section of the dining room at Standish in Lancashire' and signed and dated J. Bonomi, August 1782. It consists of a design for an Adam-style fireplace and surround, with classical alcoves, urns and friezes, hand-coloured in part. The name Bonomi rang a distant bell, and it was quickly found that Joseph (1739-1808) was an important architect who carried out designs on a number of English country houses. Born in Rome, he came to England in 1767 to work for the Adam brothers, and exhibited at the Royal Academy from 1783. Examples of his work can be seen at Packington Hall, Warwicks., Blickling Park, Norfolk and Hatchlands, Surrey (all National Trust), but the Standish and Towneley designs seem to be the only ones prepared by Bonomi for Lancashire clients.

An enquiry to the R.I.B.A. library confirmed that the drawings collection there contains what appears to be Bonomi's own (uncoloured) working set of designs for the dining room at Standish. Our coloured version would have been the presentation design for the client.

Although we can't be sure (because Standish Hall was demolished in the 1920's), it seems unlikely from the few surviving interior photographs that Bonomi's design was executed. It is significant that he also prepared an unexecuted



Design for the dining room at Standish Hall, by Joseph Bonomi, 1782 (D/D St).

design for a sculpture gallery for the celebrated Charles Towneley at Towneley Hall, who had inherited the Standish estate in 1778 and for whom Bonomi must have prepared his Standish drawings. Unfortunately there appears to be a gap in Edward's surviving letters preserved amongst the Standish papers for the period around 1782.

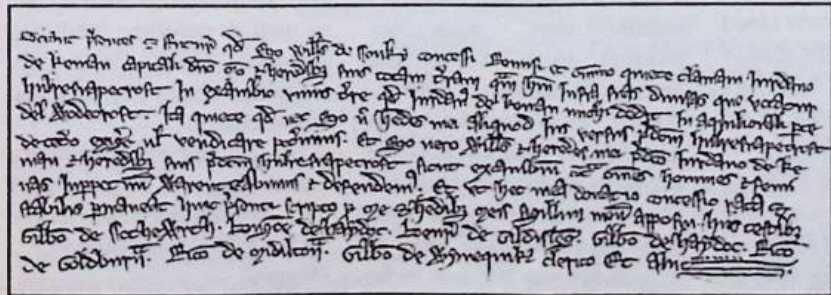
Our drawing has now been carefully cleaned, repaired, mounted and photographed, and it is hoped to exhibit it at the History Shop in the near future.

Amongst more modern items added to the Archives is an unusual pair of registers of children employed under the Factory & Workshops Act of 1878. These were kindly donated by Mr. G. Smith of Carlisle. They relate to the Welch Hill

cotton weaving mill at Westleigh and cover the period 1893-1902. Originally a silk mill, Welch Hill by this time was being operated by Gamble & Smith Ltd., who by the 1890's were also producing cloth at the Brookside and Charles Street mills. The registers record the names, addresses, parents, dates of birth and of starting work, of several hundred minors (under 18) during the nine year period. The entries are divided between 'children' (mostly aged 11-13) and 'young persons'. Many of the children can be traced through to the 'young persons' section of the registers when they reached 13 and passed a minimum standard at school, although a good many also ceased to work in the mill at this stage. About 90% of the employees were female.

Coming almost up to date is a further deposit of records by Wigan & District Field Club, which was established in 1945 'to study the natural history and geography of the district and to promote an interest in the countryside'. Since then the activities of the Club have been carefully chronicled in two MS. volumes containing minutes, reports, letters, programmes

and lists of species recorded on the many field trips undertaken over the years. The first volume covers the years up to 1968, the present deposit being the volume for 1969-1981. Both are illustrated with some excellent photographs of habitats, specimens and club members. In 1995 the Club celebrated its jubilee and issued a souvenir booklet compiled by former secretary and treasurer Edna Stephenson, which was appropriately subtitled 'Mallowing with Thyme'. The present Club had its precursor in the shape of a short-lived Wigan Field Naturalists' Society. This was founded in 1862, its object being 'the cultivation of a study of natural history in the field... to examine and contemplate the beauties of nature in the places where they are most strikingly exhibited, and in such a manner as to unite the pleasures of social intercourse with the unalloyed gratification of the intellect in a pure, healthful and ennobling pursuit.' The minutes of this society survive up to 1867 and reports to 1873, when it is assumed that its activities ceased. All of the records described here are available for study at the Archives Office.



Kenyon deed, c. 1270 (Acc. 3045)

N. W.

*Ernie Taberner stays with his motoring theme, this time remembering the industrial sounds (and the smells) around Wigan Pier:*

# I Remember When . . .

IF just after World War I you stood at the junction of Pottery Road and Swan Meadow Road, with your back to Eckersley's mill across the way, you wouldn't see the Heritage Centre as you would these days. Rather you would see a sombre grey stone warehouse, then owned by H & CB Pilkington, whose stores of Hay, Bran, and Chop were fodder for the mules and horses which hauled the barges along the canal below, plying their owner's trade of canal carriers from Liverpool in one direction, to the various towns of north east Lancashire and the woollen towns of Yorkshire in the other.

Next to Pilkingtons towards Seven Stars Bridge was Wigan Pier service station (which was opposite the old Pier across the canal). The owner, Mr. Harry Williams, would sell the early motorist one of several brands of petrol, ranging at that time from under a shilling (5p) to 1s. 3½d (about 8p per gallon). Later Mr. Williams opened a car showroom across Wallgate on the corner of Miry Lane as the Main Ford Dealer for the area.

## Repetitive clatter

But from your vantage point it would not be the sights that would attract you so much as the sounds and smells. At that time almost everyone, from toddlers to senior citizens, wore iron clad clogs, causing a repetitive clatter on the pavements and cobbled roadways from very early morning until well after teatime at night. Then there was the constant rumbling of the tramcars behind you as they rumbled along Swan Meadow Road to Poolstock Lane past St. James's Church, almost as if they were in competition with those across the canal rumbling up and down Wallgate to and from Abbey Lakes and the Market Place.



*Wigan Pier Service Station set amidst a drab industrial landscape between the Wars.*

Had you chosen to take up your position early morning the shrill blasts from the factory steam whistles reminding workers of the time of day would cause you to almost jump out of your skin, as we used to say. But there was no mistaking this with the shrill blast of the steam locomotive warning you to clear off the track. Yes, there was a railroad track, along the road way, to enable the Wigan Coal and Iron locomotive to shunt the loaded coal wagons to the Pier, to be unloaded into the waiting barges on the canal below.

Other noises were caused by the hissing of the exhaust valves from the giant steam turbines that provided the power to drive the looms in the mill behind you, not to be confused with the hissing of the Foden Sentinel steam road wagons operated by the firm of Alfred Goulding and Sons Ltd. of the Potteries, the main haulage contractors to Eckersleys Ltd. at that time.

## Smell

If the constant and repetitive hissing and clanging had an impact on the sense of hearing,

it was as nothing by comparison to the impact on the sense of smell on days when the wind was blowing down the canal in the wrong direction - from the direction of the Council's cleansing department at the bottom of Miry Lane.

Here it was where the specially constructed horse-drawn drays of the Night Soil Department would return with the full tubs collected from the outside toilets in the area, to be emptied, washed and disinfected before being taken out to replace the next load of used tubs to be collected.

To exacerbate the stench the Department was next to the firm of Gallagher Bros. who advertised themselves as Hide Skin and Fat Merchants, but were known locally as the 'Bone Works'. On those days when the smells were particularly pungent, locals would joke among themselves, "They're boiling up at t' bone works again". One wonders how the residents of the neighbouring streets contended with such unpleasantness! And yet, on reflection, it was true that, in the conditions then prevailing, most

of them had no option, many of them were in fact better off than they had been for years.

## Tribulations

Families were reunited (sadly not all) after more than four long years of bitter war, but many of the men were not demobilised until 1921, when many of them, as ex-miners, were unable to find employment during the miners strike. After the tribulations of trench warfare in which many were gassed and wounded, however, the rebuilding of family ties in any circumstances was infinitely preferable to what had already been endured in most cases.

It brings to my mind a saying of the time that 'Half a loaf is better than no bread'. In my own case I have often had occasion to be thankful that the education facility open to me, as well as the three "Rs" also included Good Citizenship, Respect for others, Loyalty and Comradeship.

As this was initially within a stone's throw of Wigan Pier, I can say with deep conviction, "Ahm glad I were browt up i' Wiggin".

© E. Taberner

# Wigan Pier ready for new season

THE Education section at Wigan Pier are putting together a series of activities and events that extend 'way beyond' schools to cover our many adult visitors and family groups. We will be looking at the social history and culture of the people of Victorian England, especially customs and seasonal events. Moreover, many activities will be free to day pass holders. These start with an invitation to...

## "Pace yourself at the Pier"

Like last year we are holding events with the theme of the traditional Lancashire Easter. These will include egg painting, egg rolling (on the Changeline Bridge over the Leeds and Liverpool Canal) and an Easter Egg Trail around the museum with some very special prizes for those who discover most about Wigan Pier!

We also hope to offer more

Victorian activity workshops - bonnet making being the first - on Sunday 31 March - with a parade at 4.00 p.m. to show off your handywork around the site. We will provide the materials, all you need is your imagination ...

## Learning early

Did you know that 17-25 May is Museums' Week? Spearheaded by T.V.'s Lloyd Grossman and run in conjunction with the Radio Times (who will be publishing all kinds of money-off vouchers prior to the date!), this annual event was launched last year with the intention of bringing Britain's heritage to the fore. The themes this year are 'Education for all Ages' and 'Hidden Treasures' and in keeping with this, Wigan Pier is organising free tours for day

pass holders between these dates. The Pier is such a wonderfully huge and complex site with so many things to see and do that many of our visitors never even get to see half of what is available. Follow one of our Volunteer Interpreter/Helpers - you may be in for a surprise!

For the tiny Wiganer there will also be an 'Early Years Day' on Saturday 24 May. Not many people are aware of the fact that 4 year olds and under get in free when accompanied by a paying adult and there will be all kinds of special activities for our smaller visitor taking place on that day.

For our older visitor we will be holding a 'Remember When' Day on Sunday 25 May, free to day pass holders.

There will be the opportunity to tour the site (special tours for the fit and not so fit!) with a helper, examine objects and join in with discussions about the past, led by one of our Education Officers.

Coincidentally **Adult Learners' Week** is to take place from 19-25 May and we welcome anyone who is involved in running adult education courses who can tell us what we at the Pier can do for adult learners. To help with this process we will be organising an **Adult Learners' Forum** on Wednesday 21 May beginning at 4p.m. Please phone to book a place.

**For more information on educational events and workshops at Wigan Pier contact:** Education Department, Orwells Folly, Wigan Pier (01942 323666 ext: 212/213).



## Book Review

**Jacobites in Lancashire** by Fred Holcroft. Published by the author 1995. (83 pages) ISBN 0 9524311 014. £4.99.

The overthrow of James II and his replacement by William and Mary in 1688, was one of the major steps in the development of our constitutional monarchy. There can be no doubt that James II, his son James (the Old Pretender), and his grandson Charles ('Bonnie Prince Charlie' or the Young Pretender) should have been, by right of lineage, the kings of England, Scotland and Ireland. It was equally certain that the majority of the people, in England and Scotland at least, did not want them to reign, because of their adherence to Roman Catholicism, their reluctance to accept any constitutional limitations to their power, and the fact that they were



supported by England's chief enemy, France.

Between 1688 and 1745, the Stuarts, with the aid of their supporters (who were known as Jacobites) struggled unsuccessfully to regain the throne, and this book deals with that struggle as far as it affected Lancashire.

Lancashire was the English county in which the

Stuarts thought that they had most support, although in the event this turned out to be less than they had hoped for.

The years following the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688 were full of imagined and actual plots to restore the Stuarts. One of these was centred on Standish Hall, and involved the local Jacobite gentry. In this book Fred Holcroft devotes a chapter to outlining this complex affair. There is a chapter on the attempt by a Jacobite army to seize the throne in 1715, which culminated in the battle of Preston. A further chapter is devoted to the more well-known attempt by 'Bonnie Prince Charlie' in 1745. There are lucid descriptions of the battle of Preston, and other, more minor, military engagements, backed up by some excellent maps and plans to show the military situation at various times.

Readers who are aware of Fred Holcroft's other military histories will know that his speciality is collecting information on individual combatants, especially the rank and file soldiers. In this he performs a service to the local historian and family

historian alike. So, as one would expect, there is a list of the Lancashire Jacobites who took part in the rebellions; their names, ages, places of birth, and ultimate fates. Some were hung, drawn and quartered; some shot by firing squad; some transported to labour on a West Indian plantation; some pardoned on condition that they joined the British Army (!); some discharged; and at least one acquitted on the grounds of lunacy. Some of them escaped by tricks or turns of fate so unlikely as to be almost unbelievable.

A point of special interest for us is the rebels' stay in Wigan during the '45. Fred Holcroft has the Jacobite army occupying the town both during the advance (on 28 November) and the retreat (10 December). Some other writers (J. J. Bagley and Jane Sterling) have the rebels by-passing the town during their advance. Support for the former case comes from a report in the London Gazette of 30 November - 3 December 1745 (quoted in an essay by R. C. Jarvis). Although contemporary reports of the movement of Jacobite armies are notoriously inac-

curate, we have further evidence in the mayor of Wigan's accounts for 1746, which state that the grammar school (which, incidentally, stood on the site of the History Shop) had to be cleaned up twice after it was occupied by the rebels. So it appears that Fred Holcroft may be right on this point.

Associated with this question is the belief that Bonnie Prince Charlie stayed at Walmesley House in Bishopgate. Most accounts have him lodging there during the retreat; Fred Holcroft has him lodging there during the advance. We have never seen any contemporary evidence that the Prince stayed at the house. The belief may be based on oral tradition, though not necessarily false for that.

When events of national importance take place in a particularly locality, we have local history at its most exciting. This book makes fascinating reading, and is a useful introduction to a period of crisis in British history.

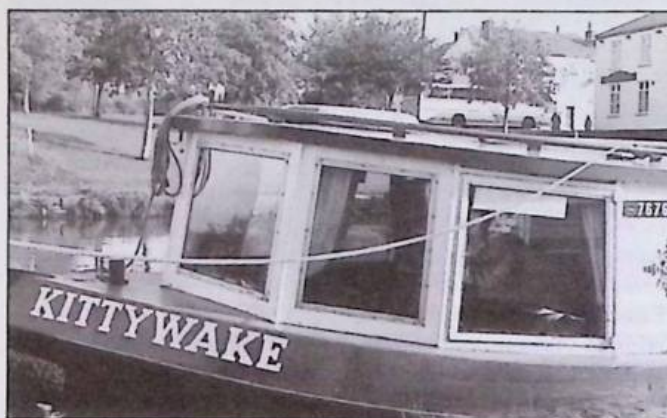
B. B.

HISTORICAL tours have become a feature of the annual Standish Arts Festival in recent years. Previous events have included coach tours around the district and canal trips between Red Rock and Haigh. For 1996 a more ambitious canal route was chosen, between Wigan Pier and Gathurst. Two separate trips were run on the Tuesday of Festival week in October, dividing at Crooke, each being duplicated making four all told. Around 125 people enjoyed the day on Kittywake which is based at The Pier.

The leisurely cruise through peaceful town and countryside, supplemented by either drinks on board or a light meal at St. Wilfrid's vestry in Standish, has proved a great attraction. Wigan Heritage Service's contribution is to provide an historical commentary about features along the route and the history of the canal, alternating with tasteful music (Chopin, Beethoven, Handel etc.).

The Leeds Liverpool Canal was opened as far as Wigan by 1781, succeeding the Douglas Navigation which had connected Wigan with the Ribble estuary and the coastal

# STANDISH FESTIVAL CANAL TRIP (1996)



*Moored at Crooke*

Two locks are operated along this section, at Pagefield and Eil Meadow, a chance to see at first hand the simple but effective technology of two centuries ago. The original Crooke lock (now disused) is also passed. At Martland Mill Bridge the ancient boundaries between Wigan, Standish and Pemberton meet, the canal thereafter passing into Standish parish. As the boat approaches Crooke the entrance to the old branch canal leading to Taylor Pit is passed. Used between c. 1800 and c. 1840, about 600 of its 1,000 yards length ran underground to the coal seam (Ince 7'), the coal being 'legged' out in barges down to the Leeds Liverpool. The site of Crooke Hall, a fine Jacobean house (demolished 1937), is also passed.

At Crooke the contrast could hardly be greater between today's peaceful, clean and rural scene and the place's appearance around 1900 - 'desolate and sordid, owing to the working of collieries in the immediate neighbourhood', as one observer wrote. On each bank can be seen the sites of piers at which coal was unloaded from railway trucks into the barges. Crooke was one of the main loading points for the Wigan coal field, most of the coal being taken to Liverpool. As late as 1900 some 50 boatloads were daily leaving Crooke. At the time of the 1891 census there were some 30 boats moored there with people living in the tiny cabins, most of the boat people coming from the Wigan or Liverpool areas, but some having been born in other parts of the country.

Between Crooke and Gathurst many features of interest can be seen, including the Roburite explosives factory (now I.C.I.) dating from 1888, the Heinz baked bean plant, Ackhurst Hall, Gathurst Bridge and Farm. The furthest point is reached at Dean Locks where the Kittywake turns round. Here can be seen the double locks, Lock House and the remains of the regulating lock between the canal and the River Douglas. For those interested in walking further along the canal towards Parbold, the site of the original connecting locks to the Douglas Navigation can be identified.

N.W.

trade since 1742. By 1816 the through route to Leeds was completed, and the connection to Leigh and the Midlands canals by 1820. The canal basin around the Pier was the original canal terminus and still has original stone warehouses, together with later Victorian warehouses (now containing 'The Way We Were' exhibition, shop and Schools Centre), and other features.

Travelling towards Crooke the canal is crossed by two railway lines (formerly Lancashire & Yorkshire); the railways took much trade away from the canals from the 1850's onwards but despite this the canal remained very important for the Wigan coal field into the present century. Two former industrial sites of great importance are also passed in the St. Andrew's district - Walker Brothers' Pagefield Works and Douglas Bank Colliery. The latter was made famous by St. Andrew's first vicar, Rev. William Wickham, a pioneer of underground photography in the mines.

## BOB DOBSON

Publisher and Book Dealer

### LANCASHIRE YORKSHIRE & CHESHIRE

I deal in secondhand books relating to these counties: I appreciate quotations: I search for books: I issue lists. I buy quantities of other books: I organise Secondhand Book Fairs throughout the North West — Send for details. I want to publish Lancashire-interest books.

**BOB DOBSON**

"Acorns"

3 STAINING RISE,  
STAINING,

BLACKPOOL FY3 0BU.

Tel. (01253) 895678



# A Visit to Wigan —

## 84 Years Later

**EARLIER** this year, in May, my husband Charles and I travelled in England, and I had the opportunity of visiting Wigan where my ancestors lived. (My father James Molyneux emigrated to the States in 1912.) We live in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin near the state capital of Madison, about 150 miles north of Chicago. We toured England for a week with a group from Madison and saw many historic places from York to Stonehenge. It was easy for me to feel "at home" because the countryside looked so much like the New England states where I grew up. When the tour ended in London, and the other people took their flight home, we rented a car to continue our travel in England. This second week was spent in pursuing family history in the places where it happened.

We drove first to the South Coast to see Battle Abbey, site of the Battle of Hastings in 1066. My most distant ancestor in England was William de Molins. According to Molyneux family history, he was one of the noble attendants of William the Conqueror, and he fought in that historic battle. Afterwards we went north to meet Beryl Goodall and her husband Edward, who live at Romiley, Stockport. Beryl and I became pen pals in our early school years, but had never met each other in person. On her own initiative, she has been doing research for me in the Wigan area for fifteen years to gather genealogical information about my father's family.

My father, James Francis Molyneux was born in Wigan in 1890. As a young man he worked in the Garswood Coal and Iron Company mine at Wigan. He married Mary Ann, daughter of William Cunliffe in 1909. Mary Ann died a few days after their baby was born. My father emigrated to the United States in 1912 with his widowed mother, Ruth Pilling Fearnley Molyneux, his half sister Margaret Fearnley Speakman and

Margaret's daughter Norma. They joined Margaret's husband Albert Speakman in New Britain, Connecticut where he had immigrated earlier. Margaret's nephew John Femley had also preceded the family to America. A few years later my father served in the American army in France in World War I, then he worked in steel mills in Connecticut until he retired.

### 103 years old

He married Veronica Heslin in 1925 in New Britain; I am the youngest of their five children. He died in 1971 in Milford, Connecticut. My mother still lives there; she is 103 years old and has been a great help to me with her recollections of her family history. She told me that as a young girl she often saw an old lady who smoked a pipe and sat behind the stove in her grandfather's farm house. This lady, actually her great grandmother, was born in Ireland in 1815.

With Beryl Goodall as my guide, I toured Wigan and neighbouring towns. We visited the History Shop to view its many interesting exhibits, and I made a contribution to continue receiving Past Forward. (I enjoy reading every article in this newsletter). Afterwards we found street addresses where my father and earlier relatives lived. Unfortunately the original buildings are no longer there, so I had to be content with taking photographs of similar homes that still exist



*Madeline Carome (right) with her friend Beryl Goodall at St. Thomas's Church, Ashton-in-Makerfield, looking through old church records*

nearby. However, it was a unique and satisfying experience to walk on the same streets where my ancestors walked. If their homes were still there, perhaps the present owners would have let me walk into them too.

### Colliery explosion

My father lived at 214 Wigan Road and Mary Ann Cunliffe lived nearby at 19 Soughers Lane. Both addresses are vacant lots now. In 1891 my grandfather James Francis Molyneux lived with his family at 2 Bolton Road. The Cross Keys Inn is now at that site; according to the stone marker on the wall, it was built in 1904.

In 1861, my great grandfather, Francis Molyneux lived in Miffield Lane, Haydock with his wife Elizabeth Kitts Molyneux and their six children. On 7 June 1878, Francis and his son, John died in the Wood Pit colliery explosion at Haydock when 200 lives were lost. Ian G. Winstanley tells of this disaster in his book 'Weep Mothers, Weep'. The Wood Pit colliery is now a fenced-in salvage yard, so we were only able to see the colliery slag heap from the road. It had been a working mine from 1950 to 1971.

We also visited two church cemeteries at Ashton-In-Makerfield. Many of my Molyneux ancestors are buried in the cemetery of St. Oswald's Church, while other ancestors from the Littler and Kitts families are buried in the

cemetery of St. Thomas's Church. My present research is concentrated on finding records of my great great grandfather James Molyneux who died around 1830 in Ashton-In-Makerfield; he might have been buried in St. Thomas's Cemetery. He was the first husband of Ann Littler; her second husband was Peter Murrow.

### 'Discovered' each other

Later, I met my cousin, Miss Margaret Pimblett of Standish, and her extended family. We have been writing and exchanging family information since we "discovered" each other five years ago through Norma Speakman Spigener, now 86 years old, who emigrated with my father in 1912. Margaret has helped me with information about my father's mother, Ruth Pilling, and her family. (Ruth Pilling and Margaret's grandfather were brother and sister.)

Before returning to London and home to Wisconsin, we also had the pleasure of meeting Betty and Gordon Brown in Prescott. Betty is editor of MX World, Newsletter of the International Molyneux Family Association. She prints detailed information of Molyneux family history from genealogists in England and in many other parts of the world. Betty welcomes Molyneux data from anyone who wishes to send it. (Her address: Mrs. Betty Mx Brown, 18 Sinclair Avenue, Prescott, Merseyside L35 7LN).

*Madeline (Molyneux) Carome.*

Readers of 'Past Forward' may remember Mr. Heaviside's article on Bottling Wood in issue no. 7. Here is the continuation. Ed.

# More About Bottling Wood

IF we look at an Ordnance Survey map of Wigan we see, alongside the River Douglas, just to the south of Haigh Plantations, an area shown as Bottling Wood. In 1841 there was a hamlet of 23 dwellings here, which by 1861 had increased to 68 dwellings. The census returns show many of the inhabitants working in the nailmaking, spinning, weaving and coalmining industries. Other less common occupations included a bricklayer, a farmer, a clogger, an organist and a provisions merchant.

Living conditions, compared with those of today, were appalling. Many of the houses were built back to back and had no rear windows. Water was supplied by pumps and wells; sewage was deposited in the River Douglas. The weir across the river at Sutton Mill created a barrier behind which rubbish accumulated. Sometimes the houses on the riverbank were flooded to a depth of about two feet. The houses were built of common brick with slate roofs, and were, in themselves, reasonable protection from the elements. The heating consisted of one Yorkshire range on which all the cooking was carried out. One can understand why bathing was not a priority as the hot water had to be provided from this one fire. The floors were flaged and often the windows and doors did not fit properly. The houses were of the "two up, two down" type.

I am told by people who lived there, that even in the

20th century (the houses were demolished shortly after 1926) parents and children slept together in the same room. Where there were not enough beds, the children slept on one or more chairs. Grandparents often lived with their children's families. Such overcrowding resulted in an unhealthy atmosphere when doors and windows were shut. An extreme example is that of the Seddon household, which at one time consisted of two adults and their six children, three adult lodgers and another child; altogether twelve people living in a two-bedroomed house.

The 1841 census records a Cox family consisting of J. Cox, a 55-year old labourer; Mary, his 50-year old wife, and Jephtha their 20-year-old son who worked as a brass moulder. All of these were born outside Lancashire. There was also a 15-year-old daughter, Caroline, working as a spinster, and Hashbanna, a son of the same age described

as a cotton spinner. Both of these were born in Wigan.

The census returns of 1861 show that Mr. Cox had died in the interim, his wife being listed as a widow. Jephtha had not married, and was still working as a brass moulder. Caroline was married, and is now known as Mrs. Fisher, although her husband is deceased. Her occupation is listed as a nursemaid. Also living at this address is Agnes Cox, granddaughter to Mary (it could be that Agnes is really Mary's daughter born out of wedlock - such a situation was common in closely-knit communities). Agnes was 17 years of age and a cotton reeler. Finally we have Francis Stokes, granddaughter, 7 years old and a scholar.

Another family who were living at Bottling Wood during this period were the Seddons. Mr. Seddon was a 45 year old bricklayer, his wife Elizabeth was the same age, their two 15 year old sons James and John, a daughter Sarah aged 11, Peter, a son aged 15 (?), Edward aged 5 and Elizabeth 1 year. In the same household there were several lodgers i.e. John Brown, a 20 year old miner, Alice, his wife, Mary their 2 year old daughter, and an 80-year-old weaver called John Holland. Twelve people in one two-up and two-down

house! No wonder another daughter Alice, a 15 year old cotton spinner, found accommodation with another family.

In 1861 we find that this family was reduced to Mr. Seddon, aged 64, his wife, and a daughter Ann, described as a loom minder. 22-year-old cotton spinner Elizabeth Roby was also living there as a boarder.

The last family I should like to consider is the Tarbucks. The 1841 census showed J. Tarbuck, a 20-year-old engineer, Mary, his 18-year-old wife, and Dennis their 3 month old son. By 1861 Mary was the head of the household and was working as a laundress. Dennis, and a 15-year-old son Ellis, were working as boiler-makers. Mary also had a 13-year-old daughter, Margaret.

Another branch of the Tarbuck family consisted, in 1841, of George, a 50-year-old nailmaker, his wife Ellen, who was the same age, and their 25-year-old daughter Alice, who was a drop maker (the making of lead shot was a domestic industry, whereby molten lead, heated over the fire, was poured through a ladle full of holes and fell into the washing boiler which was full of cold water, and thereby solidified).

By 1861 George Tarbuck junior was head of the household and was described as both a bolt and nailmaker. He had a wife, Elizabeth and children George aged 11, Ellen aged 10, Francis aged 6, and Jane aged 4. Because they were more affluent they employed a 16-year-old governess Hannah Knowles, and a 13-year-old servant Cicely Dawson. James also had married and had a family. He was described as a bolt-maker. Sarah, his wife, came from Huntingdon. They



Bottling Wood earlier this century

continued on page 9



# PHILIP LARKIN —

## THE LEIGH CONNECTION

PHILIP Larkin (1922-1985) was a Midlander from Coventry who eventually became University Librarian at Hull in 1955. He was both a novelist and poet. His novels 'Jill' (1946) and 'A Girl in Winter' (1947) won critical review as did his poetry, his best known poem being 'Whitsun Weddings' (1964).

There is no evidence that Larkin himself ever visited Leigh, but both his mother and her parents had lived in the town. His mother was Eva Emily Day, daughter of William James and Emily Day. The Day family came to Leigh in 1897 when Mr Day took up his new position as first class Excise Officer. He retired in September 1921 after 24 years service to the town.

William Day was born in 1859 at Harlow in Essex. He became a pupil teacher under the London School Board before entering the Civil Service in May 1880. His first appointment was in London but in September 1880 he was moved to Coventry where he assisted in the administration of the new Beer Act. In 1852 he was moved to Dublin, becoming a first class assistant. During his time there he had some experiences in connection with the Phoenix Park riots.

In 1888 he left Dublin, returning to Coventry before being transferred to Glen Tarris, Dumfries, Hammersmith, Littleborough and Epping Forest.

In 1909 the Old Age Pensions Act came into operation and William Day was responsible as Pensions Officer for dealing with all matters concerned with dependants' allowances - a job made much more difficult by the outbreak of the War. After his retirement in 1921 his successor was W. B. Allan of Atherton. In October 1933 William and Emily Day celebrated their Golden Wedding. Unfortunately Mrs Day died only five months later. Mr Day continued to live at 13 The Avenue, Leigh until his death in March 1942. Both William and Emily Day are buried in Leigh cemetery. Their only son Arthur of Ashton under Lyne died in August 1941. During his time at Leigh he had been a member of the Conservative Club, was a keen photographer and contributed puzzles to the Leigh Chronicle.

In October 1911 Eva (25) married Sydney Larkin (27), an accountant in the City Treasurers Office at Birmingham. The marriage took place at Leigh Parish Church.

T. A.

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:

**£6.00**

**PER MORNING OR  
AFTERNOON SESSION**

**£9.00**

**PER EVENING SESSION**

**COMMERCIAL RATE ON  
APPLICATION**

**REFRESHMENTS ARE  
ALSO AVAILABLE**

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

### *More About Bottling Wood*

continued from page 8

had two daughters, Sarah aged 12 and Jane aged 4. William, too had a family. He was described as a "ship-builder" (i.e. barge-builder).

There was another Tarbuck family living in Bottling Wood in 1861. William Tarbuck, aged 45, was a master bolt and nail maker, Mary was his wife, and he had two sons Thomas, aged 16, an apprentice turner, and 13-year-old James, an apprentice moulder. They also had a daughter Ellen, aged 14. There was a row of houses in Bottling Wood known as

Tarbuck Cottages. The Tarbucks appear year after year in local trade directories with a business address in Wigan Lane.

Before we leave the census it is interesting to note the number of people that came to Bottling Wood from outside the locality. In 1861 we find:-

J. Shaw, engine tender, formerly of Sowerby Bridge; W. Bailey, breadmaker, of Middlewich; Mary Bailey his wife, of Bolton-le-Moors; Mary Cox of Newcastle-on-Tyne; the wife of Mr. Ambrose of Cumberland; John, son of R. Wallwork of Penistone; John Nolan, born in Ireland; John Nolan, born in Australia; his wife, born in Australia; their daughter Ann, born in Looe; John Heaviside of Arthington; Isabella Heaviside

of Cottingham.

Nailmaking was particularly important to the inhabitants of Bottling Wood. The nailsmith is the most conservative of craftsmen. "As busy as a nailer" is a phrase that has passed into a proverb. The raw material for the production of iron nails is received at the smithy in the shape of bundles of iron rods. These bundles vary in weight, and the rods are of different lengths and thicknesses. The nailsmith puts several rods into the fire at once. With his left hand he blows the bellows and with his right hand he trims the furnace and handles the reddening irons. As soon as the requisite heat has been attained, he takes one rod out of the flames and hammers it onto his small

"stithy" or anvil to the shape desired. Every nail is made on the end of the iron rod, and then cut off. Sparrowbills (so called for their resemblance to the bird's beak) are used largely by shoemakers. Other nails go by the names of "diamonds", "roscheads", "shingles", and "wire nails". Nailmakers usually worked from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Apart from nail-making, the other main occupations were coalmining, cotton manufacture and iron founding. In the mid 19th century, the nearest ironworks to Bottling Wood was the Haigh Foundry, a short walk along the Douglas. The nearest collieries were in Whelley and Swinley, and the nearest cotton mills in Wigan town centre.

# HISTORY SHOP NEWS

## Events in the History Shop

IT has been an exciting period for events at the History Shop with the Charter celebrations last year really ending on a high. On Saturday 23 November there was an opening of the Charter Patchwork Community projects, where all who had been involved in the works were invited to a private view of the exhibition.

On Tuesday 10 December we were indebted to Byrchall High School for an excellent Christmas carol concert in the Art Gallery. Introduced by Dick Hatch the 40 strong choir delighted us with Christmas fayre traditional & new. Many thanks once again to teachers Mr Thornton and Mrs Hughes.

On Tuesday 17 December the same space was used by the Scherzo Dance company to perform two of the innovative works, 'Signature' (specially commissioned for Charter Year) & 'The Very Soul' (based on the decline of the local coal industry).

Finally on Thursday 19 December Dick Hatch, ex BBC broadcaster and a keen supporter of the History Shop, treated the audience to a selection of Christmas readings.



Dick Hatch reading a selection of Christmas pieces

The new year has seen more activity in the gallery with the muralist Gerald Rickards being 'in residence' on Tuesdays throughout January and February - working on sections of his wonderful Wigan mural and being on hand to chat with interested members of the public. You may recall that the Heritage service ran a competition to name all the buildings in the Charter Mural? A few weeks ago we were happy to announce the winners and present them with their prizes. The winner of the main prize for naming the most buildings went to Mrs S. Lawton who received the 'Wigan - A Historical Souvenir' book while the Junior prize was won by 14 year old Gillian Gerrish, who received the video 'The Wigan Story'. Congratulations once again to both winners.

Photo courtesy of Lancashire Evening Post

On 26 August 1996 Wigan celebrated its 750th anniversary as a royal borough, making it one of the four ancient boroughs of Lancashire. At the heart of the celebrations was the Charter Exhibition, mounted in Wigan's highly successful History Shop. A highlight of this exhibition has proved to be an audio visual display, telling the story of Wigan. Due to public demand, this video - the first by Wigan Heritage Service - has been compiled. It includes all four programmes produced by Wigan Heritage Service for the History Shop and Wigan Pier. These programmes provide a fascinating insight into our local heritage.

- Charter 96 5 mins.
- The Wigan Story 17 mins.
- Rev. William Wickham's Magic Lantern Show (a recreation of a Victorian Wigan Lantern Slide Show) 8 mins.
- The Story of Wigan Pier 10 mins.
- Wigan and World War II 20 mins. (produced as part of Wigan's VI and VII Day commemorations)

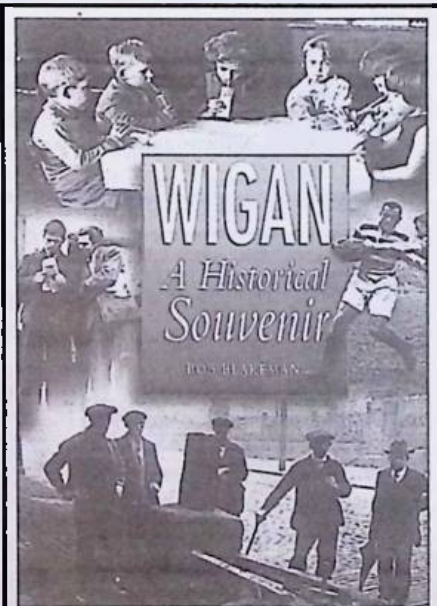
Movie design and print by Concorde Ltd. Video production by CH (W) Ltd., Chorley, on behalf of Wigan Heritage Service. © Wigan Heritage Service, 1996.

The Heritage Service's best-selling video £10.99 (plus 50p p.c.)



Lizzie Jones in her role as the 17th century Countess of Derby

Photo courtesy of Lancashire Evening Post



This splendid book, written by the Heritage Service's Bob Blakeman - "the author is to be congratulated on what he has put into this book, and how he has done it" (Richard Denniston in 'Really Lancashire') - is available from the History Shop @ £14.99 (plus £2.95 postage and packing).

# HISTORY SHOP NEWS

## Lectures in the History Shop

The lecture programme for 1997 has begun well, with two stimulating evenings, with a difference, in the Wickham Gallery. In January Gerald Rickards gave a fascinating insight into the production of his magnificent Wigan mural, while in February Lizzie Jones

enthralled a packed house in her role of Charlotte, Countess of Derby, during the siege of Lathom House, 1643-45.

**9 April**

'Local Men at the Somme' An illustrated talk by Fred Holcroft

**14 May**

'Children in the Mines' An illustrated talk by Alan Davies

**11 June**

'Pub Signs' An illustrated talk by Mr R Lowe

## Exhibitions in the History Shop

The Charter year ended with two splendid exhibitions continuing into the new year. The community arts project with the colourful Charter Parchworks was quite a contrast with the exhibition of French Charters from our twin-town Angers. This contrast, though, only served to highlight the strengths of each display as they were displayed side-by-side through January, February and March have seen 'The Demon Drink' on show, a Heritage Service exhibition that is backed up by some interesting items from the Archives.

The next show will be 'Painting with Light', an exhibition by the Heritage Service tracing the development of photography from its earliest pioneering days right up to the present. This will introduce the theme of photography which will be continued throughout the summer. Downstairs in the Wickham Gallery a tribute to the Victorian amateur photographer William Wickham will open in April.

programme. Alternatively you could arouse your child's interest in archaeology with one of our Archaeological Detective game packs (great for any budding Indiana Jones!). On the lighter side we also have a range of pocket money toys that mums and dads may well remember; Yoyos, clicking frogs, magnets and marbles, and those of you that were around in the 70's must remember the miraculous kinetic wheel!?

For further details on any of our stock ring (01942 828128).

He came to Wigan as vicar of St. Andrews in 1878 and was to stay for 38 years, building up a unique photographic record of the town. This tribute is particularly appropriate as it was a generous bequest from his last surviving daughter, Dr Monica Wickham, which made our new gallery development possible.

Then later in the summer the Wigan Photographic Society will hold its annual exhibition upstairs in the Taylor Gallery. An opportunity to compare the work of keen amateur photographers of today with that of one from a hundred years ago perhaps? This exhibition was very popular last year and will be staging an opening by the Mayor on the evening of Friday 8 August.

Before that in June and July the temporary exhibition area will be given over to a Wigan Arts Festival exhibition organised by our Visual Arts Outreach Officer Jo Gorner. It is hoped that events & shows will be held Borough-wide, focusing on the weekend of the 19 & 20 July 1997. For further details ring Jo at the Turnpike Gallery, Leigh tel 404558.

**Taylor Gallery**

**27 March**

**Demon Drink**

**7 April - 28 June**

**Painting with Light**

**7 July - 2 August**

**Wigan Arts Festival Exhibition**

**9 - 23 August**

**Wigan Photographic Society Annual Exhibition**

**Wickham Gallery**

**Charter '96**

This major exhibition will continue throughout 1997.

**Rev William Wickham - A Victorian Photographer**

A permanent exhibition, opening April 1997.

## THE WIGAN STORY

750 Years a Borough



is available from the History Shop @ (page and packing).

## Thanks for your custom

The Christmas period was a very successful time for our retail area at the History Shop. Our specially commissioned Charter China and the new video and Wigan book proved particularly popular. Both the book 'Wigan a Historical Souvenir' and video 'The Wigan Story' are still available and are highly recommended. Several designs of the china proved so popular that we are currently waiting for replacement stock and have also commissioned coffee cups and saucers, tea-cups and saucers and a new design of bone china beaker. These should be available by April.

### Not Just for Kids

As well as our extensive range of local history books we also stock several general history books designed for children. 'Snapping Turtle Guides', whose subjects include Tudors and Stuarts, Crime and Punishment and Medieval Life, are well illustrated, fun to read and carefully designed to link to the national curriculum. We also stock titles from the 'Horrible History' series as previewed on BBC TV's Bookworm

Owen Davies was born in Tyldesley in 1913, the seventh of nine children of Owen and Elizabeth Davies, who had moved from North Wales to Tyldesley. Shortly after his father's death in 1927, Owen, aged 14, found work at Caleb Wright's cotton spinning mill at the top of Union Street. Initially, he worked as a spinners' scavenger, earning 12s weekly, then as a piecer, for a weekly wage of £1.4s.6d. By 1937, he had become a spinner earning up to £3.12s.10d. in a good week.

Following active service in World War II, Owen Davies became a leading Labourite, on friendly terms with many Union leaders of the time. He was a prominent member of Tyldesley Town Council and a noted local bass singer. Shortly after the War, he moved to 43 Union Street, Tyldesley, where he lived with his wife Edna until her death.

Half a century later, he still lives there, with his second wife, Doreen, who has fortunately recently written down Owen's boyhood reminiscences.

# A Daft Lad

I WAS always a daft lad, said Owen. I liked a bit of fun and a lark, if it didn't hurt anybody. I was the apple of my mother's eye, and she always worried if I didn't get home when I should have done. There were ten of us at home; my mother, father, six sisters and me and my brother. When we sat down at table the oldest got first choice, then those who were working.

*So the youngest had the last pick?*

Aye, that's right, if they weren't working. My older brother Emlyn worked at a pit. He had to walk across three or four fields, and it took him 20 minutes. One of the young fellows from the office walked the same way, and it took him over half an hour. He used to say, when he left work, 'See you in 25 minutes, Emlyn? Our Emlyn couldn't leave until 15 minutes later, but he always caught up with the other lad, before he got home.

My mam saw to it that there were never any marks or scratches on the furniture. They were dusted every day and polished every week.

*How many rooms in the house?*

Two up and two down; and a privy house at the end of a fairly long garden. Emlyn once wrote a notice and stuck it on the back door - '7 miles to privy.'

**Clothes line**

*There must have been a number of you sleeping in one room.*

My dad used to string a clothes line across our bedroom, and at nights he pegged our shoulders to it, and we slept, hanging like the washing! My youngest sister, Myfanwy, was always last to take her choice of food. Sometimes a visitor would share her early turn with Myfanwy, and they'd have half each of what they got.

Every Sunday after tea, we had a musical evening. Our neighbours used to come and listen outside, until my parents invited them in. Friends were also invited regularly. No one was ever turned away, and no one ever left without having a drink, and something to eat. From being children, we all had to learn Tonic Sol-fa. Whatever key you sang in, the distance between doh and lah, soh and me, is always the same. We could sing anything at sight, using Tonic Sol-fa. This is very handy for choirs with limited practice time.

*He sat humming softly.*

Aye, everyone knew our street. There were Halls, Balls, Greenalls and Catteralls; then us. At the corner on the main Road lived Mr. Woods, the theatre owner. Next door lived Mr. Peel and then Rosie Orange and her parents. We used to say Woods Peels Oranges. Us lads always used to call it the Fruity Corner.

*I stared at him, but he wasn't laughing.*

*Are some of the houses still there?*

Oh yes. Quite a lot of them; and they're still good family houses. One family we knew had about 24 kids. There were a Tally Board, and the parents looked on the Board, to see which of their offspring were in. They had to give up a tally of meal times. Other kids used to play tricks and go to the table - but, no tally, no meal!

**Welsh Baptists**

*What work did your father do?*

He went round selling insurance. His parents had come from Wales in the late 1800's, to work in the pits or mills of South Lancashire. Our families were all Welsh Baptists - pillars of the Church and very good singers. My father was the choirmaster in church, and conductor of the local male voice choir. They settled down here, and streets of houses were built to accommodate them, near to their work. They brought up families, and thought themselves lucky to have a job and a home. They were good houses for those times. Some of their descendants still live in those houses. The pits and mills sometimes provided houses for their workers. Some of the street names tell you what it was like then before, such as Blossom Lane, Pine Wood and so on.

Life was always hard for those who had to work. In olden times it was thieves and robbers, and those who stole land. Then it was wars,

lack of trade and changes in government policy.

Sometimes in winter, you couldn't get up to the top of a steep street. People still wanted to go to church, so they built a chapel at the top of a street, and one at the bottom.

**'Resurrection Day'**

We always knew the day of the week at home, by the food we ate. Monday was 'Resurrection Day' - all cold dishes mixed up and reheated. Three times a week we had best steak - 9d. for 1/2lb. On Sundays we ate sirloin steak at 7s.6d. That was a fortune - equal to three bags of coal, whichever you preferred.

Everything was cooked on the old cast iron range in the living room. There was an oven, a fire grate, a warming place, and a trivet for the copper kettle. Little children had to be watched, in case they touched it when hot. First thing in the morning, the fire was raked and stoked up. This was our only source

continued on page 13



Owen (senior) and Elizabeth Davies with seven of their children outside their home, 147 Manchester Road, Tyldesley, c.1920. Owen (junior) is in the centre with his hand on his Father's knee.

of warmth, so was done every day of the year. I remember when I was about four, one day I took the poker out of the fire. It was red at the end. I waved it about and ran round the kitchen, chasing my mother and anyone else there. When I couldn't catch them, I pushed the poker down my trousers! I can recall lying on the kitchen table, while mother and the next door neighbour tried to treat the burn. I still have a scar!

At bedtime the fire was raked low, and some coal with slack was put on to last until morning.

The back room was the large kitchen, with a stone sink on brick pillars. There was a wooden draining board, and cupboards at the side. In one corner was a brick-built boiler for washing clothes. It had a brick chimney running up behind the fire, right up to the roof. The boiler itself was cast iron, with a lid over. Underneath was the fire with a metal plate at the front for raking out the ashes. There was a metal door for firing.

#### One gas mantle

Hot water for washing the family came from a pan on the range, or the kettle, or the boiler on washday. There was one cold water tap in the kitchen, and one gas mantle in the living room. Everywhere else were candles or paraffin lamps.

All the white clothes were boiled first; then the other things and woollen clothes last. From the boiler, the clothes went in the dolly tub, and a wooden posser pushed the clothes up and down, in soapy water. After this they went into a rinsing tub and finally into the sink for a last rinse. The whites were dolly-blued in a separate tub and any starching was done then.

After, came the mangling! Everyone took a turn. Our Emlyn said his day was Tuesday. Some clothes were pegged out before mangling, and then they were put away.

On washing day everyone had to be up at first light. Monday was washing day, Tuesday was starching and mangling day and Wednesday was ironing day.

The old metal box irons had a heated block inside. A cloth was needed to hold the iron handle. The poker fitted in the hole in the block, and then helped the block into the iron. The lid was then fastened. Before and after ironing the clothes hung from a rack across the ceiling. My dad used to sit on a rocking chair in between the hanging clothes, smoking his pipe. We used

to pretend the clothes were on fire.

Thursday was sewing day. All the women and girls patched, mended and darned.

Friday was baking day. All the women and girls also helped to bake bread, barm cakes, cakes, biscuits and pies.

#### Without pay

A working day was 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., 5 days a week. On Saturdays it was 6 a.m. to 12 noon. We had one week's holiday each year - without pay. We also had Christmas Day, New Year's Day, Good Friday and Easter Monday - without pay. The September holidays were 3 days - all without pay.

Two of my older sisters went to work in the next village, for a vicar and his wife. They had to work seven full days for 1s.6d. each - for the whole week! They were refused Sunday off, so that they could stay at home and go to church with their family. The vicar's wife threatened to stop dole money, if they had Sunday off. After two weeks, my father went and took them home.

One lad's father was a winder at a local pit. He was the top wage earner at home. If the children wanted spending money, the father would tell them to take back any empty bottles; bring home the cash and he would share it out between them. At home, however, they all ate and drank from odd pieces of pot and glass. When the girl grew up, she became a schoolteacher, and one of the boys worked at the Co-op. This was a good job then, because you weren't often thrown out of work. On one occasion, the father came home with a black eye. He'd been walking home along a path used by courting couples!

#### Carry on drinking

There used to be 20 pubs in this town. The pit men would go in for a drink at dinner time and carry on drinking. The wife would bring in his billy can and butty box, and say, "Get to work, you lazy so-and-so."

When coal and cotton men got their wage packet, the wives might be waiting at the gates for their share. The spinners would empty their wage packets on a piece of cloth. They shared it out - so much for picers, so much for scavengers, so much for ale, baccy and the wife. If there was not enough money for baccy, they put it all together again, and re-divided it.

Chanters Colliery was one of the first pits in England to have pit-head baths. It was called the 'Turkey Pit', because at Christmas the men were offered the choice of a turkey

or a food parcel. The row of pit houses is historically significant, as they were some of the first pit houses to be built by management for workers.

The Fletcher Burroughs pit preferred to employ men in their office who worshipped at either of the local churches. One of the collieries was behind the local church, and was called by the same name. The same employment conditions obtained here. That pit closed years later, and that church became the parish church. One Calvinist Church also boasted that their members were preferred in the local coal offices.

#### A penn'orth o' peas

When I was a lad at school, we hadn't much spending money. If we got a penny on Friday night, or Saturday, we'd go to the local chip shop and ask for 'A penn'orth o' peas, and have you any scraps?'

#### What were scraps?

Small pieces of fried batter, that came off, when the fish was cooked.

On Thursday nights, I bought six separate 1/2d's of sweets. I handed them out to my sisters; then I went off to the Carlton Cinema, sometimes with friends. We paid 2d. to sit on backless forms. Many a time we laughed so much that we fell off onto the 4d. forms, which had a back.

They were silent films, and the pianist sat at the front and played an accompaniment. If the pianist played wrong notes, the older lads sitting further back would use pea shooters and catapults, and try to hit the player. Sometimes I didn't see much of the film, as I was watching the fun. There was one lad who got so carried away, that he shouted comments to the actors. The older lads at the back came in late from work, wearing pit clogs, and clattering down the aisle. The owner used to threaten to throw them out. Thursday night second house was always a laugh. Some people couldn't read and others read out the subtitles for them. One fellow jumped up and down when cowboys were on with guns, shouting, "Look out, he's behind you."

Our local theatre was built in one of the side streets. It played opera, plays and musical works, like Faust. The players had better dressing rooms than the Manchester Palace. It had the biggest stage in Lancashire.

There was an electric curtain, flats and painted backcloths. These

were sometimes raised and lowered at wrong times. E. from the Chorus was desperate to 'spend a penny'. She hadn't enough time to leave the stage and go to the w.c. So, when the backcloth was moved, the audience saw poor E. sitting uncomfortably on a bucket, with a horrified look on her face!

#### Wagonette

I remember a day trip to Warburton Bridge in a wagonette. It was the Male Voice Choir from the Welsh Baptist. The driver got drunk during the day, and my dad had to drive the wagon home. We went round all the corners on two wheels. The choir conductor had introduced a guest organist, as about to play, 'Bachthes Fudges.' Then he announced a selection from Mozart's Rigoloffit!

Uncle G. would go into a pub with his tribby on one side, because he played by ear. One woman said to her husband, "Have you seen G.'s pants? They're all ripped underneath, and he's showing everything!" The husband whispered to G., "Do you know you're showing everything?"

"No, but if you whistle it I'll follow."

His wife wanted G. to take her out, so he does, and buys her a pint of beer. She thinks it's awful, and G. says, "Now you know what I've been doing, do you still think I'm enjoying it?"

At the Boat Inn, near the canal, were stables for several horses. The bargees would go in for a drink, and then stagger out of the back door, several of them straight into the canal!

One dark winter night, three of the bargees came out drunk, collected their horses from the adjoining stable, turned the wrong way, and all followed one another into the canal.

#### Drunkenness

##### Who came looking for work?

We had Irish, Scotch, Welsh and people from all parts of England. The Irish came to work in the mines and on the roads, or in the mills. Parts of the town were a bit rough, and some streets were 'no go' areas. Our parents forbade us to go in those streets.

Saturday nights there was much drunkenness, and the Priests were often called out to calm things down. On Sunday morning, though, all the men were at Mass with their wives and children.

continued on page 14

The unmarried men lived in rooms, for 1s. a night. They cooked their own food on a big, old stove, in huge, old cast-iron frying pans. They bought potatoes, cabbage and some meat in the corner shops. Sometimes they got their legs pulled, because they didn't wash or peel anything, it all went in the pan, whole and untouched.

"5 lbs o' potatoes," said P. "These are Dublin potatoes," said the shopkeeper. "Oh, well then, give us 10lbs."

*What was it like in the 1920's, during the Depression?*

When we were out of work, we had to queue up to get our Unemployment Card stamped. When we had six months of stamps, we could claim Benefit. I got 1s. more a week than my last job wage. If we were off work two days, we couldn't claim Benefit, but for three days and more, we could claim.

One fellow was a clever man; he had Letters for Music. He gave lessons and played the piano in an orchestra. He always wore a black overcoat, black jacket and waistcoat, with grey striped pants. He had grey spats and black patent leather shoes. Round his neck he wore a white silk scarf; and on his head a grey trilby.

#### Means Test

We all signed on at the Miner's Hall; queuing up down the street. The miners wore flat caps. Some of those so-called Civil Servants were uncivil. They were 'knowty' if you coughed or cleared your throat, you were sent to the back of the queue. If you cap were on crooked, you went to the back of the queue as well. If you were six months out of work, and you made a claim on the 125th day of unemployment, you were in Benefit for six months. But if you didn't claim until after the 125th day, you lost Benefit; and couldn't claim again until you had more contributions on the Card.

You had to go for a Means Test, to receive more Benefit, if you thought your family needed more money. If one person in the family was working, you weren't eligible for extra help. This was in the form of grocery vouchers. If you couldn't pay your rent you could be put out on the street. Your family could be split up, and your children taken from you.

Soup Kitchens were started in the Miner's Strike of 1926, by the Labour Party. The children were fed at school from voluntary contributions; and the unemployed

miners did the cooking, serving and washing up at the schools, for six months. Our Emlyn went every day during the Strike, to the Mission School. He said, "I bet old Baldwin doesn't have soup for his dinner."

We all voted Labour here.

As children at home, we played games on check cloths for a board; like Ludo, Snakes and Ladders, Draughts, and so on. We also played Marbles on Raffia mats and holes in the floor.

#### Mule spinner

I worked in a pit office; then I went to work in a spinning mill. I became a mule spinner - the best - and earned £3.19s.10d. per week. I had to pay my piecer for a week's work, which was £1.4s.4d. depending on the length of the



*Elizabeth Davies with four of her sons and daughters, c.1932. Owen is on the right of the photograph, which also shows Emlyn, Olwen and Myfanwy.*

mules, and the number of spindles on it. Normally this was 1,056 on a pair of mules.

Spinners wore tall hats and frock coats in the early days.

You also needed to be a rope splicer, a mechanic and engineer. You had to be able to change all parts of the machinery and re-set it correctly, according to the thickness of the spun thread. The mules were the full length or width of the floor space.

When I was a boy, a fire was a serious thing. Horse-drawn fire carts were used. They had a water container and a hose, with a motley crew of firemen. Us lads used to run to the shed where they kept the fire cart, as soon as we heard warning. When the firemen were getting the cart out, one or two had to run to the field where the Council horses were grazing, and try to catch one as quickly as

possible. Sometimes it was difficult. We would all run alongside the cart on both sides.

#### 'Sulking'

We tried to jump on it and the firemen would swipe at us with their helmets, which were polished brass. The Fire Bell was also polished brass, and one fireman would be ringing it furiously. They all had one turn in order. If a fireman lost his turn, he wouldn't get one, but ran beside the wagon sulking.

One time, they had a struggle to get out the hose. A fireman fell over it, and had to be shipped off to hospital, as he'd hurt his leg. Another time, someone else trapped his finger in the door of the storage compartment. There was a big fuss, as it took them a

He was a very large man, with a big head and a thick neck. We lads gave him a suitable name. Our Edie must have said something rude to him, because one day he chased her into the back door of our house, and right through it, before going out of the front door.

He had a motor bike. They were fairly scarce in the early 1920's. He used an old wooden box for a side car, to make his deliveries of goods, which were knitted or sewn by his wife. He sold these to other shops.

He had trouble starting his motor-bike; so any children handy would push him until he got it started.

#### Take 'boggarts'

Then he'd hit us with his extra large cap, and shout "Get off!". He didn't know how to stop his bike at first; and once ended up at Oldham, when the petrol ran out!

Quite frequently he would shake his head spasmodically, and make strange grunting noises. He kept a horse in a field; and when he tried to catch it, as like as not he would shake his head and grunt. The horse would take 'boggarts', and run off again! We would sit on the fence laughing and clapping. This enraged him and he used to knock us off the fence.

My brother and I went to buy a coat. The shop had only one gas mantle burning, and it was so dark, that we had to take the coats outside in the street, to see what colour they were. We dressed in Macs and Velour coats, which reached down almost to our ankles. My brother said we looked like Russians.

Almost everyone was a shareholder in the Co-op, to the extent of £1 each. Each quarter everyone received a dividend on what they had bought between 1s. and 2s. 6d. Mostly the children got the benefit of the 'Divi,' turn and turn about, depending on what clothes they needed.

You could probably receive about £3 a quarter. Then you might go to a Co-op outfitter for a suit or coat, or jacket.

You could also visit a large tailoring outfitter, like Burton's, or the 50s. tailors. I bought black pin-striped pants, a black jacket and a waistcoat for my dad's funeral, when I was 14. This was only for church afterwards, and had to be taken off on arriving home.

# THE REGAL CINEMA, LEIGH



THE Regal which was officially opened on 25 June 1938 was the last of Leigh's purpose built cinemas. The building was situated at the corner of King Street and Spinning Jenny Street, adjacent to the old Leigh bus station. Until August 1958 it advertised under its own name, although by this time it was officially an ABC cinema owned building. By 22 August 1958 it began advertising as the ABC Regal. Films continued to be shown for a further ten years until 30 December 1968, after which the cinema finally closed its doors to the public. By this time most other cinemas had also closed, leaving only the Classic Cinema as a venue for the loyal cinema-goers at Leigh. The building was finally demolished to make way for the widened Spinning Jenny Way and Leigh's new bus station.

Like many cinemas, the Regal had frequent staff changes over the years for which we have no record. Fortunately on 22 May 1954 a photographer was present on the occasion of a presentation to the then assistant manager Mr Stephenson. All the staff can be seen in the photograph which was

taken in the foyer of the cinema. Mr Stephenson (front right) who had been at the Regal for only 14 months had been presented with a travelling clock before he left to take up his position as assistant manager at the Regal Cinema, Southport. His successor was a Mr. Kitchen from Blackpool.

Mr Verity (sitting left) made the presentation, although he had only been appointed manager shortly before this. As can be seen, two members of staff were dressed-up, one as a cowgirl, the other as an Indian. This was for publicity purposes, as the film shown during the week was 'Calamity Jane', starring Howard Keel and Doris Day.

The cowgirl has been identified as Alice Shaw who was an ice cream seller at the cinema. Two other members of staff named are Jeff Stout, assistant projectionist (back row left) and Ken Brown, assistant projectionist (back row right).

Should anyone be able to identify any other members of staff in the photograph please contact Tony Ashcroft, Local History Officer at Leigh Library (01942 404559). T.A.

Mrs Freda Palmer, of Dorset, recently discovered some old postcards of Leigh. They had been given to her mother by her uncle, Thomas Osborn Hunter, who owned a grocer's shop in Bradshawgate, Leigh. Mrs Palmer has very generously donated the postcards to the Heritage Service. She writes:

"Enclosed are the postcards of Leigh. I am glad they are going home. So would my mother and father have been. I am enclosing a cutting from the Leigh journal. My father wrote to the journal when War broke out, and asked them to put a notice in the paper to inform any men who came to India, to please contact us. These



were a few of them. They were stationed at Allahabad, about 60 miles away. Fred Shepherd often came for weekends and gave us all, especially my mother, a lot of pleasure talking about Leigh and how it had changed over the years. I have often wondered if they all got home, as Burma was their next move. The journal has spelt our name wrong - it's Sefston!"

Freda May Palmer,  
3 Berkley Close,  
Pimperne,  
Blandford Forum,  
Dorset



Railway Road, Leigh.

## LEIGH FAMILY'S HOSPITALITY



Local lads in the garden of Mr. and Mrs. E. Sephton, Civil Lines, Mirzapur, India. Group includes Fred Shepherd, Astley; Best Jones, Liverpool; Max Grundy, Leigh; Ralph Farrington, Leigh; and Bill Fazzackerley, Wigan.



Front view of house.

I have received a splendid response to Mrs. Bryden's [nee Lowe] recollections of Hindley and Abram Grammar school in Past Forward 14. By way of a supplement, Mrs. Bryden has submitted this 'News Bulletin', which accompanied the school magazine in 1940. Ed.

## An important news bulletin will follow, so please stand by

THE Gryphons have sent an ultimatum to the Minotaurs, that if Hostilities do not cease in the Chemi. Lab. by the time the Baron announces his engagement to Nick, they will attack the Geog. Room, which is of great strategic importance.

It was officially announced in the Master's Room, that Griffith and Healy were killed by two pies (made in the D.Sc. Room) thrown at them by Moody. As a result of this, Moody will be placed in a Concentration Camp.

Miss E. M. Naish, the Winwick Espionage agent, who is known throughout Europe as Evil Emma, the beautiful spy, was seen slinking across the Netball Courts. It is thought that it is she who stoles the plans of the air-raid shelters a week ago from the Pavilion.

A false air raid alarm was sounded over certain parts of the top corridor. This was later discovered to be a certain member of the Staff - L. W. Topham blowing his nose.

The Grammar School First Lord of the Admiralty has resigned - this is due to the fact that Mr. Cockcroft finds he is unable to carry out the duties of both husband and First Lord of the Admiralty successfully. His place will be taken by Sir William Atherton, the brilliant inventor, who found out the way every housewife could save butter - by eating less.

32 destroyers and 16 minesweepers are making their way up Borsdane Brook - this is purely a precautionary measure. Tonight's communiqué states intense local activity in the Junior cloakroom.

Mr. H. J. Barker, the Wearish Lane Minister is to make a broadcast this afternoon explaining the events which lead up to the scuttling of his bike. This huge vehicle some 2 or 3 lbs. was the pride of the nation.

A Reuter message from Ince states that they will remain in strict neutrality - this was stated by the Ince Ambassador in Hindley who was in conversation with the Hindley Prime Minister Mr. J. Taylor for 3 hours this afternoon.

The Tritons stated that if the Centaurs independence is in any way threatened they would offer them all the support within their power; meanwhile owing to profound distrust among the table prefects, considerable risings among the Juniors are reported.

*Another anecdote regarding Johnny Topham comes to mind. Johnny couldn't sound his R's, neither could one boy in our class, Neville Hinchcliffe. One day, Johnny was dictating notes on the Nile floods. He said "the Nile floods are caused by the tangled masses of weeds and washes (meaning reeds and rushes)". He looked down at a boy's book and the boy had written "weeds and rushes". "Weeds, you fool" said Johnny. "I've written weeds" said the boy, so Johnny wrote it on the board. The whole class had written "weeds and rushes" except Neville Hinchcliffe!*



Dear Sir,

The article by Mrs. Marjorie Bryden about Hindley and Abram Grammar School brought back many memories of bygone days. Both my father and I were educated there and I knew well all the teachers mentioned; I left the school in 1929 to go to Oxford to read for an English Degree.

Fairbrother the headmaster was a brilliant Maths man and on one occasion taught my form Maths for twelve months. My desk was by the door and I was the first pupil he saw as he entered the room. "Hibbert" he said, "What is the solution to a quadratic equation?" I had been off ill for some weeks and didn't know what he was talking about. "Write it out twenty times for tomorrow morning" he said. I have never forgotten it even to this day! Johnny Topham had been an officer in the first World War; he had difficulty in pronouncing the letter R. The story was told that on one occasion he was inspecting a group of soldiers when he stopped and said, "You wugged wotters in the wear wank, wub your wusty wiffles with an oily way." Len Fielden was an intellectual gentleman, who inspired me with a love for physics which I still have, in spite of my English Degree. Unfortunately his health was affected by his service with the Home Guard during the War and he died at a comparatively young age. Healy (Sol) I met several times at various social functions after the War and then lost touch with him.

Jimmy Taylor I well remember. It was only a few weeks before the end of the school year; we were in the sixth form and were all leaving school. I don't know what we had been doing but six of us were kept in after school to do some extra maths. After about ten minutes Jimmy Taylor decided to go out and rather foolishly locked the classroom door. By his desk was a hopper window, so we took it out, got outside, replaced it and went home. The next morning we got six of the best from the headmaster.

The teacher who was to have the greatest influence on my whole life was Daddy France. He was Organist and Choirmaster of St. Peters Church, where he played the world famous Schultz organ and where as a chorister he taught me in private lessons to sing. As a

result, when I was ordained I went not only as Curate but as bass soloist to Emmanuel Church, Southport, well known for its musical tradition. Both the Warden and his son had a Mus. Doc. degree, and there was an orchestra of twenty professional musicians which gave monthly recitals at which I sang. For four years I sang Jesus in Bach's St. Matthew Passion with a full orchestra. After four years I went as Precentor to Lancaster Priory and when I joined the Army I was stationed at Bowerham Barracks where was the band of the Kings Own. When they gave concerts I was always asked to sing, this time popular secular songs, which brought the house down! Audiences hadn't seen a parson singing previously!

Daddy France may not have been a great teacher at H.A.G.S. but I owe so much to him.

In 1929 I along with others left school and we went our various ways. In 1945, after service with the First Army in North Africa, I was Staff Chaplain at The Kings Chapel Gibraltar. After leaving the Army I became Vicar of Fulwood, and also Chaplain to Fulwood Barracks, Chairman of Governors of Fulwood High School and Editor of the Diocesan Magazine. On retirement I joined the choir of 42 boys and 22 men at the local church. Daddy France had laid a good foundation.

Norman Cockcroft, son of 'Cocky' came to Preston as Assistant Engineer to Lancs County Council. Jim Holme became a Doctor; Harry Ackers became a Consultant Surgeon at Blackpool; Jack Moody after a distinguished career in the Army and the Police became Chief Constable of Bolton and later Deputy Chief Constable of Lancashire. He was awarded the O.B.E. and the Q.P.M. (Queens Police Medal) and appointed a Knight Commander of the Order of St. John. I think Fairbrother would have been rather proud of his former pupils.

It is now 1997 - what of the present H.A.G.S.? Various Education Bills since my time have had different pressures brought to bear, especially on Grammar Schools. I think the situation today is best summed up in some words from that great poet Matthew Arnold (who was a school inspector) when in one of his poems he writes 'How changed is here each spot man makes or fills - nothing remains the same.'

The Rev. J. R. Hibbert, M.A., H.C.F.  
Inisfail Rest Home  
15 Wading St. Rd., Fulwood  
Preston PR2 8EA



## H.A.G.S. – a teacher's memoir

Dear Sir

MY much-missed dad died three years ago and so it was a particular pleasure for me to read his name in *Past Forward* (Issue 14). I refer to the article by Marjorie Bryden, on her schooldays at Hindley & Abram Grammar school in the 1930's. She remembers that "Mr. Davi(e)s was the woodwork master there"; that was my father.

I'm very pleased to say that I can supply his own contribution to the picture, as in his last year he wrote about his life.

He taught at Hindley & Abram Grammar School early in his career, when he was still seeking permanent work. In fact, he was appointed in 1938 for two days per week, adding to the three days he already worked at Haslingden Grammar School. He writes:

*"Two grammar schools, 40 miles apart, was hardly an ideal situation, but as I lived in between and the journey to Hindley was easy, the hassle wasn't much worse than what I was already suffering.*

*I was very soon 'in trouble' at Hindley; the Head tried to insist that I wore a hat to school - he'd seen me arrive without, and it was a strict rule that they be worn! I replied politely that I never wore a hat, and couldn't see how I could possibly be subjected to*

*such a rule - I was a member of staff, not a pupil. I was immediately threatened with a Governors' Meeting! I couldn't believe what I was hearing, and asked him to call an immediate meeting and settle the issue. After a bit of blustering on his part he climbed down and admitted that he couldn't have me dismissed for such a reason (I knew full well that he couldn't) but he would have seen to it that I wouldn't have been appointed if he'd known I wasn't going to wear a hat!*

*First round to me, but it was only the first of many. I made it clear in the beginning that the workshop was a class room, like any other, and not a repair shop for the school. There were many favours to the school which I would undertake as long as they served some purpose in the teaching of boys, but the regular routine work (until now) of repairing smashed desks, doors etc. was 'out' from now on. I was employed as a teacher, not a journeyman, and firms in the town would undertake such work.*

*Another of the Head's tyrannical fads was insisting on open windows, even in winter, something else I wouldn't accept. I pointed out that I was responsible for safety in the workshop and was not having boys handling razor-sharp tools in a 'fridge'. I won that one, and many more as they cropped up during the course of normal school practice. When the others learned of the 'war' I was fighting they gave me a week before the 'chop', pointing out that he'd sacked my predecessor; but*

## Nicknames still the same

Dear Sir

I was very interested to read Mrs. Bryden's article on Hindley & Abram Grammar School, where I attended from 1944 to 1949.

Most of the teachers she mentions were still there when I was there, and her descriptions of them are just as I remember them. The teachers' nicknames were still the same in my time except Mr. Barker who

was known as "Bud".

The teacher who made the greatest impression on me was Miss Nicholas, whose success rate in pushing pupils through English Language and Literature exams must have been about 99%.

A. E. Charnock  
3 Park Road  
Standish  
Wigan  
WN6 0TY

## DELIGHTED TO BE REMINDED

Dear Sir

Someone sent me the Autumn / Winter edition of *Past Forward* and as a past pupil of Hindley and Abram Grammar School, I was delighted to be reminded of my time there (1934-41). I well remember being told to get on my bally hind legs by Johnny Topham who on occasion used to throw the board duster at someone.

Miss Nicholas must have been the best teacher of English and Literature ever!

I went on to become assistant and proof reader to Professor Harry Street,

*I assured them that there was no danger of the same fate befalling me as I was a certificated teacher, not a journeyman in the direct employ of the Head, and that he couldn't sack me, and that I would never give him the chance of reporting me to the higher authorities for misdemeanour or defaulting in my work as a teacher, the work for which I was employed.*

*It was a good school, staffed by teachers who had been there a long time and who knew how to get good exam results, and I soon conformed to their routine (mostly) and traditions, including the post-lunch 'wander' up the road to the park - every male member (except the Head), with a courtesy apology to the Senior Master if you missed it for some reason! With experience I learned that the Head's bark was worse than his bite; he enjoyed quarrelling with staff!"*

Dad left the school when he was called up to serve in the Royal Marines in early 1941. On his demob in 1946 he returned briefly to his split posts before finding a permanent appointment at Leyland Senior School (later named Wellfield Secondary Modern). Here he stayed until 1976, when he retired after teaching his beloved woodwork for 40 years.

I have always cherished the thought that throughout the region (and no doubt beyond) there are hundreds of carpenters, amateur or otherwise, who owe their skills to the patient and thorough teaching of my father,

Professor of English Law at Manchester University (for 21 years).

I can still recall Miss Craig's voice as she led the "General confession" and Mr. Fairbrother, looking over my shoulder in an Art Class, remarking that he wouldn't like to sit on "that chair" - a feeble attempt at my drawing one.

Margaret Croston (née Spencer)  
Rookery Nook  
Bridge Drive  
Christleton  
Chester  
CH3 6AW

and may indeed have passed them on to their descendants. I would be so very pleased to hear from anyone who remembers him.

In my home I am surrounded by his furniture, skilfully crafted in his favourite mahogany. And of course I have his 'book'. It is a lovely, personal account which opened my eyes to the life he had led. I am sure that many of your readers would find great interest in the accounts of his childhood in Aspull and Coppull;

I would be very happy to share his reminiscences.

I am indebted to my good friend Wilf Walsh for bringing your publication to my attention; he was the groundsman at Hindley & Abram Grammar School, and so knew my father (I know he also has many tales to tell!).

Ann Davies  
56 Church Lane,  
Charnock Richard,  
Chorley,  
PR7 3RB.

## 'Confidentially Yours'

Dear Sir

Here is a signed photograph of the late great comic of stage, radio, films and TV - Coventry born Reg Dixon (not to be confused with Blackpool Tower organ player Reginald Dixon). He wrote many of his own songs, including his introductory song 'Confidentially', which sold a million copies around 1954.

Like his friend Jack Storey [see *Past Forward* 14, p18 Ed.] he only appeared once at Wigan Hipp - in March 1955. In his early years Reg would act gormless as if he was always ill, so his catchphrase was "I've been poorly, proper poorly, in fact I've been proper proper poorly."



But in 1954 he was stopped from using this phrase, as it really belonged to another comic, Reg Barber. Reg Dixon died in 1984, aged 69.

Eric Stockley  
Higher Ince  
Wigan.

more letters on page 19 ➡

# A TRIBUTE TO HARRY POTTS

## (FORMER CHAIRMAN OF THE RED ROSE STEAM SOCIETY)

IT was with great shock and sorrow that those Councillors and Council Officers involved with the Astley Green Colliery Museum learned of the sudden and completely unexpected death of Harry Potts, which occurred at his home on Friday 20 December 1996.

The Red Rose Steam Society have had their base at the Astley Green Colliery going back to the days when the site was owned by Greater Manchester Council. Harry, an engineer and technology lecturer, joined the Society in January 1980 and became Chairman in 1991. He stepped down from office for a period when his wife became seriously ill, but after her death returned to the Society's leadership, an office he still held at the time of his own sad demise.

He really was the ideal chairman - in addition to his engineering background he had the patience of Job and the wisdom of Solomon when it came to running the Society and negotiating with other bodies on its behalf. Having retired early in

1990, he had the priceless luxury of having plenty of time to devote to Society matters, be they administrative or practical. This combined with the fact he lived so close to Astley meant that the old colliery, a prominent physical reminder of a now defunct North West industry, could well and truly be called his second home.

For more years than it should have needed Alastair and I attended meetings with other Council department officers, and with Harry representing the RRSS, to arrange a satisfactory lease for the Astley site. On more than one occasion just when we seemed to have reached an amicable arrangement, an external factor would arise and throw everything back into the melting pot. Harry was not phased by this, he did not rant and rave or threaten resignation but accepted the reality of new situations and continued to pursue what was in the best interests of his Society. No doubt his experience as a J.P. was useful in these circum-

stances. His balanced judgement meant that he could appreciate the other parties' situation and would always look for compromise, but when enough was enough he said so - it was a calm, reasoned statement of the Society's views, not to be moved.

I'm sure that I speak for everyone at Wigan Council who has had dealings with Harry that we will remember him with appreciation and respect. His loss is genuinely felt by all those involved with Astley Green, and it seems doubly cruel that he was taken at a time when the future development of the site was starting a new and potentially exciting phase.

To the generation of us involved with the site, Astley Green's massive headgear will from now on also be a towering testament to a man who cared so much about the place and the former human endeavours that it represented during its working days. At the age of 66 he was taken from us far too early.

M.H.

### 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).

**14 April** 'Monasteries in Lancashire',

M. Gilbertson.

**12 May** 'Corn Dollies',

Lynn Gibbons.

**16 June** 'Local People Transported to Australia',

Fred Holcroft.

### 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).

## SOCIETY NEWS

**8 April** 'Winwick - A Place of Safety',

Ken Lewis.

**13 May** A.G.M.

**10 June** Over the years members have visited eight churches in our area for guided tours. This year's visit not yet finalised.

### Leigh & District Family History Society

Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of every month in the Derby Room, Leigh Library.

For further details contact the Secretary, Olive Hughes (01942 741594).

**15 April** 'Alder Hall',

Mrs Maureen Gilbertson.

**20 May** A.G.M. - 'Preserving Documents'.

**17 June** 'Visit to Mormon Genealogical Society'.

**15 July** 'Visit to Prescott Parish Church'.

### Leigh Local History Society

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

**26 March** 'Powys Castle and Welshpool',

Evelyn Finch and Norma Ackers.

**30 April** A.G.M.

**28 May** Outing TBA.

### Tyldesley & District Historical Society

Meetings are held at Tyldesley Pensions Club, Milk Street, Tyldesley on the third Thursday 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.

**2 April** 'Amenhotep III',

Joanne Fletcher.

**7 May** 'The Roman excavation at Walton-le-Dale',

Rachael Newman.

**4 June** 'Obelisks',

Stan Ladd.

### Wigan Civic Trust

The Trust meets at 7.30 p.m., on the second Monday of the month, at the Drumcrown Arts Centre, Parsons Walk, Wigan.

For further information contact Anthony Grimshaw, Secretary (01942 245777)

**14 April** 'Roadside Care Initiative',

Theresa Jennings.

### Wigan Family History Society

Meetings are now held on the first and third Tuesday of the month, at the Springfield Hotel, Springfield Road, Wigan.

(N.B. change of date and venue)

# BRILLIANT!

Dear Mr Lowe and Mr Blakeman,

On behalf of class Y5 I would like to thank you for giving us a tour of Wigan Town Hall and the History Shop. We all thought that the Council Chamber in the Town Hall was brilliant. It was interesting to see the civic regalia. The quiz in the History shop was good too. We thought it was very clever the way books and newspaper were put on micro-film. We all thought that the trip was so good we decided to do some work on the trip.

All of us wrote about the trip and now we are doing a display of the trip.

We all would like to say thankyou!

Yours sincerely,  
Andrew Farrington

Millbrook Primary School,  
Elmfield,  
Shevington,  
Wigan,  
WN6 8DL

• Any teacher wishing to arrange a class visit to the History Shop / Town Hall should contact Bob Blakeman (01942 827580). Ed.

## PHOTOGRAPH WANTED

Dear Sir,

I would like to hear from anyone living in Atherton who has memories or in fact photographs of Arthur Smithies TYRER who was born in Bag Lane Atherton on 23 November 1934. If you were at school or worked with Arthur who became a motor mechanic or possibly have any photographs which I could have copied (returnable of course) please write to me, Christine Fazackerley, 68 Chapel Lane, Longton, Preston, PR4 5EB. You may remember his father was a policeman in that

area. Sadly though, Arthur and his parents are now deceased.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Christine Fazackerley,  
68 Chapel Lane,  
Longton, Preston,  
PR4 5EB

## Still the friendliest

Dear Sir,

Although writing from nearer at hand than Ms Smart (Past Forward Issue 14) I would like to endorse her 'Wigan Folk were the friendliest' and amend slightly to 'Wigan Folk are the friendliest.'

I got the call to research my Family History only a short time ago and it has already given me a great deal of pleasure.

I've met some delightful people and encountered much help and interest from registrars, libraries etc. in many places. However, in Wigan help has been offered without any prior request, from many people.

Growing up in Yorkshire and having been born in the county, it was a bit of a family joke for dad (also born in Yorkshire) and I kept quiet about the fact that mum had been born in Wigan (Ince), even though the family moved to Leeds when she was very young.

Thanks to the local people of Wigan today.

Y. P. Morris,  
26 Altcar Lane,  
Little Altcar, Formby,  
Liverpool, L37 6AX

## Working boat group needs you

Dear Sir,

Over the May Bank holiday weekend (3rd, 4th and 5th May) the wide working boat group will be holding a get together of ex Leeds and Liverpool working boats in Wigan, at the junction with the Leigh branch.

The wide working boat group is a fellowship of people who are restoring, or have restored, old working boats that worked the wide waterways of the north of England, and people who have a historical interest in them. Also those who have worked these craft in their former working days.

The aim of the group is to promote a greater awareness of the wide working boat traditions and to foster a continuation of the working boatman's skills.

The get together also gives the opportunity for some of the ex working boatmen to meet up and reminisce about the old days of boating.

If anyone requires further information they can contact me.

J. A. Holden,  
48 Marlborough Road,  
Accrington,  
Lancashire,  
BB5 6AY

## Eckersley Estate Found - Well Nearly!

Dear Sir,

Following your kind publication in Past Forward of my request for information on the ancient settlement of ECKERSLEY, I received some fascinating information from one of your readers. ECKERSLEYS was identified in the year 1350 as an estate in the ancient township of Bedford, to the east and south of the current town of Leigh. It seems there were no adult heirs immediately following the Black Death of 1349 and the wardship of the land was disputed by neighbours, so ended up being settled at assizes. What's more, it now looks like the ECKERSLEY FOLD out at Tyldesley is actually named after a Bedford Yeoman farmer, Joseph Eckersley, who rented land there in the late 1700's.

I was greatly excited by this news but frustrated that I could not pass on my thanks as the reader who supplied this information from John Lunn's 1958 book on Leigh did not identify himself. As a consequence, I am taking this opportunity to express my gratitude. I have now reduced my search for the estate to merely 4 square miles of town and countryside. What I really need to follow up are a few more clues, like the names of neighbouring farms which survive today. Barring that, I suppose that there is always Tony Robinson's Time Team from the TV!

Thankyou again.

Ron Eckersley,  
3 Townsend Close,  
Wyton, Huntingdon,  
Cambs,  
PE17 2AR.

Published by Wigan Heritage Service, Leisure Services Department, Market Suite, Market Hall, The Galleries, Wigan WN1 1PX.

The views expressed in this issue are not necessarily supported by Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council, or by its Recreation and Amenities Committee. Nothing printed may be construed as policy or an official announcement unless so stated.

Neither Wigan Council, nor the Editor, accept liability for any matter in this publication.

Contributions are welcome but no responsibility can be taken for loss or damage to contributors' material.



© Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council

March 1997

If you would like to receive future editions of 'Past Forward' through the post, please complete the coupon (unless you have already sent one previously) and post to:

The Heritage Services Manager, Editor, 'Past Forward', The Heritage Service, Market Suite, Market Hall, The Galleries, Wigan WN1 1PX.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

.....

.....

I enclose a contribution of £.....towards production costs.

(Please make all cheques payable in Sterling to 'Wigan MBC')

I do / do not require a receipt

# Where?

WE now know that the top three mystery photographs in *Past Forward* 14 are all of Roy Turner's bands (apparently there were about seven in all). These bands were particularly popular in the 1940's. The left-hand photograph shows Roy Turner and the Barnstormers.

As for the bottom photograph, I cannot remember any other picture producing such a response! It seems as if half the band have written in or telephoned. Thanks to all those readers who have contacted us. Here are just two of the many letters received.

**If you can help identify these buildings/streets, please contact Len Hudson in Leigh Town Hall (01942 404432)**

Dear Sir,

I refer to your Autumn/Winter 1996, Issue No. 14 of the 'Past Forward' Magazine and in particular to the back page 'Who and Where?' photographs.

The large photograph at the bottom of the page was taken in Darlington Street, looking towards Wigan. The building which is just visible on the right hand edge of the picture is the old Pepper Mill Brass Foundry. This building is still in existence. The one side of the bridge which can be seen behind the procession is the bridge which carries Darlington Street across the River Douglas. The old houses, barber's shop and the other business premises seen in the background is the site of the present day new Magistrates' Court.

As regards the procession, the gentleman dressed in a dark, two piece suit with black forage cap was Harry Lloyd. He was the Captain and founder of the 5th Wigan Company of the St. Catharine's Church Boys' Brigade

in Scholes, in the 1930's. He formed this company from the previously existing Church Lads' Brigade. The boys and young men seen in the procession are probably members of St. Catharine's Church Boys' Brigade. I have asked an old gentleman, who was once a member of this organisation in his younger days, and he seems to think that the procession is a mixture of boys from different churches of the deanery. They had probably been attending a function in the town and were now marching back to St. Catharine's Church in Scholes.

The photograph was taken some time during the Second World War. Evidence of this is to be found from the policeman bringing up the rear of the procession. He can be clearly seen with the webbing strap of his gas mask case draped over his shoulder. There are also two figures in military uniform - one walking along the pavement and the other a bugler in the procession

In conclusion may I offer my congratulations on a superb quarterly magazine. It is always full of articles which no doubt prove of great interest to a wide spectrum of the reading public.

Once again many congratulations.

**Bill Bithell,  
17 Dalbeattie Rise,  
Platt Lane,  
Whelley,  
Wigan,  
WN1 3YP**

Dear Sir,

Firstly the marching band on the back cover of *Past Forward* 14 is the St. Catharine's 5th Wigan Boys Brigade. This band took part in Mayoral processions during the war years with a 1s.6d lunch at the 'British Restaurant' for those who took part. The side drummer on the 2nd row, facing the camera, happens to be me.

A great magazine, good reading and for me happy memories.

**R. B. Clements,  
'Kinder Road',  
Ridge Avenue,  
Marple, Stockport,  
Cheshire,  
SK6 7HJ**

