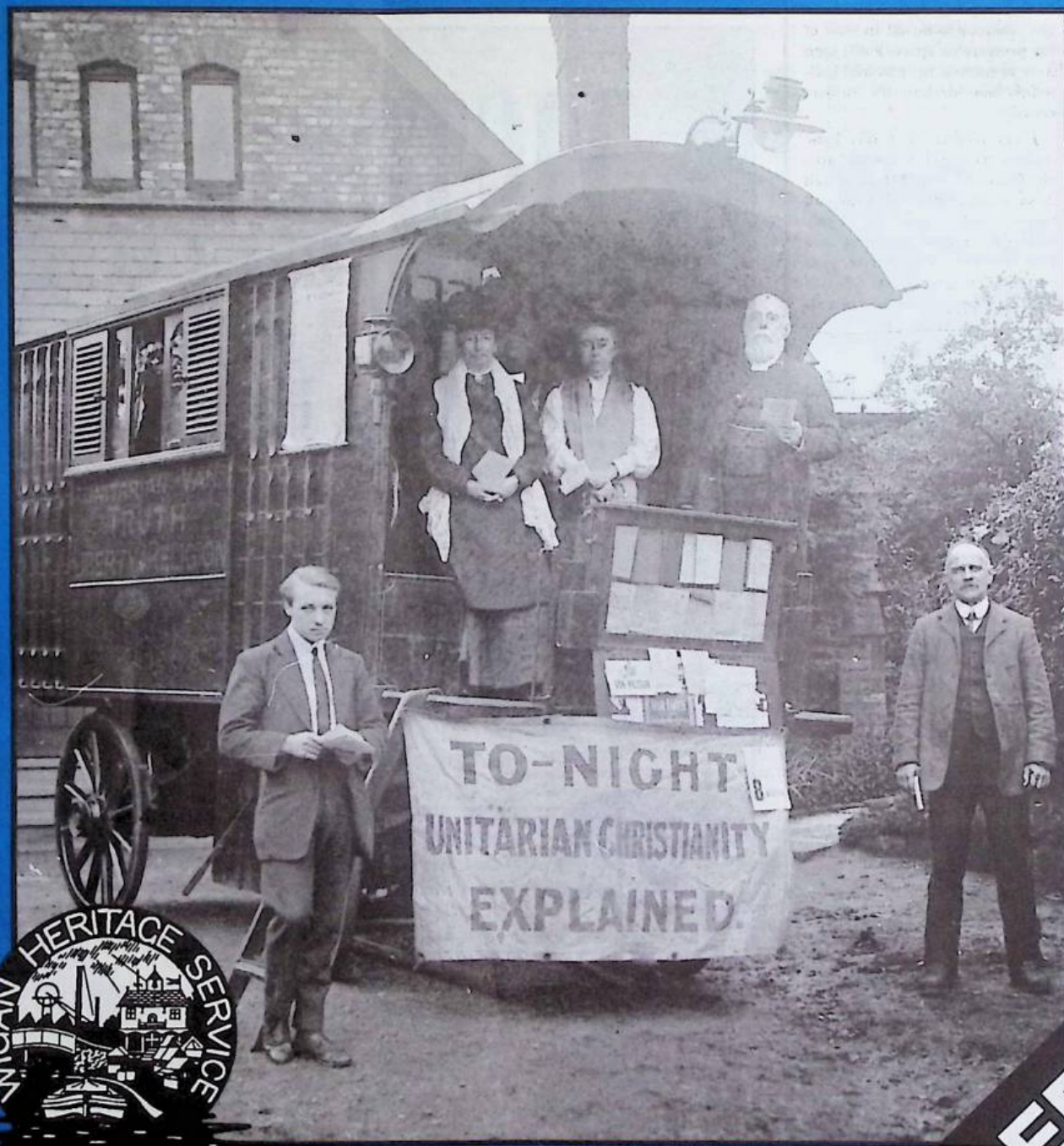


PAST FORWARD

ISSUE NUMBER SEVENTEEN

AUTUMN/WINTER 1997



The Newsletter of Wigan Heritage Service

FREE

From the Editor

ONCE again I'm spoilt for choice - what should I include, and what will I have to leave out? For those of you who went to the trouble to submit articles and are disappointed that they have not appeared - please be patient. They will be printed one day. As ever, my sincere thanks to all those readers who have submitted articles.

Mrs. Bryden's articles on Hindley and Abram Grammar School have produced an unprecedented response - and, as you will see, continue to do so! In view of the pressure on space, I will soon have to exercise my editorial guillotine, and declare the subject closed!

I am pleased that this issue contains a number of splendid articles from new contributors, as well as some old faithfuls (if I can call them that!), such as Ernie Taberner, James Fairhurst and Bert Worsley. 'Past Forward' is certainly an appropriate title - in 1998 the magazine will be going on the Internet, as part of a Wigan Heritage Service web-site! More details in the next issue.

Amazingly, Christmas is fast approaching once again, and I would draw your attention to the events in which the Heritage Service is particularly involved - the two lunch-time performances in the History Shop during the week before Christmas (see p 10) and the ever-popular Victorian Christmas at Haigh Hall on Saturday 13 December (see this page). And don't forget the History Shop for that special Christmas present with a difference.

Although I'm writing this in mid-October, I must take this opportunity to wish all readers of 'Past Forward', throughout the world, a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year. Many thanks to the thousands of you who have helped to make the magazine such an unprecedented success, and I look forward to your continued support in the future.

All comments and correspondence should be addressed to:

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Wigan Heritage Service,
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The Galleries
Wigan WN1 1PX

WE NEED 'FRIENDS'!

AS Past Forward goes to press this Autumn, plans are being laid to launch an exciting new initiative. We feel the time has now come to introduce a Friends organisation for the Heritage Service. We are certain that we already have many friends out there and now with the completion of phase II of the History Shop, we have a venue of which we can be really proud.

There are a number of issues to be discussed and any thoughts from you on these at this early stage would be very helpful.

- How to recruit 'Friends'.
- What role 'Friends' will play.
- How to involve all 'Friends' i.e. locally, nationally and internationally.
- The cost of 'Friendship'.
- How 'Friends' should keep in touch e.g. a page or two in Past Forward.
- The benefits of being a 'Friend' - special events etc.
- Finally, what we should call you!

It is hoped that discussions will progress over the Winter and a report will appear in the next Past Forward. If you have any thoughts at all please let us know, even if it's just to let us know that you think it's a good idea.

P.A.B.



VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS

at Haigh Hall



Saturday 13 December 1997

7.00p.m. for 7.30p.m.
Carriages 12.30a.m.

**Five
Course Dinner**

Entertainment:
Children's Choir
Leodian String Quartet - Victorian Cabaret
Dancing to the Toll Bar Band

**Victorian
Costume to be
worn**

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Haigh Hall (01942 832895) or TIC (01942 825677)
Credit Cards Accepted
Further details from
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(01942 827375)



Cover: Unitarian Van Mission, Ashton-in-Makerfield, 1913. This splendid photograph appears in Tony Ashcroft's new book, 'Around Ashton-in-Makerfield and Golborne' (See p 10).

Tracing the ancient highways from Wigan to Standish

ADRIAN Morris, Bill Aldridge of Wigan Archaeological Society and myself, were talking one night, about the things that have disappeared from the Wigan area through the relentless advance of urbanization and population growth. I mentioned a walk along Gidlow Lane, through Langtree into Standish, and so, with Adrian taking his camera along with him, to record for posterity the things that we saw, we started our journey at Gidlow House.

We proceeded past, on the right, Beech Hill Chapel, built in 1893. The members before that date used to meet at Daylight House, in Beech Hill, as a Bible Class. We went further on past on the left the site of Gidlow Lodge now pulled down and houses built on the site. It is said that a brace of flintlock pistols were found concealed there when demolition was in progress. We carried on past the site of Gidlow Farm and wondered what the place was like in its heyday. We then entered what was once the land holdings of the Standish family in Beech Hill; and on we went past the children's play park, which was years ago the site of a coal yard. We then crossed the site of a railway crossing point - the line used to carry the mineral wealth from the pits to the main railway line at Whitley crossings.

We progressed further north to Brimlow Farm, at the very head of Gidlow Lane. On the south side of the barn ran a path towards Wellfield Cottage in Beech Hill. The last section was tarmacked as recently as December 1996, for access to the new estate.

We then crossed the defaced boundary into the southern riding of Langtree. The true manor boundary lies just a few yards to the north, no mere stones here. A short distance further along on the right is the road that leads to Gidlow Cemetery. Here we paused a few minutes, to talk of the Roman road that heads north and south, between the Barley Brook and this path. I am told that otters used to swim in the stream in the 1920's. Other creatures survived in the area until a few years ago when the area was built on, at Whitley.

(THIS ARTICLE HAS BEEN DEDICATED BY THE
AUTHOR TO THE LATE LEN MARSDEN OF WIGAN
FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY)

The three of us struck out again to the north, and on to Brockhurst Farm. When we reached the junction of the four lane ends, we took the left hand path that leads to Giant's Hall Farm, past, on the left, Nearer Meadow and the Brimiley, bordering onto the brook, in which field once was a well. To the right side are the fields known as the Farm and the Barn Croft. We got to the stream, and went down the embankment to the right hand side of the path, to view the brick built culvert.

We scrambled up the embankment to the path and went back the way we had come, taking the infrequently used north bound path, which goes round the back of Brockhurst Farm. To the right of the path, down to the brook, was the Great Cragg Hey - covered with a very thick layer of spoil from the coal wash. The slag tip is on the move, advancing onto the culvert, raising the land and water levels so much that this action is now destroying the ancient embankment and culvert.

We again got back onto the embankment and walked over the stream, with the 'broom croft' on the left, to the disused farm gate, with its stile. We climbed over it, and stepped into a large field, very tranquil and peaceful. We proceeded towards the hedge at the end of the field and crossed the stile, over about eight feet of ground to the next hedge and crossed the next stile.

An explanation is necessary here regarding this boundary. It is, in fact, the manor boundary of Langtree to the south and Standish to the north. Where the hedges have been removed barbed wire has been substituted. To the right the boundary ditch has silted up, towards the further end of the ditch the ancient stone lining is still in place in parts. This is best seen out of the growing season. Could this stone facing have been put there when the manors were first divided? Did this ditch extend round all three segments of land that once formed the manor of Langtree? To the left, the Langtree side of the boundary has been grubbed up and the ditch filled in to the next field boundary hedge.

We had entered Standish in a field called the Lower Hey, which a few years ago was used for open cast

mining. To the right side of the boundary hedge, a few yards down, is a brick built well. We crossed the path, approached the stile and gate, and crossed into a lane which the locals call Sandy Pad (the official name is Standish Wood Lane).

We passed on the left Upper Wood Farm, built - I am told - c.1580. On we went past the farm's barn. We then entered the very beautiful and photogenic section of this trackway, and then on to the stone cross pedestal. This lies to the right of the track, in the hollow way; and it lies just to the north of a field boundary. It does, in fact, stand next to a field called the Intack; this medieval word means land taken from the waste for man to farm. To the south of the boundary lies the field called Anne's Field.

The socket is about nine inches deep and the top of the stump has cut-outs on three sides, each about one inch deep. Next to the shaft hole on the fourth side is a water drain. In the rainy season, a spring erupts at the site and water runs down the path to Upper Wood Farm and enters the field behind the barn.

A few years ago, a project was going to be undertaken to straighten the ancient hedge line on this section of the track. Fortunately, the people of the area did not want this to take place. The authorities, taking notice of the people's feelings, did not take any action and the ancient line of hedges still remains.

The three of us took a rest at the pedestal, and the question arose as

to why this hollow way had not been used as a film set, because it is very easy once you are here to visualise King Arthur and his troops of northern cavalry thundering southwards to knock seven bells out of yet another Saxon incursion of Britain.

We passed on to the junction of Beech walk and Green Lane and there, at the junction of the track, is another pedestal for a stone cross (see photograph below). This is again about nine inches deep. Just a few yards to the right, at the bottom of Green Lane, on the corner opposite Prospect Hill House, is yet another pedestal - again of similar dimensions. It has been moved from the top of the lane to the bottom. Stone crosses usually indicated land once owned by the church.

We then proceeded onwards to St. Marie's Church to view the so called stone cross arm piece. When one gets close to this stone it appears to be more like a set of steps to mount a horse; on each step there is an indentation. Why?

It is to be hoped that all this very beautiful and ancient area will stay as it is for ever, for the benefit of future generations; but there is a very unwelcome black cloud hanging over this entire area - the ring road around Standish, starting at the Standish junction of the M6 and ending up at Boar's Head.

This walk is a very stimulating one and can be recommended to all who are able and have a few hours to spare. You will not regret it one little bit.

With thanks to Wigan Archives Service and the History Shop.

John Barker



Pedestal of stone cross, junction of Green Lane, Beech Walk and Standish Wood Lane.

News From the Archives

BY courtesy of the County Archivist at Preston, several more batches of school records for the Wigan Metro area have been transferred from Lancashire Record Office to add to the already substantial and important series held by Wigan Archives Service (see Guide to the Archives pp. 23-30). Notable amongst these are **Abram Colliery schools, Bickershaw** (SR 92: log books 1882-1944); **Abram C.E.** (SR 93: log books 1874-1968); **New Springs C.E.** (SR 94: registers 1874-1948; log books 1873-1928); **Billinge C.E.** (SR 95: log books 1874-1948); **Hindley St. Benedict's R.C.** (SR 97: log books 1867-1924); **Ince St. William's R.C.** (SR 99: log books 1876-1960); **Orrell Holgate** (SR 100: log book 1883-1921).

Of these schools, two had unusual origins. **Abram Colliery schools, Bickershaw Lane** (now **Bickershaw C.E.**) were built in 1880 by Messrs. Hayes and Johnson, proprietors of **Abram Coal Company** who were at that time working the seams beneath the **Bickershaw Hall** estate. Like many such schools **Abram** also served in its early years as a licensed place of worship - a 'school church' - for a newly created ecclesiastical district, until the parish church of **Bickershaw** was consecrated in 1905.

Holgate school (Moor Road, **Orrell**), was named after **John Holgate**, minister of the Independent Congregation at **Orrell** between 1820 and 1850. It was apparently built in 1824, along with **Salem**

RECORDS COME HOME!

Congregational Chapel, and in **Slater's Directory** (1848) is described as an 'orphan school', with **Holgate** as its master. **Holgate** was recognised by the Education Department in 1882 (which explains the date of the first log book), and became a county elementary school in 1911.

Amongst other recent accessions (Acc. 3106), is a rare print of the Order of Service for the foundation stone ceremony for **St. Elizabeth's church, Aspull**, on 30 August 1876. This was preserved by the late **Leslie Smith**, a churchwarden, and has come to the Archives through **Eva Barker** of **Hindley** who is currently researching the history of **Aspull**. **St. Elizabeth's** was built to serve the growing population of the eastern portion of the parish of **Haigh & Aspull**, which had been created out of **Wigan** parish in the 1830's and served since then by **St. David's** at **Haigh** village. The growth of collieries and factories such as **Dicconson** cotton mill (at the north end of **Borsdane Wood**), had swelled **Aspull's** population from 2,272 in 1841 to over 8,000 by 1881. **St. Elizabeth's** was not the first church to serve that part of **Aspull**, however. In 1868 the **Bishop of Chester** had licensed an earlier church known as **Hindley Hall Chapel** (dedicated to **St. Margaret**), at **Pennington Green** for worship and baptisms, which also had its own Sunday school attached. **St. Margaret's** had been built in

1859 by **Lord Kingsdown** (trustee for life of the **Hindley Hall** estate of **Sir Robert Holt Leigh** who had died in 1843), presumably as a chapel-of-ease for his estate workers and tenants.

Again, thanks to **Eva Barker** we have been loaned the only known photographs of **St. Margaret's**, belonging to **Mr. Rutter** of nearby **Bradshaw Hall Farm**. These show the church in course of demolition in the 1920's.

On the death of **Lord Kingsdown** in 1868 the **Hindley Hall** estate was inherited by **Roger Leigh** (1840-1924), adopted son of **Sir Robert Holt Leigh**. **Roger** was a powerful local influence, as a magistrate in **Lancashire** and **Kent** (where his other estates lay), **M.P.** for **Rochester** (1880-85), and active landlord in **Hindley, Aspull** and **Orrell** (where he owned the manorial rights).

He evidently considered the chapel at **Pennington Green** inadequate and too far from **Aspull** village. Thus the new church of **St. Elizabeth** was built and consecrated in 1882, a separate parish being formed. **Leigh** paid most of the £6,500 cost, apart from £1,200 contributed by **Lord Crawford**. **Leigh** also built new church schools. The unusual dedication, **St. Elizabeth of Hungary**, was presumably in honour of **Leigh's** first wife, **Elizabeth Blackwell**, who died in 1884. Certainly this is one of the most striking of the Victorian

churches in the **Wigan** area, occupying such a prominent position and built of red brick, now blackened by a century of soot. The consecration deed (in the Archives) includes a plan showing seating for 456 (all free), and an outline for a future 'Gospel Aisle' and north transept to bring the accommodation up to 740. With the economic decline of **Aspull** and of church attendance after 1900, neither of these was built.

The baptism register for **St. Margaret's** was continued at **St. Elizabeth's** (available on microfilm at **The History Shop**). Incidentally, the Archives also has a print of the Order of Service for the jubilee thanksgiving service on 6 November 1932. In a fragment of the parish magazine of that time also preserved with the parish records, are notes to the effect that the original altar and altar cross from **Hindley Hall Chapel** were transferred to **St. Elizabeth's** when the old church was demolished. In 1927 the Parochial Church Council proposed to raise funds to install the east window from **St. Margaret's** (then preserved at **Hindley Hall**) in **St. Elizabeth's**, but it is not known whether this was ever carried through.

Further valuable transcripts have been donated. **Mr. Phil Fairclough** of **Wakefield** has transcribed the Protestation Oath of 1641 for **Wigan Borough**, the original MSS. of which are in the House of Lords Record Office. This oath was 'to maintain and defend... the



Orrel Holgate Primary School as it is today. The building has been substantially enlarged since the time of John Holgate.



LEN'S INDISPENSABLE LEGACY

LEN Marsden, a tribute to whom appeared in 'Past Forward 16', spent much of his life helping others to share his interest in Wigan's past and especially those trying to unravel their own family histories. To do this meant developing skills in reading early scripts, much patience and considerable tenacity so that the documents important to understanding the past could be easily used. Of special importance are the parish records of All Saints Church. Part of the earliest register, from 1580 to 1625, had been transcribed and published in the 1890's but since then the task of dealing with the later registers has clearly overfaced likely transcribers.

And not without reason, for the entries are

not only numerous but in difficult handwriting, often almost illegible, frequently cramped and jumbled together, blurred and faded. It was a task well beyond the capabilities and life span of any one individual but Len made a start and during several years of his retirement kept on until he had finished transcribing the most difficult of the entries, those from 1626 until 1723.

These are now available at Wigan Archives Office and much used. But they deserve to be more widely available, and it is hoped to make this possible. With some adaptations they can be made acceptable for publication by the Lancashire Parish Register Society where they will be very much appreciated. Friends working

alongside Len in the Archives Office have offered to prepare his work for LPRS publication both as a tribute to him and as a memorial. It is also hoped that what Len achieved will stimulate others to transcribe more of the registers. They are of particular importance not only for Wigan family historians but because many of the Christenings mention the mothers' parents, many of the burials give ages and causes of death, and many refer specifically to exact parts of Wigan. They are thus of great value to all sorts of researchers and explain why Len was so keen to make them available. It is hoped that his example will lead to the completion of his dream.

Ken Taylor

News From the Archives

CONTINUED

true reformed Protestant religion expressed in the doctrine of the Church of England, against all Popery, and to defend 'the power and privileges of Parliament, the lawful rights and liberties of the subject'. The Oath was passed by the House of Commons at the beginning of its final struggle with Charles I, whose court had a Catholic flavour and who was trying to raise taxes without parliament's approval. The Oath was passed on 3 May; on 10 May Charles' minister, Lord Strafford, was attainted by Parliament, one of the principal events leading up to the Civil War. The oath was sent to every parish, with instructions that all males over 18 should subscribe and the names of refusers be noted. The mayor of Wigan received his order in February 1642, and 12% of the men required to sign refused, one of the highest rates in England. Wigan had retained a significant Catholic minority after the Reformation and of course became a royalist stronghold in the War.

The list for Wigan is headed by the mayor and corporation, then divided between the main streets: Standishgate, Market Stidd [Market Place], Millgate, Scholes, Wallgate, Hallgate and Woodhouses. Then follows the list of refusers, some 73 names,

again divided by street but also giving their occupations or status. The whole document amounts to a directory of adult males in the borough at that time, over 600 in all. Using the standard demographic multiplier the population of Wigan in 1641 can be estimated at about 1,700.

Another set of memorial inscriptions has been produced for one of our local churches. Graham Normansell of Warrington has published his transcripts of the inscriptions at Emmanuel church, Wargrave (Newton-le-Willows). Emmanuel was built to serve the rapidly growing population around the Vulcan Iron Foundry, and was consecrated in 1843. Under The Winwick Rectory Acts the ancient parish was divided into separate parishes, and unusually at such a late date six new rectories were created. Four of these were newly built churches, namely Holy Trinity at Downall Green (Ashton), St. Thomas' (Golborne), Christ Church (Southworth) and Emmanuel at Wargrave. Newton's oldest church, St. Peter's, an ancient chapelry consecrated in 1735, might have been expected to become the parish church but difficulties over the patronage prevented this.

The first burial at Emmanuel was that of Hamlet Roberts who died at Newton workhouse in 1844. The churchyard was closed for burials in 1982 after flooding had made the ground unsuitable, the last burial having been

registered in 1976. Mr. Normansell's transcripts reveal that despite the reordering of the church and yard between 1977 and 1984, when many stones were disturbed, moved or laid flat, many Victorian stones and their inscriptions remain intact and readable. Cremation plaques, inscriptions inside the church and war memorials are also included in this volume, which has been fully indexed.

N.B. All the burial registers (apart from 1856-90 which were mislaid at the church many years ago), baptisms up to 1952 and marriages up to 1922 are available on microfilm at the History Shop and Leigh Local History Library. Many of the other parish records, such as vestry minutes and accounts (1845-1943) and school records (e.g. an unusual attendance register for the Vulcan Foundry infant school 1854-55), are available at the Archives.

N.W.

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Wigan's pioneer lady councillor

MARY Elizabeth Connell was born in Wigan in 1867, the daughter of Irish immigrants. She began work at an early age as a winder in the Eckersley mills and it was there that she became a staunch trade unionist and a pioneer delegate of the Weavers Association. It was only a short step then to becoming part of the new Labour movement in which she became a vigorous and active worker. People were not as tolerant then as now and it was no uncommon thing for Labour meetings to be held in the seclusion of private houses, behind locked doors and with the blinds drawn. After her marriage to William Hart, a miner, they lived for many years in Great George Street, Wigan. For nine years she represented the Victoria Ward on the old Board of Guardians which administered the Poor Law. At another time she was a member of the National Health Insurance Committee and the Miners Distressed Fund Committee. Mrs. Hart's knowledge of industrial conditions was soon sought in a wider field.

In 1919, the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, appointed Mr. Justice Sankey head of a Royal Commission to investigate mining conditions in Britain. A distinct honour was conferred upon Mrs. Hart when she was selected to give evidence to the Sankey Coal Commission and she travelled to London to testify as to how life appeared from a miner's wife's point of view. On Friday 13 May 1919, she told the Commission's members that there was a serious housing shortage in Wigan, that the sanitary provisions were totally inadequate and that, as a result, dirt and disease were rife.

"In some instances two or three families use the same outside convenience which is usually a pail. There are also some houses where the conve-

niences are so close to the back door that a single step will take you right up to the convenience and the stench, especially in summer, can more easily be imagined than described... There are a large number of 'back to back' houses with no water supply, no wash boilers and from which all ashes and refuse have to be carried a considerable distance."

She told the Commission of large families living in houses with one living room which served as a kitchen and dining room.

"A family of from two to six sons come home from work. After they have had their meal, they take off their pit clothes and wash. There are no facilities such as hot water laid on. The usual procedure is a pan heated on the fire. Each has to wash in his turn and sometimes before the water is ready, some of them are so tired that they have gone to sleep. The shifts are so uncertain that the housewife has to be up early and late and wet clothes have to be dried in front of the fire."

The Commission also heard of this drying of clothes inside the house.

"The houses are provided with clothes lines. They wind the lines up and down and in winter they have to dry all the clothes in the house. Steam comes from them. There is no sitting room attached."

Consumption was rife in Wigan with whole families suffering from the disease.

"As a member of the Insurance Committee of the County Borough of Wigan, I have had some dealing with consumptive cases. We find that after we have sent these cases to sanatoria, they come back improved in condition. When



Mary Elizabeth Connell

they have been at home a short time, they invariably go back to the same condition because, owing to the housing circumstances and their not being able to provide rooms for the different cases, they all have to sleep sometimes in one room and the improvement has not been maintained."

Wigan housewives wanted pit-head baths which would remove a great deal of dirt from the houses. The men were not in favour, thinking they might catch cold or the baths would weaken them and there was a natural disinclination to pay for their upkeep. They considered they paid enough for the tools and the oil in their lamps. (Pay for the latter was discontinued in 1938). If it was properly explained to them that they would have separate baths and their clothes left at the pit to dry, it would remove the opposition. She would like to see not only pit-head baths but baths in all the houses.

"As a social worker I have taken a great interest in the housing question as I recognise, that to have a healthy population, we must have good accommodation."

Interviewed shortly afterwards by a Daily Mail correspondent, Mrs. Hart showed herself to be a visionary where housing was concerned.

"If Wigan will let me, I will show how to perfect the working man's home. In every house there should be one room for privacy and entertainment. Besides this, there should be a wash house and a dining room. Now, I have to do my washing in the house and dry the clothes in front of the kitchen fire. I have been out all day in the pouring rain collecting funds

for the Weavers Association and in an hour I have to attend a committee meeting. Now wouldn't it be nice if I could refresh myself in a hot bath and have proper accommodation to dry my clothes instead of having to turn out again in wet things, tired and dead beat?"

She scoffed at the idea that when baths were provided in houses, people kept coal in them.

"That arose through certain landlords putting the bath under the staircase so that tenants had nowhere else to store coal. Normal people should not be judged by that standard. Some landlords sunk the bath into the hearthstone. I would like to know where the privacy is coming from when there is a big family."

In appreciation of her services to the Weavers Association over 30 years she was appointed a life trustee. She was president of the Womens Section of the Wigan Trades Council of the Labour Party. When Alderman J. Cavey J.P. was elected to the Aldermanic Bench, in December 1926 Mrs. Hart fought the by-election in the Victoria Ward and won the seat. She was a member of the Wigan Town Council until 1928 and afterwards, because of the value of her wide experience, was co-opted as a member of the Housing Committee.

Mrs. Hart died on 17 February 1932, aged 65, and was interred at the Wigan Cemetery, Father P. Biggin of St. Joseph's Church performing the last rites. The cortege passed through parts of the Victoria Ward which the deceased had once represented and crowds lined the streets. The Public Assistance Committee, the Womens Section of the Labour Party, the Weavers and Winders Association and the Town Council were all represented.

James Fairhurst

I am grateful to Mr. Peter Grimshaw for permission to reproduce his excellent article, which first appeared in Atherton Parish Magazine in May 1997. Ed.

ATHERTON PARISH CHURCH:

BUILDINGS often have a symbolism which can transcend their function: none more so than places of worship which frequently dominate townscapes and landscapes with awe-inspiring architecture, whether crowned by tower or dome, spire or minaret. For most of its hundred year existence the present Parish Church shared the skyline of Atherton with powerful images of the town's industrial heritage - predominantly cotton mills with their tall chimneys, and pit head-gear. Most of these industrial symbols have now gone. However, when the refurbished Parish Church opens in June although many may well not respond to its prime function as a place of worship few, if any, will be able to ignore its continuing presence and its message. Into the 21st century it will still proclaim both the town's religious heritage, and the presence of an active Christian community in its midst.

Those who are a part of that community will be well aware of the significance of the church's re-opening after closure for no less than six years. However, the opportunity to briefly gaze beyond the pomp and ceremony of celebration, and beyond the impact of new features and old ones seen in new light, provides a perspective of value but easily obscured. It is fairly easy to appreciate the 'why' and the

ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

'what' of a building, but this often impedes recognition of the underlying 'who' and 'how.' Essentially a building - any building - is about people: obviously those who use it, and less obviously those who employ their skills to promote, design, build, maintain and renovate it.

The present Parish Church, on the site of at least two former churches which date back to the 17th century, was opened in two main stages - in 1879 and 1892. Built at the instigation of Ralph Fletcher Jr. of the Fletcher-Burrows colliery owning family, it was designed in the 'Gothic-Revival' style of the late 19th century by architects Paley and Austin of Lancaster. The oak chancel screen was added in 1898, and the organ was commissioned the following year in the memory of Ralph Fletcher.

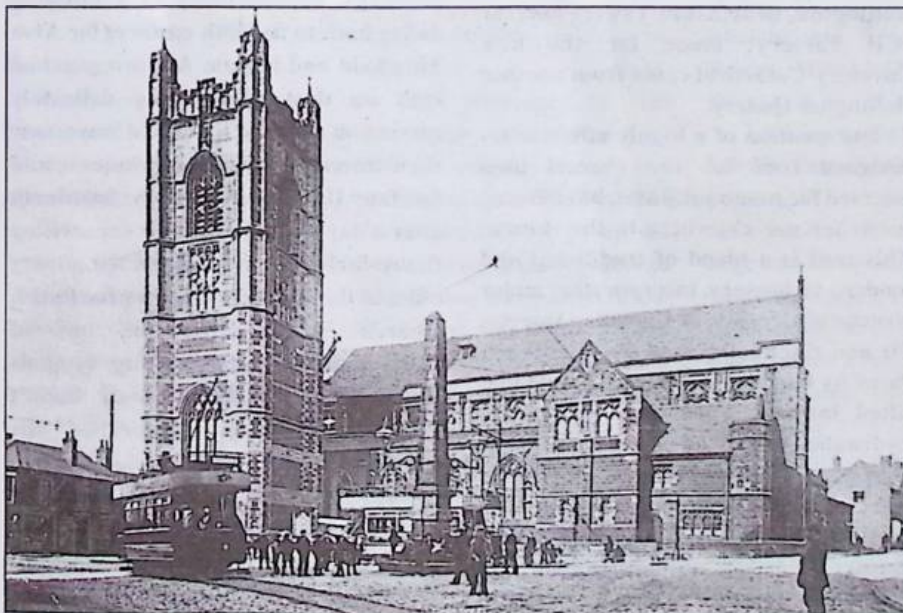
Until 1991 the building remained virtually unaltered: the addition in 1973 of a forward nave altar being one change worthy of note. Closure took place in May 1991 so that repairs could be carried out to the roof. When this work was nearing completion, in August, a major fire damaged the organ-chamber and chancel roof beyond repair, resulted in stonework

at the east end of the church being cracked or shattered, and caused smoke damage throughout the building.

Thus now, after some 120 years, another architect has added his expertise to that of Paley and Austin; not only to oversee damage repairs but also to redesign parts of the Parish Church. Peter Skinner of Macclesfield, specialist in historic buildings, is currently also undertaking projects at the National Trust properties of Penrhyn Castle and Quarry Bank Mill as well as church buildings in Lancashire and Cheshire. He has responded to a brief for the Parish Church including significantly, the reservation of the chancel area to accommodate future rooms for community uses; and has achieved the separation of this area from the nave by means of an impressive new, and partly-glazed, screen incorporating the original chancel screen, soon to be revealed.

The overall project, with key funding from insurance cover and English Heritage, has cost over £1m, and work on the main 62 week contract started in January 1996. This contract was let to the major building and civil engineering contractors, Laing. The company has been associated with many prestigious projects, including the recently built

continued on p.8



Atherton Parish Church, c.1905



Interior after renovation.

THERE are many still living in the district who will remember the Tabor as it was locally known. The 11 cottages were demolished in 1939 at a time when councils were condemning many old properties; today I am sure they would have been restored into very attractive dwellings.

Unfortunately I have not been able to get a photograph of the houses although I advertised several times in the local papers. However, one kind lady sent me an artist's impression which gives some idea of the buildings arranged on three sides a square, or oblong, with the superintendent's cottage a short distance away.

Most of the occupants were housed in a new council estate on Slag Lane. Some were not very happy about the move - an old uncle of mine for example,

Thowd Work Heause (or Mount Tabor), Lowton

was heard to remark. "It's like living in a foreign country".

The following few paragraphs taken from Richard Ridyard's "Memories of Lowton", written in 1935, gives us a short history of Thowd Work Heause.

"On the right of Newton Road about midway between Lane Head and Lowton Junction Railway is situated the acre field set apart by the Inclosure Commissioners for sand to be used by the parishioners. It is about 200 yards from the highway, and is approached by a narrow lane which leads through it to 11 cottages, which stand back on the higher portion of the field.

In the lower part, which is now used as garden allotments, there is evidence of sand having been dug, but not during my life time. It is said the cottages used to fetch it to sprinkle on the flag floors of their houses to keep them clean. This custom was practised down to quite recent times, and I remember sand being hawked though the village for this purpose.

Carpets, even of the cheapest kind, were a luxury and beyond the means of many of the inhabitants. 10 of the 11 houses referred to form a rectangular block, and were known by the older inhabitants as "Thowd Work Heause" because of them having been construction out of

a building erected in 1817, which was used for between 30 and 40 years as the "Parish Poor House".

In 1850, the Poor Law Union was formed, and a more commodious building erected in Leigh Road, Leigh, to which the Lowton poor were transferred in 1851. The postal address of the cottages is now "Mount Tabor" and it was interesting to learn from one of the oldest tenants how the change of name was brought about. Many years ago most of the people living in the cottages were Methodists connected with the Chapel near Lane Head. It was the custom in those days as it is more or less at present for members of the Chapel to entertain for the day, in their turn the preacher who conducted the Sunday services.

One Sunday, the cottager whose Sunday it was to entertain the preacher, expressed to



ATHERTON PARISH CHURCH

continued from p.7

Bridgewater Hall, the new home of the Halle Orchestra which opened in Manchester last year. Laing was developed into a national major organisation by John Laing (1879-1978) who was a devout 'Plymouth' Brethren, and whose company not only built the new Coventry Cathedral at the end of the 1950's and the beginning of the 1960's, but also gave its profits back to the Cathedral on completion. Martin, grandson of John, now leads the company as chairman.

A large part of the Parish Church contract has been undertaken by men from Laing's Stonemasonry Division based in Carlisle, near where the Laing family's 19th century Cumbrian business roots can be found. These stonemasons, including foreman Peter Jenninson who served his apprenticeship at Beverly Minster, rebuilt the chancel arch on timber centre form work devised by

site manager Tony Heys, with assistance from structural engineer Brian Clancy. Few stone arches of this size - supporting 94 tonnes of stone over the 7.6m span - are built today. Matching Triassic Sandstone for the Parish Church came from Brian Oldham's Tearne Quarry at the small Staffordshire village of Hollington, near Alton Towers and the JCB Factory: stone for the new Coventry Cathedral came from another Hollington Quarry.

The creation of a highly effective re-designed roof for the chancel area reserved for community uses, has released funds for use elsewhere in the church. This roof is a blend of traditional and modern technology, incorporating major structural elements of Canadian Douglas Fir and zinc coated mild steel pre-fabricated by Gordon Cowley at Lincoln and lifted into the roof space by mobile hydraulic crane. The new glazing in the clerestory windows is superb; this is the work of Linda Walton of Blackrod. The scaffolders from Preston, whose skilful constructions are now dismantled and thus unseen, formed a temporary roof to

give vital protection whilst the church roof was repaired and rebuilt.

When you reflect upon this 'immense' and 'amazing' building in June, and in the years to come, please spare a thought for people like Peter Skinner using the latest computer technology to make detailed drawings, appropriately in a building dating back to the 18th century; for Alan Threlkeld and his son Andrew perched high on dusty scaffolding delicately carving on site, and in age old ways, new stone tracery for clerestory windows; and for Tony Heys returning to Saddleworth after a day's work well done supervising the re-furbishment from his temporary office in the meeting room over the Parish Church Vestry. After all, one of Christianity's most enduring symbols would not exist if somebody hadn't designed, built and supervised the construction of, the stable at Bethlehem.

"The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former saith the Lord of Hosts, and in this place will I give peace."

Peter N. Grimshaw

*Thowd Work Heause
(or Mount Tabor),
Lowton
CONTINUED*

him her dislike of the neighbourhood being called "Thowd Work Heause", a sentiment with which he agreed, and he said "Why not call it 'Mount Tabor', it would be a more appropriate name, for every time I come amongst you I would feel I am with the brethren". Knowing the aptness some of the old Methodists had for quoting passages from the Bible, I can well believe the incident to be true.

We are also indebted to Richard Ridyard for publishing other interesting records relating to the Work Heause. . .

Accounts - Building The Workhouse, December 1817-1818 (no prices for the work seems to have been recorded).

John Green 1 man and 2 horses fetching bords to Workkhous.

John Green 1 man 1 horse fetching led pipes to Workkhous.

Roger Leigh to 1 load of stone to Workkhous.

Edward Peirpoint fixing pump.

To candles 11b. for Workkhous.

To 1 Hundred of Cole for Workkhous.

To beasom, weigh beam and boards, and meal chest.

John Green 1 lode of stone from Billinge.

John Green to boiler pot and sundries Warrington.

John Pimblett to 4 load of stone to Workkhous.

To James Worsley 1 man and horse to 8 packs of lime from butts to Workkhous.

To John Green 1 man and 2 horses 1 load of timber from James Worsley's saw pit to Workkhous.

To John Green 1 man and 2 horses fetching 1 load of thorns

from Mather Lane to Workkhous.

James Worsley 1 man 1 horse to 5 packs of sutton lime from butts and 13 stubs from Golborne Town to Workkhous.

To Edward Pennington for building stable.

J. Stanley 1 day wheeling bricks and clay.

It was interesting to find that before the workhouse was built in 1818 the paupers were sent to the Warrington Institution at Grappenhall, the Lowton Overseers being charged 2½d. per day for the maintenance of each inmate sent by them, as this little entry shows, -

Grappenhall United Workhouse.

Received the 5th day of May 1789 of Thomas Guest, Overseer of the poor of the township of Lowton the sum — 6s.5½d.

To maintenance of 1 person in March last - for 31 days at 2½d. per day and the sum of — 10s.4d.

Also in addition in changing 2 cows — 1s.10½d.

To rent, wages, etc., for 4th Quater 1 say received for the use of the said Workhouse on account by me.

Total — 18s.8d.

Thomas Newton Clerk to the House Expenses — 6d.

Grand Total — 19s.2d.

The reference to the Warrington Workhouse reminded me of a sad and touching story of "The Penniless Bench" told to me by an old Lowton resident many years ago when I was a boy. Before the Workhouse was at Lowton the old and helpless were taken, many times by their own families, to the Institute at Warrington. It was said on one occasion that a young man was carrying his father there by way of Winwick Lane, then little more than a cart track; where Sandy Brow Lane joined it,

there was a triangle of grass and a seat for weary travellers to rest awhile, and here they stopped. The father was crying, his son asked, and "What's wrong father?" "This is where", he sobbed, "I rested with my father 25 years ago". The son could not continue the journey but took his father home to care for him there, no doubt wondering if the same might happen to him in later years. Among my grandparent's generation that place was always known as Th' Penniless Bench'.

I have not discovered how many inmates there were in the early years of the Workhouse but the 1841 census shows that Thomas McClure was the governor and his wife Alice was the matron. There were 91 occupants 42 being children; no occupations were included in that census. Many were whole families some with several children and of course many were old. The 1851 census gives more information revealing that out of the 61 residents 54 were male and most were employed; there were hand loom weavers, nail-makers, a drapers assistant, a journeyman tailor, farm labourers, miners and a visitor. They came from various places near and far, from Astley, Atherton, Leigh, Culcheth, Wakefield, Bradford, Manchester, Stockport and Bristol. Alice McClure was still the matron.

Looking through Lowton St. Luke's Church records some years ago I had noted at times there seemed to have been a large number of burials from the Workhouse which I thought was understandable among the old and poor, but a recent investigation revealed the following information.

From the opening of the institution in 1818 no one was buried at St. Lukes until 1825, and the total interments to the end of 1839 was only 20. In 1840 12 were buried and a

further 18 in 1841. There seems to have been an epidemic of some kind for in 1842 30 people died (14 of them in May and June of that year) 15 more died in the following year, 13 of those before May was out.

There was no indication of the cause of so many deaths; if there had been an epidemic to cause such tragedy it is strange that the story had not been handed down through the last few generations.

During the 33 years the buildings were used as a Workhouse 153 people were buried from there at St. Lukes, the last interment being on 15 July, 1851.

My own more recent memories go back to the years just after the 1914-18 war and are of a pleasant lane leading over the brook and up the hill to the houses; on the left and in the hollow were the allotments referred to by Richard Ridyard, nearer the brook was the Tabor pit which in those days had fish in it - I well remember a neighbour Geoff Prescott showing me several roach he had caught. Between the allotments and the pit a foot path crossed the field and along the farther hedge to the houses, from there it turned at a right-angle along the edge of the field and out on to Stone Cross Lane, but for most of its length it ran along the high wall of the Grange, occupied at that time by Mr. William Clegg. The path was known as "Clegg's Walk".

There were quite a number of children living there at that time, many were my friends, schoolmates and playmates from the families I remember so well - the Coopers, Runcorns, Owens, Howells, Hattons, Rooneys, Lallys, Cunliffes, Horrockes and Andersons. Altogether I have pleasant memories of a happy community.

© H. Worsley

Christmas in the History Shop

LAST Christmas, the History Shop's new Wickham Gallery proved an excellent venue for a number of lunch-time events. This year, we have arranged three more festive events. On Monday 15 December, popular local personality Lizzie Jones will be performing her highly-acclaimed dramatisation of Christmas Through The Ages. The following day, Graham Derbyshire, one of the Leisure

Services Park Rangers, will give a demonstration of Traditional Christmas Wreaths and Decorations. And on Thursday 18 December, popular radio personality Dick Hatch will be reading a further selection of his favourite Christmas readings.

All three events begin at 12.30p.m., and they're free! You'll even be given a glass of sherry and a mince-pie! Everyone is welcome.

EXHIBITIONS IN THE HISTORY SHOP

Taylor Gallery

3 November - 31 January 1998

- 'Shelf Life' - The Story of Our Building.

Wickham Gallery

November - 1998

- Charter '96 - A Celebration of 750 years of Local Government in Wigan.

- Reverend William Wickham - A Victorian Photographer.

LOCAL groups have been to the fore in our exhibitions in the Taylor Gallery in the late

Summer and early Autumn. In July there was an exhibition of works by the Standish & Ashton Art Groups. Entitled 'Mixed Medias' the exhibition lived up to its name filling both the walls and eight showcases. Brilliant stuff!

Following on from this there was the annual exhibition by the Wigan Photographic Society. This once again proved to be a great show. The special club night and opening by the Mayor, Cllr. K. Pye, was a great success and a steady flow of visitors enjoyed the prints for two weeks in August.

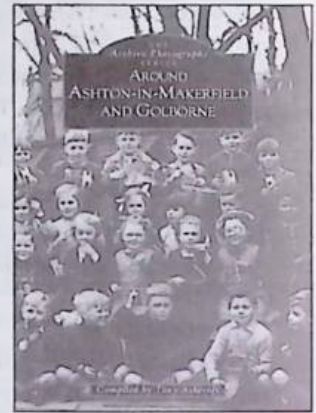
The exhibition for this winter in the Taylor Gallery is 'Shelf Life'. This is a Heritage Service exhibition tracing the history of our special building, now the History Shop but for over 100 years Wigan Library. All aspects are covered, from the site, the building and the architect to the staff, the books and the exhibitions. This exhibition marks the completion of

Stop Press!

JUST in time for Christmas - Tony Ashcroft's new book, in Chalford's renowned *Archive Photograph* series - **Around Ashton-in-Makerfield and Golborne.**

Following the success of his Leigh book in this series, Tony has now moved to the west, and produced an excellent collection of over 200 photographs, fully annotated, of the old Urban District of Ashton-in-Makerfield and the township of Golborne. The majority of the photographs - many of which are published for the first time - come from the Heritage Service's own collection.

This brand-new book, along with its predecessor for Leigh, is available from Leigh Library and the History shop, at only £9.99. An ideal Christmas present!



phase II of the History Shop and we can proudly show the whole building as the main exhibit. Come and see for yourself. We are sure that you will agree this building has a much longer shelf life in store.

Conversation in History Shop ...

Small boy, viewing replica coins: Have you not got no Rangers coins?

Assistant: Pardon?

S.B.: Have you not got no Rangers coins?

Assistant: I'm sorry, but what are Rangers coins?

S.B. Impatiently: You know - RANGERS. Have you only got these Celtic. I don't like them, I'm a Rangers fan.

Assistant picks up jaw and explains! No sale.

LECTURES IN THE HISTORY SHOP

10 December

Monasteries in Lancashire

An illustrated talk by Maureen Gilbertson

14 January

The Crompton Family of

Ashton-in-Makerfield

Walter Carney

11 February

The Liverpool and Manchester

Railway

Reg Lowe

NEW PUBLICITY LEAFLET

NEXT time you visit the History Shop, pick up the brand new publicity leaflet. Attractively produced in full colour, this gives key information about what the History Shop, and the Heritage Service, has to offer, including directions, opening hours and telephone numbers.

ATTENTION ALL TEACHERS

THIS is a selection of the splendid educational services offered by Wigan Heritage Service.

The Civil War Battle of Wigan Lane

The story of the Battle of Wigan Lane 1651 told in words and pictures, with replica weapons and armour for children to wear. Venue: The History Shop. Suitable for ages 8-16 years.

Wigan's Industrial Heyday

A slide presentation about heavy industry in late 19th and early 20th century Wigan. Venue: The History Shop or schools. Suitable for ages 7 years - adult.

Wigan Town Centre Guided Heritage Walk

Using as examples buildings in Wigan town centre, children will be shown how to distinguish older buildings from modern ones, and how to discover changes of use that occurred in the past. Children will also be introduced to some basic architectural terms. They should then be able to apply the methods learnt to the built environment of their own locality. Suitable for ages 8-16 years.

Medieval Wigan and its Charters

The distinctive features of medieval society expressed in a local context. A lecture for sixth-formers and first degree students. Venue: The History Shop or schools.

Leigh Local History Collection

Small groups of students interested in studying the local history of Leigh, Atherton or Tyldesley only, can be accommodated in Leigh Library.

For further information please contact the Education and Outreach Manager at the History Shop (01942) 827580, or the Local History Officer for Leigh at Leigh Library (01942) 404559.

Christmas Already!

IT'S hard to believe, but the fact that you are reading the winter issue of Past Forward means that Christmas is fast approaching. As in previous years the History Shop gift shop may well provide you with that unusual present or special greetings card. For Christmas '97 we have extended our range of quality traditional and modern individual cards to include pull out 3D cards, woven cards and new designs of our popular Victorian cut-out cards.

New giftware for this Christmas includes

miniature reproduction clocks, to complement the watch and clock making section of the Charter exhibition. Also a range of library related items such as bookmarks, pen sets and seals to accompany our temporary exhibition 'Shelf Life'. Staying on a literary theme, we continue to offer a wide range of local history books and still stock Bob Blakeman's 'Wigan a Historical Souvenir'. Why not send a copy to someone this year.

As always our stock is available by mail order. For further details call the shop on 01942 828128.



This highly collectable series of 1/5th scale miniatures illustrates the history of the English mantel clock from the 18th and 19th Centuries. The attractiveness of the antique is combined with a quartz movement made to the highest technical

standards of today. All are hand finished and reproduce the pagination of the original piece. The movements are guaranteed for 1 year, supplied with a battery and have a dial diameter of 3cm.

DYING TO MEET YOU!

AT Easter 1998 the Heritage Service will be opening a temporary exhibition on the theme of death and local burial customs. Dawn Wadsworth and Tony Ashcroft

would be delighted to receive anecdotes or information from any of our readers who have connections with the funeral trade or interesting recollections on the topic.

The treasure of Park Lane

WHEN I first began doing my family tree as I thought of it in the beginning, I was delighted to find all the names and dates concerning my ancestors. I did exactly the same as everyone else, that is birth certificates, marriages, burials and of course followed them every decade on the censuses as they moved around the districts. I have been fortunate in the fact that all my forebears (with the exception of an Irish great-grandmother) lived between St. Helens on one side of town and Bolton on the other, each generation moving closer to Wigan until my parents met.

Along the way, as I was researching my late mother's family background, I found one or two surprises. To begin with I was always led to believe that they originated in the Woodhouse Lane/Beech Hill area, which I suppose was true as they obviously only knew as far back as their grandparents. However, as I moved back through the generations, I found that the Brindle family (my mother's maiden name) had moved into the afore-mentioned area via Goose Green from Ashton-in-Makerfield (or Ashton-in-the-Willows as it was called then).

Interesting story

When I was looking for the baptisms of the ancestors from there I was looking at the larger Churches first without much success, and then I looked on the film for "Park Lane Presbyterian Chapel" and there they were. I don't need to tell you the satisfaction I felt when I found several generations baptised and buried there. But this is only the beginning of a more interesting story to me and my family, and one that I would like to share with you.

After studying the micro films for Park Lane I was told that the History Shop also had a small photocopied booklet "The Register of Park Lane (Unitarian) Chapel with baptisms, 1786-1837 and burials, 1800-1837". So as it contained numerous entries concerning my family I had the

every day for years on my way to Ashton Grammar School and never noticed it.

Child-like writing

I decided to take a look at the chapel but unfortunately the gates were locked. I looked over the wall and there were the tombstones of several members of the Brindle families alongside families they had married into. I contacted the Chapel secretary



Park Lane Chapel

complete booklet photocopied. In the introduction to the register is a passage which reads "further information on the Park Lane Chapel is contained in Nightingale's Lancashire Nonconformity and in greater detail in George Fox's History of Park Lane Chapel of 1897". The History Shop had both of these books so I browsed through them. The latter was an actual treasure because it not only told about the chapel but about the congregation as well. The book was over 250 pages so I couldn't just deposit myself in the History Shop until I had read it, besides which I WANTED it.

I had no idea where the chapel was or had been, but I was soon put right by our friends in the library, it is still there, still in use and this year is its tri-centenary. For anyone else who doesn't know where it is - it is on the A49 from Wigan to Ashton a little way past the M6 junction at Bryn. I passed it

and asked if it was possible to look around the churchyard and she kindly unlocked the gates for me. There then followed a discussion about the book (History of Park Lane) and she informed me that she had a copy belonging to the chapel which I begged to borrow for a few days. My first surprise on opening the book was that someone had written in child-like writing M. Brindle, so the book had obviously belonged to a long gone member of my family. I photocopied the complete book, all 250 plus pages.

When I read this book my names suddenly became real people who had lived and breathed and no doubt struggled in those hard times. The interesting little tales told about the congregation included ones like the following that refers to my great-great-great grandfather:-

"In 1750 a singing club was established at the chapel to meet once every week at ye said

chapel, namely, every Thursday at half an hour past seven of ye clock in the evening."

The sexton

Some years later, I read, the choir master was Nathaniel Brindle, who was also the sexton. In his days, it is said, one of the female singers was unable even to read. It thus became Nathaniel's duty to teach her the words of the hymn before she could practice the tunes. "Fortunately, the young woman had a good memory; so that the labour was not very difficult. The double task was assuredly a somewhat unusual one for a choir-master".

In 1785/86 the Rev. John Brownlow retired, and the congregation including Nathaniel signed a letter asking the Rev. Hezekiah Kirkpatrick to take over the duties of Park Lane chapel. After Mr. Kirkpatrick came Rev. Thomas Broadbent, and later in 1812 Rev. Thomas Smith took over the flock. In his first year there, a Sunday school was established and in a description of the running of, and the cost of this venture is a passage which says "The chief expense seems to have been the stipend of Peter Blinson and that of his assistant, James Brindle, who received threepence per Sunday for his labours".

Beautiful penmanship

A section written concerning the period around 1830 refers to a number of devoted school superintendents and teachers. Among them may be mentioned Mr. David Shaw, Mr. Peter Blinston, Mr. Henry Lowe, and others. Some special mention is merited by two zealous men, Thomas Baker and Thomas Brindle "who worked together in the most self-sacrificing manner for the good of the school. The one was a joiner, who willingly made the simple articles of furniture needed in the school; the other was an excellent writer, and he prepared



The treasure of Park Lane continued

the heads for the copy books, besides in other ways utilising his beautiful penmanship for the benefit of the scholars. In those days of small wages and small collections, the two frequently, out of their hard earned wages, purchased articles necessary for school purposes. Sunday by Sunday, with undeviating regularity, these good men attended the school, though in the weekdays they had toiled long hours, Baker working 12 hours a day at the factory, beside utilising his spare time in the evenings as village coffin maker.

Instead of the ordinary extra Sunday dinner at home, they contented themselves with a cake eaten in the school-room, so that they might be ready for their afternoon teaching duties." In addition to his labours in the school, Thomas Brindle, as his father before him, was leader of the chapel choir. In this capacity, he wrote an anthem, entitled "The Power of Truth".

Later on in a letter of invitation to a minister, there are the names of members of the congregation who signed the letter, amongst them are James, John, Thomas and Ann Brindle.

Unitarian faith

Another passage reads:- "JOHN BRINDLE - A valuable side-light is thrown on the religious life of Park Lane congregation at this time, by an obituary notice which appeared in the "Christian Reformer" of December 1824. A young man, named John Brindle, aged 29, the son of Nathaniel Brindle, has died. He had been brought up in the Unitarian faith, and he had found it sufficient to influence his moral character for good, and to support him in the hour of sickness and death"..... A simple gravestone preserves the name of John Brindle, upon which is engraved the following verse:

*Reader, beware! Bad
courses shun,
Or quit them if they are
begun;*

*Be not to any vice a slave;
There's no repentance in
the grave.*

One passage in the book, written in 1897, I find extremely touching. This concerns a brother of my great-great-grandfather James Brindle. "Between 30 and 40 years ago, the congregation possessed a chapel-cleaner named Nathaniel Brindle. He was grandson of the Nathaniel Brindle, who signed the requisition in favour of Mr. Kirkpatrick's invitation to Park Lane, and who was the leader of the chapel choir. Nathaniel the younger was unique in his devotion to the chapel, no labour in connection with the chapel was too great for him. He kept the building, with the adjacent school-rooms, scrupulously clean. He spent many unnecessary hours in the place just for the love of it. On Sundays, in winter, the stove was the special object of his attention. He had fashioned a piece of iron for the purpose of opening the stove door. He was accustomed to use this implement to close the door, which had, however, only an imperfect fastening. In the interval between the services, he would stand patiently keeping the door closed with the iron above mentioned, so that the proper degree of heat should be maintained. He was the general factotum of the congregation, rendering it essential, if unobtrusive service, and this for the slenderest compensation, though himself but poor.

He was "quite dead"

A newly-settled minister being asked by him on Boxing-day for a gift to him as chapel-cleaner, elicited a fact which indicates a primitive method of operation in such affairs at the chapel. The man was paid no regular salary; but he received donations from certain members of the congregation at Christmas time. Formerly, his compensation amounted to as much as 25 or 30 shillings; but, owing to the death of the most liberal givers, that sum had been reduced to about a guinea! Meagre as was this uncertain stipend for the work so willingly done by him, the good man seemed pleased and thankful for what he received. Nathaniel was subject

to epileptic fits. They were of frequent occurrence, and attacked him at all sorts of unseasonable times. Through them he had often been placed in danger, and by them he lost his life. He was found one day lying in a ditch in Sougher's Lane, with his face downwards. When he was lifted up he was quite dead. It was evident that, overtaken by one of his fits, he had fallen into the ditch, from which he had been unable to extricate himself, and so had perished. Thus passed away one of the most faithful, if humble, friends of Park Lane Chapel."

On a lighter note, there is mention of the author George Fox taking over the flock in 1864, and a passage reads:- "After making the acquaintance of his little flock, Mr. Fox began active operations in the church. Fortunately, there was a body of teachers in the Sunday School, for the most part young, who quickly showed themselves sympathetic to the minister. The greater number of them lived at a long distance from the chapel, some coming even from Wigan and Ince, a distance of from three or four miles. They were accustomed to bring their dinners, which they eat in the school-room in friendly intercourse with one another. Two young women, sisters, named Mary and Ann Brindle, after their removal to Wigan, and even beyond, were for years so regular and punctual in their attendance, that the people of Worsley Mesnes were able to set their clocks by them as they passed."

Played the harmonium

"At a teachers' meeting, held at the Parsonage in the year 1865, a proposition was made by Mr. James Brindle, one of the teachers, that new schools should be built." The new building was erected in 1867. As the Chapel became more prosperous it became necessary to run things even more business-like, and monthly meetings were instituted. "The secretary was Mr. James Brindle, whose family had been connected with the congregation for nearly 100 years. He had been a scholar and teacher in the Sunday School. For some years, he gratuitously played the harmonium in the

chapel. He remained the secretary until his business engagements compelled his withdrawal."

So now I hope you will understand my wish to share my treasure with you, because these little passages about my ancestors seem like something too good to be true.

The really sad fact about all this, is that I can't tell my mother or any of her sisters or her brother, because I left it too late. But there are still my children and grandchildren, etc. and hopefully many generations to come who will be interested in their FAMILY HISTORY as I now call it. I just feel so privileged to have had so much information left by others for me to find.

If only I could find as much about my fathers family (the name being Monks, the family coming from Aspall). I shall continue to scour the pages of local publications, for who knows what is there waiting to be found.

Mrs. Freda M. Chorlton,
25 Ash Grove, Orrell,
WIGAN, WN5 8NG.
Tel: 01942 203579

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interested, contact
Philip Butler
(01942)
827594*

I have recently received a splendid booklet from Mr. G. Pierce, Secretary of Tyldesley Amateur Swimming and Water Polo Club, tracing 120 years of the history of the club, from 1876. My thanks to Mr. Pierce for permission to publish an edited version in 'Past Forward'. Here is the story of the amazing success which the club achieved in its early years. Ed.

TYLDESLEY SWIMMING CLUB THE FORGOTTEN YEARS

ON the afternoon of Saturday 22 July 1876, Tyldesley Baths were officially opened for public use by local mill-owner Caleb Wright, who had originally conceived the idea. In reality they had been open for three weeks, and had already attracted over 5000 visitors. A swimming gala was held at the Baths after the official opening.

The handicap race, open to all England, was won by H. G. Dunlop, of Manchester. The Lancashire champion, Peter Atherton, captain of the Bolton Swimming Club, with twelve seconds start, won the second prize.

The scratch race, open to residents of Tyldesley, was won by James Walshaw. Messrs. Reynolds and Boardman, of Bolton Swimming Club, gave a display of ornamental swimming and double floating, and the gala concluded with a game of water-polo.

Following the gala, a tea party, concert and ball was held in a large room at Caleb Wright's mill.

About 800 people sat down to tea, after which there were several speeches, and a concert by Mr. Tunnercliffe's glee party. Following the concert the room was cleared for dancing.

THE SWIMMING CLUB

Less than two weeks after the official opening of the Baths, the Tyldesley Swimming Club was formed at a meeting on 2 August 1876. The annual subscription for membership of the swimming club was set at five shillings. The first Annual General Meeting was held on 18 April 1877, and the following advert was placed in the Tyldesley Journal:

TYLDESLEY SWIMMING CLUB

The committee of the above club beg to inform gentlemen of Tyldesley and neighbourhood that the swimming season has now commenced, and that persons can join by giving in their names to the undersigned.

The club has the advantages of an efficient teacher, and a pair of patent life saving cuffs by the aid of which learners are greatly assisted.

Terms 5s. Od. per annum.

R. M. Whitehead

THE FIRST ANNUAL GALA

On Saturday 15 September 1877, there was a capacity crowd at the Baths for the first Annual Swimming Gala of the Tyldesley Swimming Club. The President, Dr. Duncan, occupied the chair, and Mr. R. M. Whitehead was judge and starter. Some capable swimmers had been developed since the formation of the club,

which had continued to increase in numbers.

The members' class races (five in all) were first on the programme. The race for first class members, eight lengths, was contested by three swimmers. R. M. Whitehead walked over in the first heat. Joseph Dixon out distanced John Plunkett, and just as easily disposed of Whitehead in the final.

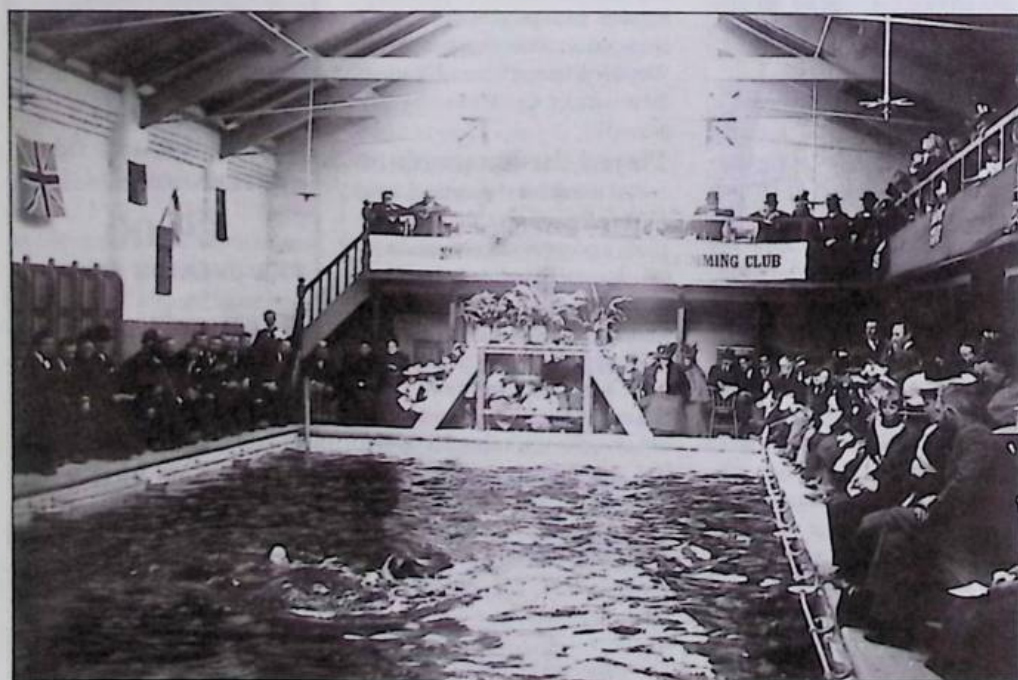
The all-comers race, four lengths of the bath, was won by T. Potter of Bolton, who had five seconds start from E. Morley of Blackburn, and eight seconds from J. Slater of Ashton. Tyldesley member Joseph Dixon, with two seconds start, won the twelve lengths all comers race from T. Reynolds of Bolton.

THE CAPTAINCY OF TYLDESLEY SWIMMING CLUB

The race for the captaincy of the club was between Thomas Smith of Astley, and John Plunkett of Bedford. Dixon was prevented from competing by the rule which required a three year residence within a certain radius of the baths. Plunkett won the gold medal, and was captain of the club, but before the medal became his own property he had to hold it against all-comers, and if need be, race once a month for a full year.

It was decided at a meeting on 6 March 1878, that the Tyldesley Swimming Club should become a member of the Amateur Swimming Association. On 12 October 1881, the first ladies gala was held, but this was later to be included in with the main gala.

For the first six years, the club was only open to seniors. However, on 16 June 1881, it was agreed that boys under 16 could become members, and that their subscriptions would be 3s. Od. per annum. This was changed two years



Old Tyldesley Baths, Union Street

THE FORGOTTEN YEARS continued

later, the new fees being 5s. 0d. for seniors, 2s. 0d. boys under 15.

WATER POLO

In 1891, Tyldesley Swimming Club became one of the first clubs in the country to take up water-polo. It is said that at that time the nearest club with whom Tyldesley took part in competitive water-polo was Kendal. During the next few years, opposition was also provided by:- Manchester Leaf Street, Mayfield, Osborne, St. Helens and Leigh.

The game was played in very crude fashion in those days, no proper rules having been formulated. Somewhat similar lines were followed as those that apply in rugby. There were no goal-posts, and to score, players had to place the ball down outside the water at the opponents ends of the bath, similar to scoring a try on a rugby field. There were no hard and fast rules as to the procedure to be adopted to reach the opponents end of the bath. If a man had possession of the ball, another could hold him under the water until he released it, but for two players to tackle him was disallowed.

Naturally the tactics employed were not gentle, and on the whole, play was of a rough and tumble description. Generally it was a case of the "survival of the fittest". The idea was to get the ball to the opposite end, either by fair means or foul!

Swimming times, also, were nothing in those days, compared to what they are today. A man was considered fast if he could do four lengths in the minute and Tyldesley plunge was only 16 yards 2 feet long at the time.

There is the story of Adam Pendlebury and Jim Howarth once being matched to swim 500 yards and how an official of the club saw them start, and, after walking to Atherton and back to transact a little business was in time to see them finish the race!

SUCCESS

The club soon began to enjoy success. In 1889, Alf Smith won the famous Mersey Championship. He was successful again the following year, and by winning once again in 1892, he made the trophy his own property. Nathan Potter was the only other member of Tyldesley Swimming club to

win this event in 1898.

Jackie Houghton did win the race twice, in 1934 and 1935, but he was with Atherton Swimming Club at the time. Jackie holds a unique record, his swimming times of one hour 16 minutes 20 seconds and 10 minutes 32 seconds respectively, are the slowest and fastest winning times ever recorded. The facts are that on the first occasion the race was swum against a strong ebb tide, and only the strongest swimmers could make any progress. Some of the competitors withdrew before the race had even started, and only six finished the race. One swimmer who gave up

cup would be awarded annually to the swimmer with the best points aggregate from the three races:- 110 yards, 220 yards and 880 yards. Competitors had to take part in all three races.

At the Annual General Meeting of 1906 it was agreed to change subscriptions as follows:- Seniors 2s. 6d., Boys 14 to 16 1s. 6d., Schoolboys 1s. 0d. Same fees for the ladies section. In that same year 150 season tickets were sold for polo, at a cost of 3d. for members and 6d. for non-members.

The R. J. Clegg Challenge Shield was donated in 1907, and it was resolved that it be used for a



Tyldesley Senior Water-Polo Team, 1908.

after 20 minutes was actually 50 yards behind the starting point, whilst another was lost for two hours, having been taken behind the wash of a liner!

In the following year, conditions proved favourable, hence the fast time.

The first water-polo success was in 1900, when Tyldesley won the Manchester and District second division championship. Tyldesley Swimming Club won the Northern Counties Flying-Squadron championship in 1901 and 1903. These were very notable achievements, and after the victory in 1901 a deputation from the club presented the championship certificate to the District Council. An enlarged framed photograph of the squadron team was presented to R. J. Clegg, Esq., the club president in 1901, and following the win in 1903, photographs of the team were sent out as Christmas Cards.

The Eckersley Cup was donated to the club in 1904, and after long discussion it was decided that the

competition called the Tyldesley Schoolboys Team Swimming Championship, and would be confined to schoolboys attending the elementary schools in Tyldesley, Hindsford and Astley. Each team to consist of four boys who had to be on the school register on the 1 September in the year of competition.

OLYMPIC GAMES

Much interest was aroused in the locality on 17 July 1908, when Addin Tyldesley swam in the 100 metres freestyle in the Olympic Games in London. In the heats Addin swam in fine style, and he was only beaten by a touch by O. Schiff of Austria. Along with P. Radmilovic, who had the same time, he qualified for the semi-final as the fastest loser. Here, however, he met top class-foreign opposition in C. M. Daniels of U.S.A. and A. W. Persson of Sweden. Daniels won the race in 1 minute 10.2 seconds, but Tyldesley's time of 1 minute 12 seconds in the first round was the best English time

recorded. Two years later, he was elected a life member of the Tyldesley Swimming Club.

WORLD CHAMPION AT TYLDESLEY

Frank E. Beurepaize of Australia, the world amateur champion at all distances up to one mile, came to Tyldesley on 14 October 1910. At the time he was holder of the Australian, English, Swedish, German, Belgium and French Championship. He made an attempt to beat the quarter mile record, being accompanied on his swim by Kenneth Tyldesley, the Tyldesley Swimming Club Champion. Beurepaize defeated Tyldesley by two lengths of the baths and his time of 5 minutes 27 seconds was only two-fifths of a second outside the record.

The Bolton and District Swimming and Water-Polo Association was founded in 1909, and Tyldesley won both the water-polo and squadron championship in the first two seasons.

Tyldesley Swimming Club were the Bolton and District champions every year from 1909 right up to the First World War in 1914.

THE WAR YEARS

At the Annual General Meeting of the A.S.A. in 1924, a decision was made not to admit the Germans to the Olympic Games. The committee of Tyldesley Swimming Club was so incensed by this decision that they wrote a letter of disapproval to the A.S.A. The letter read as follows:- "The members of Tyldesley Swimming Club disassociate themselves entirely from the resolution that was passed by the A.S.A. re the non-admission of Germans at the Olympic Games. We believe it is just an expression of your own views on the matter, and does not interpret the feeling of the majority of swimmers in this country. In view of the efforts that are being made by eminent statesmen to bring about a better spirit and understanding between the people of the world, we think the resolution was arrogant and deserving of condemnation."

Tyldesley Swimming Club won the Manchester and District First Division water-polo championship for the first time in 1927, but this proved to be the last success until after the Second World War.

Tyldesley did actually reach the final of the Lancashire Junior Championship in 1938, but the championship race never took place because of the War.

Ernie Taberner continues his motoring theme with a visit to the Earls Court Motor Show and a meeting with Sir Quinton Hazell.

I remember when . . .

AS Chief Buyer of parts and accessories for one of the big six motor manufacturers it was a pleasant part of my job to attend the Motor Show at Earl's Court in London. This was held each Autumn, for a period of 10 days, where buyers from all over the world would congregate to view the next season's models and components, at what was then universally acknowledged to be "The Biggest Shop Window in the World".

Viewers were welcome on all but the opening day, which was press day, when the world's press representatives and VIP's had the run of the show without being pushed and shoved by the jostling crowds as on other days, and on this day all the "Top Brass" from the selling organisations as well as buyers would welcome each other yet again. At this time I was one of the privileged spenders with several millions of pounds of my employer's money to spend annually, and it was at one particular show that I was thanked by a fellow Lancastrian openly for helping him break into what was a closed shop, and by doing so was instrumental in helping him to make the first of many millions he was later to acquire. His "refusal to take no as an answer", very high standard of personal integrity, astute foresight in his business dealings, entrepreneurial outlook and strength of personal character, put him in my opinion, on the same plane as Sir Henry Ford

in the car world, or Sir Frank Whittle in the aviation world.

Greatest thrill

I am pleased to record this memory for several reasons, not least of which is that it recalls the beginning of a personal friendship between two Lancastrians lasting almost half a century - between a Wiganer who started life as a slum kid born in a two up and two down canal-side cottage, almost on the doorstep of the Heritage Centre at Wigan Pier, and a former Manchester Grammar School lad who became one of the world's most astute and respected business men. It was on one of my visits to Earl's Court Motor Show that I was given the greatest thrill I ever had in my working life, when a young salesman seeing me studying some literature on my friend's stand approached me with the request "Can I help you sir?" to which I replied, "I would like to speak to Mr. Quinton Hazell please, if I may".

Salesman: "Have you an appointment sir?"

Me: "No I'm afraid I haven't."

Salesman: "Then I'm sorry sir, he won't see you if you haven't."

Me: "I think you will find that he will if you will announce me please."

Salesman: "I'm awfully sorry sir, it's more than my job is worth."

Me: "I suggest you just excuse yourself, tell him I'm here and if he sacks you I will see you get reinstated."

The poor man was petrified, but with some reluctance decided to accede to my request. Then the man himself appeared at the top of

the staircase, arm outstretched and with obvious sincerity declared, "Ah Mr. Taberner, how good of you to come and see us, I have Mr. . . . from our South African operation who will be delighted to meet you, do please come in!"

Tetchy customer

As I passed the salesman I congratulated him on the handling of a tetchy customer (myself), loud enough for the great man as he was later to become to hear me and (to reassure the salesman) I explained to my host that I had promised his sales receptionist I would get him reinstated if he had been sacked for disobeying orders. We all had a good laugh when he recovered the situation with his next comment, "I would have sacked him if he hadn't."

In his private reception area where his previous visitor was still waiting, my host exclaimed "Ah Mr. . . . please meet Mr. Taberner of . . . and followed it with . . . "The only man in the whole of the British motor industry prepared to give me a fair crack of the whip."

For the uninitiated it should be explained here, perhaps, that in that immediate post war era, replacement parts for cars and light commercial vehicles were practically unobtainable for several reasons, too technical to itemise without boring the average reader, but it was paramount to me to know that if my staff placed an order with any supplier then the lead times - that time between placing the order and the receipt of the goods - should be as short as possible. The incident to which he was

referring took place many years previously when the owner of a small factory making ball joints in Chorley, Lancashire, for my company, rang me one day to explain that he was considering selling out, and retiring to his rose garden, and he queried what would be my reaction towards the new owner, in the event that he did sell. I advised him that provided that new owner (whoever he was) fulfilled the criteria we laid down for all our suppliers, then we would not object to any change of ownership. Frank Marsh, the owner of this company, then divulged that the prospective buyer was alongside him and asked if he could put him on to me and would I be good enough to confirm that directly to him. Now speaking to the prospective buyer, I not only agreed, but also promised him that I could confirm it in writing that very day, which of course I did. That gave my new found friend the toehold he required, since not one of the big six would deal with him because of his avowed intention to beat them at their own game in the aftermarket (the name given to the supply of spares once a car is sold).

Entrepreneurial pursuits

It didn't take long for Sir Quinton (he was knighted for services to industry by Her Majesty The Queen in the New Year's Honours List in 1995) to become restless after, as he told me, "the loss of his baby". Before long he was soon off on his entrepreneurial pursuits, this time in

Aspull & Haigh Historical Society

Meetings are held in the Village Centre, Bolton Road, Aspull, on the second Thursday of the month at 8.00p.m. Further details from the Secretary, Mrs. Rosalie Naylor, 3 Pennington Close, 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 7.30p.m. Members £1, Non members £1.50. Everyone welcome. Further details from the Secretary, Mrs. P. Madden, 22 Butterfield Road, Over Hulton, Bolton, BL5 1 DU. (01204 651478).

10 December 'Margaret Fox' by Lizzie Jones.

12 January 'The Way We Were' by Mrs. P. Madden.

9 February 'Around Shrewsbury' by Mrs. E. Greenhalgh.

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 7.00p.m. Non-members welcome. Further details from Ron Marsh, P.R. Officer (01942 726027).

Leigh & District Family History Society

Meetings are held on the 3rd Tuesday of every month in the Derby Room of Leigh Library. The programme for the coming months is as follows:-

16 December Christmas Festivities with Lizzie Jones.

20 January Members evening.

17 February 'Convicts to Australia' by F. Holcroft.

SOCIETY NEWS

17 March *Army Records* by Michael Watts. For further details contact the Secretary Mrs. O. Hughes (01942 741594).

Leigh Literary Society

Meetings are held in The Derby Room, Leigh Library on Mondays at 7.30p.m. Subscription £10, Visitors £1. Secretary: Mrs. H. Gaskell (01942 601743).

1 December *Dad's Army* by N. Tildesley.

8 December *A Christmas Presentation* by Doreen Johnson and Friends.

12 January *A Coast to Coast Walk* by D. Cookson.

19 January *South American Journey* by N. L. Brown.

26 January *Billinge Hospital* by M. Powell.

2 February *A Miscellany* by P. Crockett.

9 February *Rationing and All That* by N. Hindley.

16 February *Hannibal, Hero of the Second Punic War* by T. Lucas.

23 February *Life in China* by Miss L. Parry.

2 March *Women in the Mines* by G. Stirup.

9 March *Antique Collectable Books* by Mr. & Mrs. Cropley.

16 March *An Evening with Jim Hopkinson.*

Leigh Local History Society

Meetings are held in the Derby Room, Leigh Library on the last Wednesday of the month. **29th October** 'Barons and Saints. A history of the Gerard family'. Walter Carney.

26 November 'Clandestine Marriages in the 18th Century'. Bob Blakeman.

28 January 'Burials and Funerals'. Tony Ashcroft.

25 February 'Pub Signs, their origins and meanings'. R. Lowe.

25 March 'Standish Hall Water Corn Mill'. Adrian Morris.

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

Tyldesley & District Historical Society

Meetings are held at Tyldesley Pensions Club, Milk Street, Tyldesley on the third 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 7.30p.m. New members are always welcome.

Wigan Civic Trust

The Trust meets at 7.30p.m., on the second Monday of the month, at the Drumcroon Arts Centre, Parsons Walk, Wigan. For further information contact Anthony Grimshaw, Secretary (01942 245777). New members are always welcome.

12 January *Railways in the Metropolitan Borough of Wigan* by Dennis J. Sweeney.

9 February *The Mersey Basin Trust* by Mark Turner, Community Project Officer.

9 March *The Pewter Industry in Wigan* by Jean Wood.

Wigan Family History Society

Meetings are now held on the first and third Tuesday of the month, at the Springfield Hotel, Springfield Road, Wigan at 7.30p.m. (N.B. change of date and venue). For further information contact Mrs. Lynne Kearns, 28 Wareing Street, Tyldesley, Manchester, M29 8HS (01942 878549).

I remember when . . . continued

the chemical world with his acquisition of Supra Group plc of which he was Chairman, and Managing Director, as well as several other directorships of various companies. When I wrote to him to congratulate him on his Knighthood award he kindly sent me a copy of his autobiography (see below), on the flyleaf of which he wrote opposite his photograph:

"To Ernie Taberner

Great to speak to you after so many years.

Keep up your work for Wigan and Lancashire."

Sir Quinton Hazell,
January 19th, 1995.

He was a really loyal member of the County Palatine, even though Wales adopted him later (his first

plant was in Colwyn Bay) as also did my adopted county of Warwickshire, where he became deputy lieutenant of the county, a position he still held on his death aged 75 years, after suffering a stroke. This was only four weeks after his last letter to me, telling me that he soon hoped to be 100% fit, and that his secretaries were complaining that he was arriving at his office too early in the mornings.

All regular readers of 'Past Forward' magazine already know of my commitment to Wigan and Lancashire, and God willing I hope to be relating more anecdotes for many years yet.

© E. Taberner, 1997

● "Quinton Hazell - The Life of an Entrepreneur" is published by Alan Sutton Publishing at £14.99 (ISBN 0-7509-0246-9)

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From an avid reader of P.F.

Dear Sir,

Reading Past Forward is pleasurable in itself. Being involved in it, as I was via my letter in the Summer 1997 Issue, for which I am most grateful, is at once, special, and in the event, a great motivator.

Within a few days of receiving Past Forward there followed a lovely letter from none other than Ernie Taberner himself. This was a surprise, but no more than that which revealed that Ernie lives just a 20 minute car journey from here! And just to prove that there is no holding this man down, within a couple of days of receiving the reply to his said letter, another letter arrived, triggered by one particular aspect I had mentioned but further - he, promises now to write again in what he refers to as his usual vein.

Margaret Hutchinson and I have corresponded on the subject of her search for Gore families. I was able to inform Margaret that I was, twixt the years 1944-48, a colleague of her (so it transpires) Uncle Tom, as we both worked on the same section at DeHavilland Propellers Ltd., Looe, now, presumably, British Aerospace. Margaret kindly inserted a photograph of Tommy (as we knew him), taken in his youth when he played professional football.

Ron Marsh's letter about Golborne disinterred memories of my uncle Jim Heaton, Aunt Nell and cousin John who lived at the premises of their small bakery shop in High Street. Uncle Jim was a clerk at Rothwells but when they folded he went into the aforementioned bakery business. During World War II, he joined what I think was the Pioneer Corps and was, for a time, stationed about six miles from here at Whittington Barracks.

But what about Madame Moss's? What memories - I must have danced many times to Ron's strict tempo as I

struggled to emulate the appearance of the ease of young Tom and his sister in the execution of their Terpsichorean gyrations.

I became friendly with young Tom - we were almost exact contemporaries, and it was via his expertise that I reached the dizzy heights of THE BRONZE, prior to having to curtail my dancing via a move of employment.

We did, however, meet at Crewe Town Hall when he and sister Hilda appeared. It was here that I had the honour of meeting them in their private room, via the courtesy of Laurance Ratigan whose dance studio I attended then.

It was, however, long before I met Tom that his parents, Madame and Tom Moss came to the newly opened Mission Hall in Garswood. Here, they gave demonstrations of the old standards which bore no resemblance at all to the Saturday night ploddings of the locals. And this, on a new, probably T.&G. floor, knots 'n all. None of your tenoned, sprung, sanded and polished maple.

Any glissades, accidental or scripted, owed their success or otherwise to yours truly who was charged by father in his role of Mission Hall committee secretary, to take a carton of Lux soap flakes and sprinkle the floor, not too liberally, and "Try and pur a bit more where t' dancers gu round."

It was shortly after that occasion that Mr. and Madame Moss parted company. I did, however, espy Mr. Moss in the crowd at the aforementioned Crewe Town Hall occasion. I do not know to this day whether or not Tom Jun. and Hilda knew of his presence.

As a compulsive writer I am beginning to wonder whether or not this avid, quarterly perusal of Past Forward is good for constitution, jolting as it does the occasional rousing from that state of hibernation, erroneously referred to as retirement... but, just like being born on this ever-revolving planet - how does one - if in the unlikely event of him wanting to - get off?

Yours sincerely,

J. Harold Smith
108 Worcester Lane,
Sutton Coldfield,
West Midlands,
G7 5NJ

GIVING GREAT PLEASURE

Thank you very much for sending me the 'Past Forwards'. They are giving me great pleasure especially articles on Hindley Grammar School.

I would like to say that myself Ellen and my twin sister Annie commenced this school in September 1926. We were placed in class "C". I have a photo with Ellen Rotherham, Edith Warrington, Ellen Lyon, Annie Lyon and Kathleen Hardman. There are eight boys on the photo, but unfortunately I don't remember who they are. The teacher Miss E. Ogden or Miss E. M. Naish(?), John Lowe and James Walker were in this class, but they are not on the photo.

We travelled by train from Gathurst to Hindley Station, and then had to walk down Ladies Lane or George

Street, Lord Street and Park Road. Quite a distance. There were other students who came from Dalton and Appley Bridge. My elder brother James and my younger brother Eric also attended during these years. My youngest sister Mary commenced H.A.G.S. c.1932. She did not travel by train, as I understand by then there was a bus service in operation to Hindley.

During our time at the school we were given a privilege to leave the class 10 minutes earlier so that the train from Hindley to Wigan would be in time to catch our connection to Gathurst. This arrangement no doubt disrupted our lessons - sometimes we had to leave without receiving our homework.

In 1938 I married a farmer from Shevington, and

in 1948 we came to live at Long Lane Farm, Hindley Green with our four children. We farmed there for 33 years and on retirement in 1981 we came to live in Ecclestone.

Perhaps someone will have a good photo of class "C", 1926/33, and who they are. Mine has been damaged. I would be grateful for any information.

Another interesting article and photograph in 'Past Forward 16' is of St. Oswald's Church, Winwick. My husband and I have the same GT.GT.GT.GT.GT Grandparents, Edward Ball & Mary Dixon, who were married at this church on 5 October 1708.

Yours faithfully,

Ellen Ball,
10 The Fields,
Ecclestone,
Chorley, PR7 5SD.

Fascination!

Dear Sir,

In the absence of existing knowledge I would mention that the 1951 staff photograph taken at the H.A.G.S. shows the recently much-discussed Miss Naish seated on the front row in the third from right position. From H. J. Barker (Doggie/Little Bud) at the front second left seated, are: L. Fielden (Len.); L. Healey (Sol.); R. Britton (Headmaster); Miss L. Nicholas (Miss/Fat Nick.); Herself; and at the end Miss R. Y. Craig. All the others were at that time comparatively new.

Your issue No. 15 Cover-comment has fascinated me as far as identifying the photograph goes, and I was anticipating some positive response from at least one reader. Too bad; it remains for me to construct a surmise:

Clearly taken in the very early 50's, the location simply has to be Lower Ince-in-Makerfield, and virtually all the boys being sons of ex-Servicemen. I would guess that the 'wicket' is alongside the Regal cinema in Bryn Street, more recently Kattenbergs, the low building at the Keeper's end being the new Lower Ince British Legion in Windleshaw Street. The sunlit buildings along the On-side are those fronting Warrington Road, and the very tall telegraph pole starkly displayed at the centre-top would have been situated at the bottom of Ince Green

Lane alongside the Ince Hall Hotel (now the Black Diamond) where it originally served both the lane and the Warrington Road directions. The near-mid-day sun elevation also seems to fit the issue, but yet all the suggestion is one of hit or miss.

The back page of No. 16, No. 1 mystery photograph may never be identified, but it gives rise to mention that before the last War, at the right-hand entrance to Hardy-butts, from Birkett Bank, were located some three or four in-line, such cottages which represented the saddest form of poverty that I was beheld to see in Wigan and its environs. The demolition took place by 1939.

Many features of the forgotten past deserve never to be so discarded, especially that displayed on page 10 (issue 16) by grace of the late Revd. Wickham. Did you ever see such a clear depiction of those lowly yet proud British denizens whose purpose in life was almost exclusively to dig and win the black mineral on which the Industrial Revolution founded! We are privileged to see on record just one national quality which burned as strongly within those oppressed of our society as ever it did midst all the palaces, castles and cathedrals in the land.

Thank you.

Harry Entwistle
Krithia, 3 Queensway,
Ince-in-Makerfield
WN2 2HL

A family of interesting names

Dear Sir,

I was wondering if any of your readers can help with information about my Grandfather and his brothers.

The names are quite interesting. My Grandfather, who died when my father was a young child (in c. 1914) was called Constantine Diamond. He was born in Wigan on 13 August, 1860. He had three brothers: Napoleon, born 1853, Hannibal (Hannable) born 1863, and finally Julius Caesar born 28 October 1866. Their father was James Diamond and their mother was Ann Ellison. According to the 1891 census Napoleon lived at 14 Rupert St., was married to Ellen and had 2 children, Elizabeth 12, and Hannibal 1. My Grandfather married Sarah Ann Daniels and they had moved to Leigh by the time my father Robert, the youngest of 9, was born.

I would love to hear from anyone to whom these names are familiar.

Yours sincerely,

Judith Ann Rothwell,
19 Fordham Road,
Soham, Ely,
Cambridgeshire,
CB7 5AH.



THE MYSTERY IS SOLVED

Dear Mr. Gillies,
Re my supplement to Hindley & Abram Grammar School. Mr. Harry Entwistle asked "Who was the Baron?" He was indeed the groundsman. He was chosen as the least likely person to become engaged to tall and stately Miss Nicholas (Nick).

Incidentally, the "Wartime Bulletin" was an undercover publication, not for the teachers' sight, but widely distributed amongst the pupils by the V1th form perpetrators.

When I looked again at the photograph of Staff 1951 of Hindley & Abram Grammar School (page 13 of 'Past Forward 16') I realised that I could name all but one of the front row - the old stagers from my time there (1933-40). In case it is of any interest they are - front row from the right:- Ruth Moody (Cookery), Miss Unsworth (Art), Miss E. M. Naish (Maths and Science), Miss Nicholas (Senior English), Mr. Britton (Headmaster, who replaced Mr. Fairbrother), Mr. Healy (Latin), Mr. Feilden (Physics), Mr. Barker (French) and the last unknown.

Yours sincerely,

Marjorie Bryden
27 St. Annes Road,
Eastbourne,
E. Sussex,
BN21 2DJ

Interesting Buildings old and new

Dear Mr. Blakeman

Thank you for the interesting walk in Wigan. We learnt a lot of interesting things about old and new buildings and how to tell which are old and which are new. We learnt how to find clues on the buildings, to find out what they used to be. You told us words that we hadn't heard before, and explained what they meant in a simple way. Everyone enjoyed the information and

the walk. Thank you for spending a bit of time talking about buildings. We really enjoyed it.

Thank you again.

From Y5 (St. Stephen's School)

* Any teachers interested in finding out more about the Heritage Services Education Services should contact Education and Outreach Manager, Bob Blakeman (01942 827580).

PEN PALS RECORD?

Dear Ed.

I thought it would be nice if my pen pal story appeared in 'Past Forward'. From April 1953 to September 1983, I'd corresponded with over 800 pen pals worldwide, yes over 800 pen pals in 30 years. I received and answered many letters mostly in U.S.A., then Canada, Australia, Russia, England, Romania, Hungary, Cuba and others too.

I learned many interesting things from many interesting people. They loved hearing about Wigan. I sent many picture post cards of Wigan. My first pen pal was in Waco, Texas, in April 1953, my last one in September 1983. I was 51 years old when I quit for good. It has been a great interesting hobby. I bet no one in Wigan has had so many pen pals as me - world wide.

Eric Stockley
Apt. 25
Kendal Road
Hr. Ince
Wigan

HINDLEY INFO WANTED

Dear Sir,

I would like to know if any of your readers could help me.

I am after information or any photos of my late great grandmother's shop. She and her husband owned the shop right up to the 2nd World War and were forced to close due to rationing and her husband's illness. The shop was situated at 26 Fairclough Street, Hindley, off Ladies Lane. My grandparents were Edith and William Pilkington.

I would be grateful for any information

P.S. In the shop was said to hang a large fake colourful parrot. I hope this can bring back memories.

Stuart J. Pilkington,
71 Salisbury Avenue,
Hindley,
Wigan

PETER GASKELL

Dear Sir,

My great grandfather Peter Gaskell was born in Shevington on 1 November, 1870. Peter's parents were Richard Gaskell (1828-1887) from Upholland and Ellen Wilson from Wrightington (1832-1904). Peter married Mary Kevill (1873-1902), who herself was of Irish extraction. They had three children, Elizabeth (1898-1987), Richard (1900-1975) and Paul (1902-1965). Mary died in childbirth. Peter was shown on the 1891 census as a coalminer, who lived at "John Pit Houses", Standish Lower Ground. He subsequently had a mining accident and lost an eye, although he might have been working at another pit by then.

In search of work, Peter emigrated to America

c.1906. Nothing is known about his emigration except that he sailed alone from Liverpool - and he was never heard of again. He seems to have disappeared off the face of the earth!!! His three children were brought up by other family members. I have checked the indexes of consular marriages and deaths at the new Family Records Centre in London, but without luck. Research via other records is continuing, but if any reader knows anything about what happened to my great grandfather after emigration, then I would be very grateful if they would let me know.

Paul Gaskell,
28 Bulan Road,
Headington,
Oxford,
OX3 7HT.

A poem born of experience

Dear Sir,

I wonder if the enclosed is of any interest to you. I was brought-up in Hindley and have known these conditions from my own experience. My father was Chief Draughtsman for Wigan Coal & Iron Co.

In 1945 I was Staff Chaplain, The Kings Chapel, Gibraltar, so when I mention The Rock, I know its shape and size.

WIGAN
*The molten metal from the furnaces was flowing
The sky outside was glowing
The slag tip towering into the sky*

*In size and shape like Gibraltar high
Deep mines all around
With tonnes of coal underground
Mills everywhere were thriving
With women and girls to earn a living striving
Wigan was then a prosperous place
With an acceptable face
In spite of Wigan Pier
At which some would jeer.*

Raymond Hibbert,
Inisfall,
15 Watling St. Road,
Fulwood,
Preston,
PR2 8EA.

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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

Who? Where?

THREE of last issue's mystery photographs produced no positive identification. The bottom left view of a fine-looking property, called 'Huntscliffe', however, produced a tremendous response. The house is in Parbold, near Wigan, and dates from 1880. In 1905 it was purchased by Henry Green, a well-known butcher on Wigan Market, and remained in his family for many years. Thanks to all those readers who provided this information.

The wrestling photographs in the last 'Past Forward' also proved extremely popular, so here are two more (one is signed 'J. Keane Lineker', I think!), as well as some more general views, and a very famous bird – a pigeon called 'Old Blackun', who belonged to T. Gore. Presumably both were well-known in the local pigeon-racing fraternity. If you can help identify any of these photographs, please contact Len Hudson in Leigh Town Hall (01942 404432).

