

PAST FORWARD

ISSUE NUMBER NINETEEN

SUMMER 1998



The Newsletter of Wigan Heritage Service

FREE

From the Editor

WELCOME to another bumper edition of *Past Forward*. Once again I have received such an overwhelming response from readers by way of written contributions for the magazine that I have had to include an extra four pages - and still ended up disappointing many of you who have sent in articles. Please be patient - I will do my best to include as many of these as I possibly can.

This issue sees the continuation in the serialisation of two splendid - and very popular - articles on Haigh Brewery and Ashton-in-Makerfield, as well as the first part of the memoirs of James Davies (who later became a teacher in Hindley & Abram Grammar School), relating to his early years in Aspull and Coppull. There are also the regular features, including Ernie Taberner's *I Remember When*, *News from the Archives* and *Local Society News* - and a great deal more.

The centre spread in this issue is devoted to our *Friends of Wigan Heritage Service* initiative. I must stress that this is designed to include ALL readers of *Past Forward*, whether you live locally or a distance away, or even abroad. The next issue of *Past Forward* will contain a registration form, completion of which, along with a modest annual subscription, will make you a Friend, entitling you to receive the three copies per year of the magazine. In the meantime, may I encourage as many readers as possible, wherever you live, to complete the register of interest form on p.13 - this will be of great benefit to us in the planning and setting up of our Friends organisation.

All comments and correspondence should be addressed to:

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



On the (Wigan) buses for 47 years

Dear Alastair,

Having read, with great pleasure, issue number seventeen of *Past Forward* I wondered if you would be so kind as to include in your next edition the enclosed information and photographs concerning my father, Alfred Rouse.

My father actually drove the very last tram that operated in Wigan out to its last journey and drove the very first 'Omnibus' to operate within the Wigan area. His route was nearly always the Pemberton/Abbey Lakes then Standish route, together with a bus conductor in those days.

He served for 47 years on Wigan Corporation, including also serving in the Armed Forces in World War II. Whilst in the forces, my mother, Lily Rouse, worked a 12 hour shift on "Munitions" at Euxton and joined the "Canary Girls" as they became known, because of their skin turning yellow, caused by the continual contact with T.N.T. powder.

Our home was at No.7 Douglas St. East off Warrington Lane. These terraced houses are now demolished.

His father, Benny Rouse, played for Wigan Town Rugby at Central Park. His name is listed on the records there!

Hoping you can manage this!

Best wishes,

**Wally Rouse,
2 Denville Avenue,
Anchorsholme,
Blackpool.
FY5 3SQ.**



Alfred Rouse, Wigan's last tram driver and first "Omnibus" driver

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

Cover: Wigan and District Brass Band evolved from what was previously Wigan Boys' Club Band, which existed from the late 1940's under the baton of William Haydock. After the demise of Wigan Boys' Club there arose a new band - Wigan and District Brass Band - under the guidance and musical direction of the late Alan Mason and latterly Ted Gray, principal cornet player of Fodens Band. During the Band's existence it achieved many honours and accolades.

News from the Archives

THE Lancashire Parish Register Society has published some further transcripts of local registers. Volume 141 contains the baptisms (1810-1827) and burials (1806-1844) for St. Thomas's, Ashton-in-Makerfield, and volume 142 contains baptisms (1828-1873) for the same church. Simultaneously the Society has published earlier transcripts on microfiche, so that baptisms (1698-1809), burials (1745-1805) and marriages (1700-1753) are all now available in this format. Ashton marriages for the period 1753-1844 were (under the Hardwick Marriage Act) solemnised at Winwick, Ashton, being a chapelry in that parish. These are already available as L.P.R.S. transcripts.

The Ashton registers are unusually detailed. The baptisms include the date of birth from 1698 to 1873. The seniority of children of each sex within the family is given from 1810 right up to 1873. A detailed place of abode is also stated during this period. The burial registers give the age, cause of death and, from 1837, the date of death.

Meanwhile work is progressing steadily on the transcription of the Leigh (post-1700) and Wigan (post-1625) registers, for eventual publication by the L.P.R.S.

RECENT ACCESSIONS

Amongst a small group of family items (Acc.3132) is an illuminated scroll presented in September 1923 to John Stott, headmaster of Leigh Technical School since its opening in 1892, by the past and present students and staff. Technical schools were established by local authorities under an Act of 1889, and were really the beginnings of further education for the masses. 'Under your guidance and supervision', the citation states, 'the school has developed into one of the most important of its kind in the county ... you have had one constant aim - the mental and moral welfare of the adolescent ... to secure the benefits of further education for those to whom hitherto it has been denied'. The school has evolved to become part of the present Wigan and Leigh College, and still occupies the original buildings on Railway Road, which are depicted in watercolour at the foot of the scroll. Stott had come to Leigh in 1884, establishing classes under the aegis of Leigh Literary Society, and after the 1918 Education Act was influential in seeing that Leigh became the second town in England to provide Day Continuation classes for children up to sixteen.

Another item in the collection is a rare memorial volume, printed privately from press cuttings and other notes, issued in tribute to Sir John

Holden by his daughter, Emma, in 1926. Holden was a typical self-made man, a Tory and a Churchman. One of Leigh's leading industrialists, he became managing director of Tunnicliffe and Hampson's Firs Mills and acted for other cotton spinning firms. By the 1920's the mills controlled by the Holden family were considered amongst the best and most up-to-date in Lancashire. Although a Boltonian, Holden was a powerful influence in Leigh, becoming a councillor in 1910 and the first to be elected mayor for consecutive years (1911-13). It was he who received the King and Queen on their visit to Leigh in 1913. His pater-

nalistic influence resulted in the creation of Firs Park in 1921. Holden was made a baronet in 1919.

A further deposit of Methodist records has been made, adding to our holdings for the former Primitive Methodist chapel in Crawford village, Upholland. This was a colliery village built in the 1860's by Lord Crawford to house workers at pits that he had sunk on Holland Moss. The records of the chapel include a good series of Sunday School registers and papers from 1897 onwards, besides two photographs of the building c.1910.

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LEIGH — Did you know...

...that Capt. Sir Arthur Henry Rostron, who was Master of the *Carpathia* which rescued the survivors from the *Titanic*, married Ethel Stothert on 14 September 1899 at Atherton Parish Church?

Leigh Chronicle 15 September 1899

INTERESTING MARRIAGE AT ATHERTON

An interesting marriage took place yesterday afternoon at the Atherton Parish Church, the contracting parties being Miss Ethel Minnie Stothert, youngest daughter of Mr. R. Stothert, wholesale chemist and mineral water manufacturer, Bag Lane, Atherton, and Lieutenant H. Rostron, R.N.R. of the Cunard liner, "Etruria". The bride, who was given away by her father, had as bridesmaids, Miss Doris Walker, Miss Bessie Maxwell, Miss A. Jowsey and Miss M. Mercer, nieces, and Miss Rostron, sister of the bridegroom. Mr. G. Rostron, brother of the bridegroom, was the best man. The Rev. W. Nuttall, vicar, assisted by the Rev. J. Potter, curate, officiated. As the party entered the church, the organist, Mr. Booth, played several selections, and as they left the "Wedding March" was played. After the ceremony a reception was held at the house of the bride, at which 70 persons responded to invitations. The newly married couple afterwards proceeded to Scotland to spend their honeymoon. The presents, which numbered about 100, included cheques from the father and mother of the bride and father of the bridegroom, and a handsome timepiece from the employees of Mr. Stothert.

...that Sheree Jones, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. J. T. Jones of Highbank, Atherton, had married Cyril Meade (a former painter and decorator) and lived at 15 Ramsey Close, Atherton in 1978? Although you may not have heard of Cyril Meade, you certainly will have heard of his stage name, Syd Little, one half of the comic duo Little and Large.

SUPERMARKETS and FISH AND CHIP SHOPS

Tony Ashcroft, Local History Officer at Leigh Library, is beginning research into the history of supermarkets and also the history of fish and chip shops within the Wigan area. If anyone has personal reminiscences, photographs etc. relating to these two topics, please contact Tony (tel. 01942 404559).

Leigh Journal 26 April 1912

Carpathia Resumes Her Voyage

Presentation to Captain Rostron

The *Carpathia* on Saturday started again on her interrupted trip to the Mediterranean. No-one was allowed on the pier except on business. As sailing time approached this order was modified, and those who were able to give the names of the friends they wished to see were allowed to go on the pier and the vessel. Quite a number of persons obtained admission and long before the vessel cast off they overran the decks, anxious for glimpses of the rooms occupied by the survivors to listen to stories of the rescue, and especially to climb to the wireless operator's room. The stewards and sailors were busy cutting up life preservers stripped from the survivors for souvenirs. The committee of survivors met at noon aboard the *Carpathia* and presented a loving cup to Captain Rostron. As the *Carpathia* sailed late in the afternoon people cheered heartily for Captain Rostron, a fine, clean-cut type of the British officer, who made a splendid impression on the Senate Committee when he gave evidence. Standing on the bridge, he doffed his cap and smiled gravely as the Cunarder steamed from the pier towards the fairway.

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

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*If you are
interested, contact Philip Butler*

(01942) 827594

This article will bring back many 'sweet' memories for readers as the writer remembers his boyhood days in Abram, his 'Friday Penny' and proper sweet shops. Ed.

Sweet nostalgia

JUBILATION, anticipation, concentration, indecision - the signs of all these emotions flicker across my face as I stand and look into the windows of the local sweet-shop shining brightly on a dark winter evening, enticing with its display of cheery pleasures, happy in the knowledge that in my pocket I have the power to sample some of them, albeit only a small portion.

For it is Friday evening and I have just been given my "Friday Penny" to spend as I wish, but there are some serious decisions to be made regarding my wealth and how I dispose of it - should I act as the "Big Spender" and blow it all at once, or should I be miserly and spend only a ha'penny, saving the other ha'penny for later on. Whilst trying to make my mind up, my eyes roam around, taking in all the sweets in their boxes and large glass jars, with their tempting labels, and the tins of Devon Cream Toffee, beautifully adorned with a country picture, all at two ounces for a penny. But which one to choose from such a bewildering selection? Now, what about Chocolate Chewing Nuts - one got quite a few of those for a ha'penny - or Chocolate Caramels or Rum & Butter Toffees - but one does not get as many of these, as they are bigger and last longer. But there's that lovely Devon Cream Toffee which has to be broken up with a small "toffee hammer"; Pontefract Cakes, Liquorice Pips and Bootlaces are another possibility.

Peanuts and Tiger Nuts - I can get a lot of those for a ha'penny, but eating them will lead to a hefty dose of Castor Oil which I do not like at all, so they are out, much as I like them. Wine Gums, Liquorice Allsorts, Mint Imperials, Marzipan Tea-Cakes, Coconut Mushrooms, Mint Balls, Mintoes, Pear Drops - all there for the asking, but to get a good supply of these I'll need to spend my whole penny, which would also buy me a Hazelnut Bar - five squares of milk chocolate, each containing a crunchy nut. Or there's a two-ounce block of chocolate, milk or plain, or a Fry's Sandwich - a layer of plain between two of milk or the other way round, a "Buttons" Coconut Square, or perhaps a thick stick of Liquorice - now that will last for a long time as it's too hard to bite, so it has to be broken up with a hammer or something, and if one isn't careful some of it can fly off and be lost! The last time I sampled this confection, to avoid this I wrapped it in one of my mother's stockings and hit it with a stone. It kept my sweet together, but it didn't do the stocking any good and mother wasn't very sporting about it - she boxed my ears and packed me off to my bedroom.

I SPY A NEWCOMER...

Remembering this, I think I'll pass over the Liquorice this time and the other "penny sweets", nice as they may be, as purchase of those means all my money gone, and there are

seven long days to the next "Friday Penny". All those desirables demanding my attention, but which one to choose? That is the dilemma - surely no-one in higher office has such a critical decision to make? But wait! I spy a newcomer in the window, a box with its lid folded back to show a footbase with the words "This Could Be Yours" written on it; underneath it says "Try Our New Spearmint Chews - 4 For a Ha'penny, 8 For a Penny - Each Wrapper Has the Name Of a Football Team - Collect All Twelve As Shown On The List And The Ball Is Yours".

SHE DOESN'T FIDDLEFADDLE

It sounds easy enough, but I am a bit doubtful. Suppose they are like the cigarette cards with the same one turning up two or three times - it could mean buying the same sweets every week for many weeks with no guarantee that I'd get the ball. I'll skip that until I have talked it over with the other lads, so it's back to "the two ounces a penny" line, although it's not too bad really. The old lady who owns the shop is not mean on weight - if the scale goes a bit over she doesn't fiddlefaddle around picking off sweets to get the scale exact, as long as it doesn't go too far, so I am always sure of a good helping whatever I buy.

But again the big question - what shall I buy? Diced Coconut Chips - no, they're too sweet. Dolly Mixtures, Cherry

Lips and Chocolate Buttons are out - they're only for girls, so what shall it be? My thoughts wander and I think for a change I could buy a firework for my penny, a big "Banger", but that's just a fizz and a bang and my money is gone with nothing to show for it, so I will forget that and stick to the sweets. Colts Foot Rock, Cough Candy, Barley Sugar Sticks - these and more are laid out for my inspection, but I just cannot make up my mind, and I shall soon have to go as it is cold and a fog is coming down. In any case I shall soon be called indoors for bedtime, so I'll leave it for now and think it over when I'm in bed. One thing I do know - I'll be glad when I'm grown up then I won't have such difficult decisions to make!

GREAT STROKE OF LUCK

As it turned out later, the "Spearmint Chews" Football was a sales ploy, but it was genuine, the only catch being that of the twelve names required, one - Portsmouth - was very rare indeed. But by a great stroke of luck Ernie Blundell got it, so no time was wasted in sending off for the prize. And when it arrived, what a prize it was - nothing cheap or tatty, but a genuine full-size sewn leather panel ball which, during the football season, provided us with many hours of pleasure on the old football field at the bottom of Crankwood Road.

ANON

Mr. J. F. Moore, who died in 1982, fortunately wrote down his memories of John Sumner's Haigh Brewery, where he worked in the 1920's and 1930's. Here is the second in a serialisation of these memories. Ed.

Memories of Haigh Brewery

(By someone who worked there 50 years ago)

A HUGE amount of hay needed chopping, provender had to be mixed. All the horses on the road had to take a nosebag along for dinner times. All along the rear of the premises was a cart shed, close by the mortar mill and here ashes were tipped. If you required a load of ashes you could help yourself. Behind all this was another block of stables, sheds with haymaking machinery, pig sties and a Dutch barn, plus 40 acres of land. The land is attached to Whittle Tag Farm now. The high chimney was on the east gate until about 1920, when a large bottling store was built, leaving the chimney in the centre of the building. The women who worked here were Bella Berry, Martha Seddon, Alice Leach, Mary Ashcroft, Jenny Hampson and the boss who was Peggy Ditchfield. About three times a year we went to Bolton to a bottle exchange yard and we would take all the bottles which belonged to other breweries and collect our own, as well as 2,000 empty wine and whisky bottles.

When I went to work there, Mr. Scotson was in charge of the wine and spirit stores. He lived in Sumners Row and, as the offices only opened at 9am, he came on duty at 7.30 to attend to the wagons. I took over from him, leaving him free to take up an appointment in the office. Every morning I would call at his house to collect the keys. Agnes Bradshaw would be waiting for me, as she used to clean the offices. On a desk I would find four sets of invoices for the morning loads of these wagons. The beer then required was sent up by the cellarman and loaded. I would give them the wine and spirits and cigarettes that I

had prepared the day before.

Every barrel had its own number burned on both ends and we kept a record of these numbers. As it wouldn't have been easy then to find a Bendix or twin tub washing machine, a landlord could see a barrel in two, selling the two halves for use as washing tubs and he would get 10s. for each half. This check gave us a record of every barrel away from home. If a month went by and a barrel had not been returned, the landlord would be charged for it. The number of barrels in actual use was 5,500 36 gallon barrels, 3,500 18 gallon barrels, 2,500 9 gallon barrels and 1,000 Tommy Thumpers.

When you consider that each pub and club could be holding from three to twelve barrels there would be quite a number on the road. The pubs such as the Sportsman at Leigh and the Yarrow Bridge at Chorley in summer time would take 20 each week and 30 doz. boxes. These made a

load for a 5 - 6 ton Leyland wagon and we had four of these. Standish Bleachworks also had four taking cloth every day to Manchester. All the wagons had solid tyres. All roads were paved and driving these wagons was not too comfortable. Great use had to be made of the gears for we had no power brakes then, just a foot and hand brake on the rear wheels. Care had to be taken in wet weather, for they would skid easily in the tram lines.

In addition to delivering beer, the wagons were found other work. At least 40 of the licensed premises had bowling greens attached and one or two always seemed to be in some stage of refurbishment. Drain pipes, ashes and sand would be needed. Killing two birds with one stone, we would load a wagon with spent hops to leave with Mr. Molyneux at Newburgh for his rose garden, then continue to Southport. The esplanade from the end of Rotten Row leading towards Ainsdale was then covered with about 5 or 6ft of sand,

blown over by the winds and the Corporation would welcome anyone who would take it away.

After about two years a new model Leyland wagon was available on pneumatic tyres. This was a great improvement; it was also more powerful. Unfortunately the drivers would find themselves in trouble with the police, for the speed limit was then 30 m.p.h. My own brother, Tom, was booked twice and fined £2 at Wigan and £5 at Bolton. Commenting on the difference in fines, it was stated that Bolton had its new Town Hall to pay for!

At this time Fred Wood was the proud owner of a 7 horse power Harley Davidson motor cycle. One day he managed to get a tram wire standard firmly wedged between the sidecar and the bike. He was very badly injured and spent several weeks in Bolton Infirmary. This meant that we had a



A 5-6 ton 12 m.p.h. Leyland solid-tyred wagon. Four such vehicles were used by Sumner's Haigh Brewery

Memories of Haigh Brewery

continued from p6

wagon without a driver until Joseph Donnelly of Church St. suggested that if they would let me take the wagon out he would go along with me as second man. I was only 16 years old! Joe and I got along very well, but Arthur Scotson was not too pleased with this arrangement. As the weeks went by it became evident that Fred Wood was not able to resume wagon driving and handling barrels. As there was no other driver around, a man was brought from Thwaites Brewery at Blackburn. I went back to the spirit stores in time to get stocks built up in time for Christmas. The four directors then were Henry Molyneux, Tom Winrow, Gerald Seddon and Tom Moore. Mr. Hughes and Mr. Platt were the travellers. Mr. Platt was at a later date connected with Central Park Rugby Club. In the offices Mr. Jolly was Secretary to Mr. Lawton and Mr. Arthur Scotson, Mr. Ainscough, Mr. J. Anderton, Miss Miller and Miss Hartley were general clerks.

Mr. Hughes and Mr. Platt were now supplied with a Morris Cowley each. Two vans were bought for the wine shops. One shop was in Pall Mall, Chorley, and the other in Lee Lane, Horwich. Once a week an order came in from there for the wines and cigarettes. The bottled beer was delivered by wagon. Tom Quigley from the Horwich shop spent one afternoon running round the field behind the brewery before taking the van home. There were no driving schools then and people had to teach each other to drive. We also acquired a 30 cwt. Morris commercial van for general use. Every vehicle bought was sent down to Fairs in Wigan to be painted and lettered in gold leaf, extolling the virtues of Sumner's Beer.

Although the wagon tanks

were filled with 20 gallons of petrol and 10 gallons of benzol which was supposed to facilitate starting, cold winter mornings could make them very stubborn. Across the fronts of the radiators was an iron bar which was to hold onto when using the starting handles. It was necessary to place the handle in about 3.15 and begin to press down against the compression. Doing this three or four times you could overcome the resistance and an extra swing on the engine would result in a start.

Every wagon had a pair of ropes to let the full barrels down into the cellars and to haul the empties out. Each night they were hung in the boiler house to dry out, for after a day in the rain being dragged along the road they could be uncomfortable to the hands.

The order then was that everyone who was working around the yard could between 10am and 3pm put a pint bottle on the shelf by the incline leading down to Mr. Parr's cellar. After they were filled with beer they could be collected at will. The men in the cellars could have a glass at any time! The back door of the Balcarres was inside the yard behind the entrance gate.

Every morning Doris Southern, the daughter of the landlady, used to take a tray of tea into the offices for the staff. The women at the bottling stores could brew their own drinks. I preferred to slip across to the Brew House and fill a glass of malt extract, for it was a good drink on a cold morning. Anyone who came into the yard on any business whatsoever could go down to the cellar for a drink, for from every brewing a half barrel was taken and the number of brew and the date was chalked on it. These half barrels were held for a few days, after all the particular numbered brew was despatched, so providing a safeguard against any complaints by the tenants or any Excise Officer. Instead of

it being wasted thereafter it formed a wonderful community relations exercise, for it would be over dated to be sent out. A sack of hops was approximately 2ft in diameter, but 6ft long, the hops being pressed in very tightly. The empty sacks were not returned, as some were made into pinafores, or brats as they called them, to protect men's clothing against the wet and dirty barrels. Another use for an empty sack was for making a peg rug - there was quite a demand for them around the village at 2s. each.

The hops were stored over the offices, the warmest place and the driest. The adjoining loft over the wine stores was occupied by a collection of old and new items, a collection of wooden shovels, forks and rakes, which must have been brought up from the malt kiln. Next to these came a collection of horse gear, storm carriage lamps and name plates. Over each stall in the stables was placed one of these name plates with the name of the horse. There were boxes of horse shoe nails, and studs used in snowy weather, cartons of labels for beers and wines and price cards. The current prices then ranged from 3½ to 5d. a pint.

Next in line came sacks of corks for the spirit bottles and stoppers for the one, two and five gallon stone jars, bars of sealing wax and boxes of lead foil tops for the whisky bottles. Here was also a collection of pottery and glass ash trays, along with beer mats, which were distributed now and then by the travellers. Finally in the corner were the real piece de resistance - a few old cast iron spittoons usually filled with sawdust.

A small building stood at the gable end of the Balcarres. It was to house the arm of the weighbridge which was out at the front. It was used occasionally by John Dickinson and C. D. Robinson of Horwich and Chorley, to weigh loads of hay and straw, and by W. Southworth of Gorton Well, Hall Lane, Hindley, who kept

himself busy carting loads of manure for the potato farmers around Ormskirk. On the right of this weighbridge was a gents toilet by the side door of the hotel. The remaining space from here to the main building was occupied by the main gate.

On the corner of the west front was a coach house and from here to the rear of the building was a line of stables. Keeping left along this passage between the hotel and the building you would pass the back door and kitchen window of Mrs. Southern. Three stone steps here led into the loading bay. There was also a small clocking on office and then the hoist which brought up the barrels for loading. A padlock, an iron rod and a second lock gave entry and just inside the door was the counter and door arrangement to halt unwelcome visitors. Inside you would notice four large casks of oaken staves with reeds in the ends like channels, but these were shaped like inverted plant pots. They were approximately 4ft in diameter and 5ft in height with copper hoops and taps, the latter being bolted in for safety. They required strong stillage on which to stand, for they held 200 gallons each. The contents were mixed by a long paddle like an oar. Using an electric pump they were soon filled from smaller casks with rum or whisky. You would also see casks of French and Spanish ports, pale and brown sherry, brandy, gin and cheap quality Australian wines.

All these items we had to buy from the Customs Officer in Wigan. In winter time a weekly appointment would be made on Friday mornings and we would take a supply of empty casks for the rum and whisky, and our electric pump for the casks in bond were too large to manhandle on to a wagon. These came to Wigan by rail and were lowered by lift to the ground floor. Here they would stand for up to five more years.

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Past Forward 15 contained a letter from Miss Ann Davies, which included some brief memoirs written by her late father, James Davies, recalling his years as a young teacher of woodwork at Hindley & Abram Grammar School. I was delighted to receive recently from Miss Davies the whole of her father's account of his life. Here are some extracts relating to his formative years in Aspull and Coppull, 1912 - 1925. Ed.

Memories from the life of James Albert Davies

I WAS born on 25 February 1912 at No. 13 Smith Street, Aspull, near Wigan, the second son of James and Margaret Davies. 'Big-Brother' Jack preceded me by 18 months, youngest brother Arthur entered the family three years after my arrival, and sister Marjorie completed the family two and a half years after Arthur.

Father was a miner, advanced to Colliery Under-Manager, and we soon learned that he was a 'hard' man. Mother was a very gentle lady, who had her own way of keeping us under control - I don't recall ever hearing one single word of anger coming from her! I remember very little of the house in Smith Street; isolated incidents such as falling from a rain-barrel and cracking the back of my head open on the corner of the doorstep - I bear the scar to this day.

Of a second-hand sewing machine arriving on a cart and proudly carrying one of the drawers into the house - I was just about big enough; the sewing machine is still with me, and in perfect working order after 70 years' use! I took charge of it after mother died in 1933, as I was the

only one who could use it.

Of a runaway pram careering down a grassy slope towards a 'pit-lodge', but fortunately overturning before reaching it and baby Marjorie being thrown out on to the grass; Jack and I were supposed to be walking her out, but presumably stopped to play football.

Of a family Sunday afternoon walk and Father putting a stray kitten under the pillow in the pram and bringing it home.

Of placing half-pennies in the tram-lines in the hope that an oncoming tram would 'spread' them into pennies, and of one foolish boy putting his cap there to see what the tram would do to it - no doubt he found out when he returned home, as the 'pit-strap' was the inevitable answer

to all misdemeanours (miners held their trousers up with a leather belt, not braces).



James Albert Davies c.1918.

I remember much to-ing and fro-ing in the ginnel separating the back-yards of Smith Street from those in a parallel terrace in Haigh Road - just like Coronation Street on present-day television: women-neighbours gathering and talking in hushed tones, which often meant that another baby was being born (a common occur-

rence in mining terraces). All the women banded together and attended to such matters, and though there was probably a mid-wife involved, we'd never heard of a doctor at this early period of our lives. There were similar hushed-tone gatherings if someone had died, possibly some toddler who had drowned in one of the 'lodges', or a mother giving birth. Later in life, I learned that I had been pulled out of the lodges three times by passing miners, but only remember one occasion when trying to retrieve a clog which had fallen in. Our mothers must have died a thousand deaths whilst we were running wild in our mining area, with the attendant reservoirs and pit-rucks, but we survived all the pitfalls as a family.

Before leaving Smith Street, one other matter worthy of mention; the miners had their own wall-game, played on the open gable end of the terrace, pitting their strength and skill against one another, and though we were too



Memories of Haigh Brewery

continued from p7

On our way down we had to call at the Bank at the top of Library Street and leave a cheque, and then on to the bonding stores opposite to Livesey's Builders' Yard. The Excise Officer, satisfied that we were fit and proper persons, would unlock the premises. We would then phone the Bank to verify the cheque, as nothing was left to chance with these people. Arriving back, the rum and whisky were pumped into the casks and the remainder placed on stillage.

The spirits were 100% proof and we had to reduce them to 70%, probably because after seven or eight whiskies 70% would make a man happy, but at 100% he would go up in a blue light! To the whisky we added a colouring to suit the whim of the management, for the spirit proof is almost colourless. Reducing the strength began by adding 5 gallon measures of water down to the 75 mark. Then by adding smaller amounts of water, mixing with a paddle and continually testing with the hydrometer, it was brought down to 73 approx. The law demanded not less than 70 and the Excise people not more than 71. Mr. Burston who lived at Riley House was the officer for the

district and he could call anytime and test whatever he wished. I always considered that if I had a boss whilst working at Haigh, it was Mr. Burston. On Sundays he was a Preacher at the Methodist Church, but he could put the fear of God into me any day of the week!

The rum, gin and brandy were also reduced in strength, but remained their natural colour. The ends of all these casks were solid and in order to fit a tap the services of a cooper were required. Being a Scot, Mr. Ponton never needed a second invitation to come along with his brace and bit. With a tuck in place to retrieve any spillage, George would begin to bore. This was a little dodgy

because we had no idea whether the end was one, two or three more inches in thickness. I would be standing alongside with a tap and mallet like a cat watching a mouse. On completion of his task, George was away back to his workshop, licking his moustache! The taps we used were all of cherry wood. We also had stocks of champagne and dinner wines which we collected ourselves from Messrs. Thornton and France of Preston. Soda syphons were bought in by Dewsbury and Browns of Manchester. To each cask of wine I used to add the whites of 6 eggs, for these had the same settling effect as finings in beer.

(To be continued)

Memories from the life of James A. Davies

continued from p8

young to participate, I remember being fascinated by the spectacle. I often wonder if they were the forerunners of the more noted Eton Wallgame.

Early in May 1918, we moved into the rambling 17th century Marsh House (now demolished, and the site incorporated into the Civic Centre and leisure area), not far from Smith Street; it was an isolated dwelling in marsh-land, with both a reservoir and 'pit ruck' in close proximity, and there we continued to run wild in an open area until early 1920, when Father left the mines and moved to Coppull to try his luck in a grocery business.

Marsh House was a wonderful place for boys; there was a vast, floored attic, where we could play when it was too wet to be out - a shot-gun hung on the wall by the window, which Father used to keep the sheppies (starlings) off his garden - we were under strict orders not to touch it, and we never did!

The kitchen was the old farm dairy, very large, and with an open-range fireplace which was big enough to roast a pig at least, and where we could all sit round in comfort; oil-lamps were the source of light, hung from a hook in the low ceilings, and I remember vividly a 'nearly fire' when our 'ball' smashed into one and splattered burning paraffin all over the room - I think we spent 90% of our leisure kicking 'balls' about (rolled-up balls made from socks, etc, tied with string). There was a huge cellar, which was forbidden territory unless Father was down there too - in any case, the trap door was too heavy to lift; I have no recollection of bedrooms, probably because we were too tired to notice them after our full days of activity and simply fell asleep as soon as we 'hit the pillow'.

We each had our own garden area, with rabbits in hutches as pets, and it isn't long since my gardening spade 'gave up the ghost' (1960). I was always under the impression that Father had the handle of an ordinary spade shortened, specially for me, and only later found out that it was his pit spade. In his mining days they

often worked in confined areas where there simply wasn't enough head-room to use the normal length, and if I'd known this earlier, I would have preserved it as a grim reminder of the conditions under which they worked.

It was whilst living in Marsh House that two events left an indelible impression on my mind, viz, going down a mine, and the result of bombing by the Graf Zeppelin in New Springs (about a mile from where we lived).

A deep mine, in the 'bowels of the earth', is definitely no place for a little boy of five or six years of age; the cage-drop still lives vividly in my memory after 70+ years, with its attendant clanking noises, pitch-blackness, and what seemed to be frightening speed; those among you who are reading this may have experienced a slight 'twinge' when descending in a stores lift - multiply that by about 3000, and you might be somewhere near the effect of the first drop in a pit-cage for one little boy! And on reaching the bottom, crawling along dark tunnels, through holes which weren't high enough for even a small boy to walk upright through, let alone hefty miners - what grim working conditions they had in those days - no wonder they were hard men.

Sunday was their only day off, and they made their own fun - whippet racing down the mineral railway lines (closed for the day); 'Piggy' on the marsh-lands (I could whittle a 'pig' from a short length of sawn-off broomstick, at so early an age) with lads acting as their 'runners' - the skillful ones could drive the 'pigs' a tremendous distance when they hit it true in the air with their 'pick-arms' - a bit like a cricketer hitting a ball right with his bat. Any outdoor activity was 'on' for them after working underground all week. Wrestling matches on the pub bowling greens was another popular pastime, with no-one getting hurt - just 'licked'.

I am not sure of the legal position re children 'visiting' a mine around 1919, but do know that they were not allowed down in 1950 if under 12 years of age, and that in 1885 (probably before) they were not allowed to work in the mine until they were 12 years old. In his position of Under Manager, Father was required to go down on Sundays, when the mine wasn't working, to carry out checks for safety purposes, etc, and it was on such



Marsh House, Aspull (site now occupied by Leisure Centre). Home of the Davies family from May 1918

an occasion that I went down with him - there were other men in the cage, but I don't know why.

Where there were miners, there were footballers, chiefly in the Rugby League code, but there was one of Father's men who played for Manchester United if and when Father would conveniently arrange his shifts for him so that he was free on Saturdays and any week-day games which cropped up. Can you believe it? The mighty Manchester United having to go cap-in-hand to a colliery Under Manager to get one of their players released from work to play for them? He used to boast about having a complimentary stand-ticket to use any time he cared to visit Old Trafford - a 'sweetener', unsolicited, for his co-operation.

War with Germany broke out when I was two years old, and all through the four years it meant very little to us at that age; our parents must have been hard put to keep us as a family, but I don't remember going so short that it hurt - no doubt Mother would be the one who would feel the pinch most. But the night the Graf Zeppelin came over and bombed close by taught us the reality of war far better than any verbal instruction; they dropped about a mile from Marsh House, and the next morning, early, all the village hared down the road to see the damage. Though it was slight, one terraced house being demolished, with the death of father and son, and bomb craters around the area, it was a pretty

awesome scene to children - stench of explosives and smouldering ruins, etc. But getting back to normal didn't take long, and though the war was still raging, we knew little of it after the bombing and it came to an end later that year.

We blithely continued to enjoy the life of miners' children; there was a lot of open land on which to roam, playing football or anything else which took our fancy - sliding down pit rucks on bits of wood or old spades, scrap-metal, etc - anything which would protect our trouser-seats. I remember very little of school except that we attended the Methodist day school by the Finger-Post junction; I don't think I could have been very interested!

A little more than one year after the war we left Aspull and moved to Coppull; Father had become disillusioned with mining - he foresaw the trouble with the removal of war subsidies. He decided to buy a grocery business in Coppull, another mining village six or seven miles away, and leave mining for good. Coppull was not a lot different from Aspull but had less open space to roam in, and was more built up into a smaller total area.

There were only the Church Schools when we took up our new life; a new Council School was still under construction and not ready for use - just our bad luck, as it was just across the road

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Memories from the life of James A. Davies

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from our new dwelling, 109 Spendmore Lane West. We were enrolled at Coppull Moor C E School, probably because it was in a close-knit mining area, almost a mile from the centre of the village.

We were 'mistakenly' dressed up in sailor-suits etc for our first day, and the lads up there couldn't believe their luck - new lads, and dressed-up into the bargain. What they didn't know, of course, was that like them we were miner's kids, perhaps even harder than they were, but after fighting for every minute of non-class time, we returned home a bit worse for wear. Our poor little sailor suits never went up there again, 'ganseys' (woollen jerseys) and clogs ever after being the order of the day. I don't remember any further trouble after that first day - miners' lads were very quick to recognise like-kind, and we were accepted. Again, as at Aspull I don't remember anything about classroom activity, only that discipline was way over the top, the cane being the answer to every misdemeanour.

At that time there was very little traffic on the roads - buses hadn't reached Coppull; I don't remember any cars, but motor lorries were in use to some extent; horse-drawn carts were in use and carriages for outings; adults had bikes, and for the rest it was Shanks' Pony. The lorries were limited to eight or ten miles per hour and it was common practice for lads who were fleet of foot to catch up with them from behind and get a free ride by swinging on the back. We had almost a mile to walk to school, another one back, twice per day as there were no school dinners, so the free lift helped, until the headmaster got to know and caned us severely. My partner in crime on this occasion was a policeman's son, also named Davies, and I have remained convinced to this day that he laid on twice as hard because of this - he was the type of man who would delight in punishing the law whilst at the same time upholding it. The punishment was effective - I 'caught' no more lorries, at least not on Coppull Moor.

After six months up there, the newly built Council School was opened, and as it was just across the road from our house, so we were naturally transferred. However, I kept in touch with all my friends at Coppull Moor for a long time, and had formed a pattern of activities which we were reluctant to give up - football, roaming in the woods with 'swings' in trees, 'paddling' in pit flashes, where the water was shallow, and watching and learning from the miners at play. Wrestling and boxing were very popular sports in mining areas, all in a good spirit, and I don't remember anyone getting really hurt in this play - there was always an adult around if the 'gloves' were on. I remember Father advising me to keep away from Coppull Moor, saying that I wasn't big enough for that lot, and that I would get 'kilt', but it wasn't an order and I kept going - and survived!

After a while, life wasn't much different in the main village; mining for the men and the mill for the women were the chief sources of income, and we lived in the area of Coppull where all the property had been built and was owned by the mine-owners. There was never a shortage of children where miners dwelt, but unlike our previous experiences, we were in a built-up area with nowhere to play, and the streets became our football pitches, etc - many a window had to be paid for, not to mention having to flee from the village bobby, whose on-the-spot punishment wasn't to be laughed at (if he could catch us).

I was only caught once, because I couldn't run fast enough. My 'gansey' was one of the goal posts and I hadn't time to retrieve it before fleeing from his irate approach; on arriving home without it, I was quickly dispatched to the police station to get it back. I came away chastised, with a warning not to let it happen again - and it didn't; someone else's property made the goal posts ever after!

I progressed at school fairly easily, without a lot of enthusiasm; I must have been a 'clever-clogs' as I was always with older boys and girls, but my highlight was becoming old enough to join the woodwork group at 11 years of age; as far as I was concerned, it was here that my schooling really began. I had 'dabbled' at home with the limited facilities

available, but now I had good equipment and a teacher to hand, and took to it like a duck to water, and soon became noticed.

Much was done in the woodwork room to help the teachers with things that helped them and for which there was no money to purchase. We kept the pencils sharp (no pencil sharpeners) and using a chisel for that purpose was a very trustworthy job, done by the teacher as a rule, but Mr Blamire soon off-loaded this task on to me when he realised my potential with a chisel. The number of boxes I made, of various forms for particular uses, was unbelievable; they had to be neatly made and presentable for the teachers' desks.

One half-day per week was our ration, and we couldn't wait for woodwork day to come round. On one occasion the teacher, Mr Blamire, was unaccountably missing and all was doom and gloom - no woodwork! However, he turned up at play-time - he came from Blackpool, by train, and had fallen asleep and finished up at Wigan, and had to wait for a train back to Coppull!

On reaching the age of 11 years, scholars were eligible for the State Scholarship exam if the headmaster thought they were good enough, and I was duly entered. Until that year, 1924, it consisted of written papers in English and Arithmetic. Myself and a neighbour, Olive Morris, succeeded, only to be informed that, for the first time, we were to undergo a further oral test, conducted by the headmaster and staff of the local Grammar School. For the year leading up to the written exam, we 'elite' had been withdrawn from class - eight in number - and set up in the head's room to concentrate on the two subjects, under his personal supervision. When we presented ourselves to the oral exam at Balshaw's Grammar School, we were well below their expectations in History, Geography etc (no wonder, as we hadn't touched anything but English and Maths for a year) and we failed, probably hopelessly!

I was not unduly worried by the result (though smarted a little through being branded a failure) as at that time there were no woodwork rooms in grammar schools (brother Jack was already there) and even at that early age my mind was fixed on going to the Tech as soon as I was old enough; the workshops were more in my line than Latin etc.

Failing to gain entrance to Grammar, I had a year in which to prepare for the Tech, and spent much of that time in the woodwork room; along with three others, we made a barometer for the school, which was hung in the corridor when complete - I wonder if it's still there? I had no difficulty passing the Tech entrance exams - no 'oral' this time - at the end of the year's preparation.

Throughout those years of school and play and Chapel I don't remember any dull moments, or discontent. I was amongst my own kind, and a bit more mature than the eight year-old who had come to Coppull from the wilds of Aspull. I could walk into any number of houses in Darlington Street, along with boys who lived in them, and be treated to jam butties, etc, as one of the family - there were so many lads already that an extra one didn't make any difference, and that was the way the whole streets lived - the loaf and jam and the knife were always on the table, and mothers were the salt of the earth - rough and ready in the main, but generous to a fault (to children at least). I remember with pleasure the Foster's, Holme's, Green's, Culshaw's, Wilson's, Aspinall's, Watson's, Walsh's, Thompson's and Platt's, many of whose descendants (like me) are still around with two further generations of their own. Marvellous times, without any 'pocket money' - we didn't need it! The Saturday morning 'penny rush' at the local cinema (commonly known as the 'bug-hut') was the only money I can remember handling.

Sunday School was our only real social life, with 'field-days' and gatherings, tea-parties and games in the schoolroom, and during these years we didn't leave the village much - occasional trips to Wigan on the Saturday afternoon special trains with Mother (I was needed to be her 'bag-carrier'). Sixpence return was the fare, and usually standing room only.

In the next issue, James Davies recalls his days at Wigan Technical College. Ed.

HISTORY SHOP NEWS

EXHIBITIONS IN THE HISTORY SHOP

THE TAYLOR GALLERY

20 April - 27 June

* A Good Send Off - Funeral Customs Through the Ages

6 - 31 July

* Wigan Arts Festival Exhibition

3 - 15 August

* Atherton & District Photographic Society Annual Exhibition

21 August - 5 September

* Wigan Photographic Society Annual Exhibition

THE WICKHAM GALLERY

* Charter '96 - A Celebration of 750 Years of Local Government in Wigan

* Reverend William Wickham - A Victorian Photographer

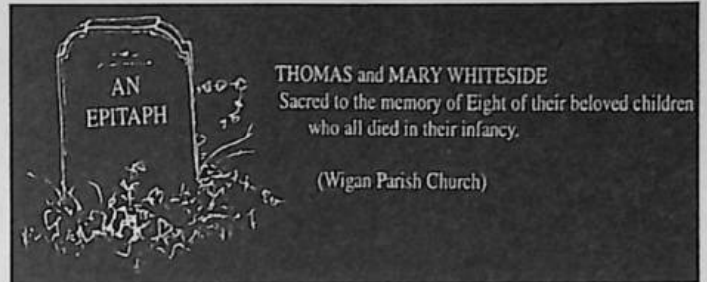
'A Good Send Off - Funeral Customs Through the Ages', has been showing in the Taylor Gallery since April. This excellent exhibition, written, designed and produced by Wigan Heritage Service, deals with this sometimes difficult subject in a sensitive and yet informative manner. From churchyard to cemetery to crematoria the wish to give our loved ones a good send off remains the same. The social history of this subject is explored in depth and, where possible, illustrated by local examples and photographs. After a less than successful appeal for local help with the objects, items were, however, kindly loaned for the exhibition by T. Cribb & Sons, a London

based firm of funeral directors who are hoping to establish a national funeral collection.

The show has already proved itself to be very popular, and received both local newspaper and local radio attention on its opening. It will run in Wigan until 27 June, but don't despair if you do miss out! It will be on show again at the Derby Rooms, Turnpike Centre, Leigh, in September. And don't forget the associated cemetery walks. Tony Ashcroft will be leading the Leigh Cemetery Walk on 22 June and the Wigan Cemetery (Lower Ince) Walk on 24 June, admission £1.

Coming up in the Taylor Gallery is the exhibition for Wigan Arts Festival. Last year the gallery was filled with works from the Standish and Ashton Art Groups, but the contributors this year have not yet been announced. This will be followed by the annual exhibitions of first the Atherton and District and then the Wigan Photographic Societies. So a visual treat to look forward to at the History Shop this summer.

Meanwhile, downstairs in the Wickham Gallery, the high standard of exhibition is continued. The Art Gallery, the Wigan Mural, our new and exciting video presentation and the exhibition celebrating the life and photographs of Rev. W. Wickham all remain popular, as does Charter '96, the Wickham Gallery's first major installation, celebrating 750 years of local government in our Borough.

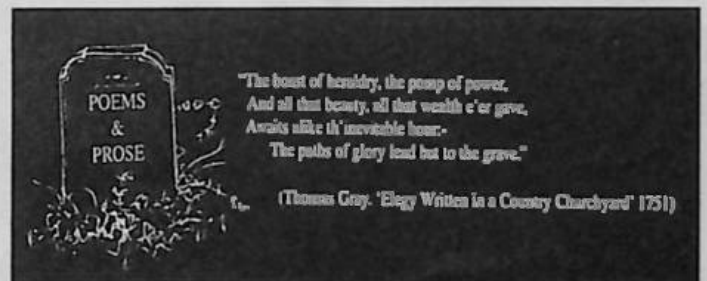


THOMAS and MARY WHITESIDE
Sacred to the memory of Eight of their beloved children
who all died in their infancy.

(Wigan Parish Church)



Jennifer McCarthy, social history officer with one of the exhibits in "A Good Send-Off".



"The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike th'inevitable hour -
The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

(Thomas Gray, 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' 1751)

PUBLIC LECTURES IN THE HISTORY SHOP

The new season kicks off on 14 October, at 7.30 pm, with 'The Edge Green Colliery Disaster' by James Fairhurst.

Photo courtesy of Lancashire Evening Post



'F R I E N D S

YOU may recall that in the last two editions of *Past Forward* we have floated the idea of a Friends group for Wigan Heritage Service. As the provider of Heritage for the whole of the Borough we must look to every opportunity to publicise our services to as wide an audience as possible. To this end we feel that the setting up of a Friends organisation would give you, the public, better access to us and to these services. Many other museums have Friends, as do many archives offices, and even some local history libraries. Where we want to be different is to offer Friendship to all of these services under the one banner, Wigan Heritage Service. Not only do we want to include all services, but we also want to include all areas. This will be a borough wide organisation without prejudice; the History Shop may be in Wigan, the Archives may be in Leigh, but the Friends will be in all parts of the borough.

In April we held a public meeting at the History Shop on this subject and got some very constructive feedback. Outlined on that occasion were five areas where we felt our Friends could help us:

Attendance - whether it is by visiting the History Shop or one of our other venues, or just browsing through our exhibitions, doing specific research or attending a special event like a lecture, walk or workshop, we need your support. We will keep you informed about what is going on, we will even try to respond to

your suggestions for what should go on, but we need people to come along and make sure these things succeed.

Advocacy - tell everyone about the Heritage Service - we have a great deal to offer. Whether your interest is local history, family history or simply visiting museums, we cater for all heritage tastes and it is vital that you spread the word.

Feedback - we need a trusted group to tell us what they think about the service we provide - about our lectures, our exhibitions or the service at our public desks. Unless you tell us how we are doing, and hopefully how we can improve, then we will go on thinking that we are doing a simply marvellous job, and not improve!

Generosity - can you spare us the time and commitment required to get this project off the ground? We need people to get involved to organise, support and be enthusiastic about the area and its heritage.

Projects - we can't say exactly what the Friends will want to get involved with, but the potential for projects is limitless. Whether it's local history based around a small corner of the borough, research into our fine art collection or family history indexing schemes, if the idea of working with a group of like-minded Friends appeals to you, then why not give it a try?

These points were not presented in any particular order, and two things became clear at the meeting. Firstly all those present were very enthusiastic and supportive of our ideas, and secondly the last area men-



W D S'

...ioned, projects, really fired the debate and most people
 ...ere keen to get started straight away! This has set us
 ... the Heritage Service thinking about what projects we
 ...eel would be most important, but ultimately the type of
 ...oject work undertaken will be directed by you, the
 ...iends.

We are offering an organisation for you, and hoping
 ...at, once established, it will be run by you. Initially we
 ...ould offer a page or two in *Past Forward* for Friends-
 ...liated items and news, a monthly meeting at the History
 ...oop to discuss organisation and projects, and a mem-
 ...bership scheme to allow friends to enrol, contribute and
 ...ceive a regular copy of *Past Forward*.

If you are interested, please fill in the form below and
 ...turn it to Wigan Heritage Service Friends, The History
 ...op, Library Street, Wigan WN1 1NU.

We would like to thank all of you for supporting the
 ...eritage Service through *Past Forward* over the last seven
 ...ears (yes, it's been going that long!) It is, to a large
 ...extent, down to the enthusiasm you,
 ...readers, have shown that we are
 ...oving ahead with a Friends scheme.
 ...Thank you for all the donations and
 ...contributions. *Past Forward* is now
 ...ceived by nostalgic Wiganers all
 ...over the world. We would like to

invite those of you on our mailing list, not able to come
 ...along and get physically involved, also to become friends
 ...and feel a part of this scheme. If we get a high enough
 ...response from you we will be able to transfer our mail-
 ...ing list into a Friends list and include you all, so please
 ...do take a minute or two to fill in the form below.

From January 1999 the membership of the Friends
 ...group will officially take off. We are proposing a mem-
 ...bership fee of £5 per annum, the monies to be used for
 ...*Past Forward* and the Friends. If you can afford it and
 ...feel that *Past Forward* is worth it, all donations will be
 ...gratefully received. If we get a good response from this
 ...appeal we will have another public meeting in Wigan in
 ...the autumn to report back. There will be more details of
 ...the scheme, and a registration form, in the next issue of
 ...*Past Forward* which will be sent out as usual in November.

In the meantime, wherever you are, please complete
 ...and return the form below (a photocopy will do if you
 ...don't want to deface your copy of *Past Forward*).



FRIENDS OF WIGAN HERITAGE SERVICE



Register of interest

Name..... Title.....

Address.....

..... Tel.....

Do you support the idea of a Friends Organisation Yes/No

General Area of Interest (e.g. museums, local history, archives, genealogy)

.....

Area of any specialist knowledge

.....

Ways you feel you can help (e.g. research, organisation, fundraising)

.....

IN the last 'Past Forward' Mr. Harold Knowles wrote about his memories of Ashton Grammar School. Here are his recollections of growing up in Ashton-in-Makerfield during the 1930's.

ASHTON-IN-MAKERFIELD IN THE 1930's

THE Public Library in Ashton-in-Makerfield stands at the junction of Wigan Road and Old Road, the main entrance being from Wigan Road. The building is of red brick construction, the doors and windows being framed in dressed stonework. On the stone lintel above the main door are carved the words "Carnegie Library", for this library is one of the many examples of the generosity of Andrew Carnegie, the Scottish iron and steel magnate, who made his fortune in the USA in the 19th century.

Compulsive Reader

I think I must have been about 8 or 9 years old when I first began to use the library on a regular basis and I was quickly hooked. I became a compulsive reader of anything and everything, often in trouble at home because my head would be stuck in a book when I should have been attending to other matters.

In addition to library books there were weekly magazines, although of course these had to be bought. How many readers remember those boys' magazines such as the *Adventure* (published on Monday), the *Wizard* (Tuesday), the *Rover* (Thursday), the *Hotspur* (Friday) and the *Skipper* (Saturday). They each cost 2d (less than 1p) and never in my life have I had better value for money. I couldn't afford to buy them all of course, few boys could, but we had a well-organised swap system whereby different boys bought different magazines and, having read them, swapped them round for the others. This way, for the price of one magazine, you got to read the lot!

There were some great stories in them and every so often the publisher (D. C. Thompson of Dundee) would give out with the magazines a free gift of some sort of knick-knack or other. These magazines were not picture comics of the *Dandy* or *Beano* variety -

in fact they contained very few pictures, they were mostly closely printed prose. And they were very well written, not in the Charles Dickens or Sir Walter Scott class perhaps, but they used good basic grammar.

There was Wilson, the ageless record-breaking athlete in the *Wizard*, Alf Tupper the Tough of the Track in the *Rover*, Red Circle School and the detestable Mr. Smugg in the *Hotspur*, the Wolf of Kabul with Chang and "Clicky-ba" in the *Adventure* and Solo Solomon, a cowboy, in the *Skipper*.

One type of event of great interest and excitement in the 1930's was the Air Display, sometimes called a Flying Circus. These shows toured the country, setting up on the outskirts of a town where they could find a field big and level enough to provide an adequate runway.

The shows consisted of a couple of old Tiger Moth bi-planes which would be used for the stunts and trick flying; sometimes there might be a small cabin plane to take up several people at a time for joyrides, but more usually the Tiger Moths would also be used for joyrides. The show which I remember coming to Ashton set up in a large field at Pewfall between Liverpool Road and the East Lancashire Road.

There would be displays of parachute jumping and some stunt flying with one of the bi-

planes chasing and dive-bombing an open-topped car with bags of flour. Some shows featured a Bird-man who would jump from a plane wearing a type of webbed suit which was supposed to help him glide to earth. The number of people willing to take on the Bird-man's job diminished considerably following a number of fatal accidents, the the popularity of Air Displays declined as people became more sophisticated and aeroplanes came into more and more common use.

The Fair came to Ashton

Twice a year, in Spring and Autumn, the "Fair" came to Ashton. The main concessionaire for the Fair was Silcock's of Warrington who were responsible for the erection and operation of the main rides and the renting out of concessionary pitches for sideshows and other stalls. The main rides hardly varied from year to year, the regular favourites being the "Noah's Ark" and the "Waltzer". Occasionally there would be a galloping horse ride and I think there were dodgem cars one year, but usually it was the good old Noah's Ark and Waltzer.

In the 1930's the sideshows often included a boxing booth among the coconut shies and rifle ranges. Challengers would be invited from the crowd to stand up to the booth's bruisers for three rounds to win about 5 shillings (25p) and some (fleeting) local fame.

I remember one year a "Wall of Death" came to Ashton Fair. They had the usual motor cycles whizzing round the inside of the wall, but they also had something different - they had a real live lion sitting in the sidecar of a three-wheeled motor cycle combination being driven round the wall by a girl. The lion was a poor specimen,

rather moth-eaten and, apparently, toothless but it was, nevertheless, a real lion and it caused quite a stir in Ashton!

Another year a circus was part of the Fair. It wasn't a very large circus - it was, in fact, a very, very small circus. Even its star performer was on the small side - it was a Shetland pony called "Tishy". Tishy wouldn't let anyone stay on his back and, of course, the volunteer riders from the audience provided most of the fun with their antics.

There was also the usual collection of coconut shies, roll-a-penny stalls and housey-housey stalls etc. There were small rides for small people and big rides for bigger people. We lads used to envy the youths who worked on the Noah's Ark and the Waltzer collecting money from the riders, flirting with the girls and having free rides. There was something for everyone really - if you were too old for the Noah's Ark and the Waltzer and too infirm to throw at the coconuts, there was always the cough candy and brandy snap stall!

Some tut-tutting

There were a few regular families who ran the sideshows and stalls on the Fair. One of these families was called Chadwick and in about 1941 Tommy Chadwick opened an Amusement Arcade in a shop next door to Abel Ogden's barber shop, a couple of doors from the Congregational Church in Gerard Street. He had the usual assortment of machines normally found in such establishments - electric and mechanical pin-tables, slot machines, one-armed bandits, coin-operated football games etc. One unusual feature was that he had a small live chim-



Ashton-in-Makerfield in the 1930's

continued from p14

panzee in the front window of the arcade. Despite some tut-tutting from the self-appointed guardians of the town's moral rectitude, the Amusement Arcade was very respectable and, to the best of my knowledge, never gave any justifiable cause for concern. Most youngsters liked it and got a lot of pleasure out of the coppers they spent there.

The recreational activity of swimming was one that we couldn't enjoy in Ashton even though there was a Public Swimming Baths situated in Morden Avenue between Wigan Road and Old Road. It had been built in the late 1920's/early 1930's and by the mid 1930's swimming at the Baths had been abandoned because of the effects on the pool of mining subsidence. Thereafter the Baths building was used as a Public Hall, the swimming pool having been boarded over. Public meetings were held here and free school dinners served. During the War the Baths Hall was very popular for regular Saturday night dances. Strangely I never knew of anyone who had ever been swimming in Ashton Baths. There was even a story - unconfirmed - that the pool was defective from its immediate completion and that it had never been used for swimming!

One of our favourite places for playing, away from adult interference, was in Lowbank Road, off Old Road, where there was a field with a very large pond called the 'Meadow'. The pond was at one end of the field and on the far side of the pond there was a large piggery which formed the boundary of the land. To get to the piggery from the field you would need a boat and this effectively kept us and the pigs well apart.

The piggery was owned by a chap called Jimmy Hodson who lived in a house in Lowbank Road, practically next door to the Meadow. Who owned the Meadow we never knew, although it might very well have been Jimmy Hodson.

Whoever owned it was very tolerant of us lads because during the years that I remember playing there, not once were we chased off.

There was quite a healthy fish population in the pond, including perch, roach and, for the smaller kids, minnows which they caught with shrimping nets and put in jam jars. We fished for the roach and perch using home-made rods with worms for bait. I remember, early in my fishing career, taking home a couple of perch which I had caught, thinking I would get domestic 'brownie-points' for providing the family tea, but I was quickly disillusioned and left in no doubt that future piscatorial offerings would be equally unwelcome. Some of my mates had a similar reception and, in future, anything we caught, which wasn't a lot, was thrown back.

Winters were, generally, colder in those days and the pond always froze over, attracting skaters from far and wide. Although we joined in the fun, we local lads felt a bit resentful at this influx of 'foreigners' and most of us were glad when the thaw set in and we had the pond to ourselves once more.

Further along Lowbank Road from the Meadow was Skitters Wood which had a public right of way running through it. This was a very popular place for Sunday evening strolls in the summer, but it was even more popular with us lads the rest of the week for general messing about, particularly since there was a stream running along one side of the public right of way. On the other side there was a grassy bank which rose to a height of about 30 feet at an angle of 45 degrees - absolutely perfect for tobogganing in winter. We discovered that it was also perfect for tobogganing in summer when we found that an empty cardboard box would slide down grass just as quickly as a sled on snow! In fact, we soon realised that we didn't need a whole cardboard box - a small piece of cardboard was sufficient to do the job. I'm afraid we wouldn't be able to do much tobogganing in Skitters Wood today - the M6 motorway runs right through it!



Gerard Street, Ashton-in-Makerfield in the 1930's

Aeronautical Experimentation

As well as the forms of entertainment and recreation already described, I and my pals indulged in the usual forms of kid's activities - football, cricket, bike riding, making a nuisance of ourselves and so on. We also ventured into the realms of aeronautical experimentation in a minor way. At the time we were growing up the development of aircraft and matters aeronautical was accelerating rapidly, and it naturally excited the interest of me and my mates. We already knew how to make paper aeroplanes by a simple method of folding, but we began to experiment with different grades and thicknesses of paper, and with different sizes of finished product. We also bought cheap gliders made from pressed cardboard and, although we didn't know the technical terms then, we experimented by changing the angles of dihedral where the wings bend up and anhedral where the wings bend down. We even looked at books in the library and learned a little about the principles of flight.

At the time, parachute jumping was gaining popularity, not only as a life-saving device, but as a sport. We made parachutes from handkerchiefs or larger pieces of cloth if we could find any. They were very simple - a piece of string from each of the four corners leading to a suitable object (bottle screw tops were popular) to represent the man. You then threw the whole lot up into the air and watched it float down! The only scope for experiment was to vary the size of the canopy (handkerchief) and the weight of the man (bottle cap). Although one of the older boys

carved a wooden model of a man for his parachute, we soon got bored with parachutes and returned to our gliders and paper aeroplanes.

We also explored the science of kite-flying. We never had much money, so we made everything ourselves if we possibly could. For kites this meant sheets of newspaper stuck with flour and water paste on to frames made from thin sticks, usually in an X shape bound together in the centre and with string running all round the perimeter. The sticks we got free in our front garden from a clump of tall flowers which grew on very stout stems and which, luckily, were very abundant. The string we would beg and borrow. Kites were good because they gave ample opportunities for experiment. The drawback was that we had to go quite a way from home to find enough open space for flying them.

The ubiquitous chip

Kenyon's chip shop, almost next door to Harry Morris's grocers shop at the Ashton end of Old Road, used to have a small area of the shop partitioned off as a café area with a few chairs and bare tables where customers could sit down to eat. The menu was basic - really basic! - and relied heavily on the ubiquitous chip. It was a chip shop, after all. You could have fish and chips, meat and potato pie and chips, steak and kidney pie and chips, and steak pudding and chips. There was the option of peas and/or gravy with everything. There were no starters and no sweet courses. As already stated, the food was

continued on p16

Ashton-in-Makerfield in the 1930's

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basic but very, very, tasty and tremendous value for money. The prices were reasonable almost to the point of bankruptcy! Fish and chips - 6d (2½p), meat and potato pie and chips - 6d, with steak and kidney pie and chips or steak pudding and chips perhaps a penny dearer. The gravy was optional but free, the peas were optional but a copper extra per portion. The food was very tasty, very nourishing and very popular - many customers ordered their sit-down meals in advance if they were going to the pictures first.

A pal of mine, Tom Riley, and I used to be able to have a good Saturday night out for a shilling (5p) each. We would be about 12 or 13 years old and we would go to the first house (performance) at one of the local cinemas, usually the Palace in Bryn Street or the Queens in Wigan Road. The cheapest seats cost 6d (2½p) and there were two performances each night except Sunday when they were all closed. The first house started at 6pm, the second house at 8pm. There were two pay boxes, one called the 'bottom doors' for the cheaper seats and one called the 'top doors' for the more expensive seats. Sheer social discrimination of course!

On our way to the pictures Tom and I would call at Kenyon's chip shop to order our supper. It never varied - meat and potato pie and chips with lashings of gravy, a really good meal for 6d. Add the 6d for the pictures and we had a jolly good night out for a shilling (5p). Those were the days!

Money was in short supply

For most families money was in short supply in the 1930's. Families were generally larger than in the 1990's and, once the basic essentials of rent, food and clothing had been provided for, there wouldn't be much left for such luxuries as regular weekly pocket money for all the family's children. Some children solved the problem by finding spare time jobs. I was one of them.

When I was about 12 or 13 years old I started taking out grocery orders for 'Tanny' Wright, the grocer in Old Road opposite Sutton's Farm. The correct name of this grocer was, of course, Nathan Wright, although he was universally known as 'Tanny'. He had two shops, the one in Old Road and one in Wigan Road almost opposite the Grammar School.

In those pre-supermarket days there were, in addition to dozens of small corner shops, a number of large independent grocers and branches of the

national multiple grocers such as Maypole, Meadow Dairy, Melias and, of course, the Co-op. Among the independent grocers were Harry Morris at the corner of Bryn Street and Old Road, Dixons in Gerard Street next to Timothy White and Taylor, the chemist, and Halliwells in Wigan Road, near Bryn Station, as well as the aforementioned 'Tanny' Wright.

Digressing slightly, it is interesting to note that, on leaving school, I served articles of pupilage together with Alan Morris, son of the grocer, Harry Morris, in the Engineer and Surveyor's Department of Ashton-in-Makerfield Urban District Council under the Engineer and Surveyor to the Council, Mr. A. K. Dennis. Alan Morris would later become Engineer and Surveyor to Orrell Urban District Council whilst at the same time I was Engineer and Surveyor to Standish-with-Langtree Urban District Council. Alan was also ex-Ashton Grammar School.

All the independent grocers at that time gave a delivery service for orders, usually by bicycle, and for Tanny Wright's Old Road branch yours truly was the delivery service. The delivery bikes were those somewhat cumbersome machines which had a large wheel at the back and a small wheel at the front with a large metal frame about 2 feet square and 18 inches deep sitting over the front wheel. Some bikes had a large metal plate under the cross-bar with the grocer's name printed in white lettering on both sides. Mine didn't.

Glad I was a big lad

Customers would either phone in their orders or drop their written orders into the shop in mid-week. Almost all the orders would have to be delivered on a

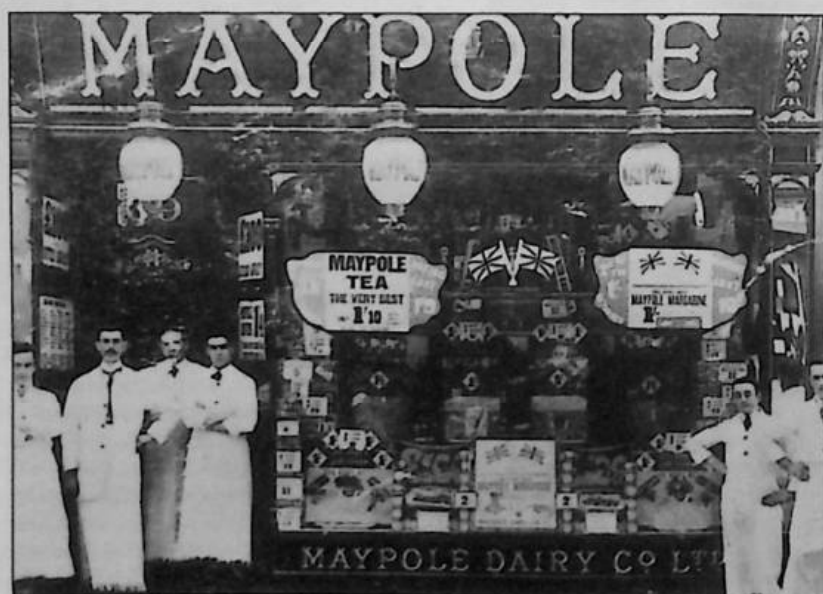
Saturday, although in busy times I would also work on Friday evenings. These working hours made it an ideal spare-time, pocket-money job for a schoolboy. The job, however, was no pushover since the bikes, as they had to be, were solid, strong, and heavy and they only had single gears - at least mine had. Add the weight of groceries in the front basket and I was often glad I was a big lad!

The best times in the job, almost by contradiction, were the busiest and Christmas was the high spot of the year. Everyone had much bigger orders than usual and they all wanted their orders delivered on Christmas Eve. The difficulties of trying to do almost double the normal amount of work were intensified by early darkness and inclement weather. But we managed somehow and the tips more than made up for the aggravation. For a normal Saturday I used to be paid 2s.6d. (12½p). Normal tips could amount to an extra couple of shillings or so, but at Christmas Tanny Wright's customers were specially generous with tips and my normal 'wage' would be supplemented by anything between £1.10s. and £2.

In my final year at school, in the Upper Fifth form, the local Post Office asked the Grammar School for senior pupils from the Upper Fifth and Sixth Forms to work as part-time postmen to help out with the Christmas rush. Since I was, by then, no longer working for Tanny Wright, I volunteered.

We worked for about a week or so before Christmas, full time, and a few of us also did the Christmas Day shift from about 8 a.m. till lunch time. Christmas Day was not, of course, a popular shift with the regular postmen, most of whom would want to have a full Christmas Day with their families, but we didn't mind and I think we got double pay for it. We got a few tips as well.

(To be continued)



Maypole Dairy Stores, Gerard Street, Ashton-in-Makerfield c.1901

Here is another of Ernie's motoring memories. Ed.

I remember when

AS a young man I had experience of driving many different types of vehicles, including many whose names are now forgotten such as Delage, Clyno, Swift and many others, but the most hair-raising experience was in the old "Tin Lizzie" Ford Model T.

I had been detailed to collect one from the repairers and drive it back to its own garage and, as my friends and I were going out to the pictures that night, I was allowed to collect it late at night. To impress my mates I invited them to come for the ride and experience, so several of them sat on the floor of the van behind me.

The route was downhill in a dip in the road, then later uphill. I negotiated the first part of the route OK (I had never driven a Model T for more than a few yards previously), but down hill where the road dipped before rising to the summit, I had the shock of my life - "Lizzie" would not climb the incline. After some thought I decided on a "U" turn to "attack" the hill I had just descended, get up the hill as far as possible, then another "U" turn to get a good run on the uphill run home to base. However, "Lizzie" refused again, so there we were with a van in the dip of the road and she refused to climb upwards, and the only way out was uphill



The Earl of Crawford, with his family and chauffeur in their model T Ford at Haigh Hall, Wigan, c. 1910

from the bottom of the dip.

Just then one of the lads shouted "It's on fire!" and they all scrambled out. Here it should be noted that the petrol tank on a Model T was under the driver's seat, whilst the exhaust pipe entered the cab and over the petrol tank and on this occasion it was glowing red. Panic stations! Switch off quickly! After a few minutes the glowing exhaust had cooled down so I decided to try again without the "moral" support of my mates who had fled the scene.

On reflection, I had decided the fault lay in something I hadn't done correctly, as the van had "been in dock" for body repairs - nothing mechani-

cally wrong, so it must be me. I therefore decided on a further attempt at the "Everest" in front of me. Then it dawned on me. Ignition! I had fully retarded it on the steering control when starting, as we always did, but one is supposed (as the vehicle picks up speed) to advance it gradually to fully advanced and I hadn't done so.

As few readers will have driven a Model T, let me say both main controls (ignition and throttle) are on a quadrant on the steering column, there is no foot accelerator so driving is by finger tip below the steering wheel. The left hand controls the ignition lever whilst the right hand controls the accelerator or throttle, and as the vehicle

gains speed the ignition lever is advanced accordingly. As, previous to this experience, I had only "shunted" this model in the yard, I had no experience of manually advanced ignition on the road, so I decided it was my fault and experimented with the ignition lever and lo and behold - she went up the hill like the proverbial bird. Ah well, we all have to learn. Needless to say, I had to take a "lot of stick" from my mates for some time afterwards. For example, "how do you get a marble out of a pudding basin without turning it upside down?" The "Tin Lizzie" was, of course, the marble, and the road contours they likened to a pudding basin.

© E. Taberner

'Wake' up at Wigan Pier

VISITORS to Wigan Pier are often slightly bewildered by the term 'Wakes Week', the time, of course, when pits and mills would close and those who could afford it would try and get to the coast for a holiday. The name originated in Mediaeval times when folk would stay 'a-wake' all night before a Saints Day, feasting, reveling and generally making merry. Between Monday 7th - Sunday 12th July, Wigan Pier will offer the chance to do just that (or at least, from 10 - 5 Monday to Thursday, 11 - 5 Saturday and Sunday!) in our very own 'Wakes Week'. A week of Victorian Lancashire - themed holiday fun will include games, trails, art workshops and performances by the Wigan Pier Theatre Company.

The new 'hands on' area for the under 7's - Pipers Alley (opened Easter '98) allows the younger visitor to step back in time and play with imaginary friends the Raffertys and the Blacoes. Pipers Alley is based on a real street that was located very near to Wigan Pier at the turn of the century. The census of 1881 means that we know the names, ages and even occupations of the

families that lived in these five terraced houses and we have created sounds and smells, stories and activities to help transport ourselves back to those times.



To mark Wigan M.B.C. Visual Arts Festival Saturday, 18th July will be the grand opening of a tactile map produced by GNVQ Art & Design students at St. Thomas More High School. This will greatly assist visitors to the site in both historical appreciation of the Pier and finding one's way around the large site. On Sunday 19th, local sculptor, Tony Unsworth, will be leading map-making workshops at the Pier - helping visitors to make their own 3D maps.

In the light of Wigan Pier's highly successful participation in Heritage Open Day 1997, the scheme is to be repeated this year. On September 13th and 14th, Wigan residents can visit the Pier free of charge (proof of residency must be shown).

For further details please contact Wigan Pier on 01942 323666.

STOP PRESS!

Wigan Heritage Service is now on the Internet! The web-site is very much in its infancy, but we will gradually be expanding it, to include the current issue of *Past Forward*, along with an index to previous editions, lists of genealogical sources, details of goods available from the Shop and news updates. You can access our new web-site at

<http://www.wiganmbc.gov.uk>

You can now also contact any branch of the Heritage Service at our new Email address

heritage@wiganmbc.gov.uk

Aspull & Haigh Historical Society

Meetings are held in the Village Centre, Bolton Road, Aspull, on the second Thursday of the month at 8.00 p.m. Further details from the Secretary, Mrs. Rosalie Naylor, 3 Pennington Close, Aspull, Wigan (01942 256145).

10 September

'Reminiscences of Royal Service' by Paul Kidd.

8 October

'A Dramatisation' by Irene Lizzie Jones.

12 November

'A Taste of Christmas' by Sheila Gallagher.

Atherton Heritage Society

Monthly meetings with talks on local history held at St. Richard's Jubilee Hall, Crabtree Lane, Atherton, on Tuesdays at 7.30 p.m. Non-members £1.50, including refreshments. Everyone welcome. Visits throughout the year to places of historical interest. Information from Hon. Sec. (01204 651478).

N.B. Please note change of venue and day.

10 August

'Any Old Iron' by Mr. G. Stockton.

14 September

'Clandestine Marriages in 18c.' by Mr. Blakeman.

12 October

A.G.M. starts 7.00p.m. prompt. Then at 7.45 p.m.:

'Tudor Houses in Lancashire and Cheshire' by Mr. Nigel Morgan, B.A.

9 November

'Local Railways of the Past' by Mr. Sweeney.

Golborne & Lowton Local History Society

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



Shrewsbury to Ince via Wellington

Dear Sir,

I am currently enjoying reading Issue No.18 and was reminded that I had prepared something to send to you.

My Perkins ancestors were incomers to Ince/Wigan, unlike my Brown ancestors who had been in the area since at least the 1790's.

Hope my effort is not too difficult to edit and that, if printed, somebody with local knowledge will be able to give some advice about schools etc. etc.

Why and when exactly did William Alexander Perkin, later Perkins, and

Ellen (formerly Griffiths) leave Shrewsbury where they had lived for approximately 10 years, the longest in one place since their marriage at St. Peters, Birmingham, on 12 June 1859? Presumably it had to do with employment for William, a spade tree maker or turner. A son, also William Alexander, had gone into the same occupation, according to the Shrewsbury Census of 1881, and William Alexander's younger brother, John Allen Perkin, shared the same occupation, also in Shrewsbury. So perhaps there was no longer enough work for all of them?

Why Ince-in-Makerfield? There were already Perkins families there with Staffordshire/Warwickshire/Worcestershire backgrounds. Could there have been a link? However, setting up in Ince probably took place in 1884/85. Whether parents and all the younger children of the family moved at the same time is not known, although I think it unlikely. Also exactly how many of the children re-located is not

known, but indications exist that Thomas (4th child/2nd son), Margaret (5th child/3rd daughter), Annie (7th child/5th daughter), Charles (8th child/3rd son), Harry (9th child/4th son), Albert (10th child/5th son) and Nellie (11th child/6th daughter) all lived in Ince. Whether Clara (6th child/4th daughter) stayed behind with older sisters, Mary and Caroline, or older brother, William Alexander, is not known, but at some point after his birth in Shrewsbury in 1888 Caroline's child, Thomas Henry Morris, also reached Ince, as he appears on the 1891 Census for 16 Warrington Road with his grandparents, three uncles and two aunts, one of whom was very little older than himself.

The older children who re-located whilst not at 16 Warrington Road were apparently nearby in Ince, apart from Margaret who appears to have been at Standish. She certainly married William Harrison there on 22 August 1891 at St. Wilfrid's Church, both addresses being shown as Standish.

So what was life like for the Perkin(s)es who were now in Ince? Life for the parents was probably very little different around 1884 as they still had quite a number of young children to care for, although Thomas aged approx. 16/17 would be looking for work, also Margaret aged approx. 14/15 and possibly Clara aged approx. 12/13 if she was in Ince. Presumably Annie aged approx. 11, Charles 9 and Harry 7 would have been enrolled at a local school. Would this have been the school at Ince further down Warrington Road which was built in 1866 by Mr. John Pearson and Mr. Thomas Knowles, owners of a local colliery and in memory of the latter's father? It later became St. Mary's Church School after the church was erected. Certainly some of them married at St. Mary's Church: Charles, of 1 Baldwin Street, to Elizabeth Ann Aspinall on 27 September 1902, Harry, of 16 Warrington Road, to Florence Annie Meacham on 3 August 1902, Nellie, of 2 Baldwin Street, to John Hitchen on 18 February

1905, Thomas (widower) of Westwood Hall, to Mary Small (widow) on 26 December 1918. However, Annie, of 16 Warrington Road, married Richard Gaskell at Wigan Parish Church on 22 December 1894.

So the new arrivals obviously did settle in, but what did the children and their parents sound like to their neighbours, workmates and school chums with their Shropshire accents or even lingering Worcestershire from William Alexander and Ellen? How did the newcomers cope with the 'Wigin' dialect?

If any of these names etc. strike a cord with anyone please get in touch, as I would very much like to know how other descendants of William Alexander and Ellen's eleven children fared.

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

SOCIETY NEWS

8 September

'Lancashire Dialect and Humour' by Brian Clare.

13 October

'The Role of Mayor' by Alderman Bernard Holt.

10 November

'The History of Lowton' by Alec Hughes.

Leigh & District Family History Society

Meetings are held on the 3rd Tuesday of every month in the Derby Room of Leigh Library. For further details contact the Secretary, Mrs. O. Hughes (01942 741594).

21 July

Visit to St. Helens Record Office.

18 August

Members' Question Time.

15 September

Members' Evening - Getting Started.

20 October

'Researching in Scotland' by Mr. D. Muir.

Leigh Literary Society

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

Leigh Local History Society

Meetings are held in the Derby Room, Leigh Library, on the last Wednesday of the month. 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 7.30 p.m. New members are always welcome.

7 October

'The Landscape and History of Anglezarke' by Dr. Baines.

Wigan Civic Trust

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

14 September

'The Impact of World War II on Local Government in South Lancashire' by Dr. Eric McPherson.

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 7.30 p.m. For further information contact Mrs Lynne Kearns, 28 Wareing Street, Tyldesley, Manchester M29 8HS (01942 878549).



Wigan Rowing Club

Dear Sir,

My father was a life member of the above club, as was his brother, who functioned as secretary. I'd love to hear of any Wiganers who had, or indeed have, connections.

In my youth I was taught to row, and apart from my first lesson on the canal, when I capsized the skiff and my poor father had to row back to the boathouse for dry

clothes whilst I was told to remain on the bank until he returned, all was very enjoyable and his sister and I spent many Sunday afternoons being rowed to Haigh, I believe it was, and of course rowing not too expertly.

On a more sombre note, I saw the green and gold colours making up a wreath at father's funeral, with a message from the club members.

Henrietta Bonikowski,
(formerly Sawbridge),
17 Thorpe Hall,
Eaton Rise,
Ealing,
London W5 2HB.

YATES, TURNER AND HINDLEY FAMILIES

Dear Sir,

I recently received a copy of *Past Forward* from a friend. I found your publication very interesting and I would like to receive future editions of *Past Forward* through the post.

I am also writing in the hope that your readers may be able to help me with my family history research, in particular on the maternal side of my father's family who came from the Leigh/Hindley Green/Lowton areas.

I am seeking descendants of the Yates, Turner and Hindley families.

My great grandfather, Peter Yates, was married to Margaret Alice Turner in December 1900. Peter was the youngest of 12 children born to Peter

Yates and Sarah Hindley. Peter and Sarah were married in March 1851. My great grandfather, Peter Yates, worked all his life in F.W. Bouth's Platt Fold Mill in Leigh. He was also a founder member of both the Leigh Labour Club and the Leigh Labour party. My great grandmother, Margaret Alice Turner, was the daughter of Richard Turner and Alice Leather. Richard was a coal miner. I know they had two other daughters, Jane and Nellie.

If any of your readers are able to help me in my research I would be most grateful.

Mrs Barbara Brick,
10 East Park Drive,
Droitwich,
Worcestershire.
WR9 9HG.
Tel. 09105 774390

When a pig's bladder "casey" was the ultimate goal

Dear Mr Gillies,

Many thanks for publishing two of my letters in Issue Number 18 of *Past Forward*.

There was I, enjoying a fairly unruffled, reasonably full sanguine sort of dotage when along comes this letter from a chap I have never met, residing in Leicester, accompanying which was a copy of *Past Forward* - I had never heard of it. That was back in 1996. Since then I have been constantly niggled by the thought of "Was there life BEFORE *Past Forward*?" If there was, then I can only surmise that it must have been pretty boring!

I write on this occasion to say how much I enjoyed reading Harold Knowles's article on Ashton Grammar School, at the same time appealing to his superior knowledge of the subject in sorting out for me a very confused picture.

I am almost certain that the photograph (which I would suggest is fairly recent) is of what I remember as the little R.C. Infant School, formerly a Grammar School which, I think, my mother and uncle attended. [Quite right! Ed.]

19th century quest

Dear Sir,

I am returning this copy of *Past Forward*, as I have already received my copy. It's too good to have a reader miss out on a copy!

I wonder if any of your readers has information on Wigan, Ashton-in-Makerfield, Upholland or Bolton in the middle 1800's, such as schools, shops, works, or any names about that time, such as Cove, Loftus and Coppinger?

Mrs M.E. Francis,
50 Breckbank,
New Ollerton,
Newark,
Notts. NG22 9XG.

The name Seneley Green was the previous name for Garswood and, if my observation is correct, the photograph shows, at the left hand side of the school, School Lane (presumably because of the said school) running north, to the crossroads of Station Road, Camp Lane and Victoria Road.

Looking beyond and to the right hand side of the school was waste land and, in the actual premises of the school itself was a disused mineshaft which we youngsters, via the negotiating of what had been well intended deterrents, could climb up the rotting wall of the circular effigy just for the hell of listening how long it took for stones or other missiles to fall to the bottom. This would continue for as long as the purveyor of the missiles could endure the stench emanating from the long deceased pet population of the district.

That telegraph pole (or tallypow) would be about in line with Ernie Pongo's shed. This was a large wooden garage built on a concrete base, though in my time I cannot remember any activity of that description being conducted there - it did make an excellent background for chalked wickets though!

In the bottom right hand corner of the picture we would have seen the corner of Mick Finnigan's fence, not a particularly interesting feature one might think but ... come slaughter time! News of Mick Finnigan's slaughter day would have spread like wildfire, attracting small boys (and some big) to the area described. Any vantage point available would be gained by personal endeavour at the good favour of a bigger boy.

Just what the attraction was in watching this despatching of overweight porkers I cannot now explain, but there was some kind of reward in the end ... unless you were very squeamish. The animals now well on their way, in a less whole form from that on entering the arena, to the rear of Mick's grocery cum butchery shop, but for the lucky (if

that word may be used) there was the prize of winning the scramble for the pigs' bladders. A quick wipe on the jersey, followed by a huffing and a puffing through the most revolting appendage and it was up to the croft for a game of kickabout with something as a welcome change to the wet, *Daily Dispatch* laden size 5 "casey", lethal at close range. I know of at least one occasion where one of the bladders took pride of place in one of our Sunday School concerts!

But poor old Mick, a dapper little Irishman in the mould of Adolf Menjou, even down to the waxed moustache, lost a trotter plus one bit. He tried to board a moving train at Garswood station and was dragged down in that gap twixt carriage and platform.

Moving now to the chronology of Ashton Grammar School. My late sister, born in 1908, and my late brother, Jim, born 1921, latterly Deputy Headteacher at St. James C. of E. School, Poolstock, latterly of Goose Green, both attended Ashton Grammar School as it stood in the Whitledge Green area, described in Mr. Knowles's article. Brother Jim must have left, perhaps in the year 1934 or 5 when the school was still at the above site.

I was not invited to sit the scholarship examination for reasons best known to my judges, but the term "too thick" looms ominously. I did, however, nearly make it to the Grammar School. I passed as a near-miss to the school next door - Ashton-in-Makerfield Central School, a brand new school, only three years old, in 1928. A meandering little brook marked the boundaries of the playing fields and often the scene of some verbal, often uncharitable exchanges between pupils nursing a grudge.

With kindest regards and continued success with the swelling of *Past Forward* success.

J. Harold Smith,
108 Worcester Lane,
Sutton Coldfield,
W. Midlands. B75 5NJ.



Recalling the psychological terror of 'T'

• *The interest in H.A.G.S. still goes on. Here are the memories of Mr. D. Huntington.*

Dear Sir,

I left the Wigan area over 40 years ago, but am always pleased to receive local news. I was recently given copies of Issues 16 and 17 of *Past Forward* and found them very interesting. When I saw the wrestler on the cover of Issue 16 I remembered watching Billy Riley in exhibition and instruction sessions in the 1940's. I think that as one gets older early memories become stronger and, of course, things are seen in a different light. This is perhaps particularly true of people who have lived far from their roots for many years. It is for these reasons that a publication similar to *Past Forward* is valuable.

I was particularly interested in the items about H.A.G.S and, at the risk of boring non-H.A.G.S readers, I should like to add a little to Harry Entwistle's contribution, with particular reference to the 'juggernaut' and Emma Naish. I went to Hindley a few years later than Harry and have many memories of the school, ranging from the frightening to the joy of being a member of an all-conquering Gryphon football team. Early learning experiences must remain in the memories of all of us. Countless intakes will still be able to recite "amo, amas, amat..." and "mensa, mensa, mensam" etc., learned under the tutelage of Sol (surely an ironic soubriquet) Heeley.

Chemistry was never my favourite subject, but I still recall and use some small "lessons" gained

from Little Emma whose sternness was legendary. We often learn almost by accident and an example from her utterances is not for chemistry per se as much as a lesson in clear thinking and speaking. It is derived from her response to anyone who dared to say or write, "Fill a beaker half full of water" instead of "Half fill a beaker". I wonder if she had read the observation in the Newbolt Report (1921), that every teacher in English should be a teacher of English.

I have just been looking at the fixture list and results of matches played by Hindley G.S.O.B. in the Southern Section of the Lancashire Amateur League in 1950-51. The season's results were:

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pos.
1st XI	24	13	4	7	98	59	5th
2nd XI	22	15	3	4	103	48	2nd

The 1st team was beaten by Blackburn Technical College in the second round of the Lancashire Amateur Cup competition. Our biggest league win was 12-3 against Chadderton and our worst defeat was away to Burnage, 3-6. There wasn't the same concentration on defence in those days. Jack Sharrat was Captain and Dudley Derbyshire was Vice-Captain. Happy days!

I have an interesting tale about a young boy's early days at H.A.G.S. He was not an extrovert and to preserve some semblance of anonymity he will be referred to as 'T', the initial letter of Ince. 'T' never grew to be more than 5ft 4ins (not even that now) and, as an 11 year old, was probably 4ft and a bit and weighing about 5 stone when wearing school cap and blue gabardine mac. 'T' attended Ince C.E. School and, having gained a County Junior Scholarship, was awarded a Bryham Memorial Prize, "Noel Howard, Midshipman", by Admiral E.R.G.R. Evans. Soon after this, a reprimand by Miss Price for some slight misdemeanour was accompanied by the warning, "If you do that at the Grammar School, you will be sent to the Headmaster down the

corridor. Corridor? What was a corridor? There might have been one at Wigan Infirmary, visited the previous year for treatment to an arm broken in a football match, but that was quite vague. Corridors could be seen at the cinema, in films about prisons and medieval castles with dungeons - for the time being the question could be left.

September arrived, it was time to go to a new, bigger school and what was the first impression - the sight of a generally rectangular building with rooms along both lengths and a corridor down the middle, lit only by poor light passing through the classrooms or by electric bulbs of low wattage, it being wartime. Even

worse was the view of a monster of a man wearing a large black gown, storming down this corridor. Was this to be the fulfilment of a post-biblical prophecy?

During the first few weeks of attendance at H.A.G.S, 'T' stayed for school dinners, by chance being seated at the table on the boys' side, nearest to the serving counter and therefore perhaps farthest from the staff's table with W.S. Fairbrother at the head. One day soon afterwards when a number of pupils were engaged in something more than whispering, WSF called for the silence. However, much to his annoyance, it didn't last long and he had to repeat his order just when 'T' was innocently addressing a colleague along the lines of, "Would you please pass the salt?" Horrified at this apparent insolence he sent a message that 'T' should report to his study immediately after assembly the following morning. 'T' was even more horrified by contemplation of what might be in store on the morrow. As soon as possible a hurried and silent exit from the building was made and later, when passing the head's study, there was a fervent desire for invisibility. There was to be no

banter with classmates that afternoon and fear of further retribution meant that news of the event had to be kept from parental ears.

If it is possible on a bicycle, 'T' was a perfect model the following morning of Shakespeare's satchelled schoolboy, "creeping like snail unwillingly to school". Assembly was nerve racking as WSF's eyes seemed to be directed down towards the front rows throughout. Then came the walk past classrooms 5 and 6 and a timid knock on the study door. There was no answer so perhaps the knock was too timid and had to be repeated more loudly. This attracted a response, "Wait there". After a few hours, or so it seemed, he appeared and said that 'T' should return after assembly on the next day, as he was too busy. The same happened again except that it was his secretary who announced that another visit would be necessary at the end of morning classes. Third time lucky, as the saying goes, and in fact the dreaded interview took place, a stern warning being issued.

Now you might imagine that no punishment had been inflicted, or in services terminology, "awarded". But think again! What had been going through that poor lad's mind for two days? Days of terror; premeditated psychological torture being inflicted on a helpless being who would remember it for life. WSF retired in 1945. That was the year when grey-uniformed, jackbooted individuals on the continent were being rounded up, tried by international courts and convicted for actions against the Geneva Convention. If only there had been a Geneva Convention for schoolboys - especially little ones!

D. Huntington,
2 Orchard Way,
Dringhouses,
York. YO2 2NU.

HIGSON AND OLLERTON FAMILIES

Dear Sir,

Could any of your readers help me regarding the maiden name of my paternal grandmother. I'm a beginner in tracing my family tree, but I keep getting sidetracked.

My grandparents were Richard and Elizabeth Higson (nee?) They had two children. My uncle Bill worked for Wigan Corporation for over 40 years as a pavior on the Highways Department and my father James went to live in Irlam. My grandfather was totally blinded in the 1st World War in the Somme. They lived at 7 School Lane, two doors from the Blue Bell pub on the corner of Scholes. I believe all this property was demolished in the late '60's.

Could any of your readers tell me, do any photos of the houses on School Lane exist, the ones adjoining the Blue Bell Inn. Also if anyone remembers the Ollerton family who lived in the same block? I suspect they were related in some way. I myself was born further down School Lane in 1933, a few doors away, and at my uncle's funeral in 1977 or thereabouts an elderly lady called Ollerton came to me and said she had known me since being born. She was then I suspect in her late 80's or early 90's. I feel my grandmother was an Ollerton before she was married.

If anyone can help me with remembering either Richard or Elizabeth Higson who both died in the 1940's or William, their unmarried son (who worked for the Council) and died around 1977, I would be obliged.

Mrs Muriel Swann,
2 Penmoor Chase,
Hazel Grove,
Stockport. SK7 5BT.



Articles appreciated

Dear Mr Gillies,

I am really delighted that the double article about Mr. Millard and my father (Issue No. 18) has come out so well. I am enclosing a letter which came in response to the articles.

Charles Lamb must have left Wigan just as my father was starting on his painting career, so I have no record of any connection between them.

Since I wrote the article I have found that one of my father's pictures, sold in about 1938, was left to St. Paul's Church, Goose Green, and now hangs in the vicarage. There were over four hundred drawings and paintings sold or given, mostly to local people. Two went to Mr. Bankes of Winstanley Hall. I often wonder

where they all are.

I have also discovered that in the 1950's he did some drawings for a Mr. Anderton, who was researching colliery buildings and possibly others. My brother remembers that Mr. Anderton asked my dad to do drawings for him. I think Mr. Anderton's son is connected to the open cast mining industry locally, but I don't know if the research was ever published.

I thoroughly enjoyed the article on A.G.S. (Ashton-in-Makerfield Grammar School). I attended during and after the war and well remember both farming camp and Dr. Reed's music lessons. By the time I went there the music choice had extended to a piece he had set to music himself - "Up the Airy Mountain, Down the Rushy Glen", and a poem by Tennyson set to music - "Ring Out Wild Bells to the Wild Sky". Isn't it interesting how a chance reading of a name brings back such detail?

I will look forward to reading more about the 'Friends' scheme. I will

be glad to support any future scheme.

Thank you again for including the articles.

**Eva Barker,
66 Hall Lane,
Hindley,
Wigan,
Lancs. WN2 2SF**

Dear Mrs Barker,

I was very interested in your article in *Past Forward* No.18 about your father, Arthur Turner, for two reasons.

First, I see the family lived in Highfield, where your father went to school, presumably about 1900. Secondly, your father was an accomplished artist interested in pen and ink drawings and water colour paintings, and also belonged to the St. Helens Art Club.

My great grandmother, Marie Louise Lamb, a widow with eight children, went to live in Highfield House in 1891. Her husband, John Lamb, who had died aged 45 in 1878, had been a fairly prosperous businessman in Wigan, and although the family had come down in the world after John's death, Marie Louise still had rather

grandiose ideas and hence wanted to live in a large house like Highfield.

When they moved there in 1891 her eldest son, Charles, my grandfather, aged 33, had already married and left home. The other eight children who moved to Highfield with Marie Louise ranged from Alfred, aged 31, to Leopold, aged 14. She lived there for ten years until about 1901 by which time all but two of her children had left home.

My grandfather, Charles Lamb, and his brother, Alfred, were both enthusiastic artists, particularly Alfred who specialised in water colours of rural scenes. They belonged to several artists' societies, particularly the Excelsior Water Colour and Drawing Society (EWCDS) during the period of about 1896 - 1918. I think this may have been a London based society, as several of the members seem to come from Hampstead or Brighton. The secretary was a Miss Anstruther. I have the names of about ten of the members.

I wondered whether your father might have known Charles or Alfred Lamb. They were, of course, considerably older than your father (Charles was born in 1858 and Alfred in 1860), but were still painting until after the First World War. About 1910 Alfred and his wife moved to Forton, near Preston, and he used to travel to Wigan every day by train. He made a number of paintings of the countryside around Forton. Judging by the two pictures reproduced in *Past Forward* No.18, I don't think the quality of my ancestors' artistic efforts was in the same class as that of your father!

I also wondered if you could tell me anything about Highfield House. This is not the original Highfield House, of course, which I gather was a "stately home", but a much more modest affair. By the time I started researching my family in the 1980's this second Highfield House, which was quite close to Pemberton Station, had also been demolished. A few years ago I spoke to the headmistress of the nearby school (Mrs. Gaskell) who said she thought the house was demolished in the 1970's, but that she knew a Dr. Redman who used to live there. I was hoping to find a photograph of Highfield House and Mrs. Gaskell said she would write to Dr. Redman to ask him if he had one, but I heard no more.

I would be grateful for any information you could give me on Highfield House or the immediate surroundings or any contacts your father may have had with Charles or Alfred Lamb.

**Eileen Jolly,
40 Pingle Croft,
Clayton-le-Woods,
Chorley,
PR6 7UP.**

**David Lamb,
79 Windermere Park,
Windermere,
Cumbria. LA23 2ND.**

Brewery connection

Dear Editor,

The photo enclosed was taken (I think) between 1914 and 1920. The man starting up the wagon is my grandfather Henry Blundell. This picture has been in my possession for a long time, but I have never been able to discover the location and street name. I think it may be close to a J. B. Almond public house as the wagon is on a delivery. I also wonder who the other man is?

My grandmother, Jane Blundell, was the landlady of The Seven Stars public house at Standish, owned by J.



B. Almonds. I do not know for how long she held the licence, but she held around 1930. Does anyone know how many public houses the brewery owned besides The Seven Stars and

The Wheatsheaf, which was also the brewery?

As a former Standisher I would like to say how very much I enjoyed reading the *Past Forward* maga-

zines. I read them from cover to cover!



*"Different
are our
days and
different
are our
ways"*

Dear Editor,

I thought your readers might be interested in the following extract from a letter to me by my friend, The Rev. Sam Davies M.B.E. who was the only Padre to survive the bitter war and imprisonment in Korea. Five Chaplains were taken prisoner. Sam started life as a Curate at Wigan Parish Church and he writes to me in response to a poem I sent to him about Wigan.

"The Rector, Canon Hunter Rodwell, lived in style at The Hall. I remember the miners clogging through the streets to get the bus up to the mining area. I even remember the "getting up" people who awaked miners in their homes for the early shift and the lamp lighters going through the streets. I lodged in Frog Lane. I used to officiate at services in the rather drab old Work House, I met some wry old characters there. Several times as a young curate doing

pastoral visits I clearly remember seeing a miner just home standing in a bath tub before the fire, they never washed their back thoroughly because the impression was that if you did, a pit fall would crush your back and spine. His wife ready with hot towel would say, "Come in Curate, 'Ave a cup of tea, its ready on t'hob". Ah, Raymond, those were great loveable days".

My father, James Hibbert, was responsible for the first pit head showers at Wigan Coal, and he used to tell the story that on one occasion two miners were having a shower in two cubicles when one shouted to the other "Is wattaah reet Bill" to which he replied "Aye there's nowt wrong wi it". The other shouted "Mines strakey". "I'll come round" said Bill. He went round, had a look and said "There's nowt rong wi watter, wentha has a shower tha wants to tack thi cap off, then it wont be strakey".

The pit head showers have gone, the miners with their caps have gone, the pits have gone, the mills have gone. A way of life has completely disappeared from our midst, times change.

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

Warrington to Wigan Mail robbery

Dear Sir,

I have recently returned from a two month tour visiting friends in South East Asia, Australia and New Zealand. In New Zealand I was visiting an ex-colleague and good friend, Jim Pilkington, from my Wigan County Borough Fire Brigade days. In addition to the Fire Brigade, Jim would probably have been known for his brass and silver band music up to his move to New Zealand in 1965. He now lives in Hawara, a small town in the Taranaki area of NZ.

Whilst visiting him, he showed me the attached article from the 'Australasian Stamps'. It would appear that not only are we famous down under for our rugby, but also for our mail robbers!

**H. Haddock, BA,
QFSM, FiFireE,
8 Repton Court,
The Arbours,
Northampton
NN3 3RQ.**



Mail Robbery.

POST-OFFICE, WIGAN,

Sunday, November 6th, 1800.

THE POST BOY carrying the MAIL, on Horseback from WARRINGTON to WIGAN, in the County of Lancashire, was stopp'd about Half past Two o'Clock this Morning, between Winswick and Red-Bank Mill, by a Man on Foot, who after a Struggle with the Rider, pulled him off his Horse, which the Robber then mounted and rode away with the Mail towards Winswick-Green, containing the following Bags, viz.

London Bag for Wigan; from Liverpool for Wigan, Chorley, Preston, Lancaster, Kendal, Penrith, and Carlisle; from Warrington for Wigan, Chorley, Preston, Lancaster, Kendal, Penrith, and Carlisle.

Whoever shall apprehend and convict, or cause to be apprehended and convicted, the Person who committed this Robbery, will be entitled to a Reward of

Two Hundred Pounds.

Whoever may find any of the said Bags, or any of the Letters, Bills, or Papers taken thereout, are requested to bring the same to the Post-Office in Wigan, Liverpool, or Warrington, and they will be rewarded for their Trouble.

By the Information received, and by a Pistol, Cap, Pistol, and Feather found near the Place, it appears that the Robber belongs to the Fourth, or Queen's own Regiment of Dragoons; and it is supposed the Robber had his Horse with him, as the Post Boy's Horse was found tied to a Gate at a little Distance from the Place, and a Man of the Description of the Robber pass'd on Horseback through the Toll Bar at Laxey-Hill.

W. LYON, PRINTER, MARKET PLACE, WIGAN.

A Post Office notice of 1800, offering the then large sum of £200 for information leading to the arrest of the person responsible for the Warrington to Wigan Mail robbery.

The last execution for the theft of mail was carried out in 1832 and the death penalty for letter stealing was abolished in 1835 after which convicted felons were sentenced to transportation for 7, 14 or 21 years (life) to America or Australia. Ed.

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

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June 1998

Who? Where?

TWO positive identifications have been made for last issue's "Who? Where?" Dickinson's shop was, and indeed still is, at 19 Station Road, Swinton - the Wigan link was that it was owned by Edward Dickinson, Mayor of Wigan, 1912-13. The ladies (bottom left) belonged to the Standishgate Wesleyan Methodist Church Sunday Afternoon Ladies' Class, c.1930.

Suggestions for the other photos include the canal at Runcorn Old Town (middle left) and Wigan Subscription Bowling Club, Park Road (middle right).

The four photos opposite are part of a series donated to the Archives in 1995. They carried a brief note on the back - "Mothers Day at Old Elms". Can any readers provide any further information?

An interesting set of nine photographs (three are reproduced below) was recently donated to the Archives. They show a funeral in Atherton (the tram lines tell us that it is post 1904), including a band assembling at the tram depot, Howe Bridge, and the burial in Atherton Cemetery. That is the only information we have, but it would appear to be the funeral of a person of some standing. Any suggestions?

